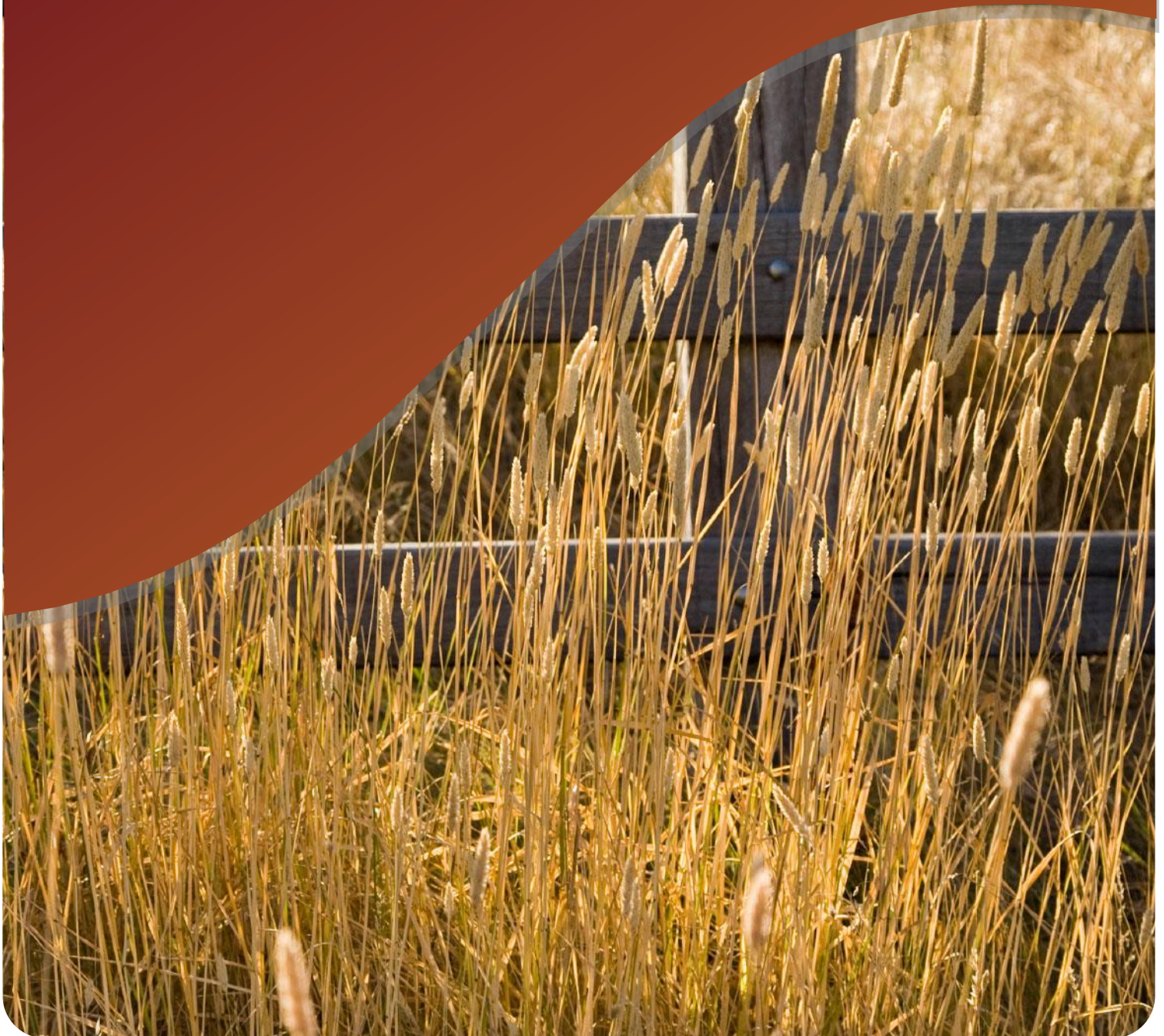




**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

Disability Action Plan 2019 – 2027

Report on community consultation
Dec 2018 to Jan 2019



Report on community consultation Disability Action Plan 2019-2027

The Victorian Disability Act 2006 requires all public bodies to have a Disability Action Plan as prescribed in the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council's (MRSC) Disability Action Plan 2019-2027 (DAP) will be part of the Council Plan from 1 July 2019. An Inclusive Consultation Plan for the development of the DAP was approved on 27 November 2018. The purpose of consultation was to allow stakeholders to contribute to DAP development and comment on proposed values and principles.

Timing

Consultations were held from the beginning of December 2018 to 20 January 2019.

People consulted

People with disabilities; carers and families; disability, health and community service providers; NDIS Local Area Coordination; and the community in general were consulted.

Promotion and information

The consultation was promoted through:

- Media release to local newspapers and on Council's website
- notices in local media
- Social media posts
- Posters and postcards at targeted locations in the community
- Direct invitations to disability service providers and NDIS Local Area Coordination
- eNewsletters to targeted networks
- Direct contact to advocacy and support groups, and other clubs and community organisations
- Service-provider and volunteer network meetings.

Ways to participate

Options for contributing views and ideas were:

- Have Your Say webpage on Council's website
- Attending one of the focus groups held in venues across the Macedon Ranges Shire
- Face-to-face interview with Council's Youth Consultant or Council officer
- Sending comments by email
- Telephone discussion with Council officer

Phone numbers and email addresses were advertised for people wanting further information.

Council also offered adaptive technology and support to enable people to participate in the consultation.

What people said

None of the people who participated in the consultation expressed concerns about incorporation of the DAP into Macedon Ranges Shire Council Plan from July 2019. The potential benefit of disability inclusion being a focus across Council business was acknowledged as a positive.

Key messages were:

- Council should clearly state and demonstrate its commitment to an inclusive community.
- In general, a good place to live for people with disabilities will be a good place to live for everyone.
- Commitment is demonstrated by working to ensure that Council services, venues, facilities and council-sponsored activities are accessible and welcoming to people with all types of disabilities. Specific mention was made of:
 - Pavements
 - Sport and recreation facilities, including walking and cycling tracks and public parks and gardens
 - Community social and cultural events
 - Web-based information
 - Customer service at Council service centres, accessible information, trained staff and appropriate signage
 - Public venues, including the Town Hall and heritage buildings
 - Accessible toilets at public locations and events
 - Local public transport, including taxi services
 - Libraries – need for more adaptive technology and disability-friendly practices
- It is important to recognise the diversity of people with disabilities in our community and to acknowledge what they have to offer to the community. Not everyone who might benefit from disability inclusion would see themselves as a person with a disability.
- When people with disabilities are included in the community their gifts and assets become more apparent to others.
- People see Council as a central point for community information, especially for residents who are new to the area or whose circumstances have changed.

People also suggested that Council has a role in:

- facilitating networks and initiatives relating to disability
- offering and enabling employment, work experience and voluntary work for people with disabilities to be fully participating members of the community
- sponsoring events that are specifically targeted to people with disabilities, for example the Kyneton Dinner Dance or other events to recognise International Day of People with Disability
- sharing Council resources, such as information, training and expertise, with the broader community. (An example was the newsletters that Council distributed to keep people informed of the transition to NDIS)
- advocating for people with a disability to other levels of government, employers, local businesses, social and sporting clubs and facilities, transport providers
- promoting visibility of people with disabilities in the community
- taking account of the needs of carers and the isolation and difficulties that they may encounter

- recognising businesses and services that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

Other comments:

- More respite is needed.
- Local bus timetables don't fit with work hours for people with disabilities.
- Since NDIS some people with disabilities face greater difficulties in accessing transport.

Suggestions for Council to involve people with disabilities in future planning and other initiatives:

- Make the generic consultation mechanisms accessible for people with disabilities.
- Involve people with disabilities in Council decision-making.
- Encourage diversity in Council.
- Listen to parents of children with disabilities and others with expertise such as therapists.
- Listen to ideas and give feedback when people offer ideas and suggestions.
- Have forums plus online surveys to meet different peoples' needs in participation process.
- Come to people with disabilities at the groups and events that they attend, and have a conversation as a group.
- Advertise opportunities to be involved in a way that encourages people with disabilities to participate.
- Disability reference groups can help get the conversation going to inform policy and strategies.
- Provide opportunities for self-help groups to form and to contribute input.
- Some people who might have views and needs do not see themselves as 'people with disabilities' so it is important to find ways to incorporate their input and interests.

Other things learned in the consultation

- The consultation process confirmed that the introduction of the NDIS has led to various changes for people with disabilities, their families and carers and service providers. One of these changes is the reduced capacity of organisations to support clients in an ad hoc capacity, such as in participation in consultations.
- Another impact of NDIS is the limited availability of resources to enable funded organisations to nominate staff to be involved in consultation processes.
- The initial targeted phase of consultation in December/January meant that schools and some other organisations were not in session, however, these organisations will have opportunity to comment when the Council Plan is available for public comment.
- Responses confirmed that it is important to offer a range of alternatives for people to provide input, to advertise the consultation effectively and to give a good length of notice.

Using findings from the consultation

Information from the consultation will be considered in development of the DAP and in other Council planning. Some suggestions may be carried forward for future years.

Where suggestions are not related to Council's current role, they will be referred to relevant agencies where possible.