



WELLINGTON
SHIRE COUNCIL

WELLINGTON DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

2025 – 2029

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Background

Wellington Shire Council is a large rural council and the third largest municipality by size in Victoria, covering 10,811 square kilometers, with a population of 45,639. The Traditional Owners of Wellington Shire are the Gunaikurnai people.

The median age of the Wellington Shire population is 44, slightly higher than the state median age of 38. When compared to the Victorian average, Wellington has a higher proportion of people aged 50+, and a lower proportion of people below the age of 34.

Additionally, 7.1% of the population requires assistance with core activities, increasing to 9.5% among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, both above the state average of 5.9%. A quarter (25.7%) of the population in 2023 self-reported living with a disability in 2023, notably higher than the state rate of 19.9%.

People living with a disability often experience poorer health outcomes, higher psychological distress, and increased exposure to modifiable health risks such as poor diet and tobacco use. Limited access to social and physical activities, alongside barriers in education, employment, and social support, can further contribute to these health disparities.

The Disability Act requires public authorities, state government departments and local governments to prepare Disability Action Plans. These plans need to describe how the agency will address access and inclusion barriers for people with a disability, as both service users and employees. Disability action plans should align to the outcomes framework of the state disability plan so it is clear how they contribute to achieving statewide outcomes.

Previously operating under the Wellington Access and Inclusion Plan 2017-2022, Wellington Shire Council is now in the process of developing our Disability Action Plan 2025-2029 (DAP) that will be Council's four year plan for making things fairer for people with a disability. The plan will outline a key way forward to making all of Wellington a fair, inclusive, accessible and equitable place for everyone.

The Wellington Disability Advisory Committee is formed by Council as an unincorporated advisory group operating under these Terms of Reference.

Purpose

The purpose of the Disability Advisory Committee is to provide expert advice and recommendations to the local council on matters relating to disability access, inclusion, and equity. The committee aims to ensure that the perspectives of people with disabilities are considered in the planning, development, and evaluation of policies, programs, services, and facilities within the local community. By fostering collaboration with individuals with lived experience of disability, the committee will work to create an inclusive and accessible environment that promotes full participation for all residents, regardless of ability.

Term

Community representatives are appointed for a term of two years, starting from the date of their formal appointment. Reappointment may be considered at the end of each term, subject to the council's approval and the needs of the committee.

Roles and Responsibilities

- a) To provide expert advice to Council on matters related to accessibility and inclusion, addressing the needs and concerns of the communities across Wellington Shire.
- b) To contribute to the development, implementation and review of the Council's Disability Action Plan, including providing recommendations for actions and initiatives as requested by Council.
- c) To undertake site accessibility assessments of Council facilities, providing feedback and recommendations for improvements, as requested by Council. This includes:
 - Site accessibility visits conducted upon Council's request, depending on the availability of Wellington Disability Advisory Committee (WDAC) community representatives and where facility use suggests a visit would be productive.
 - Council staff will suggest facilities for accessibility visits and gauge interest from community representatives.
 - Site visits will be flagged in advance at WDAC meetings, and typically three to four community representatives will attend each visit.
 - Calls for expressions of interest will be made for each visit, with a decision made by Council staff on attendance based on feedback, ensuring diverse representation, and avoiding undue burden on members.
 - Community representatives requiring assistance for site visits should inform Council early to allow time for necessary arrangements.
 - A brief report on each site visit will be prepared by a nominated community representative and presented at the next meeting.
- d) To offer advice and input into Council project steering groups, ensuring that disability considerations are integrated into relevant projects, as requested by Council. This includes:
 - Providing representation on ad hoc or ongoing steering groups directing a facility or service development, expansion, or modification.
 - Expressions of interest may be called for, or Council staff may approach individual representatives.
 - Factors considered when selecting WDAC representatives for steering groups include: feedback from steering group members, the scope of the project, demands on WDAC members, and the interests or skills of community representatives.

- e) To facilitate networking opportunities that support the planning, development, and delivery of services for people with disabilities, fostering collaboration among stakeholders.

Composition

The aim of the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee membership is to accurately represent our diverse community of those living with or caring for someone living with a disability in Wellington Shire. Membership must reflect the diversity of persons with a disability in Wellington Shire, including, but not limited to, age, location, disability type, cultural and indigenous background.

The membership will include (but not be limited to) the following representatives:

Councillor representative	Appointed annually by Council
Community representatives (max of 10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with a disability • People who are family members or carers of a person with a disability • People with experience, expertise or an interest in issues affecting people with a disability
Council staff (one or more depending on meeting purpose and or agenda item)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Inclusion Officer • Coordinator Social Connection and Inclusion • Manager Communities, Facilities and Emergency <p>Other Council staff by invitation</p>

The following outlines the process for the selection, appointment, and management of community representatives:

- a) The selection and appointment of community representatives will follow this process:
 - i) A recruitment campaign seeking expressions of interest from suitable applicants,
 - ii) Evaluation of applicants' skills, qualifications, experience, and relevant background,
 - iii) Assessment by Council staff, including a panel interview for shortlisted applicants,
 - iv) Successful candidates will be registered and inducted as Council volunteers, and will need to obtain a Working With Children and National Police Check;
 - v) Following registration and induction, appointment will be confirmed via formal letter or an alternative accessible communication method.
- b) Council will ensure a balanced and diverse representation in the membership, avoiding overrepresentation of any single interest group.
- c) The majority of community representatives will be people with a disability or individuals who provide care for people with a disability.
- d) Council may cancel a community representative's membership or volunteer registration at its discretion, with written notice provided, including the reason for cancellation.
- e) Community representatives may resign at any time by notifying a Council staff member verbally or in writing.
- f) Membership is voluntary, and no payment will be made for services as a representative. However, representatives may be reimbursed for travel and legitimate expenses incurred during site visits or steering group meetings.
- g) The Committee does not have delegated decision-making authority.

Meeting Structure

The Wellington Disability Advisory Committee will meet regularly to discuss important matters related to accessibility and inclusion. The following outlines key details regarding the scheduling, structure, and expectations for these meetings:

- a) Frequency – Meetings will be held quarterly.
- b) Venue – The preferred meeting venue is the Karang Karang Room at the Council Port of Sale building. Members may have the option to attend online via a Teams link. Alternative venues within Wellington Shire may be considered if necessary.
- c) Agenda – The agenda will be prepared by the Chair and distributed to all members in advance of the meeting.
- d) Chair – The meeting will be chaired by either a Councillor or a designated Council staff member.
- e) Minutes – Minutes of each meeting, along with any associated attachments, will be distributed in a timely manner and in an accessible format.
- f) Guests – Council staff and external guests may be invited to attend meetings to provide relevant subject matter expertise and advice.
- g) Duration – Meetings will be limited to a maximum duration of two hours.
- h) Catering – Council will arrange light refreshments for meetings. Members are requested to confirm their attendance in advance to assist with catering arrangements and accommodate any dietary requirements.
- i) Quorum – A minimum of six attendees, including at least three community representatives, is required for a meeting to proceed. i. Members will be asked to RSVP their attendance at least three working days prior to the meeting to confirm whether the meeting will take place.

Conduct

Members of the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee are expected to adhere to high standards of conduct to ensure that meetings are productive, respectful, and collaborative. The following principles will guide the behaviour and decision-making of all committee members:

- a) Engage in discussions and decision-making after sharing information respectfully and openly.
- b) Ensure that all matters are considered fairly, consistently, and without bias.
- c) Make decisions based on the best available information, taking all relevant factors into account.
- d) Treat each other with respect and courtesy, refraining from abusive or aggressive behaviour.
- e) Respect the rights of others to be heard, regardless of differing views.
- f) Keep confidential all matters and documents deemed confidential or reasonably assumed to be so due to their private or sensitive nature.
- g) Treat Councillors and Council staff with respect and courtesy, including during site accessibility visits, fostering a spirit of cooperation and collaboration rather than criticism.
- h) Acknowledge that while the decisions or recommendations of the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee are valuable input, they may not always be adopted by Council.

Confidentiality

Members of the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee are bound by the provisions of Section 125 of the Local Government Act 2020, which relates to confidentiality obligations. In accordance with these provisions, members are expected to:

- a) Maintain the confidentiality of any information related to confidential matters under consideration by the committee, particularly those of a commercial or sensitive nature.
- b) Refrain from disclosing or discussing confidential information outside the committee, unless required by law or authorised by Council.
- c) Treat all information shared in meetings, including documents and discussions, as confidential unless specifically stated otherwise.
- d) Be aware that breaches of confidentiality may result in the removal of a member from the committee and other possible legal consequences.

Insurance

Community representatives must complete the appropriate application and appointment process to become registered Council volunteers in order to be covered by Council's insurance. Once registered, they will be covered under Council's volunteer insurance for activities related to their role on the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee, provided these activities are within the scope of their duties and authorised by Council.

It is the responsibility of community representatives to ensure they comply with all Council procedures to maintain insurance coverage during their term.

Disputes

Any dispute arising from the operation of the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee, including matters related to member conduct or the interpretation of these Terms of Reference, should be referred to the Manager, Communities, Facilities, and Emergencies in the first instance. If the issue is not resolved at this level, it may then be escalated to the General Manager, Community and Culture for further consideration and resolution.

Support and Resources

- a) **Administrative Assistance:** Council staff will provide secretarial support, including preparing meeting agendas, distributing meeting materials, and recording meeting minutes.
- b) **Training and Development:** Council will offer relevant training and development opportunities for committee members, including induction training, access to information related to disability issues, and any other training required to assist members in fulfilling their roles effectively.
- c) **Access to Information:** Committee members will have access to relevant reports, data, and other materials that are necessary for informed decision-making and discussion.
- d) **Budget for Expenses:** If applicable, Council will allocate a budget for reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred by committee members in carrying out their duties, such as travel or other costs related to committee activities.

Revision and Amendment for Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Wellington Disability Advisory Committee will be reviewed at least every two years to ensure they remain relevant and effective. The review process will involve consultation with the committee members and relevant council staff.

Any proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference will be discussed and approved by the Committee before being submitted to Council for final approval. If an urgent need for amendments arises before the scheduled review, the Terms of Reference may be amended by mutual agreement between the Committee and Council.