



DIVERSITY, EQUITABLE ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY

Policy No.:	17	Approved by:	Council Resolution TBA	
Version No.:	2	Approved on:	TBA	
Responsibility:	Manager, Development & Environment	Review Date:	June 2024	
Document Control				
Rev No.	Date	Revision Details	Reviewer	Approver
2	June 2021	Full review to reflect contemporary expectations, including Diversity and Inclusion	Manager, Development & Environment	Council

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. TYPE OF POLICY	3
3. OBJECTIVE	4
4. SCOPE	5
This policy applies to all people who live, work, visit and raise a family in municipality of George Town.	5
The Context of Disability	5
The benefit of improving access to the whole community.....	5
The Context of Diversity	5
5. DEFINITIONS.....	6
6. LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN.....	7
7. RELATED LEGISLATION	8
8. RISK CONSIDERATIONS.....	8
9. POLICY	9
10. IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW OF POLICY.....	9
Appendix 1.....	10

1. INTRODUCTION

George Town Council continues to strive for fair and equal access for people within its community, regardless of their Diversity, Equitable Access and Inclusion needs. Accessible Council buildings and infrastructure enhances livelihood for people with disabilities, parents with children (strollers), elderly, people with temporary injuries, whilst also augmenting Occupational Health and Safety requirements.

Accessible Council services, policies and procedures and support systems allow all within our community to have Equitable Access to our services, enhancing their experiences and lifestyles.

Disability crosses social, economic, religious and racial boundaries. It does not discriminate. Over 4.4 million people in Australia have some form of disability. 17.8% of females and 17.6% of males in Australia have disability.

- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age. 2 in 5 people with disability are 65 years or older.
- Of all people with disability, 1.9 million are aged 65 and over, representing almost half (44.5%) of all people with disability. This reflects both an ageing population and increasing life expectancy of Australians.
- 2.1 million Australians of working age (15-64 years) have disability.
- 35.9% of Australia's 8.9 million households include a person with disability.

(Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 - [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018](#))

The percentage of people with disabilities is increasing due to the ageing of the population and medical advances that are prolonging the average life span. It is important to Council that every new building to be constructed and those receiving upgrades or refurbishment must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) provisions of independence, equality and functionality.

Additional constraints to community inclusiveness and access to services can include barriers associated with language, literacy and numeracy limitations, cultural practices and beliefs, religious practices and beliefs, gender identify and sexual orientation.

In an endeavour to ensure all members of the George Town community have equal opportunity and enjoy contemporary quality of life standards, Council's decision making and advocacy, service provision, built environments, workforce and community development should consider inclusivity for the whole of community.

2. TYPE OF POLICY

Statutory

Statutory policies are those policies that are adopted by Council due to a legislative requirement. This policy however aims to achieve outcomes exceeding legislative requirements.

3. OBJECTIVE

The policy is designed to guide Council decision making by providing high level guidance for Council's existing policies, procedures and plans.

This policy will also inform a **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion Action Plan** which will detail programs to:

The policy will also inform a **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion Strategy** which will develop programs to:

- Community Consultation:
Ensure **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is appropriately considered as part of community consultation processes.
- Facilities, Services, Events and Processes:
Ensure **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is appropriately considered for improving equitable access and inclusion to council owned or managed facilities, services, events, or processes.
- Policies:
Establish clear guidelines for ensuring **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** considerations are included in all policies as reviewed and developed.
- Operating Processes and Procedures:
Establish clear guidelines for ensuring **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is appropriately considered in all Councils operating processes and procedures
- Budget and Works Programs:
Ensure **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is appropriately considered as part of budget processes and works programs.
- Communications:
Ensure **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is appropriately considered as part of Council communications.
- Strategic and Annual Plans:
Ensure **Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion** is addressed in Council's Strategic Plan and Annual Plans.

4. SCOPE

This policy applies to all people who live, work, visit and raise a family in municipality of George Town, regardless of their Diversity, Equitable Access, or Inclusion needs.

The Context of Disability

A disability can affect a person's capacity to communicate, interact with others, learn or get about independently. It is usually permanent but may be episodic. People may have more than one disability. Disabilities can be:

Sensory: affecting, for example, vision and/or hearing.

Neurological: affecting a person's ability to control their movements, for example, epilepsy.

Physical: affecting mobility and/or a person's ability to use their body.

Intellectual: affecting a person's judgement, ability to learn and communicate.

Cognitive: affecting a person's thought processes, personality and memory resulting, for example, from an injury to the brain.

Psychiatric: affecting a person's emotions, thought processes and behaviour, for example, schizophrenia and manic depression.

The benefit of improving access to the whole community

People with disabilities will benefit from improvements towards a more accessible municipality. An accessible community creates less disruption and difficulties for people with disabilities and for their friends and relatives moving around the municipality. However, people with disabilities and their relatives and friends are not just "other people". Everyone in the community has the possibility of developing or acquiring a disability, or of having a close relative or friend develop or acquire a disability.

Access is an issue that touches everyone's life at one time or another. Many people experience reduced mobility, need to address information and signage, attitudinal or sensory concerns in various situations. Parents pushing young children in strollers, young people with sporting injuries, older people who are becoming less agile, will all benefit from a more accessible built environment.

The Context of Diversity

As Australians we are privileged to live in a country that encourages diversity. It is not our role to judge, but to be accepting of differences. Differences, whether cultural, or other, can create unintentional barriers to accessing those privileges and/or rights within our community. Diversity, on the other hand, provides opportunity and depth of cultural wealth for our whole community, broadening our knowledge, skills, understanding, awareness and strengths. For a strong community we need to embrace diversity. .

5. DEFINITIONS

- ◆ **Diversity** encompasses acceptance and respect and means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating difference. It means understanding that each individual is unique and understanding the importance of respect and recognition of differences and similarities in our community. Consideration of diversity in race, ethnicity, physical ability, socio-economic status, age, religious/faith beliefs, political beliefs, gender identity, sexual orientation is vital in Council's decision making and advocacy, service provision, built environments, workforce and community development.
- ◆ **Disability** is defined by the Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as:
 - total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
 - total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
 - the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
 - the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
 - the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or
 - a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
 - a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour.
- ◆ **Access** is defined in terms of the ability of the residents and visitors to use the service or facility provided. Consequently, a service is accessible when:
 - it is easy to find out about
 - it is easily understood
 - it is easy to get to
 - it is easy to use
 - people who use it feel they are welcome
 - people know that they will get the right assistance when they need it
 - people are confident that every reasonable effort will be made to address the customer's requirements.
- ◆ **Discrimination** means treating people with a disability less favourably than people without that disability would be treated under the same circumstances.
Discrimination also exists where there is a condition or requirement imposed, which may be the same for everyone but which unfairly excludes or disadvantages people with a disability (for example in employment, education, or access to goods or services). Different treatment of people with a disability is not unlawful discrimination where it is reasonably intended to ensure that they have equal opportunities or to meet their special needs."
(Discrimination is defined by the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992)
- **Equitable** – means treating all people the same, impartial, reasonable, fair, or just. (for example in providing access (in whatever form of access we are considering) equitable access is simply access for all, not special access for those with a disability. We are not saying "here is a special way for you to access something because you have a disability", we are saying "we are providing you with access, just as we would anyone, but we accept we need to do a bit more, as the traditional level of access may not be suitable for your situation").
- **Inclusion** – means the act of including, or the state of being included. While 'equitable access' is generally about complying with legislation, 'inclusion' is about stepping up and thinking past simple compliance about how we can include more people through our actions and decisions.

6. LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This policy aligns with following goals and objectives of George Town Community Strategic Plan 2020-2030:

Future Direction (1) Community pride

1/ All are valued and included

- I. Taking a 'whole of community' approach to everything
- II. Communicating so everyone knows what each group is doing
- III. Working towards removing all barriers to participation in community life

Future Direction (2) Prosperity for all in all aspects of life

11/ Healthy, active communities

- I. Getting and staying active. Participation in recreation, arts and cultural activities

Future direction (3) Progressive well-resourced communities

3/ Social infrastructure meets community needs

- I. Developing and maintaining social infrastructure that meets the community's changing needs

4/ Persons with special needs have local access to needed services

- I. Understanding local needs and service gaps
- II. Building local service provision capability

8/ Public infrastructure relevant to needs

- I. Maintaining access to quality health, well-being, education and training
- II. All ability amenities to meet the needs of residents and visitors
- III. Improve access through the design, maintenance and extension of footpaths, tracks and trails

Future direction (4) Leadership and accountable governance

1/ A culture of engagement and participation

- I. Trusted, transparent and inclusive community engagement processes
- II. Engaging over things that matter to the community.

7. RELATED LEGISLATION

The following legislation and documents are relevant to this policy

Commonwealth

- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992
- Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013
- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012

State

- Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Act (1998)
- Disability Services Act 2011 (Tas) and Disability Services Regulations 2015
- Disability Framework for Action 2013-2017 (Tas)
- National Construction Code (NCC)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Building) Standards 2010
- Guideline on the Application of The Access To Premises Standard (V2-2013)
- Australian Standard (AS) 1428-1 2009

8. RISK CONSIDERATIONS

This policy aims to reduce risk of discrimination and alienation to some of the communities most vulnerable members.

9. POLICY

George Town Council is committed to maximising access and inclusion to services, facilities, features and activities for all within the community, regardless of ability, literacy, numeracy and language limitations, age, race, religion or other, within all aspects of Council. The aims are as follows:

- Encourage people to participate in the community by having fair and inclusive opportunities, including appropriate and equal access to facilities, services and activities.
- Have communication tools that include access for people who may require assistance to access or contribute, and which recognises the value of their contribution.
- Ensure all people are treated with dignity and respect, without prejudice, and have fair and reasonable access to all Council services and facilities.
- Raise awareness of the diverse needs of the community and enhance the skills and confidence of Council officers in meeting the access and inclusion needs of each person.
- Ensure the Council meets its legal obligations to avoid direct or indirect unlawful or unfair discrimination.
- Implement strategies that reduce or remove barriers that may prevent a person from participating fully in the community.
- Build a network of those with diversity, equitable access and inclusion experiences to form a reference group when developing programs, action plans and the like. Promote an environment of continuous improvement and quality service through review of services, facilities, access to features and events, aiming to meet contemporary inclusion ideals, not just compliance.
- Promote the rights of all people within our community to equity in access, respect, opportunity and participation in all aspects of community life within the region, in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the George Town Strategic Plan.

10. IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW OF POLICY

Implementation of this Policy rests with the General Manager. This Policy will be reviewed in 2024 or as deemed necessary by the General Manager, Council or legislative requirements.

.....
Shane Power
GENERAL MANAGER

Appendix 1

Diversity, Equitable Access & Inclusion Strategy

Objectives	Strategies	Timelines
Integrate diversity, equitable access and inclusion actions with other policies and strategic plans	<p>Including diversity, equitable access and inclusion actions within other council strategies or plans gives visibility to these actions and requires all areas of council to be responsible for undertaking work in this area. It will also assist in being able to plan more holistically across different areas of council.</p> <p>Engaging all areas of council will also assist in educating council staff and elected officials in diversity, equitable access and inclusion practice and build momentum, practical knowledge and networks.</p>	Commencing immediately and ongoing. To be integrated into each policy and the strategic plan as these are reviewed
Develop diversity, equitable access inclusion as a process, not a project	Acknowledging that ‘inclusion’ is an ongoing process rather than a project to be delivered within a certain timeframe helps support the principles of inclusion.	Ongoing
Enact community consultation in accordance with Council’s Community Consultation Policy, specifically in the areas of diversity, equitable access and inclusion, within the normal processes for projects.	<p>Consultation with people from a diverse background, those with a disability, and people with lived experiences of either, is critical to diversity, equitable access and inclusion practices reflecting the needs of the community. Consultation at all stages of planning, implementation and reporting allows for issues and ideas to be raised and discussed and provides transparency in decision-making.</p> <p>Consultation with people with a varying range of diversity, equitable access and inclusion difficulties is essential to gain insight into how services or facilities are used, and to help plan for the best possible experience. This also allows for discussion around competing priorities and resource constraints to identify priority actions.</p>	Level of Consultation is to be determined at an early point in any project that is undertaken, with this process ongoing.
Provide leadership and support for elected officials and senior staff in following this policy	Support and visibility of diversity, equitable access and inclusion practice at a senior level within Council provides an authorising environment and an expectation that all of council has a role to play.	Ongoing support of the concept of Diversity, Equitable Access and Inclusion in all aspects of Council operations
Build strong partnerships with community	By developing strong partnerships with community organisations or service providers, councils can access diversity equitable access and inclusion knowledge and resources. This also allows councils	Ongoing development of good communication

Objectives	Strategies	Timelines
organisations and service providers	to support existing initiatives that help the community without necessarily having to drive or provide substantial resources to the initiative.	and consultation avenues
Develop training for council staff to understand and encourage diversity, equitable access and inclusion needs and best practice	It is important that Council staff and Elected Officials are supported with training and education to understand the full spectrum of diversity, equitable access and inclusion, and give staff confidence in their dealings with people with disability.	Provide a training programme in 2020/2021
Develop formal and informal networks between councils and other agencies	<p>Formal or informal networks of staff that work on diversity, equitable access and inclusion initiatives across councils to provide a forum for ideas and knowledge sharing. Networks provide an important sounding board for ideas and questions and may even result in pooling of resources to achieve similar outcomes.</p> <p>It is critical to keep abreast of current and changing community needs and expectations, emerging trends in demographics and cultural diversity, and changes to relevant legislation, regulations, and the like.</p>	Ongoing as opportunities present.
Diversity, equitable access and inclusion aims to go beyond compliance – think inclusion	While compliance with legislation such as the DDA is imperative, it is important that diversity, equitable access and inclusion is not exclusively based on legislative compliance but seeks to meet the needs of people with diversity, varying levels of ability and/or inclusion difficulties, through consultation, enabling them to fulfil their potential as equals.	Ongoing development of the concept of diversity, equitable access and inclusion as normal thinking
Develop ‘SMART’ diversity, equitable access and inclusion actions and goals	Ensuring that diversity, equitable access and inclusion planning produces goals that are specific, measurable, agreed upon, realistic and time-based will provide structure and allow for meaningful reporting on actions.	Ongoing within all processes
Encourage anyone within our community to be Involved with council, regardless of their ‘abilities’ - as employees, volunteers and elected members	<p>Councils have an opportunity to provide leadership to their community by encouraging the involvement of a diversity of people, regardless of their ‘abilities’ within council, as employees, volunteers, committee members and Councillors.</p> <p>Developing a ‘reference’ group that can be involved in planning and advisory processes to varying degrees, depending on needs.</p> <p>This reference group would involve a large range of community members and organisations that could be</p>	<p>Ongoing with inclusion into any relevant expressions of interest or advertisement</p> <p>Within first year of adoption of the policy and strategy</p>

Objectives	Strategies	Timelines
	pulled together in full, or part as needs presented. It should always be open to new diversities.	
Implement access audits	Access audits provide a useful starting point for working towards equal access to facilities for the diversity of our community, including those with disability. Along with internal inspection and audit processes, Access audits conducted by specialist consultants, or an Advisory Committee can identify issues and help councils to prioritise works, including those of which would not necessarily be apparent to an officer whom does not have the lived experience.	Ongoing within all processes