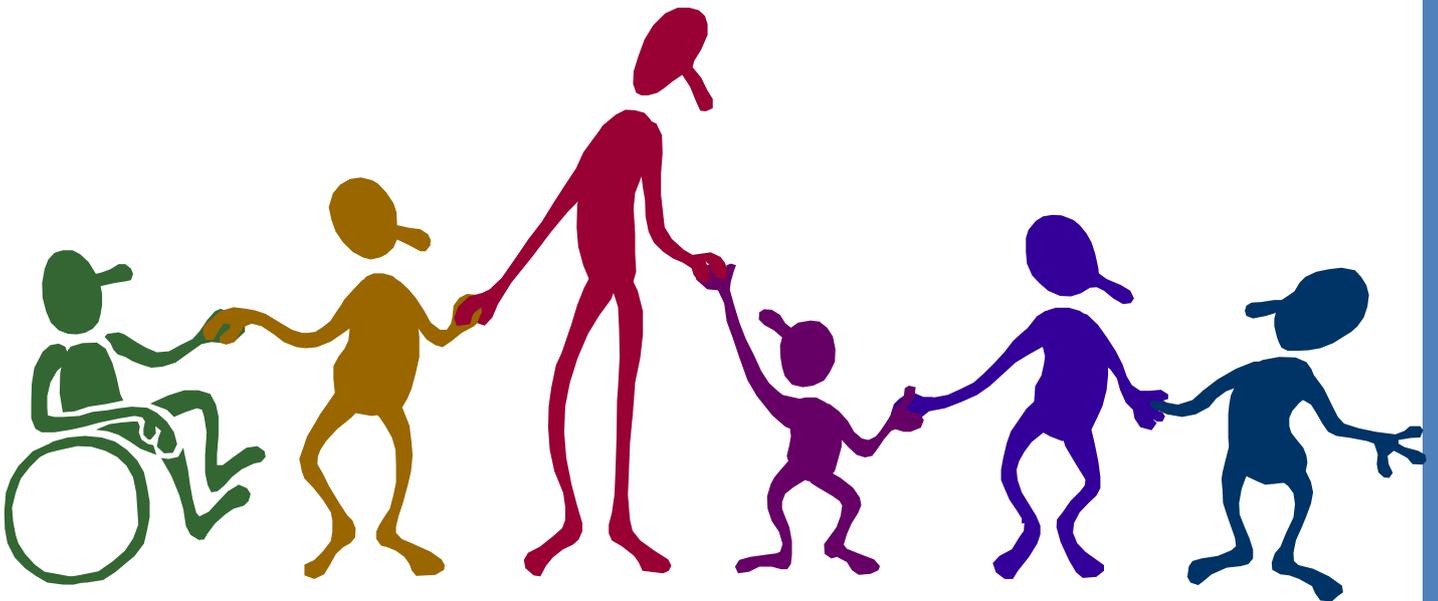


2017-  
2021

# ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN



**Yarriambiack**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

## Version record

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## Mayor's Message

Yarriambiack Shire Council is very proud to present the *Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021*. An important aspect of this plan is our *Access and Inclusion Policy Statement* which outlines the principles that support the priorities and key actions for the coming years. It demonstrates Council's desire to ensure that everyone can be active in the community regardless of their ability, gender, culture, age or socio-economic circumstance. We believe that all people within the community make important social, economic and cultural contributions, and it is this acknowledgment that has driven the development of our *Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021*.

The *Access and Inclusion Plan* builds on Council's long term commitment to improving the accessibility and inclusiveness of the Shire for all residents and visitors. It gives a snapshot of some of the challenges that face the Yarriambiack community, and focuses on the areas that the community has identified as being the most important. The action plan details how Council will respond to these priorities over the coming years by improving access to facilities, information, processes and programs. These actions will be carried out with forethought and good planning.

Increasing accessibility and inclusiveness does not just involve one area of Council. It is a responsibility that covers everything we do. The *Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2021* outlines all of the projects, actions and planning that will take place over the next few years to improve the accessibility of the Shire. Importantly, the plan outlines how Council will work with our community, with services and businesses and with community groups, to achieve our goals.

We would like to thank all of the community members and service providers who supported the development of this plan; the time and experience provided has helped us create a plan that will make a difference to our community. In particular, we would like to thank and commend the support provided by the Yarriambiack Access and Inclusion Plan working group.

As a Council, we look forward to seeing the outcomes of this plan as we work together to make Yarriambiack an even more accessible and inclusive Shire.

Graeme Massey

Mayor

Yarriambiack Shire Council

## Access and Inclusion Policy Statement

- Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to ensuring that the community is accessible and inclusive for all residents and visitors, and acknowledges its responsibility to provide services and resources that are equitable and fair.
- Yarriambiack Shire Council believes that a vibrant, dynamic and healthy community is made up of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, and values the diversity that makes up the Yarriambiack community.
- Yarriambiack Shire Council believes that all people within the community make important social, economic and cultural contributions and that the strength and prosperity of the Yarriambiack Shire is enhanced by supporting the participation and inclusion of all people.
- Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to the following principles:
  - § Developing of a culture of inclusion
  - § Ensuring a physically accessible environment
  - § Complying with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and other government standards and policies
  - § Providing leadership in the development of an accessible and inclusive community.
- Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to actioning these beliefs by:
  - § Valuing the contributions of all citizens
  - § Considering the needs of all people in planning
  - § Striving to provide infrastructure, facilities and services that are as accessible as possible to all members of the community
  - § Ensuring Council officers and contracted service providers are accountable to the entire community for the service being provided
  - § Ensuring Council staff are informed about strategies to develop inclusion and access for all
  - § Implementing Council's Equal Opportunity Policy
  - § Ensuring public information is available and accessible to all
  - § Encouraging all citizens to participate in Council's democratic processes
  - § Ensuring all public meetings, consultations, ceremonies and events undertaken or sponsored by Council are as accessible as possible
  - § Encouraging business, commerce, industry and community groups operating within the local government area to meet their obligations to people with a disability

§ Adopting the measures adopted above to eliminate discrimination against people.

## What is an Access and Inclusion Plan?

The values and principles reflected in our *Access and Inclusion Policy Statement* underpin the priority areas and actions that form the Yarriambiack Shire Council *Access and Inclusion Plan*.

The term 'access' is used in this plan to refer to any outcome that is achieved by the removal of 'barriers' or obstacles that may impede an individual's rights to engage in a chosen activity in a manner that is equitable and dignified. 'Barriers' can include obstacles in the built environment as well as communication or attitudinal obstacles in the social environment.

The strength and prosperity of any community is enhanced by supporting the participation and inclusion of its people. The Yarriambiack Shire *Council's Access and Inclusion Plan 2016-2019* formally outlines the actions that Council will take to help achieve the priorities that the community has identified in regards to creating an accessible and inclusive Shire.

This *Access and Inclusion Plan* influences, and is influenced by, a series of other Council plans and strategies. Together, they identify what is going on in our community and set the key priorities for the future of the Yarriambiack Shire.

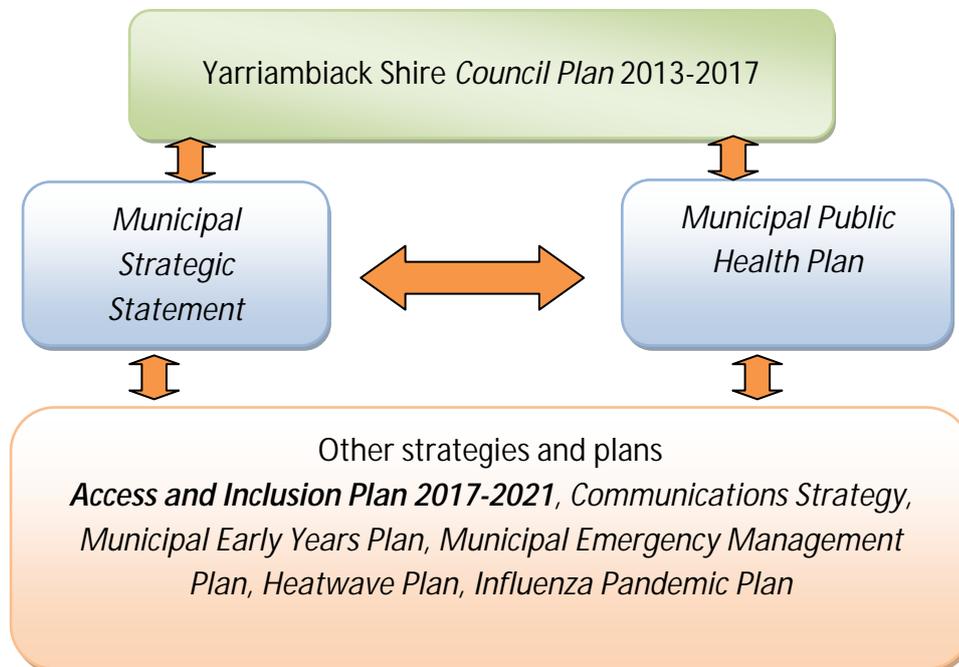


Figure 1: Strategic planning documents in local government

## Yarriambiack Shire at a glance

- **Our people:** The estimated population of the Yarriambiack Shire for 2013 is 7, 018. Our residents choose to live predominantly around the small towns of Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Minyip, Rupanyup, Beulah and Woomelang.
- **Our services:** Council offers a variety of community services, emergency relief, aged care, libraries, maternal and child health and youth services. While the Shire has a range of facilities and programs, the community can experience difficulty in accessing some of these services. As our people get older and our communities become more diverse, we will see an increase in demand for services to support both local trends around ageing, disability and cultural diversity.
- **Work opportunities:** Yarriambiack's unemployment rate, as of ABS Census 2011, sat on 3.8%. Our Shire is the heartland of grain production and handling in the Wimmera and Mallee, so it is not surprising that agriculture accounts for nearly a half of the labour force in the Shire.

We have 50.6% of employed persons working in highly skilled occupations compared to 55.3% in the Grampians Region and the Victorian State average of 56.3%<sup>1</sup>.

- **Droughts, and fires:** Recent weather events have had wide ranging effects across all aspects of life in our Shire. In the last few years, we have experienced deterioration in water quality, vegetation and wild life, losses in tourism and agriculture, job losses, stress, anxiety and depression, and significant damage to homes, roads and buildings. However, facing adversity has also engendered resilience and strengthened supportive networks within the communities.
- **Migration:** We are experiencing a recent trend of movement into the region of individuals and families from urban centres, many from lower socio-economic backgrounds, influenced by low housing prices. Our challenge is for long-term residents to develop a greater inclusiveness. New residents often find the support systems and agencies previously relied upon are not available and must develop individual living skills to establish connectedness within the community.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *National Regional Profile: Yarriambiack Local Government Area*.

## Diversity in Yarriambiack Shire

### Disability:

In 2011 ABS figures show 15.2 % of the population in Yarriambiack Shire council provided unpaid support for a person with a disability.

This was compared with 12.3 5 across Victoria.

Yarriambiack Shire Council hosts a major disability service that provides support and housing for many people with a disability in Warracknabeal.

Yarriambiack Shire Council provides a range of aged and disability services to people who are frail and aged, and some younger people with disabilities and their carers.

Our community care support services provides assistance with domestic support, personal care, respite, home maintenance, meals on wheels and planned activity groups. Our aim is to assist clients to do as much for themselves as possible to maintain their independence. These services are received by people in our Shire who have mobility issues, dementia, musculo-skeletal problems, arthritis, various types of cancer and paraplegia/quadruplegia.

- **Standard of living:** Overall, the Yarriambiack Shire is more disadvantaged in terms of socio-economic wellbeing than many other local government areas in Victoria, It ranks 14 on the level of disadvantage of Victorian communities , this places it in the top 18% of most disadvantaged communities in our state according to the 2011 census.

2. Victorian Local Governance Association (2003). *Disability by age 2003 and future projections: Inferred rates of disability*.

3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). *Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA): Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage*.

- **Cultural diversity:** Based on 2011 census data, only 6.7% of the Yarriambiack Shire population was born overseas, and 3.1% were from a non-English speaking background<sup>1</sup>. This is compared with 27.7% and 20.6% respectively for Victoria. The dominant non-Australian country of birth in Yarriambiack Shire is North West Europe. Although our Shire has very low percentages of persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, recent trends have reflected an increase with health workers from African and Asian countries and other skilled workers in the agriculture services moving to the shire.
- **Elderly:** Our population, like most parts of Australia, is ageing. This ageing trend is projected to continue, but at a higher rate as the baby boomers enter old age. 24% of our population in Yarriambiack Shire Council identified as over 65 years of age according to the 2011 census.

The incidence of disability increases with age from 4.4% of children to 95.9% of people aged over 90<sup>5</sup>. The chance of becoming the primary carer of someone with a disability, usually a partner or other family member, also increases with age, peaking in the 55 to 74 years age group<sup>5</sup>.

- Young children and families:** Based on the 2011 Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, there were 1868 families living in Yarriambiack<sup>6</sup>. Of these, 36.5% were couple families with children (compared to 45% for Victoria), 50.1% were couple families without children (compared to 36% for Victoria), 12.2% were one parent families (compared to 15% for Victoria) and 1.1% were other families.
- Mental health:** More than one in 10 (10.9%) persons reported sought professional help for a mental health problem in Victoria during 2008<sup>7</sup>. In the same year, males living in the Yarriambiack Shire had significantly higher rates (74.5%) of psychological distress, compared with all Victorian males (65.3%). Women living in our Shire also have higher rates of psychological distress (64.6%) compared with all Victorian females (59.7%)<sup>7</sup>. Suicide rates for males in rural communities have increased steadily over the past 20 years, with rates for young males consistently higher in small rural communities than in metropolitan and regional areas.

4. Department of Human Services (2004). *Population Ageing in Victoria*.

5. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004) *Australian Social Trend*.

6. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006). *National Regional Profile: Yarriambiack Local Government Area*.

7. Department of Health Victorian population health survey (2008), *Selected findings - 7. Mental health*.

## Planning for better access and inclusion

We know that by planning ahead our communities will be stronger and enjoy better services and better outcomes long-term. We can plan for better access and inclusion by:

- Understanding diversity, disability and access
- Complying with legislation
- Partnering with others
- Identifying key issues.

## Understanding diversity, disability and access

### Diversity

Australia is a multicultural country with approximately one in four people born overseas. This diversity is growing faster than at any other time in Victoria's history, and the trend is expected to continue. Our own local community is experiencing more diverse cultural, religious, social and language beliefs and practices. Regardless of socio-cultural background, all our residents and visitors are entitled to maintain, protect and develop their own culture.

Inclusive services help to build inclusive communities where people's differences are valued. Our approach to service delivery ensures each client has an experience that 'fits'. This concept involves a paradigm shift from a focus on the management of individual deficits to the creation of more inclusive environments and services that respond constructively to class, poverty, gender, disability and education for a multi-cultural and anti-racist society.

As a community we approach differences between people with an open mind and appreciate diversity where it is a source of strength.

### Disability

We understand that there are many different ways to describe disability. Disability covers a wide range of life experiences and physical and mental states, and it can change depending on the physical and social environments in various communities.

A disability can be caused by an accident, illness, trauma, genetic condition, ageing or can occur from birth. A disability can affect a person's mobility, one or more of the five senses, moods and perceptions, or the way the brain functions and its capacity to learn. It can be life-long or temporary, and include restricted capability from an ongoing medical or mental condition.

People with disability may have:

- A physical impairment, for example cerebral palsy

- A sensory impairment, for example hearing loss
- A neurological impairment
- An acquired brain injury
- An intellectual disability and/or
- Developmental delay<sup>8</sup>.

Many people with a disability, particularly those with a severe physical or mental impairment, are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. Of particular concern are those people with limitations affecting their core activities of self-care, mobility or communication, and those with education or employment restrictions.

### Access

Often people are restricted from taking part in an activity or accessing a service because of environmental or attitudinal 'barriers'. Barriers are obstacles that stop people from carrying out day to day tasks. By identifying and removing these barriers, Yarriambiack Shire Council can increase the level of access to services and community support.

Planning for the removal of barriers and the development of good access can help a range of people in our Shire including:

- Those people with a disability
- Parents with prams
- Elderly people with walking frames or sticks
- People with sports or other injuries
- People with temporary disabilities or medical conditions
- Delivery people with trolleys
- People from different cultures.

8. Disability Services Division (2007). *About the Disability Act 2006*.

## Complying with legislation

This *Access and Inclusion Plan* demonstrates Council's commitment and response to the following standards and policies:

### Federal Government Legislation and Standards

- *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Building Code of Australia*
- *Australian Standards for Access and Mobility 1428 Suite of Standards*
- *Draft Disability Access to Premises Standards (Buildings)*
- *The Disability Act 2006*
- *The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*
- *The Social Inclusion Agenda*

### State Government Legislation and Standards

- *The Victorian Charter of Human Rights Act 2006*
- *The Victorian Equal Opportunities Act 2010*
- *The Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2016*
- *A Fairer Victoria 2008*

## Partnering with others

Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to involving and including the community in the development of plans and strategies that will affect the way people live and work in the Shire. By partnering with others, we are able to better understand what needs to be done over the next four years.

For the development of this *Access and Inclusion Plan*, Council worked closely with the Yarriambiack Access and Inclusion working group. The group is comprised of representatives of the Yarriambiack Shire Council, community agencies and individuals. The working group met several times in 2015 to formulate and review the outdated *Yarriambiack Access Plan 2010-2014*. Surveys were sent to communities across the Shire to get feedback from the community on issues and the current plan. Representatives from the Grampians Disability Advocate and Wimmera Disability Forum visited local disability organisations to hold forums also. The Yarriambiack Shire Community Services and Development manager also held community forums in local towns to get feedback.

In early 2015, the working group met to review the survey feedback and look at the key issues from the responses. A draft plan was developed and Council and public feedback was sought. The information that was gathered throughout this work went directly into forming the Yarriambiack Shire Council *Access and Inclusion Policy Statement*, and the priority areas and actions that form the *Access and Inclusion Action Plan*.

Access plan working party members included:

Wendy Lynch	Wimmera Rural Access worker
Judy Hazeldene	Dunmunkle Health Services
Karen Fuller	Warracknabeal Neighbourhood House
Lisa Dunkley	Yarriambiack Shire Aged and Disability coordinator
Anthony Jess	DEECD Warracknabeal Special Developmental School
Ngareta Melgren	Community Health Manager Rural Northwest Health
Gavin Blinman	Yarriambiack Shire Manager Community Services and Development
Paula Clark	CEO Wimmera Regional Library Corporation

## Identifying key issues

Throughout the process of talking with our community members and representatives, meeting commonwealth and state statutory responsibilities and considering regional and local concerns, we have been able to identify key issues that frame the priorities and actions within this plan. Some of these include:

- Accessing Council owned footpaths, pathways, parks and recreational reserves
- Accessing Council owned buildings and facilities
- Accessing transport options
- Accessing Council and community services
- Accessing appropriate parking
- Accessing Council information in alternative formats
- Complying with building code legislation and standards
- Providing services as an equal opportunity employer
- Planning for our ageing population.

We have also considered key issues from the *Yarriambiack Shire Municipal Public Health Plan 2013-2017* that impact on access and inclusion priorities. Some of these include:

- Goal 1: To create safe respectable and equitable communities.
- Goal 3: Increase levels of physical exercise
- Goal 4: Improve access for all abilities across the shire
- Goal 8: Continue to develop and improve council services that cater for the needs of our ageing population

By looking closely at these issues, we have been able to plan appropriate and achievable goals to improve access and inclusion status in the Yarriambiack Shire over the next four years.

## **Moving forward: Our action plan**

To promote an accessible and inclusive community across the Yarriambiack Shire means planning for action. After working with our community, understanding our needs and researching other models of best practice, Yarriambiack Shire Council has established priority areas for action in 2017 to 2021. These include:

### **Moving around**

Goal: Maximise the ability of community members and visitors to easily and safely move around the Yarriambiack Shire.

### **Being informed**

Goal: Ensure that everybody in Yarriambiack has the opportunity to access the information they need to live healthy, safe and active lives.

### **Accessing services**

Goal: Provide ways of accessing services that meet the requirements of people of all abilities.

### **Connecting with others**

Goal: Create opportunities for everyone to participate actively in community life.

### **Maintaining compliance**

Goal: Meet relevant standards and policies around access and inclusion.

## Priority area 1: Moving around

Objective	Actions	Priority	Responsibility	Status
1.1 To increase access to transport options	1.1.1 Lobby state and federal government for improvements to accessible public transport	High	Councillors, Management Team	
	1.1.2 Provide information on available public transport options to all community groups. On council website and in council publications.	Medium	Corporate Services Community and Development Services	.
1.2 To improve people's ability to move around the Shire	1.2.1 Consider the feedback in the 2015 Access Survey and action footpath issues as part of Council's footpath hierarchy	Medium	Infrastructure and Planning	
	1.2.2 Review disabled access parking bays annually to ensure they are clearly marked and accessible.	Medium	Infrastructure and Planning	
	1.2.3 Ensure there is at least one safe, accessible place to cross the main street in each town	High	Infrastructure and Planning	.
	1.2.4 Ensure that walking tracks around towns are maintained and safe for all users.	High	Infrastructure and Planning Park and creek committees	
	1.2.5 Encourage business owners to keep footpath and shop	Medium	Community and Development	

	entries clear and accessible		Services	
	1.2.6 Ensure council services like waste stations are accessible for all residents	Med	Infrastructure and Planning	

## Priority area 2: Being informed

Objective	Actions	Priority	Responsibility	Status
2.1 To improve access to Council information	2.1.1 Promote alternative formats for Council documents upon request (large print, languages other than English, audio, Braille)	Medium	Corporate Services	
	2.1.2 Use both PDF and Word (read only) formats in Council downloadable website documents	Medium	Corporate Services	
2.2 To improve access to community information	2.2.1 Encourage information from tourism and business sources across the Shire to be available in alternate formats	Medium	Community and Development Services	
	2.2.2 Work with Rural Northwest Health (RNH), West Wimmera Health Services and Grampians Mental Health to provide information to all Shire residents on available mental health services	Med	Community and Development Services	
	2.2.3 Provide information to builders and renovators about access	Medium	Building Services	

### Priority area 3: Accessing services

Objective	Actions	Priority	Responsibility	Status
3.1 To improve access to Council services	3.1.1 Provide access to all members of the community to Council offices	High	Infrastructure and Planning	
	3.1.2 Ensure all Council services and meetings are held in accessible venues	High	Management Team	
	3.1.3 Provide up to date information online about all of council services.	Med	Management Team	
3.2 To plan ahead for our ageing population	3.2.1 Review use of council assets provided for senior residents and ensure they meet current and future needs	Medium	Community and Development Services	
	3.2.2 Support the development of community groups that address social and recreational need for elderly groups within the community  i.e. Men's Sheds, mothers groups, carers support groups, etc.	High	Community and Development Services	
	3.2.3 Improve disabled and elderly access in all Shire swimming pools by installing hand rails to assist patrons entering and exiting the pool steps	Medium	Building Services	

## Priority area 4: Connecting with others

Objective	Actions	Priority	Responsibility	Status
4.1 To enhance the feeling of community connectedness and inclusion	4.1.1 Provide information on what is available across the Shire to meet social and recreational needs of residents particularly the older less connected residents.	Medium	Community and Development Services	
	4.1.2 Ensure Council's advisory groups, committees and activities are advertised and conducted in a manner that supports the inclusion and participation of all residents	High	Corporate Services	
4.2 To lead the way with inclusive practices	4.2.1 Improve access to Council events and celebrations with particular emphasis on well-located disability parking bays, paths and accessible toilets	Medium	Events	
	4.2.2 Train Council staff in mental health first aid training	Medium	Management Team	
	4.2.3 Consider access and inclusion issues in the development of all relevant Council policies, action plans and strategies	High	Management Team	
	4.2.4 Explore funding options to increase inclusive practice within Council	Medium	Management Team	
	4.2.5 Ensure all Council's community consultation and engagement processes are accessible and inclusive	High	Management Team	

## Priority area 5: Maintaining compliance

Objective	Actions	Priority	Responsibility	Status
5.1 To provide leadership around building processes	5.1.1 Ensure all new buildings seeking Council permits comply with the building code and are DDA compliant	High	Building/ Planning Services	
	5.1.2 Ensure all Council building and facility upgrades and redevelopments are accessible for people of all abilities	High	Building/ Planning Services	
	5.1.3 Promote awareness of the new standards within the community and building industry	Medium	Building Surveyor	
	5.1.4 Incorporate accessible signage in all new Council developments and upgrade existing signage in line with the Capital Works Program	Medium	Building Surveyor	
5.2 To provide services as an equal opportunity employer	5.2.1 Ensure Council's workplace, where practical, is accessible for employees of all abilities	Medium	Building/ Planning Services	
	5.2.2 Ensure Council contractors undertake their services in ways that consider the needs of all people in line with this plan and the DDA	Medium	Building/ Planning Services	
	5.2.3 Provide position descriptions in accessible formats on the Council website and in hard copy upon request	Medium	Corporate Services	

## How we plan to keep on track

Over the next four years Council, with support from partnering agencies, services and the community will undertake the actions that are set out in the action plan. It is vital that the progress of these actions is fed back to the community, to ensure that they are engaged and included in the plan they helped to develop.

Measures (indications of priority, responsibility and status) for each of the actions have been allocated in the plan to monitor the overall progress and mark its completion. In addition to these measures, Council will monitor the projects and provide progress updates via the following ways:

- Quarterly reporting to Council's senior management group on the progress of the action plan
- Annual progress report to Council outlining all progress, level of success and opportunities for improvements for the actions
- Annual update to community on key outcomes in Council's newsletter.