
Moreland City Council
June 2015

Introduction and Background
Moreland City Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the eight-year review of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

The City of Moreland comprises twelve inner and mid-northern suburbs located in the north west of Melbourne. It lies between four and 14 kilometres north of central Melbourne, and covers a diverse range of communities. Moreland is a community in transition. In 2013, Moreland’s estimated population was 160,029 and this is projected to rise by over 30 per cent by 2036. This population growth will be accompanied by structural changes in Moreland’s economy and urban fabric.

The Council Plan 2013–17 commits to upholding the human rights of Moreland’s diverse community through a number of avenues, including: the Statement of Commitment to Women; the Multicultural Policy and Action Plan; The Disability Action Plan; Access and Inclusion Policy; Family Violence Prevention Strategy; Reconciliation Policy; and the and the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Moreland’s vision is of a city where the human rights of all are upheld. In the coming years Council and the Moreland Neighbourhood House Network commits to support projects that promote social inclusion such as the Recognise Campaign and others which have the potential to establish and strengthen connections between local groups within the municipality. Council and organisations representing migrant and refugee communities will continue to support the full participation of asylum seekers and refugees in the Moreland community.

Moreland City Council Human Rights and Inclusion Policy
In 2014 Council began developing a Human Rights and Inclusion Policy that will underpin previously separate but complementary strategies and action plans.

Council is already committed to supporting access, inclusion, diversity and equity through policies such as the Access and Inclusion (Disability) Policy, Multicultural Policy, Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Australians and Statement of Commitment to Women.

The proposed new Human Rights and Inclusion Policy will strengthen current social policies by bringing these stand-alone policies together under one holistic, human rights-based policy with stronger links to Australia’s Human Rights Framework 2010, the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and associated frameworks. The Policy will also incorporate Council’s policy position in relation to Moreland’s Gay Lesbian Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (GLBTIQ) community.
This Policy will provide a framework to assist Council in providing leadership and advocacy in these areas and will guide staff in delivering accessible, equitable and inclusive facilities, services, events and activities to the whole of our community.

The goals of the Human Rights and Inclusion Policy are to:

- Support Moreland City Council to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the whole community;
- Deliver facilities, services and activities that are accessible to all citizens; and
- Celebrate our diverse community as a welcoming and safe place in which all citizens can participate in community life.

Recommendations

Council programs and policies support the rights contained in the Charter as well as additional rights through advocacy across these areas. They are based on the international covenants and conventions to which the Australian Government is a signatory. Council does not have the scope to control the fulfilment of all human rights and social justice goals. However, Council believes that as part of this review of the Charter that these rights should be considered for inclusion in the Charter.

Based on Council's existing commitments as outlined in the existing plans, policies and strategies Council recommends that the review should be used as an opportunity to strengthen the Victorian Charter. The general orientation of the review should be to strengthen rather than limit the legal protection of human rights in Victoria. Council believes that the Charter should strengthen the protections in the following areas:

Gender and Sexuality

Council is committed to equity of access to opportunities for women and the participation at all levels of decision making in the community. Council aims to create an environment which advances women's health and wellbeing. Council is committed to promote opportunities that foster women's economic independence.

Council is also committed to ensuring that Moreland is a safe and welcoming city for the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) community and importantly we will strive to ensure that our services are accessible to and appropriate to the needs of our GLBTI residents and visitors. Council has demonstrated a strong public commitment to inclusiveness and its staff works with all people, including those who identify as members of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender and Intersex community (GLBTI). Council had public presence at the Victorian Midsumma Carnival and Pride March both in 2013 and 2014. Among a number of other actions focused on the community and staff Council celebrates the annual International Day Against Homophobia with a rainbow flag raising ceremony. Council follows the example of several other Victorian Councils including City of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast Shire, Hepburn Shire, Hobsons Bay, Yarra City Council and City of Melbourne who have recently passed resolutions to support marriage equality.

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Self Determination Indigenous Recognition
Moreland City Council’s vision for reconciliation is a world where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are recognised as the First Nation peoples, their culture is promoted and Indigenous and non-indigenous people work in partnership to close the gap in regards to Indigenous health, social and economic wellbeing. Council’s Reconciliation Action Plan supports campaigns for Aboriginal people’s rights, especially to land and native title to land. In particular Council has commitment to a national Treaty that enshrines the rights of Aboriginal Australians. ²

Housing and Shelter
Everyone has the right to safe, secure, affordable, accessible and appropriate housing and shelter and to live there in peace and dignity. The Moreland Affordable Housing Strategy 2014–2018 ³ is based on the recognition that access to safe and secure housing is a basic human right, protected by a number of international treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a party to all these treaties, Australia is under legal and moral obligations to promote, protect and realise the human rights of all people who are living in, or eligible, for social housing.

Council interprets affordable, accessible and appropriate housing as a social justice issue. This view is embedded across many strategic Council documents: The Council Plan 2013-2017, the Moreland Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2013–2017, the Moreland Affordable Housing Strategy 2006 and structure plans for the Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy Activity Centres. In practice this means that Council’s commitment to diversity and support for many vulnerable groups in the community require opportunities for social mix and connection through their housing options.

Discrimination Across Life Stages
Council is committed to ensuring the Early Years Strategy ⁴ reflects the four principles in the Victorian Human Rights Charter of Respect, Freedom, Equality and Dignity. The following principles have informed the Early Years Strategy: Respect for the unique needs of the infant; Respect for identity and individual circumstance and need; respect for the rights of children and their participation in decision making; commitment to the provision of timely, appropriate and accessible services; commitment to professional collaboration in the interests of the child; acknowledgement that early detection and intervention enhances outcomes for infants and children; acknowledgement that strong and supportive communities enhance the lives of children and families; and a commitment to engage parents in their child’s learning and development.

Disability Discrimination
Moreland City Council is committed to promote and increase access and participation to ensure the community and workforce reflects and represents people with disability. The


Submission to the Review of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities
Access and Inclusion Policy\textsuperscript{5} and the annual Disability Action Plan outlines the role Council will take in building increasingly accessible communities so that people with disability can exercise their rights as equal citizens. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities identifies the human rights of people with disability, and the obligation of countries that are signatories to the Convention to promote and protect these rights. Its purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and freedoms for people with a disability, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

\textit{Discrimination Against Ethnic and Cultural Minorities}

The aim of Council's Multicultural Policy and Action Plan 2011–2015 is to progress a whole of Council approach that contributes to inclusive and empowered communities\textsuperscript{6}. This reflects Council’s commitment to collaboration and innovation in responding effectively to the needs and aspirations of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Council’s research shows that recent migrant and second generation migrants, experience high level of discrimination, particularly in job-seeking\textsuperscript{7}. In this regard, it would be useful to have the key messages of the Charter to reach private companies, in particular for awareness strategies for the real estate industry in order to address the discrimination against refugees and migrants in the rental market.

At present Council is responding to request from Islamic women living in Fawkner area regarding racially motivated incidents. Local impacts of international events have created an atmosphere of fear for both Islamic and non Islamic residents. Council was been made aware of the need for human rights education for both communities and service providers at a public meeting in November 2014 and attended by over 150 women.

Our local Islamic communities are also fearful of increasing human rights violations related to the heightened level of concerns about the threat of terror attacks and Australians travelling to participate in civil conflicts overseas. The women are particularly concerned about protection of young people and children. They also report of daily harassment of women who are wearing a head scarf. There is a need for human rights education within this context, not only for those who are victims but also for service providers, police and general community.

Council has entered in to a partnership with the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet to administer a substantial project in response to need to promote social cohesion and to implement action against racial vilification via a funded project. The project will include bystander action against racism. Council recommends that VHEOC allocates resources and engages with local and state government local communities regarding the issues mentioned. We recommend that VEOHC allocate resources to respond to community issues and concerns by partnering with local and state government organisations.

