

Cairns Regional Council

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2024-2026



Contents

Acknowledgment	2
Executive statement	3
The language of disability	4
Cairns disability snapshot	5
Policy context	6
Policy context (continued)	7
Framework alignment	8
Internal stakeholder consultation	9
External stakeholder consultation	10
Structure of the plan	11
Implementation and reporting	12-19
Reference list	20

For further information or assistance relating to Cairns Regional Council’s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and other Council initiatives relating to disability, please contact disability@cairns.qld.gov.au or 1300 692 247.

Acknowledgment

Cairns Regional Council acknowledges and pays our respects to the Traditional Custodians of our region, the Djabugay; Yirrganydji; Bulawai, Gimuy Walubara Yidinji; Mandingalbay Yidinji; Gunggandji; Dulabed and Malanbarra Yidinji; Bundabarra and Wadjanbarra Yidinji, Wanjuru Yidinji; Madjandji; Mamu and NgadjonJii peoples.

The proud, culturally strong and diverse First Peoples of our region are collectively called the Bama – the Rainforest Peoples of Far North Queensland. We extend respect to all elders past, present and future, and other First Peoples within our region.

In designing this document, Council has aimed to align with the World Wide Web Consortium’s Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0). Where possible, Council has adhered to Level AA guidelines, acknowledging that sections of the document may conform to Level A.

Executive statement

Council is proud to present the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) 2024-2026, aimed at fostering a commitment to increasing participation opportunities for people with disability and recognising their valuable contribution to our community.

Cairns is home to around 28,000 residents with disability and nearly 4,000 NDIS registered individuals, with many continuing to be disproportionately affected by the impacts of COVID, climate change and ongoing housing challenges.

This DAIP recognises these challenges and builds on the achievements of Council's Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2017-21. It underscores the crucial role of local government in establishing an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone, while providing a structured framework to guide and inform Council's investment in planning, infrastructure enhancements, community-building initiatives and collaborations with the community sector.

We take pride in the progress we've made and look forward to continuing this journey through the DAIP by raising awareness and appreciation of people with a disability, both within our organisation and across the community we serve.



Cr B Manning
Mayor



Mica Martin
Chief Executive Officer





The language of disability

People's experience of disability is diverse and the language around it takes many forms. We acknowledge the active debate and different preferences in describing disability, and the importance of individuals choosing their preferred language.

Council's intention is not to exclude anyone on the basis that their preference differs to the style used within the plan. For the DAIP, Council adopts the person-centred approach – 'people with disability.'

Council has adopted the following definition of Disability and Neurodiversity¹:

"A physical and/or mental limitation, restriction, or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities. Classification of disability types are physical, intellectual, cognitive, neurological, visual, hearing, and psychosocial."

Cairns disability snapshot

Disability is part of the human experience. Most of us will experience physical, intellectual, psychosocial, sensory, neurological and/or cognitive disability at some stage in our lives – either personally, or through caring for a loved one.

Nationally, about 1 in 6 people have a disability. The Cairns Local Government Area (LGA) is home to about 10,000² residents that identify as needing daily assistance due to living with a disability and almost 4,000 individuals are registered with the NDIS (NDIS, 2023)³.

In the past 30 years, the Cairns population has nearly doubled – growing from 89,000 residents in 1992 to more than 172,000 residents today - and the region will continue to grow into the future. This growth along with the significant increase in our population aged over 65 in the next 20 years, highlights the importance of planning and investing in infrastructure and services. By working toward creating an inclusive and accessible city, we will be well-placed to meet the needs of a growing and aging population into the future.

Cairns is also identified as a premier and maturing accessible tourism destination, positioning the region to tap into the estimated \$3.2 billion-dollar industry nationally⁴, and demonstrating Council's long-term commitment to the inclusion of people with disability. Not only does Council identify inclusion as a human right, but it is also sound economic investment.



More than

28,000

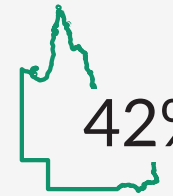
Residents with a disability in Cairns



Over

10,000

Locals require daily assistance due to a disability



42%

Queenslanders over 65 have a disability



Over

18,000

Locals act as unpaid carers to a loved one with a disability



Nearly

4,000

NDIS registered individuals



5%

Culturally and linguistically diverse



9.6%

First Nations



Policy context

The development of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031⁵ and Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-2027⁶ involved extensive national consultation and engagement with the disability sector, including peak bodies, governments, and people with disability.

These plans were a key reference for Council's DAIP, aligning our focus areas with national priorities. Council acknowledges the critical role of federal and state plans, informed by the lived experience of people with disability, in advancing equitable outcomes for all Australians.

In accordance with the national strategy, the DAIP honours the Social Model of Disability⁷. This model puts ownership of barriers back onto the attitudes, practices and structures a person interacts with, acknowledging that issues with design of places, services and programs prevent engagement and participation, not an individual's disability.

This also aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)⁸ which states that disability results from the "interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers hindering full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." The DAIP aims to address local barriers and, in doing so, harness the full economic, social and community benefits created by achieving a more inclusive society.

Policy context (continued)

In aligning with the Resilient Cities Framework⁹, Council supports holistic approaches to building community resilience in the face of complex, compounding challenges.

A society's wellbeing is linked to their ability to reduce susceptibility to the impact of challenges and uncertainty, and supporting those who face barriers through targeted action.

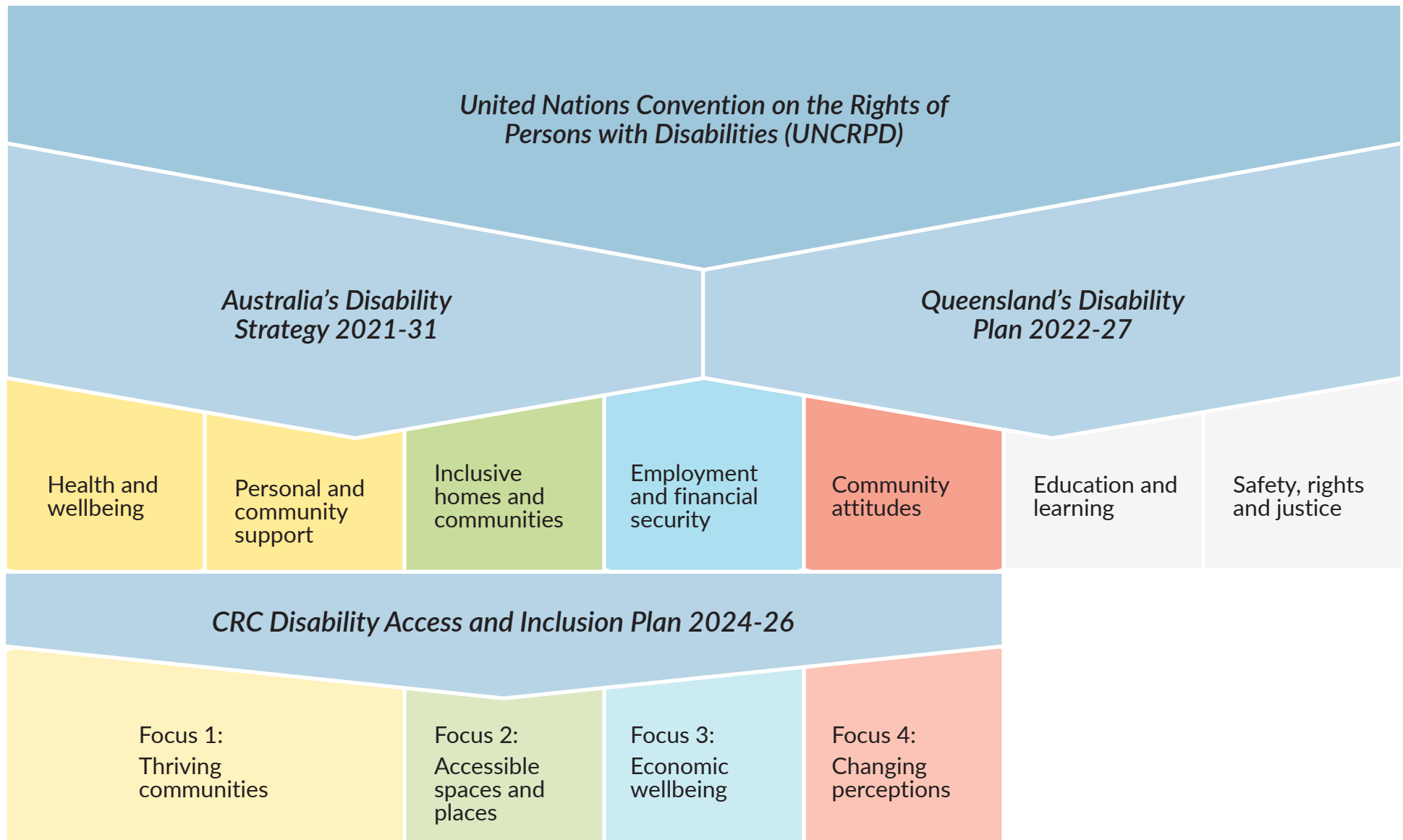
Alignment of the DAIP with UNCRPD, Australia's Disability Strategy, Queensland's Disability Plan and the Resilient Cities Framework ensures a cohesive approach to achieving better community outcomes for people with disability at all levels of government.

Council's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 identifies the significant benefits of an inclusive, connected, and vibrant social fabric in strengthening the resilience and wellbeing of the Cairns community (Focus 3, 4 and 5).

The DAIP addresses the need for specific and targeted action that support vulnerable cohorts, further aligning with the framework of Council's various social, community and economic plans, including;

- Cairns LGA Social and Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan 2023-2026
- Economic Development Strategy 2022 -2026
- Arts & Disability Strategy 2022
- Diversity & Inclusion General Policy 2022
- Open Public Spaces General Policy 2021
- Cairns LGA Social and Community Resilience Strategy (Under Development)

Framework alignment



Internal stakeholder consultation

In developing the DAIP, input was sought from teams across Council who hold direct responsibility for delivering on each action area. This approach helps put accessibility at the forefront of Council operations, create shared vision and set informed and realistic goals.

Internal stakeholder matrix:

Marketing & Communications

- Design and distribution of Council information
- Management of Council websites and social media
- Civic Events, including citizenship ceremonies

Development Services

- Design and construction of community infrastructure

Strategic Asset Management and Maintenance

- Maintenance and upgrades of community infrastructure

Community Spaces

- Planning, and design of community infrastructure and public spaces
- Maintenance of public spaces
- Community leases
- Go Clubs Grants

Economic Development and Advocacy

- Economic and major events and advocacy

Human Resources

- Recruitment
- Workforce development

Creative Life

- Creative venues and programming, including: Cairns Libraries, Cairns Performing Art Centre (CPAC), Munro Martin Parklands (MMP), Court House Gallery and Tanks Art Centre
- Arts and Culture Grants
- Regional Arts Development Grants

Community Resilience

- Disability service sector engagement
- Disaster management
- Active Living Program delivery
- Community Grants Program
- Coordination of the DAIP

External stakeholder consultation

Council acknowledges the importance of listening to, engaging with and harnessing the views and lived experiences of people with disability.

The DAIP was informed by shared knowledge from local disability service providers, accessible tourism providers, peak bodies, lived experience reference groups and members of the Cairns community.

The community consultation process to develop the DAIP commenced with the Disability Access and Inclusion Survey in November of 2021.

More than 300 members of the community completed the online survey, rating the accessibility of facilities amenities and events across the region and providing insight into key issues and barriers facing people with a disability in Cairns.

Throughout 2023 targeted interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the disability services sector and members of lived experience groups made up of both people with a disability and their loved ones with caring responsibilities.

Local voices were vital in ensuring the DAIP is responsive to local experiences, needs and trends.



Structure of the plan

The DAIP has four focus areas that are aligned with the direction of federal and state disability strategies and plans, providing context for Council's role in creating an accessible and inclusive environment.

The four focus areas and goal statements identify the plan's scope, while the strategies and actions remain broad enough to enable Council officers to respond to relevant emerging trends, issues and challenges.



1 Thriving communities
Council actively supports and promotes initiatives that increase inclusion for people with disability and improve their wellbeing and quality of life.



2 Accessible places and spaces
Public spaces are accessible and inclusive, enabling people with disability to fully participate in community life.



3 Economic wellbeing
Council supports meaningful opportunities and pathways for economic participation of people with disability.



4 Changing perceptions
Council actively promotes social cohesion by highlighting the positive contributions of people with disability to our region.

Focus Area 1: Thriving communities

Goal: Council actively supports and promotes initiatives that increase inclusion for people with disability and improve their wellbeing and quality of life.

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
1.1 Council supports a diverse range of opportunities for people with disability to participate in activities that contribute to quality of life and wellbeing.	1.1.1 Support and facilitate a diverse range of recreation and wellbeing opportunities for people of all abilities, including through Council's community grants program.	PR	Active Lifestyles Officer Team Leader Community Partnerships Coordinator Community Resilience	Year 1 Ongoing
	1.1.2 Report on the number and value of community grants provided to support programs, initiatives and events that have a focus on access and inclusion for people with disability.			
	1.1.3 Incorporate a range of inclusive programs, features and events, such as low sensory areas, relaxed performance and accessible reading and learning resources across Council's Creative Venues.	PR EN	Arts & Culture Education Officer Tanks Project Officer: Disability Strategy Library Collections Leader	Year 1 Ongoing
	1.1.4 Seek feedback from people with disability to gather accessibility data and identify opportunities for improvement on current catalogues and events, including a Lived Experience Feedback Group for the Cairns Festival.			
	1.1.5 Civic events continue incorporating the physical and non-physical access needs of attendees with disability, while exploring opportunities for future events, including captions and AUSLAN interpreters.	PR	Coordinator Events Delivery Creative Life Team – Education & Project Officer	Year 1

- Response Types: Planning (PL), Programming (PR), Engagement (EN), Policy (PO)

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
	1.1.6 Support external event and program providers with inclusive events resources and information including Council's Accessible Events Checklist.	EN PR	Coordinator Events Delivery Senior Facilities Liaison Officer Program Leader Major Economic Events Delivery Team Leader Community Partnerships	Year 1 Ongoing
	1.1.7 Work with the disability sector to increase resilience and reduce potential impacts of chronic stressors, crisis events or disruptions, including expanding the implementation of the Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) Toolkit.	PR	Coordinator Community Resilience Disaster Resilience Officer	Year 2
	1.1.8 Support and promote professional development and funding opportunities to lessees of Council facilities to increase accessibility and inclusion within local sport and recreation clubs.	EN	Club Development Officer Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
1.2 Council ensures public information is presented in accessible formats.	1.2.1 Review internal guidelines and procedures for producing online information and marketing resources to ensure accessibility is a key consideration.	PO EN	Marketing & Communications Account Manager Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
	1.2.2 Review Council's Access for All Directory and seek to collaborate with the disability sector to develop an updated resource.			
	1.2.3 Promote Council's DAIP to internal and external stakeholders using a variety of accessible formats.	PO EN	Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1 Ongoing
	1.2.4 Continue engaging with local disability networks and linking external stakeholders with relevant Council staff as required.			

Focus Area 2: Accessible places and spaces

Goal: Public spaces are accessible and inclusive, enabling people with disability to fully participate in community life.

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
2.1 Physical Council spaces are designed and managed to enable people with disability to participate in civic events, programs and services.	2.1.1 Explore opportunities for relevant Council staff to engage in professional development relating to accessible and inclusive space design.	PL	Coordinator Community Strategy Coordinator Development Services Coordinator Strategic Asset Management & Planning Transport Coordinator Design and Survey Services Coordinator Pre-Construction	Year 1 Ongoing
	2.1.2 Universal Design and DDA Standards are considered in all phases of research, planning, and designing of Council spaces and assets.			
	2.1.3 Explore mobility mapping resources, such as effort grading or accessible route planning technologies, to increase accessibility information about the CBD on Council's website.	PL	Coordinator Enterprise Systems	Year 2
	2.1.4 Report the total spend on accessible infrastructure and upgrades in the DAIP progress report and completion report.		Coordinator Strategic Asset Management Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator Community Strategy Coordinator Development Services	Years 1 and 2

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
2.2 The lived experience of people with disability is a key consideration in the management and development of public infrastructure.	2.2.1 Incorporate Customer Request Management (CRM) data and consider other sources of feedback from community and lived experience groups when planning and prioritising community infrastructure.	PL	Coordinator Community Strategy Coordinator Development Services Coordinator Strategic Asset Management and Planning Transport Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion Officer	Year 1 Ongoing
	2.2.2 Identify, monitor and record number and type of physical access-related CRM's, and feed through to relevant teams.	EN	Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1 Ongoing
	2.2.3 Develop a resource to ensure effective internal flow of the above recorded information.			
	2.2.4 Remain connected to local trends and community needs through participation in disability networks and seek to advocate to other levels of government and peak bodies where appropriate.			
	2.2.5 Explore opportunities to implement targeted consultations with lived experience groups for future infrastructure plans and scheduled upgrades.	EN PL	Coordinator Community Business Coordinator Community Strategy Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
	2.2.6 Capture and communicate trends identified at local disability sector network meetings and feed to relevant teams on a regular basis via the DAIP Working Group.	EN	Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1 Ongoing
	2.2.7 Continue advocating to commercial operators and other stakeholders to consider the access needs of customers with disability.	EN	Coordinator Community Strategy Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1 Ongoing

Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing

Goal: Council supports meaningful opportunities and pathways for economic participation of people with disability.

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
3.1 Council supports meaningful pathways for economic participation, acknowledging the higher levels of vulnerability and economic isolation that can be experienced by people with disability.	3.1.1 Continue consulting key stakeholders within the disability sector when undertaking planning for accessibility in spaces where economic activity is concentrated. Eg CBD, Esplanade Precinct and key tourism precincts.	EN	Coordinator Community Strategy Coordinator Development Services Program Leader Economic Development Coordinator Strategic Planning	Year 1 Ongoing
	3.1.2 Opportunities to work at Council are promoted to relevant networks to attract diverse and skilled employees.	EN	Team Leader Organisational Development Wellbeing Advisor, Wellbeing Health & Safety	Year 1
	3.1.3 Continue supporting reasonable adjustments and considerations for applicants and existing staff with disability, including physical and non-physical adjustments.		Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	
	3.1.4 Council Officers to attend community job fairs and similar events to encourage applicants of all abilities and educate other employers about Council's equal opportunity employment pathways.			

Target	Actions	Response Type	Responsible	Timeline
3.2 Council continues to explore opportunities to promote and grow Cairns as a premier accessible tourism destination.	3.2.1 Work with regional tourism organisations to promote the region as a premier accessible tourism destination.	EN	Program Leader Economic Development	Year 1 Ongoing
	3.2.2 Continue growing Cairns as a premier accessible tourism destination by seeking opportunities to expand accessible public infrastructure that caters to people of all abilities.	EN PL	Coordinator Community Strategy Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1 Ongoing
3.3 Council fosters a workplace culture that celebrates and supports diversity.	3.3.1 Facilitate development and learning opportunities for staff to increase knowledge about disability, improving social cohesion and increasing positive experiences of employees with disability.	EN PO	Workforce Development Officer Wellbeing Advisor Team Leader, Organisational Development Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 2
	3.3.2 Harness the voices of the Diversity & Inclusion Champions working group to inform decision making and improve Council policies concerned with anti-discrimination, such the EEO and Inclusive Language Guide, and scheduled Diversity & Inclusion Policy updates.	EN	Workforce Development Officer Wellbeing Advisor Diversity & Inclusion Champions Working Group	Year 2

Focus Area 4: Changing perceptions

Goal: Council actively promotes social cohesion by highlighting the positive contributions of people with disability to our region.

Target	Actions	Response type	Responsible	Timeline
4.1 Council uses media communication channels and levers to shift public perceptions towards acknowledging and valuing the contributions of people with disability.	4.1.1 Monitor and report on the number of stories produced across Council media platforms which have a positive association with disability in the annual DAIP progress report.	EN	Marketing & Communications Account Manager Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
	4.1.2 Using above data as a baseline, seek to increase number of stories posted both internally and externally using a variety of accessible formats.	EN		
	4.1.4 Maintain close working relationships with disability providers and advocates to ensure current issues and stories are fed to relevant Council media stakeholders.	EN	Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
4.2 Council supports organisations, events and initiatives which celebrate and showcase the achievements of people with disability.	4.2.1 Acknowledge significant dates, such as International Day of People with Disability, through internal staff communication channels and events.	PR	Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion Wellbeing Adviser	Year 1 Ongoing
	4.2.2 Support events and activities that promote access and inclusion of people with disability, including key initiatives such as Qld Disability Action Week.	EN PR	Team Leader Community Partnerships Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1
	4.2.3 Use public platforms to promote Council-run events, activities and initiatives relating to inclusion of people with disability via marketing and media channels.		Marketing & Communications Account Manager Community Development Officer - Diversity & Inclusion	Year 1

Implementation and reporting

To support the delivery of the DAIP, a working group will be established with representatives from functional areas that hold responsibility for key deliverables.

This group will meet quarterly to review progress and support the implementation of the plan. The DAIP Working Group will contribute to progress reports and ensure accountability for actions through peer-to-peer workplace support, collaboration and sharing resources and expertise across teams, where possible.

A progress report will be submitted to Council at the end of year one, using working group feedback to measure the progress towards achieving each action. Key external stakeholders consulted through the during the development phase will be re-engaged to provide community feedback on the implementation and achievements of the plan. This will ensure the disability community's experiences and perspectives remain at the forefront of plan from start to finish.

A completion report will be produced at the end of the two-year plan.



Reference list

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3. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Explore Data Online, 'National Participants by Total', <https://data.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>, accessed July 2023.
4. Tourism Research Australia (Austrade), Understanding the opportunity for Australia in Accessible Tourism 2018, <https://dsnsw.com.au/download/understanding-the-opportunity-for-australia-in-accessible-tourism-2018>, accessed August 2023.
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6. Queensland Government, Queensland's Disability Plan – Together a better Queensland 2022-27, <https://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/resources/campaign/state-disability-plan/qdp-2022-27.pdf>, accessed April 2023.
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