

SMRC DISABILITY INCLUSION ACCESS PLAN 2017-21

Appendix 1: Summary of discussion points arising from engagement.

KEY FOCUS AREA ONE: Improving attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities.

Community focus:

- Maintaining strong community connections and capacity:
 - Smaller communities know and help their neighbours. They provide informal support to people with disabilities through family, friend, neighbour and social networks.
- Community education campaigns to:
 - Profile local people with disabilities in a positive way, for example achieving in and contributing to the community or as Council staff.
 - Raise awareness of the facts around a range of health conditions and disabilities that build on national or international awareness campaigns.
 - The ski resort disabled sport programs provide a great opportunity to promote the interests of people with disabilities locally. Paralympians train at Thredbo and Perisher. A partnership between ski resorts, Paralympians, NSW Office Recreation could help fund raising initiatives and support grant applications.
 - Language is important. We need to use language that in itself does not create barriers for people with disability. We need to use inclusive language in all Council communication with the community. There is still stigma associated with disability. We still use many labels and definitions.
- Opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in their community such as:
 - Accessible community events.
 - Accessible community programs based around common interest and need: e.g. mobility scooter groups, activities for children with challenging behaviours.
- Supporting businesses to become inclusive through:
 - Business access awards linked to promotional opportunities to showcase best practice in inclusive employment.

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Internal focus:

- The attitude of workers also needs to change. So many people who don't want to work, they don't want to do outreach as it is more work. Services need to employ people with the right skills and attitudes. Workers need to provide services across their community. Provide a range of training opportunities to improve inclusion:
 - Include a diversity training component in the staff and councillor induction processes: raising awareness of disability, cultural difference and gender difference.
 - Provide key staff: managers and supervisors with training in the benefits of workplace diversity and how to support workplace diversity.
- Encourage staff to have inclusion front of mind when delivering community events, providing community information, providing community services and when designing and building public spaces and community purpose buildings and facilities.
- Staff can to improve their knowledge on the areas where vulnerable community members live and advocate for the provision of services, infrastructure and facilities in these areas.
- Staff in front line community services such as visitor information centres, libraries, Council business office front counters have positive and supportive attitudes. They provide high quality customer service to a range of vulnerable people.
- Council can use inclusive language in its communication.
- Council can prioritise access improvements arising from audits as high risk/need and low cost and implement some improvements quickly. 'Quick wins' for immediate action and to gain confidence of the community that consultations lead to action.

FOCUS AREA TWO: Creating liveable communities

- Providing accessible footpath networks is a high priority in each town. A regional standard is needed for the provision of footpaths.
- A regional Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan is needed.
- The provision of accessible public toilets and accessible car parking spaces is also a priority.
- Inclusive design is important when developing new community purpose buildings and facilities. Meets needs of changing demographics; increase in young families, increase in people with disabilities and their carers, and an ageing population.

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- Audits of Council's regional facilities are needed to assess their condition and accessibility. These facilities include public toilets, parks, sporting and recreation facilities, community halls, community purpose buildings and Council business offices.
- The Cooma Council office is a high priority for access improvements.
- Accessible public transport is high priority for Bombala and surrounding towns.
- Accessible business premises are a high priority. Many buildings are old, have heritage restrictions and are not accessible. Council could provide support to businesses through grants, access awards, good access guides and resources and access self-assessment tools.
- Council provides community organisations with small grants. These organisations can provide opportunities for community connection and support to people with disabilities or health conditions. E.g. Men's sheds.
- Staff needs to find sources of revenue to be able to afford improvements.
- Council can deliver its services in an innovative way to assist people with disabilities (and others with specific needs) e.g. the wheel in/out waste collection service.
- Council is a direct provider of disability services and is a registered provider under the NDIS. Council services and facilities Include:
 - Werri Nina Centre (Cooma). Day programs, Meals on Wheels home delivered and centre based meals; operating from Berridale, Bombala and Cooma. Home Maintenance and Modification Service, Community Nursing, Community Connect Program.
 - Yallambie Lodge Residential Aged Care Facility (Cooma).
 - Bombala Community Centre.
 - Jindabyne Health Centre.
 - Community Transport: a door to door service to attend medical and social appointments, a shopping service and community outings; operating from Bombala and Berridale.
- The Cooma Monaro Shire Development Control Plan (DCP) 2014: requires that within each multi-dwelling or residential flat development of five or more dwellings: one dwelling must be adaptable (in compliance with AS4299). Former Snowy River and Bombala DCP's are silent on adaptable dwelling requirements.

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Site specific works Bombala:

- Footpaths around Village Ford are awful and connection from the village to the roundabout on Maybe St also needs work.
- Footpaths and pram ramps near Toyota on Maybe Street need to be upgraded.
- From Wellington Street and Cardwell St - to the hospital and Public School – there is a mix of path surfaces and a steep hill.
- Many pram ramps and lay backs have lips.
- Footbridges over the River have not been repaired after the last flood. The Scooter group can no longer do the full River Walk circuit.
- It is difficult for people in High St. There are no paths around the Visitor Centre. The markets are held in this location and a person in a wheelchair had to be lifted into the market area.
- Works are occurring to repair the footpath on the Imperial Hotel corner. There are no signs to warn vehicles of pedestrian traffic which has been diverted onto the road, around the footpath works. Cars travel too fast around the roundabout at this intersection.
- The front doors are too heavy at the chemist, the community centre and the post office.
- The supermarket aisles are too narrow for people to pass mobility scooters.

Site specific works Cooma:

- Advocate for disabled access into the Westpac Bank in Cooma.
- Remove the pine needles on the footpath in front of the Uniting Church on Soho Street. “This prohibits the use of my smart wheel, wheelchair assist device and people using walking frames are slipping on the pine needles”.
- Grass grows over the edge of footpaths making wheelchair access difficult.

Site specific works Jindabyne:

- There is no access into the Berridale swimming pool. We drive to Jindabyne every day to use the pool. The Jindabyne pool has an assistive hoist. The Berridale pool also needs an assistive hoist.
- Need safe road crossings with pedestrian refuges across the Highway (Kosciuszko Road) to connect the Jindabyne town centre to the lakeside shared path.

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- The footpaths need improving all around the town to become accessible, increase the width, provide tactile markings and pedestrian refuges. They are inconsistent, often just ending and leading onto grass.
- The footpath along Park Rd near the Central School needs improving.
- There is no access up the kerbs onto the footpaths along Thredbo Terrace.
- The footpath around the soccer field needs improving. There are steep stairs along this path and a ramp is needed.
- A footpath is needed near the community garden to get to Candlebark Street.
- A lady with vision impairment walks to and around town regularly. An accessible footpath and safe road crossings with tactile indicators are needed along the Barry Way.
- The automatic doors at the Post Office were placed on the main entrance with has a lip rather than the accessible entrance.
- The Jindabyne Council Office is not accessible.
- The Council carpark at the rear of the Council office needs access improvements.
- We need more accessible and level car parking at the supermarket. It is very difficult to get out of the car into a wheelchair without wide and level car parking spaces. Access improvements are needed between the levels and surrounds at Nuggets Crossing.

FOCUS AREA THREE: Improving access to meaningful employment

Council as an employer

- Leading change by role modelling best practice in employing people with disabilities.
- Provide information to business about the benefits of taking on employees with disabilities. Share knowledge on disability employment supports and opportunities between businesses – facilitate workshops.
- Council conducts merit based recruitment and employment processes to meet legislative requirements. Job task statements are objective. Preferred applicants undergo a medical assessment to determine they are fit to perform the required tasks. Council makes reasonable adjustment of worksites for workers with disabilities.
- Council has an Equal Employment Opportunity policy and code of conduct that governs staff behaviour.

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- Some office buildings are not accessible and would provide barriers to employing people with mobility impairments. Council has recently completed an audit of its buildings and will set priorities for access improvements.
- Provide training for managers on accessible employment and access awareness particularly for less visible disabilities e.g. mental health conditions
- Include a disability awareness component in the new Council induction process
- Council could support existing Disability Enterprises e.g. Cooma Challenge are the contractor for Operations at the Cooma Swimming Pool and provides parks maintenance. Council could facilitate opportunities to establish disability enterprises e.g.
 - gardening and maintenance program for older people as disability economic enterprise
 - Cafe linked to hospitality training & providing disability cooking classes. Potential partners could be TAFE, The Hub or Sport & Rec in Jindabyne.
- Council could showcase its employees with disabilities: personal profiles, jobs performed, positive experience of employee and employer.
- Council could create employment programs for people with disabilities, including traineeships, volunteering opportunities and permanent employment. Assess suitable roles and match suitable applicants. Find champions within the organisation to supervise or mentor people with disabilities.
- Inform Council managers of resources available through disability employment agencies. For example:
 - Workplace subsidies for volunteering to traineeship positions
 - Assistive technologies & equipment for reasonable adjustment of worksite or tasks
 - Support workers that assist employees with disabilities at their worksite.
- We could set targets for workplace representation – can open up an organisation for people with disabilities.
- Consult with people with disabilities on how Council can employ people with disabilities.
- Council has limited support in place for less visible disabilities like mental health conditions. Council provides the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) but has no face to face support at work. Council could:
 - Implement a peer support program – identify and train staff interesting in supporting other staff.
 - Promote avenues of support to staff during the staff induction process.
- We need employment agency services and transition to work programs for adults and young people.

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- Council should use employment recruitment processes that are appropriate to the level of skills required in the job.

Council working with businesses within the community

- Work to increase the population to increase business opportunities which will have a flow on effect for jobs and services. Creating more employment opportunities.
- Facilitating activities that link prospective employees with prospective employers.
- Business access awards linked to promotional opportunities to showcase best practice in inclusive employment.
- Provide businesses with information to improve access. For example access self- assessment guides, the Eurobodalla Good Access is Good Business Guide.
 - Information on local disability employment agencies and the range of resources and supports they provide to employers and employees with disabilities.
 - Facilitating economic development opportunities that help people working from home due to their disabilities to work co-operatively at a central location/shop front.
- Employment services are not providing outreach to Jindabyne.
- Council can organise employment activities e.g. social and economic enterprises: café linked to hospitality training at TAFE; cooking classes, The Hub Youth Centre has a program, and NSW Sport & Recreation Centre in Jindabyne has a commercial kitchen. We need a local employment network.

FOCUS AREA FOUR: Improving the navigation of systems and processes.

- How do we prioritise, e.g. between footpaths and recreation facilities – some things could be targeted for improvement. Universal access/social inclusion is part of the quadruple bottom line in Councils resourcing strategies.
- Improved planning and communication is required as presently access is thought of as too hard and too expensive. Need to integrate the requirements of the DIAP into operating plan - to achieve meaningful integration.
- Give staff the time and resources they need to do the job.

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- Adopt a keep it simple approach to processes.
- Council communicates with the community in various ways:
 - Has a weekly Council page in the newspaper.
 - Website: conforms to WACG level 3. It can be read by reading software, it has capacity for audio and visual content and people with physical disabilities can use communication devices on the site.
 - Web based services include:
 - Web forms.
 - Development applications.
 - Payment of rates.
 - Info on Council activities, locations, services, staff contacts.
- Navigating the structure and content of the website requires a knowledge of Council business and structure, so
 - Staff assists people to locate information on the website or finds the information for them. Staff provide face to face assistance at the counter and over the phone.
 - The website needs a list of staff names, their roles and their photos.
- Council is analysing its web content for the new regional website. Council will be updating its IT system within 6 months. This provides an opportunity to review all of Council's communication templates and tools, and to improve their accessibility. Examples include:
 - The Style Guide complies with Vision Australia's Print Guidelines. The Style Guide is being launched and staff education on its use will be provided.
 - System templates
 - On-line forms.
 - On-line complaints mechanism.
- Council will develop video and audio content for the web and Facebook.
- Council is considering live streaming of its meetings. Face to face meetings will still occur around the region with streaming connection to other Council office locations. Community members could watch Council meetings from their own devices as they occur or at a later time, improving accessibility and extending audiences.

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- On-line communication is difficult to access in some rural areas as access to the internet is limited or not available. So a variety of communication methods is important.
- Council could explore the capacity of the current phone system to support customer owned voice to text devices and the capacity for Council's phone system to convert voice to text for the hearing impaired.
- Council could use a telephone interpreting service.
- Council could train counter staff in Auslan.
- Council could place a link on its staff intranet to the resources at Auslan Signbank <http://www.auslan.org.au/> Auslan Signbank is a language resources site for Auslan (Australian Sign Language) it includes:
 - a dictionary
 - ability to search for signs related to medical and health topics
 - ability to search for signs related to educational and teaching topics
 - videos of deaf people using the listed Auslan signs
 - information on the deaf community in Australia
 - links to Auslan classes
- Council uses 'in/out board' as a centrally located staff directory. It includes a name, position title, and you can add photos and include a description of your role in the comments section. The photo and description features need to be promoted to staff.
- Presently, Council communicates its master plans and major projects:
 - As a pdf file on the website (some reading software cannot read pdf).
 - Physical copies of documents at libraries and Council counters.
 - Places alerts on social media and advertises in the paper.
 - All adds state that staff are available to explain plans, projects, etc. to those interested.
- The engagement process requires a couple of targeted promotional and feedback activities, as feedback received from current methods is minimal.
- Council has a Community Engagement Policy. This needs updating and promoting to all staff to help them extend the reach of communication.

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- Need to consider a new structure for the former Cooma Access and Equity Committee and Jindabyne Social Planning Advisory Group. Need a regional and local focus.
- Need to create and promote systems for community feedback. Staff was unsure if there was a way to provide feedback on the web currently.
- Feedback is often provided to Bombala Community Centre Staff informally, for example in the supermarket. People are reluctant to use the web and have limited reception for data services.
- Also need Community Hubs for information: printed, face to face, assistance with on-line information. In Bombala these are:
 - Bombala Community Centre
 - Libraries
 - Visitor Centres
 - Health Centre
 - Doctor's surgeries
- We don't communicate well with the vision or hearing impaired. There are:
 - No high Vis or braille signage in Council facilities.
 - Limited tactile indicators on pathways.
 - No frontline/counter staff with sign language.
- We need information on accessible facilities in the region; located on
 - The website (s) (VIC, Council, etc.)
 - An app – services, activities, what's on, hotels, motels, cafes, toilets other businesses
 - Touchscreens at libraries, council offices and visitor centre
 - Possible step one to update the service guide (with access included) then step two could be to digitise – could research the many existing models out there. Visitors Centre had access maps – perhaps these need updating.
- Access maps have been produced in the past through Accessible Sports Australia – these may still be available to show accessible sports in the region.
- Council uses variety of media to get its messages out: people all have TV's radios, computers, - reach them where they are at – shopping centre stalls, info stalls at libraries, at local events.

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- Mainstream media does not reach vulnerable or at risk people. Need to find way. Potential partnership activities with other agencies like NSW Housing, other housing providers – through housing forum.
- Council uses physical community noticeboards at Woollies, near Coles in the mall, the library, the visitor centre, and the Hain Centre.
- Council uses on-line and social media noticeboards: e.g. buy swap and sell, Facebook noticeboards.
- Council promotes services through other community based organisations, schools, children's services, churches, youth centre The Hub.
- Need to provide education & information to community groups on how to communicate with Council.
- The number of disabled parking spaces in Cooma exceeds the ration required under the DCP.
- Need a way for staff to comment on planning documents before they go out on public exhibition for major public projects e.g. streetscape upgrades, new parks, and new community centres.
 - Need a policy and/or procedure to encourage staff to have input: need to identify what type of input staff can have: content/design/process/etc. Not approvals.
 - Currently, parks and gardens and waste services meet to consider projects at the design stage. This needs to be expanded to include other staff. Perhaps documents could be circulated to a range of staff by internal email. Larger projects need a community engagement process.
- Need community engagement in the planning and design of new buildings and facilities, - wider than access committee – focus on universal design – elderly, children, people with disabilities – input to design reflects local needs – saves retro fits.
- Library resources include: large print, audio, readers for vision impaired (DAISY) and runs community activities.
- We need Council to advocate to NSW Health for increased services at the Snowy Monaro Health Centre in Jindabyne, specifically for paediatric services such as early intervention, physiotherapy, speech therapy, audiology, occupational therapy, eye clinics, etc.
- Need to fill the gap between early intervention and paediatric services and services for primary school aged children with disabilities. The NSW Education Department needs to support the provision of these services within Schools and additional disability and learning support roles.
- We need more information on the NDIS and Council to work with NDIS Local Area Coordinators to provide information in Jindabyne.

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- We need Council to coordinate a local mechanism for collaborative action on disability issues. A regional inclusion committee plus a way to coordinate broader community engagement and collaboration. For example through social media and a local group of parents that can share their knowledge and experiences of the NDIS process.
- Could encourage people who are passionate about improving outcomes for people with disabilities as elected representatives on Council.
- Council can support inclusion in a range of children's activities, to encourage learning through interaction e.g.
 - Playgrounds
 - Sports programs
 - Library activities
- People in their 30's to 40's with acquired brain injuries need age appropriate social opportunities, people are presently attending activities with elderly people
- Once children outgrow the Monaro Early Intervention Service, there are no more services locally. We travel to the Royal Far West Hospital in Sydney for services, as this is a one stop shop for services. The Snowy River Health Centre could become a one stop shop for paediatric services. Currently they don't provide the full range of services needed.
- Disability services should be provided within a whole of life framework. We are always fighting and advocating. It is exhausting. We are working parents and have to fight for services across many different service types and many different people within each service. Sometimes it becomes too hard and you give up.
- Department of Education need to fund and provide disability services through schools. Currently, not a lot of the funding reaches the children.
- Individuals need to advocate to local members. Let them know of their experiences. We need a way to assist collaborative action to advocate for change. There are 165 students with disabilities at the Central School. Teachers need to share this information with services funding bodies. Parents and teachers can work together and be stronger.
- Information sharing between service providers and need to reduce top heavy administrative processes as the funding is not going to front line services. There is too much red tape e.g. NDIS registration process.