



Draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025

Engagement Summary Report

June 2023



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Executive Summary

The City of Port Phillip is committed to facilitating inclusion for all community members. Developing a Disability – or Accessibility – Action Plan is a demonstration of this commitment. While Disability Action Plans may be a legislative requirement, Port Phillip views them as an opportunity to articulate how Council will actively mitigate discrimination against people with disability. This Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) is Council's fourth, demonstrating the very established history that Port Phillip has in working with and for people with disability and their carers.

Due to COVID, the previous AAP was extended for a year, giving additional time to the development of a new iteration. However, various lockdowns saw engagement on formulating the new AAP significantly reduced with community input stymied. To address this, engagement on the draft AAP has been exhaustive with both online and in person opportunities for all community members to provide feedback. An extended engagement period provided even further opportunities for responses to be captured.

Alongside the draft AAP there are several other plans and legislation that have informed its development. Firstly, it aligns with the Council Plan 2021-2031, most notably strategic direction 'Inclusive Port Phillip'. Second, the draft reflects some of the themes found in the state disability plan, Inclusive Victoria. Finally, the draft AAP ensures Council is fulfilling its legal commitments as expressed in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*.

The engagement findings suggest the AAP successfully identifies the needs of people with disability and demonstrates how it will address these within a local government context. While it is understood that an implementation plan will provide clarity in terms of priority areas, it is not hyperbole to state that both internal and external stakeholders support the plan and what it aims to achieve.



Introduction

Project background

Having an Accessibility Action Plan (AAP) in place aligns with the first Strategic Direction found in the Council Plan 2021-31, Inclusive Port Phillip. This direction has the objective of '*a city that is a place for all members of our community, where people feel supported and comfortable being themselves and expressing their identities*'. This Action Plan is a key part of Council's commitment to being inclusive and it is Council's fourth such plan.

Further, it is a legislative requirement that all Councils have in place an AAP as stated in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, outlining the pro-active steps that Council will take to reduce discrimination against those with disability. A current AAP also meets Council's obligations under the Victorian *Disability Act 2006*.

Along with legislative considerations, the draft AAP was developed and informed by an extensive range of inputs, reflecting the needs of the community, contemporary practice, and *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022-2026)*.

Council consulted with both external and internal stakeholders in 2021 and 2022 to help shape the new AAP. Due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time, all engagement occurred online or by phone. Through this process, various themes began to emerge and many of them have been incorporated into the draft plan. These included: enhanced mobility, strengthening opportunities to participate in community life, and access to information and participation in local decision-making.

Consultation with Port Phillip staff was held in 2021, providing an avenue for internal views to be captured and similarly considered for inclusion. This process yielded themes such as increasing the representation of people with disability in our workforce, building organisational capability and ensuring an accessible and inclusive workplace.

With the initial engagement concluded, a draft AAP was developed, considering the views from the numerous stakeholders and ideas that resonated strongly across the community. Numerous themes have been reflected in the draft AAP. Some of these include:

- Council being an advocate for people with disability and their carers
- Council adopting a human rights approach to disability, facilitating greater opportunities for inclusion
- Supporting universal design principles in both service delivery and built environments



Community and Council staff consultation

In planning for consultation, it was recognised the limited opportunity that was afforded to staff and community members in the draft AAP's formulation.

For this reason and to provide greater opportunity for feedback on the draft AAP, several changes were made to Council's usual engagement processes, as follows:

- A lengthier engagement period from 6 April to 28 May 2023
- Presentations on the draft AAP were delivered to all Council Advisory Committees
- Presentation followed by a Q and A opportunity held for Council's internal Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Staff Network
- Attendance at all eight Neighbourhood Engagement Program events held in the period
- Two information sessions were held for ASSIST team members, ensuring staff were knowledgeable of the draft AAP and aware of ways that community could provide feedback aside from online
- Along with a copy of the draft AAP and documents providing historical context, the Have Your Say page included a survey to ascertain peoples' views on the draft
- Hard copies of the draft AAP and survey were made available at reception at both St Kilda Town Hall and Port Melbourne Town Hall
- Two staff drop-in sessions were held (one online and one in person, each lasting an hour), allowing staff to ask questions on the draft AAP and provide feedback
- A two hour co-facilitated session held with members from VOSS (Voices of the South Side)
- A three hour drop-in session held at St Kilda Library with an AUSLAN interpreter
- In addition to the above, emails were sent to all disability service providers in the municipality, inviting their feedback; changes were made to the Accessibility and Disability page on the website, a page dedicated to information on disability; information was provided in the weekly staff newsletter, The Portal; mention of the plan was included in the CEO's weekly message, Divercity and a 90 minute 1:1 session was held with a community member experiencing low vision.

What we set out to achieve

The purpose of the draft Action Plan engagement process was to:

- Inform the community and Council staff of the role that Council can – and indeed must – play in reducing discrimination against people with disability in our city.
- Educate staff and the broader community on the draft's alliance with legislative requirements, the State-wide disability strategy and the Council Plan.
- Consult with the community and Council staff on the overall draft Action Plan, ultimately resulting in an Accessibility Action Plan that is responsive to community need.



What we did

Engagement activities

The feedback survey was mainly hosted online on Council's Have Your Say (HYS) page, although paper copies were also made available for the community at both St Kilda Town Hall and Port Melbourne Town Hall.

Accompanying the survey on the HYS page were several documents, allowing interested parties to understand the development of the draft AAP. These included:

1. The previous Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-21
2. City of Port Phillip Access and Inclusion Plan status report July 2021
3. Community Engagement Report (these detailed the findings that were used to inform the draft)
4. The Draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025

External engagement

Along with the survey on Have Your Say, the following external engagement activities took place:

- The project was advertised through the Have Your Say newsletter on three occasions – 22 March, 26 April and 16 May. The newsletter is sent to 2,412 subscribers.
- Council's Neighbourhood Engagement Program (NEP) included community conversations at Albert Park, Ripponlea Village, VegOut Farmers Market, Carlisle Street, Port Melbourne, Elwood Farmers Market, St Kilda Road and South Melbourne Market. All sessions featured an activity board where community members provided their thoughts and feedback on the five key focus areas, inviting them to consider which would have the greatest impact for people with disability and their carers. A quick poll was used as an initial engagement tool, asking how many people live with disability in the municipality – 1 in 5, 1 in 10 or 1 in 15.

Presentations on the draft AAP were delivered to the following Advisory Committees:

- Older Persons Advisory Committee (OPAC)
- LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee
- Multifaith Network
- Multicultural Advisory Committee

A structured, two hour co-facilitated session was held with 12 participants from Voices of the South Side (VOSS). VOSS is a two year Federally funded project that aims to reduce the marginalisation of social & public housing communities in Port Melbourne and South Melbourne through community arts and community development. Participants were paid for their time, recognising the importance of lived experience in the plan's development.



A three hour drop-in session was held at St Kilda Library with an AUSLAN interpreter. The same engagement tools were employed as the NEPs, with an interactive quiz and invitation to remark on the five focus areas found in the draft Plan.

A 90 minute, in-person session was provided to a community member with low vision who was unable to read the draft Plan as she does not utilise a screen reader.

Three phone calls on the draft were taken from community members.

In addition to the above, emails were sent to all disability service providers in the City, inviting their feedback; changes were made to the Accessibility and Disability page on the website, a page dedicated to information on disability; the draft Action Plan was mentioned as one of the projects open for feedback in Council's monthly e-newsletter, *Diversity* and Facebook posts were written to promote the draft AAP at the NEPs.

Lastly, posters were placed in libraries and local Neighbourhood Houses and hard copies of the draft plan and survey were mailed out to two community members upon their request.

Internal engagement

Reflecting the increase in external engagement, internal opportunities for engagement were similarly offered. These comprised:

- Information on the draft Plan included in the fortnightly Portal Newsletter, promoting the staff drop-in sessions on 12 May 2023
- CEO email update to all staff on Tuesday 18 April 2023
- An email was sent to all staff working with older residents and providing in-home support, highlighting the plan and its potential relevance to their work
- Two 15 minute presentations to ASSIST staff. This was to ensure that staff would know about and respond to any queries about the draft and further know who to contact if needed. Two sessions were run to ensure that all staff could attend
- A formal presentation was delivered to the internal Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Staff Network. The Network comprises staff who have disability or are allies of those who do. A question-and-answer session followed
- Two staff drop-in sessions were held (one online and one in-person, each lasting an hour). After a brief presentation on the draft Plan, staff were invited to stay, ask questions and provide any feedback

Participation

Levels of participation varied across the different engagement platforms.

With 122 participants in total, the NEP in-person engagement sessions proved to be the preferred option, with community members being willing to discuss the plan, complete the short poll and choose which focus area would have the greatest impact on people living with disability and their carers.

It should be stated however that engagement varied depending on the location of the NEP. While there was great engagement at the Elwood Farmer’s Market, the South Melbourne Market did not replicate this.

Only the St Kilda Library event was promoted as a standalone post on Facebook as the Communications Team anticipated that social media posts on the draft plan would not generate a high level of engagement.

The HYS page had the least level of engagement with only 10 people completing the survey. While not statistically significant, respondents provided some considered feedback in the free text space of the survey.

Interestingly, while the survey results were minimal, there was interest in the Have Your Say page, with 199 visitors with nearly half of these (47.74%) returning to the page for at least a second time. Similarly, interest in the draft plan itself was piqued, with data showing it was downloaded 99 times.

In addition to the digital and online options, there was one community member who wanted to discuss the plan in more detail and share their feedback this way. This instance was as a direct result of the presentation that was provided to OPAC members.

Staff engagement and participation in events discussing the draft AAP however was encouraging. The online drop-in session saw 30 staff members in attendance and three staff attended the in-person session, with all three providing feedback on the draft Plan.

The ASSIST information sessions were similarly well attended, with virtually all staff being able to attend over the two sessions.

Who we heard from

Demographic characteristics of respondents were not collected in a quantitative way. However, attendance at NEP sessions indicates that a broad cross section of the community were offered the opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the draft AAP. The demographic characteristics of NEP attendees are outlined in the Appendix and indicate a representative mix of residents by age, gender, suburb and ratepayer status.

The facilitated session with VOSS group participants were recruited to ensure a cross section of disability type, age, gender and suburb. Again, demographics were not quantified.

Formal Submissions

Formal submissions were received from the Older Person’s Advisory Committee (OPAC), the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee and the internal Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Staff Network.

What we heard

As part of the engagement at the Neighbourhood Engagement Program, participants were invited to place a dot in the box that they felt best represented their answer to two questions, a form of engagement known as ‘dotmocracy’.

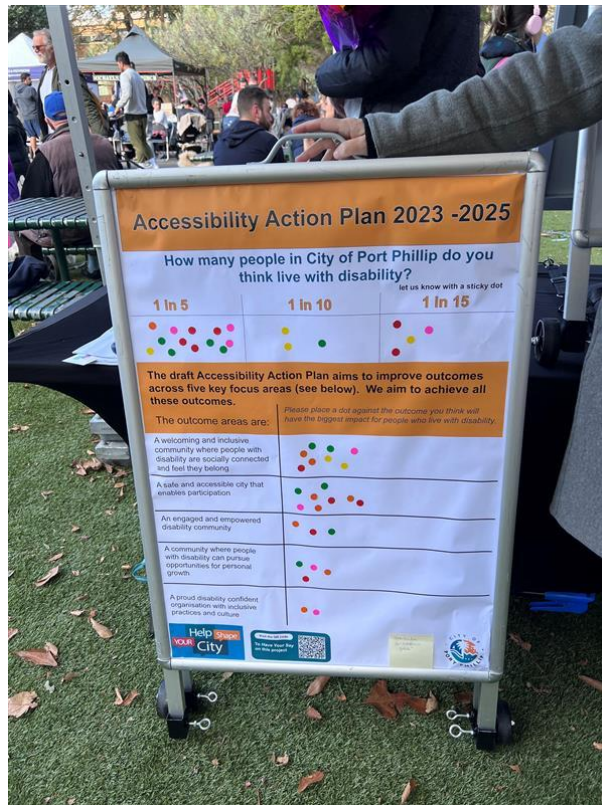


Figure 1 – Dotmocracy in action

[Image ID – a display stand in an outdoor setting with questions on the left and colourful dotted stickers in the boxes next to them, indicating the question’s popularity]

A total of 112 people provided feedback across all NEPs and the session held at the library.

Engagement totals to each of the questions are seen below.

Question 1: How many people in the City of Port Phillip do you think live with Disability?

1 in 5	1 in 10	1 in 15
48 dots in total	46 dots in total	13 dots in total



Question 2: The draft Accessibility Action Plan aims to improve outcomes across five key areas (see below). We aim to achieve all these outcomes.

The outcome areas are:	Please place a dot against the outcome you think will have the biggest impact for people who live with disability
A welcoming and inclusive community where people with disability are socially connected and feel they belong	30 dots in total
A safe and accessible city that enables participation	38 dots in total
An engaged and empowered disability community	13 dots in total
A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth	21 dots in total
A proud disability confident organisation with inclusive practices and culture	10 dots in total

It should be noted that one person had remarked on the page that they felt the number of people living with disability would be even less than 1 in 15. The correct answer was 1 in 5. People were very often surprised by the 1 in 5 answer.

Support and Feedback for Strategies by Focus Area

Given the varied engagement options, data sources were similarly diverse. Consequently, findings have been grouped together under Focus Areas as articulated in the draft Accessibility Action Plan. Not only does this reflect the structure that the community were invited to provide feedback, it further considers the way the draft AAP itself is framed.

Overall, it was felt that the draft AAP adequately responds to the needs of people with disability and their carers, despite a thorough critique of the document by some community members and staff. There was nothing that was deemed inappropriate or not worthy of inclusion and commentary focused on refinement of the document rather than significant changes needing to be made.

There was a general understanding of the importance of an Accessibility Action Plan that demonstrates how Council will actively work to mitigate discrimination against people with disability and their carers. During the in-person sessions at the NEPs it was explained to community members how the plan relates to the Council Plan, the State Disability Plan and that it is a legislative requirement. Not a single person criticised Council for having a draft AAP or felt that the AAP was not needed.



Support and feedback for strategies under focus area/outcome 1

Focus area 1: Council as Leader

Outcome: A welcoming and inclusive community where people with disability are socially connected and feel they belong

Strategies:

- Promote disability awareness within our community
- Promote equitable participation in community activities, through Council and community partners providing a diverse range of accessible arts, cultural, sport and recreational programs and events

Feedback on this Focus Area was largely regarded positively, with some comments pertaining to the structure or nuances of the wording, for increased clarity. Direct feedback from the NEPs indicated that people saw this Focus Area second in terms of which would have the greatest impact on people with disability and their carers.

Specific commentary on the strategies largely added to the action plans rather than criticised them. One participant stated:

- *“It would be good to mention how a co-design process might be implemented for some of the actions outlined. For example, co-design of the IDPwD in Action 1.2.”*

And there was a nod to the importance of building on work undertaken previously through Council’s Accessibility Action Plan with this comment:

- *“All Council Grants should have in the eligibility criteria a condition that applicants must demonstrate how their project/program encourages inclusion for all - encouragement isn’t enough? (refer Action 1.4). This builds on the work achieved in the previous plan which launched accessibility and disability inclusion fact sheets to support audiences such as arts grant applicants, and sport and recreation providers.”*

An example of how the wording and structure might be changed was:

- *“Strategy number 2 appears to conflate the concept of “leader” with service provision.”*
- *“Strategy number 2 should be separated out into individual strategies to enable ease of monitoring.”*
- *““Council as a leader” – Would need to demonstrate more than building awareness and promoting inclusive practice. Either reword as Council as an “ally” or “advocate” or enunciate actions more consistent with leadership role to be played.”*

Accessible beach matting as outlined in Action 1.7 was remarked on in more than one context. While seen as largely favourable, there was the occasional comment as to how it could be improved, such as:

- *“They only do it [have the accessible matting] when the lifesaving club is open so if you want to access the beach when the lifesaving club isn’t open, you can’t. You can only do it when the club is open.”*



Support and feedback for strategies under focus area/outcome 2

Focus area 2: Council as Service Provider and Advocate

Outcome: A safe and accessible city that enables participation in community life

Strategies:

- Apply a universal design approach to improving the safety and accessibility of public spaces, streets, community buildings and facilities
- Advocate for initiatives that deliver enhanced accessibility and inclusion in the City of Port Phillip
- Build understanding of accessibility and inclusive practices amongst our local Business community

This Focus Area undoubtedly garnered the greatest feedback across all engagement domains, with most comments pertaining to transport and the concept of universal design. At NEPs, it was felt that out of all five Focus Areas, this one would have the greatest impact on people with disability and their carers. Similarly to Focus Area 1 however, there was large support for the initiatives being proposed.

The LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee questioned the word ‘Advocate’ in the Focus Area’s title however, commenting that:

- *“The concept of “advocate” is not defined nor explained with the draft AAP. It appears to have a significant overlap with the concept of a leader and does not necessarily accord with a human rights and disability justice model informed. Those with disability are able to advocate for themselves if the current power imbalances and structures are dismantled.”*

Universal and Co Design Principles

There were several comments that correlated the principle of universal design with co-design, noting how the two can compliment each other and lead to more informed outcomes for people with disability and their carers. The below statements exemplify this:

- *“Can universal design ensure all accessibility and inclusion issues are covered, without a culture of co-design with people with disability?”*
- *“The putting into practice of universal design across service delivery and engagement would be great with the element of co-design approach.”*

Transport

Transport was the most discussed item from all Focus Areas and across all engagement sessions. Although there was recognition that this issue is broader than Council’s capacity to change it, some participants were still keen to share these views.

Commentary from Have Your Say included:

- *“DDA compliant tram stops throughout Port Phillip for example at St Kilda Junction tram stop 30 is the only tram stop along the length of St Kilda Road from the CBD to Carlisle Street that is not DDA compliant yet thousands of people per year commute to and from it. There are a number of other tram stops within Port Phillip that are not DDA complaint.”*
- [I want] *“accessible trams on the Carnegie line”*



The following two comments were made by community members. One in a stand-alone, 1:1 session and another over the phone:

- *“Does 2.4 include disability parking? There’s not much of this at the moment.”*
- *“I’m in a wheelchair and getting around is really hard.”*

A staff member at the in-person drop-in session noted the challenges with public transport as well, stating:

- *“There is a mis-match between accessible tram stops and trams.”*

VOSS participants voiced their frustration at the lack of accessible transport options in the municipality, citing that

- *“It shouldn’t have to take you a whole day to move across the city.”*

While recognising that some areas were manageable, there was a firm belief that the city is not disability friendly when it comes to public transport options.

Community Bus

A point of contention within the VOSS session surrounded the demise of the community bus and changes to the service. It was felt that cost cutting and streamlining took place during COVID with changes being made that were detrimental to those with disability and had significant impact on the local community. There is no longer a timetable and instead residents need to book the bus. Buses also used to be available to community groups to hire and that service no longer exists at all.

Participants commented that the booking process is extremely restrictive with community members feeling like you have to make an appointment – this does not facilitate engagement with community activities as you are being dictated as to how you spend your time. The restriction around booking is another challenge given that you can only do this over the phone or online and several in the room aired their concerns about CALD community members being able to do this. It was firmly felt that the system now stifles inclusion. A remark exemplifying the sentiment in the room was:

- *“You shouldn’t have to be burdened so much.”*

When asked at the end of the VOSS session what participants would change if money was no barrier, the answer was improved transport options (both public and Council run) with better connectivity.

Businesses

Action item 2.10 was discussed at some length in the VOSS session, particularly finding ways to engage with businesses. One participant suggested that a dedicated Council officer be employed to work with businesses, educating them on how to engage people with disability, particularly those experiencing mental health challenges. It was further suggested that an accreditation scheme could be developed for local traders, similarly to the rainbow tick, or something even less formal. This would indicate to people with disability and their carers that the establishment is safe, compliant and welcoming.



This was supported by the following comments from HYS respondents:

- *“Action 2.10 could be enhanced with an Accessible Business grant to improve access to businesses for disabled people. Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has implemented a funding stream in their business assistance grants.”*
- *“Disappointingly one local restaurant doesn’t want my friends guide dog to accompany him, they want the guide dog left behind the reception area. Council should be stepping in and dealing with this with education.”*

One response noted the importance of involving businesses with the rollout of any education or toolkit however, noting:

- *“Has the Traders Association been involved with this? Who is going to have time to read a toolkit?”*

Support and feedback for strategies under focus area/outcome 3

Focus area 3: Council as an Ally

Outcome: An engaged and empowered disability community

Strategy:

- Ensure equitable opportunities to participate in the engagement and civic decision-making processes of Council

Similarly to transport, a common point of discussion was the development of a Disability Advisory Committee (DAC), or some other formal mechanism. People were largely supportive of this and exploring its development was very well received. Some noted the importance of implementing co-design principles such as this very succinct statement on Have Your Say:

- *“Co-designing is important.”*

The quote below from the ADI Network submission provides a lengthier argument of support, incorporating the State Disability Plan:

- *“I can’t see how inclusion can be achieved without a commitment to co-design with people with disability, like the State Plan. A huge issue in the disability inclusion space is when decisions are made for or about people with disability by people without disability. If Council want to be inclusive, they need to commit to not repeating the mistakes of the past by leaving people with disability out the conversation when making decisions that will affect them.*

*The outcomes in the table on page 13 can’t be achieved unless CoPP actively supports the strategic reform in the State Disability Plan, **co-design with people with disability AND the principal of nothing about us without us.**” [their bolding]*

Several parties quoted the common adage of ‘nothing about us without us’. This saying exemplifies a way of working with and for people with disability that moves beyond advocacy and instead sees the lived experience of people with disability as integral and indeed central to decision making.



It was noted that Council has numerous advisory committees, and the absence of a DAC was apparent.

One staff member pointed to other successful models already found within Council, along with the benefits that could be enjoyed as a staff member, stating the following:

- *“I would recommend that the Older Person’s Advisory Committee (OPAC) would be a good model to have for a DAC. As a staff member, OPAC are a great resource to consult on for a range of issues”*

Feedback from the Have Your Say page echoed support for an advisory committee found elsewhere through the engagement channels:

- *“A disability oversight committee could be established to ensure the Accessibility Action Plan is being implemented in a timely manner and to advocate where gaps in the plan are identified.”*

Commentary on this Focus Area from the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee was very supportive of an advisory committee being established:

- *“The Committee supports the creation and establishment of a representative or consultative body which permits persons with disability, carers and organisations to make direct representations and provide advice to Council.”*

This support was reflected by a community member with low vision, during a 1:1 session:

- *“I would be very supportive of a Disability Advisory Committee”*

And further supported by the Port Phillip Multifaith Network who stated their support for a Disability Advisory Committee during their meeting on 1 May, 2023:

- *“Council should support the establishment of an advisory committee; [it’s] important to have deep level on engagement with people with lived experience.”*

This was also reinforced by feedback from the ADI Network, despite requesting a change to the wording:

- *“The language in this action provides the opportunity for Council to not follow through with establishing this forum. Suggest change to: ‘Establish a forum of persons with lived experience of disability for effective, on-going participation of community and disability sector representatives, to inform Council decisions on policy and services throughout the duration of this Plan.’”*

A further comment from the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee also questioned the usage of the word ‘ally’:

- *“The Committee supports the concept of Council as an ally but emphasises the importance of a strong theoretical foundation to explain how and why allyship is important.”*

In closing, it is interesting to note that without prompting and before the VOSS participants knew the Focus Areas in the draft AAP, one participant suggested a committee be established, stating:

- *“There probably needs to be a Disability Advisory Committee at Council”*

This comment garnered much support from the group as it was seen as a way to address the lack of communication between community members and Council (this will be explored in greater detail under Overall Themes, below).



Support and feedback for strategies under focus area/outcome 4

Focus area 4: Council as a Consumer and Leader

Outcome: A community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth

Strategies:

- Promote development opportunities for people with disability
- Partner with suppliers who demonstrate equitable and inclusive practices for people with disability

In several NEP sessions, there was a slight confusion with the wording of this Outcome Area as it was felt that it did not align with the Actions. People considered the concept of personal growth as something akin to a hobby or pursuit that one may engage with, rather than it being related to employment or volunteering. A community member at the Carlisle Street site was adamant that the best way for someone – anyone – to feel valued is through gainful employment and was therefore extremely supportive of this Focus Area and associated Outcome.

Similarly, a resident at the Albert Park site suggested Council should consider who it purchases goods and services from, ensuring those businesses do not discriminate against people with disability and was pleased to see this included in the draft Plan.

The topic of intersectionality arose in several settings during the engagement period (Action 4.2). Feedback from OPAC questioned the phrase in the first instance, asking:

- *“What does this mean – should it be reworded?”*

Similarly, a 1:1 session with a community member asked:

- *“What does this mean?”*

Feedback from the LGBTIQ+ Advisory Committee also pointed out the importance of intersectionality and its application in contemporary thinking, commenting that:

- *“The Committee emphasises that the draft LGBTIQ+ Action Plan acknowledges the experiences of our diverse communities including those living with disability. An understanding of **intersectionality** is fundamental to understanding the unique struggles faced by LGBTIQ+ persons living with disability.”* (their bolding)

Support and feedback for strategies under focus area/outcome 5

Focus area 5: Council as a Service Provider and Workplace

Outcome: A proud disability confident organisation with inclusive practices and culture

Strategies:

- Apply universal design principles and practice across our services to ensure they are inclusive, equitable and flexible.
- Build workforce capability in disability inclusive practice.

- Ensure the customer experience for people with disability is inclusive and made easy.
- Ensure we are an employer of choice for people with disability.

Of all the Outcome Areas in the draft AAP, this was the one that received the least level of interest from the community during the in-person Neighbourhood Engagement sessions. Community members could not always see the relevance of internal changes, training, etc. and how these might impact people with disability and their carers. Only 10 people felt that this Outcome Area would have the biggest impact for people with disability, with 38 people choosing Outcome Area number 2, as mentioned above.

This Outcome Area was however a point raised in some of the written submissions.

Feedback from the ADI Network had numerous questions about this Outcome Area, inviting consideration for re-wording, reframing or in some cases removing altogether, as demonstrated here:

- *“If this “knowledge bank” is similar to a toolkit, it’s likely to be forgotten. It would be better if this was imbedded in our policies and procedures.”*
- *“Is there a framework for what renders an organisation an Employer of Choice for people with disability that we can reference? Hiring people with disability doesn’t talk to the requirements to address the barriers faced by these employees during the employee lifecycle”*
- *“Action 5.6 should be stronger worded to address this and make an overhaul of this an action.”*

Support for universal design however was encouraging:

- *“...universal design is a way of removing the requirement for people with disability to request accommodations (bare-minimum requirement by law). Accommodations demand a person make their condition known to others and often have the effect of excluding a person via good intentions. UD bridges that gap.”*

Universal design and the role of this at Council was also raised at one of the staff drop-in sessions, specific to Focus Area 5. A member of the ASSIST team noted that the only accessible window for a person who requires a wheelchair, sees the staff member being significantly elevated on the other side of the screen. This can easily lead to the community member feeling intimidated. This was also noted by OPAC’s submission when they asked:

- *“Does ASSIST counter at SKTH have a lowered counter for wheelchair customers enabling them to communicate with staff in a dignified way?”*

Overall Themes

There were three topics that came through the feedback that while sitting outside of the scope of the Accessibility Action Plan are worthy of mention due to their repetition.

The first of these was communication and the perception of Council’s current role. It was felt that Council staff are not seen in the community and therefore may not have a realistic view of where the need for change is. VOSS participants were particularly vocal on this point, stating that Council staff used to be more involved with community activities pertaining to people with disability and



attend more community events. There was much discussion on creating a role within Council that could be the conduit between the community and the Council and vice versa as it was perceived that there is a gap between what Council is doing in the community and what the community needs. This thought was echoed by a HYS respondent when they stated:

- *“Get out of the office, come and meet my neighbor (sic) as we’ve requested so he can share his lived experiences...”*

This was a view shared by a community member with low vision:

- *“How will Council get feedback from the community about what needs doing?”*

It was believed that this role might also address the communication concern that has been created for those who were reliant on the printed version of the Divercity newsletter, no longer being offered in a hardcopy format. Participants were very concerned about the reliance on digital communication tools being employed at Council and noted the impacts that this has on people with disability, their carers and community members from CALD backgrounds.

Along with this being discussed at several in person sessions, OPAC’s submission also noted the communication issue as something that could be considered by asking:

- *“Publications – Will there be other written publications now that Divercity is only online?”*

The second issue that was repeated was the need for further explanation on some of the wording, definitions and models that the draft plan adopts. Some wanted to have greater clarity on the word ‘disability’ itself with certainty provided on what ‘type’ of disability the term – and therefore the plan’s application – included.

OPAC further commented on the ‘wordiness’ of the plan itself, stating that a lot of ‘motherhood’ statements were made that may confuse the community.

The LGBTIQ+ and ADI Network submissions provide commentary on the social model of disability and the human rights model, suggesting greater emphasis on why these models underpin the plan. The LGBTIQ+ report states:

- *“Would like to know why the human rights and social model were used for the plan - needs to be explicit”*

Finally, the topic that was of considerable focus across all engagement platforms was scooters. People were quick to point to examples where they have either tripped over a scooter, they have been hazardous in terms of accessibility requirements (such as them being left across footpaths) or they have caused shock due to how quiet they are upon approaching someone from behind.



Next steps

The upcoming activities related to the draft Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025

Finalise Accessibility Action Plan 2023 - 2025

Consolidate community consultation feedback and finalise the Accessibility Action Plan.

June-July 2023

Accessibility Action Plan 2023 - 2025 presented to Council for endorsement

August 2023

Launch the new Accessibility Action Plan 2023 - 2025

September 2023

Lodgement of the Accessibility Action Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission

Late 2023

To stay informed about this project, visit the Have Your Say project page at:

[Accessibility Action Plan \(AAP\) 2023 - 2025 | Have Your Say Port Phillip](#)



Appendices

Appendix One

Demographics below relate to the 122 NEP attendees.

Participants by suburb

From the demographics captured, 122 people provided responses on the draft AAP. A higher proportion (22%) resided in Middle Park while Port Melbourne (14%), St Kilda (13%) and South Melbourne (12%) was also well represented.

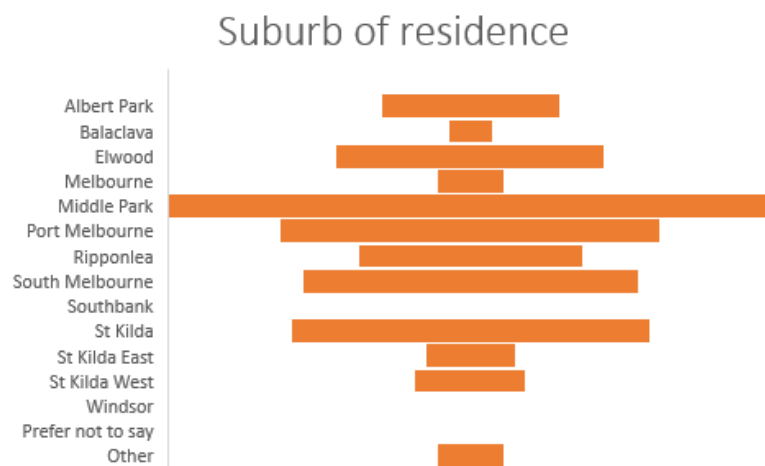


Figure 2 – Results for Residential Suburb



Gender of participants

Women represented 55.74% (68 people) of people we spoke to at the sessions. Men made up 42.62% (52 people).

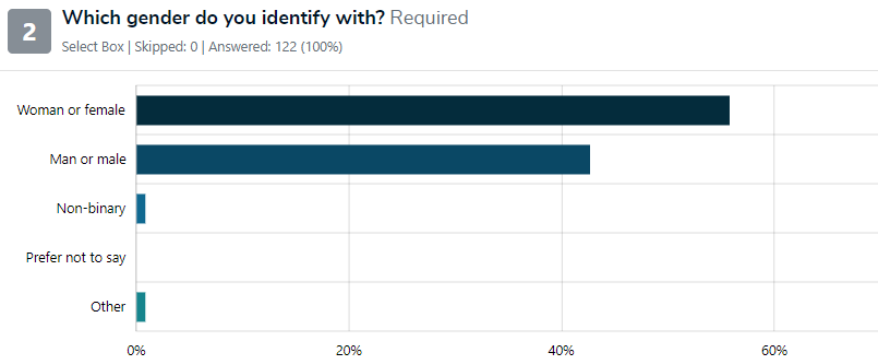


Figure 3 – Results for Participants’ Genders

Comparing this data to the wider Census data conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics is quite revealing.

The findings demonstrate that 42.62% of participants identified as male, which is lower than the Port Phillip population where males make up 49%. The reverse is true for females where, 55.74% of participants identified as female, which is higher than the Port Phillip population with females constituting 51% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021). This may suggest the role that gender often plays in paid and unpaid care provided to people with disability. This is further supported by the number of females who completed the Have Your Say survey (9) as opposed to males (1).

Age of participants

Participants’ ages ranged widely with the youngest contributor being 15 and the oldest being 90 years of age. The largest age bracket represented was 35-49 however 38% of people that we spoke with were between the ages of 50 and 69 while only 23% of 50-69 year olds reside in Port Phillip, again according to Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2021.

Similar to gender, these findings on age were also reflected in the Have Your Say data, as no one under the age of 50 completed the survey.

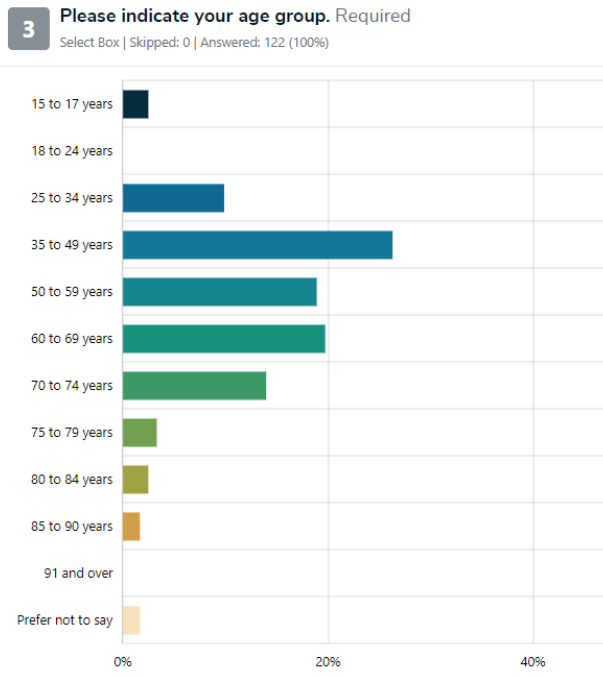


Figure 4 – Participants’ Age Groups

Ratepayer Status

A significant number (73%) of respondents were ratepayers, however this may have been due to the engagement on the draft AAP taking place in concert with the Council Plan and Budget.

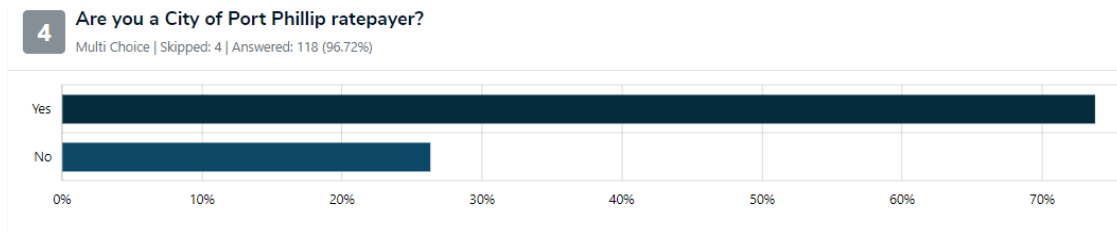


Figure 5 – Participants’ Ratepayer Status



Appendix Two

External Community Survey – Have Your Say Page

- Prior to providing feedback, participants were advised of how the survey related to the outcomes and strategies included in the draft AAP, the layout reflecting the five focus areas found in the Plan.

- Questions were sorted by focus area, outcomes and strategies. For each focus area and outcome, their corresponding strategies were listed, and a Likert Scale response requested for each, using the following:
 - *Very supportive*
 - *Supportive*
 - *Neutral*
 - *Unsupportive*
 - *Very unsupportive*

These questions were asked for the Likert Scale responses for their respective focus areas:

- Focus area/outcome 1 – *“How supportive are you of the following strategies that will see Port Phillip be a welcoming and inclusive community where people with disability are socially connected and feel they belong?”*
- Focus area/outcome 2 – *“How supportive are you of the following strategies to make sure that our City is safe and accessible and enables participation in community life?”*
- Focus area/outcome 3 – *“How supportive are you of the following strategy to have an engaged and empowered disability community?”*
- Focus area/outcome 4 – *“How supportive are you of the strategies that will result in a community where people with disability can pursue opportunities for personal growth?”*
- Focus area/outcome 5 – *“How supportive are you of these strategies to ensure Council partners with suppliers who demonstrate equitable and inclusive practices for people with disability?”*



- A table with the related strategies sat adjacent to the focus area, and it was on this that respondents were invited to judge using the scale above, as demonstrated here with question 3:

Q3) How supportive are you of the following strategy to have an engaged and empowered disability community? (Please tick)

	Very unsupportive	Unsupportive	Neutral	Supportive	Very supportive
Ensure equitable opportunities to participate in the engagement and decision-making processes of Council					

- Following each focus area, participants were invited to provide further insights in relation to that specific focus area. For example:

3a) Are there any other strategies that could lead to an engaged and empowered disability community?

- The penultimate question explored the concept of universal design, given its focus in the plan. A small description of this theory was provided before the question was asked:
 - *“Do you support Council taking a universal design approach in relation to the draft Accessibility Action Plan?”*
- The final question in the survey asked participants to consider any aspects of the plan that had not been covered or already included, by asking:
 - *“Aside from what has been listed above, are there any gaps that you can identify in the draft Accessibility Action Plan and if so, what are these?”*

Participants were asked to respond to a range of demographic questions, including, indicating which was applicable to them. These included:

- *I am a person with a disability*
- *I am a carer*
- *I work for an organisation in the area of accessibility and disability inclusion*
- *Their connection to the City of Port Phillip (e.g. resident, business owner)*