

Disability Inclusion Action Plan Snapshot

2016-
2020

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Acknowledgement of Country

Wollongong City Council would like to show their respect and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Dharawal Country, Elders past and present, and to extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Community Strategic Plan

Our Wollongong 2028 is a Community Strategic Plan that guides everything Council does. It talks about the community's main priorities for the future and how we will achieve these. Delivering the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is included in the Community Strategic Plan to achieve the goal "we have a healthy community in a liveable city."



Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Council has a key role in promoting and supporting inclusion of people with disability. We do this by ensuring access and inclusion is a key consideration in everything we do. This includes how we develop the built environment, provide our information and services, employ our staff, and promote and support positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability. The delivery of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (Plan) guides how Council works to remove barriers and create a more accessible and inclusive community.

In developing the Plan, we engaged people with disability and their carers to learn what was most important to them. People with disability and their carers told us that improvements to our footpaths, accessible public toilets, accessible parking, our events and festivals and parks/open space/sports fields were their highest priority.

The Plan set out our objectives and the actions we would deliver between 2016 and 2020.

➔ Objectives

We set seven objectives under four focus areas:

- Increase access to the built environment
- Increase access to information
- Promote positive community attitudes and behaviours
- Increase participation opportunities
- Increase employment opportunities
- Engage people with disability
- Increase our knowledge and capacity

➔ Actions

We developed 107 actions. The delivery of these actions was the focus of our Plan.



➔ Actions delivered by focus area

This table shows the number of actions we delivered for each focus area:

Focus Area	# of actions	# of actions delivered as planned	# of actions not started
Create liveable communities	54	53	1
Improve systems and processes	24	24	0
Promote positive community attitudes and behaviours	12	11	1
Support access to meaningful employment	21	12	9

➔ Tracking Our Progress

Each year a progress report was provided to NSW Government and put on our website to let the community know what we had done.

We developed measures to track our progress.

What we did to:

Create Liveable Communities

Liveable communities are places people can move about easily to access services and facilities and participate in community life.

➔ Improve our Accessible Public Toilets

- Developed the Public Toilet Strategy 2019-2029 to guide public toilet provision
- 14 unisex accessible toilets were installed/upgraded
- Installed two adult change tables at Stuart Park and Western Suburbs Pool

"The new accessible change facilities at Western Suburbs Pool are great. They have made such a difference for me taking clients to the pool. It was a real challenge for me to get my clients changed because there wasn't a change area we could fit into, without the lifeguards closing off the rest of the amenity to other pool users" - Support Worker, 2020.

➔ Increase the number of Accessible Parking Spaces

- 323 of our carparks had access audits
- Nine on-street accessible parking spaces were added
- 19 off-street accessible parking spaces were added
- 84 of our car parks had access upgrades
- Issued 1,699 penalty notices and 266 warnings for illegal use of mobility parking spaces
- Delivered a media campaign to target illegal use of mobility parking permits

➔ Increase the number of Accessible Paths of Travel to Key Destinations

- Collected access data for our footpaths
- 80 footpaths and 189 kerb ramps were built or upgraded
- 71 shared pathways were built or upgraded
- Delivered stages of the Grand Pacific Walk project
- Completed eight 'Quick Link' accessible path projects providing continuous accessible paths of travel to carparks, playgrounds, picnic shelters and toilets
- Delivered a "Share the Track" campaign to promote safety on shared pathways

"Please tell Council workers we love the new [accessible public toilet] at Gwynneville Park" - Community Member, 2020.

➔ Increase the number of Accessible Bus Stops and Shelters

- 1,306 bus stops had access audits
- 46 bus stops had access upgrades

➔ Improve Access to our Spaces and Streetscapes

- Designed clear paths of travel along building lines, free from seating and bins, to promote continuous accessible paths of travel



Increase Access to our Recreation Services and Facilities

- Developed the Beach and Foreshore Access Strategy 2019-2028 to guide access improvements at our beach and foreshore areas
- Installed access matting at Thirroul and Austinmer beaches and purchased another beach wheelchair
- Installed three accessible barbecues and picnic shelters
- Completed three access appraisals of our tourist parks
- Installed three new cabins with access ramps at our tourist parks
- Completed four access appraisals of our pools
- Installed three platform lifts to assist with access into the water at our pools
- Installed a braille sign at Luke's Place Corrimal
- Built an accessible rain forest walk (stage one) at the Botanic Garden
- Organised weekly golf buggy tours at the Botanic Garden
- Mobility scooters have been made available at the Botanic Garden
- New playgrounds included access elements including continuous accessible paths of travel
- Leisure centres supported participation in recreation activities including: Recreation Illawarra partnership, swim classes, gymnastics for young people with autism, Illawarra Academy of Sport Athletes Disability gym program and general use



Increase access to our buildings

- 740 of our buildings had access audits
- Access upgrades included accessible amenities at the Illawarra Performing Arts Centre (IPAC), Wollongong Seniors Citizens, Coniston Community Centre, Mt Keira Summit Kiosk, Bulli Surf Life Saving Club and Stanwell Park Beach Kiosk, and, upgraded kitchen facilities including an adjustable bench at Dapto Ribbonwood Centre.



Improve our policy and planning tools to create better access

- The new West Dapto Open Space Technical Manual includes principles of universal design and specifies the use of accessible fixtures
- Masterplans for Botanic Garden and Arts Precincts were developed and include access upgrades



Increase access to library, community, youth and cultural services

Libraries

- Held 'Sensory Story Time' and 'Auslan Story Time'
- Delivered a Gingerbread House making workshop with an Auslan interpreter
- Hosted a 'Blind Knitting Group'
- Purchased an adjustable table to provide wheelchair access to sewing machines
- Held My Gov information talk with an Auslan interpreter
- Screened closed caption movies
- 12 Deaf people attended a 'Decluttering Workshop' with an Auslan interpreter
- Held a 'Quiet Tour' at the library
- Corrimal library received an Autism Friendly Badge
- Made dyslexia resources available
- Provided assistive technologies
- Held sensory play sessions in Crown Street Mall during school holidays

Youth Services

- Delivered 'TeenZ Connect' program weekly during school term
- Held Barista 101 workshops
- Delivered 'Belong' program annually
- Wollongong Youth Centre tours and introductory workshops held for local high school support unit students
- Held 'Music for the Mind' live music event annually
- Provided support for young people with disability to access mainstream programs

Cultural Services

- Held exhibitions in the Curio Gallery by Outsiders Artists and Wellways Group
- Facilitated collage workshops

What we did to:

Improve our Systems and Processes

Easy to access systems, options for communicating, and information help remove barriers to participation and support people to live independently.

We undertook projects to:

→ Increase access to information

- Upgraded Council's Wollongong City Libraries and Wollongong Botanic Garden websites to international disability access standards and included information about access
- Added access information for playgrounds to our website
- Updated and distributed our 'Disability Access Guide'
- Distributed 'The Aged and Disability' Directory
- Developed three 'Easy Read' documents, Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020, Council's Frequently Asked Questions and What is Community Engagement?
- Developed 'Social Stories' for events, programs, services and facilities
- Installed play communication boards at Towradgi, Stuart Park, Thirroul, Botanic Garden and Corrimal playgrounds
- Installed a braille sign at Luke's Place playground, Corrimal
- Produced alternate formats of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020 in word, screen reader and 'Easy Read' versions
- Kept the National Public Toilet Map up to date with access information
- Supported the development of Briometrix wheelchair access mapping project and provided a link to their wheelchair access maps on our website
- Attended the 'Illawarra Disability Options Expo' each year to provide information and respond to enquiries
- Included updates in our community newsletter on access improvements

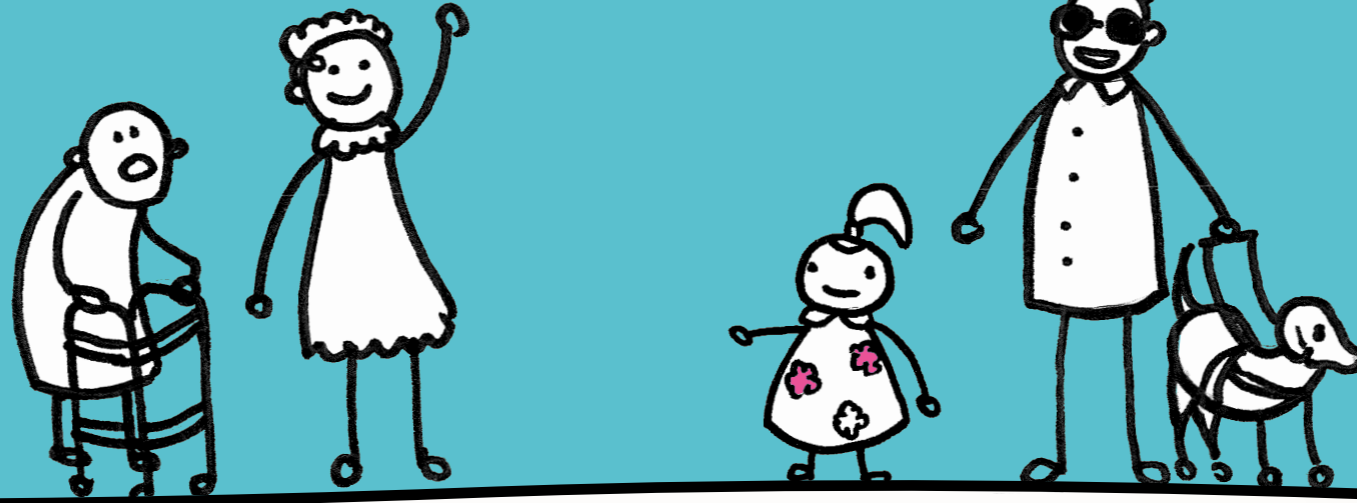
We engaged people with disability, including:

- ### → Increase participation in our community engagement activities
- 197 people with disability and their carers were engaged in the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan
 - Established the 'Walking Cycling Mobility Reference Group' to provide advice about access matters
 - Established a 'Register of Interest' to enable people to provide feedback about access matters
 - Two residents who use screen readers tested our new website before it went live
 - Engaged ten people from the Deaf community about how we can improve our services using an Auslan interpreter
 - 15 people with disability and their carers participated in mid-plan report back
 - People with disability were engaged for many Council projects

"We just want to be treated like any other person, give us a chance... We have a lot to offer" - Workshop Participant, 2019.

What we did to:

Promote Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours



People's attitudes impact all aspects of community life. The attitudes and behaviours of the community towards people with disability have been described as the single biggest barrier to participation and inclusion.

➔ Raise awareness about the contribution people with disability make to our community

- Celebrated 'International Day of People with Disability' each year with a calendar of events in partnership with Shellharbour City Council
- Engaged eight people with disability in an 'EmployAbility' project to raise awareness about employment

We worked to increase participation opportunities for people with disability in our events and activities, including:

➔ Increase participation in our events, festivals and activities

Viva la Gong

- Organised a 'Quiet Tour' of Viva la Gong before the event for people with sensory disability
- Engaged people with disability to perform at Viva la Gong
- Included access information in promotional material
- Provided the 'Quiet Space'

Comic Gong

- Organised a 'Quiet Tour' before Comic Gong before the event for people with sensory disability
- Included access information in promotional material
- Provided the 'Quiet Space'





➔ Increase participation in our events, festivals and activities

New Year's Eve and Australia Day

- A reserved accessible viewing area we provided to view the fireworks and entertainment and an online booking system
- Accessible parking spaces next to the reserved accessible viewing area
- A drop-off and pick-up zone close to the reserved accessible viewing area
- A temporary accessible public toilet near the accessible viewing area
- 'The Quiet Space' to support people needing a break from noise and stimulation
- A 'Site Map' to show the accessible paths of travel and provide access information
- A fact sheet of tips for stallholders about how they can make their stalls inclusive of people with disability
- Entertainers with disability performed at the event
- Access information to the event brochures and on webpage
- Food stalls on a continuous accessible path of travel
- Volunteers to provide support in the reserved accessible viewing area

Council won a NSW Local Government access award for our New Year's Eve event.

"I would like to register my appreciation for the effort and thought that went into organising New Year's Eve, at the Harbour, for the fireworks. The chosen site was excellent, with parking only five metres away. Your volunteers were just great, they helped us to carry gear to our spot were very attentive and offered to go to the local shops for coffee or food. Whoever thought of this, organised it and made it happen deserves a medal or a good pat on the back, I am sure there were many involved in bringing it to a conclusion. We were very comfortable throughout the night and we are looking forward to the next year for the same great experience, our exit from the area and our trip home was excellent" - New Year's Eve Participant, 2017.

➔ Undertake programs to promote access and inclusion

Environmental Education

- 11 people from the Deaf community participated in a 'Bee Workshop' with an Auslan interpreter

Art Gallery

- Held inclusive exhibitions and programs at Wollongong Art Gallery
- Hosted 'Fashion Forest Seduction' interactive sensory exhibition by Rosie Deacon
- Offered a viewing of 'Hand and Heart' exhibition with an Auslan interpreter
- Facilitated ceramics, fabric design and collage workshops
- Delivered 11-week art therapy program for people with mental illness

"Awesome Greenhouse Park!! Well done, interesting from wasteland to wetland. Great learning experience garden, bees 10/10. Can't think of anything better, everything today is awesome" - Workshop Participant, 2017.

What we did to:

Support Access to Meaningful Employment



Employment contributes towards feelings of self-worth and provides regular social interaction. For most people employment and economic security are interrelated. Employment can increase an individual's capacity for choice and control over many life decisions.

→ Increase employment opportunities

- Purchased goods and services from social enterprises who employ people with disability
- Participated in mock interviews with people with disability to assist them in preparing for job interviews

→ Increase participation opportunities

- Recruited two trainee positions for people with disability
- Employed 11 people with disability
- Facilitated an eight-week work experience program for six students from Aspect South Coast School for Children with Autism
- Supported the 'Workers of Wollongong' program by providing work experience opportunities at Bulli Tourist Park and the Botanic Garden
- Provided two work placement opportunities in Council libraries for tertiary students
- Provided workplace adjustments including IT programs, quiet spaces and antiglare screens

→ Incorporated workforce diversity as part of everyday Council business

- Developed the draft Wollongong City Council Diversity Inclusion and Belonging Policy

→ Increase retention and development opportunities

- Advertised all vacancies with the statement "Wollongong City Council is committed to the principles of employment, equity and diversity and encourages applications from people of all ages and backgrounds"

We increased our knowledge and capacity to provide inclusive service by providing a range of learning and development opportunities for our staff, including:

→ Increase awareness about working with people with disability

- 160+ Council officers completed 'Autism Awareness Training'
- 29 Council officers attended an 'Autism Spectrum Disorder Workshop' co-facilitated by a person with autism
- 15 Council officers completed 'Easy Read' training
- 17 Council officers completed 'Building Inclusive Events' training
- Provided 'Diversity Awareness Training' for new Council employees

Case Studies

Here are some case studies to provide more detail about some of the things we delivered in the Plan.

Beach and Foreshore Access strategy 2019-2029

Our beaches and foreshores are valued by locals and visitors and form an important part of our city's identity. The city has 17 beaches patrolled by our lifeguards and Surf Life Saving NSW volunteers. In June 2019, Council adopted a Plan to improve access and inclusion at our beaches. We asked people with disability what was needed to improve access to beaches and undertook an audit to give the 17 patrolled beaches an access rating. From this we identified four beaches: Austinmer, Thirroul, North Wollongong and Port Kembla, as priority beaches for improving access.

Beach matting has been installed at both Thirroul and Austinmer beaches. Further access upgrades including accessible adult change facilities with hoists are planned for these beaches.



Aspect South Coast School Work Experience Pilot Program

In June 2019, Aspect South Coast School for Children with Autism (ASPECT) approached us with a work experience request. A six-week pilot program was developed based on the needs and interests of the students. The program ran between October and December 2019. The students attended two hours each week and were supported by their teachers. The students had the opportunity to work with different Council teams including Botanic Garden, Beaton Park Leisure Centre, Foreshore Crew, Community Development and Youth Services.

The students who participated in the program indicated they would recommend Council as a work experience opportunity to their friends and family. The teachers indicated that they 'absolutely' and 'certainly would' recommend the work experience program, saying ("it's such an excellent way for young people with disability to build life/work skills and a sense of belonging in their local community. It really will help to set them up for the future"). Council staff indicated the work experience program provided them with a great learning and development opportunity. Through communicating and working with young people with autism, staff were able to put into practice the autism awareness training they had completed.

Website Rebuild

We launched a new public website in 2019. The website has features to support access for people with disability including:

- A tool to check if the content added to the website is accessible
- Colours, fonts and links to support access
- More content for people with disability, such as:
 - Social Stories about our facilities, services, and community events
 - Access information for our playgrounds and community centres and halls listing
 - Maps to show the location of accessible parking spaces across the city
 - Information about support available for people with disability

Before the website was launched it was tested by people with disability including two people who were blind and use screen readers. They provided valuable feedback and were pleased with the new site.



Braille Sign Luke's Place

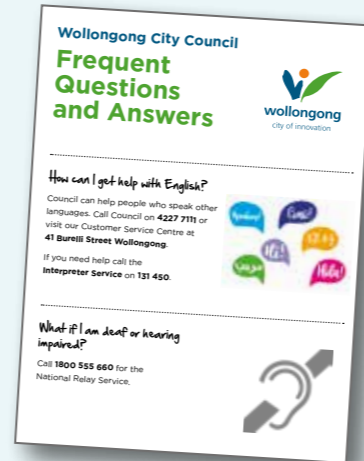
Luke's Place is a fenced playground in Corrimal with accessible play options to support children with disability to play. In 2020, we added a Braille Sign to this playground to help people who are blind or have low vision to get around the playground. The sign includes a map of the playground and provides an opportunity for everyone who visits the playground to learn more about how some children and adults read in this way. This sign is unique and sets a new benchmark for inclusion in playgrounds. We worked with Vision Australia to produce the sign.



Case Studies

Easy English Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions

'Easy English' is a term used to describe text that is written in simple short phrases for people with low literacy. It includes key information with words and images to add meaning to the text. Easy English is different to plain English, which is the use of language that is easy to understand. We have developed an Easy English fact sheet of our most Frequently Asked Questions. This fact sheet has been tested by people with low literacy to get their feedback to make sure it is as accessible as possible. It has been well received by people with disability and people with English as their second language.



Corrimal Library Autism Friendly Badge

In 2018, we were asked if we were interested in being involved in the Autism Friendly Communities - Corrimal project being run by ASPECT and University of Wollongong. Corrimal District Library and Community Centre embraced the opportunity to be a part of this great initiative. Council staff met to review current practices and how we could modify our programs and environment to ensure a more inclusive practice, including the library website. As a result the review process led to Corrimal Library creating a social story about their website, increasing sensory resources for use by the community, and implementing a story board with their children's programs on it. Library staff participated in training on how to identify and communicate effectively with people with autism.



EmployABILITY

The 'EmployABILITY' project, delivered in partnership with Shellharbour City Council, aimed to raise awareness about the employability of people with disability working in paid employment. Seven local people shared their stories which were displayed on storyboard posters. The storyboards were launched as part of International Day of People with Disability, 2017. A poet, Elliot Cameron, was contracted to use the stories to produce a slam poem. The poem was performed at the launch of the project. The launch included a round table discussion with attendees to explore the barriers people with disability face in accessing employment. The panels have since been displayed in various community settings.



Measuring our Progress

The table below provides a summary of the results:

We set indicators to measure our progress towards achieving an accessible and inclusive city.

Create Liveable Communities		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
↑ number of accessible public toilets	Council data	14 accessible toilets were installed or upgraded
↑ % of people with disability and their carers who are satisfied with our accessible public toilets	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	Less satisfied
	Customer satisfaction measure	Our Access Reference Group participated in an onsite appraisal of the new accessible toilet Stuart Park facility and provided positive feedback
↑ number of accessible parking spaces in key destinations	Council data	9 new on street spaces added 19 new off-street spaces added 84 car parks upgraded
↑ % of people with disability and their carers who are satisfied with accessible parking	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	Less satisfied
Number of new and upgraded footpaths and paths of travel	Council data	80 footpaths were built or upgraded 71 shared pathways were built or upgraded 189 kerb ramps were built or upgraded

Create Liveable Communities continued		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
↑ % of people with disability and their carers who are satisfied with footpaths and paths of travel	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	No significant change in satisfaction with footpaths
↑ % of people with disability who are satisfied with the accessibility of Council public spaces	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	No significant change in satisfaction
	Customer satisfaction measure	No data available
↑ % of people with disability who are satisfied with recreation services, community facilities and libraries	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	Less satisfied with public pools (free), Botanic Garden, Wollongong Central Library, local branch libraries, Wollongong Art Gallery, Leisure Centres, patrolled beaches No significant change in satisfaction for heated pools, district libraries and community centres

Measuring our Progress

The table below provides a summary of the results:

Create Liveable Communities continued		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
↑ access to our recreation services, community facilities and libraries	Council data	Access matting was installed at Thirroul and Austinmer beaches and another beach wheelchair purchased 3 accessible barbecues and picnic shelters were installed 3 new cabins with access ramps were installed at our tourist parks 3 platform lifts to assist with access into the water at our pools were installed
↑ access to our buildings	Council data	740 buildings had access audits 7 buildings had access upgrades
Improve access to our systems and processes		
% of people with disability who can easily access Council information	Disability Access and Inclusion Action Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	6% increase in people with disability accessing Council information from website. Less people accessing information from Illawarra Mercury 2%, Advertiser 27%

Improve access to our systems and processes continued		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
% of Council publications that are accessible, include images of people with disability and include information about access	Analyse a sample of Council publications	An analysis of random sample of publications showed the need to improve in this area
% of people with disability and their carers who have participated in a community engagement	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	1% increase in people with disability and their carers who participated in a community engagement
↑ number of Council systems that have access incorporated as a key criterion	Council data	Council website upgrade Increase access to our information introduced Easy Read documents and Social Stories
# of Council officers who have participated in access training and learning opportunities	Council data	More than 221 Council staff participated in training

Measuring our Progress

Promote positive attitudes and behaviours		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
Number of community projects and campaigns to raise awareness of the positive contribution people with disability make to the community	Council data	4 awareness raising projects were undertaken A calendar of events to celebrate International Day of People with Disability was developed each year
% of people with disability and their carers who feel included in their community	Disability Access and Inclusion Action Survey 2019 (this question was introduced in 2019, so no comparison to 2015 available)	16% of people with disability 3% of carers of a person with disability
↑ % of people with disability who have participated in and are satisfied with Council events and festivals	Disability Access and Inclusion Survey satisfaction in 2019 compared to 2015	Increased satisfaction 12%
	Customer satisfaction measure	Council received positive feedback by email from people with disability who attended New Year's Eve events in 2018, 2019 and 2020
Partnerships between Council and other organisations that deliver positive outcomes for people with disability	Number of partnerships projects	4 partnership projects were undertaken
	Customer satisfaction measure	Evaluation results for work experience for six students from Aspect South Coast School for Children with Autism indicated high satisfaction with this program 350 young people with disability participated in targeted programs at Wollongong Youth Services, 95% of people surveyed were satisfied

Support access to meaningful employment		
Indicator	How it was Measured	Results
↑ number of people with disability employed at Council (full time/part time/casual)	Council data	11 people who indicated they have a disability were employed
↑ accessibility of Council workplaces	Council data	A range of workplace adjustments were implemented including quiet spaces and IT
↑ number of Council suppliers that provide employment opportunities to people with disability	Council data	No data available

 *** Disability and Inclusion Satisfaction Survey Comparison Key findings**
A comparison of the Disability and Inclusion Satisfaction Survey results in 2015 and 2019 showed:

- 12% more people had taken part in a Council event and reported increased satisfaction
- Survey respondents reported less satisfaction with the Botanic Garden, Art Gallery, pools, Wollongong Central Library and Leisure Centres and playgrounds. An analysis of the comments showed the increase in dissatisfaction related to the lack of accessible parking in all these locations. Other issues raised included:
 - Beaton Park Leisure Centre - the need for better access to the pool and spa and more accessible toilet and change facilities
 - Pools - the need for more accessible toilets and change facilities
 - Playgrounds - the need for fencing
 - Botanic Garden - the need to have more accessible toilet and change facilities and improve paths of travel
- Surveys results from people with disability who participated in Council run programs showed high levels of satisfaction.

Moving Forward

In August 2020, Council adopted the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2020-2025. The Plan is available on our website or you can contact us to receive a copy. The new Plan builds on the culture of inclusion across Council as we continuously improve the way we go about our business and provide services for our community.



For more information

Phone: 4227 7111

Email: council@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Visit: www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Council would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Plan.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan Snapshot

2016-
2020