

DRAFT Thriving Communities: Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2026-30

September 2026

Acknowledgement

Cardinia Shire acknowledge the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which Cardinia Shire is located, we pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge their ongoing connection to Country, culture, waters, and wildlife.

“Cardinia Shire Council is deeply committed to fostering a community where every individual, regardless of their background, identity, ability or circumstances, feels truly valued, fully included, and genuinely empowered to thrive and reach their full potential.

Through our ‘Thriving Communities’ Inclusion and Equity Strategy for 2026-2030, we are working to remove barriers that affect access to inclusion and participation, while actively celebrating the rich tapestry of diversity that enriches our Shire.

By promoting fairness, equity, and inclusion, Council is paving the way for a more vibrant, resilient, and equitable future where health, connection, and prosperity are shared.”

— Cr. Brett Owen, Mayor. Cardinia Shire Council

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DRAFT

1 Introduction

The Thriving Communities Strategy sets out Cardinia Shire Council's commitment to building an inclusive, supportive, and resilient community supporting all life stages and by prioritising the needs of our diverse population.

The strategy recognises that everyone's life is shaped by many things—like age, culture, gender, sexuality, religion, disability and more. These parts of life can overlap in ways that affect people differently. This is known as intersectionality. Or put simply how different parts of a person's life meet.

These characteristics can lead to experiences of discrimination, disadvantage or exclusion, which in turn affect overall health, wellbeing, community participation, and quality of life.

The Thriving Communities Strategy replaces the previous strategies and policies including:

- Access and Inclusion Disability Strategy and Action Plan 2021–2026
- Ageing Well Strategy 2019–2025
- Child, Youth & Family Strategy 2017–2021
- Cultural Diversity Action Plan 2024–2025
- Social Justice & Equity Policy 2019

Consolidating these into a single strategy, enables Council to align service delivery, work collaboratively and share resources to achieve improved outcomes for our community.

This Strategy is one of the many ways Council works towards creating a fairer and more inclusive Cardinia for everyone. It aligns with the Council Plan, Liveability Plan, Reconciliation Action Plan and Gender Equity Action Plan,

Together, these plans help Council make decisions, design services to create places that better meet the needs of all residents, especially those who may face additional barriers to inclusion and equity.

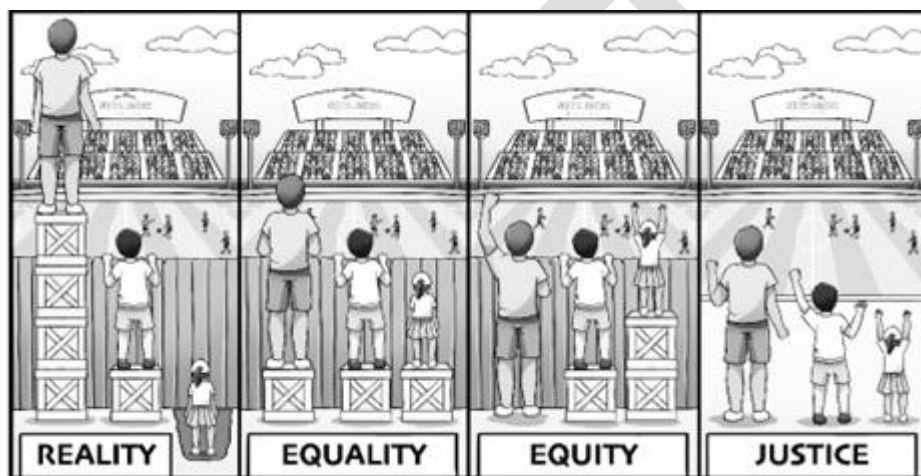
Related Council plan	Connection to Thriving Communities Strategy
Council Plan 2025–29	The Strategy directly supports the Thriving Communities objective and related initiatives in the Council Plan.
Liveability Plan 2017–29	The Strategy helps deliver the equity, inclusion and social determinants components of the Liveability Plan.
Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2026–28	Sits alongside this Strategy. Specific First Nations actions and cultural safety commitments are detailed in the RAP.
Gender Equity Action Plan 2026–30	Specific gender equality actions (including workplace gender equality) are detailed in the GEAP. Supports the intention of GIAs in everyday business.

1.1 What is inclusion and equity?

Inequities experienced by groups of people based upon their circumstances and characteristics can result in significant health, wellbeing, economic and social consequences.

Resources, opportunities, and living conditions are not shared equally among people and groups. And even when they are, people's different characteristics mean they may still not have the same experience, as shown in the example below.

- **Equity** refers to providing the resources required, based upon the circumstances and characteristics of the people involved to provide the same experience and opportunities to all.
- **Inclusion** is the removal of barriers so that people can enjoy the same experience and opportunities without reliance on external support.



1.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a way of understanding how different aspects of a person's identity, such as First Nations heritage, disability, age, gender, sexuality, cultural background, or family circumstances can overlap and interact to create unique experiences of advantage and/or disadvantage.

As the Diversity Council Australia explains, intersectionality refers to how these overlapping identities can expose people to layered forms of discrimination that greatly increase their impacts. It is not just about having multiple identities it is about how those identities interact with systems of inequity such as racism, ableism, ageism, or sexism to shape people's everyday lives in Cardinia Shire.

In practice, this means:

- People do not experience barriers or discrimination in a single, isolated way.
- Inequities happen simultaneously and interact. They are not simply added together.
- Some people face unique and layered disadvantage that is not visible if we were to only look at each part of their identity separately.

Some people face unique and layered disadvantage that is not visible if we only look at each part of their identity separately.

Example 1: Norma <i>Older First Nations woman with disability.</i>  May experience barriers to accessing Council services that are more complex than those faced by an older person, a First Nations person, or a person with disability on their own.	Example 2: Oliver <i>Young person who lives in a rural area and identifies as LGBTIQ+.</i>  May face overlapping challenges when trying to participate in community events, access support, or feel safe in public spaces. Challenges that are unique to the combination of being young, living rurally, and identifying as LGBTIQ+.
How Council can support Norma • Refer to disability services that offer specific First Nations support and culturally safe practice. • Ensure seniors events and programs are welcoming to First Nations people and fully accessible. • Apply trauma-informed approaches when engaging and delivering services. • Offer flexible ways to access information and support (e.g., face-to-face, phone, with Aboriginal support workers if preferred).	How Council can support Oliver • Design youth and community events that are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ young people and consider the challenges of travel and distance from major centres. • Use visible inclusive messaging and safe-space indicators at events and in facilities across the shire. • Build employee capability in LGBTIQ+ inclusive practice and understanding the barriers created by distance and limited transport options. • Create opportunities for young people with intersecting identities to shape the programs/events.

Intersectionality recognises these overlapping experiences so we can design fairer, accessible and more effective services, programs, places for everyone, especially those who are most marginalised.

By applying an intersectional lens, Council can remove barriers, celebrate diversity, and create a Thriving Cardinia where every resident, regardless of how their identities overlap can fully participate and feel they belong.

Intersectionality is internationally recognised best practice for equity and inclusion. As the Diversity Council of Australia and the Victorian Gender Equality Commission note, addressing single identities in isolation can miss or worsen overlapping disadvantages. Research and policy frameworks (including Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) emphasise that intersectional approaches lead to more effective, sustainable outcomes by:

- Reducing compounded barriers and leaving no one behind.
- Promoting innovation through collaboration and lived experience input.
- Delivering better value by addressing multiple inequities simultaneously.

Cardinia Shire adopts this approach to create fairer services, spaces, and decisions that genuinely enable everyone to thrive.

See Endnotes 3, 7, 11, 15, 25-29

2 Council's role in inclusion and equity

The Thriving Communities Strategy promotes consistency in Council's approach to inclusion and equity. It recognises the complexity of addressing discrimination and exclusion for those experiencing disadvantage, encouraging collaboration and partnership while supporting Council to meet its legislative and human rights obligations.

Local Government plays a vital role in creating thriving communities and while financial sustainability and responsible budgeting are essential, building a truly thriving Cardinia Shire requires looking beyond what can be easily measured. Council is committed to prioritising connection, belonging, culture and social capital which are the foundations that enable all residents to feel valued, supported and able to fully participate in their community.

Local Government is legally and ethically bound by a framework of international, national, and state legislation. These require Council to uphold human rights, prevent discrimination, and embed inclusive practices. These obligations cover all areas of Council operations as an employer, a service provider, a facility operator, and community leader.

The Thriving Communities Strategy 2026-2030 will work to ensure Council-delivered and managed workplaces, public spaces, infrastructure, facilities, services, programs, community engagement, communications, and policies are accessible, inclusive, and equitable for the entire community.

Population groups more likely to experience barriers to inclusion and equity include:

1. Children
2. Families
3. First Nations
4. LGBTIQ+ community members
5. Older people
6. People from culturally diverse communities
7. People with disability
8. Young people

This strategy has a substantial focus on these groups within Cardinia to support their inclusion and connection to the community. Council recognises that people outside of these groups may experience inequities and barriers and that the experience of individuals within community varies from person to person.

2.1 Gender Impact Assessments

Under the Gender Equality Act 2020 Councils are required to conduct Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) on policies, programs, services, and decisions with direct and significant community impact.

These assessments evaluate how initiatives affect people across different genders while applying an intersectional lens, recognising that gender inequality interacts with and is shaped by other aspects of identity and social factors (such as age, disability, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and more). This helps identify unique experiences of advantage or disadvantage, and informs actions to advance gender equality, prevent or eliminate disparities, and promote equitable outcomes for all diverse groups of people.

The process involves applying the GIA framework during planning and review stages, collecting relevant data, consulting affected communities, and utilising findings to ensure inclusive and fair results across all Council operations.

Through this process Council works to create a fair, healthy, liveable, and resilient Cardinia Shire where everyone regardless of identity can participate fully and experience equal opportunities.

This strategy compliments the intention of this legislation.

2.2 Strategic context

Local government is accountable to a range of legislative and international declarations that describe its responsibilities and guide its approach to human rights, social justice, and governance. Table 1 outlines a range of laws and policies in which Councils should have regard to in delivering for their community.

Many international agreements are enacted through legislation that prohibits discrimination based on characteristics such as age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

The legislative and policy requirements mean that Councils are required to ensure that their workplaces, public spaces, facilities, services, programs, community engagement, communication and policies are accessible, inclusive, and equitable.

Table 1. International, Federal, State and Local Policy alignment

International	Federal
• United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) • Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) • Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) • Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) • Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) • International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) • Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	• Age Discrimination Act (2004) • Disability Discrimination Act (1992) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act (1986) • Sex Discrimination Act (1984) • Racial Discrimination Act (1975)
Cardinia Shire Council plans and policies	State
• Council Plan 2025-2029 • Liveability Plan 2017 –29 • Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-28 • Fair Access Policy and Action Plan (2024) • Neighbourhood House Policy 2022 –25 • Gambling Harm Prevention and Minimisation Policy (2024) • Social and Affordable Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2025	• Local Government Act (2020) • Gender Equality Act (2020) • Multicultural Victoria Act (2011) • Equal Opportunity Act (2010) • Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008) • Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) • Disability Act (2006) • Child Wellbeing and Safety Act (2005) • Children, Youth and Families Act (2005) • Racial and Religious Tolerance Act (2001)

3 Thriving communities framework

The Thriving Communities Framework sets out the goal, objectives and action areas that will guide Council's work over the life of the Strategy. The objectives focus on areas where Council can influence more inclusive, equitable and accessible outcomes for the community.

3.1 Goal

Cardinia Shire strives to be a welcoming place where everyone regardless of life stage or experience, has the opportunity to thrive.

3.2 Objectives

The objectives define the key areas of focus needed to achieve the strategy's goal.

- **Equitable services, programs and activities:** Provide equitable Council services, programs, information, events and facilities that consider and meet the needs of our diverse community
- **A well-planned, accessible and liveable community:** Lead, plan and partner to create current and future development of accessible, connected, safe and sustainable places where people can live, learn, work and play easily.
- **A safe and equitable workplace:** Create an equitable, welcoming and safe workplace for a diverse team of employees and volunteers.
- **An inclusive and empowered community:** Support a just and equitable community by celebrating diversity, promoting community involvement, encouraging participation in decision-making, and encouraging communities to act on their own initiative.
- **Leadership, collaboration and advocacy:** Promote an equitable and just community through leadership, strategic partnerships and advocacy on behalf of, and with, the Cardinia community.

An action plan with specific actions under each objective forms part of this strategy.

4 About our community

Cardinia Shire is one of Victoria's fastest-growing municipalities and is located 55 kilometres south-east of Melbourne's central business district. Spanning an area of 1,280km², Cardinia Shire covers a range of geographic areas including growing urban areas, northern hills regions and southern rural areas. This diversity of landscape reflects our diverse population and lifestyles across the region.

Estimated population of 137,278 in 2026	18% of residents spoke languages other than English at home (previously 11% in 2016)	1% (1,145) of the population are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
23% of Cardinia Shire residents are Children aged under 14	The top 4 religions within Cardinia Shire are; Christianity (38.4%), Hinduism (2.7%), Islam (2.6%) Buddhism (2.3%)	85.4% of Cardinia Shire's population are Australian Citizens
The top 3 languages spoken at home are; English (77.1%), Punjabi (2.9%), Sinhalese (1.8%)	9.8% of Cardinia Shire's residents identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community	Residents aged 55 and over account for 22% of the population
5,724 (4.8%) of Cardinia residents need assistance with daily activities	Rural residents make up over 20% of Cardinia's population across the Shire's vast 1,280 square kilometres	Cardinia's population is expected to grow by over 48% by 2051 to 203,880

Over 20% of the population have some level of activity restrictions due to chronic illness or disability	1 in 6 people have a disability	44% do not identify with a faith or religion
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4.1 Cardinia Shire at a glance

4.1.1 Education and learning

- 96% of 4-year-olds in Cardinia Shire participated in kindergarten (2022).
- 22% of 4-year-old kindergarten enrolments in 2025 were from a culturally diverse background.
- 25.7% of all school students in 2024 received an educational adjustment due to disability.
- 66% of people with disability aged 20-24 completed Year 12 or equivalent (compared with 85% of people without disability).
- 19.7% of people with disability hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (compared with 35% of people without disability).
- 61% of First Nations residents aged 20-24 in Cardinia had attained Year 12 or equivalent.
- 52.4% of Cardinia Shire residents aged over 15 have completed Year 12 or equivalent (compared with the Victorian average of 60%).
- 20.6% of adults in Cardinia hold a Bachelor's degree or higher (compared with 29% across Victoria).
- 24.2% of overseas-born residents in Cardinia hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.
- 8% of Cardinia residents aged 15-24 are disengaged from education, training or employment.
- 2.1% of residents have poor English proficiency.
- First Nations students in Cardinia Shire are more likely to complete schooling at Year 10 level or below.

Sources: See *Endnotes 1, 3, 4, 10, 11*

4.1.2 Employment and economic wellbeing

- A greater proportion of First Nations residents (38%), and residents who speak a language other than English (34%) are on low incomes compared with residents who speak English (31%).
- 56.1% employment rate for people with disability (compared with 82.3% for people without disability).
- 7.5% unemployment rate for people with disability (compared with 3.1% for people without disability).
- In 2025, Cardinia Shire's overall unemployment rate was 4.4%, compared with 4.6% statewide.
- 9% of children under 16 in Cardinia belong to welfare-dependent families.
- Over 60% of people aged over 65 in Cardinia are on a low income (less than \$650 per week).
- 5.1% unemployment rate among overseas-born residents in Cardinia (compared with 4.4% across Cardinia overall).

- 33% of LGBTQIA+ workers in Victoria experienced workplace harassment in the past year.

Sources: See Endnotes 1, 3, 9, 10

4.1.3 Housing

- 17% of households in Cardinia are experiencing mortgage stress (compared with 14% statewide).
- 42% of households in Cardinia are experiencing rental stress (compared with 35% statewide).
- 73.5% home ownership rate in Cardinia.
- 2,072 females aged over 65 lived alone in Cardinia (2021 Census).
- 1,022 males aged over 65 lived alone in Cardinia (2021 Census).
- 83% of seniors in Cardinia own their home outright or with a mortgage.
- 1% of households in Cardinia identify as LGBTQIA+.

Sources: See Endnotes 1, 3, 6

4.1.4 Justice and safety

- Cardinia's multicultural community is much less prepared for extreme weather events.
- 43% of family violence incidents occurred while a child was present (compared with 36% across Victoria).
- 18% of Cardinia residents reported that crime or safety issues had a negative effect on themselves or their family.
- 15% of Cardinia residents aged 60-69 experienced discrimination due to age.
- 11% of Cardinia residents aged 70+ experienced discrimination due to age.
- 31% of Cardinia residents who speak a language other than English at home experienced discrimination due to cultural background.
- 9% of family violence incidents in Cardinia involve overseas-born victims.
- 6.2% of LGBTQIA+ residents in Cardinia experienced discrimination due to gender/sexuality.

Sources: See Endnotes 3, 5, 11, 16

4.1.5 Health and wellbeing

- 9% of Cardinia residents reported a long-term mental health condition (2021).
- 18-20% of adults in Cardinia report consuming alcohol at risky levels.
- 19% of Cardinia residents had difficulty finding affordable services, including healthcare, in 2023.
- Young people aged 18-24 reported the highest rates of loneliness in Cardinia.
- Mental health pressures are among the top five concerns raised in youth consultations.
- Heart disease is the most prevalent health condition among seniors in Cardinia (16.5%), followed by:

- Mental health conditions (8.8%)
- Lung conditions (7.2%)
- 9% of Cardinia LGBTQIA+ residents reported a long-term mental health condition.

Sources: See Endnotes 3, 4, 8, 11

5 First Nations peoples in Cardinia Shire

Australia's First Nations peoples are the Indigenous peoples of this land and sustain the world's oldest continuous living culture. They have a deep and enduring connection to land, waterways, seas and skies, known as Country.

"Country is the term often used by Aboriginal peoples to describe the lands, waterways and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity".

First Nations peoples are descendants of two distinct cultural groups, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or both. Within those cultural groups there is great diversity with more than 250 different language groups, knowledge systems and beliefs.

Through Australia's history of colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have suffered displacement, systemic racism, intergenerational trauma, economic loss, loss of culture, lore and Country.

Cardina Shire encompasses the traditional lands of the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. Our Traditional Owners have deep connection and knowledge of cultural heritage, including traditional practices, language, stories, cultural sites and natural landscapes.

In 2021, 1,152 Cardinia Shire residents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, which reflects a 47% growth from the 2016 census data. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People make up 1% of the population in Cardinia Shire compared to an average of 0.7% in Greater Melbourne.

There are a high proportion of First Nations residents in Cardinia Shire are under the age of 24 (57.6%) compared with the general population in Cardinia Shire (34.8%). In line with this there is a high proportion of the First Nations community in kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. 1% of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islanders in Cardinia Shire speak Indigenous languages at home.

In Cardinia Shire, First Nations students are more likely to complete schooling at Year 10 level or below compared to the broader population. They have a higher proportion of Certificate III qualifications than the broader population, but are less likely to complete higher education, such as diplomas or bachelor's degrees. Employment is most commonly in technician and trade roles, as well as community and personal services.

5.1 What First Nations People in Cardinia Shire have told us

We engaged with First Nations residents and Traditional Owners during the development of our Innovate Reconciliation Plan 2026–28. Through this engagement, community members highlighted the importance of regular and meaningful engagement, stronger participation in decision-making, and more opportunities to experience, share and celebrate culture.

They also identified the need for greater use of traditional language, improved support services and employment opportunities for First Nations peoples, and further education across Council and the broader community to strengthen understanding, respect and cultural safety.

5.2 How we support First Nations peoples in Cardinia

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026-28 outlines a range of actions and deliverables to support greater inclusion, equity and improve outcomes for First Nations peoples in Cardinia Shire.

As part of this Council renewed the Vision and Statement of Reconciliation.

5.3 Intersectionality

- There are a high proportion of First Nations residents in Cardinia Shire are under the age of 24 (57.6%) compared with the broader population in Cardinia Shire (34.8%).
- First Nations people in Victoria recorded the highest disability rate in Australia at 44%
- Young First Nations LGBTQIA+ people experience multiple intersecting identities, resulting in significantly elevated risk of mental ill-health and disability.
- Nationally, disability prevalence in First Nations people over 65 rises to 64% compared to 52.3% for the broader population.

Sources: See Endnotes 1, 2, 12, 15, 21–23

6 People with Disability in Cardinia Shire

People with disability are part of every segment of our community: women, men, and children, employers and employees, students and teachers, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, customers, refugees and citizens. No two people with the same disability experience their disability in the same way. The only thing that distinguishes a person with disability is they may require some form of adaptation/adjustment to enable them to do certain things in a comparable way as people without a disability to achieve equity.

People with disability have a wide range of conditions and impairments. What they have in common is a shared experience of encountering negative attitudes and barriers to full participation in everyday life. The 'social model of disability' is based on the understanding that disability is caused by the barriers to participation in community life or that disability is socially constructed, rather than by a person's own impairment. The social model places the person at the forefront and highlights that it is the environment and/or negative attitudes that are most 'disabling' to individuals living with an impairment. It emphasises dignity, independence, choice, and privacy. When the environment and opportunities are presented in a more accessible and inclusive way, people can be enabled to achieve their best. The social model does not deny the experience or impact of disability. It challenges the physical, and social environments, our attitudes, the way we communicate and socialise to accommodate disability.

The needs of people with disability must be considered in their own right because they relate to specific physical, communication, sensory, cognitive, and systemic barriers. These barriers require dedicated actions and cannot be fully addressed through broader intersectional approaches alone.

Intersectional factors such as age, cultural background, gender, or economic status shape a person's experience of disability, but they do not remove the need for targeted disability access and inclusion measures. Instead, intersectionality helps us recognise that some people with disability may face compounded barriers.

6.1 What People with Disability in Cardinia Shire have told us

- Ensure buildings, facilities, parks, playgrounds, and public spaces usable by everyone from the start reducing or removing the need for later upgrades.

- Advocate for more accessible public transport options within the Shire.
- Creation of accessible footpaths, parking, and linkages, especially in rural areas where access to areas can be more challenging.
- Provide more opportunities for people with disability to give input to Council decisions and provide ongoing advice on issues affecting them. Ensuring the 'Nothing about us, without us' approach is demonstrated.
- Support initiatives that remove barriers to employment through promoting flexible work and building awareness/training for staff.
- Addressing social isolation, mental health support needs, and emotional wellbeing, often linked to exclusion, stigma, and lack of accessible community activities.

6.2 How we support people with disability in Cardinia

Council collaborates with local organisations to build community capacity, support programs and events whilst actively removing barriers to employment at council and community participation.

Council also strives to implement universal design principles to infrastructure and services, ensures communications are accessible, and provides information and referrals to support carers within the Shire.

The Cardinia Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee (CAIAC) is convened by Council and provides a forum for Cardinia Shire residents, businesses, and community groups, and councillors to represent the interests of people with disability.

The Cardinia Shire Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee role is to:

- Monitor, review, and support Council's disability policies, strategies and associated implementation plans.
- Provide information and timely advice to council on issues impacting upon people with a disability which prevent their full inclusion in community life.
- Participate in strategic planning issues affecting people with disability in the Shire.
- Act as ambassadors for the disability community through advocacy, promoting information, training, activities, and issues relating to disability in Cardinia Shire.

6.3 Alignment with legislative and national frameworks

Cardinia Shire's Thriving Communities Inclusion and Equity Strategy 2026–2030 has been developed to meet Council's obligations under the Victorian Disability Act 2006 and has considered recommendations of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 and the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) Disability Inclusion Guide for Local Government (2026).

Under Section 38 of the Victorian Disability Act 2006, Council is required to prepare a Disability Action Plan that addresses four key outcome areas. Rather than maintaining a standalone Disability Action Plan or embedding it in the Council plan, Council has integrated these outcome areas into an intersectional Action Plan.

Table 2 shows how the Strategy's five pillars align with the legislated Disability Act outcome areas.

Table 2. Strategy Alignment

Victorian Disability Act 2006 Outcome Areas	Thriving Communities Strategy Pillars	Thriving Communities Strategy Action Areas
Promoting the inclusion and participation of people with disability in community life, decision-	• Equitable and accessible services, programs and activities	• Support diversity and inclusion advisory groups • Actively involve the broader community in shaping strategies

making, recreation, culture, volunteering and civic activities.		• Deliver events and programs that celebrate diversity and inclusion
Reducing barriers for people with disability when accessing council buildings, programs, information, services, events and infrastructure.	• A well planned, accessible and liveable community • Equitable and accessible services, programs and activities	• Embed access, safety, equity and inclusion into infrastructure planning • Improve sense of safety and emergency • Embed accessible information practices • Build staff capability to apply trauma-informed approaches in service planning and delivery • Develop workplace capability to understand intersectionality
Reducing barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment for people with disability, including recruitment, workplace accessibility, career development and retention.	• A safe and equitable workplace	• Strengthen employment outcomes for priority cohorts within Council
Achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with disability	• An inclusive and empowered community	• Champion visibility and representation of diversity in Council media • Ensure priority cohorts are appropriately represented within Council's partnerships, networks and advisory groups • Utilise tools such as the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) template and Diversity in decision making tools to ensure decisions are inclusive and equitable.

By embedding disability inclusion across a broader equity and intersectional framework, Council can address the overlapping experiences of people with disability more effectively, while still meeting its specific legislative obligations under the Disability Act.

Council's approach is further supported by the *Universal Design: Built Environment and Service Delivery Guidelines* (2024), the Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–2028, and Cardinia Shire's Liveability Plan 2017–29 (Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan), which addresses broader health and wellbeing outcomes for the community.

6.4 Intersectionality

People with Disability in Cardinia Shire Census, 2021

- 95 residents or 8.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have a disability.
- Around 9.1% of people with disability primarily speak a language other than English at home.
- 38.1% of LGBTIQ+ people report having a disability or long-term health condition compared to 17.7% of the general Australian population.
- In 2021, 52.3% of Australians over 65 had a disability, up from 49.6% in 2018.
- In 2022 among Australians with disability, 4.9% identified as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

- 11.0% of Australian children aged 0–14 had disability in 2022 This is a notable increase from 7.7% in 2018

Sources: See Endnotes 3, 11, 17, 21-24

7 Families in Cardinia Shire

Families are central to Cardinia Shire's growing, family-oriented community. On average, three families relocate to the Shire each week, and around 35 babies are born to residents.

Families include parents, carers and kinship networks who actively contribute to community life. They are diverse in structure and experience, and may be biological, non-biological or legally recognised. What unites families is connection, care, commitment and responsibility.

Diversity and changing needs

Family experiences are shaped by household size, cultural background, socioeconomic circumstances, location, disability, migration history and access to services. In Cardinia, around 38% of households are couples with children and 15.6% are single-parent families.

In 2025–26, Council supported more than 2,000 children to be placed in kindergarten programs, helping ensure access to early learning and the best start in life. This was complemented by more than 14,000 Maternal and Child Health consultations with families. More than 760 first-time parents were also supported through groups and programs.

Family complexity is increasing, and access to local supports remains a challenge. Growing numbers of families are relocating to Cardinia's rural communities which can compound barriers to accessing public transport and local service infrastructure. This is increasingly common for our culturally diverse and newly arrived migrant families.

7.1 What families have told us are important to them

- Better infrastructure and services, including affordable access to GPs (especially after-hours).
- Mental health support, work-life balance, and rural transport.
- Culturally appropriate programs.
- Family violence prevention.
- Action on climate change and its impacts on family health and wellbeing.
- Enhanced wellbeing and access to healthcare.

7.2 How we support families

Council's services continue to evolve to meet the needs of the growing population. In addition to the Maternal and Child Health Service, Council supports inclusive practice for fathers and LGBTIQ+ parents and responds to growing challenges such as family violence and mental health complexities that require specialist supports.

The Liveability and Community infrastructure plans integrates family needs into planning for infrastructure, accessible playgrounds, and community facilities.

7.3 Intersectionality

- Approximately 1.6% of families (695 households) in Cardinia include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander members
- Within Cardinia 19% of residents speak languages other than English at home, common in families with children, leading to potential barriers in service access.
- 81% of single parent families in Cardinia Shire has the mother as the primary carer.
- 17.3% of same sex couples in Australia had children as of the 2021 census.

Sources: See Endnotes 1, 10, 11

8 Children in Cardinia Shire

Children form a vital part of Cardinia Shire's youthful and family-oriented community. They are newborns, growing children, and active contributors to community life. The first 5 years of life are foundational for brain development, with evidence that this development continues until 25. Development across social and educational domains are interlinked, and impact and are impacted by, physical and mental wellbeing.

Key demographics (2021 Census and recent Council insights):

- 22.6% of the population are children aged 0–14 years.
- Children aged 0–4 make up 7.7% of the population.
- The shire welcomes approximately 34 births per week to residents.

Projections show continued growth in the number of children in Cardinia Shire. Between 2024 and 2034, the number of children aged 0–4 is expected to increase by around 17%, primary school-aged children by 13%, and secondary school-aged young people by more than 25%. This ongoing growth highlights the need for inclusive, child-friendly approaches so every child can access safe environments, quality services, meaningful connections, and equal opportunities.

8.1 What children have told us

Through the 2025 Postcards from Cardinia project, nearly 500 students at John Henry Primary School shared what they love about where they live, what frustrates them, and what they would change if they were Mayor.

Key messages from children included:

- Pride in local parks, sports grounds, basketball facilities, schools and places to hang out.
- Strong desire for cleaner public spaces, especially public toilets, less litter and cleaner waterways.
- Frustration with potholes, overcrowded roads, and places that feel run-down or unsafe.
- Concern about the cost of living and how expensive everyday things are for families.
- Care for other people in the community, particularly people experiencing homelessness.
- Ideas for better places to play and gather (water parks/swimming facilities, parks and sports).

Children also demonstrated that they want to be part of the solution by organising a school clean-up day and raising funds for a local homelessness service supporting women and children.

8.2 How we support children

Cardinia Shire Council delivers the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service in partnership with the Department of Health. This is a free, universal, community-based primary health service for

families with children from birth to school age. It focuses on healthy child development, early identification of health or social concerns, and family safety.

Council is a key partner in the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms. While Council does not operate kindergarten services, it plays an important role in early years planning, governance, infrastructure, and coordinates the Kindergarten Central Registration Scheme (CRES) on behalf of community kindergartens. This ensures fair, equitable, and transparent access to kindergarten places.

Council also supports community events, playgroups, accessible playgrounds, and early intervention services to promote social connection and wellbeing.

8.3 Intersectionality

- Data from 2022 shows that 11% of Australian children (0-14) have a disability.
- 37.5% of children aged 0-14 years with disability had a parent with disability.
- In Cardinia, 25.7% of school students received an educational adjustment due to disability in 202.
- Nationally, First Nations children experience higher rates of disability and greater barriers to support than non-Indigenous children.
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can face additional barriers related to language, cultural safety and access to services, particularly when disability or developmental needs are also present.

Sources: See *Endnotes 1, 9, 11, 30, 31,32*

9 Young people in Cardinia Shire

Young people aged 12-25 play a vital role in shaping Cardinia Shire, bringing innovation, creativity, and fresh perspectives to the community. Their participation in local events, programs and services as well as volunteering initiatives strengthens social connection and contributes to a vibrant and inclusive civic life. Young people also enrich the shire through cultural diversity and emerging leadership offering new ideas and energy that support the Shires long term growth and resilience.

Despite these strengths, young people in Cardinia Shire may face a range of challenges. Many experience mental health pressures and have limited access to affordable and accessible activities, particularly in rural areas where transport options are restricted. Barriers to education and employment can also impact young people, including those arising from limited experience, discrimination or the additional challenges faced by young people living with disability or from multicultural backgrounds.

Approximately 18% (21,000) of Cardinia's population are young people aged 12-25.

With the shire's projected population growth to by 2026, this group is projected to increasing to 26,250 by 2031.

9.1 What young people have told us

Feedback from the 2025 Cardinia Youth Survey highlights several key issues affecting young people across the Shire. Young people reported that stress (55%), anxiety (47%), and mental health challenges (46%) were the most common issues indicating that wellbeing pressures remain a significant concern. Friendship problems, unhappiness, negative body image and school related challenges were also frequently reported.

Young people also identified financial and money pressures as an increasing issue with financial stress rising compared with previous survey years likely influenced by current cost of living pressures. This was the only issue to increase compared with both 2018 and 2021. In contrast, concerns relating to social isolation have decreased significantly since 2021 reflecting a return to normal social routines following the pandemic.

Barriers to accessing services were also highlighted, with young people reporting that transport and distance are increasingly preventing them from engaging with support and programs. These barriers appear to have grown alongside population increases in outer areas.

Broader community engagement through the Council Plan 2025–29 also reflects priorities that directly affect young people, including the need to improve wellbeing, safety, inclusion, and access to infrastructure that supports participation and connectedness. The Liveability Plan further identifies mental health, social cohesion, safety, healthy living, financial stress, and harm from alcohol and other drugs as key public health issues many of which young people experience acutely in their daily lives.

9.2 How we support young people

Local government youth services play a critical role in advancing social justice and equity by providing accessible, inclusive and youth friendly spaces and programs. Through youth centres, programs, initiatives, events and targeted support a generalist youth service reduces barriers that may limit young people's participation, wellbeing or sense of belonging. The service offers early intervention, opportunities for connection, and safe environments where young people from diverse backgrounds can build confidence, develop life skills, and access support. By prioritising universal access alongside targeted supports for those experiencing disadvantage, youth services help ensure that every young person can have the opportunity to thrive.

Youth services further contribute to equity by promoting youth voice, participation, and leadership. Mechanisms such as youth committees, youth led events, and collaborative program design empower young people to influence decisions that impact their lives and their community.

Partnership work with schools, community organisations, and specialist services strengthens referral pathways and ensures that young people receive holistic and coordinated support. Together, these approaches uphold the principles of fairness, inclusion, and empowerment and help create a community where all young people are valued, heard, and supported to reach their full potential.

Council is committed to developing and supporting infrastructure that encourages participation by young people including sports clubs and facilities, skate parks, BMX facilities and multipurpose courts.

9.3 Intersectionality

- Young people (12-25) overlap with diverse identities: in Cardinia almost 10% identify as LGBTIQ+
- 9.8% of family violence incidents involve a child victim.
- 21% In Cardinia report activity restrictions due to disability
- Young people from non-English speaking backgrounds make up 18% of the youth population in Cardinia Shire.
- Young people in outer rural locations are disadvantaged by poor public transport connections.

- Young people in Cardinia have a higher school leavers rate than the Greater Melbourne average.

Sources: See Endnotes 4, 11, 15, 18, 19.

10 Older people in Cardinia Shire

People in Cardinia Shire aged 55 and over contribute wisdom, historical knowledge, and community stability, enriching intergenerational connections through volunteering, storytelling, and participation in events. They support community connection activities and contribute to the Shire's economy and businesses.

Chronological age alone is not an indicator of patterns of living, and it is important not to generalise about older people. People have different skills, experiences, expectations, and aspirations as they age. An intersectional approach recognises that ageing is shaped by many interconnected factors including gender, health, disability, education, work history, culture, income, housing and geographic location. Overlapping factors can create forms of advantage or disadvantage, meaning that older people experience ageing in diverse and unequal ways.

Ageism remains a significant issue for older Australians, reducing social inclusion and wellbeing. It also increases the risk of social isolation, particularly in rural areas, and create barriers to accessing healthcare and aged care services

Residents aged 55 years and over make up 22% of the population with projections showing an increase from 26,264 in 2021 to 43,698 in 2036, this is an increase of 17,434 residents or 66%.

10.1 What older people have told us

Consultations have highlighted the need for intergenerational activities, affordable healthcare, increased social opportunities, transport, and actions to address ageism.

Better access to healthcare across the Shire and support for ageing in place.

The Liveability Plan review highlighted climate change impacts on older residents' health, with calls for better recovery support after natural disasters.

Seniors in the 2025 Community Panel called for improvements in overall wellbeing supports, increases in community connection activities and events and higher levels of advocacy for better transport routes to connect the Shire.

Access to information in different formats, including printed, online and face to face.

10.2 How council support Ageing Well

Growth is possible at any age; Ageing Well at Council supports residents to grow through two key stages of later life, pre-retirement (55+) and older age (65+).

Council works to create supportive, inclusive environments that enable people to age well, stay connected, and participate in community life. This includes improving access to information, services, outdoor spaces and community infrastructure. This is achieved by:

The Ageing Well newsletter, produced three times a year and provides key information on matters impacting older residents about health, wellbeing, and opportunities to access services and events.

Working in partnership with service providers, community organisations and older residents themselves, supporting older people across the shire through direct engagement, group support and key community events including:

- Cardinia Seniors Network
- Senior Citizens groups

- Hosting annual events such as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and the Victorian Seniors Festival, and,
- Delivering Ageing Well pop ups throughout the year to provide accessible, face to face engagement opportunities.

10.3 Intersectionality

- 18% need assistance with core activities, and 14% provide are carers providing unpaid care or assistance.
- 0.4% or 61 Cardinia Shire residents over the age of 65 years identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
- 40% were born overseas. The top overseas birth places are England (1,625), Netherlands (444), Scotland (283), Germany (242), Italy (238) and India (220).
- 3.4% do not speak English well or not at all. The top non-English Languages are: Italian (205), Spanish (97), Singhalese (96), and German (95).

Sources: See Endnotes 1, 3, 4, 11, 13, 24.

11 Multicultural Communities in Cardinia Shire

Cardinia Shire's rapid multicultural growth presents both opportunities and challenges. Census data from 2026 and 2021 shows that the number of residents who speak a language other than English doubled from 2016 to 2021 and one in five members of our community now speak a language other than English.

Multicultural communities enrich the Shire through culture, faith, business, food, festivals and strong community connections. However, language barriers, racism, limited culturally appropriate services and challenges for newly arrived residents can affect participation and access. Council supports multicultural communities through advisory groups, partnerships, grants, inclusive events, culturally safe spaces and improved representation and communication.

28.5% of residents in Cardinia are born overseas and 18% speak languages other than English at home.

11.1 What multicultural communities have told us

A 2024 survey undertaken by Cardinia Shire's Multicultural Advisory Groups (MAG) showed that 14% of multicultural residents wanted more culturally appropriate and accessible spaces and a further 31% wanted to see more Intercultural connection activities, events and celebrations.

They also wanted to ensure that activities have been co-designed with community and cultural groups to meet local needs.

17% of respondents also wanted to see better representation of their community and culture in council publications and 14% would like to see more information provided to them in their first language.

11.2 How we support multicultural communities

Cardinia Shire Council is committed to building strong, ongoing relationships and partnerships with multicultural communities, settlement services, and specialist organisations to support greater integration of services and ensure equitable access across the Shire.

Council convenes the Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG), which brings together diverse community representatives to provide advice on Council priorities, identify emerging needs, and strengthen two-way communication. This is supported by CWICS (Cardinia Workers for Inclusion and Community Support), which facilitates information sharing, resource exchange, and collaboration among workers supporting diverse communities.

We actively guide and support culturally diverse community groups to access Council's grant program to deliver culturally appropriate programs and events for the community.

Through ongoing work to create culturally safe and inclusive spaces, Council continues to reduce barriers and ensure all residents regardless of cultural background, language, or faith feel welcomed, supported, and able to fully participate in community life.

11.3 Intersectionality

- People from multicultural backgrounds in Victoria have similar rates of disability to the wider community, with approximately 20% living with activity restrictions.
- Multicultural seniors have higher rates of chronic diseases (35% vs state average 25%) including diabetes, heart disease.
- 13.6% of multicultural people who identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community experience report experiencing unfair treatment based on ethnicity.

See *Endnotes 1, 2, 4, 16, 17, 20*.

12 LGBTIQ+ residents in Cardinia Shire

LGBTIQ+ residents in Cardinia LGBTIQ+ residents bring diversity, creativity, and advocacy to Cardinia Shire, fostering inclusive events and community pride. They contribute to social progress and cultural richness. The LGBTIQ+ community face discrimination which can lead to mental health impacts, loneliness (especially in rural or older groups), and barriers for those with intersecting disabilities or multicultural identities. 9.8% of Cardinia's adult population identify as being a part of the LGBTIQ+ community with 1% of couple families identifying as same-sex households.

12.1 What LGBTIQ+ residents have told us

Older LGBTIQ+ individuals have shared experiences of historical stigma leading to reluctance to engage in mainstream aged care or social programs. Calls for dedicated, inclusive venues or events where people can connect without judgment, including social groups and community gatherings.

Young LGBTIQ+ people emphasize the importance of school-based resources, peer support, and education to address bullying and "coming out" challenges in a supportive environment.

12.2 How we support LGBTIQ+ residents

Council convenes an internal LGBTIQ+ working group that provides resources, events and training to Council staff to foster an inclusive and welcoming workplace. Youth Services supports LGBTIQ residents to access targeted and universally available social groups and events. To assist the Shire's sporting clubs to build an inclusive environment the Sport and Recreation team delivers Inclusive training to sporting clubs.

12.3 Intersectionality

- In Australia, 38.1% of LGBTIQ+ people report disability/long-term conditions, higher than the broader community at 17.7%.
- Multicultural LGBTIQ+ people face elevated ethnic discrimination, with 33% reporting unfair treatment.
- More than 73% of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ Australians reported discrimination including being ignored, teased, outed, or being victims of violence.

- Rural LGBTIQ+ community members report higher isolation/loneliness.
- 7.8% of people over 65 identify as LGBTIQ+, lower than the broader community.

See *Endnotes 3, 7, 11, 15*.

13 Implementation

The Thriving Communities Strategy and Action Plan sets out the practical actions Council will take.

A cross-departmental Working Group will oversee delivery of the Strategy. The Working Group will review progress, consider emerging community needs, and help decide which actions are prioritised each year based on available resources, organisational priorities, and opportunities to make the biggest difference.

Actions will be delivered by Council, often in partnership with community organisations and other agencies. Some actions will focus on particular groups or life stages, while others will take an intersectional approach that benefits several groups at once.

Most actions will be delivered using existing Council resources. Where extra funding is needed, Council will look at external grants or consider opportunities through the annual budget process.

Progress will be reported publicly each year through Council's annual reporting processes and made available on the Council website.

14 Monitoring and evaluation

Council will use a range of methods to measure the effectiveness of the Social Justice and Equity Strategy 2026–2029 in meeting the needs of priority populations. Evaluation will be outcomes-focused, participatory, and designed to understand the positive impacts the strategy is creating for priority cohorts. This approach aligns with legislative requirements including the Local Government Act 2020, Gender Equality Act 2020, Disability Act 2006, and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

Key Evaluation Principles

- **Intersectionality:** Assess combined impacts across multiple groups (e.g., older First Nations women, young people with disability from multicultural backgrounds).
- **Participatory:** Priority populations are consulted with methods developed to be accessible and encourage engagement.
- **Mixed data:** Evaluation will include a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, including case studies to display the positive impact actions delivered as part of the Thriving Communities Strategy is creating.

15 Glossary of terms

Accessibility	Within this context, accessibility refers to council services, programs, information and facilities being available and easily understood by all our residents regardless of things like gender, ability, language or socioeconomic status.
Discrimination	The unfair treatment of people on the grounds of their characteristics or circumstances (or assumed characteristics or circumstances) including their ethnicity, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, faith or socioeconomic circumstances. Common forms of discrimination include: Racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, religious discrimination and xenophobia
Diversity	Refers to the variety of differences between people. It means understanding that each individual is unique. Differences between people can include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, physical ability, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. Making the most of our diversity as a community requires acceptance and respect.
Equality	Within this strategy context, equality is the recognition that all human beings are born free and equal, having the same rights and are entitled to the same level of health, economic and social benefits of life. Equality refers to treating people the same way, regardless of any barriers that some people face that may result in unequal outcomes between people.
Equity	Is a concept that recognises that not everyone starts at the same place. Some individuals and groups face barriers or have poorer outcomes due to their characteristics or circumstances. In these situations, the removal of barriers is required to achieve equal outcomes. This can mean additional or different resources or opportunities for different people based upon their needs.
Exclusion	In the context of this strategy refers to a person or group of people being left out or left behind in terms of access to resources, opportunities and capabilities to learn, work, participate in community life and have a voice in decisions that affect them.
Human rights	Are universal and affirm the inherent right of all people to be treated with respect, equality, and dignity. Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that people are entitled to simply because they are human beings. All people are entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. Human rights are universal – to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live. Human rights include civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights (including religion), like the right to social security, health and education.

Inclusion	An inclusive society is based on the values of equity, equality, social justice, human rights and freedom, as well as on the principles of respect and acceptance of difference. An individual who experiences inclusion has access to resources, opportunities and capabilities to learn, work, participate in community life and have a voice in decisions that affect them.
Participation	Is about people being able to participate in community life and decision making processes that affect them.
Social justice	Is the deliberate effort to ensure that everyone can experience the same economic, political and social rights, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender or other characteristics or circumstances. It is based around the key principles of access, equity, participation and human rights.
Infrastructure	Physical and digital properties and services including buildings, facilities, roads, footpaths, parks, information technology, public safety, arts and recreations and communication services.

16 Endnotes

- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census QuickStats – Cardinia LGA (and updated council / REMPLAN / .id population forecasts for 2025–2026).
- ² Cardinia Shire Health and Wellbeing Data Profile 2025.
- ³ ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) 2022 and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) *People with disability in Australia* reports.
- ⁴ Victorian Population Health Survey (VPHS) 2023 and Cardinia Annual Community Satisfaction / Liveability Surveys.
- ⁵ ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) and AIHW / Royal Commission reports on violence, abuse and neglect.
- ⁶ REMPLAN Community Profile and housing stress modelling (2025).
- ⁷ Private Lives 3 (La Trobe University ARCSHS, 2020).
- ⁸ ABS National Health Survey 2022 (nutrition, physical activity, overweight/obesity).
- ⁹ Cardinia Kindergarten Infrastructure and Services Plan / Central Registration Scheme (CRES) data.
- ¹⁰ ABS Labour Force Status of Families and Education and Work reports.
- ¹¹ Cardinia Youth Survey 2025 (internal/preliminary findings or council analysis), Annual Community Satisfaction Survey 2025, and Community Panel / Liveability Plan consultation reports.
- ¹² Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–28 engagement findings and related First Nations data.
- ¹³ Australian Human Rights Commission reports (including *What's Age Got To Do With It?* 2021).
- ¹⁴ Victorian Disability Act 2006 and related council obligations.
- ¹⁵ La Trobe University ARCSHS (2025) *LGBTQA+ Mental Health and Suicidality* briefing papers (State/Territory series including Victoria; Intersectional series on ethnicity and residential location), drawing on Private Lives 3, Writing Themselves In 4, and Pride and Pandemic.
- ¹⁶ Victoria University (2024) *Understanding reporting barriers and support needs for those experiencing racism in Victoria* (with ECCV and ICV).
- ¹⁷ Disability Gateway / Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (2025) *Disability and People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (MULTICULTURAL) Backgrounds* qualitative study.
- ¹⁸ Monash University *Australian Youth Barometer 2025*.
- ¹⁹ Office for Youth (2026) *2025 National Youth Survey Summary Report*.
- ²⁰ Cardinia Multicultural Advisory Group (MAG) surveys and related multicultural community consultations.
- ²¹ Standard definition of Country used in Reconciliation Action Plans and government resources.
- ²² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census QuickStats – Cardinia LGA and Cardinia Shire Health and Wellbeing Data Profile 2025 (population, age distribution, language, education and employment data).
- ²³ Engagement findings from development of Cardinia Shire Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2026–28 (including input from Traditional Owners and First Nations residents).
- ²⁴ Cardinia Seniors Network 2025, Ageing Well Expo survey 2024, and Ageing Well newsletter survey 2024.
- ²⁵ Diversity Council of Australia, *Intersectionality at Work: A Guide* and related resources on overlapping identities and inclusive practice (dca.org.au).
- ²⁶ Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, *Applying Intersectionality* guidance (genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au).

²⁷ Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework (Australian Government, Department of Social Services, updated 2024).

²⁸ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly Articles 6 (Women with disabilities) and 7 (Children with disabilities), which recognise intersectional discrimination.

²⁹ Diversity Council of Australia, Intersectionality at Work: A Guide.

³⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and ABS data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and disability.

³¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and related research on culturally and linguistically diverse children and disability.

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Priority groups are identified by the following key references in the action plan

- Children (C)
- Families (F)
- First Nations (FN)
- LGBTQIA+
- Older People (OP)
- People from culturally diverse communities (CDC)
- People with Disability (PWD)
- Young People (YP)

1. Equitable services, programs and activities:

Ensure Council services, programs, events, and information are inclusive, accessible and responsive to community needs.

Actions	Outcomes	Priority groups
1.1 Deliver and support a range of events and programs that celebrate diversity, equality and inclusion and build capacity of priority population cohorts.	• Range of community events and programs delivered to engage priority community groups • Increased satisfaction with community & cultural activities	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
1.2 Continue to respond to community insights and aspirations to strengthen participation, engagement and use of local places and spaces through co-designed solutions.	• Increase in overall activation and usage of Council's community spaces.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
1.3 Embed accessible information practices across Council's communication and engagement strategies, and strengthen pathways that support community access to clear, inclusive and timely information.	• Increased satisfaction with Council communication activities. • Increase in usage rates of interpreter and translation services on our online platforms. • Percentage of materials meeting accessibility standards	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
1.4 Provide community with access to up-to-date information on available services and support, while actively referring individuals to appropriate external providers.	• Number of referrals made to external services • Increased satisfaction with relevant Council support services • Percentage of local services listed on Community Support Webpage. • Increase in residents accessing the Cardinia Support website information.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP

1.5 Build staff capability to apply trauma-informed approaches in service planning and delivery to support safer, inclusive and appropriate interactions.	- Number of relevant staff trained in trauma-informed approaches. - Number of customers referred to additional support.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
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2. A well planned, accessible and liveable community:

To facilitate the growth and continued development of accessible, connected and safe neighbourhoods where people can live, work and play easily and sustainably.

Actions	Outcomes	Priority groups
2.1 Work with priority community cohorts to improve their sense of safety and emergency preparedness.	- Increase in number of priority cohort community members participating in emergency preparedness sessions. - Increased satisfaction with Council's emergency management and response. - Increased positive perceptions of overall safety within Cardinia Shire	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
2.2 Embed access, safety, equity and inclusion elements into Council infrastructure planning.	- Increased satisfaction with Council's design and delivery of public spaces. - Increased satisfaction with local area planning and infrastructure to meet the needs of my community	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
2.3 Develop and share resources and advice to support community places and spaces within Cardinia Shire to be safe, inclusive and welcoming.	Increase in residents reporting a strong sense of connection to their local community	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP

3. An inclusive and empowered community:

To facilitate a just and equitable community by celebrating diversity, promoting community involvement, facilitating participation in decision making, and encouraging communities to act on their own initiative.

Actions	Outcomes	Priority Groups
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DRAFT Thriving Communities Inclusion and Equity Action Plan 2026-2030

3.1 Build capacity across business, sporting and community organisations to support diversity, equality and inclusion.	Number of organisations supported by council via diversity, access and inclusion training, grants and partnerships.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
3.2 Support diversity and inclusion advisory groups to provide input into Council's Strategy and decision-making processes.	- Increase in use of online engagement website Creating Cardinia by priority population groups. - Increase in number of initiatives presented to Advisory Groups for feedback.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
3.4 Actively involve the broader community, through diverse engagement methods, in shaping strategies and responding to matters that impact them.	- Percentage of strategies and decisions with documented diverse community input. - Increased satisfaction with community consultation and engagement activities. - Increased perceptions of responsiveness of Council to local community needs.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
3.5 Champion visibility and representation of diversity, equity and inclusion throughout all of Council's media channels and other promotional activities.	Increase in representation of Cardinia's diverse community via Council's media and other promotional content.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP

4. A safe and equitable workplace: To create an equitable, welcoming and safe workplace for a diverse team of employees and volunteers.		
Actions	Outcomes	Priority groups
4.1 Develop workplace and volunteer capability and confidence to understand intersectionality and engage with priority cohort communities.	- Percentage of staff and volunteers completing relevant training - Increased confidence in engaging and working with priority communities.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
4.2 Promote and plan for the sustainability of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs and training within Council	Percentage of staff completing DEI training packages	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP

4.3 Implement strategies to strengthen employment outcomes within Council for priority cohorts throughout the employee lifecycle.	- Retention rates of workforce and volunteers - Increase in staff satisfaction scores relating to diversity and inclusion within Council	FN, PWD, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
4.4 Celebrate diversity, equality and inclusion within Council as a workplace.	- Number of internal celebrations and events delivered across Council. - Attendance rates cross Council departments at celebration events.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
4.5 Embed positive duty of care for inclusion and equality in internal workplace Policies, Strategies and workplans.	- Percentage of Council policies with embedded inclusion statements. - Reduction in workplace discrimination complaints within Council.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP

5. Leadership, collaboration and advocacy: To take a collaborative approach to promote an equitable and just community through leadership, strategic partnerships and advocacy on behalf of, and with, the Cardinia community.		
Actions	Outcomes	Priority groups
5.2. Utilise tools such as the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) template and Diversity in decision making tools to ensure decisions are inclusive and equitable.	Increase in GIA and diversity tools being utilised to consider intersectionality in the development and delivery of initiatives.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP
5.3. Ensure priority cohorts are appropriately represented within Council's partnerships, networks and advisory groups.	- Increase in diversity of community representation within key partnerships, networks, and advisory groups - Increased satisfaction with representation, lobbying and advocacy by Council.	FN, PWD, C, F, YP, CDC, LGBTQIA+, OP