

# Draft Access Equity and Inclusion Policy - Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the purpose of the Policy?

The policy formalises Council's commitment to access, equity and inclusion. It will provide direction for our work at both a strategic and operational level. The policy will shape our practice and inform our engagement activities, strategies, policies, plans, projects, programs and services.

## How was the Policy developed?

The Draft Policy has been informed by:

- relevant legislation and frameworks
- evidence in the [Nillumbik Community Profile 2021](#)
- recent community consultation and evidence of our local context
- alignment with Council strategic documents
- existing Council commitments related to access, equity and inclusion
- best-practice from government and community.

## Why are these priority groups identified?

For some people living in our community, there may be additional challenges in feeling included, accessing places, spaces, resources and opportunities. We recognise that some groups have been disadvantaged by inequality and discrimination, meaning that these groups may need additional assistance to reduce the barriers to access and participation. We have identified the following priority groups for Nillumbik based on information

- **First Nations People** - 3 in 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people regularly experience race-based discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People may also experience barriers to culturally appropriate health, education and justice services. 230 people (0.4%) living in Nillumbik identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.<sup>2</sup>
- **LGBTIQA+ people** - Four per cent of Nillumbik residents identify as LGBTIQA+.<sup>3</sup> However, this may be an underrepresentation - it is estimated that 11 per cent of the national population may identify as LGBTIQA+.<sup>4</sup> Almost 1 in 4 (22%) survey respondents in a recently conducted Nillumbik Youth Survey identified as LGBTIQA+.
- **Older people** – Growth in the ageing population of Nillumbik means that issues faced by the older population will increase. These include limited transportation options, social and geographic isolation, limited housing options and access to services and facilities. 30 per cent of the Nillumbik population is over 55 years.<sup>5</sup>
- **People from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds** – 16 per cent of Nillumbik residents were born overseas<sup>6</sup>, 9 per cent speak a language other than English<sup>7</sup> and there are 5635 non-English speakers living in Nillumbik Shire.<sup>8</sup> In Australia, one in five people have experienced race-based

discrimination and two in five people have been a target of verbal racial abuse.<sup>9</sup>

- **People who live rurally or are geographically isolated** – access to goods, services, employment and social interaction opportunities (e.g. public transport, education, health services, internet, housing choices) can be limited for people who live rurally. Risks associated with extreme weather events can also be higher.
- **People of low socio-economic status** - There were 5,376 people in low income households living in Nillumbik Shire. The unemployment rate in Nillumbik is 4.3 per cent. This is higher among young people (22%).<sup>10</sup>
- **People with a disability and/or chronic disease** - 1 in 5 people in Nillumbik are estimated to have a disability, which is forecast to increase by 67% by 2026. 1 in 2 people over 65 years have a disability.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the burden of disease in Australia is from chronic diseases including cancer, cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal conditions, mental health conditions and substance use. Populations in remote areas, in low socioeconomic groups and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People are more likely to face burdens of disease.<sup>12</sup>
- **Refugees and people seeking asylum** - Most refugees and asylum seekers arrive in Australia having experienced poverty, torture and trauma in countries with different racial, social, economic and linguistic backgrounds.<sup>13</sup> Nillumbik has a small population of Syrian refugees who settled in Eltham in 2017.
- **Women and gender diverse people** – women and gender diverse people are particularly impacted by gender inequity and experience higher rates of family violence. Violence against women is the biggest contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44 years in Victoria. Reports of family violence incidents have been increasing in Nillumbik and children were present in one-third of these incidents.<sup>14</sup>

Other experiences that can lead to barriers or discrimination that will be considered when applying this policy include:

- disaster, emergency or extreme weather event
- family violence
- financial insecurity
- homelessness or housing insecurity
- loneliness and social isolation
- mental illness
- unemployment or under-employment.

## How is inequality changing in Nillumbik?

Inequalities are increasing, with the impacts of the pandemic starting to show. More people than ever have reached out to access support services including family violence, housing, emergency and food relief in Nillumbik.

Our community cares deeply for the environment and are both environmentally engaged and progressive, but at the same time significant impacts of climate change are being experienced – this will continue to increase inequalities.

*“People are just getting priced out of rentals in Diamond Creek. There are no affordable housing options around anymore. That is the problem” “People are*

*moving out of the area because they just can't make ends meet" Local service provider*

*'We are seeing an increase in staff from services (disability support, Aboriginal House services, VACCA, enhanced maternal child health) who are quite worried about their clients and are seeking food assistance and other material aid on their client's behalf ' Local food relief*

## **What is Council already doing to create a more fair and inclusive Shire?**

- Undertaking Gender Impact Assessments on all new strategies, policies, plans, projects, programs and services
- Strengthening flexible and inclusive workplace practice through implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan
- Engaging access consultants to inform planning process
- Reconciliation commitments
- In home family mentoring for families experiencing challenges
- Providing Easy English translations of Council publications
- Maintaining high customer service standards
- Using the Complaints Policy and procedures to identify improvement opportunities
- Celebrating days of significance for priority groups (e.g. IDAHOBIT Day, NAIDOC Week, International Day of People with Disability, International Women's Day).

## **How will the Policy be implemented?**

Access equity and inclusion considerations are already being embedded across Council. This policy will strengthen and build on current action and commitments and will be supported by existing strategies, plans and programs and projects across Council to ensure the policy commitments are implemented and maintained.

There are three phases we will take to embed access, equity and inclusion principles and policy commitments across Council:

1. **Initiate** - establish our policy commitment and undertake community engagement to confirm opportunities and gaps.
2. **Build capacity and drive culture change** - deliver training, upskill staff, deliver pilot programs, identify champions and collect relevant information.
3. **Sustain**: measured through effective partnerships, longer-term systems and process changes, monitoring, evaluation and learning to continue to build on strengths and address gaps.

## I have a complaint related to Council regarding access, equity and inclusion. What should I do?

The easiest way to submit a complaint or feedback is via our online form: <https://au.openforms.com/Form/83029857-a40a-4499-887a-ce17e5e81408>

Alternatively, you can:

- Email [nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au](mailto:nillumbik@nillumbik.vic.gov.au)
- Call 03 9433 3111
- Write to PO BOX 476, Greensborough VIC 3088
- Visit 32 Civic Drive, Greensborough

National Relay Service

TTY call 133 677

Speak and listen call 1300 555 727

When making a complaint and/or providing feedback to Council, we encourage you to provide as much information as possible so that we can address your concern.

We respect the need to manage and protect your privacy, and we do accept and respond to anonymous complaints if we have received enough information to do so.

The following information is helpful to include in your complaint:

- your name and contact details
- identify the action, decision, service or policy you are complaining about, and why you are dissatisfied
- relevant details, such as dates, times, location or reference numbers, and documents that support your complaint
- the outcome you are seeking from making your complaint
- whether you have any communication needs.

For additional information or including our Complaints Handling Policy, please visit [Making a complaint - Nillumbik Shire Council](#)

## End notes

---

<sup>1</sup> All Together Now, Racism in Australia [website], Available at: <https://alltogethernow.org.au/racism-in-australia>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Census of Population and Housing. SEIFA data*. Collated by Forecast .id. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik/Who-are-we>

<sup>3</sup> Victorian Agency for Health Information (2020), *The health and wellbeing of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer population in Victoria: Findings from the Victorian Population Health Survey 2017*, State of Victoria, Melbourne.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Human Rights Commission (2014). *Face the facts: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People*. Available at: [humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/7\\_FTF\\_2014\\_LGBTI.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/7_FTF_2014_LGBTI.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Forecast .id (2020). Discontinued. Available at: <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/land-use-and-populationresearch/victoria-in-future>

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Census of Population and Housing*. Collated by Profile .id. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik/overseas-communities-interest?BMACOID=10>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Census of Population and Housing*. Collated by Profile .id. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik/non-english-speaking-introduction?BMACOID=10>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Census of Population and Housing*. Collated by Profile .id. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik/non-english-speaking-introduction?WebID=10>

<sup>9</sup> All Together Now, Racism in Australia [website], <https://alltogethernow.org.au/racism-in-australia>, accessed February 2022.

---

<sup>10</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). *Census of Population and Housing, Labour force data*. Collated by Profile .id. Available at: <https://profile.id.com.au/nillumbik/employment-status>

<sup>11</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018). *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018*. Available at <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release#data-download>

<sup>12</sup> State of Victoria (2019). *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023*. Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/health-strategies/public-health-wellbeing-plan>

<sup>13</sup> Camacho, D, (1999). *The social, economic and industrial issues specific to migrant workers over 45 Years of age seeking employment, or establishing a business, following Unemployment (a quantitative approach)*, Standing Committee On Employment, Education And Work Place Relations (Submission 33), Australian Parliament House, Canberra

<sup>14</sup> Department of Premier and Cabinet (2026) *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy*. Available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-and-strong-victorian-gender-equality#download-the-pdf>