



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017- 2020



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Message from the Mayor



Gwydir Shire Council embraces the inclusion of people with a disability in all aspects of community life. We are committed to creating a more inclusive and welcoming community for people with disabilities and it is with pleasure that I present the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

The Plan demonstrates our commitment to improve the quality of our services, facilities, systems and programs over a three year period. The Plan was developed through consultation with the community and outlines the actions we will take to provide more accessible and inclusive services.

We look forward to hearing about the positive impact the Plan has for people with a disability in our Shire.

Mayor, Councillor John Coulton

Message from the General Manager



Disability Inclusion Planning is about supporting the basic right of choice for people with disability in our community. People with disability have the same right to choose how to live, work and enjoy community life as we all do.

Council's aim is to ensure that our services, programs and facilities are inclusive. The Plan aims to improve conditions for people with a disability who live, work and visit our Shire.

I look forward to working with staff and our community to put the Plan into action.

General Manager, Max Eastcott

Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land, the Kamilaroi People and pays its respect to Elders both past and present.

Gwydir Profile

Gwydir Shire is located in North West New South Wales within the North West Slopes and Plains region.

The Shire covers an area of 9,122 km² and has a population of 5080 people according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The northern part of the Shire almost touches the NSW/Queensland border, while to the east it is bounded by Inverell, Armidale Regional Council and Uralla Shires, to the west by Moree Plains and Narrabri Shires and to the south by the Tamworth Regional area.

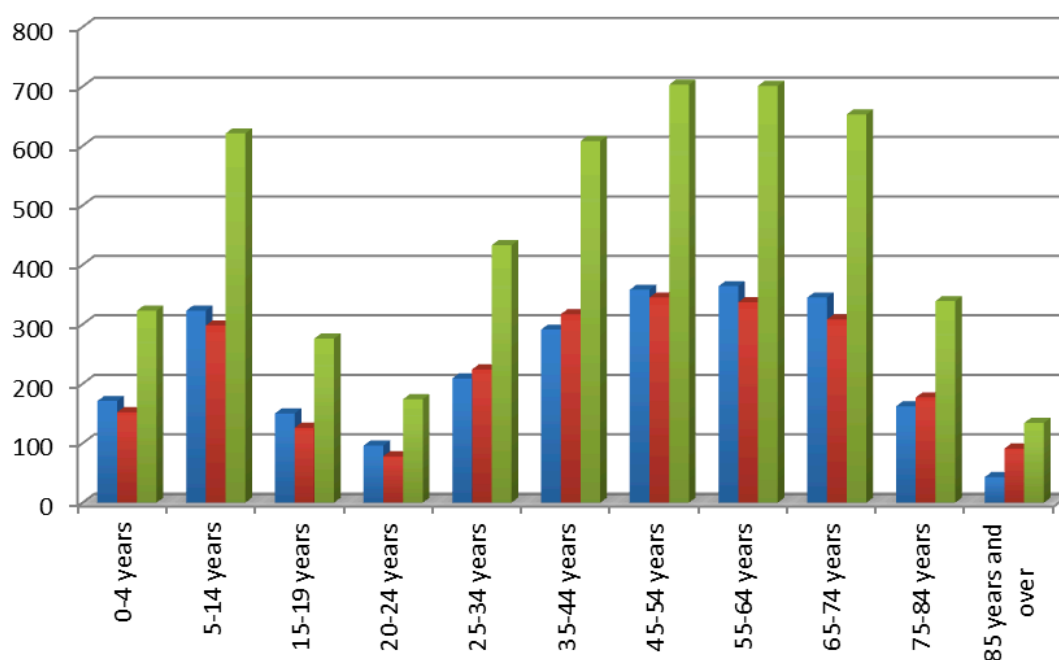
Gwydir Shire is made up of the townships of Warialda, Bingara, Upper Horton/Cobbadah, Gravesend, North Star, Coolatai, Croppa Creek, Warialda Rail, Yallaroi, Crooble, and Rocky Creek. Both Warialda and Bingara have Hospitals, Aged Care Hostels, Medical Centres, Caravan Parks, Swimming Pools, Preschools, Libraries and Tourist Information Centres.

Age Distribution

The Council amalgamation in 2004 changed the makeup of the social structure of the Shire, particularly in relation to age distribution.

Key findings are:

- In comparison to the NSW average, Gwydir Shire has a relatively high proportion of young children aged 5-14 (13.7%)
- An extremely low relative number of adults aged 15-24 living in the Shire (8.7%) compared to NSW (13.3%)
- A relatively high proportion of emerging retirees (14.9%)
- A high proportion of people aged 65+ (19.5%) and
- A relatively high median age of 43



Data Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census Data

Background

According to the the 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC).

- Almost one in 12 Australians with disability (281,100 people or 8.6%) reported they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their disability.
- Rates of reported discrimination were similar for men (8.3%) and women (8.9%).
- Young people with disability (aged 15-24 years) were more likely to report the experience of discrimination (20.5%) than those aged 65 years and over (2.1%).
- The source of discrimination was an employer for almost half of those aged 15 to 64 years with disability who were unemployed (46.9%) or employed full- time (46.2%) and just over one third (34.6%) of those employed part-time, at the time of the survey.
- Over one third (35.1%) of women and over one quarter (28.1%) of men aged 15 years and over had avoided situations because of their disability.
- Older people (aged 65 and over) were less likely to avoid situations because of their disability (20.1%) than younger people.

The International Day of People with Disability, 3 December 2014, marked the commencement of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) (the Act or the DIA). The Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014 (the Regulation) supports the Act and provides the necessary detail for the Act to work properly.

The DIA (NSW) requires Council to develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan to help remove barriers and enable people with a disability to participate fully in their communities.

The objectives of the Act are as follows:

- (a) to acknowledge that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the State and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights
- (b) to promote the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability
- (c) to enable people with disability to exercise choice and control in the pursuit of their goals and the planning and delivery of their supports and services
- (d) to provide safeguards in relation to the delivery of supports and services for people with disability
- (e) to support, to the extent reasonably practicable, the purposes and principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- (f) to provide for responsibilities of the State during and following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme

Vision

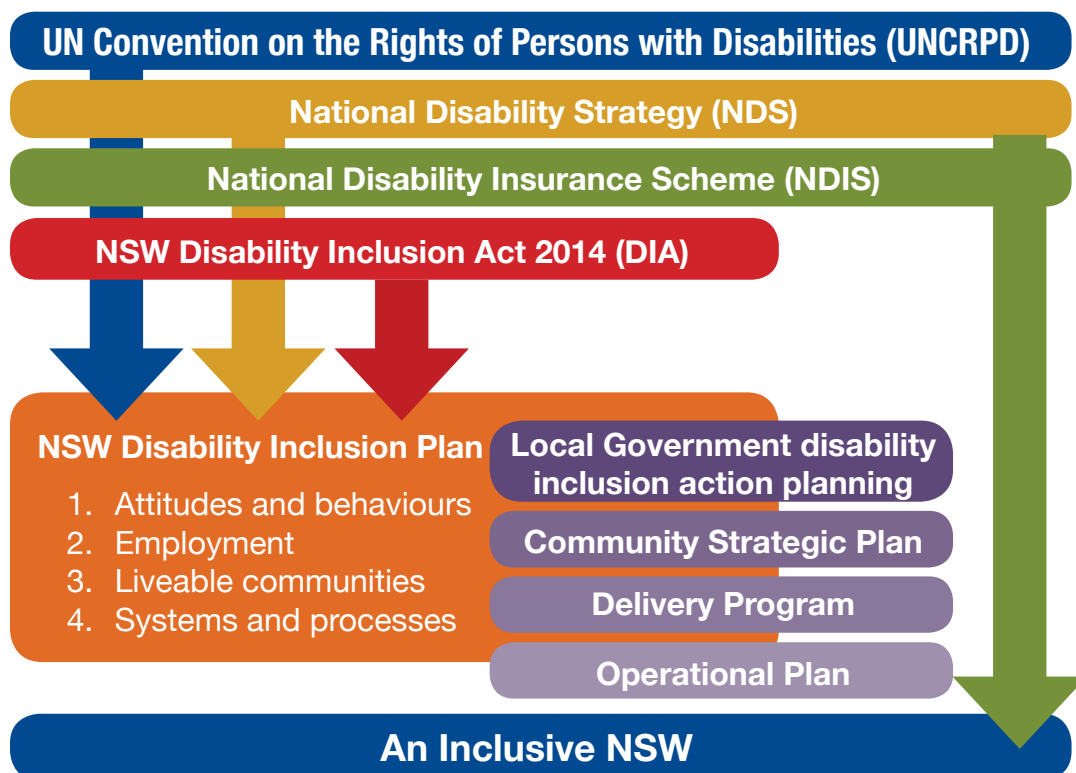
In its role as a local government authority, Gwydir Shire Council observes the following principles:

- That all residents and visitors to Gwydir Shire have the right of equal access and opportunity to fully participate and contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of the Shire
- That it is Council's moral and legal responsibility to ensure equity in provision and access to facilities and services throughout the Gwydir Shire to provide the structure which enables equal opportunity
- That Council has a responsibility under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to raise awareness through education and consultation in order to adequately provide access for the whole community and to ensure that barriers to access are addressed appropriately

Gwydir Shire is striving to be a place where people with disability have access to mainstream services and are part of their community.

Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan will aim to provide better access to Council information, services and facilities ensuring people with disabilities can fully participate in their community.





Source: Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines Local Government

International

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities protects the rights of all people with a disability around the world. Australia was one of the first countries to sign the Convention when it was ratified in 2008. The convention acknowledges that people with disability have the same human rights as those without disability. This commits participating governments to ensure these rights can be exercised and that barriers are removed. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities supports the social model of disability. This recognises that attitudes, practices and structures are disabling and can create barriers to people with disability from enjoying economic participation, social inclusion and equality which are not an inevitable outcome of their disability.

The Convention is guided by the following principles:

- Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices and independence of persons
- Non-discrimination
- Full and effective participation and inclusion in society
- Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- Equality of opportunity Accessibility
- Equality between men and women
- Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

National

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, developed in partnership by the Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments, sets out a national plan for improving life for Australians with disability and their families and carers, to support the commitment made to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Actions in the Implementation Plan that involve councils include improving Web Content accessibility, access to infrastructure, recreation, employment and community participation.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a major reform that will deliver a national system of disability support focused on the individual needs and choices of people with disability. The National Disability Insurance Scheme gives participants more choice and control over how, when and where supports are provided.

State

The DIA acknowledges human rights, promoting the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability.

The Act requires NSW government departments, local councils and some other public authorities to develop and implement a Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

The Plan must be consistent with the State Disability Inclusion Plan and include strategies to increase access and participation.

Local



Source: Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines Local Government



Gwydir Shire Council Community Strategic Plan - Growing Our Community was created by the community and provides a long term vision for our Shire. The Community Strategic Plan informs Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan which set out Council's role in achieving the community's vision. Other Council plans and documents relevant to the Disability Inclusion Action Plan include:

- Bingara and Warialda Town Strategies
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
- Motorised Wheelchair Action Plan

Development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan is supported by the Gwydir Shire Community Strategic Plan goals as follows:

- A healthy and cohesive community (Social)
- Building the business base (Economy)
- An environmentally responsible shire (Environment)
- Proactive regional and local leadership (Organisation)
- Organisational Management (Governance)

Other legislation and standards informing Council's work include:

- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan
- NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines
- Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy
- National Disability Agreement
- United Nations- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Building Code of Australia
- Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002
- AS 1428 Standards
- AS/NZS 2890 Standards
- Commonwealth Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010
- NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
- Carers Recognition Act 2012 Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

Disability Snapshot in Gwydir Shire

The DIA defines disability as:

“The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Information about disability in Gwydir Shire is based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. The Census records information about people who identify as needing help with mobility, self-care or communication due to disability or long-term health conditions.

- 7.05% of the population, or 350 people living in Gwydir Shire, identified as needing assistance because of a disability.

Need for assistance with core activities 2011

Assistance needed by age group (years)	Number
0-4 years	6
5-14 years	12
15-19 years	8
20-24 years	6
25-34 years	9
35-44 years	27
45-54 years	29
55-64 years	56
65-74 years	72
75-84 years	61
85 years & over	64
Total	350

- In Gwydir Shire there were 594 carers providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age in 2011.
- The number of people who provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age in Gwydir Shire increased by 67 between 2006 and 2011.
- 314 people were receiving a Disability Support Pension in Gwydir Shire in 2014. The Disability Support Pension is provided to people who have a physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that stops them from working, or people who are permanently blind.

Council Activity

Council works to provide opportunities and raise awareness of inclusion of people with disabilities. Some examples include:

- Council undertakes functional assessments on all new staff to determine additional needs so that modifications are made to accommodate staff with disabilities
- Functional assessments are also undertaken after existing staff members have had accidents/incidents within and out of the work place to accommodate any changes in their ability to undertake normal duties
- Working with Disability Services to provide workplace volunteer placements in Bingara Library
- Provided School work experience placements for high school students with disability
- Implementation of the Regional Library Social Inclusion Plan
- Developing the Positive Ageing Strategy
- Developing Gwydir's Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan in line with individual town strategies
- Installed adaptive technology at Gwydir Libraries and Bingara Toy Library

Community Consultation

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan was developed through a community consultation and research process. A review of Council documents and Government policy took place and a staff survey was conducted. Community consultation involved talking with many different groups of people across the community. During this time we held agency meetings, conducted surveys, held focus groups and spoke with people on an individual basis.



Feedback and recommendations for the final draft of this Plan were sought from community members and service providers who have played an important role in the development of this Plan. A formal review process of the draft Plan will be conducted and a final report will go to the May Council meeting for endorsement

Council staff spoke with 126 people over a 10 month period (June 2016 - March 2017). Community service and health workers, people with a disability and their carers and the broader community participated in surveys, community meetings, focus groups and conversations.

Strategies and Action

Attitudes and Behaviours

What people told us:

People with a disability told us what would make a difference to their community participation. We also heard from carers and family and friends of people with a disability together with community service and health workers.



There was positive feedback for Council's Commonwealth Home Support Programme services and programs as well as Library activities and resources. The majority of challenges identified by participants related to mobility (in terms of navigating the built environment) and access to transport.

Key community responses highlighted the importance of being involved in the local community and having access to appropriate services and recreational and social opportunities. Access to services is difficult and transport is a major issue for travel to other centres for day programs and respite services.

Community views and suggestions for change:

As a whole, Gwydir Shire is a place where people want to live and the response from people with a disability and their carers has been positive. Friendly small communities make it easier for people to be a part of events and celebrations as well as participating in everyday social activities.

However there are barriers within the built environment which need to be addressed. The issue of isolation and distance to medical services is a common theme and navigating the NDIS featured strongly.

Common themes and suggestions for change included:


- More advertising for the community about the range of services available and how to access them

- Increase visibility of people with a disability in Council and community publications

- Higher awareness among volunteer organisations about the value of engaging people with a disability

Livable Communities

It is important that all people can move about easily to access facilities and services and participate in community life. Pedestrian access featured highly in our community consultation with calls for footpaths that are better maintained.



Suggestions were also made for safety education for pedestrians and mobility aid users. More seating in the main street for aged/people with mobility issues was raised on a number of occasions.

Lack of access into shops for mobility aid users was raised along with improved street lighting along Narrabri Road, Bingara.

Common themes and suggestions for change included:

- Make sure Council facilities are physically accessible
- Playgrounds to include accessible equipment
- Footpaths should be level and in good order
- Provide easier access to community events, especially at The Living Classroom, Bingara
- Provide more seating in main streets of Bingara and Warialda
- Increase the length of the disabled car spaces to accommodate loading of wheelchairs.

Employment

Meaningful employment contributes to independence and feelings of self-worth. Opportunities to work in paid and volunteer roles are important. Local employment, especially for school leavers, is important for the long term future of the community.

Common themes and suggestions for change included:

- Provide more opportunities for meaningful employment for people with a disability
- Provide accessible work places and volunteer opportunities

Service Systems Processes

Service information and processes are not always readily available and don't allow for people with a range of disabilities.

Common themes and suggestions for change included:

- Make information available in more locations to ensure awareness of availability
- Ensure information is provided in a variety of formats including the Federal Government sponsored National Relay Service for people with a disability.
- Provide more information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme and where to go for help

Action Plan

Positive attitudes and behaviour

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility-Business Unit	Timeframe	Community Strategic Plan Link
Promote positive attitudes and behaviour	Audit website to ensure that images include people with disabilities and that language is appropriate.	Website includes appropriate images and language.	Business and Economic Development	December 2017	1.2.1 Enable accessible and affordable lifestyle options
	Utilise International Day of People with Disabilities to promote inclusion to the general community.	Positive media coverage after community event.	Business and Economic Development	Annually	
	Develop and facilitate Disability Awareness Training for staff (other than induction training)	Staff training completed.	Human Resources	Develop July 2018 Facilitate annually	

Livable communities

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility-Business Unit	Timeframe	Community Strategic Plan Link
Safe and accessible community facilities	Develop shared pathways education campaign to reduce conflict between pedestrians and mobility aid users.	Decrease in pedestrian complaints.	Parks and Urban Spaces	July 2018	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety
	Provide opportunities for community connection by facilitating and promoting International Day of People with Disabilities event.	Community celebration and participant feedback.	Aged and Disability Services	Annually	1.2.3 Celebrate our creativity and cultural expression
	Audit activities and events run by Council for accessibility.	Accessibility issues identified and addressed.	Business and Economic Development	July 2018	
	Review seating provision in main streets of Bingara and Warialda.	Seating provision reviewed by Council. Outcomes communicated to community.	Parks and Urban Spaces	December 2018	
	Source funding for all abilities play equipment to improve playgrounds in the Shire.	Installation of accessible play equipment in strategic spaces.	Parks and Urban Spaces	July 2017 – December 2020	
	Audit Council buildings and facilities to ensure accessibility compliance	Audit complete with recommendations for action.	Building Services Administration	December 2018	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety
	Audit Council libraries equipment and resources in terms of height and reach accessibility	Library equipment and resources meet accessibility standards.	Libraries	July 2017	
	Increase the length of disabled car spaces to accommodate loading of wheelchairs	Disabled car spaces are increased in length	Technical Services	December 2017	1.2.2 A shared responsibility for community safety

Employment

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility-Business Unit	Timeframe	Community Strategic Plan Link
Enhance employment of people with a disability within Council	Develop Council's Workforce Plan to include best practice guidelines for inclusion.	Gaps in Workforce Management Strategy identified and addressed.	Human Resources	December 2018	2.2.1 Increase the range of opportunities to work locally
	Review recruitment processes, forms and language.	Recruitment process forms and language targeted and simplified.	Human Resources	December 2018	
	Provide information and training for Council supervisors/ managers to increase their knowledge and skill.	Increased level of knowledge and skill displayed by supervisors/ managers	Human Resources	July 2019	
	Continue to work with disability employment organisations and schools to identify opportunities for employment and work experience.	Number of placements filled and sustained.	Human Resources	July 2017 – Dec 2019	
	Continue to conduct and respond to staff disability inclusion survey.	Staff survey conducted and collated with recommendations	Human Resources	Annually	

Employment continued

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility-Business Unit	Timeframe	Community Strategic Plan Link
	Develop a guide to assist Gwydir Shire Council staff respond to queries regarding services for people with disabilities.	Guide developed and utilised by staff. Increased level of staff knowledge.	Business and Economic Development	December 2017	5.1.5 Provide responsible internal governance
	Review current communication mechanisms to ensure compliance with accessibility standards.	Council's communication mechanisms comply with accessibility standards.	Information Services	December 2018	
	Develop plan for Website content compliance with disability standards.	Website content meets accessibility standards.	Business and Economic Development	December 2019	
	Include the National Relay Service contact details in all generic Council publicity and advertising materials and information provided to the public.	The National Relay Service contact details included in Council publicity and advertising.	Governance	December 2018	

Service systems and processes

Strategic Goal	Action	Measurement	Responsibility-Business Unit	Timeframe	Community Strategic Plan Link
Information is provided in a variety of formats	Investigate, develop and implement options to consider adopting better layouts, plain English and alternative accessible formats for Council documents including rates notices, dog registrations, planning documents and applications, Council agendas and minutes.	Plain English and accessible formats available to the community.	Organisation and Community Development	December 2018	
Consult with people with a disability regarding their needs.	Review the current community engagement strategy to include a checklist on inclusive consultation.	Community consultation includes people with disabilities.	Organisation and Community Development	December 2018	4.1.2 Enable broad, rich and meaningful engagement to occur



Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan includes timelines to guide the completion of the actions. The process will be monitored and evaluated through the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle.

Implementation of the Plan will be undertaken by the responsible Business Units. Each action will be monitored and reported against for the periods 1 July – 31 December and 1 January – 30 June of each year.

The Director of Organisation and Community Development will monitor the overall implementation of the Plan and the integration of its actions into Council's new Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan.



Reporting

Outcomes and achievements will be reported in Council's Annual Report and six monthly report to the community. These reports will be available on Council's Website and at its Administration Buildings and libraries.

A report will also be provided to the Department of Family and Community Services and the Minister for Disability Services.

Review

The Plan will be reviewed annually in line with the Integrated Planning and Reporting cycle.

An audit, evaluation and review of the Plan will be conducted at the end of its term.