

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL

16 AUGUST 2023



9.1 ACCESSIBILITY ACTION PLAN 2023-25

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: ALLISON KENWOOD, GENERAL MANAGER, COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND INCLUSION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present to Council the Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 for endorsement.
- 1.2 To provide to Council the Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 community consultation engagement report.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Preparation and implementation of an Accessibility Action Plan is fundamental to ensuring an Inclusive Port Phillip for people with disability and their carers. It also meets Council's obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 to prepare a disability plan.
- 2.2 The Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) was informed by two stages of engagement with the community and consultation with Port Phillip staff. The draft Action Plan that was developed was presented to the community and Council staff, inviting further input.
- 2.3 On 4 April 2023, Council endorsed the release of the draft AAP for consultation. Engagement on the draft ran from 6 April to 28 May 2023, providing an extended opportunity to engage with the draft AAP.
- 2.4 Following consideration of all feedback and modification to the draft Action Plan, this report seeks formal endorsement from Councillors of the proposed Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025.
- 2.5 Following endorsement of the AAP, officers will commence development of an implementation plan which will further utilise the consultation findings. Key considerations for the implementation plan, as expressed through the community consultation, are outlined in Section 5.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Adopts the Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 (Attachment 1) and delegates to the CEO, or their delegate, the ability to make changes that do not alter the substantive content of the document.
- 3.2 Notes the results of the community consultation and engagement on the draft Accessibility Action Plan as presented in this report (Attachment 2).
- 3.3 Requests officers prepare an implementation plan.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 This will be the City of Port Phillip's fourth accessibility action plan and will be implemented over the period 2023 to 2025.



- 4.2 The plan contributes to 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:
- equitable participation and inclusion of people with a disability within our community and within our organisation,
 - elimination of disability discrimination, and
 - 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:
- 'Reduce barriers to people with disability accessing goods, services, and facilities,
 - Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment,
 - Promote inclusion and participation and
 - 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 behavioural disability and mental ill health, with these conditions represented in nearly a quarter of people with disability. For those reporting a physical disability as their primary condition, musculoskeletal conditions 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
- 4.7 The Accessibility Action Plan 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 living with disability 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. This approach is more widely referred to as the social model of disability and is a more contemporary approach than the traditional, medical model.

Approach to developing the Accessibility Action Plan

- 4.9 The approach to developing the 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.

Action Plan Content: Outcomes and Strategies

- 4.12 The structure and content of the draft Accessibility Action Plan which went out for consultation is set out below.
- 4.13 The Action Plan provided as Attachment 1 incorporates changes suggested through consultation and summarised here in section 5.7.
- 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. Actions to support the delivery of the outcomes and strategies are detailed in the AAP.

Table 1: Outcomes and Strategies in the draft Accessibility Action Plan

Outcome & Council's Role	Strategies
<p>Focus Area 1 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.
<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.



Outcome & Council’s Role	Strategies
<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 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.
- 4.16 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.).
- 4.17 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’.
- 4.18 On 4 April 2023, Council endorsed the release of the draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25 for consultation.
- 4.19 Consultation began on 6 April 2023 and concluded on 28 May 2023 (the details of which are outlined in Section 5 - Consultation and Stakeholders).
- 4.20 Results from the engagement indicate that there is overall support for the draft plan with most of the commentary surrounding how concepts such as Universal Design and the social model of disability could be explained in greater detail. The full Engagement Summary Report can be found in Attachment 2.
- 4.21 Following Council’s endorsement of the proposed Accessibility Action Plan, officers will commence development of an implementation plan which will further utilise the consultation findings. Key considerations for the implementation plan, as expressed through the community consultation, are outlined below.



5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 Consultation with community and staff was considerable. This was in large part due to the limited engagement opportunities – particularly in-person opportunities – that were available in the plan’s initial development due to COVID restrictions at the time.
- 5.2 An extended engagement period – of nearly twice the length of comparative draft action plans – provided a greater possibility for all stakeholders and particularly those living with disability and their carers to provide commentary on the plan and ask staff for greater clarity if needed.
- 5.3 Engagement was comprehensive and included the following:
- Attendance by subject matter expert at all eight Neighbourhood Engagement Program (NEP) events held in the period. These included the following locations: Albert Park, Ripponlea Village, VegOut Farmers Market, Carlisle Street, Port Melbourne, Elwood Farmers Market, St Kilda Road and South Melbourne Market. In total, 122 community members were engaged with at the NEPs.
 - Presentations delivered to all four Council Advisory Committees that held meetings during the engagement period:
 - Older Persons Advisory Committee (OPAC)
 - LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee
 - Port Phillip Multifaith Network
 - Multicultural Advisory Committee
 - Presentation followed by a Q and A opportunity held for Council’s internal Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Staff Network
 - Two information sessions were held for ASSIST team members, ensuring staff were knowledgeable of the draft AAP and aware of ways that community could provide feedback aside from online
 - Along with a copy of the draft AAP and documents providing historical context, the Have Your Say page included a survey to ascertain peoples’ views on the draft
 - Hard copies of the draft AAP and survey were made available at reception at both St Kilda Town Hall and Port Melbourne Town Hall.
 - Two staff drop-in sessions were held (one online and one in person, each lasting an hour), allowing staff to ask questions on the draft AAP and provide feedback
 - A two hour co-facilitated session held with members from VOSS (Voices of the South Side).
 - A three hour drop-in session held at St Kilda Library with an AUSLAN interpreter.
 - In addition to the above, emails were sent to all disability service providers in the municipality, inviting their feedback; changes were made to the Accessibility and Disability page on the website, a page dedicated to information on disability; information was provided in the weekly staff newsletter, The Portal; mention of the plan was included in the CEO’s weekly message, Divercity and a 90 minute 1:1 session was held with a community member experiencing low vision.



- While engagement was low from the Have Your Say survey, with only 10 people completing the survey, written responses provided through this platform were largely positive. Further, the draft AAP was downloaded 99 times, indicating a greater degree of interest in the plan than the survey.
 - This low response rate may have been due to the length of the survey as participants were asked to reflect on each Strategy along with each Outcome Area.
 - The greatest levels of engagement – and therefore feedback – was provided via the in-person sessions held through the eight NEPs, the library drop-in session and the facilitated session with Voices of the South Side (VOSS).
 - VOSS is a project that aims to reduce the marginalisation of social and public housing communities in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne through community arts and community development. Engaging with VOSS ensured there was input from people with disability. 112 people provided feedback through the NEPs and 12 participants attended the facilitated VOSS session.
 - Formal submissions were received from the Older Person’s Advisory Committee (OPAC), the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and the internal Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Staff Network, with considerable qualitative findings offered.
- 5.4 Overall, community sentiment was positive, and it was felt that the draft AAP adequately responded to the needs of people with disability in the city, along with their carers. There was only a small sense that Council should be doing more, perhaps indicating a general understanding of the NDIS and how disability support now works at a local Council level.
- 5.5 Not a single person during in-person sessions or through written submissions criticised Council for having an Accessibility Action Plan, despite not always knowing of the legislative requirements for one.
- 5.6 A number of general key themes and issues emerged through the consultation process. Specifically:
- 5.6.1 Overall ‘wordiness’ was commented on by several stakeholders during the engagement period, with requests for greater clarity in the draft AAP, particularly the introductory pages from 1 to 14. Additionally, participants sought greater explanation – and indeed, sometimes justification – as to why certain words were used or particular models adopted at the expense of others (such as the social model of disability as noted above). The key words and/or phrases that people wanted greater clarity or definition on were disability, intersectionality, co-design, Universal Design, and the social model of disability. Similarly, some of the words associated with the Focus Areas were questioned, particularly by those providing formal submissions. Some felt that Council defining itself as a Leader as identified in Focus Area 4, was ambitious and instead ‘ally’ or ‘advocate’ may be more appropriate.
- 5.6.2 Participants felt Council staff do not engage with residents, such as attending events when invited and may therefore lack understanding of the community need.



- 5.6.3 A desire for a printed newsletter outlining what Council is currently doing was expressed.
 - 5.6.4 The potential benefits of a Disability Advisory Committee were raised with participants noting this as an absence from Council’s suite of committees and high level of support for Action 3.2: “Investigate options for Council to establish a forum for effective, on-going participation of community and disability sector representatives, to inform Council decisions on policy and services”.
 - 5.6.5 Participants discussed the challenges with transport and moving around the municipality, with recent changes to the community bus adding to difficulties.
 - 5.6.6 Lastly, results indicated that the second Outcome Area was most supported, ‘A safe and accessible city that enables participation’.
- 5.7 The community engagement findings had specific implications for the AAP. Based on these findings, a number of amendments were made to the Accessibility Action Plan, summarised in the table below and provided in Attachment 1:

What we heard	Amendments we have made
<p>Focus Area 1</p> <p>Feedback indicated that some of the wording could be refined here, perhaps replacing the word Leader with an alternative such as ally or advocate.</p> <p>Incorporating co-design principles was suggested as a way to ensure PwD are included in the planning of events such as IDPwD.</p>	<p>Change ‘Council as Leader’ to ‘Council as an Advocate’. This is more fitting given that promoting inclusive practices are at the core of this Focus Area and associated Actions.</p> <p>Include co-design in Action 1.2 so that it reads:</p> <p>Ensure recognition of International Day of People with Disability by hosting community and staff events (delivery 2023 – 2025), incorporating co-design principles.</p>
<p>Focus Area 2</p> <p>Greater focus needs to be given to accessible transport options, as this reduces the capacity of people with disability to participate.</p> <p>Engaging with the business community can be integral to participation in community life.</p>	<p>Include a new Action:</p> <p>2.8 Explore the feasibility of alternative transport options for people with disability such as changes to the community bus (delivery 2024).</p> <p>Action item 2.10 adequately recognises the role that businesses can play in improving accessibility and the implementation plan will detail the delivery of this. No change required.</p>
<p>Focus Area 3</p> <p>The most discussed topic aside from transport was the potential formation of a Disability Advisory Committee. Rather than investigating a forum being</p>	<p>Although an Advisory model has proven successful for other committees at Council, there may be alternatives that are better suited. It would be remiss to not explore other examples in the first instance and</p>



What we heard	Amendments we have made
<p>established, some parties believed that an advisory committee should definitely be established and wording in the plan should reflect this commitment.</p>	<p>therefore no change is required for this Action item.</p> <p>It should be noted however that given the delivery date for this Action item (2023), the implementation of this work will commence soon after the Plan's endorsement and may indeed, result in an Advisory model being adopted.</p>
<p>Focus Area 4</p> <p>While there was community support for this, there was some confusion surrounding the term 'personal growth', indicating that this might be more aligned to a hobby than employment.</p> <p>There was some confusion surrounding the term 'intersectionality' and while its inclusion was applauded by some, others questioned what the term meant and suggested re-wording this.</p>	<p>Change Outcome from: 'A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth' to 'A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for employment and volunteering'.</p> <p>The definition of 'intersectionality' has been included in the introductory pages of the AAP with proposed changes (Attachment 1) and states: 'For the purpose of this plan, intersectionality refers to the ways various aspects of someone's identity (such as ethnicity, ability, Aboriginality, sex etc.) can leave them vulnerable to overlapping forms of marginalisation and discrimination.'</p>
<p>Focus Area 5</p> <p>Universal design principles received strong support from all stakeholders and there was substantial agreement on its inclusion in the plan.</p> <p>It was felt that this Focus Area would likely have the least impact on people with disability, largely because of its strong internal focus. It was not felt however that this should be removed.</p>	<p>No changes required.</p>

- 5.8 In addition to suggested changes in the Focus Areas above, minor changes have been made to reduce the perceived 'wordiness' of the Plan, as cited above. There has been a tightening of the definition Universal Design and a simplified explanation of both the human rights approach to disability and the social model. These changes all reflect the feedback received.
- 5.9 Further alterations to the Plan include the removal of links that can no longer be found and the replacement of the word 'disorder' with 'disability'. Although the former term



can be found on the Australian Bureau of Statistics, this wording supports the increasingly outdated medical model of disability rather than the more contemporary and person-centred social model.

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 (Victorian)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Federal)
- 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 Accessibility Action Plan has largely been undertaken in-house using existing staff resources. To capture the lived experience of people with disability however and understand their feedback on the plan, funding was provided to staff and participants of VOSS for the co-facilitated session.

7.2 In order for all members of the Port Phillip community to engage with and understand the Accessibility Action Plan, an Easy English version will be developed. This is not only in line with accessibility best practice but continues what has been customary with the three previous AAPs at the City of Port Phillip. Alternative ways of presenting the endorsed Plan will be considered in-house.

7.3 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.

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

7.5 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.

7.6 A 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, their carers along with all members of the community.



- 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 Our approach to accessibility and disability inclusion is guided by Council's wider commitment for an Inclusive Port Phillip. The Council Plan 2021-31 defines the Strategic Direction for an *Inclusive Port Phillip* with the Strategic Objective being 'a city that is a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities'.
- 10.2 This Plan delivers on Council's ongoing commitment to working with people with disability and their carers. It is Council's fourth Accessibility Action Plan which continues to ensure that the City of Port Phillip is a community where people with disability are valued, included and feel a sense of belonging.
- 10.3 Through formulating our Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025, Council is fulfilling its legal obligations as outlined at 6.1.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

- 11.1.1 Once endorsed, officers will develop an implementation plan.
- 11.1.2 A report will be presented to Councillors by end 2023 on options for effective, on-going participation of community and disability sector representatives to inform Council decisions on policy and services.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 Once endorsed by Council, the Human Rights Commission will be provided with a copy for inclusion and publishing on their Disability Action Plan Register.
- 11.2.2 Progress on the Action Plan will be reported in Council's annual report

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. [City of Port Phillip Accessibility Action Plan 2023-25](#)
2. [Draft Accessibility Action Plan Engagement Summary Report 2023](#)