



DISABILITY POLICY & ACTION PLAN 2008-12

Adopted 20 October 2008

(Summary version)

DEFINITION OF DISABILITY

For the purpose of the Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan, Council will adopt the definition of 'disability' from the Federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* ('the DDA').

To encompass as many people as possible within its operation, the DDA adopts a very broad-based definition of disability. Under the DDA, the term 'disability' includes:

- physical disabilities
- intellectual disabilities
- psychiatric disabilities
- neurological disabilities
- sensory disabilities
- learning disabilities
- physical disfigurement
- the presence in the body of disease-causing organisms.

Further, the DDA definition includes people who currently have a disability, or who had a disability in the past, or who may have a disability in the future (for example, a family history of a disability), or who are believed to have a disability, or who have assistance for a disability (such as a carer, interpreter, reader, helping animal or use of an equipment or aid).



PART 1. STATEMENT OF INTENT AND PRINCIPLES

Statement of Intent

Maroondah City Council (“Council”) is committed to making services and amenities accessible to the whole community and ensuring that its business and operations reflect and encourage inclusive practices.

Specifically, in line with the *Disability Act 2006* (Vic.) this policy aims to:

- eliminate barriers to persons with a disability **accessing goods, services and facilities**
- eliminate barriers to persons with a disability **obtaining and maintaining employment**
- contribute to a **strengthened service system** that effectively assists, empowers and supports persons with a disability and carers
- promote **inclusion and participation** in the community of persons with a disability
- achieve tangible **changes in attitudes and practices** which discriminate against persons with a disability.

Principles

In accordance with the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) the Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan (‘the Plan’) is underpinned by the following principles to ensure it is effective in relation to the DDA. It:

- has a rights-based focus
- eliminates discrimination on the basis of disability in mainstream services
- ensures that people with disabilities have equal access
- addresses all barriers to access, including physical, information, communication and attitudinal barriers
- incorporates the DDA’s broad definition of ‘disability’.



PART 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local government is responsible for ensuring equitable access to the services, facilities and programs that it provides, and to the decision-making processes in the development of local policies and plans.

The concept of 'access' embraces many dimensions: physical access, information and knowledge, financial resources and costs, attitudes and treatment by others, and mechanisms and forums. Consequently, a whole-of-council and whole-of-community approach is integral to achieving the goal of access, equity and inclusion for all in the Maroondah community. The rights and dignity of people with disabilities are of paramount importance and can be achieved through policies and actions that maximise access for people with disabilities to the choices and decisions relating to their own lives.

Approximately one in five people in the City of Maroondah has a disability¹ and may require a range of support services from both Council and external service providers. This percentage is expected to rise in the coming years as the population ages and the need for support increases.

Disability affects individuals in different ways—people with a disability can experience varying degrees and areas of restrictions, and may require different levels and types of supports, or may not require any assistance or supports at all. Aids and equipment, informal and formal assistance, adequate income support programs, an accessible built environment and non-discriminatory attitudes are some of the key ingredients necessary to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunities to fully participate in community life.

People with disabilities can face barriers and disadvantages in many facets of their lives. Although physical barriers continue to pose major obstacles, recent activities by all sectors have led to incremental improvements in accessibility within the built and natural environments. However, people with disabilities also experience

¹ Synthetic estimates from the 2003 ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers Survey, coupled with 2004 population projections, suggest that, in 2008, approximately 22% of Maroondah residents have a disability. This is slightly higher than the estimate of 21% in metropolitan Melbourne. (VLGA Social Statistics)



disadvantages in other areas of life including housing, employment, education, transport, services, financial sufficiency and civic participation. These often inter-related disadvantages can significantly restrict their full participation and contribute to their marginalisation.

Carers have a vital role in providing assistance and support for people with disabilities. However, the ageing of the Australian population, longer life expectancies and lowered fertility rates, together with a number of other social and economic factors, are likely to lead to a critical supply shortage in carers over coming decades. To ameliorate this predicted shortfall, there needs to be adequate holistic planning and political, financial and workplace supports, along with a well-resourced, complementary and high quality service system.

The plethora of legislation, policies, plans, regulations and evidence at the international, national and state levels indicate that there is a growing recognition of the importance of and need for collective responsibility to actively support people with disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Victorian *Disability Act 2006* formally recognise the rights of people with disabilities and provide a sound framework for equity, access and inclusion for all in the City of Maroondah.

Twenty-nine strategies were identified in the Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan 2001. These strategies set out a plan for Council, key stakeholders and the Maroondah community to work towards achieving the stated goal of full access and equity. The list of the recent initiatives that have been undertaken at the national, state and local levels is extensive and these initiatives have brought about noticeable improvements at the local level. However, ongoing joint commitment, planning, engagement and action are necessary to build on the momentum and positive outcomes achieved thus far to further the realisation of a fully equitable, accessible and inclusive community.

The Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan 2008 has been developed collaboratively, in partnership with Council, the community, service providers and key



stakeholders. It builds on the initiatives and accomplishments of the Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan 2001.

The aim of the Disability Policy and Action Plan is to facilitate the inclusion, empowerment and independence of people with disabilities in Maroondah consistent with, and acknowledging the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (C'wlth), *Equal Opportunity Act 1995* (Vic.), *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic.), the *Building Act 1993* (Vic.) and Council's vision and mission statements.

Council recognises that disability planning is about more than just the service system; it is also about supporting positive social connections in the community and forging strong partnerships.

A research and evidence-based approach has informed the objectives and actions in the Maroondah Disability Policy and Action Plan.

In April 2007 Access Audits Australia (AAA) was commissioned by Council to engage the community in a review of Council's Disability Policy and Action Plan. This was in addition to consultation previously undertaken by Council. The aim of the consultation process was to provide an opportunity for a range of key stakeholders in the Maroondah community to input into the updated Plan.

A range of consultative strategies were implemented including surveys, forums and one to one interviews. The results of this consultation, in line with the findings of state and local area data relating to disability issues, have been amalgamated and defined in this Plan.

Council has had a long-standing commitment to addressing disability access issues in a number of ways. The review of the 2001 Disability Policy and Action Plan has now identified specific Strategic Directions that can be further explored and prioritised for action.



PART 7. MAROONDAH'S FUTURE: STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS AND ACTIONS, 2008 TO 2012

The consultation process has identified a wide range of issues and barriers for people with a disability in accessing Council services as well as in participating in opportunities and general life within the municipality.

The key issues are fairly consistent across the different groups that were consulted. They are also consistent with the key issues identified in State and Federal policy directions and local and international research.

In summary, past and current Council, MetroAccess and community activities have brought about improvements for people with disabilities, their carers and the wider Maroondah community. Equity in service provision is gradually increasing, accessibility within the built environment has improved markedly, Council and community awareness of disability-related issues has been enhanced, and there is greater and more meaningful participation by people with disabilities in community life and decision making channels. Importantly, there is now greater recognition of the value of equal access and the active involvement of people with disabilities in the community. Changes in organisational and individual attitudes towards disability, both within Council and in the wider Maroondah community, provide positive indicators of an increasingly supportive and inclusive environment.

The Plan is a prime opportunity to engage the Maroondah community in reviewing and reflecting on past achievements, to consider any changes in State/Federal policies and priorities, to ensure that Council's position and priorities continue to be relevant, and to identify opportunities for future actions. The updated Plan will provide a platform upon which Council and the Maroondah community can, together, build a more equitable, accessible and inclusive community.



Council will enact the policy through a focus on the following eight key Strategic Directions identified from a local evidence based approach:

- Communication, Information and Advocacy
- Carers
- Participation and Inclusion
- Physical and Built Environment
- Community Attitudes and Awareness
- Mental Health
- Transport;
- Support, Resourcing and Training.



Strategic Directions & Actions

Strategic Direction 1: COMMUNICATION, INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY

Provide up to date information to increase the awareness of supports and lifestyle opportunities for people with a disability and carers

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1.1 Improve the effectiveness of Council's communication of information to people with a disability and their carers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate a range of accessible communication systems including electronic and alternative formats, TTY, SMS, email, and hearing augmentation and sign language interpreters at key Council locations and events. • Assess the effectiveness of available media, including Council newsletters, Council's website, local newspapers and community radio. • Develop regular methods of communicating information to people with a disability and carers, such as mailing lists or periodic dedicated publications. 	<p>Mid term & Ongoing</p>	<p>MetroAccess, Customer Service, Public Affairs</p> <p>Public Affairs</p> <p>MetroAccess</p>



ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1.2 Broadly promote the range of services and activities that Council and other services/groups in Maroondah provide, with particular consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing to ensure that the main Council website (maroondah.vic.gov.au) remains accessible and compliant with Web-access guidelines. • Continuing to improve the accessibility of other Council websites • The Community Directory and the collection and update of information to ensure it remains relevant. • The development and update of a resource guide or directory specifically designed to meet the needs of people with a disability. • Raising awareness and profiling the range of services, issues and achievements of people with a disability through Council and community events, local newspapers and other Council publications. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Mid term</p> <p>Short term & Ongoing</p> <p>Short term & Ongoing</p> <p>Long term & Ongoing</p>	<p>Public Affairs</p> <p>All relevant Service Areas</p> <p>Public Affairs</p> <p>MetroAccess</p> <p>Public Affairs, All relevant Service Areas</p>
<p>1.3 Ensure information about the location of accessible toilets, parking, reserves and walking paths is kept up to date.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Open Space</p>



ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
1.4 Facilitate at least four Forums for People with Disabilities and Carers each year to gain feedback on Council activities and share information. Annually review the Forum's function, structure and effectiveness and modify the Forums accordingly.	Short term & Ongoing	Community Services
1.5 Strengthen and promote Council's role as an advocate for people with a disability, particularly in relation to issues that are largely outside the realm of Council's direct control (eg transport issues, HACC funding, housing, support for carers). Ensure that outcomes are communicated back to the community.	Short term & Ongoing	All Staff

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 2: CARERS

Recognise and support the important role of carers

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
2.1 Promote and acknowledge the role of carers.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess, Aged & Disability Services
2.2 Identify strategies that Council could support and/or facilitate to address the expected increasing reliance on formal carers in the future, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunities for volunteering and training to develop and enhance the capacity of the community to provide care for people with a disability. 	Long term & Ongoing	Aged & Disability Services, Community Planning & Development
2.3 Advocate for appropriate resources to support the anticipated growth in demand for Council's respite services.	Long term & Ongoing	Aged & Disability Services

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 3: PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

Ensure that public events and activities provided by Council are accessible to people with disabilities

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
3.1 Ensure that Council is a community and business leader in encouraging and supporting inclusive practices to the range of programs, services and opportunities on offer. This will include continuing the regular training of employees in relation to disability access awareness issues as well as education of the broader community.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess, Human Resources
3.2 Ensure that information regarding the accessibility of Council's facilities, events and services is provided in all promotional and information material.	Mid term & Ongoing	All relevant Service Areas, Public Affairs, Customer Service
3.3 Ensure all Council event checklists include the elements needed to provide disability access and maximum inclusion.	Short term	Leisure Services, All relevant Service Areas



ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
3.4 Explore the feasibility of contracts with external contractors to include a question or statement of expectations regarding accessibility and inclusion considerations.	Mid term	Contracts Management
3.5 Explore the feasibility of requiring all community events funded through Council's Community Grants and Arts and Culture Grants programs to be accessible and inclusive.	Short term	Leisure Services, Arts & Culture Services
<p>3.6 Ensure that all public consultation and engagement opportunities provided by Council are inclusive and accessible, including consideration of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue accessibility (including accessible parking, transport options, wheelchair accessibility) • Scheduling of events (day and time) • Signage • Accessibility of information about individual events and a commitment to respond to requests for special provisions (such as hearing loops, transport, attendant carer and interpreter services) to support the contributions and participation of people with a disability. 	Short term & Ongoing	All Staff



ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
3.7 Continue to promote the existing programs that support inclusion and participation, such as the Victorian Companion Card and Recharge Program.	Ongoing	MetroAccess

Short term = < 1 year Mid term = 1-3 years Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 4: PHYSICAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Identify and address issues relating to physical access and ensure people with disabilities have equitable access to infrastructure and the built environment

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>4.1 Undertake access audits of key Council facilities including buildings, parks, playgrounds and parking bays with consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High risk/high use facilities• 'Front door' projects – point of access• Locations and appropriateness of accessible public toilets, including fixtures (eg taps, door handles).	Mid term Short term Mid term	Asset Management



ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>4.2 Work with retailers and trader associations to raise awareness of the benefits and opportunities of providing accessible shopping environments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further promotion, regulation and monitoring of Council's recently adopted Footpath Trading Policy • Continue with <i>Good Access Good Business</i> Training for local business • Liaising with key private shopping centres for improvements to access. 	<p>Mid term & Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Mid term & Ongoing</p>	<p>Economic Development</p>
<p>4.3 Undertake an access audit of Council's key pedestrian path networks particularly those in high traffic areas or strip shopping precincts.</p>	<p>Long term</p>	<p>Engineering Services</p>
<p>4.4 Identify and provide training to ensure that building surveyors, planning and Major Projects staff (as appropriate) are skilled in the interpretation of the Building Control Act and the new draft premises standard when completed.</p>	<p>Mid term</p>	<p>Building Services, Human Resources</p>

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 5: COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS

Take a leadership role in promoting and reinforcing positive community attitudes to people with disabilities

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
5.1 Profile the range of services and the achievements of people with a disability in the community in Council publications and local newspapers.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess, Public Affairs
5.2 Further promote the availability of the Communicating with People with a Disability booklet and explore the expansion of this document to improve attitudes and further break down barriers in the local community.	Mid term	MetroAccess
5.3 Provide effective leadership in adopting, where possible, a more proactive role in educating sections of the community (eg school children, businesses, sporting clubs), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct and targeted information provision • Opportunities to bring together sections of the community and people with a disability to increase understanding and promote positive attitudes. 	Mid term	MetroAccess, Leisure Services, Youth Services, Economic Development

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 6: MENTAL HEALTH

Facilitate responsive and appropriate supports for people with mental health issues

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
6.1 Increase internal Council awareness of mental health issues.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess, Community Planning & Development
6.2 Increase the capacity of the community sector and Council to develop and deliver programs and services to meet the needs of people with mental health issues.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess
6.3 Continue to support and resource local Supported Residential Services (SRS).	Short term & Ongoing	Community Planning & Development
6.4 Work with key agencies to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.	Mid term	MetroAccess

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 7: TRANSPORT

Improve the access of people with disabilities to a range of transport options

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>7.1 Advocate for public transport that is user friendly, accessible and reflects the needs of people with disabilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improving access at Ringwood Railway Station and other high traffic areas• Continuing with access improvements at Bus Stops• Upgrading of accessibility at major roads crossings.• Advocating to transport service providers (eg buses, trains, taxis) for improved access and frequency of services.	Short term & Ongoing	Community Planning & Development, Engineering, Major Projects, Strategic Planning, Engineering Services
<p>7.2 Explore expanded community transport options with relevant service organisations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing of buses and volunteers• Financial assistance to individuals for transport costs associated with attending activities.	Mid term	Community Planning & Development, Aged & Disability Services



ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY
<p>7.3 Audit accessible parking in key community locations to ascertain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with standards • Availability • Locations • Appropriateness of dimensions • Alternatives. 	Mid term	Engineering Services
<p>7.4 Promote accessible forms of public transport to improve the mobility and social inclusion of people with disabilities.</p>	Short term	Community Planning & Development, Strategic Planning

Short term = < 1 year Mid term = 1-3 years Long term = 3+ years



Strategic Direction 8: SUPPORT, RESOURCING AND TRAINING

Develop the internal capacities of Council to meet the needs of people with a disability and their carers

ACTIONS	PERIOD	RESPONSIBILITY
<p>8.1 Establish the Council Staff Disability Policy Steering Group which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprise key staff from relevant Council service areas• Meet at least three times a year• Monitor the implementation of the Disability Policy and Action Plan• Construct and institute processes for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on implementation• Assist in the review of the next Disability Policy and Action Plan.	Short term	Community Planning & Development



<p>8.2 Review, monitor and document demands for disability related services and supports and identify the likely impacts that this will have on HACC services including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered meals • Respite care • Home care • Personal care • Property maintenance • Social support program • Planned activity groups. 	<p>Mid term & Ongoing</p>	<p>Aged & Disability Services</p>
<p>8.3 Explore possibilities for the employment of a Disability Access and Inclusion Officer with a key role to steer the implementation of the Disability Action Plan.</p>	<p>Short term</p>	<p>Community Planning & Development</p>
<p>8.4 Explore, implement, monitor and review methods and processes for Council to meaningfully and effectively engage people with a disability, their carers and family members in Council decision making processes and Council activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the feasibility and effectiveness of new methods, including advisory/consultative committees and Internet-based technologies. • Investigating opportunities for representation on Council Working Parties and Committees. 	<p>Short term & Ongoing</p>	<p>MetroAccess, Community Planning & Development</p>



ACTIONS		RESPONSIBILITY
8.5 Develop policy, support and systems for Council to provide employment opportunities for people with a disability.	Short term	MetroAccess, Human Resources
8.6 Continue the regular disability access awareness training of Council employees and explore opportunities to embed training in the Staff Induction Program.	Mid term & Ongoing	MetroAccess, Human Resources
8.7 Facilitate partnerships with service agencies and community groups to attract resources, identify new program opportunities and expand the range of services for people with disabilities.	Ongoing	MetroAccess, Community Planning & Development, Aged & Disability Services
8.8 Establish standards for Council's customer complaints handling process and effectively communicate the complaints process to people with disabilities, their carers and families.	Short term	Customer Service Cross Functional Working Group, Community Services

Short term = < 1 year

Mid term = 1-3 years

Long term = 3+ years

