



ALPINE
SHIRE COUNCIL



Access
and Inclusion
Plan

2021-2024



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MAYOR'S MESSAGE



It is my great pleasure to present the Alpine Shire Access and Inclusion Plan 2021 - 2024 (the Plan).

This essential plan outlines the next four years of actions to support our organisation and the community to become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability.

The Plan replaces Council's 2011 Disability Action Plan and frames our commitment to people with disability towards a focus on access and inclusion in day-to-day life.

As a Council we have a commitment to support all of our residents and visitors to enjoy the Shire's stunning natural environment, high quality facilities, services, activities, and diverse events calendar.

This four year plan outlines overarching goals and actions and a range of deliverables for Alpine Shire Council to increase participation for employees, stakeholders, residents, and visitors with disability.

We have a responsibility to lead by example to increase awareness of the barriers impacting people with disability and to embed access and inclusion into the organisation's activities, programs, policies, and processes, and, by extension, support businesses within the shire to become more accessible and inclusive.

This also means supporting local businesses and community members to be aware of the importance of access and inclusion in their daily lives and operations, and to foster an atmosphere of connection between all members of our communities.

On behalf of Alpine Shire Council, I am proud to present the Plan, which outlines relevant and achievable actions for us all to take making our communities welcoming to everyone.

CEO'S MESSAGE



At Alpine Shire Council we hold the responsibility for embedding access and inclusion practices into our organisation and also promoting, communicating, and fostering these practices in the broader community.

The Plan aims to reduce and remove barriers experienced by people with disability.

We are committed to ensuring that Alpine Shire Council is an inclusive and accessible workplace which will benefit both our employees and our community.

The Plan aims to eliminate gaps in Council's policies and processes in order to improve outcomes for people with disability and promote inclusion in our work practices.

Our commitment includes a focus on internal communication and staff training on accessibility and inclusion, identification of external and internal disability champions and an organisation-wide focus on modelling and supporting access and inclusion practices across the broader Alpine Shire community.

The Access and Inclusion Plan outlines four key focus areas:

Focus Area 1 – Promoting positive community attitudes and behaviours

Our community awareness will support the rights and abilities of people with disability and promote the development of positive attitudes and behaviours to enable access and inclusion.

Focus Area 2 – Creating liveable communities

Our community will increase participation of people with disability in all aspects of community life, through targeted approaches to address barriers in buildings, housing, transport, and our open spaces.

Focus Area 3 – Supporting access to meaningful employment

Our community supports meaningful employment outcomes for people with disability enabling them to plan for their future and exercise choice and control as a result of economic security.

Focus Area 4 – Improving access to Council services through better systems and processes

Our community supports people with disability to make informed choices about available Council services and for access to services to be easy, efficient, and accessible.

In leading with the vision that accessibility is everyone's responsibility, we aim to enhance the outcomes for the community as well as increase employee awareness and capacity to include people with disability.

I look forward to the positive outcomes for all residents and visitors into the future.

INTRODUCTION

Alpine Shire Council is committed to enabling inclusive practices and removing barriers that may exist for people with disability within our community. We do this by considering the experiences, needs and accessibility requirements of our residents, our people, and the broader community.

We understand that every one of us will face challenges during our lives, even if temporary or situational. With this perspective, it is evident we can all benefit from inclusive and accessible design, even if we don't live with permanent disability.



Snapshot of the Alpine Shire

Approximately 12,800 people call Alpine Shire home, surrounded by stunning natural beauty.

Residents and tourists enjoy the delightful climate, wide range of food and wine outlets, and great in and outdoor entertainment.

The Alpine Shire is about 300 kilometres northeast of Melbourne, 70 kilometres south of Albury/

Wodonga and 40 kilometres southeast of Wangaratta. Its main population centres are Bright, Myrtleford and Mount Beauty.

The Alpine Shire's age profile is relatively old, with a median age of 49. This is attributed to a large

proportion of Shire residents (24%) aged 65 years and over.

The Shire covers 4,790 square kilometres. Approximately 92% of that land is public land, including parts of the Alpine National Park and all of Mount Buffalo National Park.



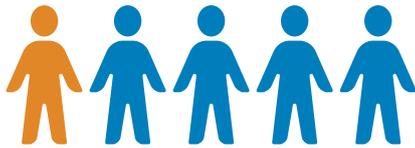
Our Community with Disability

Alpine Shire has a diverse population comprising people from different backgrounds, ages, and experiences which reflects the broader Australian community. Almost one in five Australians live with disability, and this includes the estimated 2,756 in the Alpine Shire. Health, wellbeing, and lifestyle play an important role in the inclusion of everyone in the community, and this includes people with disability and their carers.

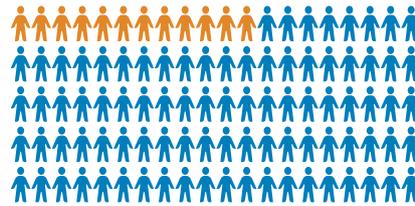


Snapshot of Australians with Disability

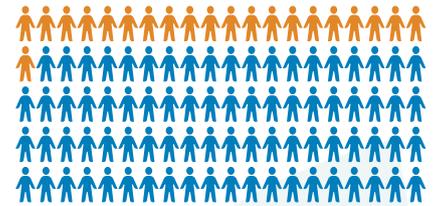
1 in 5 Australians live with disability, that includes approximately 2756 people in the Alpine Shire who live with disability



2.7 million Australians or 12% of the population are carers



21% of people born in 2018 can expect to live about 21% of their lives with some level of disability



1 in 3 people with disability had difficulty accessing locations due to challenges with mobility or communication



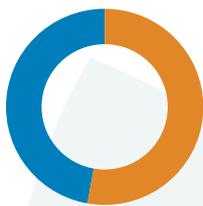
1 in 6 people with disability have had difficulty using public transport



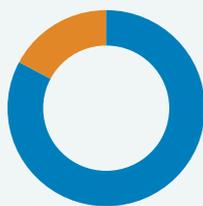
Around half of people with disability used aids or equipment to help with their disability



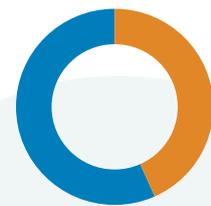
53% of people with disability participate in the workforce



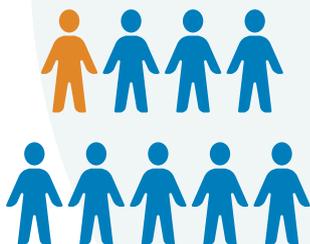
83% of people without disability participate in the workforce



44% of Australian Human Rights Commission complaints are about disability discrimination



Disability prevalence increases with age, and nearly 40 per cent of the Australian workforce is aged 45 or over



Age 0-64

1 in 9 have disability



Age 65+

1 in 2 have disability

People aged 65 in 2018 can expect to live 53% or approximately 11 years of their remaining lives with some level of disability



Our Colleagues with Disability

Council believes in its people and understands that working for Local Government brings a strong connection to the community and provides the opportunity to make a difference.

People with disability have often been disadvantaged in employment opportunities due to attitudinal and environmental barriers. Australians with disability are employed at a rate of 53.4% compared to people without disability at 84.1%.

In reflecting the diversity of our community, Council is committed to employing people with disability with the prospect of leading by example to our local businesses and community to provide meaningful opportunities and outcomes of increased social and economic participation for people with disability.

Alpine Shire Council recognises the importance of ensuring best practice in access and inclusion planning,

focuses on working in partnership with all levels of government, service providers, peak bodies, businesses, community groups as well as people with disability, their families, and their carers.

Our plan provides the future framework to continue our access and inclusion journey for people with disability over the next four years and builds upon our recent achievements.



OUR PROGRESS TOWARDS ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Local Government plays an important role in ensuring community members feel welcome and can participate fully and equitably in their day-to-day lives. Alpine Shire Council has continued their commitment to enhancing the lives of people with disability, with the notable achievements outlined below.

- The All-Terrain TrailRider Wheelchair was purchased as a collaboration between Parks Victoria and Alpine Shire Council in 2014 to enable people with disability to access more rugged walking trails which are not suitable for conventional wheelchairs. In 2020 the chair was moved to YMCA Howmans Gap and upgraded with an electric motor to make handling the chair easier.
- Alpine Shire Council's commitment to access and inclusion includes raising awareness in the community by engaging people with disability to speak at various community events.
- In 2013, a pool hoist was installed at the Bright Sports Centre to enable people with disability to access the only year-round heated swimming pool within Alpine Shire. Council are in the planning process to expand accessibility of our swimming pools to include a pool hoist at both Myrtleford and Mount Beauty outdoor pools
- Alpine Shire Council has undertaken three Accessibility Appraisals in 2017, 2019 and 2020. Appraisals benchmark against the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010 as well as some universal design considerations and provide an overview of key access issues and recommendations to improve access for all users.



<https://www.bushwalkingblog.com.au/trailrider-wheelchair-hiking/> [Above Image]

What is the Access and Inclusion Plan?

Alpine Shire Council recognises that people with disability are valued members of our community who contribute to the diversity and prosperity of our Shire.

The Plan sets out our commitment to ensuring our Shire is a welcoming and inclusive place beyond the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Plan is supported by the Social Model of Disability which challenges the social environment to accommodate disability as a normal

part of human diversity rather than the medical model of disability which considers disability to be the problem of the individual in need of being fixed or cured.

We have developed focus areas and priorities that will enable residents and visitors to actively participate and contribute to our community.

The Plan sets out our obligations under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and aligns with Commonwealth and

State Government initiatives which emphasise the choice, dignity, and rights of people with disability to live valued lives in inclusive communities.

Our overarching commitment to our community is our Council Plan 2021 – 2025. The Access and Inclusion Plan connects with our Council Plan and aligns with our overall strategic direction, setting out the goals and actions to enable Council to provide services, supports, facilities and information that are not only accessible, but genuinely inclusive.



Disabled Wintersport Australia (DWA) [Above Image]

What our Community told us about Access and Inclusion

The process of developing the Plan included consultations that were held via a combination of face-to-face workshops, online surveys and workshops, and individual feedback.

The outcomes of the stakeholder engagement focused on analysis and review of current work processes and activities, collective observations of community members and stakeholder experiences.

Data of the top five priorities from the survey:

1. Promote and educate local business on access and inclusion
2. Advocacy for accessible housing
3. Increase council staff awareness of access and inclusion
4. Increase access to mainstream services for people with disability
5. Increase access to leisure and social activities

Our commitment to continuous improvement includes strengthening our links with people with disability and disability organisations in our community in order to ensure we capture all aspects of the lived experience of people with disability.

We acknowledge our community and key stakeholders for providing their vital contributions to the development of the Plan through consultations, surveys, and workshops.



Chris Midgley at Mount Buffalo [Above Image]

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

An Access and Inclusion Plan sets out how Council will consider the needs of people with disability who reside in, work in, and visit Alpine Shire. Council has responsibilities under both Federal and State legislation, including relevant international frameworks and strategies, to ensure barriers are removed for people with disability.

International

The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** was adopted by the United Nations in 2006 and Australia became a signatory in 2008. The CRPD promotes the social model of disability and reaffirms that all people with all types of disability must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

National

The **Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)** provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability. The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate in the provision of goods, services, or facilities against people on the basis that they have, or may have, disability. It is also unlawful to discriminate on the basis that a person has or may have associates with disability.

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013** establishes the framework in which the National Disability Insurance Scheme operates and promotes person-centred outcomes to promote inclusion of people with disability in the community.

The **National Disability Strategy** outlines a 10-year national policy framework to guide government and was originally endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) on 13 February 2013.

The **Access to Premises Standards 2010** set performance requirements and provide references to technical specifications to ensure dignified access to, and use of, buildings and infrastructure for people with disability.

State

The **Victorian Disability Act 2006** provides for a strong whole of government, whole of community response to the rights and needs of people with disability. Under Section 38 of the Act, Councils are required to prepare a Disability Action Plan (also known as an Access and Inclusion Plan) that identifies actions to remove barriers and increase inclusion for people with disability.

Under the **Equal Opportunity Act of 2010**, it is against the law to discriminate against a person on the basis of disability and carer status, along with personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, any of the characteristics listed within the act, including disability.

Equitable and dignified access to services, facilities, communications, and employment processes can be achieved by integrating access and inclusion across Council. This starts with the Access and Inclusion Plan to build a strategy and framework for the future.

Our Vision for Access and Inclusion

Our goal for Alpine Shire is for everyone to be empowered and confident to actively participate in and contribute to our community. To achieve this, we must work collectively to strive for success with inclusive practices that will enhance outcomes for people with disability in our community.

Access and inclusion begins with the Social Model of Disability and considers how we adapt our mindsets to proactively eliminate

barriers for people with disability. The United Nations definition of disability reflects the Social Model of Disability:

Disability includes long-term (lasting six months or more) physical, mental health, intellectual, neurological, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Our aspiration is not only to remove attitudinal and environmental barriers for people with disability, but to integrate access and inclusion into everything we do. We commit to appoint a Disability Champion within our organisation to provide us with a role model who will lead by example and promote the importance and understanding that inclusive and accessible design is good for everybody.



ACCESS AND INCLUSION TOWARDS 2024

The Access and Inclusion summary in the table below, includes four key focus areas and twelve objectives which provide the areas of focus and help identify future actions and deliverables for Council to pursue. These objectives are supported by Alpine Shire Council's Access and Inclusion Implementation Plan.

Focus Area 1 – Promoting positive community attitudes and behaviours	
Our community awareness will support the rights and abilities of people with disability and promote the development of positive attitudes and behaviours to enable access and inclusion.	
Objectives	Outcomes
Our residents and visitors with disability have a positive experience in all aspects of our services.	<p>Improved customer service experience for residents and visitors with disability.</p> <p>Improved awareness and understanding of barriers for people with disability in the community.</p>
Our events and programs are accessible to residents and visitors with disability.	<p>Increased community and social participation by residents and visitors with disability at events in the municipality.</p> <p>Increased acknowledgment of people with disability in our community.</p>

Focus Area 2 – Creating liveable communities

Our community will increase participation of people with disability in all aspects of community life, through targeted approaches to address barriers in buildings, housing, transport, and our open spaces.

Objectives

Our inclusive environment creates greater social and economic participation for people with disability in our community.

Our Suppliers participate in equitable practices for people with disability.

Our community is connected and accessible for residents and visitors with disability.

Outcomes

An increased accessible environment promotes access and inclusion in our community.

Residents and visitors with disability have increased social and economic participation in our community.

Residents and visitors with disability are aware of public amenities in the municipality.

Increased safety and connection for people with disability in our community.

Increased economic participation for people with disability in our community.

Increased social connection and participation for people with disability in our community.

Increased liveability outcomes for people with disability in our community.

Focus Area 3 – Supporting access to meaningful employment

Our community supports meaningful employment outcomes for people with disability enabling them to plan for their future and exercise choice and control as a result of economic security.

Objectives

Our employees with disability get the support they need to perform their role at their best.

Outcomes

Increased employment outcomes for people with disability.

Increased confidence of people with disability to apply for roles at Council.

Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.

Increased satisfaction of employees with disability.

Our employees are disability confident and are aware of the Social Model of Disability.

Increased knowledge and understanding of disability in the workplace.

Our broader community recognises the contribution of people with disability to businesses and workplaces.

Increased employment and social participation of people with disability.

Focus Area 4 – Improving access to Council services through better systems and processes

Our community supports people with disability to make informed choices about available Council services and for access to services to be easy, efficient, and accessible.

Objectives	Outcomes
<p>Our information and communications are accessible for residents and visitors with disability.</p>	<p>Increased access to information for residents and visitors with disability.</p> <p>Increased access of available information in alternative formats.</p> <p>Increased community participation for people with disability.</p> <p>Increased customer service satisfaction for residents and visitors with disability.</p>
<p>Our Community Grants Program is fair and equitable and includes opportunities for people with disability and disability organisations.</p>	<p>Increased opportunities for Disability Organisations and our community to participate in Council's Community Grants program.</p>
<p>Our Council Meetings provide increased community support and engagement to our residents with disability.</p>	<p>Increased civic participation for people with disability in our community.</p>
<p>Our community feedback systems has the capability to capture systemic issues relating to people with disability in our community.</p>	<p>People with disability have a voice and their concerns are understood and respected.</p>

Governance

The implementation of the Plan is the responsibility of all areas of Council. Key business areas charged with bringing the Plan to life are accountable for progress reporting against the outcomes and measures of the Plan.

Each year, Council will report on its progress against the Plan as part of its Annual Report and this section will include success stories and transparency with outcomes and achievements.

Governance and accountability arrangements have been established to support sustainable change and embed access and inclusion in everything we do, including updating Councillors on a regular basis. The Executive Leadership Team, along with the Disability Champion, will monitor and review outcomes of the Plan and provide oversight of the implementation.

Community engagement will continue throughout the implementation of the Plan and Alpine Shire Council will endeavour to strengthen its links with the disability sector and local community of people with disability as part of its ongoing review process.

A Disability Champion will be appointed to position access and inclusion as a high priority and enable successful outcomes for people with disability in our community and in our workforce.

Reporting and Accountability

Objectives

We are transparent in the progress of our plan.

We are committed to being accountable for our progress.

We are committed to engage people with disability throughout the implementation of the Plan.

Outcomes

Yearly reporting in our Annual Report will provide meaningful and transparent outcomes.

A Disability Champion is appointed to strengthen our commitment.

A targeted approach is developed to include engagement with people with disability throughout the life of the Plan.

Accessibility

This document is available in alternative formats upon request including hard copy in standard and large print and electronically by email in Word or PDF by contacting Council:

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Phone: (03) 5755 0555

Postal: PO Box 139, Bright, Victoria, 3741

Email: info@alpineshire.vic.gov.au

The Alpine Shire Access and Inclusion Plan was prepared by Accessible Action in collaboration with Alpine Shire Council.