

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all of council decisions, policies and practices enhance social inclusion, so that everyone regardless of their circumstances, can achieve their full potential in life. The policy will guide and inform the achievement of the policy statement, in line with Council and the community's 2033 Vision for Wodonga.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Council's plans and practices acknowledge and consider that all people have the same rights, which are supported in legislation, to participate fully socially, culturally, economically, physically and politically in the Wodonga community.

## **SCOPE**

The policy covers all Council Staff across all business units related to the planning and delivery of council services, projects, programs, facilities and resources to the community.

## **BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS**

### **Community Wellbeing**

Community wellbeing is the combination of social, cultural, economic, physical and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and reach their full potential.

### **Social Inclusion**

Social inclusion is about having the opportunity to fairly and equally participate in all aspects of social, cultural, physical, economic and political life. However, it is about more than just having these opportunities for participation. It is about having the personal capacity, skills and confidence to embrace these opportunities, and positively contribute to your own life and the life of those around you – including the broader community in which you live.

## Social Exclusion

Social exclusion occurs when there are barriers caused by disadvantage that creates challenges for people to participate in community life and to access the opportunities that may be available to others. These barriers can include things such as age, unemployment, gender, socio-economic status, lack of access to services, disability, poor health and cultural discrimination.

## Achieving Social Inclusion in Wodonga

For local government, being socially inclusive means working to reduce barriers to participation, as well as working to enable opportunities and experiences that foster and support participation. Local government delivers services and support across many sections of the community, therefore a commitment to social inclusion is essential across the organisation.

Social inclusion policies seek to improve a range of social, physical, cultural and economic barriers that may inhibit people from participating in community or civic life. This may include their opportunity to access events, programs or services, their opportunity to gather information, and to be involved, or their opportunity to have their opinions heard.

A socially inclusive community is a strong and resilient community because of its ability to embrace all people, of all backgrounds and abilities in community life. Not only is it a fundamental right of every individual to have the opportunity to participate, but it is in the best interest of the community that this is possible.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Wodonga Council is committed to supporting the growth of a community that builds on the strength of all people, values diversity and tolerance, provides equitable opportunities for people, and recognises the fundamental right of all citizens to have opportunities that enable full participation in the community.

Council plans and practices will be based on the following principles:

- The key to social inclusion in the community is the opportunity of an appropriate physical and social environment;

- All community members are actively and inclusively engaged in processes that aim to better understand their needs and priorities;
- The needs and aspirations of all community members, especially those who are disadvantaged, are acknowledged and represented in partnerships and planning;
- The diversity of the Wodonga community is recognised as one of our communities greatest strengths;
- Each cultural group in Wodonga has unique strengths and perspectives that the larger community can benefit from;
- The most effective and sustainable form of planning provides a preventative approach to addressing disadvantage;
- All events, activities, programs, facilities and services are promoted and delivered equitably and inclusively;
- A whole of organisation approach is engaged to address the barriers that exclude people from full participation in community life; and
- A community development approach is used to empower and strengthen communities, encourage cooperative practices within communities, and encourages valuing diversity.

The policy principles listed above are based on the principles developed by the *Australian social inclusion board* to support the Australian government's implementation of the social inclusion agenda. The principles have been adapted to suit the Wodonga community and to reflect the role of local government.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Nil

### **RELATED COUNCIL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

All policies, policies and strategies should be developed and reviewed with consideration to the social inclusion policy and the supporting policy statements.

Specific ones that seek to improve social inclusion in our community include:

- The Human Rights policy 2012-2016
- Workplace Gender Equity Directive and Strategy, 2016

- Wodonga Charter for Prevention of Violence Against Women
- The Community Engagement policy 2014-2018
- The Child-friendly City Policy 2012-2016
- The Procurement Policy 2016-2017
- Safety, Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2016-2017 to 2021-2022
- Age Friendly City Strategy 2015-2016 to 2019-2020
- Physical Activity Strategy 2015-2020
- Wodonga Youth Strategy 2014-2015 to 2016-2017

## RELATED LEGISLATION AND REFERENCES

- Social Inclusion Principles for Australia
- *Local Government Act 1989*
- *The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*
- *Victorian Disability Act 2006*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)*
- Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012 (Commonwealth)
- *Family Violence Prevention Act 2008 (Commonwealth)*
- Closing The Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage 2009 (Commonwealth)

## REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed at least once in each four year Council term. Minor amendments to the policy may be authorised by the CEO at any time where such changes do not alter the substance of the policy.

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