

# WENTWORTH SHIRE COUNCIL

DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2022-2026

WENTWORTH  
SHIRE COUNCIL  
WORTH THE DRIVE



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**Wentworth Shire Council would like to  
acknowledge the Traditional Custodians  
of the Land and pay its respects to Elders  
past, present and emerging.**

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# **DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2022-2026**

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## STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT FROM THE MAYOR



I am pleased to present Wentworth Shire Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2026.

Council is committed to providing outstanding services to all members of our community, and I am confident that our 2022-2026 Disability Inclusion Action Plan will allow us to continue to deliver on this commitment. We understand that the basis of a strong community stems from diversity and when a range of viewpoints and individual perspectives are considered and valued.

Council has an important role to play in supporting and promoting access and inclusion and is committed to ensuring that inclusion is considered in all Council business. This includes how Council develops the built environment, provides information and services, supports employment opportunities and promotes positive community attitudes and behaviour toward people with disability.

This Disability Inclusion Plan builds on the work we completed as part of the 2017-2021 Plan, which saw our Council take important steps

towards improving access to services, increasing the liveability of our communities and providing employment opportunities for people with disability.

Evidence of this work can be found throughout our Shire as Council continues to make improvements to access through upgrades to sharedways and footpaths in Buronga, Gol Gol and Dareton. Council continues to focus on ensuring that pedestrian access and mobility is monitored on an annual basis and that improvements, upgrades and new infrastructure cater for the needs of people with disability. In addition, Council is undertaking an audit of Council's websites against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines to ensure that people with disability have greater access to information.

I am proud of what we have achieved so far but there is more work to be done.

Several key actions identified in this Plan include: supporting positive attitudes towards inclusion amongst Council staff; assessing existing infrastructure compliance with Australian standards for access and mobility; encouraging, supporting and promoting accessible businesses and tourism in the Wentworth Region; ensuring people with disability have greater access to information via Council websites; and implementing recruitment and employment policies that reflect best practice with regards to encouraging and supporting the employment of people with disability.

With this Plan, and working alongside other governmental agencies, industry leaders and our community, Council will continue to advocate and act to make our Shire a welcoming and inclusive place for all our residents and visitors to enjoy.

**Cr Tim Elstone**  
**Mayor**





## INTRODUCTION

### About this Plan

We want to make sure that people with disability, their families and carers are included in Wentworth Shire and that our community is more accessible. In writing our Disability Inclusion Action Plan we have asked the community about the barriers that people with disability face in the Shire and their ideas for improvement. The Plan explains the actions we will take to improve the lives of people with disability in our community.

### Overview of Plan

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)* (DIA) (the Act) is the legislative foundation for Local Government disability inclusion and access planning. The Act supports the Government's commitment to improving lives of people with disability and reaffirms NSW's direction on building an inclusive community. In 2014, the Act required all NSW Local Government Areas to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan in consultation with people with disability. This Plan outlines Wentworth Shire Council's commitment to people with a disability to

improve access to services, facilities and employment. It is also designed to change perceptions about people with disability and to create a more inclusive community for everyone.

## WHY INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT

Personal choice and control are only possible when communities are inclusive for all people with disability, including those with physical, intellectual, cognitive, sensory disabilities and those with mental health conditions. Real diversity cannot be realised unless people with disability are provided with the opportunities inherent in truly inclusive communities.

In addition to the human rights imperative, the case for an inclusive community is strong:

- inclusion improves opportunities for participation in the local economy, with the potential to increase economic activity within the Shire;
- providing physical access to businesses benefit not only people with disability, but



older people, parents with prams and business owners by expanding their business reach;

- exclusion leads to disadvantage and discrimination, which have far reaching negative impacts across all aspects of life, including health, welfare, education and employment.

These impact are felt beyond the individual, with families and the broader community being negatively impacted by a non-inclusive community.

Wentworth Shire Council strives to make the Wentworth region an accessible and inclusive community providing a place for everyone to be able to live, work and visit.

Council has a key role in promoting and supporting access and inclusion in all areas of Council business. This includes how Council develops the built environment, the provision of information and services, supporting employment opportunities and promoting positive community attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability.

The removal of barriers for people with disability supports the inclusion of members of the local community who may otherwise fall outside of identified definitions of disadvantage.

Wentworth Shire Council is working towards creating a region that is accessible and inclusive of everyone and provides equal opportunity for people with disability to enjoy what our region has to offer. Almost 90% of disabilities are 'invisible' disabilities, the invisibility of disability highlights the critical need to ensure that not only access but inclusion was considered when developing this plan.

Negative attitudes, physical barriers and difficulties accessing necessary supports still limit the opportunities of people with disability to find work, study, socialise and be included in community life.

To create liveable communities, we need to focus our attention and resources on the elements of community life that most people desire. To create liveable communities for people with disability, we must do more than

modify the physical environment; we must advocate for such aspects such as accessible housing, access to transport, community recreation, social engagement and universal design.

It is imperative that we respect people with disability in relation to their lived experience, empower them to influence their life direction, and encourage them to fully participate so we can identify barriers and propose solutions.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan has been developed in recognition of Council's responsibility to remove barriers and ensure that people with disability are able to participate equally in their community.

The Plan sets out the strategies and actions that Council will deliver to enable people with disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities. Council is committed to the attraction, recruitment and retention of people with disability.

The Plan has been based on the following principles enshrined in the Act:

- People with disability have the same
- inherent rights to respect for their worth and dignity as individuals.
- People with disability have the right to participate in and contribute to social and economic life and should be supported to do so.
- People with disability have the right to realise their capacities and potential and to contribute these to the community.
- People with disability have the same rights as other members of the community to be consulted about decisions that affect their lives.
- People with disability have the right to access information in a way that is appropriate for their disability and enables them to make informed choices.
- The needs of children with disability as they mature, and their rights as equal members of the community are to be respected.

The role that Council will play will vary for each of the focus areas. Although being facilitated by Council, the vision for inclusion is intended for the community and key stakeholders, and is not just focused on all activities internal to Council. Whilst Council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and implementing the Plan, other partners, such as State Agencies, community groups and businesses may also be engaged in delivery the long-term objectives of the Plan.

## DEFINITIONS

### INCLUSION

Inclusion is the process whereby every person (irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference or ethnicity) who wishes to can access and participate fully in all aspects of an activity or service in the same way as any other member of the community. Inclusion requires time, space, effort and resources, but it creates a society which is fairer, more cohesive and richer.

### DISABILITY

The definition of disability applied in this document includes both definitions provided by the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)* defines disability as including a: long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others.

The *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992 (Cth)* defines disability as:

- The total or partial loss of the person's body or mental functions;
- The total or partial loss of a part of the body;
- The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness;
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body;

and

- A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction.

### DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Disability discrimination occurs when people with disability are treated less favourably than people without disability. Disability discrimination can be direct or indirect.

The DDA provides legal protection against discrimination based on disability.

## FOCUS AREAS

The Plan has been divided into four Focus Areas where significant barriers to access and inclusion will be addressed.

These are:

#### 1. Attitudes and Behaviours

"Build community awareness of the rights and abilities of people with a disability, and to support the development of positive attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability.

#### 2. Liveable Communities

"Increase participation of people with disability in all aspects of community life, through targeted approaches to address barriers in housing, learning, transport, health and wellbeing."

#### 3. Improving access to mainstream services

"Ensure that people with disability are able to easily and efficiently access mainstream government services and other opportunities in the community."

#### 4. Supporting access to meaningful employment

"Increase the number of people with disability in meaningful employment, thereby enabling people with disability to plan for their future and exercise choice and control as a result of economic security."







## STRATEGIC AND POLICY CONTEXT

The Plan links to Council's Community Strategic Plan as follows:

### **Our Community**

Council will improve the accessibility of services and programs in Council and encourage inclusive social and recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of all.

### **Our Economy**

The Plan will support the Wentworth Region to stimulate the local economy by assisting to develop more inclusive businesses, tourism, accommodation, events and activities.

### **Our Environment**

Council will work to ensure that our buildings, facilities and services are accessible and inclusive for all people.

### **Our Leadership**

Council will champion the development of positive attitudes and behaviours; the engagement of people with disability in decision making; and support and promote increased inclusion in events, buildings and activities in the Wentworth region.

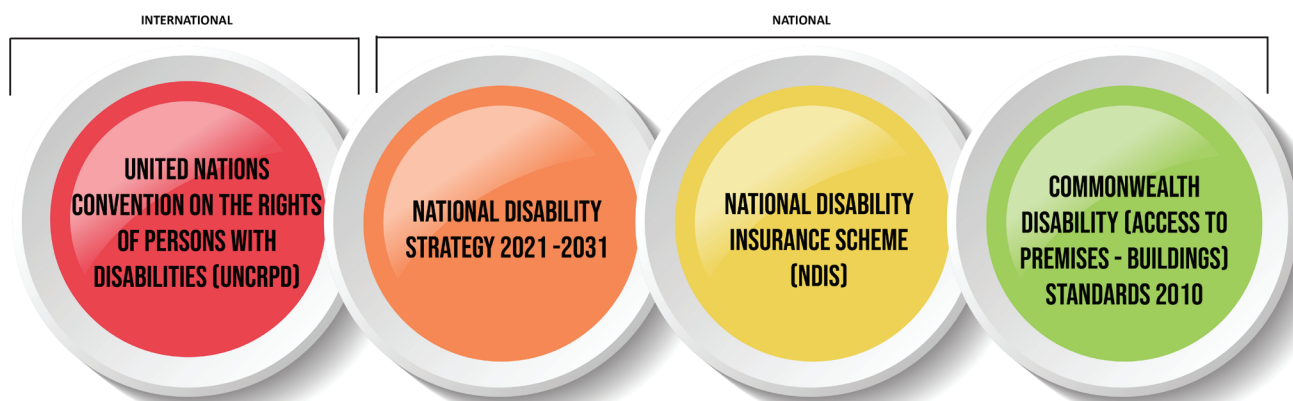
The policy context for the DIAP is one in which all levels of government in Australia are working in concert to ensure the rights of people with disability are actively promoted and upheld. Legislation in place ensures people with disability are consulted about how, together, we can make practical changes to how services are delivered so that they can be accessed equally by all Australians.

The Plan also builds on existing social equity requirements within the IP&R framework to strengthen Council's commitment to inclusion, consultation and rights for people with disability.





# LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGIC LINKS



In 2008, the Australian Government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (Convention). In doing so, Australia has committed to ensuring the articles of the Convention are reflected in policy so that the human rights of persons with disabilities can be effectively exercised, and not exist only on paper.

**Some key areas of the Convention that is relevant to this DIAP include:**

- Access to community life, including cultural events and other sites of cultural importance.
- Raising awareness for, and actively upholding, the rights of people with disability.
- Making sure people with disability have access to the physical environment as well as access to information and communication.
- Ensuring work environments are inclusive and accessible.
- Providing opportunities for people with disability to vote and to be representatives in all levels of government.

*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* is Australia's national disability policy framework. It sets out a plan for continuing to improve the lives of people with disability in Australia over the next ten years. The Strategy builds on the significant work of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 to establish a national approach to improving the lives of people with disability. At its heart is a commitment to create an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. The new Strategy is an aspirational road map pointing the way ahead. It represents our national commitment to enabling every Australian to meet their potential, to achieve, to have a fair go, and to have real choices.

**The purpose of the Strategy is to:**

- Provide national leadership towards greater inclusion of people with disability;
- Guide activity across all areas of public policy to be inclusive and responsive to people with disability;
- Drive mainstream services and systems to improve outcomes for people with disability; and
- Engage, inform and involve the whole community in achieving a more inclusive society.

This Strategy places a strong policy focus on housing, safety, employment and community attitudes because extensive consultations and engagement with people with disability and the disability sector shows that they want a National Disability Strategy that is focused on interrelated outcomes with tangible, achievable policy priorities.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a national insurance scheme that supports people with disability to enhance the social and economic independence of people with disability and their carers.

**The NDIS seeks to achieve this by three broad strategies:**

- Providing individualised funding to people with permanent and significant disability so that they can arrange flexible services geared towards achieving the life goals set by the person;
- Funding Local Area Coordinators whose role it is to link individuals with disability (whether or not they have an NDIS package of funding) to community supports; and
- Providing project-based grant funding to agencies in order to progressively make "mainstream" community life more accessible and inclusive.

**Wentworth Shire Council can support the objectives of the NDIS by:**

- Ensuring built environments become progressively more inclusive and accessible;
- Providing access to Council information in a range of formats;
- Ensuring access to Council services are barrier free; and
- Promoting positive community attitudes and behaviour towards people with a disability.

The purpose of the Premises Standards (and corresponding changes to the Building Code of Australia and state and territory building law) is:

- To ensure that dignified, equitable, cost-effective and reasonably achievable access to buildings, facilities and services within buildings, is provided for people with disability; and
- To give certainty to building certifiers, developers and managers that if the Standards are complied with they cannot be subject to a successful complaint under the DDA in relation to those matters covered by the Premises Standards.

STATE

## NSW DISABILITY INCLUSION PLAN 2021-2025

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan provides the framework through which the NSW Government will work towards achieving an inclusive society. It presents the overall statement of intent from the NSW Government and identifies the key focus areas for NSW to remove systemic and attitudinal barriers so that people with disability have a better opportunity to live a meaningful life and enjoy the full benefits of membership in the community.

This Plan provides a whole of Government strategy aligned with the objects and principles of the *NSW Disability Act 2014*.

### This Plan sets goals that:

- Promote the inclusion in the community of people with disability;
- Identify how NSW agencies and local councils will improve access to mainstream services and community facilities for people with disability; and
- Encourage collaboration and coordination across public authorities in the provision of supports and services.

## NSW ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ACT (NSW) 1977

The *Anti-Discrimination Act 1997* is an Act of the NSW Parliament, relating to discrimination in employment, the public education system, delivery of goods and services, and other services such as banking, health care, night clubs and property.

The Act prohibits unlawful racial, sexual and other types of discrimination in certain circumstances, and promotes equality of opportunity for all people.

## NSW DISABILITY INCLUSION ACT (2014)

This strategy sets out Infrastructure NSW's independent advice on the current state of the State's infrastructure and the needs and priorities over the next 20 years.

### The strategy sets six cross-sectional directions:

- Continuously improve the integration of land and infrastructure planning
- Plan, prioritise and deliver an infrastructure program that represents the best possible investment and use of public land
- Optimise the management, performance and use of the State's assets
- Ensure NSW's existing and future infrastructure is resilient to natural hazards and human-related threats
- Improve state-wide connectivity and realise the benefits of technology
- Drive high quality consumer-centric services and expand innovative service delivery models in infrastructure sectors.

## DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT 1992 AND AMENDMENTS 2009 (Cwth)

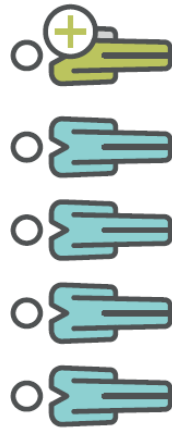
The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)* exists to provide legal protection against discrimination for people with disability (and carers, co-workers or associates of a person with disability). The Act also requires Australian governments to actively guard against discrimination by developing Disability Action Plans.

Council's DIAP has incorporated the requirements of Section 61 of the Act which includes the requirement to:

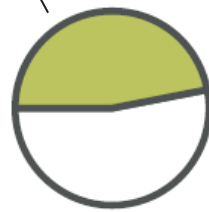
- Review practices with a view to identifying discriminatory practices;
- Set goals and targets to measure the success of the Plan;
- Communicate these to persons within the Council; and
- Appoint persons within the Council to implement the Plan.



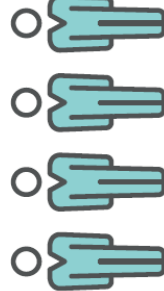
# DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA



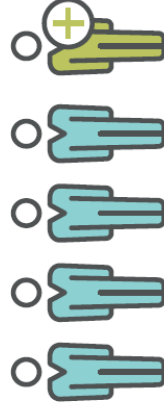
Almost **1 in 5** people in Australia have a disability.<sup>1</sup>



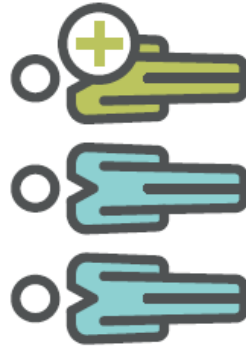
**47%** of Australians have one or more chronic conditions.<sup>2</sup>



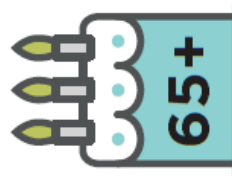
**1 in 9** Australians provide unpaid care for a person with disability or an older person.<sup>3</sup>



**26%** of customers with disability have dissuaded others from using a product or service based on their reputation for disability inclusion and accessibility.<sup>5</sup>



**1 in 5** people with disability were positively influenced by an organisation's reputation as being supportive of people with disability.<sup>5</sup>



The prevalence of disability generally increases with age and more than doubles **after the age of 65.**<sup>4</sup>



In Australia, people with disability have a combined income of around **\$54 million** and rising.<sup>5</sup>



In Australia, the labour force participation rate for people with disability aged 15-64 years is **53.4%**, compared to **84.1%** of people the same age without disability.<sup>6</sup>



**29%** of customers with disability reported that they ceased the completion of a transaction because they were not being treated with respect.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Summary of Findings 2018 (Catalogue No 4430.0, 24 October 2019).
- 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2020, Chronic conditions and multimorbidity, viewed 15 March 2021, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/chronic-conditions-and-multimorbidity>
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Summary of Findings 2018 (Catalogue No 4430.0, 24 October 2019).
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Summary of Findings 2018 (Catalogue No 4430.0, 24 October 2019).
- 5 Australian Human Rights Commission 2017, Missing out: The business case for customer diversity, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/publications/missing-out-business-customer-diversity-2017>.
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2018 (Catalogue No. 4430.0, 24 October 2019).

## ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

### We Asked

For feedback to assist in developing this Plan, particularly focussing on four key themes:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to services through better systems and processes.

### You Connected

- Online survey completed
- 6 Consultation meetings

### You Said

'Employ more staff who are used to people with disability'

'Provide more information on services that Council provides and what activities and places are accessible to people with disability'

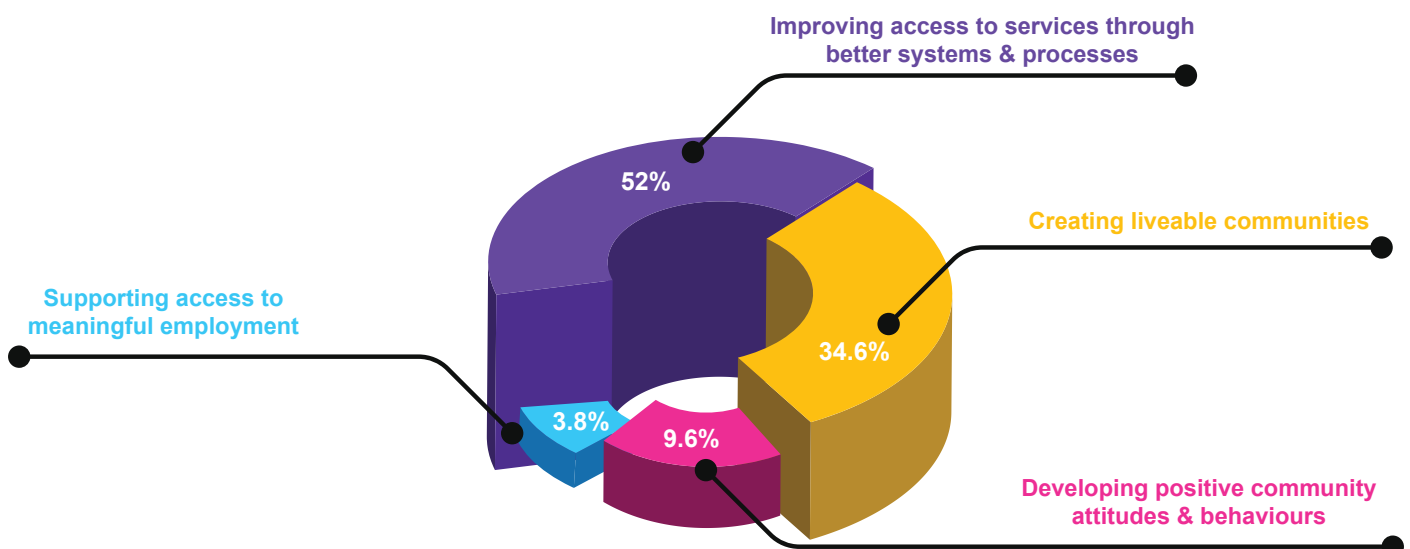
'A more disability-friendly community space in each town'

'A designated quiet shopping time for people with autism'

'More accessible footpaths and ramps to make it easier to get around'

'Incorporate more people with disability in advertising and on Council staff'

### Responses





## THE PLAN

Council's commitment is to create greater opportunities for people of all ages, all cultures, and of differing abilities, to access the full range of services and activities available in the local community.

### Attitudes and Behaviours

People with disability experience positive attitudes and respectful behaviour from Council staff and express the view that Council encourages these positive attitudes and behaviours within the broader community.

- Support positive attitudes towards inclusion amongst Council staff
- Contribute positive media stories about what Council is doing to build inclusion with people with disability.

### Liveable Communities

People with disability, their families and supporters have greater access to community places, buildings and events.

- Assess existing infrastructure compliance with Australian standards for access and mobility.
- Plan to progressively improve the accessibility of public toilets.
- Increase accessibility and inclusion of events held in the Wentworth Region.
- Encourage, support and promote accessible businesses and tourism in the Wentworth Region.

### Improving access to mainstream services

People with disability can more easily and efficiently access Council services and are engaged in the decision making of Council.

- People with disability have greater access to information via Council website.
- Improve communication and information processes.

- Update Customer Service Charter to provide guidance to staff in how to make information more accessible.
- Council services can be accessed more independently by people with disability.

### Supporting access to meaningful employment

People with disability have greater access to employment opportunities with Council.

- Council has recruitment and employment policies that reflect best practice with regards to encouraging and supporting the employment of people with disability.

## KEY OUTCOME AREAS AND ACTIONS

### Attitudes and Behaviours

People with a disability experience positive attitudes and respectful behaviour from Council staff and express the view that Council encourages these positive attitudes and behaviours within the broader community.

#### Community Outcome

The attitude and behaviours of the general community toward people with disability can be the greatest barrier to full access and inclusion. Community attitudes can further be influenced by the intersection of the particular characteristics of a person with disability, such as gender, age, ethnicity, or type of disability itself.

Council will work to build community awareness of the rights and capabilities of people with disability, and support the development of positive attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability.

Outcome	Actions
<b>Support positive attitudes towards inclusion amongst Council staff</b>	Update Annual Training Plan to include disability awareness training to existing staff
	Update Induction process to encompass the topic of inclusion of people with disability
	Incorporate disability awareness and person-centred communication in the Customer Service Charter.
	Provide regular media stories on the progress of the implementation of the DIAP.
<b>Contribute positive media stories about what Council is doing to build inclusion with people with a disability.</b>	Include pictures of people with disability in mainstream Council publications and in promotion of mainstream events, not just for disability specific areas
	Support disability awareness campaigns by displaying promotional posters in Council facilities and in Council media and publications.





## **Liveable Communities**

People with disability, their families and supporters have greater access to community places, buildings and events.

### **Community Outcome**

Inclusiveness and accessibility for people with disability forms a crucial component of the assessment of the liveability of any community. Council will work to eliminate the barriers in the built environment and advocate for improved transport, housing and local supports that prevent people with disability from fully engaging with the opportunities that exist within their communities.

Outcome	Actions
<b>Assess existing infrastructure compliance with Australian standards for access and mobility.</b>	Undertake audits of Councils buildings and footpaths to ensure that they meet the demand of those with disability.
	Ensure the provision of at least one footpath in each urban road reserve.
	Review and Update Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan priorities and assessments including the priority list for maintenance or upgrade of PAMP related infrastructure in consultation with people with mobility and vision related disabilities.
	Document the accessibility features of Council parks, sporting fields and playgrounds and include these on all relevant websites.
<b>Plan to progressively improve the accessibility of public toilets.</b>	Council public toilets are increasingly modified or replaced in line with priorities identified via sector consultation process.
	Current and accurate information on the location of Council accessible toilets is made available to residents and visitors.
	People with disability are directly consulted about the priorities for enhancement of Council public toilets.
	Council staff responsible for events are supported to ensure all community recreation, cultural and social programs and events are as inclusive and accessible as possible.
<b>Increase accessibility and inclusion of events held in the Wentworth Region</b>	Access by people with disability attending meetings held at Council is specifically addressed and catered for.
	Council Events manual to include guidance material on how event organisers can make events more accessible.
	Business and tourist attractions in the Wentworth Region have a greater awareness of the economic benefits of developing accessible and ageing friendly places and activities
<b>Encourage, support and promote accessible businesses and tourism in the Wentworth Region.</b>	





### **Improving access to mainstream services**

People with disability can more easily and efficiently access Council services and are engaged in the decision making of Council.

#### **Community Outcome**

A common issue for people with disability is the difficulty in navigating the systems and processes required to access the services and supports they need in the community. These difficulties are the product of a number of barriers including a lack of accessible information, inflexible processes, and limited opportunities for feedback and input.

Council will work to ensure that people with disability can make informed choices about available services and will advocate for other community and business organisations to review and change the way they do business to ensure people with disability can have equal access to information and services.

Outcome	Actions
<b>People with disability have greater access to information via Council website.</b>	Undertake an audit of Council's websites against WCAG 2.0 standards.
	Develop guidelines and/or checklists for staff who author web accessible documents
<b>Improve communication and information processes.</b>	Ensure all service information is available in a range of formats to support different needs and capabilities.
<b>Update Customer Service Charter to provide guidance to staff in how to make information more accessible.</b>	Customer Service training and processes incorporate the topic of disability awareness and person-centred communication.
<b>Council services can be accessed more independently by people with disability.</b>	Progressively review the procedures supporting access to all Council services and processes to ensure improved access.
	Ensure Council led community consultation events are held in accessible venues and a range of formats are used that considers the needs of people with disability.



## Supporting access to meaningful employment

People with disability have greater access to employment opportunities with Council.

### Community Outcome

Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than those without disability across all sectors. Participation in meaningful employment is vital if people with disability are to attain economic security, retain a sense of purpose and engage effectively with others in our community.

Council will aim to advocate for an increase in the number of people with disability in meaningful employment, thereby enabling people with disability to plan for their future, exercise choice and control, and increase their economic security.

Outcome	Actions
<b>Council has recruitment and employment policies that reflect best practice with regards to encouraging and supporting the employment of people with a disability</b>	Review Council's recruitment and employment processes to ensure they provide fair and barrier free opportunities to candidates who have a disability
	Keep inclusion front of mind when designing workforce management processes and practices
	Actively develop a respectful and welcoming work culture that is inclusive and disability conscious.





## MONITORING AND EVALUATING

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be forwarded to the Disability Council NSW. Monitoring and evaluation of strategies is to occur on an annual basis. Council will report on the DIAP action items as part of its Annual Report. The report will be available in a range of formats through Council's website and Administration Office.

Wentworth Shire Council will commit to implementing and monitoring the Actions within the Plan over the next four years. We look forward to working with the community to ensure that the Actions within the Plan are implemented to a high standard and to the benefit of all.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be reviewed and updated in 2026.

**WENTWORTH  
SHIRE COUNCIL**

**Our values: Honesty and Integrity | Accountability and Transparency | Respect | Quality | Commitment**