People with disabilities represent approximately 18% (or 15,656 persons) of the total Hobsons Bay population. Whilst disability can impact individuals in many different ways, some of the largest impacts on people with disabilities are the attitudes and environmental barriers that impede their full participation and inclusion in the community.

I am very pleased to present the Hobsons Bay City Council’s Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017. Through this strategy, the Council recognises the needs of people with disabilities living in the municipality and confirms its commitment to addressing the physical and attitudinal barriers that people with a disability face on a daily basis.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 builds on the considerable work already undertaken by the Council. Over the next four years, the Council will work to further improve the municipality further for people with disabilities, particularly in relation to the things people with disabilities themselves have told us they need.

Everyone, and not just the Council, has a role in building a community that is accepting and inclusive of all. I invite you to work in partnership with us to build a community that allows people with disabilities to be who they want to be!
People with disabilities in Hobsons Bay have told the Council that they want the things that everyone else in the community takes for granted. They want to go to school and work, get married, go on holidays, and have access to shops and restaurants.

Most importantly people with disabilities in Hobsons Bay want to be accepted and want the opportunity to be spontaneous. They want the chance to participate in and contribute to community life, and require others in the community to share their vision.

The Council’s Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy sets out a four year plan for improving the life of Hobsons Bay residents with disabilities, their families and carers. It builds on the work that has taken place as a result of the Council’s two previous disability action plans.

Through this strategy, the Council would like to work towards ensuring people with disabilities:

- Can get around easily.
- Are able to actively participate in the community like everyone else.
- Are accepted and respected.
- Are better supported to achieve their potential.

It is hoped that if these things can be achieved, the Council will have contributed towards:

- Achieving inclusive and accessible communities.
- A reduction in inequities.
- Increasing participation, active engagement and social connections.
- Upholding human rights.
- Improving the health, wellbeing and economic security of people with disabilities.
- Increasing opportunities for people with disabilities to exercise control over their lives.

Through the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017, the Council wants to work towards achieving a fully accessible and inclusive municipality where all residents, regardless of their ability can reach their full potential and lead fulfilling lives.

To ensure people with disabilities have access to the things they need and are able to participate in the community the Hobsons Bay City Council will work towards ensuring people with a disability:
Creating Opportunities for All
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Background
People with a disabilities represent approximately 17.1% (or 14,825 persons) of the total Hobsons Bay population, with the rate of disability increasing with age. The range of disabilities that people can experience is broad and can include physical, intellectual, psychiatric, neurological, learning and sensory disability.

The majority of people with disabilities in Hobsons Bay have a physical disability and over a quarter identify as having a disability of a profound or severe nature. This means they may require a carer and/or assistance with daily living.

The State and Commonwealth governments estimate that the incidence of all disabilities is set to increase primarily due to population growth, ageing and increased life expectancy.

Although each person with a disability has different needs, there are many common issues and barriers that people with disabilities face as a group. Although limited local data is available, it can be said that when compared to the whole population, people with disabilities generally have lesser access to education, employment and healthcare and face barriers when wanting to participate in community life.

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**Figure 1 Types and Nature of Disability, 2010**

The development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 was informed by data from the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers conducted in 2009. Produced by the Disability Policy and Research Working Group in partnership with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the survey allows for local area estimates which provide information about people with a disability at a local level. This was the most recent data available at the time of writing. The findings are presented in the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017: Background Paper which can be found on the Council’s website or by contacting the Social Planning and Development unit on 9932 1000.
The consultation process for the development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 consisted of a number of activities which included:

The ‘Be Who You Want To Be! Community Forum and Masquerade Ball’.

Survey for People with Disabilities – Your Hopes and Aspirations for the Future.

A Community Attitudes and Perceptions Survey.

Consultation with the Hobsons Bay City Council’s Disability Advisory Committee.

Consultation and workshop with various Council departments and officers.

The consultation methodology focused on:

Hearing from people with disabilities about what they would like to achieve in their lives.

Understanding what the current community attitudes towards disability are in Hobsons Bay.

Gathering information about what the Council should focus on in order to improve the municipality for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities told the Council that they simply want the same things in life that everyone else takes for granted. People with disabilities want the opportunity to go to school and work, they want to get married, go on holidays and have spontaneity in their life.

This was in line with the views of the Council’s Disability Advisory Committee who advised the Council that in order to meet the needs and wants of people with disabilities, the Council should continue their efforts in advocating and demanding for better public transport, access to the built environment and affordable housing. The Disability Advisory Committee also identified that the Council should focus on taking a leadership role in partnership development to see the creation of more recreational and social options, as well as pathways for people with disabilities to attain meaningful employment and learning opportunities.

The barriers that people with disabilities face are largely determined by the community’s values and perceptions. Through the community attitudes and perceptions survey it was found that in Hobsons Bay the majority of the community believe that people with disabilities make positive contributions to society. The majority of residents surveyed agreed that we should all be doing more to ensure people with disabilities have the opportunity to participate fully in community life.

However it was also identified that the community is less accepting of people with a mental illness or an intellectual disability. Therefore the Council has a role to play in raising awareness and in creating a more understanding and accepting community.

The development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 was informed by the findings of a comprehensive consultation. The findings are presented in the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017: Background Paper which can be found on the Council’s website or by contacting the Social Planning and Development unit on 9932 1000.

At the Federal government level, the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 promotes the rights of people with disabilities in areas such as housing, access to premises, employment, education and provision of goods and services. The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 provides a national commitment by all state and territory governments to support people with disabilities and maximise their potential to participate as equal citizens in Australian society.

At the State government level the Disability Act 2006, the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 and the Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-2017, all demonstrate a commitment to upholding the rights of people with disabilities.

Despite this, in Australia people with disabilities are less likely to complete their education, less likely to be employed and more likely to be dependent on income support. As such, in February 2010 the Federal government requested the Productivity Commission to undertake a public inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme.

As a result of this inquiry, all state and territory governments have supported the establishment of a National Disability Insurance Scheme which once rolled out will allow individuals with a disability to obtain the appropriate social, physical, medical and emotional support required to live up to their full potential.

The Hobsons Bay City Council is limited in its capacity to address all the barriers and issues people with disabilities face. For this reason, the Council strongly supports this significant reform.

However, as stated by the Disability Act 2006, the Hobsons Bay City Council is responsible for ensuring its services and programs are accessible, inclusive and responsive to people with disabilities. The Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 will assist the Council to ensure the municipality is inclusive of people with disabilities.

The development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 was informed by the findings of a policy review. The findings are presented in the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017: Background Paper which can be found on the Council’s website or by contacting the Social Planning and Development unit on 9932 1000.
Strategic Directions
The Council would like people with disabilities in Hobsons Bay to get around easily.

People with disabilities, their families and carers, informed the Council that accessing places and spaces within Hobsons Bay is still a large problem. They also stated that some shops, restaurants, playgrounds and the beach continue to be inaccessible to people with disabilities.

The Council was informed that accessing places and spaces is difficult as a result of inaccessible and unreliable public transport; one of the most common ways that people with disabilities get around.

These barriers not only put people with disabilities at a great disadvantage, but they also restrict their ability to conduct their lives in a spontaneous and unplanned manner.

The Hobsons Bay City Council currently relies on relevant Australian Standards to ensure the built environment is accessible. Whilst the Access to Premises Building Standards set out to achieve inclusion, they represent minimum compliance.

Universal design on the other hand, is an approach that creates environments and products that are useable by all people to the greatest extent possible. The Hobsons Bay City Council would like to work towards exceeding the Australian Standards when it comes to newly built and substantially renovated Council owned buildings and spaces; as well as encouraging private developers to take on a similar approach.

Whilst Hobsons Bay City Council does not have any direct influence on the public transport system, it will continue to advocate for the need for better public transport, more accessible stations and reliable timetables.

The Council is committed to:

- Improving accessibility of the built (including housing) and natural environment beyond minimal accessibility compliance requirements.
- Advocating for a public, private and community transport system that is accessible and reliable for all.
The Council would like for people with disabilities to be able to actively participate in the community.

An inclusive community is a place where people feel like they belong and are included, where people have an opportunity to contribute and where they can participate whatever their ability.

People with disabilities told the Council that they would like to get involved more by gaining a job.

Yet despite having the ability and willingness to work, many people with disabilities still do not receive the same opportunity to enter the workforce as the rest of the community. Whether this is as a result of negative attitudes or misconceptions about disability from employers or the lack of opportunity to access meaningful education, people with disabilities continue to be underrepresented in the workforce.

The same can be said for education. In Australia a significant gap exists between the level of education reached by students with disabilities and those without.

The Council understands that the opportunities for education and consequently meaningful employment are essential not only to an individual’s income security, but also to their social, emotional and personal wellbeing.

As one of the largest employers in Hobsons Bay, the Council can increase its recruitment of people with disabilities. Through its provision of libraries and community centres the Council also has a chance to increase educational opportunities for people with disabilities.

Likewise, the Council has been working to address a wide range of issues that limit equitable access, inclusion and opportunity for particular groups in local communities.

It is important however for the Council to keep ensuring it improves the way it communicates and provides information to people with disabilities, particularly in relation to getting involved in Council processes.

The Council is committed to:

- Advocating for and partnering with relevant organisations to increase the opportunity for people with disabilities to gain educational opportunities and meaningful employment.
- Ensuring it provides opportunities for all residents to get involved in Council processes through accessible communication and information provision.
The Council would like to increase awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities, their families and carers.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, notes that “Persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and violations of their human rights in all parts of the world”.

Despite this and the introduction of legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act and the Disability Act, many people with disabilities continue to face discrimination, inequalities and barriers to full participation in their community.

Both physical and attitudinal barriers can result in discrimination against people with disabilities. The outcomes of the community attitudes survey undertaken by the Council demonstrated that the Council needs to undertake further work in order to raise awareness and understanding of disability within the community; particularly in relation to people with intellectual disabilities and mental health illness.

The Council knows that people with disabilities have many skills and attributes and are capable of making a valuable contribution to the community. Therefore, the Council can do more work to showcase the talents and skills of people with disabilities to the rest of the community.

Increasing awareness and understanding in the broader community is an important focus of the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is also an area which the Municipal Association of Victoria has identified local government has a strong leadership role in which to play.

The Council is committed to:

- Positively influencing the attitudes that prevent people with disabilities from participating in the community.
- Working with residents, service providers and organisations to be more inclusive of people with disabilities.
The Council would like for people with disabilities to be better supported to achieve their full potential. People with disabilities in Hobsons Bay told the Council that they would like to have more opportunities to participate in community life by being able to get out more, participate in more sporting and recreational activities and just be able to do everyday things that allow for greater independence.

However, in order to be able to participate in the community, many people with disabilities require support. Unfortunately, as identified by the Productivity Commission inquiry in 2010, ‘the current disability care and support system is underfunded, inflexible, fragmented and inefficient giving people with disabilities little choice and no certainty of access to appropriate supports’.

The Hobsons Bay City Council supports the significant reform proposed for the disability service system. The introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme will help to ensure people with disabilities, their families, and carers have the supports they need to fully participate in community life.

As a provider of disability services and programs the Council is also committed to improving its own services to ensure they too are equitable and promote choice and control. Where the Council isn’t able to provide services, it is committed to advocating for services within the municipality.

The Council also acknowledges that an inclusive community extends past better support, and a continued focus needs to be placed on increasing opportunities for participation in sport, community events and civic participation.

**The Council is committed to:**

- Advocating for and partnering with relevant organisations that provide disability supports that are responsive to individual needs.
- Increasing the opportunities and providing support for people with a disability to participate in local events, sport and recreation.
Development and Implementation
The development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 was guided by demographic analysis, review of government policies and consultation with the community. It builds on the work undertaken in the two previous Disability Action Plans, 2004-2007 and 2008-2012. Most importantly, as everyone has a role to play in creating an inclusive and accessible community, all Council departments were involved in shaping the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017.

The development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 was informed by a Background Paper which includes:

- Information regarding the incidence of disability.
- Analysis of International, National, State and Local policy.
- Outcomes of all consultation exercises.
- A set of recommendations for the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 Background Paper can be found on the Council’s website or by contacting the Social Planning and Development unit on 9932 1000.
The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which Australia signed in 2008, notes that ‘persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society and violations of their human rights in all parts of the world’.

In developing the strategic directions of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017, the Council has specifically considered the following principles of the Convention:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons.
- Non discrimination.
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society.
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity.
- Equal opportunity.
- Accessibility.

The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities is designed to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens. The Charter gives legal protection to 20 fundamental human rights under four key values which include freedom, respect, equality, dignity.

In developing the strategic directions of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017, the Council has specifically considered promotion of the following human rights:

- Right to taking part in public life.
- Right to freedom of movement.
- Right to protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
- Right to privacy and reputation.
Annual action plans will be developed in order to work towards implementing this Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 will be subject to a six monthly reporting cycle, with progress reports presented to the Council on an annual basis.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy will be evaluated to help determine whether any benefits have arisen as a result of the work undertaken.

These reports will made available to the community via the Council’s website.

The Council would like to acknowledge the following, for their contribution to the development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017.

The Council’s Social Planning and Development unit.

All residents, community leaders and groups, who participated in the consultation process.

Councillors and staff.

The Council’s Disability Advisory Committee.

Photos in Strategy by Brent Seamer Photography
For further information or to have a copy of the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy 2013-2017 in an alternative format contact the Council on Telephone (03) 9932 1000.