



2026 – 2030

Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Reviewed April 2026

maitland
CITY COUNCIL

Contents

Message from our Mayor	3
Message from our General Manager	3
Our commitment	4
Introduction	4
Background	5
Defining disability and the importance of language	5
Our community profile	7
Understanding diversity and respecting intersectionality	10
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and disability	10
Our shared vision and alignment to Guiding Principles	11
Our role	13
What we have achieved so far	14
Legislative frameworks and strategic links	18
How we developed this plan	19
What the community told us	20
Strategic priorities/Our action plan	25
Focus area one: Developing positive attitudes and behaviours	25
Focus area two: Creating liveable communities	29
Focus area three: Supporting access to meaningful employment	32
Focus Area Four: Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes	34
Monitoring and review	36
References	37

Message from our Mayor



I am proud to present Maitland City Council's Disability and Inclusion Action Plan (2026-2030), a practical roadmap that will guide our work over the coming years to create a community where inclusion is embedded in everything we do. While this plan is a requirement under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, we see it as far more than a legislative obligation. It is a key mechanism for delivering on our long-term vision of a connected city with thriving communities, where every person feels valued, connected and able to participate in community life.

Council plays an important role in initiating, delivering and advocating for programs, services and infrastructure that improve access and inclusion.

However, lasting change cannot be achieved by Council alone. Building a genuinely inclusive Maitland requires collaboration across all levels of government, businesses, community organisations and residents. Each of us has a part to play in shaping a city that is welcoming and accessible to all.

Strong partnerships and ongoing dialogue with people with disability, their families and carers remain central to this work. Listening to lived experience helps us better understand barriers, identify opportunities and ensure our actions are informed, meaningful and responsive.

Through this plan, we will continue to strengthen access to our services, facilities and public spaces, while working alongside our community to advance shared priorities. By doing so, we move closer to a Maitland where inclusion is not an aspiration, but an everyday reality.

Message from our General Manager

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan (2026-2030) provides a clear and coordinated framework to guide Council and the community in advancing access and inclusion across all areas of our work. It outlines practical, achievable actions that will help create a city where people can move around with confidence, access services and facilities with dignity, and participate fully in social, cultural and economic life. Designing with inclusion in mind leads to better outcomes for everyone.

Our focus for this iteration is to embed inclusive practice into everyday planning, decision-making and service delivery. This includes continuing to improve access to our built and natural environments while also addressing attitudinal and systemic barriers that can limit participation. With defined priorities, responsibilities and timeframes, the plan strengthens accountability and builds organisational capability, so inclusion is considered from the outset.

This work has been shaped by the voices and experiences of people with disability, their families and carers, our Access and Inclusion Working Group, Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH) and community partners. We remain committed to fostering an inclusive workplace and expanding meaningful employment opportunities at Council. This plan reinforces our commitment to a future where diversity is valued, and everyone has the opportunity to participate and thrive.



Our commitment

Maitland City Council is committed to promoting the rights, dignity and inclusion of people with disability and creating a community where everyone can participate on an equal basis. We recognise that people are not disabled by their impairment, but by the social, physical, attitudinal and systemic barriers that exist within society. Council acknowledges our responsibility where possible to identify, remove and prevent these barriers through inclusive planning, service delivery and decision-making.

Council commits to working in partnership with people with disability, along with their families and carers, and the broader community to improve access and inclusion across all areas of Council's operations. This includes engaging carers meaningfully in consultation, planning and evaluation, considering their needs in communications and programs, and partnering with local carer networks to strengthen support, awareness and connection.

Through leadership and a whole-of-Council approach, inclusive practices will be embedded across our policies, programs, services and facilities and workforce. By taking this collaborative approach, Council aims to remove barriers, foster positive attitudes and support a Maitland where everyone can thrive.

Introduction

Maitland City Council is committed to ensuring fair, respectful and equitable access to Council services, facilities and opportunities for everyone. We work in partnership with our community to build a city where all people feel welcomed and included.

People with disability are valued members of Maitland's proudly diverse community. They bring a wide range of strengths, experiences and perspectives that strengthen the city's character and sense of belonging.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) sets out a four-year approach to improving outcomes of people with disability, as well as their families and carers. It focuses on enabling full participation in community life, supporting equal access to opportunities, and fostering a sense of inclusion across Maitland. The plan identifies actions across the four focus areas of the NSW DIAP framework to address physical, social and systemic barriers that limit participation and inclusion.

While this DIAP sets clear actions over four years, disability inclusion remains an ongoing commitment. Council will continue to build on this work by embedding inclusive and accessible practices across all areas of operation, extending beyond minimum legislative requirements. Responsibility delivery is shared across the organisation, with all staff contributing to a culture that upholds the rights of people with disability.

The DIAP has been developed in partnership with DisCo (Disability Lived Experience Consultants) from the local Disability Peoples Organisation (DPO) - Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH). As well as this, the plan has been informed by consultation with the community including people with disability, service providers, the internal Access and Inclusion Working Group and broader Council staff. These contributions have helped to identify barriers, priorities and opportunities for improvement across the four focus areas.

Background

The DIAP is prepared under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, which requires councils to develop a plan to identify and address barriers that limit participation and inclusion for people with disability. The Act is guided by the social model of disability, recognising that disability is created by environmental, social and systemic barriers rather than the person's impairment.

Previous versions of this plan have supported improvements in accessibility, community participation and inclusion. This updated plan builds on the achievements of previous plans, while responding to new challenges and opportunities identified through community consultation and internal review.

Defining disability and the importance of language

The language used to describe disability plays an important role in shaping attitudes, perceptions and community understanding. It influences how people are seen, how they are treated and whether inclusion or stigma is reinforced. For this reason, Council is committed to using language that is respectful, inclusive and responsive to the preferences of people with disability.

There are different approaches to describing disability, with the most common being person-first language and identity-first language. Person-first language (for example, 'people with disability') places emphasis on the individual rather than the impairment, acknowledging that people are multi-dimensional and not defined by a medical condition or diagnosis. Identity-first language (for example, 'autistic person' or 'deaf community') reflects that, for some, disability is an important part of their identity and can be a source of pride and empowerment. It also draws attention to the social and environmental barriers that contribute to disadvantage.

Both approaches are valid and their use depends on context and individual preference. Individuals may choose different ways to describe themselves, so it is important for persons without disability to respect and follow those preferences wherever possible.

For the purposes of this plan, Council uses person-first language, including the term 'people with disability'. This aligns with current national and state legislation and policy, while acknowledging that language continues to evolve and preferences may vary across communities and individuals.



Disability

Disability is a broad term that can refer to a wide range of physical, sensory, intellectual, cognitive and psychosocial conditions. The World Health Organisation describes disability as having three dimensions: impairment, activity limitation and participation restriction, recognising that disability is not experienced in the same way by everyone.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 defines disability as “a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder a person’s full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” This definition reinforces the understanding that disability is as a result from the interaction between individuals and their environments, rather than from impairment alone. It also highlights that responsibility for removing barriers and creating inclusive communities rests with the whole community.

Invisible disability

Disabilities are not always visible. Invisible or hidden disabilities may include conditions that are not immediately apparent but can still significantly affect a person’s daily life, access and participation. Respecting individual experiences and avoiding assumptions is an important part of creating an inclusive and accessible community.

Access

Access allows everyone to be able to participate by removing barriers that prevent equitable and full participation. This includes ensuring services and facilities are accessible, helping everyone take part in community life. All Australians have the right to actively contribute and participate in all aspects of society. Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan will work towards further improving equity by addressing barriers to access.

Inclusion

Inclusion involves recognising and celebrating the diversity of people in the Maitland community. Our society is enriched by embracing diversity not limited to disability, age, religion, sexuality, gender or ethnicity. As a result, everyone has the right to feel they belong. Inclusion involves creating a safe space where everyone can feel valued; build and maintain connection with others, have autonomy over what is important to them and participate in meaningful ways.



Our community profile

Maitland City Council upholds the social model of disability. We view disability as a result of structural, environmental and social barriers that limit the involvement of people with disability. We can provide long-lasting strategic change in creating an inclusive and accessible environment for everyone in the Maitland area.

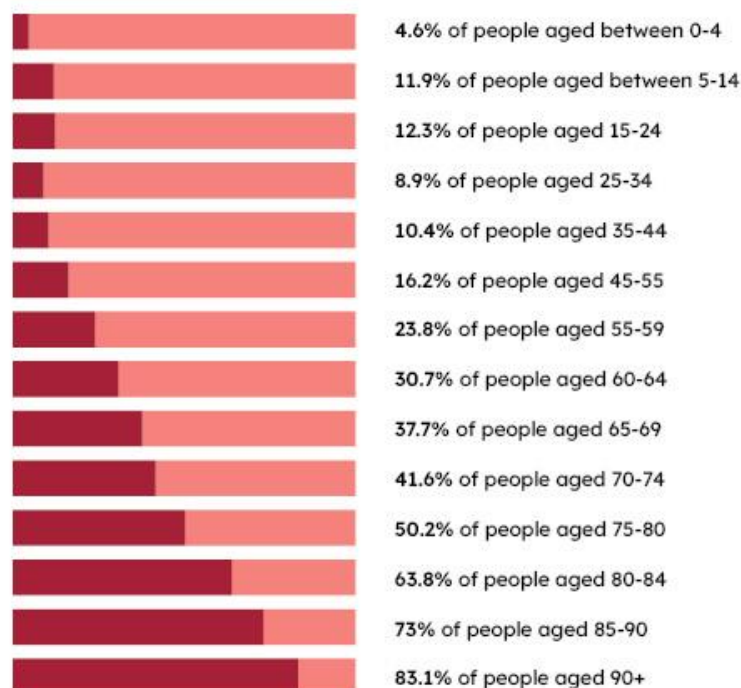
We recognise that disability is not a singular form that is permanent and visible, it also can be hidden and/or temporary. The disability community encompasses anyone who experiences or lives with a disability, however it's an individual choice whether people choose to identify themselves as part of the community or not.

It is important to note that in Australia, disability is the largest minority group with nearly one in five people having disability. This context is particularly relevant as Maitland has a higher proportion of people with disability compared to the average Local Government Area in NSW. We acknowledge that the disability community also includes allies to people with disability, whether they are friends, family, support workers or community groups, and have included them in our community profile.



A Snapshot of People with Disability Living in Maitland

In Australia, the disability prevalence per age bracket is;



Disability prevalence and level of assistance

18,059

people in the Maitland LGA (in 2021) were estimated to have disability, which at the time equated to **21.9%** of the area population, compared to **21.4%** of the Australian population.

Long-term health condition snapshot of Maitland in 2021



13.2% of the population had a mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)



11% Asthma



10.4% Arthritis

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community



1/3

people who need assistance with daily tasks are from CALD backgrounds, approximately.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Approximately

25.3%

of First Nations people in Australia included in the census indicated they need 'assistance with core activities'

Gender

Of those with disability in the Maitland LGA who need 'assistance with core activities' identify as Approximately



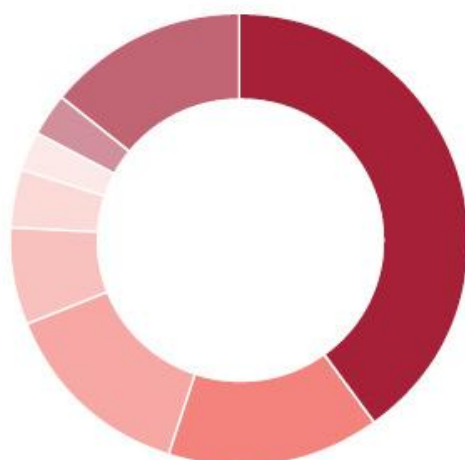
51.5%
female



48.5%
male

NDIS participation

In order of the most common as of 30 June 2025



- 40% have Autism
- Nearly 15% have development delay
- Nearly 14% have an intellectual disability
- Nearly 7% of people psychosocial disabilities
- Nearly 4% of people have other neurological disabilities
- Nearly 3% have a hearing impairment
- Nearly 3% of people have other physical disabilities
- Other



Assistance to undertake core activities in Maitland

In 2021 nearly 7% of the Maitland population had need for assistance to undertake 'core' activities

Economic Participation



In 2021, nearly **16%** of the population were carers

13% of people in Maitland provided unpaid assistance to a person with disability and of things **57%** of those who provided unpaid assistance are employed in some capacity



60% of carers are female

Employment and Income



People in the Maitland LGA with a core activity need are three times less likely to be employed¹.

In the Maitland LGA people who perform unpaid assistance roles typically earn

6% less

than those who don't¹.

Most reported abuse



The most commonly reported types of abuse towards adults with disability (AWD)

was failure to meet support needs, preventing or restricting access to supports or services and verbal abuse

Education



58% of people with disability had completed year 12 or equivalent Nationally

in comparison to **90%** without disability

1 in 3 individuals who required assistance with core activities are working toward Year 12 completion.

Understanding diversity and respecting intersectionality

Disability does not exist in isolation. Council recognises that people with disability may face multiple intersecting oppressions that affect their experiences of access and inclusion.

People with disability often hold multiple social identities, such as gender, sexuality, race, culture, religion, age or socioeconomic status. These intersecting identities can influence experiences and, in some cases, result in unique forms of discrimination and compounded barriers, where a person may face multiple layers of disadvantage simultaneously.

Recognising intersectionality helps us understand that a person's identity is much broader than their disability alone. It highlights the need to address systemic inequalities in a holistic way, considering how different factors interact to affect opportunities, participation and outcomes.

Maitland City Council is committed to promoting equality for people with disability from all cohorts and lived experience, not limited to: Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the LGBTQIA+ community, women and non-binary people, older people, children and young people, people from regional and remote areas, and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and disability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are the longest surviving cultures in the world and continue to enrich our communities in meaningful ways. Council recognises the strength, resilience and ongoing contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the social, cultural and economic life of Maitland.

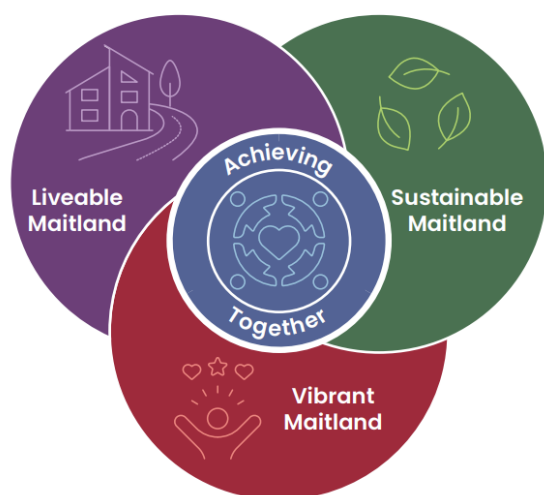
However, the history of colonisation has had devastating impacts on Indigenous communities, resulting in ongoing disadvantage and systemic inequality. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience significantly higher rates of disability than non-Indigenous Australians, reflecting the compounded effects of social, economic and health inequities.

Maitland City Council acknowledges the heightened vulnerability experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. We are committed to closing the gap on disproportionate inequality and taking meaningful action to address the impacts of colonisation and systemic racism. This includes supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access opportunities and participate fully in community life.

Our shared vision and alignment to Guiding Principles

Our shared vision

A connected city with thriving communities





Vibrant Maitland

Working together to create opportunities for growth, connection, and participation, shaping a city where people belong and thrive.

3.1 Diverse local economy • Investment attraction • Strengthened and diversified precincts • Future skill	• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connections • Community connections
3.2 Welcoming communities • Celebrate diversity and culture • City activation and presentation	3.3 City shaping partnerships • Growth opportunities • Advocacy and partnerships

Strategic alignment

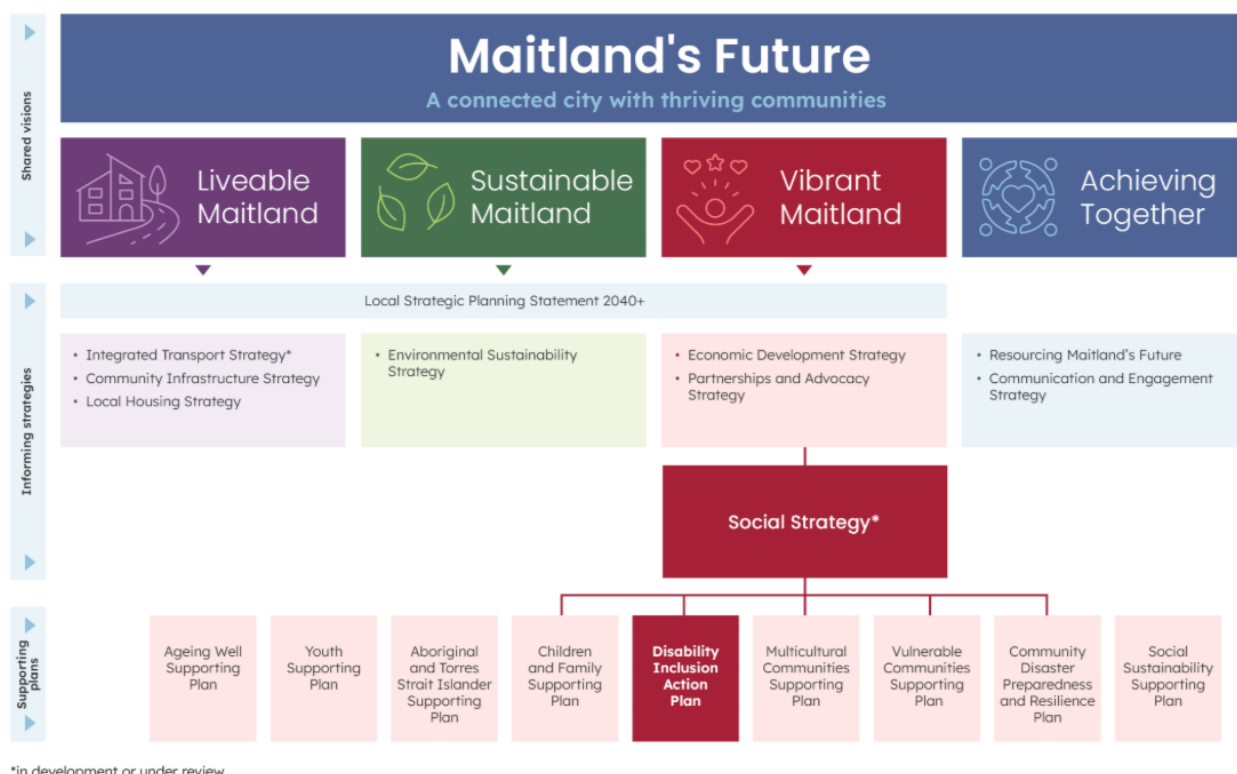
Maitland's Future, our Community Strategic Plan, sets out our shared vision for a connected city with thriving communities. Creating a city where all people, including people with disability, their families and carers can participate fully, access opportunities with dignity, and feel welcomed, respected and valued.

This plan forms part of Council's broader strategic framework. While it aligns most closely with one focus area, it cannot be delivered in isolation. The success of Maitland relies on how all focus areas — liveability, sustainability, vibrancy and achieving together — connect, overlap and support each other.

A city that is truly thriving depends on more than any single effort. Our approach is integrated and future-focused. By achieving together across teams, functions and priorities, we can deliver on our shared vision for a connected city with thriving communities.

This Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) supports this vision by working towards an inclusive and accessible community for everyone in Maitland. It connects vision to action and ensures that inclusion is integrated into outcomes that matter to our community.

While the DIAP is a standalone legislative requirement, it sits as a supporting plan to our Social Strategy and forms part of Council’s strategic roadmap to enhancing social wellbeing for all community members in Maitland.



Our Guiding Principles



MAKE THINGS EASY

Do the hard work to make things intuitive for everyone.



BE WELCOMING

Care for everyone as people, not tasks or numbers.



BE OPEN MINDED

Listen to each other and work together to find solutions.



KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Follow through on your commitments to everyone.



LOOK OUT FOR ME

Thoughtfully anticipate what will make our days go smoother.

Maitland’s wellbeing domains

The DIAP has been developed in alignment with Council’s Wellbeing Framework as outlined in Maitland’s Future. The Wellbeing Framework recognises accessibility as a foundational principle rather than a standalone domain. This ensures that accessibility is embedded across all elements of wellbeing and integrated throughout every domain of the framework, ensuring all residents can participate fully in community life and access the resources they need to connect and thrive.



Our role

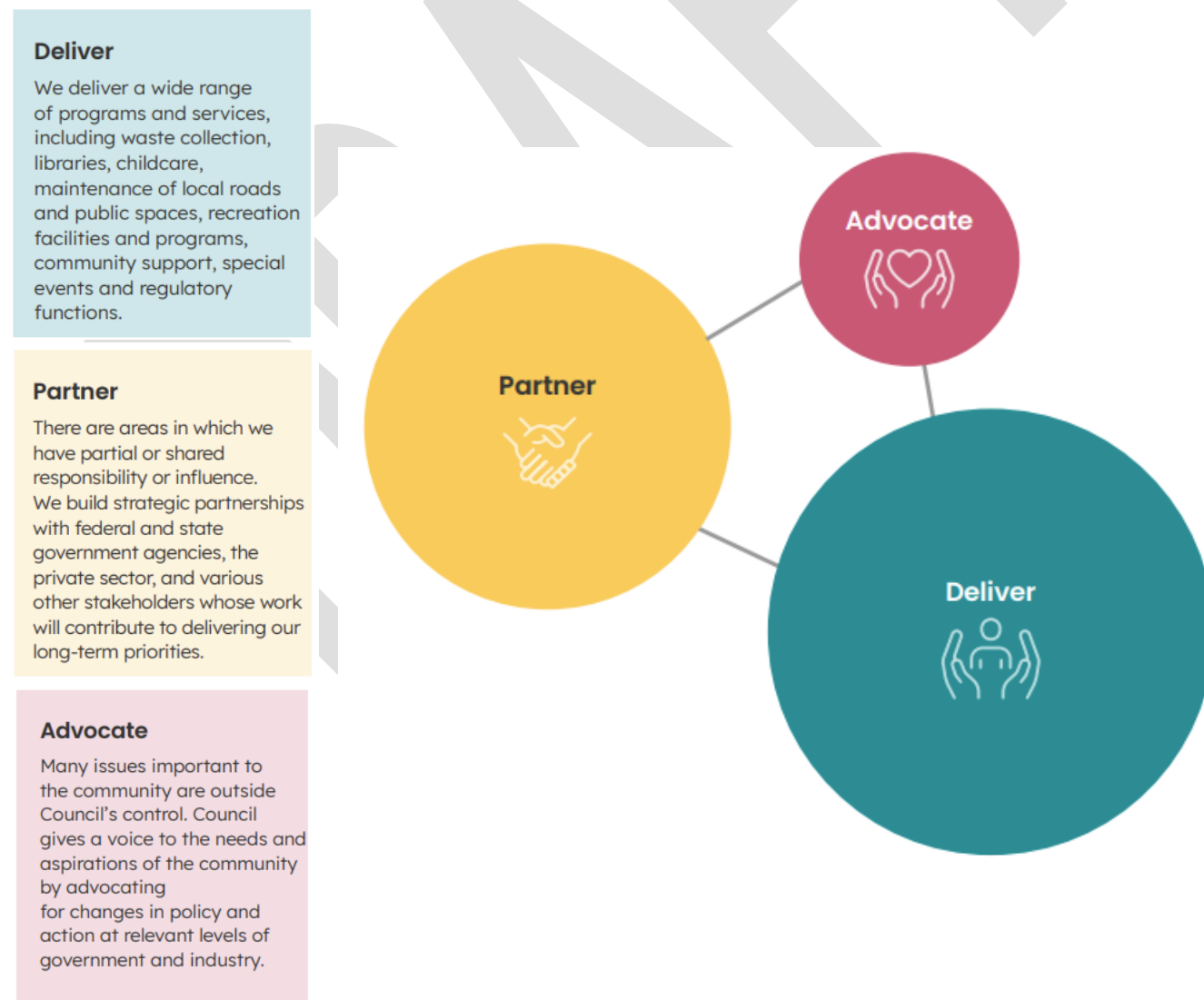
The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* requires local government to ensure people with disability can access buildings, public spaces, information, services and employment on an equal basis with others.

Creating an inclusive Maitland means recognising that people with disability can experience barriers that affect how they access and participate in everyday life. These barriers are often shaped by the way places are designed, how information is shared, and how services and systems operate.

Council's role is to identify and reduce these barriers through thoughtful planning, inclusive practices and practical actions across its operations. This includes embedding accessibility and inclusion into policies, programs, services and the built environment.

Council cannot achieve this alone. Working in partnership with people with disability, carers, community organisations, service providers and other levels of government is essential to ensuring actions are informed, meaningful and effective. Depending on the initiative, Council may lead, deliver, partner or advocate.

By taking a coordinated and collaborative approach, Council helps create a Maitland where people with disability feel welcomed, supported and able to participate fully in community life.



What we have achieved so far

This plan began with the review of Council's Disability and Inclusion Action Plan (2023-2026) and builds on the achievements and progress made.

Focus area one: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours

— Tracking ● Progress

Minimum: removes critical barriers, prevents total exclusion

Target: balanced and functional

Gold: excellent user experience, highly accessible, often aspirational



Key Achievements

- Community engagement plans designed to be inclusive, accessible and remove barriers to participation with people with disability.
- Continued work to make our events more accessible by offering, for some events, site maps highlighting all accessibility elements, accessible parking bays and drop off zones on flat ground, accessible ramps to all areas and levels of the event, pram and mobility aid storage and accessible bathrooms.
- The 'Including You Tent', a quiet, safe place for people who need some respite from the noise and crowds of large events, was available at Council's major events. These included Hunter Valley Steamfest, Luminous, Maitland Roller Disco, Summer Night Sounds, Australia Day and Christmas and New Year's Eve festivities.
- Hunter Valley Tours won the Access and Inclusion Award at the 29th and 30th Hunter Region Business Excellence Awards, proudly sponsored by Maitland City Council. The 30th award achievement featured in the Business Matters newsletter, which also included published articles focusing on accessibility, including the accessible tourism market, hiring outside the box and how to make your business more inclusive.
- Efforts continue to increase the inclusion of visual representations of people with disability in all content across Council, promoting participation in all aspects of life.
- Council's updated branding and style guide continue to be used to promote inclusion and diversity, ensuring all communications are accessible to everyone.

Focus area two: Creating liveable communities

— Tracking ● Progress

Minimum: removes critical barriers, prevents total exclusion

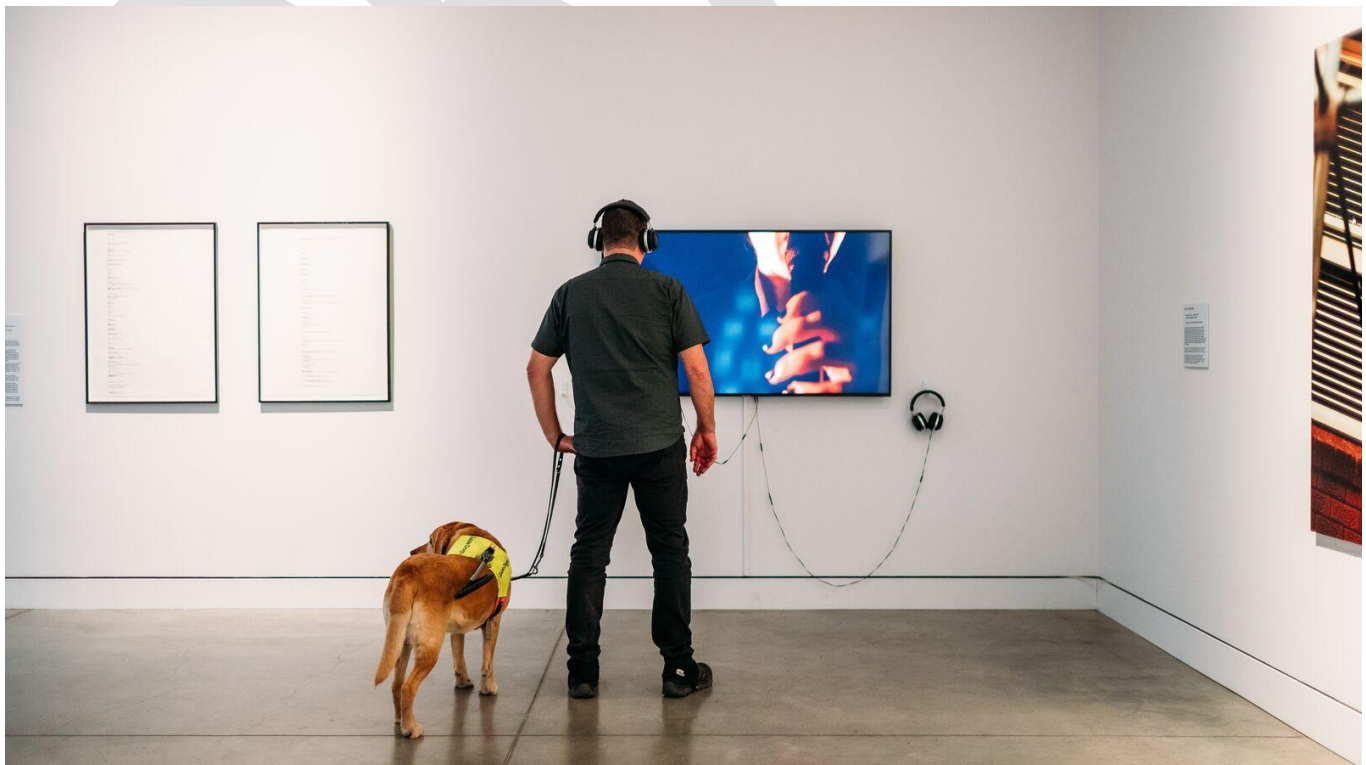
Target: balanced and functional

Gold: excellent user experience, highly accessible, often aspirational



Key Achievements

- Council's website provided accessibility information for each flagship event.
- Continued focus on accessibility in the design and delivery of our play spaces.
- The list of accessibility facilities and services, including sensory swim session times, is available on Maitland City Council's website.
- Numerous bus stops upgraded to improve accessibility.
- Enhanced accessibility in our pedestrian network, including shared paths and footpaths.



Focus area three: Supporting meaningful employment

— Tracking ● Progress

Minimum: removes critical barriers, prevents total exclusion

Target: balanced and functional

Gold: excellent user experience, highly accessible, often aspirational



Key Achievements

- We undertook learning and development activities across the organisation, including sessions on neurodiversity in the workplace, respectful workplace, gender bias and Guiding Principles.
- Key Council staff participated in disability confidence training delivered by the Community Disability Alliance Hunter, gaining insights on disability inclusion, workplace accessibility and cultural change, while strengthening relationships and collaboration with lived-experience consultancy.
- Undertaking recruitment and employee support to ensure processes are fair and barrier-free.
- The Disability Inclusion Action Plan is now featured within our staff induction, further embedding the importance of equity, diversity and respect in the workplace.
- Provision of respectful workplace training to all staff, including bullying and discrimination, and disability and inclusion.
- Our Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) committee remains in place, and we provide EEO training as part of Council's Corporate Training Plan.
- We supported employees by enabling workplace adjustments, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing access to external support providers to help improve their ability to fulfil their role requirements as Council employees.
- Staff engagement survey results show a high level of satisfaction with current flexible work arrangements.
- We have implemented Disability Employment Support Plans to help leaders provide effective support to employees.

Focus area four: Improving access to mainstream systems and processes

— Tracking ● Progress

Minimum: removes critical barriers, prevents total exclusion

Target: balanced and functional

Gold: excellent user experience, highly accessible, often aspirational



Key Achievements

- We design our websites with accessibility and inclusivity in mind, featuring adjustable font sizes, easy navigation and audio talkback functionality.
- A dedicated page for people with disabilities is available on our website providing PDF and Microsoft Word versions of the DIAP. The page also identifies two accessible playgrounds, disability car parking and introduces the 'Including You' event tent.
- Plain-text Word and easy-read summary versions, featuring simple sentences and images, of Maitland's Future, our Community Strategic Plan are published on Council's website.
- Council facilitated a new drop-in business advisory service. The Business Centre and Digital Solutions by the Hunter Region Business Hub offered free business support sessions at Maitland Administration Centre, held on one Friday per month, until 30 September 2025.
- Council's website underwent an upgrade in 2023 to ensure it is compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 with a focus on the customer experience.
- We design Council documents to accessibility standards, with some documents also providing an easy-read Word document version. We also design print materials with clear fonts and sizes, high-contrast text and accessible brand colours. To maintain consistency and usability for all audiences, we design and produce all content in alignment with the Brand Maitland Guidelines.

Legislative frameworks and strategic links

The *Disability Inclusion Act 2014* is the legislative foundation for Local Government disability inclusion and access planning. The Act supports the Government's commitment to improving the lives of people with disability and reaffirms NSW's direction on building an inclusive community.

While Maitland City Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030 focuses on access in the Maitland region, it is a requirement for the plan to align with relevant state, national and international plans, legislation and policies.

The DIAP (2026-2030) is related to the following international, national and state legislations.

International	• UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
National	• Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 (ADS) • National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) • National Disability Strategy (NDS) • Closing the Gap • National Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (DIA)
Commonwealth	• Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 • Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010
State	• NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (ADA) • Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act 2019 • Local Government Act 1993 • Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 • Government Sector Employment Act 2013 • Other Australian Standard (AS 1428) Design for Access and Mobility • Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002

How we developed this plan

The consultation process was led by Disability Consulting (DisCo), with consultation leads who have lived experience of disability facilitating discussions and engagement activities. DisCo consultants focused on facilitating personal feedback and centring the unique life experiences of participants.

How we engaged

Internal consultation

The DIAP (2026–2030) was developed through a collaborative approach across Council. Staff from the Access and Inclusion Working Group (AIWG), managers and over 30 subject matter experts contributed to reviewing the previous DIAP, to find out what achievements had been made, and what things we still need to do.

Co-design workshops were held with our AIWG and Culture and Community Committee. These were facilitated by DisCo consultants and focused on identifying barriers and solutions across the four key areas used in NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plans: attitudes and behaviours, liveable communities, employment and systems and processes.

An anonymous staff survey and engagement activities with internal Council staff captured experiences and ideas on how to make workplaces and services more inclusive, informing how Council can become a more meaningful employer and community leader in access and inclusion.

External consultation

Consultation activities included engagement with community members, people with disability, service providers and local stakeholders. Participants were invited to share their experiences of accessing council services, employment, public infrastructure and community participation opportunities.

A community co-design session and separate service provider co-design sessions were held, where participants were encouraged to group their responses into ‘barriers’ and ‘solutions’ under each of the four focus areas. In addition, three community pop-up sessions were held across the Maitland LGA during Council events in January and February 2026.

We promoted these consultations through Council’s website, social media channels and emails to relevant stakeholders through our contact lists and networks. People who could not attend the consultations could provide feedback through an online survey or by contacting Council directly via phone or email.



What the community told us

Key findings from the community survey

During our consultation, we received 478 points of feedback through face-to-face consultations, pop-ups and co-design sessions with community members and stakeholders. We received an additional 82 points of feedback through our online community survey and Council staff survey

The boxes below highlight the key themes that emerged from the conversations during our co-design sessions, consultation pop-ups and stakeholder engagement. The percentages represent the proportion of total responses in which each theme was identified, indicating how frequently each issue was raised by participants within each focus area.



Focus area one: Developing positive attitudes and behaviours

- Public areas are in need of improvement to accessibility. Parking, public bathrooms, and footpaths were the most frequently identified elements in need of improvement to accessibility.
- People with disability should be consulted about public developments, schemes, and event planning to learn more about their requirements.
- Community awareness and social inclusion can be improved with public education.
- Respondents wanted more disability inclusive and focused events including education and social/cultural programming.
- Shops and businesses can be inaccessible due to not meeting access requirements.

WE RECEIVED 105 ENTRIES ABOUT THIS FOCUS AREA, FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED THEMES WERE:

- Lack of understanding about disability or a need for education (25.7%).
 - Avoidance (4.7%)
- Negative stereotypes, beliefs and assumptions about disability (9.5%)
- Access requirements, difficulty of attaining/providing (9.5%)
- Need for a larger cultural change (6.6%)
- Hidden/non-visible disability (6.6%)
- Visibility and awareness (5.7%)
- Differing needs of different types of disability (5.7%)
- Perceived exemption from responsibility (3.8%)

Focus area two: Creating liveable communities

- Infrastructure is in need of improved accessibility.
- Education for the community and business owners about inclusion and addressing negative stereotypes about disability.
- A lack of accessible parking and other physical access features are a barrier for people with disability to engage with the community and with local businesses.
- Businesses and venues can struggle to make their premises accessible due to prohibitive costs.

WE RECEIVED 143 ENTRIES ABOUT THIS FOCUS AREA, FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED THEMES WERE:

- Accessibility in community spaces and facilities (37.1%)
 - Paths, kerbs and connectivity (13.8%)
 - Parks, playgrounds and reserves (6.3%)
- Planning (15.4%)
 - Inclusion standards (3.5%)
- Transport (13.3%)
 - Parking (6.3%)
 - Public transport (6.3%)
- Events (11.2%)
- Community consultation and collaboration (5.6%)
- Sport (5.6%)
- Social inclusion (5.6%)

Focus area three: Supporting access to meaningful employment

- The attitudes of employers, coworkers, and the community needs improvement towards including people with disability in the workplace.
- There is a need for jobs that better include people with disability, workplace adjustments, flexible work, and valuing of strengths.
- Pathways for people with disability to enter employment and obtain career growth. Access to training and education, as well as opportunities for entry level jobs, casual work, and volunteering are important to respondents.
- Transport to workplaces can be prohibitive due to a lack of or unreliable accessible options.

WE RECEIVED 120 ENTRIES ABOUT THIS FOCUS AREA, FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED THEMES WERE:

- Role charters and job descriptions (15%)
 - Driving requirement (4.2%)
- Recruitment (12%)
- Work opportunities and opportunities for career progression (12.5%)
- Council to be role model and advocate (10%)
 - By employing more people with disability (4.1%)
- Education and training (9.1%)
 - For jobseekers (7.5%)
- Physical workspaces (9.1%)
- Disclosing disability (5.8%)
- Incentivising Businesses (5.8%)

Focus area four: Improving access to mainstream systems and processes

- Rigid job criteria and inaccessible recruitment processes limiting opportunities
- Identified need to improve job design to be more flexible to meet the requirements of people with disability
- Negative assumptions exist in regards to productivity or cost of employing people with disability
- Physical workplace environments can restrict accessibility. Older buildings and design restrictions present barriers to improving accessibility.
- Employees feel uncomfortable or unsafe to disclose their disability

WE RECEIVED 110 ENTRIES ABOUT THIS FOCUS AREA, FREQUENTLY IDENTIFIED THEMES WERE:

- Communication (22.7%)
 - More formats and methods of communicating information (15.4%)
 - Hard to access information (4.5%)
 - Social media (4.5%)
 - Easy read (3.6%)
- Difficulty navigating civic systems (10.9%)
- Improved and better utilise existing resources (18.8%)
 - Website (11.8%)
- Participation in council processes (16.3%)
 - Interagency meeting (4.5%)
 - Community consultation and collaboration (4.5%)
- Inaccessible language (3.6%)
- Difficulty using technology (3.6%)
- Forms (3.6%)

Strategic priorities/Our action plan

Focus area one: Developing positive attitudes and behaviours

Council encourages and supports positive, inclusive behaviour among staff, while fostering a community-wide culture that is accepting and inclusive of people with disability. We strongly advocate for behaviours that respect and celebrate the diversity of our community.

Objectives:

- Continue to develop partnerships which promote and raise awareness of inclusive practices.
- Demonstrate leadership in inclusive and accessible communication and publications.
- Increase the overall customer experience and participation at Council events, activities and other opportunities for social connection.
- Improve capacity of Council staff to identify, understand and deliver inclusive practices.

ID	ACTION	MEASURE	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL'S ROLE
1.1	Continue to convene the internal Access and Inclusion Working Group (AIWG) to lead access and inclusion consideration and initiatives organisation-wide and oversee the delivery of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan for the community	• Convene quarterly meetings for the AIWG • Number of additional access and inclusion items submitted by Council staff for AIWG consideration (staff engagement on access and inclusion issues)	Ongoing	Deliver
1.2	Provide opportunities for the Culture and Community Committee to have input into relevant strategies, policies and projects	• Number of strategies, policies and projects presented to Culture and Community Committee for guidance and advice	Ongoing	Deliver
1.3	Promote awareness about the Culture and Community Committee among Council staff	• Development of internal communication materials about the Culture and Community committee	Ongoing	Deliver
1.4	Investigate opportunities to work with key community organisations, advocacy groups and government agencies to deliver initiatives	• Number of initiatives delivered in partnership with community organisations, advocacy groups, and government	Ongoing	Deliver

	to promote access and inclusion	agencies to promote access and inclusion		
1.5	Increase inclusion outcomes in Council procurement by embedding and measuring social and local participation requirements across all eligible tender packages	Percentage of tenders including inclusion criteria	YR 2	Deliver
1.6	Increase business capability to identify and implement accessibility and inclusion improvements through targeted education and support	- Number of targeted communications to local businesses promoting accessibility and inclusion training, workshops or partnerships, and subsequent engagement with these opportunities. - Improve Maitland City Council Business Survey results regarding the accessibility of businesses	Ongoing	Deliver
1.7	Support businesses to implement accessible services, facilities, and inclusive employment practices and encourage participation in recognition programs (e.g Access and Inclusion Award).	- Number of businesses achieving accessibility milestones or recognition - Number of initiatives delivered by Council	Ongoing	Deliver
1.8	Incorporate visual representations of people with disabilities in content, promoting participation in all aspects of life	Evidence that Council communications reflect inclusive representation of people with disability	Ongoing	Deliver
1.9	Embed inclusive design and seek community feedback to improve accessibility and participation at Council events and place activation activities.	- Accessibility feedback collected from event attendees, including people with disability and those accompanying them via customer satisfaction survey. - Connect with people with lived experience and local service providers to gain accessibility feedback and inform improvements to future events.	Ongoing	Deliver

1.10	Provide inclusive supports, such as sensory-friendly spaces, to enable people with disability to participate in Council events.	• Number of Council events with 'Including You' sensory tent or a similar sensory-friendly space • Explore external grants or funding to support inclusive event initiatives, infrastructure and services	Ongoing	Deliver Advocate
1.11	Review and enhance training for customer-facing staff, including customer service, to support positive interactions with people with disability, including hidden disabilities and communication needs	• Delivery of targeted disability awareness and customer service training for customer-facing staff	YR 1	Deliver
1.12	Liaise with NGO / NDIS providers to enhance community disaster preparedness and resilience by undertaking Council led initiatives and advocating with relevant agencies.	• Number of engagement activities undertaken with relevant agencies	Ongoing	Deliver Partner
1.13	Continue to deliver and promote inclusive programs and events at Maitland Regional Art Gallery, including Auslan interpreted tours, accessible exhibition openings, and the Conversations - Art and Dementia program	• Number of inclusive programs delivered and participant attendance	Ongoing	Deliver Advocate
1.14	Develop and deliver partnerships that support artists with disability, including programs such as Big Smoke, Little Smoke in collaboration with organisations such as Studio A, Mai-Wel and DisCo	• Number of partnerships and inclusive arts programs established or delivered for people with disability	Ongoing	Deliver Partner
1.15	Review and consider linking relevant external disability awareness and inclusion training resources, identify opportunities to collaborate with providers and promote	• Number of external disability awareness and inclusion training resources and provider partnerships identified and promoted annually	Ongoing	Deliver

	available free resources to staff.			
1.16	Explore converting the DIAP induction slides into an online training module that staff can self-elect into, while ensuring the DIAP slides continue to be delivered as part of staff induction.	Implementation of an online DIAP training module and ongoing delivery within staff inductions	YR 2	Deliver
1.17	Strengthen inclusive aquatic environments through clear and consistent signage, symbols and information that support safe, welcoming and accessible use of facilities for all community members	- Investigation of inclusive and accessible signage and symbols across aquatic facilities, including gender diverse, First Nations and accessibility indicators - Investigate visibility of accessibility features and inclusive program information through on-site and digital channels	YR 2	Deliver
1.18	Deliver programs that celebrate diversity and inclusion, both independently and in partnership with community members and community organisations	Number of inclusive programs delivered and demonstrated engagement and positive feedback from participants	Ongoing	Deliver
1.19	Incorporate disability awareness and inclusion training into the Councillor induction and training program for elected representatives	Councillors' awareness of Council's commitment for access and inclusion	Ongoing	Deliver

Focus area two: Creating liveable communities

Council actively works towards and advocates for a Maitland that is welcoming and liveable, where community spaces, neighbourhoods and facilities positively contribute to health, happiness and wellbeing and foster social connections.

Objectives:

- Create and contribute to liveable and accessible public places.
- Enhance Council assets and facilities to improve access and inclusion outcomes.

ID	ACTION	MEASURE	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL'S ROLE
2.1	Continue to ensure the wellbeing framework is embedded within Council's informing strategies to ensure access and inclusion considerations are central to work	• Wellbeing Framework has been incorporated into any new informing strategies	Ongoing	Deliver
2.2	Improve accessibility of aquatic centres through improved physical access to facilities, amenities and equipment, which supports equitable and dignified use by all community members	• Completion of accessibility audits with priority actions identified and delivered within available funding • Installation or upgrade of accessible equipment and inclusive amenities, including universal/multipurpose change spaces	Ongoing	Deliver
2.3	Increase participation in inclusive aquatic programs by delivering and promoting programs that support people with disability, carers, young people and gender diverse community members to participate safely and confidently	• Number of inclusive programs delivered and program enrolment numbers • Implementation of consistent procedures that support safe participation, including supervision expectations, behaviour management and emergency responses	Ongoing	Deliver
2.4	Continuously review infrastructure and services to provide accessible furniture,	• Accessibility improvements	Ongoing	Deliver

	facilities, and low-cost essential services such as printing and computer use	investigated and implemented.		
2.5	Continue to provide a home library service and access to a variety of formats including visual, audio, and large print texts to ensure library services are accessible to all members of the community	Number of home library service deliveries and alternative format items provided	Ongoing	Deliver
2.6	Implement improvements to outdoor access at Maitland Regional Art Gallery, including accessible parking, pathways, shelter, and safe entry points in line with Council's Capital Works Delivery Program	Completion of identified accessibility improvements to the Gallery's external areas in line with engagement feedback, project planning, and Australian Standards and Legislation Requirements	Ongoing	Deliver
2.7	Continue to improve the accessibility in public spaces via renewal programs and new capital projects as defined by Council's Capital Works Program	- Number of audits conducted as part of condition inspection process and project planning - Number of improved access and inclusion in public spaces, parks, community and recreation infrastructure in accordance with Australian Standards and Legislation Requirements - Access and inclusion deliverables considered at concept development and preliminary design	Ongoing	Deliver
2.8	Identify improvements to the pedestrian network to facilitate continuous accessible pathways of travel and incorporate improvements within Delivery, Operational, and Asset Renewal Plans.	Number of continuous accessible pathways of travel identified and delivered	Ongoing	Deliver

2.9	Advocate for accessible public transport and infrastructure	• Number of increased accessibility areas for public transport • Percentage increase in use of public transport	Ongoing	Advocate
2.10	Improve bus stop infrastructure in line with Council's Capital Works Program	• Number of audits conducted as part of condition inspection process and project planning • Number of Disability Discrimination Act compliant bus stops upgraded	Ongoing	Deliver
2.11	Regularly review planning controls to remove barriers to accessibility as part of the biennial Maitland Development Control Plan (DCP)	• Maitland DCP updated biennially to reflect contemporary accessibility planning controls	Ongoing	Deliver
2.12	Plan for accessible, connected communities by ensuring centres, open space, transport nodes and key services are linked by accessible paths	• Number of Development Control Plans or Precinct Plans assessed for accessibility	Ongoing	Deliver
2.13	Support, advocate and incentivise housing opportunities in appropriate locations for people with a disability	• Number of accessible dwellings approved	Ongoing	Deliver

Focus area three: Supporting access to meaningful employment

Council remains committed to equal employment and workplace opportunities and the ongoing commitment to removing barriers for current and future employees to succeed and thrive in the workplace.

Objectives:

- Lead by example and effectively attract, retain and support a diverse workforce that includes people with disability.
- Improve organisational capacity to support a diverse workforce.

ID	ACTION	MEASURE	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL'S ROLE
3.1	Review and enhance recruitment processes, including role descriptions and interview practices, to ensure they are accessible, inclusive and free from barriers	Engagement with external lived experience stakeholder and implementation of any recommendations	Ongoing	Deliver
3.1	Investigate and implement targeted recruitment initiatives, including identified roles and pathway programs, to increase employment opportunities for people with disability	Targeted employment initiatives investigated, progressed or established (e.g. identified roles, internships or pathway programs)	Ongoing	Deliver
3.3	Continue to promote flexible work arrangements, carer's leave, workplace adjustments, wellness program/s and other options to help staff manage work/life balance	Increase in staff awareness and uptake of flexible work and support options, as measured through annual staff survey results and HR data.	Ongoing	Deliver
3.4	Provide targeted disability inclusion training for Human Resources staff and recruitment panel members to strengthen inclusive and equitable recruitment practices	Percentage of Human Resources staff and recruitment panel members who have completed disability inclusion training	Ongoing	Deliver

3.5	Promote Disability Employment Support Plans (DESP) to assist leaders to support staff with disability	• Number of adjustment requests lodged • Time from request to assessment through the implementation • Employee satisfaction with adjustments with 6 month follow-up	Ongoing	Deliver
3.6	Facilitate access to digital literacy skills and explore volunteer opportunities that foster social connection and community engagement	• Number of participants in digital literacy, volunteer, and community programs	YR and Ongoing	Deliver

Focus Area Four: Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes

Council promotes a culture of continuous improvement, committed to improving our decision making, service delivery and access to Council information, services and facilities.

Objectives:

- Increase access to Council information and services
- Improve staff processes to support access and inclusion initiatives

ID	ACTION	MEASURE	TIMEFRAME	COUNCIL'S ROLE
4.1	Provide documents in various formats (print and digital) and ensure they meet appropriate accessibility guidelines, utilising Brand Maitland guidelines and the Language and Writing Style Guide	• Evidence that Council communications reflect inclusive representation of people with disability	Ongoing	Deliver
4.2	Ensure information shared on Council's social media platforms and digital channels is inclusive and accessible by incorporating captions for video content	• Demonstrated use of accessibility features (including captions) across Council's digital communications	Ongoing	Deliver
4.3	Investigate options to incorporate image descriptions (alt text) for images on social media platforms	• Demonstrated use of accessibility features (including alt text) across Council's digital channels	Ongoing	Deliver
4.4	Explore opportunities to upskill staff in the development of accessible documents and inclusive communications	• Training, guidance or resources investigated or used to improve accessible communication practices	YR 2, 3, 4	Deliver
4.5	Promote events that are accessible and inclusive for people with disability and provide information to the community about the specific measures in place that make these events accessible	• Number of event promotions clearly communicating the accessibility features available at Council events	Ongoing	Deliver

4.6	Increase accessibility of Council services, including simplifying forms, increasing availability of online options, and offering alternative ways to provide feedback (e.g. phone-based responses)	Implementation of accessible options for key customer processes	Ongoing	Deliver
4.6	Enhance access to information through Council's website and digital tools, including clearer pathways for customers to complete tasks, accessible transport information, and exploration of tools such as a chatbot or feedback app	Implementation of improvements to Council's website or digital platforms and tools that support accessible customer interactions	Ongoing	Deliver
4.7	Develop a video resource that introduces and summarises the Disability Inclusion Action Plan for use on the corporate website	Development and implementation of video resource	YR 1	Deliver
4.8	Improve access to emergency management and preparedness information as part of the Disability Inclusive Emergency Management NEMA Project	Increase community awareness of tools and resources available	YR 1	Deliver
4.9	Investigate and apply learnings from national and international best practice, including outcomes from the Museum and Galleries NSW International Fellowship, to inform the development of a Maitland Regional Art Gallery Accessibility Strategy	Investigation into the development and adoption of a Maitland Regional Art Gallery Accessibility Strategy informed by Fellowship outcomes	Ongoing	Advocate
4.10	Continue to report on the progress of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan in Council's reporting documents under the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework	Disability Inclusion Action Plan progress is reported on within the Annual Report	Ongoing	Deliver
4.11	Provide easy read summary documents for key Integrated Planning and Reporting documents	Summary documents provided to the community for a minimum of four reports each year	Ongoing	Deliver

Monitoring and review

Measuring impact

We are committed to being accountable for our actions. We will track our DIAP actions and share progress with the community to ensure accountability and transparency. Reporting will be completed internally on a quarterly basis and shared with the community annually. The Community Planning team and the Access and Inclusion Working Group will oversee this process and ensure actions are being implemented effectively.

Progress and outcomes will be shared with the community through Council's Annual Report. In 2030 Council will carry out a full review of the plan, in partnership with the community, to guide the next four-year DIAP. This process will include looking at relevant data and consulting with community members and local service providers to make sure the plan continues to meet the needs of people with disability and support their full participation in community life.



References

- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) Maitland Region Summary.](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics, Avery S. \(2025\) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability, 2022 Survey Disability Ageing and Carers. ABS, Canberra.](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021, Core activity need for assistance \(ASSNP\)](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) 2022 Survey Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) 2022 Survey Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) 2022 Survey Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#)
- [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 - 2031](#)
- [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\) 'Education and Work, Australia 2022'](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Act 2014 No 41](#)
- NDIS Participant Datasets obtained via Community Disability Alliance Hunter
- [NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines](#)
- REMPLAN 2021
- [Australian Local Government Association, Disability Inclusion Planning – A Guide for Local Government 2016](#)



263 High Street, Maitland NSW 2320
info@maitland.nsw.gov.au
maitland.nsw.gov.au

maitland
CITY COUNCIL