



ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN

2023/2028



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that the activities of Yarriambiack Shire Council are held under the traditional skies and in the waterways and lands of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk people and Council pays respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Yarriambiack Shire Council

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

Prepared for Yarriambiack Shire Council

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The information in this report is current as at the date of publication.



CONTENTS

Mayor's Message	4
Access and Inclusion Policy Statement	5
What is an Access and Inclusion Plan?	6
Yarriambiack Shire at a glance	7
Diversity in Yarriambiack Shire	8
Planning for better access and inclusion	9
Understanding diversity, disability and access	9
Legislative and Policy Context	10
Consultation and Engagement	10
Identifying key issues	11
Moving forward: Priority areas	11
Priority area 1: Moving around	12
Priority area 2: Being informed	12
Priority area 3: Accessing services	13
Priority area 4: Connecting with others	13
Priority area 5: Maintaining compliance	14

MAYOR'S MESSAGE

KYLIE ZANKER

Councillor

As Mayor, I am proud to present the Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2028. This plan provides a five-year vision for how we ensure our community is inclusive and accessible for all.

Access and inclusion make communities livable for everyone, this means the ability to move around the community, enter buildings in an equal and dignified manner. This can include involvement in business, work, education, social and leisure activities.

As a Council we wish to ensure that our systems and projects are designed so everyone can fully participate in public and professional activities and life.

It is also important that we as a Council and community embrace equality and diversity practices that ensure services provided to people are fair and accessible to everyone.

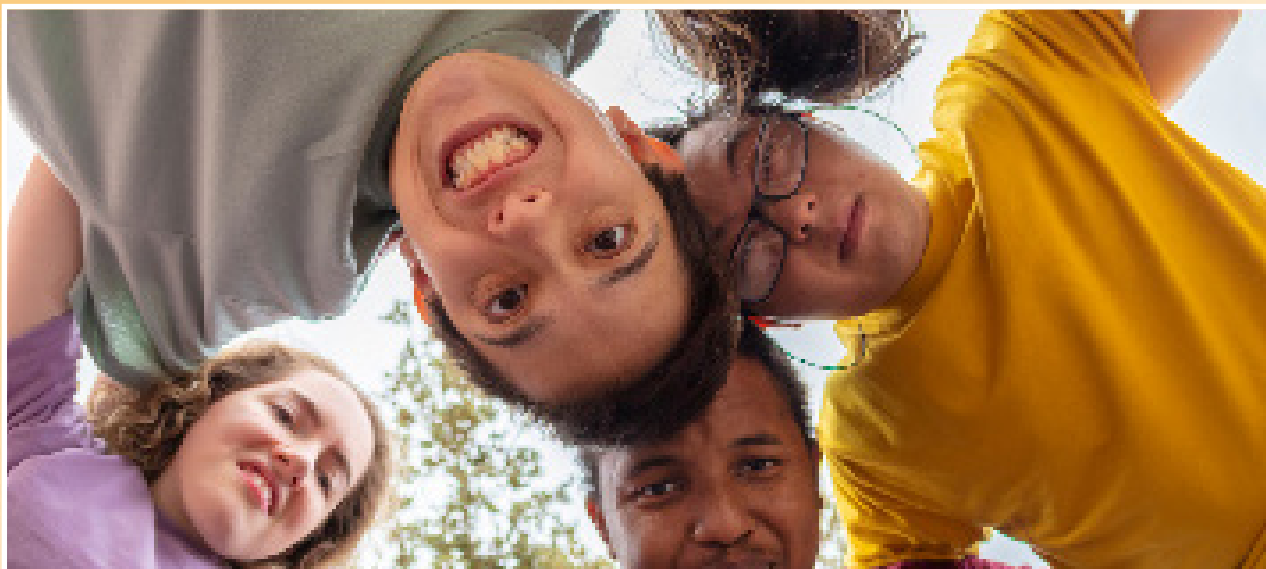
All people within our community have the right to be treated as equals and have the dignity and respect that they deserve and that their differences can be celebrated.

I wish to thank the community members and service providers who supported the development of this plan. As a Council we look forward to delivering the outcomes to ensure a more livable and Yarriambiack.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kylie Zanker'.

Cr Kylie Zanker



ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT

We are committed to ensuring that the community is accessible and inclusive for all residents and visitors; and acknowledge our responsibility to provide services and resources that are equitable and fair.

We believe that:

- a vibrant, dynamic, and healthy community is made up of people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, and values the diversity that makes up the Yarriambiack community.
- all people within the community make important social, economic, and cultural contributions and that the strength and prosperity of the Shire is enhanced by supporting the participation and inclusion of all people.

We are committed to the following principles:

- Developing a culture of inclusion.
- Ensuring a physically accessible environment.
- Complying with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and other government standards and policies
- Providing leadership in the development of an accessible and inclusive community.

Yarriambiack Shire Council is committed to actioning these beliefs by:

- Valuing the contributions of all citizens.
- Considering the needs of all people when planning services, projects and activities.
- Striving to provide infrastructure, facilities and services that are accessible for all members of the community.
- Ensuring Council staff are informed about strategies to develop inclusion and access for all.
- Implementing Council's Workforce Plan and Gender Equality Action Plan.
- Ensuring public information is available and accessible to all.
- Encouraging all citizens to participate in Council's democratic processes.
- Ensuring all public meetings, consultations, ceremonies and events undertaken or sponsored by Council are as accessible.
- Encouraging business, commerce, industry and community groups operating within the local government area to meet their obligations to people with a disability.
- Complying with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2020, that priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations across the the municipal community.

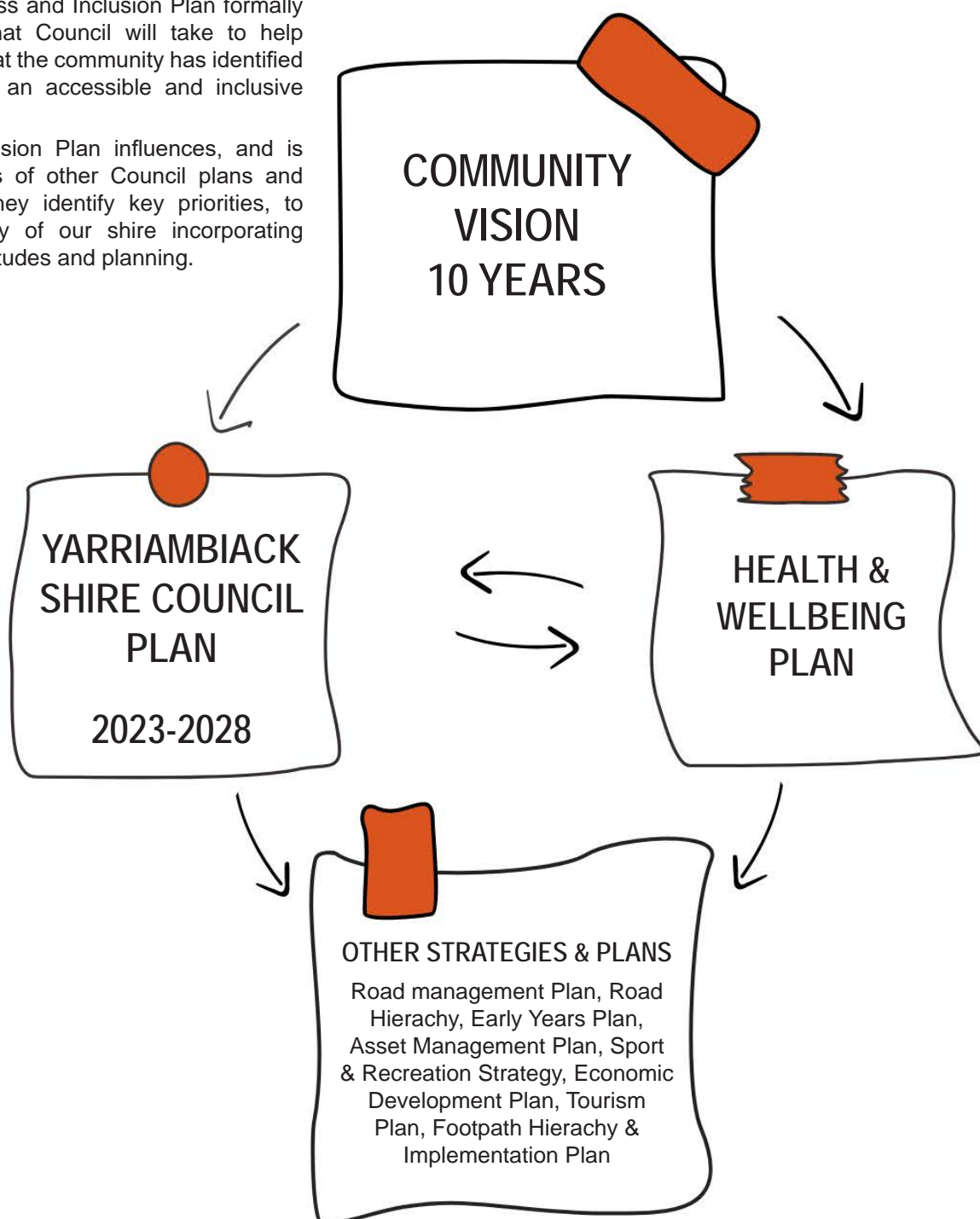
WHAT IS AN ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN?

The values and principles reflected in our Access and Inclusion Policy Statement underpin the priority areas and actions that form our Access and Inclusion Plan.

The term 'access' is used in this plan to refer to any outcome that is achieved by the removal of 'barriers' or obstacles that may impede an individual's rights to engage in a chosen activity in a manner that is equitable and dignified. 'Barriers' can include obstacles in the built environment as well as communication or attitudinal obstacles in the social environment.

The strength and prosperity of any community is enhanced by supporting the participation and inclusion of its people. Our Access and Inclusion Plan formally outlines the actions that Council will take to help achieve the priorities that the community has identified in regards to creating an accessible and inclusive Shire.

This Access and Inclusion Plan influences, and is influenced by, a series of other Council plans and strategies. Together, they identify key priorities, to enhance the prosperity of our shire incorporating inclusive behaviour, attitudes and planning.





YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE

AT A GLANCE...



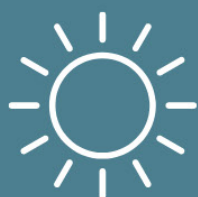
OUR PEOPLE: The estimated population of the Yarriambiack Shire for 2021 is 6,501. Our residents choose to live predominantly around the small towns of Warracknabeal, Murtoa, Hopetoun, Minyip, Rupanyup, Beulah and Woomelang.



OUR SERVICES: Council offers a variety of community services, emergency relief, customer service (VicRoads), libraries, maternal and child health. While the Shire has a range of facilities and programs, the community can experience difficulty in accessing some of these services. As our people get older and our communities become more diverse, we will see an increase in demand for services to support both local trends around ageing, disability and cultural diversity.



WORK OPPORTUNITIES: Regional unemployment in Victoria has plunged to an unprecedented low as jobs continue to grow in towns and cities across the state. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows Victoria's regional unemployment rate fell to 2.4 per cent in July 2023 – the lowest in the country and the lowest mark in the state's history. The national regional unemployment rate stands at 3.3 per cent.



EMERGENCY EVENTS: Weather events have a wide ranging impact on life in our Shire.

Pandemics, flood, rain, storms and fires have required us to continuously review and improve our practices to ensure our most vulnerable people are cared for and communicated with across our community.



MOVEMENT TO SHIRE : Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a transition of people moving from large cities to rural areas.

Our challenge is to ensure people who move to our shire feel welcome and included, so they embrace and embed themselves into the vibrant Yarriambiack community.

DIVERSITY IN YARRIAMBIACK SHIRE

DISABILITY:



In 2021 ABS figures show 15.5 % of the population in Yarriambiack Shire council provided unpaid support for a person with a disability.

This was compared with 12.9 across Victoria.

Yarriambiack Shire Council hosts a major disability service that provides support and housing for many people with a disability in Warracknabeal.

Yarriambiack Shire Council provides a range of aged and disability services to people who are frail and aged, and some younger people with disabilities and their carers. Our community care support services provides assistance with domestic support, personal care, respite, home maintenance, meals on wheels and planned activity groups. Our aim is to assist clients to do as much for themselves as possible to maintain their independence. These services are received by people in our Shire who have mobility issues, dementia, musculo-skeletal problems, arthritis, various types of cancer and paraplegia/quadriplegia.



STANDARD OF LIVING:

Overall, the Yarriambiack Shire is more disadvantaged in terms of socio-economic wellbeing than many other local government areas in Victoria. It ranks 10 on the level of disadvantage of Victorian communities, this places it in the top 13% of most disadvantaged communities in our state according to the 2021 SEIFA Index.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY:

Based on 2021 census data, 80.5 % of the Yarriambiack Shire population was born in Australia. This is compared with 48.9% for Victoria. The dominant non-Australian country of birth in Yarriambiack Shire is North West Europe. Although our Shire has very low percentages of persons from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, recent trends have reflected an increase with health workers from African and Asian countries and other skilled workers in the agriculture services moving to the shire. 1.7% of the population was Indigenous compared to 1% for Victoria.



ELDERLY:

Our population, like most parts of Australia, is ageing. This ageing trend is projected to continue, but at a higher rate as the baby boomers enter old age. 27% of our population in Yarriambiack Shire Council identified as over 65 years of age according to the 2021 census. The incidence of disability increases with age from 4.4% of children to 95.9% of people aged over 905. The chance of becoming the primary carer of someone with a disability, usually a partner or other family member, also increases with age, peaking in the 55 to 74 years age group5.



YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

Based on the 2021 Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, there were 1711 families living in Yarriambiack6. Of these, 31% were couple families with children (compared to 45.5% for Victoria), 52.8% were couple families without children (compared to 37.6% for Victoria), 14.3% were one parent families (compared to 15.2% for Victoria) and 1.3% were other families.



MENTAL HEALTH:

8.8% Of residents sought professional help for a mental health problem in Victoria during 2021. In the same year, 11.9 % residents in Yarriambiack Shire sought help for a mental health condition.

PLANNING FOR BETTER ACCESS AND INCLUSION

We know that by planning ahead our communities will be stronger and enjoy better services and better outcomes long-term. We can plan for better access and inclusion by:

- Understanding diversity, disability and access
- Partnering with others
- Complying with legislation
- Identifying and acting on key issues.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, DISABILITY AND ACCESS

DIVERSITY

Australia is a multicultural country with approximately one in four people born overseas. This diversity is growing faster than at any other time in Victoria's history, and the trend is expected to continue. Our own local community is experiencing more diverse cultural, religious, social and language beliefs and practices.

Inclusive services help to build inclusive communities where people's differences are valued. Our approach to service delivery ensures each client has an experience that 'fits'. This concept involves a paradigm shift from a focus on the management of individual deficits to the creation of more inclusive environments and services that respond constructively to class, poverty, gender, disability and education for a multi-cultural and inclusive society.

As a community we approach differences between people with an open mind and appreciate diversity as a source of strength.

DISABILITY

We understand that there are many different ways to describe disability. Disability covers a wide range of life experiences and physical and mental states, and it can change depending on the physical and social environments in various communities.

A disability can be caused by an accident, illness, trauma, genetic condition, ageing or can occur from birth. A disability can affect a person's mobility, one or more of the five senses, moods and perceptions, or the way the brain functions and its capacity to learn. It can be life-long or temporary, and include restricted capability from an ongoing medical or mental condition.

People with disability may have:

- A physical impairment, for example cerebral palsy
- A sensory impairment, for example hearing loss
- A neurological impairment
- Developmental delay
- An acquired brain injury
- An intellectual disability

Many people with a disability, particularly those with a severe physical or mental impairment, are amongst the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. Of particular concern are those people with limitations affecting their core activities of self-care, mobility or communication, and those with education or employment restrictions.

ACCESS

Often people are restricted from taking part in an activity or accessing a service because of environmental or attitudinal 'barriers'. Barriers are obstacles that stop people from carrying out day to day tasks. By identifying and removing these barriers, we can increase the level of access to services and community support.

Removing barriers and the planning and development of equitable access can assist a range of people including:

- Those people with a disability
- Elderly people with walking frames or sticks
- People with temporary disabilities or medical conditions
- People from different cultures.
- Parents with prams
- People with sports or other injuries
- Delivery people with trolleys

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

We developed the Access and Inclusion Plan in line with the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), a landmark legislation enshrining the rights of equal and dignified access for everyone. Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) sets out development of policies, programs, goals and targets to identify and remedy discriminatory practices. The National Disability Strategy 2021-2031 sets out ways to work towards equal rights for people with disability to participate and be included in the broader community. Legislation and codes supporting and guiding the strategy:

- Disability Act 2006;
- Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006;
- Australian Human Rights Commission

Universal Design and Best Practice

Universal Design is a philosophy that creates products, buildings, environments and experiences that are usable and effective for everyone, and accessible to as many people as possible. This use and access is regardless of a person's age, level of ability, cultural background, or any other factors that contribute to the diversity of our communities.

Best practice has been defined as structures and environments that comply with Universal Design principles and meet the needs of the widest possible range of people. These principles guide our information, products, services, buildings, facilities, communication and engagement. They will support improved outcomes for access and inclusion for the whole community.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Local Government Act 2020 (Vic) states that each council must have a community engagement policy and that adheres to the following five principles:

- The engagement must state clearly defined objectives.
- Participants must be representative of community.
- There must be easy access to information.
- Support must be available to enable meaningful engagement.
- Participants must be informed on how the engagement process influenced decision making.

We committed to involving and including the community in the development of this plan and understanding how access and inclusion impacts the way people live and work in the Shire. By partnering with others, we could better understand what actions were required over the next 5 years, to reduce barriers for inclusion.

We worked closely with the Yarriambiack Access and Inclusion working group to develop this plan. The group comprised of representatives of the Yarriambiack Shire Council, community agencies and individuals. Surveys were distributed and community consultation pop up sessions were held seeking feedback to inform the revision of our plan.





IDENTIFYING KEY ISSUES

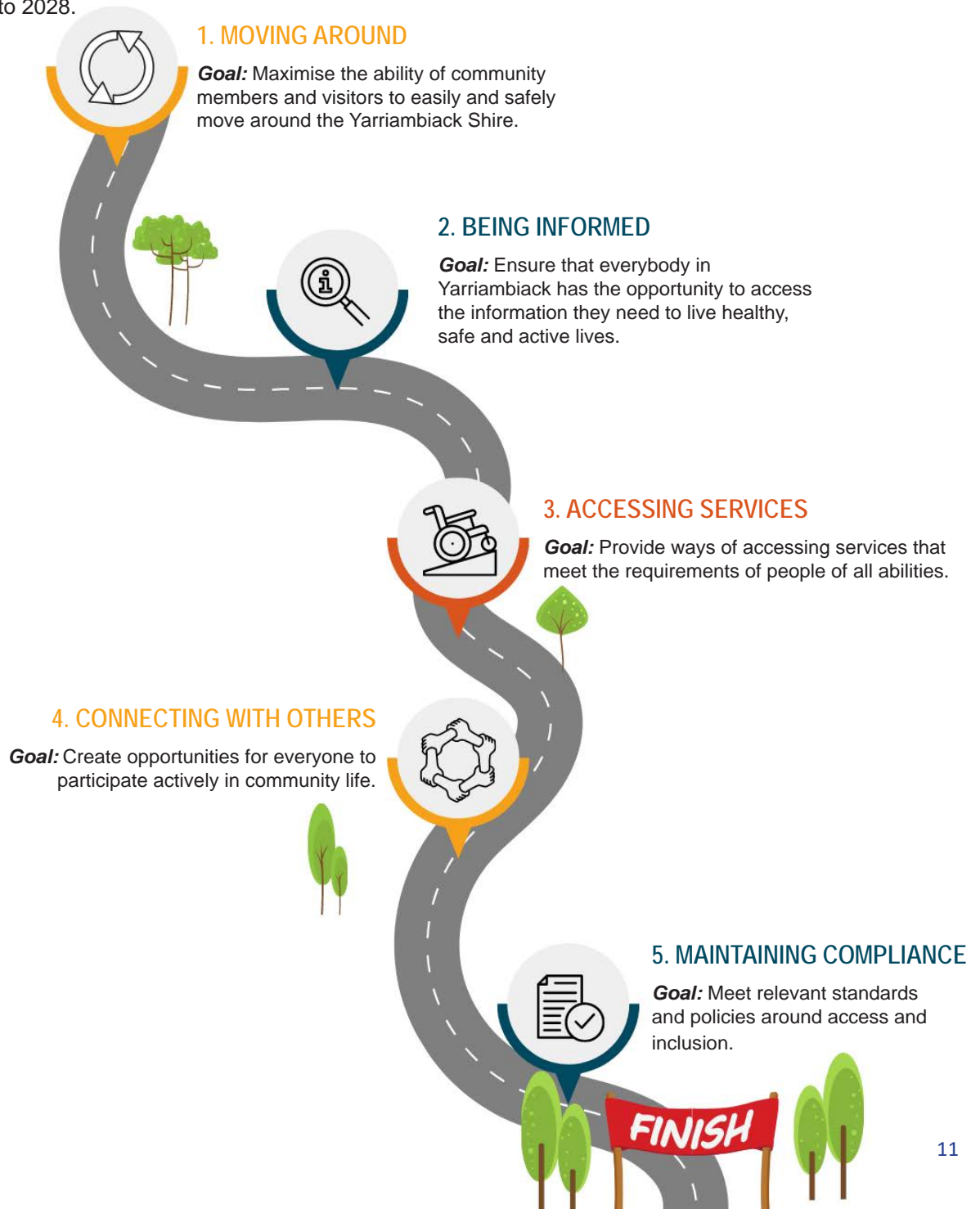
Key issues identified via community consultation, and discussions with stakeholders were as follows:

1. Footpaths, tracks and pathways accessibility and construction materials.
2. Access to pathways within recreation reserves and parklands.
3. Accessing public and community buildings.
4. Accessing appropriate parking across the shire.
5. Accessing alternative formats of Council information.
6. Lack of indoor sporting venues across the Shire.
7. Accessible public amenities facilities.

MOVING FORWARD: PRIORITY AREAS

To promote an accessible and inclusive community across our Shire means planning for action. After working with our community, understanding our needs and researching other models of best practice, We have established priority areas for action in 2023 to 2028.

These include:





PRIORITY AREA 1: MOVING AROUND

WE WILL:	ACTION	MEASURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise the ability of community members and visitors to easily move around the Shire. 	<p>Revise our Footpath Hierarchy to include a five-year Implementation Plan.</p> <p>Masterplan Recreation Reserves across the Shire that includes assessment of paths and access tracks.</p> <p>Revise the Sport and Recreation Strategy and include a focus on accessibility for recreational purposes.</p> <p>Walking tracks and footpaths are maintained across the Shire to enhance accessibility.</p> <p>Ensure there is at least one, safe accessible walking crossing in the main street area of each town.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual progress report on status of the Footpath Hierarchy Implementation Plan progress to Councillors, via a Council meeting. Report on number of recreation reserves versus number of master plans completed. Completed strategy that includes a focus on accessibility. Monitor Customer Requests (CRM's) reported, and actions taken to close out. Report annually on status of CRM's received, actioned and remain outstanding. Conduct an audit of each town in 24/25 financial year and develop an action plan to ensure all towns have at minimum an accessible crossing in the main shopping area.



PRIORITY AREA 2: BEING INFORMED

WE WILL:	ACTION	MEASURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that everybody in the Shire has the opportunity to access the information they need to live, healthy, safe and active lives. 	<p>Assess community diversity, and tailor information formats to meet community requirements.</p> <p>Provide Council information in formats that are diverse and meet the needs of our community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and update our website to include different methods of communication. Review how we engage with different demographics across our Shire to ensure we are communicating effectively with all members of our municipality. Complete a Communication Plan that outlines how we will engage with each cohort.



PRIORITY AREA 3: ACCESSING SERVICES

WE WILL:	ACTION	MEASURE
• Provide ways of accessing services that meet the requirements of people of all abilities.	Advocacy for increased options and funding for community transport across the Shire.	• Work with Neighbourhood House and our Health Services to ensure Community Transport is provided, particularly in the Northern end of our Shire.
	Review and increase accessible parking bays across the Shire.	• An audit of all disability parking is to be conducted in 2023-24 financial year, and an action plan on how Council enhances access via this means is to be developed and implemented in the following years.
	Review amenities blocks across the Shire and develop a plan to enhance facilities that ensure they are inclusive for all. Include a target for changing places amenities across the Shire.	• Complete an audit on all amenities block identifying how many require upgrades to meet the access all abilities requirements. • Include a target for changing places amenities across the Shire.



PRIORITY AREA 4: CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

WE WILL:	ACTION	MEASURE
• Create opportunities for everyone to participate actively in community life.	Commit to developing and implementing a Local Government Engagement Strategy with BGLC.	• Endorse a Local Government Engagement Strategy by the conclusion of 2023-24 financial year.
	Develop and Implement a Workforce Plan and Gender Equality Action Plan	• Continuously review and monitor progress of Council's actions outlined in the Workforce Plan and Gender Equality Action Plan, providing an annual report to Councillors and staff.



PRIORITY AREA 5: MAINTAINING COMPLIANCE

WE WILL:	ACTION	MEASURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet relevant standards and policies around access and inclusion. 	<p>Staff to undertake training that includes inclusive practices.</p> <p>Promotion of Building Code Legislative Requirements</p> <p>Participate in reporting to meet Gender Equality legislation requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training plans for all staff are to be developed and implemented with a focus on by stander training, diversity, inclusion, unconscious bias, and harassment. • Undertake a promotional campaign to assist with educating businesses on how they can create a premises that is accessible for all. • Meet all key dates for reporting requirements under the applicable legislation.



Yarriambiack
SHIRE COUNCIL