



Access, Equity & Inclusion Policy

Engagement Summary Report
May 2022

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Acknowledgement of Country

Nillumbik Shire Council respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the Country on which Nillumbik is located, and we value the significance of the Wurundjeri people's history as essential to the unique character of the shire. We pay tribute to all First Nations People living in Nillumbik, give respect to Elders past, present and future, and extend that respect to all First Nations People.

We respect the enduring strength of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and acknowledge the ongoing impacts of past trauma and injustices from European invasion, massacres and genocide committed against First Nations People. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people hold a deep and ongoing connection to this place. We value the distinctive place of our First Nations People in both Nillumbik and Australia's identity; from their cultural heritage and care of the land and waterways, to their ongoing contributions in many fields including academia, agriculture, art, economics, law, sport and politics.

Introduction

Nillumbik Shire Council is currently developing their Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy. To help ensure the policy meets the needs of the community, a broad engagement exercise was undertaken to collect feedback and ideas for enhancing the document. The following document provides a summary of the feedback received from March to April in 2022.

Previous consultation

Our People, Our Place, Our Future

Nillumbik Shire Council developed the Our People, Our Place, Our Future (OPOPOF) engagement program to capture the views and priorities of the Nillumbik community to inform the development of key strategic planning documents in line with legislative and regulatory requirements.

During the engagement period, Council engaged with over 2,000 voices through survey responses, community pop-ups, workshops, written submissions, online workshops, phone calls, visits to the website, and emails. These activities were monitored and adapted to ensure that these were accessible and responsive to the needs and wants of the community.

These results of the OPOPOF program were used to inform the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan. Issues and actions relating to access, equity and inclusion have been embedded across all three documents. Additionally, these results were also used to inform the development of the draft Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy.

The findings of the OPOPOF program indicated that our community consider community connectedness and social inclusion as very important as they are viewed as a way to build resilience, foster a sense of belonging, improve mental health and is key in preventing and reducing social isolation. Further, increasing representation of and participation for priority communities was identified as an important role for Council.

Under the banner of 'inclusion' OPOPOF survey respondents identified the following as they 'top three issues' for Council to address –

Inclusion – Top 3 issues	
1. Opportunities for all	28% of respondents
2. Accessible community and health services	17% of respondents
3. Support for children and families	15% of respondents

With this in mind the draft Policy was developed to facilitate opportunities for all members of Nillumbik's community to participate and be heard. Additionally, the draft Policy represents high level commitment that sets the foundation for culture change within the organisation to support Council in delivering inclusive community and health services for people all abilities, ages, cultural identities, gender identities, geographic locations, religions, sexualities, and socio-economic backgrounds.

OPOPOF Key findings

Of the 722 general survey participants, 5% identified as Culturally or Linguistically Diverse (CALD), 4.4% identified as LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer,

Intersex, Asexual +), 2.4% identified as a person with a disability, and 0.4% identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

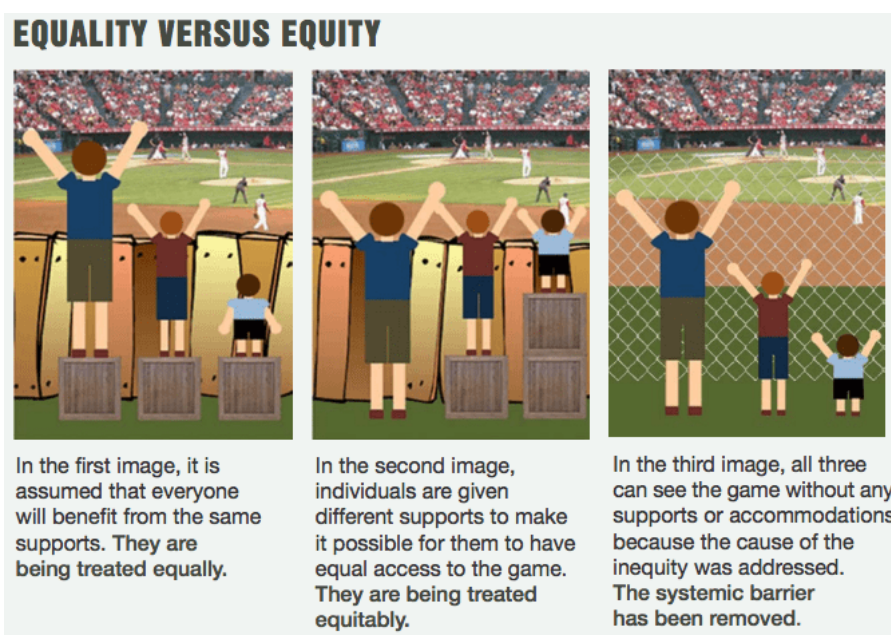
- We engaged with a higher proportion of people who identify as LGBTQIA+ (4.4% of participants compared to 2% of households, as per 2016 Census).
- We engaged with a representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (0.4%, the same amount as the 2016 Census).
- We engaged with a higher proportion of people who were born overseas (22.4% compared to 16% from the 2016 Census).

An outline of the coverage of this engagement and relevant quotes can be found in Appendix 2.

Recommendations

The comprehensive engagement process received feedback from approximately 129 individuals. The feedback provided was varied, with few stand-out themes for consideration, with many of the comments for alterations falling within the scope of the next stages of the process (e.g. implementation/action planning). However, there were some specific suggestions that may assist in fine-tuning the Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy:

- Expand the scope of the policy document to cover the specific needs of young people and children as well as adults. This may involve some terminology updates to refer to 'women and girls'.
- Enhance clarity of the process to show how the policy will integrate with budgeting and how the action planning will occur / link back to the policy.
- Greater emphasis on inclusion for Wurundjeri Woi wurrung community, specifically relating to storytelling and welcome to country at events.
- Include LGBTQIA+ in the glossary, and ensure the policy covers inclusion for Intersex as well as other components of this acronym.
- Expand the community context section to include a broader range of items that may impact on access and inclusion, including geography, SEIFA, poor public transport etc.
- Make it clearer why some groups get additional help (rather than all residents getting the same supports). E.g.



- Add Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030 and forthcoming Events Strategy to list of Council strategies and plans.
- Include Councillor role in implementation.
- Develop a simple and clear inclusion (vision) statement that can be used across Council documents.
- Consider including mental health in disability / chronic disease.
- The characteristics or intersecting identities in the section 'Intersectionality' should include 'gender identity and gender expression' as well as 'sex and sex characteristics', to better capture trans, gender diverse and intersex people.

- The definition of 'gender' and 'sex' in the section 'Glossary' should be updated in line with the Victorian Government's LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide, to better capture non-binary and intersex people.

Methodology

A wide range of engagement activities were undertaken to ensure broad coverage of key stakeholders, and give all community members the chance to provide input (see table 1). Further detail about social media and postcard distribution are provided at the end of this document.

Overall, 129 individuals provided input into the engagement.

Table 1 Engagement activities

Activity	Dates	Sample size
Participate form – Commitment questions	25 March – 19 April	7
Participate form – Visioning	28 March – 23 April	7
Youth and Community development meeting	24 March	6
Arts and cultural development team meeting	10 March	4
Postcards (1,000, 13 locations)	28 March	1
Sports development workshop	28 March	9
Youth Council	4 March	13
Staff forum	7 March	16
Local services network	12 March	20
Children's activities	Throughout	15
Environment and Sustainable Advisory Committee	20 April	5
Access and Inclusion advisory committee	22 April	9
Positive Ageing Advisory Committee	1 April	11
Individual submissions	Various	2
Recreation and leisure team	13 April	5

Key findings

Policy commitments

Question	Do you agree with the commitments outlined in the Policy?
Source	Participate form
Sample Size	n = 7

All seven people who completed the participate form agreed with the commitments outlined in the policy.

Missing priority groups

Question	Are there any priority groups missing? (If yes, please specify)
Source	Participate form Youth and Community Development Meeting Arts and Cultural Development Team Meeting Staff Forum Environment and Sustainable Advisory Committee
Sample Size	n = 38

Three of the seven respondents in the participate form said that the policy was missing priority groups, specifically:

- Young people (4 mentions).
- Children (2 mentions) – “Can we change women to 'women and girls'? This would emphasize that barriers to community participation can exist at all ages (e.g. access to sport, education etc)”
- Include mental health (2 mentions) in disability / chronic disease.
- The accessibility needs of people living with a disability
- Carers.
- Those with digital access issues

Fair and inclusive Nillumbik

Question	What does a fair and inclusive Nillumbik mean to you?
Source	Participate form Children's activity Sports club development workshop Positive ageing advisory committee Youth Council Local Services network Environment and Sustainable advisory committee Access and Inclusion advisory committee Postcard
Sample Size	n = 75 adults and n = 15 children aged 2-4
Notes	Question for children's activity adapted to: "What does it mean to be included"

When asked to define a 'fair and inclusive Nillumbik' almost every comment made was different, with very few themes coming through. This highlights the complexities of the topic, as it means something different to everyone. The broad range of topics put forth can be broadly categorised as follows:

Access and services

Ensuring that all residents have access to the services they need. This includes physical access into buildings, transport access, as well as financial access. This needs to cover people at all ages, stages and abilities, across both rural and urban areas of the municipality.

- All residents have access.
- Convenient services and shops.
- Access to buildings and transport.
- Better housing options.
- Inclusive health services
- Better communication of what is available (2 mentions), particularly with youth services, or through a 'new residents pack'.
- Mental health support in every school.
- Better ways to access programs.
- Financial access (no further information provided to clarify this).
- Same opportunities and access for everyone.
- Better disability access for services in rural areas.
- Walking and bike path in St Andrews.
- Equal opportunities and access – no one gets left behind.
- Free activities.

Council responsibilities

Some responses focussed on the responsibilities of Council, specific to being inclusive with funding, programs and services, and staffing.

- Council provides all essential services needed by residents.
- More inclusive funding for services and community groups.
- Council staff employment based on skills rather than inclusion parameters / quotas.
- Stakeholders treated equitably (no further information provided to clarify what this means).
- Learning programs in schools to make them feel welcome (no further information provided to explain what this means).
- Staff and service provider training on how to support community members with additional access needs.

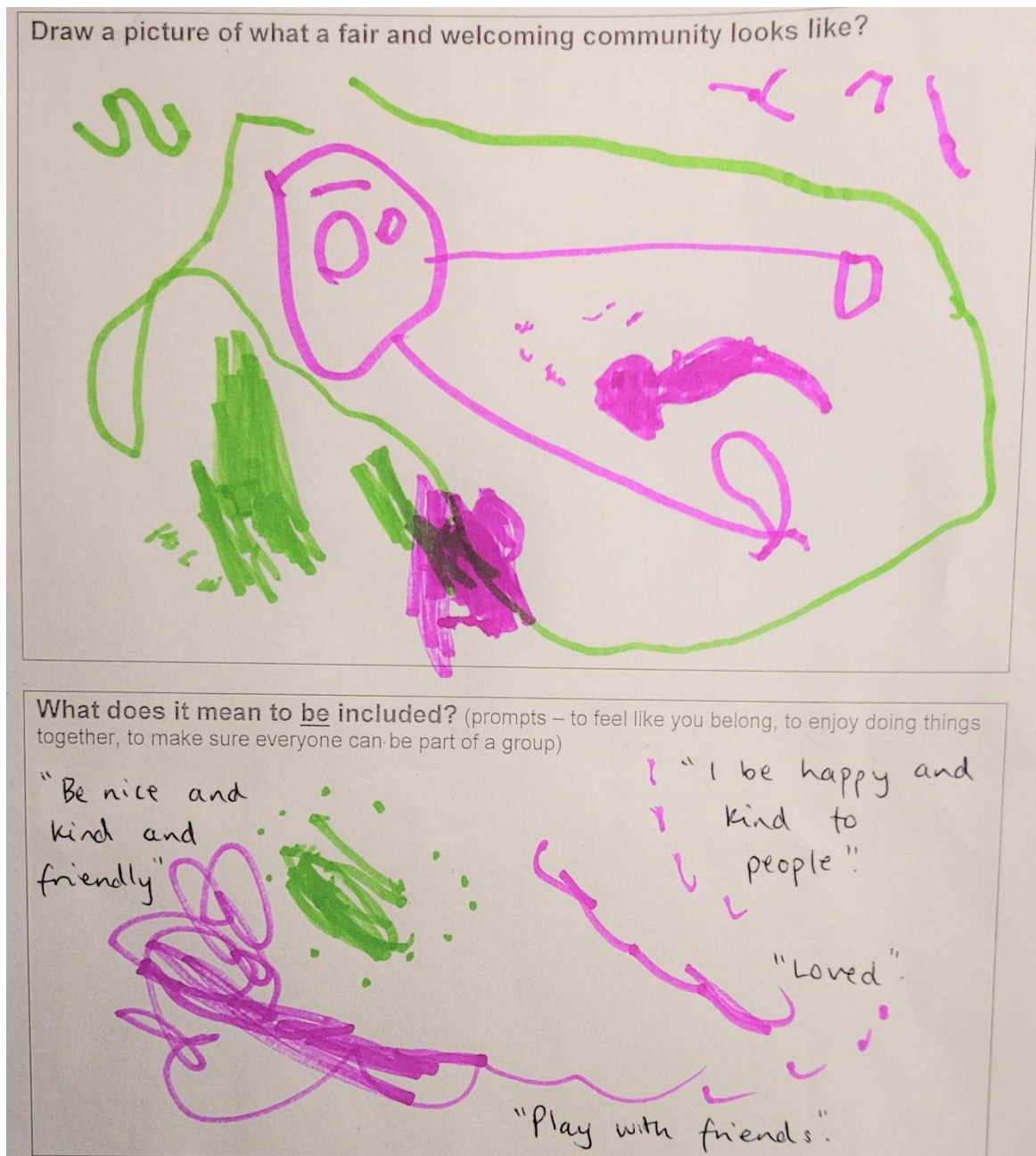
Sense of community

For many, sense of community is central to their definition of fair and inclusive, with a focus on respect, feeling safe, empathy and diversity.

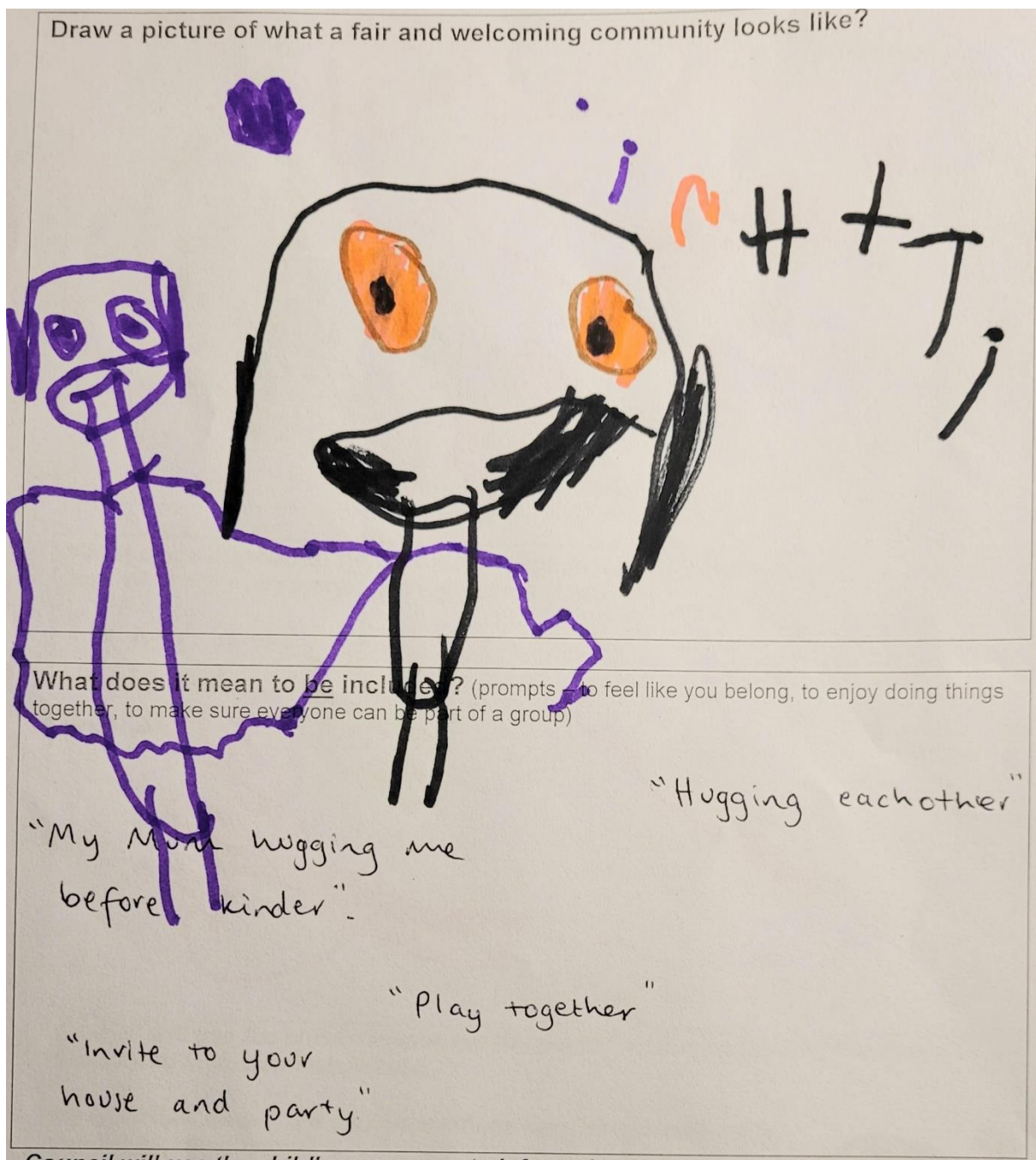
- Respect (3 mentions).
- Safe (2 mentions).
- Diversity (2 mentions).
- Empathy (2 mentions).
- Good place to live for older people.
- Friendly neighbourhoods.
- Fair treatment for everyone.
- Acceptance of differences / no judgement.
- Reduce the divide between rural and urban.
- Remove language barriers.
- Ensure all voices are heard.
- Vibrant spaces.
- Multicultural.
- Socially inclusive.
- Harmony.
- More green spaces to help the environment.

Amongst the children the key focus was on playing with friends (7 comments) and asking people if they are OK / what is wrong (4 comments).

Example 1 children's responses:



Example 2 of children's response:



Comments on policy

Question	Any comments on the policy?
Source	Participate form Youth and Community Development Meeting Sports club development workshop Youth Council Staff forum Recreation and leisure team Environment and sustainability advisory committee Access and inclusion advisory committee
Sample Size	n = 71

A broad range of suggestions were made for potential improvements to the policy document, with very few repeated suggestions. Feedback can be broadly grouped into wording / terminology, scope, and action planning / next steps.

Wording / terminology

A number of very specific wording and terminology suggestions were put forth. It is recommended that these be considered for the final version of the document.

- Clearer explanation of difference between equity and equality (perhaps in principles section). The need for this is demonstrated through one of the comments in the visioning activity, which was “don’t single out minority groups for preferential treatment”. It may be necessary to make it clearer why this is necessary.
- Change terminology from “barriers are reduced” to “barriers are addressed” (no further detail given as to why)
- Community > Principles section: mention the importance of both informal and formal partnerships.
- Strengthen the commitment statement wording; ‘consider’ seems non-committal. It is suggested this reads: “Access, equity and inclusion will be at the forefront of all decision making”.
- Include LGBTQIA+ in the glossary.
- Broaden context to cover ‘Councillor, employee, volunteer **and community** development’.
- Develop an inclusion / vision statement to be used across the organisation.
- Better articulate ‘Consider unconscious bias’.
- Consider updating terminology for ‘low status’ (no suggestion given).
- The characteristics or intersecting identities in the section ‘Intersectionality’ should include ‘gender identity and gender expression’ as well as ‘sex and sex characteristics’, to better capture trans, gender diverse and intersex people.
- The definition of ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ in the section ‘Glossary’ should be updated in line with the Victorian Government’s LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Language Guide, to better capture non-binary and intersex people.

Scope

With regards to scope, it was felt by some that there were opportunities for the document to provide better coverage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander needs, an enhanced assessment of demographic and geographic needs and variations, and greater organisational buy-in / responsibility.

- Need to include a continuous improvement mechanism.
- Greater emphasis on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung community, with particular reference to sharing their stories and welcome to country for events and festivals. Also consider a stronger local commitment to reconciliation.
- The Community Context section gives the impression that the policy only exists because of COVID, which is not the case. Either rename the section or expand the content. Suggested content inclusions are SEIFA, geography, and lack of public transport.
- Internal workforce issues
 - Strengthen this section, including barriers to recruitment (no further information provided)
 - Staff training to increase knowledge and practices that promote access, equity and inclusion
- Commitment to universal service delivery.
- Include intersex in LGBTIQ+ supports.
- Support for the emphasis on financially disadvantaged people.
- Add Economic Development Strategy 2020-2030 and forthcoming Events strategy to list of Council strategies and plans.
- Don't avoid issues of racism and unconscious bias. Foster a culture of respect and tolerance.
- Include Councillor role in how it will be implemented.
- Include neuro-divergent groups (Autism, different ways of seeing the world).
- Needs to have whole-of-organisation buy-in, including leadership. Show how it links to all parts of Council.
- Rural lens is needed.

Implementation / Action Planning / next steps

Many of the suggestions actually fell within the next steps, namely budgeting, action planning and implementation. The policy document may need to be clearer about differentiating where different components lie within the planning framework.

- What procedures have been developed to ensure these commitments are actively pursued? For example, does Council have diversity, especially within their Communications and HR teams.
- Want to see a list of actions (2 mentions) – may need to make it clearer that the action planning is a separate step of the process.
- Include budget planning to demonstrate how the policy can be implemented in a sustainable manner.
- Ensure service shortfalls are identified and integrated into future planning.
- Clearer visual displays of inclusion commitment (e.g. stickers with the rainbow flag or indigenous statements on Council buildings).
- Consider privacy when collecting consistent demographics.
- Council communications need to be more inclusive (culture change?).
- Affordable upskilling and employment programs for young people (so it is affordable without parental help).
- Activities for young people that don't rely on their parents driving them.

- Solutions-focussed approach.
- Aboriginal liaison officer.
- Open conversations and educating people.
- Review and report on committee demographics.
- Foster spaces where young people feel safe to speak up.
- Help the broader community understand the topic.
- Develop an LGBTIQ+ action plan to reduce inequalities among LGBTIQ+ people in Nillumbik
- Commit to achieve - or, at least, investigate - Rainbow Tick accreditation for Council services to ensure that they are culturally safe for and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people.
- Undertake an annual LGBTIQ+ community focus group for community members and organisations that can explore:
 - The areas of greatest importance to LGBTIQ+ people who live in Nillumbik;
 - What role Council can play in partnership with LGBTIQ+ people and organisations to achieve positive outcomes; and
 - What a meaningful relationship between Council and LGBTIQ+ people might look like

In terms of positive feedback (given although not requested), one person said they liked how it was simple and succinct and another said it was well written.

Opportunities to work together

Question	Are there opportunities to work together?
Source	Local services network
Sample Size	n = 20

A number of participants suggested that fostering opportunities to work together would be reliant on appropriate funding to do so.

The key opportunities for working together with stakeholders are:

- Communicating policy meaning to the community (simple terms, explaining implementation impacts on each group) (3 mentions);
- When developing actions;
- Developing an understanding of local needs;
- Work with organisations who support community members in need;
- Co-design with community members;
- Enhance community knowledge and capacity, particularly with regards to supporting mental health; and
- Providing a safe space for community input.

Staff practices

Question	How can you change practice in your role to create a fair and inclusive Nillumbik?
Source	Staff forum
Sample Size	n = 16

Staff recognise the opportunity for improved practices through uniform data collection, templates and assessments:

- Collecting data in a more consistent, representative and inclusive manner (2 mentions).
- More accessible document templates (easy English (2 mentions), fonts).
- Gender impact assessments (2 mentions)
- Improve grant accessibility (2 mentions) including for those on low incomes and offering a broader variety of application formats.
- More diversity in employment (2 mentions).
- Leadership buy-in.
- Advisory panel EOIs encouraging diversity.
- Ensuring Discrimination Disability Act (DDA) compliance.
- Be mindful of using inclusive language.
- Educate staff on statistics.
- More internal advocacy.
- Educate stakeholders through workshops.
- Using the statement.

Support

Question	What support do you need to help implement the policy?
Source	Youth and Community Development Meeting Staff Forum Recreation and Leisure Team
Sample Size	n = 27

The main support required is through standards and templates to ensure consistency and inclusive coverage.

- One-page cheat sheet with tick-boxes of what needs to be included (2 mentions) (not enough information provided to clarify what this means).
- Include inclusion parameters in project management templates so that it is embedded from the start (2 mentions).
- Template for collecting demographic information for forms such as grant applications.
- Provide feedback on wording and distribution of communications to ensure accessibility and inclusion.
- Definition of what makes an event 'accessible' (who, what, how).
- Council leadership providing ongoing dialogue on the topic.
- Education and resources for staff (not enough information provided to clarify).
- Dedicated team members (not enough information provided to clarify).
- Staff commitment to implement change.
- Better distribution of grant opportunities.
- Resourcing (budgets).

Appendix 1 - Survey Distribution

The Participate Nillumbik survey was promoted through Facebook as follows. Throughout the fieldwork period the Participate page had 220 unique visitors and 15 contributors.

	Date	Type	Reach	Engage- ment	Link clicks	Likes	Shares
Facebook	24 March	GIF video	539	23		5	2
	30 March	Cartoon image	4869	149		7	1
	10 April	GIF video	875	39	3	0	2
	17 April	Cartoon image	2354	46	7	3	1
	23 April	Link only	654	6	4	1	1
Instagram	24 March	GIF video		49			
	30 March	Cartoon image				5	
	17 April	Cartoon image				4	
	23 April	Cartoon Image				2	
Twitter	30 March	Cartoon image					
	17 April	Cartoon image				1	2
	23 April	Cartoon image					
LinkedIn	24 March	GIF video		325		4	
	30 March	Cartoon image		128		1	
	23 April	Link only		248		7	

Shared by:

- Hurstbridge Hub
- Nillumbik Arts
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library
- Private accounts (4)

Creative used was as follows:



What does a fair and inclusive Nillumbik look like to you?

Help inform the draft Access, Equity and Inclusion Policy.

participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/inclusive-nillumbik



Postcards were distributed at:

Location	Number
Panton Hill post office	250
St Andrews post office	200
Hurstbridge hub	50
Living and Learning – Panton hill	50
Living and Learning – Diamond Creek	50
Living and Learning – Eltham	50
Eltham Library	50
Diamond Valley Library	50
Diamond Valley Sports and Fitness	50
Eltham Leisure Centre	50
Edendale	50
Seniors lunch	25
Vaccine pop-up	25

Appendix 2 - OPOPOF engagement

OPOPOF Coverage

Of the 722 general survey participants in the Our People, Our Place, Our Future engagement program

“I want to see the promotion of equity, inclusion of all and opportunities for people to learn how to bridge difference.”

“Support for minority groups; valuing people from other cultures; promoting inclusion and equality for LGBTQIA+; making services available to people with disabilities.”

“Consulting with disabled community in Nillumbik directly, through groups that cater to disabled people, and through online surveys with disabled people, taking into account invisible disabilities too. A conscious effort to include disabled voices in council event planning, administration, events planning, and structuring of group activities going forward.”

“Inclusion awareness training for Councillors; Councillors and Council Officers to be a united front; more proactive steps to promote inclusion.”

“Put policy and procedure in place to support diversity and inclusion.”

“Support for gender equality and all things related to access, equity and inclusion for the whole community.”