



Rural City of
Wangaratta

Community Access and Inclusion Plan

2019 - 2022



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Mayors Message

Council is committed to improving accessibility across our community. This includes how people access information, buildings, public spaces, and their overall experience.

Council's aim is to provide an accessible and inclusive environment which supports people with disabilities to participate fully in our community.

The Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2022 sets out Council's measures to help achieve this over the next three years.

It is recognised that there are various social and physical barriers that people with disabilities experience. This plan informs the Rural City of Wangaratta's ongoing work to build an inclusive community, by focusing on four key themes:

1. Inclusion and participation
2. Communication and Engagement
3. Civic Leadership and Attitudes
4. Physical Environments.

This is a thorough plan that has been well researched and considered. I look forward to seeing its recommendations implemented over the years to come.



Introduction

Access and inclusion is fundamental to creating a healthy and cohesive community, where all community members are able to be involved in social, cultural and political life.

The Rural City of Wangaratta has developed the Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2022 (the "CAIP") which outlines objectives and actions to continue improving access and inclusion for people of all abilities within the municipality.

The CAIP primarily refers to a person with lived experience of disability, but it also considers the benefit accessibility has for the broader community, including the elderly and parents with young children.

When delivering the CAIP's actions the Rural City of Wangaratta (RCoW) will have various roles, with some actions requiring resource allocation through Council's annual budget process, and other actions being achieved through councils ongoing projects, program delivery of infrastructure upgrades and developments as well as active advocacy and lobbying by council..

Community Overview

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) , almost 1 in 5 people in Victoria identify as having some form of disability, with numbers higher in regional areas.

The Wangaratta Community Profile published by the Department of Health and Human Services (2015) indicates that 5.7% of our community, or 1,623 people, have some form of disability, with 4.7% of people having profound disability. People aged 15 - 44 years are under-represented relative to the state average while people aged 45+ years are over-represented. Approximately 14.9% of people living in Wangaratta receive disability support services compared to the state average of 8.9%.

79.6% of people in the Rural City of Wangaratta rate their community as good or very good for community support groups, which is higher than the state average of 61.3%.

Health Vic Ovens Murray Area 2015, Wangaratta RC Profile

Notable Achievements

In the last decade, Council has adopted a number of Disability Action Plans and implemented projects to improve access and inclusion. Some of these projects include:

Inclusion and Participation

- Community consultation with individuals living with disability their families, carers and support groups to better inform access and inclusion planning
- Raising the profile of the Rural Access Program, which works in partnership with groups, businesses and the broader community
- Facilitation of the Accessibility Reference Group, incorporating people with a disability, their families and carers

Communication and Engagement

- Upgrading Council's website to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA level
- Installation of the national relay service
- Provision of assistive equipment for community use, including a portable hearing loop and temporary access ramps
- Hearing loops installed at customer service and performing arts centre
- Council applies the IAP2 (International Association for Public Participation) core values and principles for community engagement to ensure the contribution of people of all abilities.
- Delivery of inclusive and diverse services for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds through Council's facilities and operations, including the Wangaratta Library, Wangaratta Art Gallery, Wangaratta Performing Arts and Convention Centre, Wangaratta Children's Services Centre, Wangaratta Indoor Sports and Aquatic Centre and the Visitor Information Centre.
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Civic Leadership and Attitudes

- Establishment of the RAD (Regional/Rural Advocacy Disabilities) Project to improve inclusion for young people with a disability
- Piloting the Good Access = Good Business program in Wangaratta's central business district
- Promotion of events such as International Day of People with a Disability
- Capacity building through resource provision for a range of disability support groups
- Equal opportunity employment and flexible working opportunities at RCoW
- Development of policies that reflect changing attitudes and practices
- Developed guidelines to outdoor dining and trading on footpaths

Accessible Environments

- Staff training and conduct of access audits on council buildings and facilities
- Development and promotion of an accessibility map for Wangaratta's central business district
- Increased accessibility to community buildings and community infrastructure with ongoing modifications
- Merriwa park bike hub accessible toilets and recharge points
- Development of accessible open spaces, including playgrounds at Lions Park and Mitchell Ave reserve
- Disabled parking permits administered by council
- HACC provides home help, property maintenance, personal care and respite care for people with a disability and parents/carers of people with a disability
- Installation of tactile markers
- Provision of disabled public toilets plus an ongoing review of toilets
- Scooter recharge points

Principals

The collective experiences of people with disability demonstrate that it is not just disability itself that makes life difficult. It is the physical and attitudinal barriers that society imposes because of disability.

The objectives and actions contained in this plan are underpinned by a range of principles that reflect council's values and commitment to enhance the quality of life for all people in our community.

These principles are:

Social inclusion	All members of our community have the right to feel valued and have the opportunity to participate in community life.
Human rights and social justice	People have the right to be respected and treated equally. Equality must also be combined with social justice principles to recognise and reduce the barriers in society that cause discrimination of marginalised groups.
Diversity	People with disability, their families and carers are not a homogenous group and Council will endeavour to reflect and consider the diverse needs, priorities and abilities within the community.
Community engagement	Council will continue to actively engage, consult and collaborate with people with disability, their families and carers as well as service providers to develop and deliver appropriate and relevant projects and services.

Legislative and policy context

The Community Access and Inclusion Plan assists local government to meet its obligations under Federal and State Government legislation, to protect and promote the rights of people with disability to live and participate in the community on an equal basis.

In response to its obligations under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Victorian Disability Act 2006, the Rural City of Wangaratta has in place a Community Access and Inclusion Plan.

The CAIP communicates RCoW's role in ensuring people of all abilities, including those living with disability, their families and carers are able to actively participate in community life and civic events; contribute to local government planning; and can assess services, facilities, sporting and cultural activities.

The CAIP is registered with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and its implementation reported on in Council's Annual Report.

The relevant legislation and policies considered in this plan include:

International

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities 2006

National

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- National Disability Strategy 2010-2020
- Access for People with Disabilities – AS 1428

State

- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Victorian State Disability Plan 2017 - 2020
- The Victorian Disability Amendment Act 2012
- Victorian State Disability Act 2006
- Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Local

- Council Plan 2017 - 2021
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017 – 2021

In section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, the state government has identified four objectives that all Disability Action Plans should address to enable people with disability to fully participate in their communities.

These are:

- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities
- Reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment
- Promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability
- Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

The Rural City of Wangaratta is committed to achieving these objectives.

To achieve our vision, we must be accessible to and inclusive of people with disability, and use our role to bring about improvements for people with disability throughout the municipality.

Rural City of Wangaratta, 2019

Development of the CAIP

To ensure that the Community Access and Inclusion Plan is relevant to the community's needs, consultation was carried out to identify current issues and trends around access and inclusion.

The Community Access and Inclusion Plan (CAIP) is informed by a review of the CAIP 2015 – 2017, Community Accessibility Survey results (2018) and workshops with community groups and the Accessibility Reference Group (2019). It is noted that gradual shifts in the perception of access and inclusion have occurred. The CAIP is designed to reflect current expectations and build on previous achievements.

The CAIP aligns with State and Federal government legislation and policy.

The consultation undertaken for the Community Access and Inclusion Plan identified six priority areas where community members requested improvements.

These were:

Parking	The number, location and size of accessible parking bays
Inclusion	Opportunities for inclusive activities and events and advocacy for access issues
Footpaths	Maintenance, connectivity, and accessibility
Transport	Better public transport links and networks which are accessible and affordable
Building access	Continue to improve access to buildings

Only 47% of people within the municipality live near public transport, compared to the state average of 73.9%

Themes and Actions

The Community Access and Inclusion Action Plan communicates RCoW's role in ensuring people of all abilities, including those living with a disability, their families and carers are able to actively participate in community life and civic events; contribute to local government planning; and can assess services, facilities, sporting and cultural activities.

The Action Plan has adopted the social model of disability. The social model identifies that many of the difficulties that occur for people living with a disability are the direct result of barriers imposed by the environment and not the disability itself.

The CAIP covers four key themes, each with an overarching statement. The themes reflect common issues of access and inclusion identified through community consultation.

The four (4) themes are:

1. Inclusion and Participation
2. Communication and Engagement
3. Civic Leadership and Attitudes
4. Accessible Environments

Each theme is broken down into objectives that have an explanatory aim and actions. There are twelve (12) objectives in total.

The actions represent a whole of council approach to improve access and inclusion throughout the community and informs all of councils decision making and assessment processes and plans.

The RCoW believes all actions taken to support access and inclusion of people with a disability, improves access and inclusion for all.

Theme 1 – Inclusion and Participation

Council values the lived experience of people with a disability, their families and carers, and the role they can play in identifying needs and as proactive partners in responding to those needs.

Objective 1

Strengthen social and democratic participation of people with disability in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Aim: To ensure people with disability, their families and carers can participate in an inclusive democracy and have the opportunity to have their say on issues that affect them.

Actions

- 1.1 Continue to facilitate the Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) as a major informant to council and contributor to councils projects
- 1.2 Invite and support the Accessibility Reference Group to provide feedback into Council's strategies and plans during consultation periods.
- 1.3 Embed access and inclusion considerations in all council policies and strategies, including provision for feedback to be received in alternative formats.

Objective 2

Raise awareness of the contribution people with disability make to community.

Aim: People of all abilities are recognised and celebrated as valued members of the community.

Actions

- 2.1 Promote the contributions of people with disability by hosting a regular event, to either coincide with International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) or separately, in collaboration with ARG.
- 2.2 Use Council's online presence to increase awareness and understanding of disability, and celebrate the achievements and contributions of local people with disability throughout the year.

Objective 3

Increase inclusivity of Council events, activities and festivals to enable more people with disability to participate.

Aim: Ensure that Council funded or organised events are safe, inclusive and accessible for all.

Actions

- 3.1 Create an “Inclusive Events Guide” with underpinning principles and checklists to assist council and others to host an accessible event. Seek feedback from people with disability prior to adopting an events guide.
- 3.2 In collaboration with the Accessibility Reference Group and small town communities and business, investigate feasibility to develop localised accessibility maps, including buildings and tourist information guides based on existing accessibility map.
- 3.3 Continue to promote the use of Council’s Community Resource Kit, which includes ramps, signage and hearing loop, to address potential access barriers.

Objective 4

Increase access to transport around the community to reduce isolation and enable people with disability to actively participate in the community.

Aim: Improve access to flexible, reliable and affordable transport, specifically for people with disability.

Actions

- 4.1 In conjunction with the Accessibility Reference Group, advocate to Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and state and federal government for better transport links that are affordable and accessible on behalf of the community. This includes accessible information such as timetables.

Objective 5

Increase accessible and inclusive mainstream recreation and sporting activities.

Aim: Promote the opportunities of people with disability to participate in accessible and inclusive recreation and physical activities.

Actions

- 5.1 Provide resources, support with funding applications and training for community groups and recreational organisations who are working towards increased access and inclusion for people with a disability.

Theme 2 - Communication and Engagement

Council recognises that information it distributes must be available in a form appropriate to the needs of people who use alternative means of communication. This includes people who have impaired hearing or vision, who have a physical or intellectual disability, and who use communication devices or translation services. All information council distributes will be provided in a format that enables people to access, read, hear, understand and take action via their preferred method of communication.

Objective 6

Build on Council's communication improvements to ensure all members of the community can communicate with Council and access information.

Aim: People with disability can easily communicate and do business with Council and have confidence in their dealings with Council staff.

Actions

- 6.1 Review Council's style guide and Accessible Documents Checklist to ensure it incorporates best practice for creating accessible documents in a range of printed, electronic and online formats.
- 6.2 Utilise innovative options, online resources and social networking to seek the views of people who may be less able to attend meetings due to disability, transport or distance.

Objective 7

Reduce social and attitudinal barriers experienced by people with disability when accessing goods and services through Council.

Aim: People with disability are understood by Councillors and Council staff.

Actions

- 7.1 Organise and implement a schedule for Councillors, Youth Council members and customer-facing employees to undertake training every two years in:
 - Disability Awareness Training
 - Deaf Awareness Training
 - Makaton (Key Word Sign) or basic Auslan Training
 - Communication Access Network Training; which ensures the variety of communication needs are considered.
- 7.2 Collaborate with the Communication Access Network and Customer Service Co-Ordinator to create communication boards to enable people requiring communication boards to communicate their needs to staff.
- 7.3 Undertake training and assessment to gain accreditation for the display of the Communication Access Symbol at all Council customer service points.

Theme 3 - Civic Leadership and Attitudes

Council continues to play a leadership role to improve access and inclusion for people of all abilities through its various roles: advocacy, partnerships, planning, service provision, employer and regulator.

In many cases, it is society's attitudes towards people with disability that leads to direct or indirect discrimination. Council is committed to bringing about tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate.

Objective 8

Continue to be an organisation that advocates for equal and fair treatment of people of all abilities.

Aim: The Rural City of Wangaratta is a positive role model for the community through inclusive actions and maintaining accountability. Council is an equal opportunity employer that does not discriminate when offering employment, traineeships and volunteering opportunities. The Rural City of Wangaratta rejects discriminative attitudes and practices.

Actions

- 8.1 Partner with employment and training agencies to actively promote and support work experience, mentoring opportunities, school to work transitions, apprenticeships and employment for people with disability.
- 8.2 Implement a disability awareness training module for new employees during their induction.

Objective 9

Increase partnership with the business and tourism sectors and support them to meet their legal requirements and community expectations.

Aim: Businesses and organisations are supported to provide fair access to goods, services and opportunities to people of all abilities.

Actions

- 9.1 Use the Good Access = Good Business (GA=GB) program to provide practical information, support and incentives to assist businesses to meet their legal and community expectations of providing fair access to goods, services and opportunities. Evaluate the outcomes and benefits of the GA=GB Program.
- 9.2 Celebrate businesses that prioritise access and inclusion by hosting Disability Access & Inclusion Awards.

Objective 10**Advocate for continued funding and support to reduce barriers that impact people with disability.**

Aim: Council will leverage its expertise and resources to ensure the needs of people with a disability are heard and adequate funding to address these needs is received.

Actions

- 10.1 Research and apply for Information, Linkages & Capacity Building grants.
- 10.2 Advocate and lobby for an increase in mental health service accessibility and availability appropriate for the diverse needs of the community.
- 10.3 Implement an access and inclusion category in the RCoW community grants program.

Theme 4 - Accessible Environments

Council recognises that physical access is a critical issue for people with disability (temporary or long term). Council aims to incorporate the principles of universal design across all planning for infrastructure, facilities and major projects.

Objective 11

Increase accessibility of high-use public facilities in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Aim: Council's public buildings and venues are accessible, people-friendly and welcoming spaces.

Actions

- 11.1 In collaboration with the Accessibility Reference Group, complete an audit of existing Council buildings, facilities and infrastructure to confirm compliance with Australian Standard 1428 and identify remaining barriers.
- 11.2 The Accessibility Reference Group and other community stakeholders to be consulted during the planning stages of new and redevelopment of council facilities and infrastructure to ensure the community needs are met.

Objective 12

Continue to improve and maintain Council's public spaces to ensure areas are accessible and support physical activity for the whole community.

Aim: Council's public and outdoors spaces are accessible, people-friendly and welcoming.

Actions

- 12.1 Investigate the feasibility of developing the Changing Places facilities in Wangaratta and of purchasing a portable accessible toilet (Marveloo) for Council to use during events and to hire out to organisations.
- 12.2 Consult the Accessibility Reference Group and other people with disability when upgrading, reviewing and auditing public facilities, such as toilets, changing rooms, parks and playgrounds to identify barriers to access.
- 12.3 Assess suitability of size, location and number of parking spaces for multi-purpose vehicles that transport people with a disability.

Implementation and Reporting

The themes, objectives and actions outline RCoW's priority activities for the next three years and align with the Council Plan 2017 - 2021 and other key documents.

Council will continue to facilitate and engage with the Accessibility Reference Group (ARG) to provide vital, lived experiences of disability to support implementation, monitoring and reporting of outcomes.

Progress towards achieving the stated objectives and actions will be reviewed annually in collaboration with the ARG and reported on in Councils Annual Report.

The Community Access and Inclusion Plan will be reviewed close to its completion date of 2022.

Appendix

Summary of Objectives

Theme 1: Inclusion and Participation

Council values the lived experience of people with a disability, their families and carers, and the role they can play in identifying needs and as proactive partners in responding to those needs.

Objective 1

Strengthen social and democratic participation of people with disability in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

Objective 2

Raise awareness of the contribution people with disability make to community.

Objective 3

Increase inclusivity of Council events, activities and festivals to enable more people with disability to participate.

Objective 4

Increase access to transport around the community to reduce isolation and enable people with disability to actively participate in the community.

Objective 5

Increase accessible and inclusive mainstream recreation and sporting activities.

Theme 2: Communication and Engagement

Council recognises that information it distributes must be available in a form appropriate to the needs of people who use alternative means of communication. This includes people who have impaired hearing or vision, who have a physical or intellectual disability, who use communication devices or translation services. All information will be provided in a format that enables people to access, read, hear, understand and take action via their preferred method of communication.

Objective 6

Build on Council's communication improvements to ensure all members of the community can communicate with Council and access information.

Objective 7

Reduce social and attitudinal barriers experienced by people with disability then accessing goods and services through Council.

Theme 3: Civic Leadership and Attitudes

Council continues to play a leadership role to improve access and inclusion for people of all abilities through its various roles: advocacy, partnerships, planning, service provision, employer and regulator.

In many cases, it is society's attitudes towards people with disability that leads to direct or indirect discrimination. Council is committed to bringing about tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate.

Objective 8

Continue to be an organisation that advocates for equal and fair treatment of people of all abilities.

Objective 9

Increase partnership with the business and tourism sectors and support them to meet their legal requirements and community expectations.

Objective 10

Advocate for continued funding and support to reduce barriers that impact.

Theme 4: Accessible Environments

Council recognises that physical access is a critical issue for people with disability (temporary or long term). Council aims to incorporate the principles of universal design across all planning for infrastructure, facilities and major projects.

Objective 11

Increase accessibility of high-use public facilities in the Rural City of Wangaratta through a capital works program

Objective 12

Continue to improve and maintain Council's public spaces to ensure areas are accessible and support physical activity for the whole community.

Glossary

Access	Access refers to the ability of a person to use goods, services, facilities and information and to take part in the community.
Accessible Format	Information is provided in formats suitable for people with limited vision or hearing. Examples of different formats include Word Rich Text Format, Braille, large print, audio and Easy English.
Barriers	Barriers to access are not just about ramps and accessible toilets. Attitudinal and communication barriers can impose limitations on a person's access.
CAIP	Abbreviation of Community Access and Inclusion Plan.
Disability	A person with a disability has a physical, intellectual, sensory or age-related impairment or mental illness (or a combination of these) and as a result may face barriers to the social and physical environment that prevent them from fully participating and contributing to community life.
Discrimination	To treat someone less favourably on the basis of factors such as their disability, age, gender, religion or ethnic background.
Easy English	A very simple language format where small, one line sentences are used and accompanied with pictures that explain and support the text.
Inclusion	To include and support everyone to be an active member, and to participate in their community.
National Relay Service (NRS)	Telephone access service available to all Australians that enables communication between a standard telephone and someone who is deaf and uses a Text Telephone (TTY).
RCoW	Abbreviation of Rural City of Wangaratta

We Welcome Your Feedback

We would love to hear from you and welcome feedback about your experiences of access and inclusion across the Rural City of Wangaratta.

You can contact us via:

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Rural City of
Wangaratta