CREATING an INCLUSIVE city that ENABLES people with disability to PARTICIPATE in the LIFE of the city

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016-2020
Acknowledgement of Country

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

It is my pleasure to present Council’s Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016 – 2020.

Council is working towards creating a Wollongong that is accessible and inclusive of everyone, and provides equal opportunity for people with disability to utilise and enjoy the public spaces and life of our City.

Council has a key role in promoting and supporting access and inclusion by ensuring it is a key consideration in all areas of Council business. This includes how we develop the built environment, provide information and services, support employment opportunities and promote positive community attitudes and behaviour toward people with disability.

The purpose of this Plan is to ensure access and inclusion is positioned as core business and integrated with existing planning cycles, so that employees at every level consider inclusion of people with disability in their business. It has been informed by many conversations and lots of listening to people with disabilities, their families and carers. The Plan sets out ways in which Council will assist in making Wollongong a more welcoming and accessible City for everyone, including people with disability.

Without an inclusive community and the opportunities that an inclusive community provides, diversity is not promoted, control over choice is limited and positive change for people with disability may not occur.

I am proud of the diversity of our community and the positive contributions they make to our City. Engagement is a key part of any Plan and I would like to thank the many community members who took the time to contribute their ideas with the ultimate aim of making our City a better place for everyone to live, work, study and play.

Lord Mayor

Councillor Gordon Bradbery OAM
Message from the General Manager

I am really proud to champion the implementation of Council’s Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2016 – 2020 together with Council’s senior leaders. This Plan presents Council’s commitment to people with disability for improving access and inclusion over the next four years.

In 2015/16 Council ran a number of community consultation activities to identify which Council services were most important to people with disability and how satisfied they were with these. The information collected from this consultation process has informed the objectives and actions in the Plan.

Council is committed to maintaining genuine dialogue with people with disability across the next four years as the Plan is being implemented. It is my belief that inclusion is everyone’s business who works at Council. We can all do our bit to make sure the City is a more welcoming place for all people including people with disability.

We will take a leadership role in our own practice and improve Council’s internal systems and processes to ensure they support better access outcomes.

I would like to thank everyone involved in the development of the Plan and look forward to ongoing conversation with the community and hearing about the difference to people’s lives we can make through the delivery of the actions in the Plan.

General Manager

David Farmer
Background

Personal choice and control is only possible when communities are inclusive of all people including people with disability. Real diversity is not achieved unless people with disability are provided with equal opportunity to participate in community life.

For the first time all levels of government across Australia have committed to a unified, national approach to improving the lives of people with disability, their families and carers through the development of the National Disability Strategy. In this Strategy the State and Federal Governments have committed to an approach where the individual is the ‘centre’ of focus and not their disability.

In August 2014 the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 was passed. This Act requires Council to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan to help remove barriers and enable people with disability to participate equally in their communities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is to set out the strategies and actions that Council will deliver in the next four years to enable people with disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities. The Plan includes actions for all areas of Council and will guide us in making our services and facilities more inclusive. Implementation of the actions in this Plan will benefit many people in our community including older people, people with a temporary injury and parents with young children.

The Plan is underpinned by the following principles which support the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006):

- Focusing on abilities and not disabilities
- Fundamental rights for all people
- Genuine dialogue and participation
- Improving access and inclusion for all
- Prudent use of resources
- Recognising the benefits of collaboration
- Principles of Universal Design
• Access is everyone’s business.

The Case for Inclusion

• As a community, we are poorer without a diverse range of viewpoints and individual perspectives.

• Exclusion leads to disadvantage and discrimination, which have far reaching negative 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 being negatively impacted by a non-inclusive community.

• Employment can provide independence, reduce reliance on benefits and improve the living standards of people with disability. This can have positive health impacts and contribute to a greater sense of self-worth.

• Access to business benefits not only people with disability, but older people, parents with prams and business owners by expanding their business reach. There is a strong economic case to increase inclusion in our community.
Disability in Our City

18.5% of the population, or 38,257 people living in Wollongong, have some form of disability (based on a 2014 population estimate of 206,794).

As our population ages and people live longer the number of people who have a profound or severe disability and require help with core activities such as mobility, self-care or communication will increase.

Here are some key demographics for Wollongong:

**Profound or Severe Disability - Needing Assistance**

5.8% (Australia 4.8%) of the population or 11,205 people in Wollongong identified as needing assistance.

- 6% of 0-14 years identified as needing assistance.
- 59% of 65 year olds and over identified as needing assistance.

**Socio-Economic Disadvantage**

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

**Income**

39% of households who identify as needing assistance are low income (earn less than $600/week) compared to 26% of all households.

**Labour Force and Unemployment**

14% of people who identify as needing assistance are unemployed compared to 7% of the population.

**Internet Access**

54% of people who identify as needing assistance have an internet connection compared to 71% of the population.
Car Ownership
23% of households where people identify as needing assistance did not own a car compared to 11% of all households.

Social Housing
19% of people who identify as needing assistance live in social housing compared to 8% of the total population.

Education
21% of the population who identify as needing assistance (aged 15 years +) hold educational qualifications, compared to 46% of the population.

This data was sourced for the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing. Compiled and presented by .id the population experts.
Developing the Plan

Commitment
Council committed to developing a Disability Inclusion Action Plan for delivery from July 2016. This Plan will help us meet our obligations under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

Research
We did background research, a demographic analysis and a review of Council’s access improvements.

Raising Awareness
Workshops with staff were held to raise awareness of the Act, the need to develop a plan and ways to improve inclusion across all areas of Council.

Consultation
Community Survey - 163 people with disability and their families and carers responded to a survey which rated the importance and satisfaction of 21 Council services.

Community Conversations
Two conversations between people with disability and Council staff were held to discuss barriers people with disability face when accessing Council services. 34 Council staff listened to 24 people with disability share their experience. Conversations were also held with a Transition to Employment program and a secondary school group.

Strategies and Actions
Draft strategies and actions were developed by staff across Council based on what the community told us was important.

Checking In
Two workshops were held with people with disability and their carers to present the draft strategies and actions and gather feedback on whether we had got it right before the Plan was placed on public exhibition.
Endorsement
The draft Plan was placed on public exhibition and the community provided feedback before the Plan was adopted by Council.

Lodgement
The adopted Plan will be lodged with the Disability Council of NSW.
Access & Inclusion - Legislation & Policy

People with disability, their families and carers have the same rights as all people to access services and facilities. These rights are part of State and Commonwealth policy and legislation which make it unlawful to discriminate against a person with disability.

The legislation includes:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- National Disability Strategy
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014.
Council’s Planning Process

Council has one Vision, one Program and one Plan. It’s called the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Annual Plan. The Disability Inclusion Plan is a supporting document that will inform the actions in our Annual Plan.
Improving Access

Council has been working for many years to improve access to our services and facilities.

Some of our achievements include delivering programs that Support Access through a number of our services including the Art Gallery, Leisure Centres, Cultural Services and Youth Services. We work with Community partners to deliver awareness campaigns such as Keep it Clear! and Line of Sight. These campaigns were about the importance of providing clear paths of travel.

We provide equipment and features in our recreation areas such as pools, parks, beaches and playgrounds that support access. Examples include:

- Amphibious wheelchair at beaches
- Botanic Garden – Accessible Rainforest Walk
- Access Ramp into Continental Baths
- Outdoor gym equipment.

We build new buildings that meet access standards and upgrade older buildings to be more accessible. Examples include:

- Accessible Cabins at Tourist Parks
- Thirroul Community Centre
- Upgrades to Berkley Community Centre
- All Abilities playgrounds.
Consultation – What the Community Told Us

A range of consultation activities were undertaken with people with disability, their families and carers and Council staff to inform the development of the Plan.

Community Survey Results

Council is performing well (high importance/high satisfaction) in the following service areas:

- Heated pools
- Patrolled beaches
- Council’s domestic, recycling and green waste collection service
- Public swimming pools (free entry)
- Botanic Garden.

Priority service areas for Council to make improvements (high importance/low satisfaction):

- Footpaths
- Public toilets
- Designated parking for people with disability
- Council run events, festivals and activities (Viva la Gong, Australia Day, New Year’s Eve)
- Cycle ways / shared pathways
- Council parks / open space / sports fields.
Community Conversations

Through conversations, the community told us what would make a difference to their ability to participate. Some of the key themes from the conversations included:

Creating Liveable Communities

**Footpaths and Paths of Travel**
- Wide level footpaths free of hazards
- Kerb ramps with no lip, at the correct grade and alignment
- Accessible footpaths that connect to parking, bus stops, services and facilities
- Safe pedestrian refuges.

**Accessible Toilets**
- More clean, well-maintained, unlocked accessible toilets
- Hoists and adult change tables
- Information about the locations
- Visible contact number to report issues with toilets.

**Designated Accessible Parking**
- More parking and drop off points near services, venues and events
- Greater enforcement of the Mobility Parking Scheme.

**Events and Festivals**
- Designated accessible parking and drop off points
- Accessible pathways linking parking, toilets, seating, shade and activities
- Promote access features in event information
- Designated viewing areas and rest spaces
- More accessible toilets
- More bins.
Improving Access to Services through better Systems and Processes

- More consultation to identify barriers people with disability face accessing Council services and facilities
- Greater awareness among developers, contractors, planners and architects of disability access requirements
- More information in a range of accessible formats about Council services, facilities and activities through a variety of channels
- Include information about access in promotional material
- Ensure information is kept simple
- Ensure Council’s website, print material and social media is accessible
- Let the community know what Council can and cannot do in relation to access and the challenges faced.

Promoting Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours

- More education for the community, businesses, and Council about the broad range of disabilities
- Increase visibility of people with disability in Council publications and marketing material
- Provide more opportunities for the community to engage with people with disability
- Promote accessible businesses and tourism
- Raise awareness among businesses of the value of the disability dollar.

Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment

- Council is recognised as employer of choice for people with disability
- Ask us what we can do
- Meaningful work not tokenistic
- Support Social Enterprises
- Accessible recruitment practices
- Designated positions for people with disability
- Accessible work places.
The Plan for Action
Creating Liveable Communities

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

What Council Will Do?

- Improve our Accessible Public Toilets
- Develop a Public Toilet Strategy
- Implement a program to improve our accessible public toilets
- Install signs to report cleaning concerns
- Maintain information on the National Public Toilet Map
- Promote our public accessible toilets as not for general community use.

Increase the number of accessible parking spaces.

- Develop a priority list to improve and increase the number of spaces
- Promote the location of the spaces on our webpage
- Monitor and enforce non-compliant use
- Develop and implement a campaign to target illegal use.

Increase the number of accessible paths of travel to key destinations.

- Improve the continuous accessible paths of travel including parking, footpaths and kerb ramps in our town and village centres, to key destinations such as recreation and community facilities
- Increase awareness about cycle ways and shared pathways being for everyone to use.
Improve access to our spaces and streetscapes.
- Use universally accessible park and street furniture when renewing open space and streetscapes
- Incorporate access outcomes as key criteria in infrastructure projects
- Provide clear paths of travel along property lines where possible.

Increase the number of accessible bus stops and shelters.
- Audit bus stops and shelters and develop a list of priorities for improvement
- Upgrade bus stops and shelters to make them accessible including a link to a continuous accessible path of travel.

Increase access to our recreation services and facilities.
- Include accessible play elements when renewing and installing playgrounds
- Include access to parking and seating when upgrading sports grounds and facilities
- Increase access at the Botanic Garden
- Continue to upgrade access to our community and heated pools including the installation of hoists
- Undertake access appraisals of our three Tourist Parks and promote access features
- Consider access onto North Beach
- Support the inclusion of people with disability at Council Leisure Centres.

Increase access to library, community, youth and cultural services.
- Promote and support inclusion in all activities at the IPAC, Art Gallery, Cultural services and Libraries
- Schedule programs for people with disability at the IPAC, Art Gallery, Cultural services and Libraries
• Continue to promote and support access to our Youth Services activities
• Improve access to the Arts Precinct
• Continue to provide Community Transport and Social Support Services in line with funding agreements.

Increase access to our buildings
• Undertake access appraisals of our buildings and facilities
• Prioritise access outcomes when renewing and building facilities.

Improve our policy and planning tools to create better access
• Consider the latest research around housing for people with disability when preparing our Housing Strategy
• Include the needs of people with disability in the development of our town and village plans, master plans and precinct plans.

Local Story: Accessible built environment.
“The cycle track is very popular; the areas that have been redone are good. There are a couple of blind spot where people have to be careful, maybe mirrors along these areas. While our tandem activity is for people with vision impairment anyone can join us who for any reason can't ride on their own. Some of the things that make it difficult for me to move around are signs outside of shops and also chairs and dining tables, it would help if outdoor dining spaces had temporary barriers around then, saves me from going off line.”
Geoff – Feb 2016

Here are two quotes from our survey
“One of the annoying things about kerb ramps is that they don't always match up in terms of being exactly opposite each other. This causes a wheelchair user to need to weave around other people crossing the road and potentially getting closer to vehicles than necessary.” Survey Participant - age 25-34 years.
This is a quote from the survey

**Improving Access to Services through better Systems and Processes**

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

**What Council Will Do?**

**Increase access to information**
- Implement guidelines for making our publications accessible
- Promote new accessible technologies for communicating with Council
- Educate our staff about the use of communication supports
- Monitor and update our website to meet access standards
- Incorporate captioning for video content on our website.

**Increase awareness about our services to support access.**
- Include information about access in our promotional material and signage
- Promote access upgrades to services and facilities in our newsletter
- Keep our website up-to-date with information about access.

**Increase participation in our community engagement activities.**
- Talk to people with disability and include their ideas in plans for Council services, facilities and activities.
Improve our systems and processes to deliver better access outcomes.

- Make disability access a key criteria in our Capital Works program
- Develop an online map that shows the most important things for us to fix to improve access in our City.
- Assess access for people with disability when collecting information and data about our assets.
- Set up an internal working party to develop better ways of providing access to our assets.

Increase our capacity to provide accessible services and facilities.

- Use checklists that assess access to our services and facilities and identify ways to improve.

Local Story: Accessible Communication

“Imagine what it would be like to walk around all day with a ‘gag’ on your mouth and not to be able to tell people what you want. At Para Meadows we use a variety of ways for communicating. We use unaided systems, like signing and gestures that do not require special equipment and aided systems that use picture charts, books and special computers. Many forms of communication include an assistive technology component such as iPads. To see some of these systems in more settings such as libraries, swimming pools, playgrounds, theatres, community centres and shops would be wonderful and would give our students a voice in the wider community.” - Deputy Principal at Para Meadows School from February 2016

This is a Quote from a Workshop participant from September 2015

“When advertising events you should include information about the access points.”
Promoting 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.

What Council Will Do?

Raise awareness about the contribution people with disability make to our community
- Increase the visibility of people with disability in our publications and communications
- Educate businesses about the importance of providing good access to their business.

Increase participation in our events, festivals and activities
- Provide Building Inclusive Events training for staff and community event holders
- Review our events and implement strategies to improve access
- Include information about access in marketing and promotional material.

Undertake programs to promote access and inclusion
- Partner with community organisations to deliver projects that support inclusion
- Support organisations to build their skills in delivering activities for people with disability
- Deliver campaigns to promote and support inclusion.
Local Story: Attitudes and behaviours

“We both have people that help us with things like our accounts. I have a walker, I live up 15 stairs and my biggest fear is falling. I have trouble getting on a bus, I live in Corrimal we need more buses in the suburbs that are easy to get on and off. I also have a problem speaking to people, I hate it. I used to be treated bad at school. More people are understanding us better. Need to talk more to disability people. We want to explain what we want in Illawarra, to tell the Lord Mayor and politicians. People also need to learn that disability toilets are for disability people.” Nicole and Stephen in February 2016

Quote from Workshop participant from September 2015

“They think we’re dumb because we have a disability - attitudes need to change.”
Supporting 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.

What Council Will Do?

Increase employment opportunities

- Work with community, Government and businesses to support local employment
- Support social enterprises that provide employment
- Implement our Social Procurement Policy.

Increase participation opportunities

- Make sure our recruitment website content meets access standards
- Use recruitment methods that give people with disability the opportunity to show their ability to do the job
- Provide targeted employment for people with disability through Council’s development programs
- Include people with disability on recruitment panels for targeted positions
- Promote vacancies to community networks, schools, TAFE and Universities.

Increase retention and development opportunities

- Support employees with disability to pursue their career goals
- Make sure workplaces meet the access needs of the employee
- Make sure managers and supervisors have the skills and resources to support employees with disability.
Incorporate workforce diversity as part of everyday Council business
• Establish flexible work practices.

Increase awareness about working with people with disability
• Provide access and inclusion training for all new staff
• Provide training for staff who work with the community to increase their awareness of inclusive service provision
• Provide job specific training for our employees about access relevant to their roles.

Local Story: Employment
“Council has always been supportive but at the same time I don’t want to be a quota, I am capable. I think the staff have become less awkward when dealing with disability, most people just see me as Hayley. Not all disabilities are visible, my ‘invisible’ disability causes me more grief than my physical disability. As ‘disability’ traffic increases we should seriously look at the accessibility of our building.” Hayley, January 2016, Council Employee

Quote from Workshop participant in September 2016
“Some employers are afraid to offer jobs to people with disability. Need to break down barriers and educate employers.”
Delivering the Plan

Governance
The General Manager, Executive and The Senior Management Team will sponsor and promote the Plan.
A Steering Group will oversee and monitor the implementation of the actions in the Plan.

Integration
The actions in this Plan will become part of our Delivery Program and Annual Plan and help us to deliver the Community Strategic Plan.

Implementation
An implementation plan that includes time frames, priorities, resources and responsibilities has been developed to help with the delivery of the Plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation
An evaluation framework with performance indicators has been developed to measure change. Data will be collected and reported throughout the implementation of the Plan. In the 4th year of the Plan we will measure community satisfaction through a community survey.

Reporting
Regular updates will be provided on our website to report progress.
Progress towards delivering the actions in the Plan will be formally reported as part of Council’s annual reporting processes.
Council will prepare and submit reports to the NSW Disability Council as required.

Ongoing Consultation and Review
Council will talk with the community regularly to check that the priorities in the Plan are still the same and make changes to the Plan where we need to.
Measuring our Progress
Council will use a range of indicators to track our progress towards achieving an accessible and inclusive city.

For the focus area **Creating Liveable Communities** we will use surveys and customer satisfaction measures to collect the data about the percentage of people with disability who are satisfied with Council’s accessible public toilets; footpaths; public spaces; recreation services, community facilities, libraries and cultural activities.

We collect data to measure increases in the number of accessible parking spaces, bus stops and shelters, recreation services, community facility halls and libraries.

For the focus area **Providing Accessible Systems and Processes** we will use survey data to measure the percentage change in people with disability who can easily access Council information and who have participated in a community consultation activity.

We will analyse a sample of Council publications for their accessibility, use of images of people with disability and information about access.

For the focus area **Promoting Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours** we will use Council data to measure the number of community projects and campaigns we deliver that raise awareness of the positive contribution people with disability make to the community. We will look at the percentage of people with disability who have participated in and are satisfied with Council events and festivals. We will measure the number of partnerships projects delivered and their success using customer satisfaction measures.

For the focus area **Support Access to Employment** we will use data to measure the increase of people with disability that are employed at Council, the accessibility of Council work places and the increase in the number of Council suppliers that provide employment opportunities to people with disability.
Funding the Plan

Some actions in this Plan are about continuing to do what we are doing well and others are about improving the way we do things. Many actions will not cost Council additional money but require us to do things differently. However some actions in the Plan will require additional funds to build something or upgrade an existing facility or service. The money to do this work will be allocated through the annual budget process where possible. At times Council may apply for funding from external sources to help achieve the actions in the Plan.
Managing our Risk

Council understands that it has a legal responsibility, in providing service, not to discriminate against another person on the grounds of that other person’s disability. Council will continue to increase access to information, upgrade facilities and improve how it delivers services to remove barriers to access and meet this obligation. The actions in this plan demonstrate our commitment to continual improvement and have been prioritised with consideration being given to Council’s Risk Management process.
Acknowledgement

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

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