

### ACCESS & EQUITY POLICY & PROCEDURE

Policy number:	1	Version:	6
Responsible Person:	CEO	Reviewed by:	CEO
Organisational Area:	Operational / Organisational	Review Date:	26/3/2025
Approved and adopted by:	Board of Governance	Next Review Date:	March 2028

### Scope

This policy applies to all staff, trainers, volunteers, and students involved in any course, program, or activity conducted by NRCHI.

### Objective

NRCHI is committed to the principles of access and equity. It complies with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and all relevant state and federal legislation. Our aim is to ensure every individual, regardless of age, gender, indigenous status, cultural or linguistic background, ethnicity, ability, economic circumstance, religious or political belief, or literacy and numeracy level, has equitable access to participate in our programs and services. By removing barriers and fostering inclusion, NRCHI enhances the opportunities of all members of the community.

### Definitions

- **Access:** The ability for all individuals to participate fully in programs, services, and facilities without barriers such as discrimination, physical restrictions, or communication challenges.
- **Equity:** Fairness in treatment, opportunities, and resources, acknowledging that different people may require different support to achieve equal outcomes.
- **Diversity:** The range of differences among people, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, language, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.
- **Inclusion:** The practice of ensuring that all individuals feel valued, respected, and have opportunities to participate and contribute.
- **Reasonable Adjustment:** Modifications or support provided to ensure people with disabilities or special needs can access and participate on the same basis as others.
- **Discrimination:** Unfair or less favourable treatment based on a person's characteristics, whether direct or indirect, as defined under Equal Opportunity legislation.

### Policy Statement

NRCHI promotes inclusive participation in all programs and services. We strive to reflect the cultural, social, and linguistic diversity of our community across our service delivery, communications, staffing, and governance. Staff are encouraged to take proactive steps to enhance accessibility and quality, and we support affirmative strategies to promote participation by disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.

NRCHI is committed to identifying and eliminating systemic barriers by reviewing and revising policies, practices, organisational structures, and assumptions that may contribute to the exclusion or disadvantage of underrepresented groups in our community. This includes addressing unconscious bias and promoting equitable access to all aspects of participation.

### Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
<b>Board of Governance</b>	Provide strategic oversight and ensure the policy is implemented effectively.
<b>CEO</b>	Oversee day-to-day implementation, monitor outcomes, and lead policy reviews.
<b>Trainers</b>	Deliver inclusive programs, provide adjustments, and liaise on participant needs.
<b>Volunteers and Staff</b>	Support inclusive participation, report concerns, and complete relevant training.
<b>Participants</b>	Communicate their needs and provide feedback on access and equity practices.

### Program Delivery

NRCHI delivers a broad range of programs designed to meet the diverse needs of its community. This includes language and literacy support across programs, low-cost and accessible computer courses tailored to older adults, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, unemployed individuals, and those with low income. Both accredited and non-accredited courses are available, and general adult education offerings include arts, health, leisure, information sessions, social activities, and community development initiatives.

#### Australian Democracy and Equity

North Ringwood Community House Inc. is committed to promoting the principles of Australian democracy as foundational values in our approach to access and equity. This includes supporting elected government, the rule of law, and ensuring equal rights for all individuals before the law. We uphold freedoms of speech, religion, and association, and foster an environment of openness, tolerance, and respect. These democratic values are integral to our commitment to creating an inclusive and equitable environment, where all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to opportunities, resources, and services. We integrate these principles into our programs, curriculum, and community activities to promote fairness and the active participation of all members in a democratic society.

### Procedure

#### Enrolment and Participant Support

All enrolment forms request information about any specific support or accessibility needs. Where additional support is identified, staff follow up with participants to clarify their requirements. The suitability of a participant for a specific program is assessed based on available resources, class capacity, support provisions, and any necessary prerequisites.

Where appropriate, NRCHI arranges additional support, within its means, to facilitate access. This may include the involvement of a support person whose role is to clarify instructions, assist with decision-making, facilitate participation in group activities, liaise regularly with trainers and the CEO, recommend reasonable modifications, and support alternative assessment methods such as verbal assessments when applicable. See **NRCHI Reasonable Adjustment Policy**.

#### Staff Induction and Training

All new staff and volunteers are inducted with information about access and equity principles. They are trained to understand diversity and to identify and address barriers that may prevent full participation by community



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members. Ongoing professional development ensures that staff remain aware of best practices and legislative obligations related to inclusivity and equity. See **NRCHI Staff Employment Policy** and **Staff Induction Policy**.

### Communication and Information Access

All public communication is presented in plain English to maximise accessibility. NRCHI ensures that promotional materials reflect the diversity of the community and that information is shared in formats suitable for people with language, literacy, or disability support needs. Staff are trained to help community members access interpreting or translation services when required.

### Facilities and Physical Access

All venues and physical spaces used by NRCHI are designed or adapted to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Clear signage, accessible pathways, and compliance with relevant standards are maintained to ensure safe and inclusive environments for all participants and visitors.

### Community Engagement and Program Design

NRCHI consults regularly with community members, support organisations, and local partners to understand the needs of its diverse population. Participants are encouraged to be involved in the design and evaluation of programs and services. We actively work toward having a Board of Governance that reflects the diversity of our local community. Programs are tailored to meet a wide range of community interests and needs, including low-cost, flexible scheduling to support participation by those experiencing social or economic disadvantage.

### Data Collection and Evaluation

NRCHI collects anonymised demographic and participation data at enrolment to monitor whether programs are reaching diverse community members. This data helps to identify underrepresented groups and evaluate the effectiveness of access and equity measures. Data is reviewed periodically to inform planning, support continuous improvement, and ensure compliance with reporting requirements for government and funding bodies. All data is handled in accordance with the **NRCHI Confidentiality Policy** and relevant legislation.

To support ongoing improvement, NRCHI may conduct an annual review of internal practices and barriers to participation, including consultation with participants and staff to identify hidden or unintentional forms of exclusion.

### Monitoring, Complaints, and Continuous Improvement

Feedback is welcomed and complaints related to access and equity are managed through the NRCHI **Complaints and Appeals Policy**. All concerns are treated confidentially and resolved fairly and promptly. The CEO and Board of Governance are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and ensuring it remains aligned with community needs and legislative requirements.

## Legislative Compliance

NRCHI complies with all relevant legislation, including the:

- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Disability Act 2006 (Vic)

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- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Racial Hatred Act 1995 (Cth)
- Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

### Disability Access Statement

In accordance with the Disability Act 2006, NRCHI recognises that people with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other members of the community. We encourage people with disabilities to enrol in all courses and commit to arranging reasonable adjustments and appropriate support within our available resources to enable full participation. See **NRCHI Reasonable Adjustment Policy**.

### Related Documents

Equal Employment Opportunity Policy & Procedure  
 Staff Handbook  
 Student Handbook  
 Complaints & Appeals Policy  
 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy  
 Confidentiality Policy  
 Code of Conduct  
 Reasonable Adjustment Policy  
 Staff Employment Policy  
 Staff Induction Policy

### Document Locations

Electronic file folders accessible by NRCH Administration staff  
 Policy & Procedure Manual  
 Website

Date reviewed 25/3/2025	Version 6	Details of changes (if any) Significant reformatting Added Australian Democracy and Equity	Date of next review March 2028
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