

Richmond
Valley
Council



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021

Adopted 27 June 2017

Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung Nations as Custodians and Traditional Owners of this land and we value and appreciate the continuing cultural connection to lands, their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region in the past, present and future.

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1. PUBLIC STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO DISABILITY INCLUSION

Richmond Valley Council Statement of Commitment to Disability Inclusion

Richmond Valley Council is pleased to affirm its commitment to disability inclusion under the **Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)**. Since 2014, Council has undertaken a lengthy process of community consultation with existing groups and examining our own workplaces to ensure accessibility for all in the Richmond Valley. Council has worked in collaboration with community groups, business, and other Government organisations including other Northern Rivers councils to increase inclusion and create our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 – 2021. This plan outlines Council's commitment to the following principles and actions:

- Continual examination of our own processes and policies to ensure inclusion of people with disabilities
- Positive promotion of the abilities and strengths of people with disabilities out in our community
- Accessibility for all throughout the Richmond Valley
- Working with community groups, businesses and government organisations on inclusion and wellbeing

Statement of acknowledgement of the Bundjalung Aboriginal Nation

The Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung Nations as Custodians and Traditional Owners of this land and we value and appreciate the continuing cultural connection to lands, their living culture and their unique role in the life of this region in the past, present and future.

2. OVERVIEW AND VISION FOR THE DOCUMENT

Richmond Valley Council's Vision for Inclusion

Richmond Valley Council's **Vision for Inclusion** is that of a sustainable, equitable and accessible community, where the diverse needs, aspirations and strengths of all residents and abilities are supported, promoted and celebrated.

This Vision for Inclusion is inspired by our Community Strategic Plan's Vision, Mission and Values, which are as follows.

Vision

A great community with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and vibrant economy

Mission

To provide the best possible services and facilities to make our community the best it can be

Richmond Valley Council Values

- Loving where we live and work
- Caring for our environment
- Well-maintained facilities
- Efficient and effective services
- A diverse, equitable and accessible community
- A safe and well-maintained road network
- Open and honest communication
- Strong business opportunities that support jobs for all

Background

People with disability, their families and carers have the same rights as all people to access services and facilities. Richmond Valley Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021 has been developed with these principles in mind, addressing the four key focus areas of:

Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours

Creating liveable communities

Supporting access to meaningful employment

Improving access to services through better systems and processes

In the Richmond Valley, 7.4% of residents reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability, in the 2011 Census. An updated, expanded figure from a 2014 ABS report puts this figure as being much higher, at 25.9% of the Richmond Valley population.

Carers are also an important part of the picture of people with disability in the Richmond Valley. 14.3% of Richmond Valley residents identify as being a carer of a child, aged person or person with disability.

Summary of consultation methods

In order to develop our Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021, Richmond Valley Council has undertaken consultation with people with disability and carers across a range of methods and in collaboration with other Northern Rivers councils. The result has been a strong and diverse response of suggestions for action and improvement in both our community and in Council services. This included a collaborative survey across the Northern Rivers and Coffs regions, meetings with community interest groups and Council's then-Disability and Aged Advisory Committee and supported Aged and Disability Interagency Meeting Group. Details and results of these consultations are outlined in a separate section of this document.

3. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

There is a range of Commonwealth and State legislation that actively supports access and inclusion for people with disability. These are the policies and legislation that require Richmond Valley Council to undertake its business and services in ways that support access and inclusion.

Under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*, discrimination on the basis of disability is unlawful. Council, along with other organisations, has an obligation to make its facilities and services accessible.

In 2008, the Australian Government committed to implementing the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

“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.”

The Commonwealth *National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2010 – 2020* sets out a ten year national plan for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. The NDS is underpinned by the UN Human rights approach. This approach also supports the *NSW Government enactment of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act (DIA) 2014*.

Related legislation and standards:

International:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

Commonwealth:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020*
- National Art and Disability Strategy (2009)
- *Disability (Access to Premises Standards – Buildings) Standards 2010*

NSW:

- *NSW Disability Inclusion Act (DIA) 2014*

- *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 (NSW)*
- *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (ADA)*
- *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002*
- *National Disability Strategy – NSW Implementation Plan 2012 – 2014*
- *Local Government Act 1993 and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*

Richmond Valley Council’s relevant policies are:

- Community Strategic Plan – Richmond Valley 2030
- Development Control Plan
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Economic Development Strategy
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Events Manual

People with disability, their families and carers have the same rights as all people to access services and facilities. These rights are part of State and Commonwealth policy and legislation which make it unlawful to discriminate against a person with disability.



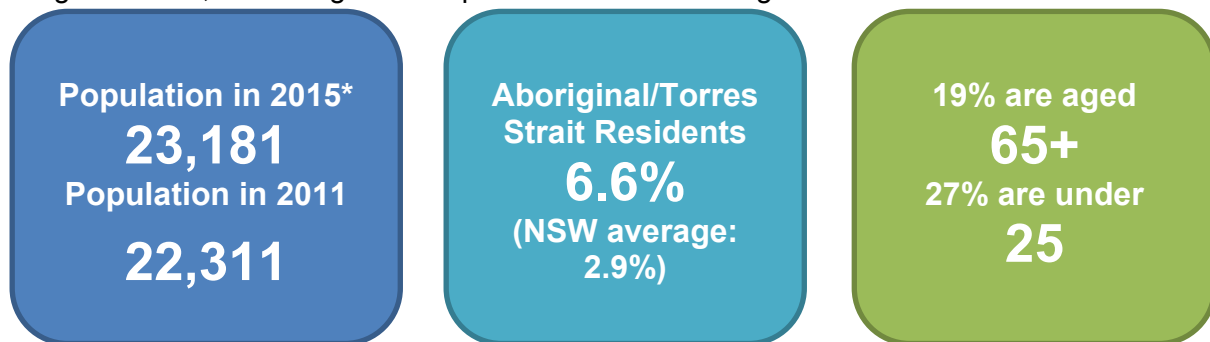
Figure 1: The relationships between the relevant policy and legislative instruments. Source: Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines Local Government.

4. COMMUNITY PROFILE

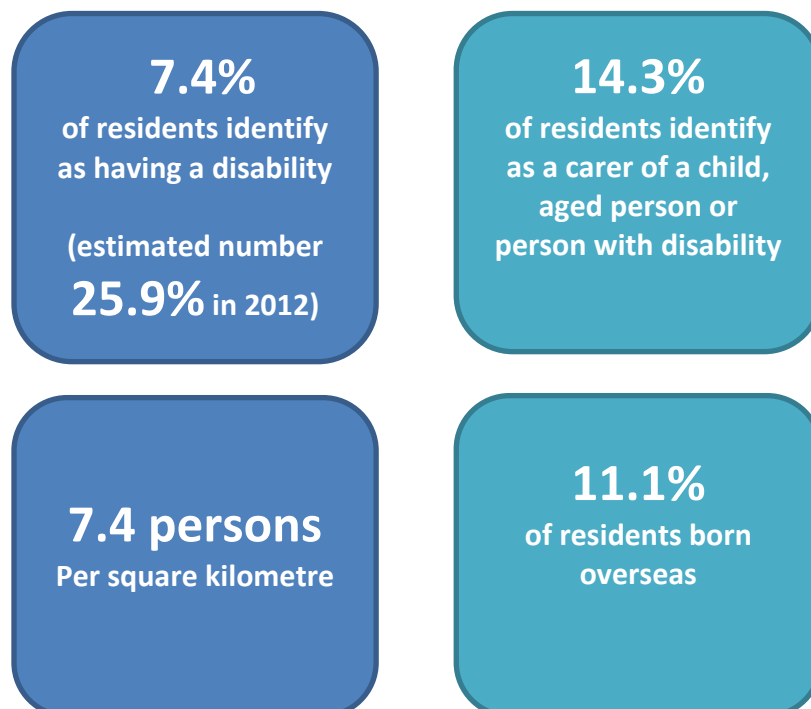
Community Profile

The Richmond Valley's estimated resident population in 2014 was 22,983 persons, across the six town and village areas of Broadwater, Casino, Coraki, Evans Head, Rappville and Woodburn, and numerous rural locations. We are proud, close-knit communities, made up of many different demographic groups.

When we look at the numbers of carers and people with disabilities in the Richmond Valley, it's also important to look at other key demographic features of our region. Different aspects of our region can intersect with positive and negative effects: greater diversity, caring organisations, but also greater experience of disadvantage.

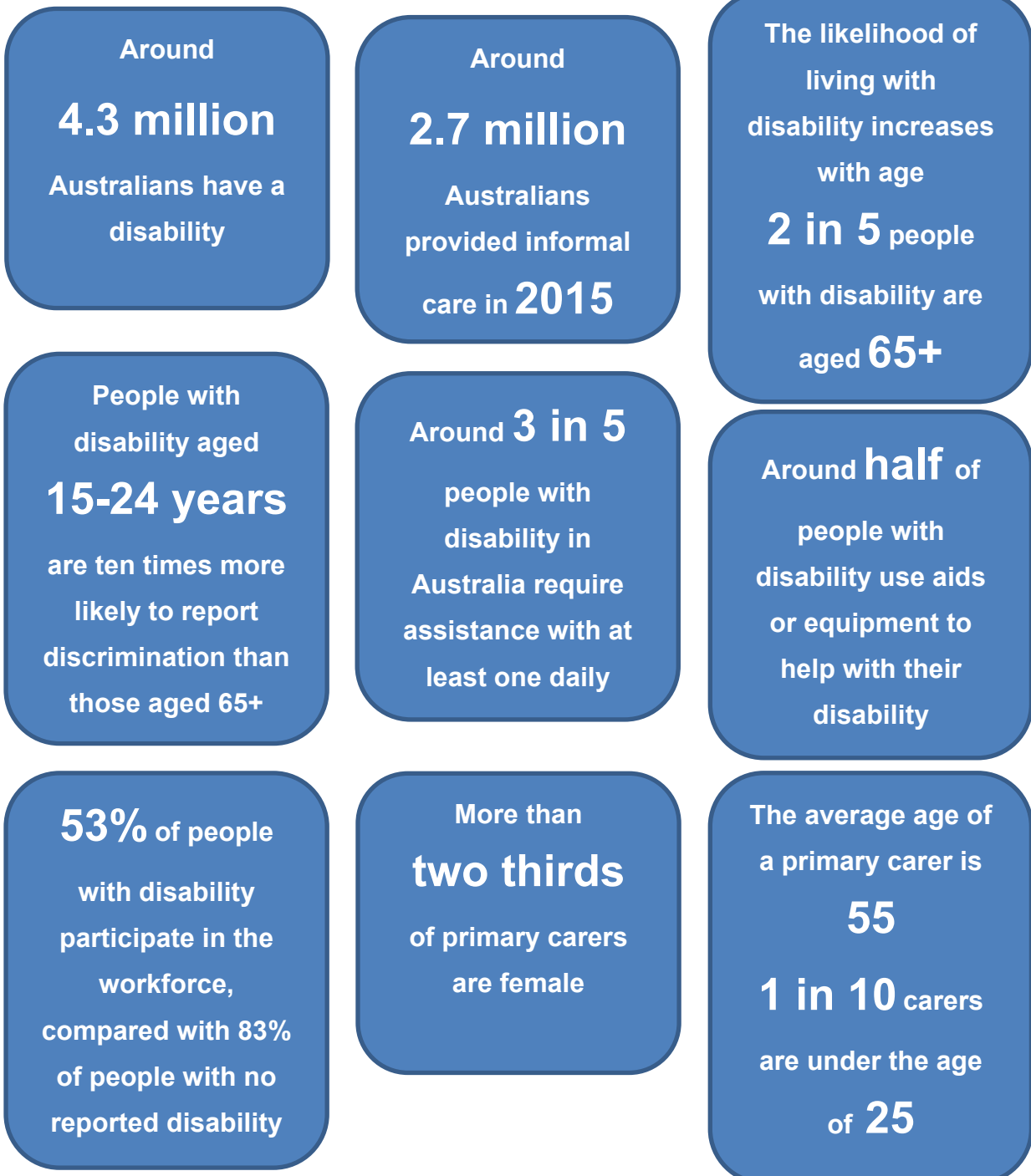


*Estimated Resident Population as at March 2015 from ABS 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia



Richmond Valley Council's disability statistics are being assessed as part of the new strategies and are expected to be reported on as part of the new monitoring and evaluation cycle.

With the identified number and estimates of people with disabilities in the Richmond Valley significantly higher than the national average of 4.8% (ABS 2011), it is useful to look at some other relevant statistics from the 2015 *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers* in Australia:



5. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Richmond Valley Council Community Consultation Activities Prior to Exhibition

Richmond Valley Council has taken a collaborative and region-wide approach to consultation for our Disability Inclusion Action Plan, working with six other local Councils to ensure a coordinated approach was taken and to share resources.

In May 2016 together with Lismore City Council and Ballina Shire Council, Richmond Valley Council created a survey across Ballina Shire Council, Byron Shire Council, Clarence Valley Council, Coffs Harbour City Council, Kyogle Council, Lismore City Council, and Richmond Valley Council. This collaborative effort resulted in 540 responses across the region from individuals with disability, carers, friends and relatives of people with disability, and a broad range of disability service and advocacy organisations.

Councils then undertook additional meetings for feedback from additional interest groups:

- Richmond Valley Council worked with Lismore City Council to gather feedback from Casino's Vision Impaired and Deaf communities at the Casino Vision Impaired Local Client Support Group meeting in September 2016
- Richmond Valley Council worked with Ballina Shire Council to present a workshop to gather feedback from AbilityLinks, a local organisation working through Social Futures to provide disability services across the region, in September 2016
- Richmond Valley Council's then-Aged and Disability Advisory Committee and Aged and Disability Interagency Meeting Group have also provided ongoing feedback
- Additional responses on disability access also came from Council's Community Survey conducted in June 2016
- Questions on disability services and accessibility support were also included in Richmond Valley Council's telephone poll that formed part of community consultation for the new Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2030, in July 2016.

By focusing on the four themes, and cross referencing between the survey and the meetings, each Council was able to identify a single major priority for each theme and then a range of strategies and actions for each area.

Overall, community members feel that there is a positive presence and inclusion for people with disabilities, for example in progress of accessible playgrounds, and promoting access to public buildings. However accessibility varies greatly for people of different abilities and in different situations e.g. more public buildings could improve accessibility, supports available could be more widely promoted and access could move beyond the physical to more support for sensory disabilities, mental health issues and other 'invisible' disabilities. For example, Council's Community Survey prompted two responses asking for accessible toilets for halls in Casino and Coraki, and for a disability access ramp to the Coraki riverside.

The consultation process emphasised how important it was for people with disability to be consulted and have their needs, aspirations, experiences and voices included at all stages of information dissemination and maintenance and creation of public infrastructure and services.

Outcomes of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan survey

Notes about respondents

There were 49 respondents from the Richmond Valley Local Government Area, out of a total of 540 across the seven Local Government Areas participating in the survey

72% of responses were from individuals, 12% were from an organisation and 17% were from a person both on behalf of an organisation and as an individual

Of these, 30% were persons with a disability, 35% were carers, family members or friends of persons with a disability and 47% were interested members of the community

An additional question was asked to encourage extra information from respondents who may have experience of a health impairment but not necessarily identify as having a disability. This is valuable information in terms of accessibility for community members as a whole.

301 respondents gave the following answers when asked whether they identified with any of the following:

- 37% responded with an 'other' impairment
- 31% said that they used a mobility aid, e.g. wheely walker, cane and/or wheelchair
- 22% said that they had a mental health issue
- 16% responded that they had hearing impairment and/or used a hearing aid
- 8% said that they had an intellectual impairment

Please note, results add up to more than 100% as respondents were able to choose multiple options.

This question was an excellent example of the value of the seven Local Government Areas working together on their survey. The pool of respondents identifying with having a similar range of accessibility issues, disability or health issues was much larger and so the experiences and opinions shared would not have been nearly as comprehensive had the survey been limited to a single LGA.

There was also a question asked in the Micromex survey in July 2016 regarding disability services and accessibility support. It ranked 4.40 out of 5 for importance and 3.57 out of 5 for satisfaction, placing the former in the higher range and the latter in the middle range.

Respondents were asked to choose from five strategies to address each of the four focus areas. The following priorities were identified for each focus area:



A full list of questions for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan survey, and the Richmond Valley Community Survey can be found at the end of this document. Responses of note included:

Consider accessibility at inception of planning

Have integrated events as the norm as opposed to “special events”

Lead by example - engaging and showcasing people with disabilities in local business and as part of our community fabric

Use universal accessible standards i.e. more than just physical

Reduce barriers: Have access to buildings, services, facilities, public areas, beaches, toilets, parks, paths etc.

We need: Communication and consultation – everyone being aware of universal design

Some people don't understand. More education, sharing experiences and more direct contact with people affected by disability would help

Overall, a great range of suggestions were given by the community. This feedback will influence the work of different areas of Council as we examine how to continue to maintain and improve accessibility of Council services and promote the needs, interests and aspirations of people of all abilities in the Richmond Valley through our Delivery Plan 2017-2021.

6. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Strategies and Actions					
Focus Area 1		Changing attitudes and behaviours towards people with disabilities in the community			
Strategy	Action	KPIs	Responsibility	Timing	IP&R Reference
Ensuring public events are accessible	Review Events Practices	Participation rates and experiences of people with disability in Council events	Manager Communications, Events & Tourism	In accordance with 2017-18 Operational Plan	Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2030
	Revise Events Manual				
Focus Area 2		Making our community liveable and accessible for all			
Strategy	Action	KPIs	Responsibility	Timing	IP&R Reference
Providing continuous accessible paths of travel between facilities and services in town centres and public areas	Review Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP)	New PAMP	Manager Asset Planning	In accordance with 2017-18 Operational Plan	Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2030
	Review relevant policies and procedures	Policies and procedures up to best practice and National Standards	Manager Development & Environment		

Focus Area 3		Improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities			
Strategy	Action	KPIs	Responsibility	Timing	IP&R Reference
Changing people's attitudes	Identify target for employment of people with disabilities Develop and collect statistics Review recruitment procedures	Target identified Statistics collected and disseminated as appropriate Procedures reviewed	Manager Organisational Development	In accordance with 2017-18 Operational Plan	Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2030
Focus Area 4		Improving accessibility of systems and processes			
Strategy	Action	KPIs	Responsibility	Timing	IP&R Reference
Ensuring all information is available in different formats for all abilities	Audit, revise and identify time frame and cost for accessibility compliance of Council's website and documents	Accessible website and documents	Manager Communications, Events & Tourism Manager Information & Technology Services	In accordance with 2017-18 Operational Plan	Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2030

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Responsibility for implementation of Disability Inclusion Action Plan strategies also includes monitoring and evaluation of strategies within the time frames provided. Richmond Valley Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan has been created in line with the strategies and goals of Council's Community Strategic Plan Richmond Valley 2030 and Delivery Plan 2017 – 2021. Strategies and goals set out in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be incorporated within the Management Plan, and relevant strategies will be included in Council's annual planning and management program. Regular monitoring and annual evaluation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan will include:

- Assessment of the quality and success of implementation to date
- Modification of strategies as required to achieve specific Disability Inclusion Action Plan goals
- Results of the review process presented to the Richmond Valley Council Accessibility, Liveability and Aged Advisory Committee, the Richmond Valley Kyogle Aged and Disability Interagency Meeting, for progressive evaluation and endorsement of achievement and strategies

Results will also be part of Council's Annual Report process and will be made available to Richmond Valley Council residents.