



Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025

Commencement Date

Council Department Environmental Services

Contact Officer Director-Environmental Services

Revision Required Every 4 years

Policy Review

This policy shall be reviewed at four (4) yearly intervals at least, to ensure it meets all statutory requirements and the needs of council. It may also be reviewed at other times as determined by council.

Revision History

Version	Council Meeting Date	Resolution No.	Responsible Officer
1	26 June 2017	168/2017	Director-Environmental Services
2			Director–Environmental Services

COWRA COUNCIL DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2025



This plan seeks to foster and advocate for a community and environment that supports people with disability of all ages so that they can be included in social and economic life to the extent of their ability; to be able to contribute as valued members of their community; and to achieve liveable outcomes.

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1.0 MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Cowra Council is delighted to unveil our revised Disability Inclusion Action Plan. A society's measure is its treatment of all members, and the aim of this plan is to guarantee that every individual, regardless of ability, within the Cowra Shire, can fully participate, contribute, and have a sense of belonging within our vibrant community.

Cowra Shire has a rich tradition of embracing diversity, promoting equality and inclusivity through our annual events such as World Peace Day and the Festival of International Understanding. Additionally, our hosting of Australia's World Peace Bell, Japanese Garden, and the Japanese and Australian War Cemetery underscores our commitment to celebrating different cultures and histories. It is imperative, therefore, that we prioritise efforts to recognise, promote, and uplift the diversity within our own community, including individuals from all backgrounds and with all levels of abilities.



Inclusion revolves around fostering a profound sense of belonging for all individuals. It entails acknowledging and appreciating the diverse spectrum of individuals and communities while guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities and resources for everyone. Inclusion transcends mere physical accessibility; it encompasses cultivating a culture grounded in respect and empathy.

In line with this ethos, the initiatives outlined in the Plan are designed to promote the full inclusion and representation of people with disabilities in our community. Moreover, businesses stand to gain from this plan as it paves the way for heightened economic engagement by individuals with disabilities and from people and groups of diverse backgrounds.

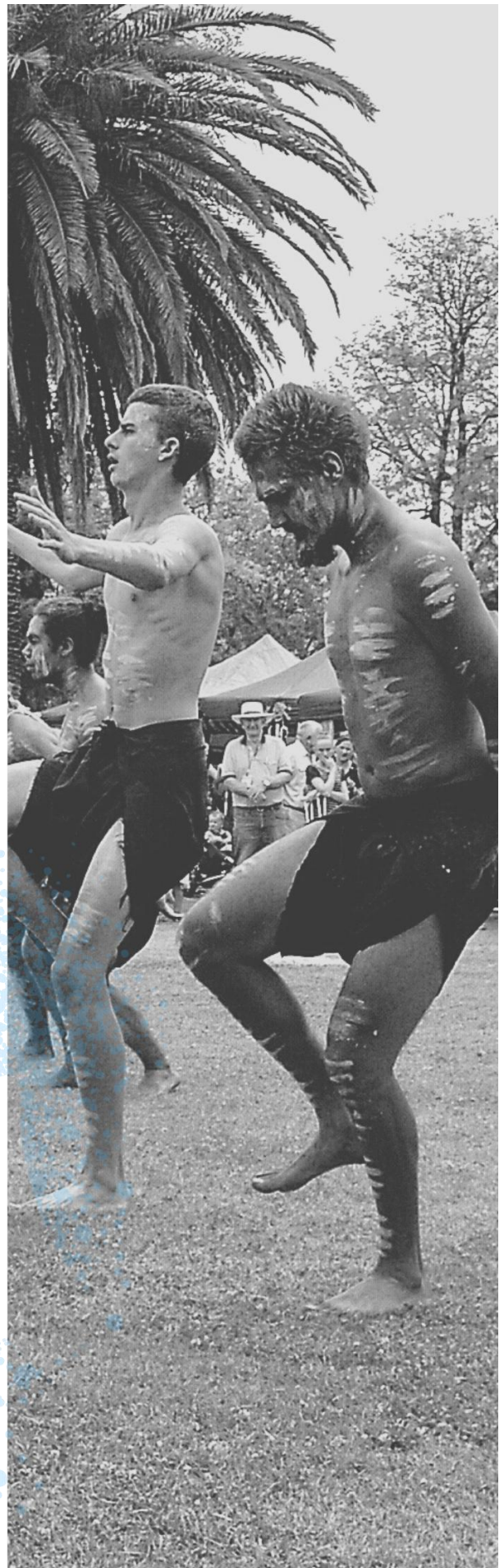
The Plan will cultivate and champion a community and environment conducive to supporting people with disabilities of all ages, enabling their inclusion in both social and economic spheres commensurate with their abilities. This initiative aims for them to contribute as equal members of their community and attain favourable life outcomes.

Such efforts will undoubtedly fortify our community, making it a more resilient and compassionate place to call home.

Cowra Mayor, Councillor Paul Smith



**COUNCIL
ACKNOWLEDGES
THE WIRADJURI
PEOPLE AS THE
TRADITIONAL
CUSTODIANS OF
THIS LAND AND
PAYS RESPECT TO
THEIR ELDERS
BOTH PAST AND
PRESENT**



2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Local Government Area of Cowra with its villages, rural lifestyle and urban environment, offer a rewarding quality of life ideal for families and a work/life balance that many are seeking. With small town hospitality, the tranquil Lachlan River and valleys, beautiful parks, gardens and tree lined streets full of history and tradition are all backed by a progressive and modern community.

Cowra has a vibrant lifestyle with a range of boutique food and wine experiences, supportive services and amenities and a focus on being a liveable community.

The community has a vision for Cowra to be a leading, innovative and creative community, proud of its place in history. By offering opportunity through the best of country living, community, education, employment and diversity, Cowra strives to meet the challenge through the Community Strategic Plan and this, our second Disability Inclusion Action Plan ('The Plan').

The Plan seeks to make things equitable, dignified and more spontaneous for all people within our community.

Access and inclusion within our communities takes many forms such as physical barriers, language, auditory, visual and communication. This includes people across the full spectrum of our community.

This is best understood by looking to the definition of disability in the Disability Discrimination Act:

Disability, in relation to a person, means:

- (a) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or*
- (b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or*
- (c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or*
- (d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or*
- (e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or*
- (f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or*
- (g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:*
 - presently exists; or*
 - previously existed but no longer exists; or*
 - may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability); or*
 - is imputed to a person.*



To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.

This reaches all of us either directly or indirectly and includes autism, neurological, intellectual, sensory and/or physical disability, mental health and chronic health conditions. Some disabilities, such as Crohn's Disease and diabetic retinopathy may not be physically noticeable but are very real.

Ensuring that our environment promotes inclusivity for all people who face day to day barriers, has advantages for those who participate in our community and for the businesses that operate within our towns.

Adequate seating, rest areas along pathways, and ramps instead of stairs may appear to be mere conveniences for some. However, for older individuals, families with prams, or even local sports individuals recovering from injuries, these installations can make all the difference between active engagement in their community and feeling isolated from it.

Over the years, Cowra Council has been dedicated to enhancing accessibility throughout the community. Numerous innovative installations have been implemented since the inception of this policy. Central to this effort is a focus on designing public and community facilities with inclusivity in mind, coupled with fostering a fair and equitable community attitude.

Cowra Council strives to change not just the physical environment but our behaviours and perceptions that presents one of the greatest challenges for a close community like Cowra.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2017 - 2025

- The Access Incentive Scheme Grant has been reviewed and promoted with an increase in applications received for accessibility upgrades.
- Council's Access Committee has continued to identify and review accessibility concerns with membership continuing to expand and evolve.
- Accessibility to Council's Civic Centre facility has been reviewed and upgraded.
- Council's public toilets have been audited and will be upgraded subject to receipt of grant funding.
- Accessible pathways have continued to be upgraded and modified to ensure continuity of paths.
- The availability of group home accommodation has increased within the Cowra Local Government area.
- Council has implemented and promotes a workplace health and wellbeing program.
- Voting venues are identified by the Australian Electoral Commission according to accessibility.



3.0 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The NSW Government through the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, requires that a community has a Disability Inclusion Action Plan. Though Council has always endeavoured to ensure equity in the community for all, implementation of the plan helps to focus those efforts and improve accessibility and achieve the goal that most of us want to live in a fair and inclusive community.

The social model of disability, outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), states, “*people with disability are not disabled by their impairment but by the barriers in the community that prevent them gaining equal access to information, services, transport, housing, education, training, employment, and social opportunities*”.

Australia is a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD). The National Disability Strategy describes some of the things that Australia will do to progress a society that is inclusive, enabling and seeking equality for all within our communities.

The Commonwealth Government’s National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is an integral part of the framework for the reasonable and necessary support for people with significant and permanent disability.

With other legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act, the rights of people with a disability to exercise choice and control over their lives, access mainstream services and participate and contribute to social and economic life is ensured.

The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan provides a framework for the development and implementation of disability action plans across NSW Government agencies and local councils to drive disability inclusion and access in continued consultation and partnership with people with disability, key agencies and members of the community.

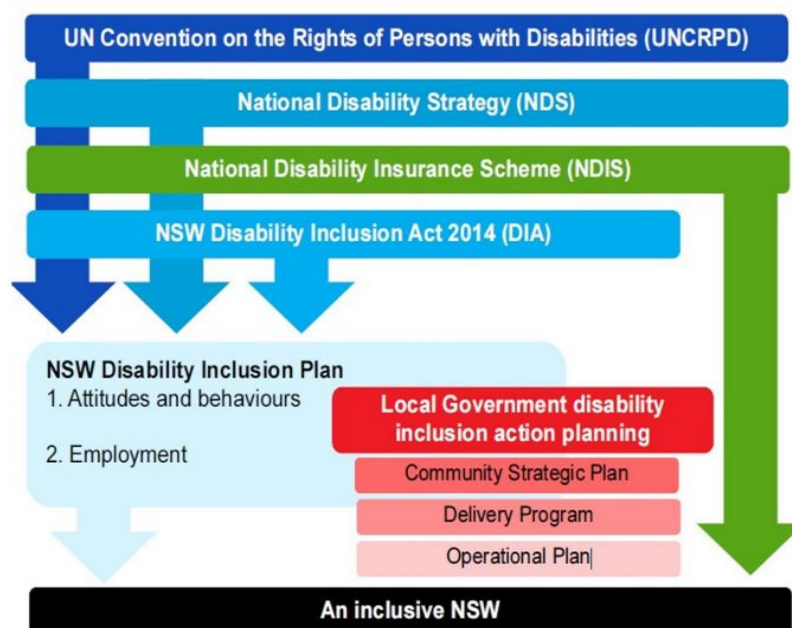
The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan sets out four key government objectives to work towards:

- the development of positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability through community awareness and education;
- the creation of more liveable communities for people with disability through improving the environment and supports;
- the achievement of a higher rate of meaningful employment participation by people with disability through inclusive employment practices and education, and;
- more equitable access to mainstream services for people with disability through better systems and processes, and access to information.

Council, through our Development Control Plan and Cowra Housing Strategy 2025, aims to ensure that the growth and development in Cowra is inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable that the future of our housing stock will be fit for purpose by utilising the qualities of the Liveable Housing Standard to ensure the adaptability of our homes into the transition for aging.



Legislation is the foundation we build upon in ensuring as a community we protect the rights of people with diverse needs.



3.1 DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION	DESCRIPTION
United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights convention which sets out the fundamental human rights of people with disability. The purpose of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986	Discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin, age, medical record, criminal record, marital or relationship status, impairment, mental, intellectual or psychiatric disability, physical disability, nationality, sexual orientation, and trade union activity.
The Disability Discrimination Act (1992) (DDA):	Discrimination on the basis of physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological or learning disability, physical disfigurement, disorder, illness or disease that affects thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement, or results in disturbed behaviour, and presence in body of organisms causing or capable of causing disease or illness (e.g., HIV virus).



The Racial Discrimination Act 1992:	Discrimination on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin and in some circumstances, immigrant status. Racial hatred, defined as a public act/s likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate on the basis of race, is also prohibited under this Act.
The Sex Discrimination Act 1984:	Discrimination on the basis of sex, marital or relationship status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, breastfeeding, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status.
The Aged Discrimination Act 2004:	The Acts works to prevent discrimination based on age no matter the age. This includes the stereo typing of a person's age and is inclusive of discrimination in employment, education, access to premises, provision of goods, services and facilities, accommodation, disposal of land, administration of Commonwealth laws and programs, and requests for information.
The NSW Disability Inclusion Act (2014):	<p>The DIA reinforces that people with disability have the same human rights as other people, including a right to be respected and to participate in and contribute to the social and economic life of their communities. It also requires plans from the State Government and its departments, and local governments, to improve the inclusion of people with disability. The NSW Disability Inclusion Plan provides four focus areas for government and community action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours. - Creating liveable communities. - Supporting access to meaningful employment. - Improving access to mainstream services.

3.2 COUNCIL FRAMEWORK

LEGISLATION	DESCRIPTION
The NSW Local Government Act 1993:	The LGA also upholds the principles of social justice equity, access, participation and rights. It requires that each council have a Community Strategic Plan, supported by a resourcing strategy, delivery program and operational plan. Their Disability Inclusion Plans can be stand-alone, or delivered through the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.
Organisational Plan	<p>The LGA requires that all Councils have a Community Strategic Plan. The Community Strategy Plan describes the community's vision and aspirations for a period of ten or more years.</p> <p>Creation of the CSP is led by the Mayor and Councillors and through engagement with the community.</p>



DIAP	Disability Inclusion Action Plans operationalise the four focus areas of the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan and provide an approach to addressing issues through engagement, planning and co-design of solutions.
Equal Employment Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Management Plan	The Cowra Council Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Plan 2020-2024 has been prepared in accordance with Equal Employment Opportunity legislation requiring Council to take appropriate action to eliminate and ensure the absence of discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, sex, marital or domestic status and disability. Council must promote equal employment opportunity for women, members of racial minorities and persons with disabilities.

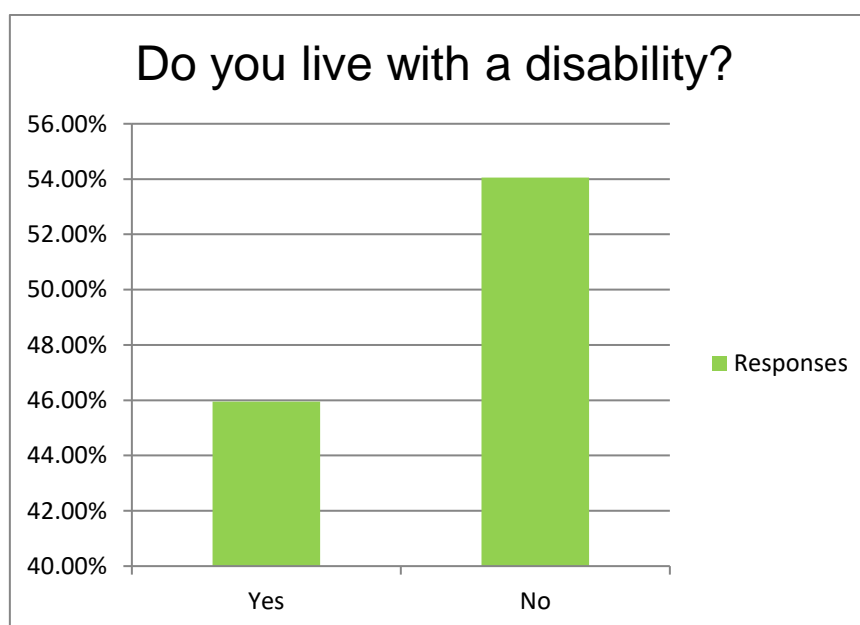
3.3 KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey was undertaken by Council in 2024 asking questions regarding people's view on the accessibility and inclusiveness of public spaces, Cowra CBD, Council facilities, services, resources, the liveability of the community and the employment opportunities.

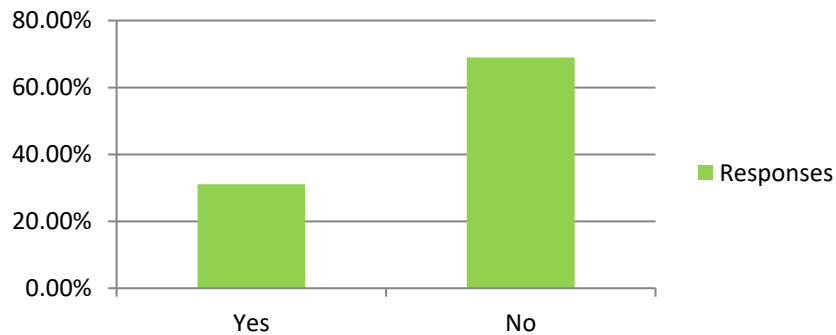
The online version of the survey was available through Council's website and in hard copy form at Council's Administration Building, Public Library and through service providers and agencies.

For the most part members of the Cowra community felt that their needs were being met in terms of accessibility, provision of services and being accepted as part of the Cowra Community.

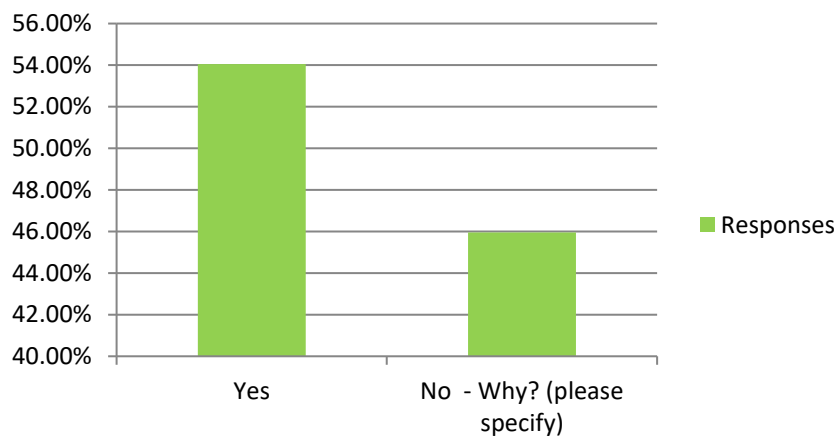
The following graphs detail the results from 74 survey responses.



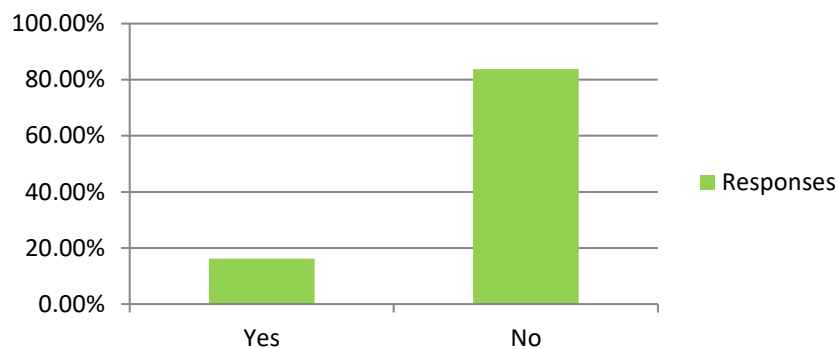
Do you encounter businesses in Cowra where you do not feel welcome?



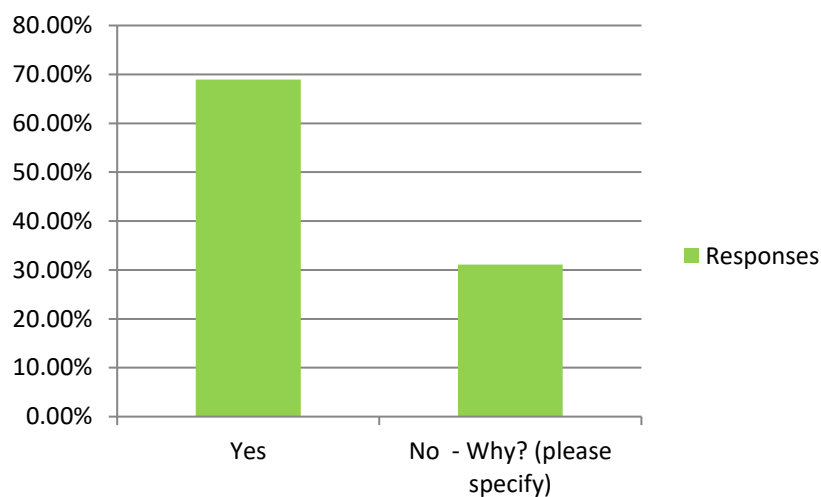
Do community services and facilities in Cowra meet your needs?

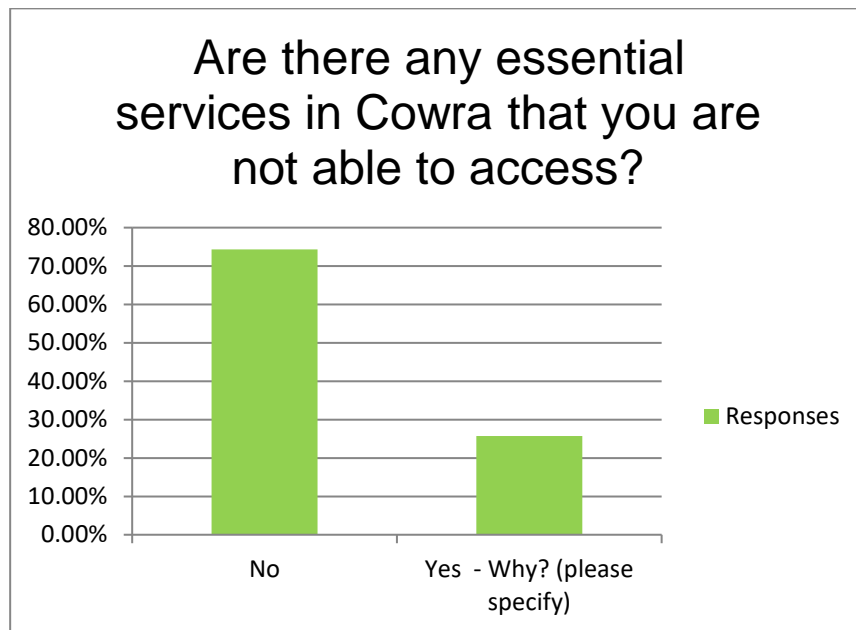


Have you ever been refused work due to your identity, beliefs or disability?



Do you feel positive about living in Cowra?





4.0 FACTS AT A GLANCE

The population of Australia is diverse and the way these impact the needs and designs of our environment is influenced by where we live and how our community is structured. We also want our communities to be accessed by those passing through, like the nomadic caravan population moving up and down the eastern sea board each Autumn and Spring.

4.1 AUSTRALIA AT A GLANCE

DIVERSITY OF POPULATION	
27.3 Million	The total population of Australia (27, 309,396 – 30/09/2024, ABS)).
21%	The proportion of the population that speak a language other than English at home (LoTE)(ABS)
1 Million	The approximate number of children 3 years and under in prams and strollers. (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)
44%	The proportion of the population that will experience a mental health condition during their lifetime. (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)
5.5 Million	The number of people who have a disability in Australia. (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)
1:3 Homes	The number of households which include someone with a disability. (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)
11%	The proportion of the population that is sexually diverse (LGBTQI+)(Australian Human Rights Commission)



DISABILITY BY AGE

52.3%	The percentage of people over 65 years with a disability.
15%	The proportion of people under 65 years of age that have a disability.
9.3%	People between 15 – 24 with a Disability (in 2009). (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)
7.6%	The proportion of Australians with a disability that were children aged between 0-14 years (in 2009). (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare)

DISABILITY IN THE ELDERLY

1.9 Million	The number of people with a disability that are over 65 years of age.
49%	The proportion of people over 65 years of age that have a disability.
12.5%	The proportion of people under 65 years of age that have a disability.
> 65 +	The number and percentage of people aged 65 years and over is increasing.
1 Million	The number of people in Australia that receive aged care services.
3.5 Million	The number of people in Australia that are expected to receive aged care services by 2050
3.9 Million	The number of older people (+65 years) in the Australian population (15.9%).



4.2 COWRA AT A GLANCE

DIVERSITY OF POPULATION	
12,724	The total population of Cowra (12,724 – 30/09/2024, ABS)).
8%	The proportion of the Cowra's population that reported needing help in their day to day lives due to a disability
13.8%	The proportion of Cowra's population that provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability or long-term illness or old age.
1052	The number of Cowra's population that provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability or long-term illness or old age.
2477	The number of people in Cowra's population that are aged 70 years or older.
8.8%	The proportion of Cowra's population that identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
11%	The proportion of the population that is sexually diverse (LGBTQI+)(Australian Human Rights Commission)

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	
88.3%	Population speaking English only at home
4.7%	Households where a non-English language is used
0.3%	Population speaking Wiradjuri at home
0.2%	Population speaking Kinyarwanda (Rwanda) at home
0.2%	Population speaking Mandarin at home
0.2%	Population speaking Greek at home
1.2%	Population speaking Filipino at home



5.0 THE PLAN

Sections 5.1 through to 5.4 of this Plan describe focus areas and associated key actions that Cowra Council will commit to over the period 2025-2029.

The NSW Government requires all Council's to have a Community Strategic Plan. This plan is the overall planning document for the Cowra Council LGA. The Cowra Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan (the 'Plan') is a planning document that provides increased detail about how some of the intents of the Strategic Plan will be progressed. It will inform the Cowra Council's Delivery Programs and Operational Plans of the key elements of strategic inclusion for the development policy and projects.

The Plan will be available and accessible on the Cowra Council website. It will be provided to the Disability Council NSW and lodged with the Human Rights Commission.

The Plan will be overseen by senior management at Cowra Council in consultation with the Cowra Council Access Advisory Committee. A progress report will be provided to the Cowra Council's General Manager and Council for review and inclusion in its annual reporting.

This report on the implementation of the Plan will be included in the Cowra Council Annual Report and a progress Report will be tabled for Parliament each year.

Cowra Council will review this Plan with the Access Advisory Committee for currency over time and at least each four years.



5.1 FOCUS AREA 1

Developing Positive Community Attitudes & Behaviours

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. This is often characterised by the misunderstanding of what inclusion is and how we see disability.

Disability discrimination has a very real impact on the lives of those who experience it. It also damages the strength of our community and results in additional costs for health care and unemployment benefits. There can also be legal costs and damage to reputation if a case is made that an organisation has breached the Disability Discrimination Act.

By educating the community about disability, including invisible disabilities, we can improve understanding and reduce discrimination. Better attitudes will lead to better outcomes in other areas such as employment and access to mainstream services. Positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability will lead to a more welcoming and inclusive community.

Often people aren't aware that the ways they act within the community are affecting other people's lives. Sometimes people don't know what to do to make things easier for others, nor appreciate what people with disability and inclusive needs can do for our community and offer to our businesses.

The physicist Stephen Hawkins said of disability that:

In 20 years, man may be able to live on the Moon. In 40 years, we may get to Mars.

During the next 400 years, we may be able to leave the solar system and head for the stars,

But meanwhile, we would like to get to the supermarket, the cinema and restaurants.

The Plan seeks to shift public perception of disability and inclusiveness, raise awareness of how we all contribute to the community and help make Cowra Shire an inclusive community.

Action 1.1

Continue to support and improve representation by people with a disability on the Cowra Council Access Advisory Committee.

The Access Advisory Committee provides advice to the Cowra Council on the barriers and lived experiences of people within the community that have a disability.

The committee comprises members of the community living with disabilities, care givers and service providers. This Committee is valued by the Council and by the development of the range of knowledge and experience; this committee can enrich the understanding and acceptance of the needs and actions



that Council can take to address inclusiveness here in Cowra.

This action empowers the continued contribution of this Committee, and will also review its Terms of Reference to ensure the focus, membership and vision can better reflect the inclusive community we all envisage for our Cowra community.

Action 1.2

Continue to support and improve representation by people with a disability with ongoing support for the Access Incentive fund.

The consultation for this Plan included significant feedback that doors, car parks, shop layouts, steps and sidewalk billboards and seating create significant barriers to people accessing services. These are a common issue in our communities with the tradition of main streets not having imagined accessibility in mind.

This action will continue the Council's Access Incentive Fund to provide financial incentives for business owners to provide improved access. This is a rolling grant and applications can be accepted any time.

During the term of the 2017 plan, grants included funding for the Cowra Tennis Club, Datavoice, Cowra Dental Group, Oak on Kendal and more.

Council will renew its plans for an awareness education program to help businesses understand the importance of providing good access and how this impacts the commerce of the whole community.

This will drive confidence through action that will contribute to business goals and optimise service engagement and employment for people with disability and older people.

Action 1.3

Further develop the Principles of Universal Design to the Council Policy platform

Universal design has been with us for a long time but in the 1990's the now late Ron Mace along with a team including engineers, designers and architects developed the 7 principles of Universal Design.

These are:

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexibility in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive to Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Tolerance for Error
6. Low Physical Effort
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use



These are not about any one specific part of our environment but can be applied to everything we do. Universal design can speak to policy, employment, community engagement, buildings and almost everything we do in and for community.

These principles help by asking important questions of our community plans to take actions or plan ideas that will move us all forward to a more inclusive place to live.



Action I.4

Increase the visibility of people with a disability on Cowra Council publications, communications, website and social media.

Despite high representation in the community, people with disability are often absent from publications and advertising. When they are included, it is often to highlight an inspirational story and get an emotional response. This influences what is acceptable about how someone looks, who might be the 'customer' and what role models it is acceptable to admire, associate with, and value.

This action will ensure that Cowra Council publications, advertising and online avenues are representative of their community and include people with disability.



5.2 FOCUS AREA 2

Creating Liveable Communities

Liveable Communities' is about making sure that people with disability have access to all the important parts of community life. That includes access to buildings, public areas and natural places across the Cowra Local Government area. It includes opportunities for social engagement and entertainment through community events and activities. It can also include access to transport and housing.

'Universal design' is about creating buildings, spaces, places or activities that everyone can access. This means from the start, thinking about and addressing the needs of all people who might use a place or space, including people with disability. Making something accessible for all people from the start means there is less need for special assistance or adaptations later. This makes for a more inclusive and liveable community and also saves money in the longer term.

The actions in this Plan will consider how to make things more universally accessible to as many people as possible keeping in mind that access is for the 90th Percentile of people.



Action 2.1

Continue to improve physical access to all Cowra Council buildings and facilities.

While any major renovations or buildings are bound by the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, Cowra Council also takes a proactive approach to improving access to its buildings and venues. This includes the 2017 installation of a stage lift and more recent upgrades to the Civic Centre. Improvements such as this will be ongoing.



Action 2.2

Investigate options to deliver new Accessible Adult Changing Facilities in a key location

Hygienic public toilets are one of the core requirements of a healthy community. Yet many people with diverse needs are not able to access existing toilets – even those labelled as ‘accessible’. Adults with higher support needs do not currently have access to a purpose-built changing facility to change safely and comfortably

Because of their design, location, signage or way they are being used, community members and visitors to the region may not be able to access these amenities due to them being locked or inappropriate for use. Many people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as other disabilities that severely limit mobility, cannot use standard accessible toilets.

The diversification to more inclusive and complete amenities in our community are part of the



ongoing vision in Cowra. Accessible, adult change facility, all gender, ambulant and assistance animal areas, are all part of the plan.

Action 2.3

Improve seating in public spaces.

Improve seating in public spaces, including supporting infrastructure like pathways and kerb ramps. People being able to move about their neighbourhood is a marker of a healthy, vibrant community. But people may need a rest along the way. This includes some people with disability, older people and those experiencing chronic health conditions, such as arthritis, back problems or heart disease.

This action will improve access to public seating and pathways so that it is safe, well designed and located for accessibility and to not interfere with other needs such as wayfinding.



Action 2.4

Improve inclusion and access to recreational activities.

Sport, recreation and leisure activities provide opportunity for people to develop friendships and improve physical and emotional health. This is particularly important for people with disability who may also use the pool and other activities as therapy. The Cowra Shire offers an abundance of activities including fishing, swimming, bowling, cinema, croquet, golf, picnic areas and bike riding. These activities are also important to tourism.



This action will improve and promote access and information for recreational options and will consider:

- Improvements and extensions to cycling paths and signage (See the Cowra Council Pedestrian and Cycling Plan)
- Research how to increase accessible and continuous paths of travel from car parks to recreation activities.
- Investigate participant access to amenities and facilities for inclusive participation.

This action will identify how to make these activities more inclusive so that people with disability feel welcomed and confident about participating in the community.

Action 2.5

Improve playgrounds so that they are accessible and inclusive, with designs informed by the “Everyone Can Play Guidelines”.

Public playgrounds are important for all children to have fun. They also offer opportunities for learning, problem solving, motor skills and socialising. An inclusive and accessible playground is somewhere that is open and safe, enables exploration and interactive and sensory play, has smooth surfaces, handrails and accessible paths. It gives children with and without a disability the same platform to play, learn and grow together while breaking down barriers, both physically and socially. The inclusion created by these parks and playgrounds encourages children, adults, and families to experience the benefits and enjoyment of playing together.



Playgrounds that consider all abilities look like ordinary playgrounds, but are designed so that everyone can join in the activities and play. As playgrounds get redeveloped or upgraded,



consideration is to be given as to how to best provide an area where all users can equitably utilise the recreation facilities. It is also recommended that Council considers developing a new inclusive playground that can attract a wide range of participants and promote inclusivity.

All new and upgraded play spaces have continuous paths of travel and where possible, inclusive play elements.

These ongoing improvements will be based around the NSW DPIE Guidelines “Everyone can Play”

Action 2.6

Improve accessible car parking design

A greater number of people are utilising vans with hoists and minibuses to transport disabled members of the community around the local government area.

Accessible car parking spaces are required to facilitate the safe use of ramps and hoists from these vehicles. This action will investigate opportunities to provide suitable parking for minibuses/ vans with rear hoist.



Action 2.7

Improve Community access to Parks and Pathways

Access to parks and pathways ensures that everyone can enjoy the outdoors and fosters a more inclusive and equitable society. They promote physical activity, improve mental well-being.

Connecting pathways to playgrounds, amenities, seating, car parks and picnic areas is crucial in enabling everyone to participate in daily living activities.

This action will identify and determine locations where improvements, continuation and new pathways should be implemented in line with Council's adopted Pedestrian and Cycle Plan.



Action 2.8

Encourage an increase in the level of accessible housing stock in Cowra Shire.

Most people with disability access the mainstream housing market by either renting or buying. People who are ageing are also often seeking accommodation that has accessible features such as wide doors, big bathrooms and easy paths and ramps. Increasingly, people have expectations of living in their home for as long as they can. For disability, there is a move away from congregate living where everyone you live with also has a disability.

The Cowra Development Control Plan gives direction regarding residential and multi premise developments being able to meet the Silver level standards in the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines,



and encourage making these developments more versatile for current and future generations. Review of the Development Control Plan is underway with controls for residential development to be reviewed of the adoption of the National Construction Codes - Liveable Housing requirements for all single residential development.

Action 2.9

Continue to Promote the Companion Card.

The NSW Government Companion Card program enables people with permanent disability, who need significant assistance, to attend a venue or activity without paying for the person who is there to help them.

At the time of preparing this Plan the following were Companion Card members: Cowra Civic Centre, Cowra Japanese Gardens and Cultural Centre, Central West Library (Cowra), Cowra Regional Art Gallery, PCYC and the Morongla Show Society.

This action will promote the Companion Card to eligible people with disability and to other venues and events. The Cowra Council will ensure that its venues and activities participate in this scheme.



5.3 FOCUS AREA 3

Creating job opportunities for people with a disability

People with disability experience many barriers in finding and keeping a job. The greatest barriers to employment within Cowra were related to discrimination and assumptions about ability, physical access in the workplace and lack of flexibility by employers.

Despite the many benefits of employing people with disability, rates of employment for people with severe or profound disability have declined, full-time work for people with disability has declined and part-time work has increased steadily since 2003. The trends are going the wrong way and people with disability are increasingly underrepresented in the workforce.

Inclusive employment means increased income, reduced social isolation and independence for people with disability. For businesses, benefits include access to a broader range of skills and dedicated and hard-working staff. If we don't employ people with disability, there are higher costs to the community through income support and increased health costs.

Action 3.1

Subscribe to the Australian Network on Disability.

The Australian Network on Disability is a national, membership based, for-purpose organisation that makes it easier for organisations to welcome people with disability in all aspects of business.

This action will consider Cowra Council membership to the Australian Network on Disability.

Action 3.2

Create pathways for people with disability to undertake work experience and apply for jobs at the Cowra Council.

The Cowra Council employs over 200 people, but there are very few who have identified as having a disability.

Cowra Council is committed to providing equal opportunity and wants to be known as an inclusive employer of choice, attracting and retaining employees from a diverse population, including people with disability. It will lead by example as an employer that focuses on equal access and opportunity for everyone.

This action will identify career pathways, recruitment processes, staff awareness, flexible working options and support for people with disability to engage in the Council's workforce. This will also consider young people in their final year of school and those supported by employment agencies.



5.4 FOCUS AREA 4

Improving access to services through better systems and processes

This section is about looking at systems and processes to see if there are any barriers that stop people from being able to get the support and services that they need. People with disability should be able to access all the services that are available to the rest of the community and have a say about issues that affect them. Systems and processes can include how you get information, how you can make an enquiry or payment, or how you can give feedback or have a say.

Through the consultation, people told us that they need more information and it needs to be in accessible formats. People want to know what's on in their community, what's accessible and how to get support. Websites need to be accessible and easy to use. We also need to make information available in hard copy for people without access to the internet.

Action 4.1

Continue operating a workplace wellbeing program for staff.

Studies show that Australian people in rural areas are happier than those living in the city and the prevalence of people experiencing mental illness is similar. Despite this, the incidence of suicide in rural areas is nearly twice as high. Many people don't seek professional help, and available mental health services are stretched and not always able to respond in a timely manner.

Cowra Council has promoted the wellbeing of its staff and the broader community for some years. This action will implement an ongoing wellbeing program for Cowra Council that will offer its staff a range of lifestyle and health supports in and outside the office. It will also help staff to identify signs that someone may be experiencing a mental health issue, and how they may be supported.

This will complement the existing Employee Assistance Program that offers confidential professional counselling for Council employees.

Action 4.2

Provide information on accessibility and disability, mental health and aged services on the Cowra Council website.

Good web design always caters to the needs of the user. The NSW Department of Communities and Justice has developed strategies, including a Digital Accessibility Standard that provides guides on how to make digital products accessible.

This action will:



- Review the Cowra Council website against this Standard.
- Ensure Council contact details include contact details for teletypewriter (TTY), the National Relay Service and the Telephone Interpreting Service.
- Include accessibility information on the website about Cowra Council services, facilities and the community that will be useful for residents, visitors and those thinking about moving to Cowra Shire.
- Include a directory of disability, mental health and aged service providers on the website.
- Develop a strategy to keep the accessibility information on the website up to date.



6.0 MEASURING SUCCESS

The following is an accountability framework that the Council and the Access Advisory Group will use to monitor progress against the Actions in this Plan.

No.	Action	Performance Measure	Timeframe
1.1	Continue to support and improve representation by people with a disability on the Cowra Council Access Advisory Committee.	Membership to the committee is promoted and encouraged through accessibility organisations and Council social media.	6 Months
1.2	Continue to support and improve representation by people with a disability with ongoing support for the Access Incentive fund.	Continue to have an open rolling grant process to encourage disabled access to businesses and community organisations. Promote the availability of the grant through social media and newspapers.	Ongoing
1.3	Further develop the Principals of Universal Design to the Council Policy platform	Utilise these principals when reviewing and updating Council's Development Control Plan and with the creation of the Cowra Housing Strategy.	On going
2.1	Continue to improve physical access to all Cowra Council buildings and facilities.	Where access is provided to people with disabilities, ensure that it is compliant with the relevant standards. Undertake an audit of Council buildings for compliance with disability standards	12 months
2.2	Investigate options to deliver new Accessible Adult Changing Facilities in a key location	A review of Council's parks and amenities is undertaken and grant application lodged and supported for the provision of an accessible changing facility	On going
2.3	Improve seating in public places	Undertake upgrades or replacement of seating in public places as identified and subject to allocation of funds	Ongoing
2.4	Improve inclusion and access to recreational activities	Cycle paths and signage be updated as required. Ensure public pathways are continuous from carpark to facilities, including picnic areas	Ongoing
2.5	Improve playgrounds so that they are accessible and inclusive, with designs informed by the "Everyone Can Play Guidelines"	Council playground equipment to be upgraded as equipment requires replacement.	Ongoing



No.	Action	Performance Measure	Timeframe
2.6	Improve accessible car parking design.	Council's car parks be audited and accessible car parking areas be upgraded to ensure compliance with the current standards	Ongoing
2.7	Improve Community access to Parks and Pathways	Ensure that any new pathways are implemented in accordance with Council's Pedestrian and Cycle Plan. Ensure that pathways are continuous and provide linkages to Council Parks and facilities	Ongoing
2.8	Encourage an increase in the level of accessible housing stock in Cowra Shire.	Review Council's DCP and incorporate the National Construction Code – Liveable Housing Requirements	6 Months
2.9	Continue to Promote the Companion Card	Ensure that Council Venues participate in the scheme and promote at all facilities.	Ongoing
3.1	Subscribe to the Australian Network on Disability	Consider membership options	Annually
3.2	Create pathways for people with disability to undertake work experience and apply for jobs at Cowra Council	Council continues to provide an equal Opportunity Employment service to all members staff and the community	Ongoing
4.1	Continue operating a workplace wellbeing program for staff	Council continues to offer Health and Wellbeing days and provide an Employee Assistance Program	Ongoing
4.2	Provide Information on accessibility and disability, mental health and aged services on the Cowra Council website	Undertake a review of Council's website and ensure compliance against the Digital Accessibility Standard	Annually



7.0 REFERENCES

The following sources were referenced in the production of the Cowra Council Disability Inclusion Action Plan:

- Australian Network on Disability, www.and.org.au
- Australian Bureau of Statistics, www.abs.gov.au
- Australian Government Department of Social Services, www.agedcare.health.gov.au
- 'Aged Care changes – the journey so far', Department of Social Services. www.agedcare.health.gov.au.
- Cowra.localstats.com.au
- Universal Design, www.universaldesign.i.e
- National Disability Services, www.nds.org.au
- 'Targeted Study of Injury Data Involving Motorised Mobility Scooters', Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.
- Tourism Australia, www.tourism.australia.com
- 'Mental Health in Rural and Remote Australia', National Rural Health Alliance Inc.

