




Disability Inclusion Action Plan

2017 – 2020



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Cover Photo: All Abilities playground in Merimbula, Livvi's Place, was opened in 2016 – a partnership project with Touched by Olivia Foundation, Merimbula Rotary and Bega Valley Shire Council

Acknowledgement

Bega Valley Shire Council acknowledges the original owners and custodians of the lands and waters of the Shire, the Yuin people.

Council recognises and respects their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing relationship with the land.

Bega Valley Shire Council reiterates its commitment to working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this community to address disadvantage and provide justice and equity for all.

Statement of Commitment

Bega Valley Shire Council has a commitment to improving our Shire as an accessible and inclusive place by:

- Advocating for all
- Collaborating with community, business and Government organisations
- Improving awareness of, and access to, Council facilities and services

Message from the Mayor and General Manager

We are pleased to present Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017–2020.

Council is committed to working with the community to make the Bega Valley Shire an accessible and inclusive place for everyone. It is important that our Shire provides equal opportunity for people with disability to fully participate in the life of our Shire.

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 Plan identifies key focus areas for Bega Valley Shire Council in dealing with improved access and inclusion in the community for all people living, working and visiting the Shire.

The Plan was developed with the community as part of our broader Community Strategic Planning consultations and we wish to thank the community for their input, particularly Council's Access Advisory Committee members who have been strong advocates for Access and Inclusion over a number of years.

Engagement is a central part of the Plan and Council will continue the conversation with the community as we work together to implement the actions over the coming years.

The Bega Valley Shire needs an inclusive community and the opportunities that it brings. Council recognises there is work to be done to achieve this and we will take a leadership role over the next four years to implement the plan and work with the community towards that outcome.



Cr Kristy McBain
Mayor



Leanne Barnes
General Manager

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The Need for an Inclusion Plan

There are many reasons why inclusion is important for people with a disability and for our community.

Marginalising parts of our community creates disadvantage. This can have negative impacts across our community in a range of areas including health, welfare, education and employment.

Meaningful employment provides independence, reduces reliance on benefits and improves the living standards of people with disability. This can have positive health impacts and contribute to a greater sense of self-worth.

A wide range of viewpoints and perspectives makes a community stronger.

Opportunities and initiatives that demonstrate the benefits of equal access makes good economic sense for the whole Shire including people with disability, older people, parents with prams and business owners.

Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan sets out what we will do to reduce barriers and make our Shire a more liveable community for all residents and visitors. Over the next four years Council will work to enable people with disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities. The Plan will guide us in making our services and facilities more inclusive. The actions in this plan will benefit not only people with a disability, but older people, parents with young children and people with temporary mobility issues.



The Legislation

The introduction of the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and the *NSW Disability Services Act (1993)* has made it necessary that government bodies ensure equitable access to services, programs and facilities for all community members. 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.

Legislation and Standards that inform Council's work:

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Commonwealth

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020

National Art and Disability Strategy (2009)

Disability (Access to Premises Standards – Buildings)

Standards 2010

NSW

NSW Disability Inclusion Act (DIA) 2014

Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 (NSW)

NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (ADA)

Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

Australian Standard (AS 1428) - Design for Access and Mobility.

National Disability Strategy – NSW Implementation Plan 2012 – 2014

Local Government Act 1993 and *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*



The diagram below shows the Commonwealth and State legislation that informs the development of local government disability access and inclusion planning.

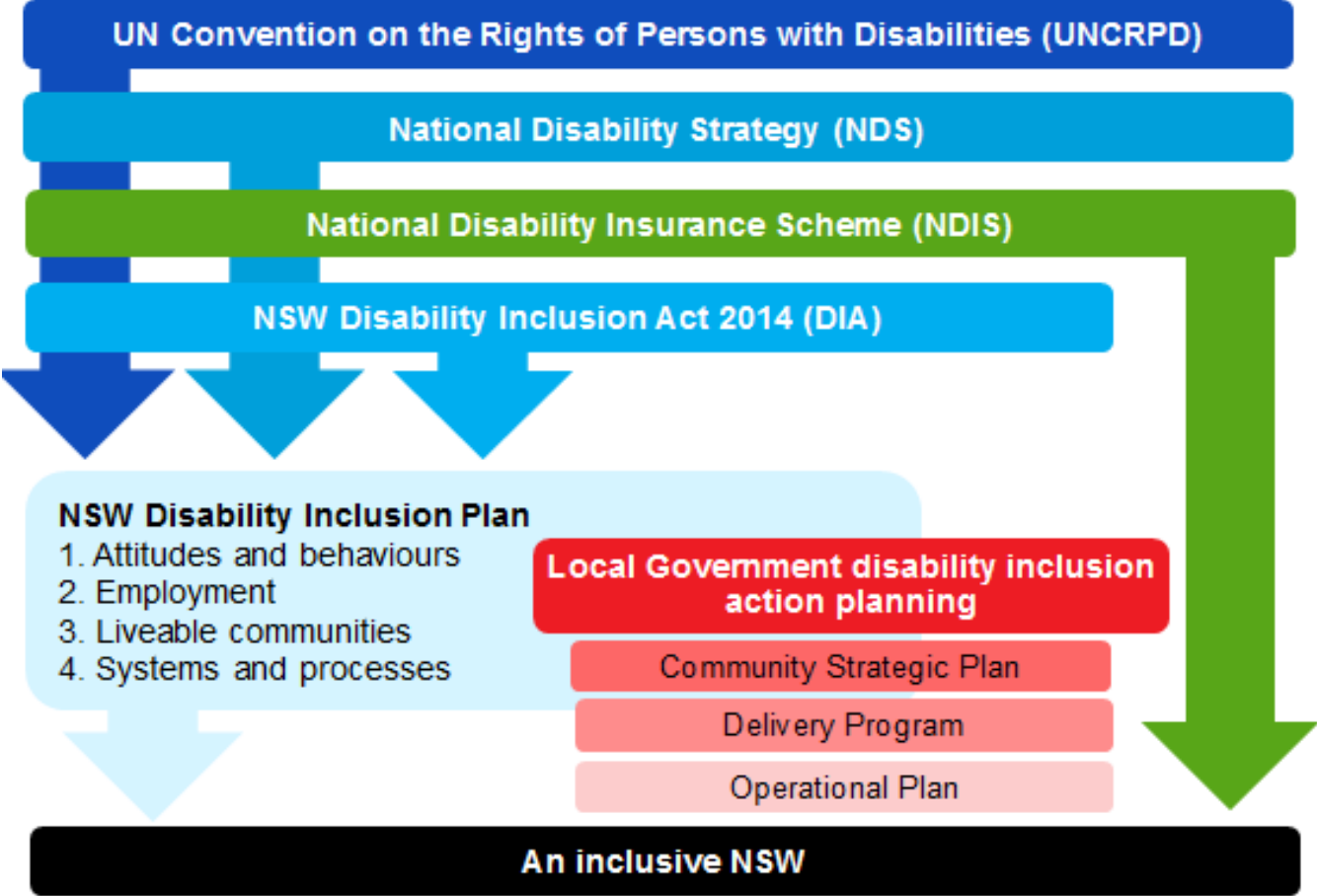


Image source: Local Government NSW and NSW Family and Community Service - Disability Inclusion Action Plan guidelines

NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 includes a series of principles which relate to people with disability and recognise the needs of particular groups. Section 12 (3) requires councils to prepare a Disability Inclusion Action plan which must include a series of principles, strategies and actions that will guide Council operations over the next four years. These align with the principles of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, as well as the NSW Government's Disability Inclusion Plan which specifies four focus areas.

The four focus areas "are aimed at creating long term change and require consistent efforts from government and the wider community". These are:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes

NSW Disability Inclusion Plan

Disability in the Bega Valley Shire

People with a disability is a term that includes many people in our community who live with a wide range of disability types, including physical, sensory and intellectual. People with disabilities have a desire for the same opportunities as most people, which is to fully participate in community life.

Bega Valley Shire's disability statistics relate directly to need for assistance due to a severe or profound disability. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Bega Valley Community Profile:

1,883 people or 5.9 percent of the population in Bega Valley Shire report needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. (ABS Census 2011)

These disability statistics help in understanding the prevalence of people who need support in the community, and along with information on unpaid care to a person with a disability, how that support is provided. It should be noted that many people living with a disability may not indicate a need for assistance and as such may not be captured in these figures.

Analysis of the need for assistance of people in Bega Valley Shire compared to regional NSW shows that there was a similar proportion of persons who reported needing assistance with core activities.

Overall, 5.9 percent of the population reported needing assistance with core activities, compared with 5.8 percent for regional NSW. (ABS Census 2011) The need for assistance is greater in the Bega Valley Shire than regional NSW as a whole and this is consistent with our ageing population with the total

persons needing assistance increased by 1% from 2006 to 2011. (ABS Census 2011)

In Bega Valley Shire there are 3,403 Carers providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age. (ABS Census 2011)

The proportion of carers providing unpaid care for older people and people with disabilities is an important indicator of the level of demand for care services and facilities. An increasing proportion of carers among the population may indicate inadequate care provision or the need for in-home support, or support for themselves.

Ageing Population

The Bega Valley Shire has a high proportion of older people compared to the NSW average. 29.9 percent of people are 60 years and over, compared with 23.6 percent and 24.5 percent respectively for regional NSW. (ABS Census 2011)

Issues of mobility increase as we age and improved access to service and facilities is particularly important for the older members of our community.

What the community told us

Community Engagement

In preparing this plan Council utilised a number of approaches as part of our broader engagement for the Community Strategic Planning review. This included:

- Community Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Targeted Consultations

A review of existing documents and previous engagement activity were considered as part of the development of the plan:

- Council's Social Issues Papers (2011-2016) People with a Disability
- Community Strategic Plan 2011-2016

Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee

One of the key mechanisms that Council utilises to inform matters affecting people living with a disability is the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee (AIAC).

This committee has been in place for 15 years and over that time the AIAC has provided expert advice to assist Council in providing the best possible access and inclusion outcomes for residents and visitors.

In early 2017 Council adopted new guidelines for the committee to include a focus on inclusion and a new committee was endorsed under these new guidelines in April 2017.

The committee will be one of the key ways Council consults on the delivery of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

There were a number of learnings from these engagement activities and the emphasis of the people that provided feedback was on meaningful and

constructive opportunities for engagement. This area of focus is identified in the strategies and actions moving forward.

“Continuing the conversation with the community is critical in the delivery of this plan”. Cr Kristy McBain, Mayor

A number of key themes were consistently identified throughout all of the engagement activities; these themes have been consistent over time, and are captured below.

Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours

- Council has a significant role as a community leader in both advocating for and delivering improved accessibility to services, programs and facilities
- Advocacy with the community for services provided by other levels of government and the business sector including employment, health, housing and transport
- Education/awareness for the broader community and the business sector about the broad range of disabilities and the value of accessible businesses
- Increase visibility of people with disability in Council publications and marketing material.

Creating liveable communities

- Improve access to the built environment. This includes streetscapes, Council facilities, playgrounds and public access to community buildings across the Bega Valley Shire
- Better accessible parking and toilet/change facilities
- The importance of a connected path of travel or pedestrian network to improve the accessibility in the Bega Valley Shire is critical for people with disabilities. This promotes participation and independence and therefore equity
- Enforcement of the Mobility Parking Scheme
- Consideration of all types of disability; Tactile Ground Surface Indicators, hearing augmentation, use of plain English documents and alternate forms of communication were raised as examples.



Supporting access to meaningful employment

- Jobs for young people with a disability were a high priority
- Advocacy for work opportunities in a range of occupations and employment areas including business and tourism
- Meaningful employment opportunities; including traineeships and apprenticeships – not tokenism
- Recruitment processes that don't do not put up further barriers
- Accessible work places.



Improving access to our systems and processes

- Council's communication and engagement practises are a critical factor to breaking down barriers to access and inclusion for the community
- More Council information in a range of formats
- The message received was that 'if Council wants people with disability to be engaged citizens of the community, then participation channels need to be improved
- Social procurement.

Achievements so far

Council has been working hard in recent years to improve access to our facilities and services, here are some examples:



New accessible amenities at Pambula River mouth

Wheel chair basketball demonstration and awareness day at Bermagui



The Autism Lab - a joint community and Bega Valley Shire Council Libraries project

photo courtesy of Bega district News



New accessible pathways and Civic Centre forecourt in Bega

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Bega Valley Shire Council is helping local community members to apply for and receive services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS creates opportunities for people who a disability to participate more widely in employment, community and society in line with their personal goals.

The types of support that participants can receive under the NDIS are broad-reaching and may include services to assist a person to remain independent at home, gain employment, or develop a social network. The NDIS began to roll out across the Shire in July 2016.

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Coastal Accessibility Masterplan Projects

The overarching objective of the project is to improve accessibility to facilities and features at three popular coastal destinations at Bermagui, Merimbula, Pambula Beach



New water access for people with a disability at Lakeside Drive, Merimbula

Strategies and Actions

Attitudes and Behaviours			
Strategy	Action	Outcome	Delivery
Improve staff awareness of disability issues	Review procedures to improve service delivery and complaints handling for people with a disability	Operating procedure developed	2017
	Provide targeted disability awareness training for current and future call centre and frontline staff	Training identified and delivered	2018
	Include disability awareness training in staff induction	Module developed including role for AIAC	2018
	Undertake 'break down the barriers' awareness training with Councillors and senior management	Include as part of incoming Councillors induction in consultation with AIAC	2018 and ongoing
Establish partnerships that address community wide barriers to access and inclusion	Continue support for the AIAC on access and inclusion	AIAC in place for the Council term	2017
	Continue to work with key community stakeholders on accessible Business and Tourism initiatives		Ongoing

Attitudes and Behaviours			
Strategy	Action	Outcome	Delivery
Celebrate inclusive practice and access outcomes	Promote Council and community projects that improve access and inclusion	Identified projects are promoted in Council newsletters, social media and website where possible	Ongoing
Liveable Communities			
Contribute towards liveable and accessible public places	Implement a strategic approach to community input at concept design stage on identified projects in public places	Process in place and implemented on agreed projects	2018/19
	Identify and promote accessible Council venues and infrastructure	Program of access audits of community facilities developed and implemented	Ongoing
Increase access to community assets	Prioritise access outcomes in renewals and upgrades of community assets	Access criteria included in the management of community facilities and assets	2017/18 Ongoing
Contribute towards programs which aim to increase social inclusion and community connections	Promote the benefits of accessible business practice through the Business Forum and Chambers of Commerce	Projects and programs identified annually	Ongoing
	Deliver the Access Improvements grant program	Grants program run annually	Annually

Liveable Communities			
Strategy	Action	Outcome	Delivery
Advocate for improved access and inclusion outcomes across all levels of Government	Continue to advocate for delivery of accessible and affordable housing and transport equity in the Bega Valley Shire	Opportunities identified	Ongoing
	Continue to facilitate the Bega Valley Local Traffic Committee to improve access outcomes		Ongoing
Employment			
Develop and enhance employment opportunities for people with a disability	Audit Council human resource policies, procedures and practices to ensure compliance with current legislation	Audit conducted and Workforce Strategy reviewed	2017/18
	Promote job vacancies to community networks, schools, TAFE and Universities		2017/18
	Examine potential for targeted recruitment initiatives within the development and implementation of the Workforce Strategy 2017-2021	Workforce Strategy reviewed and initiatives identified. Include people with disability on recruitment panels for targeted positions	2017/18 and ongoing

Employment			
Strategy	Action	Outcome	Delivery
	Investigate improvements to the administration building to facilitate employment opportunities	Accessibility a core component of office refurbishment	2019/20
	Undertake engagement with staff who identify as having a disability or primary caring responsibility to better meet their needs understand and meet their needs	Voluntary staff survey conducted	2018/9 and ongoing
Provide volunteering opportunities for people with all abilities	Review volunteering policy to ensure Council's volunteering opportunities are accessible and inclusive	Policy reviewed	2017/18
Systems and Process			
Ensure accessible and inclusive community engagement	Audit Council's community engagement policy and processes to deliver improved access and participation in consultations	Audit completed and processes revised	2017/18
		Engagement activities held in accessible venues	Ongoing
		Identified publications in multiple formats	Ongoing
		Council Website meets WCAG 2.0 AA access	

		requirements	
Systems and Process			
Strategy	Action	Outcome	Delivery
Continuously improve processes to achieve access and inclusion outcomes	Audit Council's development and regulatory processes to strengthen access requirement	Audits conducted and improvements identified and implemented	Ongoing
	Conduct an audit of accessible car spaces in the Shire	Audit completed and improvements identified	
Council events and community programs are inclusive	Update Council's event management procedures to include access and inclusion criteria and requirements	Review completed and revisions identified	2017/18
		Promote Council's community funding programs within the disability sector	Ongoing
Include access and inclusion consideration in project management, design and strategy development	Audit project management processes to identify opportunities for access and inclusion considerations	Audits undertaken and processes amended	2018/19
	Develop checklists that assess access to services and facilities to identify improvements	Access and inclusion factors considered at each stage of projects including design stages	Ongoing

Monitoring and Evaluation

Each year Council will:

- Report on its progress against the Disability Inclusion Action Plan as part of its Annual Report.
- Provide a summary of achievements to the NSW Disability Council annually.
- Measure change using an evaluation framework with performance indicators.
- Collect and report data throughout the implementation of the Plan.

In the fourth year of the Plan we will measure community satisfaction in line with the review of its Community Strategic Plan and other key strategic documents.

“This document is an important step in making our Shire a more accessible and inclusive place for our community and our visitors” Ron Finneran, Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee

Further Information

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