Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

Purpose

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy (the policy) stipulates that council as a whole embraces diversity, promotes equity, and enhances social inclusion.

The policy ensures council's compatibility and compliance with relevant legislation. It seeks to uphold human rights by incorporating the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion in all areas of its planning, decision making, communications, workforce development and service provision.

Scope

The policy is underpinned by the Council Plan, the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and the community development principles of inclusiveness, collaboration, capacity building, equity and responsiveness. The principal outcome sought is to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to achieve their potential and participate in the social, economic and cultural life of our community; helping to drive our future prosperity and build a stronger, more cohesive community.

The policy requires that Council's plans and practices acknowledge and consider that all people have the same rights to participate socially, culturally, economically, physically and politically in the Wodonga community.

This policy applies to council as a whole, including councillors, officers, contractors, volunteers and members of council committees.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Accessibility	Accessibility is best defined as the provision of flexibility to accommodate each user's needs and preferences. Accessibility is a means of ensuring that all people are able to exercise all rights and fundamental freedoms and are empowered to participate fully in society on equal terms with others. (1) Processes and outcomes for access cannot be prescriptive, and must take into account the diverse needs of individuals. In addition to considering the physical accessibility, local government must consider barriers that exist due to transport, language, gender, financial situation, and other factors that influence an individual's needs.
Diversity	Diversity is fundamental to human society- each individual's identity comprises a unique blend of characteristics, such as: • Age and generation • Cultural and linguistic background • Intellectual and physical ability. • Gender

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	• Socio-economic background • Level of education • Faith The definition of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect and means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. It means understanding that each individual is unique and understanding the importance of respect and recognition of differences and similarities in our community. (2)
Discrimination	Discrimination occurs when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably (either directly or indirectly) than another person or group because of their background or personal characteristic. Discrimination can be against the law if it is based on a person's: • Age; • Disability; • Race, including colour, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status; • Sex, pregnancy, marital or relationship status, family responsibilities or breastfeeding; or • Sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.(3) Discrimination under section 23, Access to Premises, of the Disability Discrimination Act means it is unlawful to discriminate against another person on the grounds that they have a disability. For example, providing wheelchair access only to more expensive seating areas in a theatre, or providing access which is less convenient, dignified or safe than the access provided for other members of the public.(4)
Equity	Equity means that the situation in which everyone is treated fairly, according to their needs, and no one group or person is given special treatment. This requires that services are able to consider and respond to the intersecting forms of disadvantage and discrimination to truly cater to all diverse needs.(5)
Human Rights	Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings- they are not granted by any state. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language or any other status. They range from the most fundamental – the right to life- to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health and liberty.(6) The Victorian Charter of Human Rights contains twenty rights that reflect four key principles: Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity.
Social Inclusion	Social inclusion is about ensuring that everyone is able to participate fully in Australian society. It is about people having the necessary opportunities, capabilities and resources to enable them both to contribute to and share in the benefits of Australia's success as a nation.(7) Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It is about making sure that no one is left out.(8)

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Social Exclusion	Social exclusion describes a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state. Examples of barriers that have been grounds for social exclusion over time include: age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, migration status, socio-economic status, place of residence, and sexual orientation and gender identity. (8).

Policy

Wodonga Council is committed to supporting the growth of a community that builds on the strength of all people, values diversity and tolerance, provides equitable opportunities for people, and ensures the human rights listed under the Charter of Human Rights principles of Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity are applied equally to all people in Wodonga.

Council plans and practices will be based on the following principles:

- Social inclusion in the community is the opportunity of an appropriate physical and social environment;
- All community members are actively and inclusively engaged in processes that aim to better understand their needs and priorities;
- The needs and aspirations of all community members, especially those who are disadvantaged, are acknowledged and represented in partnerships and planning;
- The diversity of the Wodonga community is recognised as one of our communities greatest strengths;
- Each cultural group in Wodonga has unique strengths and perspectives that the larger community can benefit from;
- The most effective and sustainable form of planning provides a preventative approach to addressing disadvantage;
- All events, activities, programs, facilities and services are promoted and delivered equitably, inclusively and without discrimination;
- A whole of organisation approach is engaged to address the barriers that exclude people from full participation in community life; and
- A community development approach is used to empower and strengthen communities, encourage cooperative practices within communities and celebrate diversity.

The policy principles listed above are guided by the principles developed by the Australian social inclusion board to support the Australian government's implementation of the social inclusion agenda. The principles have been adapted to suit the Wodonga community and to reflect the role of local government.

Statement of Commitment

Diversity within the Wodonga community is recognised as one of our community's greatest strengths. Together, we commit to supporting the growth of a community that builds on the strengths of all people, values diversity and tolerance, and recognises the fundamental

right of all citizens to have equitable access to opportunities and meaningful civic participation.

Council is committed to ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to achieve their potential; helping to drive our future prosperity and build a stronger, more cohesive community.

Council plans and practices will acknowledge and consider that all people have the same rights to participate fully socially, culturally, economically, physically and politically in the Wodonga community.

Related policies

- Child Safe and Wellbeing Policy;
- Community Engagement Policy;
- Complaint Handling Policy;
- Disability Action Plan;
- Wodonga Council Gender Equality Action Plan;
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
- Procurement Policy;
- Public Transparency Policy;
- Risk Management Policy; and
- Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy.

Related legislation

All policies, practices and strategies should be developed and reviewed with consideration to this Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy and the related legislation:

- Age Discrimination Act 2005 (Commonwealth), Sections 14-15, 18, 26-32
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986, Sections 11, 20, 31, 46C
- Child, Youth and Families Act, 2005, Sections 11, 12
- Commission for Children and Young People Act, 2012, Section 8
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth), Sections 4, 15-29, 31, 59-64
- Equal Employment Opportunity Act, 2010, Sections 15, 16-22A, 44-45, 73, 102
- Gender Equality Act, 2020, Sections 5, 9, 11-13
- Local Government Act, 2020, Sections 9, 46, 48-49, 106
- Multicultural Victoria Act, 2011, Section 4
- Public Health and Wellbeing Act, 2008, Sections 24, 26, 3B-3D
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, 2001, Sections 1, 4, 7-8, 15-18
- Racial Discrimination Act, 1975 (Commonwealth), Sections 9, 11-15, 18C
- Racial Hatred Act, 1995 (Commonwealth), Section 18C
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth), Section 3, 5-7AA, 14-26, 28A-28M
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act, 2006, Section 8, 19, 38
- Victorian Disability Act 2006, Section 5, 38
- Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act, 2008

References

1. United Nations Secretariat, Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2013. Accessibility and Development, Mainstreaming disability in the post-2015

development agenda, (https://www.infontd.org/resource/accessibility[1]and-development-mainstreaming-disability-post-2015-development-agenda' accessed 20/05/21).
8. City University New York, Office of the President, "Definition for Diversity" (https://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html accessed 20/05/2021).
9. Australian Human Rights Commission; "Discrimination" (https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12030 accessed 20/05/2021).
10. Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012. Know your rights: Disability discrimination. (https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/know[1]your-rights-disability-discrimination accessed 20/05/2021).
11. Victorian Government; "Everybody Matters, Victorian Inclusion and Equity Statement", (https://www.vic.gov.au/everybody-matters-inclusion-and-equity[1]statement accessed 20/05/2021).
12. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "What are human rights?" (https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx accessed 20/05/2021)
13. Australian Social Inclusion Board, 2010. Social Inclusion in Australia, How Australia is faring (https://apo.org.au/node/20210, accessed 20/05/21).
14. United Nations, 2016. Leaving no one behind, the imperative of inclusive development. Report on the World Social Situation; Chapter 1: Identifying social inclusion and exclusion (https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/2016/full[1]report.pdf accessed 20/05/21).

Review

Council may review this policy at any time but unless otherwise requested at least every four years from date of adoption. Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the CEO at any time where such changes do not alter the substance of the policy eg: typographical errors, a change to the name of a related policy, or a change to the name of legislation.

Title:	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy
Reference No:	
Business Unit:	Population Health and Community Wellbeing
Category:	Quality Manager – Strategic and Governance Policy
Approved By:	Manager Owner.Display Name
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