

Public Exhibition - Draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025

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Summary

Under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the City is required to develop a disability inclusion action plan in line with the four-year integrated planning and reporting cycle. The City's draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 (Attachment A) will be the City's fifth disability action plan and must be in place by 1 July 2021.

The plan was developed in consultation with people with disability, people with mental health conditions, carers, disability organisations and in collaboration with the City's Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel. The Engagement Report is included as Attachment B. Public exhibition of the draft plan will provide a further opportunity for comment on the City's vision for an inclusive and accessible city. Feedback received from public exhibition will be incorporated into the final plan before it is presented to Council for adoption in June 2021.

One in four Australians live with a disability, 23 per cent with a mental health condition, and 10.8 per cent are providing unpaid care to people with disability and older Australians. The likelihood of experiencing disability increases as we age with nearly one in two people over the age of 65 living with some form of disability.

The draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 outlines how we plan to make our city more inclusive and accessible by continuing to remove barriers, protect the rights of people with disability, promote the value of diversity and inclusion across the community, and ultimately create a better future for everyone.

Through the 2017-2021 plan, the City has continued to address priorities identified by our communities; in particular, addressing physical barriers in the built environment to ensure that everyone is able to access streets, parks, playgrounds and open spaces.

The draft plan includes actions under four key directions set by the NSW State Government;

- continue to provide a range of inclusive programs, services and events;
- implement access improvements in public spaces and facilities, and provide accessible and inclusive communications, decision-making and engagement opportunities;
- work to address the lack of understanding faced by people with less visible disabilities and implement new strategies to ensure our services, programs and events are inclusive for people with invisible disabilities, and;
- invest in upskilling our people to recruit and retain diverse employees, including people with disability, and develop a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Progress on the implementation of the plan will be reported annually to the Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, the NSW Disability Council and to Council in line with the City's annual reporting process. At the end of the four-year period the City will review the broader impacts of the plan and identify any new priorities that need to be considered to continue to deliver on the long-term vision.

Recommendation

It is resolved that Council:

- (A) note the ongoing contribution of the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel in development and implementation of the City of Sydney's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plans; and
- (B) approve the draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for public exhibition for 28 days.

Attachments

Attachment A. Draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025

Attachment B. Engagement Report

Background

1. There are currently 4.4 million (or one in four) Australians living with a disability, 4.8 million people (23 per cent) living with a mental health condition, and 2.65 million people (10.8 per cent) providing unpaid care to people with disability and older Australians. The likelihood of experiencing disability increases as we age with nearly one in two people over the age of 65 living with some form of disability. These statistics reveal that disability is part of the human experience; that if a person does not have disability now, chances are that at some point in their lives they will experience some form of disability, a lived experience of a mental health condition or be a carer.
2. Everyone, including the City, therefore has a responsibility to ensure that our city is inclusive and accessible for all. Inclusive cities are easy to get around, they provide people with disability opportunities for participation in the diverse social, cultural life of the city and access to meaningful employment opportunities. An inclusive city benefits everyone, not just people with disability.
3. Over the last four years, through implementation of the current 2017-2021 Inclusion Disability Action Plan, the City has continued to address priorities identified by our communities. In particular, addressing physical barriers in the built environment to ensure that everyone is able to access streets, parks, playgrounds and open spaces.
4. The City has upgraded footpaths, built new access ramps, installed braille and tactical signage and opened new inclusive and community facilities. The City has also continued to improve access for people with disability to information and services, programs and events. This plan will continue to build on these strengths whilst also harnessing opportunities to address emerging issues within our community.
5. Community expectation levels have continued to grow against the backdrop of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the current Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. We must continue to review and change the way we do business to ensure our practices are inclusive for everyone, including people with less visible disabilities.
6. The draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 is the City of Sydney's fifth Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan. In 2002, the City developed its first Action Plan for People with Disabilities 2002-2005, which primarily focused on physical disability and access in the physical environment. The City's Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2007-2011 expanded in scope to include other important aspects of inclusion to promote participation by people with a disability, and access to services and amenities for all residents, workers and visitors to the city.
7. The City's third Plan, the Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2014-2017 was developed in consultation with the City's Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel. It aimed to build on the successes of previous plans by continuing to embed inclusion and access as core considerations across all council services and processes and to deliver meaningful outcomes for people with disability and their families and carers. Implementation of the plan resulted in substantial and ongoing improvements in the accessibility of the City's public spaces and the development of inclusive programming and accessible information across the City's services.

8. The City's fourth Plan, the Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2017-2021 strengthened the City's ongoing commitment to inclusion and access. Developed in consultation with people with disability and in collaboration with the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel, the draft plan included practical steps to embed inclusion across the organisation. A key focus of this plan was to provide greater access to our built environment including City parks, streets, playgrounds and facilities.
9. On 3 December 2014, the NSW Government introduced the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014. This legislation aims to better recognise the human rights of people with disability and clarifies the role of the NSW Government throughout the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).
10. Under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, local governments are required to prepare and adopt disability inclusion action plans and lodge them with the Minister Families, Communities and Disability Services by 1 July each year. These plans must;
 - (a) outline how councils will deliver on four areas of action identified in the NSW Disability Action Plan;
 - (b) be developed in consultation with the community, particularly with people with disability, and;
 - (c) be reviewed every four years.
11. The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 also requires that councils report on implementation of their plan in their Annual Report, and forward a copy to the Minister Families, Communities and Disability Services and the NSW Disability Council.
12. The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan outlines four areas of action for all NSW government agencies, including local government. They are:
 - (a) the development of positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability through community awareness and education;
 - (b) the creation of more liveable communities for people with disability through improving the environment and supports;
 - (c) the achievement of a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices and education, and;
 - (d) more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes, and access to information.
13. The Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel has provided ongoing advice to the City regarding consultation of people with disability and disability groups, the development of the draft plan and setting priority actions. The panel will continue to play a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the 2021-2025 plan once adopted.
14. In line with requirements under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the City has used a range of engagement approaches in developing the draft plan:
 - (a) Community members were invited to complete an online survey promoted on the City's Sydney Your Say webpage. The survey was open from 31 August to 6 October 2020.

- (b) Eight online workshops were held during September 2020.
 - (i) Two workshops were open to community members including: people with disability, people with mental health conditions, people with caring responsibilities and members of the broader community.
 - (ii) One workshop was held with people working in disability services or peak organisations representing people with disability and or caring responsibilities.
 - (iii) Three workshops, co-facilitated with Autism Spectrum Australia, were held with people with Autism and parent carers of children with Autism.
 - (iv) Two workshops, co-facilitated with the Council for Intellectual Disability, were held with adults with intellectual disability.
 - (c) Community members were offered the option to provide their feedback via phone and/or email. In total the City received three submissions via phone and four via email.
15. A summary of key feedback and suggestions raised during the consultation period have been captured are included within the Engagement Report (Attachment B).
16. The draft plan includes 29 actions under the four key directions that address barriers for people with disability across a range of key areas. Under this plan the City will:
- (a) continue to provide a range of inclusive programs, services and events; implement access improvements in public spaces and facilities, and provide accessible and inclusive communications, decision-making and engagement opportunities;
 - (b) work to address the lack of understanding faced by people with less visible disabilities and implement new strategies to ensure our services, programs and events are inclusive for people with invisible disabilities, and;
 - (c) invest in upskilling our people to recruit and retain diverse employees, including people with disability, and develop a culture of diversity and inclusion.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan

17. The City's draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025, has been designed to align with the four directions established in the NSW Disability Action Plan and to build on the progress made by previous plans.

Strategic Alignment - A City for All - Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan

18. This plan aligns with the City's long-term vision for a just, inclusive and sustainable Sydney which is embodied in the Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan - A City for All. The plan supports delivery on the City's commitments with A City for All, in particular the principles that "Sydney is a just city that respects human rights and dignity" and that "Sydney is a safe and accessible city for people of all ages and abilities".

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030

19. Sustainable Sydney 2030 is a vision for the sustainable development of the City to 2030 and beyond. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the City, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. The draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 aligns with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 4 - A City for Walking and Cycling - Accessible streetscapes and infrastructure to enable people with disability to navigate our City.
 - (b) Direction 5 - A Lively and Engaging City Centre - Public spaces are designed and managed to ensure they are inclusive and accessible to people with disability.
 - (c) Direction 6 - Resilient and Inclusive Local Communities - The City is committed to ensuring social justice and equity for all, including people with disability.
 - (d) Direction 7 - A Cultural and Creative City - People with disability have opportunities to participate in cultural and creative offerings within the City.
 - (e) Direction 8 - Housing for a Diverse Population - People with disability have access to affordable and diverse housing types.
 - (f) Direction 10 - Implementation through Effective Governance and Partnerships - People with disability are supported to participate in decision-making at the City.

Organisational Impact

20. The City has responsibilities under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 to provide equitable access to its facilities, infrastructure and services for people of all abilities. The City also has responsibilities under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 to develop a disability inclusion action plan that addresses barriers to inclusive participation faced by people with disability.
21. The draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 includes practical steps the City will take to address barriers for people with disability to ensure inclusive participation in city life, access to mainstream services and meaningful employment.
22. These actions have been designed to build on the City's ongoing commitment to inclusion, the successes of previous plans, and harness emerging opportunities, with the aim of ensuring inclusion access and are core considerations across all City services and facilities.
23. The actions are deliverable within existing staffing and operational budgets or will be delivered through future planned capital works projects, procurement contracts and agreements.

Risks

24. If the Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 is not endorsed by 1 July 2021 the City will not meet its legislative requirements under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

Social / Cultural / Community

25. The Plan's purpose is to foster the development of an inclusive and accessible city for everyone. The delivery of actions within the plan will ensure that people with disability who live, work in or visit the city should experience greater independence and dignity, and more equitable opportunities for social and economic inclusion.
26. Inclusive cities benefit everyone, not just people with disability. By implementing key actions within this plan and continuing to build a city that is easy to get around, we provide equitable opportunities for participation in the diverse social, cultural life of the city and access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Economic

27. The draft plan contains actions to improve access to the public domain and participation in events run by the City. The plan also includes actions to support businesses in the city, particularly those within the hospitality and retail sectors, to be more inclusive and accessible to people with disability. Improving access in these ways encourages a wider variety of people to come to the city, and therefore opens up potential market opportunities for businesses.

Financial Implications

28. The proposed actions in the draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2021 will be delivered within the resourcing levels included in the draft 2021/22 operational and capital works budgets and future year forward estimates, subject to Council approval. These resourcing levels are consistent with previous iterations of the City's budgets.

Relevant Legislation

29. Local Government Act 1993.
30. Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).
31. Disability Inclusion Act 2014 .
32. Carers Recognition Act 2010 .
33. Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 .
34. Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987 (Cth).

Critical Dates / Time Frames

35. The City is required to have the Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan in place by 1 July 2021, in line with the requirements of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014.
36. If approved by Council, the draft plan will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.
37. The final plan will need to be considered and adopted by Council at its meeting on 28 June 2021 in order to meet the NSW Government timeframes.

Public Consultation

38. During the public exhibition period, the draft plan will be open for comment on the City's Sydney Your Say webpage. It will be published in a range of accessible formats including:
 - (a) tagged accessible PDF;
 - (b) large print; and
 - (c) Easy English.
39. An Auslan video will also be made available on the website that provides an overview of the plan and outlines the process to provide feedback. Other alternative formats will be provided upon request.
40. The draft plan will also be circulated to key disability sector organisations and people that participated in the consultation process for comment. These include organisations representing people with physical disability, people with intellectual disability, people with mental health conditions, people with Autism, Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander people with disability and people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel members will also be encouraged to circulate the draft plan to their networks.

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