



Gunnedah
Shire Council

DRAFT

EASY READ VERSION

**Gunnedah Shire
DisABILITY
INCLUSION
ACTION PLAN
2024-2028**

Enhancing Access: Cultivating Inclusion





Acknowledgement of Country

In presenting this document to the community, Gunnedah Shire Council acknowledges the Kamilaroi Aboriginal Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work. Council pays its respect to all Elders past, present and emerging.

About

Council is committed to providing its documents in a range of formats. This 'Easy Read' Plan is a shorter version of the more detailed Gunnedah Shire Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2028. If you would like to look at the bigger more detailed Plan, check out our website www.infogunnedah.com.au

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Message from Our Mayor and General Manager

Gunnedah Shire Council is committed to helping build a community that is caring and inclusive. The Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2028 *Enhancing Access: Cultivating Inclusion* (DIAP) is a document that embeds that commitment as part of our everyday business.

The DIAP has been developed in consultation with community stakeholders including the Gunnedah Access Working Group, and is an important step in our aim to become Access Champions.

Our role as an Access Champion is part of our vision for an inclusive community, in which we are recognised as both an advocate and a champion for the rights of people of all abilities in the Gunnedah Shire.

People with disability are an intrinsic part of our community. They contribute in so many ways – as leaders, as volunteers, as business people, as part of our organisations, as artists, as friends, and as family. It is vitally important that we identify and prioritise actions that further access and participation for everyone, and ensure all of our residents are treated equally and respectfully.

Our DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2028 is complemented by the actions within the Gunnedah Shire Community Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and associated performance measures embedded in our Operational and Delivery Plans.

Everyone deserves to enjoy the benefits of full participation in a caring, proud, prosperous and inclusive community. This document is our four-year path to achieving these aims.



Jamie Chaffey
Gunnedah Shire Mayor



Eric Groth
General Manager



Our Statment of Commitment

Gunnedah Shire Council recognises that people with disability are valued members of our community. We are committed to fostering a community in which people with disability and their carers live with optimum quality of life, independence and participation, and where the equal participation, access, rights and equity principles of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 are respected.

Our Vision for an Inclusive Community

To be recognised as both an advocate and champion for the rights of people of all abilities in our community ensuring all of our residents are treated equally and respectfully and have opportunities to enjoy the benefits of full participation in a caring, proud, prosperous and inclusive community.

What We Will Do to Achieve Our Vision

- Deliver an organisational culture which fosters fairness and equity and strives for continual improvement in the provision of its works and services for all its residents and visitors, including those with disability
- Promote, advocate and champion the equal rights and participation of people with disability in the Shire
- Enhance our amenities and infrastructure to support best practice Principles of Universal Design
- Engage people with disability and their carers to support a continuous improvement and best practice approach to access
- Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council's resources, services, events and facilities
- Create meaningful opportunities for people with disability to obtain and maintain meaningful employment within Council and the community
- Identify and provide opportunities for our staff to access and complete training that increases their capacity to deliver a level of customer service that acknowledges the diversity of our Shire's residents
- Foster a person-centred approach to feedback and complaint-handling across our service areas



What We Know About Disability Nationally

- 1 in 6 Australians are estimated to have disability, or about 4.4 million people
- A person with disability earns half of what a person without disability
- Only half of people with disability are in the workforce
- A person with disability can face challenges accessing and participating in community life
- It not uncommon for many people with disability to experience social and economic isolation
- Rates of reported discrimination are similar for men (8.3%) and women (8.9%)
- 1 in 6 Australians experience social isolation due to disability
- 1 in 3 (32%) people with disability have severe or profound disability (about 1.4 million)
- 2 in 3 people with disability aged <65 saw a medical specialist in the last year
- 96% of people with disability live in private dwellings
- About 519,000 people with disability are active NDIS participants with approved plans
- 9 in 10 school-age children with disability go to school
- 1 in 10 people (15+) with disability experienced disability discrimination in the last year
- 53% of people (15-64) with disability are participating in the labour force



Why Do We Need a Plan?

In 2008, the Australian Government committed to implementing The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which recognised that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability. As a result all layers of government undertook to:

“promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”.

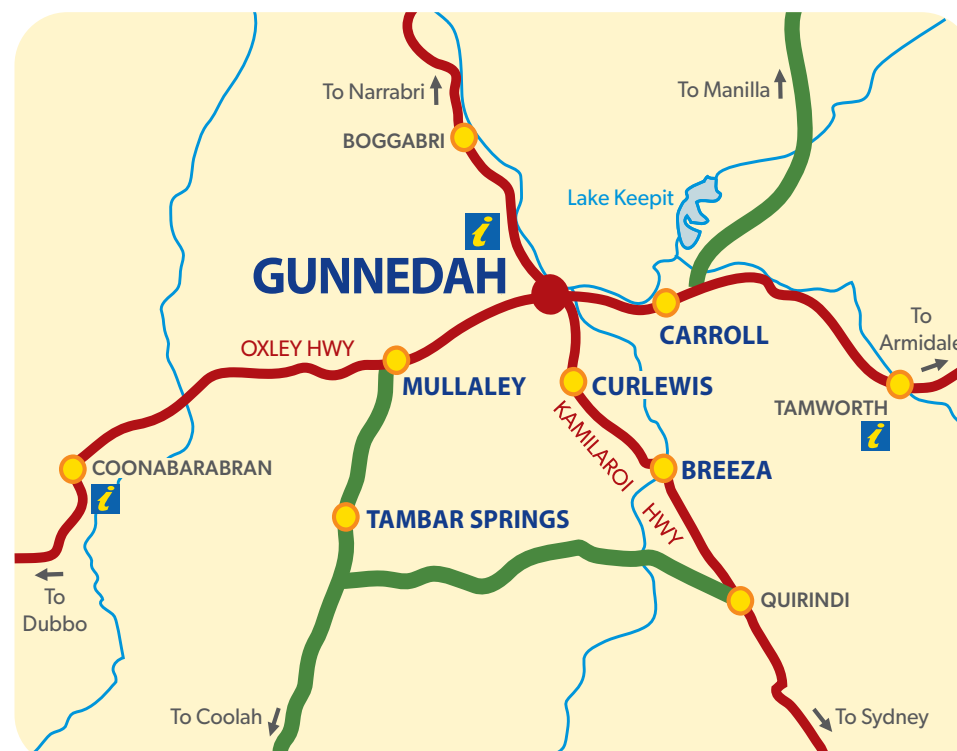
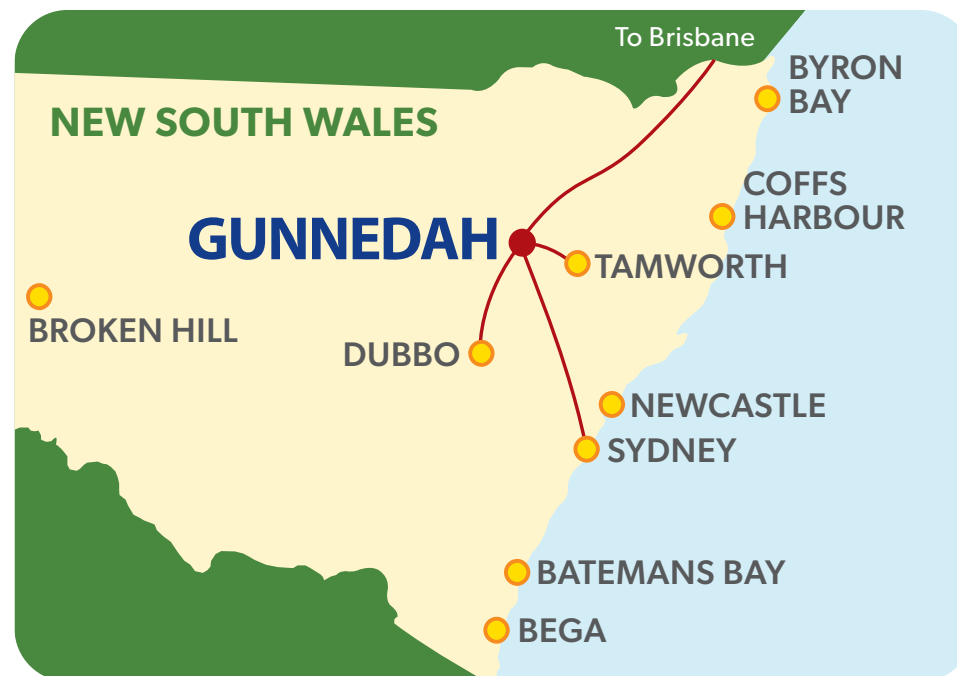
About Our Plan

The Plan is effective 01 July 2024 to 30 June 2028 and addresses four (4) key focus areas:

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

About Our Shire

- Population of roughly 12,989
- Located in the Northern Inland Region of NSW
- Covers an area of 5,001 square kilometres
- Roughly 450 kilometres from Sydney, 655 kilometres from Brisbane and just over 1,000 kilometres from Melbourne
- 24 rural localities and 7 small villages – Breeza, Carroll, Curlewis, Emerald Hill, Kelvin, Mullaley and Tambar Springs
- 80% of our Shires population live in Gunnedah
- Indigenous population of over 15.6%
- 85.6% of residents were born in Australia
- Average resident age of 40 years
- 1 in 5 members of our community reported havign a disability
- 499 NSW Mobility Parking Scheme Permits issued in Gunnedah as at 28 March 2024



Our Council

- 171 full time equivalent staff
- The majority of our workforce resides in our Shire
- 9.39% of Council's employees identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in comparison to an average of 6.98% across other rural Councils in NSW.
- Culturally and linguistically diverse employees increased from .5% to 2.2% with 2.76% indicating English as a second language.
- 6.63% of our workforce has also indicated a need for additional literacy support.
- In 2017, 5 employees (2.93%) identified as having a disability or mobility issue.



Where Council Staff are Located

Council operates from a range of locations, including:

- Council Administration Building, 63 Elgin Street, Gunnedah
- Visitor Information Centre, 80 Chandos Street, Gunnedah
- The Civic Theatre and Bicentennial Creative Arts Gallery, 80 Chandos Street, Gunnedah
- Town Hall, Corner Conadilly and Chandos Streets, Gunnedah
- Smithurst Theatre, Conadilly Street, Gunnedah
- Shire Library, 291 Conadilly Street, Gunnedah
- Shire Depot, Bennett Road, Gunnedah
- Animal Impound Facility, Quia Road, Gunnedah
- Waste Management Facility, Quia Road, Gunnedah
- GoCo Community Care, 80 Marquis Street, Gunnedah
- Sewage Treatment Plant, Kamilaroi Highway, Gunnedah
- Saleyards, Kamilaroi Highway, Gunnedah

What We Heard You Say - A Snapshot

Feedback from our community, staff and Councillors indicated strong satisfaction across all 4 focus areas. There was support for the way in which Council interacted and engaged with people with disability.

Our staff consulted with over 330 people within the Shire in order to develop this Plan.

You Asked Us to Consider

- Getting into local shops and businesses
- Physical access to venues and facilities, in particular parking and passenger set down zones and the width of doorways
- Gradients of footpaths and pram ramps
- Pedestrian crossings and user safety
- Maintenance of public walkways and pathways to enhance safety and visibility
- The width, design and connectivity of pathways
- Accessibility- friendly signage and tactile indicators
- Accessible parking spaces
- Cinema seating options for people with disability
- Access to the 2nd floor of the Council Administration Building
- Interpretive signage, sign language, interpreting and assistive technologies such as audio induction loops, captioning and audio-description services
- Access to the GoCo Community Care building
- Access to front of house and backstage areas in halls within the Cultural Precinct
- All abilities play equipment and recreational spaces
- Accessible and inclusive tourism
- Customer service sensitivity
- Access to traineeships and long-term employment opportunities
- Emergency and disaster-focussed strategies



You Recognised:



The Gunnedah Shire is a great place to live and raise a family, and that the community is a caring one



The significant contribution that people with disability make to the diverse and vibrant fabric of our community



A wide variety of services in our community already contribute to enhancing access for all

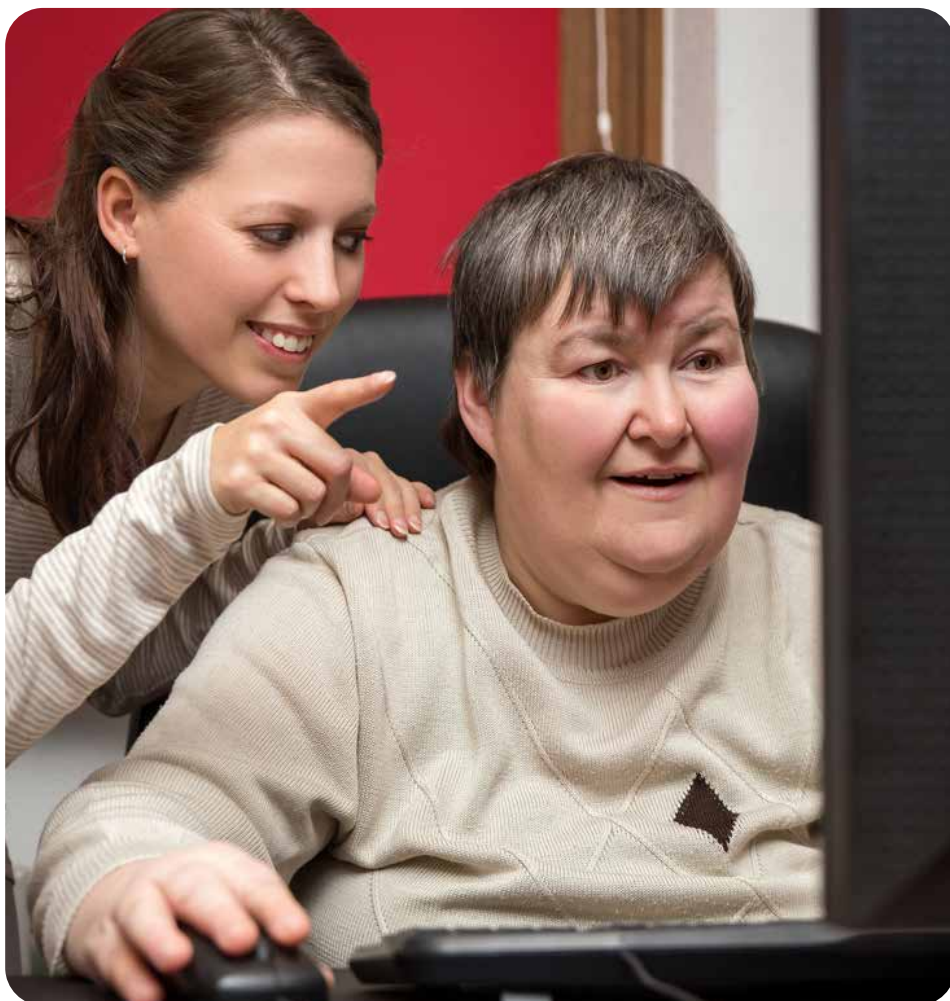


There is a shared will in our community for our Shire to be welcoming and inclusive for people of all abilities



The ongoing potential for Gunnedah Shire Council to become a champion and advocate for access and inclusion, not only in our Shire but at a regional level





You Reminded Us:



Attitudes to people with disability should not be determined by fear or ignorance



That embedding access and inclusion into the mindset of Council staff will be key to delivering on the actions within the Plan



That there is no 'one size fits all' for creating inclusive communities and that a person-centred approach is important



That disability is not solely around catering for wheelchair access



Of the need for further infrastructure enhancements to make it easier for people with disability to move around the Shire and to access events, activities and community life



That being 'code compliant' doesn't guarantee a good access outcome



Of the need for Council to collaborate with, and provide incentives to the local business sector and the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to enhance access and participation opportunities within the Gunnedah Central Business District



That access to designated parking and non-compliance is an important and ongoing issue for people with disability



That employment opportunities for people with disability in our Shire are limited, and focussed effort on increasing access to long-term employment, traineeships, work experience and volunteering opportunities is a must



That a collective effort is required to raise awareness within the community of the access issues faced by people with disability and their carers



That providing opportunities for people with lived experience of disability to have input when Council is considering accessibility equipment in public places and space will contribute to more informed decision making and better outcomes for all



That to attract visitors to our Shire, we must actively work to ensure our amenities cater for a broad demographic



The consideration of people with disability during disaster-related events requires attention, effort, action and innovation

Making Our Plan Happen

Focus Area	Objective
1: Attitudes and Behaviours	1.1. Take a leadership role in the promotion of diversity and inclusion principles within our community
2: Community Liveability	2.1. Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council’s resources, services, events and facilities 2.2. Enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of parks, playgrounds, sporting fields, poetry and riverine precincts through the Principles of Universal Design and infrastructure enhancements 2.3. Enhance opportunities for residents and visitors of all abilities to access the Gunnedah CBD Shopping Precinct through its planning obligations and with the delivery of ongoing education and awareness activities 2.4. Increase and enhance visitor experience through the promotion of our Shire as a welcoming, inclusive community 2.5. Work to ensure safety and emergency management processes address needs of vulnerable community members and people with disability
3: Employment	3.1. Enhance inclusive volunteer, work experience and long-term paid opportunities for people with disability 3.2. Provide diversity focussed professional development training and learning opportunities to ensure managers and staff remain aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding access and inclusion
4: Systems and Processes	4.1. Deliver Council communications that are accessible to all 4.2. Support Council staff and other stakeholders to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to engage effectively with people with disability

Thank You

Council would like to thank the community for their involvement in the development of the Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2028.



Gunnedah Shire **DisABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2024-2028**

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