



Wollongong City Council

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 Draft



*Image: Aboriginal Smoking Ceremony,
Sculpture in the Garden, Wollongong Botanic Garden*

Acknowledgement

Wollongong City Council acknowledges Aboriginal peoples of Dharawal Country as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, seas, and skies across the areas that we operate. We recognise the unique position this holds in the minds, bodies and spirits of Aboriginal peoples.

We pay deep respect to the Elders resting in the dreaming, to the Elders of today, and to the Elders to come, who will continue to care, protect and nurture Traditional Lands.

Wollongong City Council acknowledges Elders as the holders, educators and protectors of cultural knowledge and wisdom. We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures date back 60,000 years, enriched in heritages, languages, storytelling, dreaming, songlines and connection to countries, cultures and communities.

We understand the impact of colonisation and remain committed to ensuring that staff understand our true history as an organisation and nation. It always was and always will be, Dharawal land.



A Note on language

People use different words when talking about disability. Some prefer “disabled person”, others prefer “person with disability”, and some are comfortable with both.

In the Plan, we use person-first language, which means we usually say, “person with disability”. We understand that individuals and communities have their own preferences, and we respect that. Listening and learning about the words people choose is an important part of our work.



Image: Culture Mix Festival

Contents

Message from the Lord Mayor	6
Message from the General Manager	7
Introduction	8
Disability and Diversity	9
Disability in Australia	10
Disability in Wollongong	11
Council's Planning Process	13
Making the Plan	14
Creating Liveable Communities	16
Promoting Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours	22
Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment	26
Improving Access to Our Systems and Processes	32
Delivering the Plan	38
Thank you	39

Message from the Lord Mayor

It is my great pleasure to present the City of Wollongong Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-30. This Plan reflects our strong and ongoing commitment to building a city where everyone can participate, feel valued, and belong.

People with lived experience of disability have guided this process from the very beginning. Their insights, perspectives and honest reflections have been essential in helping us understand what is working, where barriers still exist, and what meaningful inclusion looks like in everyday life. I want to sincerely thank everyone who contributed—you helped ensure this Plan reflects the real needs of our community.

The stories we heard through this process remind us that inclusion extends far beyond physical access. It is found in attitudes, communication, representation, and connection. Barriers can be physical, digital, or attitudinal. When we're able to remove them, we build a safer, more welcoming and more connected Wollongong for everyone.

We recognise that disability is not experienced the same way by everyone. It's shaped by our age, gender, culture, language, personal circumstances, and can be part of our identity. Our planning must be similarly flexible, thoughtful, and grounded in respect for each person's unique experience.

This is the city's third Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and I'm proud of the progress we have already made. Many improvements are now part of our everyday work, but there is still more to do. The actions in this Plan show how we will continue to improve our public spaces, strengthen community attitudes, support meaningful employment opportunities, and ensure our systems and services are easier for people to use.

Inclusion is a shared responsibility across our community. As Lord Mayor, I am committed to championing this work and ensuring that the voices of people with disability remain central as we deliver this Plan.

Together, we can create a city where everyone can thrive.

Lord Mayor of Wollongong
Councillor Tania Brown



Message from the General Manager

I am pleased to present the City of Wollongong Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2030. This is our clear roadmap for how we deliver services, design infrastructure, deliver events and, as a workplace, lead the way by embedding inclusion in everything we do.

A key part of developing this Plan has been listening to people with lived experience of disability, including our staff. I want to thank everyone who contributed—it takes courage to share personal experiences, and this Plan is stronger and more meaningful through your input.

For me, supporting the inclusion of people with disability is key to creating an extraordinary Wollongong. We are all advocates and we all play a part in making our city a more inclusive place for everyone.

Within Council, we have already made progress in this space. We have been working to make our services, programs, facilities and spaces more accessible and we will continue to do so. Within our workplace, we've made it easier for people with disability to work with us, creating a more supportive, accessible and inclusive workplace culture. These

are important foundations, and this Plan builds on them with actions that will make our workplace even more accessible, supportive and responsive.

Many actions within this Plan build on work already underway. Others will require us to think differently, build capability and improve on the way we do things. Our Senior Leadership will play a central role in championing this work and ensuring accountability at every level.

I am proud of the commitment our staff have shown in helping shape this Plan. Together, we will continue building a workplace—and a community—where inclusion is not an aspiration but an everyday practice.

City of Wollongong

General Manager Greg Doyle





Image: Greenacres Workshop

Introduction

About one in five Australians have a disability, which is why creating inclusive communities is important. We want Wollongong to be a place where everyone feels safe, welcome, and able to participate. Council is committed to improving access across our spaces, services, programs, and activities.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026–2030 is our third Plan. It builds on the progress made through our previous Plans, much of which is now part of our everyday work. The Plan sets our priorities for the next four years as we work to make Wollongong more accessible and inclusive.

The Plan aligns with the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines. It has 4 focus areas:

- Creating liveable communities
- Promoting positive community attitudes and behaviours
- Supporting access to meaningful employment
- Improving access to systems and processes

The Plan focuses on the things Council can do to make our community better for people with disability. It aims to help people feel included and safe; make it easier for them to get around; and improve access to our public spaces and buildings. The Plan will also guide us as we make Council services, programs and events more inclusive; make it easier for people to share information and have a say with Council; and continue to make our workplace more inclusive and accessible for our staff.

Many people with disability, their families, carers and service providers shared their experiences to help shape the Plan. People with lived experience of disability will continue to be at the centre of delivering this Plan. We will work closely with the community, including through a Community Advisory Group, as we deliver actions and make sure our work reflects the experiences and needs of our community.



Image: Exsight Tandems at Lake Illawarra

We will deliver the Plan by making it part of our everyday work across Council. The General Manager, Executive and Senior Leadership Team will champion the Plan, supported by an internal Disability Inclusion Action Plan Coordination Group made up of staff responsible for delivering the actions. An implementation plan will guide how we deliver each action, it will include detail on when we will deliver it and who is responsible.

We will share regular updates on our progress with Councillors, our staff, the Disability Inclusion Action Plan Community Advisory Group, our local community, the NSW Government and the Minister for Disability Services.

Disability and Diversity

The Plan follows the social model of disability, which says that it's the barriers in the community that can make it hard to be involved in everyday life. Removing these barriers benefits everyone, including older people, families with prams, children, and people from diverse backgrounds.

Disability can be visible or invisible, temporary or permanent, something you are born with, or something that happens later in life. People may experience disability in physical, cognitive, sensory, psychosocial or other ways. Some people manage independently, while others need support, and those needs can change at different times in their lives.

Everyone's experience is different. Things like culture, gender, age, and life circumstances can come together to shape how someone experiences disability. This is known as intersectionality. It reminds us to consider the whole person, listen to lived experience, and think about a range of needs when planning and making decisions.

Disability in Australia

About 5.5 million Australians, or 1 in 5 had disability and 8% of all Australians had a profound or severe disability¹

1 in 7 aged 0-64 years had disability, compared with **1 in 2** people aged 65+¹

Of the people with disability:

3 in 5	needed help with at least 1 daily activity ¹
80%	acquired it during their lifetime ²
80%	had an invisible disability ²
3 in 4	had a physical condition ¹
1 in 4	experienced a mental or behavioural condition ¹
1 in 8	were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ¹
1 in 10	spoke a language other than English ¹
97%	lived at home ¹
1 in 4	lived in an area of most socio-economic disadvantage ¹
56%	of working-age people were employed, compared with 82.3% of people without disability ¹
People with disability	earn, on average, about half as much per week as people without disability. ¹
1 in 5	aged 15-34 had experienced discrimination ¹
LGBTQIA+ people	with disability were three times more likely to experience discrimination compared to heterosexual people ¹

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022, *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

2. Australian Human Rights Commission, 2022, *Australia's Disability Strategy, Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.



Disability in Wollongong

We can only access data at a local level about people with disability who need assistance with everyday activities like self-care, getting around, or communicating. This information focuses on people with profound or severe disabilities, rather than everyone with disability.

7% of people in Wollongong had a need for assistance due to severe or profound disability¹

People with a need for assistance were more likely to live in social housing (16%) than people without disability (7%)¹

Households with a person who had a need for assistance were more likely to be low income (42%) compared to all other households (24%)¹

People who had a need for assistance were more than twice as likely to be unemployed (12%) compared to people without disability (5%)¹

1. ABS (2021) Census of Population and Housing, compiled and presented by .id Profile

Image: Art and Dementia Tour, Wollongong Art Gallery



Image: Workshop with children who are blind or have low vision, Stuart Park Playground

Council's Planning Process

**The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 supports
Our Wollongong, Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan.**

The Plan is one of Council's supporting documents. It sits alongside other important plans and helps guide our work. The Plan outlines the actions Council will take over the next four years as we continue to make Wollongong a more inclusive and accessible place for everyone.

Council's Integrated Planning Framework



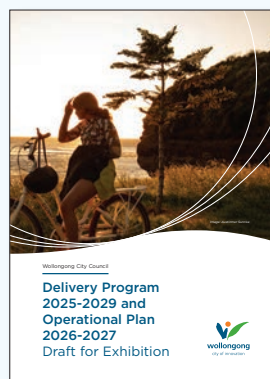
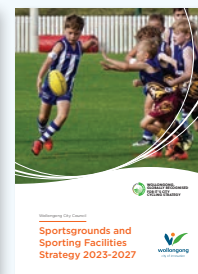
Our Wollongong Our Future 2035 Community Strategic Plan

A 10-year plan that outlines our community's vision and priorities for the future.



Supporting Documents

These documents provide more detail about how we are going to achieve positive outcomes for the community.



Delivery Program and Operational Plan

The Delivery Program sets out the key activities and projects that will be delivered to the community during the Council term. The Operational Plan includes Council's annual projects, activities and budgets.



Making the Plan

Research

We started by looking at recent studies, research and Australian and NSW plans and strategies that focus on disability and local data. Some of the documents we looked at include:

- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2026-2029
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines 2022
- Findings from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
- Information from the Review of the Disability Discrimination Act

We also reviewed what we achieved in our last Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2020-2025.

Sharing Information and Raising Awareness

We talked with the community about what we've done so far, what we've learned, and what we could do next. We explained why the Plan is important and that we were going to update it. We also asked people how they wanted to be involved.

Engagement

Between June and September 2025, we asked people with disability, their families, carers, and support workers to share what would make Wollongong a better place for them. There were many ways to be involved, including surveys, meetings, events, emails, phone calls, and workshops for people with different experiences of disability. These workshops helped us learn more about people's different needs and make sure their experiences were included in the Plan.

Image: Workshop with children who are blind or have low vision, Stuart Park Playground



Image: Greenacres Workshop

Over 500 people talked to us while we were making the Plan. About half of these people formally shared their ideas and experiences. We heard from people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, and lived experiences of disability.

We also asked Council staff with disability, and staff who care for someone with disability, how we could make our workplace more inclusive and supportive.

All this feedback helped shape the actions in the Plan.

Community Advisory Group

A group of community members with lived experience of disability are working with us to make the Plan. The Group includes people of different ages, cultural backgrounds, genders, and experiences of disability.

We're working together to look at what the community told us and to talk about the priorities. The Group is shaping our thinking and sharing helpful feedback as we create the Plan. We will keep working together until the Plan is endorsed by Council.

Writing the Plan

The Plan includes actions that will guide our work from 2026-2030. These actions are based on research and what the community told us was important.

Public Exhibition and Endorsement

The draft Plan will be shared with the community for feedback. We'll review the feedback and make updates if needed. After this, the final Plan will go to Council for endorsement.

Lodgement

Once endorsed, the Plan will be lodged with the Disability Council of NSW.



Creating Liveable Communities

Liveable communities are places people can move about easily to access services and facilities and participate in community life.

What people said

- Cracked, uneven and missing parts of footpath, steep kerb ramps, some intersections and public transport can be hard or dangerous to use.
- More accessible parking spaces and pick up/drop off areas close to important services.
- It's important to have accessible toilets that are clean, in the right place and unlocked.
- Accessible play spaces are important. Playgrounds close to busy roads and water should be fenced.
- Beach matting, hoists and accessible wheelchairs at our beaches and pools are good. People would like to see more of this.
- Better access to buildings. Council buildings and facilities could also include things like quiet spaces/times and other important sensory elements.
- Providing 'Quiet Hours' at a range of different times across our libraries and introduce them at other facilities, like our leisure centres.
- Inclusive events and activities are important. Council can keep building on the good things they are doing.

Image: Workshop with children who are blind or have low vision, Stuart Park Playground

Some of the work we have done



Accessible Playgrounds for All Abilities

In 2023, we opened our All-Abilities Playground. This project was supported by the Australian Government, the NSW Government, Wollongong City Council, University of Wollongong and community and business supporters. In 2025, we partnered with the University of Sydney to involve children who are blind or have low vision in exploring how they use play spaces and how they would design one to meet their needs. Fifteen children, together with researchers and the Department of Education Vision Team, shared ideas that could inform future designs that are more inclusive.

Beach Wheelchairs Make Beaches Accessible

Council provides beach wheelchairs at some of our beaches, so people who need them can enjoy the beach. In 2024, a children's beach wheelchair was added to the program. These wheelchairs support special moments, from family outings to meaningful occasions like fulfilling a loved one's final wish to visit the beach.

Inclusive Programs for Everyone at Our Libraries

Our Libraries run programs to make it easier for people with disability to take part. Some included:

- Korean sensory puppet workshop
- Taiko drumming workshop for people with low vision
- Aboriginal weaving for d/Deaf community
- Gingerbread House sessions for people with low vision and Auslan interpreted sessions for members of d/Deaf community
- A monthly Vision Impaired Yarners Group
- Weekly Quiet Hour in some libraries to provide a calm, low-sensory environment
- 'Seeds and Stories' Morning Tea for people living with dementia.



Image: Accessible beach wheelchair, Austinmer Beach

Things we will keep doing

Maintain, upgrade and build new accessible toilets, footpaths, kerb ramps, crossings, bus stops and accessible parking spaces

Maintain information about toilets on the National Public Toilet Map

Monitor the use of accessible parking and educate the community about using these spaces correctly

Engage with children and adults with disability, carers and relevant groups and organisations when planning or renewing play spaces

Maintain and promote the accessible equipment available at our pools and beaches

Assess Council buildings to see how accessible they are and improve access when we upgrade or build new buildings and facilities

Advocate for more housing options for people with disability, including liveable, adaptable, accessible housing and specialist disability accommodation

Provide a variety of inclusive programs and activities across our youth services, libraries, leisure centres, environment, creative and community programming



Image: Shared pathway, Thirroul

Things we will focus on next

Make it easier and safer for people to move around our community

Seek funding to create a footpath network plan that considers the needs of people with disability and people who use wheelchairs and mobility aides

Advocate to Transport for NSW to include pedestrian countdown timers when upgrading intersections on key walking routes

Seek funding to deliver construction ready or simple accessible path projects with the aim to provide continuous accessible paths of travel in key locations

Deliver road and pedestrian safety campaigns that raise awareness about the needs of people with disability and mobility aid users

Improve the accessibility of the bus stops and shelters we build by using standard accessible designs

Support better access to toilets and waste collection service

Improve accessible toilet facilities, including Changing Places, through building and facility upgrades, and consider where they are best located across the Local Government Area

Investigate community need and what would be involved in providing sanitary bins in men's bathrooms in Council operated facilities

Investigate the level of community need for compassionate waste collection services and assess whether the service could be expanded or improved

Review the use of master locksmiths access keys in Council operated facilities, limiting their use to accessible toilets with hoists, and investigate providing keys to eligible residents with disability

Increase and improve accessible parking and drop-off options

Investigate ways to increase the availability of accessible and ambulant parking in the Wollongong CBD – near the Arts Precinct, government services and Council's administration building

Work with people with disability to develop principles about the placement of public accessible parking spaces and options for pick up/drop off areas as part of a Parking Management Policy

Things we will focus on next

Improve access to our facilities and recreation spaces

Design and deliver play spaces that are accessible, inclusive, and guided by Council's Play Strategy and Everyone Can Play guidelines

Develop guidelines to inform the identification and installation of partial playground fencing or barriers, based on purpose, safety, distribution, and amenity

Seek funding to deliver stage 2 of the Stuart Park All Ages All Abilities Playground

Identify and document the accessibility features we will aim to include across our different categories of beaches and pools, so our planning and upgrades are consistent and inclusive

Make our accessible beaches better by improving our booking system and seeking funding to improve our equipment

Deliver surf safety education programs for school children with disability

Continue to have a focus on equity and accessibility when delivering the Sportsgrounds and Sporting Facilities Strategy 2023-2027 and when planning and building new or upgraded sports facilities

Explore different ways to make our leisure centres more accessible to meet the needs of people with disability

Deliver planned upgrades to accessible cabins and shared facilities at Council-owned tourist parks

Investigate opportunities for installing accessible beach access at our tourist parks

Deliver planned access upgrades at the Botanic Garden by upgrading footpaths and installing a Changing Places facility

Explore opportunities to improve access to our natural areas

Upgrade the Condolence Room at Wollongong Lawn Cemetery to improve accessibility for reflection and gatherings

Things we will focus on next

Improve access to our libraries and community spaces

Complete the Southern Suburbs Community Centre and Library with a strong focus on accessibility, including a Changing Place and Sensory Room

Complete the Helensburgh Community Centre and Library with a strong focus on accessibility

Design and deliver community facilities in the West Dapto Urban Release Area with a strong focus on accessibility

Explore different ways to make our libraries more accessible to meet the needs of people with disability

Support the delivery of more accessible and inclusive housing choices

Update the Wollongong Development Control Plan so large apartment or shop top housing developments include more accessible homes

Increase awareness and support for emergency preparedness

Explore options to support people with disability and disability service providers with emergency preparedness



Image: Mobility scooter hire, Wollongong Botanic Garden



Promoting Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours

People's attitudes influence every part of community life. When communities are supportive and welcoming for people with disability, it helps everyone feel included and able to take part.

What people said

- Respect and patience for people with disability is important in making people feel safe and welcome.
- More community awareness about disability.
- Council should keep building trust and relationships with people with disability, community groups and service providers.
- Council staff should have more training about disability awareness, neurodiversity and communication. We heard that it's important to tell the community when staff have done this training.
- Council should become a member of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program.
- Involving people with lived experience of disability in staff training and community awareness raising.
- Showing people with different experiences of disability in Council's documents, photos and videos.

Image: Culture Mix Festival



Some of the work we have done

Learning to Better Support Everyone

Council staff participated in a range of disability awareness and inclusion training, including:

- Diversity Awareness
- Autism Awareness
- Easy Read and Plain English
- Mental Health First Aid
- Dementia training for frontline customer service staff
- A workshop for managers and staff with personal experience of disability.

We also celebrate significant dates like, International Day of People with Disability, Inclusion @ Work Week and Neurodiversity Celebration Week.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing

We've partnered with The Disability Trust to deliver a tailored exercise program at Lakeside Leisure Centre, supporting people with disability to stay active and healthy. We also continue to support the Academy of Sport's Athletes with Disability program by giving scholarship holders and their coaches access to facilities and resources at both Beaton Park and Lakeside Leisure Centres.

Real Stories, Real Voices

The Wollongong Living Books program was launched in 2008. It enables people with lived experience, including those with disability, to share their stories and challenge stereotypes. Each year, the program is delivered to local schools, reaching students with stories told by participants with diverse experiences such as mental health, blindness, and wheelchair use.



Image: Accessible viewing area, Carols in MacCabe Park



Things we will keep doing

Deliver Diversity Awareness Training and Neurodiversity Awareness Training for our staff

Maintain our relationships with local groups and organisations

Include photos of people with disability in our communications, publications and on our website

Share information about access and inclusion with the community through our communications, promotional material and on our website

Deliver programs that enable people with disability to participate

Include features in Council-run major events to make it easier for people with disability to participate

Image: Wollongong City Library

Things we will focus on next

Build stronger awareness and understanding of disability and inclusion

Provide more training opportunities for our staff on disability inclusion and good customer service and let the community know when this training has happened

Investigate becoming a member of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program

Work with people with disability to plan activities that promote understanding and inclusion in the wider community

Recognise and celebrate important days for people with disability and share them with the community and our staff

Work with local groups and organisations to raise awareness and respond to the issues affecting people with disability

Build new relationships with local groups and organisations to share information and promote programs and opportunities for people with disability

Continue to strengthen our relationship with the Illawarra Disability Alliance

Raise awareness and encourage sporting clubs to consider disability access and inclusion in their programs, through the Sports and Facilities Reference Group

Raise awareness with local businesses about the importance of providing good access to their business

Improve how people with disability are represented in our images and resources

Show more people with disability in our publications and internal and external communications, including people with different backgrounds, ages, genders, identities, and types of disability

Improve access and inclusion at community events

Include accessibility features across more Council events, festivals and activities

Promote our Disability Inclusive Events Guide and work with events holders to improve access and inclusion at their events

Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment

Having a job can help people feel good about themselves and stay connected with others. Earning an income also helps people feel more secure. Work can give people more choice and control over the decisions they make in their lives.

What people said

- Applying for a job anywhere can be really hard. Clear information, practical assessments, different ways of recruiting and providing support during the process help make it easier.
- Flexible workplaces are very important.
- More pathways for younger people with disability to transition from study to work.
- People have different views about supported employment, some agree with it, while others don't.
- Want to see more people with disability working at Council.
- We've been doing some great things to support our staff, and we should keep building on this.

Some of the work we have done



Making it easier to apply for a job with Council

We're working to make our hiring process simpler and more welcoming so we can attract a wider range of people. Some of the things we've done:

- Reviewed our recruitment processes to make sure they are accessible.
- Used different assessment methods that suit different roles.
- Included our Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Statement in all job information packs, and encouraged people with disability to apply and request any adjustments they need.

We also attended careers expos to share information about Council's services, the wide range of jobs we offer and to connect with people looking for a job including students who are about to finish school.



Some of the work we have done

Supporting our staff

We've created a Workplace Adjustment Guideline to support staff who may need changes to how and where they work. Some of these things include flexible work arrangements or extra equipment.

We've also provided training and helpful resources about this. We promote workplace adjustments during recruitment, in our corporate induction, and through our support programs, so everyone understands how to access adjustments and help create an inclusive workplace.

We won the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) Best Employee Experience Strategy Award in 2025.

Targeted employment opportunity

Council took part in the Inclusion Works Project and the IncludeAbility Pilot program to create a meaningful job opportunity for a person with intellectual disability. As part of this, we provided staff training, created Easy Read materials, and used flexible application and assessment processes to make the experience accessible and support people to apply for this role.

We were invited to co-present the project at the NSW Local Government HR Network Meeting, so others could learn from our experience. We also received Highly Commended for Organisational Diversity and Inclusion at the NSW Local Government Excellence Awards.

Valuing lived experience

We've worked with our staff to create the *People with Disability and Carers Peer Collective*. The Peer Collective is made up of staff who have a lived experience of disability, they meet socially and support us in making improvements to our workplace by sharing feedback on policy, procedures and guidelines. They have also organised a range of awareness raising events for staff as part of International Day of People with Disability.

Supporting jobs in our community

We continue to create and support employment for people with disability in our community by:

- Buying things from social enterprises
- Engaging in contracts with other organisations that employ people with disability
- Educating staff and linking them with other businesses that support employment of people with disability.



Things we will keep doing

Build on the work we've already done to make our workplace welcoming, inclusive and accessible

Provide adjustments to support people through our recruitment process

Provide targeted entry level jobs and work experience opportunities for people with disability

Use different recruitment and assessment methods to suit each role

Support our staff to share their lived experience and help shape our policies and practices through the *People with Disability and Carers Peer Collective*

Continue to support workplace adjustments

Support our staff with disability and carers, by providing different options, like flexible work arrangements

Run events, activities and campaigns for our staff to celebrate and raise awareness about disability inclusion

Support social enterprises and social benefit suppliers that provide employment for people with disability

Image: Wollongong City Council staff, Disability Inclusion Action Plan workshop

Things we will focus on next

Increase employment pathways for people with disability

Create targeted and tailored employment programs

Strengthen our relationships with local organisations, schools and community groups so more people know about working at Council

Promote the different ways people can be involved with Council

Provide a positive and accessible experience for people who apply for a job with Council

Improve our recruitment processes so they are accessible and inclusive at every stage

Investigate what it means to be recognised as a Disability Confident Recruiter by the Australian Disability Network

Tell people about our commitment to accessible recruitment

Provide a consistent, safe and accessible experience for our staff at work

Continue our partnership with Australian Human Rights Commission and the Disability Discrimination Commissioner

Create a workplace adjustment policy and an adjustment passport

Make staff support options easier to find, understand and access

Support and promote the *Employees with Disability and Carers Peer Collective* so their lived experience can help shape our work

Things we will focus on next

Guided by lived experience, support our leaders and staff to build the confidence and skills to create an accessible, inclusive and safe workplace

Build inclusive leadership skills through the *Leading @ Council* program, with clear expectations for leaders

Create and deliver a disability inclusion learning framework for all leaders and staff

Include lived experience and case studies in training for our leaders and staff

Empower all staff to contribute to an accessible and inclusive workplace

Support staff with disability to develop, grow and progress in our workplace

Create a mentoring program to support our staff in their career development

Create accessible learning and development content

Include workplace adjustments into development opportunities

Support social enterprises and social benefit suppliers that employ people with disability

Update and finalise the draft Social Procurement Policy to include information on working with Australian Disability Enterprises

Explore opportunities to work with and promote local social enterprise and social benefit suppliers

Promote the benefits of buying accessible and inclusive goods and services



Image: Wollongong City Council staff



Improving Access to Our Systems and Processes

Easy to use systems, clear information and different ways to communicate help remove barriers. They make it easier for people to take part in the community and live independently.

What people said

- Make information available in many formats – plain English, Easy Read, large print, social stories, Auslan and d/Deaf interpreted videos, and captions on videos.
- Information should be shared in many ways – email, SMS, over the phone, face to face and on social media.
- It's important for people with disability to be involved in decision making and in the planning of facilities, services, events and activities.
- Use universal design to plan buildings, places, programs and activities so they can be easily used by everyone.

Image: Disability Inclusion Action Plan workshop with community members



Some of the work we have done



Accessibility tour videos

In 2024, Council produced accessibility tour videos for the Youth Centre and Wollongong Art Gallery with input from people with lived experience. These are available on Council's website to help people plan their visit.

Access and inclusion at Culture Mix Festival 2023-2025

Over the past three years, we've continued to build on the access and inclusion features of the festival. This has included:

- Involving a person with disability in the Community Advisory Group that helps plan, design and deliver the festival.
- Including disability access, information and support information in the Event Operations Manual and covered in pre-event briefings for staff and volunteers.
- Providing accessible facilities such as toilets, seating and viewing areas, a drop-off zone, and continuous accessible paths of travel.
- Offering a quiet space and social stories to support people who may need them.
- Running inclusive programs, including Auslan interpreted activities, an audio described gallery tour and an audio described welcome ceremony.
- Featuring performances by people with disability, including a 2024 festival funded project where performers with disability worked with a local Latin American organisation to create a salsa performance for the main stage and professional d/Deaf musicians as part of the performance program 2025.
- Sharing accessible event information and access maps with the local disability community, service providers and the wider community.

Improving accessibility in our streets and parks

Council created new tools to guide future upgrades to streets, parks, and public spaces helping make them more inclusive.

We've also worked with Guide Dogs NSW on an Access Barrier Tour in the Wollongong CBD to identify barriers. Following this, new surface indicators were installed at the lower Crown Street crossing to improve accessibility.

Image: Culture Mix Festival



Things we will keep doing

Image: Workshop with children who are blind or have low vision, Stuart Park Playground

Maintain our website and systems to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Level AA

Regularly engage with people with disability and involve them in decision making

Use data and feedback from community when prioritising infrastructure upgrades, including footpaths

Improve the way we evaluate and track our progress against our Disability Inclusion Action Plan

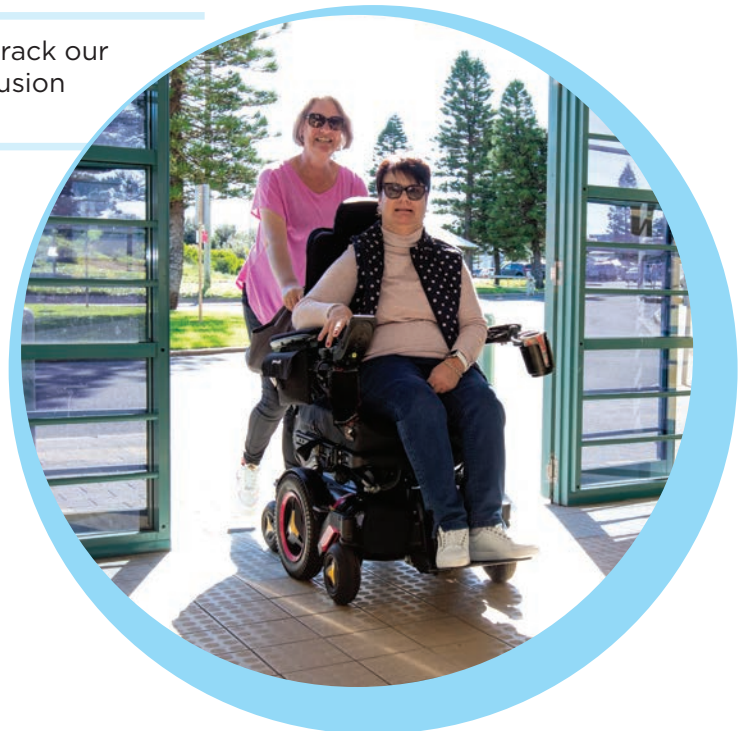
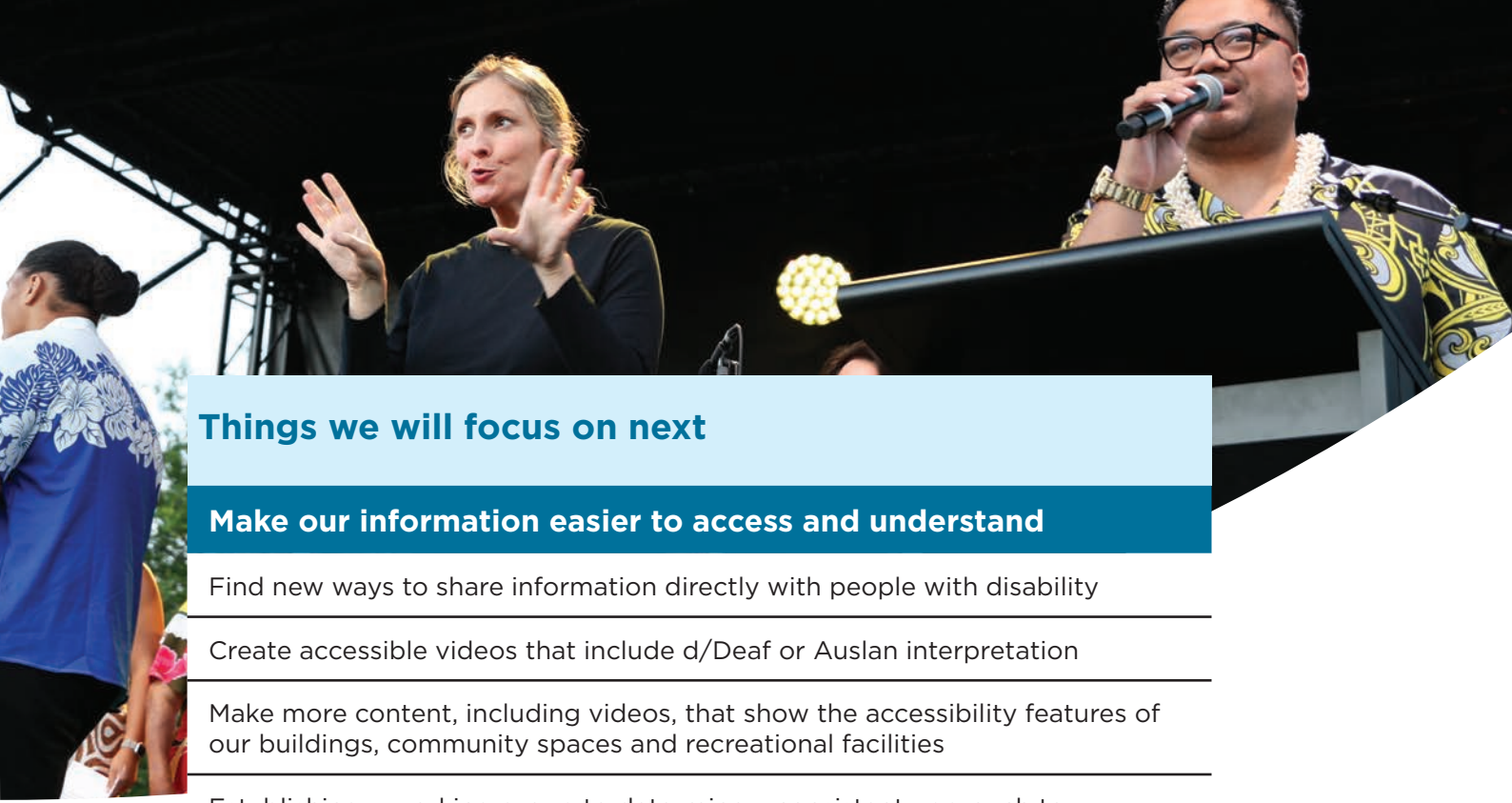


Image: Port Kembla Pool



Things we will focus on next

Make our information easier to access and understand

Find new ways to share information directly with people with disability

Create accessible videos that include d/Deaf or Auslan interpretation

Make more content, including videos, that show the accessibility features of our buildings, community spaces and recreational facilities

Establishing a working group to determine a consistent approach to providing access information about public spaces and Council facilities.

Provide more information and documents to community and staff in different accessible formats – including plain English, social stories and easy read documents

Include accessibility as an important part of creating and updating our communication plans, policies and guidelines

Review and improve our community engagement methods to make it easier and more accessible for people with disability to give feedback to Council

Improve the accessibility of our website and digital systems and programs

Review the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Level AAA and apply them where appropriate

Promote the accessible features in our digital technology and where possible, involve people with disability in testing of new or upgraded products

Create better customer service experiences for people with disability

Explore and introduce customer service offerings that make our services easier for people with disability to use

Offer more accessible self-service options so people can find information and use Council services on their own

Make communication boards available in more Council spaces and customer service areas to support inclusive communication

Image: Image: Auslan interpreter, Carols in MacCabe Park

Things we will focus on next

Deliver services and spaces that consistently meet inclusive design principles

Update the Public Domain Design Technical Manual to strengthen guidance on accessible and inclusive public space design

Develop a Universal Design Statement of Commitment to embed inclusive design practices into all Council activities, from programming and service delivery to building and infrastructure projects

Apply dementia inclusive approaches across our services, programs, and public space design

Improve our internal processes so future projects are more accessible

Build staff capability in universal design and dignified access through tailored learning opportunities

Update and expand Council's design checklists to incorporate detailed universal design and dignified access criteria

Strengthen how we advocate for the community

Develop a coordinated advocacy approach to make sure access and inclusion are part of our conversations with the community and government

Improve how we deliver the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and track our progress, and continue to involve people with lived experience throughout the life of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Review the internal Disability Inclusion Action Plan Coordination Group

Develop an approach to guide how we will continue to involve people with diverse experiences of disability, ages, cultural backgrounds and genders in the delivery of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and how we will report progress to the community on an annual basis

Establish a Community Advisory Group to provide advice on the development and delivery of the Infrastructure Delivery Program and the delivery of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Seek to develop guidelines that recognise the contribution of people with lived experience and expertise to Council projects and programs



Image: Auslan interpreter, Spinfest Beach Party

Delivering the Plan

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will guide our work from 2026 to 2030. It sets the direction for making Wollongong a better, more inclusive place for people with disability.

We will keep working closely with people with disability, their families and carers as we deliver the actions in the Plan. This will help us make sure the work we do continues to meet community needs.

Governance

Our General Manager, Executive, and Senior Leadership Team will support and promote the Plan. A group of Council staff, including managers responsible for delivering most of the actions, will oversee and monitor how the Plan is delivered.

Integration

The actions in the Plan will become part of our Delivery Program and Operational Plan and help us to deliver the Community Strategic Plan.

Implementation

An implementation plan that includes timeframes, priorities, resources and responsibilities is being developed to help with the delivery of the Plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We will use an evaluation framework with clear performance indicators to measure how we are delivering against the Plan. Information will be collected and reported throughout the life of the Plan. In the last year, we will talk to the community to get their feedback and ideas for the future.

Reporting

We will report on progress through Council's annual reporting processes and Annual Plan. We will provide reports to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice and the Minister for Disability Services.

Updates will also be provided to:

- Council's internal Disability Inclusion Action Plan Coordination Group
- Council's Executive Management Team
- Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee
- The Disability Inclusion Action Plan Community Advisory Group
- Councillors
- Our community

Ongoing Engagement

We will keep talking with the community to check that the priorities in the Plan are still the right ones. We will work with the community to get their ideas about how some of the actions in the Plan can be delivered.

Resourcing

Some actions are about continuing what we already do well, while others are about improving how we do things. Many actions won't cost extra money but will require us to work differently.

Some actions will need extra funding for new projects or upgrades. Where possible, this money will be allocated through Council's annual budget process. We may also apply for external funding to help deliver these actions.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who helped create the Disability Inclusion Action Plan. We really appreciate the time, ideas, and support from people with disability, their family, friends and support workers.

Your feedback helped us understand what inclusion means to different people and what matters most to you. Because of your involvement, we now have a Plan that reflects our community's needs and shows the way forward.

We look forward to working together to make Wollongong a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone.



Image: Vision Impaired Yarners, Wollongong City Library



Cover image: Workshop with children who are blind or have low vision, Stuart Park Playground

On Dharawal Country, from the mountains to the sea, we value and respect each other, our places, past, and future. We will be a sustainable, connected, vibrant, and innovative city, with a diverse economy.

We are a sustainable and climate resilient city

We have well planned, connected, and liveable places

We foster a diverse economy, and we value innovation, culture, and creativity

We have a healthy, respectful, and inclusive community



Wollongong City Council
wollongong.nsw.gov.au
Phone (02) 4227 7111

