

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

2025-2029



Parkes Shire Council

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Acknowledgement of Country

Parkes Shire is part of the Wiradjuri nation - the largest Aboriginal territory at the time of European settlement. Parkes Shire Council acknowledges the Wiradjuri people who are the Traditional Custodians of the Land and pays respect to the Elders both past and present of the Wiradjuri nation.

The Wiradjuri are the largest group in central New South Wales (NSW) by area and population, with lands stretching from Coonabarabran in the North to the Great Dividing Range and out to Western NSW, encompassing one fifth of NSW and were known as the people of the three rivers: the *Wambuul* (now known as the Macquarie River), the *Galari* (the Lachlan River), and the *Marrambidya* (the Murrumbidgee River).

The Wiradjuri people lived in harmony with the Country, they believed they didn't own the land, but they were responsible for looking after it. The Gugaa (Goanna) is the overarching totem for the Wiradjuri Nation. It is the symbol that connects all people, past and present, of Wiradjuri land.

We recognize and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continuing connection with the land and rivers and recognise the resilience, strength, and pride of the Wiradjuri community.

Other Acknowledgements

Parkes Shire Council would like to acknowledge everyone who contributed their time and expertise to participate in the development of this plan, including:

- Our survey respondents
- Our community consultation participants, and
- Our staff

Alternative formats

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan is available in Easy English format, including PDF and Word, with both available on our website. Hard copy formats, in both large and standard print are available upon request.



1. Foreword

It is our pleasure to present Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for the period of 2025-2029.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is a requirement under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 for all local Government organisations. For Parkes Shire Council, our DIAP is something we see as an essential tool in creating a more equitable community and not simply a legislative requirement.

The DIAP includes several vehicles for driving accountability for disability inclusion in NSW including our roadmap that provides us with strategies towards those outcomes. Focusing on four areas, the roadmap includes developing positive community attitudes, creating liveable communities, supporting access and meaningful employment and improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

We want to focus on the opportunities to improve access across our community and to understand the barriers that prevent equal access. We will engage with the community and ask them about our services, education, training and employment, and social activities in our communities.

This plan was developed in consultation with our local community and with our staff, using a combination of community consultation sessions and surveys to seek feedback on what is working and to identify gaps in service.

The plan has been informed by the voices of people with lived experience of disability, and guided by carers, support people, service providers and other interested parties. This helped us gain a broader and deeper understanding of the issues and barriers affecting people with disability across our community.

We are committed to ensuring that the future needs of our community are met, by providing the framework to guide the creation and implementation of policies, processes and infrastructure.

We want to work together to make Parkes Shire an accessible place to live, work and play. We would like to thank members of the community for their assistance in helping us to create a more inclusive Parkes Shire area. We are keen to continue collaborating with our community around this area of work, so that we can identify the community's changing needs to further improve the liveability and accessibility of the area over time.

Cr Neil Westcott
Mayor

Kent Boyd PSM
General Manager



2. Introduction

Parkes Shire Council is committed to creating a more inclusive community for all people who live in, work in, and visit our area. This means ensuring all people with disability and diverse needs have every opportunity to fully participate in and enjoy the social, business and community life of Parkes Shire.

One in five Australians has a disability – a substantial proportion of our society. Most people will experience some type of disability in their lifetime and many of us are also carers who support friends or family members with disability. Therefore, we need to ensure that our attitudes are inclusive, our environments accessible, our workforces diverse and our processes are user friendly.

At Parkes Shire Council, we believe that everyone has the right to participate, engage and contribute. Throughout Australia, there are still barriers to ensuring equitable access to social, civic or employment opportunities for people with disability. Working to remove these barriers is not only good for people with disability but makes things better for our economy and all types of our diverse community groups, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and children with disability and LGBTIQ+ people with disability.

Parkes Shire Council is committed and passionate about advocating for access and inclusion of all community members through a range of current strategies and action plans. These strategies and action plans are connected through our mission of providing equitable access for the whole community to enjoy all that the Parkes Shire area has to offer.

The NSW Government has identified four focus areas where significant barriers to access and inclusion should be addressed. These are the pillars under which our DIAP has been developed and framed:

- 1. Attitudes and Behaviours** - towards people with disability which may result in limiting access to employment and/or opportunities to contribute to social, economic and cultural life.
- 2. Liveable Communities** - encompasses the built environment, access to transport, community recreation and social engagement.
- 3. Employment** - supporting pathways to employment and increasing employment rates of people with disability at Council and in the wider Parkes Shire community.
- 4. Systems and Processes** - improving the systems and processes that enable people to access the services and supports they need in the community.

Within these four key areas, a range of actions has been developed which Council will deliver over the next four years, enabling people with disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities.



3. Who we are

The Parkes Shire sits at the heart of Central West NSW, strategically located on the Newell Highway – Australia’s major inland touring route – and within five hours of Sydney and three hours of Canberra ACT.

Covering an area of 5,919 square kilometres and taking in some of the richest and most productive farming and grazing land in NSW, Parkes Shire is renowned for our stunning natural beauty and friendly and welcoming community.

Just over 14,453 people call Parkes Shire home, with more than two thirds of our population living in the town of Parkes, which services as the administrative, commercial and services hub of the local government area. Villages are located at Peak Hill, Trundle, Tullamore, Alectown, Bogan Gate and Cookamidgera.

Just over 13 per cent of the Parkes Shire’s population identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, significantly higher than the respective state and national averages of 3.4% and 3.2%. Parkes Shire is part of the Wiradjuri nation – the largest Aboriginal territory at the time of European settlement – and continues to be the home of many Wiradjuri people, as well as those from other nations.

Parkes Shire also supports the surrounding region with health and education services through Lachlan Health Service, Western TAFE and Country Universities Centre including various public and private schools, preschools and family day care services. Parkes Shire has modern health services, with a recently redeveloped hospital and strong network of local General Practitioners and is located within an hour’s drive of other major hospital and health service providers at Dubbo and Orange. Parkes Shire boasts a strong, diverse economy, with a Gross Regional Product (GRP) of \$858 million in 2023.

Our economy is underpinned by the agriculture and mining industries and strengthened by the transport and logistics industries. Parkes Shire also boasts strong retail and public administration sectors. Just over 1,400 local businesses operate in Parkes Shire, with 6,526* residents – around 57 per cent of our population – in the workforce.

The development of the Parkes Special Activation Precinct (SAP) the first SAP in regional NSW will support continued business development and employment growth in the Central West. Taking advantage of Parkes’ location on the Inland Rail and the Main Rail line, the Parkes SAP presents opportunities for industries in the agricultural technology sector.

The Parkes Regional Airport is a major gateway to the Central West region, transporting 35,000 passengers annually through daily flights to Sydney. The development of the Parkes Airport Business Park provides potential for growth to support our strong, diverse economy through leveraging Parkes’ well-established national transport hub



3.1. Community Profile

The Community and Economic Profile, a snapshot of the Parkes Shire community:

Geographics
Geographical area: 5,919 SQ KMS Population: total Shire 14,256 Population: Bogan Gate 269 Population: Tullamore 369 Population: Trundle 568 Population: Peak Hill 1,162 Parkes including Cookamidgera, Alectown and Tichborne 11,162

Diversity:		
Indigenous population: 10%	Born overseas: 5.4%	Non-English-speaking background: 5.7%

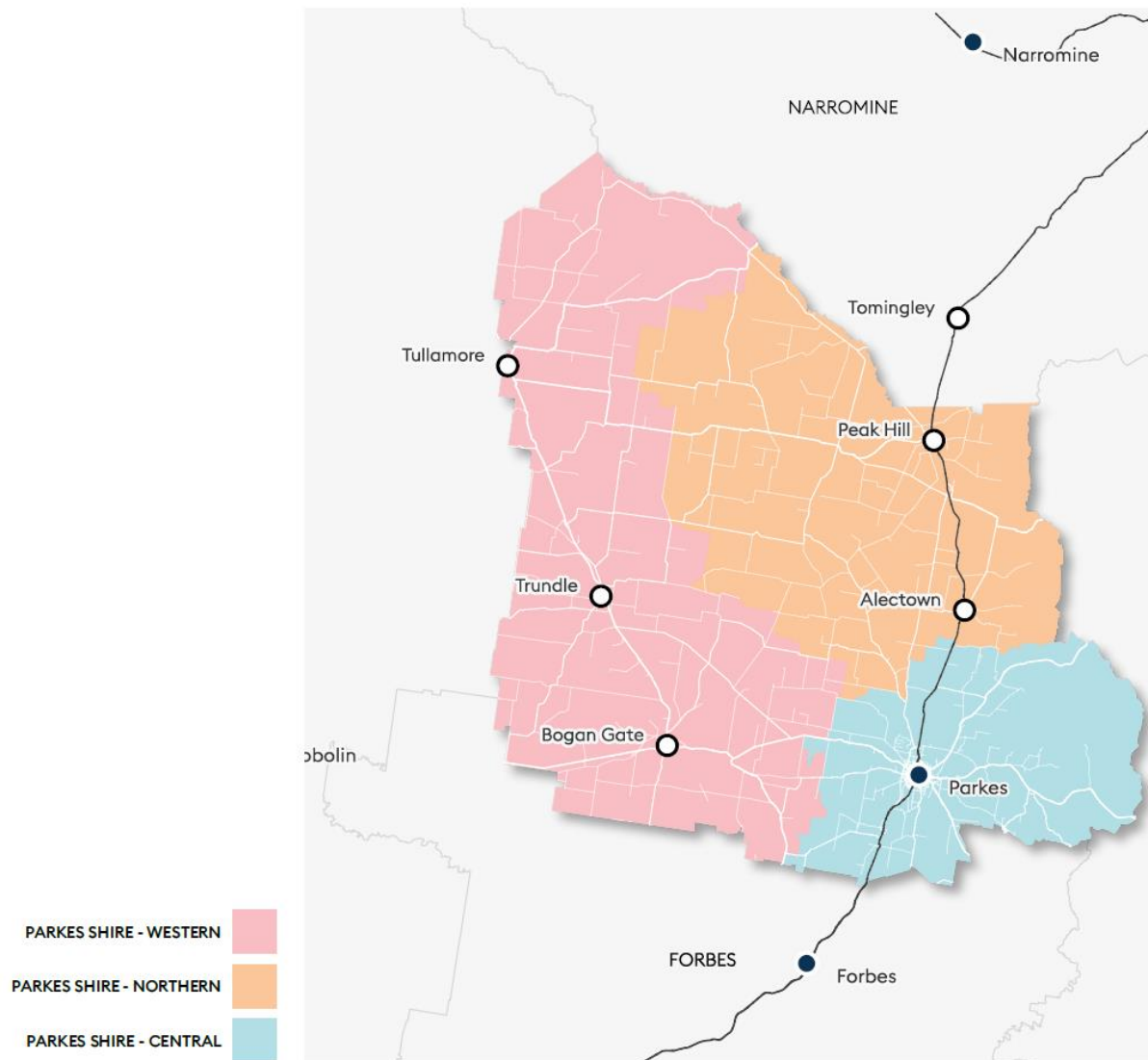
Gender	
Male: 49.2%	Female: 50.8%

Age		
Pre-school children (0-4 years) 6.4%	Primary school (5-11 years) 9.9%	Secondary schoolers (12-17 years) 8.1%
Tertiary education/Independence (18-24 years) 8.2%	Young workforce (25-34 years) 10.5%	Parents/homebuilder (25-49 years) 16.9%
Older works/pre-retirees (50-59 years) 13.6%	Empty nester and retirees (60-69 years) 12.1%	Seniors (70+ years) 14.2%

Projected trends		
Projected Shire population in 2036: 14,800	Projected dwellings in 2036: 7,500	Projected households in 2036: 6,500

Overview		
Shire population 14,608	Median Age 41	Couples with children 39.7%
Dwellings in the Shire 6,750		Households in the Shire 5,837

Employment (In 2016 % of population has the following occupation)		
Managers 17.4%	Professionals 14.7%	Technicians and trade work 24.3%
Unemployed 7.4%	Average income p/w \$1,088	Undertake voluntary work 24.3%





4. Definitions

Inclusion	<p>Inclusion is the process in which every person (irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference or ethnicity) can access and participate fully in all aspects of an activity or service in the same way as any other member of the community.</p> <p>According to the research report "Towards new indicators of disadvantage: Deprivation and social exclusion in Australia" published by UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre, dimensions of inclusion include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• being heard and valued• meaningful participation• connection and belonging• opportunity to access supports• choice and control in your life. <p>Inclusion is not about helping others to access the society, it's about changing the society; Inclusion is about making society mean everyone.²</p>
Disability	<p>The definition of disability applied in this document includes both definitions provided by the Disability Inclusion Act (NSW) 2014 and the Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) 1992.</p> <p>The Disability Inclusion Act (NSW) 2014 defines disability as including 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 others.</p> <p>The Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) 1992 defines disability as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The total or partial loss of the person's body or mental functions• The total or partial loss of a part of the body• The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness• The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; and• A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction.³
Carers	<p>The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 describes a carer as any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail due to age.⁴</p>



	<p>Many carers don't use the word 'carer' to describe themselves and they come from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and age groups. Across NSW, there are approximately 3.0 million carers, representing 11% of all Australians living in households.⁵</p>
Intersectionality	<p>We understand that the barriers people with disability experience can compound and layer when an individual is part of more than one underrepresented group. Recognising that people's lives are multi-dimensional and complex, we aim to take an intersectional approach in our thinking around accessibility, which means focusing on the points of intersection that multiple identities create.</p> <p>Intersectionality recognises the diversity of experiences within marginalised groups and provides a framework for recognising and addressing the needs of individuals who are most disadvantaged, setting a pathway for a more just and equitable world.</p> <p>We are mindful of these intersections and aim to provide good access for people with disability from all backgrounds and lived experiences. This includes First Nations people, CALD people, women and non-binary people, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people from regional and remote areas, older people, children and young people and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.⁶</p>

² Saunders P, Naidoo Y, Griffiths M (2007), *Towards new indicators of Disadvantage: Deprivation and social exclusion in Australia*.

³ Carers NSW (2018), *About Carers*.

⁴ Reynolds V (2010), *Intersectionality*.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*.

⁶ Judicial Commission of New South Wales (2022), *Equality before the Law Bench Book – Section 5 – People with disabilities*.



5. Disability in Australia

Parkes Shire Council follows the social model of disability that distinctively signals the difference between a person's individual condition or impairment, and the barriers they experience which are created by the environment and society around them. Instead of the condition, it is the 'barriers' which are disabling, as these limit opportunity, autonomy and self-expression and instead create disadvantage.

Disability can be both permanent or temporary and invisible or visible. We include mental health within our definition of disability, as well as members of the d/Deaf community (who may not choose to identify as people with disability, but instead as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, with their first language being Auslan). We recognise that not everyone who faces these barriers chooses to identify as a person with disability and we understand that identity and disclosure in the context of disability is complex and very personal. We also understand the principles of universal design, in that one size does not fit all and that the complexities of intersectionality exist within disability.

Disability impacts us all. It is a broad diversity group and is commonly experienced by those in our community – with people either directly identifying themselves as a person with disability, being a carer for someone else or having a family member or close friend with disability.

⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission (2000),
Disability and People from Non-English Speaking Background Communities.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016),
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016),
Disability Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings.

¹⁰ Price Waterhouse Coopers, (2011),
Disability expectations - Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008),
National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007.

¹² Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (2020),
Chronic conditions and multimorbidity

¹³ Access Economics (2006),
The Economic Impact and Cost of Hearing Loss in Australia.

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020),
Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2018-19.



6. The Parkes Shire Community

People with disability are diverse, and disability can be very different from person to person. Disability affects many people, directly and indirectly, in large and small ways.

Disability can be physical, intellectual, sensory and/or psychosocial (example arising from a person's lived experience). It can be temporary or permanent and can occur from birth or during a person's lifetime. Some disabilities are visible, such as people using a mobility aid, whereas others are invisible, such as a person who is hearing impaired or is on the Autism spectrum (ASD). Disability impacts people across all socioeconomic and demographic groups.

Knowing how many people in an area are living with disabilities, as well as their characteristics, can improve our understanding of their varying experiences. This information helps to foster inclusivity for all by informing planning and provision of the supports, services and communities that enable people with disabilities to participate fully in everyday life.

In 2018 the number of persons living with a disability in Parkes Shire was 22.7% and in 2021 15.9% of the population were unpaid carer/assistance to a person with a disability. As our population ages, the number of people needing assistance in their day-to-day lives is likely to increase. The increased prevalence of disability as people age will have implications for Council, service providers and the general community.

The Australian statistics shared below demonstrate how widespread disability is:
One in five Australians are people with disability (17.7% or 4.4 million people). ⁷
Of the 7.80 million residents of NSW, 1.37 million (18.34%) have disability. ⁸
People with disability from non-English speaking backgrounds face multiple layers of disadvantage and make lower than average use of disability services because they may not be aware what is available, and the services may be culturally inappropriate. ⁹
Just under half (45.1%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over, experience disability. ¹⁰
People with disability are twice as likely to be in the bottom 20% of gross household incomes. ¹¹
Of those with disability in Australia, 45% are living either near or below the poverty line, more than double the OECD average of 22%. ¹²
45% of the population will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives. ¹³
Almost half of Australians (47% or more than 11 million people) have one or more chronic conditions. ¹⁴
Vision Australia estimates there are currently 357,000 people in Australia who are blind or partially sighted.



Selected disability and carers characteristics - persons living in households	2018
Persons with disability	22.7%
Persons who are carers	15.9%
Persons who provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability	12.5%
Persons with disability who need assistance or have difficulty with personal/health care	12%
Persons with moderate or mild core activity limitation	11.2%
Persons who are non-primary carers	9.7%
Persons with disability aged 15 years and over who need assistance or have difficulty with household chores, meal preparation or property maintenance (accommodation support)	9.4%
Persons with profound or severe core activity limitation	7.1%
Persons with disability aged 16 years and over who need assistance or have difficulty with private transport	5.8%
Persons aged 15 years and over who are primary carers (%)	5.1%
Persons with disability aged 0-64 years whose need for assistance with core activities is fully met	3.3%
Persons with disability aged 0-64 years whose need for assistance with core activities is partly met or not met at all	1.2%

(Source: Australian Bureau of statistics)



7. Legislative context

International	<p>Internationally, Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008). This Convention recognises that disability is “an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.</p>
National	<p>At a federal level, Australia has had a Disability Discrimination Act for 30 years (released in 1992). Various Australian Standards and Frameworks support this Act, including the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards (2010), Building Code of Australia (BCA), Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (2002) and Disability Standards for Education (2005).</p> <p>Since 2014, Australia has implemented the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to provide Australians with permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life. Residents of the Parkes Shire LGA have access to NDIS.</p> <p>In 2019, Australia launched a three-year Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. This inquiry provided 222 recommendations across 12 volumes to government on how to prevent and better protect people with disability from all forms of violence and abuse, neglect and exploitation.</p> <p>Australia has also recently released its new National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2021-2031. The vision sets out practical changes required to fulfill its vision for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. It helps protect, promote and realise the human rights of people with disability through national leadership, guiding public policy activities, influencing mainstream services and systems and engages the whole community in achieving a more inclusive society.</p>
NSW	<p>At a state level, NSW Parliament passed the Disability Inclusion Act in 2014 and amended by the Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022 which supports people with disability to access. This Act ensures people with disability have the same human rights in the community and provides the legislative framework to guide state and local government disability inclusion and access planning.</p> <p>This Act ensures that people with a disability have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The same human rights as other members of the community and that governments and communities have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights• Independent, social and economic inclusion within the community; and



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choice and control in the pursuit of their goals, the planning and delivery of their supports and services. <p>After extensive consultation by the New South Wales Government with people with disability, their families and carers throughout the State, it was decided that all NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plans would focus on four key areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours2. Creating liveable communities3. Supporting access to meaningful employment4. Improving access to services through better systems and processes.
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(Source: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)

The below diagram illustrates how International, National and State policy interact to inform the development of Disability Inclusion Action Plans.

Table 1: Relationship between the various Disability Inclusion Action Plans





8. Integrated Planning and Reporting

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan forms part of Parkes Shire Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework, which brings together a suite of integrated strategic plans that set out our vision for Parkes Shire and the goals, strategies and actions to achieve that vision.

The development of this Disability Inclusion Action Plan has occurred using the principles identified in the IP&R Guidelines for Local Government in NSW and accompanying IP&R Handbook for Local Government in NSW published and prescribed by the Office of Local Government, and the priorities identified in the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014. This Disability Inclusion Action Plan seeks to integrate with other strategies, including our Community Strategic Plan, to ensure the principles of inclusion and access are embedded in all our planning frameworks.

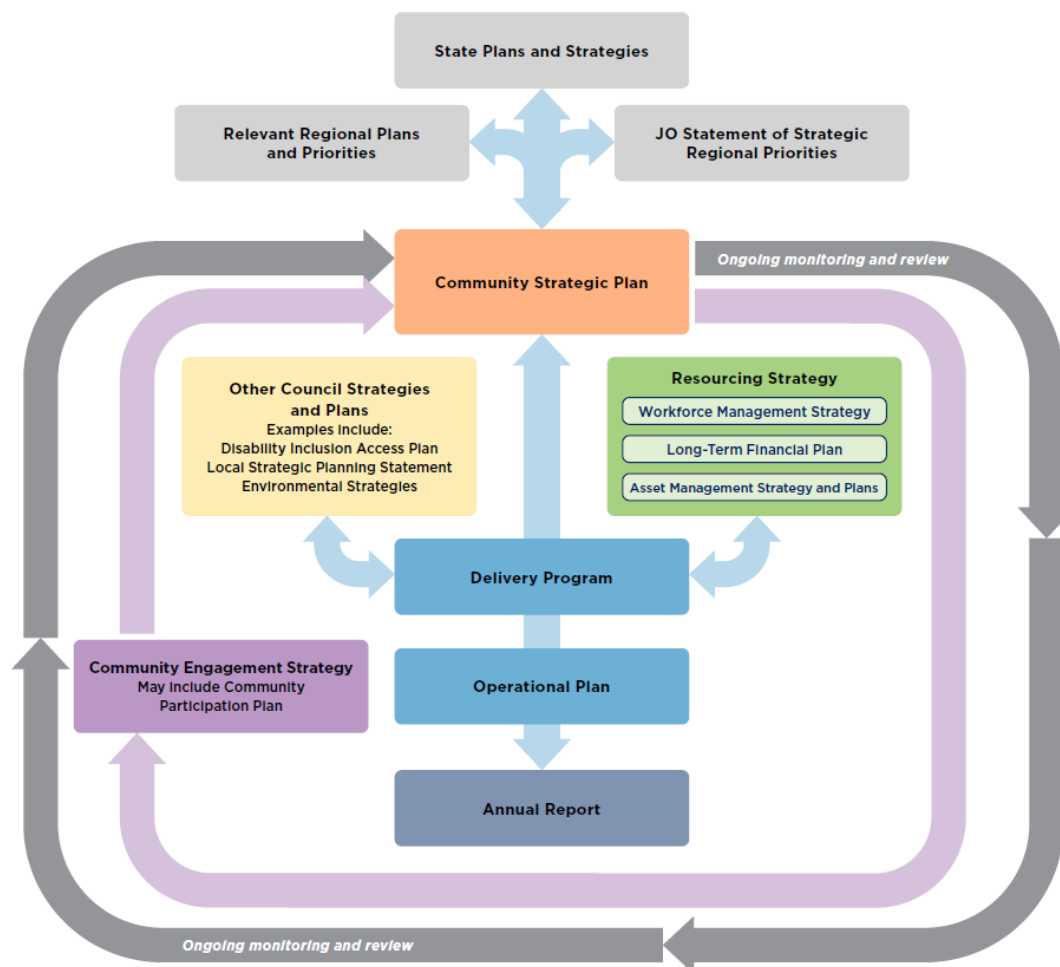
Individual actions contained in this Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be resourced for delivery in our annual Operational Plans over the coming four-year period. Reporting is a key element of the IP&R framework, and we report on our progress in implementing our Operational Plans and Annual Reports.

We also submit our Disability Inclusion Action Plan to the NSW Disability Council and, as required under section 13 of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, report to the Minister for Disability Services on our progress in achieving our Disability Inclusion Action Plan on an annual basis. The Minister for Disability Services tables annual report in Parliament about the implementation of all Disability Inclusion Action Plans by public authorities, including local councils.

The following diagram illustrates how the IP&R framework ensures that local strategic planning and reporting is informed, relevant and responsive to community needs:



Figure 1: Integrated Planning and Reporting - State Plans and Strategies



9. What is a Disability Inclusion Action Plan

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is one way that Governments, public authorities and all organisations can reduce and remove barriers for people with disability and foster a more accessible and inclusive community. Disability Inclusion Planning is about making a plan that outlines the intention and actions that public authorities will take to remove barriers in access to their information, services, facilities, and employment as well as to foster the promotion of the rights of people with disability.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, amended by the Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022 requires all public authorities, including Parkes Shire Council as a Local Government organisation - to develop and adopt a Disability Inclusion Action Plan spanning a four-year period, setting out the measures they will put in place to support people with disability to better access support and services available in the community, and participate fully in community life.

The purpose of this Disability Inclusion Action Plan is to support disability inclusion in the Parkes Shire community. While the Disability Inclusion Action Plan focuses on supporting people with disability, our actions support our wider goal for inclusion.



Making it easier for people to get around and access information is beneficial to all members of our community.

9.1. Defining Disability

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 defines disability as: ‘The long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which an interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

The World Health Organisation (WHO) shifts the understanding of disability from a focus on impairment of individuals to improving barriers to access. WHO identifies not just physical or mental conditions but rather defines disability as being interconnected with features of the society in which he or she lives.

“Overcoming the difficulties faced by people with disabilities requires interventions to remove environmental and social barriers” Council acknowledges all forms of disability, both visible and invisible, when identifying the importance of accessibility and inclusion for all. For the purpose of this Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we will define disability to include, but not be limited to, the following types of disability:

Intellectual	Physical	Auditory
Cognitive	Significant mental health issues	Visual
Sensory		Psychosocial

9.2. What must a Disability Inclusion Action Plan include?

Under Section 12(3) of the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, this Disability Inclusion Action Plan must:

1. Specify how Council regards disability principles
2. Include strategies to support people with disability, including strategies about the following:
 - a) Providing access to buildings, events and facilities
 - b) Providing access to information
 - c) Accommodating the specific needs of people with disability
 - d) Supporting employment of people with disability
 - e) Encouraging and creating opportunities for people with disability to access the full range of services and activities available in the community
3. Include details of Council’s consultation about the Disability Inclusion Action Plan with people with disability
4. Explain how the Disability Inclusion Action Plan supports the goals of the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan



10. Our Achievements to Date

Parkes Shire Council has been working to improve its programs and services for people with disability since 2016, with this DIAP building on existing achievements and actions which are now embedded within Council's daily practices and culture.

A snapshot of key highlights over the life of the previous DIAP (2017-2021/2021 and 2022-2026-) have been included below:

10.1. Attitudes and behaviours

- Delivered a range of inclusive events and programs with, by and for people with disability for example Parkes Shire Libraries Auslan Group, cultural exhibitions in the Coventry Room and inclusive activities in the Marramarra Makerspace Studio for all ages and diverse groups.
- Council's Early Learning Centres worked with children with disability, their families and allied health professionals alongside other enrolled children and families to build acceptance and embrace diversity.

10.2. Liveable communities

- Completed a detailed footpath audit on our 177km footpath network. This audit captured Council's compliant and non-compliant kerb cut outs. The audit identified trip hazards. Civil works funding has been allocated for disability specific projects.
- Supported accessible projects funded through Council's grants programs.
- Provided mobility maps and parking spaces in key areas around the LGA.
- Provided extensive free resources available for the community, including accessibility and inclusion resources and information at Parkes Shire Libraries.
- Completed accessibility audits and associated works on some of Council's most regularly used community centres, outlining recommendations to meet relevant accessibility codes and standards.
- Designed all-inclusive playgrounds to provide play and learning areas for children of all abilities, providing access and opportunity for children to interact with the equipment.
- Delivered accessible arts and cultural events.
- Hearing loop installed in Admin Building, in the Council Chambers and at the Parkes Regional Airport Terminal
- Developed a Wayfinding Strategy for town centres.
- Purchased electronic change tables, listening posts, weighted blankets and other sensory equipment in Council's Early Learning Centres to support children with diverse abilities



10.3. Employment

- Implemented a recurrent Disability Awareness – Train-the-Trainer program, which has been delivered to managers, coordinators and key customer-facing staff across Council.
- Worked in partnership with stakeholders as well as a local high school support unit to offer work experience placements across the organisation, including the Environmental, Infrastructure, Corporate and Planning functions.
- Continued to support the community and staff on Mental Health programs including mental Health First Aid training for managers. This has had positive outcomes and feedback from the participants.

10.4. Systems and processes:

- The Community, Liveability and Access Advisory Committee has continued to meet on a quarterly basis.
- Council' teams such as the Events and Outdoor Spaces have been undertaking accessibility assessments for events, in line with the Council commitments towards increasing event accessibility for performers and audiences.
- Key Council documents have started to be translated into Easy English and made available on Council's website.
- Council is using the tool ReadSpeaker to assist with content accessibility, and regularly monitor the accessibility and quality assurance of Council's website and improve usability and customer experience. ReadSpeaker assists with readability
- Live captioning and Auslan interpretations continue to be provided at major meetings and via online platforms



10.5. Case study - Liveable Communities

Support for Children with Disability

Over the past four years, Council's Early Learning Centres have worked with a variety of allied health professionals, such as Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists and Psychologists, to support children with additional needs.

Through these interactions, our Early Learning Educators have gained hands-on knowledge on how to best support individual children and their families. This partnership has enabled us to learn, grow and improve the care and support that our services offer.

We have worked closely with the Department of Education to support the transition from Long Day Care to primary school for children with additional needs and their families. We have also been able to support families and their children who have been referred to us from the Department of Family and Community Services.

Our Family Daycare Early Learning facilities and our Bangala-la Preschool currently provide inclusion support for local children with high additional development and physical support needs. In total we would have provided over 100 hours of support per week for children with additional needs.

Council's Early Learning Centres will continue to work with allied health professionals to ensure service provision is equitable and support access and inclusion for all children.

In 2024 Council undertook a Service Review of the operations of both the Family Daycare Early Learning Centres and the Bangala-la Preschool. The successful review acknowledged and upheld our services diverse needs. The review provided Council with nine (9) recommendations, including to continue to review its child safe practices to ensure it demonstrated compliance with Child Safe Standards, including those with disability. This will ensure our people working with children were well supported and suitable.

II. Methodology and consultation

In the development of this Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we conducted extensive community and staff consultation and fieldwork, to gather ideas and feedback about what is currently working well and what could be improved.

We then partnered with Currajong Disability Services, internal areas including Library, Arts and Cultural, Central West Family daycare, Planning and Certification to develop the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, using their expertise and lived experience of disability.



The types of consultation processes used during the development of this plan will continue throughout the implementation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and beyond, to ensure we are receiving feedback directly from people with lived experience to inform our thinking and design of future work.

11.1. Consultation

A range of different consultation methods were provided, so people could engage with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan development in a way that suited them. The consultation offerings were promoted extensively via social media, Council's website and the local Champion Post newspaper.

Two surveys were also conducted as part of the development of this plan:

- Place Score Liveability Survey 2023
- Micromex 2024 Community Survey 2024

Consultation sessions were held online with disability service providers and organisations and the rest from internal sources. The sessions included:

- Internal staff workshops
- Public sessions
- Students with disability and a support teacher.

We also spoke with several local community members and organisations to gather additional feedback.

Through this consultation, we heard directly from people with disability, carers, family members, disability service providers, mainstream/community service providers and staff. Those consulted included Council's Executive Leadership Team, residents, workers, visitors and those with an interest in our area.

12. Our engagement strategy:

- Online survey
- Community consultation
- Reference groups, Council staff
- Everyone is encouraged to email, call and write to Council



13. What the Community Told Us

13.1. Attitudes and behaviours

“People with disability are everywhere in our community yet not having them/their faces visible is something that always annoys me. Promoting disability in pictures and our activities are important.” *(Survey respondent)*

“Not all disabilities are visible. Design things so they can be used by all.” *(Survey respondent)*.

“Raise awareness through acknowledging and celebrating community, state-wide, national and international events and initiatives.” *(Survey respondent)*.

Summary

You told us that one of the greatest barriers for people with disability has been attitudes and behaviours, and that breaking down the barriers of attitudes and behaviours plays a key role in access and inclusion. You also told us that you believe that a lot of attitude and behaviour barriers stem from people’s ignorance and lack of interaction with people with disability.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Train Council staff in disability awareness
- Ensure people with disabilities are represented through imagery and events
- Include reference to carers within the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and consider programs such as Carers and employers' program, to support staff with caring responsibilities.
- Ensure people with disability are included in decision making processes
- Ensure disability is considered using an intersectional lens.

13.2. Liveable Communities

"Dancing and cultural spaces that are accessible" *(community engagement)*.

“Survey all footpaths and address the abundance of trip hazards and blocked sections (grass edges and overhanging bushes/trees).” *(Survey respondent)*

“While mobility is important, mobility isn’t just physical access but also things like dealing with noise, lighting, pollution, having more clearly marked pick up spots around the area for rest” *(Survey respondent)*



"Pram and all abilities accessible" (*community engagement*)

"Families with children with disability feel a disconnect to resources and support, and uncomfortable about coming to events." (*Survey respondent*)

"More accessible spaces throughout the town" (*community engagement*)

"Provide accessible adult change toilet facilities" (*community engagement*)

Summary

You told us the benefits of creating a liveable community with no physical barriers stretched beyond the need of people with disability and wheelchair access. You told us that a more accessible Council touched everyone in the community, from parents with prams to the elderly with mobility issues. The survey showed that the facilities that people are most likely to find difficult to access were footpaths and public toilets, followed by bus shelters, sports and recreation centres, Council events and festivals, and accessible parking.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Make future events more accessible and inclusive, including using disability organisations to promote them
- Provide more opportunities for carers, for example a support group
- Provide more community groups and exercise groups open to people with disability
- Improve footpaths
- Provide more accessible parking spaces and public transport
- Provide more accessible public toilets
- Provide more inclusive opportunities for young people
- Ensure all Council facilities for example the administration building, aquatic centres and playgrounds are accessible and include things like quiet spaces
- Ensure all types of access requirements are considered, not only physical ones.

13.3. Employment

"More opportunities for people with disabilities in the work sector. More awareness so that it's easier for people with disabilities to fit into a workplace." (*Survey respondent*)

"Put together morning tea. Offering local businesses to come and meet young people with disability. Meeting face to face, it helps to remove stigma." (*Survey respondent*)



“Work experience for children with disability, students looking for opportunities. One week per year at Council doesn’t make a significant difference.” *(Survey respondent)*

Summary

You told us that people with disability have many skills and assets that businesses can benefit from, yet statistics show that people with disability still have the highest rate of unemployment in the community. You told us that people with disability have access issues attending interviews, that there is a general lack of understanding of disability, and that employers fear that people with disability will cost too much to provide adequate support.

What you Told us you Would like Council to do:

- Employ more staff with disabilities.
- Provide more meaningful work experience for people with disability at Council and within local businesses.
- Encourage local businesses to employ and provide work experience to people with disabilities.

13.4. Systems and processes

“People with disability can lack literacy and numeracy skills. Now more than ever we have gone online – things can be hard for them to access. Face-to-face is still important and needed.” *(Survey respondent)*

“Including people with various disabilities through employment and consultation. Getting direct feedback to ensure their needs and interests are addressed and responded to.” *(Survey respondent)*

“Recognisable icons/map key included in digital and hard copy brochures, promotional material. For example, an easy to recognise icon acknowledging an accessible toilet, quiet space etc.” *(Survey respondent)*

Summary

You told us that while technology has advanced and that there are now many varied ways to communicate and interact, providing information effectively to people with disability still needs improvement.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Ensure service centres are accessible.



- Make the website more accessible.
- Maintain face-to-face options for services, as well as online options.
- Make it easier to find information on the website and include more information about access on the website.
- Council's Your Say page should be easy to read.
- Information should be provided in different formats.



14. Key action areas

Parkes Shire Council has developed actions with respect to the “Key Action Areas” in accordance with guidance set by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Our commitment, vision and goals will be realised through a series of actions we will take over the next four years. These are based on the feedback received from the community provided through public consultations and Council’s own research and staff discussions.

While specific actions for each Key Action Area have been reported under the Action Plan section of this document, Key Action Areas are explained below:

Attitudes and Behaviours	<p>The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion.</p> <p>Attitudes and behaviour permeate all aspects of life. Low expectations and negative attitudes about people with disability as employees serve as barriers to professional practice. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions over time</p>
Liveable Communities	<p>Creating liveable communities for people with disability is more than modifying the physical environment. It covers areas such as access to transport, community recreation and culture, social engagement and universal design</p>
Employment	<p>Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than for people without disability. People with disability experience multiple barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of reasonable adjustments to the work environment, rigid role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain employment</p> <p>Research indicates that organisational commitment to workforce equality and inclusion is closely linked to strong business performance</p>
Systems and Processes	<p>A common barrier for people with disability is the difficulty navigating systems and processes to access the services, venues and support they need in the community. This could include accessing information, communication, or lack of options to access services</p>



15. Action Plan

Our action plan identifies four (4) Focus Areas, including:

Pillar 1. ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Pillar 2. LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Pillar 3. EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Pillar 4. SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Our action plan is structured to identify the following:

ID	Identification Number
Action	Strategy and respective actions to be achieved the action
Responsibility	Council service area primarily responsibility for strategy and action delivery
Timing	Timing for implementation
Outcome	Measurement of implementation (output) or improvement (outcome)

The actions listed in the DIAP are designed to be flexible to change as technologies and ideas about best practice develop.



Pillar One (I) ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability.

Parkes Shire Council will promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability across all aspects of our organisation through increasing awareness of ability and changing language to reflect the capabilities of individuals

<i>Outcome 1.1: Celebrate and value people with disability in our community</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
1.1.1	Provide disability awareness and inclusion training to all Council staff and Councillors including human rights and anti-discrimination	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Completion of training for staff and Councillors
1.1.2	Ensure leadership on positive disability inclusion through positive attitudes towards inclusion in the Parkes Shire	Governance, Risk and Corporate Performance	2025/26-2028/29	Councillor representation on the Community, Liveability and Access Committee
1.1.3	Review Council induction materials to incorporate the topic of disability inclusion to ensure our staff have the knowledge to communicate with people respectfully, confidently, and effectively with a disability	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Council induction materials reviewed and updated
		People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Customer Service training held with the inclusion of disability awareness and person-centred communication

<i>Outcome 1.2: Foster understanding and connections within our community</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
1.2.1	Contribute positive media stories about what Council is doing to build inclusion with people with a disability	Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Updates posted on Council public communication channels
1.2.2	Provide six-monthly update on the implementation of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan to staff and Councillors to promote and encourage inclusive practices	Governance, Risk and Corporate Performance	2025/26-2028/29	Updates tabled at Community, Liveability and Access Committee meeting every 6-months



Outcome 1.3: Improve accessibility of Council's building and infrastructure assets

ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
1.3.1	Increase accessibility and inclusion at Council Meetings	Governance, Insurance and Risk	2025/26-2028/29	Access needs of people with disability attending meetings held at Council are specifically addressed and catered for
1.3.2	Encourage people with disability and their families to attend Council events through provision of accessible events	Visitor economy Major events	2025/26-2028/29	Promote accessible and inclusion events
			2025/26-2028/29	Consult with the Community, Liveability and Access Committee as part of the events planning process
1.3.3	Ensure that relevant staff have knowledge of accessibility features of venues and buildings	Planning and certification	2025/26-2028/29	CPD of continues provided to all Planning, Certified and facilities staff to ensure contemporary skills in accessibility assessment



15.1. Pillar Two (2) LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES

Improve access to buildings, spaces, places and activities for people with disability

Parkes Shire Council will improve access to buildings, spaces, places and activities for people with disability through applying universal design principles, improving connectivity, and engaging with people with disability, their families, carers and service providers, to co-design on key projects.

<i>Outcome 2.1: Make it safe and easy to get around</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
2.1.1	Progressively improve the accessibility of footpaths in Parkes Shire	Operations	2025/26-2028/29	Number of footpaths/shared paths per lineal metre constructed

<i>Outcome 2.2: Ensure Council's events, open spaces and sporting recreation facilities are accessible and inclusive</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
2.2.1	Improve the accessibility of public toilets, including way finding	Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Council's website is updated with the location of public toilets and their access features
2.2.2	Improve accessibility and inclusion of Council operated public recreation, learning and leisure facilities	Planning and Certification	2025/26-2028/29	Review access to town libraries, aquatic centres, the Little Theatre, sports fields, and playgrounds
		Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Council's website is updated with the details of access features of public facilities and playgrounds
		Visitor Economy and Major Events	2025/26-2028/29	Review Parkes Shire Visitor Guide to ensure the details of access features of places and interest in the Parkes Shire are included



Outcome 2.3: Improve accessibility of Council's buildings and infrastructure assets

ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
2.3.1	Improve access to Council Administration Centre, and Visitor's Information Centre, including way finding	Operations	2025/26-2028/29	Review undertaken on Council's Administration Centre and Visitor Information Centre to determine if buildings are accessible and fitted with advanced technologies to meet the varied needs of users
2.3.2	Upgrade and renew the provision of public accessible adult change toilet facilities	Operations	2025/26-2028/29	Public toilets are modified or replaced by accessible adult toilets as needed
			Priority 2025/26-2028/29	Community, Liveability and Access Advisory Committee consulted about the priorities for enhancements of public toilets



15.2. Pillar Three (3) EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

Improve access to meaningful employment for people with disability.

Parkes Shire Council will champion diversity and inclusion in the workplace and act to improve access to meaningful employment for people with disability and their careers, both within our organisation and across our community.

<i>Outcome 3.1: Ensure Parkes Shire Council is a leader in equal employment</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
3.1.1	Review the Equal Employment Opportunity Policy to facilitate Council being a more inclusive employer, including recruiting, retaining and supporting employees with disability	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Policy reviewed and updated
3.1.2	Promote representation of people with disability in Council's workforce to the public	Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Council website updated to promote representation of employees with disability in the Annual Report each year
3.1.3	Identify and implement services and systems that support people with disability being retained within the workforce.	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Services and systems identified and improved/implemented
3.1.4	Develop and promote flexible working arrangements and in-house support to recruit and retain people with disability in Council's workforce	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Flexible Working Arrangements Policy reviewed
3.1.5	Promote work experience and traineeship opportunities for people with disability through local schools and service providers	People, Safety and Culture	2025/26-2028/29	Inclusive employment opportunities promoted to local schools, disability employment agencies and service providers



Outcome 3.2: Support people with disability in finding local employment

ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
3.2.1	Promote information for people with disability on how to volunteer and access work experience	Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Council website updated to include information for people with disability on how to volunteer and access work experience

Outcome 3.3: Foster skills, training and social contribution of people with disability

ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
3.3.1	Facilitate programs to assist to address the gap in servicing the Early Education needs for children with disability in the Parkes Shire	Planning and Certification	2025/26-2028/29	Programs delivered to early childhood children with disability reported quarterly to the Community, Liveability and Access Committee



Pillar Four (4) SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

Improve access to services, systems, and processes for people with disability.

Parkes Shire Council will continuously improve access to services, systems, and processes for people with disability through enhanced usability and availability of information, enabling and empowering people with disability to participate fully in all aspects of citizenship.

<i>Outcome 4.1: Ensure Parkes Shire Council is a leader in equal employment</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
4.1.1	Incorporate accessibility with benefits of community and liveability for holistic focus	Planning and Certification	2025/26-2028/29	Community, Liveability and Access Advisory Committee consulted quarterly
4.1.2	Review the Community Engagement Strategy to improve representation of people with disability, their families and supporters	Corporate Communications and Media	2024/25	Community Engagement Strategy updated

<i>Outcome 4.2: Improve access and diversity of information services</i>				
ID	Output to achieve this outcome	Responsible	Scheduled Delivery	How we will measure our performance
4.2.1	Review Council's websites to ensure Website Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0 AA) compliance	Corporate Communications and Media	2025/26-2028/29	Website compliance reviewed
4.2.2	Review Council's emergency evacuation procedures to ensure consideration of the needs of people with disability	Work Health Safety	2025/26-2028/29	Emergency evacuation procedures updated



16. Governance, monitoring and review

Actions within this Disability Inclusion Action Plan will be built into Council's operational planning processes, to ensure they are embedded and delivered.

We are committed to continuous improvement and are keen to draw on ongoing community feedback and work in partnership with relevant organisations to ensure we meet our goals.

To support the implementation of this Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we will continue to work with our Executive Leadership Team, who will meet regularly to monitor and review the Disability Inclusion Action Plan progress.

We may also engage other experts, partners and stakeholders with lived experience of disability to assist us with the Disability Inclusion Action Plan implementation or specific activities as required.

Council will report on its progress against the achievements towards the commitments outlined in this Disability Inclusion Action Plan annually as part of Council's Annual Report and a copy will be provided to the Disability Council NSW.



Contact us

Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan is available to the public through our website and accessible formats are available on request.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan is also registered with the Disability Council NSW.

We value community feedback on our progress in meeting the goals and actions outlined in our Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences with us to ensure our continued improvement.

Please contact us with questions or feedback via our Governance Team on Telephone: 02 6861 2333 or Email: council@parkes.nsw.gov.au.



Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025-2029

PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL
parkes.nsw.gov.au