



# Southland District Council Inclusive Communities Strategy

# Inclusive Communities Strategy

## Background

Following submissions to the Southland District Council's 2008/09 Annual Plan, Council decided to develop a strategy to ensure that the barriers to participation for people with impairments/disabilities are reduced. In developing this concept, Council has also recognised that other groups within the Southland District Community face barriers to participation, including ethnic communities.

Thus the primary goal of this strategy is to:

**ENABLE ALL PEOPLE TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN LIFE WITHIN THE  
SOUTHLAND DISTRICT, INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH IMPAIRMENTS OR  
FROM ETHNIC COMMUNITIES**

Promoting participation both recognises and maximises the benefits of a diverse population; cultural, social, and economic. This goal links into Council's vision:

**THRIVING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WHOSE ECONOMIC, CULTURAL  
AND SOCIAL WELLBEING AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE SUPPORTED BY  
EXCELLENT INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND AMENITIES WITHIN A  
HIGH QUALITY ENVIRONMENT**

While the Southland District Council undertakes a number of activities already that support community participation, the changing make-up and needs of the Southland District community, including an aging population, and increasing immigration mean that a more strategic approach is timely.

### ***Defining Impairment/Disability***

Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have.

*Source: Ministry of Health, New Zealand Disability Strategy 2001*

### ***Ethnic Communities***

Historically, Southland District's population has been predominantly European.

The District also has a significant Māori population, with which Council has a strong relationship. Legislative mechanisms also ensure good communication between Council and Māori. That said, individual Māori may still face barriers to participation.

In addition, recent economic growth has seen a growing diversity of migrant populations in Southland, such as Asian, European migrants, African and Pacific groups. Council does not have strong links with these communities. However, these ethnic groups also face barriers to participating, including language barriers and may not have knowledge of how to participate.

### ***Demography***

There is little information available about the number of people with impairments in Southland District. However, nationally, 17% of people have some form of

impairment. Of those, sensory (42%) and physical (67%) impairments dominate. It is reasonable to expect that Southland fits a similar profile.

As with other parts of New Zealand, the Southland population is aging. As at the 2006 Census, 11.6% of the District's population was over 65. As 45% of those over 65 have some form of impairment, ensuring this growing section of our community is able to participate and access services is important.

The 2006 Census provides a snapshot of the ethnic diversity of the Southland District community. 79.4% are of European descent, 9.4% are Māori. Just over 1% are of Asian descent (approximately 280), 0.5% Pacific (140 people) and a small number of residents from the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. However, there has been significant growth in migrant populations in Southland District over the last few years, and in addition, the timing of the Census means that seasonal workers are often missed.

More recent estimates suggest that there are over 135 nationalities now present in the Southland region (includes Invercargill and Gore). These include around 3,000 Pacific Islanders, over 1000 Filipinos, over 200 Chileans and a similar number of Brazilians and Chinese, and around 100 Koreans. In addition there is a strong Dutch community and growing numbers of people from the African continent.

*Statistics sourced from: Statistics New Zealand, 2006 Disability Survey and the 2006 Census; and Venture Southland, estimates from Settlement Support*

### ***The rural/township environment***

There are significant differences in the environment in rural areas and towns, to the city environment, these issues affect all Southlanders in some form, but may be exacerbated for people with impairments or those from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

- There is little or no public transport, which may reduce mobility for some individuals.
- State highways often run along the main street of small towns, and there are few controlled pedestrian crossings. This creates difficulties in both parking and getting around town.
- Limited choices in community facilities, including banks, post offices, health care providers etc as well as open community spaces.
- Internet access varies throughout the District, this has implications for the way Council communicates with residents, as well as people's sense of isolation.
- Smaller communities mean that formal support or assistance for specific groups, including people with impairments or ethnic communities may be limited, though informal support may be stronger than in larger centres.
- A level of conservative attitudes that may impact on an individual's ability to participate in the community.
- Travelling distances and the temperate climate can have an impact on people's willingness to participate.

These issues will be taken into consideration in developing an action plan, for improving access and participation in our community.

# Inclusive Communities Strategy

## Principles and Objectives

Council will make best endeavours to progress the following Principles and Objectives, having regard to the four well-beings and community outcomes.

### **PRINCIPLE 1**

#### **Recognise and consider the diverse needs of people in the Southland District Community**

- Objective 1.1** Act with integrity to maintain ongoing partnerships built on mutual trust and respect with people with impairments, and ethnic communities, and other parties facing barriers to participation in Southland District.
- Objective 1.2** Create an Inclusive Communities Strategy and Action Plan in partnership with the diverse groups in Southland District, including people with impairments, ethnic communities, to reasonably accommodate identified needs.
- Objective 1.3** Actively encourage people facing barriers to participate in decisions that directly impact on their living in the Southland District, including people with impairments and ethnic communities.

### **PRINCIPLE 2**

#### **Provide all people with equal opportunity and access**

- Objective 2.1** Provide Council facilities that are accessible and meet best practice standards.
- Objective 2.2** Advocate for and model best practice standards towards achieving an environment that is equally accessible to all people, both physically, socially and culturally.
- Objective 2.3** Evaluate and where practicable design and deliver Council services to meet the diverse needs of people with impairments, and those that face other barriers, such as those for whom english is a second language. Where appropriate, services will be delivered in conjunction with current support services in the community.
- Objective 2.4** Provide Council information to all people in appropriate and accessible formats.

### **PRINCIPLE 3**

#### **Promote acceptance and enjoyment of diversity in Southland District**

- Objective 3.1** Model services, facilities and experiences that are considered best practice examples for people with impairments, and culturally safe.
- Objective 3.2** Consider appropriate amendments to policy to provide for cultural safety, people with impairments, and to raise awareness of related issues.
- Objective 3.3** Promote awareness and empathy with people facing barriers to participation in the community within Council through training and development of staff.

### **PRINCIPLE 4**

#### **Review progress towards Strategy objectives**

- Objective 4.1** Maintain a current Action Plan for the Strategy with relevant, measurable and time-bound outcomes.
- Objective 4.2** Monitor and report progress towards achieving Strategy objectives for the people of Southland District, including people with impairments and ethnic communities.
- Objective 4.3** Ensure that any review of the Strategy is undertaken in partnership with the people of Southland District, in particular, with people with impairments, and ethnic communities.

This Strategy supports or links to a range of Council or joint Council strategies including (but not limited to): Our Way Southland (Community Outcomes), the Long Term Council Community Plan, the Customer Services Strategy, the development of the Communications Strategy, and the Workforce Demand Strategy.

# **Inclusive Communities Strategy**

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Council**

It is the responsibility of Southland District Council to implement, monitor and evaluate the Inclusive Communities Strategy. The Strategy will be implemented through an action plan that will be monitored, evaluated and reviewed periodically.

To meet the objectives of the Strategy, Council will undertake actions that involve:

1. Recognition and consideration of the needs and views of people with impairments, ethnic communities, and other people facing barriers to participation.
2. Provision of accessible and appropriate Council services and facilities.
3. Promotion of change to disabling social attitudes.
4. Actively seeking and promoting partnerships with and between central government agencies, community organisation, and other relevant agencies to support the Strategy.
5. Revision of progress towards the Strategy's intent.

The Inclusive Communities Action Plan will outline the specific actions to be achieved by Council for each of the above areas. The Action Plan will represent Council's best endeavours to reduce barriers.

Council's tools in implementing the strategy include:

- Building consents ensure access requirements are met (limited by the scope of the Building Act).
- Council and/or Community Board infrastructure improves the ability to participate (footpaths, lighting, roading, signage, Council buildings etc).
- Council communications and services are accessible.
- Advocacy on specific issues.

Council also recognises that roles of community groups and central government in addressing barriers to participation. In particular, Council acknowledges the significant levels of volunteer effort in this area. Council will look for opportunities to work with these groups and avoid unnecessary duplication of services.