

Cairns Regional Council

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2024-2026

Progress Report - Year 1
April 2025



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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; Wanyurr Majay; 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: Jennifer Crellin and Margaret McDonald, Spinal Life's Regional Manager North Queensland, take the new power-assisted wheelchair or 'Brike' for a test ride along the Esplanade when it was launched in partnership with Council in August 2024.

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

We are fortunate to live in a region that offers such natural beauty and inviting spaces where we can work, play and connect. It is filled with a community that can be characterised by a unique Cairns-ness that includes people of diverse backgrounds, experiences and abilities.

Cairns Regional Council demonstrates an ongoing commitment to enable all our residents and visitors to participate fully in our economy and community. Our first Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Progress Report shows we are making positive progress toward a more inclusive region.

During 2024, we have significantly improved disability access and inclusion across a range of events, infrastructure, and within our workplaces. Some of the highlights include the Changing Places facility at the Esplanade Lagoon – something which I advocated for over several years as the then Divisional

Councillor – Auslan interpreters at our Carols in the Park event, and the establishment of Quiet Spaces at both the Cairns Festival and Cairns Children’s Festival.

We have further embedded awareness with our people through our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group with representation from a wide range of Council departments. Our Champions continue to inform our actions and deliver initiatives such as ‘You Can’t Ask That’ – a question-and-answer session featuring people with disability that raised awareness and fostered understanding about living with disability.

We know there is more to do and across Council we are up to the challenge. Working collaboratively within the organisation and alongside our community, I am confident we will continue to improve accessibility and inclusion for people with disability.



Amy Eden
Mayor



Mayor Amy Eden engaging with Emma Deede and her mother Doreen Deede who benefit from the Changing Places facility during the launch in June 2024.

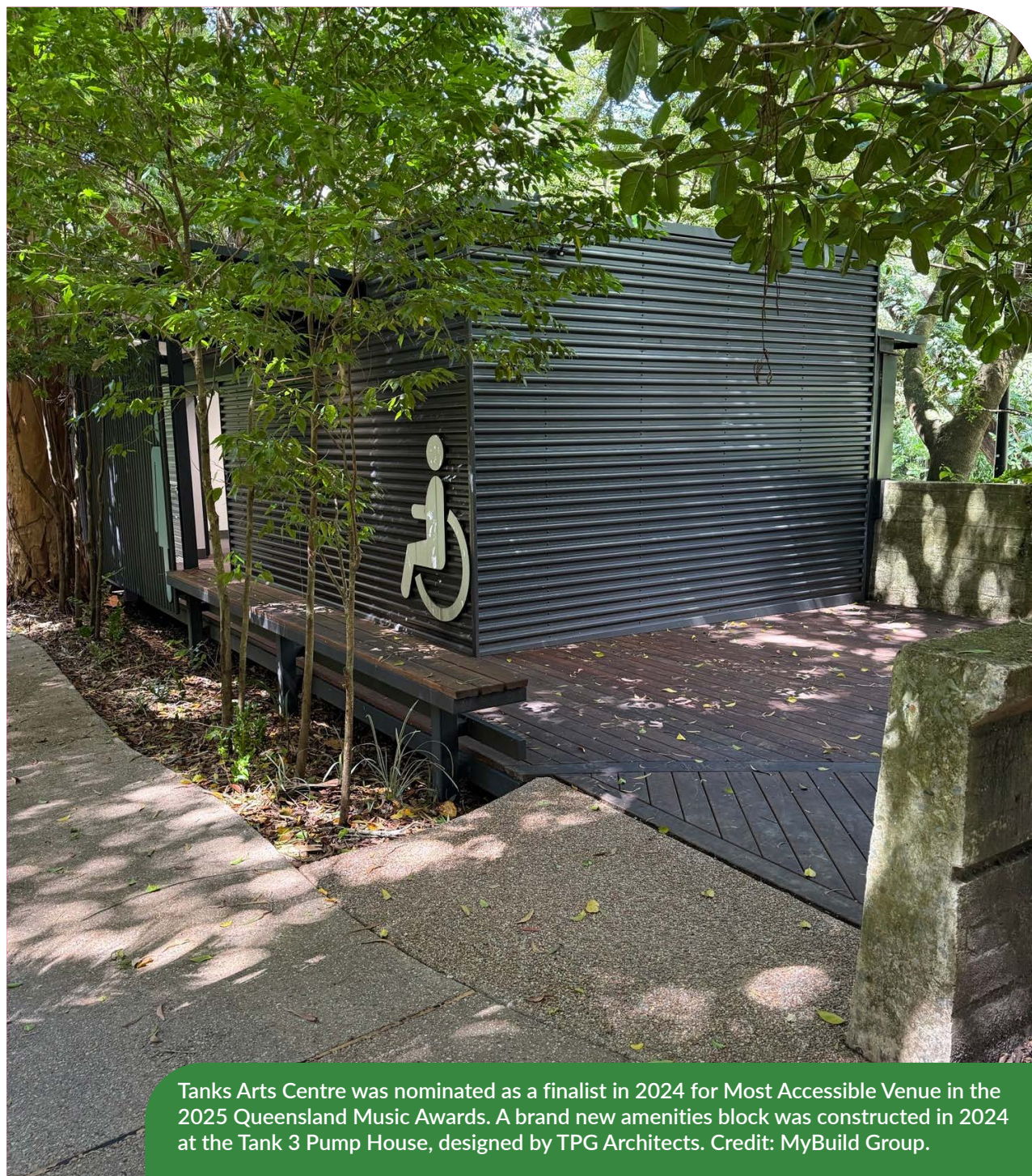
Introduction

The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024–2026 (the Plan) was endorsed by Cairns Regional Council in October 2023, formalising Council’s commitment to improving access, inclusion, and equity for people with disability. The Plan provides a clear framework for meaningful action, and was developed in collaboration with disability sector representatives, community stakeholders, and Council staff across multiple functional departments.

The Plan is structured around four key focus areas aligned with national and state disability plans, which include goal statements, targets, and practical actions that define Council’s contribution to fostering a more accessible and inclusive Cairns – both within the Council workplace and across the broader community.

This report marks the half-way point of the Plan’s two-year implementation and reflects our commitment to public reporting. The Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Working Group, with representatives from all responsible areas, has led its implementation, monitoring, and reporting. Progress in each focus area of the Plan is reported on through status updates and highlight stories to demonstrate the impact of actions taken in 2024.

The [Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024–2026](#) is available on the ‘Disability information’ page which is a subpage under the ‘Community and Environment’ menu tab.



Tanks Arts Centre was nominated as a finalist in 2024 for Most Accessible Venue in the 2025 Queensland Music Awards. A brand new amenities block was constructed in 2024 at the Tank 3 Pump House, designed by TPG Architects. Credit: MyBuild Group.

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 Plan, Council adopts the person-centred approach – ‘people with disability.’ Council has adopted the following definition (to the right) 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.”



Students at the All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities held at Barlow Park on 23 August 2024, organised by Whitfield State School P&C Association and supported by a Community Partnerships Grant.

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, which highlights the breadth of Council business that impacts access and inclusion for people with disability and emphasises the value of collaboration and the importance of a 'whole-of-business' approach to maximise impact for our community.

Members play an important role in coordinating their team's contributions to delivering the Plan, collating reporting data and sharing ideas. The group meets quarterly and uses a collaborative approach to reviewing progress, identifying opportunities for cross-Council learning and collaboration, and addressing emerging challenges.

Another internal group in Council that is complementary to the Working Group is the 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 – who help drive initiatives that foster a workplace culture that values all forms of diversity and is inclusive, respectful and welcoming of all.

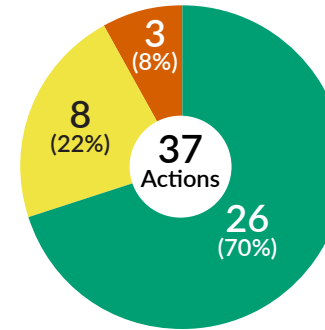


Some of the staff members that form the Disability Action and Inclusion Plan Working Group.

Progress reporting

Progress snapshot

In the first year of implementation of Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024–2026, Council has made significant progress on the commitments in the Plan.



- Completed and ongoing
- In progress
- Not started

Focus Area 1: Thriving communities



Brike

wheelchair e-bike launched in partnership with Spinal Life



49

Chair Yoga classes with a total of 1,054 attendees, as part of the Active Living program



6

Quiet Spaces at Cairns Festival and Cairns Children's Festival



2

Relaxed Performances at Cairns Children's Festival



44

staff undertook Relaxed Performance training by Autism Queensland



2

performances with an Auslan interpreter



2,685

more library catalogue items in accessible formats from FY 23/24 to 24/25

Focus Area 2: Accessible places and spaces



\$1,784,456

accessible infrastructure and upgrades (including \$336,429 Changing Places facility at the Esplanade Lagoon)



38

Council staff completed universal design training on disability access to footpaths and transport with Access Institute

Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing



10

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



281

staff completed new Diversity Awareness eLearning Training (as reported by March 2025)

Focus Area 4: Changing perceptions



50

staff participated in Disability Action Week 'You Can't Ask That' staff event



11

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

Focus Area 1: Thriving communities

Highlight: Creative Venues leading the way for access and inclusion

Council's Creative Venues are setting a benchmark for access and inclusion across Council, embedding accessible practices into a wide range of programming and venue design. The Creative Life team is leading by example in making participation inclusive for all – from providing Quiet Spaces at major events like Cairns Festival and Cairns Children's Festival, to supporting artists with disability through funding and in-kind performance venues. Quiet Spaces are calm, low-sensory areas that offer visitors a retreat from crowds, noise, or overstimulation – supporting individuals who experience sensory overload, while welcoming anyone who needs a moment of peace.

In 2024, another standout achievement was the introduction of Relaxed Performances at the Cairns Children's Festival, developed after training from Autism Queensland and industry forums. These performances adapt the theatre environment to be more calming such as softening lights and sounds, and allows noise and movement by audience members throughout the show. Tanks Arts Centre also hosted Melbourne Ska Orchestra with Auslan interpretation – paving the way for more inclusive programming in 2025. All arts and culture websites now feature dedicated accessibility pages, with visual stories created in partnership with Autism Queensland for Tanks Arts Centre and Cairns Performing Arts Centre websites that provide a simple, illustrated guide outlining what to expect at a venue. With Tanks Arts Centre earning a finalist spot for Queensland Music's Accessible Venue of the Year, our Creative Venues continue to inspire a more inclusive future for our whole community.






Quiet space set up at Cairns Children's Festival.





An Auslan interpreter signs for Melbourne Ska Orchestra at Tanks Arts Centre.

Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Brike' wheelchair e-bike officially launched in partnership with Spinal Life in August 2024. All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities, held at Barlow Park in August 2024, received funding through Council's Community Partnerships Grant Program. 49 Chair Yoga classes delivered as part of the Active Living program.
	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		<p>Council grant funding totalling \$16,200 supported the following 3 events and initiatives delivered in 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities at Barlow Park in August 2024, provided to Whitfield State School P&C Association through Council's Community Partnerships Grant Program. ARC Creatives Children's Books project, provided to ARC Disability Services, where people with disability wrote, illustrated and produced children's books for publication, and culminated in a book launch and art exhibition. ARC Disability Services' Beyond the Waves Regional Tour, additionally supported with in-kind venue hire. Moved all grant applications from PDF format to SmartyGrants online platform which complies with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

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

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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	1.1.3 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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Quiet Spaces (low sensory areas) hosted at Cairns Festival and Cairns Children's Festival, and Quiet Space resource kit developed and available for all arts venues. 2 Relaxed Performances at Cairns Children's Festival, after hosting Relaxed Performance training for 44 staff by Autism Queensland and an industry forum. 1 performance with an Auslan interpreter at Tanks Arts Centre, with more planned for 2025. Visual stories developed for Tanks and CPAC venue websites in partnership with Autism Queensland. Dedicated accessibility page developed for Court House and Mulgrave Galleries, meaning now all Council Creative Venue websites have this feature. Plan developed for Auslan Storytime pilot at Cairns Libraries. 2,685 more library catalogue items in accessible formats from FY 23/24 to 24/25 (across large print, audiobooks, eAudiobooks, eBooks and eMagazines).



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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	1.1.4 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"> Lived experience feedback from Cairns Festival 2023 was shared with relevant teams. Resulting improvements include additional accessible parking at Cairns Children's Festival 2024, and dedicated accessibility webpages for all our Creative Venues. Evaluation surveys developed for users of Quiet Spaces and Sensory Comfort Kits.
	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 interpreters included for the first time at Carols in the Park in December 2024, with plans to continue and captions are being considered for 2025. Exploring opportunities for other civic events will be a priority for Year 2.
	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 and made available publicly on Council's website and provided to all event organisers applying for support through Community Partnerships Grant Program and other external organisers booking a council event venue. The checklist was downloaded from the website by 67 people from February 2024 to February 2025. The checklist is also used by staff responsible for major events delivered by Council.


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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	1.1.7 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"> P-CEP training will be expanded to more people that are vulnerable during emergencies in 2025, including a focus on people with disability.
	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"> 2 professional development workshops delivered with Go Glubs network that included access and inclusion information and supporting clubs to access available funding to upgrade accessibility. 48 instances of access and inclusion related communication (information and grant funding) shared within Go Glubs network, via the newsletter and social media. Go Clubs Infrastructure Grant provided to Henley Street Tennis Club for accessible infrastructure upgrades that allow access for wheelchairs to clubroom and kitchen.


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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility of online information included in Council staff website editing training. Marketing, brand, logo and style guide updated to include content related to accessibility of information. Increase in web accessibility compliancy of online library catalogues and databases 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 commenced, with ongoing discussions with key stakeholders about how best to present information to the public.
	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 promoted via media release following Council endorsement. Available on Council's website and promoted through a wide range of disability networks.
	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"> 3 Far North Queensland Disability Provider Network (DPN) meetings attended. 4 Cairns Disability Network (CDN) meetings attended. 2 CDN networking events hosted at Council's Spence Street courtyard.

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Focus Area 2: Accessible places and spaces

Highlight: Changing Places facility at Esplanade Lagoon

Cairns Regional Council took another meaningful move toward a more inclusive city with the opening of a Changing Places accessible adult change facility at the Esplanade Lagoon in June 2024. Unlike standard accessible toilets, Changing Places facilities are designed for people with high support needs and feature an adult-size change table, ceiling hoist, and additional space for carers. Access is available through the Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK), ensuring those who need the space can use it securely and privately.



This new facility is more than just an upgrade – it’s been a game-changer for residents and visitors with disability, offering comfort and dignity as well as longer outings to enjoy everything our vibrant CBD has to offer. It has also added to Cairns’ growing reputation as an accessible tourism destination, complementing previous improvements such as beach wheelchair access, braille signage, and accessible beach matting. This initiative reinforces a commitment to ensuring equal participation and quality of life for all members of the community.





Mayor Amy Eden and ARC Disability Services CEO Benjamin Keast stand beside Doreen Deede, an Advocate with Rights in Action, and her daughter Emma Deede who lives with disability, inside the new Changing Places accessible adult change facility at the Esplanade Lagoon.


Progress on 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	Timeline		Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38 Council staff completed 6-hour training program through Access Institute in May 2024, including disability access to footpaths and transport. Community Strategy team promoted free webinar to staff from Parks and Leisure Australia with the topic 'Parks for Everyone' which had a segment on accessibility for people with disability.
	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 <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (DDA) standards are considered in the design process, and where relevant applied in all infrastructure design projects. A review of design guidelines including DDA compliance is planned to be completed in 2025 to ensure robust checks around accessibility are completed for every project. Tanks Arts Centre nominated as finalist for Queensland Music Awards for Accessible Venue of the Year.


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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
2.1 Physical Council spaces are designed and managed to enable people with disability to participate in civic events, programs and services.	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.	Year 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demo created of GIS mapping with key accessibility features. In the process of collecting fieldwork data for additional features (such as effort grading) and intend to seek feedback from lived experience stakeholders in 2025. On-track for launch to public by 2026.
	2.1.4 Report the total spend on accessible infrastructure and upgrades in the DAIP progress report and completion report.	Year 1 and 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1,784,456 spent on accessible infrastructure and upgrades, including all-abilities and ambulant public toilets (\$952,706), bus stop upgrades (\$460,544), the Changing Places facility at the Esplanade Lagoon (\$336,429), road and footpath access ramps, and all-abilities drinking taps. <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This figure does not include other secondary accessible infrastructure where a portion of construction costs are attributed to DDA compliance, such as the all-abilities Trinity Beach Community Activity Space, Northern Beaches Leisure Trail, footpaths and new bus stops. Individual project expenditure factors in total cost (even if design and construction started prior to 2024) so long as the project was completed and launched to the public in 2024.


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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal guidelines for engaging with the disability sector are being finalised which will support staff to consult with key stakeholders. All CRMs relating to disability are sent to relevant teams for review. For example, 10 requests from members of the public about improving access were sent to relevant teams for investigation, with several resulting in infrastructure upgrades. Year 2 will focus on how CRMs are tracked in the new system.
	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"> CRMs have been recorded and fed through to relevant teams, however further data monitoring such as by type is a priority for year 2 of implementation.
	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"> Priority for year 2 of implementation.
	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"> 3 DPN meetings attended. 4 CDN meetings attended. 2 CDN networking events hosted at Council courtyard.


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Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
2.2 The lived experience of people with disability is a key consideration in the management and development of public infrastructure.	2.2.5 Explore opportunities to implement targeted consultations with lived experience groups for future infrastructure plans and scheduled upgrades.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 targeted consultation with a disability provider on Jeff Pezzutti Skatepark design. Internal guidelines for engaging with the disability sector are being finalised which will support staff to consult with key stakeholders.
	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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 DPN meetings attended. 4 CDN meetings attended, and updates shared. 2 CDN networking events hosted at Council courtyard. 3 DAIP Working Group meetings hosted, and updates shared.
	2.2.7 Continue advocating to commercial operators and other stakeholders to consider the access needs of customers with disability.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing in response to customer enquiries and complaints, including advocacy to a wide range of commercial entities such as local shopping precincts, hospitality and tourism operators and management of local recreational facilities.

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Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing

Highlight: An employer of choice

Council has shown that equal employment opportunity is not only possible, but it can be done with simple adjustments that support staff to thrive and contribute to an inclusive workplace for all. A video interview was developed in partnership between Council and Cairns Regional Job Committee and launched in 2024 to promote equal employment for people with disability and others who may require adjustments to complete their job. It features Maddy Hoffmann who is a Revenue Support Officer with Cairns Regional Council.

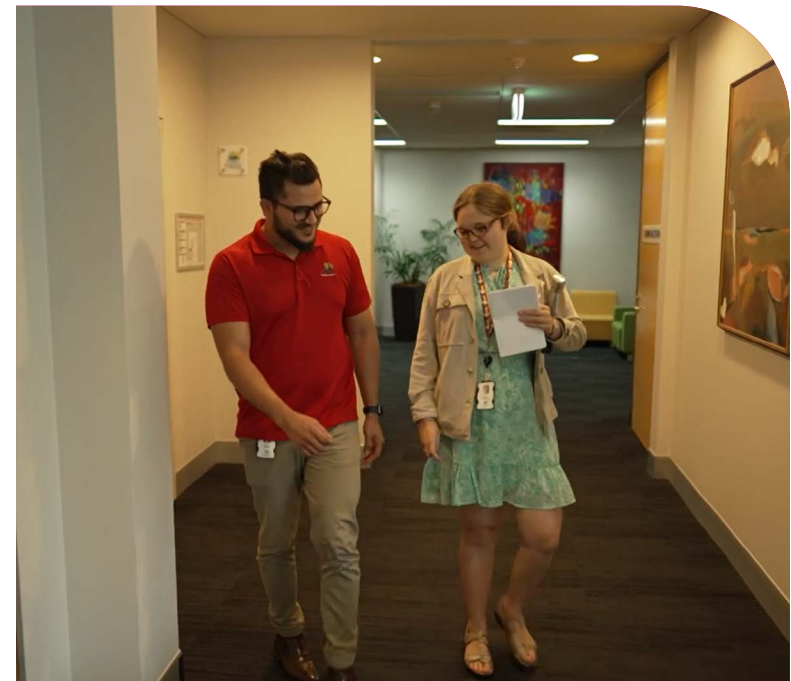
Living with vision impairments, Maddy knew securing work could be challenging, but Council's commitment to being an equal opportunity employer opened the door. "I've had the opportunity to move around a lot in my role, so I'm grateful to the Council for taking the opportunity, given the fact that they are an equal opportunity workplace."

Maddy credits Council for creating an environment where she can thrive: "They asked me what I needed and they bought magnifiers for me." She also appreciates the broader inclusive steps being taken by Council, like yellow-painted steps to assist with visibility.



As for advice for others, she said "I really want to contribute to society, so if people are looking for a job – don't give up," she said. "I didn't get the job I originally wanted, but I ended up working for the organisation I want to, just a couple of years later and via a different pathway." Maddy says, "I love my job – I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. They're like my second family – I have heaps of friends – people I would consider family."


As well as recognising Maddy's success as a staff member with disability, participation in this project also provided an opportunity to encourage other local businesses to consider how they could benefit from employing and accommodating staff with disability. Her story highlights how inclusive hiring not only benefits individuals – it strengthens teams and helps build a more equitable and resilient community.


The video interview with Maddy is hosted on the [Cairns Regional Jobs Committee website](#).




Progress on Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing




Goal: Council supports meaningful opportunities and pathways for economic participation of people with disability.				
Target	Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Precincts Urban Regeneration Project community and sector engagement will be a priority in year 2 of implementation.
	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"> Distribution list that includes disability job network agencies has been created to share job opportunities at Council, as well as promoting Council's traineeship and apprenticeship information sessions. Video created with Cairns Chamber of Commerce (Cairns Regional Job Committee) that features a Council Officer with disability, discussing their work and what supports are available for people with disability working at Council. Council hosts school Industry Engagement Tours (excursions) each term, which has led to work experience and employment outcomes.


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Progress on Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing



Goal: Council supports meaningful opportunities and pathways for economic participation of people with disability.				
Target	Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	3.1.3 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 that have disability or other medical conditions are supported with reasonable adjustments to their work environment and tasks. As part of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Diversity and Inclusion Champions reviewed the recruitment process through an inclusive lens, resulting in two key changes: the drivers licence requirement can be removed for roles where it is not essential, 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"> Staff, including the 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.
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible tourism initiatives are promoted when opportunities arise, such as Tourism Tropical North Queensland sharing in a newsletter at Council's request a free Guide Dogs Accessible Tourism training session delivered in June 2024.


 **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.

Progress on Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing

Goal: Council supports meaningful opportunities and pathways for economic participation of people with disability.				
Target	Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
3.2 Council continues to explore opportunities to promote and grow Cairns as a premier accessible tourism destination.	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 so that people with disability that have high support needs can also enjoy the Esplanade and Lagoon. Where possible, small benches have begun being added to accessible toilet cubicles in response to community feedback. New accessible public toilet facility at Ellis Beach. Accessible public toilets at Pyramid Parklands Gujura in Gordonvale and new playground development includes an accessible carousel.
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.	Year 2		<p>Initiatives by the Diversity and Inclusion Champions that facilitated development and learning opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge about disability included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversity Awareness eLearning Training for all staff launched (281 staff completed as reported by March 2025) Disability Action Week internal staff event that included 'You Can't Ask That' question-and-answer (Q&A) panel and educational session by Autism Queensland (50 staff attended) Newly developed Inclusive Language Guide shared amongst staff, including dedicated section on disability Centralised platform developed for staff where diversity and inclusion resources are kept (including accessibility tools and workplace policies).


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


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Progress on Focus Area 3: Economic wellbeing

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

Target	Actions	Timeline	Progress	Comments
3.3 Council fosters a workplace culture that celebrates and supports diversity.	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 the EEO and Inclusive Language Guide, and scheduled Diversity and Inclusion Policy updates.	Year 2		<p>10 initiatives by the Diversity and Inclusion Champions that relate to improving disability access and inclusion through Council's internal policies and procedures and other initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched Diversity Awareness eLearning Training for all staff (281 staff completed as reported by March 2025) • Created a staff wellbeing calendar to celebrate and reflect on significant dates • Hosted staff events to celebrate significant dates (see Focus Area 4 example) • 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 • Showcased individuals and teams contributing to diversity and inclusion • Communicated diversity and inclusion benefits and wellbeing initiatives • Created a centralised platform for staff to host diversity and inclusion resources (including accessibility tools and workplace policies) • Improved Council's Workforce Diversity Survey and data gathering.

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

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Focus Area 4: Changing perceptions

Highlight: Staff Champions host 'You Can't Ask That' Q&A to break down stereotypes

In a powerful step toward building greater understanding and inclusivity, Council's Diversity and Inclusion Champions hosted a thought-provoking 'You Can't Ask That' session as part of a rescheduled Disability Action Week event in March 2024. The internal event was originally planned for December 2023 but postponed due to Cyclone Jasper, and brought together around 50 staff for a 'Lunch-and-Learn' that encouraged open and respectful dialogue about what it's like living with disability.




The session featured an educational presentation from Autism Queensland, followed by an engaging question-and-answer (Q&A) panel where staff had submitted anonymous questions in advance – questions they may have been unsure how or when to ask. These were answered honestly and insightfully by two Diversity and Inclusion Champions – Dan who is neurodivergent which impacts many aspects of his life, and Maddy who is vision impaired. The initiative not only helped break down stereotypes, but reinforced Council's commitment to fostering a workplace where curiosity is met with compassion and inclusion is everyone's responsibility. This event also serves as a reminder to other workplaces that meaningful change – particularly in addressing barriers and fostering social cohesion – can begin with simple initiatives.





Left to right: Erin Barnett (Secretary), Dan Valentine (former Neurodivergent Champion), Maddy Hoffmann (Disability Champion), Gemma Boucher (former Chairperson) and Andre McMillan (former Community Development Officer – Diversity and Inclusion).


Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 stories produced across Council media platforms that have a positive association with disability.
	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"> Increase will be determined in Year 2 based on comparing Year 1 and Year 2 data. Calendar of access and inclusion focused media opportunities developed for 2025.
	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"> 3 DPN meetings attended. 4 CDN meetings attended. 2 CDN networking events hosted in Council courtyard.


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 **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.

Progress on 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	Timeline	Progress	Comments
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.	Year 1 Ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 attendees at internal staff event to celebrate Disability Action Week, featuring an educational session with Autism Queensland and an interactive Q&A 'You Can't Ask That' session facilitated by disability representatives in the internal Diversity and Inclusion Champions working group.
	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"> Collaboration 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 at community festivals and outreach events, and guest authors delivered book readings at a First 5 Forever Storytime at Earville Library. 1 Community Partnership Grant supported event with an access and inclusion focus (All Abilities Sports Day for Students with Disabilities held at Barlow Park). All Community Partnership Grant events use the Accessible Events Checklist and applications are assessed on various criteria including how their event will be made accessible. 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"> 11 media stories promoted Council-run or Council-initiated events, activities and initiatives with specific inclusions for people with disability, including relaxed performances at Cairns Children's Festival, Changing Places facility launch, the launch of the Brike, and the addition of Auslan interpreters at Carols in the Park.

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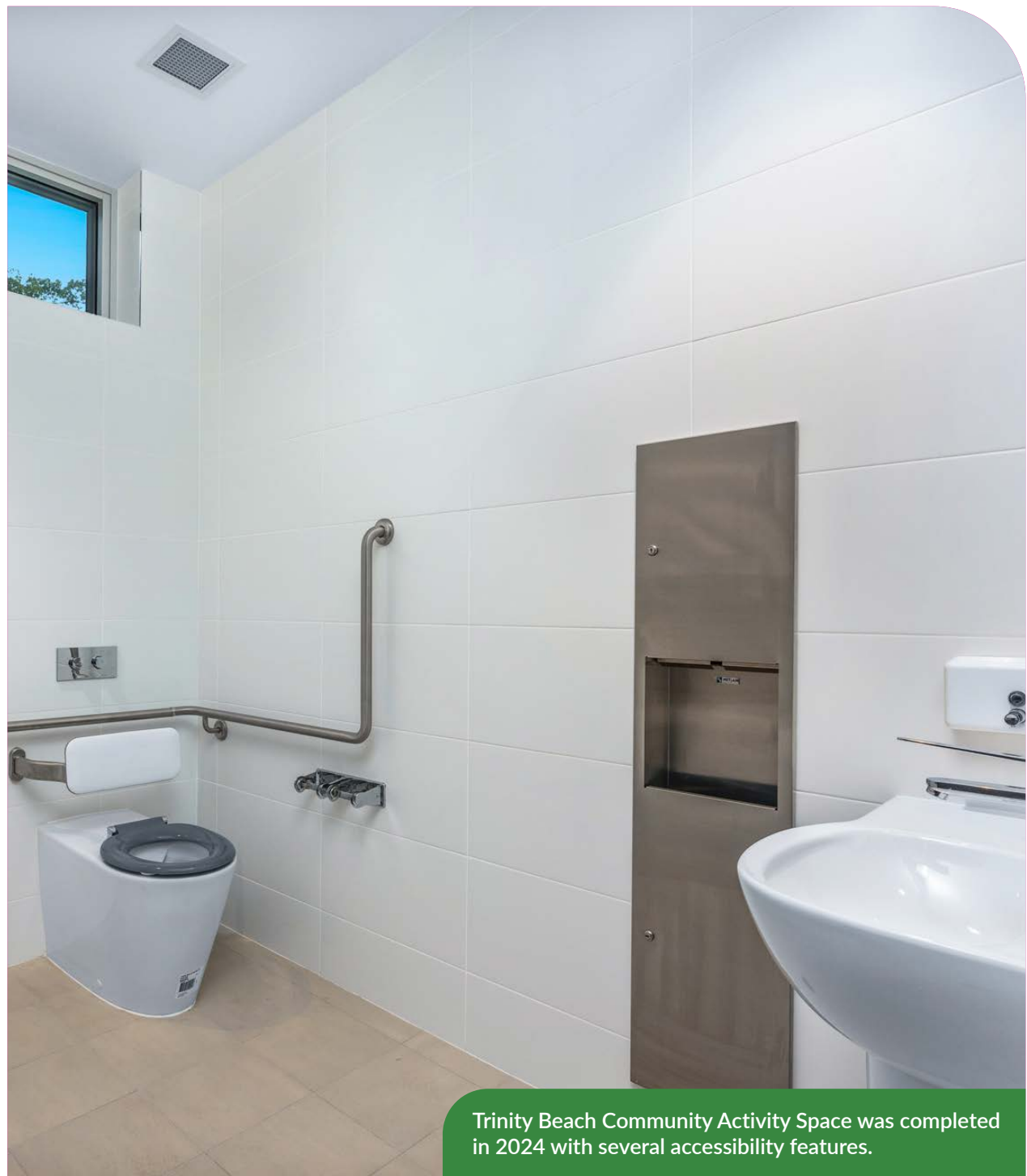
Completion and reporting

Significant progress has been made on many actions in the plan, with majority of the actions either completed or currently underway. However, further effort is required to ensure Council fulfils all commitments outlined in the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024–2026 that was released in 2023.

The preparation of this progress report has played a role in maintaining Council's accountability and driving continued action. In year two, priority will be given to addressing the gaps identified through the reporting process, to ensure all actions remain on track for completion by the end of 2025. The Working Group will continue to meet quarterly to ensure progress continues.

A final completion report will be published in 2026, marking the conclusion of the two-year plan, and will evaluate outcomes against each action. Insights from this report and process will help shape the development of a new plan focused on enhancing inclusion and enabling people with disability to thrive – both within the Cairns community and in Council's workforce.

¹ [Cairns Regional Council, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2022-2026](#)



Trinity Beach Community Activity Space was completed in 2024 with several accessibility features.



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