

Draft Brimbank

Social Justice

Towards a just and inclusive community

Framework

2025

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians.....	3
Inclusivity statement.....	3
1. Introduction	4
What is social justice?.....	5
Why is social justice important for Brimbank?.....	6
2. Statement of Purpose	6
Principles	6
Inclusivity	7
Equity.....	7
Accountability	7
Respect.....	7
Human Rights	7
3. Our approach	7
Intersectionality.....	8
Life Stages	8
Places and Experiences	8
Communities of interest	8
Case Studies	10
4. Key Commitments.....	11
5. Implementation, monitoring and reporting.....	12

Acknowledgement of Traditional Custodians

Brimbank City Council respectfully acknowledges and recognises the Wurundjeri and Bunurong Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which the municipality sits, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and future. For the Traditional Custodians, the lands and waterways in the City of Brimbank have always been a significant trading and meeting place.

Council acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination is a human right enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and we are committed to working towards social, economic, and cultural equity for Brimbank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Inclusivity statement

Brimbank's community comprises many diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages, and genders. Each person has a unique lived experience that is shaped by how these different traits connect and overlap. We seek to understand and support diverse identities and experiences in all we do. This is a fundamental requirement for creating a healthy, safe, and inclusive community. Council is committed to social justice through access, equity, participation, and rights for everyone, as well as principles that empower, foster harmony, and support the wellbeing of an inclusive community.

Social justice is a guiding principle that underpins all our work.

Aligned with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, councils must make decisions and provide services in ways that protect and promote human rights for all members of the community to contribute to an equitable and inclusive society. This covers all aspects; from the programs we deliver, to the physical infrastructure we build, and the opportunities for community to prosper and participate in our municipality.

1. Introduction

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" — Martin Luther King Jr.

Brimbank City Council (Council) recognises the important role of local government in fostering a just, equitable and inclusive community. Council's legislated responsibilities, together with its close links to the community, other levels of government, service providers and businesses, put Council in a strong position to provide leadership and act in the pursuit of social justice.

Council's commitment to being a leader in social justice is reflected by the adoption of the first Brimbank Social Justice Charter in 2008. A subsequent review in 2018 built on the previous Charters' strengths and successes, to grow and embed a culture of social justice and human rights in Brimbank.

Since 2018, the social, political, environmental, and economic landscape has evolved. Our community is facing new challenges, which require a strong commitment to fairness and equity to ensure no one is left behind.

The impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected vulnerable communities. The ongoing health, economic and social impacts continue to persist, exacerbated by a cost-of-living crisis and global conflicts escalating the displacement of people.

On an environmental front, the impacts of climate change are evident. An individual's ability to adapt and act is directly influenced by their life circumstances. People with health challenges, older people, and renters are all likely to be more adversely affected.

As the use of artificial intelligence expands, the risks of bias in how we generate and ingest information increase. Artificial intelligence models trained on open-source content reproduce long-established bias and discrimination. This poses a risk for the future of human rights and may compound pre-existing inequalities.

In this shifting landscape, it is timely to review and continue to strengthen Council's commitment to embedding social justice as a guiding principle and practice.

This commitment is reflected in the draft *We Are Brimbank: Integrated Community Vision 2050, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029*.

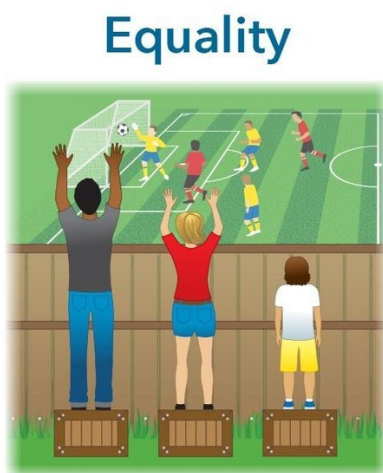
'By 2050, the Brimbank community will be healthy and safe, and we will be united through a sense of belonging and pride. Our city will be inclusive, resilient, innovative, and vibrant, and our people will share equally in the city's prosperity and opportunity. The environment and heritage will be protected and enhanced, and Brimbank's diverse neighbourhoods and housing will offer something for everyone.'

What is social justice?

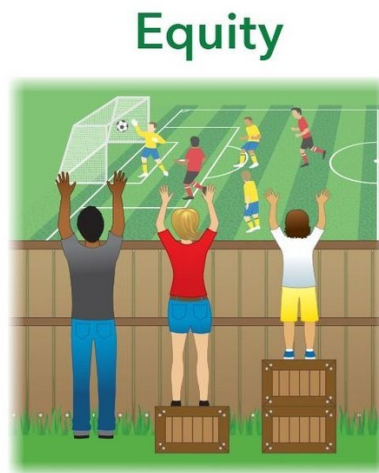
It is widely accepted that not everyone in our society has an equal chance to succeed due to a range of circumstances, many of which are at a structural level and therefore out of an individual's direct control. Significant and often interrelated social, cultural, economic, or environmental barriers exist in our society that can prevent individuals or communities accessing the services, resources and support they need to lead happy, healthy and prosperous lives.

The pursuit of social justice is the act of identifying those who are facing these barriers and finding ways to overcome them that don't unduly disadvantage others. Council is committed to working to reduce the disproportionate barriers an individual may face, and thereby enable greater opportunity for all people to thrive.

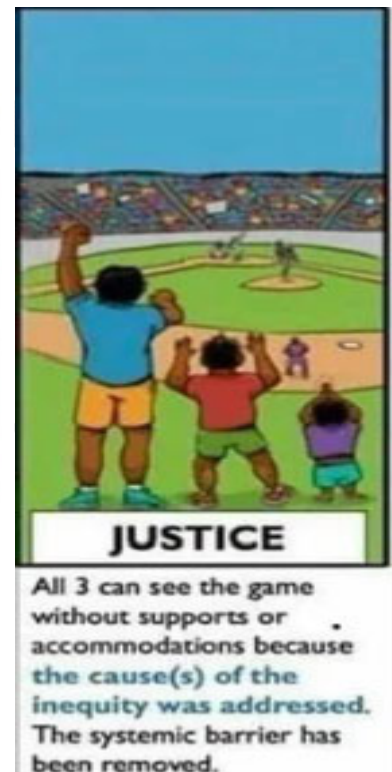
Figure 1: Equality, Equity and Justice



The assumption is that **everyone benefits from the same supports**. This is equal treatment.



Everyone gets the supports they need (this is the concept of "affirmative action"), thus producing equity.



Why is social justice important for Brimbank?

Brimbank is home to one of the most multicultural and diverse communities in Australia. This is one of Brimbank's greatest assets, with the community consistently identifying it as a highlight of living in the municipality.

Council values this diversity and the important role it plays in making Brimbank a vibrant and prosperous community. At the same time, Council acknowledges that without understanding and support, differences can result in discrimination and disadvantage.

According to the 2021 Census, Brimbank is the second most disadvantaged municipality in Greater Melbourne. A commitment to social justice is needed to reduce the social, economic, and cultural drivers of disadvantage and discrimination that exist in Brimbank.

"Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or disability¹".

2. Statement of Purpose

Council seeks to create a more just society where difference does not lead to disadvantage. A municipality where all residents, workers and visitors can thrive both socially and economically regardless of their personal circumstances or where they were born.

The Social Justice Framework outlines Council's approach to social justice by:

1. Applying the key principles of inclusivity, equity, accountability, respect, and human rights to all people in Brimbank.
2. Recognising that people's experiences, where they live and their stage of life can either support or act as a barrier to equality.
3. Identifying communities of interest who may also be at risk of structural or systemic barriers to equality.
4. Undertaking key commitments to embed a culture and practice of social justice through our advocacy, service delivery and partnerships.

Principles

The Social Justice Framework commits Council to the five inter-related social justice principles of inclusivity, equity, accountability, respect, and human rights. These principles are informed by and represent our community's vision and aspirations for Brimbank by 2050². The principles will guide all of Council's work in affirming our commitment to social justice for all people in Brimbank.

¹ United Nations, World day of social justice

² We Are Brimbank: Integrated Community Vision 2050, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029

Inclusivity

Actively including diverse voices in decision-making processes, acknowledging the intersecting characteristics that make up a person's identity and ways of experiencing community. Fostering partnerships and working cooperatively to achieve shared goals.

Equity

A social justice approach goes beyond equality or simply treating everyone the same. It requires an equity approach at a structural, community and an individual level to promote fair outcomes.

In some cases, an equity focus allows for preferential, additional, or targeted treatment to ensure everyone receives fair and balanced access to services, facilities and opportunities.

Accountability

Committing to social, environmental, and economic practices that account for both current and future community needs. Ensuring that there is transparency in decision-making processes, as well as reporting, evaluation, and communication with the community.

Respect

Fostering an environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and consideration of their needs and circumstances. People feel safe to express their identities without fear of discrimination. Diverse perspectives and experiences are valued contributions to our community and organisation.

A person's gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, age, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability should not unreasonably prevent them from accessing Council services or facilities.

Human Rights

Human rights are basic entitlements that apply to everyone, regardless of background, where we live, what we look like, what we think or what we believe. Council is committed to upholding the twenty human rights protected by law in the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*. Valuing human rights as fundamental to ensuring full, fair, and respectful community experience, which uplifts both the individual and the whole community.

3. Our approach

Council's approach to social justice is person-centred – in other words, it applies to anyone who lives, works, studies, plays, visits, does business or has a connection to the Brimbank municipality.

At the same time, there needs to be recognition that not everyone is the same in terms of background, identity, stage of life and experiences. This can influence the degree to which they are able to fully participate in community life and access basic necessities.

Intersectionality

Many factors contribute to a person's experience of disadvantage and privilege. An intersectional approach considers that each person is unique and complex, with a wide variety of identities, traits, life experiences and factors that influence their experience of inequality or privilege in our community.

Inequality and vulnerability are not inherent and are informed by systems and structures in our society that are socially constructed. A social justice approach recognises the role of breaking down barriers to inequality is key to achieving a more just society.

The following aspects are a useful way of recognising how various factors can inform and influence an individual's experience of the world and helps identify barriers to access and inclusion.

Life Stages

As people transition through different life stages; early years, child, young person, adult and senior, these can also impact their experience of inequality. Different life stages present unique opportunities and challenges, which can either protect against, or act as a risk factor in health and wellbeing.

A life stage approach recognises that key stages of early childhood, adolescence, and older adulthood are associated with significant milestones. Prioritising high impact investments during these formative periods can shape lifelong health and wellbeing outcomes. These groups can experience increased vulnerability due to health, social, and economic factors that limit their access to resources and agency.

Council applies an equity lens by considering the unique needs of populations at each life stage, ensuring that resources and opportunities are distributed equitably to reduce health disparities and promote equal access to health and wellbeing across the community.

Places and Experiences

There are certain life experiences or factors that can increase a person's risk of exclusion, disadvantage, or discrimination. These factors are not static, and someone's experience of them can change across their lifespan. When someone is experiencing a number of these factors, their risk of discrimination and disadvantage is compounded.

Equity and opportunity must also be considered from the perspective of location. Across Brimbank, some areas will experience greater inequity than other areas.

Examples of places include access to housing, work or education, public transport, open spaces, services, and facilities.

Examples of experiences include, mental ill-health, chronic ill-health, family violence, homelessness and insecure housing, financial difficulties, gambling harm, alcohol or other drug harm, caring responsibilities, disability, seeking asylum, family breakdown, poverty, low literacy, and religion.

Communities of interest

When considering life stage, experiences, and place, it is evident that there are some population groups that are potentially at greater risk of experiencing inequality or discrimination.

- Women and gender diverse people

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- LGBTQIA+ communities
- People with disability
- Culturally and racially marginalised people (CARM), i.e. migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, first generation Australians who speak little or no English.

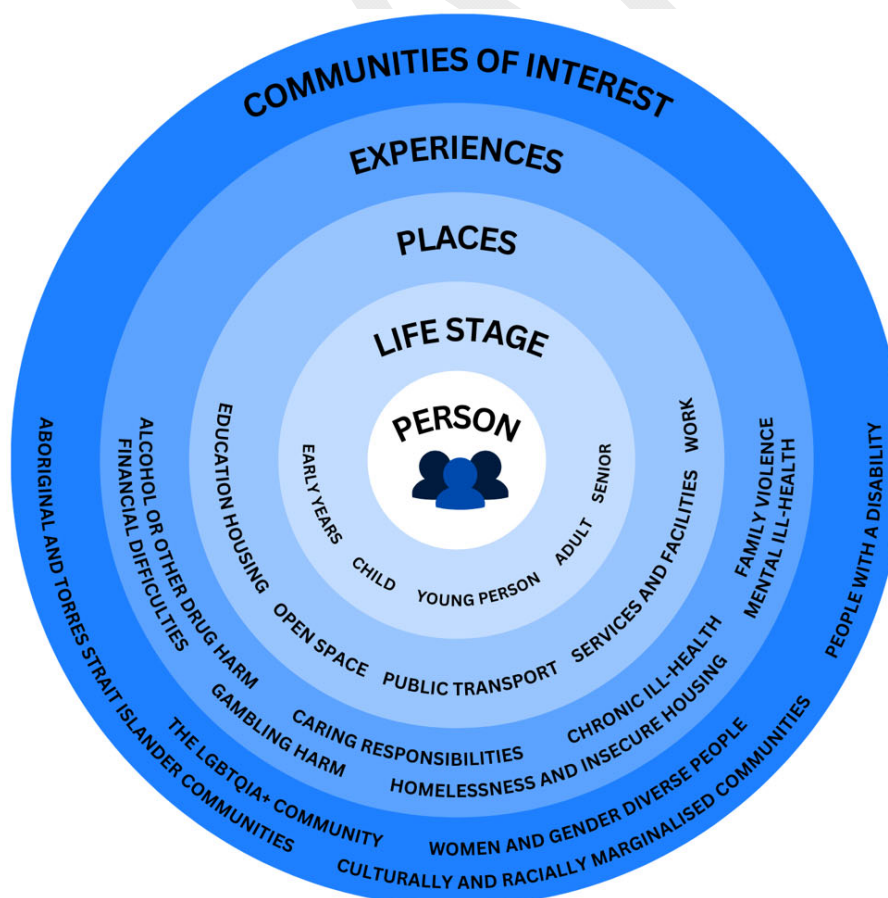
It is important to note that not everyone who identifies as belonging to one of the above groups will experience inequality. Similarly, the inequality faced by individuals is not equal.

Belonging to more than one of the above groups can compound a person's risk of inequality. Other factors, including someone's experiences and where they live are also of relevance. Disadvantage can be entrenched and compounded across generations, creating greater barriers over time. The result is that an individual must work even harder to overcome adversity and change their circumstances.

Conversely, when someone is raised with advantage and privilege, this can also compound and increase their opportunities and advantages across their lifespan, and for future generations.

The following figure outlines how life stage, places and experience intersect and contribute to inequality, particularly for some communities of interest. Person refers to someone who lives, works, studies, plays, visits, does business, or has a connection to Brimbank.

Figure 2: A person-centred approach to social justice



Case Studies

The below case studies demonstrate how social justice factors shape life's outcomes. They demonstrate how structural inequities, rather than individual effort alone, determine opportunities and long-term wellbeing.

Case Study 1: Mary

Mary is a 64-year-old woman who left the workforce in her twenties to raise children. When she returned to work, she was only able to secure casual roles, which offered limited stability and superannuation contributions. In her fifties, after her divorce, Mary began renting and became the sole carer and financial supporter of one of her children who lives with a chronic illness.

Mary does not drive and lives in an area with poor public transport access, which limits her ability to reach employment, health care, and support services. With retirement approaching, she is anxious about her financial security, particularly as she has little superannuation and fears that losing her tenancy would leave her homeless.

Social justice lens:

Mary's experience reflects gendered economic inequality, the impact of unpaid caring responsibilities, and the structural barriers older women face in the housing market. Her case highlights the intersection of gender, age, caregiving, and financial disadvantage, all of which increase her risk of homelessness.

Case Study 2: Mohammed

Mohammed is a 23-year-old man who migrated to Australia with his parents as a child. His family secured citizenship when he was 13, providing him with access to education, health care, and welfare supports. He attended a high-performing school, completed university, and recently finished his Master's degree.

Mohammed has been financially supported by his parents throughout his education. He lives at home rent-free, owns a car purchased for him by his parents, and receives JobSeeker payments while he searches for work. He intends to continue living with his parents once he finds employment so that he can save for a house deposit.

Social justice lens:

Mohammed's story illustrates how structural advantages including citizenship, stable housing, family financial support, and access to education, can buffer young people from hardship. His trajectory demonstrates how class privilege and intergenerational wealth shape opportunities, even in the absence of full-time work.

Case Study 3: Samuel

Samuel is a 17-year-old boy who sought asylum in Australia with his parents and three younger siblings two years ago. His family holds temporary visas, which exclude them from Medicare and income support, forcing them to rely heavily on charities and community organisations.

Samuel is enrolled in high school, but caring responsibilities for his siblings often cause him to miss classes. He is improving his English, but as the family's main interpreter, he must navigate complex systems on behalf of his parents. Without internet at home, he struggles to complete homework and is falling behind in his classes. His school has warned him that he may be expelled. Samuel would like to find paid work to support his family, but he does not yet have the right to work.

Social justice lens:

Samuel's case highlights how immigration status, poverty, language barriers, and caring

responsibilities intersect to compound disadvantage. His situation demonstrates the vulnerabilities faced by refugee and asylum-seeker families who are excluded from government supports.

Case Study 4: Amina

Amina is 31 years old and non-binary. They came to Australia as an international student when they were 19 and now have permanent residency. They are a lawyer with a permanent contract, earning a stable income. They purchased their own apartment with the help of an inheritance from their grandparents. They live close to public transport and own a car.

Amina has access to Medicare and private health insurance, and regularly accesses preventative health services. Their partner is pregnant and they would like to take parental leave, but have not been granted parental leave because they are not considered the primary caregiver. Amina is worried that they will need to leave their job because their workplace won't support their caring responsibilities.

Social justice lens:

Amina's experience illustrates how class privilege, financial security, stable housing, permanent residency, and access to health care provide her with resilience and choice. While they are not immune to gender-based inequities, their other intersecting privileges (income, education, citizenship, and family wealth) protect them from many of the structural barriers faced by women like Mary or young people like Samuel.

4. Key Commitments

Acknowledging the principles of social justice is not enough to uphold and strengthen social justice in Brimbank. Council will actively pursue social justice for all people who live, work, study, play, visit, do business or are connected to Brimbank through our roles in advocacy, service delivery and partnerships.

Figure 3: Key Commitments



5. Implementation, monitoring and reporting

The Social Justice Framework is a key strategic document that aligns with the community aspirations and the strategic priorities of *We Are Brimbank: Integrated Community Vision 2050, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029*.

Actions to deliver on the Social Justice Framework's key commitments will be reflected in Annual Action Plans in *We Are Brimbank: Integrated Community Vision 2050, Council Plan and Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025-2029* along with reporting on progress in the Annual Report.