Mount Alexander Shire Council

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027

Working together for a healthy, connected shire

Mount Alexander
Shire Council

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Mount Alexander Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners of country. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land.

We pay our respect to leaders and Elders, past, present and emerging of the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Taungurung peoples as the traditional owners of the lands and waters of Mount Alexander Shire. We also recognise all other Indigenous people of the Shire.

We acknowledge the vital role that Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples and their forebears play as custodians of this region for many centuries, performing age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

If you would like this plan in a different format please contact the Social Equity and Inclusion Officer on:

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Disability Action Plan Working Group Message

Disability Action Plan Working Group message to be included here.

What is an Action Plan?

An action plan is a way to develop, monitor and evaluate strategies and initiatives that Council undertakes. It's a framework we will use to make sure we're doing the best we can to support our community. This Disability Inclusion Action Plan includes activities that various Council teams will undertake over its four-year lifespan.

Throughout the implementation of this plan we will measure our progress allowing us to work towards our goals and ultimately improving our services and community for everyone.

How this plan was developed

We approached this plan by looking at disability through a model of social inclusion, human rights and social equity.

We worked with members of our Disability Action Plan Working Group, carers, service providers and individuals with disability, and consulted with the community in a variety of ways to make sure our plan reflects the needs of our community.

Members of the Working Group included the Mayor, Council staff, community members with disability, carers and representatives of Castlemaine Library and Sports Focus. The Working Group met regularly discussing research, data and best practice, and shared lived experiences. The group was also involved in workshops and undertaking broad community consultation including surveys and community drop in sessions. We engaged with the different areas of Council to understand how disability intersects with each team's work and how, at Council, we can all improve. The development and implementation of this plan is a whole of Council commitment.

Most importantly, the foundation of this plan has been developed from all the stories, experiences and voices we heard in our community. It has been a privilege to speak with, listen to and learn from our community. The objectives, actions and outcomes of this plan are a reflection of these interactions.

From our consultation, we established a vison for where we'd like to see Mount Alexander Shire be in the future, and five key areas of focus to help to get us there.

"We're excited that the Shire is taking this step to ensure that everyone within the Shire feels safe, welcomed and included in the community" DAP Working Group member

Our Vision

Our shire is a place that embraces diversity and works together to remove barriers to become genuinely inclusive of people with disabilities.

Our shire is a safe place where everybody can be their authentic self without prejudice and where differences and individual successes are celebrated.

"We are a welcoming community where everybody has access to services and supports, and opportunities for housing, education, employment and creative and social pursuits" Community Vision 2021-2031, Council Plan 2021-2025

A note on Language and Terminology

Language is a powerful tool that can influence how a person with disability feels and sees themselves and how they are viewed and treated within society. Language can be used to nurture inclusion, change attitudes and foster disability pride.

The language we use should be respectful and considered and not reinforce existing stereotypes and produce unintended barriers. Language evolves with time and can be subjective.

In this plan, we were guided by our Working Group as well as the *Inclusive Victoria - State disability plan 2022-2026* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to use 'person-first' language. Throughout this plan we say 'person with disability.' This terminology understands that a person's disability is not a defining feature of who they are.

However, we recognise that many people with disability have different preferences and may choose to use 'identity-first' language. 'Identity-first' language puts a person's disability identity before the person, for example you would say 'disabled person'. For many, their disability is a key element of their identity that connects them to a community for which they proudly advocate.

Defining Disability (social model of disability)

Definitions of disability are broad and vary across contexts such as medical, social, human rights and charitable. Not one definition works for every person or situation; however, defining disability can be helpful for people to understand medical needs, receive supports and services, and to fight discrimination.

In this plan, we use the term 'disability' in the context of the social model of disability, which describes disability as a social construct. The social model of disability recognises that it is the interaction between people with disability and inaccessible communities and environments that prevents full and equal participation.

Disability in our Community

Disability can be visible and invisible, temporary or permanent. People with disability have the same rights as other members of the community (*Disability Act 2006*) yet the statistics and anecdotal evidence show how people with disability are treated unfairly, have fewer opportunities and experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes. To be discriminated against due to your disability is a violation of your human rights.

All members of the community have a role to play in reversing these statistics and outcomes.

The statistics provided in Appendix 1 highlight the prevalence of disability within our community and nationally, and the barriers encountered by people living with disability.

"Disability is a normal part of life. Disability is diverse and affects people of all ages. Much disability is not obvious and is invisible" DAP Working Group member

Council's role

We acknowledge that the work we do, and how we do it (our actions), has a direct impact on how people feel about living in our shire.

This plan outlines the steps that will be taken to contribute to our shire being a place where everyone feels safe, feels that they belong and has the opportunity to fully participate in daily activities. We have the ability and responsibility to ensure our policies, programs and services function in an inclusive way that has considered the needs of all people who move throughout the Shire.

This plan focuses on how Council can improve inclusion by removing barriers and increasing awareness, and aims to deliver genuine, feasible and achievable results. We will look inward at how our organisation operates and behaves, and educate ourselves to improve the way that we work and interact with people. We will also work in partnership with people who experience disability within our community and other organisations to achieve our vision.

"Outcomes are very important to be realistic, achievable and deliverable but also leading to systemic change and reform" Working Group member

Council Plan

Developing and implementing this Disability Inclusion Action Plan is a foundational piece of work of the *Council Plan 2021-2025*. This is due to its legislative requirements and the nature of the work being the responsibility of the whole-organisation to deliver under the Council Plan's Vision of 'Working together for a healthy, connected shire'.

This plan relates directly to many elements of our *Council Plan 2021-2025*, including:

- Principles: 'We are engaging genuinely with the community', 'We are always improving', 'We are delivering together'

- Pillar 1: 'A healthy, connected and inclusive community'

- Objectives: ' Services in our community are accessible and coordinated'; 'Our community is inclusive and connected'; 'Our community feels safe, regardless of identity or circumstance' and 'Our community is physically and mentally healthy'

The Legislative Environment

Local governments have many legal responsibilities to protect the rights of people with disability. Under Victoria's Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, people have a right to be protected against discrimination due to their disability and councils have a responsibility to uphold this right.

Councils must act consistently with this Charter and comply with a range of Federal and State human rights laws that protect people from discrimination.

A list of local, state, national and international legislation, plans and strategies that relate to this plan is provided in Appendix 2.

Victorian Disability Act 2006 [1]

The *Victorian Disability Act 2006* requires all councils, as state entities, to develop a disability action plan. The Act sets out four key areas that the disability action plan needs to address:

1. reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;

2. reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;

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[1] During the time this plan was being developed the *Victorian Disability Act 2006* was being reviewed by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to ensure that legislation is 'contemporary' and 'fit for purpose'. The Department was considering issues to be incorporated into two separate pieces of legislation relating to safeguards and rights (*Disability Act Amendment Bill*) and inclusion for people with disability (*Disability Inclusion Bill*) and establishing an office of Disability Inclusion Commissioner. The proposed new Act would establish different responsibilities councils have in relation to Disability Action Plans. These requirements were not finalised and legislated at the time of the development of this Disability Action Plan.

3. promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;

4. achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability.

These four areas form the basis of the first four Key Areas of this plan, along with a fifth Key Area focusing on wellbeing and safety. It became evident through our consultation that a focus is required on people's emotional safety and wellbeing to acknowledge the risks many people with disability face due to vulnerable situations they experience, for example being isolated and reliant on others to complete daily activities.

Our Five Key Areas

The Key Areas of this plan have been informed by our community and internal consultation. The community survey and key stakeholder interviews asked a variety questions about how Council could improve its services, programs and facilities to be more inclusive of people with disabilities, as well as questions about how included people feel living and participating in our shire.

We have acknowledged what we have heard through the development of five impact statements summarising what we aim to achieve through the objectives and actions associated with each of the Key Areas.

The following tables list our five Key Areas, their associated objectives and the intended impact we are aiming to achieve in each area. The themes that emerged from our community consultation and subsequently helped to inform each Key Area are also included in these tables.

Key Area 1: Equal, respectful and dignified access	
What we heard from our community	Many people with disability and their carers do not feel equal to other people in our community. They feel as though infrastructure and information is designed without an understanding of their diverse needs. Our community told us the difficulties they have traveling on uneven or unsealed paths, navigating around planted up nature strips and traders' items, and the limitations of how far you can travel due to the limited number of accessible paths. Accessible car parking was a significant concern, with the location, size, quantity and safe passage to the footpath highlighted as areas to be assessed.
Objectives	- Our policies, procedures and guidelines support disability inclusion and accessibility. - Our workforce has the knowledge and skills to deliver projects, programs and services that have considered disability inclusion and accessibility. - Our Council is committed to supporting accessible and inclusive projects. - Council buildings, facilities, parks and infrastructure are inclusive of people with disabilities. - Improve access to Council information. - Improve the way we facilitate the Accessible Parking Scheme. - Support clear access to businesses.
Intended impact	Our community has equal access to all areas of Council, including facilities, services and information.

"Better parking for wheelchair accessible vehicle" Community survey respondent

"Largely, this community is kind and if I do participate, it's ok. Getting there independently is the main issue as the pathways and roads are difficult to use " Community survey respondent

"As a double pram user, often with my dog on a lead next to the pram, I am quite a wide load! I find it really hard to get past some shops" Community survey respondent

Key Area 2: Opportunities and access to employment, volunteering, education and economic participation	
What we heard from our community	Council needs to lead as an employer of people with disability and take a leading role in supporting and educating businesses and organisations on the value of being inclusive of people with disability. Additional support is often required for those with a disability to succeed in their economic and education endeavours.
Objectives	• Create new opportunities for people with disabilities to join the Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) workforce. • MASC will be a leader in disability inclusive employment. • Support businesses to become successful disability employers. • Champion Disability Enterprise.
Intended impact	Our community understands the value of diversity in the workforce and supports entrepreneurship.

"Employers and the broader community need not just focus on a person's capability to achieve work or education outcomes, but the whole person and what they contribute to the work or education space over and above their role. All people want to be valued within a team environment by being seen and heard for more than what they have to do" Disability service provider

"There needs to be a big push for employment of people with a disability and Council should be leading the way by ensuring there are traineeships in customer service, tourism, parks and gardens" Community survey respondent

Key Area 3: Promote inclusion and participation in civic life	
What we heard from our community	Our community provided considerable feedback about what makes a person feel like they belong and how they are able to connect with their community. This feedback also related to people's experiences of feeling respected and seen for who they are, not what their disability says about them. This extended to attitudes as well as physical access to spaces and information. People want to feel a part of something and have a purpose.
Objectives	• Council run events are accessible. • Sports clubs, social clubs and committees are inclusive of people with a disability. • Community events and activities are accessible.
Intended impact	Our community will feel valued, purposeful and included.

"See me, not just my disability" Community survey respondent

"Having a valued role in the community not just a recipient of service" Community survey respondent

"Limited to no support provided by youth groups, sporting clubs or at events" Community survey respondent

Key Area 4: Change the attitudes and practices that lead to discrimination of people with disability	
What we heard from our community	Diversity of disability and the impact of overlapping of identities (e.g. gender, sexual orientation and age) needs to be understood and celebrated. There is a need for education and training in disability awareness, mental health and other specific disabilities to promote inclusion.
Objectives	- Advocate for change. - Our workforce is educated, flexible and kind. - Our community is educated, inclusive and kind. - We will recognise and celebrate disability inclusion. - Support businesses, events & tourism operators to be more accessible and inclusive. - Support not for profit organisations to become accessible and inclusive.
Intended impact	Our community is welcoming and celebrates diversity and achievements. Our people are proud of our community.

"More awareness and accommodations in place in community spaces, events, and facilities specifically for people with Autism and serious mental illness" Community survey respondent

"People don't understand my disability, so my needs are not met and I can't engage" Community survey respondent

"Communities are also looking to Council to play a role in raising community awareness around the needs of people with disability, to address discrimination and stigma, and to provide advocacy around issues of inclusion and access" DAP Working Group member

Key Area 5: Wellbeing and Safety	
What we heard from our community	Council programs and services need to be inclusive of people of all abilities. Our playgrounds need to be welcoming, fun spaces with better fencing and amenities so people feel comfortable and safe. People want more opportunities to connect with services, activities and each other. Older people and people with diverse needs require more consideration regarding their vulnerabilities.
Objectives	- Council run social support programs and youth programs are inclusive of people with neurodiversity. - Parents and carers of children living with disability are informed and connected. - Children of all abilities can play in a safe and welcoming environment. - Accessible and affordable housing. - Improve support for young carers. - Support people with disabilities to plan for emergencies. - Highlight the increased risk of family violence for people with disabilities. - Advocate for older adults with disabilities.
Intended impact	Our community feels equal and safe, and is physically, mentally and socially healthy and resilient.

"Crossing the road between the Botanical Gardens and the Mill is fraught and dangerous" Windarring participant

"Need more respite programs to alleviate fatigue - ageing parents / carers" Windarring disability worker

Measuring Progress

In accordance with the *Victorian Disability Act (2006)* a progress report will be provided each year in Council's Annual Report. In addition, Council Officers will meet biannually with the Disability Inclusion Advisory Group to discuss implementation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and a progress report will be provided annually to this group.

This will ensure that progress and outcomes associated with this plan are measured, and that continuous improvement opportunities are sought.

Resourcing this Plan

Responsibility for implementing the Disability Inclusion Action Plan rests with all areas of Council.

Funding opportunities will be sought to assist with implementing projects, training and engagement of any consultants.

Action Plan

Key Area 1: Equal, respectful and dignified access

Impact - Our community has equal access to all areas of Council, including facilities, services and information.

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year 1,2,3,4	Outcomes and Indicators
1.1 Our policies, procedures and guidelines support disability inclusion and accessibility.	1.1.1 Develop an Implementation, Governance and Reporting structure for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.	Community Partnerships	1	A Disability Inclusion Advisory Group (DIAG) and internal working group convened.
	1.1.2 Conduct an audit of policies, procedures and guidelines creating a priority list of those that directly impact accessibility and inclusion and identify areas of improvement to increase accessibility, inclusion and safety for people with disability.	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	1	Policies regularly reviewed and updated.
1.2 Our workforce has the knowledge and skills to deliver projects, programs and services that have considered disability inclusion and accessibility.	1.2.1 Develop Disability Impact Assessment (DIA) toolkits.	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	3 & 4	All relevant staff have an understanding of DIAs, Universal Design Principles and DDA requirements, and the confidence to put this into practice.
	1.2.2 Provide training to staff on how to conduct a DIA.	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	3 & 4	
	1.2.3 Provide training to staff on Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance, Universal Design principles and the Charter of Human Rights.	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	1 - 4	

1.3	1.3.1	Infrastructure	1 - 4	Council has demonstrated significant investment in accessibility improvement.
Our Council is committed to supporting accessible and inclusive projects.	Ensure accessibility is incorporated into Capital Works project designs.			
	1.3.2 Advocate and seek funding for major projects, including an All Abilities playground and a Changing Places toilet facility.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	
1.4 Council buildings, facilities, parks and infrastructure are inclusive of people with disabilities.	1.4.1 All designs for new or improved parks, community facilities or streetscapes will include a Disability Design Review.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities & Infrastructure	1 - 4	Disability Design Reviews are embedded into Council practice.
	1.4.2 Council's Project Management Framework to include Disability Design Reviews.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 & 2	
	1.4.3 Using the Building Accessibility Audit, engage the Disability Inclusion Advisory Group to provide input that will guide Council's ongoing capital works delivery.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1	Priorities established and reviewed annually with input from the DIAG.
	1.4.4 All new and upgraded public toilets will include an accessible toilet, and be promoted on the National Public Toilet Map.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities & Economy and Culture	1 - 4	An increase to the number of accessible toilets in the Shire.
	1.4.5 Engage with the DIAG to seek input into the prioritisation of new footpaths and renewal works.	Infrastructure	1 - 4	Works always consider accessibility.
	1.4.6 All new builds at recreation reserves to include the construction of accessible pathways to all elements of the facility including the playing surface.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	Improved access to community assets.

	1.4.7 Explore opportunities to upgrade existing high use paths in parks to improve accessibility at the time of renewal.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	
	1.4.8 Undertake parking study of the accessible parking spaces in our townships.	Infrastructure	3 & 4	Accessible parking options meet the needs of our community.
	1.4.9 Explore ways to improve the safety of road crossing options for pedestrians within renewal and upgrade works.	Infrastructure	1 - 4	Crossing options have considered safety for people with disabilities.
1.5 Improve access to Council information.	1.5.1 Ensure the Council website aligns with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.	Communications and Customer Service	1	New website will include accessible features and use Plain English.
	1.5.2 Provide training to employees to use Plain English in public facing communications.	People and Culture & Communications and Customer Service	1,2,3,4	Consistent and clear Council communications.
	1.5.3 Investigate new opportunities to distribute information offline, including electronic notice boards at key locations around the shire.	Communications and Customer Service	1 & 2	More residents know what is going on and have an opportunity to participate.
1.6 Improve the way we facilitate the Accessible Parking Scheme.	1.6.1 Develop a communication tool to raise awareness of the Accessible Parking Scheme.	Development Services & Communications and Customer Service	1 & 2	The community is properly informed.
1.7 Support clear access to businesses.	1.7.1 Raise awareness of DDA compliance with businesses, and update Local Laws permit conditions to better reflect DDA compliance.	Development Services & Economy and Culture	1 & 2	Businesses are supported to comply with the law.
	1.7.2 Support MASDAG to update the 'Disability Access Guide for the	Community Partnerships	1 & 2	

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year	Outcomes and Indicators
	Mount Alexander Shire' and distribute to local businesses.			

Key Area 2: Opportunities and access to employment, volunteering, education and economic participation

Impact - Our community understands the value of diversity in the workforce and supports entrepreneurship

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year 1,2,3,4	Outcomes and Indicators
2.1 Create new opportunities for people with disabilities to join the Mount Alexander Shire Council (MASC) workforce.	2.1.1 Review recruitment and onboarding processes for placements, traineeships, volunteer and employment roles to identify areas for improvement.	People and Culture	1 & 2	Our workplace is attractive and accommodating to people with disabilities.
	2.1.2 Work in partnership with key stakeholders to support pathways to employment at MASC for people with disability.	People and Culture	1 - 4	
2.2 MASC will be a leader in disability inclusive employment.	2.2.1 Use the outcomes of the staff survey to identify opportunities to improve the wellbeing of employees with disability.	People and Culture	2 & 4	The results of the staff survey will demonstrate satisfaction from employees with disabilities.
	2.2.2 Requests for workplace adaptations are considered and implemented where appropriate.	People and Culture	1	More requests for adaptions are fulfilled.
	2.2.3 Coordinate and promote training opportunities to support those that supervise employees with disabilities.	People and Culture	1 - 4	Training sessions included in the yearly training calendar.
2.3 Support businesses to become successful disability employers.	2.3.1 Provide opportunities to increase the capacity of local businesses to be inclusive employers.	Economy and Culture	1 - 4	Business are engaged with people with disabilities and continue to make adjustments as required to retain employees.
	2.3.2 Promote external supports and funding opportunities for businesses to be more inclusive.	Economy and Culture	1 - 4	

2.4 Champion Disability Enterprise.	2.4.1 Explore ways to support people with disabilities to be self-employed or sole traders.	Economy and Culture	1 & 2	Increased exposure of success stories.

Key Area 3: Promote inclusion and participation in civic life

Impact - Our community will feel valued, purposeful and included

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year 1,2,3,4	Outcomes and Indicators
3.1 Council run events are accessible.	3.1.1 Review the Council Events Guidelines to consider how Council run civic events can be more accessible.	Communications and Customer Service	2	Civic events are inclusive of all people.
3.2 Sports clubs, social clubs and committees are inclusive of people with a disability.	3.2.1 Champion all abilities access to sport and recreation activities.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	Increased participation and better health outcomes.
	3.2.2 Explore ways the Community Grants Program can better support accessibility initiatives and projects.	Community Partnerships	3	Community leadership and capacity increased.
3.3 Community events and activities are accessible.	3.3.1 Update the Event Toolkit to include advice on running sensory friendly events.	Communications and Customer Service	1	More venues and events are attended by people with disabilities.
	3.3.2 Explore ways the Events Grants Program can better support accessible and inclusive events.	Communications and Customer Service	1 & 2	Events are inclusive of more people.
	3.3.3 Investigate opportunities to encourage sensory friendly events for children and adults in our shire.	Communications and Customer Service	1 - 4	Our shire is more neurodiverse friendly.
	3.3.4 Promote the benefits of having a "quiet hour" to businesses and service providers.	Community Partnerships	3	

Key Area 4: Change the attitudes and practices that lead to discrimination of people with disability

Impact - Our community is welcoming and celebrates diversity. Our people are proud of their community

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year 1,2,3,4	Outcomes and Indicators
4.1 Advocate for change.	4.1.1 Advocate for structural and systemic change to other levels of Government, including for better transport options and more localised health services.	Executive Team	1 - 4	Council uses its influence to amplify the voices of the community.
4.2 Our workforce is educated, flexible and kind.	4.2.1 Provide staff with Disability Awareness training.	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	1 - 4	Staff are knowledgeable and confident to work with the disability community.
	4.2.2 Provide specialist training to staff, including: Mental Health First Aid training, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).	People and Culture & Community Partnerships	2 - 4	
	4.2.3 Explore opportunities to conduct a 'Realistic Race'.	Community Wellbeing	2	Evaluation survey shows an increase in awareness. Changes are reflected in work practices and attitudes.
4.3 Our community is educated, inclusive and kind.	4.3.1 Increase awareness of neurodiversity and other 'invisible disabilities' within the broader community.	Community Partnerships	1	Deliver two Library Talks sessions.
	4.3.2 In partnership with local media, develop a 'Community Awareness' campaign that will raise awareness and educate the community on the diversity of disability.	Community Partnerships	3	The community is better informed.

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4.4 We will recognise and celebrate disability inclusion.	4.4.1 Work in partnership to hold an event for International Day of People with a Disability in the shire.	Community Partnerships	1,2,3,4	People with disability feel valued and celebrated.
	4.4.2 Promote the Accessibility category of the Mount Alexander Shire Business Awards.	Economy and Culture	1 & 3	An increase in businesses nominated in the category.
4.5 Support businesses, events & tourism operators to be more accessible and inclusive.	4.5.1 Support the distribution of MASDAG's 'Guide to Organising Accessible Events' and the 'Disability Access Guide for the Mount Alexander Shire'.	Economy and Culture	1 - 4	Businesses have increased awareness of the economic and social benefits of inclusion.
4.6 Support not for profit organisations to become accessible and inclusive.	4.6.1 Provide tailored workshops and training to increase awareness of the value of being an inclusive organisation.	Community Partnerships	2 & 4	Community leadership and capacity increased.

Key Area 5: Wellbeing and safety

Impact - Our community feels equal and safe, and is physically, mentally and socially healthy and resilient.

Objective	Actions will include:	Who will lead	Year 1,2,3,4	Outcomes and Indicators
5.1 Council run social support programs and youth programs are inclusive of people with neurodiversity.	5.1.1 Programs are designed to consider the needs of people with neurodiversities.	Community Partnerships & Community Wellbeing	1 - 4	More people can participate in activities.
5.2 Parents and carers of children living with disability are informed and connected.	5.2.2 Continue to present and expand the Parent Talk series to include neurodiversity topics, and encourage parent support networks.	Community Partnerships	1 - 4	Parents and Carers know where to turn for help.
5.3 Children of all abilities can play in a safe and welcoming environment.	5.3.1 As part of the playground audit, review the level of accessibility and safety for children with disabilities.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1	Playgrounds are safer and more accessible.
	5.3.2 Explore opportunities to increase the security of existing playgrounds.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	
	5.3.3 Explore opportunities to seek funding for the first All Abilities playground in our shire.	Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities	1 - 4	All funding opportunities have been explored.
5.4 Accessible & affordable housing.	5.4.1 The needs of older residents and people with disability are considered in any Council led housing initiatives and advocacy work.	Housing Solutions Broker & CEO	1 - 4	People with a disability have opportunities to live in homes that are fit for purpose.
5.5 Improve support for young carers.	5.5.1 Investigate ways to support young carers to participate in after school activities, recreation and social events.	Community Partnerships	1 - 4	We better understand the needs of Young Carers in our shire.
5.6 Support people with disabilities to plan for emergencies.	5.6.1 Deliver the Emergency Planning for At-risk Populations (EPAP) program.	Community Partnerships	2 & 3	People with a disability and their carers know what to do in an emergency.

5.7 Highlight the increased risk of family violence for people with disabilities.	5.7.1 Develop dedicated material highlighting the increased risk of violence against women with disabilities, during the 16 Days of Activism campaign.	Community Partnerships	1,2,3,4	Increased community understanding of the risk of violence towards women with disabilities.
5.8 Advocate for older adults with disabilities.	5.8.1 Raise awareness of the increased needs for people with dementia from CALD and LGBTIQA+ communities.	Community Wellbeing	1 - 4	Intersectionality with disability is acknowledged and addressed.
	5.8.2 Deliver programs designed to improve digital literacy to increase access to information and services.	Community Wellbeing	1	The digital divide is reduced.

Appendix 1: Disability in our community

Australian statistics

- 1 in 6 people, or 4.4 million, Australians experience disability

- 1 in 3 people, or about 1.4 million, have a severe or profound disability (needing assistance with self-care, mobility and/or communication)

- 1 in 12 children aged 0-14 have a disability

- 1 in 2 people over the age of 65 have a disability[2]

- By 85 years of age, 80% of people have a disability, including half with a severe or profound disability[3]

- There are 2.65 million carers in Australia[4]

- 45% of Australians report lived experience of mental health concerns[5]

- 1 in 4 disabilities is mental or behavioral[6]

Mount Alexander Shire 2021 census findings

- 20,253 people called Mount Alexander home in 2021[7]

- 5.7% of our population have a severe or profound disability that requires direct assistance with personal care, communication or mobility. This figure does not include all disabilities and only captures those who have self-identified[8]

- 11% of our population over 65 years lived with a disability in 2021[9]

- The median age of Mount Alexander residents in 2021 was 51 years, up from 33 years in 2016, with Maldon having a median age of 60 years in 2021[10]

- 36.9% of the population were aged over 65 years in 2021, up from 24.1% in 2016[11]

- 271 people in Mount Alexander with a disability live alone, 174, or 64% are women[12]

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[2] ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2021, Census findings. Important note: 'Disability' measured by the 2021 Census relates to persons who had a disability that required them to seek daily assistance with communication, mobility and/or self-care. These persons represent only a fraction of all people with mild to profound disabilities.
[3] Ibid
[4] ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics), Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2019 release, 2018 reference period
[5] Ibid
[6] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AIHW, People with disability in Australia 2022 report
[7] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Census
[8] Ibid
[9] Ibid
[10] REMPLAN, 2021 Mount Alexander Shire profile
https://app.remplan.com.au/mountalexander/community/population/age?state=j3r5uW!gpQxSrz6qH6L9QDsZJ1d8fRc0tKDRIwtetDtgtptGdY
[11] Ibid
[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Census

Carers[13]

- Nationally in 2021, nearly 11% of all Australians were carers, including 12.3% of all females and 9.3% of males

- 72% of primary carers were female nationally

- 17% of the population in Mount Alexander Shire provided unpaid care to someone with disability or a chronic illness

- 61% of females in Mount Alexander Shire were primary carers

Education / Employment / Incomes[14]

- 44% of Mount Alexander Shire residents with a disability had left school before completing year 11 compared with 19% of those without disability

- 24% of people with a disability in Mount Alexander Shire were employed compared with 79% of those without disability

- $357 was the average weekly income for people with a disability in Mount Alexander Shire compared with $823 for people without disability

Health, Safety and Wellbeing[15]

People with disability in Victoria are:

- Three times more likely to experience family violence

- Twice as likely to experience sexual violence

- More likely to be excluded from the workforce. Fewer than five out of 10 Victorians with disability are employed (49%) compared with nearly eight in 10 (77%) people without disability

- Less likely to have access to affordable housing due to lower unemployment and lower wages

- Faced with greater challenges in accessing public transport, with only 56% of regional bus stops being wheelchair-accessible

Discrimination and Harassment

- People with disability are more likely to experience discrimination than others

- 42% of people aged 15 to 24 years and with severe or profound disability report having experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months[16]

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[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Census
[14] Ibid
[15] Inclusive Victoria State Disability Plan 2022-2026, Victorian Government 2022, p.14

[16] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AIHW, People with disability in Australia 2022 report, pg.13

Appendix 2: Legislation, policies and strategies

A list of the legislation, policies and strategies relevant to the Mount Alexander Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2027

Mount Alexander Plans, Polices and Strategies

Council Plan 2021-2025

Child Safe Policy 2022

Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan 2021-2025

Open Space Asset Management Plan 2022

Commonwealth and State Legislation and Standards

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Victorian Disability Act 2006

Victorian Charter of the Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Carer Recognition Act 2010

Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Victorian Mental Health Act 2014

Access to Premises Buildings Standards 2010

National Construction Code

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Appendix 3: Glossary of terms

Ableism
Discrimination or prejudice towards people with disability.

Accessibility
The practice of making information, activities or environments easy to understand and navigate, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.

Advocacy
Giving active support to an idea or cause.

Changing places
Adult changing facilities specifically designed for people who are unable to use the standard accessible toilets. These facilities include an adult-sized changing table, hoist, peninsula toilet and more circulation space. They provide more comfort and dignity for changing and disposing of incontinence products.

Disability Pride
Disability pride can mean being proud of who you are and embracing your disabled identity. It can also mean feeling confident and not hiding your disability.

Discrimination
The unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as ability, race, gender, age or sexual orientation.

Diversity
The differences between people in factors such as age, caring responsibilities, cultural backgrounds, disability, gender, Indigenous background, sexual orientation and socioeconomic background.

Inclusion
When people feel valued and respected, and have the resources, opportunities and capabilities they need to learn, work, have a voice and participate fully in life.

Intersectionality
An approach to understanding how different parts of a person's identity can overlap, exposing them to compounding forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Some of these intersecting identities include gender, ability, Indigenous background, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, faith, socioeconomic status and age.

Participation
When people join in with others and become involved. This may include having some decision making or planning control over an event or activity or joining in an activity that was planned by others.

Universal Design
Is design that's usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. Designing and creating programs, services, tools and facilities that are useable, without modification, by the widest range of people possible. It involves considering the situation and the people who will use what is being created to design inclusive solutions. Universal design is not a product; it is the process of good design, which focuses on the needs of people.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, ABS Website, accessed 7 March 2023.

Australian Government Job Access - Driving disability employment https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/node/77746

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, AIHW, People with disability in Australia 2022 report https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/about

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.html

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft https://engage.vic.gov.au/disability-act

Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan (2022-2026) https://www.vic.gov.au/state-disability-plan/our-language/social-model-disability

MASDAG (Mount Alexander Shire Disability Advocacy Group), Disability Access Guide for the Mount Alexander Shire

PWDA, People with Disability Australia https://pwd.org.au/

World Health Organization https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health

Youth Affairs Council Victoria https://www.yacvic.org.au/ydas/resources-and-training/together-2/values-and-ideas/two-models-of-disability/#TOC-2