



# Disability Inclusion Action Plan

## 2023-2025

Richmond  
Valley  
Council





Richmond Valley Council recognises the people of the Bundjalung nation 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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*Image: Opening the Casino Memorial Pool Stage 1 upgrade, which has been designed to improve accessibility.*

*Front cover: Windara team members at work in the nursery.*



## Introduction

In 2022-23 Council worked with the community to create our Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2040. This Plan includes a long-term vision and a set of principles to guide the future growth and prosperity of our valley.

### Our vision for the future is:

A growing sustainable community, with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and thriving economy.

### We want everyone in our community to share in this future, to be valued, supported and included. Our six guiding principles reflect this:

- Everyone in our community should feel safe, valued and respected
- People should be proud of where they live
- Everyone should be treated fairly and have the same opportunities in life
- Everyone should have a home
- People should be able to live here all their life – they shouldn't have to move away to get an education, find a home, or get a job
- All of us should leave this place better than we found it for the generations to come

Achieving these goals for every member of our community, including those who live with disability, will require a strong commitment to change and inclusion from everyone who lives, works and invests in the Richmond Valley.

Council has developed the Richmond Valley Disability Inclusion Action Plan, to explore what we can do, as a local government organisation, to support people with disability to share in our community's vision for the future and participate fully in community life.



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Participating in the Casino Fun Run.

# Listening, Learning and Leading Change

## A message from the Mayor

I am pleased to present Richmond Valley Council's 2023 Disability Inclusion Action Plan. This Plan reflects the vision and values in our Community Strategic Plan, which was adopted by our Council earlier this year. One of our key values is the belief that everyone in our community should be treated fairly and have the same opportunities in life. Council has been working towards that goal in the way we design and manage our community assets, provide essential services and advocate for our community. But we still have a lot more to do to encourage understanding and inclusion. Over the past years I've been privileged to attend community awareness days, such as White Cane Day, where I've spoken directly with people living with disability and had an opportunity to explore first-hand what it is like to try and navigate our town and use our facilities in these circumstances. It altered the way that I thought about our footpaths, parking, community buildings, parks and services. Listening to the stories of those living with disability, being willing to learn, share and view the world through the experiences of others is one of the most important things that we can do as a community to encourage inclusion.

I'm pleased that our Council is improving the way it considers these issues and that new and upgraded community facilities are incorporating more inclusive design, such as tactile aids on our footpaths and road crossings to assist those with visual impairment. We are also improving accessibility in our sports facilities, with the newly upgraded Casino Memorial Pool featuring an all-ability access ramp and accessible amenities, so that everyone can share this wonderful venue together. We want to continue this theme in the future, and this plan includes actions across the four key inclusion themes of: Community attitudes and behaviours; Liveable communities; Employment, and Council systems and processes.

As the second-largest employer in the Richmond Valley, Council has a role to play in providing a range of employment opportunities for our community members. Our Youth Employment Scheme and Try a Trade Programs have helped local people of all abilities to get a start in their career and explore new possibilities. I'm proud of the progress we have made in these areas and this plan includes actions to open further

direct employment within Council and to help build understanding within our workforce of the needs and experiences of people living with disability.

I look forward to more opportunities to listen, learn and lead change in our community to make it a more inclusive, safe and enjoyable place for people of all abilities.



Richmond Valley Mayor Robert Mustow.



# About This Plan

In 2014, the NSW Government passed the Disability Inclusion Act, which aimed to enshrine the principle of inclusion in legislation and hold all levels of government – both State and local – accountable for making real change in this area. The Act includes a requirement for all government agencies, including local councils, to prepare a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The NSW Government prepares the state-wide DIAP and local councils prepare their own inclusion plans, based on the key directions of the State plan. The local plans focus on what Councils can do, within their range of responsibilities, to help ensure that people with disability have a better opportunity to participate in community life. The State DIAP focuses on four key areas for inclusion. This plan explains what Council will do towards improving outcomes in these four areas:

## ATTITUDES & BEHAVIOURS

Government, business and the general community are aware of and demonstrate positive attitudes and actions to inclusion for people with disability.

## EMPLOYMENT

People with disability have the opportunity to gain, retain, contribute effectively and experience the positive self and social benefits of employment.

## LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

All people, including those with disability, are able to exercise their rights, live, learn, work and play, feel safe, raise a family and grow old, within their own community.

## SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

People with disability can access information, systems, processes and services, and supporting their right to exercise choice and control.

# What Have We Achieved So Far?

Council’s last Disability Inclusion Action Plan was prepared in 2017. Since that time, we have made good progress in improving the accessibility of our assets and community facilities. This has included providing wheelchair accessible picnic tables, upgrading facilities to include accessible toilets, providing Tactile Ground Surface Indicators at major pedestrian crossings and designing accessibility into all new assets and major upgrades. Council has continued to implement its Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan (PAMP) to provide more shared walkways connected to key public spaces, such as the CBD, schools and sports fields. The recently completed Casino Memorial Pool upgrade includes an all-ability access ramp to the 50m pool, accessible amenities and play areas and Stage 2 of the improvements will feature an indoor hydrotherapy pool. Council’s libraries also provide services such as programs for socially isolated people, specialist software, large print and audio books for people with impaired vision and home delivery services for those who cannot attend a library. Our customer experience team offers direct assistance with tasks, such as completing

forms and accessing services and Council has recently introduced automated subtitles for council meeting broadcasts, to assist those with hearing impairment. Work is also progressing on improving housing options within the Richmond Valley for those living with disability. This includes working with not-for-profit organisations to progress housing developments, as well as planning for a broader range of housing options in Council’s Growth Management Strategy. Council will shortly commence a Housing Strategy for the Richmond Valley, to identify suitable locations for a diverse range of housing in each community. However, there is still more to be done to support a more accessible and inclusive community, such as offering more employment opportunities within Council for those living with disability. Currently only 1% of Council’s workforce declares that they have a disability, compared to some 17.7% of the population. Our new Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-25 continues our focus on improved community infrastructure and services and builds on Council’s commitment to open further employment opportunities within our workforce.



Enjoying the new Casino Pool splash play area.



Council’s mobile library service visits remote communities.





The Windara team at work in the nursery.

## Connecting with IP&R

All Councils in NSW use the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework (IP&R) to plan for the future of the community, identify long-term projects and deliver meaningful change.

Our Community Strategic Plan, Richmond Valley 2040, was developed in consultation with the community and sets out our vision for a growing sustainable community, with a relaxed lifestyle, beautiful environment and thriving economy. The Plan is based on four key directions:

### 1. Strengthening our role in the region

This focuses on opportunities for our community to grow, strengthening our economy, build back better after the 2022 floods, and provide more housing, jobs and services for the future.

### 2. Creating great places to live

This focuses on creating vibrant, liveable and safe communities. It includes enhancing our town centres and ensuring that our parks, playgrounds, sports fields and community facilities are well maintained. It also looks at strategies to adapt to a changing climate and build resilience against future natural disasters.

### 3. Protecting our unique environment

This direction focuses on preserving our native bushland and biodiversity, maintaining healthy rivers, beaches and waterways, and helping our Valley transition to a circular economy.

### 4. Delivering for our community

This direction focuses on the role that Richmond Valley Council will play in helping to deliver the community's plan. It includes Council's civic leadership as well as our responsibilities for managing community resources and providing great service.

The Community Strategic Plan is supported by a Delivery Program, which outlines what each elected Council will do during its term of office to deliver the goals in the CSP. Council reports to the community on its success in completing the Delivery Program actions every six months. Once Council adopts the new DIAP, the actions from the Plan will be included in our new Delivery Program and Operational Plans. The diagram (right) shows how the plans all fit together.





# What is Disability?

**The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 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.’

This definition is also reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was ratified by Australia in 2008.

In the national Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** defines disability as:

‘Any limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months’.

In terms of the census, the ABS collects data on ‘severe or profound disability, defining it as:

‘People who need assistance in their day to day lives with any or all of the following activities – self-care, body movements or communication – because of a disability, long-term health condition, or old age.

**The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability**, conducted over four years from 2019-2023, explored the concepts of disability and inclusion in detail. The Commission’s final report includes the following definition of disability:

‘An evolving concept that results from the interaction between a person with impairment(s) and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others’.

The Royal Commission’s final report also looked at how perceptions of disability had changed in Australia over the past 50 years and the impact that this had had on the way our society responded. The report concluded that:

‘The path to the Royal Commission opened up in the 1970s and 1980s, when disability theorists rejected the medical model of disability in favour of the social model. The medical model saw disability as an individual defect to be eliminated, cured, or hidden away. The social model focuses on the environment in which a person with disability lives. This model sees people being disabled by social barriers, including discriminatory attitudes, inaccessible physical environments and forms of communication, and failures to provide adjustments needed to enable people with disability to participate in education, workplaces and the wider community.’

Council also explored the concepts of disability and inclusion with local people and service providers during the consultation for this Plan. It became clear from these discussions that different people perceive disability in different ways. It is a personal and evolving concept.

Some regard disability as part of human diversity and ‘just another way of being’. They argue that it is not so much a person’s physical or psychological impairment, but the way society responds to it that determines the impact on their daily life.

Other people acknowledge that some members of our community may face more physical or psychological challenges than others . Some may regard this as ‘impairment’, others may regard it as ‘disability’. Some will choose not to identify as having a disability for fear of being disadvantaged in employment or treated differently in society.

There are many definitions of disability, depending on personal perspective and experience, but our priority within this Plan remains the same: Everyone in our community should feel safe, valued, respected and included, regardless of how they identify or define their abilities.



Participating in White Cane Day in Casino.



# How Many People Live With Disability?

Because there are many different perspectives in our community, it is difficult to quantify exactly how many people in the Richmond Valley are living with disability.

Official statistics provide a guide, but largely focus on those who need help with core activities, or are connected to national support schemes, such as the NDIS, or the aged care system. There are many people in our community who live with disability without being counted as such in the census or connected to service providers.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, there were **4.4 million** Australians living with disability in 2018 (most recent figures available).

This represents **17.7%** of the total population, which equates to some **4,171** Richmond Valley residents.

The prevalence of disability increased with age, according to the Survey - **one in nine (11.6%)** people aged 0-64 years and **one in two (49.6%)** people aged 65 years and over experienced disability.

Disability prevalence was similar for **males (17.6%)** and **females (17.8%)**.

Almost **one-quarter (23.2%)** of all people with disability reported a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition.



17.7%

Of Australia’s population identifies as having a disability, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



This equates to

4171

Richmond Valley residents.



1863

Richmond Valley residents reported needing assistance with core activities due to disability (2021 Census). Of these, 1000 were over 65.



843

Richmond Valley residents are currently receiving support through the NDIS.



Enjoying the HART Services Mens Day Out.  
Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023 - 2025 11



# Assistance, Support and Employment

The National Disability Insurance Scheme mainly caters for people under the age of 65. There are currently 610,500 Australians receiving support from the NDIS. This includes 182,920 in NSW and 843 participants in the Richmond Valley local government area.

The most represented age range in NSW is children under 15yrs, with a total of 77,974 children currently receiving support from NDIS, including 362 children in the Richmond Valley LGA.

The most represented primary disabilities amongst NDIS recipients are autism, intellectual disability, developmental delay and psychosocial disability.

## Older people

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers found that one in six Australians (or 3.9 million people) were aged over 65 and that nearly half of them (49.6%) identified as having a disability. There are currently 5,921 Richmond Valley residents aged over 65 and, based on the ABS statistics, some 2,960 of these older residents may be living with disability.

The survey found that only a small percentage (4.6%) of older Australians lived in care accommodation. The majority (95.3%) lived at home, with 1.3 million requiring some form of assistance with everyday activities.

Two-thirds (68.1%) of older Australians lived in a low-income household (earning less than \$756 per week).

## Carers

The ABS Survey found that there were 2.65 million carers supporting those with disability and in need of aged care - representing 10.8% of all Australians.

Females were more likely to be carers (12.3% of all females) than males (9.3% of all males), with 71.8% of primary carers being female.

- There were 235,300 young carers (under the age of 25)
- Over one-third (37.4%) of primary carers had disability, twice the rate of non-carers (15.3%).
- The most common reason primary carers gave for taking on a caring role was a sense of family responsibility

## Employment

The ABS survey found that labour force participation for people living with disability had remained stable since the previous survey in 2015, with participation rates for those aged 15-64 years at 53.4%. In contrast, participation rates for people without disability had increased to 84.1% over the same period.

Of those living with disability, 37.9% of those aged 15-64 years said their main source of personal income was a government pension or allowance

- 11.4% of those with a profound or severe disability (aged 15-64 years) were working full-time
- One-third of those aged 15 years and over had completed Year 12 or equivalent
- One in six aged 15 years and over had a Bachelor degree or above
- One in 10 aged 15 years and over had experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months because of their disability



HART Services clients enjoying an outing.

# What Does Inclusion Look Like?

## NATIONAL STRATEGY

**Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031** sets out a vision for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community. The Strategy drives change in seven outcome areas:

### Employment and financial security:

Providing jobs and career opportunities for people with disability and making sure they have enough income to meet their needs.

### Inclusive homes and communities:

Increasing the number of accessible, affordable and well-designed homes and creating a community that is inclusive and accessible.

### Safety, rights and justice:

Ensuring the rights of people with disability are promoted, upheld and protected, and people with disability feel safe and enjoy equality before the law.

### Personal and community support:

Providing people with disability access to support so they can live independently and engage in their communities.

### Education and learning:

Supporting people with disability to access education and learning throughout their lives so they reach their full potential.

### Health and wellbeing:

Increasing support and capability in the healthcare sector to meet the needs of people with disability, and ensuring disaster preparedness and emergency responses include the needs of people with disability.

### Community attitudes:

Recognising the positive contribution people with disability make to society and building confidence in the community to work and engage with people with disability.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan aligns with the National Strategy.





## What Did Our Community Say?

In preparing this Plan, Council has engaged with local people living with disability, as well as support services and carers to explore some of the main issues of the four key inclusion themes.

We recognise that this consultation is only the start of a much longer and ongoing conversation that needs to occur, as our community moves to a greater understanding of how we can all contribute to better shared outcomes.

Feedback from the consultation is included in discussion of the four key themes on the following pages, however the over-riding response from participants was the need for greater awareness and understanding of those living with disability.

Being willing to reach out, engage and learn from the lived experience of others leads to better decision-making, better design and better services for everyone. Participants spoke of their hope that those planning new communities, organising public events, designing infrastructure and services would automatically consider the needs of all users and all abilities and seek guidance and feedback on the best approach.

Another key theme was the need to involve people living with disability in decision-making in all aspects of community life, by improving accessibility to information and community consultation.

There was also a wide range of feedback on the design of key community assets, such as footpaths, public spaces, parks, sporting facilities and community buildings, and insights into how to reduce barriers to mobility and encourage inclusion.

Improving access to suitable housing and increasing employment opportunities for people living with disability were also key themes of the consultation. There were many suggestions as to how Council could increase participation in its workforce.

Based on the community feedback, we have developed 25 key actions to help support inclusion for people of all abilities in our community. These actions will be incorporated into our Council plans and processes over the next three years.

### Observations from the 2023 Royal Commission

*"Throughout our work, people with disability clearly, persuasively and passionately described their vision for a more inclusive Australia...This is a vision of a future where people with and without disability:*

- *Live, learn, work, play, create and engage together in safe and diverse communities.*
- *Have the power of choice, independence and the dignity to take risks.*
- *Make significant contributions to communities that value their presence and treat them with respect.*
- *Are culturally safe and belong in families, communities and peer networks.*

*Realising an inclusive society is the responsibility of the whole of Australia.*

*Witnesses in public hearings and others who engaged with us emphasised the importance of all Australians hearing the voices of people with disability, learning from their experiences and expertise, and recognising their capacity to be leaders of change."*

- Final Report Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability



## FOCUS AREA 1:

# Improving Attitudes and Behaviours

One of the key objectives of our Community Strategic Plan is providing opportunities for everyone in our community to learn, create and celebrate together as we enjoy the unique lifestyle of the Richmond Valley.

Community attitudes and awareness of disability issues have changed over the past 50 years, but there is still more to be done to encourage greater inclusion and participation.

Supporting improved awareness includes challenging the traditional view of disability as being 'a person in a wheelchair' and openly acknowledging the non-visible or hidden

disabilities within our community. People living with conditions such as depression and anxiety, autism, deafness, dementia, or chronic pain may suffer greater barriers to inclusion than those with more visible disabilities, but there is often limited understanding of their needs.

Council can play a role in supporting improved understanding by actively promoting and participating in community awareness days, such as White Cane Day, Hearing Awareness Week and International Day of People with Disability. We can also offer opportunities for Council staff to undertake awareness training, volunteering and 'meet and greet' sessions with local people living with disability, and engage directly with local groups and service providers to help improve our understanding of key issues and needs.

Council will also support positive perceptions by including images of people of all abilities in our community publications, social media and employment advertising and promoting inclusive messaging in community information.

We will also actively encourage local people living with disability to consider standing for election as a Councillor in the local government elections and ensure that our council meeting live-streaming services are accessible. Currently, only 3% of the State's 1259 elected Councillors identify as having a disability, compared to 17.7% of the Australian community.

Some disabilities look like this



Some look like this



Mayor Robert Mustow (right) joins members of the Casino Richmond Valley Blind Citizens Australia branch on White Cane Day to learn about the experiences of local people living with visual impairment.

## What will council do?

We will build understanding and awareness in our workforce and the wider community by:

- Promoting and encouraging participation in community awareness programs, such as White Cane Day
- Providing awareness training for our staff and opportunities to engage in shared activities with people living with disability
- Inviting people with disability to share their experiences of interacting with council services and assets, so we can improve design and service delivery
- Ensuring Council's communications, social media and publications promote positive images of those with disability and messages of inclusion
- Encouraging people with disability to stand for election as Councillors



## FOCUS AREA 2:

# Creating Liveable Communities

Creating great places to live is one of the four key directions in our Community Strategic Plan.

Everyone should have the opportunity to access services and facilities and participate in community life. One of the main issues raised in our consultation was the need to provide more accessible housing options, near key community services. Council has recently completed its Growth Management Strategy to identify where future housing will be developed. The next step is to complete a Housing Strategy for the Richmond Valley to plan for a diverse range of housing options in each community. In preparing the strategy, we will consider the needs of those living with disability and consult with community housing providers.

The consultation also highlighted the need to carefully consider the design of our community infrastructure and the experiences of those who use our assets and facilities. This included considering choice of materials, asset design, ease of use and safety. It also included thinking about the journeys people would need to make to public places such as the CBD, schools and sports facilities and ensuring there were accessible and connected pathways to get there, as well as appropriate disabled parking spaces in key areas.

One of the actions Council will undertake to improve accessibility in future is to encourage people living with disability to be involved in the design of major upgrades to our CBD areas and community buildings.

During the consultation, people also shared their experience of participating in community gatherings such as Australia Day and Christmas celebrations and other events and festivals. There were many suggestions as to how we could make these events more accessible for those living with disability and Council will consider these ideas when designing future activities.

Council's libraries also play an important role in community life, including our library bus service and outreach programs. We will continue to consult with library service users on new programs, activities and resources for people of all ages and abilities.

Opportunities to care for and connect with our environment also received a high priority in our Community Strategic Plan. Council is currently planning new tree planting and habitat restoration projects for our community and will consult with local service providers and people living with disability on how they would like to be involved in these programs.

It is also important that everyone in our community feels safe and well-prepared for emergencies such as fires, storms and floods. Council has been working with emergency service agencies to ensure that community Get Ready campaigns and information are available to people living with disability and that special needs are considered in emergency response.



*Having fun at a Disabled Surfers Association event in Evans Head*

## What will council do?

Build on our Community Strategic Plan commitment to create vibrant, liveable and safe communities by:

- Continuing to implement Council's Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan.
- Involving people with disability in the design of major public assets and spaces, including the CBD upgrades for Casino and Evans Head and design of public playgrounds
- Planning for a diverse range of housing in the Richmond Valley and supporting options for accessible housing near key services
- Providing more opportunities for people with disability to participate in Council's community events
- Continuing to provide programs and resources through our regional library service and consulting on new proposals
- Providing opportunities for people with disability to be involved in community greening programs and habitat restoration
- Supporting people with disability to be better prepared for emergencies, such as bushfire and flood through community education programs



## FOCUS AREA 3:

# Increasing Employment Opportunities

With more than 270 staff, Council is the second largest employer in the Richmond Valley, offering a range of different job opportunities.

There are six key behaviours that guide everything we do as Council employees

- **We are community focused**
- **We take responsibility**
- **We lead by example**
- **We embrace change**
- **We do what we say**
- **We are in this together**

To apply these principles in the workplace, Council will lead the way in offering employment opportunities to a wide range of community members, being inclusive in the way we recruit and welcome people to our workforce, and being willing to embrace new ideas and ways of working together.

Currently only 1% of Council's workforce declares that they have a disability, compared to 17.7% of the Australian community. So it is important that we offer more opportunities for people living with disability to gain employment with Council and that we work to create a safe and inclusive environment where people feel comfortable to disclose their disability and discuss workplace adjustments.

Increasing staff awareness and understanding is the first step in this journey. Council will also partner with local disability service providers and recruitment agencies to help make our recruitment practices more accessible, provide opportunities for work experience and support employees with disability to develop and progress their careers.

We will also continue to offer our entry-level employment programs, such as the Youth Employment Scheme and Try a Trade to support local school leavers and those entering the workforce to start their career at Council.

Additionally, Council currently purchases a range of services and products from local disability employment organisations and we will continue to explore options to expand our procurement in this area.



## What will council do?

Build on the key directions in our Workforce Strategy by:

- Proactively increasing employment opportunities within Council for people with disabilities
- Supporting people with disabilities to work effectively and safely with dignity and mobility across the workplace through appropriate workplace adjustments
- Improving our recruitment practices to make it easier for people with disabilities to engage with our processes
- Partnering with Disability Services and Recruitment Agencies to provide people with disabilities greater opportunity within the workplace to continually develop their careers
- Promoting a safe and inclusive environment where employees feel comfortable to disclose their disability and discuss workplace adjustments
- Proactively applying the Local Government Tendering provisions to support more opportunities for the purchase of goods and services from approved Disability Employment Organisations.



RVC roads crew members Brad and Cameron completing a road patching job.



## FOCUS AREA 4:

# Improving Systems and Processes

Council provides a wide range of services to our community, and it is important that everyone can access the information and support they need to engage with these processes.

This includes ensuring that our customers can access information and services through a variety of options, including on-line, via telephone and in person. To help support greater inclusion, Council will review its website, publications and communications regularly to improve accessibility and keep up to date with emerging technologies.

We will also consider our key customer contact points and how we might improve accessibility in our customer service centres. Supporting people living with disability to engage with council processes, such as lodging a development application, paying rates or registering their pets was one of the key focus areas of the consultation. We will continue to explore new approaches to our customer services, based on feedback from those who use our facilities and receive information from Council. This could include working with local service providers to conduct client surveys.

Ensuring that, wherever possible, people have adequate notice of service interruptions, such as water supply repairs and roadworks, is also important so that those living with disability can plan ahead for these changes and receive any extra support they may need.

Council regularly conducts community satisfaction surveys, to gather feedback on what is important to the community, what we are doing well and what we could improve. When designing our surveys and community consultation exercises, we will consider how to improve accessibility for those living with disability.

## What will council do?

Council will promote inclusion through its systems and processes by:

- Reviewing our Customer Service Charter to ensure it recognises the needs of people living with disability
- Extending and improving Council's on-line services
- Inviting customer feedback from those engaging with our services and processes
- Considering the needs of those living with disabilities when designing our community consultation activities
- Reviewing our website and corporate communications to improve accessibility
- Considering the needs of those with disabilities during planned and unplanned service disruptions
- Improving accessibility at our customer service centers



Celebrating Anzac Day in Casino.





Windara team members at work in the nursery.

## Implementing Our Plan & Measuring Success

Consulting on issues and developing actions to support improvement is just the beginning of the planning process. The next step is to integrate these actions into our operational plans, allocate funds in our annual budget, or seek government grants and assistance to deliver them. We also need to monitor and measure the success of key actions in improving inclusion within our community.

Over the life of this Plan, council will use its Integrated Planning and Reporting processes to allocate resources, deliver the actions and measure success. This will include quantitative and qualitative measures.

Quantitative measures will tell us whether we are increasing participation or accessibility. For example, whether we have increased the number of people living with disability who

are employed by Council, or the number of community facilities that have been upgraded to improve accessibility.

Qualitative measures tell us whether these actions have made a positive difference in improving outcomes for those living with disability in our community. To gather this feedback we will use direct engagement with service users and community surveys.

Integrating the actions from our planning process ensures that our elected members and members of our community receive regular reports on progress. Council will undertake a comprehensive review of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan as part of the process of developing a new plan to measure the progress we have made.

Local volunteers and participants enjoying a Disabled Surfers Association event at Evans Head.





# Summary of Actions

## Focus Area 1:

### Improving Attitudes and Behaviour

1. Encourage participation in awareness programs, such as White Cane Day.
2. Provide disability awareness training for Council staff.
3. Invite people with disability to share their experiences of interacting with council services and assets, so we can improve design and service delivery.
4. Ensure Council’s communications, social media and publications promote positive images of those with disability and promote messages of inclusion.
5. Encourage people with disability to stand for election as Councillors.

## Focus Area 2:

### Creating Liveable Communities

1. Continue to implement Council’s Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan.
2. Involve people with disability in the design of major public assets and spaces, including the CBD upgrades for Casino and Evans Head, and design of public playgrounds.
3. Plan for a diverse range of housing in the Richmond Valley and support options for accessible housing near key services.
4. Provide more opportunities for people with disability to participate in Council’s community events.
5. Continue to provide programs and resources through our regional library service and consulting on new proposals.
6. Provide opportunities for people with disability to be involved in community greening programs and habitat restoration.
7. Support people with disability to be better prepared for emergencies, such as bushfire and flood through community education programs.

## Focus Area 3:

### Increasing Employment Opportunities

1. Proactively increase employment opportunities within Council for people with disabilities.
2. Support people with disability to work effectively and safely with dignity and mobility across the workplace through appropriate workplace adjustments.
3. Improve our recruitment practices to make it easier for people with disability to engage with our processes.
4. Partner with Disability Services and Recruitment Agencies to provide people with disabilities greater opportunity within the workplace to continually develop their careers.
5. Promote a safe and inclusive environment where employees feel comfortable to disclose their disability and discuss workplace adjustments.
6. Proactively apply the Local Government Tendering provisions to support more opportunities for purchase of goods and services from approved Disability Employment Organisations.

## Focus Area 4:

### Improving Council Systems and Processes

1. Review our Customer Service Charter to ensure it recognises the needs of people living with disability.
2. Extend and improve Council’s on-line services.
3. Invite customer feedback from those engaging with our services and processes.
4. Consider the needs of those living with disability when designing our community consultation activities.
5. Review our website and corporate communications to improve accessibility.
6. Consider the needs of those with disability during planned and unplanned service disruptions.
7. Improve accessibility at our customer service centres.





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