

Shoalhaven
City Council

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026



Acknowledgment of country

A purple line-art illustration featuring a fish with intricate patterns on its body, a seashell, and a leaf-like shape. The fish is positioned to the right of the text 'of country'.

We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this country and their continuing connection to the land through culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

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For more information

Contact communityconnections@shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au

Message from Shoalhaven City Council

Mayor, Amanda Findley

We have achieved a lot since we adopted our first Disability Inclusion Action Plan for 2017-2021. This Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026 builds on our achievements to improve inclusion for people with disability.

To develop this second Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Council undertook extensive community consultation with more than 300 participants. I would like to thank the individuals, services and community groups who spoke with us about how we can make Shoalhaven more accessible and inclusive.

Our conversations with the community highlighted that Shoalhaven is a diverse city with people of many abilities. The Disability Inclusion Action Plan demonstrates Council's pride and commitment to building an inclusive and accessible community, ensuring that people of all abilities enjoy the same rights, opportunities, and benefits of living and working in Shoalhaven. People living with disability are an important part of our community and make a valuable contribution to life in the Shoalhaven, and we recognise the right to have fair access to opportunities and services.

I look forward to working with Council, services, and the community to build on our achievements to date and to improve inclusion for people with disability.



Introduction and Summary

Inclusion in the Shoalhaven means all people have equal access in our community and that they feel they belong. Our actions matter and true inclusion is only possible when we work together to remove barriers, improve equitable access, independence, and provide those in our community with dignity, respect, and equal opportunity to participate in a safe and welcoming way.

This is Council's second Disability Inclusion Plan 2022-2026 (The Plan). The Plan is a four-year framework to highlight how Shoalhaven Council will continue to improve access, service, activities, employment, and information for people living with a disability, their families, and carers.

Council is committed to improving opportunities for people of all ages with a disability, to access the full range of services and activities available. The priorities within this document are based on the lived experience of people who live, work, play and visit the Shoalhaven.

Over 300 people, disability service providers, families and carers contributed to the Plan and shared their thoughts and experiences about how Council can improve the accessibility and inclusivity of the Shoalhaven.

Council used the feedback from community to develop actions under the four key community themes. These themes are required under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and show what Council will do to ensure people who have a disability can participate fully in life in the Shoalhaven.

The four community themes are:



The Plan's strategies and their measures fall within our integrated planning framework.

These strategies guide Council's priorities and sets out how we aim to achieve these priorities and actions each year.

Each year Council will update community on the progress of the Plan through our annual report.



The Case for Inclusion

- The responsibility for changing attitudes and behaviours towards disability belongs to everyone. Attitudes towards people with disability are often a symptom of ignorance, fear, or the lack of opportunities to interact. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing perceptions over time.
- Accessible infrastructure benefits everyone. It is necessary for social and economic participation.
- Employment provides new connections, skills and leads to an improved quality of life. A job can give new opportunities to be part of a team and can provide independence to expand skills often leading to greater self-confidence.
- When the economy is inclusive it provides everyone with better access to goods and services. With 1 in 5 Australians living with a disability it is important to consider whether businesses are missing 20% of potential customers.

Our Shoalhaven



Average Age

48

19.7% aged 0-17 years
34.3% aged 60+ years

Population Increase



44.2%
increase for
aged 65+ years

5.5% of the
Shoalhaven's population
identify as Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander

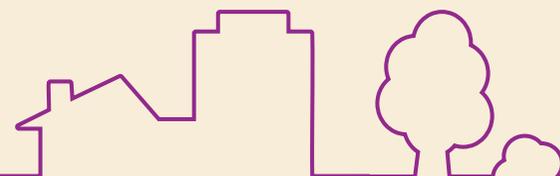
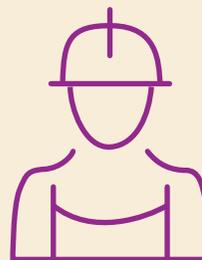


33.9%
completed year 12

25.8% vocational qualification
12.1% university education

35,751
jobs

47% in workforce
7.5% unemployed



40,935 total
households

25.3% mortgage
23.8% renting
3.8% social housing

279 individuals
homeless

Additional
Households



21.6%
of households are made up
of couples with children

17% couples without
children

26.7% single person
10.6% single-parent

Single person households
increasing to

30.7%
by 2031



Disability Snapshot - Australia

20% or 4.4 million Australians are living with a disability

32% or 1 in 3 of people with a disability have severe or profound disability with at least 1 daily living activity

1 in 10 people with a disability aged 15+ have experienced disability discrimination in the last year

42% of adults with a disability rate their health as fair or poor compared to the 7% of adults without a disability

3 in 5 people with disability living in a household need support with at least 1 activity of daily living

47% of adults with disability have experienced violence after the age 15

82% of people with a disability are satisfied with the quality of assistance received from organised services

1 in 70 Australians are on the autism spectrum

Disability Snapshot - Shoalhaven

7.7% or **7,654** people living in the Shoalhaven are living with a disability

1,041 people reported needing help daily due to disability

1 in 50 people in the Shoalhaven are on the autism spectrum. Autism is the most common disability in the Shoalhaven

453 Local active NDIS service providers operate in the Illawarra Shoalhaven

462 Aboriginal people in the Shoalhaven are living with a severe or profound disability

1,102 children aged 0-12 are living with a disability in the Shoalhaven

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019, *People with disability in Australia*
2. Australian Network on Disability, *Disability statistics 2019*
3. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2019, 4430.0 – *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia 2018*
4. Australian ASD Population data 2015

Developing the Plan

Research

Before we started to review the Plan, Council conducted research and looked at demographic data from the Shoalhaven and across Australia. We also reviewed our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021 to see what we had achieved and where there were areas for improvement.

Community Engagement

Council engaged The Flagstaff Group, a local disability service provider to support the review of the Plan. A range of methods was used to engage with over 300 people living with a disability, local disability providers, families, friends, and carers who shared their thoughts and experiences about how we can continue to improve the accessibility and inclusivity of our city. We hosted community workshops, online surveys, one-on-one meetings and targeted workshops with service providers and Aboriginal service providers.

Outcomes, Priorities & Actions

To ensure the best results for community, Council set clear outcomes under each Focus Area of the Plan. Priorities and actions describe how outcomes will be achieved, and the actions for each priority. Each action includes its own measure and outlines which department in Council is responsible for the action, a time for when it will be completed and a budget for the cost. A full action table can be found in Appendix 1 of the Plan.

Exhibition and Endorsement

The Draft Plan was reported to Council and put out to public exhibition for the community to provide feedback. This was then reviewed and considered prior to reporting back to Council and the Plan was endorsed.

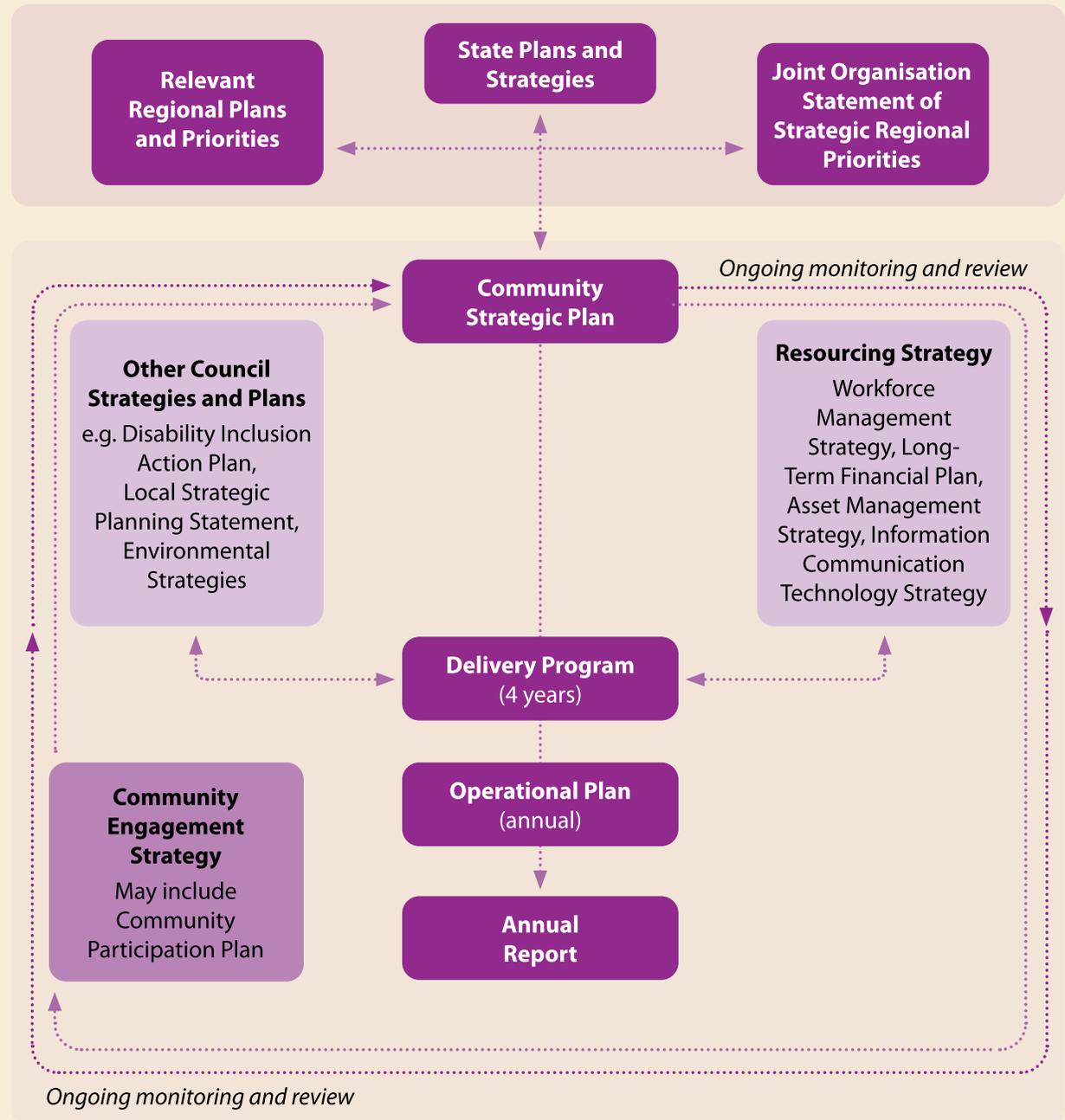
Lodgement

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

Council's Planning

All local Councils are required to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan. Shoalhaven City Council (SCC) works within a framework of a wide range of legal and policy requirements, which have informed the development of this plan.

Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan falls within our integrated planning framework, along with other supporting plans. These strategies and plans guide Council's priorities from across the city and Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan sets out how we aim to achieve these priorities and actions each year.



Achievements since 2017

Shoalhaven City Council launched the first DIAP in 2017, since then Council departments have completed 62% of the action, set out in the Plan and a further 23% of actions are still underway. Take a look at some of the things that have been achieved.

- Council adopted a lift and change masterplan.
- Front counter of the Nowra Administration Centre has been re-designed to meet accessible standards and display stands have been placed to allow access for people with mobility limitations.
- Our Libraries acquired several resources for people with print disabilities including:
 - Dyslexia-Friendly collection of youth and junior books.
 - eNewspaper database / (Pressreader) has text to voice capabilities.
 - Large print books have been purchased and are available for loan at Shoalhaven Libraries.
 - A growing collection of audio books in various formats have been added to the collection.
 - Extension of Council's Home Library Service to members of the community that are not able to physically access library services.
 - Information on accessible library resources documented.



- Wheelchair accessible beach access ramp at Nelsons Beach Vincentia.



- Increasing events to recognise Shoalhaven's diverse disability community and celebrate inclusion through International Day of People with a Disability and Disability Service expo's.



- Council continued to increase the accessibility's of our parks and reserves and opened Boongaree, a destinations park for the Shoalhaven, host wide-ranging accessible and inclusive designs.



Shaken II
Bernard McGrath

Shoalhaven Regional Gallery hosted an exhibit 'An Unending Shadow' exploring the impact of dementia on families and communities and a solo show by local artist Bernard McGrath who has early on-set Parkinson's Disease.

- Incorporating inclusion in programs across aquatic centres, libraries, and art gallery.
- Expanding documents and media to incorporate a range of abilities, ages, cultures, and disability diversity.
- Tourism Shoalhaven website has been upgraded and is currently at WCAG 2.0 AA Standard.
- NDIS funded patrons are continuing to undertake programs in Learn to Swim and Teen gym programs. Self-managed patrons also utilise the swim and fitness centres facilities, engaging with physiotherapists and exercise physiologists.



- The annual Shoalhaven Visitor Guide promotes accessible tourism throughout the guide and a dedicated double page spread on accessible holidays.



- An upgrade to the service counter Kiosk and bar at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre. Upper: before, lower: after.

Community Engagement

We asked and you answered

Council used a range of ways to engage with over 300 people living with a disability, local disability providers, families, friends, and carers who told us their thoughts and experiences about how Council can continue to improve accessibility and inclusivity in the Shoalhaven.



Who we spoke to

- People living with disabilities
- NDIS providers
- People who live, work, and play in the Shoalhaven
- Carers and families
- Shoalhaven City Council Mayor and Councillors
- State and Federal MPs
- Aboriginal disability service providers
- Emergency services
- Council committees
- Aged care providers
- Housing providers
- Council employees
- Schools

How we listened

- 6 face-to-face community workshops
- 120 people completed an online community survey
- 2 meetings with Federal and State MPs
- 34 Council staff and 6 executives attended one-on-one and group meetings
- 9 meetings with disability service provider groups
- 14 disability employment providers were consulted
- 5 representatives of indigenous disability organisations
- 52 conversations with supported employees with disability
- Social media and online interviews

What you told us



The Good

- Playgrounds and reserves
- Celebrating disability
- Council's Libraries, Art Gallery, and Entertainment Centre
- Council's communications approach



Areas for improvement

- Pathways and kerbs
- Accessible parking
- Accessible toilets
- Meaningful employment

Community Engagement Themes

The feedback collected from the workshops, community survey, interviews and conversations were reviewed, and 9 themes were identified. Below is an overview of what people said was most important for an inclusive Shoalhaven:

- 1. Community understanding**
There is a need for improved community understanding of the diversity of disabilities
- 2. Playgrounds and reserves**
Purpose-built accessible playgrounds are valued but existing facilities could be improved with fencing and footpaths
- 3. Pathways, kerbs, roads & crossings**
There is a need for accessible pedestrian facility improvements in suburbs and villages
- 4. Council buildings**
Good accessibility for many Council facilities but Nowra Admin Building needs improved accessibility
- 5. Accessible parking**
There is a need for improved accessible parking provision
- 6. Accessible toilets**
There is a need for additional accessible toilets
- 7. Sharing information**
Newsletters, social media, disability networks and plain-language communication valued
- 8. Council website**
Council website would benefit from plain-language, easier navigation, and design for vision impairment
- 9. Meaningful employment**
There is a need for improved access to meaningful employment

How to Read Our Actions

The focus areas provide a structure for our goals within the Plan

Our outcomes are what we are aiming to achieve

Priorities help us achieve our outcomes

Actions are what we will do



Create Positive Attitudes and Behaviours Within Community

The steps we will take

We heard that people's attitudes and behaviours towards people living with a disability is the greatest barrier to an inclusive community. These actions are what Council will do so that everyone can feel welcomed in the Shoalhaven.



Outcome

Build a welcoming and inclusive community by improving understanding of people with a disability

1.1 Deliver activities to improve community awareness and understanding of disability

- 1.1.1 Deliver a campaign with lived experience ambassadors to tell stories of inclusion and experiences of living with a disability
- 1.1.2 Update and increase useability of the 'Inclusive Shoalhaven holidays' page to raise awareness of accessible tourism
- 1.1.3 Increase image and video library of diverse people available for use in Council documents/material

1.2 Improve awareness of Council's inclusion initiatives and existing services

- 1.2.1 Create a comprehensive (one-stop-shop) SCC webpage to link all accessible Council services
- 1.2.2 Improve how Council uses the Annual report to raise community awareness of our inclusion work
- 1.2.3 Raise awareness of IAAG and their work within the Shoalhaven community

1.3 Deliver training and consult the community to improve skills and understanding of Council staff and Councillors

- 1.3.1 Deliver training for front line staff and Councillors on disability awareness and education
- 1.3.2 Consult the community about their perceptions and understanding of neurodiversity to inform future work to make the Shoalhaven neurodiverse friendly

1.4 Encourage businesses to improve inclusion through improved understanding of disability

- 1.4.1 Deliver a campaign to recognise inclusive businesses in the Shoalhaven

1

Create Positive Attitudes and Behaviours within Community

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- 1.4.1 Advocate for all applicant businesses to address inclusion as part of the Shoalhaven business awards assessment

2

Create Accessible and Liveable Communities

The steps we will take

Creating liveable community for people with disabilities is more than modifying the existing physical world. These actions are what Council will do to make our community more accessible.



Outcome

Create a community where people with disability can participate by improving access to places and activities

2.1 Improve kerbs, pathways, and ramps throughout the Shoalhaven

- 2.1.1 Prepare an updated Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) and ranking criteria to identify projects that need action and funding to address access improvements
- 2.1.2 Use the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) and ranking criteria to deliver projects that improve access
- 2.1.3 Use an annual IAAG workshop to seek input on kerb ramp projects to improve accessibility
- 2.1.4 Use kerb ramp budget to deliver priority kerb ramp projects, including those identified by annual committee workshop

2.2 Increase access to inclusive parks that are designed to support use by people with disability

- 2.2.1** Inspect and review destination and regional parks for the need for fenced areas to make inclusive parks friendlier to parents and careers with children and people with disability
- 2.2.2** During refurbishment and renewal projects, budget is allocated to make inclusive parks friendlier to parents and careers with fenced areas for children and people with disability
- 2.2.3** Development/redevelopment of destination parks will include inclusive and accessible playgrounds
- 2.2.4** Formalise an accessibility advocate to be involved in the development of tenders & RFQ's for playgrounds
- 2.2.5** All new masterplans will make social infrastructure inclusive for people living with a disability

2.3 Provide inclusive events for the whole community

- 2.3.1** Develop and use resources that support Council to plan accessible events
- 2.3.2** Develop and use resources that support the community to plan accessible events
- 2.3.3** Include accessibility information in the promotion of events
- 2.3.4** Seek community feedback to evaluate Community Connections events for venue and event accessibility
- 2.3.5** Update the event policy to encourage improved accessibility for events in the Shoalhaven

2.4 Improve accessibility in Council buildings

- 2.4.1** Conduct accessibility audits of priority Council buildings and use existing asset maintenance and renewal budgets to upgrade
- 2.4.2** For all new publicly accessible buildings, accessibility feedback on the design will be sought from the Inclusion & Access Advisory Group (IAAG)

2.5 Improve accessibility in the community

- 2.5.1** Review development controls in Shoalhaven DCP with a view to improving accessibility outcomes and implement amendments to Shoalhaven DCP with support from Council. This aims to improve availability and quality of accessible housing in the Shoalhaven in the long-term
- 2.5.2** Work with Transport for NSW to improve accessible transport in the Shoalhaven
- 2.5.3** Support the IAAG to provide advice on accessible parking requests from the community to the Traffic Committee

3

Improve Access to Our Systems and Processes

The steps we will take

Accessing services is hard, that's why Council is working to make it easier for the community. Take a look at the actions we will take to make getting information easier, and making access to services easier.

Outcome

Provide equitable access to services and information by ensuring Council systems and processes are inclusive for people with disability and address barriers to access



3.1 Improve useability of Council websites

3.1.1 Upgrade the foundations of our website technology and use improved capability to improve all Council websites to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standards

3.1.2 Create a framework for the transition to online accessible forms

3.1.3 Deliver training for content author staff to understand accessibility standards and improve digital inclusion

3.2 Improve inclusion in advisory committees and community engagement and events

3.2.1 Improve inclusion and accessibility of Council's community engagement activities by ensuring the Engagement Strategy reflects best practice

3.2.2 Add agenda item for relevant advisory committee meetings to review and improve inclusion

3.2.3 Add agenda item to review and improve inclusion for project planning meetings for teams that deliver community events/engagement and plan social infrastructure

3.3 Improve consideration of social outcomes in procurement processes

3.3.1 Use the procurement policy review to improve consideration of social and sustainability outcomes in procurement processes. This aims to improve the ability of Council teams to consider social outcomes of potential suppliers, such as disability employment by social enterprises

4

Support Access to Meaningful Employment

The steps we will take

Council recognises the challenges of finding employment for people living with a disability. That is why Council have set a goal to remove those barriers when applying and working for Council, and to help Shoalhaven businesses improve employment opportunities for people living with a disability.

Outcome

Improve access to employment for people with a disability in the Shoalhaven



4.1 Provide an accessible recruitment and onboarding process for new Council employees

4.1.1 Review the employment application process for accessibility and raise awareness of available support and alternative processes

4.1.2 Provide training on disability awareness to teams where a person with a disability has been recruited

4.2 Develop inclusive work experience and employment opportunities for people with disability

4.2.1 Actively promote work experience, traineeships, and volunteer roles to people with disability

4.2.2 Engage with Council teams to identify and support development of opportunities for people with disability, including work experience, traineeship, volunteer and employment rolls, and project work

4.2.3 Identify or create inclusive employment opportunities, including through use of flexible working arrangements and by partnering with disability employment providers for identified roles

4.2.4 The tender evaluation process for providers of trainee and apprentice programs will include criteria to consider improvement of opportunities for people with disability

4.3 Support Shoalhaven businesses to employ people with disability

4.3.1 Provide resources to businesses to raise awareness of benefits of, and supports for employing people with disability

Monitoring and Evaluation

How will we know if we are making a difference? We will use the following indicators to report on our priorities to ensure we are measuring our achievement for an inclusive Shoalhaven 2022-2026.

Positive Attitudes and Behaviours Within Community

Indicator	How we measure success
1.1 Deliver activities to improve community awareness and understanding of disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered • Engagement data
1.2 Improve awareness of Council's inclusion initiatives and existing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement data • Evidence of process change • Initiatives delivered
1.3 Deliver training and consult the community to improve skills and understanding of Council staff and Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation data • Initiatives delivered • Evidence of process change
1.4 Encourage businesses to improve inclusion through improved understanding of disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of process change

Create Accessible and Liveable Communities

Indicator	How we measure success
2.1 Improve kerbs, pathways, and ramps throughout the Shoalhaven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of policy change • Initiatives delivered
2.2 Increase access to inclusive parks that are designed to support use by people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered • Evidence of process change

2.3 Provide inclusive events for the whole community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered • Evidence of process change • Engagement data
2.4 Improve accessibility in Council buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered • Evidence of process change
2.5 Improve accessibility in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of policy change • Initiatives delivered • Participation data

Improve Access to our systems and processes

Indicator	How we measure success
3.1 Improve useability of Council websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement data • Evidence of process change • Participation data
3.2 Improve inclusion in advisory committees and community engagement and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of policy change • Evidence of process change
3.3 Improve consideration of social outcomes in procurement processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of policy change

Support Access to Meaningful Employment

Indicator	How we measure success
4.1 Provide an accessible recruitment and onboarding process for new employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of process change • Participation data
4.2 Develop inclusive work experience and employment opportunities for people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered • Evidence of policy change
4.3 Support Shoalhaven businesses to employ people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives delivered

Delivering the Plan

Governance

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is owned by all Councillors, Executive Team, and staff. A project control group will oversee Council's ongoing implementation of this plan.

Delivery and implementation

The actions of the Plan will be included in the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework by including them in Council's Delivery Program & Operational Plan. Progress on the Plan will be monitored by managers across Council.

Monitoring and evaluation

An evaluation framework has been developed to measure change. Council will collect and report on the implementation of the Plan.

Reporting

Each year Council will update the community on the progress of the Plan through our annual report. Council will provide a copy of this report to the NSW Disability Council.

Ongoing engagement and review

Council will continue to engage with community to ensure we are working towards an inclusive Shoalhaven and will review the Plan in 2026 to continue to guide Council into the future.

Funding the Plan

Several actions in the Plan focus on improving the way we do things, these actions will not cost additional money, as the attention will be on Council working in more inclusive ways. Some actions within the Plan will require additional funds to implement, these relate to upgrading existing facilities and building more inclusive infrastructure. The funds to deliver these actions will be allocated through the annual budget process where possible and may require Council to apply for external grant funding to achieve.



Legislative & policy

People living with a disability, their families, carers, and those who support them have a legal right to access service, and facilities. These rights are part of State and Commonwealth policy and legislation which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person with a disability.

Legislation and National Standards that inform Shoalhaven City Council's work

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008 (UNCRPD)
- National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 (NDS)
- NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019
- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA)
- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and related Disability Standards for Education (2005) and Access to Premises – Buildings (2010)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS)
- NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- NSW Government Sector Employment Act 2013
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Disability (Access to Premises – Building) Standards 2010)
- Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014



Thank you

On behalf of all staff here at Council and our Executive Management Team, we would like to thank the Shoalhaven community for taking part in the development of the Plan. With your input, we were able to develop this Plan for Council to continue the work of building an inclusive Shoalhaven, where people living with disability can participate fully in our community and in life.



Stephen Dunshea,
Chief Executive Officer



Jane Lewis,
Director - City Lifestyles



James Ruprai,
Director - City Development



Kevin Voegt,
Director - City Performance



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