



9.2 **DRAFT ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN - RELEASE FOR
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION**

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025 and endorse its release for community consultation.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Preparation and implementation of an Accessibility Action Plan is fundamental to ensuring an Inclusive Port Phillip for persons with disability. It also meets Council's obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to prepare a disability plan.
- 2.2 The draft Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) has been prepared, informed by two stages of engagement with the community and consultation with Port Phillip staff. The report proposed to progress to final community consultation, presenting the draft AAP to the community and inviting further input.
- 2.3 Actions in the draft AAP reflect engagement findings, and align to contemporary practice more broadly, and focus on:
- Strengthening opportunities to participate in community life
 - Enhanced mobility
 - Access to information and participation in local decision-making
 - Integration of the principles of universal design in our facilities, services and ways of working.
- 2.4 The Draft AAP highlights five priority outcomes, each supported by a set of strategies and actions, aligned to the Council Plan's strategic direction for an Inclusive Port Phillip:
- A welcoming and inclusive community where people with disability are socially connected and feel they belong
 - A safe and accessible city that enables participation in community life
 - An engaged and empowered disability community
 - A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth
 - A proud disability confident organisation with inclusive practices and culture.
- 2.5 Feedback from community consultation on the Draft AAP will enable the Plan to be further refined and a final Accessibility Action Plan to be adopted by Council for implementation across 2023-2025.



3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Releases the draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 (provided at Attachment 1) for community consultation between 5 April and 26 May 2023
- 3.2 Notes that a further report outlining the findings of the community consultation and any proposed changes to the draft Action Plan arising from feedback will be presented to Council in August 2023.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

Background

- 4.1 This will be the City of Port Phillip's fourth accessibility action plan and will be implemented over the period 2023 - 2025.
- 4.2 The plan contributes Council's community vision: '*Proudly Port Phillip - A liveable and vibrant City that enhances the wellbeing of our community*' and conveys Council's commitment to:
 - 4.2.1 equitable participation and inclusion of people with a disability within our community and within our organisation,
 - 4.2.2 elimination of disability discrimination, and
 - 4.2.3 ensuring disability inclusive practice.
- 4.3 The plan is a means by which Council will meet its obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to:
 - 4.3.1 'Reduce barriers to people with disability accessing goods, services, and facilities,
 - 4.3.2 Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment,
 - 4.3.3 Promote inclusion and participation and
 - 4.3.4 Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with disability.'
- 4.4 Almost one in five people in Australia identify as a person with disability, with the prevalence of disability increasing, and also becoming greater as people age.
- 4.5 An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data comparison from 2015 to 2018 identifies an increase in behaviour disorders, with these conditions represented in nearly a quarter of people with disability. For those reporting a physical disability as their primary condition, musculoskeletal disorders including arthritis and back problems were most common.
- 4.6 ABS 2018 also data indicates that:
 - one in ten persons with disability (aged 15 years+) report having experienced disability discrimination in the preceding 12 months
 - there is a 30% (approximate) employment gap for people with disability of working age



- for people with disability of working age, their median gross personal income in 2018 was less than half (49.7%) that of people without disability.

- 4.7 The draft AAP is informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states: ‘Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.
- 4.8 This statement articulates that an adverse impact of impairment is typically felt when encountering barriers in society. Barriers could be of a social nature, for example, discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards a person with disability. Barriers could also be environmental, such as a lack of accessibility to premises, goods, and services.

Approach to developing the draft Accessibility Action Plan

- 4.9 The approach to developing the draft Accessibility Action Plan has involved building on the achievements of the previous three plans, as well as being informed by Port Phillip community and staff engagement findings and contemporary best practice.
- 4.10 The proposed actions in this plan are aimed at elevating organisational maturity and clearly demonstrating our efforts to contribute a greater impact for disability inclusion in the community.
- 4.11 Building maturity as a disability confident organisation requires ongoing commitment working alongside Port Phillip employees, the community sector, community members and other stakeholders.
- 4.12 Two stages of community and staff engagement have been undertaken to inform the draft AAP. Details of this engagement is provided in Section 4 – Consultation and Stakeholders.

Action Plan Content: Outcomes and Strategies

- 4.13 The structure and content of the draft Accessibility Action Plan is set out below.
- 4.14 Five focus areas define the desired outcomes, and the associated roles Council will play. Each outcome statement is supported by a set of strategies and actions.

Table 1: Outcomes and Strategies in draft AAP

Outcome & Council’s Role	Strategies
<p>Focus Area 1</p> <p>Council as a Leader</p> <p>Outcome - A welcoming and inclusive community where people with disability are socially connected and feel they belong</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote disability awareness within our community. • Promote equitable participation in community activities, through Council and community partners providing a diverse range of accessible arts, cultural, sport and recreational programs and events.



Outcome & Council's Role	Strategies
<p>Focus Area 2 Council as a Service Provider and Advocate</p> <p>Outcome - A safe and accessible city that enables participation in community life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply a universal design approach to improving the safety and accessibility of public spaces, streets, community buildings and facilities. • Advocate for initiatives that deliver enhanced accessibility and inclusion in the City of Port Phillip. • Build understanding of accessibility and inclusive practices amongst our local business community.
<p>Focus Area 3 Council as an Ally</p> <p>Outcome - An engaged and empowered disability community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure equitable opportunities to participate in the engagement and civic decision-making processes of Council.
<p>Focus Area 4 Council as a consumer</p> <p>Outcome - A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote development opportunities for people with disability. • Partner with suppliers who demonstrate equitable and inclusive practices for people with disability.
<p>Focus Area 5 Council as a workplace and service provider</p> <p>Outcome - A proud disability confident organisation with inclusive practices and culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply universal design principles and practice across our services and programs to ensure they are inclusive, equitable and flexible. • Build workforce capability in disability inclusive practice. • Ensure the customer experience for people with disability is inclusive and made easy. • Ensure we are an employer of choice for people with disability.

- 4.15 Actions to support the delivery of the outcomes and strategies are detailed in the draft Action Plan provided at Attachment 1.
- 4.16 Actions embed a strong focus on applying a Universal Design approach to programs and services, and also projects that can contribute to a safe and accessible built environment and public realm.
- 4.17 Applying the principles of Universal Design means designing our infrastructure, programs and services in such a way that as many people as possible can use it. It means the design is inclusive and safe for everyone. (Note: embedding universal



design will approach inclusion from a broad perspective (i.e., disability, gender, age, multicultural, etc.).

- 4.18 This focus aligns well with, and can leverage, the recent commitment in Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026) to introduce a ‘whole-of-government Universal Design policy’.
- 4.19 It is now proposed that Council release the draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 (Attachment 1), inviting community members and stakeholders to provide feedback prior to considering formal adoption of the plan in August 2023.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Two stages of community and staff engagement have been undertaken to inform the draft AAP.
- 5.2 Stage 1 community consultation sought input via survey, with the aim of gaining an understanding of areas the community perceives Council should focus on to increase participation and remove barriers that may prevent someone from taking part in economic, social and community life. Feedback and/or input from community members was also welcomed in other formats. Feedback highlighted the following key themes:
- Strengthening opportunities to participate in community life
 - Enhanced mobility
 - Access to information and participation in local decision-making
 - Integration of the principles of universal design in our facilities, services and ways of working
 - Enhancing diversity employment initiatives.
- 5.3 Staff consultation was also held which highlighted the importance of:
- Increasing the representation of people with disability in our workforce
 - Building organisational capability and ensuring an accessible and inclusive workplace.
- 5.4 Stage 2 community consultation used a targeted approach to further explore the engagement themes raised in Stage 1. This included conducting two focus groups facilitated through a local community program. The sessions identified the following issues:
- A sense of increasing gentrification adversely impacting the experience of inclusion of people with disability
 - Concerns about rationalisation of services in the community – expressed as both a lack of opportunity to engage in community and civic life due to individual circumstance, as well as the increasing reliance on requiring access to digital technology.
- 5.5 Telephone interviews were also conducted with representatives from community organisations and service providers. Interviews provided qualitative information with common themes including:
- Awareness of available services



- Individuals' ability to access and navigate support services (with or without assistance from the service providers/community organisations)
- The complexity of navigating (dispersed) systems and processes to access services that could assist individuals can be a barrier in itself, with respect to accessing the required support.

5.6 In summary, consolidation of feedback yielded the following community engagement themes:

- Enhanced mobility
- Strengthening opportunities to participate in community life
- Importance of applying the principles of universal design in our facilities, services
- Access to information and participation in local decision-making.

5.7 The outcomes, strategies and actions of the draft Action Plan are reflective of these themes.

5.8 Release the draft Action Plan for community members and stakeholders to provide feedback is now proposed, prior to its formal adoption. The proposed engagement activities and dates are set out in section 11 of this report.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The development of an Accessibility Action Plan ensures Council fulfils its obligations under legislation including:

- Disability Act (2006)
- The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- The Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- The Human Rights Act 2019.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 Development of the draft Action Plan has been undertaken in-house using existing staff resources.

7.2 Effective implementation of the Action Plan will require on-going staff resourcing, noting this will be integrated with related Council activities promoting diversity and inclusion across Council activities to achieve both synergies and efficiencies.

7.3 Actions within the draft Plan will be delivered across the organisations to ensure disability inclusion is embedded. This can be achieved within existing program and service budgets, noting the need to allocate staff time.

7.4 Should actions evolve to require additional budget allocation, this would occur through Council's annual budget process on a project specific basis, for example, capital works projects which incorporate universal design (accessibility) elements.

7.5 An existing staff resource exists within the Community Building and Inclusion Department that leads the implementation of Council's accessibility action (disability) plans, and supports the organisation to build its maturity in disability inclusion.



8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 The Accessibility Action Plan has no direct environmental impacts.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 The Accessibility Action Plan will help ensure that Council's services are inclusive, accessible and equitable. The actions in the plan will support the opportunity for full and equal participation in community life for persons with disability and their carers.

9.2 The Accessibility Action Plan will also help facilitate disability awareness in the broader community, helping to reduce discrimination and disadvantage, and create a safer and more accessible place for persons with disability.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 The development of the draft Accessibility Action Plan aligns to Strategic Direction 1 *Inclusive Port Phillip* in the Council Plan 2021 – 2031:

- Strategic Objective: "A City that is a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities."
- Four Year Strategies: "Port Phillip is more accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities" and "Port Phillip is a place where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can access services and facilities that enhance health and wellbeing through universal and targeted programs that address inequities".

10.2 The draft Plan recognises that creating an Inclusive Port Phillip requires a holistic approach with actions that achieve:

- An Inclusive Community - that is welcoming, values diversity, and enables everyone to actively participate in their community and feel they belong.
- An Inclusive Place – a city with accessible and inclusive public spaces, transport options, community facilities, shops, and housing, that meets the diverse needs of all members of the community.
- An Inclusive Organisation and Workplace – which is representative of the diversity of the Port Phillip community and ensures inclusion is at the core of its culture and practices. This means council services, programs, places, and spaces are inclusive, accessible, equitable, and responsive to the diversity of needs, rights, and priorities of our communities.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 It is proposed the engagement process commence on 5 April 2023 and occur across an extended period until 26 May 2023 to recognise the Easter and school holiday period. Key activities are to include:

- Promoting the draft Action Plan on Council's Have Your Say website and at Town Halls, Libraries and Community Centres.
- Promoting the draft Action Plan through local community and health sector networks, including relevant disability service providers and agencies.



- Inviting participation from diverse and intersectional groups by using Council's networks and engaging with Council's Advisory Committees (including Older Persons, Youth, LGBTIQ+, Multicultural and Multifaith).
- Engaging the local business community, including via Council's Business Advisory Group.
- Using scheduled Neighbourhood Engagements Sessions that fall within the consultation period to promote the draft Action Plan and opportunities for community feedback.
- A specific purpose engagement session at the St Kilda Library, with presence of an AUSLAN interpreter.
- Engagement with City of Port Phillip staff, including Council's Disability Inclusion Network.

11.1.2 It is anticipated that a summary of community feedback and any revisions to the draft Action Plan will be presented for Council consideration in August 2023, prior to adoption.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

11.2.1 Preparation and implementation of an Accessibility Action Plan is fundamental to ensuring an Inclusive Port Phillip for persons with disability and their carers.

11.2.2 Almost one in five people in Australia identify as a person with disability and this is increasing, including as people age.

11.2.3 The Plan also meets Council's obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to prepare a disability plan.

11.2.4 The Plan is aligned to *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan (2022–2026)*, particularly in regard to strengthening Council's approach to embedding Universal Design, to enhance the accessibility of services and public spaces for all.

11.2.5 The draft Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) has been informed by two stages of engagement with the community and consultation with Port Phillip staff.

11.2.6 The community consultation process on the draft Plan aims for a broad reach and seeks feedback from persons with disability and their carers, disability agencies, the broader Port Phillip community and staff.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 (Consultation Draft)