Equally Active Policy

Date adopted: << insert Day Month Year >>
Responsible Service Area: << Insert Service Area >>

Purpose

The Equally Active Policy articulates Council's position in relation to advancing gender equity in sport and recreation and, to undertake initiatives to change the physical, social, and attitudinal environments that support women and girls to be active.

Council's vision for more active women and girls in Maroondah

In Maroondah, women and girls will have equal opportunity to undertake sport and recreational physical activity in environments where they feel welcomed, supported and safe.

Background / Context

Council's 2015 - 2020 Physical Activity Strategy highlighted women as a specific population which would require targeted actions to make a positive impact on the reported low activity levels. It is well documented that significantly fewer women than men do enough weekly physical activity to maintain optimal health and are much less likely to participate in organised sport. In Maroondah, participation rates illustrate that regular active recreation declines substantially for women and girls from the age of 15, declining to only 14% of women aged 35 to 44 years who meet the National Physical Activity Guidelines.

There are many barriers to women and girls' regular involvement in sport and active recreation, including time pressures, body image concerns, real and/or perceived fear of judgement, lack of opportunity, unsuitable amenities and family responsibilities. Participation in regular sporting or active recreational pursuits is proven to be of great benefit to both participants' physical and mental health and can be extremely valuable in the context of social inclusion and integration.

In the past 5 years, Maroondah has experienced unprecedented growth in girls' participation in traditionally male dominated sports of soccer, AFL & cricket due to increased media, campaigns and investment in programs and infrastructure at a Federal, State and local level. While Council will continue to prioritise the upgrading of infrastructure to cater for the needs of women, the projected increase and sustained growth of women and girls' participation will be dependent on improved governance structures, strong leadership, equitable sport scheduling and facility access and safe, inclusive club environments. Implementing initiatives to achieve gender equitable sporting environments will require a strategic approach to ensure these girls entering sporting clubs continue long term participation through teen years into adulthood.

Council currently allocates sportgrounds to clubs on a seasonal basis and affords clubs the autonomy to allocate the distribution of hours and venues to teams within their club. Council does not currently have a mechanism to gauge whether clubs are utilising this autonomy to be fair and equitable in the scheduling of training and matches, particularly the premier grounds and optimal times.

The 2015 Victorian Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation highlighted that women often feel reluctant to participate in boards, committees, and other leadership roles in strongly male-dominated environments. Even women holding leadership positions often reported feeling intimidated or treated in a dismissive way. Supporting initiatives to increase the gender balance in coaching and leadership positions will continue to enhance the engagement of women and girls in all aspects of sporting environments.

Scope

For the purposes of this Policy, physical activity refers to both sports and active recreation participation and both organised and non-structured activities. The Policy is limited to community sports and recreation provision acknowledging that Council has limited influence over the activities of private providers.

This Policy does not specifically address gender diversity, however acknowledges that in achieving a safe, inclusive and gender equitable environment the needs of trans & gender diverse people should always be considered.

All policy statements are developed in context with, and aligned to, a wide range of adopted Maroondah City Council strategies, plans and research.

Objectives

The objectives of the Policy are to:

- Identify Council's position in relation to advancing the gender equitable investment in, and usage of, sporting infrastructure.
- Recognise that affirmative measures are required to be put in place to overcome structural barriers and to address inhibitors that prevent inclusion, participation and access to resources and opportunities.
- Facilitate the continued work with partners to ensure collaboration and alignment of initiatives to promote equity in sport delivery and access to recreation opportunities.
- Acknowledge that Council will invest resources in more than sport to ensure optimal conditions and systems to support women and girls of different ages, abilities and backgrounds to be engaged in physical activity.

Policy Principles

Everyone is entitled to basic human rights such as social inclusion, equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination.

Council will work with sport & recreation providers and review infrastructure provision to ensure services are accessible and inclusive so that women and girls in Maroondah have access to the same opportunities, rights and respect, regardless of their gender.

Council will seek to prevent violence and discrimination by creating and promoting an environment where people are equally valued.

Council will ensure progression towards fair and gender equitable access to sporting fields and amenities through awareness, advocacy and reporting.

Relationship to the Maroondah 2040 Community Vision

Community Outcome:	**A safe, healthy and active community**
Key Directions:	**1.19** Provide a range of integrated recreation and leisure facilities that meet the needs of all ages and abilities **1.21** Support and empower local community groups, sporting clubs and special interest groups across Maroondah
Community Outcome:	**An inclusive and diverse community**
Key Directions:	**7.2** Encourage programs and initiatives that raise the awareness of accessibility issues and deliver improved access to facilities and services for all ages and abilities **7.10** Promote and create opportunities for community connectedness, learning, mentoring and social interactions for people from all life-stages and cultural backgrounds
Community Outcome:	**A well governed and empowered community**
Key Directions:	***8.2*** Undertake inclusive engagement and consultation using accessible and tailored approaches to consider the needs and aspirations of different age and population groups

Alignment with Council's mission and values

The Policy supports Maroondah City Council's mission to work in partnership with the community to foster quality, accessible and sustainable lifestyles for the community by ensuring that sport and recreation environments are safe, welcoming and suited to the needs of all genders.

Policy position

This Policy states Council's commitment to supporting a community that provides quality sport and recreation experiences, where women and girls are actively engaged and equitably supported.

Investment in infrastructure

Council will prioritise the continued improvement of sporting infrastructure to accommodate and further enhance the growth of women's and girl's participation in sport. Design processes for new facilities, major refurbishment or redevelopment, will ensure the genuine engagement of women and utilise universal design principles and sporting code facility guidelines to optimise access.

Priority of use

The incumbent tenant will be afforded priority access meaning the sporting club who in previous season/s held the allocation for the requested facility will be given first priority. This priority access is contingent however, on the club's ability to field women and / or girls teams or demonstrate implementation of actions to promote and seek women's and /or girls participation.

Tenant clubs will be expected to utilise the following hierarchy to prioritise the allocation of sporting grounds within their designated hours of use and permissible surface usage.

1. Tenant club match games for all teams Junior - Boys & Girls, and Senior Male & Female
2. Tenant club training all Juniors & Seniors teams 1st night
3. Tenant club training Seniors 2nd night
4. Tenant club training Juniors 2nd night

Essentially, the prioritisation of women's and girls' teams must be afforded over a second training session for juniors and matches take precedence over all training.

Furthermore, it is an expectation that clubs will continue to progress the gender equitable distribution of the facilities within their allocation to ensure that their premier venues and times are available for use by women and girls. Council will work closely with clubs and associations to assist with this change.

Policy implementation

Develop baseline data to monitor sports club progression towards gender equitable scheduling of training and matches and the progression towards equal representation of women on club committees.

Work in collaboration with peak sporting bodies and allied health to develop initiatives to support clubs seeking to undertake cultural change.

Encourage a whole of Council approach to support the access, equity and diversity across the organisation.

Expand knowledge development through research and data collection to understand the physical activity needs and preferences of women and girls in Maroondah and to use and share innovative practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

This Policy, and the implementation of the Equally Active Strategy, will be led by Council's Sport & recreation service area. The Policy will be reviewed in two years in conjunction with the Equally Active Strategy evaluation.

Related policies, strategies, procedures and guidelines

The development of the Policy was informed by the following Council documents.

- The Maroondah Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Physical Activity Strategy 2015 - 2020 (2015)
- Maroondah Open Space Strategy (2016)
- Getting Females Active in Maroondah Situational Analysis (2017)
- Equally Active Strategy (2019)

Definitions

Gender Diverse is used to recognise people who do not fall within the traditional binary notions of sex and gender (male and female). This may include people who identify as a gender different to their birth sex or who identify as neither male nor female.

Gender Equity is the process required to achieve equality. It is the process of understanding the needs of all genders and supporting those most in need to ensure equal outcomes for all.

Gender Equality means that everyone is afforded the same rights and opportunities regardless of gender. Gender equality can only be achieved if people start from the same position.

Transgender (often shortened to 'trans') refers to a person whose gender identity, gender expression or behaviour does not align with their sex assigned at birth.

Intersex refers to a person who is born with a combination of male and female biological characteristics. A person who is intersex may identify as male, female, intersex or as being of indeterminate sex.

Sport refers to 'structured, organised & scheduled physical activity' May or may not be competitive.

Active Recreation denotes activity undertaken during leisure time, with the primary activity requiring physical exertion for the purpose of health and wellbeing and/ or enjoyment.

Allocation is an agreement between Council and a user group to utilise a Council sporting facility for a seasonal or once off tenure. In most instances an allocation allows a tenant exclusive use of a sports ground and/or facility at specific agreed times.

Equitable support may be substantively different from equal support, and may include – at times – additional support in order to achieve the desired outcome

Meaningful opportunities are where individuals are provided with true options for involvement, including chances for further development free from limitations based on assumptions or stereotypes based on sex or gender. The concept of meaningful opportunity extends beyond the removal of barriers.

Supporting documents

The **Equally Active Strategy 2019** has been developed to support the implementation of this Policy by articulating short and medium term actions achievable over the next two years.