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| POLICY LOCATION | Community Development | POLICY TITLE | Fair Access Policy |
| POLICY NUMBER | 1 | DATE ADOPTED | DRAFT – MARCH 2024 |
| REVISION NUMBER | Nil – New Policy | REVISION DATE | June 2025 |

Purpose

The Buloke Shire Council Fair Access Policy (the Policy) has been developed in response to the Victorian Government’s Fair Access Policy Roadmap, which seeks to address known barriers experienced by women and girls in accessing and using community sports infrastructure. The Policy aims to progressively build capacity and capabilities of the Buloke Shire Council (Council) in the identification, and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services in relation to community sports infrastructure.

The Buloke Shire Council will undertake take the necessary and proportionate steps towards implementation of the Fair Access Policy.

Background

Sport is a highly visible and valued feature of Buloke Shire Council’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. Buloke Shire Council is well positioned to design and implement place-based, integrated action plans that progress gender equality in community sport.

Alongside the Victorian Government, Council is committed to developing an environment for all to live in a safe and equal society, have access to equal power, resources, and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. A reform agenda has been developed to change the systems that have perpetuated gender inequality by designing an enduring structure that requires implementation and tracking of progress over time.

This reform agenda includes addressing the traditional structures and the way community sport and recreation organisations operate through the implementation all nine (9) recommendations from the *2015 Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation*. This includes recommendation six (6):

“...encourage facility owners and managers to review access and usage policies to ensure women and girls have a fair share of access to the highest quality facilities at the best and most popular times”

and

“facilitating a universal adoption of policies, strategies and audit tools that will drive change further”

As a defined entity of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, from 31 March 2021 Council must 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 infrastructure is an example of policy that has a direct and significant impact on the public.

Definitions

Committees of Management

For the purposes of this document, refers to committees appointed by the Department of Land, Water, Environment and Planning under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* to manage recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.

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, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and 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 power 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.

Public land management groups

For the purposes of this document, are the Committees of Management appointed under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and responsible for the management of recreation reserves where community sport training and games are held.

Transgender, or trans

Someone whose gender does not only align with the one assigned at birth. Not all trans people will use this term to describe themselves.

Policy Statement

This Policy establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all of Council's current and future planning, policy, service delivery and practice as they relate to community sports infrastructure.

- a. Buloke Shire Council recognises that gender equality is the attainment of equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women, men, trans and gender diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men, trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on their gender.
- b. Buloke Shire Council recognises that gender equity is 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 power related to their gender and these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

Scope

The Policy enables effective and efficient integration of the requirements of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the *Local Government Act 2020* and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* and other legislative frameworks.

The scope of the Policy is to support Council to take positive action towards achieving gender equity in the access and usage of community sports infrastructure. This complies with the *Gender Equality Act 2020* and aligns with Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

This policy aims to build capacity and capabilities of Council in the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in our policies, programs, communications and delivery of those services relating to community sport and recreation. It ensures an effective place-based response for gender equitable use and access to local community sports infrastructure.

For the Buloke Shire Council, this policy applies to the community sports infrastructure that is owned or managed by Council and of which is a beneficiary of Council's recreation allocation funding program. Any infrastructure that is not owned or managed by Council falls outside of the scope of this policy. Council is committed to working alongside the owners and managers (including the State Government via the Dept of Energy, Environment and Climate Action/DEECA) of any other recreational based facilities within the Buloke Shire to support compliance with the Fair Access Policy Roadmap and consistency for our community.

Appendix 1 sets out the infrastructure within the scope of this Policy.

Policy Framework

The Policy is designed to comply with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, and the wider Victorian Government gender equality strategy.

Council acknowledges:

- the disadvantaged position some individuals have had in the sport and recreation sector because of their gender; and
- that achieving gender equality will require diverse approaches for women, men, trans and gender diverse people to achieve similar outcomes for people of all genders.

Council will:

- engage fairly and equitably with all staff, governance working groups, state sporting organisations, regional sport assemblies (where applicable) and members of our sport and recreation community, regardless of their gender, in a positive, respectful, and constructive manner; and
- engage in the process of gender impact assessments to assess the implications for women, men, trans and gender diverse people of any planned action, including policies and communications. This is a strategy for making all voices, concerns and experiences, an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring of policies and programs.

References

Fair Access Principles

The Fair Access Principles have been developed by the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Victoria and VicHealth, in consultation with representatives from local government and the state sport and recreation sector. This Policy and any resultant action plan are based on six (6) principles of inclusivity, full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality.

Council considers that these principles provide clear direction, while also enabling adaption to the specific environment of *the* Buloke Shire area.

Other Related Legislation and Plans:

Gender Equality Act 2020

Local Government Act 2020

Equal Opportunity Act 2010

Gender Equality Action Plan (Buloke Shire Council)

Inclusiveness Plan (Buloke Shire Council)



Figure 1: Fair Access six (6) principles

Compliance and Monitoring

Actions

Council commits to undertake a GIA on all current community sports infrastructure access and use policies and processes, and to consider opportunities to strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles.

If the process of assessing current policies and processes identifies opportunities to develop or strengthen gender equitable access and use of community sports facilities in alignment with the Fair Access Principles, Council commits to developing and adopting a locally relevant gender equitable access and use policy and action plan no later than 1 October 2024.

Council acknowledges that the requirement to have a gender equitable access and use policy and action plan (or equivalent) in place, and the ability to demonstrate progress against that policy and action plan (or equivalent), will form part of the eligibility criteria for Victorian Government funding programs relating to community sports infrastructure from 1 July 2024.

Council has also identified specific actions to progress gender equitable access and use of community sports infrastructure in its Fair Access Action Plan.

Responsibility

Council’s Senior Executive Team, the Coordinator Community Facilities and Manager Community Development are responsible for implementing the Buloke Shire Council’s Fair Access Policy. All management personnel, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders within Council and the Buloke Shire local government area, have a shared responsibility to support the policy, as outlined in the table below.

| Role | Responsibility |
|--|---|
| All Council personnel, volunteers and stakeholders, Community Leaders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote a gender-aware and gender-responsive culture and community and championing the Fair Access Policy. To promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women and girls in sport and active recreation. |
| Council Senior Officers and relevant Council personnel Nominated Committee members/ leaders within stakeholder groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the review of sport and recreation policies and process Develop and adopt gender equitable access and use policies To communicate policy updates to all staff and members To monitor compliance and issues To promote, encourage and facilitate the achievement of gender equality and improvement in the status of women and girls Support the undertaking of Gender Impact Assessment and submission of progress reports as per the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> obligations |
| Council Senior Officers and relevant Council personnel Nominated Committee members/ leaders within stakeholder groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the review of sport and recreation policies and processes Support the formal adoption process of a new or revised gender equitable policies Undertake Gender Impact Assessment and submission of progress reports as per the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> obligations |
| Council Senior Officers and relevant Council personnel Nominated Committee members/ leaders within stakeholder groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To communicate and educate sport and recreation infrastructure user groups and users. |
| Council Senior Officers and relevant Council personnel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To adhere to and communicate the policy when required. To attend training / awareness programs. |

Consultation

Council Consultation

Councillors have been briefed and consulted on the Fair Access Roadmap and are invited to contribute to the further development, review and progress of this draft Fair Access Policy.

Staff Consultation

The draft Fair Access Policy is to be circulated to Council staff with an offer to contribute and provide feedback on both the draft Policy and draft Fair Access Action Plan.

Community Consultation

Community groups, volunteers and the wider Buloke Shire community will be invited to review and contribute to the further development of Council's draft Fair Access Policy and draft Action Plan.

Policy Review

The draft Fair Access Policy and Fair Access Action Plan will be monitored and then reviewed over the period of the first year of its implementation with a due date of June 2025 for the completion of the review.

Appendix 1: Relevant Community Sports Infrastructure and Assets

Asset Category:

(note: this Policy excludes any school sporting facilities located on land controlled by the Department of Education and Training)

- Recreation and sporting social rooms/club houses
- Indoor sports stadiums
- Outdoor sporting fields/grounds and sporting reserves
- Tennis Courts
- Aquatic facilities
- Golf Courses & Golf precincts
- Skate Parks
- Cricket pitches and outdoor cricket practice net facilities
- Netball Courts
- Bowling Greens
- Bike/pump track facilities
- Croquet facilities
- Squash facilities
- Outdoor gym facilities
- Indoor gym facilities
- Racing and equestrian facilities