



**Let's
Talk**

Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030

Engagement Report

May 2026



Wollongong City Council

Visit 41 Burelli Street, Wollongong

Phone 4227 7111

Email engagement@wollongong.nsw.gov.au

Web our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au



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The information in this report is based on data collected from community members who chose to be involved in engagement activities and therefore should not be considered representative.

This report is intended to provide a high-level analysis of the most prominent themes and issues. While it's not possible to include all the details of feedback we received, feedback that was relevant to the project has been provided to technical experts for review and consideration.

The analysis of engagement results was assisted by the use of AI technology. All data was reviewed and de-identified by staff before being input into AI.

Executive summary

We're committed to creating a more inclusive Wollongong where people with disability can access services, facilities, and community life. Between April and May 2026, we asked the community to comment on the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2030, including its actions, priorities and how well it reflects community experience.

What we did and who we heard from

We used a range of communication and engagement methods to reach the community and make it easy to take part. We shared information through social media, email, newsletters, libraries, website content, and community organisations. We collected feedback through online surveys, printed surveys, meetings, pop-ups, events, and emails.

We heard from 71 people and organisations, including people with lived experience of disability, carers, families, support workers, service providers, and community members from a range of backgrounds.

What we heard

There was strong overall support for the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan, with Council commended for taking action to improve inclusion.

Respondents commented on a range of topics in their feedback, which are summarised into the following themes:

- safety and mobility
- parking and wayfinding
- inclusive public spaces and facilities
- information and communication
- training and awareness
- governance, rights, and accountability
- housing and development
- inclusion and community leadership
- NDIS reforms
- requests for alternative formats for the plan.

Next steps

Council will use this feedback to finalise the new Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

A report will go to Council in mid-2026. We will let everyone who provided input know when the meeting will happen and put an update on our engagement website.

Overview

Why we're doing this

Council is creating its third Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), which will run from 2026 to 2030. This plan is required under the New South Wales Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and is designed to make Council services, facilities, and community life more accessible for people with disability.

The DIAP covers the whole Wollongong Local Government Area and aims to support not just people with disability, but also older residents, people with young children, and people with long-term or short-term health conditions.

To develop the new plan, Council is building on what was learned from the 2020-2025 DIAP. It's using updated guidelines and best practices and working closely with people who have lived experience of disability, carers, and service providers to help shape the plan.

This second phase of engagement (building from phase one in 2025) took place between April and May 2026 and focused on the public exhibition of the draft plan.

Council's decisions are guided by:

- legal requirements under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Council policies and strategies, including the Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan
- expert advice and professional assessments
- industry standards, such as the Australian Disability Network's Access and Inclusion Index
- a balanced approach that considers social, economic, environmental, and governance impacts.

The new DIAP must be in place by 1 July 2026.

Engagement purpose

We wanted to find out from our community:

- if the draft plan reflects what people with lived experience of disability told us was important to focus on
- whether they support the draft plan
- whether it is easy to read
- if we need to make it available in other accessible formats besides plain English, easy read, and plain-text large font.

Feedback will be used to refine the plan before Council considers whether to adopt it.

What we heard in phase one and how it connects to this phase of the project

To inform the development of the draft plan, we undertook a broad and inclusive engagement process between July and September 2025. We received 240 submissions, including feedback from children, young people, people with non-visible, cognitive, intellectual, physical, sensory and psychosocial disability, and representatives from LGBTQIA+ and culturally diverse communities. They shared feedback relating to:

- access to public spaces and facilities
- inclusive design and sensory needs
- attitudes, respect, and community understanding
- employment and workplace inclusion
- information and communication access
- community activities, social connection, and participation
- safety, dignity, and independence
- transport and mobility
- carers, families, and support networks

- representation, trust, and inclusion in decision-making.

Stakeholders

Our stakeholders are people or groups who have an interest in, or are affected by, a Council project or decision. Before the engagement period began, we identified the following stakeholders:

Disability Inclusion Action
Plan Community Advisory
Group

Disability focused
businesses, organisations,
and NDIS service
providers

Community advocacy and
support groups

Reference / interest
groups

our.wollongong.nsw.gov.au
Register of Interest -
disability inclusion

Children and young
people, including
preschoolers, students,
and Council's Youth
Services program
participants

Families, support workers,
and carers of people with
disability

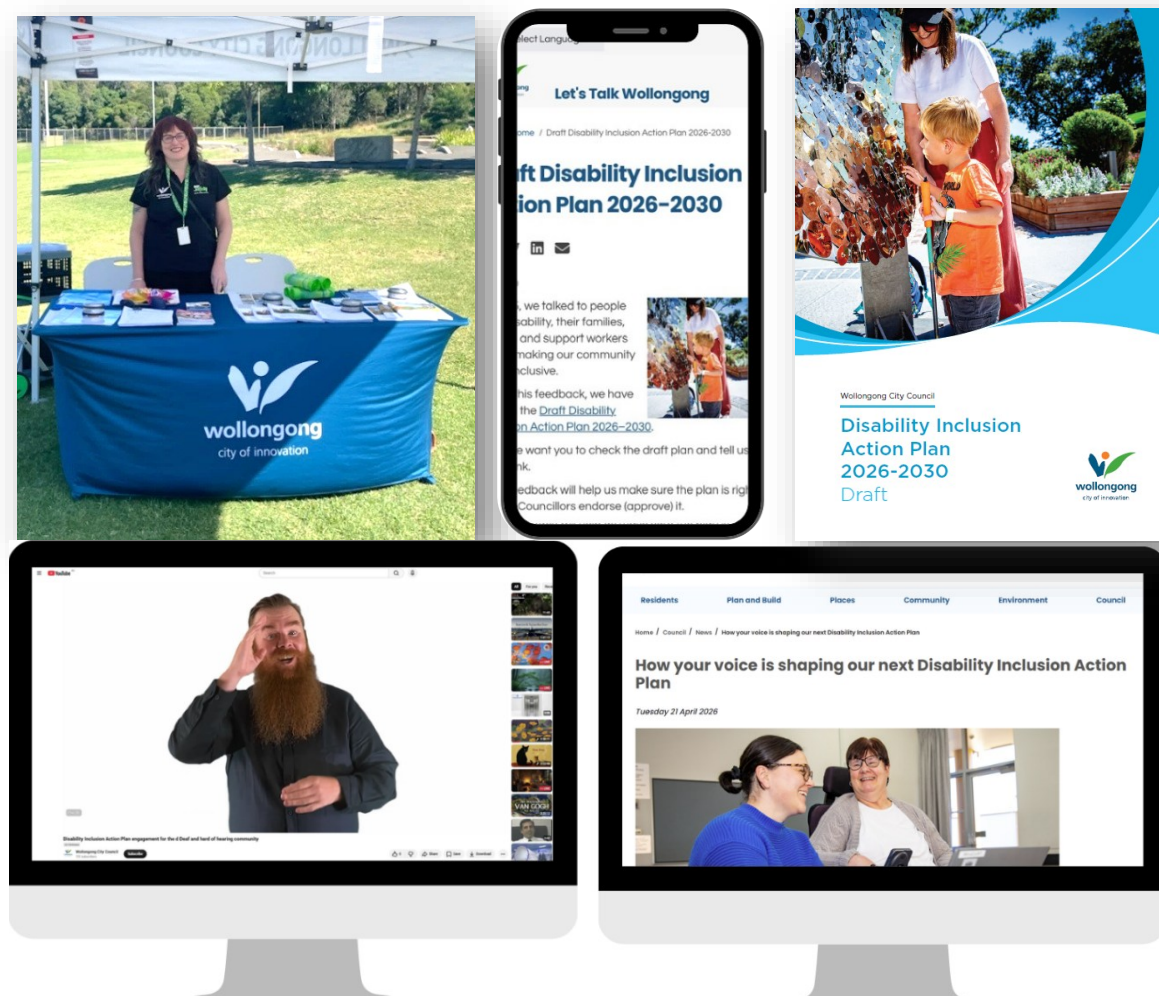
Phase 1 Disability
Inclusion Action Plan
engagement participants

People with lived
experience of disability,
including those with
physical, cognitive,
intellectual, sensory, and
non-visible disabilities

Methods and reach

How we got the message out

Some of the ways we spread the word about this project included:



External communications

The Lord Mayor of Wollongong Councillor Tania Brown supported engagement for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2030 through an Illawarra Mercury column on Thursday 30 April 2026 titled “Inclusion is needed for everyone's benefit”. The column promoted opportunities for community participation and reinforced inclusion as a shared community priority.

Reach

Website

The project page on Let's Talk Wollongong included:

- 648 aware users
- 271 informed users who downloaded documents and clicked video links

The Deaf-interpreted video on YouTube had 28 views.

E-newsletters

Notifications were sent to 2,979 people across Council's registered engagement website participants, e-news subscribers, previous engagement participants, and identified stakeholders:

- **23 April 2026** - "Let us know what you think of our draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030"
- **28 April 2026** - "What we're planning for the next few years - Draft Delivery Program 2025-2029 and Operational Plan 2026-2027 and Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030"

Social media

The social media campaign was successful, reaching more than 11,000 users and creating online interaction and engagement.

Instagram posts:

- **22 April 2026** - "Your say matters! Three important community consultations are now open for feedback".
Reach and interactions: 912 reach, 35 interactions
- **23 April 2026** - Council meeting recap, including the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 endorsed for public exhibition
Reach and interactions: 942 reach, 21 interactions
- **15 May 2026** - final week to submit feedback
Reach and interactions: 769 reach, 23 interactions

Facebook posts:

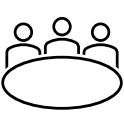
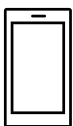
- **22 April 2026** - "Your say matters! Three important community consultations are now open for feedback".
Reach and interactions: 4,021 reach, 23 interactions
- **23 April 2026** - Council meeting recap, including the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 endorsed for public exhibition
Reach and interactions: 2,526 reach, 19 interactions
- **15 May 2026** - final week to submit feedback
Reach and interactions: 2,005 reach, 27 interactions

Some stakeholders promoted the public exhibition via their social media profiles.

How we sought feedback

From 22 April to 20 May 2026, we offered the following ways for people to provide feedback on this project. These included:

			
Online via a survey	Printed survey	Email	Phone call

			
Letter	Face-to-face at pop-up events	Meetings	SMS text message

Engagement participation

This section provides details on the participation in engagement activities and feedback received during the exhibition period.

- 40 online surveys
- 5 printed surveys
- 8 emails
- 12 pop-up attendees who shared feedback
- 6 meeting attendees

Total number of voices heard from through this engagement project was: 71

What we heard

We invited all stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft plan. There were 71 submissions.

Feedback themes and individual comments focused on:

Support

There was strong overall support for the Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan. People said it was inclusive, easy to read and well presented. There was positive feedback on the use of plain language, accessible fonts and images. Many supported Council taking action to improve inclusion.

Accessible communication

People spoke about the importance of providing information in inclusive and accessible formats across all Council communications. This includes Council meeting business papers, which should be presented in formats that meet diverse accessibility needs.

There were requests to expand how the plan is shared. This includes providing audio and video versions for people with dyslexia, low vision or who cannot read, as well as offering a translated version (Italian).

There was a suggestion to create a register of people's accessibility requirements so information and papers can be shared in ways that suit individual needs. Feedback also highlighted the need to provide materials in multiple formats, including Braille and plain text Word documents that don't include information in tables. People would also like Council to share information using non-digital channels such as radio and print.

Participants noted the importance of including audio options and improving awareness of the availability of accessible information.

There was a request for consistent communication about Council's progress in delivering the plan. This includes maintaining and sharing updates in accessible formats across platforms such as the website, social media, email, newspapers and television.

There is a view that the term "disability" can feel negative, with a suggestion that "all abilities" is a more inclusive alternative.

Moving around safely

People raised concerns about:

- unsafe footpaths, including missing footpaths, uneven surfaces, and poor visibility
- lack of lighting on streets
- kerb ramps, including the lack of braille indicators and unclear directional arrows
- challenges around four-way pedestrian crossings (also known as scramble crossings) where all directions move at once, which can create confusion and safety risks.

Construction works blocking footpaths for extended periods were spoken about as a significant barrier for wheelchair users. There were calls for Council to strengthen the review and enforcement of Development Application conditions relating to footpath closures, including the provision of safe temporary pathways and checks on accessibility between roads and footpaths.

These issues create a high risk for wheelchair users, people using mobility aids, and people who are blind or vision impaired. There were calls to prioritise paved footpaths on at least one side of streets. Some drew attention to specific safety concerns in Wollongong CBD, Windang, and along the Thomas Street to Market Street connection near disability housing.

To support greater independence, people requested improved tools such as updated and expanded wheelchair-accessible mapping, and the return or continuation of the Vision Illawarra Navability Map. There were also requests for safer crossings, more controlled crossings and auditory (sound) signals in busy areas.

Parking

Accessible parking was identified as a major daily barrier, with a perceived severe shortage across Wollongong and the Illawarra. People said parking design needs to suit rear-access vans, not just side access, and called for clearer signage and stronger action to prevent misuse, including at Bald Hill.

Inclusive places

There was strong support for more inclusive public spaces and amenities. People want accessible seating in public areas and businesses, including a range of sizes. There were requests for better access to:

- ocean pools
- changerooms
- parks
- tables
- barbeques

It was shared that although access improvements have been made in Stuart Park, some areas and facilities are still not accessible.

Safer, smoother paths that connect key destinations are also a priority.

Playgrounds

There were calls for more inclusive playgrounds with features such as fencing, accessible equipment, sensory-friendly elements and suitable amenities.

Toilet facilities

There is a need for change tables that can accommodate babies and toddlers who are larger than typical sizes. There was also a request for accessible toilets to include hand basins that meet the needs of people with stomas.

Transport

Transport accessibility was raised as a critical issue. Respondents want:

- more accessible public buses that can accommodate different wheelchair sizes
- reliable staff assistance on trains
- clearer procedures for using ramps.

Concerns were raised about stress and delays when support is not well coordinated, making travel difficult and unpredictable.

Feedback noted that while bus shelter accessibility has improved, bus stop signs are often located outside shelters. This can result in people standing in the rain and makes it harder for bus drivers to identify waiting passengers. Integrating bus stop signage into shelters was recommended.

There were also concerns about buses departing out of sequence, which can cause passengers to miss services. People asked for better collaboration and advocacy between Council and Transport for NSW.

Everyday experience

There was strong support for disability awareness and skills training across Council, businesses and the wider community. People spoke about the importance of communication access training to help staff interact effectively with people of all abilities. There was also a call for training in behavioural de-escalation skills to improve safety and reduce crises.

It was suggested that Council develop positive disability awareness content like videos on deaf awareness and disability parking, to be shared on Council's website and social media.

Perceived gaps in the plan

Most of the issues raised in the feedback are already covered or aligned with actions in the draft plan, but a small number were seen as only partly addressed or missing. These included:

- the need for more detail about how and when actions will be delivered
- clearer language about social enterprises and social benefit suppliers
- stronger requirements for shops and public buildings to be wheelchair accessible, with proper checks and enforcement.

It was asked that Council clearly acknowledge in the plan that discrimination exists. There was also discussion about the difference between the social model and the human rights model of disability, with a view that the plan should better reflect lived experience and individual impairments.

A smaller group felt the plan should go further by grounding it in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities rather than just meeting NSW rules. Requests were made to:

- set up a paid, disabled-led Disability Rights Committee with real decision-making power
- use disabled identity language alongside person first language
- stop buying from services that pay disabled workers less than minimum wage
- act on the Disability Royal Commission findings to prevent abuse and harm by making sure services funded or supported by Council are safe and have a clear way to report problems or harm
- set up independent oversight of the plan led by disabled people, with a clear complaints process and consequences when actions are not delivered

Accessible housing was raised as a key issue, with a call to treat it as a right rather than an option. This includes:

- building more accessible homes in new developments
- designing homes for long-term accessibility
- ensuring affordable housing is available to people with disability
- strengthening advocacy to state and federal government.

Specific actions to support First Nations people with disability were requested, including backing First Nations-led organisations and recognising the impacts of colonisation.

There was a request for Council to respond to recent National Disability Insurance Scheme reforms, particularly for those who may lose supports or need more community services, with stronger advocacy to government.

There was a suggestion to add a line in the Plan's acknowledgement section recognising diverse cultures.

Next steps

Council will use this feedback to finalise the new Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

All feedback is important and is one factor in the decision-making process for Council. This graphic shows some of the factors we consider in our decision making:



A report will go to Council in mid-2026. We will let everyone who provided input know when the meeting will happen and put an update on our engagement website.

Updates about our progress on delivering the actions in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for 2026-2030 will be shared on our website.