



9.4 ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN 2019 - 2021: EXTENSION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on implementation of the Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2021 and consider endorsement of an extension to the timeframe, to ensure a current plan is maintained until a new Access Action Plan is adopted.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Council's current Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2021 (*also known as a Disability Action Plan*) concludes at the end of December 2021. Development, including engagement, of Port Phillip's new Accessibility Action Plan is underway but will extend into 2022.
- 2.2 Community and staff engagement took place in July/August 2021 to help shape strategic directions and actions for the new plan. This process has highlighted the need to undertake further engagement, with both internal and external stakeholders, to explore accessibility and disability inclusion issues more deeply prior to developing a draft Accessibility Action Plan for wider community feedback.
- 2.3 To demonstrate Council's ongoing commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion, and to meet our obligation under the Disability Act 2006 (Victoria) to have a disability action plan in place, an extension to the timeframe of the current Access and Inclusion Plan is proposed until Council adopts the new Accessibility Action Plan (revised from May to October 2022).

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Formally receives and notes the progress of the current Access and Inclusion Plan 2019-2021, as reflected in the published Access and Inclusion Plan Status Report (July 2021) provided at Attachment 1.
- 3.2 Endorses an extension of the timeframe of the current Access and Inclusion Plan until such time as Council endorses a new Accessibility Action Plan (scheduled by October 2022).

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 Council's current Access and Inclusion Plan formally concludes at the end of December 2021. Consultation and development of Port Phillip's new Accessibility Action Plan is underway, however the need for further engagement and research to inform the new Plan will require the timeframes for the current Plan to be extended to October 2022.
- 4.2 Extension of the timeframe of the current Access and Inclusion Plan will:
 - 4.2.1 Demonstrate Council's ongoing commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion.



- 4.2.2 Enable alignment to the new Victorian State Disability Plan 2021 – 2025 which is yet to be released (anticipated December 2021).

Development of the new Victorian State Disability Plan has been delayed and advice on the Victorian State Disability Plan website is that '*The current state disability plan, "Absolutely everyone" will remain in place until the new plan is released*'.

- 4.2.3 Enable additional community and staff engagement to explore accessibility and disability inclusion issues more deeply, to further inform development of a draft Accessibility Action Plan.

Status of current Access and Inclusion Plan

- 4.3 A Status Report on the current plan was published in July 2021 (Attachment 1). This formed part of a first-round of community engagement process for the new Accessibility Action Plan.

- 4.4 This report highlights achievements to date, including:

- An online participatory creative performance video titled 'Got the Magic', produced as part of our celebration and acknowledgment of International Day of People with Disability.
- Introduction of Accessibility and Disability inclusion fact sheets to support a range of audiences such as arts grant applicants, and sport and recreation providers.
- Introduction of the new Council website, which has seen a drop of 38 per cent in accessibility issues.
- Incorporation of improved design features and accessibility for public space and parks in the municipality. In addition, progress has been made on accessibility improvements for a range of community infrastructure and asset planning projects.
- ASSIST team front service counter at the South Melbourne Town Hall awarded with the Scope Communication Access qualification in December 2019, and retention of Communication Access status at all other front service counters and the call centre.
- Launch of a Carer Information Hub on Council's website, detailing what services are available from Council for carers, local carer led support groups, and key government led resources and programs.
- Introduction of an online Accessibility and Disability Inclusion toolkit for staff, featuring resources to help staff create an equitable workplace and inclusive community.
- Successful grant application for the City of Port Phillip to participate in a work experience program for people with disability (funders/sponsors: Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program and Office for Disability in Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)). A paid internship program was designed for tertiary students/graduates with disability.



- 4.5 While most actions in the current Plan are well progressed, two actions related to Council's social procurement engagement (actions 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) have been delayed. These and a number of other actions can benefit from an extended timeframe for delivery, and will build further maturity in Council's approach to accessibility and disability inclusion leading into the new Plan, including:
- 4.5.1 Incorporating universal access into the design of public space and other infrastructure assets.
 - 4.5.2 Working with community partners to build capacity within the municipality.
 - 4.5.3 Awareness and support for people with disability to equitably participate in community events and activities.

Process to develop new Accessibility Action Plan

- 4.6 The development of a new Accessibility Action Plan has commenced, with a first round of community engagement now completed. A report is being prepared to assist with further targeted engagement and to inform actions to be included in a draft Accessibility Action Plan.
- 4.7 The original timeline to seek Council endorsement of the new Plan was scheduled for May 2022, following second-round community consultation on the draft Plan.
- 4.8 The first-round community engagement has however, highlighted the need to undertake further engagement to explore some accessibility and disability inclusion issues more deeply, prior to finalising the draft Accessibility Action Plan for wider community feedback.
- 4.9 Whilst 34 survey responses were received, there is the opportunity to further engage with key stakeholder on these emerging issues, and also to connect with members of the community whose voices may not have yet been heard about the things that matter to them. Targeted engagement with the community and key service providers is proposed.
- 4.10 Community engagement to date has indicated the following themes for further exploration and development in the new Plan:
- 4.10.1 Enhanced mobility within the city including access routes to transport, accessible parking, footpath design, accessible toilets, and places to sit.
 - 4.10.2 Strengthening opportunities to participate in community life including beach access, playground design, employment pathways, arts and recreation.
 - 4.10.3 Access to information and participation in local decision making.
- 4.11 Further engagement can also be informed by and align with the directions of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2021 – 2025 (scheduled for release in December 2021)
- 4.12 The need for some deeper engagement will result in a longer time-period for the development of the draft Plan. It is anticipated that the draft plan will now be available in July 2022 for community feedback through the Have Your Say platform, with a view to finalising the plan for Council's endorsement by October 2022. A detailed timeline is set out in the Implementation Strategy section (part 11) of this report.



5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 A first-round of community engagement took place in July and August 2021, inviting the community to provide feedback and input to help shape Council's next Accessibility Action Plan:
- 5.1.1 A survey was the primary method used to invite people to provide input, to gain an understanding of where the community perceives Council could focus its efforts to increase participation of persons with disability, and to remove barriers that may prevent someone from participating in economic, social and community life.
 - 5.1.2 The community engagement was promoted through social media channels, emails to external organisations and groups via service networks, a mailout to Council's subscriber list for accessibility and disability inclusion topics, and mentions in TWiSK ('This Week in St Kilda' community-run e-newsletter) and Council's Divercity Online e-newsletter.
 - 5.1.3 Council's Access and Inclusion Planner also shared information regarding the consultation in online sessions with the Older Persons Advisory Committee and the Multifaith Advisory Committee.
 - 5.1.4 While Council has a limited direct role in community capacity building for people with disability and is not a disability service provider (NDIS), the consultation for the new Plan successfully yielded 34 survey responses.
 - 5.1.5 A report with the engagement findings will be made available to Council and the community, both for awareness and to support the next phase of deeper engagement with stakeholders, prior to publishing a draft plan for further community feedback.
 - 5.1.6 Community consultation for the current Access and Inclusion Plan was limited to inviting feedback on the draft plan. In contrast, building engagement into the development of the new plan, to gauge community sentiment and to shape the overall direction of the plan, provides for a more participatory approach and will strengthen relationships with the community on accessibility and disability inclusion initiatives in Port Phillip.
- 5.2 Staff consultation has also taken place, with all employees invited to contribute input and share insights. Staff were able to participate in online workshops and forums and were provided the option of completing an anonymous survey. This engagement was undertaken as a joint consultation associated with the development of Port Phillip's Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A disability action plan reflects Council's commitment to improve the equitable participation and inclusion of people with disability within the community, and to work towards the elimination of disability discrimination.
- 6.2 Disability Action Plans are a legislative requirement for local government. The Victorian Disability Act (2006) states:

(1) A public sector body must ensure that a Disability Action Plan is prepared for the purpose of—



- (a) *reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;*
- (b) *reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;*
- (c) *promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;*
- (d) *achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.'*

(Source: Victorian Legislation, 'Disability Act 2006', retrieved 17 May 2021, <<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/disability-act-2006/043>>.)

6.3 A disability action plan also assists Council in meeting its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Equal Opportunity Act (2010).

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

7.1 There is no direct budget impact of extending the date for the current Plan.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 No environmental impact is anticipated.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

9.1 Extension of the current plan will continue to demonstrate Council's commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion. The community will have the opportunity to contribute further to the development of the plan, including through 'Have Your Say' on the draft Accessibility Action Plan.

9.2 The community will be informed of the revised timeline and of the Community Engagement Report on the first-round community consultation, via the Accessibility and Disability Inclusion webpage.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

10.1 Having a disability action plan meets our obligations under the Disability Act 2006 (Victoria), and is aligned with the strategic direction of the Council Plan 2021-31 for an '*Inclusive Port Phillip*' and the strategy that '*Port Phillip is more accessible and welcoming for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities*'.

10.2 Council's current Access and Inclusion Plan has already contributed to more inclusive practices at Council. The new Accessibility Action Plan will aim to continue the effecting of positive change for community members and Port Phillip staff with disability, through our ongoing commitment to inclusion and access for all.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

11.1 TIMELINE

11.1.1 The timeframe for key stages in development of the new Access Action Plan is summarised in the table below:

MEETING OF THE PORT PHILLIP CITY COUNCIL 1 DECEMBER 2021



Activity	Timeframe
Council endorsement of extension of current Access and Inclusion Plan	December 2021
Inform community of revised timeline	December 2021
Development of draft Accessibility Action Plan (includes further stakeholder engagement)	By April/May 2022
Council consideration of release of draft Accessibility Action Plan for community and staff feedback	June 2022
Community and staff consultation on draft plan ('Have Your Say')	July 2022
Consolidate community consultation feedback and finalise the Accessibility Action Plan	August 2022
Council endorsement	By October 2022
Launch the new Accessibility Action Plan and commission an Easy English version	October/November 2022
Lodgement of the Accessibility Action Plan with the Australian Human Rights Commission	November 2022

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 The Community Engagement report with information on the first-round community consultation will be made available on Council's website.
- 11.2.2 The revised timeline for release of a new Accessibility Action Plan will be published on Council's Website.
- 11.2.3 Messaging will highlight Council's continued commitment to accessibility and disability inclusion, and its desire to meaningfully engage to inform the new Accessibility Action Plan.
- 11.2.4 The community (and Port Phillip employees) will have opportunity to 'Have Your Say' on the draft Plan, prior to finalisation of the new Plan.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any material or general interest in the matter.

ATTACHMENTS

1. City of Port Phillip Access and Inclusion Plan Status Report July 2021