

Access and Inclusion

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Scope

Towong Shire developed a Community Access and Inclusion Plan for the 2011-2014 periods. The plan was prepared in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Victorian Disability Act 2006.

Initiatives included the completion of an Access Audit across all Recreational facilities to support significant recreational master planning and to secure multi-million dollar grant opportunities to support equitable access and participation through improved infrastructure.

Council plays a vital role in the lives of people with a disability. All local government functions directly or indirectly impact on the quality of life of people with a disability in the Shire who live, work, and visit or socialise within its boundaries.

Background

Disability Access planning enables Towong Shire to plan and ensure existing and future services are accessible to people with a disability. Planning implementation utilizes five key principles to reflect inclusive practice and accessibility for community members and visitors:

The key guiding principles are:

- To mobilize and support people with a disability to optimize participation in the life of their local community
- To build and strengthen the communities capacity to provide support to people with a disability and their families
- To facilitate integrated local community planning and coordination which engages and involves people with a disability and their families, disability service providers and community organizations

- To work with existing disability support providers to enhance their capacity to provide relevant and appropriate supports in the community
- To improve access to information about relevant services and community activities to people with a disability in their communities

The guiding principles and actions are listed in the Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2011-2014 for implementation. The Community Access Committee assisted with the development of the Access and Inclusion Plan development however due to limited attendance this group will not continue. Instead, all Council and Community Services activities will ensure representation for equitable access is achieved in all areas of Council business. This will be achieved through community engagement, inviting key agency support, working closely with the Towong Health Alliance and promoting access relevant themes to the broader community.

The Shire's primary responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 is to ensure that there is no discrimination in any of its own functions, services and programs or by any of the organizations it supports via facilities or use of funding.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- To ensure Council's facilities and services are universally accessible.
- To ensure Council complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992.
- To develop and promote the Towong Shire as being a disability friendly place to live and visit.

Approach

We aim to achieve the objectives of this Policy by:

- Implementing a Council's Community Access and inclusion Plan
- Ensuring that our functions, programs and services do not discriminate against any person on the basis of disability in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992.
- Taking action to identify areas which need improvement and prioritise them as the basis of action.
- Raise awareness that people with disabilities have the right to equality within our community.
- Facilitating appropriate links between groups and individuals within the community.
- Improve the knowledge, understanding and confidence of Council personnel so that all areas of planning, coordination and service provision are responsive to the needs of a person with a disability.
- To include Community Access awareness in Family Fun Day and Community Services activities where practical
- To support the Disability Services Community Building Program

Deployment

Management and staff are to be familiar with, and are accountable for, the delivery of this Policy within their areas of responsibility. This will be measured via regular Workplan Reviews. In specific terms the responsibility for this policy can be described as follows:

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing this policy across the Council.

- The Director Community and Corporate Services is responsible for overseeing the implementation of both our Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2011-2014 and the Disability Access Policy.
- Managers, at all levels, are required to create an environment where disability access is accepted as the personal responsibility of each member of the Council.
- All staff to be actively involved in ensuring all disability access issues are dealt with appropriately.

Resources

The following resources are committed by Council to assist with the implementation of this policy:

- Director Community and Corporate Services to co-ordinate implementation;
- Manager Community Services to implement the Community Access and Inclusion Plan and Disability Services Community Building Plan;
- Annual Budget allocation;
- Training for all Councillors and Staff; and
- Other resources as deemed necessary by the Chief Executive Officer.

Relevant legislation

- Disability Discrimination Act, 1992
- Victorian Disability Act 2006
- The Local Government (General) Amendment (community and Social Plans) regulation 1998
- Building Code of Australia

Results

The deployment of this policy together with the results achieved will be reviewed at least annually.