

Boroondara Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-28

Consultation results

July 2023

Responsible Directorate: Community Support



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1 Introduction

The following report provides an overview of the methodology undertaken to inform the development of the draft Boroondara Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2028. It also provides an overview of how many people we heard from and the key findings from the community consultation undertaken in June 2022 that informed the development of the vision, themes, strategic objectives and implementation plan in the draft Boroondara Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-28.

2 Overview of research and consultation

Outlined below is an overview of the research and consultation steps that informed the development of the draft Plan. Also outlined below is the number of people who participated in each stage of consultation.

2.1 Stage 1: Evaluation

An evaluation was undertaken of the progress, success, and learnings from the Boroondara Disability Action Plan 2018-2022 and other relevant plans, policies, and strategies across Council. This provided information about actions that could continue or be expanded in the next Plan and areas for further action.

2.2 Stage 2: Research and benchmarking

A review was undertaken of the Australian Census and other relevant data related to disability and inclusion. Key research, reports, plans, and legislation were also reviewed.

Benchmarking against the Inclusive Victoria: State disability plan 2022-2026 and 11 other Victorian council disability action plans was undertaken. The benchmarking looked at consultation approaches, actions and evaluation methods.

2.3 Stage 3: Community and service provider consultation

The community and service providers were consulted between June and September 2022.

Community members were invited to complete a short survey to understand peoples' backgrounds, experiences and ideas for improving disability access and inclusion in Boroondara. The opportunity to participate was promoted extensively through disability groups, organisations, and networks to ensure we reached people with disability, their families, carers, advocates, support organisations, specialist schools and businesses with links to the disability sector.

To encourage participation, a variety of accessible communication methods and tools were also used. These included:

- instructional information in plain language, Easy Read and Auslan
- an online and paper plain language survey
- an online and paper Easy Read survey
- an option to provide submissions in a written, audio or video format.

In-depth interviews were also undertaken with community members and representatives from organisations providing services to people with disability. This enabled Council to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges experienced by people with disability and opportunities for greater disability inclusion in Boroondara. It also enabled Council to gather information about the needs and issues that service providers were seeing in the community and any issues they were experiencing related to service provision.

2.4 Stage 4: Workshops with community members and organisations

The findings from the survey and interviews were presented in 10 workshops.

Workshop participants were selected because they had lived experience of disability, disability support or worked in the disability sector.

To support access and greater participation in the workshops, we met with people 'where they were at'. The workshops were conducted at:

- sports clubs
- day programs
- staff meetings
- art classes
- other programs across the community.

This approach meant we could reach a diversity of people.

Workshop participants were asked to verify the accuracy of our findings from the other data collection methods against their own experience and if anything was missing from the findings.

Four workshops were also conducted with members of the Boroondara Community Disability Advisory Committee during the meetings on 15 June 2022, 14 September 2022, 30 November 2022 and 31 May 2023. The Committee includes:

- residents with disability
- carers or family members of a person with disability
- representatives from local disability organisations.

Its role is to guide Council's policy, plans and activities that support disability inclusion. In these workshops, members provided advice, feedback and guidance to inform our consultation approach and the development of the draft Plan.

2.5 Stage 5: Plan development

Through the research and consultation with the community, service providers and the Boroondara Community Disability Advisory Committee, we gathered valuable information about the barriers people with disability face and opportunities to increase access and inclusion in Boroondara. The findings were shared with Council staff and informed the development of the themes, strategic objectives and actions in the draft Plan.

3 Consultation

3.1 Who we heard from

We prioritised hearing the voices of people with disability, their families, carers, advocates, support services, specialist schools and organisations with links to the disability sector. Within these cohorts, we tried to capture intersectional experiences by speaking with women, young people, people who identify as LGBTQIA+, people from culturally diverse backgrounds and people with a diverse range of disability experiences. **Table 1** below provides a breakdown of the number of responses to each type of consultation.

Table 1: Consultation method and number of responses

Consultation method	Number of responses
Community surveys	79 responses including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 63 responses to the online plain language survey• 10 responses to the online Easy Read survey• 6 responses to the paper plain language survey.
In-depth interviews with community members	3 community members
Community submissions	9 audio, written or video submissions
In-depth interviews with organisations	11 representatives from organisations
Community and organisation workshops	10 workshops conducted with community members and organisations with a total of 98 participants.
Boroondara Community Disability Advisory Committee workshops	4 workshops conducted with 11 members
TOTAL number of participants	211

We also analysed 139 responses from the community consultation undertaken in late 2020 and early 2021 for the refresh of the Boroondara Community Plan for comments specifically relating to disability access and inclusion.

4 Summary of topics from the community consultation

The table below provides a brief overview of the topics raised during the community consultation that informed the development of this draft Plan.

Table 2: Brief overview of topics from the community consultation

Topic	Brief overview
Better accessibility moving around Boroondara	<p>Getting around Boroondara was commonly reported as a barrier faced by people with disability. Infrastructure in the built environment, such as footpaths and steps into shops were noted as not being accessible and impacting people's mobility and independence.</p> <p>Suggestions on how to improve the built environment to support greater movement around Boroondara included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving footpaths • clearer signage • more lighting • more pedestrian crossings • accessible parking for carers • replacing steps outside shops with small ramps • incorporating universal design into places and spaces. <p>Improving access to public transport, especially trams, was also critical to facilitating inclusion. It was noted that Boroondara has many old railway stations with access issues.</p> <p>Some respondents want to see more accessible parking bays and better enforcement of them.</p>
Accessible spaces, amenities, and infrastructure	<p>Accessible spaces, amenities and infrastructure was recommended to improve inclusion and enable people with disability to participate in community life more fully.</p> <p>Amenities and infrastructure like toilets and playground equipment for people with disability at parks, reserves and facilities were reported as lacking. Limited quiet spaces available and the possibility of public spaces causing sensory overload was noted as a deterrence for going out.</p> <p>Suggestions to improve access to public spaces and amenities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of more, cleaner and accessible toilets in parks, reserves and facilities, including Changing Places facilities • more accessible public seating, benches and tables

Topic	Brief overview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more all abilities and age inclusive play equipment in playgrounds • fenced play areas to support parents and carers to ensure children's safety • improving access into and through buildings by improving lifts and widening doors. <p>Organisation respondents also reported challenges finding appropriate and accessible facilities to operate from and support their work with people with disability.</p>
Safety	<p>The importance of Council considering accessibility in emergency evacuation procedures and emergency management plans was noted.</p> <p>Respondents highlighted the need for more action and support for people with disability experiencing family violence.</p>
Inclusive opportunities for recreation, community and social participation	<p>More inclusive opportunities for recreation, community, and social participation were noted. This included wanting opportunities to participate in everything from local businesses, libraries, parks, sports facilities to neighbourhood house programs.</p> <p>It was suggested that a broad offering of events and activities to suit different needs and interests should be provided and affordability and equitability should be considered.</p> <p>The creation of more sensory sensitive spaces and activities for neurodiverse people, such as quiet times at libraries, gyms, and reduced lighting, were also suggested.</p> <p>Some respondents noted the experience of isolation from friends, particularly during lockdowns. It was noted that re-entering the community was particularly hard on people with disability. It was recommended more needs to be done to 'meet people where they're at' and inform and involve them about what's happening in the community.</p>
Better communication	<p>Improvements to communication were identified, as some respondents did not know what activities, programs, and services were available for people with disability, their families, and carers in Boroondara. It was noted that better communication would help ensure people can understand and find information about what is available and accessible for people with disability.</p> <p>Suggestions to improve Council communication included:</p>

Topic	Brief overview
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> proactively promoting services and programs on offer to people with disability using fewer PDFs and incorporating Easy Read, Auslan, Braille, and other language translations on Council's website. <p>It was noted that accessibility needs to be considered not just in online communications but in-person and print.</p>
Employment opportunities	<p>Employment opportunities for people with disability was a frequent topic raised. People with disability face barriers to entering the workforce, transitioning to paid employment and maintaining work.</p> <p>It was suggested Council can lead by example by employing more people with disability. It was noted that it is important that people with disability hold senior roles not just front-of-house and administration roles. Career development of people with disability should be supported.</p> <p>Other suggestions included Council sharing its learnings with businesses to increase awareness about the importance of employment opportunities for people with disability and offering work experience for students with disability.</p>
Community attitudes	<p>Educating Council staff and the community about disability was identified as important. This would help reduce stigma, promote human rights, and understanding of the importance of autonomy and self-determination of people with disability in the community.</p> <p>Stigma was noted as a barrier for people with disability that are not visible, such as people experiencing mental illness or people who are neurodiverse.</p>
Appropriate and affordable housing	<p>Access to appropriate and affordable housing is insufficient for people with disability. Council could advocate to other levels of government for more affordable and accessible housing.</p>
Council staff and leadership	<p>Council should be a leader in this area by better responding to queries relating to disabilities and providing training to staff.</p> <p>Council could also use its networks to create connections amongst councils, organisations, carers, and local businesses to improve accessibility in the community and grow mainstream employment opportunities for people with disability.</p>
Nothing about us without us	<p>It is essential that people with lived experience of disability are involved in decision-making that affects their lives. Council was</p>

Topic	Brief overview
	<p>encouraged to meaningfully consult and engage with people with disability to understand their needs and ensure that they are met.</p> <p>Co-design was regularly raised by respondents as a valuable process for Council to use. It refers to the process of involving people with disability in designing, delivering, and evaluating a policy, program or service.¹ It was suggested that Council could use this process to enable people with disability more choice and control in decision-making.</p>
Accessing health services and the NDIS	Several barriers were raised as preventing people from accessing health services and the NDIS. Organisations noted there were staff and service shortages impacting the availability and standard of care. They also remarked on the eligibility challenges with the NDIS. For example, recent changes in the NDIS eligibility requirements in early childhood space are presenting financial barriers to families accessing important early intervention treatment.
Organisation funding	Current funding models for disability organisations present challenges. Funding is often short-term and program based, which makes it difficult to grow and continue valuable programs and supports.
Volunteer shortages	Organisation respondents reported difficulties retaining, recruiting, and engaging volunteers to help provide services and programs to people with disability. The main cause of the decline in the number of volunteers was COVID-19.
Support and encourage disability pride	People with disability want to be able to be proud of who they are, embrace their disability and not hide it. Council could promote disability pride by supporting positive representation of people with disability and celebrating the experiences, insights, and skills of people with disability in the community.

¹ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (2022) [Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan \(2022–2026\)](#).