

## **Eligibility, Access and Equity Policy**

The Access, Eligibility and Equity policy outlines the approach taken by Interchange Outer East towards the allocation and provision of services. The key values and principles in this policy are:

- Services are made available to everyone who is entitled to them, free of any form of discrimination.
- Services are developed, allocated, and delivered on the basis of fair assessment and treatment of all participants eligible to access them.
- Eligible participants are informed of the services available, and how they can obtain them.
- Services will be sensitive to the needs and requirements of participants from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and be responsive as far as practicable to the particular circumstances of individuals.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for funded services from Interchange Outer East participants must meet the following criteria:

- They have a disability as defined by the Disability Services Act 2006.
- Live at home with their family or in home based care, including foster / long term care.
- Living independently in low cost accommodation (Supported Accommodation, Rooming Houses and Public Housing).
- Reside within Knox, Maroondah or the Shire of Yarra Ranges.

Many recreational services have additional eligibility criteria around age and locality that need to be met for a participant to be considered eligible for those specific services.

To be eligible for family support programs such as family camp and sibling support, there must be a member of the family who is a current participant utilising services either funded or purchased.

To be eligible for purchasable services such as Flexible Care and Balance Services, participants must have access to funds that will enable full cost recovery of any service provided. There are no locality restrictions within purchased services.

### **Access**

Eligibility for the service does not guarantee access to the service. Access to Interchange Outer East services is determined by a range of factors including:

#### Age Range

Many services and programs provided by Interchange Outer East have specific age groups that the service is provided for. This is done to ensure an equitable spread of services across all age groups.

## Group Dynamics

Interchange Outer East offers a number of group based services that are provided on ratios that are less than 1:1. In such services it is imperative that access to these services considers compatibility and group dynamics to ensure services are effective, safe and secure for the whole group.

## Matching criteria

For some volunteer based services (host program, specialised care, camps) and 1:1 based services (flexible care, outreach), Interchange Outer East uses a matching process to ensure that the capacity, skills and interests of volunteers and staff members are used to the maximum benefit. The matching process involves families, people with disabilities, volunteers and Interchange staff.

## Availability and capacity to provide a service

At most times the requests for service far outweighs the availability of places within a service. Access to services will be restricted at times to ensure an equitable spread of the available resources to those participants seeking them. Determination of who is able to access services is made using the equity criteria.

## Safety and risk assessment

When it is determined that a service or group cannot be operated because it is not safe or the risks associated with the service provision is too high, then people's access to service will be affected. Issues such as staff and volunteer availability, weather conditions, behavioural issues, transport ... etc. could all affect access to a service.

## Equity

Interchange aims to provide an equitable distribution of its service resource across all eligible families. However, where demand is greater than the available service, a priority system needs to be implemented to determine priority of access whilst addressing more global equity issues of social and community disadvantage. The priority indicators for access to Interchange Outer East services are as follows:

- The need to strengthen or support the role of the family, carer or person's support network.
- The need to provide support to ensure safety and well being of the person with a disability, their family / carer and the community.
- Immediate and potential benefit of the support to reduce the likelihood for more intensive assistance in the future.
- Impact on the individual's / family's wellbeing if service not available.
- The provision of other services made available to the individual and/or family from within Interchange and across other services if known.
- The existence of multiple disadvantage:
  - People with multiple disabilities and complex support needs.
  - Financially disadvantaged persons.
  - Indigenous people.
  - People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In order to determine priority, Interchange Outer East relies on information through its assessment process, which occurs throughout a person's involvement with Interchange and is an ongoing information gathering process.

Initial assessment provides:

- A determination of eligibility for Interchange Outer East services.
- Identifying needs of families.
- Information in regards to participant's support needs.
- Information in regards to priority indicators.

Ongoing assessment provides:

- Ongoing understanding of a family's support needs.
- Updated information about participant's support needs.
- Referral to other services.
- Priority assessment information.