



MIDCOAST
council



**MIDCOAST
DISABILITY
INCLUSION
ACTION PLAN
2022-2026**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Gathang-speaking people and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now reside in the MidCoast Council area. We extend our respect to Elders past and present, and to all future cultural-knowledge holders.

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MAYOR'S MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to present MidCoast Council's new and revised Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Our first Plan, developed soon after the establishment of MidCoast Council, focused on education and encouraged staff to look at everything we do 'through a disability lens'. Our annual reporting to the Minister for Disability Services demonstrates we have achieved improved consideration of the needs of people with disability.

However, we can do much more. Our consultations with people with disability and their carers highlights prejudice and bias in the community and lack of opportunities for people with disability to participate in society. We will focus on this – not just within Council, but in the broader community.

It is incumbent on all of us to help in removing barriers for people with disability. Everybody deserves to be able to live, work and play without obstacles.

I look forward to working with Council staff and all stakeholders in the delivery of this Plan.

Claire Pontin

Mayor - MidCoast Council



BACKGROUND

In 2014, the NSW Government introduced the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) (the Act), which requires Councils to have a Disability Inclusion Action Plan to show what is being done to enable people living with disability to live, work and play equally in their communities.

The Act requires the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to have four key outcome areas

This action plan will centre on four key outcome areas, as identified by people with disability, the NSW Government and the community. These outcome areas are:

- **Developing positive community attitude and behaviours** towards people living with disability
- **Creating liveable communities** in which people with disability can feel safe and welcome to work, live and play
- **Supporting access to meaningful employment** for people with disability and their carers through inclusive employment practices
- **Increased access to mainstream services through better systems and processes**

These action areas were used to guide consultation with key and secondary stakeholders in the MidCoast Council area.

The Act is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (2006):

“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.”



DISABILITY SNAPSHOT

- **1 in 6** (18%) people in Australia have a disability - approximately 4.4 million people
- **1 in 3** (3.2%) people with disability have severe or profound disability - approximately 1.4 million
- For **1 in 4** (23%) people with disability, their main form of disability is mental or behavioural ¹
- Approximately **40%** of Australia's 8.9 million households includes a person with a disability
- Almost **1 in 5** (18.9%) of people with disability aged 15-24 years experienced discrimination ²
- People with a disability are more likely to be unemployed (**10.3%**) compared to people without a disability (4.6%)
- **1 in 10** employed people aged 15-64 with disability are underemployed
- **3 in 10** employed aged 15-64 with disability want to work more hours
- **59%** of people with disability need help with at least 1 daily activity

¹ ABS, People with Disability in Australia, 2020

² Australian Network on Disability, Disability Statistics, 2019

OUR COMMUNITY

The MidCoast region is located on the mid-north coast of NSW, about 3.5 hours north of Sydney by road, and 2 hours north of Newcastle.

- Covering approximately 10,000 square kilometres, the MidCoast has vast tracts of farmland, national parks and forests, and a population density of just 0.09 people per hectare. This makes transport and the delivery of services to remote areas difficult. Data from the 2021 census estimates the population on the MidCoast as 95,209. ³
- A closer look at the data indicates that the proportion of people living with disability in the MidCoast region is higher than the average across Regional New South Wales and Australia, with 8.2% compared to 6.3% and 5.1% respectively. ⁴
- The data collected by the ABS relies on self-reporting and subjective assessment and therefore it must be acknowledged that it may not be a true representation in the MidCoast area; it is likely that there are more people needing assistance than represented.

10,052 km²

**POPULATION
95,209**

(ABS ERP 2021)



ROADS 3,599KM

**1,845KM OF SEALED ROADS
1,754KM OF UNSEALED ROADS**

**47,400
DWELLINGS**
(NIEIR)



**657
BRIDGES**

**195
towns
villages
& localities**

**192km
of coastline**

**84
PLAYGROUNDS**



People in need of assistance

MidCoast: **8.2%**

Regional NSW: **6.3%**

Tuncurry-Darawank: **11.3%**

Taree: **9.8%**

Forster-Tuncurry: **9.5%**

³ ABS, Regional Population Growth, Australia

⁴ ABS, Census of Population and Housing

STRATEGY SCOPE

MidCoast Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan has been developed to apply across the entire MidCoast local government area and addresses people of all ages living with a disability in our region.

While consultation has highlighted a wide range of needs, it's important to recognise the limits of Council's scope and other government and support agencies will be required to address some of the identified issues. For example, identified gaps and issues relating to the provision of health services are a responsibility of NSW Health, and public transport shortfalls are responsibility of Transport NSW.

Council's role throughout the implementation of the Plan, however, will be to advocate for improvements to support and services that have been identified but fall outside our scope.



COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Extensive consultation was undertaken with the MidCoast community from July 2021 - March 2022 to explore the different barriers faced by people living with disability in participating in their community and opportunities for change and improvement. The four key outcomes areas outlined in The Act formed the basis of our engagement.

To maximise relevance within the community, two different surveys were developed:

- People living with disability
- Carers and disability service providers

Who participated:

- People living with disability
- Family members
- Paid and unpaid carers
- Local disability support services

How you participated:

- 124 survey responses from people living with disability
- 85 survey responses from carers and service providers
- 5 focus groups with 25 participants
- Individual phone calls

Online engagement:

- 528 visits to dedicated web page - 471 unique visitors
- 2 media releases
- 5,963 people reached via Facebook post

Check-in Survey

A check-in survey will be conducted in 2024 and responses compared to the baseline results from the 2021 survey. This will allow Council to measure progress and identify areas requiring focus.

Please refer to the Engagement Outcomes Report for a more detailed outline of community engagement.



FOCUS AREA 1

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Develop positive
community attitude
and behaviours
towards people living
with disability



ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
People living with disability in the MidCoast feel accepted and included	<p>Campaign to educate and raise awareness in the community about people living with disability</p> <p>Continue to look for opportunities to partner with disability support services to deliver events and projects in the LGA</p> <p>Campaign to remind the community about the needs of people with disability and appropriate use of accessible parking, toilets and shared pathways</p>	<p>Community Development</p> <p>Engagement, Communication and Education</p> <p>MidCoast Libraries</p> <p>Transport Assets</p>	<p>Disability Service Providers</p> <p>Local Community Groups</p>	<p>2-year check-in survey shows an increase feeling of acceptance and inclusion</p> <p>Number of partnerships</p> <p>Number of activities</p> <p>Number of participants</p> <p>Campaign released to media outlets and survey conducted</p>
People living with disability can participate in sporting opportunities in the MidCoast LGA	<p>Partner with Disability Sports Australia to support engagement with local sporting groups, recreation centres and independent activity providers to complete adaptive education</p> <p>Support Disability Sports Australia to host an Activate Inclusion Sports Day in the LGA</p>	<p>Community Development</p> <p>Community Spaces</p>	<p>Local Sports Clubs</p> <p>Recreation Centres</p>	<p>Number of entities in LGA that have completed adaption certification</p> <p>Number of schools and individuals with a disability who participate in Activate Inclusion Sports Day</p>
Tourism operators and local businesses are aware of the benefits of being accessible	<p>Provide information to educate tourism operators and local businesses on the needs of people with disability and the benefit of promotion as an accessible business</p>	<p>Growth, Economic Development and Tourism</p> <p>Community Development</p>	<p>Chambers of Commerce</p> <p>Local businesses</p>	<p>Number of engagements with tourism operators and local businesses</p>
People living with a disability on the MidCoast are recognised and valued	<p>Recognise and celebrate International Day of People with Disability and other significant dates through Council events and social media networks</p>	<p>Community Development</p> <p>MidCoast Libraries</p>	<p>Disability Service Providers</p> <p>Local Community Groups</p>	<p>Annual recognition event with high engagement and attendance</p>



ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS (CONTINUED)

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
MidCoast Council's use of graphics is representative of our community	Use content that includes people with disabilities when depicting the community	Engagement, Communication and Education		No complaints received about lack of representation of people with a disability
MidCoast Council staff are aware of the needs of people with disability	Include a disability awareness component within staff induction process Continuing education across the organisation	Human Resources		Disability awareness is included in staff induction Number of internal campaigns
Community events sponsored by Council are accessible and inclusive	Inclusivity is taken into account when assessing event sponsorship opportunities	Growth, Economic Development and Tourism		Information on inclusivity continues to be sought from event applicants Examples to demonstrate how to make accessible and inclusive events are available to applicants

FOCUS AREA 2

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Create liveable communities in which people with disability can feel safe and welcome to live with and play



LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
People living with a disability can access local shopping centres and precincts safely and appropriately	Advocate to local shopping centres to provide wheelchairs, undercover accessible parking and quiet shopping times	Community Development	Local businesses	Number of engagements with local shopping centres and businesses
Footpath safety and connectivity are improved Opportunities for active transport are improved and promoted	Seek funding for additional works not identified in the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan Continue to consult with the community to identify improvements	Transport Assets	State Government Federal Government	Works program identified in the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan is implemented Number of appropriate funding opportunities applied for Improvements are identified by the community
MidCoast Council's Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group advocates for the needs of people with disability	Council officers advise the Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group and support identified actions	Community Development	Local community groups Local businesses Local Disability Service providers	Number of actions recommended by the Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group
Council's amenities meet the needs of people with disability	Seek funding to install lift-and-change facilities where appropriate Provide compliant accessible toilets Provide accessible linkages from point of entry to amenities	Community Spaces	External funding providers (State and Federal)	Number of facilities provided
Council's recreational space meets the needs of people with disability	Include wheelchair beach access in Forster Main Beach Master Plan Install accessible bench seating in parks and reserves Signage on formal walks in the LGA to include accessibility information	Community Spaces		Beach wheelchair access is part of the Master Plan Number of accessible bench seating Signage includes accessibility information



LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES (CONTINUED)

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
High-usage pontoons, jetties and formal water access points across the LGA comply with accessibility standards	Audit on pontoons, jetties and formal water access points to assess compliance with accessibility standards Priority list of changes compiled	Community Spaces		Audit is conducted and action list is developed
Local residents and visitors can easily find information about accessible accommodation and experiences on the MidCoast	Promote opportunities to contribute content to Barrington Coast website about accessible accommodation and experiences	Growth, Economic Development and Tourism	Local businesses Local residents Visitors	Increase in content focussed on accessible accommodation and experiences
Ensure adequate accessible parking bay provision	Conduct parking surveys in high-use areas to ensure adequate accessible parking bays available Follow standards / guidelines regarding the number of accessible parking bays provided for any new works	Transport Assets		Survey results inform adequate provision of available accessible parking bays Compliance with standards and guidelines

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey blazer and light-colored trousers, is seated in a black wheelchair. She is smiling and shaking hands with a man whose arm and hand are visible on the right side of the frame. The man is wearing a light-colored suit jacket and a white shirt. They are in an office setting with a wooden desk, a pen holder with blue pens and scissors, and a white shelving unit in the background. A large teal oval graphic is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

FOCUS AREA 3 **EMPLOYMENT**

Support access to meaningful employment for people with disability and their carers through inclusive employment practices



EMPLOYMENT

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
MidCoast Council is an accessible and inclusive place of work and people with disability feel comfortable and safe working here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a Recruitment Review through the Australian Network on Disability Develop an Action Plan from the Australian Network on Disability Recruitment Review report 	Human Resources	Australian Network on Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment Review completed Action Plan developed
Raise awareness with local businesses of the benefits of employing people with disability	Liaise with Chambers of Commerce to raise awareness of the benefits of employing people with disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Development Growth, Economic Development and Tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chambers of Commerce Disability Service Providers 	Number of engagements with Chambers of Commerce
People with disability are included on Council interview panels	Explore opportunity for people with disability to be on interview panel for Council employees as appropriate to the role and responsibilities of the position being recruited	Human Resources	Disability Service Providers	Number of interview panels including a person with disability

A photograph of a man and a woman fishing together. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a grey cardigan and blue jeans, and is seated in a wheelchair. She is smiling and holding a fishing rod. The man is in the background, wearing a blue plaid shirt, and is also holding a fishing rod. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage. A large yellow circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'FOCUS AREA 4 SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES'. A smaller yellow oval is overlaid on the bottom right, containing the text 'Increased access to mainstream services through better systems and processes'.

FOCUS AREA 4

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Increased access to mainstream services through better systems and processes



SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Objectives	Actions	Responsible Council department	Who else can help	Measure
Council staff are aware of the needs of people with disability	<p>Explore disability awareness and inclusion training opportunities for front facing staff</p> <p>Include a disability awareness component within staff induction process</p>	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>Community Development</p>		<p>Disability awareness is included in staff induction</p> <p>Number of internal campaigns</p>
People living with disability are included in engagement activities and their ideas are considered in the development of plans for services, facilities and activities	<p>Council's Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for including people with disability in Council's engagement activities</p> <p>Investigate accessibility training opportunities for Digital Engagement team</p> <p>Community Relations team continues to upskill in engagement practices</p> <p>Increase opportunity for participation of people with disability in community engagement activities</p>	<p>Engagement, Communication and Education</p>		<p>Adoption of reviewed Community Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Digital Engagement team understands accessibility issues and opportunities</p> <p>All Community Relations team to complete IAP2 certification</p> <p>Short survey conducted at engagement events collecting demographic data indicates high participation with people with disability</p>

MONITORING, REVIEWING AND REPORTING

To support implementation of this Plan, action plans will be developed on an annual basis in consultation with key stakeholders. These action plans will detail priority areas for action, responsible parties, timeframes for completion and performance indicators for each financial year of the plan. To support flexibility and the delivery of meaningful and achievable outcomes, these annual action plans will be developed for each new financial year in the preceding quarter.

Actions that are the responsibility of Council will be incorporated into Council's Operational Plan and linked to the Delivery Program. The Operational Plan is Council's annual plan, including the individual projects and activities to be undertaken in that year to achieve the Delivery Program. The Delivery Program outlines Council's commitments and focus areas over a four-year period in order to deliver on the objectives and strategies the community has outlined in the Community Strategic Plan. Progress will be reported annually to Council and a check-in survey will be conducted and evaluated in 2024 to check progress against the 2021 survey outcomes.





THANKYOU

Preparing the second iteration of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan for the MidCoast region has been a collaborative effort, and MidCoast Council would like to thank all community members who took time to complete and share the survey, attend focus groups, provide verbal feedback, and participate in the engagement process. Without this valuable input from individuals, organisations and community groups, this Plan would not exist and its success will ultimately be attributed to you all.



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