**Moreland Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 – 2025 (Draft)**

**Acknowledgement of Country**

Moreland City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Moreland, and pays respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

**Message from the Mayor**

This will be included in the final version of the plan.

**A quick mention about language and terminology**

The way we use language and words to define and describe disability can directly impact our attitudes, stigma and perceptions of disability, so it is important that we use language that is respectful and inclusive.

Council recognises that there are currently two different ways that we can use language to identify people with disability - *person-first* language and *identity-first* language. People with disability can have preferences for either and it is important that non-disabled people should be led by each person with disability for the preferred choice of language

For the purpose of this plan, Council uses *person-first* language when referring to people with disability. Person-first language uses phrases like ‘people with disability’, ‘people with live experience’ or ‘a person with a cerebral palsy’. It puts the word ‘person’ first. Person-first language acknowledges that people with disability are multi-faceted individuals with diverse characteristics and are not necessarily defined by a medical condition, illness or diagnosis. In other words, it separates a person’s sense of identity from any notion of disability. *Identity-first* language, on the other hand, has reclaimed the word ‘disabled person’. Other examples of identity-first language are ‘autistic person’ or ‘the Deaf community’. Identity first language acknowledges that for some people their disability is an integral part of who they are and can feel empowered by identifying with a disability community with shared experiences. Identity-first language also acknowledges that people have been disabled by the barriers created by ableist attitudes and systemic inequalities imposed by society. Both *person-first* and *identity-first* phrases have merit depending on the situation and the disability. The phrase ‘people with disability’ will be used throughout this plan so that it is aligned with the current terminology used in national and state legislation and policies. We also recognise that person-first language is not fixed and the organic nature of language may shift the consensus in time.

The term *disability* is also a word that has attracted some different and changing definitions over time. This plan will not define the term disability and will embrace broad, respectful and sensitive views of what disability means for individuals and what it is like to live with disability in Moreland.

**Purpose of the plan**

The Moreland Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022– 2025 sets out a 4-year plan to eliminate the discrimination of people with disability. The plan also seeks to improve the lives of people with disability, their families and carers, so they can enjoy a fulfilling life without barriers, have equal access and opportunity, and feel included to participate in all aspects of life.

Council takes a whole of Council approach to access and inclusion and sees it the responsibility of all Council staff to protect and advance the human rights of people with disability.

This plan was developed mainly in consultation with people with disability, their families, carers. We also consulted widely with disability advocates, members of the Moreland Disability Working Group, disability service providers, Moreland staff, and community members with an interest in the human rights of people with disability.

**5 Key Areas**

The Moreland Disability Access and Inclusion Plan has 5 key areas. These areas will guide our actions to ensure that we address the main barriers preventing people with disability from enjoying full participation in community life. The first 4 area are requirement of the Victorian Disability Act (2006).

The 5 key areas are, to:

* Ensure **equal and dignified access** for people with disability in all areas of life within Council’s responsibility, including the built environment, information, and service delivery.
* Improve the **employment** and education opportunities for people with a disability
* **Promote inclusion and participation** in the community of people with disability
* **Change the attitudes and practises** that lead to discrimination of people with disability
* Support the **health and safety** of people with disability in all settings and contexts

**The foundations of the plan**

The plan is built on 3 foundations:

1. Legislation, policies and standards

2. The Social Model of Disability and the Human Rights Model of Disability

3. The Community - local people who live, work, study, visit and play in Moreland and their knowledge, perspectives, values and lived experiences of disability

1. **Legislative and Policy context**

In Australia, people with disability are far more likely to experience discrimination than people without disability. People with disability are entitled to the same rights and opportunities as everyone else, and this is enshrined in legislation and fundamental human rights. The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) makes it unlawful in Australia to discriminate on the grounds of disability. It also highlights the importance of treating people with disability, family members, friends and carers, equally and with dignity, and to make sure they participate and feel included in the community.

The Victorian Disability Act (2006) provides Victorian public authorities, such as Councils, with a framework for disability access and inclusion plans. The Act requires all Councils to develop disability action plans and identifies 4 key areas that all Councils must address in their Plans. These are:

(a) reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities;

(b) reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment;

(c) promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability;

(d) achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability

This plan is aligned with these 4 key areas.

In 2008, Australia became a signatory to the United Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This important commitment has helped Australia move even further towards promoting and protecting the human rights of people with disability and reinforces the legislation that already exists in Australia.

Sadly, despite anti-discrimination legislation and commitments to human rights, many people with disability in Australia are still unfairly treated and do not have access to the same basic human rights and opportunities as everyone else. This is not just a problem for people with a disability and their families and carers, but for society as a whole. A truly inclusive world generates harmony, knowledge, creativity, and wealth for everyone.

A more extensive list of the legislation, policies and industry standards that are relevant to this plan can be found at the end of this plan. See Appendix 1.

1. **The Social Model of Disability**

The Social Model of disability is another important approach that underpins this plan. The social model of disability recognises that people are disabled by the barriers created by society, not because they have an impairment, limitation or condition. This is contrasted with the medical model where disability is seen to be a medical problem that needs to be fixed or cured. While there is value in the medical model approach in certain medical settings, the social model is the preferred lens to effectively advocate for reversing inequality, combatting ableism and removing barriers for people with disability.

1. **Our Community**

Some data about disability in our community.

* 20% of Moreland’s population have a disability.
* 1 in 2 people over the age of 65 have a disability.
* 1 in 3 households includes a person with a disability.
* 44% of all complaints made to the Australian and Human Rights Commission were about disability discrimination.
* Aboriginal people are twice as likely to experience disability compared to non-Aboriginal people.
* People with disability are two times more likely to live in poverty.
* People with disability are six times more likely to have poor health.
* The unemployment rate of people with disability is double than people without disability
* Over 80% of businesses on Sydney Road have inaccessible entries.
* For every $1 invested in disability, governments can receive at least $4 in return.

Disability is more common than we think. In Moreland, 20% of the population have a disability, and one in every 3 households in Moreland includes a person with disability. Despite disability being very common, the general perception in the community is that it is uncommon. One of the reasons for this is that most disability is not visible or immediately apparent. Autism, anxiety, depression, deafness, blindness, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, and intellectual disability are all just some examples of the many disabilities that are less obvious. People with invisible disability often report that they are unfairly treated and harassed because other people mistakenly believe they do not have a disability.

This does not to suggest that people with more visible disabilities are advantaged in any way. In fact, when disability is more obvious, people are still discriminated and can be perceived either as either heroes who have triumphed in the face of adversity or victims who are in need of saving. Both these perceptions are disrespectful and harmful.

Rather than being labelled as inspirational heroes or unfortunate victims, people with disability want to be accepted for who they are – ordinary, multi-faceted, complex individuals with diverse characteristics, just like everyone else. People with disability are not necessarily defined by their disability. A person’s identity can be defined by things like their gender, sexuality, race, culture, ethnicity, friendships, religion, preferences, age and so on.

When a person with disability identifies from another marginalised group, discrimination can be intensified, and this person can experience double or triple the level of discrimination. Thinking about disability in this way is sometimes referred to as intersectionality. This approach is considered best practice and it helps us to better understand the systemic barriers and inequalities that are connected in our society. This plan does not leave any person with a disability behind, regardless of their disability, background, identity, or beliefs.

**First Nations people with disability**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the longest surviving culture in the world and enrich our communities in unique and meaningful ways. However, the impacts of colonisation has had devastating effects on indigenous communities. First Nations people with disability are amongst some of the most disadvantaged members of the community. The rate of disability amongst Aboriginal people in Australia is more than double than non-indigenous people. We recognise the unacceptable disadvantage that exists for First Nations people with disability, and we will work towards closing the gap on disproportionate inequality and repair the damage inflicted by colonisation and years of systemic racism.

**Carers**

Carers play a critical role in providing unpaid care to people with disability in our community. Over 11% of people in Victoria are carers and this figure is likely to be much higher as many people who have a caring role do not identify as carers. Carers can be children, parents, partners, relatives, friends, and older people. While there is considerable diversity amongst carers, a significant majority of carers are older people and most are women (over 70%). Caring can be a very physically and psychologically demanding role, and quite often carers must balance their own personal interests with their caring responsibilities. Carers make a vast contribution to our society and economy. A report commissioned by Carers Australia in 2020 estimated the annual cost of replacing unpaid carers to be $77.9 billion.

**COVID-19**

In some settings, COVID-19 has indirectly improved the situation for people with disability. For the first time, people with disability were suddenly able to access flexible services that they had been asking for years. However, despite some improvements, COVID-19 disproportionately impacted people with disability and exacerbated systemic inequalities in Australia. People with disability were more susceptible to further social isolation, digital exclusion, accessing information, reduced economic security, slower vaccination rates, higher infection rates and a greater risk of developing serious symptoms and complications. We will continue to advocate for better responses to support the COVID-19 health and well-being of people with disability during the life of this plan.

**Disability Royal Commission**

In Australia, people with disability experience the highest rates violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation compared to any other group. These rates are even higher amongst women and children with disability, Aboriginal people, LGBTIQA+ people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds with disability.

During 2022 and 2023, the Disability Royal Commission will continue to investigate how to better protect people with disability from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in all settings. Moreland City Council welcomes the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Neglect of people with disability and will continue to encourage and support people with disability and those who support them to share their stories.

**NDIS**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is one of the most important and essential social reforms Australia has experienced in recent history. After years of tireless campaigning by disability advocates for a fairer system, the NDIS was created and Australian’s living with permanent and significant disability were finally able to enjoy greater choice and control of the supports and services they need to lead fulfilling lives.

We welcome the NDIS, but also acknowledge that there are still improvements that need to be made. Importantly, we also recognise that almost 90% of people with disability in Australia are not eligible for the NDIS, which means the vast majority of people with disability in Australia must rely on other community and mainstream supports. In some instances, these supports are not suitable for some people, and occasionally, the required supports are not available in the mainstream and community sector. We remain committed to provide home and community support services for people with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS for the entire life of Council’s home support program. We will also advocate for the continuous improvement of the NDIS wherever possible, and advocate for a better system with proper supports for the many thousands who are not eligible for the scheme.

**What you told us – “Nothing about us, without us.”**

**Access to the places and spaces**

Physical barriers to places and spaces were the most commonly reported issues by people with disability and carers in the consultation of this plan. Barriers regarding footpaths, toilets, playgrounds, open spaces, public transport, accessible parking spaces, and inaccessible retail premises were just some of the concerns people mentioned. It was also highlighted that these barriers prevent people with disability from being able to fully participate in the community, including socialising, going to work or school and accessing basic health care needs. In other words, barriers to the built environment lead to social isolation and exclusion.

**Programs and services and the NDIS**

It was reported that there is a lack of appropriate programs and services available for people with disability, which is in part due to the service gaps created by the introduction of the NDIS. Not only has the NDIS resulted in many funded services and programs being discontinued, many people with disability are not eligible for funding under the NDIS, making it difficult for them to access the services and supports they need.

**Employment and economic participation**

There was wide acknowledgement Council should be leading by example when it comes to providing more employment opportunities for people with disability. In order to do this, Council needs to create a culture that supports disability inclusion and provides a safe and flexible working environment. There was also a view that Council needs to be more proactive and accountable for this by establishing quotas and targets and more employing people with disability.

**Advocacy**

There are a number of ways in which Council could improve access and inclusion for people with disability by increasing its advocacy role to state and federal governments, as well as local stakeholders. Key opportunities for advocacy include improvements to building outcomes, public transport systems, retail and private sector changes, health and housing, and addressing other systemic inequalities and attitudinal barriers that disadvantage people with disability from other marginalised groups.

**Our commitment**

We are committed to addressing the interests and issues raised by our community to remove barriers and eliminate discrimination experienced by people with disability. Council will develop an Implementation Plan with specific actions to deliver on this commitment. These actions will be aligned with the following 5 key areas and the objectives described under each area.

**1. Equal access to all areas of community life**

Council will work to improve the accessibility of Council buildings, infrastructure and open spaces and go beyond principles of Universal Design, whenever possible, so they can be accessed by everyone.

We will also improve the accessibility of Council’s information, programs and services to increase the participation and social inclusion of people with disability.

1. **Improve employment, education and economic security for people with disability**

Council will work to improve employment and education opportunities for people with disability, both within Council and the local community.

We will support our staff with disability to feel safe, supported and equal members of our team.

We will also advocate for stronger economic security for people with disability, especially those who are underemployed or unable to participate in the labour market.

1. **Promote inclusion and participation in the community of people with disability**

Council will promote the inclusion and participation of people with disability.

We will provide opportunities for people with disability, their families and carers to be involved in civic life and co-design our work.

We will provide inclusive programs and services to people with disability.

We will work with community organisations and the private sector to increase the opportunities for people with disability to participate in community life.

1. **Change the attitudes and practises that lead to discrimination of people with disability**

We believe it is every staff member’s responsibility to work towards eliminating disability discrimination.

We will support our staff to be disability confident.

We will not tolerate and call out any form of discrimination against people with disability.

We will advocate for the removal of systemic barriers that lead to inequality and discrimination.

We embrace the Social Model of Disability.

We will take an intersectional approach to disability access and inclusion.

We will celebrate disability.

We will lead by example.

1. **Support the health, wellbeing and safety of people with disability in all settings and contexts**

We will protect the health, wellbeing and safety of our staff with disabilities, and staff who are carers.

We welcome the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability and will encourage and support people to share their stories.

We will work with community, allied health organisations and other relevant stakeholders to reduce the health, housing and safety inequalities experienced by people with disability.

We will support people with disability, families and carers through the next phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Action Plan - How will we meet these objectives?**

To deliver our commitment to these 5 key areas Council will develop a separate Implementation Plan with specific actions, goals and allocated responsibilities. The Implementation Plan will list several measurable, achievable and relevant goals and corresponding actions for each of the 5 key areas.

**Monitoring and reporting**

Council is committed to the ongoing monitoring and reporting of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

Progress will be monitored and addressed through an Accountability Framework that will include the following methods to ensure we are held accountable:

* An annual review and evaluation of the actions identified in the Implementation Plan.
* An annual report of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan in the annual Council Report.
* Council will submit its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan to the Australian Human Rights Commission.
* Council will include the DAIP within its Risk Register. This means that Council must assess the risk of any actions that are not delivered on time.

**Appendix 1**

A list of the legislation, policies and industry standards that are relevant to the Moreland Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 -2025.

**Moreland Policies**

* Moreland Council Plan
* Health & Wellbeing Plan
* Moreland Human Rights Policy
* Living and Ageing Well in Moreland Framework
* Moreland Children, Young People and Families Plan

**Commonwealth and State legislation**

* Disability Discrimination Act 1992
* Carer Recognition Act 2010
* Victorian Disability Act 2006
* Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
* Victorian Mental Health Act 2014
* Charter of the Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

**International, National & Victorian Strategies**

* The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
* National Disability Strategy 2010 - 2020
* Victorian State Disability Plan 2017 - 2020
* *Every Opportunity*: Victorian economic participation plan for people with disability 2018-2020
* The social model of disability
* The human rights model of disability

**Industry Standards**

* Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards
* Disability Standards Accessible Public Transport
* Disability Education Standards
* Australian Standards 1428; 2860
* WCAG 2.0 & 2.1