



GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL  
**DISABILITY INCLUSION  
ACTION PLAN**

**2023/2025**





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, the Kamilaroi People and pays its respect to Elders both past and present.



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## MESSAGE FROM **MAYOR**

John Coulton

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Gwydir Shire Council embraces the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of community life. We are committed to creating a more inclusive and welcoming community for people with disabilities and it is with pleasure that I present the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

The Plan demonstrates our commitment to improve the quality of our services, facilities,

systems, and programs throughout Gwydir Shire. This Plan was developed through consultation with the community and outlines the actions we will take to provide more accessible and inclusive services.

We look forward to hearing about the positive impact the Plan has for people with a disability in our Shire.



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## MESSAGE FROM **GENERAL MANAGER**

Max Eastcott

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Disability Inclusion Planning is about supporting the basic right of choice for people with disability in our community.

People with disability have the same right to choose how to live, work and enjoy community life as we all do.

Council's aim is to ensure that our services, programs, and facilities are inclusive. The Plan aims to improve conditions for people with a disability who live, work and visit our Shire.

I look forward to working with staff and our community to put the Plan into action.





## GWYDIR SHIRE **PROFILE**

Gwydir Shire is located on the North West Slopes and Plains of NSW, approximately 400kms north of Sydney, 120kms north of Tamworth, 300kms southwest of Brisbane, 40kms west of Inverell and 40kms east of Moree.

The Shire sits at the crossroads of the Fossickers Way, a popular north-south touring route, the Gwydir Highway, a significant east-west route linking the NSW North Coast to Outback NSW and on Nature's Way (State Touring Route 3), which links Narrabri to Inverell via Gwydir Shire. The Bruxner Highway (east-west route) traverses the northern edge of the Shire with links into southern Queensland. The Shire is part of the New England – North West Region of NSW (also known as the Northern Inland Region) and is bounded by Tamworth Regional Council to the south, Narrabri Shire to the southwest, Moree Plains Shire to the west, Inverell Shire to the east and Uralla and Guyra Shires to the southeast.

Gwydir Shire has five rural villages – North Star, Croppa Creek, Coolatai and Gravesend in the northern part of the Shire, and Upper Horton in the south. There are 21 rural localities – Boonal, Blue Nobby, Yallaroi, Crooble, (part of) Pallamallawa and Balfours Peak in the northern half of the Shire, and Warialda Rail, Gineroi, Bangheet, Riverview, Elcombe, Pallal, Rocky Creek, Back Creek, Cobbadah, Gundamulda, Dinoga, Gulf Creek, Upper Bingara, Keera, and Copeton in the southern half.

The two small towns within the Shire are Bingara and Warialda, located approximately 40km apart. Bingara

services the southern part of the Shire and Warialda services the northern part of the Shire. Both towns have small, vibrant shopping centres, with IGA supermarkets, historic hotels, eateries and shops and services that meet the day-to-day needs of the community. There are also a few boutiques and some lifestyle and 'quirky' retailers that are always popular with visitors. Both towns are ideal to use as a stop-over base for exploring the Gwydir Shire and surrounding regions.

### Age Distribution

The Council amalgamation in 2004 changed the makeup of the social structure of the Shire, particularly in relation to age distribution.

Key findings include:

- The proportion of young people aged 5-14 in the Shire (17.6%) has declined in comparison to the NSW average from (18.2%) the 2016 census.
- A significant difference between the NSW average (11.8%) and Gwydir Shire average (7.7%) of adults aged 15-24 residing in the Shire boundaries.
- A very high proportion of people aged 65+ residing in the Shire (28.4%) compared to the NSW average (17.7%)
- A high median age of 50 years old compared to the NSW average of 39 years old.

## Background

According to the 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC)

- There were 4.4 million Australians with disability, 17.7% of the population. A decrease from the 2015 survey (18.3%).
- 5.7% of all Australians had a profound or severe disability.
- There were 2.65 million carers, representing 10.8% of all Australians (down from 11.6% in 2015).
- In 2018, 2.1 million people with disability living in households were of working age (15-64 years) and 47.8% were employed, compared with 80.3% of those without disability.
- Almost one in five young people aged 15-24 years (18.9%) and 25-34 years (18.2%) experienced discrimination, compared with 3.2% of those aged 65 years and over.
- One in ten women (10.3%) and one in eleven men (8.8%) experienced discrimination.
- Of those with disability who experienced discrimination, the most common sources of discrimination were service and hospitality staff (36.3%), family and friends (21.0%) and their employer (20.7%). These rates were similar to 2015.

The International Day of People with Disability, 3 December 2014, marked the commencement of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) (the Act or the DIA).

The Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014 (the Regulation) supports the Act and provides the necessary detail for the Act to work properly.

The DIA (NSW) requires Council to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan that will help guide Council and remove barriers and enable people with disability to participate fully in their communities.

The objectives of the Act are:

- To acknowledge that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the State and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights.
- To promote the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability.
- To enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports and services.
- To provide safeguards in relation to the delivery of supports and services for people with disability.
- To support, to the extent reasonably practicable, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities.
- To provide for responsibilities of the State during and following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.



## VISION

To be the recognised leader in Local Government through continuous learning and sustainability.

## MISSION

To ensure that the Council's long term role is viable and sustainable by meeting the needs of our residents in a responsible caring way, attract sustainable development while maintaining the traditional rural values, character and culture of our people.

## COUNCIL CORE VALUES

### 1. For Our Community and Visitors

We will provide a safe, clean and healthy environment in which all people have the opportunity to participate in and share in the Council's services and facilities.

### 2. For Our Community Committees

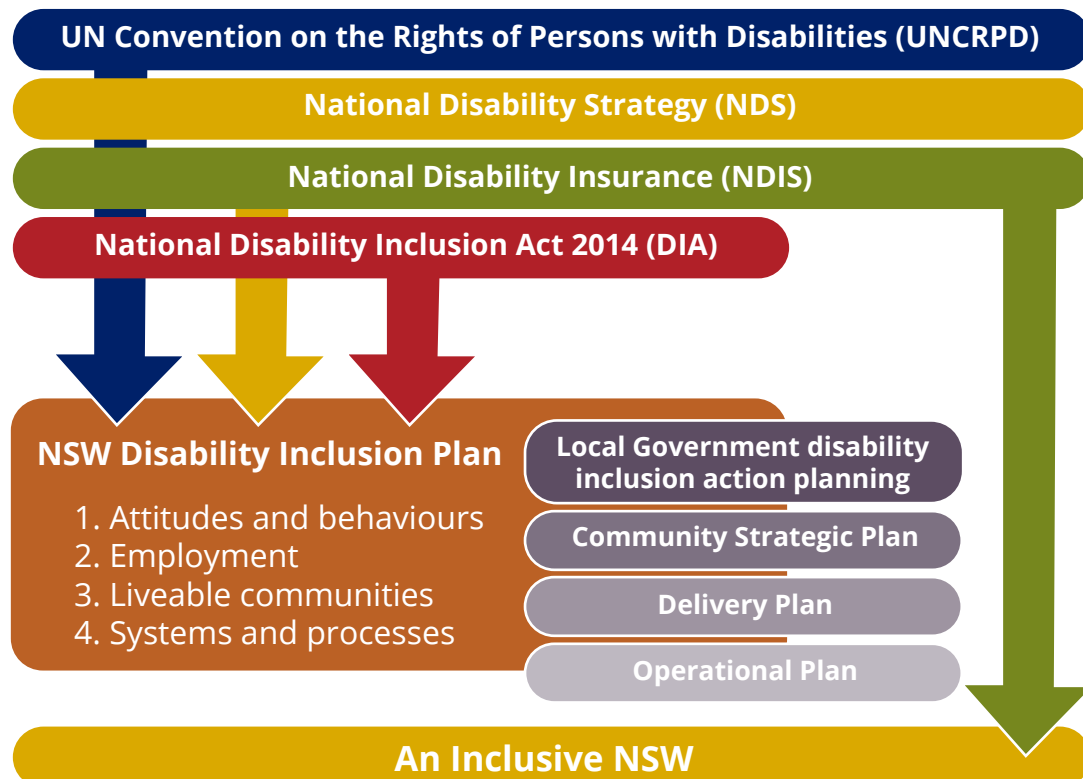
We will seek their opinion in relation to the services in which they assist us, offer relevant and timely support and recognise their valuable contribution.

### 3. For Our Staff

We will create an atmosphere of team support, which encourages frank and honest communication, and the use of common sense and innovation in a safe and friendly working environment with the aim of efficiency.

### 4. For Our Councillors

We will treat all Councillors equally and ensure that they are provided with accurate and timely advice and expect that they will treat each other and the staff with due respect.



Source: Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines Local Government

## INTERNATIONAL, NATIONAL & OTHER LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

### International

The United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) protects the rights of all people with a disability around the world. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the Convention when it was ratified in 2008. The convention acknowledges that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability. This commits participating governments to ensure these rights can be exercised and that barriers are removed. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities support the social model of disability.

This recognises that attitudes, practices and structures are disabling and can create barriers to people with disability from enjoying economic participation, social inclusion and equality which are not an inevitable outcome of their disability.

#### The convention is guided by the following principles:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

### National

The National Disability Strategy 2021/2031, developed in partnership by the Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments, sets out a national plan for improving the life for Australians with disability and their families and carers, to supports the commitment made to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Actions in the Implementation Plan that involve councils include:

- Urban planning/design of the built environment
- Accessible buildings
- Local development planning
- Local roads, bikeways and footpaths
- Local parks and recreational facilities
- Local sports grounds
- Public toilets
- Playgrounds
- Council-run childcare and aged care centres
- Municipal services
- Parking regulation
- Public libraries and community halls

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a major reform that delivers a national system of disability support focused on the individual needs and choices of people with disability. The NDIS gives participants more choice and control over how, when and where supports are provided.





## State

The DIA acknowledges human rights, promoting the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability.

The Act requires NSW government departments, local councils and some other public authorities to develop and implement a Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

This Plan must be consistent with the State Disability Inclusion Plan and include strategies to increase access and participation.

## Local

Gwydir Shire Council's Community Strategic Plan 2017/2027 was created by the community and provides a long-term vision for our Shire. The Community Strategic Plan informs Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan which set out Council's role in achieving the community's vision.

Other Council plans and documents relevant to the Disability Inclusion Action Plan include:

- Bingara and Wyallda Town Strategies
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Motorised Wheelchair Action Plan





Development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is supported by the Gwydir Shire Community Strategic Plan goals as follows:

- **A healthy and cohesive community (Social)**
- **Building the business base (Economy)**
- **An environmentally responsible shire (Environment)**
- **Proactive regional and local leadership (Organisation)**
- **Organisational management (Governance)**

Other legislation and standards informing Council's work include:

- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
- National Disability Strategy 2021/2031
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Disability Inclusion Regulation (2014)
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021/2025
- Web Accessibility national Transition Strategy
- National Disability Strategy
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Building Code of Australia
- Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
- AS 1428 Standards
- AS/NZS 2890 Standards Accessible (Disabled) Car Parking Requirements
- Commonwealth Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010
- NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Carers Recognition Act 2010
- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005



## DISABILITY SNAPSHOT IN THE GWYDIR SHIRE

The 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."*

Information about disability in Gwydir Shire is based upon Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. The Census records information about people who identify as needing help with mobility, self-care or communication due to disability or long-term health conditions.

### Need for Assistance with Core Activities

Has need for Assistance (by age group)	Total
0-4 years	19
5-14 years	23
15-19 years	18
20-24 years	11
25-34 years	34
35-44 years	46
45-54 years	64
55-64 years	123
65-74 years	167
75-84 years	206
85 years and over	159
<b>Total</b>	<b>870</b>

- 17.72% of the population, or 870 people living in Gwydir Shire, identified as needing assistance because of a disability.
- In Gwydir Shire there were 1,130 carers providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age in 2021.
- The number of people who provided unpaid assistance to a person with disability, long term illness or old age in Gwydir Shire increased by 41 since 2016.
- 283 people were receiving a Disability Support Pension in Gwydir Shire in 2021. The Disability Support Pension is provided to people who have a physical, intellectual, or psychiatric condition that stops them from working, or people who are permanently blind.

\*As per 2021 ABS census data





## Council Activity

Council works to provide opportunities, education and raise awareness of inclusion and accessibility of and for people with disabilities. Some examples include:

- Council requires all new staff to complete functional assessments to determine additional needs so that any modification required can be made to accommodate staff with disabilities.
- Functional assessments are also undertaken after any incident/accident involving existing staff that occur in or out of the workplace to accommodate any changes in their ability to undertake normal duties.
- Working with Disability Services to provide workplace volunteer placements in Bingara Library and other Council facilities that can accommodate these volunteers.
- Provide school work experience placements for high school students with disability.
- Development and Implementation of the positive Ageing Strategy.
- Developing Gwydir's Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan in line with individual Town Strategies.
- Installation of adaptive technologies at Council run public facilities including libraries and toy libraries.

## Community Engagement

This Plan was developed through a community consultation process. A review of Council documents and Government policy has also taken place and a Disability Advisory Committee formed that consists of Council staff, Elected Members, disability and inclusion professionals and community members.

Feedback and recommendations from participants have been sought from the community and from service providers, all of whom have played a vital role in the formation of this Plan.

From our consultation process, Council has devised an Action Plan that it will endeavour to achieve for the period to further enhance our Shire and ensure that it is accessible to all who have the right to enjoy it.

Council will continue to actively consult with the community and service providers to ensure that we are providing the most appropriate facilities, services and resources to our community.



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/FOCUS AREAS

### Focus Area 1 - PROMOTING POSITIVE COMMUNITY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

**Aim** – To build community awareness of the rights and capabilities of people with disability and support the development of positive attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability.



#### WHAT WE HEARD

People with disability told us what would make a difference to their community participation. We also heard from carers and family and friends of people with disability together with community service providers and health workers.

There was positive feedback for Council's Commonwealth Home Support Programme services and programs as well as the library activities and resources.

Many challenges identified by participants related to mobility (in terms of navigating the built environment) and access to transport.

Key community responses highlighted the importance of being involved in the local community and having access to appropriate services and recreational and social opportunities. Access to services is difficult and transport is a major issue for travel to other centres for day programs and respite services.

#### COMMUNITY VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

Gwydir Shire is a place where people want to live and the response from people with disability and their carers has been positive.

Friendly small communities make it easier for people to be a part of events and celebrations as well as participating in every day social activities.

However, there are barriers within the built environment which need to be addressed. The issue of isolation and distance to medical services is a common theme and navigating the NDIS features strongly.

#### WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

Continue advertising for the community about the range of services available to them and how they can be accessed.

Increase visibility of people with disability in Council and community publications.

Work with volunteer organisations to create awareness about the value of engaging people with disability.



## ACTION PLAN FOR THIS FOCUS AREA

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility	Community Strategic Plan Link	Timeframe
Promote Positive community attitudes and behaviours	Audit Council's websites to ensure that they are promoted inclusively through the use of imagery and language that is appropriate	Website includes appropriate images and language	Communications and Media	1.2.1 Enable accessible and affordable lifestyle options	30 June 2024
	Utilise International Day of People with Disabilities to promote inclusion to the entire community	Positive media coverage before, during and after event	Communications and Media	1.2.3 Celebrate our creativity and cultural expression	30 June 2024
	Develop and facilitate Disability Awareness Training for staff (independent of induction training)	Complete staff training and continue education and awareness	People and Culture	5.1.5 Provide responsible internal governance	30 June 2024
	Develop website to include resources for Access and Inclusion on Council's website	Website visitors have access to information and resources on accessibility and inclusion	Communications and Media	4.1.3 Build on our sense of community	30 June 2024



## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/FOCUS AREAS

### Focus Area 2 - CREATING LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

**Aim – To increase participation of people with disability in all aspects of community life, through targeted approaches to address barriers in housing, learning, transport, health, social and cultural engagement and wellbeing.**



#### WHAT WE HEARD

It is important that all people can move about easily to access facilities and services and to participate in community life. Pedestrian access featured highly in our community consultation with calls for footpaths that are better maintained and suitable for people with mobility issues.

Suggestions were also made for safety education for pedestrians and mobility aid users. More seating in the main street for aged/people with mobility issues was also raised.

A lack of safe and appropriate access into shops for people with disability, mobility aid users and the elderly continue to be a concern.

#### COMMUNITY VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

It is important to the community that playgrounds include equipment that is accessible for all to enjoy.

Footpaths should be well maintained and built to accommodate those with mobility issues.

Easier access to community events is important, so that everyone can enjoy them and be a part of their community.

Ensuring that all council facilities and future infrastructure projects are accessible for all is important.

#### WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

Remove barriers to services and facilities for people with disabilities.

Raise awareness and provide practical strategies and assistance to local communities and agencies to work toward a safer and inclusive environment.

Create solutions to develop and support liveable communities.



## ACTION PLAN FOR THIS FOCUS AREA

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility	Community Strategic Plan Link	Timeframe
Creating liveable communities	Develop shared pathways education resources to reduce conflict between pedestrians and mobility users	Decrease in customer complaints	Organisation & Community Services	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Provide opportunities for community connection by facilitating and promoting International Day of People with Disability event	Community celebration and participant feedback	Aged & Disability Services	1.2.3 Celebrate our creativity and cultural expression	30 June 2024
	Audit activities and events run by Council for accessibility	Accessibility issues identified and rectified	Events	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Introduce Accessibility & Inclusion checklist to the Event Management Plan process to create awareness and accountability for event organisers	Assist & Educate event organisers to help create inclusive events	Communication & Media and Aged & Disability Services	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Audit Council buildings and facilities to ensure compliance with accessibility requirements	Council facilities are accessible to all who need to use them	Building Services	1.1.3 Provide the right places, spaces and activities	30 June 2024
	Audit Council libraries equipment and resources in terms of height and reach accessibility	Library equipment and resources are to standard	Community Assets	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Council footpaths are assessed and prioritised for repair/replacement according to compliance standards	All Council footpaths meet compliance standards	Town Services & Utilities	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Create education and awareness resources for business owners to ensure shops and shop fronts are accessible	Shop owners can access information and tools needed to provide inclusive spaces for all	Communication and Media	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety	30 June 2024
	Add tactiles to public toilets	All Council public amenities have tactiles for vision impaired individuals	Building Services	1.1.3 Provide the right places, spaces and activities	30 June 2024
	Introduce accessibility and inclusion checklist to be used in project planning for new and existing infrastructure to ensure projects are compliant	All new and existing infrastructure meets Standards for access and inclusion	Building Services		

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/FOCUS AREAS

### Focus Area 3 - SUPPORTING ACCESS TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

**Aim** – To increase the number of people with disability in meaningful employment, thereby enabling people with disability to plan for their future, exercise choice and control, and increase their economic security.



#### WHAT WE HEARD

Meaningful employment contributes to independence and feelings of self-worth. Opportunities to work in paid and volunteer roles are important to our community members with disability. Local employment, especially school leavers, is important for the long-term future of the community.

#### COMMUNITY VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

Provide more opportunities for meaningful employment for people with a disability.

Provide accessible work places.

Provide opportunities for work experience for high school students and volunteer opportunities for community members with disability.

#### WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

Support, educate business owners and internally develop access to meaningful employment opportunities.



## ACTION PLAN FOR THIS FOCUS AREA

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility	Community Strategic Plan Link	Timeframe
Enhance the employment opportunities of people with disability within Gwydir Shire	Develop Council's Workforce Management Strategy to include best practice guidelines for inclusion	Gaps in Workforce Management Strategy identified and addressed	People and Culture	2.2.1 Increase the range of opportunities to work locally	30 June 2024
	Review recruitment and selection processes including language, forms, technology and imagery	Recruitment & selection processes are inclusive and accessible	People & Culture	5.1.5 Provide responsible internal governance	30 June 2024
	Provide information and training to managers/supervisors to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence	Increased level of awareness for managers and supervisors on inclusivity	People & Culture	5.1.5 Provide responsible internal governance	30 June 2024
	Continue to work with disability employment agencies and schools to identify opportunities for employment and work experience, both paid and unpaid	Number of opportunities for placement is consistent and utilised	People & Culture	2.2.1 Increase the range of opportunities to work locally	30 June 2024
	Continue to conduct and respond to Staff Disability Inclusion Survey	Survey results collated and actioned via recommendation to executive	People & Culture	5.1.5 Provide responsible internal governance	30 June 2024
	Review current communication methods and mechanisms to ensure compliance with Standards	Councils' methods and mechanisms for communication are compliant	Communications & Media and Information Services	4.1.1 Encourage an informed community	30 June 2024

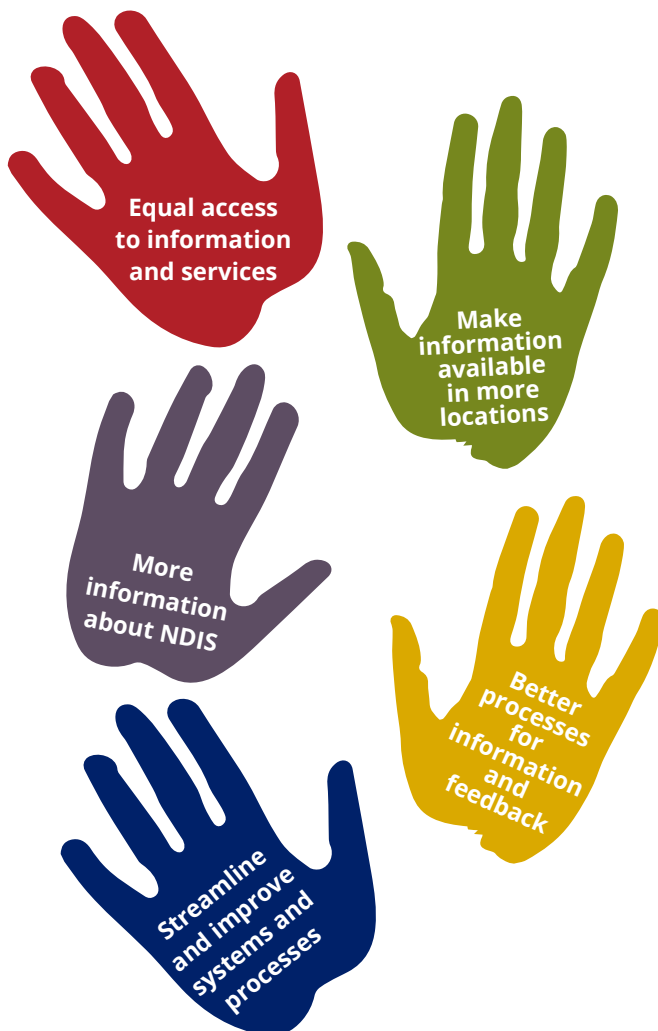




## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES/FOCUS AREAS

### Focus Area 4 - IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES THROUGH BETTER SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

**Aim - To ensure that people with disability can make informed choices about available services and to easily and efficiently access mainstream government services and other opportunities in the community.**



#### WHAT WE HEARD

Service information and processes are not always readily available and do not always allow for people with a range of disabilities. Barriers include a lack of accessible information, inflexible processes and limited opportunities for feedback and input.

Council needs to ensure that people with disability have equal access to information and services.

#### COMMUNITY VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE

Make information available in more locations to ensure awareness of availability.

Ensure information is provided in a variety of formats including the National Relay Service for people with disability.

Provide more information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme and where to go for help.

#### WHAT WE WILL DO NEXT

Provide better processes for information and feedback from the disability community within the scope of Council's available resources.

Streamline and improve systems and processes by which families, children and young people can access timely targeted mainstream support.

## ACTION PLAN FOR THIS FOCUS AREA

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility	Community Strategic Plan Link	Timeframe
Information is provided in a variety of formats	Investigate, develop and implement alternative formats for all Council documents that are publicly available to ensure they are accessible to all	Plain English and other accessible formats are available for the community	Organisation & Community Services	4.1.1 Encourage an informed community	30 June 2024
Community Engagement is meaningful and inclusive for all	Ensure that the Community Engagement Strategy is inclusive for all to participate in engagement	Community engagement is accessible to all	Organisation and Community Services	4.1.2 Enable broad, rich and meaningful engagement to occur	30 June 2024
	A variety of consultation methods are used to ensure that all are able to participate	Increase in participation levels of engagement	Organisation and Community Services	4.1.2 Enable broad, rich and meaningful engagement to occur	30 June 2024
	Utilise the knowledge and skills of the Disability Advisory Committee to facilitate engagement	Meaningful engagement occurs through specialised knowledge and processes	Organisation and Community Services	4.1.2 Enable broad, rich and meaningful engagement to occur	30 June 2024





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## IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

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This Disability Inclusion Action Plan includes timelines to guide the completion of the actions. The process will be monitored and evaluated through the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle to ensure compliance.

Implementation of the Plan will be the responsibility of the relevant Business Unit Managers/Supervisors and their staff. Each action will be monitored and reported 6 monthly.

The Director of Organisation and Community Services will monitor the overall progress and implementation of the Plan and the integration of its actions into Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting documents, in consultation with the Disability Advisory Committee.

### Reporting

Outcomes and achievements will be reported through Council's Annual Report and 6 monthly reports to the community. These reports will be published on Council's website [www.gwydir.nsw.gov.au](http://www.gwydir.nsw.gov.au) and available at Council's customer service centres and libraries.

A report will also be provided to the Department of Communities and Justice and the Minister for Disability Services.

### Review

This Plan will be reviewed annually in line with the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle.

An audit, evaluation and review of the Plan will be conducted at the end of its term.