



Gunnedah
Shire Council

DRAFT

**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.

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Contents

Message from Our Mayor and General Manager	5	03 Our Community	18
Gunnedah Shire Council Statement of Commitment	6	What Does Our Community Look Like?.....	18
What is Disability?	7	Our Council.....	19
What is a Disability Inclusion Action Plan?	7	Our Demographic and Diversity Profile.....	20
01 Our Guiding Principles - Enhancing Access: Cultivating Inclusion ..	8	Our Key Achievements.....	22
Australia’s National Disability Strategy 2021 -2031.....	8	Key Practices which Support Access and Inclusion.....	30
Our Organisational Values	8	04 What We Heard You Say - A Snapshot	32
Our Vision for an Inclusive Community.....	9	Our Scorecard Overall.....	38
Our Actions to Achieve This Vision.....	9	05 Our Actions	38
02 Our Legislative, Policy and Strategic Context	10	Focus Area 1: Attitudes and Behaviours.....	42
Federal Government.....	11	Focus Area 2: Community Liveability.....	45
NSW Government.....	11	Focus Area 3: Employment.....	50
Local Government.....	11	Focus Area 4: Systems and Processes.....	52
Access Standards.....	11	06 Implementing the Plan and Monitoring our Progress ...	54
Defining Disability.....	12	07 Appendices	56
Defining Discrimination.....	13	Appendix 1: Disability Inclusion Action Plan Checklist....	56
A Profile of People Living with Disability in Australia.....	14	Appendix 2: Acronymns.....	57
Sex and Age.....	15	Appendix 3: Acknowledgments.....	58
NSW Local Government Integrated Planning Framework.....	16		



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

Gunnedah Shire Council Statement of Commitment

This Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2024-2028 works to address the ongoing needs for our local community by:

- Advocating equal rights for all
- Progressing positive community attitudes and behaviours
- Creating liveable communities by providing a range of facilities, services and events that make our Shire a great place for people to live, work and play
- Supporting access to meaningful employment, education and professional development opportunities
- Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes
- Collaborating with business partners, service providers and community groups
- Strategic planning to meet the changing needs and expectations of its growing community
- Monitoring compliance to legislation

Gunnedah Shire Council recognises that people with disability are valued members of our community and 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.



What is Disability?

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA) defines disability as:

‘The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

The DIA provides the legislative foundation for Local Government disability inclusion and access planning. The DIA supports the Government’s commitment to improving the lives of people with disability and also reaffirms NSW’s direction on building an inclusive community.

What is a Disability Inclusion Action Plan?

In 2014, the DIA mandated all NSW government agencies and local councils to develop Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs) every four years in consultation with people with disability. These plans were to outline the measures put in place so that people with disability can access general supports and services available in the community and can participate fully in the community.

A Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) outlines the practical steps put in place by an organisation to break down barriers for people with disability and promote access to services, information, employment, and the rights of people with disability.

There are four key focus areas required for all DIAPs:

1. To foster positive community attitudes and behaviours.
2. Increase the liveability of our communities.
3. Support access to meaningful employment for people with disability.
4. Improve access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

01

Our Guiding Principles - Enhancing Access: Cultivating Inclusion

Australia's National Disability Strategy 2021 -2031

"People with disability want the same things as everyone else, whether that is forming personal relationships, having a family, taking part in continuous learning or enjoying retirement. Young people with disability have the same aspiration to grow up, get a job and leave home as other young people – and they deserve the same opportunity."

Our Organisational Values

Community Spirit

We have welcoming towns, villages and rural areas working in partnership to share the good times and bad, looking out for and supporting one another. We genuinely care.

Environmental Care

We embrace preservation of our heritage, our natural resources and our social fabric to achieve sustainability.

Lifestyle Access

We enjoy access to services and facilities in Gunnedah yet benefit from the peace, tranquillity, safety, security, beauty and friendliness of our rural community.

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.

Our Actions to Achieve This Vision

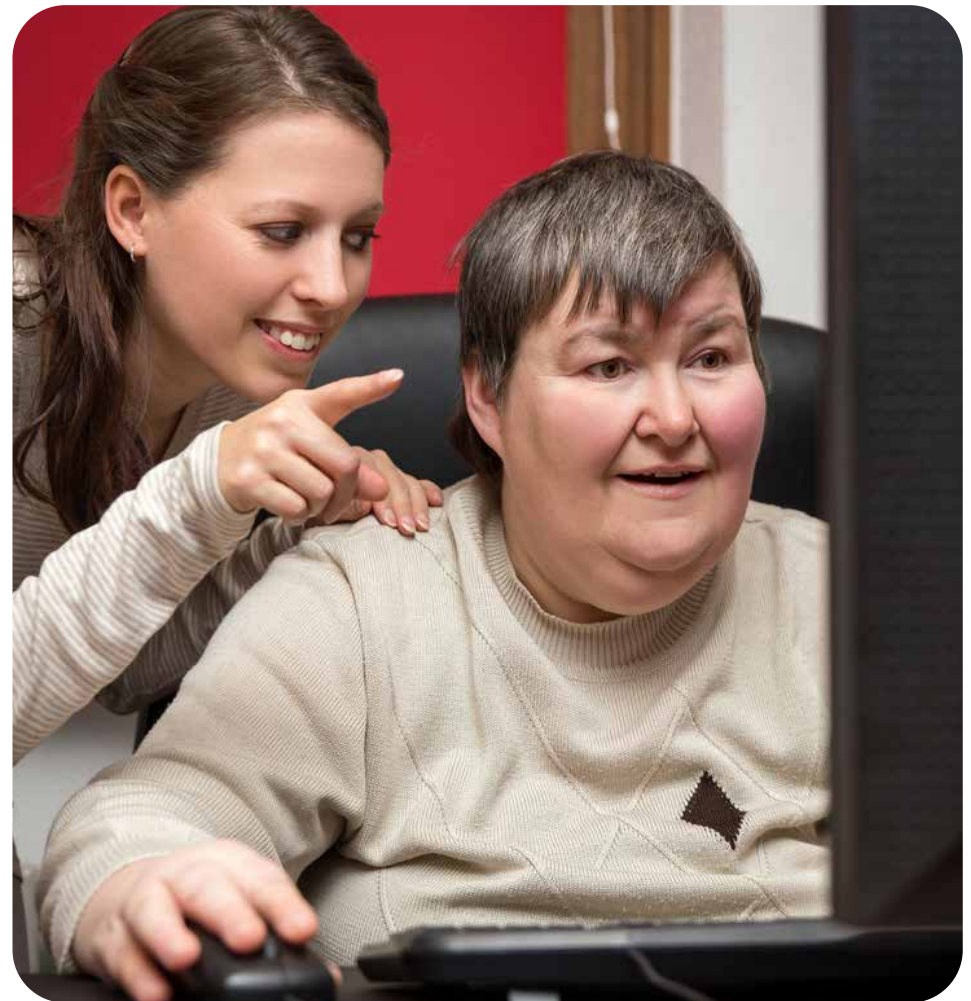
- Deliver an organisational culture which fosters fairness and equity and strives for continual improvement in the provision of its works and services for all its residents and visitors, including those with disability;
- Promote, advocate and champion the equal rights and participation of people with 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; and
- Foster a person-centred approach to feedback and complaint-handling across our service areas.



02 Our Legislative, Policy and Strategic Context

This plan acknowledges and considers the hierarchy of legislation and policy at the international scale and at all levels of Australian government, which provide for and qualify disability as a human rights issue. In 2008, the Australian Government committed to implementing The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which recognised that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability, and committed all layers of government:

“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.”



Federal Government

- National Disability Strategy 2021 – 2031 (NDS)
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013 (NDIS)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

NSW Government

- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA)
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025 (DIP)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- (ADA) Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019

Local Government

- NSW Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005
- Government Sector Employment Act 2013

Access Standards

- AS/NZS 2890.6-2009 Parking facilities Part 6: Off-street parking for people with disabilities
- AS 1428.1-2009 Design for access and mobility Part 1 - General requirements for access to buildings
- AS 1428.2-1992 Design for access and mobility Part 2 - Enhanced and additional requirements - Buildings and facilities
- AS 1428.3-1992 Design for access and mobility - Requirements for children and adolescents with physical disabilities
- AS/NZS 1428.4.1:2009 Design for access and mobility - Means to assist the orientation of people with vision impairment - Tactile ground surface indicators
- AS 1428.5-2010 Design for access and mobility - Communication for people who are deaf or hearing impaired
- Disability (Access to Premises — Buildings) Standards 2010
- Guideline for promoting compliance of bus stops with the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)

Defining Disability

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) defines “disability”, in relation to a person, as:

- a. Total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or
- b. Total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- c. The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- d. The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- e. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or
- f. A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- g. A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour.





Defining Discrimination

The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the grounds of disability in work, accommodation, education, access to premises, clubs and sport; and the provision of goods, facilities, services and land and promote community recognition and acceptance of the equal and fundamental rights of people with disability.

Direct discrimination occurs when a person with disability is treated less favourably because of their disability than another person who does not have a disability where the circumstances are the same or not materially different.

Example: A bus or taxi driver refuses a customer entry because they are accompanied by an Assistance Animal.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a person with disability is required to comply with a requirement that can be complied with by a substantially higher proportion of people without the disability, the requirement is not reasonable in the particular case, and the person with a disability is unable to comply with it. This means that “treating everyone the same” may be discriminatory.

Example: Council holds a community engagement forum in a venue where access is only possible via a set of stairs. As a result, people with disability who use wheelchairs or those who have mobility issues are unable to attend or participate.



A Profile of People Living with Disability in Australia

- 1 in 6 Australians are estimated to have disability, or about 4.4 million people
- 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

Sex and Age

The Australian population is ageing, with 16% of the population aged 65 and over. Half (50%) of people aged 65 and over have disability.

The prevalence of disability generally increases with age. This means the longer people live, the more likely they are to experience some form of disability:

- 7.6% of children aged 0–14 have disability
- 9.3% of people aged 15–24 have disability
- 13% of people aged 15–64 have disability
- 50% of people aged 65 and over have disability (*ABS 2019b*).

Overall, the likelihood of experiencing disability varies by age but does not vary much by sex after childhood:

- 9.5% of males and 5.7% of females aged 0–14 have disability
- 9.2% of males and 9.5% of females aged 15–24 have disability
- 13% of males and females aged 15–64 have disability
- 49% of males and 50% of females aged 65 and over have disability (*ABS 2021b*).



But when looked at by level of disability, differences can be seen among children and people in older age groups:

- 6.0% of males and 3.0% of females aged 0–14 have severe or profound disability
- 3.6% of males and 3.3% of females aged 15–24 have severe or profound disability
- 3.2% of males and females aged 15–64 have severe or profound disability
- 15% of males and 20% of females aged 65 and over have severe or profound disability (*ABS 2021b*).

Source: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia>

NSW Local Government Integrated Planning Framework

NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 provides the legislative framework to guide state and local government disability inclusion and access planning.

The Act supports people with disability to access the same human rights as other members of the community regarding independence, choice and control in the pursuit of their goals, and the planning and delivery of their supports and services.

S.12 (3) of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 requires each local government area to prepare a Disability Inclusion Action Plan and outline the strategies it will adopt to cultivate social and economic inclusion in their community.

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

Figure 1: Demonstrates the relationships between the relevant policy and legislative instruments that inform the development of local government disability access and inclusion planning.

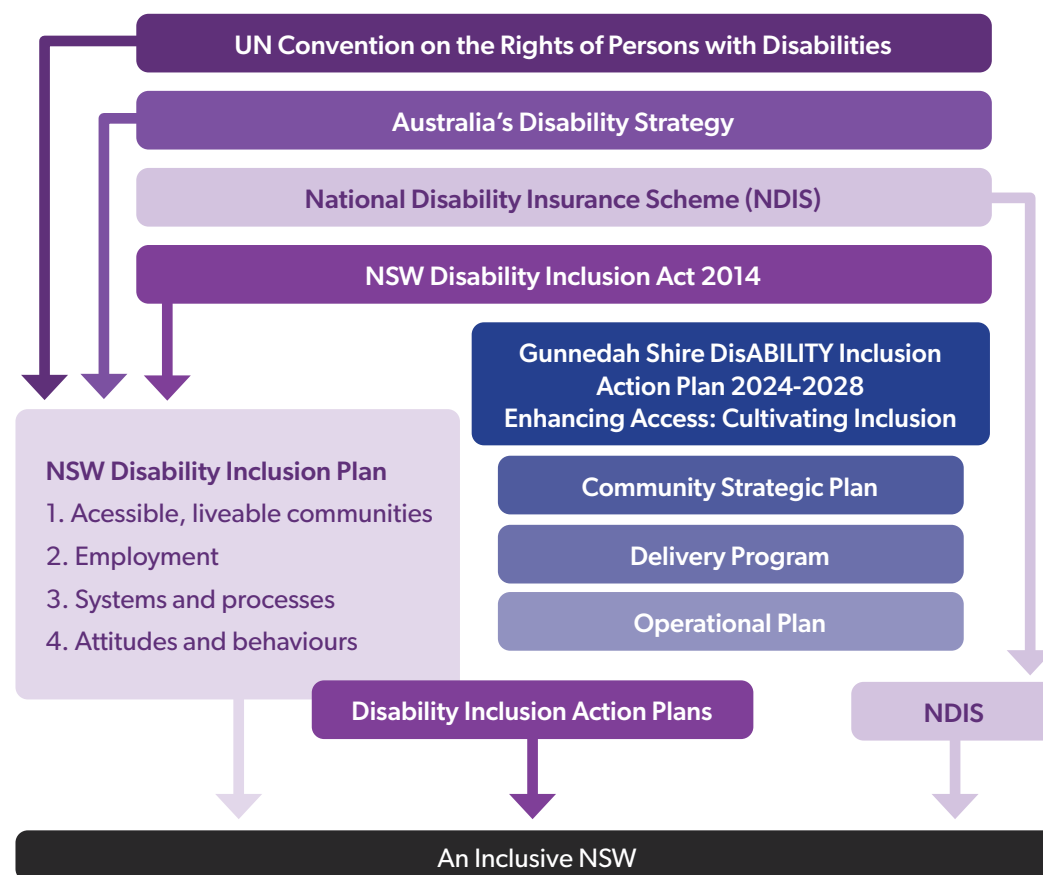




Figure 2: Local Government Integrated Planning and Review Cycle

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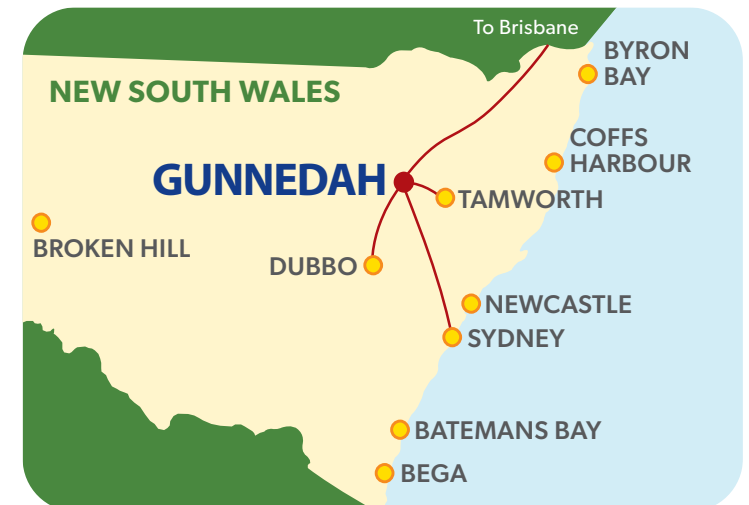
What Does Our Community Look Like?

Our Community

Gunnedah Shire is located in the Northern Inland Region of NSW, covers an area of 500,083 hectares (5,001 km²) and is bordered by the Tamworth Regional Council and the Shires of Liverpool Plains (Quirindi), Narrabri and Warrumbungle (Coonabarabran). The Shire sits at the southern end of the Nandewar Range and lies within the upper catchment area of the Namoi River. By road, Gunnedah is approximately 450 kilometres from Sydney, 655 kilometres from Brisbane and just over 1,000 kilometres from Melbourne.

Gunnedah Shire has its own airport and is serviced by Tamworth Regional Airport, which has frequent flights to Sydney and Brisbane. The Shire is easily accessible to main highways and lies on the North West (Country-Link) rail line which runs daily rail passenger services to Newcastle and Sydney. The Shire has twenty four (24) rural localities - Basin Plain, Bluevale, Boggabri (part), Booroondarra, Burburgate, Carroll Gap, Coochooona, Ghoolendaadi, Gulligan, Gunnembene/Crossing, Keepit, Kurrumbede, Marys Mount, Meermaul, Milroy, Mornington, Nea, Noggabri, Orange Grove, Pialloway, Pullaming, Rangari, Watermark and Willala. There are also seven (7) small villages – Breeza, Carroll, Curlewis, Emerald Hill, Kelvin, Mullaley and Tambar Springs.

The Gunnedah township is the service hub of the Shire with 80.12% of the Shire's population (10,359 people) living within the Gunnedah urban area. 19.88% (2,570 people) reside in the immediate surrounding rural area. (Source: ABS 2021)



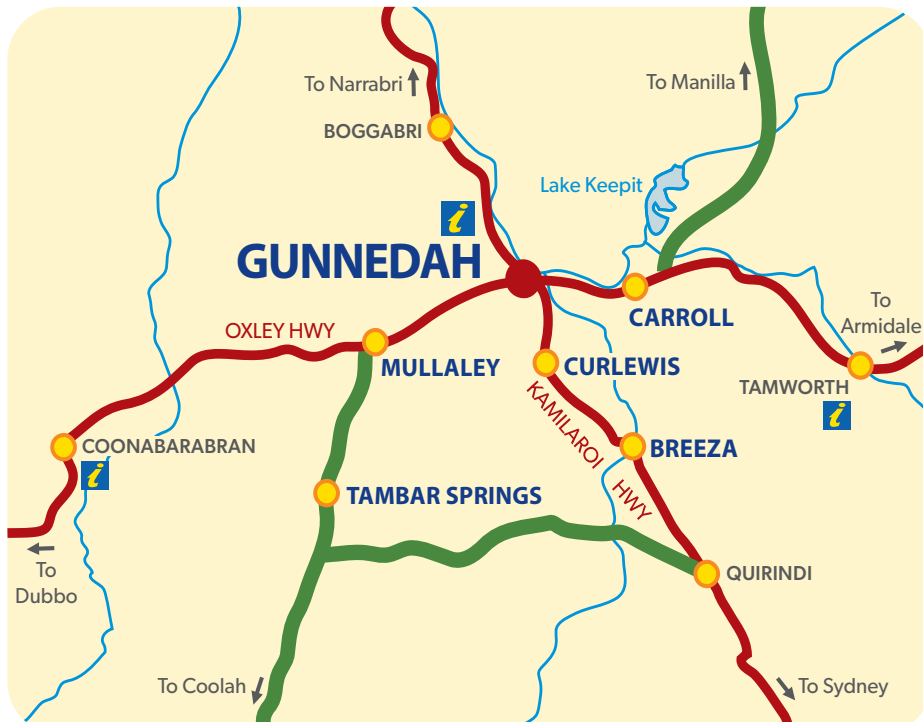


Our Council

In 2023, Gunnedah Shire Council recorded a workforce of 203 full-time equivalent staff. 6.3% of the workforce identify as having a disability of some type and/or of caring for family with disabilities. The majority of our workforce resides in our Shire while a smaller portion resides in the adjoining Tamworth 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 0.5% 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.

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



Our Demographic and Diversity Profile

In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples comprised 15.6% of the Shire's population compared to the regional NSW average of 6.6%, NSW State average of 3.4% and national average of 3.8%

In 2021, 85.6% of our Shire's residents were born in Australia. The other common countries of birth were England 1.1%, Philippines .7%, New Zealand 0.6%. South Africa .3%, India and .2% China

From 2016 to 2021, Gunnedah Shire's population increased by 732 people (6.0%). This represents an average annual population change of 1.17% per year over the period. The largest changes in the age structure in this area between 2016 and 2021 were in the age groups:

- Primary schoolers (5 to 11) (+236 people)
- Young workforce (25 to 34) (+227 people)
- Older workers and pre-retirees (50 to 59) (-130 people)
- Empty nesters and retirees (60 to 69) (+106 people)

- One in 5 members of our community reported having a disability in 2021, with 793 people (6.1%) of people of all ages in the Gunnedah Shire needing help in their day-to-day lives due to a disability, compared with 5.8% for NSW (an increase of 126 since 2016)
- In 2021, 142 (7.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were living in the Gunnedah Shire with profound or severe disability and needed help in their day-to-day lives (an increase of 52 from 2016)
- In 2021, 1078 (11.3%) people aged 15+ years were providing unpaid assistance to persons with disability
- In 2021, 81 people were providing unpaid assistance to Aboriginal people with disability
- As at 28 March 2024, 499 NSW Mobility Parking Scheme Permits were issued in Gunnedah (449 Individual, 30 Organisation, 20 Temporary).



Our Key Achievements

Developing Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours

- Ongoing delivery of the Access Working Group - An advisory group of Council comprised of a range of internal and external stakeholders. The group meets quarterly to discuss ideas, projects and initiatives of Council relevant to enhancing access and cultivating inclusion including those focussed on parking, transport, infrastructure, events etc. The group is solution-focussed and seeks to be a change agent while broadening the mindset of internal stakeholders around inclusive design.

- Reprinted the 'Missed Business Guide' and provided to businesses within the CBD. The guide is a resource manual for business on how to attract more customers by providing better access to their business operations.
- Initiated the Access at a Glance window decal initiative.
- Ongoing maintenance of Council website to enhance access to information and opportunities with a dedicated 'access and inclusion' area on the portal. Positivity statements and copies of the DIAP are available for download (full, easy to read, access-friendly versions). To value-add to the website, a shared library of appropriate and positive images featuring local people with disability for use in publications has been developed and is continuing to grow.
- Initiated multiple community events and activities at Livvi's Place Inclusive Playground in Gunnedah. In 2022, a free community event was held to celebrate International Day for People with Disability with stalls and activities and more than 100 people attended.
- Council continues to build positive attitudes and access by design principles with the implementation of its annual Section 356 (Access Incentive Grant) to encourage businesses to enhance accessibility in their operations.
- Council staff routinely access inclusion-focused online training (virtual forums and webinars) as opportunities arise.



- Access design principles continue to be considered in the open space planning, further demonstrating that inclusion is becoming embedded as a principle across the organisation.
- The Access Working Group continues to advocate for greater input in the design elements at the planning phases of these projects to capitalise on opportunities to create inclusive spaces.
- The Access Working Group is working towards the delivery of a disability Expo in 2025.
- Council's review of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan has included references to strategies that strengthen inclusive tourism.
- Council has worked with Carers NSW and local emergency management agencies to include references to community members with disability in its organisation Emergency Evacuation Plans and in the Gunnedah Local Emergency Management Plan.
- Council staff have collaborated with NSW and Gunnedah PCYC to submit a grant application for the development of the Gunnedah PCYC as an Emergency Evacuation Centre with significant access enhancements featured in the design.
- Council's Community Safety team has strengthened its focus on monitoring compliance in Accessible (Disabled) Parking and NSW Mobility Parking Scheme Permits.



Creating Liveable Communities

- Council's Gunnedah Shire Community Directory continues to grow in size. It includes information about a range of organisations in the Gunnedah area and featured services include disability support, health, community groups, child services, employment, training and recreation and leisure. The associated 'My Access' app is disability-compliant and will adjust according to the view required and how it is being accessed. The site has Google translate features.
- Council's continued subscription to the disability-compliant Gunnedah Shire Funding Finder has enhanced the community's capacity to access funding that supports access initiatives and infrastructure projects.
- Council continues to deliver its Section 356 Access Incentive Small Grant Program aimed specifically at supporting businesses and community groups to enhance access for people with disability within their premises. Projects may include the installation of an access ramp to the business or shop front, redesign of marketing collateral (i.e. menus) to appeal to a broader demographic, changes to the fit-out of premises to enhance manoeuvrability, access and safety for wheelchairs, people with temporary mobility challenges, etc.
- Council reprinted its Missed Business Guide, and the Access Working Group disseminated a copy to businesses within the CBD and electronically to the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Hard copies are also available in the front customer service centre foyer.
- Across Council, marketing and engagement techniques have expanded to include a range of engagement tools to expand accessibility and appeal to a range of demographics.
- Access and inclusion has been incorporated as a category in Council's annual Section 356 Community and Sports Small Grants round. A number of community and sports organisations were successful in obtaining grants under the program to enhance access and safety, to increase participation and membership and to purchase equipment to enhance accessibility.
- Council routinely provides letters of support to build the capacity of community organisations to access grant for access friendly projects including ramps, accessibility-friendly toilet amenities.
- Council's Access Working Group continues to work on the development of an access parking map for community use and this has been added as an action in the revised DIAP.



- Council's \$1.5million inclusive playground 'Livvi's Place' project which was completed in December 2019 continues to raise the focus on access and inclusion. The playspace has developed a strong reputation as a fully accessible destination with intergenerational play equipment, wheelchair-friendly BBQs, mixed seating types, ramps, tactile indicators, buddy seats, sensory garden, shade, fencing and shared pathways. It has become a go-to space for events and celebrations, further extending the reach of the access and inclusion message.

- In 2024, Council delivered on its successful 'Everyone Can Play in NSW' Grant application which resulted in the construction of a new accessibility-friendly playground in Kitchener Park, Gunnedah that incorporated a design that considered 'Can I get there? Can I play? Can I stay?'
- Everyone Can Play in NSW Access Audits tool for existing play spaces are undertaken within the Shire and in consultation with the Access Working Group. On completion, an audit report is provided to the Public Facilities team for future place based planning. This activity also serves as a learning opportunity for members.
- An online booking and ticketing system exists for events within Council's Cultural Precinct and Civic Theatre to enhance access for a broad range of demographics. This system is compatible with assistive technology.
- Council supports and actively promotes the use of Companion Cards at all its events and venues, including the Civic Theatre and the Gunnedah Memorial Swimming Pool.
- Staff continue to undertake Accessible Design training with Vision Australia, and training manuals have been disseminated to other teams within Council that have a high focus on marketing.
- Council continues to monitor and maintain the currency of National Public Accessibility Toilet Map in relation to the Gunnedah Shire with recent amendments finalised in 2024.



- Council continues to implement its Footpath Occupation Policy which is to provide clear and concise guidelines in relation to footpath occupation within Gunnedah's business zones. This Policy ensures that the provision of pedestrian access for all users is not inhibited.
- In 2024, Council purchased a mobile wheelchair lift to enable people with disability to access multiple stages in the Town Hall, Civic Theatre and Smithurst Theatre.
- Council's entertainment venues including the Town Hall, Smithurst Theatre and Bicentennial Creative Arts Gallery are accessibility-friendly.
- Council's Civic Theatre has a hearing loop and provision for access seating.

- Council delivers its Wide Angle Film Festival for International Day of Disability and this continues to be recurring event.
- Council's Pool includes accessible BBQs, wheelchair friendly seating and water station with inclusivity now standard consideration across the open spaces team.
- Council continues to maintain and upgrade equipment in Livvi's Place Inclusive Playground. This accessible and intergenerational playground remains a central activity space, with parents now able to engage in spontaneous play.
- Council is currently collaborating with the Gunnedah Wood Turners to design and install an accessible outdoor library at the 'reading seat' in Livvi's Place Inclusive Playground.
- Council's GoCo Community Care Transport provides safe, flexible and efficient transport services for the residents of the Gunnedah Shire Council area. Clients of this service are predominantly aged, people with disability, the frail and socially isolated who do not have access to appropriate transportation.
- In 2023, Council's Library completed internal renovations to its layout, colour scheme and design, with enhanced accessibility a key feature of the upgrades.
- The Library provides a House Bound service for customers including those with disability, those recovering from surgery, frail aged and those who are either transport or socially isolated. The library is an important hub for socially isolated and linguistically diverse groups to connect and to access activities and events.

Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment

- Employment is an identified action in Council's DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan, which is a living document.
- Council fully supports and implements its Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan and reports on progress as part of the Integrated Planning and Review process.
- Recruitment policies, procedures and practices are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure a best practice and integrated approach to workforce and diversity planning.
- Induction and on-boarding programs are routinely reviewed to strengthen references to access and inclusion obligations and responsibilities and to foster a supportive, diverse and welcoming workforce.
- Principles are reinforced in:
 - Staff position descriptions and employment contracts
 - Council Employee Handbook
 - Council Code of Conduct
 - Council Customer Service Standards Management Directive
 - Council's Complaints and Grievance Policy
 - Council's Induction and On Boarding Program
 - Annual Performance Review process
 - Toolbox/safety talks program (e.g. Bullying, Harassment).
 - Strategies to attract and retain employees from diversity groups are referenced in Council's Workforce Plan.
- Staff exit interviews (cessations, resignations and terminations) capture emerging patterns and issues.
- Council's on-boarding process includes capacity for the Work Health and Safety Officer to work with managers to determine suitable workplace modifications if required.
- Council staff in relevant areas, continue to develop partnerships and collaborations with schools and employment-focussed community organisations as an opportunity to grow a diverse workforce.
- Council has a 10-year contract with Gunnedah Workshop Enterprises (Recyclit) to process recyclables and to operate the Bowerbird Shop at the Waste Management Facility. Recyclit utilises an onsite building under a peppercorn lease arrangement and a long-term contract secures ongoing employment and training for its workers, all of whom have disability. Council also allows Gunnedah Workshop Enterprises to collect proceeds from the Drum Muster and Container Deposit Scheme and batteries in order to enhance that support.
- Council's Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund encourages young people of all abilities to pursue university level education and to encourages their return to the Gunnedah Shire and this opportunity is disseminated widely in all sectors of the community



Improving Access to Mainstream Services through Better Systems and Processes

- Council's websites are compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 (Level A).
- Council is committed to maintaining websites and platforms that are as accessible as possible to all visitors, including those using its site with:
 - mobile devices
 - assistive technologies such as screen readers
 - various browsers and
 - slower internet connections.
- Council's website features an Access and Inclusion portal to direct customers to key information which includes: the DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan, Access Working Group, National Relay Service, Companion Card, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and Tips for accessible complaint handling.
- Council's customer service staff receive training on working with customers with special needs.
- Council undertakes annual update and currency checks of the National Public Toilet Map as part of the National Incontinence Program. Additional updates are made throughout the year if the need arises, with multiple staff across the organisation trained to do so.



- Education around accessibility principles and formatting for marketing and promotions collateral is ongoing.
- Community development staff work to disseminate and share a myriad of information and resources to the disability support sector in order to enhance connections to services.
- An Accessible Events Guide is currently under development.
- The growth of the new Gunnedah Shire Community Directory enhances the capacity of customers to connect with Council services and agencies providing support to the area locally, via outreach, or online. The inclusion of an accessible app with this platform further enhances the capacity of users to source information.

Key Practices which Support Access and Inclusion

- ✓ Council incorporates access requirements via the delivery of its Development Control Plan (DCP) and Local Environment Plan (LEP), Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, Building Code of Australia, Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), Premises Standard, Transport Standard, and numerous other pieces of legislation. Council's disability access obligations regarding Australian and NSW planning and development legislation are met.
- ✓ Council proactively promotes a safe, healthy and dynamic working environment with key consultative actions championed by the Work Health and Safety Committee.
- ✓ Council delivers a range of programs and initiatives that focus on ensuring new residents and families are welcomed in our community.
- ✓ Council's commitment to providing and maintaining safe and serviceable public facilities and infrastructure including roads, footpaths is reflected in its Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027 and Strategic Asset Management Plan.
- ✓ Council continues to engage trainees in the workplace in order to support the provision of career paths for the youth in rural NSW.
- ✓ Discriminatory terminology and language is not acceptable in our workplace and is not evident in employment documentation.
- ✓ Merit selection panels reflect a balanced gender composition.
- ✓ Staff are selected for higher duties based on their skill set and performance.
- ✓ Council encourages staff to access a confidential Employee Assistance Program for professional support.
- ✓ Conditions of employment include flexible working hours and arrangements with the capacity to seek approval to work from home.
- ✓ Council convenes a Leadership Forum on a bi-monthly basis with access and inclusion topics a feature of the staff development program.
- ✓ Council convenes a bi-monthly Access Working Group to support the actions within the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, with the Working Group taking a key role in the ongoing implementation of the Plan.
- ✓ Council actively encourages people with lived experience of disability to nominate for its Working Groups, Committees and Advisory Groups.
- ✓ Council has reflected a commitment to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners by identifying barriers to learning and accessing employment as actions in its 2020 – 2024 Shire Workforce Plan.
- ✓ Council is currently delivery significant infrastructure upgrades to the GoCo Community Care building to render the building fully accessible to its staff, volunteers, clients and customers. The building will be re-opened in late 2024.

Council documents that already support the principles embedded within the DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan include:

- Community Strategic Plan – ‘Together We Achieve Great Things’ 2017-2027
- Economic Development Strategy 2022 – 2026
- Local Strategic Planning Statement – Future 2040
- Open Space Strategy 2021-2026
- Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Community Participation Plan 2020
- Community Engagement Policy
- Customer Service Policy
- Media Policy
- Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan 2016
- Strategic Asset Management Plan 2013 -2022
- Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan 2020 – 2024
- Gunnedah Shire Council Workforce Management Plan
- Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan
- Advertising Signage on Public Infrastructure Policy
- Communications and Media Engagement Policy
- Flexible Working Arrangement Policy
- Footpath Occupation Policy 2016
- Harassment and Workplace Bullying Policy
- Missed Business Guide
- Employee Assistance Program



04 What We Heard You Say - A Snapshot

In order to develop the Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan, a robust community engagement process was implemented. Community engagement processes were delivered by Council's Community and Social Planner with input from over 325 people including elected representatives, Council staff, GoCo staff, individual members of the Access Working Group, disability support sector, community service providers, people with disability and the residents within the broader Gunnedah Shire.

- ▶ Dissemination of information to Village Hall Committees and Progress Associations
- ▶ Dissemination of information via established community interagency networks
- ▶ Consultation with Access Working Group
- ▶ Community Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Engagement Opportunities
- ▶ Community Inclusion Survey (142 respondents)
- ▶ 2 x community workshops (31 attendees)
- ▶ 3 x community pop-up events (15 individuals)
- ▶ 15 x conversations with disability support sector (28 individuals)
- ▶ 8 x conversations with community organisations (13 individuals)

- ▶ 9 conversations with people with disability and their carers (26 individuals)
- ▶ 12 conversations with Council Staff and Departmental Stakeholders

Feedback indicated strong successes across all four (4) focus areas. Those participating in the consultations indicated support for the way in which Council interacted and engaged with people with disability, and acknowledged the significant inroads made by Council, over the past five (5) years into promoting access and inclusion.

While community satisfaction with Council's services in relation to access and inclusion overall was strong, *employment and infrastructure* continue to be rated as the two (2) key priority areas for enhancements. The consultation process highlighted the barriers that still remain for people with disability and their carers when accessing information and services, and when getting around our community. Additional actions around inclusive tourism and supporting vulnerable community members and people with disability to plan and prepare for emergency and disaster scenarios were also encouraged.



Topics that featured heavily in our conversations with you:



Getting into local shops and businesses

Gradients of footpaths and pram ramps

Accessibility-friendly signage and tactile indicators

Accessible parking spaces

Physical access to venues and facilities, in particular parking and passenger set down zones and the width of doorways

Pedestrian crossings and user safety

Cinema seating for people with disability

Maintenance of public walkways and pathways to enhance safety and visibility

The width, design and connectivity of pathways

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

All abilities play
equipment and
recreational spaces

Accessible
and inclusive
tourism

Access to the GoCo
Community Care
building

Customer
service
sensitivity

Access to
traineeships
and long-term
employment
opportunities

Access to front of
house, and stage areas
in halls within the
Cultural Precinct

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 public amenities and open space design consider a broad demographic



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

Our Scorecard Overall

Developing Positive Community Attitudes and Behaviours

- ✓ Council staff are respectful to customers with disability
- ✓ Council makes genuine efforts to consult with and engage the community to achieve better service outcomes
- ✓ Council provides a range of direct services to support people with disability, the frail aged and their carers
- ✓ Council's regular contributions in the local paper are viewed positively
- ✓ Council's lifeguards provide good customer service and support people with physical disability to access the pool
- ✓ Council accessible meeting areas for community meetings, events and activities are valued
- ✓ Departments within Council are seen to actively promote, advocate and champion for the equal rights of people with disability.



Creating Liveable Communities

- ✓ Council maintains its parks, gardens, playgrounds and sporting fields to a high standard
- ✓ Council's streets and paths are always clean and tidy
- ✓ Council makes genuine efforts to consult and engage the community to achieve better service outcomes
- ✓ Council's participation in the Companion Card Scheme in all its event venues supports socialisation and is valued
- ✓ The allocation and renewal of alcohol-free and alcohol-prohibited zones has added to a sense of safety for members of our community who have disability or who are frail or aged
- ✓ People with disability have utilised opportunities to access and participate in Council's services, events and programs
- ✓ Council's efforts to enhance the availability of accessible infrastructure in the Shire's public amenities is applauded
- ✓ Council supports a strong portfolio of initiatives and events that reflect the diversity of our community i.e. NAIDOC Week, International Day of People with Disability, Harmony Day, Youth Week
- ✓ The 'Missed Business Guide' developed by Council for local businesses and the Chamber, has raised awareness of the barriers that residents and visitors experience when accessing and navigating their way around shops
- ✓ The Library collection of large-print book, audio, Bolinda and e-book collections, as well as a special computer and desk for people with visual impairments is valued
- ✓ The Gunnedah Creative Arts Centre's access ramp is well utilised
- ✓ GoCo Community Transport provides valued support for people with disability who are transport disadvantaged
- ✓ The Inclusive Playgrounds at Kitchener Park and Wolseley Park provide a significant value-add to the liveability in our community
- ✓ The services provided by Council, particularly in the areas of the library, GoCo, youth, arts, culture, the cinema, community events and celebrations is acknowledged and valued
- ✓ The Gunnedah Access Working Group provides a valuable opportunity for Council to support access and inclusion efforts in our Shire

Supporting Access to Meaningful Employment

- ✓ Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan incorporates appropriate measures to meet legislative obligations and other employment-related responsibilities
- ✓ Council's commitment to encouraging staff to access training via webinars and remote location training tools to build diversity skills and knowledge is known.
- ✓ Council's 'no tolerance' policy for workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination is widely communicated
- ✓ The policy of "reasonable adjustment" implemented across the organisation includes numerous examples of equipment being provided for individual staff members with a physical disability to assist them to perform their duties.
- ✓ Council's Injury Management Coordinator's support of staff in rehabilitation and return-to-work scenarios is valued
- ✓ Council's work to accommodate the learning and literacy styles of its diverse workforce through the provision of different training environments and access to specialist support was noted
- ✓ Access enhancements in different parts of Council buildings support ongoing efforts to ensure there is access for all

Improving Access to Mainstream Services Through Better Systems and Processes

- ✓ Customer service locations in the Elgin Street Administration building and at the Visitor Information Centre are easy to access and staff are welcoming
- ✓ The community stated that Council customer service staff were helpful and treated people with disability courteously
- ✓ The community placed high value on Council's numerous and diverse 'have your say' opportunities

Based on What You Told Us, Council will:

- 1.1. Take a leadership role in the promotion of diversity and inclusion principles within our community
- 2.1. Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council's resources, services, events and facilities
- 2.2. Increase the inclusivity and accessibility of parks, playgrounds, sporting fields 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 the needs of vulnerable community members and people with disability
- 3.1. Enhance inclusive volunteer, work experience and long-term paid work 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
- 4.1. Deliver Council communications that are accessible to all
- 4.2. Support Council staff and other internal stakeholders to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to engage effectively with people with disability



05 Our Actions

Focus Area 1: Attitudes and Behaviours

Goal

Promote and improve positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability both internally and externally, to deliver an organisational culture which fosters fairness and equity in the provision of its works and services



Objective 1.1. Take a leadership role in the promotion of diversity and inclusion principles within our community

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
1.1.1 Maintain and facilitate the Gunnedah Access Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Manager Economy and Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group meetings held 	Quarterly	Existing Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Delivery Program
1.1.2 Actively work to encourage people with disability to become members of Council Working Groups, Committees and Advisory Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Departments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of engagement with vulnerable groups when advertising vacancies • Increase in membership on Council Working Groups, Committees and Advisory Groups 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.3 Incorporate disability awareness training for new staff and elected representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager People and Culture Corporate Trainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability awareness training is included in the Induction Program • Number of attendees 	Annual	Existing
1.1.4 Develop and implement training for relevant frontline engagement staff to better represent the reality of people with disability in media and other communication mediums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture • Team Leader Communications • Team Leader Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of relevant staff completed training • Customer feedback on quality of content developed 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.5 Seek out professional development opportunities for frontline customer service staff to access Auslan training in order to increase their capacity to engage effectively with people who are hearing impaired or deaf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture • Team Leader Communications • Team Leader Cultural Precinct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key customer service staff are identified and attend basic Auslan training 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.6 Publicise and share good news stories of inclusion in internal and external communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster • Communications Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 items featured annually (Shire Flyer/all staff emails, Community networks and newsletters) 	Ongoing	Existing

Objective 1.1. Take a leadership role in the promotion of diversity and inclusion principles within our community

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
1.1.7 Continue to build a shared library of appropriate and positive images for use in Council publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared image library is developed and known to staff 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.8 Ensure the design of documents, flyers and posters maximise reach for all members of the community including those with assistive technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster • Community and Social Planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of documents developed • Number of campaigns delivered annually 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.9 Collaborate with community groups and disability support sector to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes towards people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Access Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media engagement activities delivered • Number of accessibility focussed events supported 	Ongoing	Existing
1.1.10 Collaborate with local services, employers, community organisations and sporting clubs to deliver a Disability Expo in order to showcase employment and volunteer opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Economy and Growth team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of community support • Access to funding sources identified 	Ongoing	Existing Grants Sponsors
1.1.11 Work with local businesses to improve knowledge of disability and actively promote benefits of access improvements to premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Team • Access Working Group • Community and Social Planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed Business Guide disseminated • Number of Initiatives promoted in Economic Development E-Flyer 	Annual	Existing Grants

Focus Area 2: Community Liveability

Goal

Work to continuously improve accessibility, inclusivity and liveability within the Gunnedah Shire



Objective 2.1. Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council's resources, services, events and facilities

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.1.1 Seek out opportunities to engage with people with disability and their carers, to support a continuous improvement and best practice approach to access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Team Leader Communications • Staff and elected representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagement opportunities • Attendance at community meetings 	Ongoing	Existing Grants
2.1.2 Incorporate information on local disability support services in new resident brochures and on Council's Community Directory and websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster • Economy and Growth Team • Community and Social Planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of 'hits' on the 'access and inclusion' landing page • Community Directory contains information on the availability of local disability support services • Information on Gunnedah Shire Council community funding programs is accessible to all 	Ongoing	Existing

Objective 2.1. Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council's resources, services, events and facilities

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.1.3 Review procedures and practices for events, activities and exhibitions held within the Cultural Precinct to ensure people with disability can exercise their right to access facilities, services and resources, both as audiences and as participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Events and Engagement Officer • Team Leader Communications • Team Leader Cultural Precinct • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible booking and ticketing options • Number of patrons using Companion Cards • Number of accessibility focussed events held • Information is available in accessible formats about the availability and accessibility of events and venues 	Ongoing	Existing
2.1.4 Develop an Inclusive Events Guide for internal and external use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Events and Engagement Officer • Communications Team • Manager Economy and Growth • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guide developed and promoted to all clubs and associations funded by Council or using Council venues • Guide available on Council's website 	2025	Existing
2.1.5 Maintain and promote the Shire's information in the National Public Toilet Accessibility Map	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Public Facilities • Community and Social Planner • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Accessibility Toilet Map current for our Shire • Information updated on Council website 	Annually	Existing
2.1.6 Implement the Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) system in the Shire's accessible public toilets, and ensure information and locations are available to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Manager Public Facilities • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLAK system implemented and promoted throughout the Shire • Public Toilet Accessibility Map updated to reflect changes 	2025	Existing
2.1.7 Promote Companion Card partnership at appropriate Council amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Precinct Team • Webmaster • Community and Social Planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Companion Card attendances at Council events 	Ongoing	Existing

Objective 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

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.2.1 Provide opportunities for people with disability and the Access Working Group to provide input into new public recreation spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Public Facilities • Access Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of opportunities 	As required	Existing Grants
2.2.2 Encourage access to training on Principles of Universal Design and access standards to relevant staff, Councillors, as well as members of the Access Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Building and Strategic Projects • Manager Public Facilities • Manager Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training sessions delivered • Number of attendees 	Ongoing	Existing
2.2.3 Undertake access audits of Council amenities, including the Shire Library, Administration building and customer service locations, interview and meeting rooms, Chambers and The Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Public Facilities • Team Leader Cultural Precinct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Access Audits completed 	Annually	Existing
2.2.4 Support the implementation of actions within the Strategic Asset Management Plan to ensure footpaths, crossings, parks, public buildings, community infrastructure, village halls and other public places are maintained to safe and accessible standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Public Facilities • Manager Works • Manager Building and Strategic Projects • Manager Development Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a gap analysis of existing infrastructure • Feasibility Study undertaken to install lift at Council Administration building 	Ongoing	TBC Grants
2.2.5 Seek opportunities to progressively upgrade older Council-owned assets to meet Access to Premises Standards and relevant modern day best practice approach in Gunnedah and Village locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Community and Social Planner • Manager Public Facilities • Manager Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of accessibility-focused infrastructure grants accessed made • Older buildings, venues and amenities are accessible to customers and clients in wheelchairs • Increased number of accessible adult changing facilities available to the community 	Ongoing	TBC Grants
2.2.6 Incorporate accessibility requirements when reviewing the Gunnedah Shire Development Control Plan (DCP) and Local Environmental Plan (LEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Development Assessment • Manager Building and Strategic Projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility requirements included in review 	3 Yearly	Existing

Objective 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

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.3.1 Promote accessibility principles to local shops and businesses within the Gunnedah CBD and throughout the Shire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Economy and Growth • Community and Social Planner • Access Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of interactions promoting accessibility to Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry • Number of compliments and complaints 	Ongoing	Existing
2.3.2 Promote Council's Section 356 Small Grants Program to enhance the capacity of local organisations and businesses to access funding that increases opportunities for inclusion and infrastructure enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Manager Economy and Growth • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number inclusion focussed Section 356 applications received annually • Number of inclusion focussed Section 356 grants awarded 	Ongoing	Existing \$256 grants budget
2.3.3 Utilise Council's Business Partner Program to build the capacity of local businesses to access funding to increase opportunities for inclusion and infrastructure enhancements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development Team • Community and Social Planner • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Partner Program Policy reviewed to incorporate Access Incentives , and program promoted to Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry • Number of inclusion focussed Business Partner Program applications received annually • Missed Business Guide finalised and made available to local businesses 	Ongoing	Existing
2.3.4 Review allocations and locations for designated access parking bays throughout Shire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Works • Manager Development Assessment • Manager Community Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of infringement notices issued • Signage installed and reflects enforcement protocols • Reduced number of infringements issued 	Ongoing	Existing
2.3.5 Undertake access audits of footpaths, crossings, parklands, public buildings, community infrastructure, village halls and other public places for compliance and include priority recommendations arising from accessibility audit in the development of annual capital works program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Public Facilities • Manager Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Access Audits completed • Mobility Map developed 	Annually	Existing

Objective 2.4. Increase and enhance visitor experience through the promotion of our Shire as a welcoming, inclusive community

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.4.1 Work to enhance the accessibility of amenities and play spaces across the Shire, including the villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Public Facilities • Manager Economy and Growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of potential funding partners and grant sources identified 	Ongoing	Grants
2.4.2 Undertake an audit of the Shires 'tactile and way-finding signage at key venues and spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Manager Public Facilities • Tourism Team • Community and Social Planner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits undertaken • Costings identified • Increased percentage of way-finding that is tactic and audible 	Ongoing	Grants

Objective 2.5. Work to ensure safety and emergency management processes address needs of vulnerable community members and people with disability

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.5.1 Ensure Emergency Evacuation Plans for Council buildings outline specific needs and procedures for assisting staff and customers with access challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Health Safety Officer • Manager People and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's Emergency Evacuation Plan for all buildings are inclusive • Wardens are appropriately trained • Evacuation drills include appropriate scenarios for people with access difficulties 	Ongoing	Existing
2.5.2 Ensure Gunnedah Local Emergency Management Plan and all supporting plans identify vulnerable communities and facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager Community Safety • Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) • Community Resilience Network Coordinator (CRN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable community members, carers and relevant government and non-government services are engaged in development • Community Resilience Plan shared with all relevant stakeholders • Number of recommendations from CRN considered 	Ongoing	Existing

Focus Area 3: Employment

Goal

Create meaningful opportunities for people with disability to obtain and maintain employment within Council



Objective 3.1. Enhance inclusive volunteer, work experience and long-term paid work opportunities for people with disability

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
3.1.1 Implement strategies that support meaningful work placement and volunteer opportunities for people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Departments • Manager People and Culture • Communications Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of people with disability completing placements • Number of vacancies promoted with disability recruitment agencies • Council's volunteer register reflects positions that support people with disability 	Ongoing	Existing
3.1.2 Investigate opportunities to support permanent engagement of people with disability within Council beyond traineeships and work placements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of permanent appointments of people with disability annually 	Ongoing	Existing
3.1.3 Review Council's recruitment processes to ensure both informal and formal barriers to employment of people with disability are removed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of relevant policies reviewed and updated • Increase in the percentage of people with disability employed by Council 	Ongoing	Existing
3.1.4 Develop and utilise accessibility statement for all job adverts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of job adverts containing Accessibility Statement 	Ongoing	Existing
3.1.5 Investigate the use of an alternative online recruitment system that uses plain English and meets relevant standards (i.e. WCAG 2.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture • Communications Team • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting compliance for WCAG 2.0 or relevant standard 	Ongoing	Existing

Objective 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

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
3.2.1 Identify and provide opportunities for Council staff to access and complete training that increases their capacity to deliver a level of customer service that acknowledges the diversity of our workforce and Shire residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Trainer • Manager People and Culture • Leadership Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of diversity focussed training opportunities identified • Number of sessions supplied through induction process to all new relevant staff • Percentage of managers and staff aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding access and inclusion 	Ongoing	Existing

Focus Area 4: Systems and Processes

Goal

Provide a person-centred approach to feedback and complaint handling across our service areas



Objective 4.1. Deliver Council communications that are accessible to all

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
4.1.1 Maintain compliance of Council's website and intranet to relevant accessibility standards, (e.g. WCAG 2.0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster 	<p>Website meets and where possible exceeds relevant standards</p> <p>All relevant software and hardware procured demonstrate accessibility compliance</p>	Ongoing	Existing
4.1.2 New or revised publications and brochures are available in an accessible easy-to-read format and large print versions are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Departments • Team Leader Communications • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with disability can access Council's customer feedback and complaints processes • Number of compliments and complaints 	Ongoing	Existing
4.1.3 Incorporate strategies and measures into the Community Engagement Framework to increase opportunities for people with a disability to engage with Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Team Leader Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies and measures included in Community Engagement Policy 	Ongoing	Existing
4.1.4 Implement access to Telephone Interpreting Services in Council's key customer service locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of compliments and complaints • Number of customers accessing service 	Ongoing	Existing

Objective 4.2. Support Council staff and other stakeholders to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to engage effectively with people with disability

Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
4.2.1 Maintain currency of Council and GoCo websites and the Access and Inclusion portal on Council's website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Engagement Officer GoCo • Webmaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website information contains accurate and relevant information for people with disability 	Ongoing	Existing
4.2.2 Provide professional development training opportunities for staff to enhance their knowledge of access and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager People and Culture • Leadership Team • Corporate Trainer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of staff across all Council work areas who have attended disability awareness training during each financial years 	Ongoing	Existing
4.2.3 Liaise with people with disability and the disability support sector to determine best practice approach to seeking input of Council systems and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Working Group • Community and Social Planner • Team Leader Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of compliments and complaints 	Ongoing	Existing
4.2.4 Promote the Gunnedah Shire Community Profile demographic data in the community and to government stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Team Leader Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagement and promotional opportunities taken 	Ongoing	Existing
4.2.5 Promote the Gunnedah Shire Community Directory and encourage inclusion of disability support services on the directory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and Social Planner • Team Leader Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage increase in the number of support services included 	Ongoing	Existing

06 Making Our Plan Happen

Implementing the Plan and Monitoring our Progress

Endorsement	<p>The Gunnedah DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan 2024-2028 will be placed on public exhibition for a twenty-eight day (28) period at the Gunnedah Shire Council Administration Building, Shire Library and other customer service locations. Copies of the Plan will be distributed broadly throughout the community to encourage robust discussion and comment. Feedback gathered within the exhibition period will be incorporated into the Plan prior to its final endorsement by Council.</p>
Document Champion	<p>Staff across all areas of Council’s business will be champions for access and inclusion. The Executive Leadership Team will be responsible for providing executive support for appropriate strategies that relate directly to Council operations and facilities.</p>
Implementation	<p>The responsible Directorate for monitoring the implementation and progress of this Plan is the Planning and Environmental Services Department. The Gunnedah Shire Access Working Group will support the implementation of the Plan through its regular meetings. The Community and Social Planner will take a lead role in the provision of relevant information to the Gunnedah Shire Access Working Group and to internal Council stakeholders, to enable members and Council staff to make informed decisions on future access and inclusion initiatives.</p>

Resources	<p>The Plan was developed with consideration of the existing resources of Council and in the context of its integrated planning process. Some actions within the Plan have a focus on continuing to improve what Council does well and that do not require additional funding, while other actions have a focus on enhancements. Consideration was given to the need for future and ongoing collaboration of internal stakeholders, and for the ongoing identification of additional funding sources, grant opportunities and partners. Grant funding will be sourced to support implementation and value adds to relevant actions.</p>
Communication and Media	<p>Council will utilise its resources to market the ongoing existence of the Plan to its internal and external stakeholders in accordance with Council’s Community Engagement Policy. A copy of the Plan once finalised will be provided to NSW Minister for Disability and the NSW Department Communities and Justice.</p>
Reporting and Review	<p>Over the next four (4) years, the Plan will be monitored and evaluated via the performance measures listed within the Action Plan. A Progress Report will be provided to the Executive Leadership Team by 30 November each year, with key results to be included in Council’s Annual Report. A Progress Report will be provided annually to NSW Minister for Disability Services. The Plan expires 30 June 2028.</p>

07 Appendices

Appendix 1: Disability Inclusion Action Plan Checklist

PLANNING	TICK
Have people with disability been consulted in the disability inclusion action planning process?	✓
Are there strategies and actions to provide access to buildings, events and facilities?	✓
Are there strategies and actions to provide access to information?	✓
Are there strategies and actions to support employment of people with disability?	✓
Are there strategies and actions to encourage and create opportunities for people with disability to access the full range of services and activities available in the community?	✓
Does the Plan use appropriate terminology that respects the dignity and autonomy of people with disability?	✓
Have you provided a report on your disability inclusion action planning consultation with people with disability to the Disability Council NSW?	✓
Do actions and strategies support the goals of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014?	✓
Has a copy of the disability inclusion action planning documentation been given to the Disability Council NSW?	✓
Is the disability inclusion action planning documentation publicly available?	✓
Has the Plan been provided in accessible formats?	✓

REPORTING	TICK
Is progress towards achievement of the action planning goals included in the Gunnedah Shire Council Annual Report?	Ongoing as per reporting cycle
Have FACS and the Minister for Disability Services been provided with a copy of the section of the Gunnedah Shire Council Annual Report that details implementation of disability inclusion action planning?	Ongoing as per reporting cycle

Appendix 2: Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
AS	Australian Standards
Auslan	Australian Sign Language
BCA	Building Code of Australia
Chamber	Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CSP	Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027
DCP	Development Control Plan
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act 1992
DIAP	Disability Inclusion Action Plan
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
HR	Human Resources
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)
IPR	Gunnedah Shire Council Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
LEP	Local Environmental Plan 2012
MLAK	Master Locksmiths Access Key system
PAMP	Pedestrian Access and Mobility Map
PWD	People with Disability
Universal Design	Refers to broad-spectrum ideas meant to produce buildings, products and environments that are inherently accessible to older people, people without disability and people with disability.
SAMP	Strategic Asset Management Plan
SDAC	Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (2018)
WCAG 2.0	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2

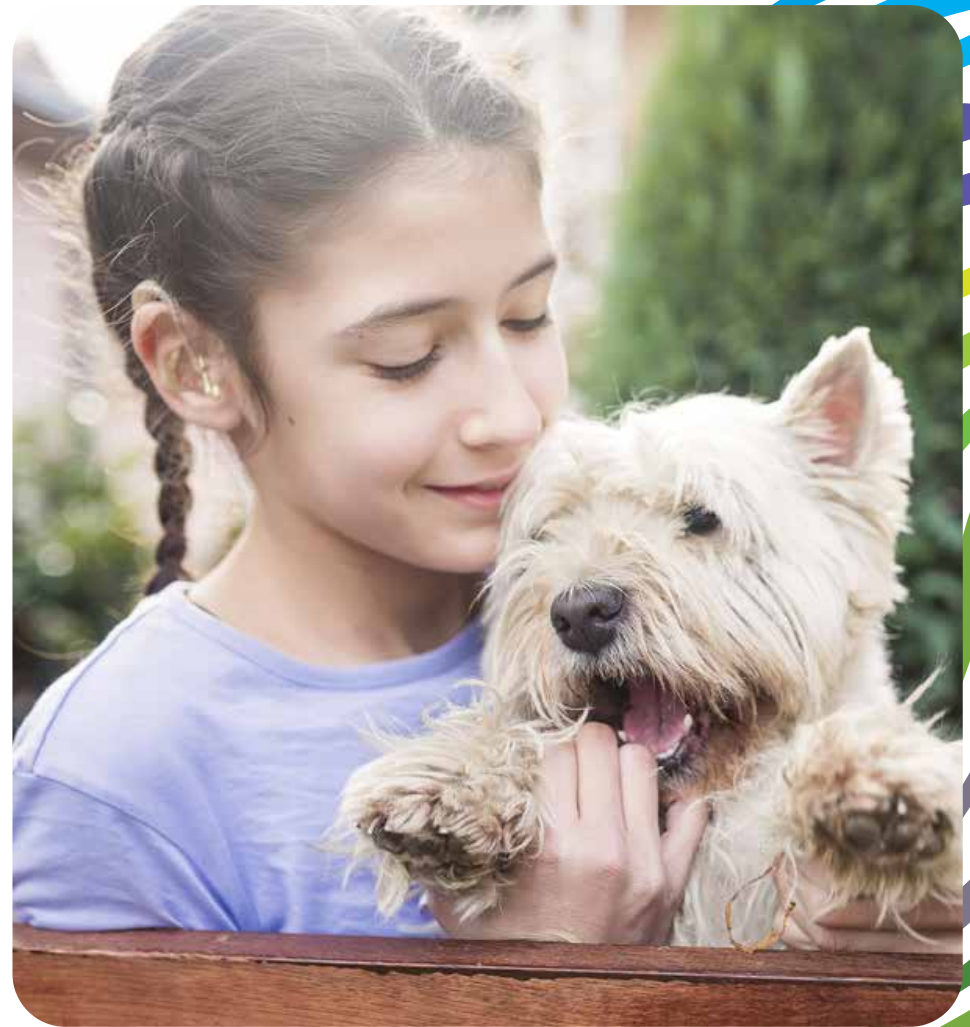
Appendix 3: Acknowledgements

The following documents and websites were consulted in the preparation of this document:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics collections on disability data - www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018
- Australian Government (2013), *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring – 2nd Edition* - www.socialinclusion.gov.au
- Australian Human Rights Commission - www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/disability-rights/guides/brief-guide-disability-discrimination-act
- Digital Transformation Agency: *Design Principals, 2015*: www.dto.gov.au/standard/design-principles/
- Digital Transformation Agency: *Service Standard, 2015*: www.dto.gov.au/standard
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 – www.comlaw.gov.au
- Disability Inclusion Regulations 2014
- Disability Planning Across Local Government in NSW: Final Report 29 October 2013
- Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021
- Gunnedah Shire Community Strategic Plan 2017:2022
- Gunnedah Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement – Future 2040
- Gunnedah Shire Council Economic Development Strategy 2022-2026
- Gunnedah Shire Council Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan 2015
- Gunnedah Shire Council: *Missed Business Guide*
- Gunnedah Shire Open Space Strategy 2021-2026
- Gunnedah Shire Council Pedestrian Access and Mobility Map
- Gunnedah Shire Council Strategic Asset Management Plan 2013-2022
- Gunnedah Shire Council Workforce Management Plan 2017 -2023
- Gunnedah Shire Workforce Management Plan 2020 – 2024
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission: *Advisory note on streetscapes, public outdoor areas, fixtures, fittings and furniture, 2013*
- ISO/IEC 40500:2002 – Information Technology – W3C Web content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0
- Local Government NSW : *Engagement tools and techniques, Information Sheet*
- Local Government NSW : *NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines, 2016*
- Local Government NSW: *Inclusive Tourism Resource List* - https://www.lgnsw.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Advocacy/LGNSW_Inclusive_Tourism_Resource_List.pdf
- National Arts and Disability Strategy, Cultural Ministers Council, 2009
- Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021 - 2031
- Northern England Regional Development Board: *Research Report on Aboriginal Employment and Enterprise in the Gunnedah Region for the Australian Government Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009*
- NSW Public Service Commission, *Disabling the Barriers*. www.psc.nsw.gov.au/sector-support/equity-and-diversity/people-with-a-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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