

Darebin Gender Equity Advisory Committee
Meeting minutes



Date: Tuesday 5 September 2023 (Meeting 3)

Meeting time: 5.30pm - 7.30pm

Meeting venue: In person (Darebin's Birnum Djirri room, Preston) with hybrid attendance.

Present

Chair: (see Councillors)

Councillors:

Cr. Susan Rennie (Chair)

Community representatives:

Sandra Morris, Rosa Vasseghi (online), Anna Scovelle (online), Carmen Lahiff-Jenkin (online), Megan Burke (online),

Council staff:

- Wendy Dinning, Acting Manager Equity & Wellbeing
- Jade Myconos (Gender Equity Officer)

Guest speakers:

- David Godden, Planning Project Officer, Family Youth and Children
- Vanessa O'Shea, Senior Strategic Planner, City Futures
- Stella Radford, Strategic Planner, City Futures
- Lakshamanan Madu, Senior Strategic Planner, City Futures

Apologies:

Cr. Emily Dimitriadis, Jo Van-Dort, Felicity Rorke, Samantha Young, Diana Pais, Amanda Wilczynski, Melissa Collins, Emily Fraresso.

Minute taker:

Jade Myconos

1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country, and Apologies

The Acting Chair opened the meeting at 5:35pm and welcomed everyone, acknowledged the traditional owners and custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri people, and paid respect to their Elders, past and present and emerging.

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Apologies were noted.

2. Actions arising from previous minutes

The Gender Equity Officer provided an overview of the actions from the previous minutes as follows:

Action: Find out when the Public Toilet Strategy will be developed and invite to GEAC.

Comment: The Team Leader of City Design, City Futures has commenced preparations for a comprehensive Strategy review. They have agreed to attend and present to GEAC when ready.

Action: 16 Days of Activism.

Comment: We will pick up on this item under the General Business item at the end.

Action: Identify and invite representatives from areas of Council who are less engaged with gender equality issues to a future GEAC meetings.

Comment: Jade (Gender Equity Officer) has reached out to Coordinator Infrastructure and Fleet Maintenance to connect about gender equality initiatives happening in their area. Will invite to a future GEAC meeting.

Action: Inclusive Employment Framework,

Comment: Team Leader Phillip O'Brien, has passed on information which Jade shared with GEAC via email – circulated with Agenda 28th of August

3. Endorsement of minutes

Minutes were circulated to members 13 June 2023

Moved: Sandra

Seconded: Rosa

4. Conflict of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared for this meeting.

5. Round table check in – everyone

All members introduced themselves and greeted the committee.

The Following items were added to the 'General Business' agenda item:

- New National Consent Survey - Anna
- Women from Ava Tapestry cultural event – Rosa
- Would like opportunity to provide input to the Climate Emergency Strategy - Carmen

ACTION: Jade to follow up opportunity for GEAC to provide input to the Climate Emergency Strategy

6. Integrated Families, Youth & Children Strategy

Welcome to David Godden, Planning Project Officer, Family Youth and Children to introduce the project:

Refer to attached slides.

Summary:

The development of an Integrated Families, Youth and Children Strategy was included as an action in the 2021-25 Council Plan. The new strategy will replace two strategies that have now each run their stated course: the Early Years Strategy 2011-2021 and the Youth Services Strategy 2019-2021.

The new strategy will outline an integrated approach for children and young people aged from 0 to 25 years old and their families. The move towards an integrated strategy across this cohort is in line with sector trends, with many Councils having moved towards this integrated approach over recent years. It is also responsive to community feedback received during the development of the last Youth Services Strategy in 2019 which identified a gap in Council's response, and the sector more broadly, to families with young people and the 'middle years' (children aged 8-12).

Question to Committee: How can we deliver an inclusive, accessible, relevant, and engaging engagement process that centres voices that might otherwise be marginalised?

Member feedback and discussion points:

- **Q:** What's in scope? Is it the scope of what Council provides or community wide?
A: Everything is in scope to understand. Looking at making this a partnership strategy. So, partners might respond to what we hear from the community also. Or if there are gaps in partnerships, we would be looking at identifying the gaps. - David

- We need to hear feedback about the service mix or if the balance is wrong – then we can respond and re-focus. Council won't have council resources to respond to everything community says. Messaging should include this will help Council to prioritise and allocate resources. - Cr Rennie
- If feedback has potential to reconfigure services we deliver, or partnerships etc. we need to include that in the messaging. Ensure marketing includes parameters.
- Lots of kids, young people who are not engaged in schools– include local legal services in as points of engagement to reach young people.
- **Q:** in response to presentation information “Young people (via the Youth Jury) said northland after 2pm on a Friday is a good time to engage with young people at the Hub.” How feasible is it for young people help designed the questions in this feedback? Would like to see them asking the questions. Their perspective is valuable. How to get young people involved. Invite committee from schools? If used properly that engagement can be valuable.

A: Conversations had so far with Young Citizens Jury (Darebin's Youth Advisory Committee) have helped shaped some of the questions. Several members are interested in staying involved. - David

- For people of different cultures and backgrounds this can be a sensitive topic. If you give a survey to young people and they are (physically present) with their family, they will say what their parents want them to say. Need safe spaces for young people to say what they want about what is good and best for them. If you do survey, suggest having spaces for young people away from their family/groups so they feel more confident to say what they need.
- To the above point, we are very mindful of reaching broadly to capture experiences from culturally diverse community members. This comment was useful to help form an approach to ensure as many voices as possible are used. We plan on going to schools and other settings, not just in context of families.

ACTION: Jade to circulate presentation with minutes.

7. General business

The previous agenda item finished earlier than planned. To allow time for the next guests to arrive, agenda items 7 & 8 were swapped.

Jade Myconos, Gender Equity Officer to provide the following updates:

1. Affirmative Consent Model Now Law in Victoria | Premier of Victoria

Reforms to change the way sexual violence is dealt with in Victoria have passed Parliament, called the [affirmative consent model](#), it has now been in effect since July 2023

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022 (includes amendments that will adopt an affirmative consent model and provide better protections for victim-survivors of sexual offences, shifting the scrutiny from victim-survivors onto their perpetrators.

The model makes clear that everyone has a responsibility to get consent before engaging in sexual activity.

The reforms will also clarify that circumstances where there is no consent to an act, including the removal, non-use or tampering of a condom – without the other person's consent is a crime.

The Act also includes stronger laws to target image-based sexual abuse, which includes taking intimate videos of someone without their consent and distributing, or threatening to distribute, intimate images, including deepfake porn.

These reforms will be supported by community-based education delivered by local organisations and specialist services, announced in the Victorian Budget 2022/23.

Safe and Equal [webinar](#)

2. New resources to support orgs & businesses to meet their positive duty obligations under the Sex Discrimination Act

The [new positive](#) duty was introduced in December 2022. It imposes a legal obligation on organisations and businesses to take proactive and meaningful action to prevent relevant unlawful conduct from occurring in the workplace or in connection to work. Taking preventative action will help to create safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces.

The Commission has developed practical guidance materials to help organisations and businesses to understand their responsibilities and the changes they may need to make to meet these new legal obligations.

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3. 16 Days of Activism:

- When developed, Jade will send the draft Communications Plan for 16 Days of Activism to the committee for feedback.
- Intend to provide training to staff during the campaign.
- Internal and external communications piece bringing attention to gender equality resources.
- Campaign was raised at Darebin's Family Violence Network – to encourage smaller organisations to keep us in the loop so we can add their events to our communications.
- Libraries Team will be holding a small craft event.
- Safe and Equal and Respect Vic update Theme: The theme will be '[Respect Women: Call it out – \(Respect Is\)](#)'
- Have applied for \$1500 from Safe and Equal

4. Free from Violence Grant

Darebin will be applying for funding view the [Free from Violence Local Government Program 2023–2026](#) . The program will provide Funding of up to \$212,500 over three years to implement [MAV's Local Government Guide for Preventing Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women](#).

The proposal will include the funding be used to employ a Multi-Cultural Gender Equity Project Officer to lead the implementation of the [Local Government Guide or Preventing Family Violence and All Forms of Violence Against Women](#) at Darebin. It would also fund the provision of training for Darebin employees.

Notice of Motion:

Darebin's Gender Equity Advisory Committee supports Council's Free from Violence funding application. The Program objectives align with Council's commitments towards gender equality and preventing violence against women.

GEAC resolution:

- **Moved:** Susan
- **Seconded:** Rosa

Post meeting note: *Jade incorrectly referred to the Guide as Gender Equity and Preventing Violence Against Women Guide. Apologies to Sandra who questioned this in the meeting and was given the incorrect title.*

1. National Consent Survey

Anna provided the following update:

The Australian Human Rights Commission is in the early stages of planning for the National Student Consent Survey (funded by Commonwealth Department of Education) which will examine understandings of consent and experiences of relationship and sexuality education in secondary school students. We will shortly be releasing an EOI for expert advisors and if any member would like to find out more, they can contact me at:

anna.scovelle@humanrights.gov.au.

Additionally, it will be great to have further discussions with the Council down the track about promotion of the study once we approach fieldwork in 2024.

ACTION: If helpful, Anna to contact Jade further down the track prior to commencing fieldwork in 2024 to discuss opportunities for Council to promote the study.

6. Event: Ava Tapestry Group 6 October 2023

Rosa shared an upcoming event:

Women from Ava Tapestry group will come together to celebrate at the Aboriginal Advancement League. There will be speakers, musical performances from different cultures, multicultural food, and sharing in activities and conversations.

Contact Rosa to find out more: to rosa.vasseghi@gmail.com or

7. Awareness Raising Days

- National Child Protection week this week - Megan
- Women's Health Week – Sandra

8. Housing Strategy and Neighbourhood Character Study – stage 1 update

This item was first presented to GEAC July 2022 as per the minutes re-distributed with the agenda.

Welcome back to our Jobs for the Strategic Planners Stella Radford and Senior Strategic Planner Vanessa O’Shea from City Futures who will provide an update about this item.

Refer to attached slides.

Summary:

We are preparing a Housing Strategy that will:

- Include a 20-year vision for housing in Darebin.
- Guide population growth and housing within residentially zoned land
- Encourage delivery of housing that better meets resident’s needs.
- Encourage improved quality and design of new housing.
- Be informed by the Darebin community.
- Update planning policy and controls in the Darebin Planning Scheme

Question to Committee:

We’d like your thoughts on:

- Are there any groups we should be speaking with during the upcoming engagement process on the draft Housing Strategy?
- Are there any safe and inclusive places you would recommend for face-to-face engagement?

Member feedback and discussion points:

- Discussed feedback given last time about poor quality and unsafe rentals for young women– are unsafe for everyone.
- Would like to hear more about housing services. Research (RMIT) shows mixing levels of housing e.g., private and social/public is not a good idea (as once believed). Better to make housing specific to cohort needs and provide needed services to those cohorts.
- Housing mix should also be about ages so you can have a mix of people of different ages in your community – knowledge transfer, social connection, support, safety.

- Allot of discussion about pressure on older people to ‘give up’ large family homes i.e., downsize to make these houses available for younger families. A difficult situation, as allot of smaller housing stock does not accommodate for family/social connections at all. Need to be able to socialise with family members, house to be accessible (no stairs) with some outdoors spaces. Allot of people sitting in very large homes because they can’t find housing which meet their needs within smaller builds. Still need office space, grandkids, and others to visit.
- Building on the above point, many small bedroom townhouses (in Reservoir), are not very accessible for people with disability, stairs, bathrooms, etc.
- Darebin could advocate to National Construction Code to be more accessible. - Vanessa
- **Q:** How will new planning laws from the Victorian Government impact this strategy and Councils approach.
A: It is something we will have to consider before going out to launch with the draft.
- We talk allot about the role Council can plan in housing, but the role council can play is quite limited.
- Safety and how housing is built in terms of entry points, lighting, should be considered – not just for young people but for all women and gender diverse people. Thinking about how housing is designed that helps people feel safe. How do we respond to poor housing and amenity build and safety? Noting Council’s limitations by State Government. Mix of ages in community can contribute to safety. And public spaces integrated into new builds, ensuring accessible public spaces.
- In response to Council being blamed for holding up planning permits: Applications of planning permits have been sitting there and not used for years. There are many permits waiting for use. - Cr. Renni
- Other is an equity issue when thinking about accessibility. Apartments can be more accessible than townhouses. One of the problems with apartments is they have exorbitant body corporate fees e.g., \$5-10,000 per year. This can limit accessible housing options for people with disability - Cr Renni
- Council could advocate for accessibility in lower-level builds too (in difference to apartments) - Vanessa.
- **Q:** How much power does Council have in negotiating with Body Corporates?
A: Not something Council is involved in.

- **Q:** ‘Pushing older people out of their homes can have adverse health impacts’ Can Council do something to advocate for body corporates for older people.

A: This is in the space of commercial operations. What we can think about is future maintenance costs of buildings we approve as this will have an impact on the body corporate costs.

- Long term maintenance costs are a big issue in units.
- Going back to earlier point re issues with body corporate (as Council cannot assist). It is my understanding if you need support the understanding is get a lawyer and go to VCAT.
- This conversation has raised intergenerational equity issue disadvantage – younger people might be disproportionately impacted by body corporate fees and issues etc. Happy to hear stage two of this project’s engagement will focus on engaging with younger adults who we did not hear from in stage 1. - Cr Rennie

Ways to keep up with the Project: A [Your Say Darebin](#) page will be available, and you can contact Vanessa via email on: Vanessa.O'Shea@darebin.vic.gov.au

ACTION: Jade to circulate presentation with minutes.

9. Meeting feedback – what worked, what could be done differently in the future?

Reflected as majority of members attended online, future meetings could be held online as a standard format, with one meeting per year being held in person. Online meetings are less resource intensive too.

ACTION: Add meeting format to December agenda.

10. Meeting end

- The Chair thanked everyone for their time.
- The meeting was closed at 7.10pm.

Next meeting

Tuesday 5 December 2023, 5.30pm-7:30pm, Birnum Djirri.