



Mildura Rural City Council

## **DISABILITY INCLUSION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**April 2025**

*Note: This document uses both identity-first (e.g., 'disabled people') and person-first (e.g., 'people with disabilities') language to respect the diverse preferences within the disability community.*

#### **VISION**

The vision is to strengthen the Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee's role within Council and the community – empowering disabled people to influence positive change for themselves, their families and their carers.

#### **AIM**

The aim of the Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee is to establish a consultative framework to enable input from the community to Council, to advise on the priority accessibility needs and inclusion of disabled people within the Municipality.

The Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee was established in 2001 and has evolved over the years from being an advisory committee to also being an expert resource to Council in addressing barriers to access and inclusion for people with a disability.

#### **RATIONALE**

Mildura Rural City Council is committed to ensuring the provision of equitable and dignified access and inclusion to all people, to its services, programs and facilities within the municipality.

Council has a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that its facilities and services comply with a range of legislative and strategic frameworks.

These include:

- The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- The Australian Standard 1428 (Design for Access & Mobility)
- The Building Code of Australia
- The Planning and Environment Act 1987 or as updated
- The Mildura Planning Scheme
- The Victorian Disability Act 2006
- The Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- A Fairer Victoria 2005
- The State Disability Plan 2022-2026 – Inclusive Victoria
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- Local Government Act 2020
- Gender Equality Act 2020

### **Alignment to Council Plans and Strategies**

The Community Vision aspires to make our region the most liveable, people-friendly community in Australia – ensuring people with a disability, their families and carers are all included in the vision.

The Council Plan under the theme of Community sets the strategic direction to reduce barriers and increase access for people with a disability to promote inclusion and participation as a key priority.

The Community Health and Wellbeing Plan provides a strategic framework for Council staff to respond to barriers to access and inclusion for all people. The Community Health and Wellbeing Plan applies across all Council services, with nearly every business unit contributing to the implementation of identified strategies.

The Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee has an important role in monitoring the implementation and evaluating the effectiveness of the Disability Action Plan that is referenced in the Council Plan and Community Health and Wellbeing Plan. The Committee also has an advisory role in prioritising capital works projects that impact more severely on disabled people or people with mobility-related access needs.

Council staff from across the organisation are encouraged to attend the Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee for advice and input on programs, initiatives and strategies to address access and inclusion needs.

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

- (a) Act as a knowledgeable and consultative resource to the Council.
- (b) Assist in identifying issues of need for access and inclusion for disabled people.
- (c) Assist in the identification, development and planning of proposed capital and maintenance work programs.
- (d) Provide input into the development and review of Council programs, initiatives, projects and strategies as they relate to the needs of disabled people in the community.
- (e) Provide input into and be actively involved in events and activities for disabled people.
- (f) Participate in Grant Funding processes as necessary.
- (g) Review the terms of reference annually of the Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee with the aim of increasing its level of influence on Council operations.
- (h) Play an active role in raising community awareness of disability access and inclusion issues.

## **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

- (i) Members of the Committee must have a commitment to working to improve access and inclusion for people in the community with a disability and those people who support them.
- (ii) A designated Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee member will chair the meeting.
- (iii) The Committee will meet on a monthly basis.
- (iv) The Committee is committed to creating an inclusive environment where all access needs are recognised and supported. Members are encouraged to request any supports or accommodations they require to participate fully.

- (v) The Committee will actively provide reasonable accommodations to ensure that every member has equal opportunity to contribute and take on leadership roles such as Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson.
- (vi) Membership will consist of:
- Between four (4) to eight (8) community representatives who are either a disabled person, a carer (Definition of Carer – somebody who has the principal responsibility of caring for a disabled person) or parent/sibling of a disabled person. The Committee will endeavour to have people with a broad range of disabilities represented, including those with physical, cognitive, and neurodivergent disabilities on the Committee, with all members over the age of 18. The committee will actively encourage diversity within the group in terms of age, gender, cultural background and other.
  - Two (2) to Six (6) local disability service organisation representatives and;
  - Up to four (4) Mildura Rural City Council representatives, including the Project Officer, Community Wellbeing Coordinator, Manager of Engineering Development & Delivery and the Manager of Facilities & Assets or their nominated representatives.
  - Portfolio Councillor
- (vii) Membership (Community Members and Disability Service Providers) will be for a three year term unless the member resigns prior to this date. Positions will be advertised on a biennial basis with the members who have served the longest period being advertised first, those members can reapply. Unless more than 2 vacancies exist, no more than 1 position from each category will be advertised at any one point in time.
- (viii) Attendance can be– online or in person- Committee members are encouraged to notify the Chair or Council representative if they are unable to attend a meeting. If a member misses two consecutive meetings without notice, a Council representative will reach out to check in, offer support, and discuss any access needs. Members may miss meetings for reasonable or health-related reasons, including fluctuating capacity, and their continued involvement will be supported wherever possible. If three consecutive meetings are missed without a reasonable explanation and the member cannot be contacted, their membership may be re-evaluated by the Committee.

- (ix) Within three months of a position becoming vacant an advertisement will be placed to fill the vacancy, unless this coincides with the biennial advertisements at which time this vacancy will also be advertised.
- (x) Where an organisation is represented, other staff members from that organisation are able to assume the position on the Committee if the elected member is unable to attend.
- (xi) Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee will select new members.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Chairperson**

- 1. Ensure meetings are conducted in an orderly and timely manner.
- 2. Reinforce the purpose of the Committee as per the Terms of Reference.
- 3. Represent the Committee when appropriate.
- 4. Report to Council as required.
- 5. Liaise with community groups as appropriate.
- 6. Act as a communication link with Council and the community.

### **Deputy Chairperson**

- 1. Act as the chairperson in meetings in the chairperson's absence.
- 2. Stand in for the Chairperson in the chairperson's absence in performing the duties required of the role.
- 3. Support the Chair in performing the role (at the chair's request), such as attending external meetings and sharing the actions that arise in meetings.

### **MRCC Representative**

- 1. Record minutes of meetings, send out agendas and book meeting room.

4. Ensure that minutes reach all nominated office bearers and attendees in a timely manner.
5. Record and collate all committee correspondence.
6. Draft correspondence and follow up on relevant issues as directed by the Committee.

### **Committee Members**

1. Represent people with a disability, their families and carers and their needs.
2. Communicate those needs to the Committee.
3. Act in the best interests of the community they represent.
4. Participate in projects as directed by the committee.

### **Committee Protocols**

1. All communications to Council are via the committee minutes, that are provided by the MRCC representative to the distribution list below.
2. All meetings will be conducted in an orderly fashion as directed by the Chairperson.
3. Conduct of meeting will be in accordance with Council Meeting Code of Conduct.

### **Distribution of Minutes**

The following to receive minutes:

- a) MRCC - Chief Executive Officer
- b) The Mayor - Mildura Rural City Council
- c) Manager Engineering Development & Delivery
- d) Engineering Development Team Leader
- e) Manager Facilities & Assets
- f) Manager Strategic Planning
- f) Manager Community Partnerships

h) Committee Members

i) Relevant Councillors

## Appendix 1

### Glossary of Terms

#### Access Needs

The specific supports, adjustments, or conditions a person requires to participate fully and equally in an environment or activity. These may include physical accommodations, communication supports, sensory considerations, or flexible participation options.

#### Ableism

Discrimination, prejudice, or systemic inequality based on a person's disability or perceived difference in ability. Ableism can appear in attitudes, language, environments, and policies that privilege non-disabled people and exclude or disadvantage disabled people.

#### Disabled People / People with Disabilities

Both terms are used to reflect the diverse preferences of the disability community. *“Disabled people”* aligns with identity-first language, which emphasises disability as an important and valid part of a person's identity. *“People with disabilities”* is person-first language, placing the individual before their disability. This document uses both to acknowledge and respect individual preferences.

#### Disability

A broad term that includes physical, sensory, cognitive, neurological, psychosocial, and intellectual differences, as well as chronic health conditions, that may impact how a person interacts with the world. Disability may be visible or invisible, and may be permanent, temporary, or fluctuating.

#### Fluctuating Capacity

The recognition that a person's ability to participate can change over time due to disability, health conditions, or other factors. Inclusive practice takes fluctuating capacity into account by offering flexibility, compassion and understanding.

#### Inclusion

Inclusion refers to creating environments, systems, and practices that ensure disabled people have equal opportunities to participate fully in society. This means removing barriers—including physical, social, and systemic—that limit access to education, employment, healthcare, and social life. True inclusion goes beyond accessibility; it values the perspectives, contributions, and rights



of disabled people, fostering a culture of belonging where differences are respected and accommodated.

### **Lived Experience**

The first-hand knowledge and insights people have from living with disability or supporting someone with disability. Including lived experience in decision-making recognises its value as expert knowledge and is critical to inclusive policy, planning, and service delivery.

### **Neurodivergent**

A term describing individuals whose brains function differently from what is considered typical. This includes autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, OCD and other neurological differences. Neurodivergence is a natural and valuable part of human diversity, and should be recognised, respected, and supported in all environments.

### **Reasonable Accommodations**

Modifications or supports provided to enable equitable participation by disabled people in all areas of public life. Reasonable accommodations are legally protected under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), which requires that individuals with disabilities are not treated less favourably and are provided with reasonable adjustments to ensure equal access and opportunity. These adjustments can include changes to communication methods, meeting formats, physical access, or timelines, and should be tailored to individual needs.

### **Universal Design**

A design approach that aims to make spaces, products, and services usable by as many people as possible, regardless of age, disability, or background. Universal Design benefits everyone by removing barriers at the design stage, rather than retrofitting solutions later.