



ACCESS & EQUITY POLICY

Title	Access & Equity Policy
Division	Community Services
Category	Community
Date adopted by Council	28 August 2006 (Ratified 10.6.08; Updated Dec 2011)

PURPOSE

This Policy is initially developed and adopted by Council in 1999. Last review was undertaken in August 2006. This current update aligns with Council's Willoughby City Strategy 2010-2025. The Policy is one of the many policies and plans that support the Strategy, which is a long term vision and plan for the future of the City to guide planning and decision making processes.

Equity, access, participation and rights underline the social justice principle. The principles of social justice, sustainability and community, forms the basis of the Strategy.

The Policy is to reiterate Council's commitment to ensure all residents, ratepayers, people working and visiting gain access to services and facilities provided by Council, regardless of their race, culture, religion, language, age, sex or disability.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this Policy, Access and Equity is defined as follows:

Access means creating the necessary conditions so that individuals or groups desiring to use Council services, facilities, works and/or programs have access to them – regardless of their race, culture, religion, language, age, gender or disability.

Equity means those residents who are entitled to use Council services be treated fairly in relation to other users, and have an equitable share of the resources which Council manages on behalf of the community.

Much of the confusion about equity comes from the interpretation of the word "equality". Many people believe that true equality means treating everyone exactly the same.

Everyone is not the same – people do not have the same opportunities, education, lifestyles, skills, talents or personalities. Equity of outcome does not necessarily imply equity of input depending on the individuals' level of need.

It is therefore important for Council to be sensitive to cultural aspects and differences in their local community to ensure better and more balanced services for the whole community.

If access is about bringing people through barriers, equity means showing that a fair result has been achieved in the process.

POLICY STATEMENT

Council will ensure that its resources are fairly distributed and rights and responsibilities of all people are recognised. The community will be consulted about decisions relating to program development and service delivery to ensure these effectively meet their needs.

THE PEOPLE OF WILLOUGHBY

Willoughby is an increasingly multicultural community with a 47% increase in the cultural & linguistically diverse (CALD) community since 1996. The most common CALD languages spoken include Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Armenian and Italian.

The estimated resident population in 2011 was 69,439. On Census night 8/8/2006, there were 64,858 people counted in Willoughby. 1,132 of these were overseas visitors which are not included in the following statistics. Based on a resident population of 63,725, approximately 53.7% of the population was Australian born, 39.2% born overseas and 7.1% did not state their place of birth. Among the overseas born, 18,914 people were born in non-English speaking countries (NESC). This represents 29.7% of the total population. Between 1996 and 2006 Census statistics, the increase from people who were born in a NESC was 5,225 people (38%). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Census 2006 was 87, which is 0.13% of the total population.

Children (0-11 years) and youth (12-24 years) represented almost a third of Willoughby's population in 2006 (respectively 9,467 children and 10,128 young persons) that is, 19,595 persons under the age of 24 out of a total population of 63,725. In 2006, 2.7% of the total population in Willoughby reported needing assistance with core activities, compared with 3.8% for the Sydney Statistics Division.

Willoughby has an extremely well educated and skilled population and its residents also have higher than average household weekly incomes than the Sydney metropolitan average.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Council is committed to a 'whole of Council' approach to promoting access and equity in all its policies, plans and programs.

The Policy is particularly relevant to the following sub-themes outlined in 6 key strategic directions in the Strategy:

- **Celebrating Diversity and Community Spirit**
- **Community Services and Facilities**
- **Sustainable Practices**
- **Community Engagement**

STRATEGIES

Celebrating Diversity and Community Spirit

- Acknowledge, respect and protect our Aboriginal heritage
- Respect all religious beliefs
- Staff to recognise and value individual differences of customers/ clients in a way that is responsive to their needs
- Provide community programs and events which encourage, recognise and value the diversity of the community and understanding of difference
- Foster and broaden community understanding of the value of diversity

Community Services and Facilities

- Council owned facilities, events, programs and plans for the delivery of community services are managed in an accessible and equitable manner
- Cross-cultural training and disability awareness training for Council staff be provided to ensure that customer relations are accessible and equitable across our diverse community
- Provide community programs which encourage cross cultural communication and community understanding of difference
- Support programs targeting disadvantaged communities
- Advocate for the needs of disadvantaged communities
- Foster partnerships with neighbouring councils, government and non-government organisations for provision of services and facilities
- Continue to implement Disability Discrimination Act Action Plan
- Ensure urban design proposals and plans integrate access and safety for people with disabilities, families with children, young people, older people and for people of different languages and cultures
- Provide signage accessible to people with disabilities; and International symbol signage for people speaking languages other than English
- Through joint agency planning and implementation, develop an integrated transport strategy, which includes accessible public/community and private transport for residents, older people and people with disabilities
- Where feasible, provide accessible and direct paths of travel, in all modes, for easy access to services and facilities within the city

Sustainable Practices

- Uphold Council's Sustainability Chapter
- Create economic and cultural opportunities for the community
- Enhance social capital through community and cultural development programs and events
- Educate the community about protecting the local natural environment and resources

Community Engagement

- Inform the community of Council's policy framework, its decision-making processes and the opportunities for participation in decision making
- Make Council documents, minutes and reports of Council meetings accessible to the community via Council libraries, internet and facilities such as Help and Service Counter
- Use accredited interpreter and translation services to provide information in community languages where appropriate
- Increase awareness in the community and amongst Council staff of the availability of interpreter services when dealing with Council services
- Ensure Council's policy, procedures and planning documents are formatted and in plain English, whenever possible in order to be understood by as many people as possible
- Disseminate relevant information in various formats and languages wherever possible
- Regular monitoring of customer satisfaction with Council services and facilities
- Provide consultations, which enable residents, business people, workers and visitors to participate in discussion on issues, which affect the city or the services available to them
- Promote community participation in Council's decision-making processes to ensure transparency, inclusiveness and a balanced representation of community interests and values, to achieve clearly stated outcomes
- Ensure Council meetings are held in welcoming and accessible venues and encourage community participation