

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022 to 2026



All Welcome



Access and inclusion for everyone **Byron Shire**



**BYRON
SHIRE
COUNCIL**



Acknowledgement to Country

Byron Shire Council recognises the traditional owners of this land, the people and the wider Bundjalung Nation, Arakwal people, the Widjabal people, the Minjungbul people and the wider Bundjalung Nation.

We recognise that the most enduring and relevant legacy Indigenous people offer is their understanding of the significance of land and their local, deep commitment to place.

The Council respect and embrace this approach by engaging with the community and acknowledging that our resources are precious and must be looked after for future generations.

Thank you

The consultation and successful implementation of the Byron Shire Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan relies on the involvement of members of the local community and Council staff. In particular this work is done in partnership with Council's Access Consultative Working Group, made up of members of the Byron Shire community with a lived experience of disability and individuals that support people with a lived experience of disability. This work is also supported by Council's internal DIAP Working Group, made up of members from all Council directorates. Contributors to this project and the consultation process included people with disability, their carers, friends and families, disability services providers, community organisations and Council staff.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this process, your contribution will ensure the Byron Shire Council's DIAP responds in the best possible ways to the needs of people with disability in our communities.

Abbreviations

ACWG – Access Consultative Working Group

BSC – Byron Shire Council

DIAP – Disability Inclusion Action Plan

IWG – Internal Working Group



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1. Introduction from the Mayor



Welcome to Byron Shire Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

This is our new, four-year plan that continues the work of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 to 2021.

It's one of our most important plans because it's about making sure people with disability can participate equally in our community. When something is accessible, everyone can use it. When something is inclusive, everyone can take part.

Byron Shire Council recognises the significant ethical, social and economic case for ensuring full access and inclusion in our communities, for our residents and for people visiting our beautiful Shire. This new Plan aims to:

- build on the work of our previous DIAP and guide Council in meeting its responsibilities under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014; and
- provide Council with a strategic approach to further support people with disability to participate in community life and access Council services and facilities.

A huge thank you to our Access Consultative Working Group who co-designed our community engagement plan and helped us achieve a significant community response. Thank you to everyone who took part in our survey and workshops – your contribution will ensure the Byron Shire Council's DIAP responds in the best possible ways to the needs of people with disability in our communities.

This Plan outlines our Priority Actions over the next four years. These actions will then be embedded into our Operational Plans to ensure this work is part of Council's core business in delivering services to our community. We commit to fully integrating this work into Council's planning and operations – and to reporting back to the community on our progress.

We look forward to working with our communities to improve access and inclusion for everyone.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Michael Lyon'.

Byron Shire Mayor, Michael Lyon





2. Guiding principles

Access and inclusion are important aspects of ensuring that everyone can participate in our community. In line with Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, our vision is an inclusive society that ensures people with disability can fulfill their potential, as equal members of the community. We endorse the guiding values of respect, inclusion and equality.

Byron Shire Council operates under the social justice principles of:

Equity: There should be fairness in decision making, prioritising and allocation of resources, particularly for those in need. Everyone should have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of the community. The planning process should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances with the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

Access: All people should have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.

Participation: Everyone should have the maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.

Rights: Equal rights should be established and promoted, with opportunities provided for people from diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds to participate in community life. In addition, Council is committed to accessibility and inclusion promoting equal rights for all members of the community.

3. Policy and legislative context

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UNCRPD), ratified by Australia in 2008, acknowledges that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability. This commits participating governments to ensure these rights can be exercised and that barriers are removed. It requires mainstream services to be provided in a way that does not directly or indirectly prevent people with disability fully participating.

In line with Australia's commitments under the UN CRPD, *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* (ADS) is Australia's national disability policy framework. It sets out a plan for continuing to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia over the next ten years. The Strategy builds on the significant work of the *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* to establish a national approach to improving the lives of people with disability.

In addition to the UNCRPD and the ADS, there are additional pieces of legislation that provide a framework and basis for disability inclusion action planning. These include the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1993* (DDA), which recognises the rights of people with disability to equality before the law and makes discrimination based on disability unlawful, and the *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (ADA), which relates to discrimination in places of work, the public education system, delivery and goods and services.

In particular, the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* mandates local councils have a **Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)**. The aim of this is to drive inclusion across NSW by removing barriers so that people with disability have a better opportunity to live a meaningful life and enjoy the full benefits of participation in the community.

The Act requires the DIAP to have four focus areas:

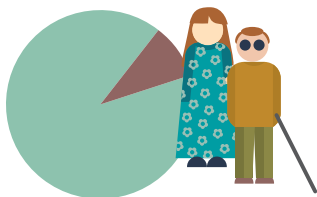
- promoting positive community **Attitudes and Behaviours**,
- creating **Liveable Communities**,
- supporting access to **Meaningful Employment**,
- improving access to services through better **Systems and Processes**.



4. Our customers and staff



In Byron Shire **16.8%** of people are living with disability, which equates to 5,732 people.



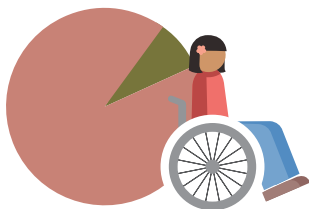
In addition, **9.7%** of the community care for someone with a disability, which equates to an estimated 3,328 carers.



As a significant tourist area, more than **2.2** million people visit every year and the tourism and hospitality industry are our largest employer.



Given that **1 in 5** people in Australia live with disability (increasing to 2 in 5 over the age of 65 years), it is important to consider that the number of people impacted by access and inclusion issues in our Shire is significant.



According to our research, **8%** of staff survey respondents were staff members with disability, and more than a quarter of all respondents (26%), either have a family member or friend with disability or are a carer or support worker.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018/2019) 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, accessed 10 January 2022.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018/2019) 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, accessed 10 January 2022.

5. Consultation, governance and resources

An essential element in preparing a DIAP is community consultation and engagement. This ensures the plan is focused on the needs of community members, service users and staff.

To ensure the voice of lived experience is heard, Byron Shire Council undertook Community Consultation. This process was co-designed with Council’s Access Consultative Working Group (ACWG), a group made up of members of the Byron Shire community with a lived experience of disability as well as individuals that support them. This was paired with the work of our DIAP Internal Working Group (DIAP IWG).

As a result of this process, we undertook a community survey, community conversations, and a staff survey. There were responses from across the shire, including:

148 responses to our community survey:



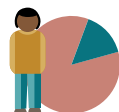
Responses came from across the age spectrum, and included people living with disability, or answering on behalf of someone with disability, family members, carers or support workers, and service providers.



Many types of disability were represented, including disability affecting mobility, mental health conditions, cognition, learning, hearing- and vision-related disabilities.



67% identified as female.



6.2% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.



15% spoke a language other than English at home.

5 one-on-one telephone conversations, **3** online workshops, and **3** email submissions.

22% of all Council staff responded to our staff survey.

The information from the community consultation was used to inform Council’s Priority Actions and this Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022 to 2026. The key focus areas in this Plan will become integrated into Council’s core business through the Delivery Program (4 year) and Operational Plans (annual) and resourced through Council’s budget processes. Actions can be modified through the quarterly review process, with review and input from Council’s Access Consultative Working Group.

6. Focus area: promoting positive community attitudes and behaviours

The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion.

6.1 What we heard

There were mixed results from the consultation. Whilst 20% of respondents reported positive or very positive perceptions of people with disability in the Byron Shire, the majority of respondents felt perceptions were neutral (sometimes positive and sometimes negative) and 16% felt that perceptions were negative or very negative. The reported perception of people with mental health conditions was more negative, with 40% indicating negative or very negative perceptions, and half of respondents reporting neutral perceptions.

When asked what is most important to change attitudes towards people with disability, respondents were limited to three responses to help elicit priority actions. Including people with disability in the development of communication campaigns was the top response, closely followed by the need for more community education and awareness, and the need for Council to lead by example. The need for public events to be accessible was also a popular response.

Key feedback theme: Public awareness and education



"Ableism is rife in our community. Please hold regular campaigns, online and otherwise, reminding others to be aware of the variety of disabilities in contemporary society, visible and otherwise."

Key feedback theme: Encouraging businesses



"Businesses should be encouraged to improve access. Maybe the council could have annual disability awards for businesses in various categories, such as: physical access, communication, employment etc. and then publicize these widely."

Key feedback theme: Access leads to better inclusion



"Physical access for wheelchair users delivers on many levels. Not only does it benefit the wheelchair user as they can then include themselves in ordinary spaces and events, but it also educates the community about the diversity and the capacity of wheelchair users to become independent and/or to participate alongside the public. This then builds positive attitudes about people with physical disability and allows for friendly interactions."



6.2 What we have achieved so far

Since 2017 and the establishment of Council's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we have recognised that change needs to start with us. One of the key activities has been the implementation of Disability Awareness Training for all Council staff. The training was selected by the Access Consultative Working Group and supports employees, managers, and leaders to develop their skills and confidence to support staff with disability, encourage people with disability to feel confident to ask for the support they need, and consider how best to make our workspaces accessible for everyone. 40% of Council staff have completed the training and it is now included as part of our induction program.

In addition, 120 Council managers, team leaders and supervisors completed mental health first aid training which will help them in supporting their staff.

We also partnered with Vision Australia to provide training for staff on how to create accessible documents. The training is developed in accordance with WCAG 2.1 and aligns with the Australian Government's Digital Service Standard and created a huge shift in staffs understanding of disability.

6.3 What we will do next

Over the next four years we will:

- ➔ Lead by example to help improve attitudes and behaviours in the broader community.
- ➔ Improve education and enforcement of the rules relating to mobility parking.
- ➔ Encourage and support local businesses to increase access and inclusion, including tourism opportunities.
- ➔ Include people with disability in the design of communications and awareness campaigns.
- ➔ Increase the number of public awareness campaigns to celebrate people with both visible and invisible disabilities.

6.4 Attitudes and behaviours priority action plan

Action title and description: improve attitudes and behaviours in the broader community

The following priority areas will guide the development of specific actions within the annual Operational Plans.

Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
Improved disability awareness and organisational capability	AB-1 Ensure all staff, including leaders, are trained in prioritising access and inclusion	Council staff	1	2	3	4	People & Culture, Governance Services, Customer Service	# / % of staff and Councillors that have undertaken disability inclusion training
Accessible parking spaces are available for people who need them	AB-2 Improve education and enforcement of the rules relating to mobility parking.	Vehicle users in village/ town centres and beaches	1		3		Public and Environmental Services, Media & Comms	# awareness campaigns delivered # of fines for parking in accessible parking without a permit
Increased awareness of accessibility, inclusion and accessible tourism	AB-3 Encourage and support local businesses to increase access and inclusion, including tourism opportunities.	Local businesses			3	4	Environmental & Economic Planning	# awareness campaigns/ workshops delivered
Positive community attitudes towards people with disability and mental health conditions	AB-4 Include people with disability in the design of communications and awareness campaigns.	Council staff	1	2	3	4	Media & Comms, All business units	# / % increase of digital and print materials produced that include representation of people with disability
Positive community attitudes towards people with disability and mental health conditions	AB-5 Increase the number of public awareness campaigns to celebrate people with both visible and invisible disabilities.	Whole shire			3	4	Social and Cultural Planning, People & Culture	# of campaigns delivered Range of campaigns delivered

7. Focus area: creating livable communities

Access is a fundamentally important aspect of community participation and inclusion and a key part of creating liveable communities.

7.1 What we heard

The majority of responses, suggestions and feedback from the consultation related to access issues in the Shire. From the survey responses, beaches and footpaths were reported as being difficult to access by the most people, with a number of other issues such as vehicle parking, public toilets and adult change facilities, and public transport also presenting access difficulties for many respondents. Additional access difficulties, beyond those listed, included access to specialist doctors and affordable allied health and mental health services, affordable housing, and Auslan interpreting services.

Key feedback theme: Footpaths and kerbs



"As a person who supports people in wheelchairs I find many of the footpaths in the whole Byron Shire either very uneven and hard to navigate or at times very dangerous. Also many businesses have high frontages and are not accessible to a person in a wheelchair, especially as these businesses do not have accessibility ramps."

Key feedback theme: Beach access



"Our beaches are probably the most prominent aspect of our local way of life, and such a common place for community to gather/use for so many reasons, yet they're not accessible to people with mobility issues or people who use prams (which is a lot of people!!). For me, I couldn't participate in recreation/ exercise/ social events with friends. This has been very isolating at times and negatively impacted my mental health. It also contributes to negative impacts at the social level - decreasing opportunities for social connectivity and resilience, which are both so valuable."

Key feedback theme: Vehicle parking



"There are never enough accessible parks at the beach or in town. The one that terrifies me the most is Byron Street where Aldi is - there's one disabled car space on Aldi side and the space itself is not wide enough. We parked and got the wheelchair out and a big 4WD pulled in on the passenger side so there was no space on the passenger side to get out - I just sat in the car because I couldn't go in, I couldn't get out of the car!"

7.2 What we have achieved so far

Since 2017 and the establishment of Council's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we have made some significant improvements to access issues in our Shire. We can't list all of them here, but are pleased to note the following key achievements:

- Developed and adopted Council's 10-year Pedestrian and Access Mobility Plan (PAMP) and completed works to repair more than 100 footpaths and upgrade more than 30 ramps.
- Increased the number of accessible parking spots and upgraded many existing ones. In just the last year this has included six spots in Byron Bay and six in Brunswick Heads.
- Increased the number of accessible play facilities, including the upgrade at Waterlily Park (including an all-abilities flying fox, an accessible two storey tree-house, two new accessible carparks and accessible pathways that link the playground, amenities and parking area), and the new playground at Bangalow Parklands.
- Completed access audit inspections of 261 Council buildings, identifying access barriers.
- Improved access to several Council-owned community buildings, for example the new access ramp at Mullumbimby Neighbourhood Centre, a stage lift and new accessible toilets at Brunswick Memorial Hall, accessible toilet upgrades at Marvell Hall, new access ramp and accessible parking at Durrumbul Hall and accessible toilet upgrades at Suffolk Park Hall.
- Completed renewal works to improve accessibility at Clarkes Beach and the installation of a new accessible pathway servicing Torakina Beach at Brunswick Heads. We also provide a beach wheelchair available for use at Main Beach in Byron Bay and another at Brunswick Heads. Hire of the beach wheelchairs is free and delivered with local partners.
- Undertaken an assessment of bus stops within the Shire and scoped a staged program to upgrade each stop to meet accessibility standards as funding permits. The community consultation and audit found that more than 40 formal bus shelters in the shire and at least 60 other stops are without shelters and that many of these stops do not meet accessibility standards. So far 14 bus stops have been upgraded under the Bus Stop Accessible Improvement Program, new accessible bus shelter at Suffolk Park.
- Adopted a Residential Strategy that recognises the need for adaptable housing, which is housing that is designed in such a way that it can be modified easily in the future to become accessible to both occupants and visitors with disabilities or progressive frailties. This year, Council exceeded the basic requirement of 10%, and is pleased to report that more than 17% of dwellings in approved multi-unit or medium density housing is to be Adaptable Housing.
- Increased the number of accessible toilet facilities. In just the last year this has included two unisex accessible toilets at South Golden Beach, two unisex accessible toilets at Gaggin Park in Suffolk Park and a new pathway to the toilets, and an upgrade of the male and female public toilets completed at the Byron Recreation Grounds which included new compliant accessible toilets.

7.3 What we will do next

Over the next four years we will:

- ➔ **Improve accessibility of footpaths** and appropriate kerb ramps across the Shire, including safe continuous connections between paths.
- ➔ **Improve beach accessibility** for a range of mobility needs, including ocean viewing areas.
- ➔ **Increase and improve accessible** transport options including:
 - accessible parking to ensure appropriate and safe loading space, and increase drop-and-ride locations,
 - availability of accessible public transport and adequately sheltered bus stops.
- ➔ Work alongside the business community to **improve access, in particular to essential services** such as medical practices and banking services, but also to increase tourism opportunities.
- ➔ Consider and **accommodate a range of visible and invisible disabilities during public events**, including physical access, low energy, hearing and vision related considerations.
- ➔ **Increase and improve accessible parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities**, including adequate seating accessible play equipment.
- ➔ **Improve access** to Council-owned buildings and public facilities and amenities.



7.4 Livable communities priority action plan

Action title and description: Creating liveable communities

The following priority areas will guide the development of specific actions within the annual Operational Plans

Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
Footpaths and open spaces are accessible to everyone	LC-1 Deliver access ramp and footpath upgrade and renewal program shire wide.	Whole shire	1	2	3	4	Works and Open Spaces, Major Projects	# of paths improved # of connections improved
Improved beach access	LC-2 Improve beach accessibility for a range of mobility needs.	Whole shire	1	2	3	4	Works, Open Spaces and Major Projects	# of beaches accessible # of ocean viewing sites accessible
Improved accessible transport options	LC-3 Increase accessible parking to ensure appropriate and safe loading space, and increase drop-and-ride locations	Whole shire	1	2	3	4	Works	# of accessible parking spaces # of drop-and-ride locations
Improved accessible transport options	LC-4 Undertake accessibility upgrades to existing bus shelters across the Shire	Whole shire		2	3	4	Works	# of accessible and sheltered bus stops



Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
Business in the Shire are more inclusive and accessible to people with disability, parents with prams, and older people as well as friends and families.	LC-5 Work alongside the business community to improve access, in particular to essential services such as medical practices and banking services, but also to increase tourism opportunities.	Business community		2	3	4	Environmental & Economic Planning, Sustainable Development, Works	# of accessible parks # of accessible play equipment # of accessible seating
Events are accessible, inclusive and encourage greater participation of people with disability	LC-6 Consider and accommodate a range of visible and invisible disabilities during public events, including physical access, low energy, hearing and vision related considerations.	Event organisers, general community	1	2	3	4	Events	Range of considerations made Accessibility considerations included in Council's event processes and Event Guide
Open spaces are accessible. The design, maintenance and management of facilities enables people with disability to fully participate in community life	LC-7 Increase and improve accessible parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities, including adequate seating accessible play equipment.	Whole shire	1	2	3	4	Open Spaces, Major Projects, Works	# of accessible parks # of accessible play equipment # of accessible seating
Council facilities are accessible and support inclusive participation	LC-8 Improve access to Council-owned buildings and public facilities and amenities.	Whole shire		2	3	4	Open Spaces, Works, Major Projects, Works	# of accessible council-owned buildings # of accessible public facilities and amenities



8. Focus area: supporting access to meaningful employment

Employment and economic security for most people are closely related. Employment contributes to feelings of self-worth, social interaction and mental health, and increases opportunities to support individual choice and control. Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than those without disability across all sectors.

8.1 What we heard

People with disability experience multiple barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of reasonable adjustments to the work environment, poor career planning opportunities, rigid role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. Whilst there were some encouraging examples of employment opportunities and flexible workplaces, feedback from the survey indicated that young people have a particularly difficult time accessing meaningful employment in the Byron Shire.

Key feedback theme: Insufficient employment opportunities for young people with disability



"I am answering for my 24-year-old autistic son. Employment in the community is unattainable. The employment agencies have extreme difficulty in finding any suitable employment, and my son is unable to search or approach opportunities without support. We need to improve local business acceptance and understanding of disability."

Key feedback theme: Encourage local businesses



"Encourage and educate businesses and the Byron Council to hire and include local people with different abilities – mental health issues, autism, etc. Reward those businesses with special recognition. People with special abilities need to be visible and recognized for contributions that they can make to the community."

Key feedback theme: Flexible work arrangements



"I'm very fortunate, my employer lets me have flexible work patterns, because I have good days and bad days."



8.2 What we have achieved so far

Since 2017 and the establishment of Council's first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we have committed to supporting access to meaningful employment. In particular, Council has continued to review recruitment practices and has implemented some effective strategies to make applying for jobs more accessible for everyone. So far Council has:

- reviewed each Position Description as positions become vacant to ensure only essential competencies and core requirements listed;
- ensured there is an inclusion statement in all position adverts;
- included more information about the interview process at advertising;
- ensured there is an inclusion statement in all invitations to interview;
- accommodated any specific needs or requirements identified and notified applicants of the arrangements made;
- ensured panel members are briefed on appropriate interview practices and any reasonable adjustments;
- assessed each applicant against the inherent requirements of the role;
- ensured that if an applicant had previously declared a disability then asked them if there are any adjustments or modifications that may be required;
- asked all new employees if they need any adjustments to learn or perform the job;
- provided reasonable adjustments on request;
- considered flexible work arrangements for all staff; and
- reviewed and further developed a flexible work policy to allow further flexibility where appropriate.

8.3 What we will do next

Over the next four years we will:

- ➔ Encourage local businesses to **increase employment opportunities** for people with disability, including accessible recruitment processes for both visible and invisible disability.
- ➔ **Increase training** around both visible and invisible disability in the workplace.
- ➔ Support and encourage local businesses with **training and awareness-raising activities**.

Within Council:

- ➔ Encourage inclusion by **improving accessibility of work sites** (both Administration building and the Depot).
- ➔ Disability Awareness training has been very well received and staff would **like more training**, especially regarding invisible disabilities.
- ➔ Provide more guidance and training on **inclusive language**.
- ➔ Improve and increase the availability of **accessible meeting rooms**.
- ➔ Consider and accommodate visible and invisible disability **access requirements for Council events and processes** such as community engagement.



8.4 Meaningful employment priority action plan

Action title and description: Supporting access to meaningful employment

The following priority areas will guide the development of specific actions within the annual Operational Plans

Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
Encourage local businesses to increase employment opportunities for people with disability, including accessible recruitment processes for both visible and invisible disability.	ME-1 Develop information and resources for distribution to business community	Business community			3	4	Environmental & Economic Planning, Social and Cultural Planning	# of awareness activities
Improved disability awareness and organisational capability	ME-2 Increase training around both visible and invisible disability in the workplace.	Council staff	1	2	3	4	People & Culture	# of training activities facilitated
Increased awareness and understanding of disability and inclusion in business community	ME-3 Support and encourage local businesses with training and awareness-raising activities.	Business community			3	4	Environmental & Economic Planning, Social and Cultural Planning	# of awareness activities # of training activities facilitated
Council facilities are accessible and support inclusive participation	ME-4 Improve accessibility of work sites (both Administration building and the Depot)	Council staff			3	4	Open Spaces, People & Culture	# of accessibility improvements / access audit



Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
Improved disability awareness and organisational capability	ME-5 Provide more guidance and training on inclusive language.	Council staff	1	2	3	4	Media & Comms, People & Culture, Social and Cultural Planning	# of resources shared
Council facilities are accessible and support inclusive participation	ME-6 Improve and increase the availability of accessible meeting rooms, completion of access audits	Council-owned buildings			3	4	Open Spaces, People & Culture	# of accessible meeting rooms language
Council events are accessible, inclusive and encourage greater participation of people with disability.	ME-7 Consider and accommodate visible and invisible disability access requirements for Council events and processes such as community engagement.	Council staff and community members		2	3	4	Events, Media & Comms, All business units.	# of accessibility improvements Range of accessibility improvements



9. Focus area: improving access to services through better systems and processes

A common issue for people with disability is the difficulty in navigating systems and processes to access the services and supports they need in the community.

9.1 What we heard

A common issue for people with disability is the difficulty in navigating systems and processes to access the services and supports they need in the community.

Key feedback theme: Diverse representation across Council operations and projects



“Council should have identified roles and PAID community roundtables of people with lived experience of disability (of several types, not just one) to be making these decisions and advising.”

Key feedback theme: Improved communication of accessibility



“When advertising an event, e.g. markets, discuss if the terrain is concreted or grassed, sloped or flat, it would help bring confidence to decide if an event is accessible to attend.”

Key feedback theme: Diverse methods of communication



“I have chronic osteoarthritis which makes using computers difficult. Everything with Council is more and more web-based which makes it more and more difficult for me to access things.”

9.2 What we have achieved so far

Since 2017 and the establishment of Council’s first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we have made improvements in the accessibility of systems and processes. We have continued to partner with the Access Consultative Working Group (ACWG) to provide expertise and guidance on access and inclusion matters across all of Council activities. Membership terms align with the Council terms, and members provide strategic advice to Council based on lived experience to directly improve policies, strategies and plans and advance the inclusion of people with disability. We deeply appreciate the contributions of the Group and acknowledge the sharing of knowledge and experiences supports us to improve inclusion outcomes for everyone.

Council aims to facilitate and promote online opportunities for community access and make community engagement opportunities accessible to people using assistive technology. Council meetings are now accessible via livestream. There have been recent enhancements to the technology and services used by Council for livestreaming meetings which now enables automatic closed captioning, and we have installed a Hearing Loop in Council Chambers to improve sound quality for people with hearing impairment. This has improved the accessibility of Council meetings for those who require this type of assistive technology.

Council aims to increase the accessibility of community engagement. Important steps include:

- development of visual assets to clearly communicate projects and concepts;
- promoting and encouraging the use of plain English;
- making sure project leaders consider and provide a range of ways for people to provide input or submissions or get information including being available for on-site one-on-one visits, video conferencing and telephone calls;
- promoting projects in a range of ways including radio and newspaper advertising, direct communication with community groups and individuals, direct communication with community Facebook groups and via our social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram); and
- Your Say Byron Shire – Council's digital engagement platform which meets WCAG AA standards.

Council templates have been updated to improve the accessibility of information and continuous improvements are being implemented to further enhance the accessibility of Council reports and attachments.

The accessibility of the Council website has also been significantly improved. It has been updated to comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 and ReadSpeaker has been installed on Council's website to improve digital accessibility. In the 2020/2021 reporting year, there were 730 uses of the ReadSpeaker web reader. The majority of users accessed the Readspeak on the COVID-19 pages and the Committees and Boards of Management pages.

This year Council also began using a specialist tool (Monsido) to monitor the quality and accessibility compliance of the website. This allows us to remediate content and improve its 'readability' score so that the website is accessible and understandable for all visitors. As a result, 298 improvement updates were made to the Council website during the 2020/2021 reporting year and are ongoing.



9.3 What we will do next

Over the next four years we will:

- ➔ **Continue to improve the accessibility of Council meetings**, such as with live captioning or Auslan signing.
- ➔ **Ensure diversity of representation** on the ACWG and across other consultation processes such as Place Planning Collectives.
- ➔ **Introduce sitting fees/compensation** for lived experience advisory groups.
- ➔ **Ensure a diversity of communication strategies** that consider and accommodate a range of visible and invisible disability.
- ➔ **Improve staff understanding of invisible disability** and how to assist community in navigating Council processes.
- ➔ Continue to **improve accessibility of online information and systems**, including effective search function.

9.4 Systems and processes priority action plan

Action title and description: Improving access to services through better systems and processes

The following priority areas will guide the development of specific actions within the annual Operational Plans

Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
People with disability are informed, consulted and actively participate in Council decision-making processes	SP-1 Continue to improve the accessibility of Council meetings, such as with live captioning or Auslan signing.	Whole shire	1	2	3	4	Corporate Services, Media & Comms	# of accessibility improvements Range of accessibility improvements
People with disability are informed, consulted and actively participate in Council decision-making processes	SP-2 Ensure diversity of representation on the ACWG and across other consultation processes such as Place Planning Collectives.	Council staff	1	2	3	4	Social and Cultural Planning, All business units	# of opportunities for representation

Outcomes	Actions: What we will do	Target population or audience	Timeframe (year)				Responsibility	Measures
			1	2	3	4		
People with disability have an equal opportunity to participate in Council decision-making processes	SP-3 Introduce sitting fees/ compensation for lived experience advisory groups.	Community	1				Social and Cultural Planning	Annual budget allocation
People with disability are informed, consulted and actively participate in Council decision-making processes.	SP-4 Ensure a diversity of communication strategies that consider and accommodate a range of visible and invisible disability.	Council staff	1	2	3	4	Media & Comms, All business units, Customer Service	# of communication strategies
Improved disability awareness and organisational capability	SP-5 Improve staff understanding of invisible disability and how to assist community in navigating Council processes.	Council staff		2	3	4	People & Culture, Customer Service, All business units	# of training activities facilitated
Council information is accessible to people with disability.	SP-6 Continue to improve accessibility of online information and systems, including effective search function.	General public	1	2	3	4	Media & Comms, All business units	# of accessibility improvements Range of accessibility improvements



A young boy in a blue shirt is sitting in a wheelchair on a sandy beach. He is looking out towards the ocean, which has gentle waves breaking on the shore. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The wheelchair is blue and has a yellow wheel. The boy's legs are visible, and he is barefoot. The background is a soft-focus view of the beach and the sea.

10. Monitoring, reviewing and reporting

This Plan outlines Council's commitment to access and inclusion in our Shire and provides a statement of priority focus areas for 2022-2026. This forms the basis of the annual development of our Operational Plan, in which detailed actions will be decided in cooperation with the Access Consultative Working Group.

As part of this annual process, resource allocations and responsible staff members will be allocated to each action. These actions will then be reported on each month, with quarterly reports made public.

All actions will be reported in Council's Annual Report, which is endorsed by Council and published on Council's website.

For further information

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