



<b>Policy Title</b>	Fair and Equitable Access Policy			<b>LGP030</b>
<b>Directorate</b>	Chief Executive Officer			
<b>Approval Date</b>	05/09/2024	<b>Council Resolution No.</b>	NA	
<b>Review Due</b>	05/09/2028	<b>Revision</b>	4 Years	
<b>References</b>	<i>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth)</i> <i>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986</i> <i>Racial Discrimination Act 1975</i> <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> <i>Anti-Discrimination Act 2015</i> <i>VDRC Strategic Plan 2020-2024</i>			

## 1. PURPOSE

The Fair and Equitable Access Policy seeks to support Victoria Daly Regional Council's commitment to promoting inclusiveness and equitable access in the design, development and operation of Council facilities, services, and programs.

Acknowledging the richly diverse Aboriginal communities that the Council serves, Victoria Daly Regional Council is also committed to ensuring local infrastructure, amenities and services are developed with respect to cultural sensitivities and practices.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy is applicable to all Council employees, Councillors, contractors acting on Council's behalf or engaged in Council business, residents and visitors to the Region.

## 3. POLICY STATEMENT

The Council is committed to encouraging social inclusion, enabling individuals to stay connected through activities that support and promote community harmony and build community capacity.

Recognising that a substantial proportion of its service area is comprised of Aboriginal communities, the Victoria Daly Regional Council is equally committed to developing local infrastructure, amenities, and services with due respect for cultural sensitivities and practices.

The Council understands that implementing diverse, practical and targeted programs, alongside ensuring equitable access to facilities, will significantly contribute to building strong communities and enable the Council to effectively address local needs.

This policy aligns with the Council's *Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024 Objective Four: Enhance the liveability of our communities and regional lifestyle* and *Objective Five: Continually improve Council's assets and infrastructure through good forward planning*.



## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Council** – Victoria Daly Regional Council

**Disability** - The term ‘people with disability’ is defined in the National Disability Strategy (NDS) as: “People with all kinds of impairment from birth or acquired through illness, accident or the ageing process. It includes cognitive impairment as well as physical, sensory and psycho-social disability”.

**Discrimination** – the making of a difference in particular cases, as in favour of or against a person or thing, especially when arising from prejudice based on race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, etc. (including those listed in disability).

**Equitable access** – The maximisation of civic participation in the community by identifying and removing barriers that prevent people from knowing about, using and/or participating in a service, facility, open space or decision-making process provided by Council and others.

**Universal design** – means the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

## 5. APPLICATION OF POLICY

Recognising that equitable access maximises participation and social inclusion in the community, the Council will seek to achieve the following outcomes:

### 5.1 Access to Facilities, Spaces and Amenities

The Council will ensure that all relevant standards are applied to planning and development of Council’s infrastructure within the region, encouraging proactive processes that promote universal design.

Wherever possible, the Council will strive to improve access to its buildings, facilities and public spaces by:

- a) Developing community infrastructure environments that are genuinely welcoming, safe and inclusive,
- b) Ensuring Council facilities are accessible to people with various accessibility requirements,
- c) Consult with local communities, including people with disabilities, women, First Nations Peoples and minority groups, to better understand their needs and preferences early in the planning process for infrastructure and service delivery projects.



## 5.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

The Council will create more equitable conditions that respect and uphold the rights, cultures and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in remote communities by:

- a) Continuing to advocate for equitable funding, service delivery and strategic planning to address the significant disparities that remote Aboriginal communities face in accessing essential services including community infrastructure, roads, telecommunications, economic development and improved living standards.
- b) Encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to play a central role in decision-making processes affecting their communities by joining Local Authorities,
- c) Ensuring that programs are developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and are responsive to their specific needs and aspirations,
- d) Ensuring Council facilities are culturally safe and respond sensitively to cultural protocols such as the need for gender specific spaces within certain places and activities.

## 5.3 Gender Equity

Council will take positive action towards achieving gender equity in the access and usage of community infrastructure by:

- a) Building the capacity and capabilities of Victoria Daly Regional Council in the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services.
- b) Consulting with local communities, including people with disabilities, women, First Nations Peoples and minority groups, to better understand their needs and preferences.
- c) Incorporating features like safe and secure changing rooms and separate facilities for different genders.
- d) Ensuring effective place-based responses for the gender equitable use and access of community sports infrastructure.
- e) Promoting gender equality in policies, programs, communications, and services as they relate to community sports infrastructure.
- f) Encourage women and girls to fully participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation.
- g) Encouraging all user groups who access and use community infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement equitable access and use practices.
- h) Pursuing grant funding to support projects that address inequity and intersectional inclusion.

## 5.4 Access to Information and Services

The Council will deliver information in clear and accessible formats and media and will provide services that are inclusive and responsive to community needs. It will provide training for



employees to enhance their capacity to identify and remove any barriers to equitable access in the planning and delivery of services.

## 5.5 Advocacy and Engagement

The Council will seek to influence public policy and resource allocation, advocating for equitable funding, service delivery and planning to address the needs of diverse groups and individuals. It will engage with communities to seek guidance in identifying issues for planning and advocacy.

## 5.6 Celebration and participation

The Council will seek to create an inclusive community that celebrates and values diversity by supporting local events, festivals and activities that promote pride, harmony, and respect for all.

## 6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Council commits to:

- a) Undertake ongoing evaluation of all current Council facilities, services, and programs to identify opportunities to strengthen fair and equitable access for all community members,
- b) Undertake ongoing consultation with communities to ensure future planning supports equitable access and maximises social inclusion,
- c) Implement feedback mechanisms to gather direct input from community members about their experiences and barriers to access,
- d) Record and utilise data to assess whether programs and services are reaching their intended audiences and are being utilised effectively by community members,
- e) The ongoing mandatory delivery of cross-cultural awareness training for all staff throughout their employment with Council

<b>Signature of Endorsement</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Brian Hylands
<b>Position</b>	Chief Executive Officer

### REVIEW HISTORY

Date	Details