

Melbourne East Region Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy

2024

Review Year: 2028

Local Government Authorities:

Knox City Council

Manningham City Council

Maroondah City Council

Monash City Council

Whitehorse City Council

Yarra Ranges Council

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Melbourne East Region Councils acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong people as the Traditional Owners and original custodians of this land, and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Melbourne East Region Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy (the Policy) addresses known barriers experienced by women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people in accessing and using community sports and recreation infrastructure.

The Policy aims to progressively build the capacity and capabilities of the Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy (MERSRS) Group and associated stakeholders in identifying and eliminating systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery and allocation of community sports and recreation infrastructure.

This policy has been developed in response to the 2022-2032 MERSRS recommendation to implement the Victorian Government Fair Access Policy Roadmap consistently across the region.

The Policy provides a consistent platform for the integration of the requirements of the Gender Equality Act 2020, the Local Government Act 2020 and Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 across the eastern region Councils.

1.2 Scope

The scope of the Policy is to support the Melbourne East Region Councils to take positive action towards achieving gender equality in the access and usage of community sports and recreation infrastructure. The MERSRS Group of Councils will take the necessary and proportionate steps towards implementing the Policy.

For the purposes of this Policy, the Melbourne East Region includes the following Local Government Authorities:

- Knox City Council
- Manningham City Council
- Maroondah City Council
- Monash City Council
- Whitehorse City Council
- Yarra Ranges Council.

1.3 Corporate framework

Local Government strategic and policy alignment with State Government legislation and policy on gender equality in sport and recreation is critical to a regional response to the issue.

The Policy responds to the following Federal Government and State Government gender equality legislation and policy and Local Government strategies:

- Federal Government legislation – Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- State Government legislation – Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, Equal Opportunity Act 2010, Gender Equality Act 2020
- State Government Policy – Fair Access Policy Roadmap 2022
- Council Strategic Plans and Policies – Health and Wellbeing Plan, Recreation and Open Space Strategy, Gender Equality Action Plan, Inclusion and Access Policy
- Regional Strategic Plan and Policy – Melbourne East Regional Sport and Recreation Strategy 2022
- Council Child Safe Policy and Statement - Child Safe Standards, Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005.

2 Background

The seven Local Government Authorities that make up the Melbourne East Region have developed an overarching Melbourne East Region Sport and Recreation Fair Access Policy (the Policy) together with supporting resources to facilitate equitable access and allocation of community sport and recreation infrastructure. The Policy is also intended to help identify and eliminate systemic causes of gender inequality in programming, policies and strategies and to help ensure the equitable distribution of community sports and recreation infrastructure.

Sport is a highly visible and valued feature of Melbourne East Region's culture and identity. The sport and active recreation sector provide opportunities for enriching our communities through the promotion of respect and fair-mindedness for all people while also supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of all Victorians. The Melbourne East Region is well positioned to design and implement place-based gender equality in community sport and recreation.

2.1 Policy context

As a defined entity of the Gender Equality Act 2020, all councils will be required from 31 March 2021 to conduct Gender Impact Assessments (GIA) on all new policies, programs, communications, and services, including those up for review, which directly and significantly impact the public (Gender Equality Act 2020). The access and use of community sports and recreation infrastructure is an example of a policy that directly and significantly impacts the public.

Key reasons for the Fair Access Policy:

- MERSRS has identified a need to improve participation for all genders and abilities to improve the health and well-being of the community. To do this a Fair Access Policy is required which focuses on infrastructure, programs and governance.
- Overall participation trends show an increase in women and girls', transgender and gender diverse people participating across sport and recreation activities, including improved development pathways and competition structures. However, some sport specific trends still indicate low levels of women and girls', transgender and gender diverse people participation, and support is needed to reverse this trend.
- Women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people continue to face barriers to accessing or participating in sport and active recreation.
- State Government policy mandate for all Local Government Authorities requiring a Fair Access Policy to access State Government funding opportunities effective from 1 July 2024.
- A partnership approach with State Sporting Associations, local sports associations and leagues and local sport and active recreation clubs is important to improve gender equality in sport and active recreation.

3 Policy statement

Melbourne East Region Councils acknowledge:

- The disadvantaged position some individuals have had in the sport and recreation sector because of their gender and gender identity.
- Achieving gender equality will require diverse and intersectional approaches from Councils, State Sporting Associations, local sports associations and leagues, and local sports and active recreation clubs to achieve similar outcomes for people of all genders.

3.1 Statement of Intent

This Statement of Intent establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future Melbourne East Region Councils' planning, policy, service delivery and practice related to community sports infrastructure.

- The Melbourne East Region Councils recognise that gender equality is attaining equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and girls, men and boys, transgender and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women and girls, men and boys, transgender and gender-diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
- The Melbourne East Region Councils recognise that gender equity is the provision of fairness and justice in distributing benefits and responsibilities based on gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and powers related to their gender, and these differences should be identified and addressed to rectify gender-related imbalances.

3.2 Vision

Women and Girls, Transgender and Gender Diverse People in Melbourne East Region will have equal participation, access, power, and resources in sport.

3.3 Objectives

Policy objectives include:

- Participation opportunities are inclusive for all.
- There is access to safe facilities and welcoming sport environments.
- Women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people have power and representation in leadership and decision making.
- Resources are distributed in a fair and transparent manner
- Addressing intersectionality through design and participation.
- Eliminating systemic causes of gender inequality and discrimination across the seven Melbourne East Region Councils' sport and recreation services.
- Women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people will be treated with respect and fairness.

3.4 Policy principles

The Policy Framework aligns with the State Government's six guiding principles under the Fair Access Policy Roadmap. These are:

- Principle 1 – Infrastructure
- Principle 2 – Roles in Sport
- Principle 3 – Allocation and Scheduling
- Principle 4 – Leadership
- Principle 5 – Culture and Environment
- Principle 6 – Reward, Celebrate and Prioritise.

Principle 1 – Infrastructure

The aim of this principle is for community sports and active recreation infrastructure to be genuinely welcoming, safe and inclusive.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Undertaking Gender Impact Assessments as part of the functional audit community sports and active recreation infrastructure and to inform future design.

- Prioritising capital works budgets that increase and improve safe access to community sports and active recreation infrastructure, i.e., gender-neutral change rooms, upgraded security lighting, etc.
- Showcasing and communicating community sports and active recreation infrastructure that support women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people participation in sport.
- Advocacy to State Government for funding to support delivering gender equality initiatives.

Principle 2 – Roles in Sport

The aim of this principle is for women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people to be encouraged to participate in all aspects of community sport and active recreation including as a player, coach, administrator, official, volunteer and spectator.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Collecting categorised participation data by gender on the use of Councils' community sports and active recreation infrastructure through lease and licenses processes.
- Set targets for women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people participation in sport to close the participation gap compared to that of boys and men.
- Long-term investment into programs targeting women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people participation with a view to creating ongoing sustainable programs.
- Partner with peak sporting bodies and local community representative organisations for target groups such as, LGBTIQ+, cultural and linguistically diverse and First Nations people and tailor community sport and active recreation programs to meet their needs.

Principle 3 - Allocation and Scheduling

The aim of this principle is for women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people to have fair access to and use of community sport and recreation infrastructure which is of the highest quality, at the most convenient location and times and includes new opportunities and sports.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Collecting categorised usage data by gender for use of Councils' community sports and active recreation infrastructure through lease, license and booking processes.
- Developing or updating an allocation policy/framework which provides equal access to community sport and active recreation infrastructure. This should consider and promote ground rotation for training and games across all teams to ensure equitable access to the different standards of facilities.

- Collaborating with peak sporting bodies and local sports clubs and associations/leagues to ensure community sport and active recreation infrastructure is provided to women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people to the standard of infrastructure appropriate for the level of competition.
- Consulting with women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people to understand their preferred training and game facility and time preferences to influence scheduling by local sports associations/leagues and peak sporting bodies.
- Where demand exceeds supply, prioritising access to community sporting venues for clubs who demonstrate inclusive practices on and off field.

Principle 4 – Leadership

The aim of this principle is for women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people to be equitably represented in leadership and governance roles.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Collecting categorised data of leadership positions by gender of community sports and active recreation organisations.
- Setting targets for women in leadership positions. Specifically, Committee members and coaches.
- Partnering with peak sporting bodies and local sporting associations to facilitate access to governance training and development programs for women.
- Promoting organisational recruitment practices and processes that increase women in leadership positions.
- Showcasing women in decision-making positions and the outcomes they achieve.
- Encouraging clubs to have a discussion with women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people on facilitating a pathway that encourages them to take on a leadership position, i.e., Times of committee meetings, training and mentoring support, place of meeting, etc.
- Sharing consultation outcomes with peak sporting bodies and local sporting associations to support /influence women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people participation in leadership roles.

Principle 5 – Culture and Environment

The aim of this principle is to encourage and support all user groups who access community sport and active recreation infrastructure to understand, adopt and implement gender equitable access and use practices that are genuinely welcoming, safe and inclusive.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Using the Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool and Gender Action Plans to guide and inform change in club culture and environment so it is welcoming, safe and inclusive.
- Partnering with peak sporting bodies in delivering club training and development programs i.e., Bystander training
- Changing the “look and feel” of community sport and active recreation places to recognise and celebrate the inclusion of all genders, abilities, and cultures. This may include allocation policy updates, updating the décor in clubs, including women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people on honour boards and having safe alcohol free, family friendly gatherings at clubs.

Principle 6 – Reward, Celebrate and Prioritise

The aim of this principle is to prioritise access, use and support to all user groups who demonstrate ongoing commitment to gender equitable access and use of allocated infrastructure.

Examples of how this principle may be implemented:

- Incentivising fair access to community sport and active recreation infrastructure, i.e., financial, recognition and reward, prioritisation of capital works, etc.
- Prioritising grant programs that support investment in women and girls, transgender and gender diverse people participation.
- Promoting and reward community sport and active recreation organisations, that demonstrate commitment to gender equality outcomes e.g., Sport and Leisure Awards.
- Seeking out and partner with organisations and clubs, to market and promote fair access through all media platforms.

4 Policy Review and Evaluation

Melbourne East Region Councils continue to undertake Gender Impact Assessments of new and reviewed policies, programs and services that directly and significantly impact the community, in line with the Gender Equality Act 2020.

Assessing current policies and processes has identified opportunities to develop or strengthen gender-equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Policy principles. The Policy will be reviewed every four years by the MERSRS Steering Committee.

Each council will implement the Policy principles into relevant sports and recreation infrastructure policies (new and updated), programs, frameworks and communications.

5 Definitions

Term	Definition
Committees	<p>For the purposes of this document, refers to committees of local sports clubs, local sports associations and leagues or reserve committees.</p> <p>Reserve committees include Committees of Management appointed by the Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 to manage recreation reserves.</p> <p>Reserve committees include Community Asset Committees appointed by Local Council under the Local Government Act 2020 to manage recreation reserves.</p>
Community Sports Infrastructure	Publicly owned local, rural, regional, or state-level sport and recreation infrastructure operated and maintained primarily for the purpose of facilitating community sport activities, including sporting grounds, surfaces, facilities, and pavilions.
Gender	How you understand who you are and how you interact with other people. Many people understand their gender as being a man or woman. Some people understand their gender as a mix of these or neither. A person's gender and their expression of their gender can be shown in different ways, such as through behaviour or physical appearance.
Gender Diverse	An umbrella term for a range of genders expressed in different ways. Gender diverse people use many terms to describe themselves. Language in this area is dynamic, particularly among young people, who are more likely to describe themselves as non-binary.
Gender Equality	The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and girls, men and boys, trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does

Term	Definition
	not mean that women and girls, men and boys, trans and gender-diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
Gender Equity	The provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities based on gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and powers related to their gender, and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender-related imbalances.
Gender Impact Assessment, or GIA	A requirement under the Gender Equality Act 2020 to be carried out on policies, programs and services which have a direct and significant impact on the public. The assessment must evaluate the effects that a policy, program or service may have on people of different genders.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality is a term that helps us understand the multiple interacting influences of a person's identity, including but not limited to ethnicity, gender, disability, education, geographic location, sexual orientation, culture, religion, mental health, social class and age. These different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. It is important to acknowledge that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.
Transgender	Someone whose gender does not only align with the one assigned at birth. Not all trans people will use this term to describe themselves.
Women and Girls	For the context of this policy, women and girls refers to females and describe the various stages of life and development within the context of age.