

DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN 2024-2026 COMPLETION REPORT

L&C | 52/2/4-02 | #7804993

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council notes the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026 Completion Report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) 2024-26 was endorsed by Council in October 2023. The completion report summarises the outcomes of the Plan and the status against each of the 37 actions. It highlights significant progress across all four focus areas of the plan and provides snapshots of projects that have had a significant positive community or organisational impact.

The completion report provides an opportunity to publicly report progress made in supporting access and inclusion for residents and visitors with disability throughout the two-year DAIP implementation.

BACKGROUND:

The Cairns Local Government Area (LGA) is home to approximately 28,000 residents with disability, and a further 22,800 people in unpaid caring roles (ABS). Approximately 9000 people in the region require daily assistance due to living with a profound or severe disability and almost 4,900 people are registered with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Our population has nearly doubled in the past 30 years and is set to continue to grow at a similar rate in the coming decade, including a predicted dramatic increase in people aged over 65 years. By working toward creating an inclusive and accessible city, our region will be well-placed to meet the needs of a growing and aging population into the future.

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) was endorsed by Council on 25 October 2023. It built on the achievements of Council's previous Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2017-21 and was informed through consultation with disability sector stakeholders, community members and staff from a wide range of functions within Council. The DAIP includes four key focus areas that align with state and national disability plans. Each focus area includes a goal statement, targets and tangible actions which clearly outline Council's commitment to ensuring our community is accessible and inclusive of people with disability.

Implementation has been driven, monitored and reported on by the DAIP Working Group which was established during the development of the Plan. The working group is made

up of Council Officers from all functional areas with responsibility for delivering on actions, with membership spanning 5 directorates and 12 branches of Council. This innovative, whole-of-organisation approach to access and inclusion has been integral to the achievements of the Plan and highlights the value of collaboration to maximise positive community impact.

COMMENT:

The completion report details the status of each of the actions under the Plan's four focus areas and highlights key achievements of the Plan. Of the 37 actions in the DAIP, 86% were completed, while 3 (8%) remain in progress and the final 2 (5%) are yet to be delivered but scheduled for commencement in 2026. Key notable achievements of the DAIP across 2024-2025 include:

- 18,052 more accessible library catalogue items added to the collection
- \$2,266,862 invested in accessible infrastructure development and upgrades, including Changing Places facility at Esplanade Lagoon
- Tanks Arts Centre nominated as finalist for Queensland Music Awards for Accessible Venue of the Year 2025
- 93 Chair Yoga classes delivered as part of the Active Living program
- 10 Quiet Spaces hosted at Cairns Festival, Cairns Children's Festival, Ecofiesta and Tanks Markets
- Brike wheelchair e-bike launched in partnership with Spinal Life
- Social stories, visual stories, and dedicated accessibility pages developed for several arts venues and libraries to support visit planning
- 20 initiatives delivered by internal Diversity and Inclusion Champions to promote access and inclusion within Council as a workplace
- 362 staff completed new Diversity Awareness eLearning Training
- 28 media stories promoted Council events, activities and initiatives with specific inclusions for people with disability

Councils' commitment to improving access and inclusion for people will continue beyond the completion of the current plan. The DAIPWG will continue to meet regularly, to ensure the incomplete actions in the plan are finalised and to maintain momentum and collaboration in this space. Work will begin on the development of a new plan for Council's consideration which will be informed by learnings and achievements from this plan and consultation with community and sector stakeholders.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: (Recommended)

That Council notes the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026 Completion Report.

Option 2:

That Council seeks additional clarification or information.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

Reputation - Effective implementation and the presentation of the completion report protects Council from reputational risk by demonstrating Council's commitment to access and inclusion and by providing accountability to the public and stakeholders who contributed to the development of the DAIP.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

Implementation of the DAIP did not incur additional expenditure as all works were completed within existing operating and capital budgets.

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The implementation of the DAIP has benefited the community by;

- Providing and reporting on measurable targets for the delivery of accessible public infrastructure, enabling improved access for a wide cross-section of community.
- Increasing social, economic and digital inclusion for people with disability.
- Increasing disability awareness and inclusion in both the community and the workplace, maintaining Council's reputation as an employer of choice in the region.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Corporate Plan 2025 -2030: Focus areas: 1 – Economy, 3 – Liveability, 4 – Community and Culture, 5 – Serving the Community.

Statutory:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Policy:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.
- Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-2027.
- CRC Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2022.
- CRC Open Public Spaces General Policy 2025.
- CRC Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - #7860281 Cairns Regional Council Disability Access and Inclusion Plan
2024-2026 Completion Report

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AM', is positioned above the printed name.

Andrew Moore
Acting Director Lifestyle & Community

Attachment 1: Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026 Completion Report

Cairns Regional Council

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2024-2026

Completion Report
March 2026



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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.

Acknowledgement

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; Madjandji; Mamu and Ngadjon Jii 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.

Cover page photo: Local Artist and FLAME Arts participant Elina Isabella poses with her work at the Flame Visual group exhibition at Tanks Arts Centre.

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.

Message from the Mayor

Cairns is a special place to live.

We are fortunate to call a region home that offers remarkable natural beauty and spaces where people can work, play and connect. But what truly defines Cairns is our people.

There is a unique sense of “Cairns-ness” here. It’s something you feel as much as you see. It’s in our relaxed tropical lifestyle, the mix of cultures that shape our city, the salt in the air, the flavour of the food and the way people look out for one another. People from different backgrounds, experiences and abilities all contribute to the rhythm and lifestyle of this city.

Even our geography plays a part. Cairns is built largely on a coastal floodplain, which means compared to many cities we are relatively flat. You might say we have a natural head start when it comes to accessibility. Living on a mudflat has its advantages.

But accessibility is about far more than geography. It’s about the choices we make as a community.

Through Cairns Regional Council’s Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, we are working to ensure residents and visitors of all abilities can participate fully in community life and in our local economy.

Across 2024 and 2025, Council has delivered improvements in community events, infrastructure and within our organisation.

At events and venues we have introduced Quiet Spaces, engaged Auslan interpreters, supported relaxed performances and developed social and visual stories to help people feel more comfortable when visiting Council facilities.

We have also invested in practical infrastructure upgrades, focusing on the small changes that make a big difference. Improvements to toilets and changing facilities, footpaths and bus stops are helping create a more inclusive environment across our region.

Just as importantly, we have continued to build awareness within Council itself. Our Diversity and Inclusion Champions play an important role in strengthening understanding across the organisation, many bringing valuable lived experience of disability.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group and Council’s Diversity and Inclusion Champions. Their collaboration, commitment and advocacy have been instrumental in the outcomes highlighted in this report.

While we are proud of the progress made over the past two years, we know the work does not stop here.

This completion report marks an important milestone. Council looks forward to continuing to work with our community and the disability sector to strengthen access and inclusion across our region, ensuring Cairns remains a place where everyone can participate, belong and thrive.



Amy Eden
Mayor



Introduction

Cairns Regional Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026 (the Plan) was endorsed unanimously by Council in October of 2023. Developed in consultation with community members, disability sector representatives, and Council staff across multiple functional departments, the Plan formally outlines Council's commitment to improving access, inclusion and equity for people with disability over a two-year period.

The Plan is structured around four key focus areas selected to align with national and state disability plans. Goal statements, practical actions and targets were developed for each of the four action areas which have shaped Council's contribution to fostering a more accessible and inclusive Cairns – both within the Council workplace and across the broader community for the last two years. The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group, made up of representatives from responsible areas across Council, has been integral to the Plan implementation, monitoring, and reporting.

This report marks the completion of the two-year Plan and reflects Council's commitment to transparent public reporting. Progress against each focus area is reported on through status updates and selected highlight stories to demonstrate the real impact of actions taken. Of 37 actions in total, 85% of the Plan's actions were successfully completed and embedded into ongoing Council practices, while 3 (8 %) actions remain in progress and the final 2 (5%) are scheduled for completion in 2026.

The [Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026](#) is available on the 'Disability information' webpage, located under the 'Community and Environment' menu tab.



Photo: Playground equipment featuring Auslan alphabet board

The language of disability

People's experience of disability is diverse and the language around it takes many forms. We acknowledge the 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 or this report. Council adopts the person-centred approach – 'people with disability.' Council has adopted the following definition of Disability and Neurodiversity.

"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."



Photo: Signage from the children's festival low sensory events

The Working Group

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group brings together staff members across Council from a broad range of disciplines, backgrounds and experiences to collectively enhance access and inclusion for people with disability in our region.

Working Group members represent key areas of Council's services and operations, including community development, marketing and communications, civic and major events, IT, public spaces, arts and culture, libraries, infrastructure engineering, economic development, disaster management, and human resources. The Working Group's membership spans 5 directorates and 12 branches across Council, highlighting the breadth of Council business that impacts access and inclusion for people with disability. The establishment of the working group and their ongoing involvement throughout the delivery of the Plan has been a new way of working and their achievements have highlighted the value of collaboration and a 'whole-of-organisation' approach to maximise impact for our community.

The Working Group has been integral to both the development and successful implementation of the Plan. They have played an important role in coordinating their team's contributions to deliver on the Plan, collating reporting and sharing ideas. The group have met quarterly throughout the term of the Plan, using a collaborative approach to monitor progress, identify opportunities for cross-Council learning and collaboration, and address emerging challenges.

Another group integral to the success of the Plan is Council's internal Diversity and Inclusion Champions — a dedicated network of staff with lived experience across disability, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, First Peoples, LGBTQIA+, and different age groups. This group helps drive internal initiatives that foster a workplace culture which values all forms of diversity and is inclusive, respectful and welcoming of all.

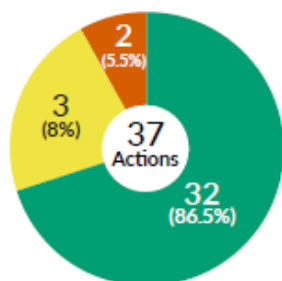


Photo: Some of the staff members that form the Disability Action and Inclusion Plan Working Group.

Reporting

Snapshot

Across the two years of implementation of Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2026, Council has made significant progress.



- Completed and ongoing
- In progress
- Not started

Focus Area 1: Thriving communities

 93 Chair Yoga classes as part of the Active Living program	 10 Quiet Spaces at Cairns Festival, Cairns Children's Festival, Ecofiesta and Tanks Markets	 6 Performances with an Auslan interpreter
 18,052 Accessible library catalogue items added to the collection	 Brike Wheelchair e-bike launched in partnership with Spinal Life	 3 Relaxed Performances at Cairns Children's Festivals
 6 Person-centred emergency preparedness (PCEP) sessions delivered to 157 participants with a focus on people with disability and seniors	 Social stories, visual stories, and dedicated accessibility pages developed for several arts venues and libraries to support visit planning	

Focus Area 2: Accessible places and spaces

 \$2,266,862 Invested in accessible infrastructure and upgrades	 38 Council staff completed universal design training on disability access to footpaths and transport with Access Institute
 Tanks Arts Centre Tank 5 bar, ticketing counter and merchandise desk re-designed with input from peoples lived experience	 Tanks Arts Centre nominated as finalist for Queensland Music Awards for Accessible Venue of the Year 2025.
 Smithfield Library refurbishment 2025-2026 includes specialised accessibility features (height-adjustable self-service loan kiosk, mobile shelves, hearing loop and rocking perches)	

Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing



20

Initiatives by internal Diversity and Inclusion Champions that relate to disability access and inclusion



5

Disability Action Week staff events



362

Staff completed new Diversity Awareness eLearning Training



2

Changes made to make recruitment processes more accessible based on feedback from Diversity and Inclusion Champions review

Focus Area 4: Changing perceptions



90

Staff participated in Council's Disability Action Week events



28

Media stories promoted Council events, activities and initiatives with specific inclusions for people with disability



1

Flame Visual program participant with disability supported with accessibility adaptations



Photo: A local resident participates in training as a member of an all-abilities sports team.

Focus Area 1: Thriving communities

Highlight: Singing songs and building belonging – First 5 Forever launches Auslan Storytime

In 2025, Cairns Libraries debuted Auslan Storytime as part of the First 5 Forever program, bringing together people from all walks of life to connect through shared language.

Facilitated by Brenda and Roslyn from Deaf Connect, the sessions were enriched by both professional expertise and lived experience, fostering confidence, curiosity, and meaningful engagement for 248 participants of all ages. Inclusive resources such as Auslan flash cards and 'Sign and Singalong' books were also incorporated to support early literacy development while introducing Auslan in an interactive and joyful way.

The sessions have not only provided people with disability the opportunity to engage with the libraries' resources in an accessible way, but also created connections beyond the books, facilitating conversations with strangers across the room, and opportunities for observation and learning for residents new to Auslan.

The pilot series delivered impact beyond expectations. One attendee, who had not visited the library in nearly 20 years, thoroughly enjoyed the session and rejoined the library as a result. She was excited to discover accessible modern library services, including BorrowBox, Libby, Beamafilm, and digital newspapers, and highlighted the cost savings these services would bring to her family.

After a successful pilot, Auslan Storytime will continue to be delivered in 2026 as Cairns Libraries continues to create welcoming, accessible spaces for all community members to enjoy.

First 5 Forever is an initiative of the Queensland Government, coordinated by State Library of Queensland and delivered in partnership with local government.



Photo: Brenda and Roslyn delivering an Auslan Storytime session.



Photo: New inclusive resources including Auslan flash cards and 'Sign and Singalong' books.

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

Key of symbols:



Completed and ongoing: this action has been finalised and is now being implemented on an ongoing basis.









In progress: activities that relate to this action have started but have not yet been completed.







Not started: activities that relate to this action have not started yet.

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			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 93 Chair Yoga classes delivered as part of the Active Living program 'Brike' wheelchair e-bike officially launched in partnership with Spinal Life Australia in August 2024 Council's Community Partnerships Grant provided funding for the All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities in both 2024 and 2025
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council grant funding totalling \$22,484 awarded to support 5 events and initiatives in 2024 and 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities at Barlow Park in August 2024 and September 2025 ARC Disability Services adaptation of Adam Reddicliffe's children's book "The Magnificent Danny & Dazzle" into a theatre production ARC Creatives Children's Books project in 2024 ARC Disability Services' Beyond the Waves Regional Tour All grant application processes transitioned from PDF form to SmartyGrants online platform which complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Plain English version of Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) Guidelines created

<p>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.</p>	<p>Year 1 Ongoing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visual stories developed for Tanks Arts Centre and CPAC venue websites in partnership with Autism Queensland ● 8 Auslan Storytime sessions delivered at Cairns Libraries in 2025 and set to continue in 2026 ● Dedicated webpage developed to provide accessibility information for Court House and Mulgrave Galleries ● 'Story walks' installed in community settings to support accessible low-pressure literacy engagement, including Cairns Children's Festival, community health centres and Hambleton House ● 18,052 additional items in accessible format added to library catalogue, which equates to a doubling of the digital collection ● Quiet Spaces (low sensory areas) hosted at 10 Council events including Cairns Festival, Cairns Children's Festival, Tanks Markets and EcoFiesta ● Quiet Space resource kit developed and available for use at all arts venues. ● Sensory Comfort Kit for audience members trialled at CPAC ● Sensory kits purchased for use in libraries including borrowable kits added to library catalogue ● Auslan interpreters used at 6 events including Cairns Festival comedy show, Cat Empire and City Sounds ● Relaxed Performance training for 44 staff by Autism Queensland and an industry forum in 2024. Relaxed Performances incorporated in Cairns Children's Festival. ● A range of adaptations implemented to improve accessibility of Flame Visual program ● Incorporation of "Quieter Hours" at Cairns Children's Festival ● Social Story developed to support neurodivergent children and first-time attendees at libraries and available via the Cairns Libraries website ● Upgrades made to digital infrastructure in libraries to improve accessibility, including adding digital information screens and a large mobile interactive touchscreen, 10 iPads for use in inclusive multi-sensory programs and an interactive touchscreen gaming tabletop ● Development has commenced on 3D virtual tours of all libraries to support pre-visit accessibility planning ● Auslan-supported picture books and flashcards purchased for libraries ● Dedicated "Quieter Journey" page created for Cairns Children's Festival outlining activities that had been adjusted to provide a lower sensory experience
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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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feedback from lived experience group review of Cairns Festival 2023 incorporated in planning for Cairns Children's Festival 2024 and webpages for all Creative Venues ● Evaluation surveys developed for users of Quiet Spaces and Sensory Comfort Kits ● Users with lived experience engaged to inform the re-design of the Tanks Arts Centre Tank 5 bar, ticketing counter and merchandise desk ● Feedback on Accessible Events Checklist resulted in the document being reviewed and updated
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Auslan interpreter and Quiet Space incorporated into Carols in the Park
1.1.6 Support external event and program providers with inclusive events resources and information including Council's Accessible Events Checklist.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessible Events Checklist developed for ongoing use and provided to all event organisers applying for support through Community Partnerships Grant Program, booking a council venue, or delivering a major event in partnership with Council (including 27 major events across 2024-2025)
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.	Year 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 6 person-centred emergency preparedness (PCEP) sessions delivered to 157 participants including people with disability, disability support service providers and aged care service providers
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 3 professional development workshops delivered to Go Glubs network that included access and inclusion training, information or support to access funding to upgrade accessibility of sport infrastructure ● 48 instances of access and inclusion related communication with over 200 clubs and organisations in the GoClubs Network ● \$64,707 total of Go Clubs Infrastructure Grants provided to community groups to undertake accessible infrastructure upgrades ● Engagement with Far North Inclusive Sports Collective (FNISC) to foster inclusive sport and physical activity across the Far North region

1.2 Council supports a diverse range of opportunities for people with disability to participate in activities that contribute to quality of life and wellbeing			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
1.2.1 Review internal guidelines and procedures for producing online information and marketing resources to ensure accessibility is a key consideration.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of online information principles incorporated into website editing training for Council Officers • Marketing, brand, logo and style guidelines updated to include content related to accessibility of information • Web accessibility compliance of online library catalogues and databases increased to WCAG 2.1 AA on new Spydus OPAC system
1.2.2 Review Council's Access for All Directory and seek to collaborate with the disability sector to develop an updated resource.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review completed, with ongoing sustainability issues identified with current model. Discussions underway with key stakeholders about how best to present information to the public in an accurate and sustainable way
1.2.3 Promote Council's DAIP to internal and external stakeholders using a variety of accessible formats.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) promoted via media release following Council endorsement, made available on Council's website and promoted through disability networks • Progress updates provided throughout the year to relevant sector stakeholders
1.2.4 Continue engaging with local disability networks and linking external stakeholders with relevant Council staff as required.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Far North Queensland Disability Provider Network (DPN) meetings attended • 9 Cairns Disability Network (CDN) meetings attended • 4 CDN networking events hosted at Council's main administration building • 3 regional QDN conferences attended, including a senior Council Officer as guest speaker on a Q&A panel on employment and social impact • 3 Far North Inclusive Sport Collective (FNISC) meetings attended

Focus Area 2: Accessible places and spaces

Highlight: Making small changes that have a big impact on liveability.

Council has been upgrading bus stops across the LGA to ensure they meet best-practice standards, as part of our commitment to accessible public transport. Over the lifespan of the plan, a total of \$822,761 was spent upgrading bus stop sites across all nine divisions of the Cairns LGA. This ensures they now meet or exceed the updated standards for public transport under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) and support an inclusive, equitable and accessible transport system.

The upgrades include features such as DDA-compliant access ramps, high-contrast floor tactiles, non-slip floor surfaces, and clearly marked pathways which make it easier and safer for people with varying physical abilities to navigate the space. Other improvements include sheltered seating at appropriate heights, seating gaps for wheelchairs, clear signage, connecting ramps on opposite sides of the road, better drainage and lighting improvements.

While often overlooked, these upgrades to essential infrastructure play an important role in ensuring that people with disability are able to travel independently, connect and participate in community life.

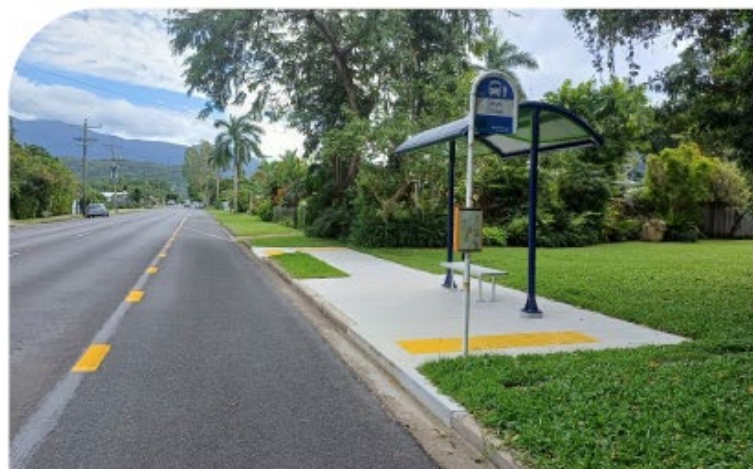
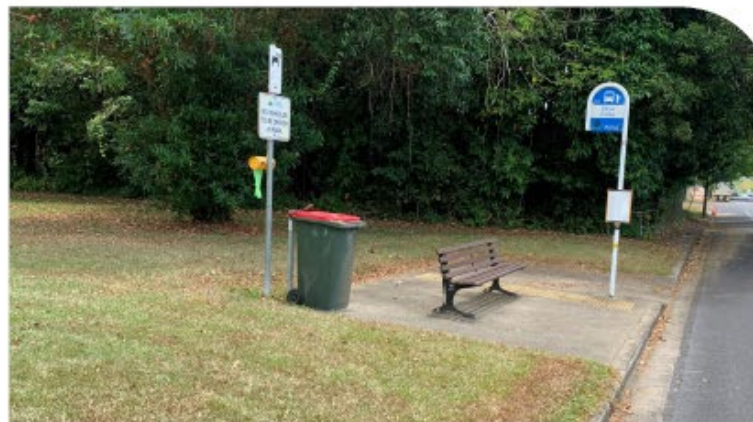










Photo: Before and after the upgrade of bus stop facilities at Woodward Street near Skye Close, Edge Hill.




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

2.1 Physical Council spaces are designed and managed to enable people with disability to participate in civic events, programs and services.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
2.1.1 Explore opportunities for relevant Council staff to engage in professional development relating to accessible and inclusive space design.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38 Council staff completed Access Institute's 'Access and Universal Design in Streetscapes and Public Transport Infrastructure (Buses and Taxis)' training Community Strategy team promoted attendance of the "Parks for Everyone" webinar delivered by Parks and Leisure Australia Several engineers and project managers attended Disability Action Week 2025 professional development sessions relating to accessibility and inclusion (see 4.2.1) Libraries staff completed two training sessions focused on supporting people with diverse learning, communication, and sensory needs and inclusive design of library spaces
2.1.2 Universal Design and DDA Standards are considered in all phases of research, planning, and designing of Council spaces and assets.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal design and DDA standards considered in the design process and applied to all relevant Council infrastructure projects A review of design guidelines including DDA compliance is being undertaken as part of Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC) development manual review to ensure robust accessibility checks are completed for every project Re-design of Tanks Arts Centre Tank 5 bar, ticketing counter and merchandise desk informed by engagement with access and inclusion consultants Accessible features incorporated into 2025-2026 refurbishment to Smithfield Library, including height-adjustable self-service loan kiosk, mobile shelves, hearing loop and rocking perches Tanks Arts Centre nominated as finalist for Queensland Music Awards for Accessible Venue of the Year 2025

<p>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.</p>	<p>Year 2</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prototype created of GIS mapping featuring key accessibility features developed ● Community consultation begun at Cairns Disability Expo 2025 ● Data has been inputted into Open Street Maps to support other software platforms that use centralised data sources for information about accessibility
<p>2.1.4 Report the total spend on accessible infrastructure and upgrades in the DAIP progress report and completion report.</p>	<p>Year 1 and 2</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$2,266,862 spent on accessible infrastructure and upgrades, including all-abilities and ambulant public toilets (\$960,604), 13 bus stop upgrades (\$822,761), Changing Places facility at the Esplanade Lagoon (\$336,429), road and footpath access ramps (\$128,053), Smithfield pool access ramp improvement, seating installed in 7 all-abilities public toilets in the northern beaches in response to community feedback, and all-abilities drinking fountain on Arlington Esplanade <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>This figure does not include infrastructure where access improvements were not a primary focus of the project but a portion of construction costs were attributed to ensuring compliance</i> ● <i>This figure includes the total costs of projects completed in 2024 and 2025, noting in some cases design or construction started prior to 2024</i>

2.2 The lived experience of people with disability is a key consideration in the management and development of public infrastructure.

Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CRMs relating to disability are sent to relevant teams for review, with several resulting in infrastructure upgrades Internal staff guidelines have been developed to support ongoing consultation and engagement with stakeholders from the disability sector and lived experience representatives
2.2.2 Identify, monitor and record number and type of physical access-related CRMs, and feed through to relevant teams.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A system for tracking disability-related CRMs has been developed for implementation in mid-2026, as part of a CRM system upgrade
2.2.3 Develop a resource to ensure effective internal flow of the above recorded information.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be developed following system upgrade planned for mid-2026 (see 2.2.2)
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 disability network events attend 11 trend raised at disability sector networking events provided as feedback with relevant Council Teams

<p>2.2.5 Explore opportunities to implement targeted consultations with lived experience groups for future infrastructure plans and scheduled upgrades.</p>	<p>Year 1</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal staff guidelines developed to support ongoing consultation and engagement with stakeholders from the disability sector and lived experience representatives • Targeted consultations with disability stakeholders on Jeff Pezzutti Skatepark design and Tank 5 upgrades • Disability stakeholders engaged in the design process for upgrades of Tanks Arts Centre's Tank 5
<p>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.</p>	<p>Year 1 Ongoing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 disability sector events attended to maintain relationships and communication with stakeholders • Insights from sector shared at 7 DAIP Working Group meetings
<p>2.2.7 Continue advocating to commercial operators and other stakeholders to consider the access needs of customers with disability.</p>	<p>Year 1 Ongoing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing as needed in response to customer enquiries, including advocacy to commercial entities such as local shopping precincts, hospitality and tourism operators and management of local recreational facilities

Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing

Highlight: Disability Action Week celebrations become an opportunity to connect, inform and upskill Council staff

Throughout November 2025, Council proudly celebrated Disability Action Week with a series of staff events aimed at building awareness, understanding, and connection across the organisation. Activities brought together staff from all areas of Council to engage and learn from their colleagues and sector representatives about what it's like to live with various forms of disability, in turn improving staff awareness and engagement with colleagues and community members who may have disability.




We were pleased to welcome Guide Dogs Queensland and Vision Australia, who provided hands-on sessions focusing on lived experience, accessibility in public spaces, and the vital role of assistive services. Council staff also had the opportunity to participate in Deaf Awareness Training, helping build confidence and capability in communicating and working inclusively with our deaf and hard-of-hearing community.




These events were championed and organised by two of our passionate Diversity & Inclusion Champions for Disability—Maddy, who is vision impaired, and Colleen, who is deaf. Their leadership, lived-experience advocacy, and commitment to building a more inclusive workplace brought tremendous value to the week's activities.





Photo: Staff and presenters at internal Disability Action Week events during 2025.

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

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.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 members of representative Community Panel established to inform Towards 2050 Growth Strategy had lived experience of disability. Consultation opportunities in concentrated economic areas have been limited during the term of the plan, however and internal staff resource has been developed to support staff to engage with the sector on future projects.
3.1.2 Opportunities to work at Council are promoted to relevant networks to attract diverse and skilled employees.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability job network agencies added to distribution list for promotion of job opportunities at Council as well as Council's traineeship and apprenticeship information sessions Cairns Regional Council Careers Fair was promoted in disability networks. Council Officer with disability featured in Cairns Chamber of Commerce (Cairns Regional Job Committee) video discussing their work and what supports are available for people with disability working at Council
3.1.3 Continue supporting reasonable adjustments and considerations for applicants and existing staff with disability, including physical and non-physical adjustments.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes in place that ensure Council staff with disability or other medical conditions are supported with reasonable adjustments to their work environment and tasks Diversity and Inclusion Champions reviewed Council recruitment process resulting in two key changes: the removal of the requirement to have a driver's license from roles where it was not an essential requirement, and improved transparency in the pre-employment medical process with a focus on reasonable accommodations

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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cairns Regional Council Careers Fair piloted in 2025 and promoted in disability networks • Council staff, including Diversity and Inclusion Champions, attended several job fairs throughout the year to represent the diversity of Council's workforce, promote job opportunities at Council and to actively demonstrate Council's commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity • Council Disability Champion spoke as a panellist at Council's Careers Fair
3.2 Council continues to explore opportunities to promote and grow Cairns as a premier accessible tourism destination.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
3.2.1 Work with regional tourism organisations to promote the region as a premier accessible tourism destination.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 accessible tourism initiatives promoted via Tourism Tropical North Queensland newsletter and Council's Business Newsletter • Continuation of the TTNQ Accessible Travel Hub, supported by Council funding
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing Places facility built at Esplanade Lagoon providing people with disability that have high support needs the facilities they require to enjoy the Esplanade precinct and Lagoon • Seating added to 7 all-abilities toilets in response to community feedback • New accessible public toilet facility built at Ellis Beach • Accessible public toilet facility and accessible play equipment included in upgrade at Pyramid Parklands Gajura • All-abilities drinking fountain installed on Arlington Esplanade

3.3 Council fosters a workplace culture that celebrates and supports diversity.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 2		<p>Council's Diversity and Inclusion Champions led the development and delivery of 13 initiatives designed to improve social cohesion and staff knowledge and understanding of disability, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity Awareness eLearning Training for all staff (362 staff completed as of Dec 2025) • 5 Disability Action Week events consisting of a 'You Can't Ask That' (Q&A) panel, and professional development sessions with Autism Queensland, Vision Australia, Guide Dogs Queensland and Deaf Connect • Development of the Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter, which promotes relevant events and initiatives, showcases individuals and teams contributing to diversity and inclusion, and communicates the benefits of diversity and inclusion • Created a staff wellbeing calendar to celebrate and reflect on days of significance • Promotion of the QDN Emerging Leaders Program • Promotion of Council's Inclusive Language Guide • Centralisation of all diversity and inclusion information and resources in one location the staff intranet • Addition of a diversity and inclusion section in staff orientation training • Creation of internal Diversity & Inclusion Ally group
3.3.2 Harness the voices of the Diversity and Inclusion Champions working group to inform decision making and improve Council policies concerned with anti-discrimination, such as the EEO and Inclusive Language Guide, and scheduled Diversity and Inclusion Policy updates.	Year 2		<p>The Diversity and Inclusion Champions contributed to 7 initiatives relating to improving disability access and inclusion through Council's internal policies and decision making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched Diversity Awareness eLearning Training for all staff (362 staff completed as reported by December 2025) • Developed and shared the new Inclusive Language Guide for Council staff • Reviewed recruitment procedures with an inclusion lens • Reviewed key Council-wide staff communications with an inclusion lens • Created a centralised platform where all diversity and inclusion resources are hosted (including accessibility tools and workplace policies) • Improved Council's Workforce Diversity Survey and data collection process • Reviewed Council's new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (EBA) through a diversity and inclusion lens

Focus Area 4: Changing perceptions

Highlight: Flame Visual shines spotlight on local artist with disability

Local artist Elina Isabella joined the Tanks Arts Centre's Flame Visual program in 2025. With the support of Auslan interpreters for all face-to-face sessions, she was able to make the most of support offered to local creatives through FLAME.Arts to develop and adapt her practice and challenge public perception of people with disability. Elina also secured her first-ever solo exhibition at Tanks Arts Centre which opened to the public in December 2025 – “the Flame Visual program gave me the tools I needed to feel prepared, creating a stronger solo show”.

Elina's exhibition “Soft Moments” aimed to reveal the harshness of life with complex illnesses and disability, combining narrative portraiture with storytelling to capture the small ‘soft moments’ in between that provide an anchor when the world feels too much. Her debut solo exhibition provided an opportunity to shift public perceptions in the Cairns community about the experiences and limitations of people with disability.

“I paint so young people with illness and disabilities grow up seeing themselves as something beautiful and worthy of art.” – Elina Isabella




Through a Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) grant, Elina has also been able to create an [accessible online version](#) of her first solo exhibition for those who cannot easily get out into the community.




Flame Visual is Cairns Regional Council's program for young and emerging creatives in the arts, artists with a disability and First Nations artists.



Photo: Local Artist and FLAME Arts participant Elina Isabella poses with her work at the Flame Visual group exhibition at Tanks Arts Centre.

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

4.1 Council uses media communication channels and levers to shift public perceptions towards acknowledging and valuing the contributions of people with disability.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16 media and social media stories shared across Council media platforms that have a positive association with disability across 2024-2025
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 media stories in 2024 and 7 media stories in 2025 shared across Council media platforms with a positive association with disability. While this does not reflect an increase, additional stories in 2025 about Council initiatives were produced by external news outlets rather than by Council so are not captured in these figures
4.1.3 Maintain close working relationships with disability providers and advocates to ensure current issues and stories are fed to relevant Council media stakeholders.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council's community development team continues to work closely with a wide range of disability stakeholders and escalate issues to relevant Council teams, including Marketing & Communications

4.2 Council supports organisations, events and initiatives which celebrate and showcase the achievements of people with disability.			
Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
4.2.1 Acknowledge significant dates, such as International Day of People with Disability, through internal staff communication channels and events.	Year 1 ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Disability Action Week events hosted, including a 'You Can't Ask That' (Q&A) panel and professional development sessions with Autism Queensland, Vision Australia, Guide Dogs Queensland and Deaf Connect Launched monthly Diversity & Inclusion Newsletter led by Diversity & Inclusion Champions, which promotes significant dates, events and opportunities to staff
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborated with ARC Disability Services on 'There's More to the Story' project, which featured magnetic storyboard artwork by ARC Creative artists at First 5 Forever Pop-Up Libraries and guest author readings at a First 5 Forever Storytime at Earlville Library 5 Disability Action Week events hosted, including a 'You Can't Ask That' (Q&A) panel and professional development sessions with Autism Queensland, Vision Australia, Guide Dogs Queensland and Deaf Connect 2 Community Partnership Grants provided to support events with an access and inclusion focus (All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities held at Barlow Park) All Community Partnership Grant funded events were provided with the Accessible Events Checklist and applications are assessed on various criteria including how their event will be made accessible All event organisers booking Council venues or running major events in partnership with Council are encouraged to use the Accessible Events Checklist Community Partnership Grants and information sessions shared with CDN and DPN
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28 media stories across 2024-2025 promoted Council-run or Council-supported events, activities and initiatives with messaging related to inclusion for people with disability, including relaxed performances at Cairns Children's Festival, Changing Places facility launch, the launch of the Brike, Tanks Accessible Venue of the Year nomination, Live Music Interpreting Workshop, First 5 Forever Auslan Storytime, and the addition of Auslan interpreters at Carols in the Park

What's next?

Cairns Regional Council acknowledges the contributions of the DAIP Working Group, the disability sector and the Council staff working hard to translate this Plan into meaningful and sustainable action. Whilst immensely proud of the achievements of this Plan, Council recognises that disability access and inclusion is not something finite. It requires ongoing and intentional commitment and investment.

Council Officers will seek to build on the achievements of this Plan to inform the development of a new plan for consideration by Council. This process will involve research, community and sector engagement and elected member and staff consultation, ensuring that our commitments in the space of disability access and inclusion are responsive, achievable and meaningful.

The DAIP Working Group will continue to meet and collaborate to drive access and inclusion across Council business, including ensuring any actions that remain outstanding continue to be progressed.

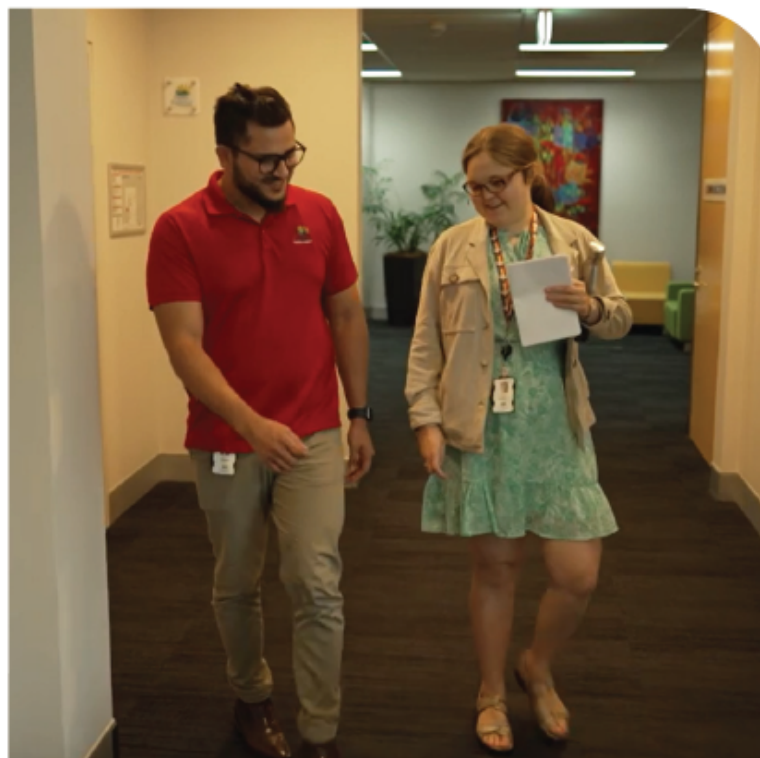


Photo: Council Officer and Diversity and Inclusion Champion Maddy Hoffmann photographed with coworker.



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