



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022 - 2026

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

The Armidale regional community pays tribute to their love of land, love of people, and love of culture.

We all share the beauty of this land, the richness of its soil and the uniqueness of its wildlife.

Let us walk together in the footsteps of love and understanding.

While valuing diversity, let us share the same hope for a better future.





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Message from the Mayor



I am proud to present to the community, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2022-2026.

According to the 2016 census, 5.2% of our community need help in their day to day lives due to disability. This was an increase from 2011, which saw 4.5% of our population living with disability. The aim of this document is to help remove barriers for these people and to foster a more accessible and inclusive community.

As a Council we are dedicated to making the Armidale region

an accessible and inclusive place to live and visit. People with disabilities have a wonderful role to play in our community and should be supported in their efforts to enjoy all of the benefits of living and working here. As civic leaders, Council will lead the way in developing positive community attitudes and behaviours.

On behalf of Council I would like to thank the community members and organisations who have provided advice and feedback in the creation of this new plan. Your valuable knowledge and experience has guided the creation of these actions which will have a positive impact on our community for years to come.

Cr Sam Coupland
Mayor



Message from the GM



It is with great pleasure that I present Armidale Regional Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026 (DIAP). This plan will replace our 2017-2021 Disability Inclusion Action Plan and seeks to build on our efforts to date.

Council has an important role to play in improving inclusion and accessibility in our community, and this plan covers many areas of our business including People & Culture, Communications, Planning & Development, Parks & Gardens, IT, Customer Services and Community Services. Improving outcomes for members

of our community living with disability requires collaboration and commitment across the organisation.

The actions outlined in this plan seek to create continual improvement in our business to ultimately create a more accessible and inclusive community. Our commitment to delivering on these actions has been reinforced by its inclusion in our Delivery and Operational Plans.

Inclusion and Wellbeing are two of Council's core values and reflect our commitment to valuing diversity and great outcomes for our community and staff, particularly for those living with disability who face barriers in the enjoyment of their day to day life.

James Roncon
General Manager





Core Council Values

Council is committed to creating a workplace where staff hold the below values at the core of our behaviour and conduct.

Inclusion	Wellbeing	Transparency	Commitment
Having positive interactions with the community and other staff members and valuing them for who they are. Valuing diversity and allowing for real opportunities for everyone to have meaningful relationships.	Striving for what is good for the community and staff, to ensure they are comfortable, healthy and happy in the community and workplace.	Conducting your duties in a way that creates openness between the community, Councillors, managers and staff by sharing information freely in an effort to benefit Council, staff and the Community.	Taking ownership of your work and being an ambassador for Council and our community through a willingness to get involved.

National and Legislative Context

Disability Inclusion Planning is one way governments, public authorities and all organisations can reduce and remove barriers for people with disability and foster a more accessible and inclusive community. Disability Inclusion Planning is about making a plan that outlines the intention and actions that the NSW government departments and agencies will take to remove barriers in access to Government information services and employment as well as to foster the promotion of the rights of people with disability.

Under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, all NSW Government Departments, some other government agencies and all Local Councils (collectively referred to as “public authorities”) are required to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

All public authorities are required by section 12 of the Disability Inclusion Act to give a copy of their DIAP to the Disability Council to enable the Disability Council to fulfil its role under the Disability Inclusion Act.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is responsible for providing a framework for governance, evaluation and reporting on DIAPs.

Local government has specific roles and responsibilities across a range of policies and programs that impact on people living with disability, their families and carers. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) does not change the nature of these roles and responsibilities however seeks to create a more cohesive and inclusive approach across all its services and programs.

Following the amalgamation of the Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire Local Government areas in 2016, the first Armidale Regional Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan was developed and this has been in place from 2017 to 2021. This will be Armidale Regional Council's second DIAP and will include actions through to 2026.

1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

The aim of our DIAP is to break down barriers which hinder the fundamental right of people living with disability to choose how they live their lives, to access opportunities and enjoy all the benefits of living and working in our community.

The DIAP plays a critical role in identifying and delivering on practical measures to turn good intentions into action by Council.



2 Council's Role in the Community

Council works closely with state and federal governments, as well as other community based organisations, to ensure our resources are targeted to add value to each agency's programs and projects. State and federal governments are responsible for ensuring people have access to services such as health care, education, police, housing, emergency management and other social services to support and improve their quality of life. In NSW, this is outlined in the [NSW Premier's Priorities](#).

The Armidale region has a broad range of community based organisations which address a diversity of social needs in areas such as youth, disability, Aboriginal, migrants and refugees, mental health, aged care facilities and programs, and housing affordability.



Council has a range of roles it plays in delivering outcomes to the community, including:



Provider of direct services

Council will provide services such as building regulations and development, public health, local roads and footpaths, parks and playing fields, libraries, waste disposal, access and inclusion, and local events.



A partner in providing facilities or programs

Council will provide a range of facilities and programs in partnership with the State and Federal Government which meet the social, cultural and recreational needs of the community.



Leader

Council will identify key community issues and work collaboratively with key stakeholders to respond where appropriate. This leadership can be in the form of advocacy, facilitation or negotiation.



Planner

Council will undertake research, provide information, and in consultation with community stakeholders, develop and evaluate ways to resolve identified issues.



Capacity Builder

Council will work closely with community groups and local service agencies to meet local needs. We will mentor and/or assist community groups to obtain the necessary resources through partnerships with other agencies.



Advocate

Council will defend the human rights of people living with disability.

3 Disability Inclusion Focus Areas

3.1 Focus Area 1: Developing positive community attitudes & 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. Consultation to date has identified that attitudes towards people with disability are often determined by ignorance, fear, or lack of opportunity to interact. It is important that our council staff and Councillors display a positive attitude to people with disability and focus on measures to support positive and inclusive attitudes and behaviours across the community.

We aim to:

- Integrate training on access and inclusion into staff induction practices
- Develop a corporate training plan which includes training on access and inclusion for all staff
- Include images of people with disability in mainstream publications and in promotion of mainstream events, not just for disability specific events
- Develop public messages and campaigns that highlight inclusion and recognise the rights and contribution of people with disability in the community
- Involve people with disability in the development of communication campaigns regarding inclusion.

3.2 Focus Area 2: Making the Armidale region liveable community

Liveable communities are important for all people in our community and can be achieved by applying the [principles of universal design](#). Our attention and resources will be focused on the elements of community life that are of highest importance to people with disability. Creating liveable communities is more than modifying the physical environment, it covers areas such as public housing design, access to transport, community recreation, council policies and social engagement.

We aim to:

- Provide accessible toilets in all public buildings
 - Provide change tables (including adult change tables in appropriate locations)
 - Provide continuous accessible paths of travel between facilities and services in town centres
 - Go beyond access standards to apply the principles of universal design in the planning of new infrastructure and buildings
 - Engage people with disability in the design and planning phases of new infrastructure and buildings to support truly accessible and inclusive assets
- Ensure community events are accessible through early consideration of venues, transport, toilets, parking and accessibility
 - Conduct audits of buildings owned or leased by council to assess compliance with Australian standards for access and mobility (AS1428 parts 1-5)
 - Ensure community recreation, cultural and social programs are inclusive and accessible

3.3 Focus Area 3: Employment

Employment and economic security for most people are closely related. Employment contributes to independence and 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. 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. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain or improve employment. We recognise that organisational commitment to workforce diversity and inclusion is also closely linked to strong business performance.

We aim to:

- Make diversity and inclusion a key consideration for strategic workforce planning and develop position advertisements that welcome disability
- Design role specifications and recruitment processes to optimise the opportunities given to all applicants to demonstrate their merits against the job requirements
- Incorporate strategies and plans into learning and development opportunities as well as career planning
- Facilitate work opportunities for people with disability by developing targeted volunteering and work experience programs
- Make equity and access key criteria for decisions about physical infrastructure, and information and communications technology
- Adjust the workplace to support an employee with disability to perform their job

3.4 Focus Area 4:

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 support and information they need in the community. Some of these difficulties stem from the quality of service and training of front line personnel, the systems and processes required to access services, and the lack of accessible options for communicating, accessing information or providing input or feedback.

A number of communication formats should be considered to provide accessibility for people with a range of disabilities. For example:

- **Vision impairments** – audio, audio description, Braille, telephone
- **Learning disabilities and literacy difficulties** – audio, audio description, easy read, easy access, subtitles
- **Hearing** – Auslan, subtitling, textphone, SMS
- **Co-ordination difficulties** – large print, audio, audio description, telephone.

We aim to:

- Ensure information is available in a range of formats to support different needs and capabilities
- Ensure service users have access to communications support such as hearing loops, touch screens and translation services
- Ensure feedback and complaint mechanisms can be accessed by people with a range of disabilities
- Ensure the website content is compliant with the [W3Cs Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) which ensures broad community input
- Provide a mechanism for feedback on access and inclusion in the council area
- Ensure internal systems and processes are designed to allow for inclusion of staff with a range of disabilities

4 Local Demographics

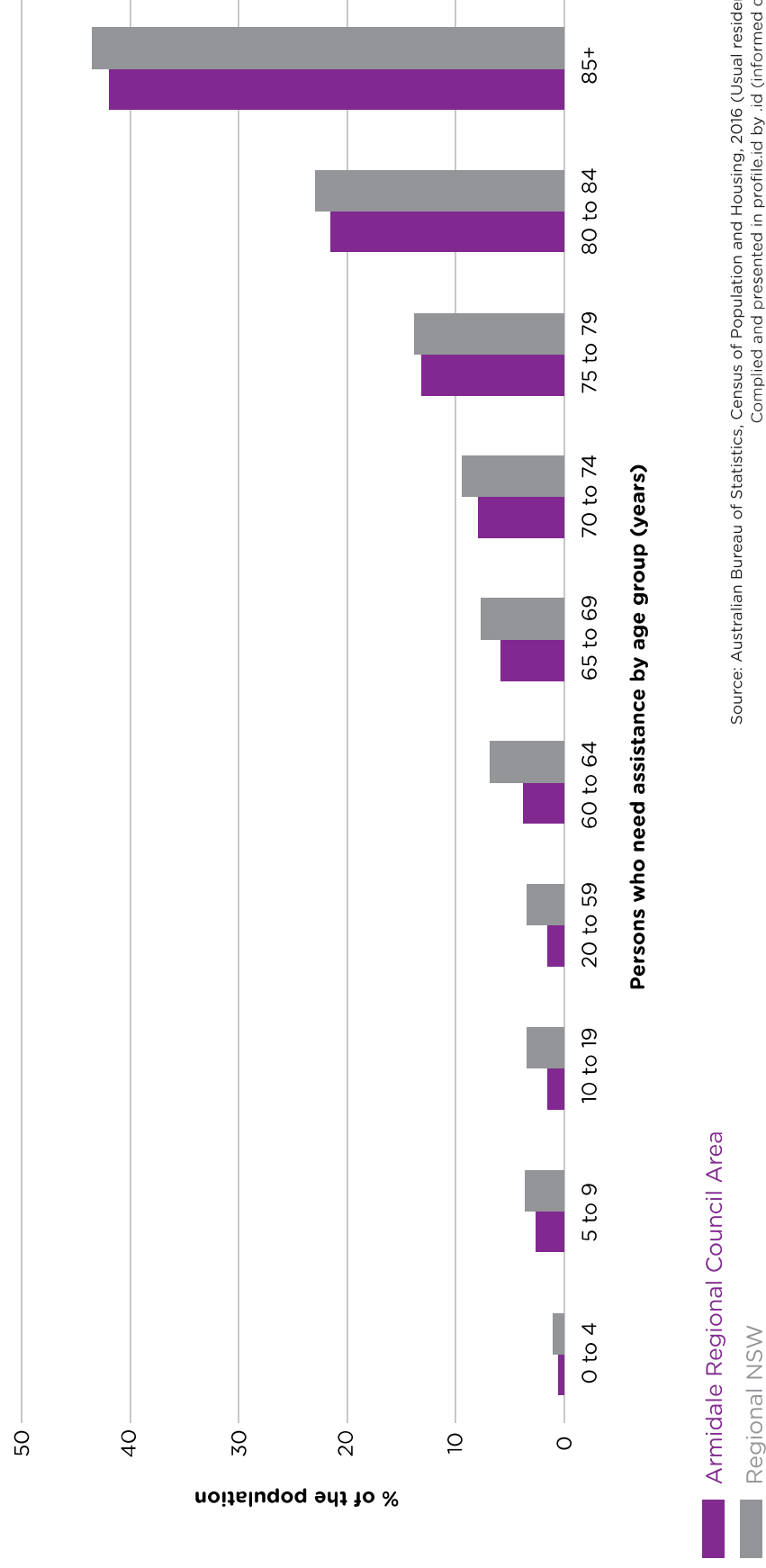
ABS estimated residential population of the Armidale Regional Council LGA is 29,484. Of this population, in 2016, 1,479 people or 5.2% reported needing help in their day to day lives due to disability. <http://profile.id.com.au/armidale/assistance>. This represents an increase from the last figures collected in 2011.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented in profile.id by .id (informed decisions).

Armidale Regional Council area - Persons (Usual residence)		2016			2011			Change
Assistance needed by age group (years)		Number	% of total age group	Regional NSW %	Number	% of total age group	Regional NSW %	2011 to 2016
0 to 4		9	0.6	1.3	20	1.2	1.1	-11
5 to 9		45	2.7	3.8	40	2.3	3.0	+4
10 to 19		69	1.7	3.6	83	1.9	2.6	-14
20 to 59		229	1.6	3.6	330	2.4	3.2	-101
60 to 64		60	4.0	7.0	60	4.0	7.3	0
65 to 69		87	6.0	7.9	83	6.9	7.7	+4
70 to 74		91	8.1	9.6	90	9.1	9.6	0
75 to 79		116	13.3	14.1	108	14.8	14.8	+9
80 to 84		123	21.7	23.1	127	22.3	24.7	-4
85 and over		219	42.2	43.8	296	53.3	48.3	-78
Total persons needing assistance		1,479	5.2	6.3	1,243	4.5	5.8	+237

Table 2: Comparison with Regional NSW

Need for assistance with core activities, 2016



5 Community Consultation

Community Consultation has been thorough in the preparation of the Disability and Inclusion Action Plan. The below table illustrates the process of consultation that has occurred.

Date	Consultation	Attendees	Purpose	Venue
May 2021	DIAP Working Group Meeting	Disability agencies, people living with disabilities, community members, Armidale Regional Council Staff	Introduction, purpose initial review of expired DIAP	Hughes House Jacaranda Room
June 2021	DIAP Working Group Meeting	Disability agencies, people living with disabilities, community members, Armidale Regional Council Staff	DIAP in depth review and inclusion of new initiatives	Hughes House Jacaranda Room
28 March 2022	DIAP Working Group Meeting	Disability agencies, people living with disabilities, community members, Armidale Regional Council Staff	Planning and Prioritisation	Hughes House Jacaranda Room
6 April 2022	Community Consultation Meetings (x2)	Community members and relevant agencies	Seek further contribution from broader community	Kent House Armidale 12-2pm Guyra Council Chambers 3-5pm
9 May 2022	Community Consultation Meetings (x2)	Community members and relevant agencies	Seek further contribution from broader community	Kent House Armidale 1.30-3pm Guyra Council Chambers 3.30-5pm
25 May 2022	Ordinary Council Meeting to endorse DIAP	Councillors, staff and Community	Authorise for the plan to be placed on Public Exhibition for 28 days	Armidale Regional Council website 'Your Say' page
29 May 2022	Community Consultation	Community members	Seek further contribution from the broader community	Armidale Markets in the Mall
22 July 2022	Adoption of the DIAP and placement on the Council website	All members of the community	DIAP is implemented and accessible to public per legislative guidelines.	Armidale Regional Council website



DIAP Working Group members comprising of disability agencies, people living with disabilities, community members and Council staff develop plans and work through priorities

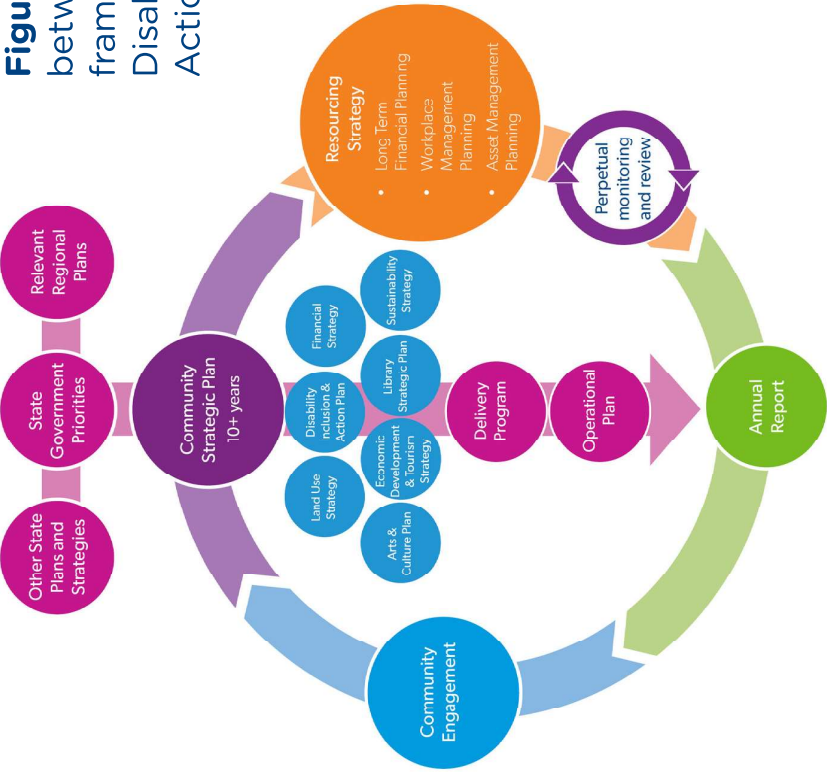


Members of the DIAP working group reach consensus on dependencies and priorities

6 Disability Inclusion Action Planning

The IP&R framework requires councils to draw their various plans together, to understand how they interact and to get the maximum leverage from their efforts by planning holistically for the future. Council plans and policies should not exist in isolation however should be connected and coordinated. Planning for inclusion and access needs is considered as a core component of our IP&R framework.

Figure 1: Relationship between the IP&R frameworks and the Disability Inclusion Action Plan



7 Moving Forward

Our community engagement process has assisted Council in developing and revising the strategies and actions included in each focus area. The implementation of the actions will be delivered over the next 4 years. Council's Access Advisory Committee will monitor and review the DIAP as it progresses.

This Plan contains a mixture of aspirational and deliverable outcomes in support of a fully inclusive society for all. The determination of priorities, the allocation of responsibilities and the identification of the necessary resources are the next key steps in progressing this Plan.



Focus Area 1: Attitudes and Behaviours

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Lead a social reform agenda to enhance social integration of people living with disabilities and continue to remove barriers preventing them from fully participating in community life	1.1	Promote a set of corporate values which reflect social justice principles of equity, access and inclusion.	Demonstrate how the core values of Armidale Regional Council (Wellbeing, Transparency, Commitment and Inclusion), are aligned to efforts relating to Disability Access and Inclusion. A description of how they manifest as supporting behaviours is to be promoted/referenced in communications. Example: ARC Value = Inclusion: Actively valuing the views of everyone; encouraging and providing opportunities to be involved in decision making; creating a culture where it is safe to be different	Year 1
	1.2	Ensure future public infrastructure projects and community services programs are based on social justice principles.	Planning processes reviewed and efforts from disability advocates. Best practice for Council is when public developments have exceeded Australian standards in relation to accessibility.	Year 3
	1.3	Community engagement is inclusive and a diverse community is represented.	Council working groups have a membership which includes a person living with disability wherever possible.	Ongoing
	1.4	Council advertising celebrates the diversity in our community.	Council advertising shows diverse images and inclusive language.	Ongoing

Focus Area 1: Attitudes and Behaviours (Continued)

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Increase staff awareness of disability issues in order to provide responsive services for customers with a disability.	1.5	Maintain frontline staff procedures aimed at continually improving service delivery and complaints handling for people living with disability.	Frontline staff procedures are regularly reviewed and continual improvement is sought.	Ongoing
	1.6	Provide targeted disability training for frontline staff. Include Councillors and members of the Executive.	Regular training is delivered as part of the annual Corporate Training Program. Frontline staff become more proactive in relation to accessibility and inclusion.	Developed Year 1. Ongoing thereafter.
	1.7	Include disability awareness training in staff inductions	Include training and awareness of people living with a disability as part of the staff induction package.	Developed Year 1. Ongoing thereafter.
Formally re-establish the Access Advisory Committee (AAC) and continue its advocacy role.	1.8	Revise the terms of reference for the AAC.	Committee to represent the entire region. Terms of reference remain relevant.	Year 1
	1.9	Provide administrative support to the committee and nominate a Council officer to as Executive Officer on the AAC.	AAC to meet bi-monthly and all minutes and relevant reports are sent to Council.	Year 1
Create community awareness around the needs and issues facing people living with disability.	1.10	Hold an “adopt a disability” day. Invite Councillors and Council staff to participate.	An event is held every 2 years, with the first to be used as a promotional stunt to help raise awareness of the adopted 2022-2026 DIAP, and Councils commitment to it.	Years 1 & 3 First event to occur in August 2022

Focus Area 2: Liveable Communities

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Develop employment and volunteering opportunities for people living with disability.	2.1	Revise the Pedestrian and Mobility Plan (PAMP) for the LGA.	A new PAMP is developed with a particular focus on busy pedestrian areas in Armidale and Guyra.	Year 1 and then updated regularly
	2.2	Monitor Council's "Assessment of Public Toilets under Council Control" Plan. Specifically in relation to locations (high visibility) and function (remote toilets, circulation space, hot water, soap, adult change tables).	Status reports are sent to the AAC.	Ongoing
	2.3	Prioritise the work required to upgrade Nicholli House in Guyra to make it more accessible.	A cost analysis is completed and considered for inclusion in the budget.	Year 3
	2.4	Seek to improve accessibility in public toilets across the LGA, by renovating existing toilets and/or constructing new purpose built facilities.	Accessibility of our public facilities improved, suitable facilities increase.	Ongoing
	2.5	Monitor and maintain tactile markings and increase connectivity where possible.	Tactile pathways are fully maintained and extended wherever possible.	Ongoing
	2.6	Continuously update the existing disability database and send out notifications of current and future planned road works and footpath maintenance when requested.	Footpath notification list is kept updated and notifications are sent out	Ongoing
	2.7	Identify and prioritise public buildings that require access audits in accordance with AS1428.1 – Access to Premises standards.	An audit is completed and priority list maintained.	Year 1 and ongoing

Focus Area 2: Liveable Communities (Continued)

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Develop employment and volunteering opportunities for people living with disability. Cont.	2.8	Ensure relevant staff receive up to date training in Disability -Access to Premises – Buildings Standards 2010	A training plan is in place.	Ongoing as required
	2.9	Ongoing feedback from our key stakeholders is critical to identifying areas for improvement in access. Seek to have people with a disability provide feedback into any concept design plans.	The community engagement strategy includes the need to consult with people living with disability.	Year 1
	2.10	Investigate and scope out the work required to make the Monckton Aquatic Centre and the Guyra Swimming pool more accessible. Seek grant funding when available.	Explore improvements to make our pools more accessible such as the addition of cranes to lower people into our pools, alternate steps/ ramps to enter, etc.	Ongoing
Ensure community programs and events are inclusive and accessible	2.11	Monitor and review the mobility map	Maintain an up to date mobility map.	Year 1 and ongoing
	2.12	Develop a framework for public events which includes identifying access for people living with disability	A framework is developed and will form part of Council's Events Management Plan.	Year 1
	2.13	Celebrate and promote the International Day of People Living with Disability in the community.	An annual event is held to celebrate in December each year.	Annually commencing Year 2
	2.14	Continue to support the operations of the Kent House Community Centre and the Guyra HACC Centre.	These accessible facilities are available to the community.	Ongoing

Focus Area 2: Liveable Communities (Continued)

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Be a strong advocate for people living with disabilities	2.16	Promote accessible public events and sport and recreation programs.	Councils Communications team promotes programs and projects, highlighting accessibility in marketing.	Ongoing
	2.17	Advocate for improved outcomes for people living with disabilities in all areas of life including housing, education, employment and transport. Especially at state and federal government levels.	Increased participation in community life and increased community awareness.	Ongoing
	2.18	Continue to sponsor the Accessibility Award with Business New England & Guyra Business Chambers.	An Accessibility category is part of the annual business awards and ensure funds are available for sponsorship each year.	Annually

Focus Area 3: Employment

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Develop employment and volunteering opportunities for people living with disability.	3.1	Revise human resource management policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive.	Revise policies and procedures.	Year 1 and ongoing
	3.2	Develop a Council wide work experience/ volunteering program that can be accessed by people living with disability.	A program is developed and launched.	Year 1
	3.3	Work in partnership with local employment and disability services and offer assistance where possible to assist people living with disability transition to work or volunteering.	Open lines of communication with local employment and disability services, establish MOU's with them if considered beneficial.	Year 2
	3.4	Continue to contract the services of local disability employment services, such as Ascent Group.	Continue to utilise the services of Ascent Group for rubbish removal and printing.	Ongoing
Audit Council's capacity to support a diverse workforce.	3.5	Engage regularly with staff who identify as having a disability to ensure their needs are being met in the workplace.	Annually engage with staff and their supervisors.	Ongoing
	3.6	Support flexible workplace practices, particularly for those living with disability.	Promote this in Council's job advertisements.	Year 3

Focus Area 4: Systems and Processes

Strategy	Action No.	Action	Expected Outcome	Timeframe
Ensure all promotions and the website is accessible	4.1	Ensure all Council promotions including brochures and flyers are available in a range of communication styles including Easy Read and audio.	Review Council's promotional materials, considering font size, colours schemes, etc. Trial new formats of marketing material, such as Easy Read and audio formats.	Ongoing
	4.2	Review Council's website to ensure all content is accessible by those living with a disability.	Update Council's website.	Year 2 and ongoing
Promote a culture of responsive customer service	4.3	Review Council's customer service processes to identify barriers to access and communication for people living with disability.	Training for customer service staff is completed.	Year 2 and then ongoing as required.
Continuously improve Council's processes to achieve better outcomes for people living with disability	4.4	Develop and promote a printed handbook and webpage with relevant contact agencies citing what they do, as well as explaining Council's resources and processes including parking, footpath maintenance, development applications, Ranger services, waste management, water management and tourism.	Publication is produced.	Year 4

8 Monitor and Review



On completion Council's DIAP will go onto the NSW Disability Council website.



Each year Council will submit to the NSW Government an Annual Report on the progress of the DIAP including a summary of achievements.



The Access Advisory Committee (AAC) will have the DIAP as a permanent agenda item and Council will report to the AAC on progress and achievements.



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