



Access and Equity Policy

Adopted by Council – March 2016

The policy provides a framework for the delivery of accessible and equitable council services and programs to all residents and visitors to the area. Access and Equity is about facilitating the necessary conditions and opportunities to enable everyone utilising council services, programs and facilities to be treated fairly, free from any discrimination.

The Access and Equity Policy is provided in detail overleaf.

This Policy shall be subjected to review in line with council elections.

PURPOSE	To provide a coordinated policy framework for the delivery of accessible and equitable council services, programs, infrastructure; opportunities that facilitate necessary outcomes for all residents and visitors to the Mornington Peninsula; and to be treated in a fair manner when accessing these services.
BACKGROUND	<p>The Local Government Act 1989 (the Act) requires Councils be responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of the community. Under the Act Council must act to ensure services, facilities, infrastructure and programs provided by Council are done so in a way that is equitable and accessible to all.</p> <p>To fully meet the requirements of the Act, Council will have in place processes to support people of all ages and abilities.</p> <p>Since the adoption of Councils original Access and Equity Policy (the Policy) in 2002, considerable work has been undertaken to meet the diverse needs of our end service users, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footpaths Construction Policy 2011 • Motorised Mobility Devices (scooter) Policy 2012 • Disability Action Plan 2013 – 2017 • Cultural Diversity Statement of Commitment 2013 • Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 – 2017 • Positive Ageing Strategy 2013 – 2017 <p>This Policy formalises the work of the Council and Officers; and provides a renewed commitment to equitable and dignified access to services, facilities, programs and infrastructure is not only a legislative responsibility but a basic human right.</p> <p>However, it should be noted the provision of access and equity is not the sole responsibility of Local Government. Every sector of the community and every level of government all have a role to play when it comes to outcomes that are inclusive of all.</p>
OBJECTIVES	<p>The Policy intersect across all areas of Council's work, within a broad range of policies, strategies and actions; and aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide Council in its decision making process to comply with legislative responsibilities for access and equity • Provide education on the principles of access and equity • Maximise civic participation in the use of council built assets, open spaces, services, decision making and facilities • Foster communication and understanding of the rights and responsibilities that belong to all Victorians • Ensure 'Best Value Principles' under the <i>Local Government Act</i> are applied.
SCOPE	This policy applies to the provision of all Council's services, programs, facilities and infrastructure. All staff, contractors and volunteers employed or engaged by Council are obliged to comply with this policy.
DEFINITIONS	<p>Access means that, not only do built assets and open space (such as community halls, libraries, parks and reserves) and services exist; but that people know about them and that they are designed so that the community can use and/or fully participate in them.</p> <p>Equity means that there is a fair and socially just distribution of resources. This</p>

	<p>results in comparable opportunities for everyone in the community. The criteria under which Council considers opportunities to be comparable will be addressed as part of the development and implementation of the Policy.</p> <p>Community is an understanding to be found in people's attitudes and thinking. It can be defined by or related to a number of aspects such as community of intent, collective, citizens of a particular area or age group, etc. or where people share a common identity, goal or territory.</p> <p>Built assets and open space include roads, footpaths, community halls and centres, libraries, public toilets, parks and reserves, public meeting places and spaces.</p> <p>Services refer to social assets: programs and activities/actions, which will assist in the distribution of resources. For example: Council meetings, customer service requests, consultations, childcare programs, delivered meals program and the dedicated provision of youth services.</p>
<p>POLICY</p>	<p><u>Access and Equity Statement</u></p> <p>In addition to legislated access and equity requirements under state and federal legislation; Council is committed to the provision of responsive, timely and quality services, facilities, programs, and infrastructure, as well as good governance to all.</p> <p>In seeking to meet these duties, Council will ensure a whole of Council, whole of community approach in decision making – further enhancing the relationship of Council with community.</p> <p>Council believes access and equity principles are important as it is these 'Best Value Principles' which allow Council to know its resident's needs.</p> <p>This policy has been developed with reference to the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (the Charter). The Charter sets out the human rights of all people in Victoria, and recognises that human rights belong to everyone and have a special importance for Aboriginal people.</p> <p>Council support for these outcomes is intrinsically linked with access to life opportunities to healthy places and spaces; healthy lifestyle choices; participation in active local communities and a sense of hope and belonging now and into the future.</p> <p><u>Access and Equity Principles</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accountability <p>Accountability means the Shire will work with Community to facilitate safe environments that are conducive to the sustaining and building of constructive relationships amongst disparate interest groups.</p> 2. Meaningful Consultation <p>Meaningful and inclusive consultation in the development of policy, planning and implementation of Shire programs, projects and services.</p> 3. Comprehensive Information <p>Provision of information delivered in an appropriate form and way, so that citizens can make informed decisions and choices about services, facilities, places or activities most relevant to them.</p>

	<p>4. Proactive Leadership</p> <p>Responsibility to promote citizenship and advocacy for and with the community, and others to advance access and equity principles.</p> <p>5. Human Rights</p> <p>Principles of access and equity are further supported by rights outlined in the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities 2006.</p> <p>6. Social Justice</p> <p>A fair and just distribution of community infrastructure, services and social resources essential to achieving a healthy lifestyle for all.</p> <p>7. Sustainability</p> <p>Commitment to planning and service delivery, which is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, that improves the present and future quality of life on the Mornington Peninsula, whilst maintaining the ecological processes on which life depends.</p> <p>8. Encouraging Participation</p> <p>Provision of an environment that enables genuine opportunities for all citizens to participate fully in a safe environment.</p> <p>9. Constructive Partnerships</p> <p>Support for processes that achieve equal partnership and ownership for local issues and outcomes. Empowering the community to achieve common goals based on access and equity principles.</p> <p>10. Community Wellbeing</p> <p>Commitment to quality of life opportunities free from discrimination, and community wellbeing outcomes; taking into consideration impacts of social, cultural, environmental (natural and built) and economic factors within policy, planning and development.</p> <p><u>Reporting Requirements</u></p> <p>Service and program levels report through Council's internal and Annual Reporting lines.</p>
<p>COMPLAINTS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A complaint may only include matters related to Shire staff, Councillors or services provided by the Shire. 2. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with the Shire's level and quality of service, policies or procedures. 3. Complaints may be lodged in person, by phone or in writing with Council. 4. Council has in place a four level complaint management process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level 1 – Frontline Complaint Handling Level 2 – Internal Review – Operational

	<p>Level 3 – Internal Review</p> <p>Level 4 – External Review</p> <p>5. Confidentiality of complainants will be maintained at all times.</p>
RESPONSIBILITY	<p>Council has legislative responsibilities from the federal and state government to provide access and equity; this includes the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.</p> <p>Council will work to fulfil these responsibilities in partnership with Local, State, and Federal governments as well as community services to create outcomes that are accessible and equitable for all.</p> <p>All Council Officers shall abide by the intent of this policy.</p> <p>The Community Access Planner shall have the responsibility for reviewing and updating this policy as required.</p>
COUNCIL POLICIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPS Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017 • Motorised Mobility Devices (scooter) Policy 2012 • Disability Action Plan 2013 – 2017 • Cultural Diversity Statement of Commitment 2013 • Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013 – 2017 • Positive Ageing Strategy 2013 – 2017 • Aboriginal and Reconciliation Policy 2008 • Social and Affordable Housing Policy 2011 • Rooming House Policy 2014 • Homelessness Policy 2008 • Signage Policy 2012 • Footpaths Construction Policy 2011 • Statement of Commitment for the Prevention of Family Violence 2014 • Hastings Town Centre Structure Plan • Complaint Resolution Process
RELATED LEGISLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Discrimination Act 1986 • Disability Discrimination Act 1992 • Age Discrimination Act 2004 • Sex Discrimination Act 1984 • Racial Discrimination Act 1975 • Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 • Victorian Local Government Act 1989 • Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 • Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010 • Victorian Disability Act 2006 • Victorian Multicultural Act 2011 • Victorian Children and Young Persons' Act 1989
PROCEDURE	<p>Facilitation of outcomes under this policy will occur through an inclusive and equitable culture. This includes internal processes, such as staff training and development, as well as external processes consistent with Council's commitment to access and equity for all.</p> <p>Council will include access and equity actions in key Strategic Documents and report annually on its implementation as part of its legislative requirement to create</p>

	inclusive communities for all.
AUTHOR	Community Access Planner
REFERENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth of Australia, 2009. A Stronger, Fairer Australia. www.socialinclusion.gov.au • National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020. www.dss.gov.au • National General Assembly of Local Government. Promoting Access and Equity in Local Government. • Australian Human Rights Commission. National Anti-Racism Strategy, 2012. • State Government of Victoria, 2010. A Fairer Victoria www.dpcd.vic.gov.au • State Government of Victoria. State disability plan 2013 – 2016. • State Government of Victoria, 2010. Victorian Government Aboriginal Inclusion Framework www.dpcd.vic.gov.au • Municipal Association of Victoria, 2011. Creating a more inclusive community for people with a disability. • Municipal Association of Victoria, 2012. Cultural Diversity Statement of Commitment. • Szoke, Dr H. 2009. Social inclusion and human rights – strange bedfellows on the road to an authentically Australian inclusion agenda, Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission • Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2008. From Principle to Practice: Implementing the Human Rights Based Approach in Community Organisations. State of Victoria. • Mornington Peninsula Shire. Just, not just the same: An access and equity policy 2002
REVIEW	This Policy shall be subject to review in line with council elections.