

Snowy Monaro Regional Council Disability Inclusion Access Plan 2017-21. Summary

Introduction

Under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act (2014) Council must prepare a Disability Inclusion Access Plan. The Plan will help to identify and reduce barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating fully in their community.

Council must also integrate the Plan within its Community Strategic Plan, budgets and works programs to ensure that the Plan is resourced and actioned.

Council has consulted people with disabilities, their families and carers and the broader community in the development of the Plan. Community engagement occurred through disability services and through community workshops held in Bombala, Cooma and Jindabyne. The workshops were promoted throughout the Region.

The Plan addresses four key areas of focus for improving Council business: improving attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities; building a livable community; improving access to employment and improving the navigation of systems and information. Council will also advocate for improvements to other service providers.

Demographics

In 2105, the National Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers indicated that:

- Almost one in five Australians reported living with disability (18.3% of the population or 4.3 million people).
- 2.4 million Australians with disability needed assistance with at least one core activity of their daily life, including self-care, mobility and communication.
- The majority of people with disability were living in households (95.5%) rather than in supported accommodation (4.5%).
- Almost 2.7 million (or 11.6%) of Australians were carers.
- 53.4% of working age people with disability were employed compared to 83.2% of people with no disability.
- The median gross income for a person with disability was \$465 per week, less than half that of a person without disability.

The Community Profile for the Snowy Monaro Region is based on data from the National Census. In 2011, the Profile indicated that:

- 881 people (or 2.3% of our population) needed help in their day-to-day lives due to disability. From 2006 to 2011 the number of people with disabilities increased most

significantly within the age groups 0 to 4 years old, 20 to 59 years old; and 85 years and over.

- 1,864 carers (or 11.7percent of our population) provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age. The number of carers increased by 358 people between 2006 and 2011.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA), requires Council to: report annually to the Minister on the implementation of the Plan, to review and update the Plan every four years and to make the Plan available to the public.

Summary of strategies and actions

Key focus area one: Improving attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities.

- Engage with the community about Council business and implement a Communications Policy.
- Develop inclusive community engagement tools and methods and promote these tools to staff and the community.
- Provide resources on current inclusive language and photographs representing the diversity in the local community to staff on the Intranet.
- Use a wide range of media to engage with the community, including: on-line and electronic information, printed information; information stalls, community service networks and local radio promotions.
- Conduct a range of community education campaigns on disability types, facts and issues and campaigns that showcase the contributions, skills and experiences of local people with disabilities.
- Support community connection and capacity by providing accessible community programs based around common interests and skills.
- Provide community events at accessible sites, with facilities to support the attendance of people with disabilities.

- Develop inclusive community events policies and procedures.
- Provide an annual event in partnership with community organisations that celebrates International Day of People with a Disability.
- Provide inclusive customer service at central locations in larger towns and assist customers with disabilities where needed to conduct business with Council.
- Map the locations of disadvantaged communities and target the provision of Council services, infrastructure and facilities in these areas.
- Include a diversity training component in the staff and councillor induction processes to raise awareness of disability and cultural and gender diversity.

Key focus area two: Creating liveable communities.

- Implement a Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan and works program.
- Include people with disabilities in the community engagement for the development of Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans.
- Provide disabled car parking spaces within Council owned car parks.
- Provide accessible public toilets throughout the Region.

- Provide accessible community and health centres in Berridale, Bombala, Cooma and Jindabyne.
- Provide a range of disability services and programs and employ a Disability Services staff.
- Provide community organisations with small grants.
- Audit Council facilities for condition and access and implement a program of upgrades.
- Consult on the development of new Council owned community purpose buildings, public spaces and recreational facilities with staff across all relevant functional areas of Council and the community.
- Improve access to and within the Snowy Monaro Regional Council Offices in Cooma and Berridale.
- Manage compliance of construction works undertaken by developers of public and private buildings against requirements for access and mobility.
- Include resources on universal design for developers of community purpose buildings on Council's on-line development application webpage.
- Comply with legislative requirements and employ best practice principles in the design and delivery of new parks and recreational spaces.
- Provide accessible facilities at swimming pools in Bombala, Cooma and Jindabyne and improve access at Berridale pool.

- Discount dog registration fees for pensioners, provide free registration for assistance dogs (excluding therapy dogs), and deliver a subsidised de-sexing, microchipping and vaccination program.
- Support local businesses to become accessible by: providing information and resources. Establish accessible business awards in partnership with businesses.
- Advocate to Transport NSW and local bus companies to increase bus services within the Region.
- Develop a program for younger people with disabilities within the Werri Nina Centre and The Hub Youth Centre.
- Advocate to privately-owned larger retail developments for larger disabled parking signs and blue paint on pillars adjacent to disabled parking spaces.

Key focus area three: Improving access to meaningful employment.

- Use merit based recruitment and employment systems in accordance with legislative and policy requirements.
- Provide a tiered system of job application and interview processes that reflect the level of skill required for the position.
- Complete worksite assessments for staff and provide adaptive equipment to staff, where required and within reason.

- Promote a diverse workforce through compliance with legislative, policy and planning requirements for staff recruitment and management.
- Provide training in anti-discrimination legislation and Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy and Code of Conduct in Staff induction programs.
- Provide staff with training on Council's Vision and Values to develop an organisation culture, which is 'solutionary, together, accountable, innovative and caring'.
- Include non-discriminatory behavioural capabilities in Council's position descriptions and Code of Conduct and monitor and manage behaviour against these.
- Provide flexible working arrangements and a contemporary workplace to enable the employment of people with disabilities.
- Provide free counselling and support under the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for staff experiencing personal and work related difficulties.
- Engage Disability Enterprise 'Cooma Challenge' as the contractor for operations at the Cooma Swimming Pool and to provide park maintenance services in Cooma.
- Establish a Peer Support Group and train Group members to provide general support and information to colleagues who are experiencing a range of difficulties.

- Further explore opportunities to establish working relationships with disability employment services (DES) and TAFE to offer job placements in Council.
- Provide information and resources to managers on the supports available to employ people through disability employment services. Also make these resources available to local businesses.
- Advocate to NSW Education to provide transition to work programs for young people with disability at local high schools.
- Identify people with disabilities working within Council and seek their participation in a community education campaign that promotes employment for people with disabilities.
- Host forums to consult with people with disabilities, employment agencies and TAFE on employment practices and opportunities.

Key focus area four: Improving the navigation of systems and processes.

- Provide accessible library resources in accordance with the interests and needs of people with disabilities. Provide free access to Wi-Fi and internet and provide a mobile library service.
- Operate an accessible website that can be read by reading software, has capacity for audio and visual content and

can accommodate communication devices. Web based services include web forms, development applications, payment of rates and information on Council business.

- Communicate with the community using on-line and social media sites like Facebook and electronic noticeboards of Regional community networks.
- Communicate Council business through schools, children's services, youth centres, community centres, community service inter-agencies (including disability services) and information stalls at events and shopping centres.
- Provide face to face customer service at centrally located Council facilities such as reception counters at Council business offices, Council's community centres, libraries and visitor information centres.
- Use a Corporate Style Guide for Council's written communication, which is based on the Guidelines for Producing Clear Print (2011) Roundtable on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities.
- Explore the capacity of Council's telephone system to support technology held by people who are hearing or vision impaired.
- Provide customer service staff with training and resources in sign language. Place a link on the staff intranet to the resources at Auslan Signbank and provide iPads or tablets at service counters to assist communication.

- Explore the use of webcasting equipment to broadcast Council meetings on-line.
- Review the web content and web-based business templates to improve their accessibility.
- Produce a community information directory on accessible services and facilities. Investigate a range of platforms on which to locate the directory, including: mobile phone apps and the internet, with the capacity to be printed from the internet.
- Support engagement with people with disabilities by establishing regional and local area Inclusion Committees.
- Advocate to NSW Family and Community Services for more National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) information sessions in Jindabyne.
- Advocate to NSW Health for a range of health services to operate from the Snowy Monaro Health Centre in Jindabyne.
- Advocate to NSW Education for increased resources for children with disabilities in primary and secondary schools in Jindabyne.