

24 ENDORSEMENT OF DRAFT DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2027-2031

Report prepared by: Manager - Social and Cultural Development
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REPORT SUMMARY

The draft City of Ryde Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027–2031 (draft DIAP) at **ATTACHMENT 1**, has been prepared to guide Council's work over the next four years to improve accessibility and inclusion, remove barriers and support the full participation of people with disability in community life.

The draft DIAP is Council's third Disability Inclusion Action Plan. It builds on the achievements, significant momentum and lessons of the DIAP 2022–2026, recognising the progress already made while focusing attention on the areas where community members and stakeholders have identified the greatest need for continued improvement.

The draft DIAP has been developed through a comprehensive evidence-based process, including an extensive community and stakeholder engagement program, analysis of local data, targeted research, review of relevant policy and good practice, achievements and learnings from Council's previous DIAP (2022-2026) and extensive collaboration with Council teams.

The draft DIAP contains 30 focused actions across five focus areas:

1. Inclusive Communities, Participation and Belonging
2. Getting Around Safely and Independently
3. Accessible and Inclusive Council Facilities, Events and Programs
4. Inclusive Work, Volunteering and Opportunity
5. Accessible Information, Inclusive Community Engagement and Accountable Delivery.

The draft DIAP's streamlined action framework is intended to maintain flexibility while concentrating effort on the priorities identified through community feedback, stakeholder input and evidence gathered during development of the draft DIAP. Each action identifies measures, lead Council teams and delivery timing to support implementation, monitoring and reporting. The final DIAP will be integrated into Council's Delivery Program, Operational Plans, service planning, budgeting, asset planning and reporting processes.

The draft DIAP recognises that every person's experience of disability is different and that disability may be visible or non-visible, permanent, temporary or change over time. It reflects a broad range of disability experiences and supports flexible and inclusive approaches that respond to different physical, communication, sensory, cognitive and psychosocial needs.

ITEM 24 (continued)

The draft DIAP is presented to Council for endorsement to proceed to public exhibition. Public exhibition will provide a further opportunity for people with disability, families, carers, service providers, community organisations and the broader community to review the draft DIAP and provide feedback before it is finalised for adoption.

A summary presentation outlining the development of the draft DIAP and its key features is also included as **ATTACHMENT 3**.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

- (a) note the comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement, research and cross-Council collaboration undertaken to inform the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027-2031; and
- (b) endorse the draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027–2031, provided at ATTACHMENT 1, for public exhibition for a minimum period of 42 days, noting a further report will be provided to Council following the public exhibition period, outlining submissions received, recommended amendments and the final Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027–2031 for adoption.

ATTACHMENTS – CIRCULATED UNDER SEPARATE COVER

- 1** City of Ryde Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027-2031
- 2** Draft DIAP 2027-2031 Community Engagement Outcomes Report
- 3** Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027-2031 - Summary Presentation

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ITEM 24 (continued)

Discussion

Overview and Purpose

Under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW), councils are required to prepare and implement a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) and report on progress. Council's current DIAP 2022–2026 expires at the end of 2026 and a new plan is required to continue Council's disability inclusion work and meet legislative requirements. Progressing the draft DIAP in a timely way will support continuity between the current and new plans and maintain momentum in Council's disability inclusion work.

The draft DIAP 2027–2031 (Attachment 1) provides a practical whole-of-Council framework for improving accessibility and inclusion across Council's planning, places, facilities, services, events, programs, communications, engagement, partnerships, employment and volunteering activities. It supports the delivery of the Ryde to 2035 Community Strategic Plan, particularly the outcomes for Our Connected and Accessible City, Our Diverse and Inclusive City, and Our Open and Progressive City, by promoting equitable access, participation and inclusion for people with disability across all aspects of community life.

The draft DIAP has been developed through a comprehensive process that combines community and stakeholder engagement, local evidence, research and cross-Council collaboration. Building on the achievements and lessons of the DIAP 2022–2026, it sets out Council's proposed priorities and actions for the next four years.

Strategic and Legislative Alignment

Development and implementation of the draft DIAP, and Council's associated responsibilities, are guided by the following legislation and strategic documents:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031
- Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) and NSW disability inclusion action planning guidelines and requirements
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2026–2029
- Ryde to 2035 Community Strategic Plan and Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

Building on the Previous DIAP 2022–2026

The draft DIAP builds on the notable momentum and achievements of Council's DIAP 2022–2026. Over the life of the current DIAP, Council has progressed initiatives across its services, facilities, public spaces, events, communications, engagement and employment practices, while strengthening disability inclusion as a shared responsibility across Council.

ITEM 24 (continued)

The draft DIAP seeks to build on this foundation by continuing areas of work that require sustained attention, responding to the priorities and experiences identified through community engagement, and establishing a focused set of actions for the next four years. It reflects Council's ongoing commitment to practical improvements that support people with disability to participate in community life and access places, services, programs and opportunities.

Key Differences from the DIAP 2022–2026

The draft DIAP 2027-2031 builds on the achievements and lessons of the DIAP 2022-2026 while introducing a more focused and accountable framework. Key differences include:

- A streamlined framework of 30 actions, compared with 92 actions in the DIAP 2022–2026.
- A more strategic approach to action planning, with related activities consolidated into broader actions. Individual actions may involve multiple projects, activities, teams and stages of delivery. The reduction in the number of actions reflects greater focus and accountability, rather than a reduction in Council's commitment to disability inclusion.
- Five local focus areas that more directly reflect community priorities and lived experience, while maintaining alignment with the NSW disability inclusion planning.
- A more extensive engagement process that focused on hearing directly from people with disability and drawing on lived experience, while building on Council's existing community relationships, stakeholder networks and expertise across service areas.
- Greater emphasis on the ongoing involvement of people with disability and the Inclusion and Wellbeing Community Committee in implementation and monitoring.
- Stronger consideration of whole-of-journey accessibility and the integration of accessibility and inclusion into Council planning, service delivery and decision-making processes.
- Greater emphasis on the diversity of disability experiences, including increased consideration of non-visible disability, neurodiversity and changing support needs.

ITEM 24 (continued)

Development of the Draft DIAP

The draft DIAP was developed through a thorough and collaborative process that brought together lived experience, local evidence, Council knowledge and relevant policy and research. The main inputs were:

- A comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement program undertaken primarily between March and May 2026, with further discussions, meetings and input continuing through to September 2026.
- A review of achievements, lessons and remaining priorities from the DIAP 2022–2026.
- Analysis of local demographic, disability, caring, housing and participation data.
- Research into relevant legislation, policy, disability inclusion practice and approaches used by other councils and organisations.
- Targeted research by Macquarie University relating to specific cohort groups.
- Council staff knowledge and input regarding services, assets, programs, delivery responsibilities, resources, capacity, budget considerations and opportunities to address gaps and needs.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The engagement process was deliberately broad and accessible, with particular emphasis on hearing directly from people with disability. Council offered online, paper and Easy Read surveys, accessible focus groups, community events, drop-in sessions, targeted outreach, feedback boxes, service visits and discussions with advocacy organisations, service providers and community groups.

A comprehensive communications and promotion program supported participation. Engagement opportunities were promoted through Council's Have Your Say webpage, e-newsletters, social media, digital screens, posters, flyers, community networks and Councillor Information Bulletins. Two promotional videos featuring local people with disability were also developed and shared through Council's communication channels, with accessibility features included to support a wider audience. Disability organisations, service providers, community groups and partner organisations also helped promote opportunities to participate through their networks.

Council worked with People with Disability Australia and the Council for Intellectual Disability to deliver accessible focus groups. Engagement was also taken into locations and activities already used and trusted by community members, helping Council hear from people who may not participate through more traditional consultation methods.

ITEM 24 (continued)

More than 280 people participated, including people with disability, families, carers, children and young people, older people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, service providers, advocacy organisations, Inclusion and Wellbeing Community Committee members, Council staff and other community members. More than 440 comments, ideas and lived experience insights were received. Key themes in relation to needs and opportunities included:

- Inclusive communities where people with disability feel welcome, represented, connected and involved in decisions that affect them.
- Safe and connected paths of travel, including footpaths, crossings, kerb ramps, parking, transport links, seating, shade, signs and temporary access during construction.
- Council facilities, events and programs that are accessible in practice, with clear access information, helpful staff, appropriate amenities and sensory-inclusive options.
- Inclusive pathways to employment, volunteering and skills development.
- Supported by accessible recruitment and clear adjustment processes.
- Information that is easy to find, understand and use, inclusive engagement options, accessible digital services and clearer reporting back to the community.

The feedback also highlighted the importance of recognising the diversity of disability experiences, with non-visible disabilities identified as requiring greater awareness and understanding.

The engagement process, including the promotional activities undertaken, engagement methods used and feedback received, is documented in the Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027–2031 Community Engagement Outcomes Report (**ATTACHMENT 2**).

Vision and Guiding Principles

The draft DIAP proposes a vision for the City of Ryde to be:

A welcoming, accessible and inclusive City where people with disability take part in everyday life, feel safe and connected, and have equal opportunities to belong and thrive.

The draft DIAP includes guiding principles that provide a consistent foundation for how Council will implement the DIAP and make decisions. The principles emphasise rights, belonging and wellbeing; working in partnership with the community; learning from diverse lived experience; making access and inclusion part of everyday Council practice; and turning community feedback and evidence into action.

ITEM 24 (continued)

Focus Areas, Outcomes and Actions

The draft DIAP organises Council's proposed work around five focus areas. The focus areas were developed from the key themes identified through community and stakeholder engagement and align with the four focus areas identified in the NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2026-2029.

Table 1 below outlines the focus areas, the intended outcome for each focus area and summarises the types of actions included. The actions have been designed to focus on areas where Council can directly influence outcomes through its own services and practices, while also supporting advocacy and partnerships to address broader accessibility and inclusion issues that fall outside Council's direct control.

Together, the focus areas comprise 30 actions that will direct implementation of the draft DIAP.

Table 1: Draft DIAP Focus areas, outcomes and actions

Focus area	Intended outcome	Action areas
1. Inclusive communities, participation and belonging	People with disability feel welcome, recognised and included in everyday community life, with opportunities to participate, connect and shape local services, programs and decisions.	Embedding lived experience in DIAP implementation and monitoring; strengthening staff disability awareness and capability; supporting inclusive community participation, representation and belonging.
2. Getting around safely and independently	People with disability can move around the City safely, confidently and with greater independence, supported by accessible streets, paths, transport connections and public spaces.	Improving whole-journey access through Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan reviews, accessible route prioritisation, construction access requirements, universal design and advocacy for accessible transport.
3. Accessible and inclusive Council facilities, events and programs	People with disability can use Council facilities, attend events and take part in programs that are welcoming, accessible and inclusive in everyday practice.	Auditing priority community facilities and major open spaces to inform maintenance, renewal, masterplanning, grant applications and capital works prioritisation; strengthening accessibility and sensory inclusion across Council

ITEM 24 (continued)

Focus area	Intended outcome	Action areas
		events, programs and libraries.
4. Inclusive work, volunteering and opportunity	People with disability have fair access to meaningful work, volunteering, skills development and local opportunities, with their skills recognised and appropriate supports in place.	Improving inclusive recruitment and workplace adjustment processes; developing employment and skills pathways; and strengthening inclusive volunteering opportunities.
5. Accessible information, inclusive community engagement and accountable delivery	People with disability can find, understand and use Council information, participate in engagement in ways that work for them, and see how Council acts on feedback.	Developing accessible communication and engagement tools; auditing Council's website; improving issue reporting; and publishing accessible annual progress reports.

Whole-of-Council Delivery and Accountability

The draft DIAP outlines how progress on each action will be measured, the Council teams responsible for delivery and the proposed implementation timeframes. Together, they provide a clear framework for coordinated delivery, monitoring and reporting across Council.

The draft DIAP is a whole-of-Council plan. The Social and Cultural Development team will coordinate implementation and annual reporting, supported by an internal cross-functional DIAP Working Group. Delivery of individual actions will remain the responsibility of the nominated lead teams.

Teams with delivery responsibilities were involved in developing and refining the actions. This process tested the practicality, timing, ownership and likely resource implications of proposed commitments and identified opportunities to integrate actions into existing projects, programs and work plans.

Actions will inform Council's four-year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans and be considered through relevant budgeting, service planning, asset planning and reporting processes. Council will report annually on actions completed, work underway, outcomes, and any barriers or delays. People with disability and Council's Inclusion and Wellbeing Community Committee will continue to be involved during implementation.

ITEM 24 (continued)

Public Exhibition

Public exhibition will provide a further opportunity to test the draft DIAP with the community before it is finalised. A minimum 42-day exhibition period is recommended to provide people with disability, carers, service providers and other stakeholders with sufficient time to review the materials and participate.

The exhibition package is proposed to include the full draft DIAP, an Easy Read version, Auslan transcription, translated executive summaries in Simplified Chinese and Korean and the Community Engagement Outcomes Report. Accessible participation options and targeted promotion through disability and community networks will support involvement.

Following exhibition, submissions will be analysed and proposed amendments will be reported to Council with the final DIAP for adoption.

Financial Implications

The financial implications of implementing the draft DIAP were considered when developing and refining the actions. Many actions will be delivered alongside business-as-usual activities, existing budgets, or existing and planned projects. Where additional funding is required, this will be considered through Council's annual budget and service planning processes.

The actions will help identify and prioritise future access and inclusion improvements, including capital and non-capital works, informed by community feedback, accessibility audits, assessments and reviews. This will support Council to direct investment towards improvements that address identified barriers and are expected to deliver the greatest access and inclusion benefits. Future works will be considered through Council's established asset planning, maintenance, renewal, capital works and budget processes.

There are no additional financial implications associated with placing the draft DIAP on public exhibition. The costs of preparing accessible and translated exhibition materials and undertaking engagement will be managed within existing project resources.

Conclusion

The draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2027–2031 provides a clear, evidence-based and practical framework for improving accessibility and inclusion across Council and the wider City over the next four years.

ITEM 24 (continued)

The draft DIAP has been shaped by extensive community and stakeholder engagement, local evidence, lessons from the DIAP 2022-2026, targeted research and strong internal Council collaboration. Its focused actions establish clear responsibilities, measures and a whole-of-Council approach to implementation and reporting.

Progressing the draft DIAP in a timely way will support continuity between the current and new plans and maintain momentum in Council's disability inclusion work. It is recommended that Council endorse the draft DIAP for public exhibition for a minimum period of 42 days. A further report will be presented following exhibition, outlining community feedback, recommended amendments and the final DIAP for adoption.