

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030



South Gippsland
Shire Council

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

Thank You and Acknowledgement

The Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee plays a vital role in providing advice to South Gippsland Shire Council on opportunities to make our community more accessible and inclusive.

As a group of dedicated advocates living and working in South Gippsland, with a diverse set of lived and professional experiences, we are proud to support the Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030.

We are committed to bringing lived experience to this work and helping create a South Gippsland community where people of all backgrounds and abilities are included, heard and supported to fully participate.

Council thanks the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for their valuable guidance, lived experience and thoughtful contributions to this Action Plan. Their insights have strengthened Council's commitment to building a more inclusive South Gippsland.



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Purpose

The Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030 outlines South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to building a community where everyone can participate, belong and thrive. The Plan supports Council to meet its legislative responsibilities while responding to community expectations for greater accessibility, inclusion and equitable participation for all community members.

The Plan provides a structured approach to identifying, reducing and preventing the barriers that affect people's ability to participate fully in community life. These barriers may be experienced by people with a disability, their families and carers, as well as others who encounter exclusion due to physical, social, cultural, economic or systemic factors. It highlights the importance of designing spaces, services and systems that enable all community members to take part on an equal basis.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in community life. However, *barriers* continue to exist, including *accessible* facilities, services, information and practices. This Plan has been informed by engagement and lived experience perspectives and will guide Council's ongoing efforts to embed accessibility and inclusion across its operations and decision-making between 2026 and 2030.

Strategic Framework

South Gippsland Shire Council Plan 2025 to 2029 (Council Plan)

The Council Plan 2025 to 2029 sets out actions that drive positive changes for South Gippsland. The Access and Inclusion Action Plan aims to support Council to achieve its strategic themes of *Leading with Integrity*, *Developing a Sustainable Future* and *Empowering Communities*.

South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)

The MPHWP aims to ensure that all people have access to necessary services and support, while focusing on improving the health outcomes for groups who may be facing challenges. The Access and Inclusion Action Plan aims to support the MPHWP achieve its strategic priorities of *Preventing All Forms of Violence*, *Improving Wellbeing*, *Increasing Active Living*, *Healthy Eating* and *Climate Change and its Impacts on Health*.

South Gippsland Shire Council plays a vital role in supporting access and inclusion within the South Gippsland community. Council's role in the actions described in this Plan is outlined below.

Champion

We elevate the voices, rights and priorities of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those who face barriers to participation in Council planning, leadership conversations and everyday practice.

Collaborator

We work alongside people with lived experience, community groups, staff and partners to co-design inclusive approaches and shared outcomes.

Communicator

We share information in accessible ways, raise awareness, encourage positive community attitudes and participation.

Regulator

We ensure Council assets, buildings, infrastructure, programs and events meet accessibility standards, legislation and safe practice requirements.

Service Provider

We deliver accessible programs, services and experiences that support participation, wellbeing and inclusion.



Our People

Access and Inclusion in South Gippsland

- The population estimate as of 30 June 2024 was 31,022. Since the previous year, the population grew by 0.65 per cent. Population growth in regional Victoria was 1.23 per cent.
- 1,962 people (6.4 per cent) needed assistance with daily activities due to disability.
- In 2021, 11.5 per cent of the population was born overseas compared to 12.4 per cent in regional Victoria.
- 145 people who spoke a language other than English at home had difficulty speaking English.
- 1.2 per cent of residents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- 49 per cent of the population were aged 50 years or older.
- 33.6 per cent of the population have a *low income*, compared to 33.3 per cent in regional Victoria.
- Between July 2024 and July 2025, there were 604 total incidents of family violence, a 5.04 per cent increase in incidents compared to the previous year.
- In 2021, 9.7 per cent of the population had a mental health condition compared to 10.9 per cent in regional Victoria.
- In 2021, 37.4 per cent of the population has a long-term health condition compared to 37.2 per cent in regional Victoria.



Summary of Plan Priorities and Strategies

Priority One: Communication and Engagement

Goal – South Gippsland Shire Council communicates in accessible, inclusive and consistent ways, ensuring people with inclusion barriers can easily receive information and participate in community engagement.

1.1 Improve the accessibility and clarity of Council's communication materials.

1.2 Strengthen community-facing information to increase awareness.

1.3 Ensure community engagement processes are inclusive.

Priority Two: Council Environments that Support Inclusion

Goal – South Gippsland Shire Council-owned places, spaces and infrastructure are inclusive, safe and accessible.

2.1 Ensure public spaces and facilities support universal access.

2.2 Improve accessibility across roads, paths and signage.

2.3 Strengthen accessible tourism, events and public experiences.

Priority Three: Healthy, Active and Connected Living

Goal – People with barriers to inclusion have equitable opportunities to participate, connect, contribute and feel valued in their community.

3.1 Support participation in sport and all forms of recreation (including the arts).

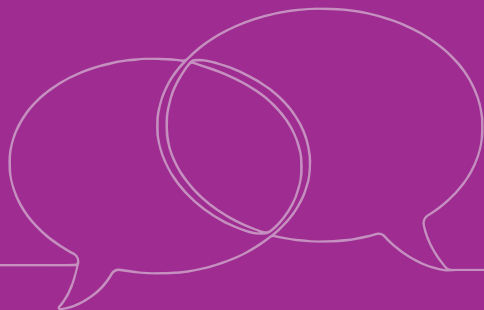
3.2 Improve community connection through inclusive programs.

Priority Four: Inclusion, Safety and Fairness

Goal – South Gippsland Shire Council fosters a culture of fairness, safety and inclusion through equitable policies, accessible services and behaviours that promote respect and wellbeing for all.

4.1 Strengthen inclusive workforce practices.

4.2 Promote community safety, inclusion and respect.



Priority One: Communication and Engagement

South Gippsland Shire Council communicates in accessible, inclusive and consistent ways, ensuring people with inclusion barriers can easily receive information and participate in engagement.

Strategy 1.1 – Improve the accessibility and clarity of Council communication materials.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Investigate options for providing closed captions on social media videos to improve accessibility.	Communicator	Ongoing	Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Promote venues where <i>Augmentative and Alternative Communication boards</i> are available.	Communicator	Year 1 to 3	Customer Experience
Review and update the kindergarten registration form to improve accessibility, clarity and use of plain English for families.	Communicator	Year 1	Children and Families
Add clear guidelines on accessible communication and using interpreters to the <i>staff intranet</i> .	Champion	Year 1	Customer Experience
Review and report on Council's Augmentative and Alternative Communication Boards to ensure information is relevant.	Collaborator	Year 3	Customer Experience

Strategy 1.2 – Strengthen community-facing information to increase awareness.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Incorporate Access and Inclusion information into 'In the Know' to support regular community awareness.	Communicator	Ongoing	Community Development Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Develop practical guidelines to help community groups understand what makes their activities accessible and use these to inform updates to the South Gippsland Community Directory.	Service Provider	Year 1	Community Development Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Review and update the existing recreation section of the Community Directory using an <i>accessibility lens</i> , including standard <i>accessibility questions</i> developed with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.	Collaborator	Year 1	Community Development
Publish and promote a local food relief list and improve accessibility information by adding a food relief category to the online Community Directory.	Service Provider	Year 1	Community Development
Encourage <i>community projects</i> to plan for accessibility and inclusion by adding this to the Community Grants Program Guidelines.	Champion	Year 1	Community Development
Develop a community awareness campaign encouraging people to respect disability parking spaces and comply with local laws.	Service Provider	Year 3	Community Safety Community Development

Strategy 1.3 – Ensure community engagement processes are inclusive.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Work in partnership with Bunurong and Gunaikurnai Traditional Custodians to strengthen relationships in readiness to support cultural recognition across Council facilities and publications.	Collaborator	Ongoing	Community Development
Share significant accessibility-related plans and projects to the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for feedback.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Develop organisation-wide engagement guidelines to support inclusive consultation with children, youth and families and carers across facilities, services and programs.	Communicator	Year 2 to 3	Community Development Children and Family Services



Priority Two: Council Environments that Support Inclusion

South Gippsland Shire Council-owned places, spaces and infrastructure are inclusive, safe and accessible.

Strategy 2.1 – Ensure public spaces and facilities support universal access.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Where possible, consider that open space and playgrounds offer inclusive, diverse and adventurous play experiences supporting children, families and carers of all abilities.	Champion Service Provider	Ongoing	Children and Families Open Space and Environment
New and redeveloped public spaces, walking and cycling paths and community facilities are designed to be child friendly, family friendly and accessible.	Champion Service Provider	Ongoing	Children and Families Open Space and Environment
Ensure access and inclusion are considered in the development and review of the Playground Strategy.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Open Space and Environment
Promote <i>sensory</i> gardens in South Gippsland and encourage the consideration of sensory elements and nature play in open space designs where possible.	Champion	Ongoing	Open Space and Environment
Deliver and maintain the accessible pontoon at Port Welshpool to support safe boating access for people of all abilities.	Service Provider	Year 1	Infrastructure Delivery

Strategy 2.2 – Improve accessibility across roads, paths and signage.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Advocate for Victorian Government funding to enable the Department of Transport and Planning to progress Stage 2 of the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Route. In addition to improving traffic flow, this would also improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians in the precinct and users of the Great Southern Rail Trail.	Champion	Ongoing	Regional Partnerships
Identify high-risk pedestrian locations and recommend improvements as opportunities and funding arise.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Investigate opportunities to close priority footpath gaps in townships.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Consider accessibility requirements when project planning.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Advocate for clearer, easy to read signage at local beaches, supporting accessibility and beach safety.	Champion	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy Community Development
Contribute to accessibility audits being undertaken by the <i>Step Outside and Move Your Way Initiatives</i> with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.	Collaborator	Year 1	Community Development

Strategy 2.3 – Strengthen accessible tourism, events and public experiences.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Investigate and deliver sensory-friendly approaches within arts and creative projects.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy
Ensure accessibility is considered and promoted across Council's digital visitor experience assets where possible.	Communicator	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Provide education to customer-facing teams on the locations of <i>Changing Places</i> facilities across South Gippsland and how they can be accessed.	Communicator	Year 1	Community Development
Contribute to and support a stock take of accessible tourism assets in South Gippsland.	Collaborator	Years 2 to 3	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy
Develop accessibility guidelines to support inclusive planning of Council and community events.	Service Provider	Years 2 to 3	Community Development



Priority Three: Healthy, Active and Connected Living

People with barriers to inclusion have equitable opportunities to participate, connect, contribute and feel valued in their community.

Strategy 3.1 – Support participation in sport and all forms of recreation (including the arts).

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Promote and share information about the <i>Sport4All</i> program to build inclusion in local sports clubs.	Communicator	Ongoing	Building and Recreation Assets Community Development
Support organisations that provide physical and creative recreation activities to deliver accessible programs for people experiencing participation barriers.	Collaborator	Ongoing	Building and Recreation Assets Community Development
Advocate for the continuation of the <i>Get Active Victoria</i> vouchers to support families.	Champion	Year 1	Building and Recreation Assets Community Development

Strategy 3.2 – Improve community connection through inclusive programs.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living, Healthy Eating.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Support and promote the <i>Choose Tap</i> campaign in Gippsland to encourage tap water use and highlight accessible drinking water points.	Champion	Ongoing	Community Development
Support people with disability to strengthen their <i>emergency preparedness</i> by collaborating with community organisations to enhance access to emergency information and training.	Champion	Years 1 and 2	Community Development
Consider accessibility and diversity when delivering ' <i>The First 72 Hours</i> ' program across the South Gippsland community, supporting people to create personalised emergency plans that suit their own individual needs and strengthen their resilience.	Service Provider	Years 2 and 3	Community Development



Priority Four: Inclusion, Safety and Fairness

South Gippsland Shire Council fosters a culture of fairness, safety and inclusion through equitable policies, accessible services and behaviours that promote respect and wellbeing for all people.

Strategy 4.1 – Strengthen inclusive workforce practices.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Deliver internal campaigns aligned with key health and wellbeing dates to promote awareness and inclusive practices.	Service Provider / Champion	Ongoing	People and Culture
Formalise South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through the development of an Inclusion and Belonging Framework.	Champion	Year 1	People and Culture Inclusion and Belonging Working Group Community Development
Integrate access and inclusion training into the onboarding experience.	Communicator / Collaborator	Year 1	People and Culture
Incorporate disability inclusion into the Compliance Training Framework.	Communicator	Year 1	People and Culture
Identify and provide access and inclusion training opportunities for employees to build understanding and confidence.	Service Provider	Year 1	People and Culture
Create clear, practical guidelines outlining <i>workplace accommodations</i> available to employees.	Regulator	Year 2	People and Culture

Strategy 4.2 – Promote community safety, inclusion and respect.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Preventing all forms of Violence, Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Coordinate accessible awareness campaigns and training about family violence in partnership with local groups.	Champion	Ongoing	Community Development
Investigate and install <i>interpreter</i> symbol stickers at Council venues where an interpreter is available.	Service Provider / Communicator	Year 1	Customer Experience



Development of the Action Plan

The development of this Access and Inclusion Action Plan was informed by a structured and collaborative process. Workshops were held to support the establishment of the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and to gather early insights that shaped the Plan's direction.

The Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee provided ongoing advice and expertise, particularly in relation to access and inclusion challenges and the actions required to address them. South Gippsland Shire Council also reviewed a range of Access and Inclusion and Disability Action Plans from other organisations to ensure alignment with best practice and legislative requirements. Internally, teams across Council contributed to refining the scope and finalising the actions to ensure they were practical, achievable and responsive to community needs.

A draft of the Plan was then provided to the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for review, and their feedback played a critical role in strengthening the final Plan and ensuring it reflects a clear, community-informed pathway for advancing access and inclusion across South Gippsland.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

Implementation

Implementation of the Access and Inclusion Action Plan is a shared responsibility across South Gippsland Shire Council. Each action identifies a lead team, with other departments contributing where relevant. The Action Plan will be delivered gradually, in line with Council's priorities and available resources.

South Gippsland Shire Council will support implementation by:

- Promoting awareness of the Plan across the organisation;
- Providing guidance and resources to staff;
- Considering access and inclusion in relevant projects, plans and processes; and
- Encouraging collaboration across teams to support consistent practice.

Monitoring

The Community Development team will oversee the monitoring of this Action Plan. Monitoring aims to give a clear picture of progress and help teams deliver actions in a supportive and achievable way. Monitoring will include:

- Keeping a central record of all actions and their status;
- Having an annual progress touch base with internal teams;
- Sharing updates with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and inviting feedback; and
- Identifying any challenges that may affect timelines and making adjustments if needed.

Reporting

An annual progress report on the Action Plan will be prepared to complement the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan reporting. This report will show how actions are tracking and identify what has been achieved during the year.

Each action will be given a traffic-light status to make progress easy to understand:

- Green (completed) – the action has been delivered.
- Orange (in progress) – the action is underway.
- Red (yet to commence) – the action has not started.

The annual snapshot report may also include:

- A summary of key achievements and improvements.
- Any challenges that affected progress.
- Actions or areas that need extra focus in the next year.
- Feedback or advice from the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- Any recommended changes to timelines, responsibilities or actions if needed.

Authorising Environment

South Gippsland Shire Council has clear responsibilities under Victorian, Australian and international legislation to ensure that people with a disability can fully participate in community life.

These laws guide the development of our Access and Inclusion Action Plan and ensure our approach is consistent, rights-based and aligned with best practice.

The following table outlines the key Victorian, Australian and international legislation that shapes and supports this work.

State (Victoria)	National (Australia)	International
Disability Act 2006 (Vic)	Disability Discrimination Act 1992	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)	National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013	
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031	
Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022 to 2026		



Definitions

Word	Definition
Accessibility lens	Looking at a plan, design or activity to check if it is easy for everyone to use, including people with a disability or other barriers.
Accessible	Something that can be used, understood or entered by everyone, including people with a disability. This includes physical spaces, information, services and activities.
Advocate	A person who speaks up for themselves or others to support their rights, needs or interests.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) boards	A board with symbols or pictures that helps people communicate if speaking is difficult.
Accessibility Questions	Questions that may be asked to understand user experience, for example does the building have a ramp?
Barrier to inclusion	Anything that makes it hard for a person to take part. Barriers can be physical, social, communication, cultural or digital.
Captioning / Closed captions	Words on a video that show what is being said or what sounds are happening.
Champion	A person or group that actively supports and promotes accessibility and inclusion within an organisation or community.
Changing Places	A type of accessible toilet designed for people with high support needs. It includes extra space and specialist equipment such as a height-adjustable change table and hoist.
Co-design	Working together with people who have lived experience of disability to plan, design or improve services, facilities or programs.
Collaborate	To work together with others, such as community members, organisations or partners, to achieve shared goals.

Communicate	To share information in ways that are clear, accessible and easy to understand. This may include spoken, written, visual or digital communication.
Community engagement	Ways Council talks and listens to the community to help make decisions.
Compliance Training Framework	A structured strategy an organisation uses to educate employees on internal policies.
Council	South Gippsland Shire Council – a local government organisation that works to improve the community.
Discrimination	Treating a person unfairly or differently because of disability or another personal characteristic.
Emergency preparedness	Getting ready for emergencies by having a plan, information and support.
Family Violence	Any behaviour that causes physical, emotional or psychological harm to someone within a family or intimate relationship. It includes controlling behaviour, threats and isolation.
First 72 Hours Program	A program that helps people prepare for emergencies by planning how they will manage on their own for up to three days if emergency services can't reach them.
Inclusion	Making sure everyone feels welcome, valued and able to participate, regardless of disability or other differences.
Inclusive design / Universal design	Designing something so it can be used by as many people as possible without needing changes.
Interpreter / Interpreter symbol	A person who helps people communicate by translating spoken language or signing. The interpreter symbol shows that this service is available.
Intranet	A private website or online space that only staff can access. It's used to share information, documents and updates within an organisation.
Low income	Having less money than most people and not enough to easily pay for everyday needs.

Sensory-friendly	Activities, spaces or events designed to reduce noise, lights or other things that might overwhelm someone. These environments can help people feel safer, calmer and more confident, particularly those with sensory sensitivities, anxiety or cognitive changes, including people living with dementia.
Service provider	An organisation or person that delivers services or support to the community.
Sport4All	A nationwide Australian initiative, developed with Dylan Alcott's Get Skilled Access and funded by the Australian Government, aimed at making community sports clubs and schools more inclusive for people with disabilities.
Sport and Recreation	What people choose to do in their free time for enjoyment and wellbeing such as playing sport, dancing, making music, acting in theatre, creating art or taking part in other fun activities.
Step Outside and Move Your Way	An awareness campaign focused on promoting tracks and trails to those who experience barriers to participation.
Support	Help provided to enable people to participate, access services or meet their needs. This can include physical assistance, information, programs or resources.
Workplace accommodations	Changes or supports that help an employee do their job well, such as flexible hours, equipment or adjustments.

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