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# **Access & Equity Policy**



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1	1 April 2003	Community & Culture	Initial Creation of Document
2	9 March 2009	Community & Culture	Review and update to content
3	11 April 2021	Community & Ranger Services	Document reviewed with legislative and terminology changes made only. Document updated into new formatting

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## 1.Scope:

The City of Ryde is committed to the provision of services and facilities in a fair and equitable manner. This policy has been developed to ensure that access and equity strategies are put in place, which produces positive outcomes for our diverse and multicultural community.

It replaces and supersedes the original Local Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement adopted by Council in 1994. It outlines the aim of Council in relation to its commitment to Access and Equity, its guiding principles; it underscores our values and details a range of actions to be implemented throughout the organisation.

In the course of developing the Access and Equity Policy a 'whole -of -Council' approach has been adopted which required inter-departmental co-operation and commitment; this has been achieved through the establishment of the Access & Equity Strategy Steering Group in November 2001.

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## 2.Purpose:

The aim of the Access and Equity Policy is to ensure the City of Ryde complies with current legislation and seeks to strengthen community wellbeing through activities that prevent discrimination. Compliance with the legislation and the adoption of 'best practice' methods will ensure the provision of equitable and accessible services that are inclusive and encourage the participation of residents and visitors regardless of their race, culture, disability, religion, language, age, gender, geographic barriers, social or economic disadvantage.

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### 3.Guiding Principles:

- The City of Ryde will act, as a representative advocating on behalf of its citizens
- The City of Ryde will adopt a proactive role in coordinating community initiatives
- The City of Ryde will create incentives that promote social and economic growth, encourage and support initiatives that are both socially responsive and environmentally sustainable
- The City of Ryde affirms its commitment to engendering community pride, building citizen commitment to their neighbourhoods and strengthening the connection between the citizens and their community
- The City of Ryde will foster development at individual, community and Organisational levels leading to a sustainable, safe and healthy future for citizens, their families and their workplaces within the City.
- The City of Ryde will recognise, welcome, and build upon the social and cultural diversity within the community embracing and celebrating the different talents that residents bring to their communities and the City.

### 4.Definitions:

#### Characteristics of community wellbeing

- A strong sense of belonging and connection to the community in which one lives
- A welcoming and celebration of people from diverse backgrounds
- A responsiveness to disadvantage and difficulties that arise
- A network of support systems
- The active practice of neighbourliness
- A belief by the community in their capacity to influence decision-makers.

#### Factors of Disadvantage

- Inability to communicate in English
- A sustained disability; physical, intellectual, sensory or psychiatric
- An addictive disorder; drug related, alcohol, gambling, etc.
- Loneliness
- Unemployment
- Lack of access to affordable housing
- Lack of access to transport

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## Access

Means Council will aim to create the necessary conditions so that individuals or groups desiring to use its services, facilities, works or programs have equal access to them - regardless of their race, culture, disability, religion, language, age, gender, geographic barriers, social or economic disadvantage.

## Equity

Means that those individuals and groups who are entitled to use and receive Council services are treated fairly in relation to others and have an equitable share of the resources that the Council manages on behalf of the community.

## Multiculturalism

The NSW government policy on multiculturalism is set out in the NSW Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000. The Principles of Multiculturalism are:

- a) All individuals in New South Wales, irrespective of their linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds, should demonstrate a unified commitment to Australia, its interests and future.
- b) All individuals in New South Wales should recognise the importance of shared values governed by the rule of law within a democratic framework.
- c) The people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious and ancestral backgrounds who, either individually or in community with other members of their respective groups, are free to profess, practise and maintain their own linguistic, religious and ancestral heritage.
- d) All individuals and institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.
- e) All individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life in which they may legally participate, and make use of, and participate in, relevant activities and programs provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales.
- f) All institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.

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Consequently, the City of Ryde Access and Equity Policy is based on:

- Civic Duty, which obliges all citizens to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish.
- Cultural Respect which, subject to the law, gives all Australians the right to express their own culture and beliefs and obliges them to accept the right of others to do the same.
- Social Equity which entitles all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity so that they are able to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and,
- Productive Diversity which maximizes for all Australians the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population.

The steering group will monitor the Access & Equity initiatives in the Management Plan and ensure specific timeframes are met. Representatives on the steering group will also be required to assist and monitor the implementation of the policy within their own department or section and will assist in the overall evaluation of the process and recommend improvements. This group will report back to Council annually and as the need may arise.

To date the steering group has been involved in the development of this Access and Equity Policy, the Language Aide Policy and the Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan. Coupled with the EEO policy these form the Access and Equity Strategy.

## 5. References and Legislation:

There are separate legislative requirements that govern Council in providing services in an accessible and equitable manner, particularly in reference to residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to people with a disability:

### New South Wales

- The Local Government Act 1993 requires Council to (directly or on behalf of other levels of government) exercise all its functions with due regard to the cultural diversity of the community. ***The Local Government Amendment***

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- (*Community and Social Plans*) Regulation 1998 requires Council to develop a community and social plan in accordance with Department of Local Government Guidelines and include strategies and achievements taking into account Access and Equity initiatives.
- Disability Services Act 1993 (now Disability Inclusion Act (2014) requires public authorities to prepare and implement disability action plans for the provision of services for people with disabilities.
- Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 (now Multiculturalism NSW Act (2000) outlines principles of Multiculturalism and responsibilities of all public authorities in their implementation in NSW.
- Anti Discrimination Act 1977 and Amendments set out specific grounds for unlawful discrimination based on race, sex, marital status, physical or intellectual disability, pregnancy, homosexuality, compulsory retirement and age.
- Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998

## Disability Inclusion Act 2014

The Disability Inclusion Act (2014) which replaces the Disability Services Act (1993) has two main roles:

1. Committing the NSW Government to making communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability now and into the future. These commitments will continue even when the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is operating across NSW.
2. Regulating specialist disability supports and services to people with disability in NSW and introducing better safeguards for these services until the change over to the NDIS.

The Act requires that each public authority have a Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which sets out the measures it intends to put in place so that people with disability can access general supports and services available to the community and can participate fully in the community.

Once adopted by City of Ryde, this document will be lodged with the Disability Council NSW, Local Government NSW and the Minister for Disability Services. The main objectives of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan are for the City of Ryde to maintain and continuously improve its practices in 4 key areas:

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1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to services through better systems and processes.

## Commonwealth of Australia

- Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act 1986
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Human Rights (Sexual Conduct) Act 1994
- Privacy Act 1988
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984

## Disability Discrimination Act 1992

In 1992, the Commonwealth Government passed the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which makes it unlawful to treat people with a disability, less favourably than people without a disability.

The City of Ryde will promote and facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community by:

- Raising awareness and understanding of the DDA through promotion, information dissemination and programs involving the community.
- Ensuring access to services and facilities for people with disabilities within the City of Ryde.
- Actively consulting and communicating with the local community.

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- Identifying the needs of people with disabilities and their carers and responding to those needs.
- Promoting an informed, equitable and responsible culture in regard to disability issues
- taking a leadership role in promoting community inclusion values and providing solutions in the community and local government.
- Providing opportunities for people with disabilities to actively participate in the local democratic process.

## 6. City of Ryde Advisory Committees:

### City of Ryde Social Inclusion Advisory Committee

The City of Ryde Access Committee (now known as the Social Inclusion Advisory Committee) was established and operates under the procedures of Councils Section 377 of the Local Government Act (1993). The committee is chaired by a nominated Councillor and has members from a broad spectrum of the community. It is elected annually and is assisted by Council officers, as determined by the Terms of Reference.

The aim of the City of Ryde Social Inclusion Advisory Committee is to provide advice to Council to ensure that all residents and visitors to the City of Ryde are able to participate actively in all aspects of community and civic life, and ensure that Council recognises and values the diversity of its community.

The City of Ryde Social Inclusion Advisory Committee encourages a broad representation of the community and council officers to be involved in the committee and uses the following criteria for the nomination process of its community members:

- The Chairperson (a Councillor to be appointed annually by Council).
- Persons with specialist skills relevant to People with Disabilities e.g. Engineers, Architects and Occupational Therapists.
- People who reside, work or visit the Ryde Local Government area with a demonstrated commitment to access issues.
- Community Groups/organisations representing people with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act.

### The Multicultural Advisory Committee

The City of Ryde Multicultural Advisory Committee was established as a formal advisory committee of Council. The committee is chaired by a nominated Councillor and has community

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representation from persons who are representative of the cultural, ethnic, faith and linguistic diversity of the City of Ryde.

And People who reside, work or visit the Ryde Local Government Area who have a demonstrated commitment to community harmony.

The Multicultural Advisory Committee is responsible for providing advice and recommendations to Council and Council officers regarding:

- Effectiveness/improving Council engagement activities for CALD communities.
- Implementation and review of the Community Strategic Plan. Delivery Plan and major projects.
- Council’s policies and procedures regarding their relevance for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities in Ryde.
- Council’s advice to state and commonwealth governments on policy areas and issues that impact on CALD communities and community harmony.

## 7.Target Priorities & Strategies:

The City of Ryde will develop a range of action plans that aim to achieve specific outcomes. The action plans will focus upon the following key target areas over the next four years and will be revised after this time:

- Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
- Disability

The implementation of the strategies will target specific areas to improve customer service and develop positive community relations to actively contribute to strengthening community well-being and addressing factors of disadvantage.

- The provision of efficient and appropriate public contact services to all residents regardless of their race, culture, disability, religion, language, age, gender, geographic barriers, social or economic disadvantage.
- The provision of appropriate information to residents of Ryde to publicise and promote City of Ryde services.
- Conduct and engage in effective community consultation and social research to assess community needs and gaps in service provision to all residents respectful of their race,

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culture, disability, religion, language, age, gender, geographic barriers, social or economic disadvantage.

- The provision of training on disability, cultural and linguistic issues to all staff in public contact positions.
- To enhance and improve upon workplace practices.
- The collection of appropriate data to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the Access and Equity Strategy.

These strategies are discussed in more detail below:

- **Organisational Change** - Staff members are aware of and have the understanding and skills required to provide a level of service which takes into account the needs of people with disabilities.
- **Participation** - All members of the community are able to participate in activities of the City of Ryde, including representation on committees.
- **Employment** - People with disabilities have equal access to employment opportunities within the City of Ryde. They are afforded access to facilities, services and opportunities to meet their specific needs.
- **Community Development** - The City of Ryde continues to resource and support local organisations to provide quality service to people with disabilities and continues to facilitate positive change within the community services sector.
- **Direct Service Provision** - Services provided by the City of Ryde reflect the needs of the community and that they continue to be responsive towards individual needs.
- **Education and Promotion** - Provision of public information is user friendly and accessible by all residents. Publicity reflects a positive image of people with disabilities and demonstrates that people with disabilities actively contribute to our community.
- **Waste Management** - All sections of the community are able to use and take maximum advantage of the services provided by the City of Ryde in the disposal of household garbage and recyclable.

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- Asset Management - All new assets owned and leased by the City of Ryde be accessible to Australian Standards. Current assets are upgraded to required standards, as set out in the Development Control Plans, codes and policies.
- Urban Development - The City of Ryde’s codes and policies reflect best practice for everyday life within the city and that they do not give rise to discrimination on the grounds of disability.
- Public Contact Services- The City of Ryde will assist residents and ratepayers who have a language difficulty by providing one or more of the following:
- Language Aide Program- City of Ryde:
  - Has a policy and guidelines on the use of Accredited Language Aides.
  - Provides a list of Accredited Language Aides to all Departments, which is updated on a regular basis.
  - Provides training for Accredited Language Aides and Interpreters.
  - Meets any costs associated with the appropriate development of linguistic skills and testing or training for Language Aides.
  - Recognises the value of Accredited Language Aides by incorporating the use of a community language, as a designated skill for remuneration under the skills-based award.
  - Ensures there is ongoing involvement from relevant departments.
- Data Collection and Monitoring of Language Aide Program
  - Language Aide Officers will collect data on the type of assistance they provide to residents of a non-English speaking background (NESB), by recording their activities.
  - This data and other information will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the Language Aide Program and access to services and adjust its strategies accordingly.
  - The City of Ryde will undertake further research and data collection regarding the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) local residents in consultation with ethnic organisations and communities in the area.
  - Translator Interpreter Services (T.I.S.)

The City of Ryde will:

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- Monitor the use of the dual handsets for T.I.S presently installed at the Customer Service Counter, with due consideration being given to extending the scheme to other counter areas.
  - Place a Translating and Interpreting Service poster and a sign at all counter areas, which advertises the service.
  - Provide staff with guidelines and information sessions on the effective use of professional interpreters (both on-site and through the T.I.S.).
  - Publicise the T.I.S. service to all staff and with the general public, especially targeting ethnic media and networks.
  - Provide all counter areas with relevant translated information pertaining to the City of Ryde’s functions and responsibilities.
  - Translated identification cards in relevant languages will be provided for staff where appropriate.
- Translation of letters, publications and other written communications

The following outlines the procedures and practices for the translation of letters, publications, and other written communications produced by the City of Ryde into languages other than English. A service is available to all departments for the translation of documents and letters and to arrange translation services to City of Ryde staff. Contact the Communications Department for this service.

All departments are required to pay for their own translation services.

All requests for translations into community languages will be dealt with according to the following criteria:

- Number of residents from a particular language background living in Ryde.
- The level of their English proficiency.
- Recent arrival in Australia.

Timescales for translation will be agreed upon when the request is made. Staff are advised to request translations well in advance of any deadlines in order to ensure adequate time. The required time will vary with the length of the document, the language required, and the priority of works undertaken by the Communications Department.

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It is the responsibility of individual departments to ensure that documentation, which is requested (or likely to be requested) on a regular basis, has translation built into its publication cycle and that sufficient copies are requested by departments to meet likely demand.

In addition, the City of Ryde will:

- Provide a translation in relevant community languages on the reverse side of all City of Ryde letterhead stating that, if the correspondence is not understood in English, assistance is available through an interpreter by request.
- Respond to any correspondence written in a language other than English by:
  - Use of a Language Aide Officer to provide translation of the correspondence and respond verbally to the customer where relevant;
  - Use of an accredited Translation Service or Translator to respond in writing using an Accredited Language Aide and/or a translator.
- Only use translators accredited by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd. (NAATI). A Directory of translators is provided at [www.naati.com.au](http://www.naati.com.au). In addition, the NAATI are able to verify accreditation of translators either on 1300 557 470 or [info@naati.com.au](mailto:info@naati.com.au).

Suggested translator services for quotations:

- SBS Language Services  
Ph: 1300 305 727 [inlanguage@sbs.com.au](mailto:inlanguage@sbs.com.au)
- Community Relations Commission  
Ph: 1300 651 500 [languageservices@crc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:languageservices@crc.nsw.gov.au)
- Information Promoting City of Ryde Services

The City of Ryde will use a range of appropriate mediums to publicise its services to CALD residents when considered appropriate. These will:

- Include the ethnic media through appropriate press releases, paid advertising space, promoting community announcements, etc.
- Utilise existing community networks particularly those in contact with residents of CALD e.g., Community Services Unit
- Target specific language groups through educational presentations, talks, information sessions, seminars, etc.
- Utilise existing events, such as citizenship ceremonies, activities through festivals, etc.

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- Provide translated sections of the Annual Report, Notice to Ratepayers, Resource Directories, and Newsletters when considered appropriate.

The City of Ryde will research and monitor the information needs of residents of CALD with a view to improving their access to Council services.

- Community Consultation

The City of Ryde will consult with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds about their particular needs and about how to improve its services. Consultation will take place with workers from peak ethnic groups, local organisations, government bodies and members of resident ethnic communities and networks to ensure local needs are identified, with a view to assist and advocate for provision of services.

This is a mandatory requirement under the Social Planning Amendment of the Local Government Act and should take place regularly and form the basis of 'The Needs of People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds' paper of the Council's Community Social Plan produced every five years.

- Staff Training

- All staff in public contact positions will receive training on the implementation of the Access and Equity Policy.
- An Access and Equity Policy module will be provided in all induction programs for any new employee.
- The City of Ryde will allow time for staff to be released from their duties to attend relevant training that promotes the better servicing of culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD) residents and people with a disability. This training may be conducted in-house or by an outside training provider.

- Personnel Practices

The City of Ryde will adopt the Access & Equity Policy and EEO programs that promote greater understanding of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The employment policy will ensure that discrimination and barriers do not exist in relation to selection, recruitment, training and advancement to people of culturally or linguistically

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diverse backgrounds or disabilities. The following are references for Access & Equity initiatives within the City of Ryde.

- Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan - 2002-2005 HR 08/1-1

Objectives of the EEO Management Plan include:

- Improving access to information relating to Human Resources policies and practices.
- Creating a diverse and skilled workforce.
- Improving employment access and participation for EEO groups.
- Promoting a workplace culture displaying fair practices and behaviour.

The Plan addresses the needs, representation and development of EEO groups which include women, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders, people with a disability and people of a racial, ethnic and ethno-religious background.

- Prevention of Discrimination HR 8/2

The purpose of this annexure to the EEO management plan is:

- To prevent all forms of discrimination in employment within Ryde City Council.
- Compliance with legislative requirements.
- To reinforce standards of fair and unbiased conduct, practices and decisions in our relationships with people.
- To provide an operating procedure, which allows natural justice, fair investigation and a right of appeal against decisions affecting employment opportunities.

- Prevention of Harassment HR 8/3

The purpose of this annexure to the EEO management plan is:

- To prevent all forms of harassment, vilification or other offensive behaviour by Council employees in the conduct of their duties, or in any work-related context, such as work functions, conferences, office Christmas parties, business trips, provision of goods and services.
- Compliance with all legislative requirements.
- To provide an operating procedure, which allows natural justice, fair investigation and resolution of differences between parties.

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## 8.Accountability:

This policy will apply to all sections and staff of the City of Ryde.

## 9.References:

City of Ryde Disability Inclusion Action Plan

City of Ryde Social Inclusion Advisory Committee Terms of Reference 2018

Hume City Social Justice Charter 2001

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