

CP 06 Fair Access Policy

Responsible Officer:	Manager Community
Document Type:	Council Policy
Reference:	CP 06
Approved by Leadership Team	5 April 2024
Adopted by Council:	26 June 2024
Date of Next Review:	June 2028

Policy Objective

The Fair Access Policy (the Policy) 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 Benalla Rural City Council (the 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.

Benalla Rural City 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 Benalla Rural City'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 Council is well positioned to design and implement place-based, integrated actions plans that progress gender equality in community sport.

The Victorian Government is committed to developing an environment for all Victorians 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 way community sport and recreation organisations operate through the implementation all nine recommendations from the *2015 Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation*. This includes recommendation six:

“...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] will drive change further”

As a defined entity of the *Gender Equality Act 2020*, the Council 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.

The access and use of community sports infrastructure is an example of policy that has a direct and significant impact on the public.

Statement of Intent

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

- a. Benalla Rural City 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. Benalla Rural City 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.

Policy 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 the 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 or Council Strategies:

Reform Agenda	Objectives
<p>To support Benalla Rural City Council to take positive action towards achieving gender equity in the access and use of community sports infrastructure</p>	<p>To build capacity and capabilities of Benalla Rural City Council in the identification and elimination of systemic causes of gender inequality in policy, programs, communications, and delivery of services in relation to community sport and recreation.</p> <p>To ensure an effective place-based response for the gender equitable use and access of community sports infrastructure.</p> <p>To promote gender equality in policies, programs, communications, and services as they relate to community sports infrastructure.</p>

For Benalla Rural City Council, the Policy applies to community sports infrastructure with Council being the land manager and/or operator of the facility.

Policy Framework

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

Benalla Rural City Council acknowledges:

- a. the disadvantaged position some individuals have had in the sport and recreation sector because of their gender; and
- b. 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.

Benalla Rural City Council will:

1. 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
2. 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.

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 principles of inclusivity, full participation, equal representation, encouraging and supporting user groups, and prioritising user groups committed to equality.

The Council considers that these principles provide clear direction, while also enabling adaption to the specific environment of Benalla Rural City.



Compliance and Monitoring

a. Actions

The 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. The Council commits to developing and adopting a locally relevant gender equitable access and use policy and action plan no later than 1 October 2024.

The 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.

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

b. Responsibility

The General Manager Corporate is responsible for implementing the Council's Fair Access Policy. Management personnel, staff, volunteers, and stakeholders (for example SSAs and RSAs) at the Council have a shared responsibility to support the policy, as outlined below.

- 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.
- 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 Gender Equality Act 2020 obligations
- 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 Gender Equality Act 2020 obligations
- To communicate and educate sport and recreation infrastructure user groups and users.
- To adhere to and communicate the policy when required.
- To attend training / awareness programs.

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 Asset Committees

For the purposes of this document, refers to committees appointed by Council under the Local Government Act 2020 to manage recreation reserves where community sports infrastructure is located and utilised for community sport activities.

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.

Related Policies

Benalla Rural City Council Plan 2021-2025

Benalla Rural City Council Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025

Benalla Rural City Community Plan 2016-2036

Related Legislation

Local Government Act 2020

Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)

Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)

Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)

Review

This policy may be reviewed at any time by the Council to accommodate changes in legislation, regulations, policy gaps, new technology or systems, as well as remain consistent with industry best practice.