

Creating a

more inclusive

community for

people with

a disability

A Strategic Framework for Local Government

Victorian councils have been making ongoing and important progress

in reducing barriers to inclusion by people with a disability.

Councils across Victoria now have a sound understanding

of the ongoing efforts required to enable people with a

disability to fulfill their potential as equal citizens.

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# VISION

Victorian local government shares the vision

set out in the National Disability Strategy -

An inclusive Australian

society that enables people

with a disability to fulfill their

potential as equal citizens.1

The achievement of this vision requires

a strong commitment from all spheres of

government to undertake their respective

responsibilities alongside of other

organisations, businesses, community

services and groups and community

members. Local government is committed

to undertaking its roles and responsibilities

and utilising its influence to continue to

reduce the barriers for people with a

disability created by attitudes, practices

and structures to ensure that all members

of our community are able to participate

fully in the life of the community.

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COAG National Disability Strategy (2011) p 22



# A Strategic Framework for Local Government

The development of a strategic framework for creating a more inclusive community for people with

a disability marks the next phase in local government’s ongoing work in this area. The Victorian

local government strategic framework presents the diversity of aspects that need to be addressed

to maintain a comprehensive approach to continuing to systematically reduce the barriers

experienced by people with a disability. The framework has been developed taking into account

the roles and responsibilities of councils, good governance and management practices, the

requirements of section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006 and the policy and outcome areas

of the National Disability Strategy.

The development of the strategic framework has drawn on what many councils are already

working on as demonstrated through their disability action plans and councils’ strategic planning

documents. While each council needs to be responsive to its local context, overall councils are

bound by similar legislation and regulation and by a number of common community needs and

expectations. Thus, in the area of improving access and inclusion councils are addressing many

similar issues, even if the detail of individual council responses sometimes varies.

The strategic framework proposes that Victorian councils will work in the following ways to

continue to systematically improve inclusion for people with a disability and their families:

1. A whole-of council approach

2. Incorporate access and inclusion objectives in key strategic documents

3. Facilitate civic participation and inclusive consultation

4. Systematically improve the accessibility of council buildings and infrastructure

5. Inclusive communication and information approaches

6. Accessible and inclusive council services, programs and events

7. Strategic use of statutory and regulatory roles

8. Improve employment opportunities

9. Influence community attitudes and perceptions

10. Exercise leadership in advocating to other organisations

11. Foster partnership and collaboration

12. Effective accountability practices

13. Reviewing and evaluating progress

# The focus of our ongoing actions

All Victorian councils have been working to increase the inclusiveness of their communities

through progressively addressing a wide range of issues that limit equitable access, inclusion and

opportunity for particular groups in local communities. However, councils recognise that there are

still many barriers that are limiting people with a disability having the same opportunities as other

community members and that ongoing action is required by each council.

Victorian councils will work in the following ways to continue to systematically improve access and

inclusion for people with a disability and their families.

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A whole-of council approach

Councils will work to ensure a culture within their organisation that recognises

that everyone within the organisation (councillors, senior managers and staff) has

a responsibility and an important role to play in addressing the discrimination

experienced by people with a disability and in systematically addressing the barriers

created by attitudes, practices and structures that limit the opportunities for people with

a disability to fully participate in the life of the community.

Incorporate access and inclusion objectives in key

strategic documents

Councils will reflect their commitment to improving access and inclusion in their key

strategic policy and planning documents such as the Council Plan, Municipal Public

Health and Wellbeing Plan and Municipal Strategic Statement.

Facilitate civic participation and inclusive consultation

Councils will work to ensure that people with a disability can exercise their rights

as equal citizens in areas such as council elections, council meetings, council

consultation processes, membership of council’s committees involving community

representatives and in making complaints.

Systematically improve the accessibility of council

buildings and infrastructure

All new council buildings will be designed to incorporate all legislated accessibility

standards and wherever possible to incorporate enhanced accessibility features that

facilitate access for all community members.

Councils will maximise the accessibility of all new council infrastructure (including

parks, open space, signage, roads, kerbs, footpaths, playgrounds, bus stops, street

furniture) taking account of regulatory requirements, constraint of local terrain and a

council’s financial capacity.

Councils have a program for progressive improvement to the accessibility of existing

council owned buildings and infrastructure within a framework of inclusive policies,

local priorities and the financial capacity of individual councils.

Inclusive communication and information approaches

Councils’ communication and information approaches and systems continue to be

progressively improved to ensure that they appropriately address the needs of staff,

volunteers, and community members with a disability.

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Accessible and inclusive council services, programs and events

Council services, programs and events are accessible to people with a disability,

promote their participation and provide people with a disability with opportunities to

participate equally alongside other members of the community.

Strategic use of statutory and regulatory roles

Councils will use their statutory and regulatory roles to lead and influence improved

inclusion, participation and accessibility for all members of the community.

Improve employment opportunities

Councils will exercise their responsibilities as equal opportunity employers and exercise

their community leadership role to work with others to enhance local employment

opportunities for people with a disability.

Influence community attitudes and perceptions

Councils will exercise leadership in their community in promoting the importance

of inclusion for all, addressing discriminatory attitudes, promoting good models

of inclusive practices and approaches and influencing others through information

provision and education.

Exercise leadership in advocating to other organisations

Councils will advocate to other spheres of government, business, other organisations

and the community, in collaboration with people with a disability and their families/

carers, to promote the rights of people with a disability and advance inclusion of

people with a disability.

Foster partnership and collaboration

Councils will work in partnership with other spheres of government, business, other

organisations and the community to improve access and inclusion for people with a disability.

Effective accountability practices

Councils will ensure that they have organisational accountability processes in place

for implementing their access and inclusion initiatives and will publically report on

progress on implementation of these initiatives at least annually.

Review and evaluate progress

Councils will review their progress on improving access and inclusion and work to

evaluate impacts and outcomes to inform further actions.

# Creating Inclusive Communities Policy

Under the Victorian Local Government Act 1989 councils have a responsibility to improve the

overall quality of life of people in the local community and to ensure that services and facilities

provided by the council are accessible and equitable. Addressing issues of discrimination and

improving access and inclusion for all community members, including people with a disability,

falls within these responsibilities.

Victorian local government recognises that the factors contributing to a person having a

disability are wide and varied and that the term people with a disability incorporates all types of

impairment including cognitive, physical, sensory and psycho-social which can be acquired from

birth or acquired through illness, accident or the ageing process.2

Victorian local government also recognises that attitudes, practices and structures can be disabling

and present barriers that prevent people with a disability from enjoying economic participation,

social inclusion and equality; that is people with a disability can be more disadvantaged by

society’s responses to their disability than the disability itself. Therefore, it is important to work to

remove these barriers.

Victorian local government recognises that people with a disability have the same fundamental

rights as other citizens and that a person with a disability is an individual first and is not defined

by their disability.

All Victorian councils recognise their specific responsibilities to people with a disability under the

Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and

Responsibilities Act 2006, the Victorian Disability Act 2006 and the Victorian Equal Opportunity

Act 2010.

In recognition of Australia’s ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities in July 2008, Victorian local government is committed to operating in a manner

that upholds the general principles of this Convention, namely:

> Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the

freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons;

> Non-discrimination;

> Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;

> Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as

part of human diversity and humanity;

> Equality of opportunity;

> Accessibility;

> Equality between men and women;

> Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and

respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

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This is the definition of disability used in the National Disability Strategy COAG (2011) p 23