# COMMUNITY ACCESS PLAN

## 2011 to 2014

*Reviewed May 2011*

NORTHERN Grampians SHIRE COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY ACCESS PLAN**

# How to contact us

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## 1. Introduction

The Northern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges that there are a number of people living in the Shire with a disability. Local Government is a key planner, developer and provider of physical and social infrastructure and is committed to the responsibilities determined by the *Disability Discrimination Act* (D.D.A.) 1992, Disability Act 2006 to assume greater responsibility for people with a disability within our community.

The D.D.A.1992 and the Disability Act 2006 is based on the premise that people with a disability are members of our community who are entitled to the same rights and the same opportunities to participate in and contribute to the full range of services and facilities as other members of the community.

In the 2009 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) just under one in five people in Australia (4,026,213 or 18.5%) had a reported disability. Disability was defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities. Examples range from hearing loss which requires the use of a hearing aid, to difficulty dressing due to arthritis, to advanced dementia requiring constant help and supervision.

The rate of profound or severe core-activity limitation showed little change between 1998 (6.4%) and 2003 (6.3%) however this declined to 5.8% in 2009 due to a decline in the proportion of Australians disabled by physical health conditions such as asthma and heart disease.

As part of the process of developing the original Community Access Plan, Council undertook consultations with community groups, people with disabilities, their carers and associates, and staff from the Council. In 2007, Council formally appointed a Community Access Advisory Group, comprising representatives of people with a disability, carers, and service providers from across the Northern Grampians Shire. This review has been developed following significant input by the Advisory Group and staff from Council

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Access Plan is to equip Council with the knowledge and skills to provide services to its residents and visitors in a manner which:

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- Maximises access for all citizens including those with a disability
- Enables participation by people with a disability in the life of the community with dignity and as few barriers as practicable
- Achieves as far as possible, equity of service delivery, the development of appropriate policies, and the implementation of those policies across all functions of Council.

### 3. Aim

Community Access Plan continues to identify issues and suggest actions to address the needs of people living in the Shire who have a disability as defined in the Disability Discrimination Disability Act (DDA).

### 4. The Disability Discrimination Act

The *Disability Discrimination Act* is a Commonwealth Law that makes it illegal to directly or indirectly discriminate against a person with a disability in:

- accommodation
- employment
- access to premises used by the public
- provision of goods, services and facilities
- disposal of land
- administration of Commonwealth laws and programs
- membership of sporting club and facilities
- requests for information

The specific intent of the DDA is:

- To eliminate as far as possible, both direct and indirect discrimination against persons on the grounds of disability.
- To ensure, as far as practicable, that persons with a disability have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community.
- To promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle that persons with a disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

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The Act came into effect on 1 March 1992 and must be considered alongside the Equal Opportunity Act, Victoria (1996)

## 5. Definitions

### 5.1 Disability

The definition of **Disability** in the DDA refers to disabilities, which are:

- total or partial loss of a person's bodily or mental functions; or

- total or partial loss of a part of the body; or

- the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or

- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body; or

- a disorder or malfunction that results in a person learning differently from a person without a disorder or malfunction; or

- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perceptions of reality, emotions or judgments that results in disturbed behaviour;

The definition includes a disability that:-
- presently exists
- previously existed but no longer exists
- may exist in the future or
- is imputed to a person

### 5.2 Discrimination- the definition as identified in the DDA is clear and comprehensive:

- It is discriminatory to treat people with a disability less favourably than people without the disability would be treated under the same circumstances.

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- Discrimination also exists where there is a condition or requirement imposed which may be the same for everyone, but which unfairly, excludes or disadvantages people with a disability.

- It is also unlawful to discriminate against a person because their associates (family, carers, partners etc) have a disability.

### 6. Access

Council defines **access** in terms of the ability of the residents and visitors to use the service or facility provided. Consequently, a service is accessible when:

- it is easy to find out about
- it is easily understood
- it is easy to get to
- it is easy to use
- people who use it feel they are welcome
- people know that they will get the right assistance when they need it
- people are confident that every reasonable effort will be made to address the customer's requirements.

These are also features of good customer service.

### 7. Key Policy Statement

Northern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges that people with a disability are valuable members of our community who expect and are entitled to equitable access to services and facilities. It accepts its moral and legal obligation to its residents who are living with a disability, and to their carers and associates. It commits to act in accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Disability Act (2006)*. Council considers the Community Access Plan as a key supporting document to the Council Plan 2009-2013.

### 8. Implementation and Development of the initial Community Access Plan 2002

During the development and implementation of the plan, work was to be carried out in many area of Council including access to physical, cultural and social environments and experiences.

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As part of Council's "whole of Council approach" to the Plan, staff were invited from all areas of Council to participate in Disability Awareness Training. Disability Awareness Training was also provided for all Councillors.

The plan as developed, aims to prioritise and readdress, in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) the barriers identified by the consultative process which informed the development of the Community Access Plan.

In December 2002, Council adopted the plan which was then forwarded to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

In 2003 an audit of all Council's services and facilities was conducted by Access Audits Australia AAA to support the Community Access Plan implementation.

## 9.  The Community Access Advisory Group

The Community Access Plan was originally developed under the guidance of a Reference Group that comprised of a Councillor, Council Director, Managers, Officers and representatives from a wide range of community groups, including people with a disability their carers and associates, disability groups and the community.

The group was formed to look at specific access issues. These pertained to:

- Training (staff awareness)
- Employment
- Communication / Information
- Physical Access
- Parking
- Signage
- Cultural events
- Building and Infrastructure

Community consultation was conducted and community questionnaires were distributed to the community and to people with a disability via staff, friends and carers at the consultations to assist in the development of the plan.

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**10. Community Access Advisory Group Membership as at June 2011**
**Term ends May 2013**

**Community Members**

1.   Mr Peter Milley

2.   Margie Price

3.   Marie Turner

4.   Deborah Jobson

5.   Vacant

6.   Vacant

**Organisation**

1.   DHS – Denise Robson or delegate

2.   Eventide – Helen Farnsworth or delegate

3.   Skene Street – Mrs Robyn Anyon or delegate

**Carer**

1.   Carers Respite Centre - Grampians Community Health Centre – Alison Duxson or delegate

**Council**

Cr Ross Clementson  Chair

Council Staff Rep - Secretariat.  Melissa Mair

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## 11. KEY ACTIONS

1. **TRAINING & INFORMATION for all Council staff and Councillors to increase awareness of disability issues.**

| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | Progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 To Incorporate on-going Disability Awareness Training into staff training and development plan via staff appraisals for Council staff, highlighting disability specific issues relating to access to services. | Executive Management Team | On-going | Human Resources Department<br><br>Rural Access Coordinator | |
| 1.2 Disability Awareness training and information to be included in the induction of all Staff, Councillors and volunteers on appointment to ensure they have a good understanding of the DDA (1992) and assist with the whole of Council approach to the Community Access Plan. | Executive Management Team | Ongoing | Human Resources Department | |
| 1.3 Provide information to architects, builders, developers and other relevant personnel to relate the requirements and responsibilities of the DDA(1992) to the development approvals area, focusing on the practical requirements for access and facilities as well as the inter relationships between the DDA (1992), the Building Code and the Australian Standards for Access and Mobility in commercial/public areas. | Manager Planning and Building | Ongoing | Local, architects, builders and developers | |

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| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | Progress |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2. EMPLOYMENT opportunities within Council for people with a disability** | | | | |
| 2.1 Actively promote the Northern Grampians Shire Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy by inclusion on job position advertisements. | Manager Human Resources | On-going | Human Resources Officer | Actioned and ongoing |
| 2.2 Ensure all job descriptions and job advertisements are not discriminatory when positions are advertised. | Manager Human Resources | On-going | Directors/ Managers | Actioned and ongoing |
| 2.3 Ensure a suitable workplace for employees with a disability by adapting workplace equipment and working environment where necessary on a case by case basis. | Manager Human Resources | On-going | Appropriate Directorate | As required |
| 2.4 Develop and provide relevant information to new staff in the induction program, regarding disability access issues and Council's CAP. To provide the information in alternate formats as requested. | Manager Human Resources | On-going | | |
| **2.1. Contracts** | | | | |
| 2.1.1 To ensure Council staff specify E.E.O. and D.D.A. requirements for Contracts of Employment eg Senior officers. | Manager Human Resources | On-going | Executive Management Team | |

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## 3. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION to our community will be provided in an accessible manner.
### 3.1. Publications: written, verbal & other

| | Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.1.1 | Hold Council meetings and other meetings in accessible venues as required. | Director Corporate Services | Ongoing | Councillors | St. Arnaud Council meetings held upstairs |
| 3.1.2 | Make available upon request Council publications and information in alternative formats to standard print form e.g. large print, Easy English, audio tapes, culturally appropriate formats Provide face to face explanation of written communication or provide an alternative format/service i.e. interpreter, upon request or by appointment. | Manager Governance and Civic Support | As required | Customer Services Staff Governance Co-ordinator | |
| 3.1.3 | Community Access Plan to be reviewed as required. Community Access Advisory Group to monitor implementation of the Community Access Plan. | Director Marketing and Community | On going | Community access Advisory Group | |
| 3.1.4 | Display Better Hearing Cards on all customer service counters. | Manager Governance & Civic Support | Actioned | Customer services staff | ongoing |
| 3.1.5 | Ensure the community and Council staff are aware of the option of using interpreters for public meetings. | Manager Governance & Civic Support | 2 weeks notice prior to the meeting. | Relevant language services Customer Service Staff Marketing and Communications Officer | |

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| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3. COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION** to our community will be provided in an accessible manner. | | | | |
| **3.2. Information Technology** | | | | |
| 3.2.1 Council will ensure Council meeting Agendas and Minutes, current information and public information are available on the Internet. | Manager Governance & Civic Support | On-going | Manager Finance & Information Services IT staff/ Web maintenance staff Governance Co-ordinator | Actioned and ongoing |
| 3.2.2 Ensure that Council's Community Access Plan is available on the web site, which will include progress updates on a regular basis. Pertinent legislative changes also to be profiled. | Manager Governance & Civic Support | ongoing | Manager Information Service/IT staff/Web maintenance staff. Team Leader Aged & Disability Services | Actioned and ongoing |
| **4. BUILDINGS & FACILITIES** will be systematically upgraded to provide equity of access | | | | |
| **4.1. Building Audits** | | | | |
| 4.1.1 Annual Capital Works & Operating budget allocations to progressively improve accessibility. (Utilise CAAG to highlight concerns and assist to prioritise outstanding works from AAA.) | Director Infrastructure & Environment | ongoing | Executive Management Team CAAG | Actioned and ongoing |
| **4.2. Emergency Access** | | | | |
| 4.2.1 Review Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan to ensure that people with a disability have equitable access to information, in the circumstance of a local emergency. | Municipal Emergency Resource Officer Municipal Recovery Manager | Audit - As required for the Emergency Services Victoria | Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee Marketing & Communications Officer | . |

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**4. BUILDINGS & FACILITIES**
**4.3. Development Applications/Approvals**

| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4.3.1 Information accompanying all planning and building permit applications, and distribute to Designers, Developers and Builders advising of the requirements of building design under the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*. The AS 1428 (Parts 1-4) complies with the DDA and prescribes the basic requirements for access and facilities that must be adhered to in the planning, development and construction of all **public/commercial** buildings and facilities. | Manager Planning and Building | ongoing | Building Surveying and Planning officers | May 2011 Access to Premises – Building standards 2010 comes into effect. Information brochure produced for NGSC planning to accompany all planning permit applications. As attached. |
| 4.3. NGSC monitors that compliance with AS1428 as identified in the BCA is achieved | Manager Planning & Building | ongoing | Building Surveyor | |

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## 5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
### 5.1. Footpaths and Kerbing

| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1.1 Ensure ongoing maintenance of footpath and kerb meet DDA requirements. | Director Infrastructure and Environment | On-going 6 monthly footpath inspections | Risk Management Committee Customer service 'CONFIRM' |
| 5.1.2 Ensure program to select walking routes in municipalities towns are accessible. Focus from 2008 to be St Arnaud with support from the CAAG for priority of need. | Director Infrastructure and Environment | On-going Focus on centre of town to hospital, centre of town to Dr's surgery and Centre of town to Children's precinct | CAAG VicRoads (grant applications) |
| 5.1.4 Promote the established priority routes of travel to the public via the Council Community Newsletter. Media & Web | Manager Community Sustainability, Director Infrastructure and Environment | ongoing | Manager Infrastructure Organisation Marketing & Communications Officer |

## 5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
### 5.1. Footpaths and Kerbing

| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1.5 Council to use VicRoads Footpath Crossing Standards for footpaths for new and retrofit works for electric scooters throughout the municipality, incorporating predicted trends of usage. | Director Infrastructure and Environment | On-going | VicRoads Community Access Committee |

The "Current and ongoing." annotation appears in the Partners column area spanning rows 5.1.1 and 5.1.2.

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.1.6 | Raise public awareness of appropriate behaviour on shared footpath usage by, for example, skateboarders, electric scooters, roller blades, wheelchairs, prams and twin strollers, long cane users and bikes. | Local Laws Officer<br><br>Manager Community Sustainability | Ongoing | Executive Management Team<br>Police<br>Marketing & Communications Officer<br>Rural Access | Mobility forum April 2009 Stawell Gopher awareness days 2010 |
| 5.1.7 | Undertake a public awareness campaign encouraging residents to remove overhanging branches, planter boxes and street trees that may obstruct a continuous and accessible path of travel by use of the local media and Council's Community Newsletter. | Local Laws Officer<br><br>Communications Officer | Ongoing | Director Infrastructure and Environment<br>RuralAccess<br>Confirm report | |

**5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
**5.2. Parking**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.2.1 | Continue to review the provision of DAPB when streetscapes and public areas are redeveloped with regard to signage size lighting surface conditions. | Director Infrastructure and Environment | ongoing | Local Laws Coordinator & Officers | |
| 5.2.2 | Monitor Disabled Persons Parking Scheme ensuring number of bays and Parking permits are fair and equitable | Local Laws Coordinator | ongoing | Manager Community Sustainability/CAAG | |
| 5.2.3 | Continue to replace inappropriate DAPB and installation of appropriate DAPB with priority given to areas of need as identified within the budget allocation. | Local Laws Coordinator | On-going | Infrastructure Operations | |

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| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.2.4 Publicise/promote the correct usage of the DAPB Scheme to the community in newspaper articles and Council's Community newsletters. | Local Laws Coordinator Marketing & Communications Officer | On-going | Council RuralAccess | |
| **5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE** **5.3. Signage** | | | | |
| 5.3.1 Council signage for Exit Signs and Toilet signs as per the Building Code of Australia. All other signage to take into account the recommendations from Vision Australia. Community Access Advisory Group to identify where there are concerns with signs. | Manager Business and Tourism Services  Director Infrastructure and Environment  Infrastructure Operations Team Leader | ongoing | Economic Development  EMT | Extensive work completed on Toilet signage across the shire 2010 as identified as a priority at CAAG meetings with reference to AAA audit. |
| 5.3.2. Undertake an audit of existing Council signage to identify barriers to access, Prioritise and put to budget processes | Director Infrastructure and Environment | ongoing | Manager Business and Tourism Services CAAG EMT | |
| 5.3.3. Council signage at all Service Centres to ensure it complies with, and where applicable displays the International symbol of access. | EMT Director Corporate Services, Director Marketing & Community | In place and On-going | Customer Services Centres, Visitor Information Centres | |

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**5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
**5.4. Seating**

| | Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.4.1 | Ensure compliance for access to public seating with the Australian Standards for public open spaces and buildings. | Director Infrastructure & Environment | On-going | Infrastructure Development EMT | |
| 5.4.2 | Ensure replacement of inappropriate seating and installation of seating in accordance with the manufactures guidelines. Where inappropriate bench seats are to be replaced, (replace with bench seats with arms) are brought to council attention and subject to the limits of Council's budget part of **Urban Design Framework has established Standards** | Director Infrastructure & Environment | On-going | Manager Infrastructure, Infrastructure Operations Team Leader, Parks & Gardens Coordinator | |
| 5.4.3 | Adopt a preferred design for outdoor public seating, to ensure compliance with Australian Standards for access. | Director Infrastructure & Environment | Ongoing | Team Leader Community Development | All outdoor seating is installed in compliance with relevant standards CAAG requesting that all outdoor seating has arms. |

**5. BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**
**5.5. Public Lighting**

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.5.1 | Investigate the appropriateness of lighting arrangements that currently exist in high use/risk buildings and facilities & locations. | Director Infrastructure & Environment | ongoing | Building/Projects Officer | |

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| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---------|--------------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| **6. COUNCIL PROGRAMS will be accessible** | | | | |
| **6.1. Cultural Events** | | | | |
| 6.1.1 Develop a set of guidelines which will assist Council staff involved in the organisation of special events. Such guidelines are to provide a checklist to identify issues of parking, physical and sensory access, location of toilets, availability of seating for people and their carers and information needs for evacuation or emergency procedures in the event of an emergency for people with a disability. | Manager Business & Tourism Services, Events & Projects Officer | Ongoing | Manager Infrastructure Development RuralAccess | Information included in Council's events process, reviewed June 2010 |
| 6.1.2 Where Council sponsors major indoor and outdoor events, organisations are required to demonstrate provision for people with a disability and their carers. | EMT | On-going | Manager Business & Tourism Services, Events & Projects Officer Rural Access | Information included in Council's events process, reviewed June 2010 |
| **6. COUNCIL PROGRAMS will be accessible** | | | | |
| **6.2. Recreation, Sport and Access** | | | | |
| 6.2.1 Develop a set of guidelines, which will assist Council staff involved in the organisation of recreational, sporting events and tourism services. Such guidelines are to provide a checklist to identify issues of parking, physical and sensory access, location of toilets, and availability of seating and information needs for evacuation or emergency procedures in the event of an emergency for people with a disability. | Manager Tourism & Business Development, Events & Projects Officer | 2007/08 | Director Marketing & Community Manager Community Sustainability Director Infrastructure & Environment | |

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| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6.2.2 Ensure that any new planning and development of recreation and sporting facilities includes consultation to ensure access for all. | Manager Planning and Building. <br><br> Manager Community Sustainability | On-going | Director Infrastructure & Environment <br><br> Coordinator Leisure Recreation | Legislated regulation. |
| 6.2.3 Actively promote the availability of Community Grants to recreation and sporting clubs to support improved access for participants and spectators with a disability. | Manager Community Planning | Ongoing | Grants Officer <br> Director Marketing & Community <br> Rural Access, AAA | |
| **6. COUNCIL PROGRAMS** will be accessible <br> **6.3. Young People** | | | | |
| 6.3.1 Encourage youth service providers to provide activities that are inclusive of young people with a disability and supports the NGSC Youth Strategy | Director Marketing & Community <br><br> Manager Community Sustainability | On-going | Other youth services <br> Community Development Officer, Llen, Skene Street, Intertwine | |
| **6.4 Transport** | | | | |
| 6.4.1 Advocate for improved transport and access for people with a disability. | Executive Management Team | On-going | Department of Human Services, Transport Connections, Infrastructure & Environment Directorate RuralAccess | |

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### 6.5 Structure

| Actions | Responsible Officer | Timelines | Partners |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6.5.1 Continue to provide opportunity for assessment for people with a disability or frail aged to access Home & Community Care Services. | Manager Community Sustainability | On-going | Department of Human Services.<br>Director Marketing & Community |
| 6.5.2 Continue to provide opportunity for children 0-6 years with additional needs to attend Commonwealth and State approved Child Care Centres. | Manager Community Sustainability | On-going | Director Marketing & Community |

### 7. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION will occur regularly to inform on Council's progress and ascertain further accessibility issues

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7.1.1 Members of CAAG to be encouraged to consult with interested residents about the plan | Manager Community Sustainability | Ongoing | CAAG<br>Team Leader Aged & Disability. |
| 7.1.2 Publicise the CAP extensively throughout Council and the community and distribute the Community Access Plan to the broader community. The CAP to be made available in alternative formats on request. | CEO and Executive Management Team | On going | Rural Access Worker<br>DHS<br>CAAG<br>Marketing & Communications Officer |