Accessibility Action Plan 2026-2030

Version 4, January 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

Wominjeka. Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Kulin Nation. We acknowledge their legacy and spiritual connection to the land and waterways across the City of Port Phillip and pay our heartfelt respect to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

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Mayor's message

Note: The Mayor's message will be added once the final plan is endorsed by Council.

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Language in this document

When talking about people with disability, this plan focuses on the person rather than a disability or diagnosis. This is called person centered language and is an approach to discussing disability that attempts to reduce stigma and promote respect.

Some people however, prefer to adopt what is called an identity first model. This highlights the person's disability as an identifying aspect of the person that is inseparable from them. Some people with autism, for example, may prefer to describe themselves as 'an autistic person' rather than 'a person with autism'.

There is no right or wrong way for people with disability to refer to themselves as it is a deeply personal choice. In general terms however, person centered language is more widely accepted.[1]

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[1] Language Guide - People with Disability Australia

Introduction

The Accessibility Action Plan 2026-2030 is a key strategic document, publicly outlining the steps Council will take to reduce discrimination towards people with disability.

The City of Port Phillip (Council) is committed to building a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community where all people – regardless of ability – can fully participate in civic life. This plan outlines our strategic approach to identifying and removing barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing services, facilities and opportunities within the municipality.

Developed in consultation with people with lived experience of disability, carers, community groups, service providers, and advocacy organisations, the plan aligns with our obligations under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* (DDA) and the Victorian *Disability Act 2006*. It further reflects our broader commitments to social cohesion and community connection as articulated in Council's Plan for Port Phillip 2025-2035 and other key strategies.

Through this action plan, we aim to promote inclusive practices across Council operations, enhance physical and digital accessibility, improve employment outcomes and foster a culture that values the contribution of people with disability.

While the DDA was passed nearly 35 years ago, knowledge of the Act is still limited and people with disability still face discrimination in a variety of contexts, such as employment, access to goods and services and government programs. It is in these settings that local government can play a role in eliminating discrimination towards people with disability, ensuring they are afforded dignified and equitable access in the same way as people without disability.

This plan is both a roadmap and a call to action. It challenges us to lead by example, remove systemic barriers, and ensure that everyone who lives, works, or visits the City of Port Phillip can thrive.

Vision and Outcomes

The Accessibility Action Plan 2026–2030 sets out the City of Port Phillip's commitment to creating **A City for Everyone**, a community where every person can participate, thrive, and belong. Guided by principles of equity, human rights, and social justice, this plan outlines a clear roadmap to remove barriers, challenge discrimination, and foster inclusive environments across all Council operations and community spaces.

The outcomes of this plan focus on creating a city where everyone can participate and belong. They aim to remove barriers to access, foster inclusive employment, increase community participation, and shift attitudes and practices to reduce discrimination. Together, these outcomes drive equity and inclusion across Council and the community.

This plan turns vision into action by defining clear results, practical steps, and measurable indicators. It sets out what success looks like, such as accessible buildings, fair recruitment, and inclusive events, and then outlines actions such as audits, training, and community engagement to achieve these goals. Progress will be tracked through performance measures, including improved access ratings, reduced complaints, and positive feedback from people with disability and their

carers. Together, these elements ensure the plan delivers real, measurable change across Council and the community.

Through leadership, collaboration, and continuous learning, this plan positions Council to drive meaningful change, ensuring that everyone who lives, works or visits the City of Port Phillip can thrive.

Models of Disability

This plan is framed in the context of both the social and human rights models of disability.

The social model of disability shifts the focus away from individual impairments and instead highlights the societal barriers that disable people. It argues that disability is not caused by a person's condition but by the environment and attitudes that prevent full participation. Under this model, steps such as improving physical access, changing discriminatory attitudes, and removing systemic barriers are key to enabling people with disability to live independently and equally. Developed by the disability rights movement, this model empowers individuals by recognising that exclusion and inequality are not inevitable, but the result of choices made by society. It encourages institutions, governments, and communities to take responsibility for creating inclusive environments.

The human rights model of disability builds on the social model by grounding the rights of people with disability in international human rights law. It emphasises that people with disability hold rights and are entitled to the same freedoms, dignity, and opportunities as everyone else. This model is reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Australia ratified in 2008. It promotes autonomy, participation, and equality before the law, and calls for measures that uphold the rights of people with disability across all areas of life—education, employment, healthcare, and civic involvement.

Together, these models challenge discriminatory practices and promote a society where people with disability are not only included but valued as equal participants. They guide contemporary disability policy and practice, including action plans at local government levels.

Why we need a new Accessibility Action Plan

Council is committed to building a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community where all people, regardless of ability, can fully participate in civic life. The Accessibility Action Plan is one way in which Council can publicly commit to actions that will make progress towards achieving this.

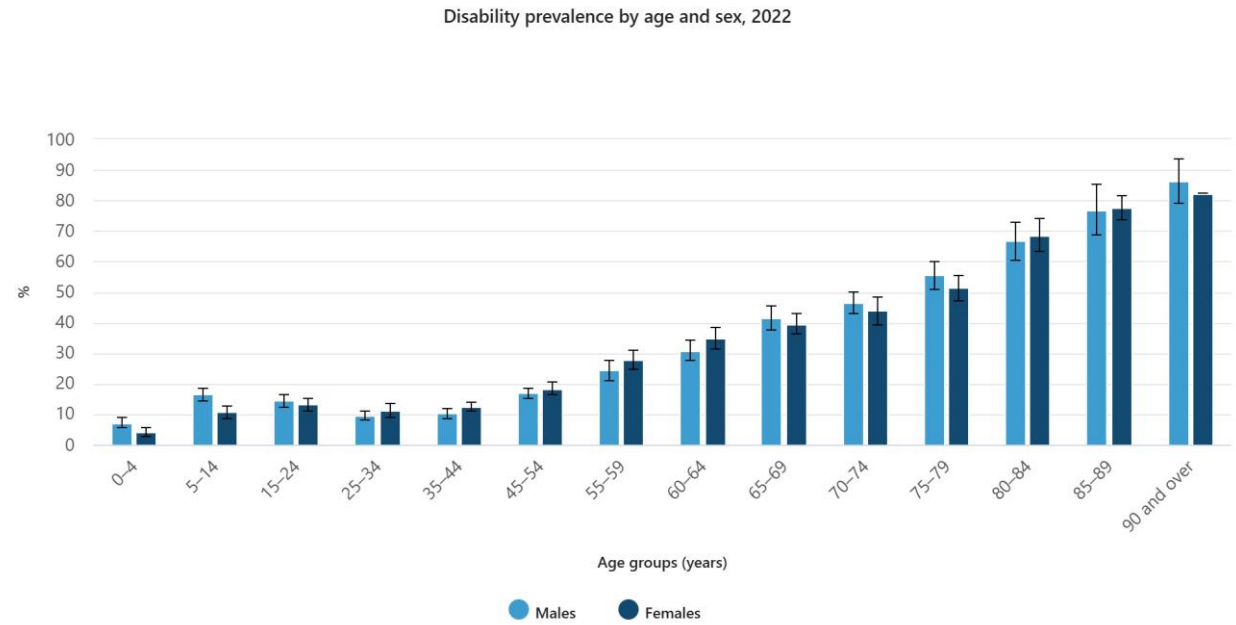
Council's current Accessibility Action Plan is due to expire and there are both local and legislative reasons to develop a new Action Plan that reaffirms Council's commitment to building a diverse, inclusive, and accessible community.

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Disability – an overview

According to the most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, the number of people living with disability is rising[2], while levels of discrimination towards people with disability stubbornly stay the same.

In 2022, 21.4 per cent of the Australian population lived with disability compared to 17.7 per cent just four years earlier, in 2018. Further, statistics reveal that disability impacts older people more than those under 65, with over half (52 per cent) of people over 65 having disability. Possible reasons for this include an ageing population, a growing awareness of disability in Australia more broadly and an increase in prevalence of some long-term health conditions.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings 2022

The number of carers in Australia has also grown with three million Australians now being in a caring role. The gap between the numbers of men and women in caring roles has reduced over time, with 12.8 per cent of all females now being carers and 11.1 per cent of all males.

Despite the above data, people with disability are still one of the most discriminated and marginalised communities in Australia. Also according to ABS data, in 2022:

- The unemployment rate for people with disability was more than twice the rate for people without disability
- The median income level for a person with disability was $575 per week compared with $1055 for people without disability
- One in ten people with disability had experienced discrimination and, for people with profound or severe disability, this rose to one in five

[2] Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics

- Two thirds of people over 15 years with disability reported that they had experienced barriers to participating in social and community activities in the last three months
- Within the City of Port Phillip, the most common long term health condition was a mental health condition[3]

Local government can play a critical role in not only identifying barriers in existing services, it can further take practical actions to remove these in ways that other levels of government and local organisations cannot. Working with local traders to encourage employment of people with disability is just one example of how Council can take proactive steps to reduce discrimination towards people with disability.

Legislative Context

There are two pieces of legislation that underpin the Accessibility Action Plan.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992,* which ensures people with disability experience equitable and dignified access to all aspects of life.

Victorian Disability Act 2006

The Victorian *Disability Act 2006* commits Council to developing an Accessibility Action Plan and states that the primary purpose of the plan is to eliminate barriers for people with disability and promote inclusion in all aspects of civic life. Under Section 38 (1), the Act outlines four key objectives for councils:

1. Reduce barriers in accessing goods, services and facilities
2. Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment
3. Promote inclusion and participation in the community
4. Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with disability

It is these objectives that are the framework which underpins the Accessibility Action Plan.

Relevant legislation and guidance

Other relevant legislation and guidance includes the following:

State	Federal	International
Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022–2026)	Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006	*Fair Work Act 2009*	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2
Equal Opportunity Act 2010		
Local Government Act 2020		

[3] | City of Port Phillip | Community profile

Plan for Port Phillip

Beyond legislation, this Accessibility Action Plan also reflects the commitments within the Plan for Port Phillip 2025-35 which outlines a range of priority areas and strategic directions that will shape the future of Port Phillip. This plan aligns with the community vision of being *"a liveable and vibrant City that enhances community connection and wellbeing"* and further aligns with the following strategic directions:

- A Healthy and Connected Community
- A Vibrant and Thriving Community
- An Engaged and Empowered Community

Accessibility Action Plan Context

Along with legislative commitments and Council's Plan for Port Phillip, this action plan sits within a suite of other diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, each committing Council to advance equity and inclusion in the local context. These include:

- Reconciliation Action Plan 2025 – 2027
- LGBTIQA+ Action Plan 2024 – 2026
- Positive Ageing Policy 2023 – 2027
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 – 2025
- Community Safety Plan (in development)
- Affordable Housing and Homelessness Strategy (in development)
- Multicultural Strategy (in development)

All of Council's diversity, equity and inclusion work is guided by the following commitments and principles:

- We will listen to the voices and lived experiences of employees and community
- We will be accountable to employees, community and each other
- Council's approach will be intersectional and equitable – guiding how we prioritise our diversity, equity and inclusion work
- Council's approach to making progress towards equality is ongoing, through this journey, we will learn, reflect, be accountable and grow

Building on our Success

The City of Port Phillip has been developing Accessibility Action Plans for 25 years, the first being in 2001. With this history, Council is well placed to understand what initiatives and interventions have proven successful and where work is still required.

Successful highlights include:

- A comprehensive accessible beaches program during summer, allowing people with disability to access and enjoy the beach with family and friends.
- Disability awareness training, elevating disability knowledge amongst staff, particularly those in key service areas.

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- Significant consideration of accessibility at key events such as the St Kilda Festival, ensuring that all community members can access and enjoy iconic activities.

A comprehensive review of the Accessibility Action Plan 2023-2025 revealed that there is still work to be done. A key focus of this action plan is to more comprehensively elevate the capability of staff such that people with disability can be more considered across all Council projects, policies and programs.

This Accessibility Action Plan adopts an approach that allows for responsiveness over the next four years, whilst still making robust and meaningful commitments, acknowledging Council's current place in its accessibility journey.

The plan also considers people with disability beyond the next four years by committing to actions that promote lasting change, beyond the life of this action plan.

How this plan was developed

This plan has been developed through numerous engagement channels with a variety of people contributing and chief amongst these were people with disability. Further to Council led engagement, key state and federal policies, strategies and plans have been considered to ensure that there is alignment with current work in the disability space.

From November 2024 to May 2025, Council undertook extensive engagement to capture the views of people living in our City. These findings informed the Plan for Port Phillip and provided key insights into the lives of people with disability in the municipality and those caring for them. The recent findings from the 2025 Annual Community Satisfaction Survey have also been considered in this plan's development.

In June 2025, people with disability were invited to attend a targeted, facilitated session to provide feedback on what they would like to see in a new Accessibility Action Plan. Run in conjunction with Voices of the South Side (VOSS), the session concentrated on the four legislative objectives, ensuring that contributions were meaningful for those in attendance and that feedback was actionable.

A comprehensive review of Accessibility Action Plans across eight adjacent Councils took place to further inform this plan's development, with the view to exploring opportunities for partnership. This strategic approach will encourage collaboration across Councils, reduce duplication of resources and ultimately provide improved outcomes for people with disability and their carers.

Internal engagement on the new Accessibility Action Plan also occurred, allowing for Council departments to reflect on what aspects of the previous plan worked well and what were found to be challenging. This ensures that Council can build on previous work with understanding and considered insight.

Finally, a thorough Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) was completed. A legislative requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020, the GIA examined how a new Accessibility Action Plan might impact women, girls, men, boys and gender diverse people differently, with recommendations on how to ensure equitable outcomes. The new plan has been designed with the GIA's findings in mind.

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The Role of Governments

Every level of government plays a role in reducing discrimination toward people with disability.

Federal Government	
The federal government provides the national legal framework, funding, and policies	• Legislation: enforces the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), which makes it unlawful to discriminate in areas such as employment, education, transport, and access to services • National strategy: leads Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031, which outlines goals for inclusion and equal rights • NDIS: funds and manages the National Disability Insurance Scheme (with states), providing tailored supports to individuals • Oversight: supports bodies like the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to enforce rights and standards • Public Education: runs national campaigns to promote awareness and reduce stigma.
State Government	
The Victorian Government aligns with federal policies but focuses on state-wide implementation, legislation, and services	• Disability legislation: implements state laws such as the *Disability Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, which protect rights at the state level • State strategy: implements *Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022–2026*, which supports access, participation, and safety for people with disability • Health, transport, and education services: ensures public schools, hospitals, public transport, and housing are inclusive and accessible • NDIS role: works with the federal government to deliver the NDIS locally • Disability advocacy and inclusion programs: funds organisations that support individuals and raise awareness across Victoria.
Local Government (Councils)	
Local councils are the closest level of government to communities and are responsible for practical implementation and everyday accessibility	• Accessibility Action Plans: develop and implement Accessibility Action Plans to make public spaces, services, and information accessible • Inclusive facilities and Services: provide accessible parks, libraries, community centres, toilets, footpaths, and events • Community education: promote inclusion and reduce stigma through working in partnership with others such as community organisations and traders • Consultation: engage with people with disability and local disability organisations to inform planning and service delivery.

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Vision

A City for Everyone

This plan seeks to achieve the City of Port Phillip's vision of a community where every person can participate, thrive and belong. Guided by principles of equity, human rights, and social justice, Council is committed to removing barriers, challenging discrimination, and fostering inclusive environments. Through leadership, collaboration, and continuous learning, we strive for a City that ensures dignified and equitable access for all.

Outcomes

The outcomes in the Accessibility Action Plan describe the tangible changes Council aims to achieve over the life of the plan. They focus on creating a city where people with disability can fully participate in civic life without barriers. Specifically, the outcomes seek to:

- Improve access and participation by ensuring Council services, facilities, and programs are physically and digitally accessible.
- Foster inclusive employment practices so that people with disability experience fair recruitment processes and supportive workplace adjustments.
- Increase community inclusion by promoting opportunities for people with disability to engage in events, programs, and decision-making.
- Shift attitudes and practices by embedding disability awareness and reducing discrimination across Council and the broader community.

Together, these outcomes aim to remove systemic barriers, challenge discriminatory behaviours, and embed equity and human rights principles into everyday operations, creating a city where everyone can thrive.

Actions and Performance Measures

The plan uses a methodology that links outcomes to observable changes, supported by actions and performance measures that track progress. Known as the PuMP methodology, it is a performance measurement approach that focuses on creating clear, meaningful measures linked to real outcomes.

- Clarified Results describe what success looks like in practice. For example, people with disability can enter and use Council buildings without assistance, applicants experience fair recruitment, and community members participate in events without barriers.
- Actions are practical steps to achieve these results, such as updating emergency preparedness plans, conducting accessibility audits, supporting local traders, delivering inclusive recruitment training, and auditing Council events for accessibility.

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- Performance Measures provide evidence of impact, not just activity. The table below outlines proposed performance measures which would need further investigation before proposing the final plan.

Together, these elements ensure the plan moves beyond intentions to measurable improvements in access, inclusion, and attitudes across Council and the community.

Objective One: Reduce barriers in accessing goods, services and facilities

Services, facilities and programs will be more accessible, ensuring that people with disability can meaningfully engage with them. Facilities include public spaces and footpaths

Outcome	Clarified Result	Actions	Performance Measure
Services, facilities, and programs are accessible and inclusive for people with disability	People with disability can enter, use, and navigate Council buildings, foreshore areas, and services without assistance or complaint	1.1 Emergency Preparedness Plans updated to include people with disability and their carers 1.2 Foreshore Accessibility Evaluation program developed 1.3 Council buildings accessibility audit conducted 1.4 Local traders supported to be inclusive through training 1.5 Inclusive Library Programming 1.6 ASSIST Accessibility Review 1.7 Accessibility Improvement Plan developed for South Melbourne Market Accessibility statement included in each Project Brief, Tender and Strategy 1.8 Program of works to address inaccessibility (based on audit findings).	- % of staff and visitors with disability reporting improved access in annual surveys. - Reduction in accessibility related complaints logged in ASSIST. - % of Council buildings audited for accessibility.

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Objective Two: Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment

As a workforce, Council will build on its current disability inclusive practices, identifying barriers to employment and seeking ways to address these

(Note: Workforce data is regularly analysed to understand representation and experiences of employees with disability and other diverse backgrounds, informing initiatives that foster a more inclusive workplace. Council continues to focus on building staff confidence to share demographic data, including disability status. Due to sample size and employee privacy, this data is not reported publicly.)

Outcome	Clarified Result	Actions	Performance Measure
Council is an inclusive employer that supports people with disability at all recruitment stages.	Applicants and employees with disability experience fair, supportive recruitment and workplace adjustments.	2.1 Inclusive recruitment and disability inclusion awareness 2.2 Workplace Adjustments procedure education and awareness	- Recruitment eLearn published; 80% of people leaders completed it - Inclusive Leadership Training completed by 80% of people leaders - Disability Inclusion communications issued twice yearly - Workplace Adjustments procedure published and intranet page updated Awareness of adjustments promoted twice yearly; annual drop-in sessions for leaders

Objective Three: Promote inclusion and participation in the community

Council will actively identify and promote opportunities, events and programs that increase the participation of people with disability, their carers and families

Outcome	Clarified Result	Actions	Performance Measure
People with disability are actively	People with disability attend and participate	3.1 Accessibility of Council events and festivals audited and audit actions	- % of attendees with disability reporting a positive experience at

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included in community life and decision-making processes.	in Council events, programs, and consultations without barriers.	implemented through a program of works 3.3 Support and training provided to build capability of community organisations 3.4 Inclusive communication developed 3.5 Accessibility training module and toolkit developed and made available to all grant applicants	Council events. - % of community organisations reporting increased confidence in disability inclusion after training.

Objective Four: Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with disability

Increased knowledge amongst community members on the rights of people with disability and relevant legislation

Outcome	Clarified Result	Actions	Performance Measure
Increased awareness and inclusive practices across Council and the community, reducing discrimination.	Staff and community members demonstrate improved knowledge and inclusive behaviours.	4.1 Tailored disability, legislation and discrimination training 4.2 Forum with community enabling sharing of inclusive and equitable practice 4.3 International Day of People with Disability recognition	- % of participants in inclusive practice forums reporting intent to apply inclusive practices. - Year-on-year increase in engagement with International Day of People with Disability activities.

While the four objectives of the Victorian *Disability Act 2006* are focused on in the Accessibility Action Plan, Council commits to seeking further opportunities to reduce discrimination and promote inclusivity throughout the plan's lifetime.

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Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

Implementation

To track the progress of the plan's delivery, an annual implementation plan will be developed, with all actions being reported on. This will enable responsiveness to policy and legislative changes, community need and Council priorities.

The outcome framework below demonstrates what will be achieved during the plan's lifetime:

Plan for Port Phillip Strategic Direction	Legislative Objective	Outcome
	All four legislative objectives	Reduced barriers to access and participation, and inclusive attitudes and practices across Council and community.
A Healthy and Connected Community	Reduce barriers in accessing goods, services and facilities	Facilities, programs and services are accessible and inclusive for people with disability
A Vibrant and Thriving Community	Reduce barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment	Council is an inclusive employer that supports people with disability at all recruitment stages
An Engaged and Empowered Community	Promote inclusion and participation in the community	People with disability are actively included in community life and decision-making processes
A Healthy and Connected Community	Achieve tangible changes in attitudes and practices that discriminate against people with disability	Increased awareness and inclusive practices across Council and the community, reducing discrimination

Monitoring

An internal steering committee with Officers responsible for actions will complete the suite of measures employed to track the plan's progress and guarantee the delivery of actions. Monitoring will be further supported by an internal reporting mechanism established through the internal Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework and Steering Committee.

An annual desktop review will ensure that actions are on track, identifying any areas that may need attention.

Finally, a comprehensive review will take place in the final six months of the plan, enabling the successes and lessons to be built into the next iteration.

Reporting

This action plan will be lodged with the Victorian Human Rights Commission and published on their Disability Action Plan Register. The register allows people with disability to see what commitments organisations have made to reduce discrimination toward people with disability.

The plan's status will be reported yearly in Council's Annual Report, providing transparency to the community on how we are progressing.

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