Yarra Ranges **Council**

Equity, Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013–2023

Summary Report Snapshot

Introduction

Almost 20% of Yarra Ranges residents have a disability. Over 5% need daily support with core activities. This is because of age, chronic illness, or profound disability. Almost 15% of residents provide unpaid care to a person due to disability, health condition, or age.

The Yarra Ranges Equity, Access, and Inclusion Strategy (Disability Action Plan) 2013–2023outlines some ways Council will work to improve disability access and to advance equity and inclusion for people with a disability. Council is developing the next iteration of this Strategy.

This report shares some of the highlights, achievements and reflections of Council throughout the Strategy's lifecycle. Council has completed many projects that contribute to access, equity and inclusion across the Yarra Ranges, it should be noted that this report does not feature all of them.

Development of the Strategy

A cross-Council working group at Council meet every three months called the Access and Equity Reference Group. This group of staff provided advice about what should be written in the Strategy. Members of the Yarra Ranges Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) also contributed. The DAC are key stakeholders. They guide implementationof the Strategy and bring lived experience to decision making.

Vision

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

Goals

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.

Goal 1

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

Highlights and Achievements for Goal 1

- Council put an accessibility menu on our website. It has features that allow users to transform the information into an easier-to-read format.
- Council documents include photographs of people with disabilities, promoting understanding and acceptance.
- Key Council documents are available in accessible formats.
- 'Our Brand' is an internal document. It helps staff to create documents in a consistent way, including accessible colour contrast and font size.
- Service Centre staff have communication tools to help with speaking to people with diverse needs.
- We have information on the website about accessible options for sporting groups, reserves, pools, water play parks and clubs. And the location of accessible toilets and Changing Places facilities.

Reflections on Goal 1

Council are continuously striving to improve;

- Staff skills in creating accessible documents.
- Making all public documents available in accessible format.
- Providing more information about the accessible features of Council's public buildings, play spaces and car parks.
- Encouraging local business to make their places more accessible.
- Adding social stories to our website.

Goal 2

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

Highlights and Achievements for Goal 2

- Built four Changing Places facilities. They are located at Lilydale Lake, Monbulk Aquatic Centre, Yarra Centre, and McKensie Reserve. Another one is being built at Kilsyth Stadium.
- Installed accessible features at Millgrove Community Sporting Pavilion, Mooroolbark Community Centre, Narre Warren East Pavilion, Kilsyth Stadium Monbulk Pavilion, Lilydale Depot, Belgrave Hub.
- Identified and mapped around 700 new footpath links. 65% of those respond to community requests. The rest will be added for overall network improvement.
- Every new play space includes at least one piece of age- and ability-friendly equipment.
- Improved Adaptive Mountain Bike tracks, near Lilydale Lake, Wesburn and Warburton Mountain
- We won a 2019 Inclusive Sport, Recreation, or Open Space Infrastructure award for the Lilydale to Warburton Trail with new universally accessible chicanes.

Reflections for Goal 2

- Council have over 750 buildings and are continually prioritising which buildings are most important to make accessible and ensuring that all building improvements and renovations meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements.

Goal 3

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

Highlights and Achievements for Goal 3

- Pathways for Carers program. Participants walk and talk with other carers. It provides social connection and information about supports.
- Inclusive programs at leisure centres.
- Promoted the benefits of accessible tourism to industry professionals.
- Weekly cinema sessions with open captions at Warburton and Healesville.
- We started a plan to make Yarra Ranges dementia friendly. People with dementia and some service providers are helping us to achieve our goal.
- Delivered 13 workshops to help community understand the changes brought on by the rollout of NDIS.

Reflections on Goal 3

- Council will continue to seek external funding and partnership opportunities and offer grants for community-led initiatives.
- Continue to advocate and educate about the benefits of accessible tourism.
- Support community to recognise and utilise its existing assets and strengths.

Goal 4

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

Highlights and Achievements for Goal 4

- Council's Disability Inclusion Officer drives community engagement and enhances organisational capacity. The role convenes the Disability Advisory Committee and the Access and Equity Reference Group.
- Consulted with the DAC on major strategies and plans.
- Secured external funding and partnerships to deliver more projects that support people with disability and their unpaid carers.
- Trained our staff in how to work better with people with a disability.
- Included people with a disability and their unpaid carers in emergency planning, crisis management and recovery.
- Similfied our job ads and made them more accessible.

Reflections on Goal 4

- Council will continue to build staff capacity to make sure disability access, equity, and inclusion are considered in all Council activities. This is an ongoing action for Council.
- Council will aim to increase opportunities for people with disability to access employment.

Image description: Current Yarra Ranges Disability Advisory Committee members and Cr Len Cox smiling at the camera. One man and one woman seated in wheelchairs at the front. Seven women and two men stand behind them.

Conclusion

The Yarra Ranges Access, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2023 has made great progress and has advanced the vision of a Yarra Ranges that is an accessible, inclusive, and equitable society. That enables people with a disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens. But there is still work to do.

The next version of the Strategy is being developed. It will build upon the success of the previous Strategy and be strengthened by including the voice of community.

Council appreciates the collaborative efforts of both internal and external partners. These partnerships help drive projects and promote fair, inclusive, and accessible participation, connection, and wellbeing.

We extend a special acknowledgement to members of the Disability Advisory Committee. Their pivotal role significantly contributed to the success of the Strategy. They shared their lived experiences and advice generously. We sincerely thank them for their invaluable contributions.

"The DAC has been an amazing influence in shaping what we do. Our programs, our marketing, our accessible gym equipment. We continue to listen and to improve what we do. Accessibility is at the forefront of our minds".

– Lesley, Belgravia Leisure

Contact Information

Community Links

Lilydale
15 Anderson Street

Healesville
110 River Street

Monbulk
21 Main Road

Yarra Junction
2442-2444 Warburton Highway

Upwey
40 Main Street

National Relay Service

133 677 – for callers who have a hearing, speech or communication impairment and for Text Telephone or modem callers

1300 555 727 – for callers using Speech to Speech relay

9658 9461 – Teletypewriter (TTY)

Translating and Interpreting Service

131 450 – Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) National. An interpreting service is available if required.

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