

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

2017 - 2021



Acknowledgement of Country

Coffs Harbour City Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Gumbaynggirr people, and show our respect to elders past, present and future.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land.

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Message from the Mayor and General Manager

Coffs Harbour City Council strives to create an accessible and inclusive environment in which people enjoy an equal opportunity to participate.

The purpose of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021 (DIAP) is to position access and inclusion at the centre of Council business. The DIAP has a vital role in ensuring access and inclusion are fundamental considerations in how we create liveable communities, support access to meaningful employment, provide information and services and promote positive community attitudes and behaviour.

The DIAP builds on work already underway to increase access and inclusion. It spans all areas of Council, building capacity in order to make Council, and ultimately the Coffs Harbour area, a welcoming place for all people. The DIAP supports the larger reform of the disability sector through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which aims to enhance positive change in the lives of people with a disability.

The development of the DIAP has been informed by feedback from the community as well as Council's Access Advisory Committee. Ongoing community input will be essential to the success of the DIAP, and our community and stakeholders are encouraged to engage with Council regarding the implementation of the Plan.

With a more inclusive community, people have access to greater choice to enhance their everyday lives; this represents a significant improvement for people with disabilities, their families and carers and the broader community.



Denise Knight
Mayor
Coffs Harbour City Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Denise Knight'.

Steve McGrath
General Manager
Coffs Harbour City Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve McGrath'.

Background

In 2008, Australia signed the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The *National Disability Strategy* was then developed which commits both State and Federal Governments to a person-centred response to people with a disability.

The *NSW Disability Inclusion Act* was passed in August 2014. This Act requires all Council's in New South Wales to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan to promote the independence and inclusion of people with a disability.

This means that for the first time all levels of government in Australia have a unified approach to improving the lives of people with a disability, their families and carers.

Purpose

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021 sets out what Council will do in the next four years to enable people with a disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities.

The DIAP is a statement of Council's ongoing commitment to improving access and inclusion for people with a disability. It is Council's intention to take a leadership role within the Coffs Harbour area, to facilitate improvement across the four focus areas which have been nominated at a national level by people with a disability as being of primary importance in creating an inclusive community.

These four areas are:

- ❖ Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
- ❖ Creating liveable communities
- ❖ Supporting access to meaningful employment
- ❖ Improving access to services through better systems and processes

Statement of Commitment

Coffs Harbour City Council strives to be inclusive and accessible for people with a disability.

Council seeks to achieve this by:

- ❖ Advocating equal rights for all and improving our city as an accessible and inclusive place,
- ❖ Striving for an inclusive society through collaborations with community, business and government groups,
- ❖ Improving awareness of and access to Council services, facilities and information,
- ❖ Supporting workforce diversity.

The DIAP will set the framework and priorities to implement significant improvements in relation to access and inclusion for people with a disability. Diverse participation and contributions made by the whole community will strengthen our vision of a vibrant and connected Coffs Harbour area.

The Case for Inclusion

Disability is caused by a range of conditions including intellectual, physical, cognitive, sensory, neurological impairments and mental illness. What is consistent across all these conditions is the social isolation, discrimination and disadvantage that so often results for the person experiencing the condition.

The significant changes that have taken place internationally and nationally concerning disability policy recognise that people with a disability have a right to fully participate in society and to pursue their goals and aspirations.

*'Inclusion means I can do stuff and help my family, because my family has helped me a lot. It will feel great to be able to do stuff and be on similar levels as people that don't have disability.'*¹

Don't DIS my Ability ambassador 2014

Research has shown that inclusion benefits everyone:

- ❖ As a community, we are stronger with a diverse range of viewpoints and perspectives, and as a whole we are enriched through activities that promote inclusion.
- ❖ Inclusion reduces disadvantage, isolation and discrimination. It has far reaching positive impacts across all aspects of life, including health, welfare, education and employment. These impacts are felt beyond the individual, with families and the broader community all being positively impacted by an inclusive society.
- ❖ There are strong economic reasons for increasing the inclusiveness of our society. Analysis indicates that there are significant financial gains for both individuals and for the economy by moving people into productive and fulfilling employment.²

¹ NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015

² NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015

Disability in our Area

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 defines disability as:

'The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.'

In 2012, it was estimated that **23% or 16,226** people living in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area (LGA) had some form of disability.³ This includes profound core activity limitation, severe core activity limitation, moderate core activity limitation and mild core activity limitation.

Profound or Severe Disability – Needing Assistance

4,038 people or 5.9% of the population in the Coffs Harbour LGA in 2011 reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.⁴

- 8% of 0 -14 year olds identified as needing assistance
- 52% of 65 years and over identified as needing assistance

Providing assistance

12% or approximately 8,300 people provided unpaid care, help or assistance to a person with a disability in the Coffs Harbour LGA in 2011.⁵

Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Research shows that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and disability. In areas such as income, employment, education, internet connection, housing and transport, people with a disability experience greater disadvantage than the general population.⁶

Income

On June 30 2016, there were 3,800 people whose main source of income was the disability support pension.⁷

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability Estimates, 2012

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011

⁶ The Geography of Disability and Economic Disadvantage in Australian Capital Cities, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Canberra, 2009.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Coffs Harbour (C) (LGA) statistics, 2016

Developing the Plan

Commitment

Council began developing a Disability Action Plan in 2014.

Research

A demographic analysis was undertaken along with a review of Council's access improvements.

Awareness

Council staff were made aware of the *Disability Inclusion Act (2014)* and the need for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to improve inclusion across all areas of Council.

Consultation

In late 2015, Coffs Harbour City Council joined 7 other Councils (Ballina, Byron, Clarence Valley, Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond and Tweed) to collaboratively undertake stakeholder consultation. A survey for key stakeholders was jointly developed and implemented with 540 responses received.

Council's Access Advisory Committee was also consulted about what they thought were the biggest barriers to inclusion for people with a disability when accessing Council services and facilities along with the staff from the Deaf Society and Ability Links.

There was also two community sessions held to provide external stakeholders with the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft document.

Action Plans

Draft strategies and actions were developed by staff from many parts of Council based on what the community feedback identified as important. There was also consideration of alignment with other strategic plans such as the Coffs Harbour Community Strategic Plan, the Cultural Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022 and the Coffs Coast Strategic Tourism Plan 2020.

Endorsement

Consultations were conducted to gather feedback on the draft Plan to ensure what had been developed resonated with community expectations and aspirations. Participants of the consultations included Council's Access Advisory Committee, people with disability and their carers and key stakeholders from government and non-government sectors.

Lodgement

The adopted Plan will be lodged with the Disability Council of NSW.

Legislation and Policy

‘to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.’ UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Commonwealth *National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2010-2020* sets out a 10 year national plan for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. The NDS is supported by *the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The NSW Governments passing of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act (DIA) 2014* further strengthens Australia’s commitment to support access and inclusion for people with disability.

Legislation, Strategies and Standards

International

- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability*

Commonwealth

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the National Disability Insurance Scheme*
- *National Art Disability Strategy (2009)*
- *Disability (Access to Premise Standards – Buildings) Standards 2010*
- *Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy 2010*

State

- *NSW Disability Inclusion Act (DIA) 2014 and the Disability Inclusion Plan*
- *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 (NSW)*
- *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (ADA)*
- *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*
- *National Disability Strategy – NSW Implementation Plan 2012 – 2014*
- *Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*

This diagram shows the relationship between the international, national, state and local legislation and policy.



Council's Planning Process

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021 supports the Coffs Harbour Community Strategic Plan and it will inform the actions of Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan and will be reported on in the 6-Monthly and Annual Reports.



Image source: *Local Government NSW and NSW Family and Community Service – Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines*

Consultation

This DIAP was informed by the responses of 540 people who live in one of the seven Local Government Areas between Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads. These 540 people answered a survey in 2015 that asked them what was most important for access and inclusion across the areas of attitudes and behaviour, liveable communities, employment and systems and processes.

Of the 540 people;

- 102 live in the Coffs Harbour Local Government Area
- around 50% were from 45 to 64 years old
- 71% were female
- about 2% were Aboriginal and 6% from a culturally and linguistically different (CALD) background
- 72% were individuals (person with a disability, carer or interested community member)
- 31% of respondents use a mobility device, 22% said they had a mental health issue, 16% hearing impairment and 8% intellectual impairment.

Consultation Outcomes

The following information collates what respondents identified as being most important to enabling people with a disability to participate in the community. The responses are listed from the most important to the least important.

What is most important for changing attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities in the community?

- ❖ Ensuring public events are accessible
- ❖ Involving people with disability in developing communication campaigns regarding inclusion
- ❖ Public message campaigns that highlight inclusion and recognise contribution
- ❖ Positive images
- ❖ Staff training

What is most important for making communities liveable and accessible for people with disabilities?

- ❖ Providing continuous accessible paths of travel between facilities and services
- ❖ Ensuring community programs and events are accessible – venues, transport, toilets, parking
- ❖ Encouraging promotion of accessible-for-all design in planning
- ❖ Accessible toilets in public buildings
- ❖ Adult change tables

What is most important for improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities?

- ❖ Changing people's attitudes
- ❖ Accessible workplaces
- ❖ Flexible working hours and locations
- ❖ Designing suitable roles
- ❖ Inclusive recruitment processes

What is most important for improving accessibility of systems and processes?

- ❖ Ensuring all information is available in different formats for all abilities
- ❖ Communication supports – hearing loops, touch screens, interpreters
- ❖ Promoting mechanisms for feedback and inclusion like access committees
- ❖ Ensuring workplaces internal systems and processes are accessible

What Council will do to:

Develop Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours

Advocate for appropriate service provision for people with a disability in the region.

- ❖ Work with other levels of government to improve access and inclusion and service provision for people with a disability.
- ❖ Participate in regional forums and inter-agency networks that address issues of access and inclusion.

Support and encourage people with a disability to participate in Council's decision-making processes.

- ❖ Continue to support Council's Access Advisory Committee to be an effective advisory body for Council on inclusion and access issues.
- ❖ Support people with a disability to participate in Council meetings and community consultations.

Promote positive attitudes toward people with a disability.

- ❖ Support the coordination and implementation of celebration for the International Day of People with a Disability.
- ❖ Promote the achievements of people with a disability through Council's publications, social media and marketing materials.
- ❖ Increase the visibility of people with a disability via Council's social media, website and marketing material.

What Council will do to:

Create Liveable Communities

Contribute toward improved access and inclusion for residents and visitors with a disability.

- ❖ Provide up to date information for visitors and residents on facilities and services that support access including mobility maps, accommodation guides and accessible business guides.

Increase participation of people with a disability in Council run events, festivals and activities.

- ❖ Support people with a disability to have the opportunity to participate on Council events committees, planning and focus groups.
- ❖ Implement accessible events training for Council staff involved in the planning and delivery of events.
- ❖ Develop and implement an inclusion checklist for Council events and encourage its use with stakeholders.
- ❖ Include information about access provisions including parking, toilets, hearing augmentation and companion card etc. in marketing and promotional material and event signage.

Increase the number of accessible paths of travel in key locations.

- ❖ Update the Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan and include it in the Integrated Transport Management Plan.
- ❖ Review Council design standards for footpaths, passing areas and provision of public seats.
- ❖ Develop public seating and footpath policies and install public seating and footpaths in accord with the policies.

Increase the number of accessible public toilets across the area.

- ❖ Audit public toilet facilities in the local government area (LGA) and develop a strategy to prioritise provision of accessible facilities.
- ❖ Increase the number of accessible change places in the LGA.

Provide accessible public transport infrastructure.

- ❖ Implement an action plan to provide 100% accessible public transport infrastructure, bus stops and shelters by 2022.

Improve Council's planning processes to strengthen access and inclusion outcomes.

- ❖ Incorporate the delivery of disability access outcomes as criteria when developing project briefs and staging the delivery of Council infrastructure projects.
- ❖ Undertake access appraisals and consult people with a disability to incorporate access priorities as part of the development and implementation of plans.

Upgrade Council's owned and managed facilities to meet DDA and BCA legislative requirements.

- ❖ Inspect community facilities to audit access requirements and establish a priority list to guide expenditure when additional funding becomes available for improvement works.
- ❖ Design the proposed Cultural and Civic Space so it incorporates features that will accommodate inclusion of people with disabilities.

Improve access to Council owned public spaces and streetscapes.

- ❖ Plan for people with varying levels of mobility to be accommodated in cultural facilities.
- ❖ Consider installing all-abilities play equipment to improve playground accessibility as part of all upgrades and new developments.
- ❖ Review beach access for people with mobility issues including the use of beach wheelchairs and beach mats and provide recommendations for improved access.

What Council will do to:

Support Access to Meaningful Employment

Increase the workforce participation of people with disability.

- ❖ Ensure our recruitment website meets the Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Incorporate workforce diversity as part of everyday Council business.

- ❖ Establish flexible work practices and policies for staff with a disability and staff who are carers of a person with a disability.
- ❖ Revise the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) strategy as part of the workforce planning framework.

Improve organisational capacity to support a diverse workforce.

- ❖ Assist Council's Leaders to work effectively with staff with a disability through the provision of coaching and support.
- ❖ Capture EEO data as part of the recruitment on-boarding process.

What Council will do to:

Improve Access to Services through Better Systems and Processes

Improve access and inclusion to Council's community and cultural services, activities and facilities.

- ❖ Investigate assistive technology to support access to services by people with disabilities and provide recommendations.
- ❖ Implement assistive technology and ensure that staff are able to use this technology for the benefit of people with disabilities.
- ❖ Investigate installing computers in the Libraries with software to facilitate access for people with disabilities.
- ❖ Assess and adapt collection development to ensure Library stock provides for people with disabilities.
- ❖ Assess options to add features to existing Library stock to aid independent use by people with disabilities i.e. braille blurbs for talking books, raised numbers on the sleeves of talking books.
- ❖ Develop a strategy to encourage artists with disabilities to participate in Council's cultural program.
- ❖ Actively promote the Jetty Memorial Theatre to groups which support people with disabilities and the aged including acceptance of the companion card.
- ❖ Investigate partnering with groups which support people with disabilities and the aged to develop and deliver targeted programs.
- ❖ Investigate providing more accessible parking or implement a drop off zone at the Jetty Memorial Theatre to assist those with mobility issues.
- ❖ Engage with Vision Australia to look at providing audio description and tactile tours of selected performances.

Increase staff and volunteer's knowledge, skills and confidence to provide a responsive service to people with a disability.

- ❖ Provide training for staff and volunteers in disability awareness that covers impacts of all disabilities, legislation, reasonable adjustment, communication, trauma informed care, and mental health first aid.

Increase access to Council information.

- ❖ Review and update Council's Communication Strategy and incorporate the requirements for developing accessible publications, communications, forms and templates including the use of plain English.
- ❖ Develop and implement guidelines to ensure graphic design publications are accessible for people with a disability.
- ❖ Increase the WCAG rating of Council's website.
- ❖ Review and update web content across all Council services to comply with content accessibility guidelines.
- ❖ Explore options to make information on inclusive and accessible facilities, services and events available in one place and promoted this to the community.

Delivery of the Plan

Governance

All areas of Council have responsibility for enhancing access and inclusion. Council's Senior Leadership Group will manage and monitor the implementation of the Plan across Council.

Integration

The actions in this DIAP will be integrated into Council's four year Delivery Program and one year Operational Plan and will be aligned with the Community Strategic Plan.

Implementation

An internal implementation plan that outlines actions, responsibilities and timeframes has been developed to guide the delivery of this DIAP.

Reporting

Each year Council will formally report on its progress toward delivering the DIAP as part of its 6-Monthly Reports and Annual Report.

Funding the Plan

Some sections of the DIAP are about what we already do and others are about doing new things. Some of the actions will not require additional funds but others such as facility upgrades will require additional funds. The funds to do this work will be allocated through the annual budget process where possible. Council may also apply for external funds where possible.

Managing Risk

Council is aware of its legal responsibility to ensure that people with a disability are not subjected to discrimination when accessing services and information. We will continue to implement changes that remove barriers to access and support us to meet this obligation.



Coffs Harbour City Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan – Prepared June 2017

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