

DRAFT V1 – TEXT VERSION

GUNNEDAH SHIRE

DisABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2024-2028

ENHANCING ACCESS: CULTIVATING INCLUSION

This document has been made available in text format only.
A comprehensive version and easy read version are available on Council's website
www.infogunnedah.nsw.gov.au

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.

A 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

The Gunnedah Shire DisABILITY Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2024-2028 works to addresses 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. 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? (DIAP)

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.

SECTION 1: 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.

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.

SECTION 2: 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 & 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 because they were 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 were 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).
- For 1 in 4 (23%) people with disability, their main form of disability is mental or behavioural.
- 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.
- 38% of people (15-64) with disability receive a government payment as their main source of income.
- 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 2021b).

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 2019b).

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

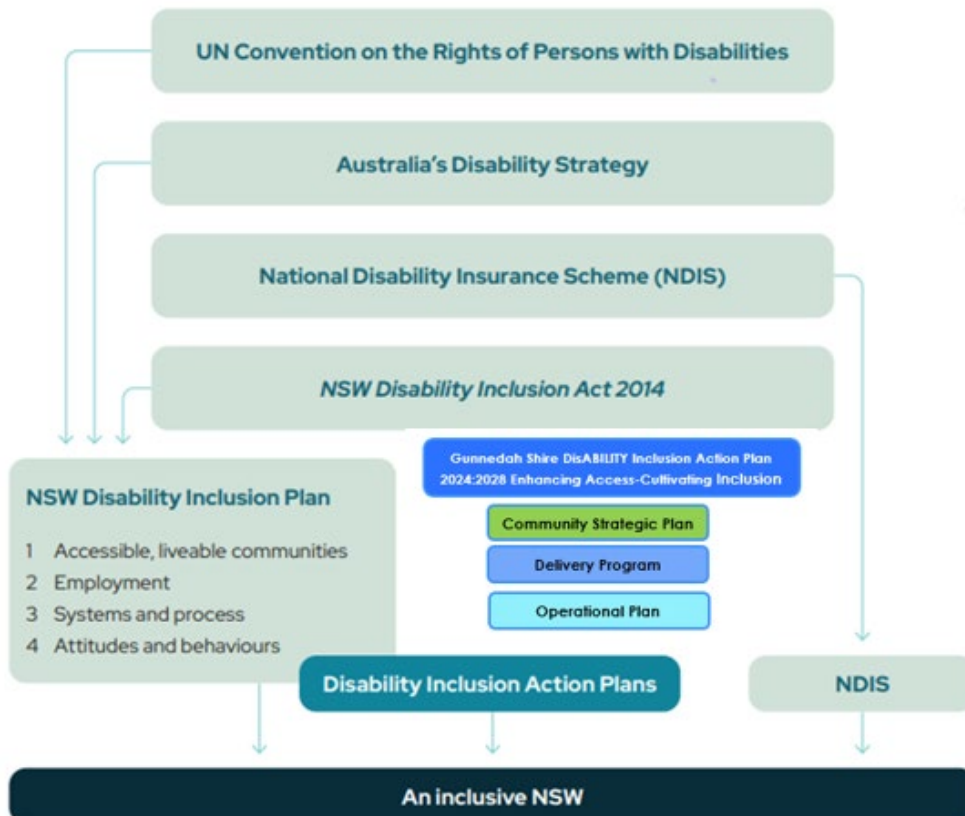


Figure 2 Below: Local Government Integrated Planning and Review Cycle
(Source: NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines Local Government)



SECTION 3: 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, Coocooboonah, 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 .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
- 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%, 3.4% NSW State average 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 people 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 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 & 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.
- 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 also under review 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.

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 Access 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

SECTION 4: 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 Councillors, 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
- × physical access to venues and facilities, in particular parking and passenger set down zones and the width of doorways
- × the width, design and connectivity of pathways
- × gradients of footpaths and pram ramps
- × pedestrian crossings and user safety
- × maintenance of public walkways and pathways to enhance safety and visibility
- × accessibility-friendly signage and tactile indicators
- × accessible parking spaces
- × accessible and inclusive tourism
- × access to the 2nd floor of the Council Administration Building
- × access to the GoCo Community Care building
- × access to front of house and backstage areas in halls within the Cultural Precinct
- × cinema seating options for people with disability
- × 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
- × access to traineeships and long-term employment opportunities
- × customer service sensitivity
- × 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:

- ☆ that attitudes to people with disability should not be determined by fear or ignorance
- ☆ that embedding access and inclusion into the mindset of Council staff and the broader community will continue to 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 & District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to enhance access and participation opportunities within the Gunnedah Central Business District
- ☆ of the need for Council to ensure that information is made available to the public in an array of alternative formats and languages
- ☆ 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

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 and GoCo websites comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 (WCAG2.0) level AA*
- ✓ *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 supports and promotes Gunnedah Sheltered Workshop's waste management and recycling service*
- ✓ *Council provides accessible meeting areas for community meetings, events and activities*
- ✓ *Departments within Council already actively promote, advocate and champion for the equal rights of people with disability.*

Our Scorecard Overall:

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 implements the Companion Card Scheme in all of its venues
- ✓ Council utilises opportunities to reduce public expenditure by accessing grant funding to accelerate accessible infrastructure enhancements
- ✓ 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 opportunities to access and participate in Council's services, events and programs
- ✓ Library provides Brain Training to support people with cognitive challenges and intellectual disability
- ✓ 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
- ✓ A 'Missed Business Guide' developed by Council to support local businesses and the Chamber supports efforts to enhance inclusion and patronage of people with disability to their business
- ✓ Library now has large-print book, audio, Bolinda and e-book collections, as well as a special computer and desk for people with visual impairments
- ✓ The Gunnedah Creative Arts Centre has an access ramp
- ✓ A new accessibility-friendly GoCo Community Care building which will be completed in 2024 will significantly enhance access for all internal and external customers and volunteers
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Council's Community Participation Plan and Community Engagement Policy support efforts to engage the community in decision making

Our Scorecard Overall:

Supporting access to meaningful employment

- ✓ Council is an equal opportunity employer
- ✓ Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan incorporates appropriate measures to meet legislative obligations and other employment-related responsibilities
- ✓ Council provides 'Valuing Diversity' training program to all staff and has included the content into its Induction Program
- ✓ Council encourages and supports staff to access webinars and remote location training tools to build skills and knowledge
- ✓ Council encourages and supports staff to achieve a work-life balance and provides capacity for staff to connect to its systems via a remote access portal
- ✓ Council implements a 'no tolerance' policy for workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination
- ✓ Council staff and elected representatives are bound by a Code of Conduct to 'foster an environment that is respectful for all staff and customers'
- ✓ Traineeships, work experience and volunteer opportunities are provided to people of all abilities
- ✓ People with disability have access to opportunities for career development.
- ✓ A policy of "reasonable adjustment" has been implemented in the workplace, with numerous examples of equipment being provided for individual staff members with a physical disability to assist them to perform their duties.
- ✓ Council employs an Injury Management Coordinator to support staff in rehabilitation and return-to-work scenarios
- ✓ Council routinely accommodates the learning and literacy styles of its diverse workforce through the provision of different training environments and access to specialist support
- ✓ Access enhancements made to different parts of Council buildings support ongoing efforts to ensure there is access for all
- ✓ Council delivers the Gunnedah Community Scholarship Fund to encourage young people to pursue university level education and to encourage their return to the Gunnedah Shire and this opportunity is disseminated widely in all sectors of the community

Our Scorecard Overall:

Improving access to 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
- ✓ Council provides numerous 'have your say' opportunities to maximise feedback
- ✓ Council and GoCo websites meet WCAG2 accessibility requirements
- ✓ Council provides a number of ways to provide feedback, complaints and compliments

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

SECTION 5: 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	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Success	Timing	Budget
1.1. Take a leadership role in the promotion of diversity and inclusion principles within our community	Maintain and facilitate the Gunnedah Access Working Group	Community and Social Planner Manager Economy & Growth	Working Group meetings held	Quarterly	Existing Community Strategic Plan (CSP)/Integrated Planning Reporting (IPR) Framework
	Actively work to encourage people with disability to become members of Council Working Groups, Committees and Advisory Groups.	All Departments	Evidence of engagement with vulnerable groups when advertising vacancies Increase in membership on Council Working Groups, Committees and Advisory Groups.	Ongoing	Existing
	Incorporate disability awareness training for new staff and Elected Representatives	Access Working Group Manager People and Culture Corporate Trainer	Disability awareness training is included in the Induction Program Number of attendees	Annual	Existing
	Develop and implement training for relevant frontline engagement staff to better represent the reality of people with disability in media and other communication mediums.	Manager People and Culture Team Leader Communications Team Leader Customer Service	Percentage of relevant staff completed training Customer feedback on quality of content developed	Ongoing	Existing
	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.	Manager People and Culture Team Leader Communications Team Leader Cultural Precinct	Key customer service staff are identified and attend basic Auslan training	Ongoing	Existing
	Publicise and share good news stories of inclusion in internal and external communications	Manager Communications Webmaster/Media Team	4 items featured annually (Shire Flyer/all staff emails, Community networks and newsletters)	Ongoing	Existing

SECTION 5: 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	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Success	Timing	Budget
	Continue to build a shared library of appropriate and positive images for use in Council publications	Community and Social Planner Team Leader Communications Webmaster	Shared image library is developed and known to staff	Ongoing	Existing
	Ensure the design of documents, flyers and posters maximise reach for all members of the community including those with assistive technology	Team Leader Communications Webmaster Community & Social Planner	Number of documents developed Number of campaigns delivered annually	Ongoing	Existing
	Collaborate with community groups and disability support sector to raise awareness and promote positive attitudes towards people with disability	Community and Social Planner Access Working Group	Media engagement activities delivered Number of accessibility focussed events supported	Ongoing	Existing
	Collaborate with local services, employers, community organisations and sporting clubs to deliver a Disability Expo in order to showcase employment and volunteer opportunities	Community and Social Planner Economy and Growth team	Level of community support Access to funding sources identified	Ongoing	Existing Grants Sponsorship
	Work with local businesses to improve knowledge of disability and actively promote benefits of access improvements to premises	Economic Development Team Access Working Group Community and Social Planner	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	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
2.1. Identify and remove barriers which exist to reduce access to and usage of Council's resources, services, events and facilities	Seek out opportunities to engage with people with disability and their carers, to support a continuous improvement and best practice approach to access	Access Working Group Team Leader Communications Staff and elected representatives	Number of engagement opportunities Attendance at community meetings	Ongoing	Existing Grants
	Incorporate information on local disability support services in new resident brochures and on Council's Community Directory and websites	Team Leader Communications Webmaster Economy and Growth Team Community and Social Planner	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
	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.	Cultural Precinct Team Leader Access Working Group Events and Engagement Officer Team Leader Communications Team Leader Cultural Precinct Webmaster	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
	Develop an Inclusive Events Guide for internal and external use	Access Working Group Events and Engagement Officer Communications Team Manager Economy & Growth Webmaster	Guide developed and promoted to all clubs and associations funded by Council or using Council venues Guide available on Council's website	2025	Existing
	Maintain and promote the currency of the Shire's information in the National Public Toilet Map	Manager Public Facilities Community and Social Planner Webmaster	Public Accessibility Toilet Map current for our Shire Information updated on Council website	Annually	Existing
	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	Community and Social Planner Manager Public Facilities Webmaster	MLAK system implemented and promoted throughout the Shire Public Toilet Accessibility Map updated to reflect changes.	2025	Existing
	Companion Card partnership promoted at appropriate Council amenities	Cultural Precinct Team Webmaster Community and Social Planner	Number of Companion Card attendances at Council events	Ongoing	Existing

Objective	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
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	Provide opportunities for people with disability and the Access Working Group to provide input into new public recreation spaces	Manager Public Facilities Access Working Group	Number of opportunities	As required	Existing
	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	Access Working Group Manager Building & Strategic Projects Manager Public Facilities Manager Works	Number of training sessions delivered Number of attendees	Ongoing	Existing
	Undertake access audits of existing hearing loops and assistive technology at Council facilities, including the Shire Library, customer service centres, interview rooms, Council Chambers and The Civic Cinema	Access Working Group Manager Public Facilities Team Leader Cultural Precinct	Number of Access Audits completed	Annually	Existing
	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	Access Working Group Manager Public Facilities Manager Works Manager Building and Strategic Projects Manager Development Assessments	Prepare a gap analysis of existing infrastructure Feasibility Study undertaken to install lift at Council Administration building	Ongoing	TBC Grants
	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	Access Working Group Community and Social Planner Manager Public Facilities Manager Works	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
	Incorporate accessibility requirements when reviewing the Gunnedah Shire Development Control Plan (DCP) and Local Environmental Plan (LEP)	Access Working Group Manager Development Assessment Manager Building and Strategic Projects	Accessibility requirements included in review	3 Yearly	Existing

Objective	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
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.	Promote accessibility principles to local shops and businesses within the Gunnedah CBD and throughout the Shire	Manager Economy & Growth Community & Social Planner Access Working Group	Number of interactions promoting accessibility to Gunnedah & District Chamber of Commerce & Industry Number of compliments and complaints	Ongoing	Existing
	Promote Council's Section 356 Community and Sporting Small Grants Fund to enhance local organisations' capacity to access funding that increases opportunities for inclusion and infrastructure enhancements	Community and Social Planner Manager Economy & Growth Webmaster	Number inclusion focussed Section 356 applications received annually Number of inclusion focussed Section 356 grants awarded	Ongoing	Annual \$356 grants budget
	Utilise Council's Business Partner Program to build the capacity of local businesses to access funding to increase opportunities for inclusion and infrastructure enhancements	Economic Development Team Community and Social Planner Webmaster	Business Partner Program Policy reviewed to incorporate Access Incentives, and program promoted to Gunnedah & 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
	Review locations and infrastructure for designated access parking bays throughout Shire	Access Working Group Manager Works Manager Development Assessment Manager Community Safety	Number of infringement notices issued Signage installed and reflects enforcement protocols Reduced number of infringements issued	Ongoing	Existing
	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	Access Working Group Manager Works Manager Public Facilities	Number of Access Audits completed Mobility Map developed	Annually	Existing

2.4. Increase and enhance visitor experience through the promotion of our Shire as a welcoming, inclusive community	Expand amenities at Livvi's Place Inclusive Playground within Wolseley Park and Kitchener Park Playground	Access Working Group Manager Public Facilities Manager Economy and Growth	Number of potential funding partners and grant sources identified	Ongoing	Grants
	Undertake an audit of Shires tactile and way-finding signage at key venues	Access Working Group Manager Public Facilities Tourism Team Community and Social Planner	Audits undertaken Costings identified Increased percentage of way-finding that is tactic and audible	Ongoing	Grants
2.5. Work to ensure safety and emergency management processes address needs of vulnerable community members and people with disability.	Emergency Evacuation Plans for Council buildings outline specific needs and procedures for assisting staff and customers with access challenges.	Work Health Safety Officer Manager People and Culture	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
	Gunnedah Local Emergency Management Plan and all supporting plans identify vulnerable communities and facilities	Manager Community Safety Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) Community Resilience Network Coordinator (CRN)	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	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
3. 3.1. Enhance inclusive volunteer, work experience and long-term paid work opportunities for people with disability	Implement strategies that support meaningful work placement and volunteer opportunities for people with disability	All Departments Manager People and Culture Communications Team	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
	Investigate opportunities to support permanent engagement of people with disability within Council beyond traineeships and work placements	Manager People and Culture	Increased number of permanent appointments of people with disability annually	Ongoing	Existing
	Review Council's recruitment processes to ensure both informal and formal barriers to employment of people with disability are removed.	Manager People and Culture	Percentage of relevant policies reviewed and updated Increase in the percentage of people with disability employed by Council	Ongoing	Existing
	Develop and utilise accessibility statement for all job adverts	Manager People and Culture	Percentage of job adverts containing Accessibility Statement	Ongoing	Existing
	Investigate the use of an alternative online recruitment system that uses plain English and meets relevant standards (i.e. WCAG2.0)	Manager People and Culture Communications Team Webmaster	Meeting compliance for WCAG2.0 or relevant standard Options for online application system investigated and reported	Ongoing	Existing
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	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	Corporate Trainer Manager People and Culture Leadership Team	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	Action	Internal Champions	Measuring Our Success	Timing	Budget
4.1. Deliver Council communications that are accessible to all	Maintain compliance of Council's website and intranet to relevant accessibility standards, (e.g. WCAG2.0)	Team Leader Communications Webmaster	Website meets and where possible exceeds relevant standards All new software and hardware procured demonstrate accessibility compliance	Ongoing	Existing
	New or revised publications and brochures are available in an accessible easy-to-read format and large print versions are available	All Departments Team Leader Communications Webmaster	People with disability can access Council's customer feedback and complaints processes Number of compliments and complaints	Ongoing	Existing
	Incorporate strategies and measures into the Community Engagement Framework to increase opportunities for people with a disability to engage with Council	Community & Social Planner Team Leader Communications	Strategies and measures included in Community Engagement Policy	Ongoing	Existing
	Implement access to Telephone Interpreting Services in Council's customer service locations	Team Leader Customer Service	Number of compliments and complaints Number of customers accessing service	Ongoing	Existing
4.2. Support Council staff and other stakeholders to gain the appropriate knowledge and skills to engage effectively with people with disability	Maintain currency of Council and GoCo websites and the Access and Inclusion portal on Council's website	Community and Social Planner Engagement Officer GoCo Webmaster	Website information contains accurate and relevant information for people with disability	Ongoing	Existing
	Provide professional development training opportunities for staff to enhance their knowledge of access and inclusion	Manager People and Culture Leadership Team Corporate Trainer	Number of staff across all Council work areas who have attended disability awareness training during each financial years	Ongoing	Existing
	Liaise with people with disability and the disability support sector to determine best practice approach to seeking input of Council systems and processes	Access Working Group Community and Social Planner Team Leader Communications	Number of compliments and complaints	Ongoing	Existing
	Promote the Gunnedah Shire Community Profile demographic data in the community and to government stakeholders	Community and Social Planner Team Leader Communications	Number of engagement and promotional opportunities taken	Ongoing	Existing
	Promote the Gunnedah Shire Community Directory and encourage inclusion of disability support services on the directory	Community and Social Planner Team Leader Communications	Percentage increase in the number of support services included	Ongoing	Existing

SECTION 6: MAKING OUR PLAN HAPPEN

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN AND MONITORING OUR PROGRESS	
<i>Endorsement</i>	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.
<i>Document Champion</i>	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.
<i>Implementation</i>	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.
<i>Resources</i>	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.
<i>Communication and Media</i>	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 Disability Council.
<i>Reporting and Review</i>	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.

SECTION 7: APPENDICES **Appendix 1 – Disability Inclusion Action Plan Checklist**

DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN CHECKLIST	TICK
Planning	
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	
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 & 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
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