



Inclusive and Connected Communities Resource Guide



Government
of South Australia

Preventive Health SA

As the tier of government closest to communities, councils play a key role in creating vibrant and healthy communities. Councils are well placed to support preventive health policy and action to deliver better wellbeing outcomes for communities through the provision of a range of services, infrastructure and facilities which support community wellbeing.

Preventive Health SA, in partnership with the Local Government Association of South Australia, has developed a set of Resource Guides to support local councils in improving community health and wellbeing outcomes for their communities.

It is acknowledged that there is diversity across South Australian councils and that capacity to support and deliver health and wellbeing initiatives varies based on location and size, resourcing, priority focus areas and the interests and concerns of the local community. This diversity across council areas will influence and shape the design, implementation, and evaluation of community wellbeing initiatives.

The Resource Guides provide evidence-informed information and pathways to resources to support the planning, implementation and evaluation of community health and wellbeing initiatives. The Resource Guides are not prescriptive, and councils can tailor the implementation of community wellbeing initiatives to suit their specific operating environment. These may be useful to councils who are just starting their wellbeing journey, right through to those who are well established in their health and wellbeing strategies.



Preventive Health SA acknowledges and respects Aboriginal peoples as South Australia's First Peoples and recognise Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners and occupiers of South Australian lands and waters. We recognise that their connection to the land and waters is integral to identity and cultures and should be honoured and celebrated. We give respect to Aboriginal Elders who have sustained culture, in days past, present and the emerging generation that will carry it into the future.

Preventive Health SA recognises and thanks the Councils and staff who have contributed to the development of these Resource Guides.

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For more information contact:

Preventive Health SA – Strategy and Partnerships
Email: PreventiveHealthSA.strategy@sa.gov.au

The role of local councils

Local councils are innately connected to their communities and are therefore key in promoting inclusion and connection.

The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies social inclusion and non-discrimination as determinants of health¹ which have been enshrined in the United Nations' [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)².

Inclusion is fostered when individuals feel valued and respected for who they are, feel connected to and accepted by their community, have equal opportunities and can contribute and feel safe within their community.



Being an inclusive community can also support the local economy through increased productivity in the workplace, improved employment outcomes, reduced costs of social services, and opportunities for shared economic growth³.

Connection opportunities are fostered when like-minded people come together; councils play a key role in enabling this through a variety of settings including libraries, community centres, youth centres and recreation facilities.



Diversity and inclusion

An inclusive approach embraces community diversity and acknowledges inequity. Discrimination and prejudice based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, or disability contribute to social exclusion.

Discriminatory practices at institutional and systems levels can look like under-representation in decision-making, and insufficient access to facilities or services or decisions that reduce opportunities for inclusion.

This contributes to disproportionate over-representation of risk factors for poor health and wellbeing within vulnerable communities.

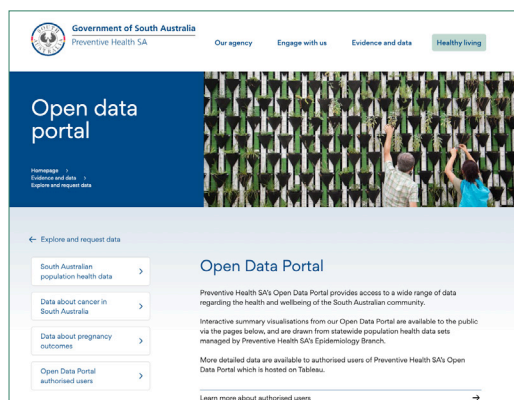
Establishing pathways and systems within councils to promote inclusive consultation, collaboration and decision-making ensure councils can address the needs of their community.

Due to their connection with communities, councils are well-placed to address inclusivity and accessibility of environments and initiatives and can lead this approach in their region.



Data and trends in South Australia

Social connection and inclusivity can be quantified through reporting of indicators around participation, loneliness and discrimination.



The [Preventive Health SA Open Data Portal](#) provides data on a wide range of indicators, including social and civic participation, loneliness, racism and discrimination. South Australian data draws insight into the impact of these indicators on mental health and wellbeing.



Participation in social and civic groups has a direct impact on mental health and wellbeing. The proportion of South Australians involved in community support, social, and civic groups has been decreasing over the last decade⁴, providing an opportunity for growth.



Loneliness impacts on mental wellbeing and is a greater predictor of sickness and death than smoking, alcohol consumption and poor lifestyle. In 2021, 53.4% of the South Australian population reported their experience of loneliness to be moderate or high⁴. This data indicates this is an area that needs to be addressed within South Australian communities.



Racism and discrimination impact wellbeing both directly and indirectly. Experiencing racism or discrimination can cause psychological distress and increase the risk of mental health conditions, including depression. The impact of experiencing racism or discrimination can be associated with an increase in risk-taking behaviours, including substance abuse. Associated with racism is the fear of discrimination which can result in social isolation, poor school attendance, and not seeking health care⁵.

In South Australia in 2021, 35.1% of adult respondents reported being discriminated against based on religion, race, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, or other reasons (an increase from 33.4% in 2018)⁴.

An inclusive approach to supporting communities

An inclusive approach to embracing diversity relies on consultation and engagement with community.

Many councils have supported reference groups for key demographic communities who provide valuable data to inform council planning. Key reference groups can include groups for Access and Inclusion and Reconciliation Action Plans.

Language is key to ensuring accessibility for all within a community. Understanding the impact of language and the needs of local community will ensure an equitable approach, while identifying priority community groups at risk of exclusion or discrimination.

Communication / language and accessibility resources:



[Accessible Communication Toolkit⁶](#)
Department of Human Services

[DHS Diversity and Inclusion Strategy⁷](#)

[NSW Government The language of disability and accessibility⁸](#)



Priority populations

Aboriginal people

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) provides a framework for organisations to take meaningful action to advance sustainable and strategic reconciliation. RAPs are designed to promote relationships, respect, and opportunities to work towards reconciliation⁹.

There are four types of RAPs:

- Reflect
- Innovate
- Stretch
- Elevate.

Each type of RAP is designed to suit an organisation at different stages of its reconciliation journey. Councils can find support to develop their own RAPs through [Reconciliation Australia](#).

Many local councils have formed Reconciliation Advisory Committees to provide strategic advice in relation to Reconciliation and inform and monitor Council's RAP.

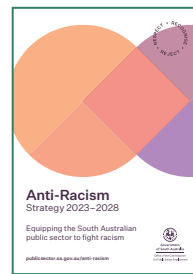
The role of RAP committees can include:

- Supporting the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Council's RAP.
- Providing advice to Council on priorities and opportunities for effective action on reconciliation.
- Identifying any risks or challenges to Council's work in this area.



People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be over-represented in indicators of disadvantage.



The [South Australian Public Sector Anti-Racism Strategy](#), released in 2023, provides a framework to tackle racism and the inequity it supports. This strategy focuses initially on addressing systemic and interpersonal racism in the

public sector as the largest employer within South Australia¹⁰.

People with disability

State Government and local councils aim to promote, uphold, and safeguard the rights and advocacy of individuals living with disability.

The Government of South Australia enacted the [SA Disability Inclusion Act](#) in 2018 which reflects the need for a more robust commitment to enhancing disability access and inclusion within South Australian communities.

This act requires local councils and state government agencies to develop their own [Disability Access and Inclusion Plans](#) (DAIPs) that align with priority areas set out by the State's Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023¹¹ to support innovative strategies to dismantle barriers to access and inclusion for people living with disability.



Older people

Ageism refers to the stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory practices that exclude or disempower, purely based on age¹².

The impact of ageism within society can lead to limited personal agency, and reduce the experience of all people being treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age. This impact can influence community and workplace participation and connection, and ultimately, health and wellbeing.

With approximately 37% of South Australia’s population aged 50 and over¹³, local councils have an important role in challenging ageism within their community, through promoting, valuing and supporting the contributions of older people.



The [SA Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025](#)¹³, developed by Office for Ageing Well¹⁴, demonstrates the State Government’s commitment to tackling ageism and negative narrative around ageing. The Plan raises awareness of the multifaceted experiences

and possibilities of ageing and emphasises living well, regardless of age.

Several South Australian local councils have already developed their own plan to enhance the inclusion and empowerment of their ageing population.

LGBTQIA+

The term 'LGBTQIA+' refers to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/transgender, intersex, queer, and other sexuality (including asexual), gender, and bodily diverse people.

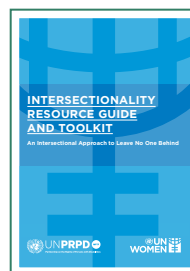
LGBTQIA+ communities are diverse but are often grouped together because of a shared history of challenges and discrimination. LGBTQIA+ Australians may face discrimination and challenges to their health and wellbeing, compounded by intersectionality. Some local councils have gained the [Rainbow Tick](#) accreditation which indicates that they are safe, inclusive and affirming services and employers for the LGBTQIA+ community.



Intersectionality

“*Intersectionality*’ refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person’s identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation”¹⁵. This can lead to the experience of discrimination across multiple characteristics of a person’s identity. For example, a person may experience discrimination and exclusion due to multiple factors, including ethnicity, age, language ability, gender identity and socioeconomic status.

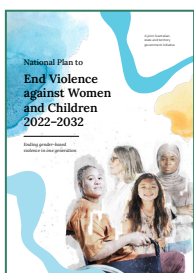
There can be compounding effects of intersectionality for people in accessing services, their experience of health and wellbeing, and a proportionally increased experience of systemic barriers.



An “[Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit](#)¹⁶” has been developed by UN Women and the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It aims to help organisations and individual practitioners address intersectionality in policies and programs.

Gender equality

Gender equality is a major global issue, listed as one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations¹⁷. In Australia, one in three women over the age of 15 have experienced physical violence, and one in five women have experienced sexual violence¹⁸.



The [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children](#)¹⁸ (The Plan) is the overarching national policy framework that will guide actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.

The Plan highlights how all parts of society must work together to achieve the shared vision of ending gender-based violence. This includes government, businesses and workplaces, media, schools and educational institution, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, communities and all individuals.

Workplace equality and respectful relationships are promoted in South Australia by [Equal Opportunity SA](#)¹⁹ which works with South Australian Government departments to ensure they are equipped with the right knowledge, skills and tools to prevent violence against women both within the workplace and across our community²⁰.



Discrimination and the link to mental ill health



In 2022, the [National Survey of Mental Health-Related Stigma and Discrimination](#)²¹ showed that over four million Australians experienced mental health-related stigma and discrimination in a 12-month period.

- Experiences of stigma and discrimination were more common among females, younger people, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.
- Young people, as well as males and people with a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, were more likely to experience publicly stigmatising beliefs and intentions.
- People who experienced discrimination were:
 - » more than twice as likely to report they had avoided accessing healthcare.
 - » three times more likely to have decided not to apply for employment opportunities.
- Experiences of discrimination, bullying or harassment can adversely affect a person's social and emotional wellbeing and contribute to higher levels of psychological distress and poor physical and mental health²¹.

Surveys from Aboriginal and refugee communities^{22 23} indicate that experiencing racial discrimination can be associated with poor mental health which can worsen with the volume of discrimination experienced.

Protective factors including sharing stories and empowering those who need support to seek it are important in building resilience and strength, enhancing social and emotional wellbeing, and improving mental health²⁴. Councils are centrally placed to address discrimination within communities, in multilayered approaches that foster inclusion and improve community mental health and wellbeing.

Opportunities and actions

There are a range of opportunities for evidence-informed initiatives by local councils to enhance inclusive and connected communities. These suggestions range on a scale from quick wins to longer-term strategic actions.



Supportive Environments

Improve accessibility of council buildings by undertaking an access audit of the council's buildings.

Consider activities and infrastructure within libraries, community centres, co-designed spaces. Supporting places and connections important to culturally and linguistically diverse groups (e.g., inviting people to share how to set up culturally inviting places and spaces).

Ensure that the streetscape and council's playgrounds, parks and other natural environments are accessible to all abilities by using the [Healthy by Design](#) guidelines.



Programs and Services

Review all services and programs to ensure that they are age-friendly, accessible to all abilities, and include all community groups.

Auspice home support programs e.g. Commonwealth Home Support Program ([CHSP](#)).

Introduce a volunteer visitors scheme to decrease loneliness e.g. Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme ([ACVVS](#)).

Start up a '[Chatty Café](#)' at a community venue.

Encourage social connections through groups that bring together like-minded people-playgroups, art groups, music groups, book clubs, walking groups, youth 'hang-out' sessions are all great ways to bring people together.

Encourage the community to get involved in [Neighbour Day](#).

Promote "quiet" times with low noise and low lighting at Council centres and services for people with sensory needs.



Policy and Planning

Develop and implement existing frameworks such as DAIPs, RAPs to promote inclusive and accessible communities.

Develop a Social Inclusion Policy that recognises and reflects inclusivity across priority populations.

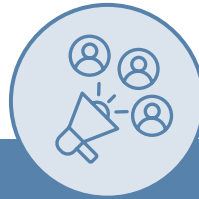


Engagement and Partnerships

Identify pathways and ways of working with agencies representative of community groups (e.g. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, CALD organisations and advocacy groups).

Seek State and Commonwealth funding to partner with regional councils and stakeholders to deliver collaborative regional projects e.g. the [Northern Collaborative Project \(NCP\)](#), or the [Seniors Collaborative Action Project \(SCAP\)](#).

Partner with local sports and recreation clubs and community groups to grow the availability of [modified and social sports and activities](#).



Communication and Promotion

Ensure communication material, media and promotional material is available and [accessible](#) for community members of all abilities, for example, ensuring video content is captioned, materials are produced to be sensitive to colour contrasts and are clear and easily understood.

Supporting culturally inclusive environments through an Acknowledgement of Country protocol or guideline and the development of Dual Naming Policy or Action Plan.



Case Study

Multicultural Focus Group – Naracoorte Lucindale Council



The Naracoorte Lucindale Council embarked on an initiative to embrace the rich diversity of its multicultural community through developing a Multicultural Focus Group.

Recognising that 23% of the region's population have a multicultural background, representing 20 ethnicities, the initiative aimed to directly engage community leaders to assist in shaping the council's future decisions and activities.

Central to the initiative, the Naracoorte [Migrant Resource Centre](#) provided logistical support and facilitated cultural engagement through prompting meaningful talks and aiding translation where needed.

Collaborating closely with community, the centre identified six participants from diverse demographics to participate in focus groups, ensuring a representative cross-section of the multicultural community.

These participants, in turn, became integral voices contributing to informal conversations that provided insights into opportunities and potential challenges within the council's Wellbeing Program.

“Through this engagement, the council has strengthened our connections with community leaders and gained a clearer understanding of how to increase involvement and tailor the activities we run.”

Engagement strategies such as meeting the multicultural community at familiar locations before introducing novel services was another important approach used to create effective outreach with locals.



Case Study

‘Connecting through the Art of Ageing’ – City of Victor Harbor, District Council of Yankalilla and Alexandrina Council



‘Connecting through the Art of Ageing’ is a partnership initiative of the City of Victor Harbor Council, Alexandrina Council and the District Council of Yankalilla, supported by an Age Friendly SA grant from the Office for Ageing Well.

The project challenged ageism and reshaped societal perceptions by promoting ageing as a natural, lifelong process. Through facilitated conversation and engagement activities, the initiative uncovered how ageing is perceived and encouraged intergenerational connections to build community inclusion.

Positive Ageing Project Officer, Michelle Fuller, explained how the collaborative nature of the project, which brought together councils, consultants and the community, ensured a tangible difference.

“Our approach was to initiate conversations about ageing through a variety of channels,” Michelle said. “This included hosting community workshops, conducting surveys, and organising inter-generational activities and showcase events. These platforms allowed for meaningful exchanges, enabling participants to share perspectives and learn from one another.”

The project's success has strengthened collaboration and increased community capacity through celebrating successful community activities and diverse participation.

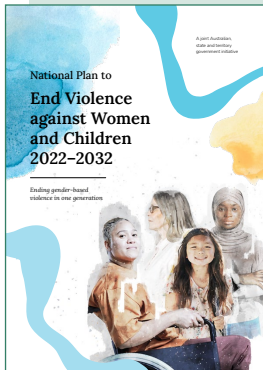
A survey participant involved in the project remarked: *“Getting older, acquiring wisdom, making the most of every day, living life to the fullest. I look back on my life, my childhood, family, work and think how things have changed. My older body can’t do what my younger body did, but there is still so much I am capable of.”*

The community-driven approach sets the stage for locally informed inter-generational projects that demonstrate a sustainable approach to celebrating diversity and connection through promoting wellbeing across all ages.





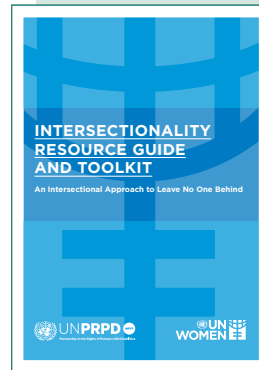
Useful Tools and Resources



National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032¹⁸

The National Plan is the overarching national policy framework that will guide actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.

[View document](#)



Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit - An Intersectional Approach to Leave No One Behind¹⁶

This toolkit has been developed by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and United Nations Women, and it

offers a starting point for those wishing to deepen their understanding and apply an intersectional approach to their work.

[View document](#)

Government of South Australia. Inclusive SA – State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019-2023¹¹

This plan sets out specific actions for State Government agencies and local councils to achieve. These will support the implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

[View document](#)



Accessible Communication Toolkit⁶

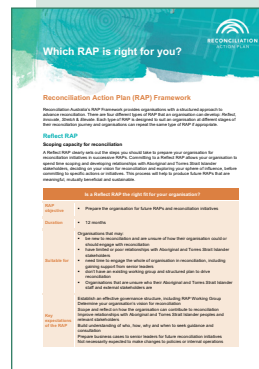
The online accessibility toolkit is a 'quick start' online guide about how to make digital products, content and services accessible.

[View Toolkit](#)

South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025¹⁴

The State plan defines 3 strategic priorities (Home and community, Meaningful connections, and Navigating change) that enhance opportunities for the ageing population and aim to empower and value them.

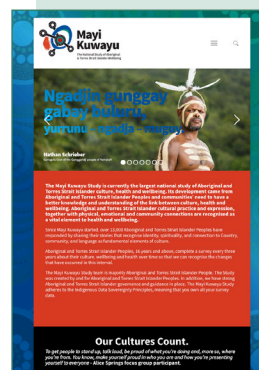
- City of Adelaide – [Ageing in the City Plan](#)²⁷
- Campbelltown City Council – [Ageing Well](#)²⁸
- City of Salisbury – [Age Friendly Strategy 2022-2027](#)²⁹



Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Framework²⁵

This Framework provides organisations with a structured approach to advance reconciliation. It identifies four different types of RAP that an organisation can develop: Reflect, Innovate, Stretch & Elevate.

[View document](#)



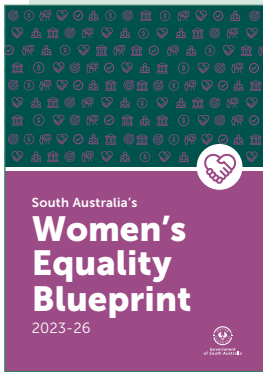
Mayi Kuwayu The National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing²⁶

The study has been created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and explores the holistic components of social and emotional wellbeing cultures.

[Read the study](#)



Recommended Reading and Listening



South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023-26³⁰

The government of South Australia document expands on the Women's Statement by highlighting the key initiatives and activities the South Australian Government is leading.

[View document](#)

Anti-racism strategy¹⁰

This South Australian Strategy is a resource that addresses racial inequalities experienced by First Nations peoples and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

[View document](#)



Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: a cross-sectional survey²²

This article published in BMC Public Health examines how people from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds in four Australian localities experience and respond to racial discrimination, as well as associated health impacts.

[View article](#)

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- ¹⁴ Department for Health and Wellbeing (n.d.) [Office for Ageing Well](#), Department for Health and Wellbeing Government of South Australia.
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- ¹⁷ United Nations (UN) (n.d.) [Take Action for the Sustainable Development Goals](#), Sustainable Development Goals, UN website.
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- ¹⁹ Office of the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, [Workplace Equality and Respect Project](#), Equal Opportunity SA, Government of South Australia.
- ²⁰ [Office of the Commissioner for Equal Opportunity](#), Government of South Australia.
- ²¹ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) (2022) [National Survey of Mental Health-Related Stigma and Discrimination](#), DPMC, Government of Australia.
- ²² Ferdinand AS, Paradies Y & Kelaher M. (2015) [Mental health impacts of racial discrimination in Australian culturally and linguistically diverse communities: a cross-sectional survey](#). BMC Public Health 15, 401
- ²³ Ziersch A, Due C & Walsh M (2020) [Discrimination: a health hazard for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds resettled in Australia](#). BMC Public Health 20, 108
- ²⁴ Department of Health and Aged Care (2022) [Keep your spirit strong](#), Department of Health and Aged Care, Australian Government. Aug 2022.
- ²⁵ Reconciliation Australia (n.d.) [Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\) Framework](#), Reconciliation Australia
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