



DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2021-25

PLANNING FOR OUR PEOPLE
OUR PLACE OUR FUTURE

Page of Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	3	Community Engagement.....	26
Mayor's Message	4	Survey Participants.....	29
General Manager's Message	5	Survey and Consultation findings	30
Introduction.....	6	What Council has achieved.....	36
Definitions.....	8	Action Plan.....	41
Guiding Principles.....	8	1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours	42
Strategic and Legislative Context.....	10	2. Creating liveable communities.....	46
Council Framework	10	3. Supporting access to meaningful employment	52
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.....	11	4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes	55
National Disability Insurance Scheme	12	Resourcing.....	62
NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014	12	Monitoring, Review and Reporting.....	63
NSW Disability Inclusion Plan.....	13	Thank you.....	64
Other Legislation and Standards.....	13		
Community Profile	16		
Disability in Cessnock City.....	17		
Disability in Australia	20		

Adopted by Council on 21 May 2021

Acknowledgement of Country

Cessnock City Council acknowledges that within its Local Government Area boundaries are the Traditional Lands of the Wonnarua people, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung people.

We acknowledge these Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices and operations are located, and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now live within the Cessnock Local Government Area.

Mayor's Message

COUNCILLOR BOB PYNSENT
CESSNOCK CITY MAYOR

I am pleased to present Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025.

Communities that are accessible and inclusive provide greater choice and control for individuals and are vital to enabling people with disability the opportunity to participate equally in community life.

This Plan demonstrates Council's commitment to improving access and outlines how we intend to address barriers to participation, creating a more inclusive community for people living in and visiting the Local Government Area.

Consultation with people with disability, friends and family of people with disability and the disability services sector has directly informed the action plan. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of our community who contributed to the development of the Plan. Council looks forward to developing and maintaining strong working relationships with the community in delivering the Plan's actions.



General Manager's Message

LOTTA JACKSON
GENERAL MANAGER,
CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025 is a four year framework that outlines the key strategies and actions Council will deliver to fulfill our commitment of improving opportunities for people with disability to access services, activities, facilities and information.

The Plan will build on the work Council has done through our first Disability Inclusion Action Plan, which has seen access upgrades to community infrastructure, introduced systems that support inclusion and improved access at our community events and activities.

Council is committed to reducing barriers for people with disability and ensuring our facilities, services and processes can be accessed by the community equally. We also have an important role in promoting diversity and fostering positive community attitudes, recognising the key contributions people with disability make in our community.

The Plan is embedded in Council's overarching Integrated Planning and Reporting framework and will be reviewed annually with progress reported to the community through the annual report.

Ongoing engagement and collaboration with the community is vital to the Plan's success and I encourage community members and other local stakeholders to support its implementation.



Introduction

Cessnock City Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021 – 2025 demonstrates Council's commitment to improving opportunities for people with disability to access services, activities, facilities and information. The purpose of the Plan is to outline the practical steps Council will take over the next four years to create a more inclusive community for people with disability living in and visiting the Local Government Area.

It is estimated that about 4.4 million Australians or around 1 in 6 (18%) people have disability¹. If you take this percentage and apply it to Cessnock City's 2019 estimated resident population (59,985)² there could be approximately 10,797 people with disability living in our Local Government Area.

Council recognises that the barriers people with disability encounter in participating in community life are not just about the individuals or their personal condition, but from the interaction between people with disability and the physical, attitudinal, communication and social barriers they face in their environment.

Council has a key role in working to remove barriers so people with disability can participate equally and independently in the community.

This Plan is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is a legislative requirement under the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*, which ensures Councils have a plan setting out the measures they intend to put in place to enable people with disability to participate fully in the community.

The Plan also supports the goals of the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015, focusing on the four key areas of action:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020), People with disability in Australia

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (2019), Regional Population Growth, Australia – 3218.0, Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions)

During the development of the Plan, Council consulted people with disability, family and friends of people with disability, local service providers and networks to assist in identifying access barriers and opportunities for Council to improve inclusion.

The actions developed have been embedded within Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework and have been aligned to the objectives, strategies and deliverables in the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Operational Plan. In monitoring the progress of the Plan's actions, a review will occur annually and be documented in Council's annual report.

The delivery of actions in this Plan will not only benefit people with disability, but will have a positive impact on the broader community who will also benefit from physical access improvements and being part of a community that values inclusion and diversity.



Definitions

Inclusion is the process whereby every person (irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference or ethnicity) who wishes to can access and participate fully in all aspects of an activity or service in the same way as any other member of the community³.

Disability, in relation to a person, includes a long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others⁴.

³ ACE DisAbility Network, Inclusion in the Community

⁴ Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW)

Guiding Principles

This Plan uses the following guiding principles:

- Council will demonstrate leadership in providing and advocating for an inclusive and accessible community.
- People with disability will be provided with equal opportunity to access Council services and facilities.
- Council community events will be inclusive of people with disability.
- Council will provide the community with information that is easily understood.
- People with disability will be encouraged to participate and be included in community consultation processes.
- People with disability will be provided the same opportunities to obtain and maintain employment at Council.
- Council will collaborate with other government departments, businesses, community organisations and groups in advocating for and achieving an inclusive and accessible community.



Strategic and Legislative Context

Council Framework

Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025 has been developed to align with the Community Strategic Plan, Cessnock 2027, the highest level plan in an interconnected set of documents that allows Council to sustainably plan for the future of the Local Government Area. The purpose of Cessnock 2027 is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to develop and implement strategies for achieving these goals.

The strategic themes of Cessnock 2027 are:

- A connected, safe and creative community
- A sustainable and prosperous economy
- A sustainable and healthy environment
- Accessible infrastructure, services and facilities
- Civic leadership and effective governance.

The Delivery Program is a four year plan for how Council aims to achieve the outcomes developed by the community in the Community Strategic Plan. The Operational Plan is a one year plan developed to implement the activities that will achieve the strategic directions set out in Delivery Program and longer term vision of the Community Strategic Plan.

This Plan has been embedded within the Community Strategic Plan, Cessnock 2027 and sits under the strategic theme 'A connected, safe and creative community'. The implementation of the Plan will be incorporated into Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plans. At the end of each year, Council will report on the progress and outcomes of the Plan to the community in the Annual Report.



United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In 2008, the Australian Government committed to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the first binding international human rights instrument to explicitly address disability. The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity. The Australian Government's commitment to the Convention signified a shifting attitude towards people with disability by acknowledging that they have the same rights as those without a disability and that their rights should be protected by law and promoted by Government.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

The National Disability Insurance Scheme was introduced to deliver people with disability greater choice and control by allocating them an agreed individualised funding package to purchase disability supports directly from service providers. This replaced the previous model where government contracted disability service providers through block funding grants to deliver specific services. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is an outcome of the implementation of the National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 which was developed to support Australia’s compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme was first introduced in the Cessnock Local Government Area in 2016 and became available to all eligible people in NSW in 2018.



NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014

Building on Australia’s responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the objectives of the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020, the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* and accompanying *Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014* were introduced to reaffirm the state wide focus on building inclusive communities through planning and coordination across all levels of government.

The *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* provides the legislative framework for disability inclusion and access planning. Section 12 of the Act requires Councils to develop Disability Inclusion Action Plans that:

- Specify how Council proposes to have regard to the disability principles in its dealings with matters relating to people with disability.
- Include strategies to support people with disability.
- Include details of Council’s consultation about the Plan with people with disability.
- Explain how the Plan supports the goals of the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan.

NSW Disability Inclusion Plan

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan aligns with the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan provides direction to government and sets a framework for continued consultation and partnership with people with disability, key agencies and members of the community. The plan has four focus areas for concentrated action identified by people with disability, the NSW Government and community stakeholders. The four areas of action are:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes

Other Legislation and Standards

Other legislation and standards relevant to the delivery of Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan include:

Commonwealth Legislation

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

State Legislation

- *NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) and Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (NSW)*

Standards and Codes

- Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010
- Building Code of Australia
- Australian Standard (AS 1428) – Design for Access and Mobility
- Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

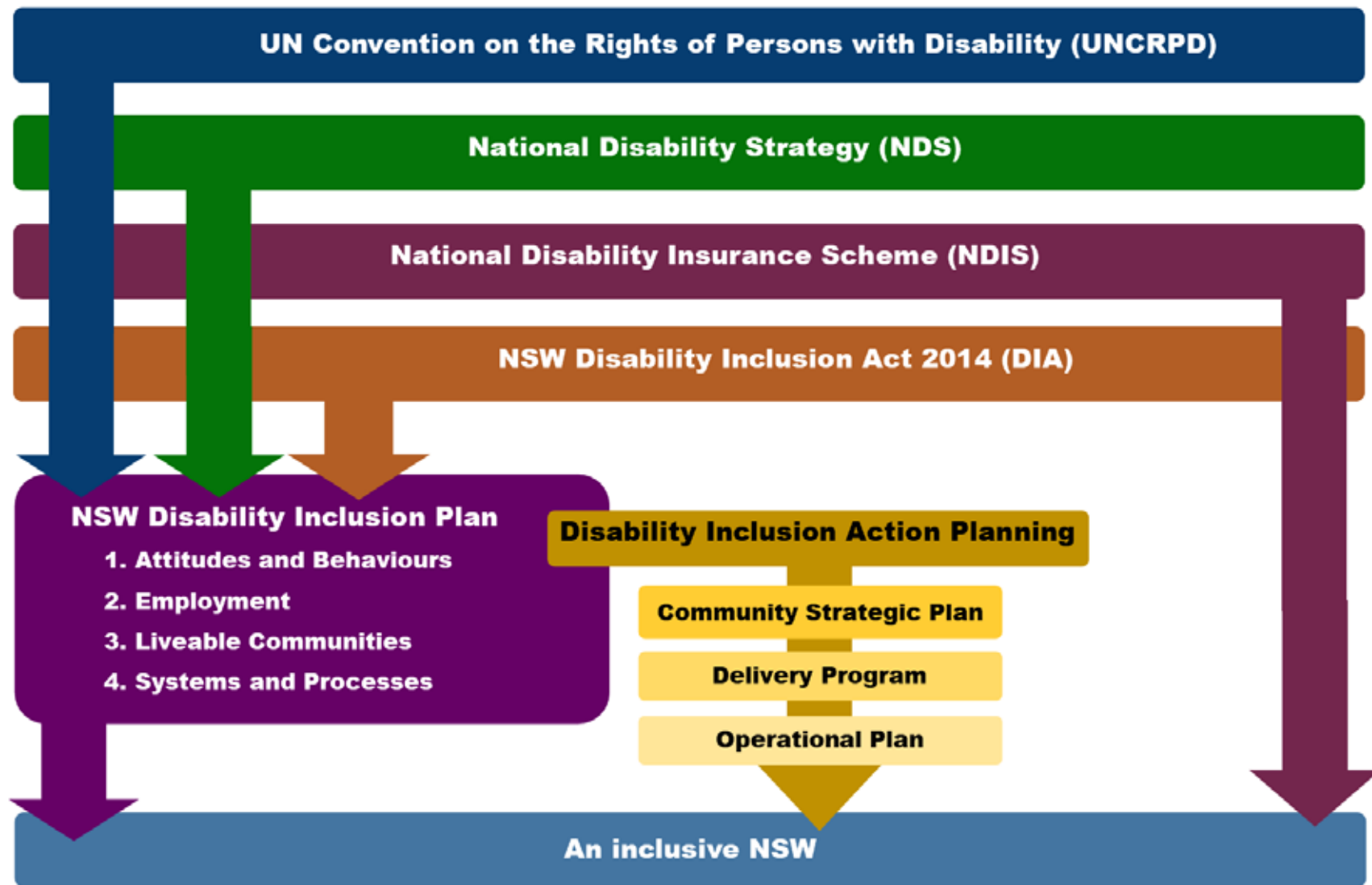


Figure 1: The relationships between the relevant policy and legislative instruments

Source: Adapted from NSW Government (2020), NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan Guidelines

This Plan considers the broader strategic and legislative context that commits to a national, unified approach to inclusion and improving the lives of people with disability, and has been developed to meet the requirements of the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014*. The Plan's actions are structured under the key focus areas of the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2015.

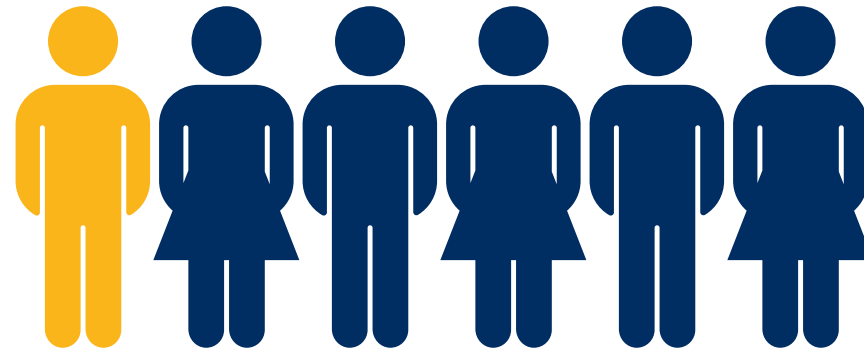
At the time of developing this Plan the National Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020, NSW Disability Inclusion Plan and *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* were being reviewed by the Commonwealth and NSW governments. It is expected that the outcomes of these reviews will result in changes to future strategies and amendments to legislation. As part of this Plan's annual review process, national and state disability inclusion strategies and legislation will be revised to ensure the Plan's goals and actions remain relevant and responsive.

Implementation of the Plan will be a specific action identified in Council's Delivery Program 2022-2025 and Operational Plans. The Plan will be monitored and implemented as part of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.



Community Profile

It is estimated that about 4.4 million Australians, or around 1 in 6 (18%) people have disability. If you take this percentage and apply it to Cessnock Local Government Area's 2019 estimated resident population (59,985) there could be approximately 10,797 people with disability living in our Local Government Area.



4.4 million Australians - or around 1 in 6 people - have a disability.

Of those 4.4 million people...



1 in 3 have severe or profound disability



1 in 4 have a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition



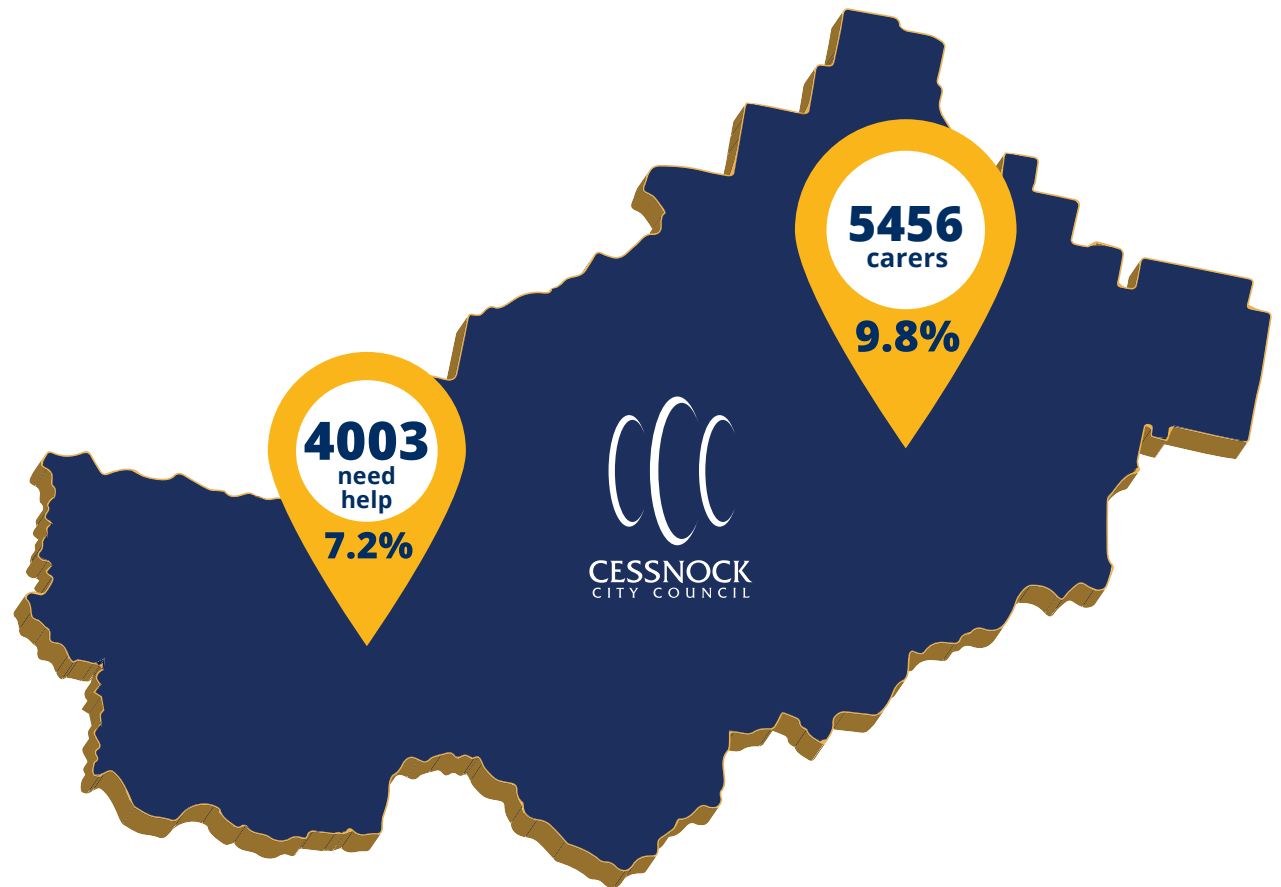
3 in 4 have a physical disorder as their main condition

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020), People with disability in Australia and Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census of Population and Housing, Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions)

Disability in Cessnock City

In the 2016 Census, 4,003 people (7.2% of the population) in the Cessnock Local Government Area reported needing assistance with either self-care, body movement or communication activities. The prevalence of people needing assistance in Cessnock Local Government Area was the highest of the seven Local Government Areas within Family and Community Services Hunter District, which included Cessnock, Dungog, Lake Macquarie, Maitland, Newcastle, Port Stephens and Singleton ⁵.

5,456 people reported providing unpaid care, help or assistance to a person with a disability, long term illness or old age, which represented 12.3% of the population aged over 15 years old ⁶.



⁵ NSW Government (2018) Hunter District Data Profile

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census of Population and Housing, Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions)

Disability in Cessnock City (continued)

In June 2020, 3,217 people in Cessnock Local Government Area aged 16 to 64 received a Disability Support Pension and 2,519 people received Carers Allowance administered through Services Australia ⁷.

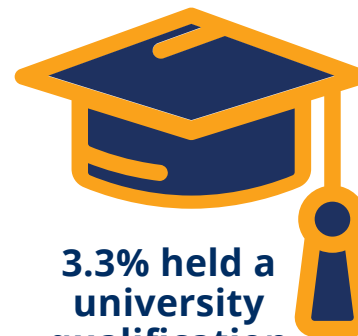
The 2016 Census data provided the following insights about people with a need for assistance in the Cessnock Local Government Area.

- 18.4% of people were unemployed compared to 8.6% of people who didn't report a need for assistance.
- 3.3% aged over 15 held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 7.8% of people who didn't report a need for assistance.
- 6.8% lived in households earning an income of \$2,500 or more a week, compared to 15.6% of households without people who reported a need for assistance.

Of the people who needed assistance with core activities in Cessnock City...



18.4% were unemployed
Compared to 8.7% of the total population



3.3% held a university qualification
Compared to 7.5% of the total population



6.8% lived in high income households
Compared to 14% of the total population

⁷ Department of Social Services (2020) DSS Payment Demographic Data



Get Creative Competition

Participants were asked to create a drawing, painting, song or poem that responds to the question What does inclusion look like in Cessnock City?

Carousel Cafe
Artist: Thomas Groves



Disability in Australia

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare recently released their report, *People with Disability in Australia 2020*. The report brings together information from a range of national data sources to contribute to a greater understanding about disability in Australia. Some of the key findings are outlined below.

- 1 in 3 (32%) people with disability have severe or profound disability, about 1.4 million people.
- 1 in 4 (23%) people with disability have a mental or behavioural disorder as their main condition.
- 3 in 4 (77%) people with disability have a physical disorder as their main condition.
- The prevalence of disability increases with age. Around 1 in 8 (12%) people aged under 65 have some level of disability, rising to 1 in 2 (50%) for those aged 65 and over.



Health

- 42% of adults with disability rate their health as fair or poor compared to 7% of adults without disability.
- 32% of adults with disability experience a high or very high level of psychological distress compared to 8% of adults without disability.



Justice and Safety

- 47% of adults with disability have experienced violence after the age of 15, compared to 36% of adults without disability.
- 1 in 10 (9.6%) people aged 15 and over with disability have experienced disability discrimination in the last year.



Housing

- Almost two thirds (64%) of people with disability own their home, either with or without a mortgage.
- 2 in 5 (41%) social housing households include at least one person with disability.



Education

- 1 in 10 (10%) school students in Australia have disability.
- 34% of people aged 20 and over with disability have completed Year 12 compared to 66% without disability.
- 17% of people aged 20 and over with disability have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 35% without disability.



Employment

- 53% of working age people with disability are in the labour force, compared with 84% of those without disability.
- Working age people with disability (10%) are twice as likely as those without disability (4.6%) to be unemployed.



Income and Finance

- People with disability (14%) are less likely than those without disability (34%) to have a high income.
- 38% (or 2.2 million) of households with a person with disability have a low level of household weekly income, compared with 18% (or 2.2 million) of households that do not.
- Almost 1 in 3 (27% or 145,000) primary carers have a low level of personal income, compared with 28% (or 3.6 million) of people who are not primary carers.



People with disability are a vast and diverse group, and an individual's disability may have a minimal or substantial impact on how they participate in their community.

Relying on Census data to provide a clear picture of the number of people with disability and how those people live can be problematic because individuals have different perceptions of disability and only people who require assistance with day to day tasks are captured. It is likely that the number of people with disability living in Cessnock Local Government Area is much higher than the number presented in the Census data.

As people grow older they are more likely to experience some form of disability. It is expected by 2036 the population of Cessnock Local Government Area will have grown to 77,050⁸ people , and there will be an 80% increase of people aged over 65 (from 2016)⁹.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report found that some people with disability face challenges routinely and actively participating in everyday life areas and are more likely to experience poor health, discrimination and violence than those without disability. The available data for the Cessnock Local Government Area indicated that people who reported a need for assistance were more likely to have poorer outcomes in the areas of education, employment and income.

⁸ NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment (2020) Historic and projected population change

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) Census of Population and Housing, Compiled and presented by .id (informed decisions); NSW Department of Planning Industry and Environment (2020) Projected population by age



Community Engagement

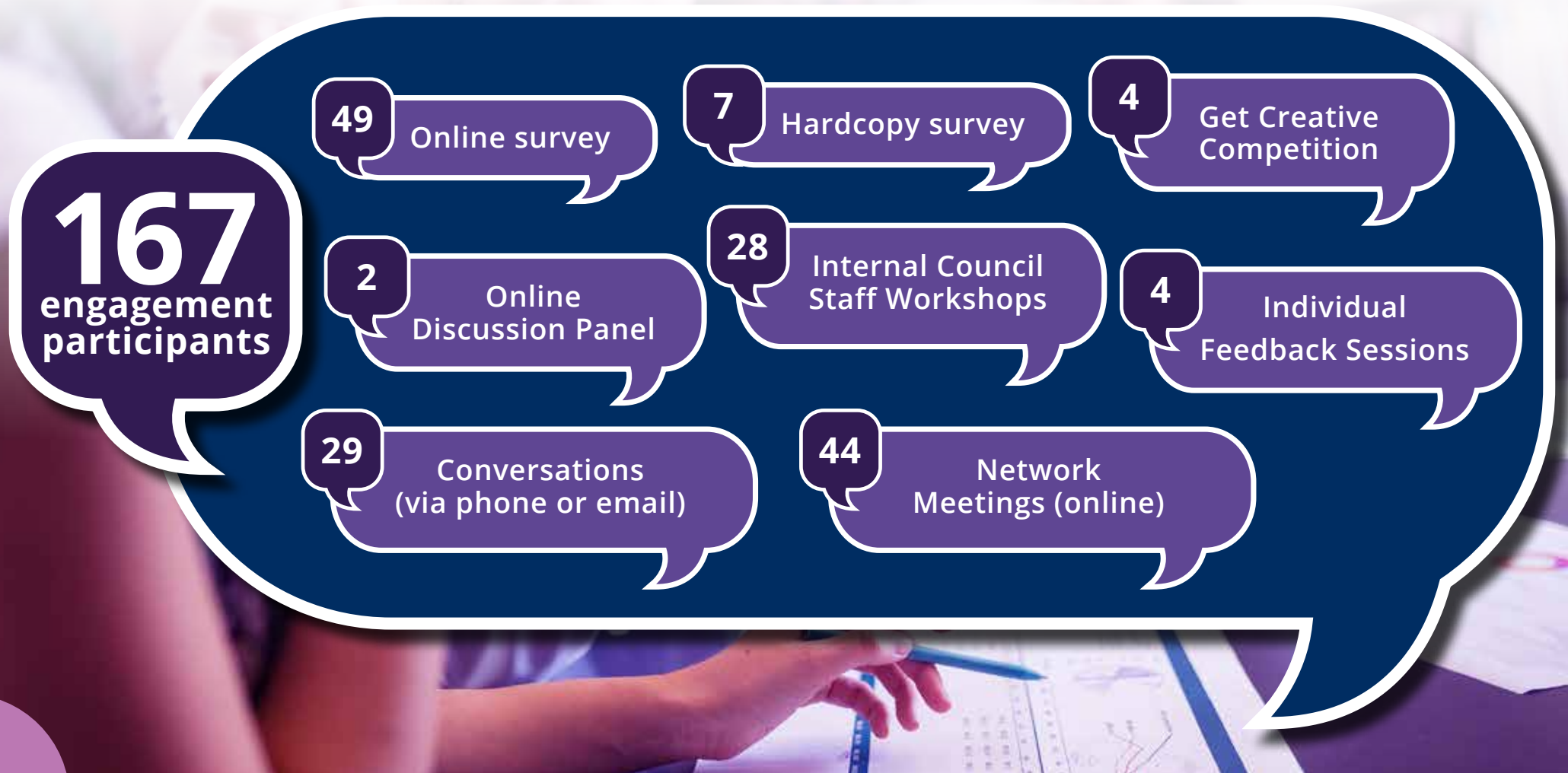
This Plan has been developed by engaging with people with disability, family and friends of people with disability and local service providers. The community engagement process provided valuable insights into some of the barriers that local people with disability can face accessing information, services and moving around their community.

Online engagement was open from 13 August 2020 to Friday 2 October 2020, and a Have Your Say page was created for the Plan's review on the Council's website that detailed the range of ways people could get involved and provide feedback. Consultation was promoted through social media channels, local newspaper articles and through email networks. Local service providers supported the engagement by promoting opportunities for people to get involved, sharing social media posts and assisting individuals to complete surveys.

Council took into account the difficulties faced by the community during the COVID-19 pandemic and the requirements of the Public Health (COVID-19 Restriction on Gathering and Movement) Order 2020 in enforcement at the time when undertaking engagement activities. Online engagement methods and phone calls were encouraged, with face to face meetings with individuals only taking place through a booking process where physical distancing and hygiene measures could be maintained.



A total of 167 people participated in engagement. The following details the consultation methods used to gather people's ideas and feedback, and the number of people who participated in each activity.



Survey participants

Of the 56 people who completed the survey:

- 35% were people with disability, 29% worked in the disability services sector and 23% were family or friends of a person with disability.
- 90% of people lived or worked in the Cessnock Local Government Area.
- 91% of survey participants were aged between 25 and 59.



Survey and Consultation findings

Summarised below are survey findings and themes that were raised during the community engagement process. These findings have been used to inform the actions in the Plan.

Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours.

- 31% of people who completed the survey agreed that the local community is welcoming and inclusive of people with disability, 29% disagreed, and 38% neither agreed or disagreed.
- Invisible or hidden disabilities that are not always visibly apparent or obvious to others should be better recognised and understood. Examples of disabilities that can be hidden or invisible include psychosocial disabilities, autism, learning disabilities and chronic health conditions.
- Council has a role in promoting inclusion and helping to develop positive community attitudes.
- Accessible infrastructure, social connection and being able to participate were identified as the key things that made people with disability feel welcome and included in their community.
- Community events should be accessible and inclusive, with additional parking and drop off points.
- Having contact with people with disability was considered the most helpful way to shift people attitudes towards disability.
- Awareness and Inclusion training is helpful in developing understanding and building confidence in communicating with people with disability.

Creating liveable communities.

- Safe and accessible transport, footpaths, parking and pedestrian crossings were identified as fundamental to improving people's ability to live independently.
- Transport and cost were identified as key barriers for people with disability participating in their communities.
- Public spaces should have more tables, benches and shade.
- Playspaces should have accessible facilities, clear signage, shade and fencing.
- Accessible family change rooms and toilets at aquatic and sporting facilities help people with disability and their families participate in their community.
- Lack of accessible parking and toilets in central business districts.
- Accessible parking spaces should include space for vans and taxis to unload and kerb ramp access to footpaths.
- Towns and villages should have accessible paths of travel, connecting important services and facilities.
- Housing, health and transport services should be affordable and accessible for people with disability.

Supporting access to meaningful employment.

- Council should practice, support and promote inclusive employment.
- Lack of employment opportunities and workplace culture and attitudes were identified as key barriers for people with disability accessing employment locally.
- People with disability identified they would be interested in employment opportunities with Council. Permanent employment opportunities were preferred, and also of interest were casual, contract, apprenticeship/traineeship, work placement and volunteer roles.
- The areas within Council people with disability were most interest to work in were Parks and Gardens, Community and Cultural Services, Administration and Customer Service and Community and Sporting Facilities.
- Application processes for roles that don't require a lot of reading and writing should be simpler.
- Neurodiverse job applicants are often disadvantaged in traditional interview scenarios. Neurodiversity is the idea that neurological differences like autism, tourette syndrome and dyslexia are natural brain variations, not disorders.
- Employers should be prepared and well informed about the resources available to support employees with disability.

Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

- People with lived experience should be heard and involved in decision making that affects them.
- Council's website and social media were identified as key sources of information.
- Information should be presented simply, clearly and in multiple formats.
- The promotion of specific access and inclusion measures when advertising community events and activities will make it easier for people with disability to plan and participate.
- Inclusive and accessible services that Council delivers should be clearly presented on Council's website.
- Requests to Council to address access issues should be responded to in a timely manner.

During the development of this Plan Council was also undertaking consultation with young people aged 12 to 25 living, working or studying across the Cessnock Local Government Area for the development of Council's Youth Engagement Strategy. A total of 367 young people participated in a survey which explored issues important to them across topics such as education, employment, support and community.

Some of the survey findings from the 115 (35%) young people who identified that they had a medical condition, disability or mental health diagnosis that affected their everyday life included:

- They were more likely to be actively looking for work, but less likely to be employed.
- They were more likely to be interested in social media, music, art and food (cooking, baking, writing recipes) and less likely to be interested in organised sport and exercise and physical health.
- They were less likely to feel they belonged in their community.
- They were less likely to feel positive about their future.
- They were more likely to seek support from support services.





Get Creative Competition

Participants were asked to create a drawing, painting, song or poem that responds to the question What does inclusion look like in Cessnock City?

Cessnock Is My Home
Artist: Lorie McMillan

What Council has achieved

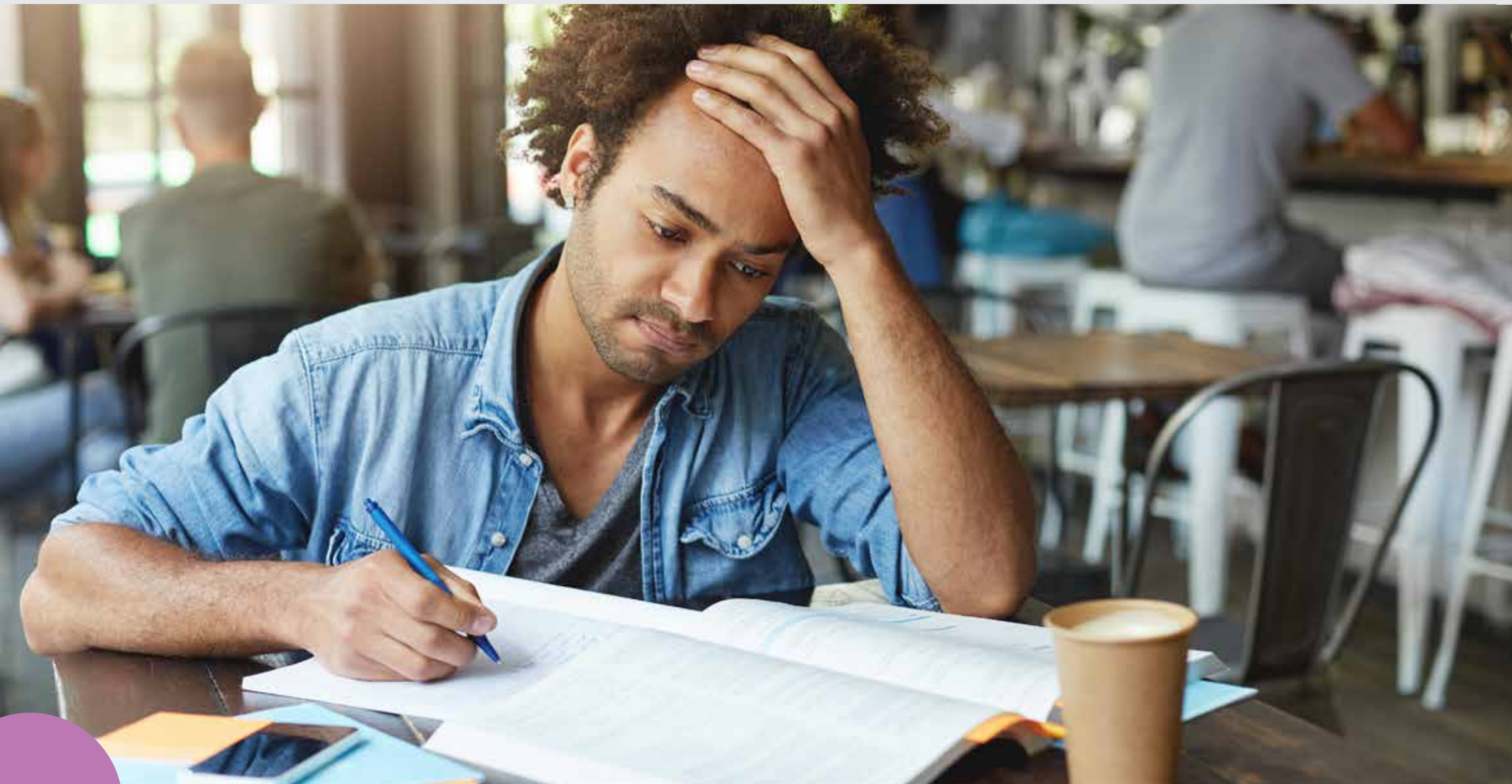
Council's first Disability and Inclusion Action Plan 2017-2021 provided Council with a path to improve access and inclusion for its services, infrastructure, communications and business systems. Below is a snapshot of what has been achieved:

- The hearing loop in the Council Chambers has been expanded to provide greater coverage and improve audio quality for people with hearing aids and cochlear implants.
- The National Relay Service (NRS) has been introduced as a contact option for Council's customer service team. The NRS assists Australians who are deaf, hard of hearing and/or have speech impairment to communicate with voice callers.
- The new Council website with live web chat that aims to meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Accessibility Standard to AA level has been launched.
- An Accessible and Inclusive Event Practice Guide has been developed to assist organisers to plan inclusive community events including the Cessnock City Seniors Festival.
- Equal Employment Opportunity, Bullying & Harassment training was delivered to Council staff through eLearning and face to face sessions. The training included information on having a workplace free from discrimination by providing everyone with the same opportunities, ensuring there are no barriers for people with disability or cultural differences. The training also informed staff of bullying and harassment behaviours, what is acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour and the impacts these have on people.
- The 'Including You' Ability Links NSW event tent has featured at Council's Youth Week, Spring Awakening and Carols in the Park events promoting social inclusion and providing a safe space for people to retreat to when they need some time away from the noise and action of events.
- Bridges Hill Park and Playground, Veterans Memorial Park, Johns Park, Miller Park and Jeffries Park have had upgrades that include accessible pathways, park furniture and inclusive play elements.





- New playgrounds at Cliftleigh Meadows District Park and Wyndham Ridge Park were installed with inclusive play elements and accessible park furniture.
- Both Cessnock and Kurri Kurri Library Branches installed height adjustable customer service desks and self-check units.
- Cessnock Library Branch installed a lift and automatic doors to improve access from the carpark to the main floor of the Library.
- Council's Procurement Policy was updated to include a commitment to explore opportunities to provide direct and indirect procurement opportunities to Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) that supply goods and services locally, acknowledging ADEs play an important and valuable role in providing supported employment opportunities to people with disability.
- The family change rooms at Kurri Kurri Aquatic Centre were refurbished to provide accessible showers, hand basins, toilet, baby changes tables and automatic doors.
- Bellbird Community Hall was refurbished to provide an accessible ramp, toilet and parking. Access improvements were also made to the existing toilet facilities.
- A dedicated Access and Inclusion page on Council's website was established and provides information on accessible facilities and initiatives that support inclusion.
- The accessible toilet at Council's Youth Centre was refurbished.



Action Plan

Four key outcome areas:

1

Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours.

2

Creating liveable communities.

3

Supporting access to meaningful employment.

4

Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours

Council encourages inclusive community attitudes and behaviours and delivers programs that support social inclusion.

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
1.1	Promote inclusion and positive perceptions of disability	1. Promote public awareness campaigns that celebrate and recognise the achievements, contribution and abilities of people with disability	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of public awareness campaigns promoted • Number of people reached
		2. Include images of people with disability in our publications and communications	Ongoing	Media and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of documents produced that include images of people with disability
		3. Participate in and/or promote local initiatives that support inclusion	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of initiatives supported • Level of engagement by community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
1.1	Promote inclusion and positive perceptions of disability	4. Promote the use of Council's Accessible & Inclusive Event Practice Guide to organisations hosting community activities and events	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of organisations issued with Practice Guide • Feedback from event organisers
1.2	Improve understanding and increase awareness of disability inclusion among Council staff	1. Continue to deliver Equal Employment Opportunity training inclusive of access and inclusion information to staff as part of Council induction	Ongoing	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new staff completed training • Feedback from staff
		2. Deliver disability awareness and inclusion training as part of the Leadership Development and Capability Framework	Ongoing	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training completed • Feedback from staff
		3. Develop an Inclusive Communication Factsheet to assist Council staff in understanding accessible formats and responding to access requests	2021/22	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factsheet completed • Factsheet promoted to Council staff • Feedback from staff

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
1.3	Deliver inclusive events and activities that increase community connection	1. Include an access statement in the promotion of Council's community events and activities to encourage people to advise of any accessibility requirements	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access statement included in promotion of events and activities • Number of requests received by staff
		2. Provide a quiet sensory space at large scale Council community events	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory space provided • Level of engagement • Feedback from community
		3. Trial the use of sensory kits during activities at Cessnock and Kurri Kurri Libraries, reducing barriers to inclusion for children and young people who may get overwhelmed in busy environments	2022/23	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory kits introduced • Level of engagement • Feedback from staff and community



2. Creating liveable communities

Council plans, designs and constructs public spaces and facilities that promote social participation and connectedness. Council advocates for increased service provision that supports the independence and wellbeing of people with disability.

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
2.1	Improve the accessibility of public spaces and facilities	1. Consult with people with disability on design and accessibility during the development of new community buildings and major renewal works for existing community buildings	Ongoing	Open Space and Community Facilities Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of people with disability consulted • Features incorporated into design • Feedback from community
		2. Where resources and funding allows, undertake audits of community facilities to assess compliance with the Australian Standard for Access and Mobility (AS 1428)	Ongoing	Open Space and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of access audits completed

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
2.1	Improve the accessibility of public spaces and facilities	3. Undertake an audit of Council's accessible public toilets and identify priority upgrades as part of Council's Public Amenities Review	2021/22	Open Space and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Amenities Review completed
4. Continue to pursue funding opportunities for the implementation of refurbishment works creating a cultural hub at Cessnock Performing Arts Centre including improved access to new community spaces		Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of funding opportunities pursued for refurbishment works Refurbishment works completed Feedback from community 	
5. Identify and program access improvements through Asset Management Plans, Plans of Management, Strategic Documents and Masterplans for public domain projects, community and recreation facilities		Ongoing	Open Space and Community Facilities Strategic Planning Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of access improvements identified Access improvement works completed Feedback from community Number of grants submitted for access improvement works 	

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
2.1	Improve the accessibility of public spaces and facilities	6. Implement the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Everyone Can Play Guideline in the development and upgrading of playspaces	Ongoing	Open Space and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of playspaces developed or upgraded • Feedback from community
		7. Review and update the Cessnock Development Control Plan (DCP) to ensure adequate guidance is provided for access requirements	2023/24	Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCP review completed • Feedback from staff • Feedback from community
2.2	Improve accessible paths of travel and parking in key destinations	1. Continue to implement the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan 2016 (PAMP)	Ongoing	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of items actioned in the PAMP • Feedback from community
		2. Ensure designs for major Central Business District upgrades and public domain improvements consider accessible paths of travel	Ongoing	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible paths of travel identified and included in detailed design • Feedback from community
		3. Continue to investigate opportunities to improve accessible parking in Cessnock and Kurri Kurri Central Business Districts	Ongoing	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of accessible parking spaces installed or upgraded • Feedback from community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
2.3	Support safe and accessible transport options	1. Continue to advocate for increased transport options including public and community transport services	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of submissions or representations made for increased transport options • Feedback from community
		2. Install and upgrade priority bus stops and supporting infrastructure to meet the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002	Ongoing	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of grants submitted for upgrade works • Number of bus stops installed and upgraded • Feedback from community
		3. Provide community education and resources regarding safe mobility scooter use	2023/24	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community education and resources delivered • Feedback from community
2.4	Participate in collaborative networks that support social inclusion and advocate for increased service provision	1. Continue to be active members of local and regional networks that strive for inclusive, safe and healthy communities	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of networks • Number of projects delivered in partnership

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
2.4	Participate in collaborative networks that support social inclusion and advocate for increased service provision	2. Continue to advocate for increased disability, social support and health services to meet the needs of people with disability in the Local Government Area	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of submissions or representations made for increased service provision
2.5	Support the delivery of affordable and accessible housing	1. Continue to support and advocate for the delivery of affordable and accessible housing through the implementation of actions in the Cessnock Housing Strategy	Ongoing	Strategic Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cessnock Housing Strategy implemented



3. Supporting access to meaningful employment

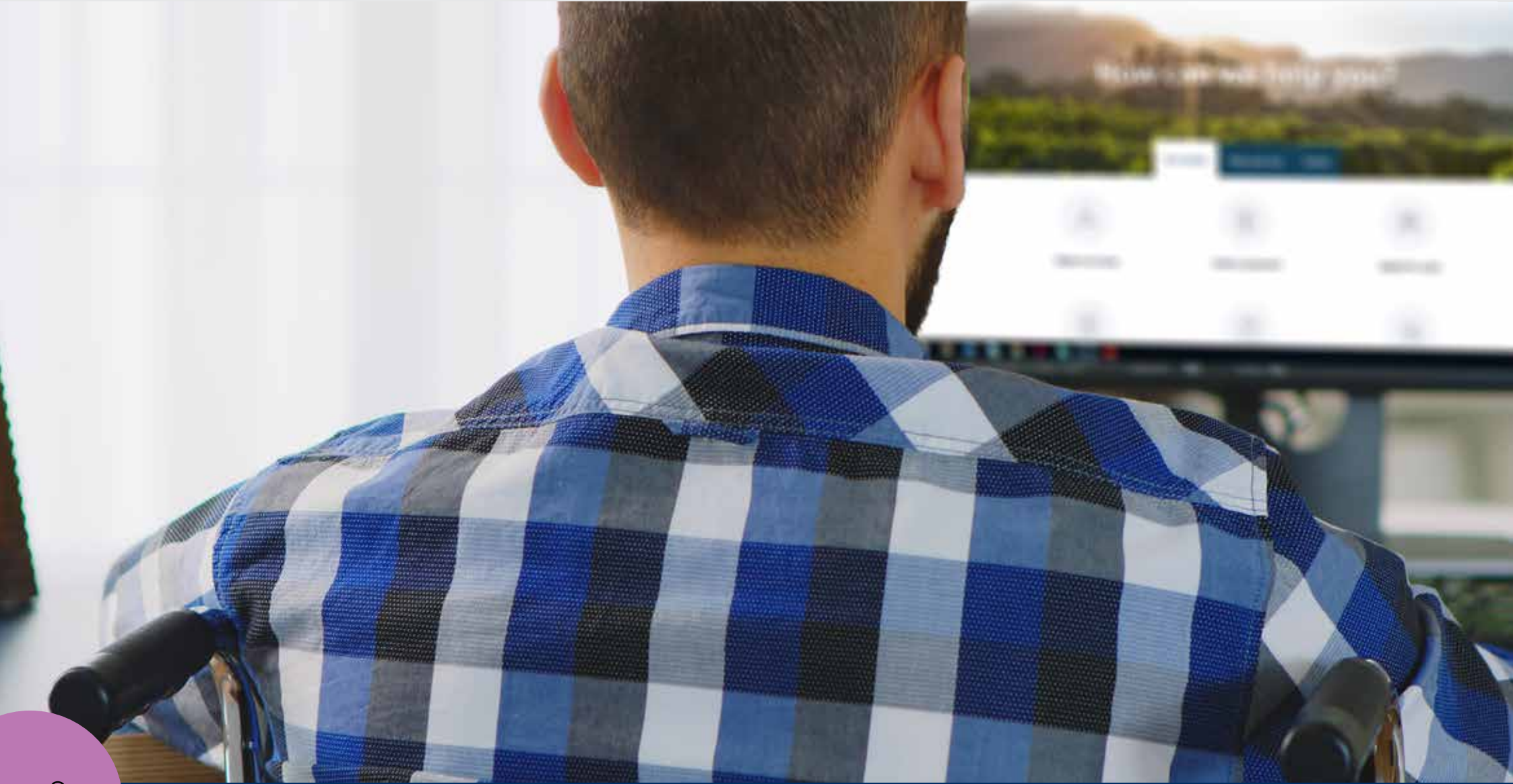
Council is committed to workforce diversity, inclusion and equal employment opportunities. Council encourages and supports the employment of people with disability across the wider Local Government Area.

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
3.1	Improve Council's capacity to attract and support a diverse workforce	1. Develop and implement a Diversity Plan that aims to strengthen the representation of people with disability within the organisation	2021/22	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity Plan developed • Feedback from staff • Feedback from community • Increased representation of people with disability working at Council
		2. Review recruitment and selection processes to ensure current practices are inclusive of people with disability	2021/22	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of recruitment and selection processes completed • Changes implemented • Feedback from community
		3. Develop and implement an accessibility statement for job advertisements	2022/23	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility statement implemented • Feedback from community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
3.1	Improve Council's capacity to attract and support a diverse workforce	4. Continue to provide awareness of flexible work and leave arrangements through Council Protocols and induction	Ongoing	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from staff
		5. Promote job vacancies through Disability Employment Services	Ongoing	Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of vacancies promoted Increased representation of people with disability working at Council
3.2	Promote access to volunteering opportunities	1. Promote to local services the importance of including and listing volunteering opportunities within the online community directory	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of community directory listings that include volunteering opportunities
3.3	Support the employment of people with disability across the Local Government Area	1. Develop guidelines that support the procurement of goods and services from Australian Disability Enterprises, in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy	2021/22	Finance and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines developed Feedback from staff
		2. Promote the benefits of inclusive employment and support available to local employers through Council's jobs portal	Ongoing	Economic Development and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of content shared that promotes inclusive employment Feedback from community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
3.3	Support the employment of people with disability across the Local Government Area	3. Develop connections with local Disability Employment Services through Council's Employment and Training Network	Ongoing	Economic Development and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Disability Employment Services represented on network • Feedback from community





4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

Council will continuously improve the delivery of systems, processes and information and the promotion of inclusive facilities, services and initiatives.

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
4.1	Increase opportunities for people with disability to be involved in Council decision making processes	1. Develop and implement an access statement that can be used when promoting engagement activities to encourage people to advise of any accessibility requirements	2021/22	Business Support and Customer Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access statement included in promotion of engagement activities • Number of requests received by staff
		2. Review Council's Code of Meeting Practice to identify opportunities to improve access and inclusion	2021/22	Finance and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Code of Meeting Practice completed • Changes implemented • Feedback from community
4.2	Ensure that Council's systems are accessible	1. Review Council's website protocols to ensure Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards are included	2022/23	Media and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of policies and protocols completed • Changes implemented

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
4.2	Ensure that Council's systems are accessible	2. Include a statement on Council's website that provides information about the accessibility of content and a contact option for requesting alternate formats	2022/23	Media and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement included on website • Feedback from community
4.3	Continually improve our request, complaints and response processes	1. Collect data on disability access issues raised and resolved through Council's Customer Request Management (CRM) system	2021/22	Business Support and Customer Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection system implemented • Feedback from staff
		2. Review Council's Complaint Handling Policy to identify opportunities to improve access and inclusion	2022/23	Finance and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Complaint Handling Policy completed • Changes implemented • Feedback from community
4.4	Raise awareness of services and facilities that support access	1. Ensure Council's Access and Inclusion webpage lists the infrastructure in place that supports people to access Council owned facilities	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of webpage annually • Changes implemented • Feedback from community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
4.4	Raise awareness of services and facilities that support access	2. Review and update Mobility Maps to include CBD upgrades and accessible parking.	2023/24	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Mobility Maps completed • Changes implemented • Feedback from community
		3. Use the International Symbol of Access in Council's community event programs to identify activities that are held at accessible venues	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of community event programs produced using the International Symbol of Access
		4. Promote Cessnock City Library's accessible programs and resources through social media	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of social media posts promoting accessible programs and resources • Feedback from community
		5. Update Council's Communication Brief template to include project details about access and inclusion	2021/22	Media and Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Brief template updated • Feedback from staff
		6. Promote Cessnock Youth Centre as an accessible and affordable facility for the facilitation of social groups, living skills and healthy cooking programs	2022/23	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number new programs facilitated • Feedback from community

	Strategy	Action	Timing	Responsibility	Measures
4.4	Raise awareness of services and facilities that support access	7. Continue to provide an online community directory and events calendar and promote its use within the community and to service providers	Ongoing	Community and Cultural Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of engagement • Feedback from community
		8. Promote access improvements to waste management services for people with disability.	Ongoing	Environment and Waste Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access improvements promoted • Feedback from community





Resourcing

Many actions in this Plan improve existing services, processes and policies or develop new plans that ensure that Council's practices are inclusive of people with disability. Most of these actions can be resourced using existing operational budgets. Council may require additional funds to achieve some of the Plan's actions that involve infrastructure development and upgrade projects. In this case grant funding will be sought.

Monitoring, Review and Reporting

The Plan will be monitored through Council's corporate management system that tracks Integrated Planning and Reporting responsibilities, including the implementation of Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan. Progress and outcomes of the Plan's actions will be reported to the community in Council's Annual Report. A copy of the Annual Report will be provided to the NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

A review process will be undertaken annually to measure Council's progress against the Plan's actions. During the annual review relevant strategies and legislation will be revised to ensure goals and actions of the Plan remain relevant and responsive to national and state disability strategies and legislation.

Half way through the delivery of the Plan, Council will engage with community stakeholders to update the community on the progress of the Plan, seek feedback on the implementation of actions, share information and raise important issues.

If significant changes in government strategies and legislation or shifts in community priorities are identified during the life of the Plan, the delivery of actions will be adjusted accordingly.

In 2025, the Plan will be comprehensively reviewed and updated. This process will include an analysis of available data, community and staff engagement to ensure the Plan's strategies and actions are relevant and assess whether Council is achieving its vision of creating a more inclusive community for people with disability living in, and visiting the Local Government Area. The outcome of the comprehensive review and updated Plan will be reported to Council, the community and the NSW Disability Council.

Thank you

Council wishes to thank all the individuals and organisations who provided valuable input and support in the development of this Plan.





Our Happy City

Where did the cinema go?
I got nothing to do now
Except stare at these blank walls
We need more colour and lights to glow
No feelings of judgement here
Nah, we don't need that
Safe spaces for us to chill
With flowers and friends

I want to live in a Happy City
A place where I can be free
I want to live in a Happy City
With everybody here with me

We want a place where we feel safe
Shaded paths, BBQs with mates
An outdoor cinema, underneath the stars
And watching the sunset helps us feel calm
Music festivals for all to enjoy
Old and young, kids with their toys
Dancing together, ain't it pretty
That's what we want in our Happy City

I want to live in a Happy City
A place where I can be free
I want to live in a Happy City
With everybody here with me

'Our Happy City' was written by Mai-Wel participants in a creative arts group.

If you need more information about the Disability Inclusion Action Plan or require another format, please contact Council's Community Planning and Development Team.

Cessnock City Council is National Relay Service and Translation and Interpreting Services friendly.

CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL



62-78 Vincent Street
Cessnock, NSW
Australia



Contact:
tel: 02 4993 4100



Online help:
council@cessnock.nsw.gov.au
<http://www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au>