

the place
to live

Towards Equality

Darebin City Council's Equity, Inclusion and Human
Rights Framework 2019-2029

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waters we now call Darebin and affirms that Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people have lived on this land for millennia, practising their customs and ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal. Council acknowledges that Elders past, present and emerging are central to the cohesion, intergenerational wellbeing and ongoing self-determination of Aboriginal communities. They have played and continue to play a pivotal role in maintaining and transmitting culture, history and language.

Council respects and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination. Council also recognises the diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have had and continue to play a unique role in the life of the Darebin municipality. Council recognises and values this ongoing contribution and its significant value for our city and Australian society more broadly.

Extract from Darebin City Council's Statement of commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 2019

Mayor's foreword

I am proud to introduce Towards Equality - Darebin City Council's Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029. Towards Equality represents Council's long-standing commitment to social justice, tackling disadvantage, standing up against discrimination in all its forms, and responding equitably to the diverse needs and aspirations of our community.

Council is committed to reducing discrimination, disadvantage and the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities and outcomes, so that we can build a strong, healthy, cohesive and harmonious community. At a fundamental level, this is about fairness. At a practical level, this is about how, as an organisation, in our services, programs, places and spaces and with our community, we can be equitable, responsive, inclusive and accessible to all. It is about recognising and valuing our diversity.

Reflecting national trends, there is growing inequality in Darebin and a corresponding decline in the diversity of people who live in the municipality. In part, this trend is linked to the process of gentrification impacting housing affordability and the 'pricing out' of residents and communities, as well as growing social, health and economic inequalities.

This also reflects entrenched and multiple disadvantage in Darebin, in which generations of people, families or communities have had poor access to opportunities for housing, education, work, wellbeing and inclusion, little power and resources, and therefore poor outcomes. Towards Equality outlines how Council can help change this narrative through a considered and strategic approach.

Equity, inclusion and human rights must be considered in all aspects of Council's business to ensure our processes and decisions do not inadvertently compound disadvantage through inequitable spread of services or unequal distribution of investment. This is all the more necessary as the challenges and risks associated with climate change are likely to have a stronger impact on the most vulnerable of our residents, notably those experiencing poverty and discrimination.

Towards Equality integrates consideration of human rights throughout our work, based on the fundamental right of all people to a life of freedom, respect, equality and dignity. This approach, aligned with our commitment to community engagement and participation, mandates that people who are affected by a decision, policy or practice should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process.

Council is striving for equality: a community where everyone is treated with respect and has equal access to resources and opportunities that help them thrive and belong. This is essential for us to create a community where everyone can live their lives well.

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Executive summary

Darebin City Council has a long-standing commitment to serve and respond to the diverse needs of its community. This is articulated in the Council Plan 2017-2021 which places a strong emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion throughout all aspects of Council business.

Towards Equality – Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029 (Towards Equality) advances this commitment and provides a framework to help address the barriers to inclusion experienced by Darebin community members. This means considering diversity, inclusion, equity and human rights across all of Council’s organisational culture, practice, process and decision-making and continuing to stand against discrimination, notably racism, sexism, ableism, ageism and homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, and against injustices, including poverty. Discrimination and poverty impinge on people’s right and ability to participate fully and equally in our community.

Council strongly believes that all people, in their diversity, should have fair and equitable access to opportunities, infrastructure, services and information. All people should have a say in the decisions that affect them, recognising that we are all better off when everyone is able to contribute and be heard.

The Framework sets the vision for a community for all, a fair city where everyone can thrive and belong. With this Framework, in partnership with the community, local agencies and organisations, Council will work towards a discrimination-free Darebin and seek to reduce the impact of poverty and disadvantage.

The Framework is underpinned by six principles that guide and influence ongoing action:

1. Recognising Australia’s First peoples
2. Upholding human rights
3. Advancing social justice
4. Delivering meaningful, equitable and inclusive community engagement
5. Championing health equity
6. Supporting climate justice

This will be delivered through three mutually reinforcing goals:

Goal	Outcome
Goal 1: We will build an organisation that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin’s diverse communities where social justice, accountability, participation and community engagement, human rights, diversity and wellbeing are core principles that inform all of our policies, practices and business.	Outcome 1: A diverse and inclusive Council (as an organisation) that reflects our community.

<p>Goal 2: We will build Council services, programs, places and spaces that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable and respond to the diversity of needs, rights and priorities in our communities.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Accessible, equitable, inclusive and responsive Council services, programs, places and spaces</p>
<p>Goal 3: Working in collaboration with partner agencies, organisations and residents, we will contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities by facilitating and advocating for equitable opportunities for all people to be heard, connected, respected and supported to participate in community life and in decisions important to their lives</p>	<p>Outcome 3: An inclusive and empowered community where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered.</p>

The Framework seeks to guide and influence policy development at all levels of the organisation. This is to ensure that people and their lived experiences are brought into the thinking and design of every Council policy and process. This is also to ensure that our policies and processes proactively seek to address disadvantage, poverty and discrimination and do not unintentionally compound them.

The Framework is implemented through various Council policies, specific programs and services and the use of the Equity Impact Assessment. This process ensures the application of equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing considerations, values and practices across all of Council’s work and decision-making.

Finally, the Framework and its implementation through the Equity Impact Assessment overlay three key evidence-based lenses in order to build a deeper, more complete picture of risk of exclusion:

1. People
2. Places
3. Experiences (or factors that additionally contribute to exclusion)

Through implementing the Framework, Council seeks to maintain the diverse make-up of the Darebin municipality, support our residents' human rights and ensure a fairer, more inclusive Darebin for all.

1. Strategic context

Towards Equality seeks to create a fairer, inclusive and equitable place for all residents to live in. The Framework recognises the current climate change and social justice challenges that we encounter both locally and globally.

At a global level the Framework draws from the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which pledges that "no one will be left behind". The Framework considers the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, most notably:

- Goal 1: end poverty
- Goal 3: healthy lives and wellbeing for all
- Goal 5: gender equality
- Goal 10: reduce inequality
- Goal 11: inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities
- Goal 13: urgent action to combat climate change.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide a useful strategic architecture reinforcing Council's approach and obligation to:

- facilitate and advocate for just, fair, healthy and cohesive communities, particularly in the light of climate change
- promote human rights for all residents in the community
- address discrimination and disadvantage (including by examining how we allocate resources, programs and services and how we might need to redistribute them to tackle poverty and disadvantage)
- value diversity and difference, and
- maintain good governance and evidence-based decision making.

1.1 Federal level

Under federal law, people are protected from discrimination on the basis of a number of attributes (or grounds) including race, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. These grounds recognise that some people are at increased risk of discrimination and disadvantage.

The protections in place require Council to have a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of which people or groups of people may be more vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination, including systemic and structural discrimination, in our community. This highlights how disadvantage goes beyond poverty, class and social-economic disadvantage and stems from both poverty and discrimination.

1.2 State level

Victorian *Local Government Act 1989*

Council is bound by the Victorian *Local Government Act 1989* to:

- foster community cohesion and encourage active participation in civic life, taking into account the diverse needs of the local community (section 3D of the Act) and
- ensure that our services “best meet the needs of [our] local community”, are “accessible and equitable” and that we aim to “improve the overall quality of life of people” (section 3C).

Victorian *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*

Local government has a role in supporting community members to achieve optimal health and wellbeing, as set out in section 24 of the Victorian *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008*.

Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*

The Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* protects people from discrimination and harassment in areas of public life including workplaces, places that provide services and local government. As an employer, a service provider and in all of its operations, Council is bound by the Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of many personal characteristics.

The Victorian *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* aims for greater equality and the prevention of discrimination by placing a “positive duty” on local councils to take proactive, reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. This includes being an equal opportunity employer, and reviewing our services, programs, places, spaces and external operations to prevent discrimination. For example, this might mean reviewing community engagement practices, assessing the accessibility of physical structures, ensuring written products are available in various formats and languages or providing specific, tailored services for disadvantaged or under-serviced groups and people.

Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

Council is bound by the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter). The Charter sets out the basic rights, freedoms and responsibilities of all people in Victoria and compels Victorian State and local governments and public servants to take human rights into consideration when making laws, setting policies and providing services. Under the Charter, local councils in Victoria have an obligation to respect, and act compatibly with, human rights in the way they go about their work and deliver their services. They have a responsibility to demonstrate how all of their decisions align with the Charter and how they’re not only upholding but also promoting human rights.

1.3 Darebin’s social justice commitments

Over the past two decades, Council has worked resolutely to address poverty and discrimination and remove barriers that entrench disadvantage and inequality. Actions taken by Council cannot in and of themselves resolve issues of poverty and inequity. This requires sustained, long-term and concerted efforts from all levels of government, agencies, businesses, organisations and community. However local government can play a role by ensuring that our services, programs and decisions consider equity and social justice and do not further compound inequality within our community. Barriers to people’s full and equal participation in community life, notably structural barriers such as discrimination, intergenerational disadvantage or unequal distribution of power and privilege are shaped by a much broader context, including State and federal levels of government. Council does not have all the levers to act on and reduce them. However, we as a Council have some influence over these systemic issues and the way they impact on citizens. Council is determined to address those within our remit and advocate on behalf of, and in partnership with, the Darebin community regarding those that are outside our sphere of action.

The Council Plan 2017-2021 Goal 5 embeds equity, diversity and inclusion as a priority in all of Council’s business, in order to proactively address growing inequality across the Darebin municipality. Goal 5 states “We will lead on equity and recognise our diverse community as our greatest asset for solving future challenges.”

This Framework gives life to Goal 5.1 “We will ensure our services, facilities and programs benefit all, including our most vulnerable.”

In a context of rate-capping and constrained resources, this will mean making concerted efforts towards redistribution and adaptation so:

- we give more to those who have less
- we tailor services, programs, places and spaces to people’s diverse and specific needs and
- we carefully consider ways to redressing injustices and imbalances.

The Framework brings together all of Council’s long-standing social justice commitments.

Darebin City Council’s social justice commitments
Commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as this country’s First peoples
Commitment to children, recognising them as active and current citizens with rights in a Child-Friendly City
Commitment to older people and the achievement of an Age-Friendly Darebin where older people are valued, supported and empowered to live well

<p>Commitment to our culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse (CALRD) residents and to Welcoming Cities, taking a stand against racism and supporting refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>Council has joined a growing network of local governments across Australia and is now a Welcoming Cities Network member committed (under several Standards) to reducing racism through strengthening social and cultural inclusion, economic engagement and civic participation.</p>
<p>Commitment to gender equity and prevention of violence against women</p>
<p>Commitment to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) residents and to “stand up against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia”</p>
<p>Commitment to people with a disability, underpinned by our legal obligations under the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i></p>
<p>Commitment to young people through the Darebin Youth Strategy</p>
<p>Commitment to anti-poverty and support for households and people on low incomes or experiencing hardship, homelessness or intergenerational disadvantage</p>

1.4 Equity in practice

The following examples illustrate how the Framework is put into practice and showcase tangible community benefits and equity outcomes across a broad range of Council functions and activities.

Solar Saver Program – pairing social and environmental benefit

The Solar Saver program sees Council pay for the upfront cost of installing solar panels on residences. While the program has now expanded, the initial pilot paired equity and sustainability objectives, focusing on pensioners and low income households. This recognised that these citizens were the least likely to be able to afford to pay upfront, while being the most likely to benefit through reduced electricity bills.

Community Grants – targeting groups at risk of exclusion

In 2018, Council undertook a review of all community funding agreements and grants. A new model was adopted in 2019 and over \$350,000 was allocated to grants programs that directly support equity, inclusion and wellbeing. All applications include questions on how groups at risk of exclusion will be included, with the three-year grants also seeking information on the location of the proposed activity, program or service. Equity and inclusion considerations accounted for 25 per cent of the assessment criteria for all three-year grants, with applicants required to consider the lenses of people, places and experiences in their proposal.

Prevention of violence against women – creating a safe and respectful workplace

Council is committed to being a workforce and community leader in the prevention of family violence and violence against women. Council was one of the first local governments in Australia to develop a Family violence policy for employees. This policy supports staff experiencing family violence so they can access a range of supports, including access to additional leave, developing a safety plan and referral to a family violence service. In 2018, the Policy was recognised as best practice and received a Victorian Worksafe Award.

Pathways to Employment – building a diverse workforce

Council recognises that a workforce reflective of its community plays a significant role in delivering services and programs that are relevant, contemporary and meet community expectations. Council is in the process of developing a Local Diversity Through Inclusion (Pathways to Employment) Strategy, which will seek to minimise barriers to diversity in the workplace by reviewing internal recruitment policies and processes, developing a culturally safe workplace and delivering programs that improve employment pathways for the community.

Youth Strategy – having a voice in Council decision-making

The Youth Services Strategy 2019-2021 guides Council's work with and for young people. It is based on what young people have told us is important to them now and for a positive future. Principle One of the Strategy is Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights, meaning that Council's work with and for young people ensures it values diversity and seeks to reduce discrimination, disadvantage and the unequal distribution of resources.

Get active in Darebin – adopting a place-based approach to improve outcomes

Council's Get Active in Darebin program provides free exercise classes in parks and venues across Darebin. Following a review of the program in 2019 Council pledged to provide at least 60 per cent of all future Get Active in Darebin programs in easily accessible locations within or close to areas of concentrated socio-economic disadvantage and social housing. This change helps people to be physically active in a safe, supportive environment and recognises and addresses health inequity within the community, particularly in areas of socio-economic disadvantage, through a targeted, place-based approach.

Fees and charges – reducing financial barriers

Council has a range of policies and practices that aim to reduce financial barriers for low-income residents by recognising differing capacity to pay in different circumstances. This includes differentiated fees for venue hire; waiving the fee for registration on the Child Care centralised waiting list for people more likely to experience financial hardship, such as health care card holders and asylum seekers; and the Pensioner Rate Rebate - as people on a pension have limited financial means that need to be factored in when asking them to contribute to our municipality through payment of their Council rates.

2. Understanding disadvantage

A critical component of supporting diversity, inclusion and fairness is ensuring that all people can live free from discrimination and disadvantage and have equal opportunity for dignity, wellbeing and participation in community life.

There are a range of multidimensional factors, including historical and structural barriers, that, on their own or jointly, can result in an individual, a group or a community being included or excluded. This makes it challenging to identify the complex, nuanced and sometimes contradictory ways in which people may be vulnerable to exclusion, discrimination and inequity. This doesn't mean that people and groups should be seen from a deficit perspective, which focuses on problems and helplessness. While the barriers they face should be recognised and challenged, their strengths, knowledge and resilience should also be acknowledged and respected.

Understanding the impact of gentrification and the role that Council's structures and processes play is also critical to ensure that these structures and processes do not inadvertently entrench disadvantage and inequality. This is particularly relevant when considering the effects of planning approaches for the built environment, public places and open space.

Toward Equality and its operationalisation through the Equity Impact Assessment overlay three key evidence-based lenses in order to build a deeper, more complete picture of risk of exclusion:

1. People
2. Places
3. Experiences - factors that additionally contribute to exclusion.

2.1 People

Council recognises that, because of historical and current inequalities and power structures, particular attributes or dimensions of people's identities can put both individuals and communities at higher risk of experiencing disadvantage and discrimination.

Council also recognises that people and communities have considerable strengths, wisdom and skills that should be acknowledged, understood and should inform our work with and for communities. Understanding which people or groups of people and identities may be more vulnerable to exclusion, and in which circumstances, is crucial to understanding how inequity and inequality are experienced in the Darebin community. In an Australian context, this notably requires an acknowledgement of the legacies of invasion and colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

To determine who might be at risk of discrimination and disadvantage in particular contexts or circumstances, noting that belonging to a group based on an aspect of one's identity - even when it

places one at risk of discrimination and disadvantage - can also be a protective factor fostering resilience and connections, the Framework applies:

- a gender lens, with particular attention to gender inequity experienced by women and girls¹
- a lifespan lens, with particular attention to children, young people and older people
- a culture lens, with particular attention to:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Nations people and original inhabitants of the lands, with distinct cultural rights
 - Culturally, Linguistically and Religiously Diverse (CALRD) people, notably - in light of increased racism, islamophobia and the growing threat of white supremacy - recently-arrived migrants from non-English speaking countries, asylum seekers and refugees, international students, people of diverse faiths and people who experience language barriers
 - the ongoing, systemic legacies of invasion, colonisation and the White Australia Policy and the need to consider and question our own structures
- an abilities/access and inclusion lens, with particular attention to the risk of discrimination experienced by people with a disability
- a sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status lens, with particular attention to the risk of discrimination experienced by LGBTIQ+ people
- a class/socio-economic status lens, with particular attention to poverty and its impacts, people on low incomes and/or in housing stress and intergenerational disadvantage.

2.2 Places

Looking at place and location within Darebin is a crucial aspect of understanding the structural disadvantage that can occur within the municipality. To gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of this disadvantage, the Framework applies a place-based lens.

Place-based approaches seek to improve people's daily experiences, shaped by the locations where they reside, work or play. They seek to increase social networks and community connections and reduce inequity between and within communities. A place-based approach is particularly important for neighbourhoods that experience greater levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Place is a useful frame to go beyond 'issues-based' or 'target group-based' approaches. Looking at population data through a place-based lens provides an understanding of disadvantage within the municipality. This is important in the context of Council's prioritising of resources and programs.

¹ In this context, building on VicHealth's *Gender equality, health and wellbeing strategy 2017-2019*, 'women and girls' is used to represent people who identify as women or girls. However, we recognise that gender is not binary and that some people's gender identities do not fit into binary categories of male or female, or do not reflect the biological sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender, gender diverse, non-binary, gender non-conforming people, as well as intersex people, encounter great barriers to equality.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is a key resource that Council can utilise to understand disadvantage from a place perspective.

The SEIFA (IRSD) captures elements such as low income, unemployment, lack of qualifications, absence of car ownership, overcrowded dwellings, disability and poor English proficiency. It provides a rating of disadvantage across the community and helps identify inequality across Darebin. The lower the score, the more relative disadvantage in that area compared with other areas.

Other research has shown that the further north the suburb, the least conducive to health in terms of capacity to provide a healthy environment for residents. This includes walkability, active transport to work, open space, tree cover, access to fresh food, distance to and capacity of hospitals, access to allied and community healthcare, density of liquor and fast food stores and how many residents volunteer.

Through a place-based approach, Council can address inequities in the distribution of resources and infrastructure and other issues as they are experienced within geographic spaces in collaboration with community members and relevant stakeholders.

2.3 Experiences

To complete the lenses of People and Places, the Framework also considers experiences or additional factors that might place people at risk of exclusion. Identifying and reporting on what contributes to disadvantage and inequality is complex. However, there are some key experiences and factors that can contribute to exclusion. They include, but are not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • housing tenure, housing stress and homelessness • employment status, job insecurity, unemployment and underemployment • education • household composition (sole person, single-parent, families with young children) • mental health • general wellbeing and physical health • social isolation • carer role • pregnancy and breastfeeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • migration, including seeking asylum or having refugee status • low level of English proficiency • faith • family violence and violence against women • trauma • community safety • food insecurity • access to emergency relief • out of home care • engagement with the justice system • access to technology
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The Framework applies a multi-layered analysis of the many factors contributing to risk of exclusion and disadvantage. It asks us to consider people, place and experiences and strengthens the application of human rights, health equity and climate justice in our planning and decision-making.

3. The Darebin community - a snapshot

The City of Darebin is home to a diverse community of people with different socio-economic status, gender, age, ability, race, culture, ethnicity, language, sexuality, sex characteristics, gender identity, beliefs, occupations, income, education, carer status and household type. The Darebin community cherishes this diversity and values it as an important civic asset.

Under the lenses of People, Places and Experiences, it is imperative to use relevant and robust data to inform Council's decision-making, planning and service-delivery. This requires both quantitative and qualitative data that capture the lived experiences of the community through meaningful, equitable and inclusive engagement with them.

3.1 Darebin's diverse community at a glance

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Darebin has one of the largest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in metropolitan Melbourne: almost 1% of residents are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. The Traditional Owners are the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people.
Gender	Of the 161,609 Darebin residents, 48.3% identify as men and 51.7% women ² .
Poverty	<p>Income levels: above one third (38%) (Greater Melbourne 37.8%) of individual residents have a personal income of less than \$500 per week.</p> <p>In terms of households, 19.3% (greater Melbourne 16.7%) are classed as low income (less than \$650 a week), but this varies greatly across the City, from a low of 12% in Alphington to highs of 32.8% in the Northland Activity Area, 26.7% in Reservoir (Oakhill), 24.4% in Kingsbury and 23.8% in Reservoir (Cheddar).</p> <p>Approximately 80 people sleep rough in Darebin on any one night and 972 people were homeless in 2016.</p> <p>Unemployment levels also vary widely across the municipality, from a low of 4.7% in Northcote to highs of 8.8% in Reservoir (Cheddar and Merrilands) and 13.2% in Kingsbury/Bundoora (with a rate of 7.2% overall in Darebin compared to 6.8% for greater Melbourne).</p>

² The **ABS does not capture data about gender identity** or people who identify as gender diverse or non-conforming, nor does it capture data about **people with intersex variations**.

	In terms of food insecurity , 5.8% of households report that they have run out of food in the past 12 months and couldn't afford to buy more.
Age	16% are children (0–14) 13% are young people (15–24) 57% are of working age (25-64) 14% are older (65+)
Disability	6% of residents say they need help in their day-to-day lives due to disability, although a fifth of residents (21%) say they have a permanent or long-term disability, including physical, psychological, intellectual and/or learning disabilities.
Cultural diversity	59% of residents were born in Australia and 33% were born overseas (mostly Italy, China, India, Greece, the UK and Vietnam). 59% speak English at home; 7% speak Italian, 6% Greek, 4% Mandarin, 3% Arabic, 2% Vietnamese and 19% another language, with 138 languages spoken in total. Approximately 7% of our population has difficulty speaking English. Just over 2,000 international students live in Darebin. There are 208 holders of IMA BVE (asylum-seekers).
Sexuality	6% identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual ³ .
Faiths and beliefs	48% are Christian 35% have no religion 5% are Muslim 3% are Buddhist 3% are Hindu (there are 37 recorded religions in total)
Carer status	11% provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age. Of people providing care, 60% are women and 40% are men.
Household composition	27% live alone 27% live in couple with children 22% live in couple (without children) 9% live in one-parent families 8% live in group houses

³ *Darebin Household Survey 2014*. We know this is a clear under-estimation of the LGBTIQ+ population as (1) looking at sexual orientation only and not capturing people who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming or people with intersex characteristics and (2) people under-declare for a variety of reasons including sensitivity of the question, fear of discrimination, etc.

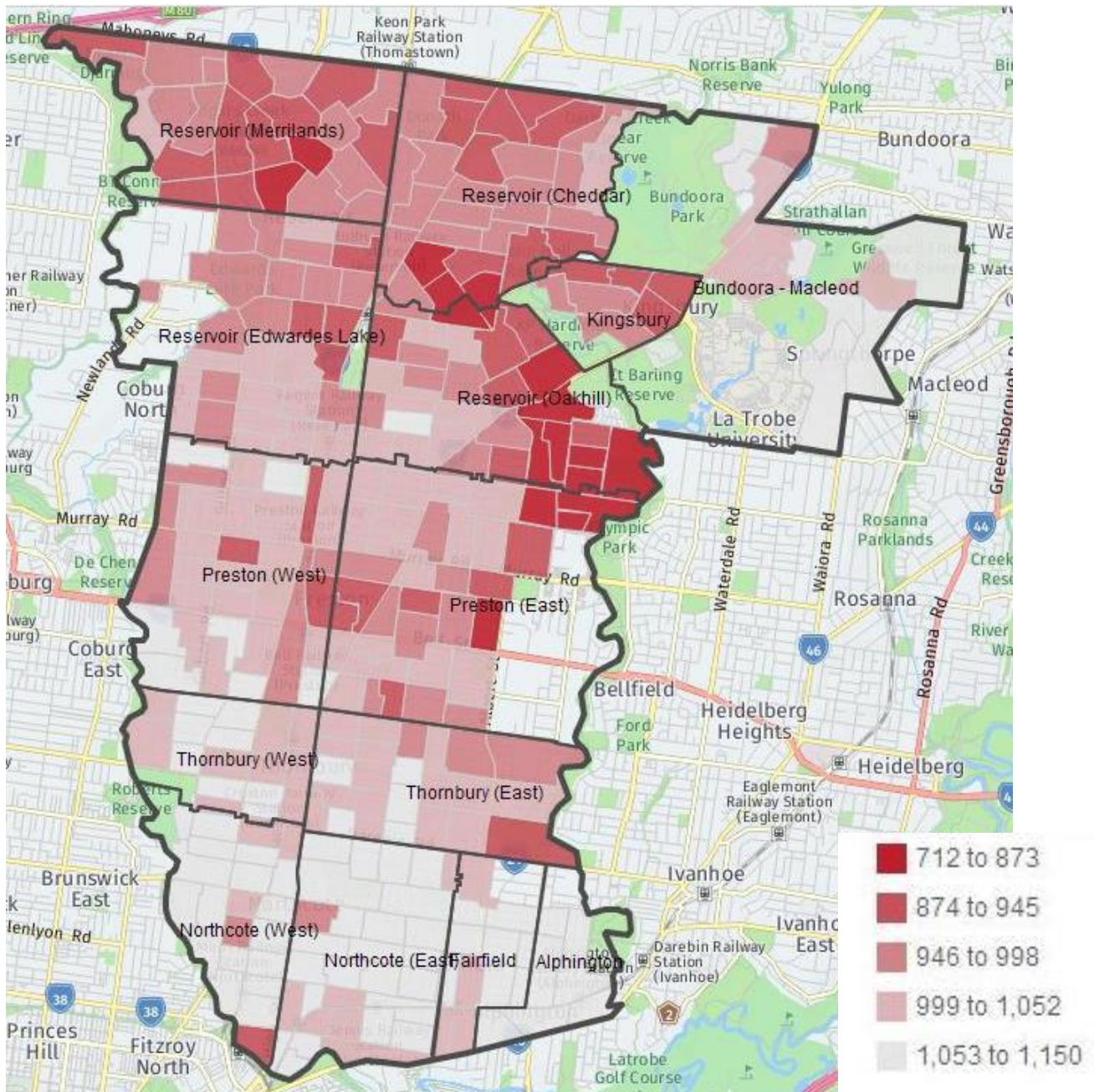
3.2 Humanising the data

Following evidence-based policy development, it is imperative to use robust data to inform Council's decision-making, planning and service-delivery. However, quantitative data is only part of the story. It is important to use it in conjunction with qualitative data. Talking to people about their lived experiences is crucial to bring community voices, particularly more marginalised community voices, into Council's thinking and decision-making.

3.3 Map of the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) 2016⁴

As outlined in the map below, there is a south-to-north gradient of advantage to disadvantage, with greater disadvantage in the northern precincts (north of Bell Street) than in the southern precincts. The map below also highlights that, even within more affluent or advantaged areas and suburbs, there remain pockets of disadvantage with limited infrastructure and capacity to access amenities such as transport, technology, fresh food and community infrastructure.

⁴ Source ABS *Census of Population and Housing 2016*



4. Guiding principles

Principle 1: Recognising Australia's First peoples and the right to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a foundation for equity and fairness

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are Australia's First peoples. They never ceded sovereignty. Aboriginal peoples have the world's oldest continuous living cultures. The uniqueness and diversity of these cultures, and the wisdom and knowledge they hold, should be highly valued by all Australians.

Council has a strong, long-standing commitment to, and relationship with, the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, residents and organisations in Darebin. This commitment is set out formally in the Darebin Council Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and is a foundational principle underpinning the Towards Equality Framework.

Honouring this commitment requires Council and the Darebin community to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents' and communities' strengths, resilience, cultural rights and values, living culture and practices, including their continuing spiritual, physical and cultural connection to the land and waters and their right to self-determination⁵.

This commitment also requires Council to lead, and contribute to educating, the wider Darebin community so we are all proactive in recognising the historical, as well as current and ongoing, injustices experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These injustices have had lasting legacies.

Australia as a settler-colonial State rests on a history of invasion, frontier wars, massacres, colonisation, oppression, forced removals and dispossession. These have lingering, inter-generational effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, despite their resistance and resilience. In this context, recognising, respecting and valuing Australia's First Peoples and their knowledge, cultures and rights, and acknowledging the absence of justice for them, is the foundation of all of Council's social justice work. There cannot be a fair, just and healthy Australian society without this essential, initial step. It is the most important and appropriate starting point for Darebin's Towards Equality Framework and all of Council's work to build equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing in our community.

⁵The right of self-determination means the right to authority and control over aspects of one's political, economic, cultural and social life. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other indigenous peoples worldwide have continued to struggle for self-determination including greater autonomy over their political, social, cultural and economic destiny, and greater participation and representation in the institutions of the State.

In that regard, the Aboriginal concept of health has much to teach us and Council's social justice work can only be strengthened by drawing inspiration from it.

"Aboriginal health is not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but is the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community, in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of the whole community. Aboriginal people have a whole of life view incorporating the cyclical concept of life-death-life and the relationship to the land. Community control is the key strength in Aboriginal communities"⁶.

Respecting the aspiration to community control, Council will continue to seek guidance from Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, in the spirit of self-determination. As highlighted by the Australian Human Rights Commission, without self-determination, it is not possible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to fully overcome the legacy of colonisation and dispossession.

Overcoming this legacy also requires recognition of the uniqueness and centrality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Australia and the telling of a true account of the nation's history, as called for by the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This is imperative to try and decolonise Australian society's structures. This requires us (Council and community) to make a conscious effort to prioritise and practice First Nations people's cultures and values, seek to dismantle oppressive systems and structures on First Nations people's terms and centre Aboriginal people's experiences, voices and knowledge.

Acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land and recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin provides the baseline for all of Council's social justice work. Putting rights and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the forefront of our equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing work provides the foundation on which Council's other commitments to all of our residents and communities can flourish and grow and be meaningful.

Principle 2: Upholding human rights

Beyond our legal mandate to protect, fulfil and promote the human rights of all of our residents, Council also recognises that human rights are the basic standards required to achieve our social justice goals.

Human rights are universal, they belong to all people at all times. Human rights reflect the idea that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights⁷. We possess rights regardless of our background, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religious belief, abilities, class or other status.

⁶ National Aboriginal Health Framework 1989 and Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations

⁷ Article 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Human rights are centred on the inherent dignity and value of each person. Exercising our human rights allows us to make free choices about how we live and how we treat one another.

Council affirms the inherent right of all people to enjoy freedom and equality and be treated with respect and dignity. Towards Equality places human rights at the centre of Council's values and work.

This means embedding core human rights values within Council's culture and practice at all levels⁸, including as an elected council, in our administration, in community engagement and in third party interactions. We must uphold and apply the 20 human rights protected under the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, particularly the right to equality before the law and non-discrimination, freedom of movement, right to privacy, freedom of thought and religion, freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly, right to protection of families and children, right to liberty and security and cultural rights. The Charter recognises distinct Aboriginal cultural rights to identity, culture, language, kinship ties and relationship to land and waters that must not be denied

Beyond the Charter and in line with United Nations (UN) understandings, Council has long taken a broader view of human rights that is inclusive of economic, social and cultural rights. While not bound by these rights in the same way, Council is particularly attentive to all of our residents' right to work, right to an adequate standard of living including the right to food and to housing, right to health, right to education, right to participate in cultural life and right of self-determination.

To uphold human rights Council will, as part of the Equity Impact Assessment:

- give proper consideration to human rights when making decisions
- ensure that actions, policies and services are compatible with human rights
- interpret and apply local laws consistently with human rights
- ensure that people who work on our behalf do so in a way that respects human rights
- involve residents and other stakeholders affected by Council decisions in dialogue and decision-making that is informed, active, free and meaningful and based on reciprocity. Of particular relevance are the actions that Council takes to consult and engage with residents who are disadvantaged and/or whom Council traditionally finds hard to reach. In that respect, Towards Equality informs and works closely with the Community Engagement Framework.

This (and the Towards Equality Framework more broadly) aligns with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's (VEOHRC) Framework that identifies six key influences for a strong human rights culture: engaged leadership, employees' values and attitudes, transparency and accountability, community engagement and participation, operational capability and systems and processes.

⁸ Guidance on how to do this and meet our legal obligations under the Charter can be found in the Human Rights checklist developed by the Victorian Local Governance Association to assist local government understand and implement the Charter and in the VEOHRC's Good decision-making with the Charter: How Council planning decisions can consider human rights.

When human rights are actively upheld for all, including people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable because of inequalities and power structures, everyone in the community benefits from a fairer, healthier and more socially cohesive community. In that regard, a rapidly emerging area with potential impact on human rights and fairness is technology, its evolutions and the digital divide. The Australian Human Rights Commission highlights that unprecedented and rapid technological change has already significantly affected our human rights, with potentially unfair outcomes. The implications for economically, socially, culturally and physically marginalised groups and for the climate emergency should be monitored over the lifespan of this Framework and adjustments made as needed.

Principle 3: Advancing social justice

Equity and inclusion are complex and multidimensional concepts. While there is no universally accepted definition, this Framework will use the following ones.

Equity: Equity is about fairness and rights: making sure people have access to the same opportunities and rights, notably by increasing access to power and resources for groups or people without them, to achieve more equal outcomes. Equity implies redistribution and adaptation.

Equality: Equity is not the same as equality. Equality refers to the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, responsibilities and opportunity. Equality is what we, as a Council are striving for: a community where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and where everyone has equal access to power, resources, decision-making and opportunities in order to live their lives well.

Social justice: Equity and equality are intrinsically linked to the idea of social justice, which aims to tackle systemic and structural inequalities through positive government intervention so that all people can have equal access to wealth, health, wellbeing, justice and opportunity.

Applying an equity approach is core to advancing social justice outcomes. It recognises that people are different and that Australian society as it operates today is not a level playing field.

To create equality, targeted and customised responses are required where there is evidence of a community's or group's experience of poverty, discrimination, marginalisation or under-participation. This means that Council may need to realign the distribution of its funding, resources, services and programs towards groups and people experiencing inequality or structural and systemic barriers such as poverty, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, bearing in mind that some people might experience more than one barrier.

An equity approach also recognises the power differentials within a society. While some people have little power and resources, others have more and experience privilege as a result. People who

experience privilege are generally unable to see barriers that others with less privilege encounter, because they are not barriers to them. This can manifest notably (but not solely) in unconscious bias.

This is why raising awareness (within and outside of Council) of unconscious bias is necessary. Similarly, working directly with people who experience inequality is critical when designing programs, services, places and spaces, to avoid building or reinforcing systemic barriers. Well designed, meaningful, equitable and inclusive community engagement is crucial to that end.

Social inclusion: Social inclusion is a universal human aspiration. It means being included in the life of the community around you, with full access to the opportunities and resources available, having a sense of belonging and feeling respected and valued for who you are. It has positive flow-on effects on individual and community health and wellbeing. Human rights are fundamental to overcoming discrimination and promoting inclusion.

Social cohesion: Inclusion is the outcome when barriers are addressed. It is an aspiration driving all of Council's equity work. An important process for creating an inclusive community involves building social cohesion so people feel they belong, are able to participate in community life, share common values and respect difference and diversity of views. All of Council's work can make a difference to people's (both community members and Council staff) experience of inclusion. However, Council does not have all the levers to achieve this, notably when it comes to dismantling systemic and structural barriers. Council will seek to address the barriers within our remit and advocate on behalf of, and in partnership with, the Darebin community regarding those that are outside our scope.

Social cohesion is also about building community harmony and resilience, an urgent task in the context of climate change and its potential impact on communities in Darebin and beyond.

Diversity: Diversity is valued as a strength of the Darebin community, but it can also be a basis for discrimination and disadvantage. Diversity in its broadest sense refers to the many ways in which people all differ, such as culture language, ethnicity, faith and beliefs, gender, age, ability, sexuality, gender identity, class, socio-economic status, income, education level, occupation, caring responsibility and where we live. These attributes help define who we are, our own experience and how the world sees us. They make up the various facets of an individual's identity.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality recognises that people's lives and experiences are shaped and influenced by diversity – resulting in power and privilege in some cases and discrimination and oppression in others. People experience disadvantage and exclusion because their identity is made up of belonging to more than one group that experiences systemic and structural discrimination. While some people may have added layers of power and privilege, others experience compounding layers of discrimination. For example, lesbian, gay and bisexual people with a disability may be discriminated against both on the basis of sexual orientation and of disability. They experience exclusion within both groups, in addition to exclusion and invisibility in "mainstream" society.

Disadvantage and privilege: Intersectionality also means that people can experience both privilege and disadvantage/oppression, depending on the specific situation or context they are in. For instance, while both may experience discrimination based on their gender, a woman of Anglo-Celtic background is privileged and holds power in Australia compared to an Aboriginal woman whose daily experience is shaped by racism and the impacts of colonisation, in addition to sexism.

Principle 4: Delivering meaningful, equitable and inclusive community engagement

As highlighted by goal 5.2 of the Council Plan 2017-2021 to “bring the ideas of our diverse community into our decision-making”, community engagement is crucial to Council's work, notably in light of social justice and human rights principles.

Council recognises that community engagement is a key step in forming decisions and developing policies, services and spaces that continue to be relevant and responsive to changing needs and expectations. This follows a human rights approach that mandates that people who are affected by a decision, policy or practice should have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in the process.

Active citizen engagement is at the heart of Council’s aim to create a fairer and more inclusive city by giving people and communities who experience disadvantage or marginalisation greater control over their lives. This can be summarised in the principles of “Nothing about us, without us” and “With us, not for us” and will be supported through people-centred and place-based approaches.

Genuine engagement begins with listening to the aspirations and views of the people of Darebin, especially those most affected by Council’s decisions and those whose voices might be less often heard. Accountability is crucial to good engagement. This means always “closing the loop” by going back to the community post-engagement, so people know how their feedback was considered and what decisions were made as a result.

Principle 5: Championing health equity

Council recognises that good physical, mental and social health and wellbeing cannot be achieved without equity and inclusion. Feeling included helps people achieve their optimal personal mental health and wellbeing. This flows on to help create a community that is resourceful, resilient, connected and cohesive.

The link between disadvantage or poverty and poor health is well established, as is the health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal Australians. To achieve optimal health and wellbeing for all, we need to adopt a health equity lens.

Health equity means that everyone should have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential. Because health inequalities mostly result from social and economic inequalities created by

underlying inequalities in power, money and resources, they are largely preventable. To counter health inequalities, we need to work on the social determinants of health that influence individuals' and communities' health and wellbeing.

Many of Council's processes and structures influence some of the social determinants of health. They have an impact not only on health and wellbeing, but also on people's opportunities and on their capacity to enjoy their human rights.

In this respect, Towards Equality is closely linked with Darebin's Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021 which aims to create healthy, equitable and connected communities for all residents. The Equity Impact Assessment supports and makes operational the mutual and concurrent consideration of equity, inclusion, human rights and health and wellbeing.

Principle 6: Supporting climate justice

Council recognises that climate change and inequality are intrinsically linked and that we need to support the development of rights-based, socially-just responses to climate change, particularly in light of the climate emergency. Climate change is as much a symptom of inequality as it is a force that exacerbates it.

Various forms of climate injustice have been identified worldwide and apply in an Australian context. First Nations people, people living on lower incomes and other groups experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability (e.g. older people, children, women, people with disabilities, tenants) generally contribute least to causing climate change but are likely to be most negatively affected by it. They often pay, as a proportion of income, the most towards implementing certain policy responses and benefit least from those policies. Their voices tend to be unheard in decision-making.

The impacts of climate change are varied and will be felt differently by different groups. Some people and places will be more vulnerable than others to these impacts, as a mix of socio-economic, environmental and cultural factors and institutional practices such as planning rules and housing policy interact. Climate change impacts include human health, with reduced health and wellbeing outcomes, and are unequally distributed across society.

Climate change can compound poverty, discrimination and disadvantage and conversely, poverty increases vulnerability to climate impacts. There is also evidence that some adaptation and mitigation policies can deepen inequity. Australia's peak environment and welfare groups have highlighted that the costs and benefits of climate change policy are unequally and unfairly distributed, with people living on low incomes and experiencing discrimination and disadvantage being disproportionately affected.

In addition to recognition of this disproportionate impact of climate change, there is also a growing recognition that addressing climate change requires addressing inequality. A rapid transition away from a fossil fuel economy can only be achieved by addressing the factors that drive inequality.

Similarly, climate change has been recognised as “one of the greatest threats to human rights of our generation, posing a serious risk to the fundamental rights to life, health, food and an adequate standard of living of individuals and communities”⁹. There is therefore a need for policy solutions that integrate social justice and human rights considerations into climate change policy and vice versa.

The Framework strengthens the connection between social justice, human rights and climate change, meaning that:

- Individuals are seen as rights-holders and it is Council’s responsibility to support their participation and input into climate change policy development
- There is an emphasis on local knowledge of the environment and ways to protect it, including being guided by Traditional Owners
- The principles of non-discrimination and substantive equality are key elements of climate change policy formulation and the likely impacts on disadvantaged or vulnerable groups are assessed when deciding on climate change policy, and
- Core minimum human rights standards guide decision-makers.

5. Vision, goals and outcomes

5.1 Vision

Darebin aspires to be a community for all, a fair city, where everyone can thrive and belong. We will work towards a discrimination-free Darebin and aim to reduce the impacts of poverty and disadvantage

In partnership with local agencies and organisations, Council will continue to work with and for the Darebin community in a way that recognises and acts to change the multiple and complex ways in which discrimination and poverty create barriers that limit people’s rights and abilities to achieve their full potential and a life of dignity and wellbeing.

This Framework is Council’s commitment to undertake this work and advocate for other levels of government to do the same. The Framework can and should be used to hold us to account. It is also our call to action to the community and partner organisations, recognising that we cannot realise this aspiration and do this work without them. The change we seek can only happen through sustained and dynamic collaboration and partnerships with community groups and organisations.

⁹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Climate Change and Human Rights*, 2015

5.2 Goals and outcomes

To achieve our vision, Council will continue to focus on three mutually reinforcing goals, leading to three interconnected outcomes.

Goal	Outcome
<p>Goal 1: We will build an organisation that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin’s diverse communities where social justice, accountability, participation and community engagement, human rights, diversity and wellbeing are core principles that inform all of our policies, practices and business.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: A diverse and inclusive Council (as an organisation) that reflects our community.</p>
<p>Goal 2: We will build Council services, programs, places and spaces that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable and respond to the diversity of needs, rights and priorities in our communities.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Accessible, equitable, inclusive and responsive Council services, programs, places and spaces</p>
<p>Goal 3: Working in collaboration with partner agencies, organisations and residents, we will contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities by facilitating and advocating for equitable opportunities for all people to be heard, connected, respected and supported to participate in community life and in decisions important to their lives.</p>	<p>Outcome 3: An inclusive and empowered community where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered.</p>

These mutually reinforcing goals are interconnected and underpinned by the principles set out in Section four and informed by relevant legislation and policy. This model supports a more integrated and responsive approach.

6. Implementation

A whole-of-Council approach is essential to the implementation of the Towards Equality Framework. The Framework will seek to influence the organisational culture, practice and process and ultimately inform Council decision-making to address inequality and achieve better outcomes for the Darebin community.

To support the implementation of the Framework, Council will:

- Ensure that decision-making about services, programs, infrastructure and advocacy is informed by an Equity Impact Assessment, weaving equity, inclusion and human rights into both the process we follow and the resulting content.
- Meaningfully engage with the community, particularly people most directly affected by poverty, inequalities and discrimination, and build their capacity to participate in the engagement process.
- Contribute to building the community's capacity, and that of partner agencies and organisations, to develop an effective voice advocating for social justice and human rights.
- Adopt people-centred and place-based approaches.
- Build organisational capacity around equity, inclusion, human rights and community engagement and create an organisational culture where equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing considerations are front of mind from the earliest stages of planning.

Implementation of the Framework is multi-fold and will be enacted directly through a range of Council strategies and plans addressing and redressing disadvantage and discrimination experienced by some people and groups, through the Equity Impact Assessment planning process, through continuous improvement of services and programs and through advocacy and engagement.

6.1 Implementation through Council strategies and plans

The following strategies and plans all contribute to the implementation of the Framework:

- Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015-2019 (new plan in development)
- Gender Equity and Preventing Violence against Women Action Plan 2019-2023
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2017-2021
- Food Security and Nutrition Action Plan 2016-2020
- Welcoming Cities Standard Action Plan (in development)
- Youth Services Strategy 2019-2021
- Early Years Strategy 2011-2021
- Active and Healthy Ageing Strategy 2011-2021
- Leisure Strategy 2010-2020
- Breathing Space: Open Space Strategy 2019
- Libraries Strategy 2014-2019 (new plan in development)
- Darebin Housing Strategy 2013-2023
- Affordable Housing Action plan (in development)
- Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2017-2027
- Community Grants Program

Implementation is also through the following policies and frameworks that guide decision-making, support staff and outline how we will engage with the community:

- Community Engagement Framework, including the Inclusive Communications Charter and Community First initiatives
- Family Violence Policy
- Social and Sustainable Procurement Policy (in development)
- Workforce diversity planning policy (in development)

Completing this is a suite of policies and frameworks that build organisational capacity in the areas of equity, inclusion and human rights:

- Diversity Capabilities Framework 2014-2020
- Aboriginal Cultural Protocols (in development)
- Responding to Homelessness Protocols (in development)

6.2 Implementation through the Equity Impact Assessment

The goals of the Towards Equality Framework 2019-2029 will be operationalised and applied throughout the organisation through the Equity Impact Assessment.

This assessment process includes consideration of the three overlapping lenses of people, places and experiences at the early stages of planning and project design to identify the potential wellbeing, human rights and equity and inclusion impacts, as well as opportunities to address inequality and make sure we plan inclusively from the outset.

To ensure Council considers equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing in everyday practice, the following expectations will be applied:

- The Equity Impact Assessment will be applied to **all** projects, policies, strategies and services, including service planning and business planning processes, unless a reasonable justification can be provided as to why it does not need to be applied.
- All Executive and Council briefing papers and reports will include a mandatory section that asks the author for evidence that the Equity Impact Assessment has been applied and for details of the outcome.
- Equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing reporting requirements will be included in Council's performance management system for senior staff.
- Equity Impact Assessment referrals will be integrated in project management systems and processes, communications and engagement plans and all budget submissions will complete an initial Equity Impact Assessment checklist at the project initiation stage before progressing.

The implementation techniques will be monitored, reviewed and adjusted as the organisation further develops and refines the integration of the Framework across all of Council's business.

6.3 Implementation through Council services and programs

Council provides a range of services and programs, informed by Council's strategies and frameworks, that address inequality and promote inclusion, social justice and human rights. Some examples are:

Increased recognition and visibility of Aboriginal culture and history: Council is working with the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation and the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee to develop cultural protocols for the organisation and rename Council meeting rooms in Woi Wurrung language.

Library Services provide a welcoming, inclusive and safe place where anyone can read, study, work, relax and share. The Library supports the lifelong learning aspirations of our diverse community and supports our residents to learn and grow.

Youth Services: Council's Youth Strategy includes a commitment to proactively work to reduce discrimination, disadvantage and the unequal distribution of resources. Council's youth services focus on prevention and early intervention with young people with increased vulnerability. A range of activities, programs and services are run across the municipality including programs and services at The Hub and Decibels Youth Music Centre.

Neighbourhood houses and community centres: Council funds seven neighbourhood houses and the Darebin Information Volunteer Resource Service. They work to strengthen and empower communities and promote inclusion. Council manages the East Preston Community Centre which provides services to groups most at risk of exclusion and disadvantage.

Homelessness assertive outreach service: In 2019/20 Council will start a two-year trial to fund an assertive outreach service in Darebin to reach out to people experiencing homelessness and connect them with critical services and support.

Intercultural Centre: The centre aims to create an arena for intercultural dialogue and interaction, exploring the synergies of intersecting cultures and faiths and challenging racism and discrimination.

Trans and Gender Diverse Swim Nights: Council introduced trans and gender diverse swim nights in 2018 to provide a safe and inclusive space for members of the transgender and gender-diverse community and support and promote their health and wellbeing.

Community Development programs: Council undertakes place-based community development activities in areas which experience socioeconomic disadvantage and supports resident action groups to inform and design locally anchored and driven programs and projects.

Education and learning: Council works with Darebin schools to support the wellbeing and learning needs of students who experience disadvantage. This includes supporting schools to undertake training and implement education practices that support students experiencing trauma and complex disadvantage.

Family and Children’s Programs: Council delivers a range of initiatives that support the wellbeing of vulnerable families and children. They include supported playgroups, employment of an Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health Nurse and partnerships with organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA).

Fostering and enabling community programs and services: Council supports a wide range of community organisations through community grants and provision of venue hire.

Aged Care Services: Some of the most vulnerable people in the Darebin community are older people who rely on home support services and/or Council’s social support programs to continue to live in their community. Council has adopted the Age-Friendly Darebin review, including a range of new services and service improvements to create a community that supports and empowers older people to live well.

Gender equity and preventing violence against women: Council is delivering the Creating Gender Equity in the Early Years: A Resource for Local Government project to support educators at early years’ services in Darebin to create foundations for learning that are respectful and promote positive gender norms and respectful relationships.

6.4 Advocacy and engagement

Council advocates to other levels of government in order to promote social justice and human rights, address disadvantage and discrimination and foster social wellbeing and inclusion. On many issues, Council has limited ability and capacity to control outcomes, therefore advocacy is the key strategy to influence and progress. Council also engages with the Darebin community to raise awareness.

Key areas of advocacy include but are not limited to:

- Supporting the rights and recognition of First Nations people
- Advocating for the humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers
- Promoting affordable and social housing
- Improving federally funded services for older people
- Advocating for policies and programs that promote gender equity and reduce violence against women and children
- Supporting the rights and wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ communities
- Promoting the wellbeing of children and young people especially those who experience disadvantage, and
- Advocating to reduce the harm associated with electronic gaming machines (EGMs).

Part of this work is also about Council’s support to, and amplification of, community voices and advocacy. In this respect, we invite the Darebin community to use this Framework as a tool for self-advocacy, including in their interactions with Council and as a way to hold us to account.

7. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring the implementation of the Towards Equality Framework across Council will include:

- Measures against each of the three goals and outcomes of the Framework:

Goal	Outcome	Measure
<p>Goal 1: We will build an organisation that is inclusive and reflective of Darebin’s diverse communities where social justice, accountability, participation and community engagement, human rights, diversity and wellbeing are core principles that inform all of our policies, practices and business.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: A diverse and inclusive Council (as an organisation) that reflects our community.</p>	<p>Staff census and surveys, notably as compared to ABS census and other national surveys)</p>
<p>Goal 2: We will build Council services, programs, places and spaces that are inclusive, responsive, accessible and equitable and respond to the diversity of needs, rights and priorities in our communities.</p>	<p>Outcome 2: Accessible, equitable, inclusive and responsive Council services, programs, places and spaces</p>	<p>Indicators and data collection at service and program levels.</p> <p>Impact and outcomes of Equity Impact Assessments undertaken per year</p>
<p>Goal 3: Working in collaboration with partner agencies, organisations and residents, we will contribute to building inclusive and empowered Darebin communities by facilitating and advocating for equitable opportunities for all people to be heard, connected, respected and supported to participate in community life and in decisions important to their lives.</p>	<p>Outcome 3: An inclusive and empowered community where social cohesion and community harmony are fostered.</p>	<p>Health and wellbeing indicators at Darebin and neighbourhood levels that consider community connection and engagement, feeling valued by society.</p>

Monitoring at the output level will also include:

- Tracking Council's progress in creating a stronger organisational culture around equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing.
- Learning from the processes and seeking continuous improvement.
- Expansion and evolution of the Diversity report in Council's Annual Report to an Equity, Inclusion and Wellbeing report that outlines key achievements and changes as a result of the Equity Impact Assessment and consideration of the development of a Towards Equality Scorecard.
- Council's bi-annual reporting to the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission about the application of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities*.
- Impacts and learnings from the equity, inclusion, human rights and wellbeing reporting requirements included in Council's performance management system for senior staff.

Monitoring and review will reflect the key principles of rights-based equity and inclusion, in particular accountability, participation and empowerment.

A review of the ten-year Framework will be undertaken mid-implementation to ensure currency with any changes and relevant developments at a local, State, Federal or global level.

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