



# Community Services Policy

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Responsible Officer:	Director – Community Services
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## Policy Statement

Council acts primarily as a facilitator for community services rather than a provider of direct services, with many activities carried out in collaboration with service providers, such as community groups, charitable organisations, government agencies and adjoining Councils.

Council will encourage and assist other organisations to provide required community services to Woollahra residents. Where there is a high level of community need and no other organisation with the capacity to provide a required service, Council will consider providing the service directly.

Through the implementation of the Community Services Policy, Council will maximise access to services that are appropriate to community needs.

## Background

The State and Federal Governments largely fund community services in Australia. As the level of government closest to the community, Local Government has a pivotal role in facilitating and providing facilities and services which meet the social and physical well-being requirements of local communities.

Council has a long involvement in the planning and implementation of community services for Woollahra residents. Council does not have the financial or human resources or the responsibility to directly provide all services for its community, but is involved as a planner, funder, direct service provider, advocate, and facilitator of services and facilities. The commitment of Council to community services is outlined in this policy, which will provide the framework for council activities in this area.

## Purpose

This policy provides a high level community services policy framework to enable holistic and informed decision making by Council. This policy details Council's commitment to community service planning, facilitation and service provision to contribute to the quality of life and well-being of Woollahra residents.

## Legislation

- 1 With the implementation of the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework in 2009, the legislative requirement to prepare and adopt social plans became obsolete, with social issues to be integrated into councils' ten year Community Strategic Plan and four year Delivery Programs. Although no longer a legislative requirement, Council decided to continue to develop a *Social & Cultural Plan* so as to be better informed for the review of the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans, which are a requirement of the IP&R legislation. The current Social and Cultural Plan is dated 2013 to 2023.
- 2 Under the *Local Government Act 1993, Chapter 3, Section 8* Local Government's charter includes:
  - to provide directly or on behalf of other levels of government, after due consultation, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively
  - to exercise community leadership
  - to exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the principles of multiculturalism
  - to promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children
  - to bear in mind that it is the custodian and trustee of public assets and to effectively account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible
  - to facilitate the involvement of councillors, members of the public, users of facilities and services and council staff in the development, improvement and co-ordination of local government
  - to keep the local community and the State government (and through it, the wider community) informed about its activities
- 3 Under the *Local Government Act 1993, Chapter 6* confers the service or non-regulatory functions on councils. Examples of these functions include the provision, management or operation of:
  - community services and facilities
  - public health services and facilities
  - cultural, educational and information services and facilities
  - sporting, recreational and entertainment services and facilities

The Community Services Policy provides a clear policy on the role that Council will take in community services in the future.

## Scope

This policy covers all activities undertaken in the area of community services, with the exception of library services, as this service is governed by the Library Act 1939.

## Policy Principles

Community Service activities will be conducted in accordance with the following principles:

- **Access and Equity.** All residents are entitled to use and access public facilities and services regardless of their social and economic circumstances. Council will promote and prioritise access to services by disadvantaged residents.
- **Diversity.** Council is committed to embracing the diversity of the Woollahra community and will promote an inclusive harmonious community.
- **Participation.** Council will encourage community participation in the planning, development and delivery of community services. It will provide opportunities to participate in activities that assist the development of relationships and build a strong and cohesive community.

## Role of Council

Council has a number of roles in Community Services. Council is committed to the following roles and activities.

### 1. Community Planning

Community planning provides a strategic planning framework for community services and facilities in the Woollahra area. Council will:

- Investigate and document local needs and assets, in consultation with service providers and local residents.
- Develop and/or facilitate programs and policies to meet these needs.
- Contribute to State & Federal planning processes.
- Include social and cultural planning in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

## 2. Leadership & Advocacy

Council plays a significant leadership role in building positive community relations and in securing improved outcomes for the local community.

Council acknowledges that it is in a position to influence decision-making in other levels of government and the wider community, in ways that can enhance the quality of life of the Woollahra community. As a result Council will play an advocacy role to other agencies and contribute to regional interagencies and forums.

## 3. Community Interaction

Council considers interaction and socialising between all members of its community to be a vital aspect of its community life. Many of Council's direct and funded programs aim to encourage community interaction and harmony. For example, Council supports and provides funding for recreation and cultural activities, such as local events, as an important means of encouraging community interaction.

## 4. Providing Information and Fostering Participation

Council aims to ensure that the community is kept well informed about community services through the provision of a broad range of information, provided in a variety of mediums and languages. Easy access to information is offered through our libraries, community centres and customer service centre, website, newsletters, brochures and by word of mouth through Council staff.

Council will facilitate the sharing of information within the community and between service providers and agencies to promote community understanding and knowledge.

Council supports all community members to participate in decisions in relation to community services when appropriate, through the effective planning, facilitation and implementation of appropriate consultation and participation mechanisms.

## 5. Supporting Community Organisations

Council builds strong and positive relationships with local community organisations to assist them to be sustainable and responsive to local community needs, and to fulfil their service delivery goals.

Council supports community organisations through service and skills development, its annual Community and Cultural Grants Program and subsidised accommodation.

Supported community organisations contribute to a well-served community and assists the capacity of the community to determine and achieve its own outcomes.

As part of this role, Council also makes available important planning information to assist other agencies, particularly community-based organisations, to effectively plan their services and programs.

## 6. Provision of Community Services

Council aims to provide appropriate community services that are responsive to the needs of the local community. Council will become or continue to be a direct service provider in the area of community services if an external organisation or other government agency is unable to provide an accessible and equitable service to Woollahra residents. This will include an assessment of:

- The importance of the service to the Woollahra community in terms of contribution to community well-being and quality of life.
- The ability of an external organisation to provide an effective and efficient service.
- The ability of an organisation to demonstrate quality outcomes for the Woollahra community, with particular reference to disadvantaged residents.

## 7. Community Facilities

Council will manage and maintain community facilities that are appropriate to community needs. To facilitate the provision of community services Council will provide facilities to community organisations and for community purposes at a subsidised rate, when available. The level of subsidy will be determined through an assessment of the user group, their needs and level of priority.

Council has a clear role as public trustee and guardian of public and community assets and will provide access for all members of the community, now and in the future.

## 8. Partnerships

Council seeks to fund, develop and encourage program delivery through creative partnerships with other levels of government, other councils, and community-based organisations and groups.

## **Relationship with Other Policy/Planning Documents**

Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan and strategic documents are in accordance and consideration of this policy.

## **Implementation**

Council will undertake an annual audit of its contribution to community services, which is documented in its Annual Report. Actions to implement this policy are included in the four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan.

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with the review of the Delivery Program every 4 (four) years.

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