Yarra Ranges Council

Disability Action Plan Community Engagement Report

April, 2024

Prepared by the Health and Wellbeing Team

Acknowledgement of Country

Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways. We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.

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Introduction

This report summarises the community engagement period between February and March 2024. It captures the first of two phases in which the community is engaged regarding their vision and preferences for access, equity, and inclusion for people with disability and unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges.

Information gathered through community voice will inform the development of the Yarra Ranges Disability Action Plan (DAP) 2024 – 2028.

The DAP outlines the ways Council will work to improve disability access and to advance equity and inclusion for people with a disability and unpaid carers, including Councils infrastructure, facilities, communications, and service.

Once a Draft DAP has been developed, a second round of community engagement will be undertaken.

Project Background

People with disability (and unpaid carers) have a human right to be included in all aspects of community life. This also brings many social, cultural, and economic benefits to the wider community.

The Victorian Public Sector Commission, in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, defines disability as encompassing individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These impairments, when coupled with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal footing with others. Disability can be permanent or temporary, visible, or invisible. acquired or congenital, fluctuating, or episodic.[1]

Carers are people who provide unpaid care and support a person who has a disability, this may be a family member and or a friend. Carers are an integral for both the person they are caring for and as part of Australia's health system.

Individual characteristics such as age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and cultural upbringing can shape the experiences, perspectives, needs, and challenges of individuals living with disability. The intersectional nature of a person's circumstance can result in compounding layers of barrier and discrimination. For example, an older woman with disability, may experience difficulties participating in social activities due to mobility issues and age-related discrimination, and may also be more likely to experience violence, which influences her overall health and wellbeing.

Council actively sought to capture the intersectional experience of individuals with disability and unpaid carers, when undertaking community engagement to inform the DAP.

Almost **20%** of Yarra Ranges residents identify as having a disability. [2]

Over 5% (5.6% among females; 5.2% among males) need daily support with core activities due to severe or profound disability, chronic illness, or age.[3] Among the Aboriginal population, this figure increases to **9.55%** (9.7% among females; 11% among males), nearly double the rate observed in the general population.[4]

Additionally, almost **15%** of Yarra Ranges residents (17.6% among females; 11.7% among males) provide unpaid care for someone due to disability, chronic illness, or age.[5] Among the Aboriginal population, over **18%** (23.3% of females; 12.9% of males) provide unpaid care for someone with disability, chronic illness, or age.[6]

Currently, National population-based data collections, such as the Census, and the State based Population Health Survey lack of inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. Despite this, the Department of Health (2019) estimates that approximately **11%** of the Australian population identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Intersex (LGBTI).[7]

Based on the Department of Health estimates, some assumptions for the Yarra Ranges community are:

- Over **17,000** Yarra Ranges residents (11% of the population) identify as LGBTIQ+

Of this 17,000:

- Almost **3,500** people have a disability.
- Over **900** people need daily support with core activities due to disability, chronic illness, or age.
- Over **2,500** people provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

Almost **17%** of Yarra Ranges residents were born overseas. 39 languages other than English are spoken at home.[8, 9] Gender-disaggregated data is not available. Assumptions for the Yarra Ranges Culturally and Linguistically Diverse residents based on general population data suggest:

- Over **5,000** people have a disability
- Almost **3,800** people provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, chronic illness, or age.

1. Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2021–2025 (content.vic.gov.au)

2. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). "Region Summary, Yarra Ranges". https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=lga&rgn=27450 Accessed 17 April 2024.

3. .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Need for Assistance". Need for assistance | Yarra Ranges Council | Community profle (id.com.au) . Accessed on 10 April 2024.

4. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profle. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab I09. Core Activity Need

5. .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Unpaid Care". Unpaid care | Yarra Ranges Council | Community profle . Accessed on 10 April 2024.

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Census of Population and Housing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profle. Yarra Ranges (LGA27450) 2468.2 sq Kms. Tab 110. Unpaid Assistance

7. End of Life Directions for Aged Care (2022). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Australia's ageing LGBTI population. https://www.eldac.com.au/Resources/Diverse-Population-Groups/Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-and-Intersex#:~:text=Current%20estimates%20from%20the%20Department,based%20discrimination%20over%20their%20lifetime. Accessed on 10 April 2024.

8. .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Birthplace". https://profle.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/birthplace . Accessed on 10 April 2024.

9. .idcommunity Demographic Resources. (2021). "Yarra Ranges Council, Languages used at home". https://profle.id.com.au/yarra-ranges/language . Accessed on 10 April 2024.

It is the vision of the DAP to:

"Yarra Ranges is an accessible, inclusive and equitable society that enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens."

The four goals of the DAP are:

Goal 1

Information and communication from Council is accessible to everyone in our community and supports equitable participation and inclusion in civic life.

Goal 2

Council buildings and infrastructure are accessible to everyone in our community.

Goal 3

Yarra Ranges is an inclusive community where all citizens can participate equally.

Goal 4

Council's commitment to equity, access and inclusion is demonstrated in all aspects of the business.

Council has a responsibility under the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and the *Victorian Disability Act 2006* to develop and maintain a Disability Action Plan (DAP) that seeks to:

- Reduce barriers faced by people with disability in accessing goods, services, and facilities.
- Obtain and maintain employment.
- Promote inclusion and participation of people with disability.
- Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against such people.

Methods of data collection

Council completed a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) obliged under the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, which recommended Council:

- Respond to clear gaps in gender-disaggregated data and intersectional lived experience by undertaking targeted consultation with priority cohorts.
- Establish relationships with priority cohorts who have a disability, capture their voices to inform the DAP.
- Consider the needs of LBGTIQA+, CALD, and Indigenous people with disability, including women, girls, and gender diverse people, who are currently under-serviced communities.

These recommendations guided Council with planning the engagement that was delivered.

To gain an understanding of how Yarra Ranges Council was performing against the Vision and Goals, the community was able to get involved in the following ways:

The Yarra Ranges community exhibits a remarkable diversity of interests and requirements relating to accessibility, shaped by factors such as the type of disability, levels of support required. Residents genuinely appreciate living in the Yarra Ranges and, Council remains committed to actively listening and involving community in making improvements.

To promote and reach a variety of people Council used the following promotional methods:

Website Promotion

Social media

E-Newsletters

Radio

Presentations

Printed media

Email distribution

Limitations

Views on how accessible Councils' infrastructure, facilities, communications, and services was sought. However, due to respondents self-electing to participate, this resulted in data gathered reflecting a present-time individual needs base rather than indicating an aspirational view of future community needs.

Given the broad geographical spread of the Yarra Ranges municipality, this imposed limitations on levels of participation during the engagement process across all nine wards of the region. Therefore, note that the feedback included in this report reflects the individuals who participated in the engagement process and may not be reflective of all people with a disability and unpaid carers in the Yarra Ranges.

During the engagement, Council successfully connected with people residing, working, and spending time in the Yarra Ranges. Yarra Ranges offers a mixture of urban and rural communities. There are over 55 suburbs, townships, small communities, and rural areas, making it one of the most diverse of any municipalities in the State.

The voluntary sharing of location by some participants, in contrast to others who did not, highlights the breadth of outreach efforts across Yarra Ranges. The engagement extended to a diverse range of suburbs, including at least 34 distinct neighbourhoods. This coverage represents over 50% of the suburbs within Council, encompassing all nine wards.

Council cannot take immediate action in response to all feedback received. Any action taken due to the data collected must align with the Council's ongoing legislative responsibilities and align with the vision and intended goals of the DAP. Budgetary constraints are also a consideration.

How did people get involved

Recognising ways that systems, structures, and attitudes can lead to multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage, the community engagement plan applied an intersectional lens. The engagement methods, number of participants, key findings and who offered feedback from the community are shown below.

E-newsletter and Radio

- Over **13,190** recipients recevied Council E-newsletters

Social Media

- **14,977** people reached through Yarra Ranges Council Facebook and Instagram.

Shaping Yarra Ranges Page & Surveys

- **828** visitors
- **30** contributions
- **125** surveys completed

Interviews and Focus Group Sessions

- **489** people reached
- **5** face-face focus group sessions
- **2** public events
- Disability Inclusion Network
- **2** Pathways for Carers Walks
- **11** interviews
- Yarra Ranges Neighbourhood House Network

Advisory Committee's

- Disability Advisory Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- Positive Ageing Reference Group.

Summary of feedback

The Community has highlighted several key themes that warrant consideration for the upcoming DAP. These themes listed alphabetically provide valuable insights.

Table 11 – Key themes and desired outcomes

Number of Key Themes	Key Themes	Desired Outcome
1.	**Accessible tourism**	Yarra Ranges is a welcoming destination for all visitors.
2.	**Customer Experience**	There is a variety of options available for people with disability and unpaid carers to engage with Council. Including the latest technology to support an improved customer experience.
3.	**Emergency Management**	People with a disability and unpaid carers are included at all stages of Emergency Management planning and delivery.
4.	**Festivals and Events / Local Businesses**	Community events and local businesses have access to Information and capacity building opportunities.
5.	**Housing**	Temporary/permanent housing affordability, availability, and suitability for people with disability.
6.	**Information**	The information required is readily available and in accessible formats.
7.	**Infrastructure**	Increased accessibility in relation to: • Changing Places toilets • Trails • Shade • Accessible parking • Signage • Footpaths • Seating • Safe pedestrian crossings • Recreational facilities
8.	**Public Transport**	Accessible public transport Adequate infrastructure leading to public transport. Increased public transport options across Yarra Ranges.
9.	**Safety**	Lighting near recreation equipment and around shopping precincts is improved.
10.	**Social connection and wellbeing**	People with a disability and unpaid carers have access to local programs to enhance social connection and wellbeing.
11.	**Youth Employment**	Pathways for young people with disability to support workforce entry.

Conclusion

Council values and acknowledges the people who informed this report and the development of the next DAP. It's essential to create an inclusive environment for the community.

The next engagement and consultation phase of this project will ask the community for feedback on the draft version of the DAP.

To remain up to date with this project please visit the Access, Equity and Inclusion Strategy | Shaping Yarra Ranges page.

References

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *"Region Summary, Yarra Ranges"*. https://dbr.abs.gov.au/region.html?lyr=lga&rgn=27450 Accessed 17 April 2024.

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6. End of Life Directions for Aged Care (2022). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) Australia's ageing LGBTI population*. https://www.eldac.com.au/Resources/Diverse-Population-Groups/Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-and-Intersex#:~:text=Current%20estimates%20from%20the%20Department,based%20discrimination%20over%20their%20lifetime. Accessed on 10 April 2024.

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Glossary of terms

Term or abbreviation	What it means in the plan
Accessibility	The extent to which people with disability can access something like an office, worksite, or public area.
Changing Places	Public toilets with full-sized change tables and hoists in major public spaces that meet the needs of people with disability.
Cohorts	A group of people with a shared characteristic
Community engagement and consultation	Community engagement at Yarra Ranges Council includes a wide range of activities aimed at involving the community in Council's decision-making processes.
Community voice	Involvement of members representing the community/lived experience
Culturally Linguistically diverse (CALD)	A community or group of people who come from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
Data	Facts or information about a topic or group of people.
Disability Advisory Committee	The Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) provides advice on equity, access and inclusion to maximise opportunities for people with a disability to participate fully in the community of Yarra Ranges.
Disability Act	The Disability Act 2006 (Vic) provides a whole-of-government and community response to the rights and needs of people with disability including a requirement to have four-year state disability plans
Disability Action Plan (DAP)	An important way that state government departments and local governments ensure they are delivering inclusive and accessible services.
Emergency Management (EM)	The process of preparing for and responding to emergencies, including natural disasters such as storms and floods.
Gender	The socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity. Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.
Gender Disaggregated Data (GDD)	Data that has been broken down and analysed by gender.
Gender Diverse	Refers to a range of genders expressed in different ways. There are many terms used by gender diverse people to describe themselves, for example non-binary.
Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)	It's an assessment that outlines where gender analysis has been used to inform a policy to deliver better gender equality outcomes.

Term or abbreviation	What it means in the plan
Health and Wellbeing Advisory Committee	The Health & Wellbeing Advisory Committee allows for community voice and a consultative process for a wider range of activities and initiatives, as well as advice to support Council's decision making and monitors the achievement of objectives of the Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025.
Health and Wellbeing Team	A team within YRC that is responsible for providing advice on outcomes, namely the Disability Action Plan.
Intersectionality	A methodology of studying the overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination.
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex, and queer.
NDIS	Jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, the National Disability Insurance Scheme provides access to disability supports for eligible people with disability.
Pop up sessions	Directly engaging with the local community through face-to-face conversation
Underserviced groups	Groups of people who, because of systemic discrimination or disadvantage, often miss out on important services or having their voices heard
Unpaid Carer	Carers are people who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness, an alcohol or other drug issue or who are frail aged.
Vision	In this plan the vision represents what we hope will happen if the actions do what they are meant to do.
Wellbeing	Wellbeing includes physical, mental, and social health. Wellbeing can be described as how you feel about yourself and your life.
Focus groups	Conversing with key stakeholders to inform the DAP in a group setting whether it be face to face and or online.
Survey	Asking people questions through a questionnaire with a written set of questions. Both online and paper surveys were available.
Interviews	A formal conversation one on one and or in a group setting.
Shaping Yarra Ranges Page	An online engagement platform that gives you the opportunity to share your ideas and feedback on the projects and services that will shape your community.
Advisory Committee	A group of people with skills, expertise across multiple sectors who provide independent advice on issues occurring in the community.
Reference groups to Council	A collective group of people providing advice/opinions of topics.

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