

S13 (1) Report on Implementation

This section reports on Council's fourth year of implementing its Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and will be provided to the Minister for Disability Services and the NSW Disability Council. The Plan and our disability information hub can be found at northernbeaches.nsw.gov.au/services/disability

We continued implementing the plan to help create a more inclusive and accessible community. Amongst many ongoing actions, 11 actions were completed this year, with good progress in all focus areas. In total, 46% of the actions have now been completed (i.e. 36 of 78). Of the remaining 42 actions, 28 are considered to be ongoing programs.

Focus Area 1: Develop positive community attitudes and behaviours

Mandatory training on inclusion and disability awareness is included in induction for new staff, and is being rolled out for existing staff. This training was developed with the Human Rights Commission and experts in job access, inclusive culture and behaviours. We encourage businesses to be inclusive of people with assistance animals, by providing direct advice to food businesses and providing guidance in our newsletters and website. Our first Access and Inclusion Award also recognised inclusive businesses in the 2020 Northern Beaches Local Business Awards, and there were even more applicants for the 2021 award, to be judged later this year. We are also developing Event Accessibility and Inclusion Guidelines.

Council uses positive images of people with disability in its media and publications. By using fonts that are bold or are a larger size on signage and in publications, the messages are more visually accessible.

More infographics and video footage are being used on website and social media to enhance the viewer experience.

Our inclusive programs include those run by the events team, community development, children's centres, libraries, Coastal Environment Centre, bushcare, plant nursery, and aquatic centres. Free native plants were delivered to residents homes during COVID, in the Backyard Habitat program. This expanded program also catered to many residents with mobility issues that are unable to participate in bush regeneration, but can provide habitat in their own yards.

Key Council events and community engagement are planned with accessibility in mind e.g. amenities, ramps, parking and viewing areas. Physical and online access are provided for all formal Council meetings, to enable full participation by the public and Councillors. Other accessible events this year included:

- Big community events such as Open Air Cinema, Christmas Choral Concert, Sun Run, ANZAC Day Ceremony, Citizenship Ceremony, Australia Day, Solar Expo and National Tree Day
- Promotion of International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) in December 2020, including links to national website of events near you or online
- An exhibition at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum in May 2021 included braille text
- The library service children's program has Inclusive Story Times. During COVID shut down periods Children's programs were adapted to online inclusive programs. The service also held promotional activities for Mental Health Awareness Week and International Day of People with Disability.

Focus Area 2: Create liveable communities

Accessibility audits were conducted in various parks, reserves, parking stations, buildings and facilities to help prioritise sites for improvements works. Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans (PAMPs) are detailed audits of the pedestrian network and provide recommended improvements to provide connectivity and accessible for all users. PAMPs have been prepared for Avalon and Manly, with works commencing as funding becomes available.

The Northern Beaches Accessibility Map shows accessible facilities and buildings, amenities, playgrounds, rock pools and more. Now available on our website, it will continue to be developed as other infrastructure is audited and works are completed.

This year accessibility works were completed on various paths, kerbs, bus stops, carparks, amenities, playgrounds, surf clubs, rock pool ramps, libraries and other buildings. New buildings underway which will be fully accessible are Long Reef and Mona Vale Surf Clubs, as well as Warriewood Community Centre currently in the planning stage. Disability inclusion is now embedded in our planning and project management frameworks for future Council plans and works, including broader plans to encourage affordable and adaptable housing in the community.

Community Development staff attend regular networks with local services including other levels of government and ongoing implementation of the NDIS. Our disability liaison staff direct key community programs, advocacy and host our online disability information hub. We provide a regular disability newsletter to 1,300 readers on our programs, information and events, as well as promoting advocacy and partnerships.

The Library Service provides inclusive programs and activities. During COVID lockdowns we expanded online Children's programs and the Home Library Service (delivering over 41,000 items during lockdown) which provide even greater inclusion ongoing for those with mobility issues. Regular children's programs now include sign language resources and online broadcasts. More e-Audio resources are on offer.

All our Children's Services are inclusive and accessible, with Council's commitment to this in our new Children's Services Strategy and Inclusion Policy. This includes children with additional needs, socio-economic and other challenges – this year 18 children with high support needs received quality education and care through Council services

The Coastal Environment Centre provides a range of adaptable school programs and activities to cater for accessibility needs, as well as specialised programs for children living with disability. Our community and school videos have both captions and text to provide visual information. All online and web education resources and events meet accessibility standards.

Focus Area 3: Support access to meaningful employment

Our new Integrated Volunteer Management Framework ensures that each volunteer role has clearly defined duties, assisted by the Volunteer Coordinator to determine roles that are tuned to their capabilities. A wide range of flexible opportunities and meaningful roles are on offer, including ongoing training and support, for all people including those living with disability. The environmental volunteer program for bush regeneration works very closely with Bushlink, a non-government organisation employing young people with intellectual disabilities.

The volunteer programs through Bushcare, community nurseries and the Coastal Environment Centre are all-inclusive, providing sustainable and social outcomes to all participants.

We are also developing more inclusive and flexible employment practices for the Council workforce. Our 'Working Remotely Toolkit' launched in 2020 assists in overcoming some of the access barriers to our facilities. It provides for tailored, flexible working arrangements. Council is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workforce that is representative of the community in which we live. We ensure that every stage of our recruitment and selection process is fair, transparent and based on merit.

For wider employment across the region, our Local Strategic Planning Statement adopted in 2020 is guiding the development of commercial centres, and includes specific actions for access and inclusion to help increase local employment opportunities.

Focus Area 4: Improve access to Council services through better systems and processes

Ongoing reviews and accessibility training have improved our online information, forms and booking systems for consistency, readability and ease of use. All new Council documents placed online meet online accessibility standards for visual content and readability, including the use of a range of formats. Media such as video is developed with audio descriptors, transcripts and closed captions. Easy-read versions are provided for selected topics and audiences.

Our website is compliant with industry guidelines for web accessibility. We continued to make more information and services available online for all residents, providing greater inclusion for accessing services and keeping informed during major incidents:

- Accessibility map of villages and town centres
- Emergency preparedness map
- Rate payer emergency SMS communication tool e.g. fire, storm or flooding incidents
- Nine more services online to apply and/or pay for
- Online calculators for rates harmonisation and some fees
- More online bookings available
- Library service App and online feedback
- Noise App to record and report noise

Our Library website was improved to enhance user experience and accessibility. A monthly library E-newsletter is sent to all customers, as well as printed copies delivered to Home Library Service customers. Customer Service Centres continue to provide computers for customers' use at the centres, as an alternative to paper forms. Customer Service is also fully accessible 24/7 for assistance by phone call or online requests.

Our Disability Newsletter continues to provide a platform to promote the availability of accessible systems, processes and formats.