Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy



Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations and to their Elders past, present and future.

National Relay Service
TTY 133 677 then (03) 9205 5055

Languages
中文 9280 1937
Italiano 9280 1931
Tiếng Việt 9280 1939
العربية 9280 1930
Ελληνικά 9280 1934
Español 9280 1935
Other 9280 1940

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Priority areas for disability inclusion



1. Accessible Places & Transport



2. Inclusive Services, Programs & Information



3. Employment & Community Participation



4. Fairness & Safety



5. Belonging & Celebration

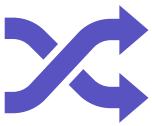


6. Effective data and reporting outcomes

Principles Guiding Council's Universal Design Approach



1. Equitable Use



2. Flexibility in Use



3. Simple and Intuitive Use



4. Perceptible Information



5. Tolerance for Error



6. Low Physical Effort



7. Size and Space for Approach and Use



8. Cultural appropriateness

Overview

Purpose of the policy

The Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy (The Policy) sets out the City of Yarra's commitment to using a universal design approach to create an inclusive, accessible and welcoming community for people of all abilities.

It guides how Council designs its services, facilities, public spaces, and communications, and ensures they include people of all abilities. This Policy will inform Council plans, strategies, service delivery and decision-making. It also provides a framework for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Why universal design?

A universal design (UD) approach is the most effective way for local governments to improve disability inclusion because it embeds accessibility from the outset across places, services and information – for the widest possible range of users, including people with disability, older people, parents with prams, people with temporary injury, and people with different language and literacy needs. UD shifts effort from retrofitting individual adjustments to designing mainstream environments and systems that are usable to the greatest extent possible without specialised design, reducing barriers and supporting safer, more independent participation in everyday community life.

Embedding a universal design approach

This Policy will require the principles of universal design to be applied to all new and renewed activities of Council, including but not limited to:

- The planning, design, construction, refurbishment, maintenance and operation of Council-owned and managed buildings, facilities, open space and recreation assets.
- Footpaths, parking, public toilets, wayfinding and the broader public realm.
- Communication and information (digital and non-digital), community engagement and customer experience across all channels.
- Council services, programs and events, including emergency preparedness and response.
- Policies, plans, processes and procurement that shape how decisions are made, how money is spent, and projects are delivered.
- Employment and volunteering, including inclusive recruitment, workplace adjustments and volunteer support.
- Civic participation and volunteering

It is relevant to all departments and forms the basis for operational planning.

Alignment with the broader Council policy context

This Policy sits within Council's current strategic framework, including **the Yarra 2036 Community Vision**, the **Council Plan 2025–29** and **Yarra's Social Justice Charter**. It supports delivery of those directions by embedding universal design as a consistent, organisation-wide approach to how Council plans, designs and delivers places, services and communications, improving participation for people living with disability and others who experience barriers.

Council's Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025–29 identifies people living with disability as a priority group within its equity focus, reinforcing the need for a practical, systematic approach to reducing barriers across the built, social, and digital environments that shape everyday participation and wellbeing.

Council delivers universal design outcomes through its established statutory, regulatory, and organisational systems. These include the **Yarra Local Law** and associated procedures, planning and design standards, asset management practices, procurement frameworks and service planning processes.

A range of adopted strategies guide how these responsibilities are delivered in practice, including:

- Parking and Kerbside Strategy*,
- Parking Management Policy,
- Asset Plan 2025–2035,
- Community Infrastructure Plan 2025,
- Multicultural Partnerships Policy,
- Rainbow Yarra Policy,
- Yana Ngargna Policy: Continuing connection*,
- Ageing Well Policy,
- Sportsgrounds and Facilities Allocation Policy,
- Yarra Open Space Strategy 2020, and
- Moving Forward: Yarra's Transport Strategy 2022–2032.

Together, these and other relevant instruments provide the operational and strategic basis for improving accessibility and inclusion across the municipality.

This Policy aims to strengthen integration, consistency, and visibility across these mechanisms rather than duplicate, override, or replace them.

While grounded in the current strategic and statutory environment, the Universal Design and Disability Inclusion Policy is designed as a durable framework. It will be reviewed and may be updated over time to reflect changes in Council direction, relevant legislation, government policy and contemporary best practice.

Key concepts

Understanding disability

There is no single way to define disability. Disability is broad and dynamic, and can be permanent or episodic, visible or invisible. It is part of human diversity, and each person's experience of disability is unique.

Disability can arise from many different causes, including genetic conditions, illness, accidents, ageing, injury, or a combination of factors over time. It can affect people in different ways and may involve physical disability, intellectual disability, psychosocial or psychiatric disability, sensory disability (such as hearing or vision), neurological conditions, learning disability, or disfigurement.

Some disabilities are also **hidden or not immediately visible**, such as chronic illness, pain, fatigue, neurodivergence, mental health conditions, or hearing loss, and can still significantly affect people.

Human rights and the social model of disability

Over time, how we understand disability has changed. Earlier thinking (often called the medical model) treated disability as a problem within the individual and focused on "fixing" the person. Contemporary approaches focus instead on removing barriers and enabling equal participation.

The **social model of disability** explains that people can be disabled not only by an impairment or condition, but by barriers in society that limit participation. These barriers can be physical (buildings, streets and public spaces), digital (websites, systems and online services), communication-related (information that isn't accessible), or social and attitudinal (rules, assumptions and low expectations). Applying the social model helps Council identify and address barriers so more people can take part in community life.

The **human rights model** builds on the social model by recognising people with disability as rights-holders and disability as part of human diversity. It emphasises dignity, choice, and the right to participate in decisions that affect you. It also strengthens governments' and organisations' responsibilities to prevent discrimination and actively support equal access and opportunity.

These interconnected models guide Council. This includes recognising that people with disability are experts in their own lives and should be meaningfully involved in the decisions that affect them.

Language

In this Policy, we use person-first language, which emphasises the individual before their disability. For example, we say "person with disability." Many people with disability consider person-first language important.

We acknowledge that others prefer identity-first language because they view their disability as an integral part of their identity. An example of this is "Autistic person." Council respects everyone's right to choose the language that best represents them.

Language evolves, and individuals may have different preferences for how disability is described. When the community tells us their preference, whether person-first or identity-first, Council will use the terminology they have chosen.

Diversity of Disability

An intersectional lens

The Policy acknowledges the intersectional nature of disability, recognising that people with disability have diverse experiences and identities, including those shaped by culture, race, language, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and ageing, which collectively influence their journey through life. These overlapping identities can increase marginalisation and reduce visibility or agency.

Council is committed to using a universal design approach to address these barriers and support all people with disability to be fully included in their community.

Disability and First Peoples

The City of Yarra acknowledges the ongoing impacts of colonisation on First Peoples, including members of the Stolen Generations, and recognises that these impacts contribute to compounded inequality and disadvantage for First Peoples with disability. Council also acknowledges the strengths and contributions of First Peoples, including First Peoples with disability.

We are committed to working in partnership, grounded in self-determination, to enhance and advocate for access and inclusion for First Peoples with disability and to help close the gap on disproportionate inequality.

* These policies were in draft form and awaiting final endorsement by Council at the time of writing.

Our community

This section shares insights into the lives and experiences of people living with a disability in Yarra. Understanding the data provides valuable context for the community's needs, strengths, and potential barriers.

Key statistics and demographics[1]

Community Snapshot – Overview



Disability in Yarra:

4% (~3,500 people) of Yarra's population reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to a severe or profound disability*

21% (~21,000 people) of Yarra's population reported having disability, impairment or long-term health condition**



Disability and Ageing:

Disability is more common with increasing age:

- **20% of people aged under 65 years reported having a disability****
- **34% of people aged 65 years and over reported having a disability****



Caring and Disability:

12.1% (4,989) of females and 8.9% (3,475) of males in Yarra aged 15+ years provide unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or older age*

[1] This data is from two different sources:
*The Australian Census – defines people with disability as having a need for assistance with core activities related to self-care, body movement or communication activities. This represents people with more severe or profound disabilities.
**Yarra Social Indicators Survey – defines people with a disability as having a disability, impairment or long-term health condition, and represents a broader spectrum of disability

Key issues for disability inclusion

This section outlines the key issues surrounding disability inclusion, highlighting the barriers individuals with disabilities often face across various aspects of life. These challenges can range from physical and structural obstacles in built environments to attitudinal and social barriers in workplaces, education, and public services.

A note on strengths-based approach and the available data

Council recognises that many population-level datasets compare people with disability to those without, which can inadvertently reinforce deficit-based or ableist assumptions. These limitations reflect how data is currently collected and reported, rather than the lived experience, strengths or capabilities of people with disability.

Where such data is referenced, it is used to highlight structural inequities and unequal outcomes, not to frame disability as the cause of disadvantage. Differences in outcomes – including health outcomes – are primarily shaped by social, environmental and institutional factors, including ableism and systemic exclusion, rather than being inherent to disability itself.

Council also recognises the strength, resilience, agency and autonomy of people with disability in navigating systems and shaping their own lives and communities

Attitudes and ableism

Ableism refers to the discrimination and bias faced by people with disability, rooted in the misconception that they are less valuable or capable of participating in society. This mindset enables the exclusion and marginalisation of people with disability. The Council plays a key role in addressing ableism by promoting inclusive policies, practices, and advocacy that ensure equal participation for all community members.

Community Snapshot – Participation

Key data indicates that, of people with disability in Yarra:

22% ↑ are **not satisfied with their community inclusion,** which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (14%)

43% ↑ are **experiencing loneliness**, which is *significantly higher than* Yarra's total population (26%)

27% **volunteered** in the past 12 months, which is *comparable to Yarra's* total population (24%)

60% **participated in or attended an arts or cultural event** in the past 12 months, which is *comparable to* Yarra's total population (57%)

Employment

People with disability experience higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, unfair treatment, and workplace discrimination.[2] These challenges are rooted in ableism and negative perceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disability. Employment is closely connected to overall wellbeing, including physical and mental health. Therefore, removing employment barriers is essential to reducing inequality. The Council plays a vital role in confronting practices and attitudes that limit or prevent people with disability from accessing equal employment opportunities.

In Australia 41% of people with disability aged 15-64 **received income from wages or salary** compared with 73% of people without disability.[3]

Systemic disadvantage refers to the ongoing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing the same opportunities as everyone else. These barriers are built into systems such as education, healthcare, and the workplace, often due to outdated policies or negative attitudes. As a result, people with disabilities may face more challenges in finding work, getting healthcare, or participating fully in society.

Community Snapshot – Disadvantage

Key data indicates that of people with disability in Yarra:

15% ↑ are **not satisfied with the home/property they live in,** which is *significantly higher than Yarra's* total population (6%)

29%↑ were **unable to access a GP in the past year due to cost**, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (16%)

38%↑ describe their physical health as poor or fair, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (15%)

36%↑ describe their mental health as poor or fair, which is *significantly higher than* Yarra's total population (22%)

22% ↑ had **run out of food** in the past 12 months, which is *significantly higher than Yarra's* total population (9%)

Violence and safety

Violence and safety are major concerns for people with disabilities, as they often face a higher risk of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This can happen in various settings, including at home, in care facilities, and in the community. The lack of accessible services, support networks, and awareness about the specific needs of individuals with disabilities can make it harder to report incidents or seek help.

[2] The Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing, 2024, available: People with disability in Australia, Employment - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Community Snapshot – Violence and safety

Key data indicates that of people with disability in Yarra:

44% ↑ have **safety concerns commuting without a vehicle**, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (5%)

11% ↑ found **safety was a barrier to exercise**, *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (5%)

17% ↑ had **experienced family violence**, which is *significantly higher than Yarra's* total population (12%)

Built and non-built environments

Barriers in both built and non-built environments create significant challenges for people with disabilities. In the built environment, physical obstacles such as uneven pavements, inaccessible buildings, or the lack of ramps make it difficult for individuals with mobility impairments to move freely.

Other barriers include poorly designed lighting, which can challenge people with visual impairments, and a lack of quiet spaces or areas with poor acoustics, which can hinder individuals with sensory sensitivities or hearing impairments.

In non-built environments, barriers like negative attitudes, lack of awareness, or inaccessible digital platforms and services prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in social, cultural, and professional life.

Community Snapshot – Environmental barriers

Key data indicates that, of people with disability in Yarra:

13% ↑ did not exercise for at least 30 minutes on any day of the week, which is *significantly higher* than Yarra's total population (8%)

Data on disability

In Australia, a significant lack of reliable disability data hampers effective policymaking and service delivery. As a result, the full scope of disability-related needs and disparities remains underrepresented, making it challenging to implement targeted, evidence-based interventions and track progress toward inclusion.

All levels of government play an essential role in improving disability data collection and use, ensuring policies and practices are better informed and that the needs and experiences of people with disability are accurately represented and addressed.

Jurisdictions, Legislation and Frameworks

Initiatives from the Australian and Victorian Governments have specifically informed our Policy. They inform a vision for a vibrant, universally accessible city where people with disability are fully included and celebrated for their contributions to our community.

International Context

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Australia is bound by international human rights obligations to uphold equality, non-discrimination, and full participation for people with disability, including accessible environments, services, and transport.

Article 9 of the CRPD emphasises the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. It requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to:

- Physical environments such as buildings, roads, and transportation.
- Information and communications, including electronic services and emergency services.
- Facilities and services open to the public, ensuring accessibility for all, including people with disabilities.

Federal context

Australia's national disability framework is underpinned by Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 (ADS), which is based on the social model of disability and commits all levels of government to improving inclusion, accessibility and participation for people with disability.

The federal *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with disability across many areas of public life, including access to premises, public transport, services, employment, and information. Under the DDA, Standards such as the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, the AS 1428 suite of access standards, and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 set minimum accessibility requirements for buildings, transport services, and infrastructure. Some are legally binding, some are optional, and all are minimum, which is why a universal design approach is also needed to meet the DDA requirement of non-discrimination.

Implications for local government: National frameworks mean councils have a clear role: preventing discrimination, applying accessibility standards in infrastructure and services, promoting inclusive employment and community participation, and embedding these commitments into local planning, service delivery and community engagement.

Victorian context

State Disability Plan

Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026 provides the current Victorian framework for disability inclusion, accessibility and systemic reform. It sets the state's vision of "an inclusive, accessible and safe Victoria" for people with disability and requires all local governments to have a Disability Action Plan.

The State Plan outlines a series of systemic reform commitments - including Universal Design and accessible communications, co-design and lived-experience inclusion, intersectional approaches, inclusive workforces, and data & outcomes reporting - that provide a framework for all Victorian public authorities.

Under the Plan, public authorities (including local government) are required to develop Disability Action Plans that address access to premises, services, employment, and participation.

Systemic reforms for local governments

Our approach explicitly embeds the six systemic reform directions from the State Plan, adapted for the local government context.

Implications for local government: There is a clear state-level directive: to embed Universal Design and inclusion throughout planning, services, facilities, communications, and community engagement - and to co-design, accessibility and equity as default practice in municipal decision-making.

Systemic Reform	What it means for Yarra Council / Community
Co-design	People with disability (and carers, advocates) are directly involved in planning, designing, delivering and evaluating Council services, infrastructure, events and policies.
Accessible communications & Universal Design	All Council communications, digital services, built and non-built infrastructure, events and programs follow accessibility and Universal Design standards.
Disability-confident & inclusive workforce	Council invests in workforce training, recruitment, retention and culture so staff and volunteers understand disability, apply inclusive practices, and reflect community diversity.
Intersectional approaches	Policy and program design consider intersecting identities (e.g., disability + cultural background, gender, LGBTIQA+, age, Aboriginal status, neurodiversity) to address diverse experiences and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.
First Peoples' self-determination	Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability to ensure services and participation respect cultural context, heritage and self-determined access needs.
Effective data collection and outcomes reporting	Collect, monitor and publicly report data on access, inclusion, employment, service use, and community outcomes — to track progress, identify gaps, and guide continuous improvement.

Other relevant state legislation

***Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)**

The Equal Opportunity Act makes it unlawful to discriminate on the basis of disability in areas such as employment, education, and the provision of goods and services. It also supports **substantive equality** (recognising that equal outcomes may require different supports) and includes duties such as **reasonable adjustments** in relevant settings.

***Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic)**

The Charter applies to public authorities (including local government) and requires decision-makers to act compatibly with human rights and consider them when making decisions. This strengthens rights-based, fair and accountable approaches to access and inclusion.

***Disability Act 2006* (Vic) (commenced 1 July 2007)**

Victoria's disability legislation is the **Disability Act 2006**, which commenced in 2007. It provides a key state framework supporting disability services, safeguards and related obligations in Victoria. (So yes—you're right to include it, but it's not called the "Victorian Disability Act 2007".)

Whole of Victorian Government Universal Design Policy (2022)

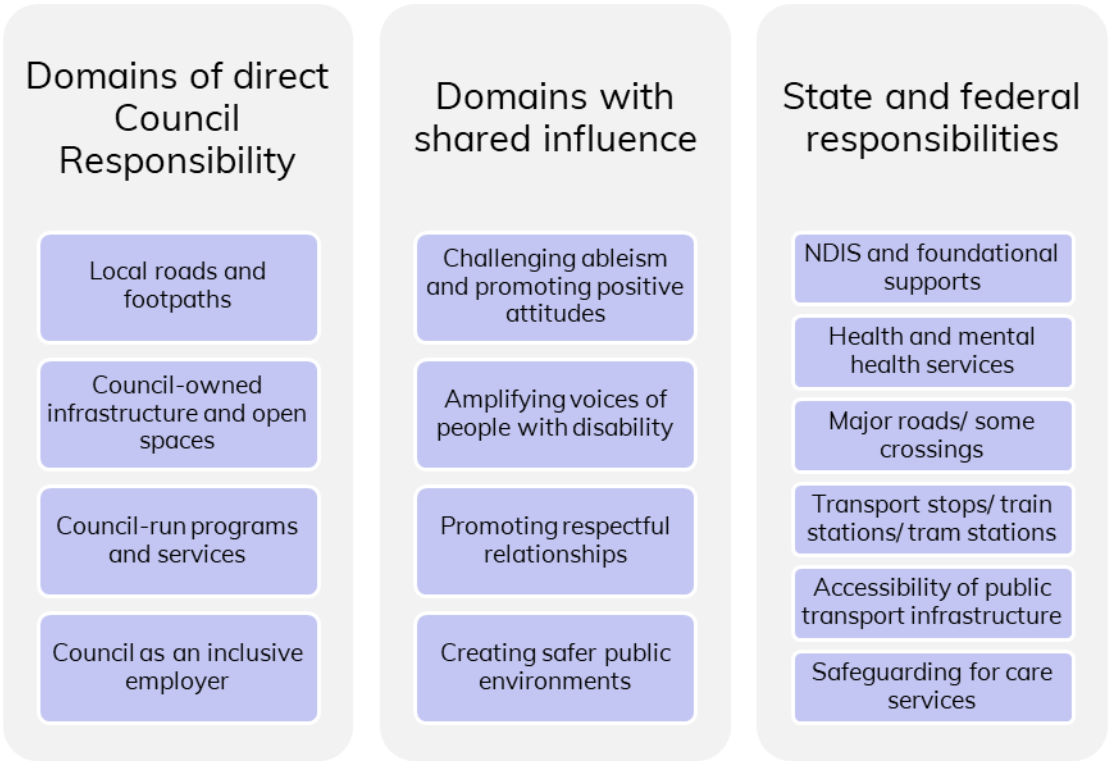
This policy provides practical guidance for consistently embedding universal design, particularly across Victorian Government-funded infrastructure. This is relevant to Councils, as it forms part of the grant criteria for receiving state funding.

Role of Local Government

Within its remit, Council can promote inclusion by ensuring public buildings, streets, parks, wayfinding to public transport, and community facilities are accessible, safe, and usable for people with diverse access needs. As a service provider, Council can embed inclusive design and accessible communication across programs, events, customer service, and digital platforms, so services are equitable and easy to navigate.

As an employer, Council works within established people and culture policies, enterprise arrangements and legislative requirements to support inclusive recruitment, workplace adjustment and professional development practices. Through its civic leadership role, Council also promotes inclusive employment and participation more broadly across the municipality.

Council's regulatory and planning roles enable it to support disability inclusion through development assessment, local planning controls, and place-based decision-making that prioritise universal design and accessible public spaces. In addition, Council acts as a community leader and advocate, working with residents, businesses, service providers, and other levels of government to challenge ableism, promote positive attitudes, and amplify the voices of people with disability in decision-making.



Priority areas

This Policy and our commitments consider input from our community, obtained through detailed consultation and engagement exercises, as well as ongoing advice and direction from Council's Disability Advisory Committee.

Priority areas and strategic objectives:

1. Accessible Places & Transport	• Facilities and public spaces • Footpaths and public-realm • Wayfinding and transport links • Community guidance
2. Inclusive Services, Programs & Information	• Services and programs • Website, digital services and materials • Communication and customer-service channels • Engagement and consultation
3. Inclusive Economic Participation and Employment	• Inclusive employment and leadership in Yarra • Encourage local employment participation pathways • Sport, recreation, arts and volunteering
4. Fairness & Safety	• Public transport advocacy • Business, event and festivals • Accessible and adaptable housing options • Food relief and community-support access • Emergency preparedness
5. Belonging & Celebration	• Representation in communications and public art • Disability pride and awareness events • Recognition of carers • Accessible arts, culture and volunteering pathways • Inclusive community events and social connection
6. Effective data and reporting outcomes	• Data and insights • Evaluation and improvement • Transparency and accountability

Priority 1: Accessible & Inclusive Places and Transport

Improve Yarra's buildings, parks, streets and transport to ensure equitable access and inclusion.

1.1 Apply a Universal Design approach to all new and upgraded Council buildings, facilities, and open spaces to achieve the best possible accessibility outcomes.

- Continue a rolling program of accessibility audits of existing Council buildings to identify access barriers and inform retrofit works.
- Use Universal Design to guide all new and upgraded buildings, parks and open-space projects.
- Consider opportunities to identify, improve, and upgrade public toilets into more accessible facilities in terms of availability, safety, and wayfinding.
- Integrate sensory, cognitive and neurodiversity-friendly design features into upgrades where appropriate (lighting, acoustics, quiet spaces, clear layouts).

1.2 Improve footpaths, kerbs, lighting, and other public realm elements.

- Strengthen internal coordination to identify, prioritise and address accessibility barriers across the public realm.
- Continue an ongoing program of footpath renewal, kerb ramp installation, and trip hazard removal.
- Continue targeted accessibility upgrades to footpath surfaces and designs to support access and mobility.
- Maintain tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) in priority crossings and high-traffic routes.
- Continue to improve seating, rest points, shade, and shelter across activity centres, parks, and paths, prioritising opportunities for rest and respite at intervals along pedestrian routes.
- Continue to improve street lighting in key pedestrian areas and transport connections to improve visibility and safety.

1.3 Improve transport access, accessible parking, wayfinding and connected paths of travel.

- Improve wayfinding across the municipality by providing clear signage, tactile markers, consistent symbols, and accessible maps.
- Identify opportunities to upgrade accessible parking and ensure safe, clear, step-free paths from parking to key destinations.
- Identify opportunities to expand accessible parking supply in high-need locations and review placement for safe paths of travel.
- Prioritise safe crossings, reduced clutter and smoother footpath surfaces along routes to public transport.
- Provide digital wayfinding information in accessible formats (e.g., alt-text maps, Easy English, high-contrast PDFs).

1.4 Partner with people with disability to identify access barriers and shape upgrades to buildings and spaces.

- Continue to involve the Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) in the design, planning, audits and decision-making for major public-realm projects.
- Establish a program of lived-experience access walks in activity centres, parks and transport routes to identify barriers and co-design solutions.

- Create ongoing feedback loops through Council's online channels to capture community-identified access issues and track responses.
- Include people with disability in prototype testing, wayfinding trials, and the evaluation of Universal Design features.

Priority 2: Inclusive Services, Programs & Information

Deliver Council services, programs and information in ways that everyone can access and participate

2.1 Design all Council services and programs to be inclusive, flexible and responsive.

- Apply Universal Design principles when developing or updating all Council services and programs, including leisure, recreation, libraries, family, youth and children's services.
- Apply Universal Design principles when reviewing policies, enrolment systems, and pricing structures.
- Continue to offer flexible program formats (e.g., quieter sessions, sensory-friendly options, booking support).
- Support inclusive programs by embedding adaptable practices into program delivery.
- Continue to develop a disability-confident workforce through staff capability uplift, training, and awareness of best practices to support disability inclusion.
- Ensure all Council advertising communicates that accessibility accommodations are available on request (e.g. Auslan interpreters, closed captions, quiet spaces)
- Regularly review user feedback, complaints and participation data to identify and address access barriers.

2.2 Make Council's website, online services and materials accessible.

- Progressively apply WCAG 2.1 AA and Universal Design standards across websites, online forms, digital tools and public-facing documents as they are developed, reviewed or updated.
- Deploy strategies for delivering alternative formats, including Easy Read/Easy English, plain-language summaries, captions, transcripts, and alt text for images, leveraging emerging technologies.
- Prioritise Auslan interpretation and closed captioning for critical digital communications, including emergency updates and key public information.
- Conduct regular digital accessibility audits.
- Ensure contractors and content providers meet Council's accessibility requirements.

2.3 Offer multiple communication pathways and accessible customer service options.

- Provide accessible contact methods, including phone, email, SMS, the National Relay Service, and in-person support.
- Ensure customer service counters, reception points and meeting rooms meet accessibility standards.
- Provide Easy English or plain-language information for processes such as permits, payments and enrolments.

2.4 Use inclusive consultation and engagement methods.

- Continue providing multiple engagement formats, such as online sessions, drop-ins, supported groups, and accessible surveys.
- Offer materials in accessible formats (Easy English, large print, high-contrast visuals, and translated materials as required).
- Design inclusive consultation events by identifying and planning for participants' access needs in advance, including offering opportunities for people to register requirements such as Auslan interpretation, captioning, hearing loops, and quiet spaces.
- Ensure engagement planning includes intersectional considerations (culture, age, gender, neurodiversity)

Priority 3: Inclusive Participation and Employment

Council recognises that access to employment, leadership and community participation is fundamental to independence, wellbeing and social inclusion. Council can use its role as a civic leader, partner and connector to encourage inclusive practices, strengthen pathways and promote opportunities across Yarra.

3.1 Promote inclusive employment and leadership in Yarra

- Use Council's economic development networks and relationships to promote the benefits of inclusive employment and diverse leadership.
- Share practical information, resources, and examples that help employers better understand accessibility, reasonable adjustments, and inclusive workplace practices.
- Showcase positive examples of inclusive employment and leadership through Council communications and local business networks.

3.2 Encourage local employment participation pathways

- Promote awareness of traineeship, internship and work-experience opportunities delivered by specialist providers, education partners and employers.
- Use Council communication channels and networks to share relevant inclusive employment and training opportunities with the community.
- Encourage collaboration between local employers, training institutions, and disability employment services where there is interest.

3.3 Support Yarra sports clubs, recreation groups, arts and volunteer organisations to welcome participation by people with disability.

- Continue to offer training, resources and accessibility guidance to clubs and community groups.
- Encourage grant applicants and partners to consider disability inclusion in their programs and activities.
- Promote inclusive clubs, programs and events through Council communication channels.
- Work with local organisations to identify and remove barriers to participation in sport, the arts, and volunteering.

Priority 4: Fairness and Safety

Build a community where people with disability feel safe and supported through advocating for fairness, equity and inclusion.

4.1 Advocate to state transport authorities for more accessible public transport and road crossings.

- Advocate to the Department of Transport & Planning, Public Transport Victoria and operators (e.g., Yarra Trams, Metro, bus services) to improve tram stops, station access, timetable information and service reliability.
- Continue to gather data and evidence on people's experience of accessibility in the physical environment, and use this to support targeted advocacy to the State Government, its agencies and partners to improve the quality of infrastructure delivered and maintained across Yarra.
- Support community members to raise access issues with transport authorities, including through DAC (Disability Advisory Committee).
- Advocate for crossings that are timed to support diverse speeds of movement and include audio and visual crossing indicators.

4.2 Support local businesses, events and festivals to improve accessibility through tools, guidance and partnerships.

- Promote Council's accessibility guidance and practical tools for businesses, venues and event organisers.
- Offer targeted support - such as brief advisory sessions, referrals and accessibility guidance - to help local businesses, events and festivals to improve access.
- Encourage event organisers and festival partners to adopt Universal Design and accessibility standards.
- Highlight and celebrate businesses and events that demonstrate strong access and inclusion practices.

4.3 Promote accessible housing options, including advice on heritage-related upgrades and modifications.

- Provide information on accessible and adaptable housing pathways, including modifications and retrofit options.
- Apply recognised accessibility standards — such as *AS 4299 Adaptable Housing Standard*, the *Liveable Housing Design Guidelines* and *Australian Network for Universal Housing Design principles* — across strategic and statutory planning, and educate developers and partners to strengthen support for accessible housing.
- Continued advocacy for the increased supply of accessible social and affordable housing within Yarra.
- Offer guidance on balancing accessibility and heritage requirements, including referrals to state resources and expert advice.
- Identify and share examples of good practice in accessible housing design and adaptive heritage upgrades.

4.4 Strengthen access to food relief, outreach programs and community support for people with disability, families and carers.

- Partner with local food relief providers to improve physical, sensory and communication accessibility.
- Work with community organisations to ensure outreach programs consider the needs of people with disability and their carers.

	• Support culturally safe, inclusive and low-barrier delivery models for essential supports.
	• Promote information on available supports through accessible communication channels.

4.5 Improve emergency preparedness information and support for people with disability.

	• Provide accessible emergency information (plain language, Easy Read, captions, Auslan, translations).
	• Promote personal emergency preparedness planning tools for people with disability and carers through Council service touchpoints and strategic partnerships to support readiness and recovery.
	• Strengthen relationships with emergency services to ensure disability-inclusive planning and response.
	• Continue to identify and address environmental barriers that may impact safe evacuation and emergency access across Council assets, and use Council's planning, building and regulatory functions to support improved outcomes in the broader built environment.

Priority 5: Belonging and Celebration

Promote disability inclusion, pride and belonging in Yarra by celebrating the contributions, leadership and culture of people with disability and carers.

5.1 Increase the representation of people with disability in Yarra's communications, cultural outputs and public art.

	• Include people with disability in communications campaigns, imagery, storytelling and digital content.
	• Work with artists and creatives with disability to contribute to public art, exhibitions and cultural projects.
	• Promote inclusive image use, language and representation.

5.2 Celebrate awareness days and events that promote disability pride and challenge stigma.

	• Mark key dates such as International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD), Carers Week, World Autism Acceptance Week y and other disability-led celebrations.
	• Partner with disability organisations to deliver events and campaigns that promote positive attitudes and challenge ableism.
	• Share disability pride stories and learning resources through Council's communication channels.

5.3 Acknowledge the essential role of carers and support their wellbeing and participation.

	• Celebrate Carers Week through recognition events and community storytelling.
	• Promote local wellbeing, respite and support options for carers.
	• Provide inclusive opportunities for carers to connect and participate in community life.
	• Consider carers as a priority population in the development of Council's programs and services.

5.4 Promote opportunities for people with disability to engage in local arts, culture, community life and volunteering.

- Support accessible volunteering opportunities across Council programs and events.
- Partner with arts, culture and recreation organisations to create inclusive participation pathways.
- Promote grants, residencies and community project opportunities to people with disability and disability-led groups.

5.5 Create and promote inclusive events and social connection opportunities for people with disability and carers.

- Apply Universal Design principles to Council events, including access information, quiet spaces, captions, hearing augmentation and sensory supports.
- Offer accessible social programs and community connection initiatives in partnership with local groups.
- Provide guidance on event accessibility to community organisations and festival organisers.

Priority 6: Effective data and reporting outcomes

Collect meaningful data, track progress and keep improving disability inclusion across Council.

6.1 Collect high-quality disability data across surveys, engagements, programs and service reviews.

- Build consistent disability-related data collection across surveys, programs, engagement and service interactions.
- Improve organisational systems for tracking participation, access issues and user experience.
- Ensure data methods are inclusive, culturally safe and accessible.
- Disaggregate data by disability for Council monitoring and reporting, wherever possible and appropriate

6.2 Embed evaluation and continuous improvement across Council.

- Develop measurable indicators for accessibility, inclusion and participation that apply across departments.
- Expand the use of audits, feedback, complaints and lived-experience insights to inform organisation-wide improvements.
- Integrate accessibility considerations into ongoing service reviews, planning cycles and performance reporting.

6.3 Strengthen transparency and organisational accountability.

- Publish an annual Council-wide accessibility and inclusion update in accessible formats.
- Report progress to the Disability Advisory Committee and seek advice on emerging issues.
- Share results and next steps internally to support learning, collaboration and continual uplift

Universal Design Guidelines

Universal Design at Yarra:

To meet Council's aim of building an accessible and inclusive Yarra, we will apply a Universal Design (UD) approach to the design of the built and non-built environment, including buildings, open spaces and the public realm, as well as information, communication, services, programs and events.

A Universal Design approach will be applied to systematically consider how to achieve the best possible accessibility outcomes, while recognising that existing urban environments, site constraints and other intersecting factors may influence the final outcomes.

What is Universal Design:

Universal Design (UD) is the design of products, environments, programs and services so they can be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, disability or background.[1]

Unlike minimum accessibility standards such as the Access to Premises Standards 2010 and AS 1428, which are the minimum compliance thresholds and usually only consider basic access rather than inclusion, universal design goes further - it aims to create environments that work well for everyone from the outset.

While disability-accessible design may retrofit ramps, lifts, or tactile indicators to remove barriers, UD considers the whole experience encompassing movement, sensory needs, cognition, wayfinding, comfort, safety, and enjoyment, and integrates these considerations into the design.

Guiding Principles of Universal Design at Yarra

These are adapted from: https://design.ncsu.edu/research/center-for-universal-design/

1. Equitable Use 	The building/service/public space is usable by people with diverse physical, cognitive, sensory and social abilities. Examples of equitable use include: • Step-free entry & continuous accessible path of travel • Accessible toilets & personal care amenities • Communication & information in multiple formats • Seating, rest points & comfort • Inclusive recreation & social infrastructure • Welcoming of assistance animals
2. Flexibility in Use	The design accommodates a wide range of individual needs, preferences and abilities.

	Examples of flexibility in use include: • Communication & information in multiple formats • Acoustics, noise & "calm options" • Family-friendly participation supports • Inclusive recreation & social infrastructure
3. Simple and Intuitive Use 	The design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. Examples of simple and intuitive use include: • One clear main entry • Forms that flow logically and auto-fill where possible • Consistent crossing design across the municipality
4. Perceptible Information 	The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. Examples of perceptible information: • Wayfinding & legible signage • Lighting, contrast & visual clarity • Crossings & street interface safety • Communication & information in multiple formats
5. Tolerance for Error 	The design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. Examples of tolerance for error: • Safe, even surfaces & unobstructed movement • Lighting, contrast & visual clarity • Crossings & street interface safety Inclusive emergency preparedness & response
6. Low Physical Effort 	The design can be used efficiently and comfortably, with minimal effort or fatigue. Examples of low physical effort: • Step-free entry & continuous accessible path of travel • Safe, even surfaces & unobstructed movement • Doors, corridors & turning space • Seating, rest points & comfort

	Lifts that work for more people
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use 	Appropriate size and space are provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility. Examples of size and space: • Doors, corridors & turning space • Accessible toilets & personal care amenities • Lifts that work for more people • Inclusive recreation & social infrastructure Assistance animal support in public realm
8. Cultural appropriateness 	Respecting diverse cultures and First Peoples and ensuring designs are a cultural fit for their community and user groups Examples of cultural appropriateness: • Wayfinding & legible signage • Communication & information in multiple formats • Family-friendly participation supports • Inclusive recreation & social infrastructure

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

An accompanying plan will be developed to ensure the priority areas outlined in this Policy are implemented in a structured and effective manner. Council will provide twice-yearly updates in the Quarterly Community Report and Annual Report. Council will review the Policy and evaluate the success of the plan annually.

Monitoring success indicators

Where possible, the metrics below will be used to measure outcomes and satisfaction for people with disability, helping us evaluate the impact of our efforts and investment.

Performance metric	Source
Percentage of library members with a disability who report feeling more connected and engaged in the community as a result of their participation in library services and programs	Yarra Libraries Membership surveys
Satisfaction with activities/programs offered at neighbourhood houses	Neighbourhood houses annual reports
Participants in targeted programs supported through Neighbourhood Houses	Neighbourhood houses annual reports
Number of people with disability accessing leisure centres	Leisure centres membership data
Satisfaction with programs implemented to support at-risk members of the community	Council Plan 2025-2029: performance metrics
Expand Yarra's public open space portfolio, ensuring safe and accessible spaces.	Council Plan 2025-2029: performance metrics
Community satisfaction with parks, gardens and open spaces	Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey
Number of pedestrian improvement-related projects delivered across the municipality	Council Plan 2025-2029: performance metrics
Community satisfaction with the delivery of major transport-related projects	Council Plan 2025-2029: performance metrics
Community satisfaction with public arts access and initiatives	Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey
The community is supported to access affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food	Municipal Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029
Better awareness of shaded routes and wayfinding to access essential services, school and public transport	Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030
Neighbourhood houses and other relevant organisations are well prepared to support their local community during extreme weather events	Climate Emergency Plan 2024-2030

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