

## ITEM 2 DRAFT BEACH AND FORESHORE ACCESS STRATEGY 2019-2028

The draft Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy 2019-2028 provides an outline for a more planned and considered approach in the way Council can practically support people with a disability to access our beaches and foreshores.

The draft strategy was informed by research into best practice approaches across Australia and consultation with South Coast Disabled Surfers Association and key stakeholders including wheelchair users, members of the deaf and blind community and carers of people with a disability.

This report seeks Council's endorsement for the draft Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy 2019-2028 to be placed on public exhibition from 19 February 2019 to 18 March 2019 inclusive.

### RECOMMENDATION

- 1 Council endorse the public exhibition of the draft Beach and Foreshore Strategy 2019-2028 from 19 February 2019 to 18 March 2019 inclusive.
- 2 Following exhibition the final version of the draft Beach and Foreshore Strategy 2019-2028 be presented to Council for consideration and endorsement.

### REPORT AUTHORISATIONS

Report of: Peter Coyte, Manager Property and Recreation  
Authorised by: Kerry Hunt, Director Community Services - Creative and Innovative City

### ATTACHMENTS

- 1 draft Beach and Foreshore Strategy 2019-2028

### BACKGROUND

As part of the development of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020 the community provided feedback that people with a disability wanted improved access to our beach and foreshore areas. It is acknowledged that improving disability access to our 17 patrolled beaches remains a key priority for Council to enable all our community to enjoy and participate in recreational and lifestyle activities that our beaches and foreshores have to offer.

To date Council has not pursued an encompassing strategic approach to access to beaches and foreshores. Our focus has relied on the provision of disability parking, disability amenities and amphibious wheelchairs at a number of beaches.

The opportunity to improve access at targeted locations will provide a co-ordinated and consistent approach to improving the accessibility of Council's beaches and foreshores.

Preparation for the draft strategy incorporated research with other local government authorities and industry providers to ascertain best practice initiatives to enhancing access to beaches. Discussions with key stakeholders and a targeted consultation were identified as the best method for gaining insight into the challenges people with disability face in accessing foreshores and beaches.

As a result of our research the following key goals have been identified for the draft Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy:

- Improve safe and accessible beach and foreshore access;
- Provide relevant and current information about our beaches and foreshores; and
- Work with partners in improving beach access.

Four beaches across the city are identified as priorities for improvement in the strategy. Austinmer, Thirroul, North Wollongong and Port Kembla have natural landform and built infrastructure to facilitate improved access to beaches.

Associated with each of the goals are specific actions to effectively deploy the strategy.

## PROPOSAL

This report seeks Council's endorsement of public exhibition of the draft Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy 2019-2028 from 19 February 2019 to 18 March 2019 inclusive. The draft strategy will be made available to the community for comment and will be promoted through Council's website, libraries, customer service, social media platforms and local newspapers.

## CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

In informing the draft Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy, Council officers pursued a range of initiatives including:

- Investigating what other councils were doing to improve access to beaches;
- Investigating what products were available to support people with accessing beaches;
- Held discussions with the South Coast Disabled Surfers Association to examine the issue;
- Undertook targeted consultations with wheelchair users and members of the deaf and blind community; and
- Engaged with the parents and carers of students at Para Meadows.

The proposed public exhibition of the draft strategy will enable the broader community to provide comment on our findings and further inform our approach.

## PLANNING AND POLICY IMPACT

Improving beach and foreshore access has remained a priority for Council with investigating beach accessibility options for people with a disability as a deliverable in the 2018-2021 Annual Plan.

The draft Beach and Foreshore Strategy 2019 – 2028 also takes into account the draft Public Toilet Strategy 2019 – 2028.

This report contributes to the delivery of Our Wollongong 2028 goal 5 "We are a healthy community in a liveable city". It specifically delivers on the following:

Community Strategic Plan	Delivery Program 2018-2021	Operational Plan 2018-19
Strategy	3 Year Action	Operational Plan Actions
5.5 The public domain is maintained to a high standard	5.5.1 Public facilities in key locations and transport routes are maintained and clean, accessible and inviting to our community and visitors	5.5.1.1 Well maintained assets are provided that meet the needs of current and future communities
5.1.4 Urban areas are created to provide a healthy and safe living environment for our community	5.1.4.1 Provide an appropriate and sustainable range of quality passive and active open spaces and facilities	Investigate Beach Accessibility options for people with Disability

## RISK ASSESSMENT

The proposed strategic approach ensures that improving accessibility to beaches and foreshores is planned and coordinated and the improvements are equitably distributed across the three Council planning districts.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Unfunded actions will be considered as part of Council's annual budget planning process. Actions that are funded via current budget allocations will be included in Council's Annual Plan and Delivery Program. Council officers will also seek external funding opportunities to help deliver actions in this strategy.

## CONCLUSION

The draft strategy demonstrates Council's commitment to providing people with a disability the opportunity to enjoy and participate in the entertainment, recreational and lifestyle activities that our beaches and foreshores offer. The draft strategy ensures that improving accessibility to beaches and foreshores is planned and co-ordinated and the improvements are equitably distributed across the three planning districts.



# Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy 2019 - 2028

## -DRAFT-







Photo: North Beach

## Introduction

Wollongong's coastline stretches from Stanwell Park Beach in the north to Windang Beach in the south. It includes 17 beaches patrolled by Council's professional lifeguards and Surf Life Saving NSW volunteers. Our City's beaches and foreshores are a key part of our identity. They are highly valued by both locals and visitors and

provide an ideal setting for many recreational and lifestyle activities. In Council's 2017 Community Survey, the residents identified patrolled beaches as an area where Council 'performed extremely well'. It's only fitting we continue to invest in improving ease of access to beaches for everyone, including people with a disability.

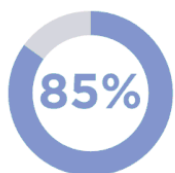
### Did you know?

- 1 in 5 people in Australia have some form of disability.
- 35.9% of Australia's 8.9 million households include a person with a disability.
- 4.4% of people with a disability in Australia use a wheelchair.
- 1 in 6 Australians are affected by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 Deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.
- Vision Australia estimates there are currently 357,000 people in Australia who are blind or have low vision.

Source: Australian Network on Disability <https://www.and.org.au/pages/disability-statistics.html>. Viewed 6.8.2018



20% of Australians have some type of disability or have some difficulty getting down to the water.



85% of Australians live within 50km of the coast.

Australia State of the Environment 2016 Report: <https://soe.environment.gov.au/sites/g/files/net806/t/soe2016-coasts-launch-17feb.pdf?v=1488793015>

## Definitions

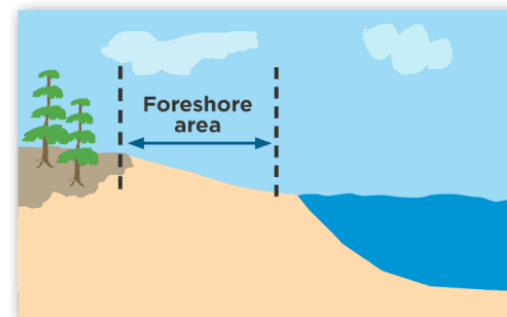
### • Beach:

An area covered with sand or small rocks that is next to an ocean or lake.



### • Foreshore:

The part of a shore between the water and occupied or cultivated land.



### • Beach Access:

A continuous, unobstructed path that crosses the surface of the beach that allows pedestrians to participate in beach related activities.







Photo courtesy of Shane Hryhorec - Push Mobility



Wollongong 2022 Community Goal:  
"We are a healthy  
community in a  
liveable city"

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## Why do we need a strategy?

In 2016, in response to the introduction of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act, Council developed a Disability Inclusion Action Plan. A consistent message from the community consultation was that people with a disability wanted improved and easier access to Council's recreational services and facilities.

Our City's foreshore areas cater for a range of entertainment, sport and recreational activities. They provide pedestrian and shared paths, playgrounds, picnic areas, toilets and showers and other supporting

infrastructure. Our foreshores host many events including surf lifesaving and surfing events, Australia Day and New Year's Eve celebrations.

This Strategy will help Council meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). Under this Act, we are a 'service provider' and must consider the needs of people with a disability when developing and delivering services and facilities including our beach and foreshore areas.



Photo: Austinmer Beach promenade



Photo: Thirroul Beach

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## The purpose of this strategy

This Strategy will provide a more planned and considered approach in the way Council can practically support people with a range of disabilities to access our beaches and foreshores. Improved access for people with a disability also means improved access for everyone including parents with prams and people with limited mobility.

This Strategy aligns with Council's objective to increase the health and wellbeing of our community (Wollongong 2028 Community Objective 5.1). The Strategy will guide Council in making improvements to the accessibility of beaches and foreshores and assist in allocating resources fairly across Council's three planning districts; Planning District 1 (North), Planning District 2 (Central), Planning District 3 (South).



Photo: Port Kembla Beach

## The challenges

It's a challenge to create and sustain accessible beaches. The dynamic and harsh environment, including changing tidal conditions, movement of sand, steep sand dunes and soft, unstable sand all make it difficult to maintain infrastructure and provide consistent access to the beach. Also, many of our existing facilities were built to the regulations of the day and don't comply with many of today's accessibility standards.



Photo: Port Kembla Beach



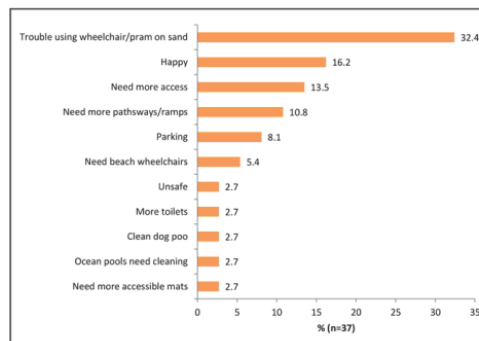
Photo: Blue Mile Tramway



## What did we do?

We:

- looked at what other councils were doing to improve access to their beaches.
- looked at what products are available to support access to beaches.
- reviewed Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Survey 2015 to see what the community told us.
- engaged with South Coast Disabled Surfers Association and Surf Life Saving Illawarra to discuss beach accessibility.
- held a discussion with clients of Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and the local MS Society support co-ordinator about beach accessibility.
- held discussions with members of our deaf and blind community on how beaches can be made more accessible.
- provided the parents and carers of students at Para Meadows School with a Beach Access Questionnaire.
- provided Council's staff with the results from the consultations and a presentation from a beach access expert with lived experience.
- ran a staff workshop to identify the beaches in our City which posed the least and greatest challenge to improving accessibility.



Graph 1:  
Comments regarding disability access  
to patrolled beaches.



Photo:  
DIAP report back and community consultation.

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## What did the community tell us?

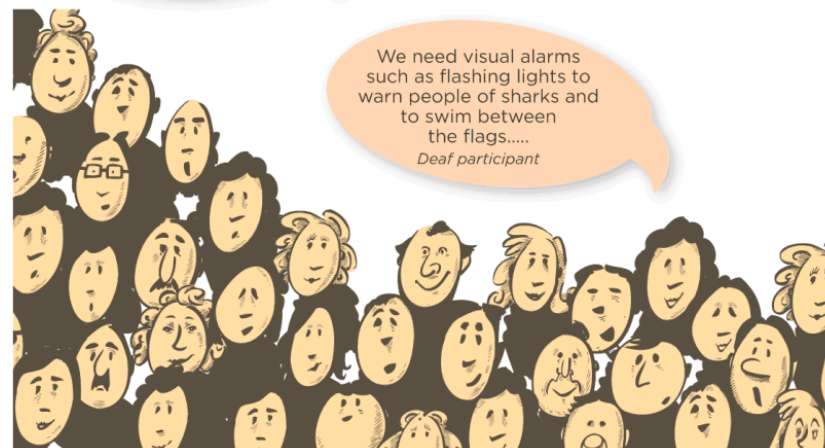
People with a disability want:

- to be on the beach with their family and friends
- relevant information about beaches eg what is available, how to book a chair, how accessible are the facilities, what else is nearby
- beach matting so they spontaneously visit the beach and simple processes for booking beach wheelchairs
- more accessible parking bays that are safe and closer to beach
- level continuous pathways connecting car park to the beach and to facilities
- accessible toilets, showers and change rooms
- assistance for carers in transferring a person to and from a chair and safe storage for their own wheelchairs
- visual alarms (flashing lights) to warn people that are deaf of any dangers
- to be able to access BBQs, picnic shelters, cafés
- shade and access to drinking water
- to be able to view the beach from parking bays
- to be able to turn up spontaneously like everybody else and access the beach
- training/education for lifeguards in disability awareness

The beach wasn't part of my world, I never considered that going to the beach would be a possibility...  
Wheelchair participant

Matting is easier for carers, it means less loading and unloading. A combination of matting and a beach chair...  
Wheelchair participant

We need visual alarms such as flashing lights to warn people of sharks and to swim between the flags....  
Deaf participant



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Map: Council planning districts and patrolled beaches.

## What do we know about our beaches?

From the information obtained from our research, site audits and feedback from key stakeholders, Council has provided an accessibility rating on our beaches, refer to Table 1 below:

	Adequate, safe accessible parking	Accessible foreshore footpath & connectivity	Accessible toilets	Showers	Accessible BBQs, picnic shelters	Access to cafés nearby	Shade available with view of beach
Stanwell Park	**	*	**	nf	*	nf	*
Coalcliff	*	*	nf	nf	nf	nf	*
Scarborough	*	*	nf	nf	nf	nf	*
Coledale	*	*	cp	*	*	nf	***
Austinmer	**	***	cp	cp	*	***	***
Thirroul	**	***	**	**	**	***	*
Sandon Point	**	*	nf	nf	nf	nf	**
Bulli	**	**	*	*	*	***	**
Woonona	**	*	*	nf	*	**	*
Bellambi	**	*	nf	nf	nf	**	*
Corrimat	**	*	nf	*	**	***	*
Towradgi	**	*	nf	nf	**	cp	**
Fairy Meadow	**	*	nf	nf	**	nf	*
North Wollongong	**	***	***	***	***	***	***
Wollongong City	**	***	***	**	*	***	*
Port Kembla	**	**	**	**	*	***	*
Windang	*	*	nf	nf	*	nf	*

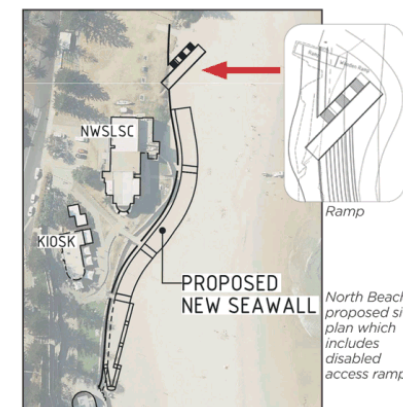
Table 1: Patrolled beach precincts rated against accessibility features

*	Poor	nf	No facility
**	Satisfactory	cp	Currently planned
***	Good		

## What will we do with the information?

We've identified four beaches as priorities for access improvements: Austinmer, Thirroul, North Wollongong and Port Kembla. See Map 1. These beaches are spread across Council's three planning areas, are very popular with residents and visitors, and can safely accommodate a beach wheelchair and matting. These four beaches also offer good foreshore connectivity.

While these beaches have been identified as focus areas for access improvements other actions will be considered for all our beaches.



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## What we will do?

### Improve safe and accessible beach and foreshore access.

We will:

- ensure disability access is part of the assessment criteria for capital works projects.
- develop a priority list of capital works with cost estimates to improve beach access in each planning district.
- develop concept designs for Austinmer, Thirroul, North Wollongong and Port Kembla Beach that consider accessible parking, amenities, ramps, connectivity and shade.
- improve accessibility at foreshore bus stops.
- develop a program of footpath upgrades that connect public transport drop off points to beach.
- undertake 'quick links' audit to identify small projects that create connectivity links.
- implement the priorities of Council's Public Toilet Strategy including installing lift and change tables at Austinmer, Thirroul and Port Kembla beaches.
- audit foreshore parking with the aim to increase accessible parking and parking bays with views to the beach/water.
- undertake a shade, seating and shelter audit of patrolled beaches.
- ensure door widths on accessible amenities accommodate a beach wheelchair.
- explore external funding opportunities to improve access

### Provide relevant and current access information about our beaches and foreshores.

We will:

- develop a promotion plan to promote the beach wheelchairs and matting.
- develop a webpage that promotes the access features of foreshores and beaches.
- review the current beach wheelchair usage guidelines and booking process.
- investigate an online booking system for the hiring of the chairs.
- install wayfinding signage that includes accessible amenities and parking information.

### Work with partners in improving beach access.

We will:

- explore opportunities for collaborating with surf clubs
- provide disability awareness training for surf clubs and Council's lifeguards.
- explore opportunities to collaborate with organisations to provide programs at beaches.
- engage people with disability when developing foreshore plans.
- trial a 'come & try' beach matting and wheelchairs program in the three planning areas.
- provide a range of beach wheelchairs, matting and appropriate storage.



We'd like to thank everyone who has provided  
input to help us improve the accessibility of  
Wollongong's foreshore and beaches.