

Attachment B

Engagement Report - Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2025-2029

Community engagement report – inclusion (disability) action plan 2025–2029

Stage 1



Contents

Executive summary	2
Overview	3
Sydney Your Say – key findings	5
Co-design roundtable – key findings	26
Focus groups – key findings	40
Engagement activities	45
Attachments	46

Executive summary

We want to make Sydney a truly inclusive and welcoming city and champion the rights of people with disability, through engagements to inform the next Inclusion (disability) action plan 2025–29.

We've consulted with more than 350 people with disability, their families and carers, service providers and disability representative organisations.

This report details what we heard from focus groups, a co-design roundtable, a survey and other engagement activities. Their feedback will inform our next steps and priorities in developing our next inclusion (disability) action plan. Key insights are highlighted under the plan's 4 focus areas.

1. Positive community attitudes and behaviours

- Discrimination and negative attitudes towards disability are still widely experienced. Change is needed to ensure people with disability feel included and welcomed in the community, especially those with intersectional experiences of disability.
- Promoting more positive images and stories of people with a diverse range of disabilities, and their contributions to the community and workplaces, will challenge stigma and discrimination.
- Attitudes will change for the better by embedding co-design principles, promoting continuous improvement and disability-led advocacy.

2. Liveable communities

- Accessibility is paramount for liveability, enabling dignity and independence. It's important to continue prioritising accessibility of streets, footpaths, parks, facilities and open spaces, with a dedicated budget and opportunities for people with disability to have a say on works.
- Safe and welcoming places are needed to enable people with a diverse range of disabilities to come together and connect, share and advocate.
- By co-designing programs and events, the City of Sydney can create more equitable participation and reduce social isolation and loneliness.
- Collaboration with businesses is required to support them to improve access and inclusion to increase profitability, diversify their customer base and enhance their reputation.
- Providing greater affordable and accessible housing and easing the cost-of-living crisis for people doing it tough will help support people with disability experiencing financial stress.
- Helping people with disability prepare and plan for emergencies, along with supporting measures to address reporting of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to improve safety.

3. Meaningful employment

- Demonstrate commitment and leadership by developing a disability workforce strategy in consultation with people with disability, to increase meaningful employment from entry-level to leadership, with clear targets and measurable outcomes.
- Build workforce capability through a strategic and targeted learning and development program.
- Influence greater employment for people with disability by facilitating community training, education and resources that promote the business case for a diverse and inclusive workforce.

4. Systems and processes

- Accessible information and communication are important, including providing information in alternative formats, ensuring digital accessibility and providing in-person support.
- Ongoing sector support and development is needed, along with a centralised hub of access, inclusion and disability information, and options to report accessibility issues in the City of Sydney local area.

Overview

Why we're doing this

The City of Sydney is committed to making Sydney more accessible and inclusive. This includes strategies to ensure our services, programs and events are inclusive for everyone.

The inclusion (disability) action plan 2021–2025 aligns with our long-term vision of an inclusive city for all. It includes 29 actions designed to actively address barriers faced by people with disability. The actions build on the success of previous plans and embrace new and emerging opportunities.

Our current plan is due to finish on 30 June 2025 and we're developing our new plan for 2025–2029. In our new plan we'll respond to emerging issues and provide opportunities for co-designing solutions to enhance access and inclusion and promote the rights of people with disability.

Engagement purpose

We wanted to:

- understand barriers to access and inclusion in the City of Sydney local area, as well as strengths and opportunities to promote the rights of people with disability
 - gather feedback and ideas to enhance access and inclusion under the 4 legislated areas of the inclusion (disability) action plan – positive community attitudes and behaviours, liveable communities, meaningful employment, and systems and processes
 - co-design responsive actions with people with lived experience of disability, their families and carers, disability service providers and disability representative organisations.
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Engagement summary

From 20 August to 9 October 2024, we invited feedback on developing our new inclusion (disability) action plan.

The Sydney Your Say webpage provided people with the opportunity to complete an online survey, provide comments by email or post, or complete a printed survey and drop it off at one of our libraries, community centres or customer service centres.

We aimed to ensure representation of our diverse communities across 5 focus groups:

- people with intellectual disability
- people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability
- people with disability from multicultural backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability
- people who are neurodivergent.

An extra focus group was held for disability service providers, and we carried out in-person, pop-up engagements.

We also worked with the Australian Disability Network on a half day roundtable workshop that was set up to empower co-design of responsive actions for the new plan.

Engagement accessibility

- Sydney Your Say survey was translated into Easy Read and 5 community languages
- Easy Read materials were provided for focus group with people with intellectual disability
- Presentations in plain language and definitions were provided a week in advance
- Live captioning of online focus groups, co-design roundtable and multicultural focus group
- Auslan interpreters were provided at the co-design roundtable
- Accessible presentations were shared with participants with low vision in advance
- Accessible venues were used, including a quiet space for the co-design roundtable

Engagement outcomes

We received 160 survey responses, 158 online and 2 printed, and 2 emails with written feedback. The Sydney Your Say webpage was visited 2,911 times.

Our focus groups with diverse communities included 53 participants. Outcomes along with key themes and insights are contained in attachments E to I. A disability service provider focus group included 12 participants, with neighbouring councils. The summary report is in attachment J.

We carried out in-person, pop-up engagements at R U OK Day events, Wear it Purple and Lunar Moon festival at community centres. Outcomes are detailed in Attachment K.

A roundtable workshop of 90 people co-designed new actions for the plan. These included people with disability, family members and carers, disability service providers and representative organisations, and our employees (including members of our disability employee network).



Image: Table-based workshop with 8 participants co-designing actions for the new plan. Photo by Margaret Sevenjhazi.

Sydney Your Say – key findings

Survey demographics

From a total of 160 survey responses, we received 82 from people with disability, 55 from family members or carers and 18 from disability service providers, peak bodies or businesses.

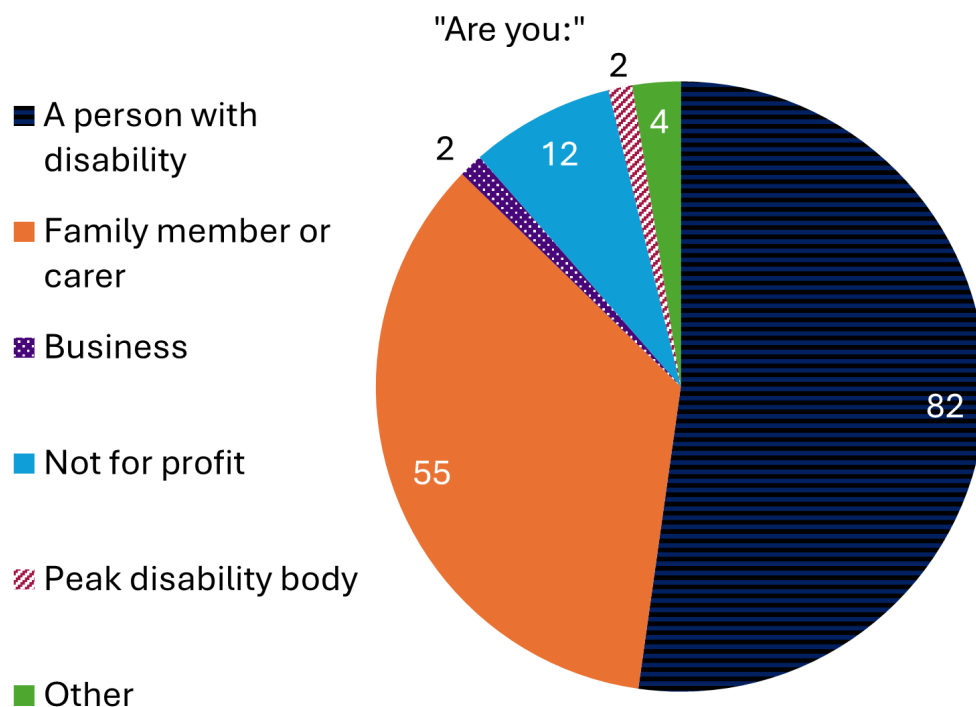


Figure 1: A pie chart containing survey respondent profiles, reflecting the figures written above.

Respondents with disability included around 33% from multicultural backgrounds, more than 32% from people of diverse sexualities and genders, and more than half (55%) from people with 2 or more disabilities.

There was wide variety in age groups, with more than half aged over 40 (58%), and 23% over 60 years.

Respondents with disability – demographic groups

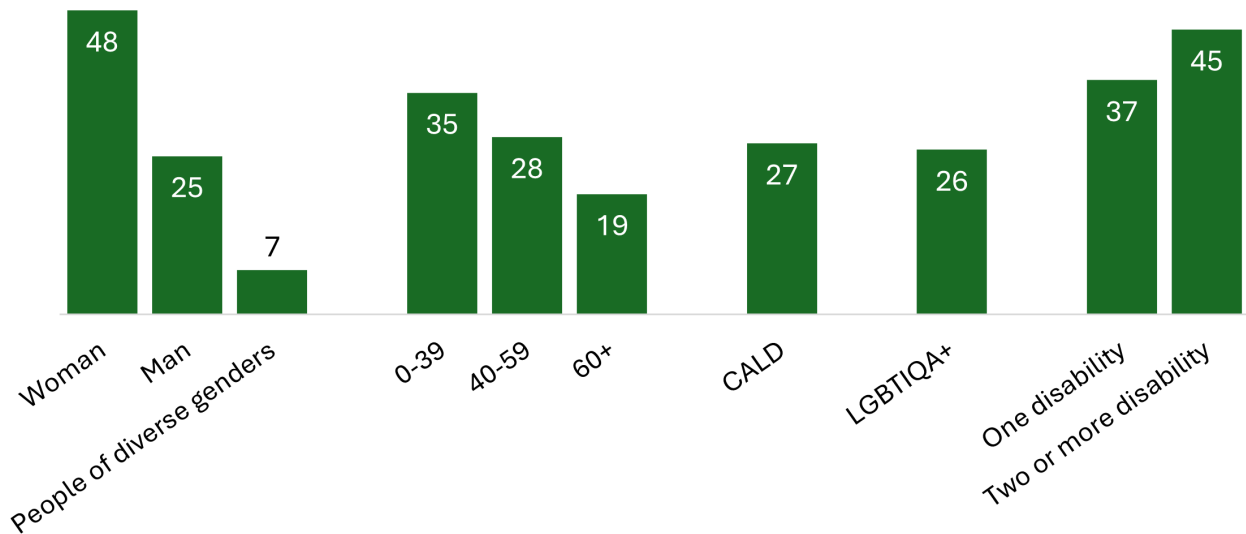


Figure 2: Bar graph showing the demographic profile of respondents with disability, reflecting the figures written above.

More than half (55%) of respondents with disability have a physical disability, 42% reported a long-term or chronic health condition, 37% have a sensory disability, 33% have a mental health condition, 29% identify as neurodivergent and 12% with cognitive or intellectual disability.

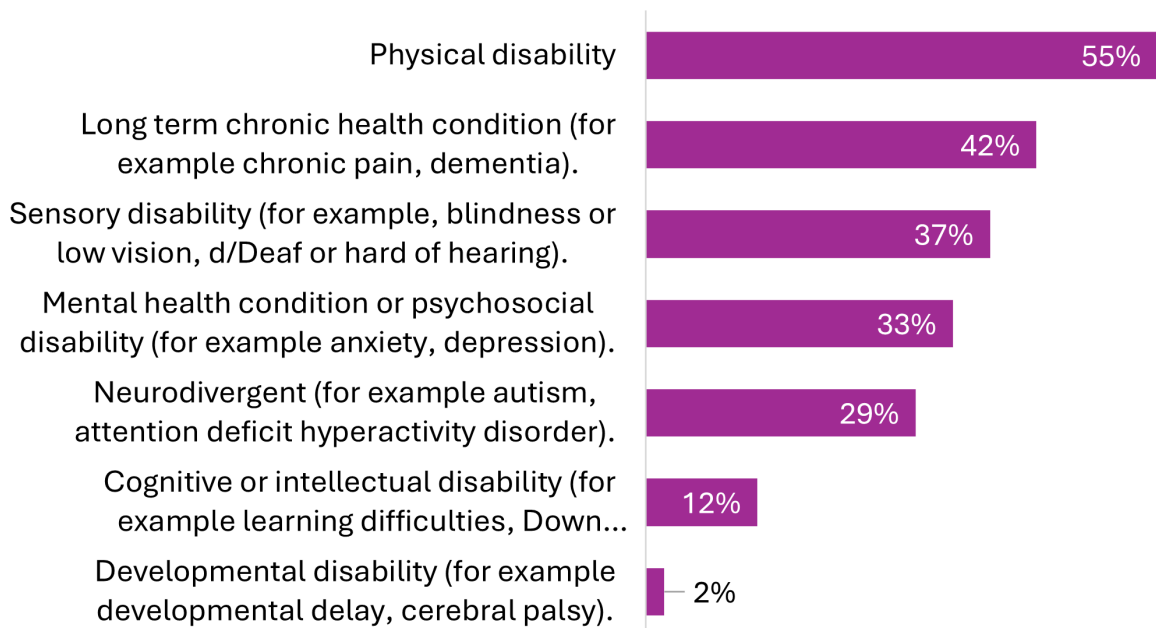


Figure 3: Bar graph showing people with disability by type of disability, reflecting the figures written above.

People with disability who responded visit the City of Sydney local area for different reasons:

- 82% go out and socialise
- 66% go to cultural events
- 63% use services
- 43% work
- 35% exercise, or do sport or other physical activity
- 13% study.

Reported use of services was higher with people of diverse sexualities and genders (77%), and for people over 60 years (84%).

Respondents with disability – reasons for visiting local area

“Do you, or the person with disability, visit the City of Sydney local area to: (Select all that apply)”

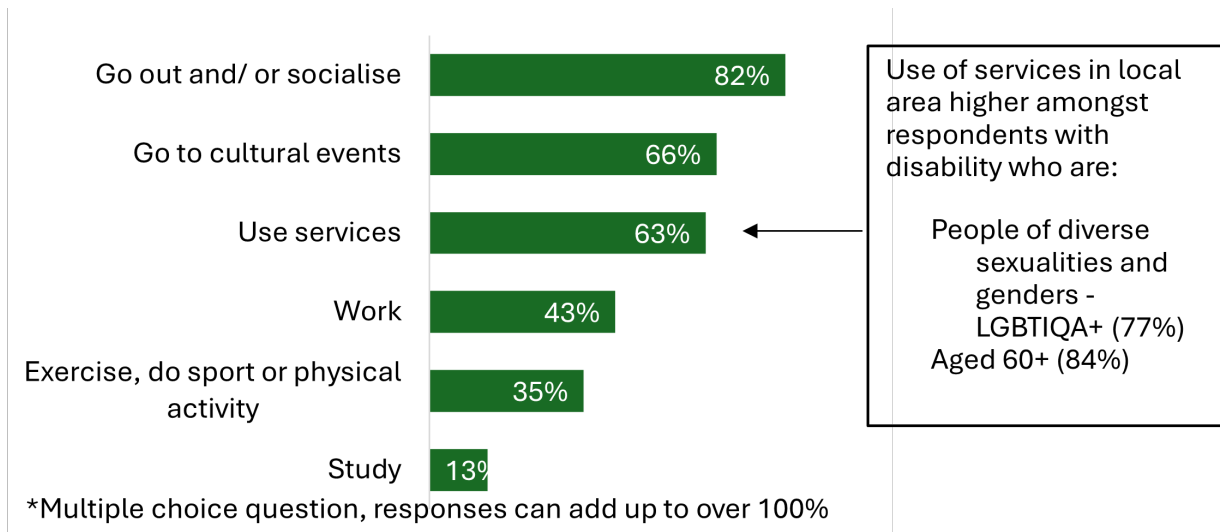


Figure 4: Bar graph showing reasons for people with disability visiting the City of Sydney local area, reflecting the figures written above.

When looking at the profile of unpaid care:

- 35% of people with disability were carers
- 87% of family were carers
- 56% of businesses, peak bodies or service providers.

The significant proportion of carers living with disability (35%) is notable as caring has implications for health and wellbeing and socioeconomic status, creating need for responsive programs and supports for carers¹.

Unpaid support by respondent group

“Do you provide regular unpaid support to a person with disability, long-term health condition, mental health condition or older person?”

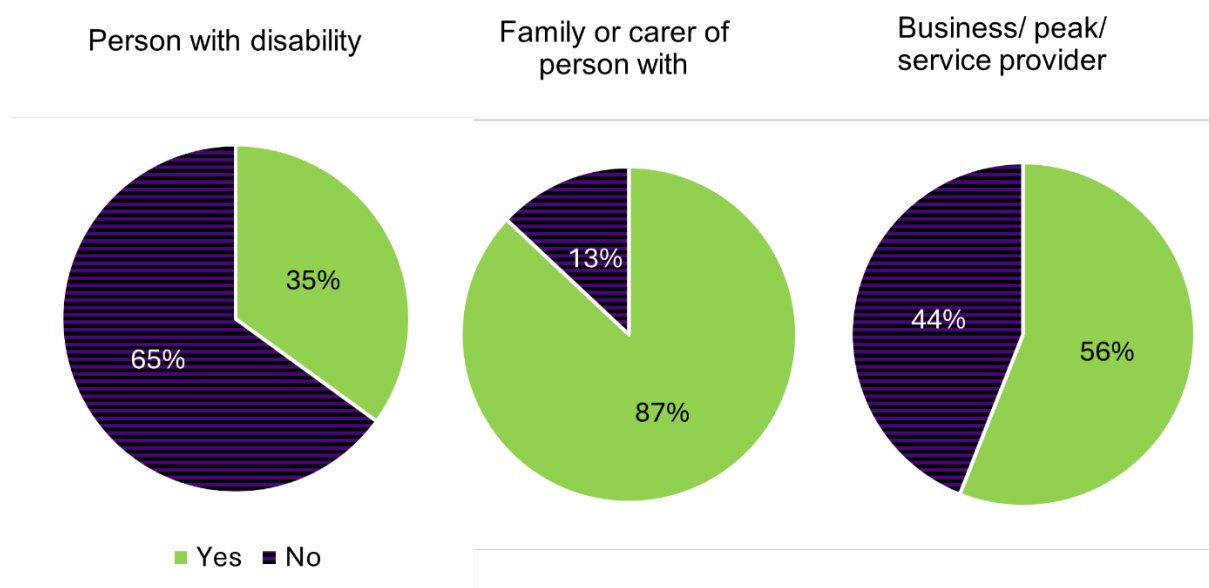


Figure 5: Pie graph showing unpaid care provided by respondent group, reflecting the figures written above.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

A third of people with disability feel people’s attitudes towards disability are negative

When asked about people’s attitudes towards people with disability, 21% of people with disability reported they felt attitudes were positive, 46% provided a neutral response and 33% reported negative attitudes. Attitudes among family members and carers, businesses, disability peak bodies and service providers reflected a similar trend.

¹ National Carer Strategy 2024-2034, [Draft strategy](#), November 2024

“What do you feel people’s attitudes are generally towards people with disability in the City of Sydney local area?”

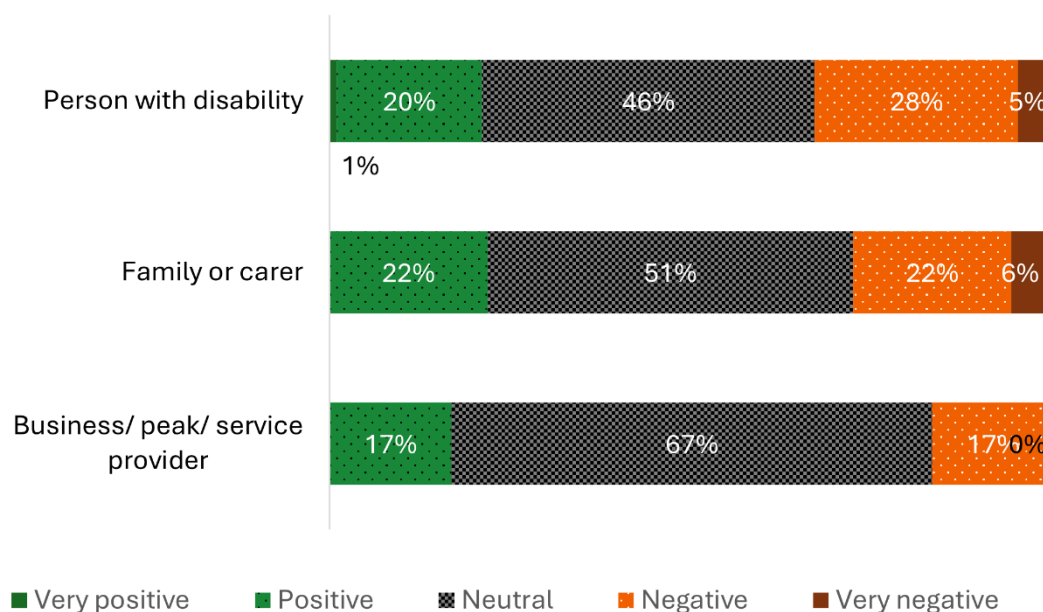


Figure 6: Bar graph showing perception of attitudes towards people with disability, reflecting the figures written above.

Women, people from multicultural backgrounds and people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability were more likely to say that people’s attitudes towards disability are negative. Women were more than 3 times more likely to report negative attitudes when compared with men.

People from multicultural backgrounds, people of diverse sexualities and genders, and people with 2 or more disabilities reported more negative attitudes towards people with disability.

Respondent with disability sample only - % saying that attitudes are ‘negative’

	Total positive	Total negative		Total positive	Total negative
Person with disability	21%	33%	LGBTIQA+	19%	31%
Woman	15%	40%	One disability	27%	16%
Man	36%	12%	Two of more disability	24%	40%
People of diverse genders	14%	57%			
0-39	17%	37%			
40-59	22%	29%			
60+	26%	32%			
CALD	19%	37%			

Figure 7: Table highlighting demographics more likely to say people’s attitudes are negative towards people with disability, reflected trends written above.

Two in 5 respondents with disability disagree they feel welcome and included in the local area

When responding to the statement “I feel welcome and included within City of Sydney local area”, 31% of people with disability agreed with the statement, 29% gave a neutral response and 40% disagreed. There was a clear gender-based difference as more than twice as many men felt welcome and included than women, while 50% of women did not feel welcome and included.

Almost 50% of people with 2 or more disabilities did not feel welcome and included.

“If you have a disability, how do you feel about this statement: “I feel welcome and included in the City of Sydney local area.” (Excluding 'not relevant')

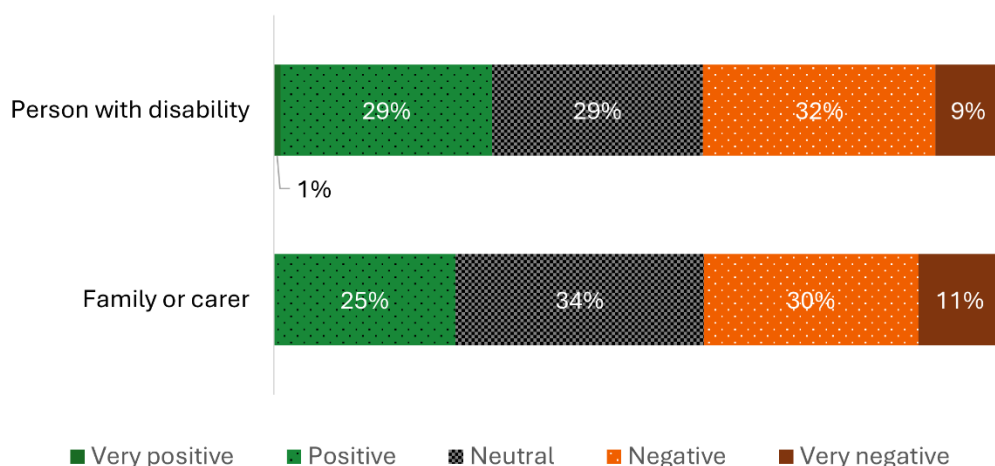


Figure 8: Bar graph showing people with disability and family and carers, and if they agree or disagree that they feel welcome and included in the local area, reflecting the figures written above.

These results suggest that more work is required to challenge and change negative attitudes and behaviours towards disability, and to showcase the diversity of the community and champion inclusion.

Intersectionality should also be highlighted in communications and through promotion of positive stories to broaden the community’s understanding and perspectives of disability. Disability should be celebrated as a natural part of human diversity that should be respected and valued.

The City of Sydney can play a leadership role in leveraging its communications, programs and training to challenge bias, stigma and stereotypes and celebrate disability by promoting the ‘social model’ and ‘human rights model’ of disability.

84% of respondents with disability experience discrimination in the City of Sydney local area

When asked about discrimination experienced in the City of Sydney area, 84% of people with disability reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination, with 65% experiencing disability discrimination and 44% experiencing ableism. Family members (51%) and carers (40%) of people with disability also experienced high levels of disability discrimination and ableism.

People with intersectional identities have unique and disproportionate experiences of discrimination

More than a quarter (26%) of people from multicultural backgrounds experienced racism and people of diverse sexualities and genders were overrepresented among people who reported experiencing disability discrimination (73%), ableism (62%), homophobia (42%) and sexism (39%). Woman were

more than 3 times as likely to experience sexism (27%) and people with 2 or more disabilities were more likely to experience all forms of discrimination.

“Have you or the person with disability you care for, experienced the following in the City of Sydney local area? (Please select all that apply)”

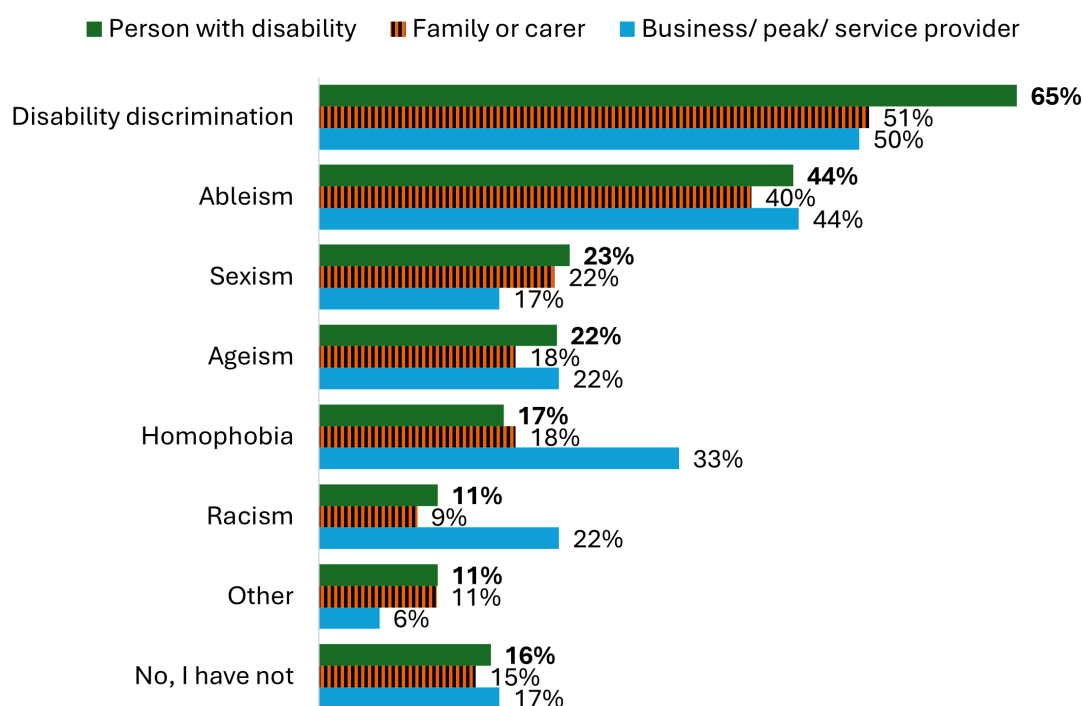


Figure 9: Bar graph charting the percentage of different forms of discrimination experienced by people with disability, reflecting the figures written above.

Suggestions for improving positive community attitudes and behaviours

When asked how the City of Sydney can support positive community attitudes and behaviours towards disability, suggestions included playing a leadership role in promoting:

- positive images and stories of diverse people with disability, including people with non-visible disabilities and people with intersectional experiences
- more visibility of people with disability in the community, so that the diversity of the community is featured in communications
- opportunities to celebrate disability through communication campaigns, programs and events.

Attitudes can be shifted towards disability by:

- including people with disability in planning, using co-design and co-production principles
- creating more opportunities for people with disability to be in leadership roles, representing and advocating for people with disability
- increasing community education and training for disability awareness across the City of Sydney area, including local schools, businesses and the community
- training and promoting disability rights and ways to advocate for change and provide feedback.

The City of Sydney can do more to create an accessible physical environment through universal design so that everyone has an equitable opportunity to access and participate in the local area. This will in turn, help people with disability feel more welcome and included.

Providing safe spaces that are accessible and inclusive such as quiet spaces at City of Sydney facilities, parks and other public spaces would enable people with disability to come together and connect.

Liveable communities

Almost half of respondents are unsatisfied that City of Sydney events, services and programs are inclusive

When measuring satisfaction of how inclusive City of Sydney services, programs and events are of people with disability, people with disability reported highest satisfaction with libraries (59%), parks and reserves (43%), community centres (40%), aquatic centres (45%) and customer service (41%).

“How satisfied are you that City of Sydney services, programs and events are inclusive of people with disability? (Excluding 'not applicable')”

Respondent with disability sample only

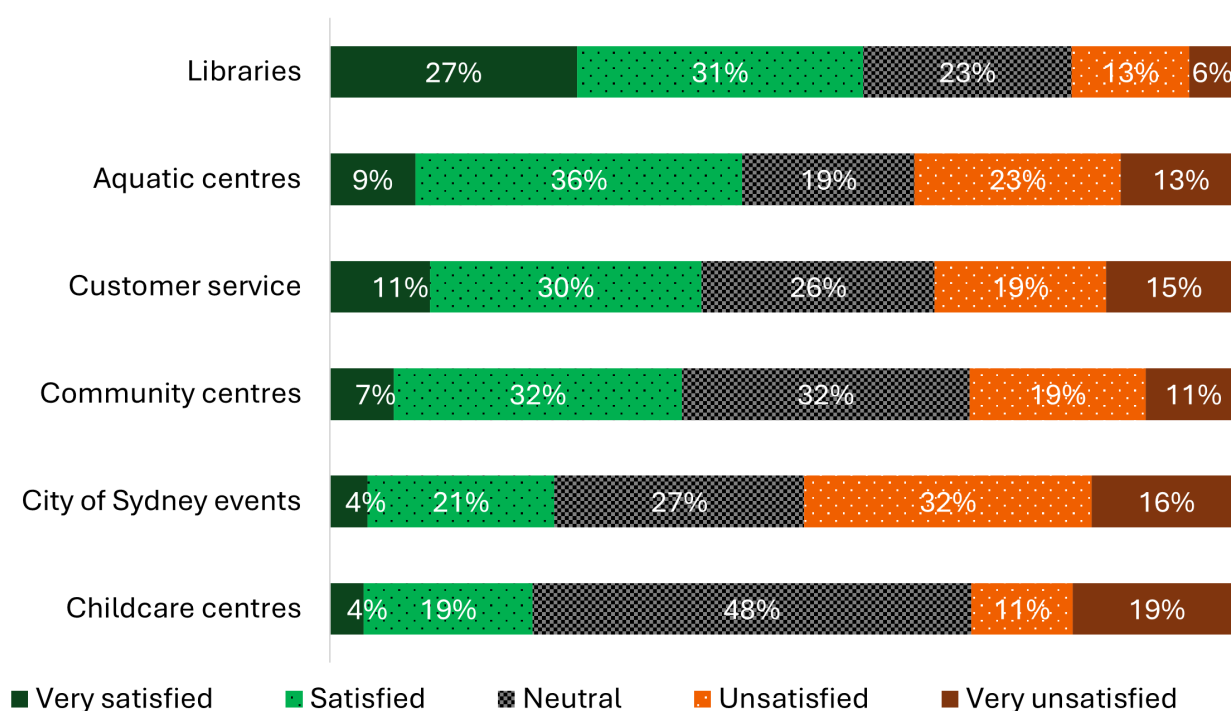


Figure 10: Bar chart showing percentage satisfaction of service and facilities, reflecting the figures written above.

More people with disability are unsatisfied than not with accessibility of a range of services and facilities in the City of Sydney area

When asked about how accessible services and facilities are in the City of Sydney area, people with disability were most unsatisfied with accessible drop-off areas (73%), footpaths (63%), mobility parking (62%), public toilets (62%) and public seating (55%).

When considering family members and carers, the results mirrored people with disability, with the notable exceptions being childcare centres (42% satisfied) and playgrounds (42% dissatisfied).

“How satisfied are you with the accessibility of the following services and facilities in the City of Sydney area? (Excluding 'not applicable')”

Respondent with disability sample only

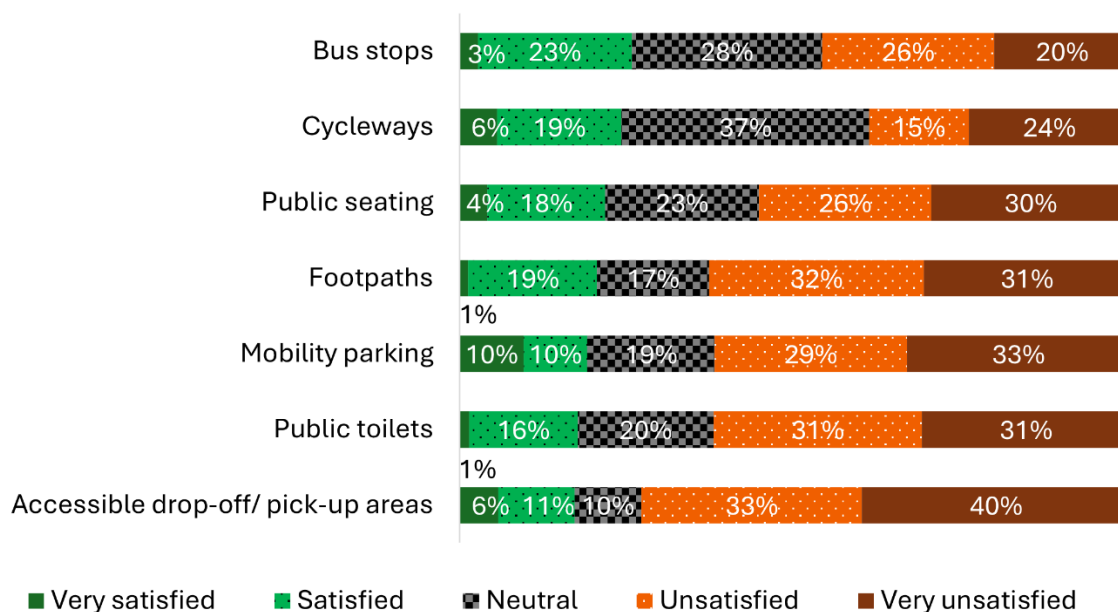


Figure 11: Bar chart showing percentage dissatisfaction of accessibility of facilities, public domain, parking, drop-off and public toilets, reflecting the figures written above.

Respondents with disability who are women, from multicultural backgrounds or with multiple disabilities are more likely to be unsatisfied with inclusiveness of City of Sydney events

Almost half of respondents with disability reported dissatisfaction with City of Sydney events (48%). Women with disability were more than twice as likely to be unsatisfied (55%) than men (23%).

Notably, 58% of people with disability from multicultural backgrounds were dissatisfied with events, 52% of people of diverse sexualities and genders, and 62% of people with 2 or more disabilities were unsatisfied with the inclusiveness of events.

Respondent with disability sample only - % saying that attitudes are 'negative'

	Total satisfied	Total unsatisfied		Total satisfied	Total unsatisfied
Person with disability	25%	48%	LGBTIQA+	19%	52%
Woman	17%	55%	One disability	29%	32%
Man	50%	23%	Two of more disabilities	21%	62%
0-39	17%	62%			
40-59	32%	44%			
60+	26%	32%			
CALD	25%	58%			

Figure 12: Table showing dissatisfaction rates around inclusivity of City of Sydney events, showing profiles of people with disability.

Summary

More evidence is needed to explore the reasons for dissatisfaction of people with disability with City of Sydney events. This could be addressed by co-designing events, seeking continuous feedback and consistently promoting access and inclusion features.

It is clear there needs to be greater compliance with the City of Sydney's inclusive and accessible event guidelines for events in the local area. This will enhance inclusion for people with disability at events.

Only a quarter of people with disability were satisfied with the accessibility of businesses

When asked about the accessibility of businesses in the City of Sydney local area, only one quarter of people with disability were satisfied, while 42% were dissatisfied. Women were almost twice as likely to be dissatisfied (42%) than men (24%), and people of diverse sexualities and genders were 62% dissatisfied with the accessibility of businesses.

“How satisfied are you with the accessibility of businesses located in the City of Sydney area?”

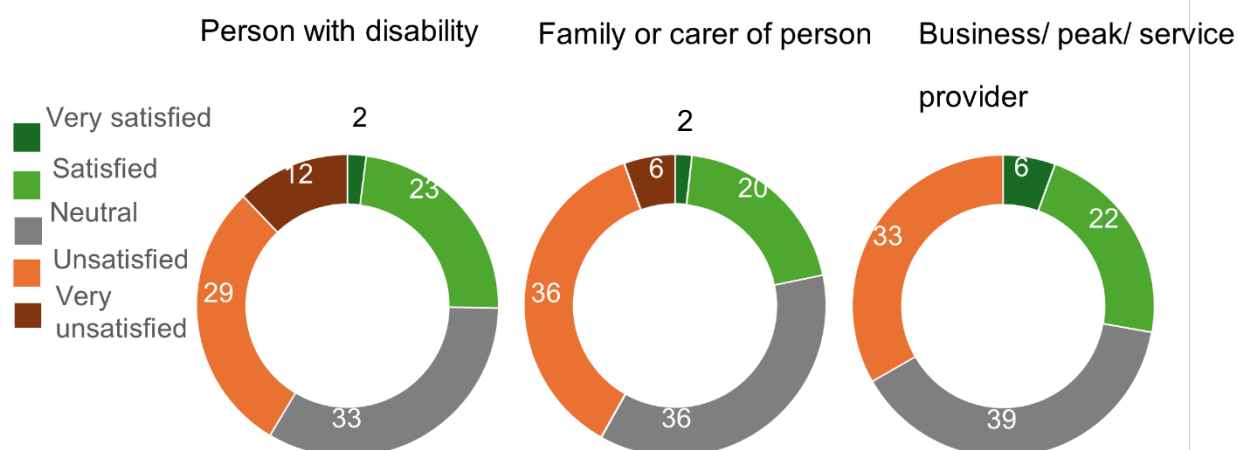


Figure 13: Pie graph of satisfaction rating of local businesses according to respondent types, reflecting the figures written above.

The housing status of people with disability, family members and carers is varied

People with disability were most likely to be paying off a mortgage (24%), renting (23%), an outright owner of their housing (21%) or living rent free with family (18%).

Notably, people from multicultural backgrounds were more likely to be living rent free with family (27%) or in social housing (8%), and people of diverse sexualities and genders and those with 2 or more disabilities were almost twice as likely to have no fixed address (12% and 11%) or chose 'other' (8% and 7%).

A higher proportion of respondents with disability aged 0 to 39 years live with family (27%) and a higher proportion of social housing tenants among respondents with disability aged over 60+ years (16%).

“In relation to your home, which of the following applies to you?”

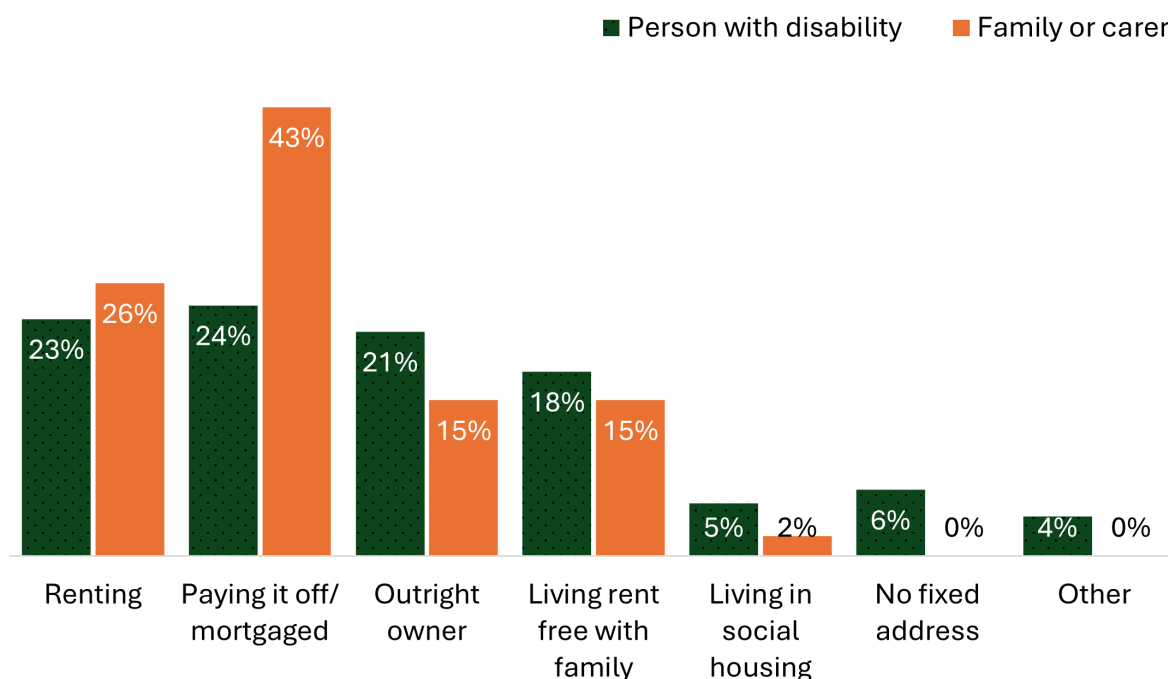


Figure 14: Bar chart showing housing tenure of respondents with disability and family and carers, reflecting the figures written above.

Under 40% of respondents with disability are satisfied that their housing meets their needs

Under 2 in 5 respondents with disability were satisfied that their housing meets their needs, with 44% of people with disability being dissatisfied and 34% of family or carers dissatisfied. Satisfaction towards housing is lower among people from multicultural backgrounds (54%), people of diverse sexualities and genders (50%), and for people with 2 or more disabilities (55%). Women were more likely to be dissatisfied (42%) than men (29%).

“If you live in City of Sydney local area, how do you feel about your housing meeting your needs? (Excluding not applicable)”

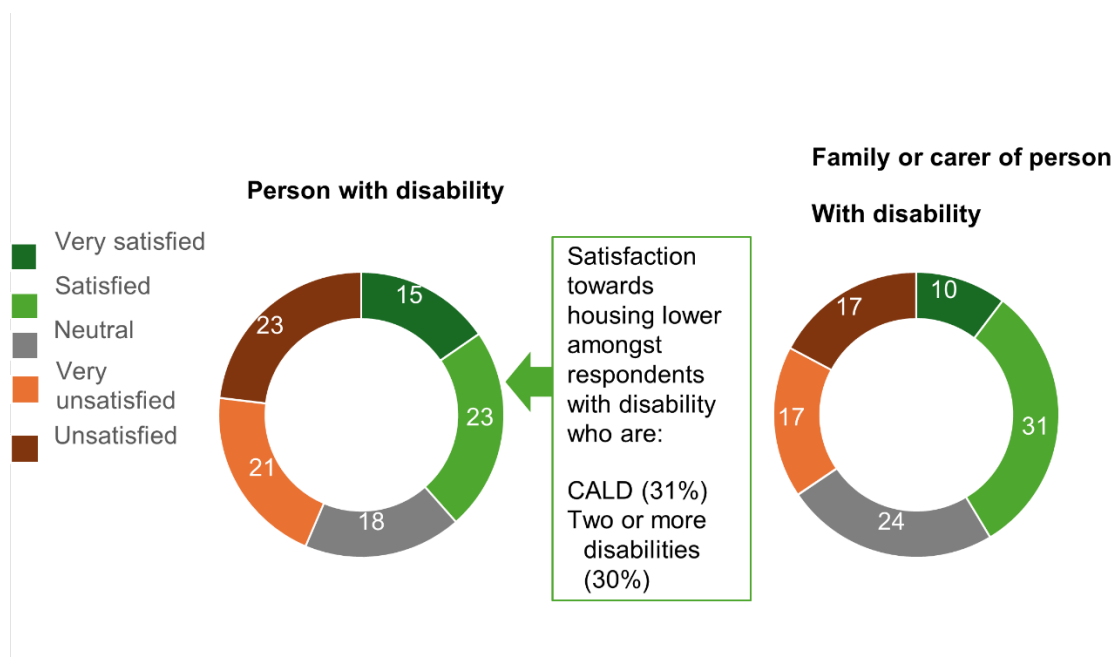


Figure 15: Pie chart showing the percentage of people with disability and family and carers satisfaction with housing meeting their needs, reflecting the figures written above.

Respondents with disability who are women, aged 60+ or with diverse sexualities and genders (LGBTIQA+) are more likely to be living alone

One third of respondents with disability live alone (36%), 19% live in a couple and 43% live with family or friends. More than twice as many women live alone (40%) than men (17%), 74% of people over 60 years and 42% of people of diverse sexualities and genders live alone. These groups may be more at risk of loneliness or social isolation.

“What best describes your household?”

Respondent with disability sample only.

	Just me	Lives with family or friends		Just me	Lives with family or friends
Person with disability	36%	43%	LGBTIQA+	42%	15%
Woman	40%	40%	One disability	29%	51%
Man	17%	58%	Two of more disability	42%	36%
0-39	27%	52%			
40-59	21%	57%			
60+	74%	5%			
CALD	31%	50%			

Figure 16: Table showing profile of respondents with disability living alone or with family or friends.

More than a third of family members and carers of people with disability say they ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel lonely or socially isolated

When asked how often people feel lonely, more than a third (37%) of families and carers, and 45% of people with disability, ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel lonely. Women were more than twice as likely to feel lonely than men, and almost two-thirds of people from multicultural backgrounds (63%), and 58% of people of diverse sexualities and genders reported feeling lonely.

People with 2 or more disabilities were more than 3 times more likely to feel lonely compared to people with one disability.

Proactive programs to connect people with a diverse range of disabilities, offer safe spaces to come together and meaningful engagement or activity are needed to combat the growing epidemic of loneliness and social isolation for people with disability.

“How often do you feel lonely or socially isolated?”

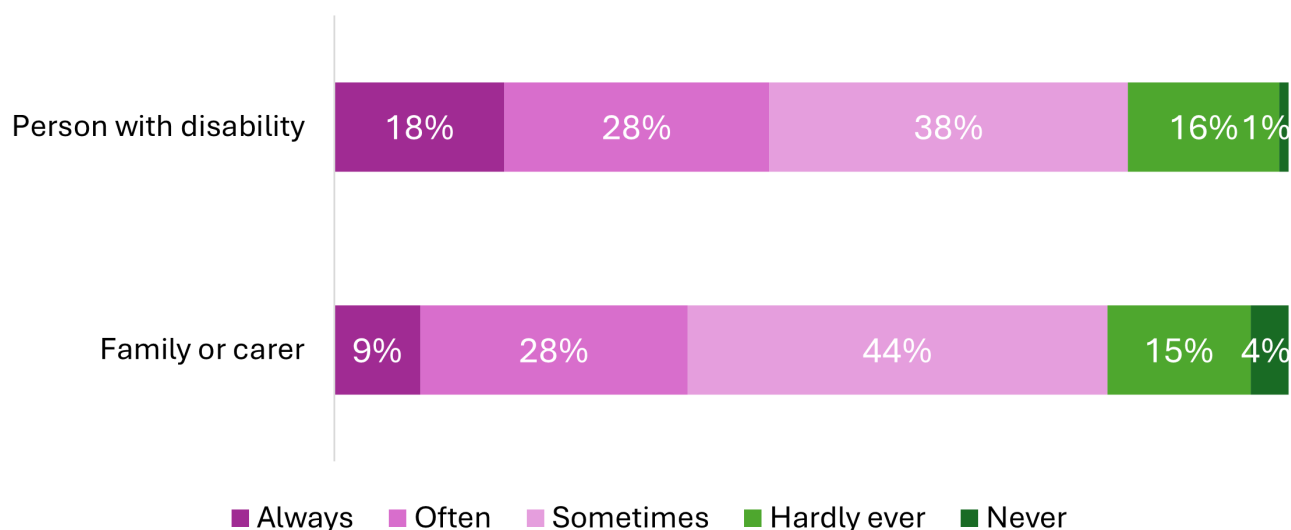


Figure 17: Bar chart showing the percentage of people with disability and family and carers that feel lonely or socially isolated, reflecting the figures written above.

Suggestions for creating a more liveable community for people with disability

When we asked how the City of Sydney can improve access and inclusion of our services and facilities to create a more liveable community, feedback included:

- **Continuous engagement** with people with disability to receive feedback, prioritise and co-design solutions. Ensure there is a regular community listening and feedback mechanism and provide training for greater peer-led advocacy.
- **Physical accessibility is important:**
 - ensure all facilities, parks and public spaces are accessible and the principle of universal design is embedded in planning
 - ensure the City of Sydney looks beyond compliance with current Australian Standards and towards best practice
 - accessibility of footpaths and maintaining an accessible path of travel is vital for people with disability to participate in the community
 - playgrounds with a range of accessible equipment that consider the Everyone Can Play principles of 'Can I get there, Can I play, Can I stay' promote greater inclusion
 - a capital works program aimed at improving accessibility, with input and prioritisation by people with disability can empower disability-led improvements
 - consult with people with disability before the design phase of new facilities to ensure they're accessible and inclusive of people with a diverse range of disabilities
 - improved wayfinding and signage in Central Sydney will assist with independence.
- **Accessible pick-up/drop-off points and more mobility parking** is important for safety for people with disability. In Central Sydney, this includes more:
 - strategically located accessible drop-off points
 - mobility parking spaces with kerb ramps and close to key facilities.
- **Public toilets are a fundamental necessity and promote inclusion:**
 - availability of accessible public toilets in facilities and public spaces enable people with disability to plan and participate in the local community

- more accessible adult change facilities enable greater dignity and promote inclusion.
- **More public seating is needed** to allow for rest points in public spaces.
- **Quiet spaces** at key locations and events throughout the city will assist people with sensory disability and people who are neurodivergent.
- **Promote access and inclusion for businesses** by playing a leadership role in:
 - promoting the business case for access and inclusion to make it easier for people with disability to buy products and services, which will diversify customer bases and enhance profitability
 - encouraging businesses to improve physical accessibility, disability awareness and inclusion training, accessible communications and information.
- **Inclusive programs and events:**
 - co-design events, have dedicated access and inclusion coordinators, provide Auslan, captions and audio-description
 - provide inclusive programming for people with a diverse range of disabilities, as well as inclusion in mainstream events, including sports, arts, social activities and safe places to connect and belong
 - promote inclusive programs and events to the disability community, along with accessibility features to encourage participation
 - accept the Companion Card at City of Sydney facilities, activities and events to enable more people with disability and carers to participate.
- **Partnerships and systemic advocacy** need to address barriers to access and inclusion at both community and policy levels, including affordable and accessible housing, transport, education and employment.

Meaningful employment

People with disability can give organisations and businesses a competitive advantage as they have different ways of navigating, solving problems, challenging assumptions and thinking 'outside the box'. Studies have shown that employing people with disability adds to the diversity of the workforce. People with disability have higher rates of retention, take fewer sick days and incur fewer staff related business costs.

Most workplace adjustments cost less than \$500 and research has shown companies that embrace best practice for employing and supporting more people with disability in their workforce outperformed their peers².

Despite this, according to the People with Disability Australia report, people with disability are twice as likely to be underemployed. If employed, people with disability are more likely to work part time, or as a casual worker, compared with people without disability. This difference in labour force participation rate has remained relatively unchanged for people with disability over the past 20 years.

² Australian Human Rights Commission, Good access is good business, December 2023

Less than half of respondents with disability are in paid employment

Less than half (44%) of respondents with disability are in paid employment. Employment participation was much lower among women (40%) compared to men (60%), and in people aged over 60 years (16%) compared to people aged 0 to 39 years (60%).

Rates of unemployment are higher for people from multicultural backgrounds (52%), people of diverse sexualities and genders (65%), and those with 2 or more disabilities (69%).

71% of family or carers are in paid employment.

“Are you currently in paid employment?”

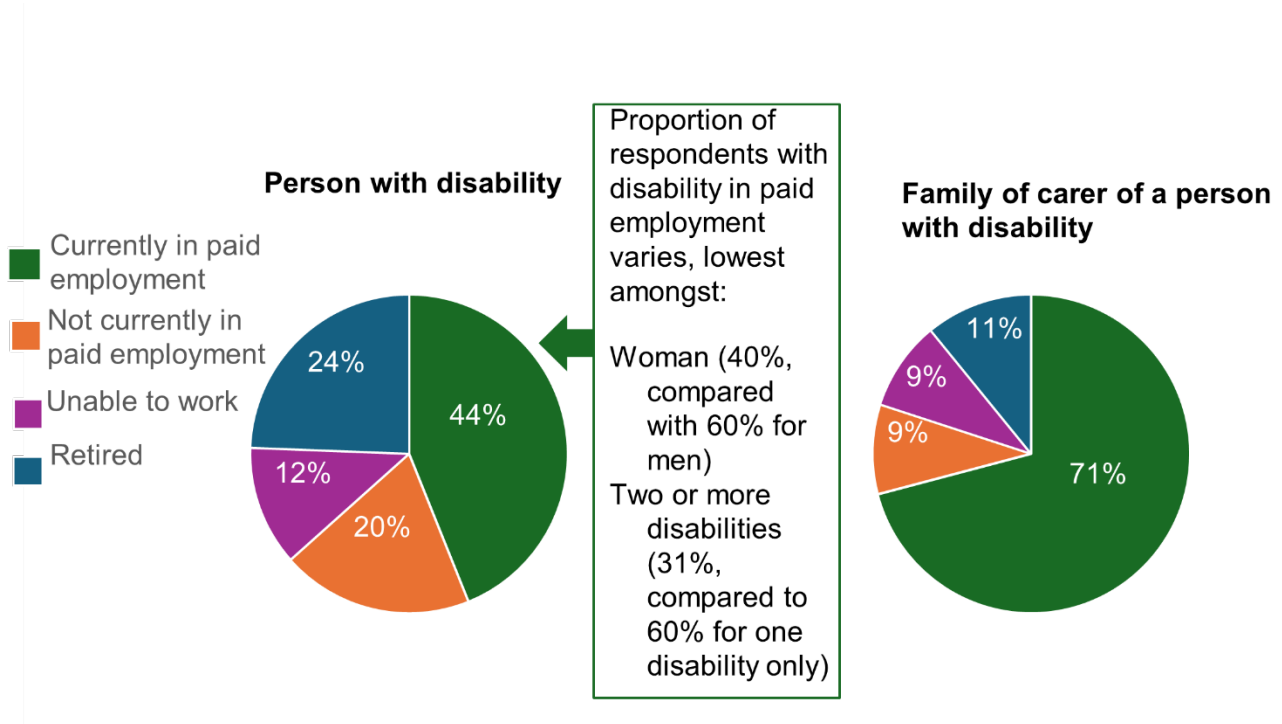


Figure 18: Pie graph showing rates of employment for people with disability, family members and carers, reflecting the figures written above.

Almost three quarters of family members and carers provide unpaid caring for people with disability

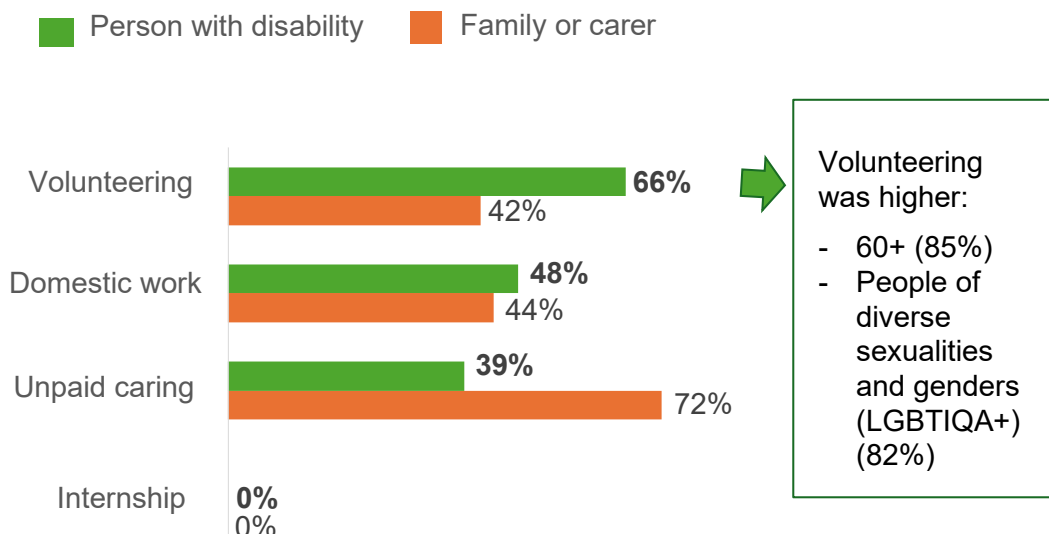
When asked about the types of unpaid work, 66% of people with disability volunteer, while this figure is just under half of family members and carers (42%).

Rates of volunteering are higher among people over 60 years (85%), and for people of diverse sexualities and genders (82%).

Domestic work is performed by 48% of people with disability, and 44% of family and carers.

Notably, almost three quarters (72%) of family members and carers provide unpaid caring, while this figure is 39% for people with disability.

“Do you do any of these types of unpaid work? (Please select all that apply)”



*Multiple choice question, responses can add up to over 100%

Figure 19: Bar graph showing rates of unpaid work for people with disability, and family and carers, reflecting the figures written above.

Suggestions for supporting access to meaningful employment for people with disability

When asked how the City of Sydney can support access to meaningful employment for people with disability, feedback included:

- **Challenge bias, stigma and stereotypes by:**
 - viewing people with a disability as assets that add value to the City of Sydney through added diversity and through empowering inclusion
 - increasing positive images and stories of diverse people with disability in mainstream communications to change attitudes and promote inclusion.
- **Creating inclusive job opportunities by:**
 - identifying job opportunities that are accessible and suitable and promoting them to disability employment services and through disability networks
 - providing part-time employment opportunities or consider job sharing arrangements to allow more people with disability to work at the City of Sydney.
- **Partner with disability organisations:**
 - for targeted recruitment and to access specialist support to enable people with disability to retain and thrive in employment
 - training and development opportunities can include internships, traineeships, and volunteering opportunities, to enable skill development for entry-level recruitment at different organisational levels
 - support to transition into permanent employment based on strengths.
- **Transition support** by partnering to provide support for those transitioning from secondary school to employment, including workshops to build skills and experience and bringing employers together to facilitate open employment opportunities for young people with disability from inclusive employers.

- **Provide workplace optimisation** with a specific policy starting at recruitment throughout a person's employment journey that capitalises on workplace flexibility and promotes outcomes-based working.
- **Ensuring accessibility of the workplace** by conducting access audits of the workplace and developing a program of works to implement upgrades in line with Australian Standards.
- **Targeted training and development opportunities that include:**
 - providing opportunities for skills development, a culture of continuous learning, and provide people with disability a seat at the leadership table
 - specialist training on a diverse range of disabilities, including non-visible disabilities, intellectual disability, people who are neurodivergent or have mental health conditions
 - managerial training to enable better support of City of Sydney employees with disability.
 - informal supports such as mentoring, shadowing and peer support, as well as a disability employee network to connect with peers and access support.
- **Create a disability workforce strategy** co-designed with people with disability to include all levels of employment from entry level to leadership, that sets a clear path to increase employment of people with disability.
- **Play a leadership role by:**
 - promoting the business case for disability employment as a benefit among local businesses
 - sharing disability awareness training and knowledge on creating inclusive workplaces and promote positive stories of disability employment to challenge stereotypes and create change
 - considering programs or incentives for businesses that champion access and inclusion, and grants to enable businesses to improve their accessibility.
- **Supporting pay equity and open, inclusive employment:**
 - ensure the City of Sydney does not procure from, create, fund or participate, or award new grants to Australian Disability Enterprises.

Systems and processes

Social media, email newsletters, and the City of Sydney website continue to be the top sources of information for people with disability

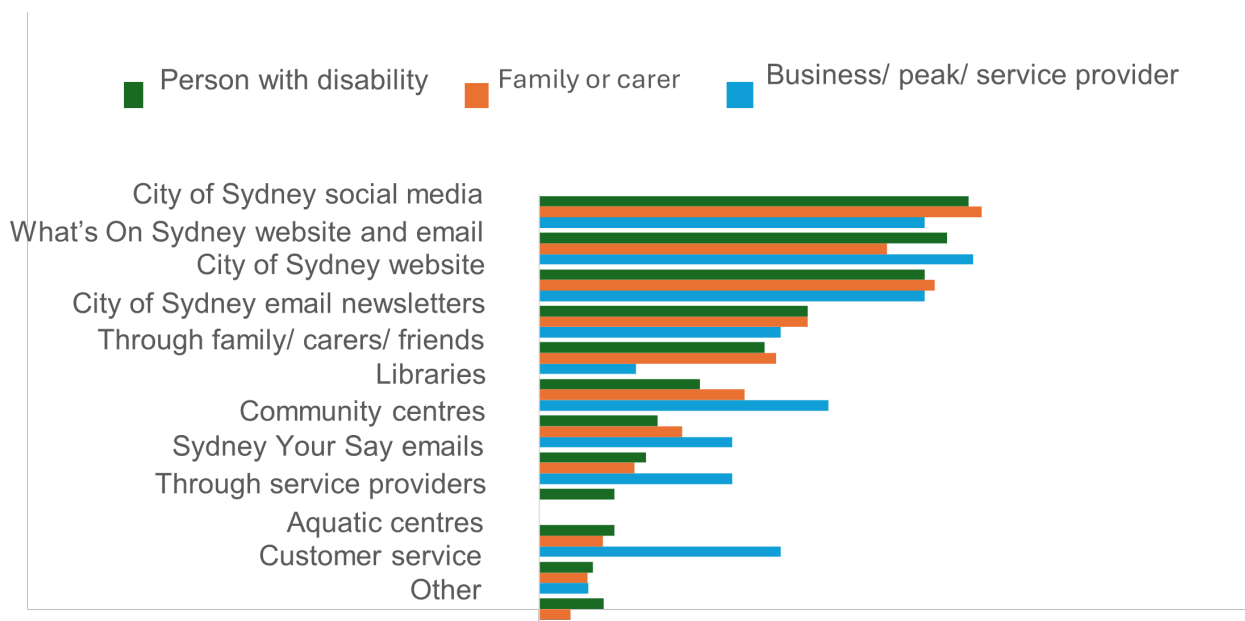
When asked about how they hear about City of Sydney services, facilities, programs, events and information, respondents most commonly reported using social media (49%), What's On Sydney (47%), City of Sydney website (44%) and newsletters (31%).

A large proportion of people get information from family and friends. This is the case for 26% of people with disability and 27% of family and carers.

Other sources of information for people with disability, their family and carers include libraries (19%), community centres (14%), aquatic centres (9%), service providers (9%) and customer service (6%).

These findings indicate that the City of Sydney should provide information through a variety of methods to communicate with people with disability, their family and carers.

How do you hear about City of Sydney services, facilities, programs, events and information?" (Tick all that apply)



*Multiple choice question, responses can add up to over 100%

Figure 20: Bar graph showing the information method used by people with disability, their family and carers, and businesses, disability peaks and service providers, reflecting the figures written above.

People with disability are most satisfied with social media, website and feedback options

Measuring satisfaction among respondents showed that people with disability were most satisfied with social media (62%), information and documents (61%), website (59%), and options to provide feedback (55%).

Among people with disability, the services that registered the highest rates of dissatisfaction were grants and sponsorships (40%), procurement (27%) and public access computers (27%).

There are divided views about having opportunities to have a say on important issues

When asked for views on the statement: "There are enough opportunities for me to have a say on issues that are important to me," responses were divided:

39% of people with disability agreed, while 35% disagreed. There were clear differences for people with intersectional identities.

For example:

- women were much more likely (38%) compared with men (20%) to disagree
- people of diverse sexualities and genders (42%) were much more likely to disagree.
- people with 2 or more disabilities (42%) were much more likely to disagree when compared with people with one disability (27%).

Only 29% of family members and carers agreed, compared with 31% who disagreed.

Summary

These results indicate there is more work to be done to provide safe, inclusive and accessible opportunities for people with disability, their families and carers to have a say on issues that are important to them.

“How do you feel about this statement: “There are enough opportunities for me to have a say on issues that are important to me.”

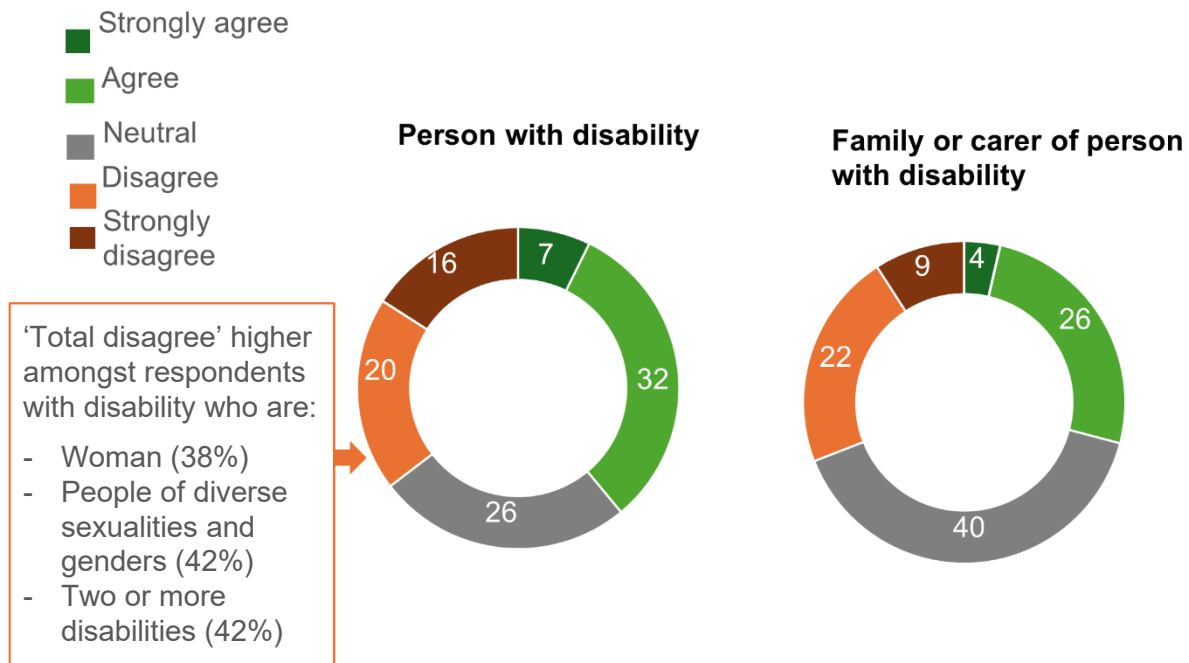


Figure 21: Pie graph showing the total agree and disagree of people with disability, their family and carers and businesses, disability peaks and service providers, reflecting the figures written above.

Suggestions for improving systems and processes to be more inclusive and accessible

When asked for suggestions on how to improve systems or processes to be more accessible and inclusive of people with disability, feedback included:

- **Creating accessible feedback mechanisms:**
 - a 'snap and solve' mobile phone app, and an easy-to-use accessible complaints mechanism
 - have regular community listening sessions with diverse people with disability to enable continuous feedback and improvement, including with priority groups
 - ensure the feedback loop is 'closed' so people with disability can see how their voices led to action
 - include people with disability in planning through co-design and co-production to enable peer-led solutions, policies, programs and events
 - continue to engage with the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel to seek feedback and input on City of Sydney policies, strategies, guidelines, information and events.
- **Accessible information and communication:**
 - where possible, provide alternative formats as the norm, such as Microsoft Word, large print, audio, Auslan and Easy Read
 - provide social stories for programs and events with important safety and accessibility information included
 - provide information in plain English to increase accessibility and offer targeted information in different languages for different cultural groups
 - provide a variety of methods to contact the City of Sydney including phone, email, online meetings and in-person.
- **Simplify the grants and sponsorship application process:**
 - co-design an accessible grant application with people with disability
 - promote the City of Sydney's grants and sponsorships program to people with disability and service providers to increase equitable access.

Stage 1

- **Create strategic partnerships** with universities, businesses, schools and service providers, to collaborate and promote best practice and disability rights.
- **Support more opportunities for people with disability to connect** such as an online platform linked to social media that would allow people with disability to come together and share thoughts and ideas, collaborate, advocate and promote programs and services.

Co-design roundtable – key findings

On 9 October 2024, the City of Sydney held a co-design roundtable at Lower Town Hall.

The event aimed to empower the co-design of responsive actions to address barriers and challenges towards access and inclusion and provide opportunities to promote the rights of people with disability in the new inclusion (disability) action plan.

In total, 90 people attended the roundtable including:

- 38 people with disability, family members or carers
- 29 service providers or disability representative organisations
- 23 City of Sydney employees, including disability employee network members.

The roundtable was facilitated by the Australian Disability Network and included a lived experience panel discussion and 13 table-based co-design workshops on the focus areas of the inclusion (disability) action plan.

The workshops were peer-led by members of the City of Sydney's Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel, along with City of Sydney employees with disability. City of Sydney employees with key responsibilities for implementing the current action plan supported these discussions.

The table-based workshops offered an opportunity for participants to:

- co-design actions in the new plan
- select their 3 top priority actions
- give their key 'vision' and 'principles' to underpin the new plan.

This section contains a summary of the feedback that was provided across each of the 4 focus areas.

At a glance: key themes discussed at the roundtable

City of Sydney employees took detailed notes of table-based discussions at the roundtable. After the event, the comments raised on each table were analysed and divided into key themes.

The top 5 themes discussed during the roundtable included:

- recruitment and inclusive workplaces
- community attitudes
- communications
- access to information
- council decision making and participation.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

The biggest barrier to full participation in the community for people with disability is attitude. Attitudinal barriers are created by people who see disability only in a negative way and is perpetuated through stigma, bias, stereotypes, discrimination and fear. These barriers include low expectations of people with disabilities, and these barriers contribute to all other barriers³.

Misconceptions, negative attitudes and a lack of knowledge about disability can impact many aspects of life for people with disability, including education, employment, health and community participation. A person unable to participate in everyday activities, or who avoids situations, may be at higher risk of negative outcomes, including social isolation, unemployment and poor health⁴. In 2022, one in 10 people over the age of 15 years living with disability had experienced disability discrimination. Young people, people with a severe or profound disability, and people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability experienced significantly higher rates of discrimination⁵.

People at the co-design roundtable with lived experience of disability shared their experiences of discrimination which take place in different areas of their lives. Some participants mentioned the need to take away the “emotional burden” of people with disability to create change, while others raised their experience of feeling the “expectation that people fit into set requirements”.

From these discussions, it is clear much is needed to improve community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability and provide opportunities for education and training to empower people with disability to actively lead change.

More positive images and stories of people with disability

All table-based workshops discussed the need to showcase the diversity of disability, including non-visible disabilities and intersectionality. We were told to recognise that people with disability are not a “one size fits all” community.

Attendees told us that “normalising awareness of living with disability” and celebrating disability through positive images, stories and communication campaigns would be vital towards combatting negative attitudes, bias and stigma towards people with disability.

Leading by example and using the resources, influence and reach of the City of Sydney was highlighted. To do this, the City of Sydney could provide opportunities to celebrate a diverse range of disabilities through communications and events, thereby “pushing the narrative” and making the case that “accessibility helps everyone”.

We were told that communications should be strategic, targeted and available across multiple platforms and formats to enhance accessibility and impact.

Supporting peer-led advocacy

Common suggestions included providing training and support for peer-led advocacy by and for people with disability and amplifying disability voices through policy and advocacy. These activities were seen as important towards living the value of ‘nothing about us, without us’.

By promoting the opportunity for capacity building and disability-led change-making and advocacy, people with disability can be empowered to promote positive attitudes and behaviours and effect impactful systemic change that is needed.

³ Australian Federation of Disability Organisations, [Social Model of Disability](#), November 2024.

⁴ Australian Government, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [People with disability in Australia](#), April 2024

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, [Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia: Summary of Findings](#), July 2024

Diverse disability awareness and inclusion training

Several people at the roundtable recommended that the City of Sydney increase training opportunities for staff, businesses, service providers and the community on disability awareness and inclusion.

The City of Sydney has rolled out mandatory inclusion (disability) awareness training and diversity and inclusion training, and a suite of mental health training for employees in the past 4 years.

Some suggested next steps to build on this included:

- diversifying the role-specific access and inclusion training that is available
- providing disability awareness and inclusion training by people with lived experience of disability
- ensuring training on a diverse range of disabilities (, for example d/Deaf awareness training, non-visible disabilities, psychosocial disability, as well as people who are neurodivergent) and intersectionality.

Implementation of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme

More education of non-visible or 'hidden disabilities' is needed across the City of Sydney, along with promotion and awareness-raising to be rolled out across the City of Sydney local area.

The City of Sydney can advocate for greater membership to the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program for businesses and promote images and stories of people with non-visible disabilities to help change attitudes.

Inclusive and targeted community programming

Attendees told us community programming that fosters positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability should continue in the next plan, along with ensuring mainstream programs and events are inclusive and accessible for all people.

They recommended programming should be diverse and take into consideration a wide variety of interests and access requirements. Inclusive programming should include sport, music, art and cultural programs, community programs, festivals and events.

It was also suggested that more targeted promotion of inclusive programs and events for the disability community is needed to increase participation and reduce experiences of social isolation.

We also heard that events should prioritise intersectionality: being "inclusive for all".

Accessibility features of programs or events should be publicised and communicated through a variety of avenues and alternate formats to the disability community.

Liveable communities

As one participant noted, "liveable communities are shaped by the people who live there".

Safe and welcoming spaces promotes inclusion

Attendees told us about the importance of having dedicated safe, accessible and welcoming spaces provided for people with disability. This could address the feeling that "people feel invisible" in the community.

We were also told that incorporating quiet spaces and quiet times will allow for greater participation by people with sensory disabilities in key City of Sydney facilities such as community centres, libraries, pools and gyms and recreational facilities.

More accessible public toilets and accessible adult change facilities

The need for more accessible toilets and accessible adult change facilities in the City of Sydney area, along with their regular servicing was highlighted by attendees. The availability of accessible facilities “provides dignity and enables greater participation” by people with disability.

Improved signage and wayfinding

E-signs and interactive maps on digital screens to assist with wayfinding and having an option to request help would support independence for people with disability in Central Sydney. Along with better wayfinding, there were suggestions to build signage into footpaths, and having colour and tactile wayfinding in footpaths for people who are blind or have low vision.

We were also told that the City of Sydney’s [accessibility map](#) should be promoted, and access maps provided for major events and festivals. Tactile and braille signs, wayfinding signposts, pictograms and simple Easy Read signage were also recommended.

Physical accessibility improves liveability and inclusion

Roundtable attendees told us that accessibility audits, along with a dedicated capital expenditure budget to improve access and inclusion at City of Sydney facilities, and in the public spaces could improve liveability. This potential action should be subject to consultation with people with disability.

We were also told that the City of Sydney should continue to complete Access Keys and make them publicly available to enable people with a diverse range disabilities to pre-plan and to boost inclusion.

Attendees also told us that planning with universal design principles and a best practice “accessibility lens” will provide for better access for all.

The public domain should promote connection and place-making, and be inclusive, and accessible.

We were also told that improving information around physical accessibility will assist the entire community.

The importance of accessible footpaths

Attendees told us that footpath renewals and maintaining an accessible path of travel is vitally important. Creating a more walkable city should have accessibility front of mind and look towards continually improving footpaths.

We were told about the need to minimise obstructions in considering the location of street furniture, the impact of outdoor dining, display of goods on the footway, and greening with footpath gardening – to make sure we consider accessibility for people with disability.

Wider and more accessible footpaths, mapping footpaths and effort-based mobility routes, as well as better lighting and the ability to easily report footpath accessibility issues to be resolved quickly were all suggested (, for example ‘Snap Send Solve’ was highlighted)

The [accessibility map](#) was noted by some attendees as a great resource, with need to continuously improve and add information that will assist people with a diverse range of disabilities.

It was suggested that the City of Sydney could investigate creating a mobile phone app that details accessibility for people with disability, which includes the accessibility map, and would provide for greater independence and participation.

Valuing green space and the need for more inclusive playgrounds

Having accessible green spaces, parks, playgrounds and reserves was highly valued by participants when mentioned.

But attendees also told us there is a need identified for more inclusive playgrounds, with inclusive and sensory play equipment and inclusive design to bring people together to connect , for example

spaces for wheelchairs at tables and Auslan and communication boards, braille and tactile signage, and resting places with a variety of seating.

We were also informed that making community gardens more accessible and inclusive was seen as an opportunity to engage more people with disability in the community.

Having more inclusive play spaces that consider the NSW Government [Everyone Can Play guidelines](#)⁶ and the best-practice inclusive principles of 'Can I get there? Can I play? Can I stay?' was also raised.

More mobility parking and accessible drop-off points

The increased need for accessible parking and drop-off points in Central Sydney was raised by roundtable participants. This was especially important for people with mobility disability and the safety risk posed to people when accessible options with kerb ramps are not available.

The strategic placement of dedicated accessible drop-off points in Central Sydney would provide for greater safety and access by people with disability.

It was also noted that more communication of mobility parking rules is required to educate the community that mobility parking scheme permit holders can stop in a no parking zone for up to 5 minutes to drop off or pick up passengers or goods if the driver remains within 3m of the vehicle.

Other participants raised the need for more accessible EV charging in council and private car parks.

Affordable and accessible housing

The lack of affordable and accessible housing was emphasised by participants, with the need to promote universal design, and advocate for the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines to be adopted by the NSW Government. One participant told us that "designing for diverse communities is designing for all".

Increasing accessible and affordable housing through planning controls, the City of Sydney affordable and diverse housing fund and advocating for more and better social housing were mentioned as ways the City of Sydney can continue to support housing needs of people with disability.

Moreover, the City of Sydney can look at creative strategies and best practice towards providing more accessible and affordable housing for people with disability (, for example unused office space, shared options, partnerships).

Training, incentives, awards and grants for businesses

A key point raised during the roundtable for inclusion in the new plan included the need for the City of Sydney to continue collaborating with businesses and service providers to improve accessibility, promote the business case for access and incentivise accessibility enhancements.

Resources for organisations to implement improvements should be developed, making access and inclusion easy, along with access to grants and sponsorship funding to undertake upgrades or undertake inclusive programs benefiting people with disability.

We were told by participants that the City of Sydney should provide opportunities to educate, provide training and raise awareness of a diverse range of disabilities among businesses and service providers. Incentives and awards should also be considered to motivate businesses to improve access and inclusion.

Attendees also raised that the City of Sydney can demonstrate leadership through employing people with disability and promoting stories of businesses that demonstrate good employment practices.

⁶ NSW Government, Planning, [Everyone can play guidelines](#), February 2023

Targeted communication campaigns developed to challenge and change attitudes to increase employment of people with disability can be rolled out in the City of Sydney local area.

Inclusive businesses that commit towards creating greater access and inclusion should be recognised with shop-window signage for people with disability to feel confident to engage and to encourage other businesses to make improvements.

Accessible programs and events

Promoting inclusive events on the What's On website with accessibility features, and posters or flyers for the disability community will facilitate greater participation. We were also told that having quiet spaces, accessible drop-off points, and accessible communications through Auslan, captions and audio description would be highly valued.

It was also noted that community centres can be promoted as disability inclusive community hubs and include co-designed programs and activities and facilitate connection through support groups and "social cafes". One example of a social cafe operating in Tasmania was highlighted as a case study. Another gap that needs addressing is better nightlife activities for people with disability to participate, particularly for young people with disability.

Targeted and accessible disability events, as well as providing opportunities to celebrate disability were all suggested: International Day of People with Disability, Mental Health Month, R U OK Day, Carers Week, Autistic Pride, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, Deaf Awareness Day, World Sight Day and Disability Pride.

Attendees expressed the need for greater accessibility at major events and using the City of Sydney's influence to ensure that third-party event producers embed access and inclusion at events. We were given feedback around the need to design event sites to position infrastructure in accessible locations. For example, positioning a sensory or quiet space close to the accessible toilet and drop-off/pick-up points where possible, to avoid people with disability "having to take the long way round". Where some third-party events didn't adopt best practice, we were told "you lost the experience" of being at the event.

It was expressed that co-design and co-production can help to ensure accessibility is forefront of mind, and gathering feedback and evaluation from people with disability will allow for continuous improvement.

Disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction

Roundtable participants discussed how climate change will continue to disproportionately affect people with disability. There were also suggestions for the City of Sydney to bring emergency and disability services and people with disability together, to undertake disability inclusive disaster planning.

The potential benefit of this is that it could build the capacity and disability awareness of services; and empower people with disability to undertake person-centred emergency planning.

Meaningful employment

Inclusive recruitment and targeted employment

Collaboration with specialist disability organisations will utilise their expertise and allow for greater support for people with disability throughout the recruitment and onboarding phase. Partnerships will enable capacity building for managers and employees and support the ongoing employment of people with disability, for example Vision Australia, Jigsaw, IncludeAbility, Council for Intellectual Disability, Australian Disability Network. Job customisation, tailoring roles to skills and experience, and ensuring equity of opportunity for people with disability is important.

We heard that entry-level recruitment programs for people with disability, including traineeships, apprenticeships, work placements and volunteering programs should be actively promoted with disability employment services and to the disability community. We were also told that more targeted recruitment, along with the promotion of positive employment stories, could help people with disability see the City of Sydney as “an employer of choice”.

Inclusive policies, such as support for adjustments, workplace optimisation and workplace flexibility should be openly promoted and be approached as ‘business as usual’, always asking the question in recruitment: “what can we do to help you?”.

Attendees reported to us the need for more social stories, plain English job advertisements and position descriptions, supportive recruitment practices, and creative recruitment methods.

For example, we were told that video applications and online interviews and making interviews more task-based are ways to encourage more people with disability to apply for roles at the City of Sydney. These methods could provide for greater choice around disclosure of disability during the recruitment process.

We were also told that fostering a culture of trust and open dialogue around diversity and inclusion, disability and caring responsibilities, will provide confidence for more people with disability to disclose and comfortably request the supports they need to succeed.

Attendees also told us that there should be a City of Sydney commitment towards targeted recruitment of specific roles and entry-level positions to create a pathway for more people with disability to be employed. Part-time and job-sharing arrangements should be considered as a strategy towards enabling more people with disability into open employment.

Inclusive workplaces and providing ongoing support for employees with disability

Attendees reported to us the importance of psychological safety in the workplace, by promoting a culture where diversity and inclusion are pivotal. One suggested idea was an “accessibility passport” that could be offered to new employees with disability outlining their access requirements and workplace adjustments without having to tell their story to multiple people, as well as rights, support programs and inclusive policies.

Attendees also suggested ongoing professional development and training opportunities to increase skills and experience, as well as transparent policies, guidelines and programs that support a diverse and inclusive workforce and enable people with disability to thrive in the workplace. Flexible working and outcomes based workplans can allow for equality of opportunity for people with disability. The City of Sydney could also offer career planning or ‘job coaches’ to support employees with disability to advocate for their needs and facilitate career progression.

We were told about the need to make regular check-ins between employees and managers the norm, along with discussions about access and inclusion requirements, promoting open dialogue. Others highlighted that workplace flexibility benefits all employees.

Providing safe quiet spaces, and “safe words” and other shortcuts for staff to take time and space needed without full disclosure required were suggested to help instil a culture of trust and safety among managers and employees.

Informal supports, such as Inclusive City (disability employee network) offers a supported peer network that aim to promote the rights of people with disability and enhance access and inclusion. Other opportunities arising from mentoring, shadowing and peer support that are available, all contribute towards providing support for employees with disability.

Disability advocates that can act as role models and advocates was seen by some attendees as the next step in the inclusion journey. Positive stories of inclusive employment and promoting the benefits and qualities of employing people with disability are needed to combat stigma and stereotypes and promote change.

Attendees also told us that anonymous surveys that can measure a more accurate reflection of the number of people with disability in the workplace, their various experiences, their levels of safety and inclusion, and ideas for improvements, could allow for continuous improvement.

Some participants told us about what they considered to be good practice leave entitlements at other organisations, such as recognised leave for people living with long term health conditions and leave for employees who wish to undertake training for their support animal without requiring a medical assessment.

We were also told by participants that greater visibility of employees with disability and carers will help to challenge assumptions and change attitudes. One assumption that participants told us about was the “misconception of needing more time and assistance”. Therefore, showcasing an employee’s passion, drive and meaningful employment at the City of Sydney will demonstrate that career opportunities are possible for people with disability.

Employment targets demonstrate commitment

The labour force participation rate in Australia for people with disability has remained relatively unchanged for the past 20 years⁷.

Several suggestions were made around having employment targets, from entry level through to leadership. Where mentioned, targets are considered to provide for accountability and transparency, demonstrating leadership in disability employment.

This would be in line with provision of disability inclusion employment targets proposed in the Resolution of Council on 29 July 2024.

Setting clear goals and performance measures around access and inclusion for leaders at the City of Sydney could further embed values of diversity and inclusion.

Review and promote the workplace optimisation policy

Attendees told us that the City of Sydney should make it the norm to ask employees if they require workplace optimisation, have a robust policy that is widely promoted and make adjustments quick and easy to support inclusion. We were also told that employees with disability should be actively engaged throughout policy development processes through consultation and co-design to ensure it is representative and fit for purpose.

Building the capacity of people with disability as leaders

Attendees told us that there needs to be more people with disability in leadership positions to help lead-change. Investing in capacity building, management and leadership development of people with disability should be a priority.

One potential solution for addressing this is a disability workforce strategy, providing a clear roadmap for disability employment from entry level to leadership, setting clear goals and providing accountability will help affect change in disability employment at the city.

Moreover, disability awareness and inclusion should be front of mind through creating opportunities to share diverse lived experience of disability with executives at the city, including exploring creative ideas such as ‘mentor up programs’ enabling executives to spend time and learn from employees with disability.

Access and inclusion fundamentals need to be top down and embedded into executive leadership, with trained and informed leaders championing diversity and inclusion across the organisation.

⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, Employment for people with disability in Australia, November 2024

Disability awareness and inclusion training

Attendees told us that training specific to a diverse range of disabilities, including people with non-visible or 'hidden' disabilities, as well as a greater understanding and appreciation of intersectional identities is needed.

Inclusion (disability) awareness training should be updated and developed through co-design, as well as providing regular opportunities to hear and learn from people with diverse lived experience built into training programs.

Ambassadors, volunteers and casual event staff should receive mandatory inclusion (disability) awareness training, as well as specific training such as inclusive and accessible events.

Supporting inclusive education and transitions

Around 10% of Australian school students aged 5 to 18 years have a disability, and most (89%) attend a mainstream school⁸. Education is the building blocks towards future employment, and the City of Sydney can support young people to transition into employment through supporting capacity building initiatives and transition projects, and those that bring inclusive employers together to provide employment opportunities. The City of Sydney can partner and collaborate with the disability sector, NDIS, education and employment providers to help increase employment of people with disability.

Procurement practices supporting disability owned businesses

The City of Sydney should not support Australian Disability Enterprises who segregate people with disability and do not offer fair pay for employees.

Instead, the City of Sydney should strengthen procurement practices to support businesses that are disability owned and led, and that support the open employment and pay equity for people with disability, in line with a Resolution of Council on 11 December 2023.

Systems and processes

Continuous community engagement with people with disability

Feedback from participants stressed the importance of greater engagement with people with disability on a regular basis when developing major strategies, policies and initiatives. Suggestions included reporting back to enable people with disability to see how their voices have been turned into action and change. For example, community listening exercises, roundtables, forums and focus groups. Other participants valued the need to provide accessibility and supports when workshops include people with lived experience.

Accessible feedback mechanisms including in-person and over the phone, as well as online were suggested to improve services and programs for people with disability. Along with customer service providing end-to-end support for people with disability, so that they are not 'lost in the system' and having to repeat their story.

When designing a new service, program or facility, consultation with people with disability can help to ensure accessibility and conducting user testing will determine if a facility, service, program or process is fit for purpose.

⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, People with disability in Australia 2024, Summary Factsheet 6: Education and skills

The Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel was seen as a valuable resource for the City of Sydney to engage with diverse lived experience for independent advice and guidance, and to co-design solutions or programs.

Promoting the guide to council decision making, and the many ways people with disability can have a say, advocate and participate was also mentioned. Easy and accessible ways to give feedback and make complaints and seek resolutions should be prioritised, along with promoting avenues to seek support for individual advocacy from disability representative organisations.

Embedding increased consultation and co-design where possible, into Council processes

Co-design is inclusive, promotes diverse perspectives, improves idea generation, services and outcomes. It can also save time and money, and empowers people to give them greater choice and control⁹.

We were told that participants with disability want to be “in the room when decisions are made”. And that by embedding co-design into Council processes, this will enhance outcomes both for the City of Sydney and people with disability in the community.

Co-production of programs and events will provide for equity of opportunity and boost participation. We were also told that the City of Sydney should aim to demonstrate best practice by ‘doing with, and not for’ people with disability, valuing the diverse voices of those with lived experience, and where possible empower disability-led change.

Access and inclusion advocates

Attendees told us that upskilling employees responsible for implementing the inclusion (disability) action plan with specialist access and inclusion training could help build organisational capacity. Having access and inclusion advocates across the City of Sydney will ensure this is front of mind and encourage continuous improvement. Providing opportunities for executives and advocates to collaborate on a more regular basis will promote inclusion at all organisational levels.

Accessible information and communication

At the roundtable, accessible information and documents were emphasised as very important for inclusion. For example, accessible PDF, Word, large print, Auslan videos and Easy Read documents for key strategies, policies and guidelines.

Suggestions for the City of Sydney website included an in-built screen reader, improved navigation and search functionality, and web-chat options. Developing a City of Sydney mobile phone app made for and with people with disability could improve independence and promote participation.

Having visual aids, use of images and pictures, and providing Easy Read information can all support improved accessibility in the customer service experience.

Attendees also told us that continuing to have alternative formats available at libraries, such as audio books, Auslan videos, large print and braille books will all enhance inclusion. We were also told that hard copies in some cases are “still an important medium to be used” when considering access to information at City of Sydney facilities.

Centralised disability information and online platform to connect

Attendees told us about the need for more centralised, easy to find information about disability services, programs, events, advocacy, useful resources and accessibility. This could be made available in alternative formats such as the website, in app form, printed directory, and in-person supports.

⁹ JFA Purple Orange, Guide on co-design with people living with disability.

We were also told that information about the National Relay Service, Translating and Interpreting Service, and how to request accessible information or documents should be readily available on the City of Sydney website and in print at service counters.

The City of Sydney's [accessibility map](#) was seen as a great resource and should be kept current and improved with additional accessibility features of facilities, public spaces, parks, reserves and playgrounds, mobility parking, public toilets, lifts, street furniture and effort-based mobility routes. There were several suggestions to investigate the development of an easy-to-use mobile app version to support accessibility.

Attendees told us about the need for more regular in-person disability hubs at community centres, bringing key disability services and government agencies together to support people with disability. These may include NDIS, Centrelink, housing and homelessness services, disability service providers and others.

Providing information to empower informed independent choice was seen as an important function of the City of Sydney. Information and a guide for peer-advocacy, along with training could be developed and promoted to people with disability in the community.

Disability specific community development support, through sector training, resource development and capacity building for service providers and disability representative organisations is highly valued. Partnerships with disability service providers should be strengthened to facilitate greater support and connection to services, programs and events for people with disability.

Signage and communications reflecting City of Sydney policies promoting inclusion

Roundtable attendees made a number of suggestions about the need for visible signage and communications in the City of Sydney area promoting inclusive policies such as the [Companion Card](#), assistance animals, [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower](#), recharge stations, quiet spaces, racism not welcome, [refugee welcome zone](#), and other signage.

Promoting digital literacy

In 2018, 1.1 million (29%) people with disability were not using the internet and 1.4 million (38%) older Australians were not using the internet¹⁰. Access to computers and opportunities to enhance digital skills were highlighted as barriers for some people with disability.

Attendees at the roundtable told us that the City of Sydney can play a role in promoting digital literacy by providing programs at libraries and community centres that teach digital literacy and support people with disability to participate safely online to access information or connect. Providing and promoting public access computers with accessibility features, as well as training and skills development opportunities, will support digital literacy for people with disability. Providing free wifi at key facilities will assist more people to connect online.

Sensory seeking and calming tools and resources

Accessible sensory seeking and sensory calming kits being available at community centres, libraries and at events for use in quiet spaces will promote acceptance and inclusions. This could include tools, fidgets and resources, for example noise cancelling headphones, weighted blankets and blindfolds.

End-to-end user thinking for customer service

Improving the customer service experience was another key theme raised during the roundtable.

We were told about how thinking about the customer experience through learning from lived experience and engaging in user testing will improve the customer experience for people with

¹⁰ [Use of information technology by people with disability, older people and primary carers](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020

disability. We were also told that “having to repeat your story to Council is exhausting”, and that a “no wrong door” approach to customer service is essential.

Upskilling customer service employees on disability awareness and accessibility will further improve the customer experience, and providing support to follow requests through to completion will provide a person-centred approach.

We were also told that having greater in-person customer service availability across the City of Sydney local area could be of benefit creating greater access for people with disability. Seeing the person with disability as the expert in their lived experience, we were told that the City of Sydney can proactively ask people with disability the question “how can we make this more accessible for you?” across many of its services, programs and events.

There were also suggestions for the City of Sydney to offer a simple way for people to report accessibility issues in various forms, such as the website, app, in-person, and other channels. One suggestion was for customer-facing facilities to have a Service NSW-style in person survey to capture more insights about customer service experiences with the City of Sydney.

A more accessible and targeted grants and sponsorship program

Participants provided suggestions around improving the accessibility of the City of Sydney’s grants and sponsorship program. We were told that the grants and sponsorship program should investigate ways to make applications simpler and remove barriers for people with a diverse range of disabilities to apply. This should be done in collaboration with people with disability.

Attendees suggested the program could engage in targeted promotion to the disability community, and the applications process should be accessible. For example, verbal or video application, Easy Read application, peer support person. Feedback on the application process should also be actively sought from applicants with disability to allow for removal of barriers for continuous improvement.

Provide programs, activities and events at reduced rates or for free

Financial barriers are restrictive to people with disability on limited incomes participating in the community. In 2021, 25% of people with disability aged 15 to 64 in Australia would not have been able to raise \$3,000 in a week for an emergency, and 9% of people with disability went without meals due to a shortage of money¹¹.

With the current cost-of-living crisis, when on a fixed income, it becomes a matter of paying for necessities first and there can be little left over to pay for costs associated with community participation.

This was reflected in suggestions at the roundtable for the City of Sydney to “make sure things are free”, and in turn combat the high levels of loneliness and social isolation experienced by people with disability. Some ways this could be achieved include through providing rebates and discounts for pensioners and by accepting the NSW Companion Card at more facilities and services.

Explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence can support access and inclusion

Roundtable participants also told us how emerging technologies could be considered in improving access and inclusion in the City of Sydney local area. This links to recent research in this area that shows how artificial intelligence for example, could assist people with disability to communicate, learn and promote inclusion, and could support interactions with local government¹².

We were told by one participant that “accessible development” in technology “has led to innovations for everyone”. In particular, participants mentioned opportunities to leverage existing and emerging projects, including an AI-powered avatar software that is currently being developed by Sydney

¹¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, [People with disability in Australia: Finances](#), April 2024

¹² Forbes, [Empowering individuals with disabilities through AI technology](#), June 2023

Stage 1

Trains and members of the Australian Deaf community that can translate audio announcements into Auslan.¹³

¹³ The Mandarin. [AI-powered Auslan avatar can help Deaf people with train travel](#)

Vision

The following vision was crafted from the co-design process, considering the suggestions put forward at the roundtable:

Drive greater social change and equity. We will do this by promoting and protecting the inherent rights, dignity and voices of people with disability, and creating a more inclusive, accessible, resilient and diverse city for all.

Principles

The following principles were put forward during the co-design process:

- Resilient
- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Connected
- Empowering
- Advocacy
- Social justice
- Innovation
- Collaborative
- Equity
- Universal design
- Compassion
- Solution focused
- Diversity
- Capacity building
- Respect

Focus groups – key findings

Five focus groups were undertaken to ensure diverse perspectives of priority groups were captured, respecting intersectionality and accessibility. The focus groups were peer-led in partnership with specialist disability organisations to provide expertise and impartiality. The focus groups included:

- People with intellectual disability: 29 August in partnership with Council for Intellectual Disability
- People of diverse sexualities and genders with disability: 11 September in partnership with SQuAD (Sydney Queer and Disability community group)
- People with disability from multicultural backgrounds: 17 September in partnership with the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, Settlement Services International and Ethnic Community Services Cooperative
- People who are neurodivergent: 26 September in partnership with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability: 17 October in partnership with First People's Disability Network

Although each focus group was unique and identified barriers and challenges specific for that community, there were some common themes and important perspectives to highlight within the feedback.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Representing the diversity of people with disability

- There is a lack of visibility and representation of priority groups, and more positive images and stories are needed demonstrating the diversity and qualities of different groups.
- The City of Sydney can showcase the contributions of people with a diverse range of disabilities and provide opportunities to celebrate talent and ability: “celebrate that diversity means we are all different, and that’s what makes us the same”.
- Support the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme and promote awareness of non-visible disabilities.
- There is greater need for an anti-racism campaign locally, as well as education and communication combatting ableism and disability discrimination.
- Greater efforts to promote social cohesion, inclusivity and a sense of belonging are needed.

Capacity building for disability-led changemaking

- Building the capacity of priority groups to advocate and lead change: “make sure there is a strong voice of people with disability so they can have their say”.

Training on intersectionality, priority groups and specific disabilities

- More training on intersectional identities and of specific disabilities is needed to challenge stereotypes and promote unique talents and abilities (including for multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, women and people of diverse sexualities and genders, older people with disability, and people with non-visible disabilities, intellectual

disability and psychosocial disability, people with multiple disabilities, and others). Where possible, training should be co-designed with people with disability.

- Training on disability-inclusive language and on communicating effectively with people with a diverse range of disabilities is needed.

Physical accessibility promotes inclusion

- Physical barriers in the built environment impact feelings of inclusion, and accessibility should be considered in design and provided as a 'norm'.

Inclusive programming supports inclusion

- More programming that takes into consideration cultural safety, offers safe and welcoming spaces, and that is accessible for a diverse range of disabilities is needed. The City of Sydney can use existing facilities such as community centres, libraries and recreational facilities, and promote a variety of targeted programming and events that welcomes priority groups with disability and allows them to connect and participate in a variety of activities.
- Support the creation of support and advocacy groups for people with a diverse range of disabilities and carers.
- Events bring people together to connect and feel included. Look at opportunities to celebrate a diverse range of disabilities or people with disability during priority group celebrations. For example, Autistic Pride Day, Neurodiversity Celebration Week, World Down Syndrome Day, R U OK Day, Mental Health Month, or during other celebratory occasions such as Harmony Week or Mardi Gras.

Liveable communities

Improve the accessibility of facilities, public spaces, footpaths, parks and playgrounds

- Access audits of facilities and public spaces should be conducted, and a program of works developed with clear targets to improve access and inclusion.
- Inclusive design can promote community connection within public spaces and parks. For example, wheelchair spaces at tables with public seating.
- More inclusive parks and playgrounds are needed, with inclusive play equipment for people with a diverse range of disabilities to enjoy.
- More accessible green space would enhance liveability.
- Ensure inclusivity is considered in public spaces and through planning controls to facilitate connection and place-making.
- An accessible path of travel needs to be prioritised for footpaths.
- More lifts in public spaces and especially along popular accessible travel routes in Central Sydney are needed.
- More lighting is needed to increase safety and accessibility, including at events.

Mobility parking and accessible drop-off

- More mobility parking and accessible drop-off points in the City of Sydney local area are needed, including kerb ramps.
- More community education around the ability to use 'loading' and 'no parking' zones for drop-off for people with mobility parking permits is needed.

Better wayfinding and signage

- Consider electronic wayfinding that gives directions and is available in accessible formats, and help points to connect with a person.
- Simple, Easy Read signage and wayfinding would enable greater independence and participation, especially in Central Sydney.

- Signage should include phone numbers to call for assistance, and where to find in-person support.
- A mobile phone app with accessibility features of facilities and events, and the accessibility map would greatly benefit people with disability, including sensory maps of central business districts.
- Navigating transport interchanges was particularly difficult for some people with disability and needs clearer signage and integrated wayfinding with public spaces.
- Signage that welcomes people of diverse sexualities and genders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from multicultural backgrounds, people with non-visible disabilities, and people with assistance animals should be included at City of Sydney facilities.

Quiet spaces

- Designated safe and quiet spaces throughout the City of Sydney area would allow people to take a break in a place they know they're welcome.

Accessible toilets

- More accessible public toilets are needed, along with universal access (not requiring an MLAK key).

Recharge stations

- More recharge stations are needed at City of Sydney facilities and in public spaces.

Lack of accessible and affordable housing

- Investigate local planning controls and innovative solutions. For example, explore use of vacant buildings or the diverse housing fund to increase the amount of accessible and affordable housing in City of Sydney local area.
- Advocate for more specialist disability accommodation to provide housing designed for people with significant disabilities to provide liveability, accessibility and high physical support.

Online platform to connect and get disability information

- The City of Sydney could develop an online platform to allow people with disability to connect, find out relevant information on disability programs and events.

More accessible and inclusive programming at mainstream events

- Promote accessible and inclusive events in mainstream programming (for example Sydney Festival, Fringe Festival, and others).
- Investigate opportunities to make mainstream events more compliant with the inclusive and accessible event guidelines.

Strengthening partnerships and bringing services together

- The City of Sydney can play a role in bringing services and priority groups together to build relationships, educate and advocate for supports (for example NSW Police, Centrelink, NDIS, NSW Housing, and others).
- Ongoing sector support and development is needed, along with capacity building in access and inclusion.

Supporting disability-owned social enterprise

- The City of Sydney could support community cafes or social enterprises where people with disability could be provided with job training and employment opportunities.

Meaningful employment

Disability workforce strategy

- A coordinated workforce strategy that empowers people with disability, from entry level to leadership is needed, with disability employment and leadership targets.
- Commitment with dedicated targeted entry-level position programs should be available for people with disability, for example internships, traineeships, apprenticeships.
- Physical accessibility of the workplace should be provided as a priority to remove barriers to employment.
- Support to retain employment and thrive in roles should be considered, including with partnerships to specialised disability organisations. For example, Jigsaw, Aspect, Council for Intellectual Disability, Australian Human Rights Commission IncludeAbility and others.
- People with disability want to work, they just need to be given an opportunity and have inclusive employers that are willing to learn with them. Strengths-based employment is needed that is outcome focused and offers flexibility and trust to enable greater employment of people with disability.
- Viewing disability as an asset, having the attitude: “we value your insights because you have lived experience, and a unique skill set”.
- Workplace optimisation (adjustments) should be considered as a step within recruitment and regularly and openly discussed with managers and promoted transparently.
- Psychological safety needs to be promoted, with a focus on safe and supported disclosure of disability within a culture of appreciating lived experience as values of diversity and inclusion.
- Part-time employment and job-sharing should be considered to provide more people with disability the opportunity to work.
- Provide disability leadership training, to upskill and provide for more leaders with disability.
- Continue to provide mentoring, peer support, and disability employee networks to support employees with disability, and consider a ‘buddy’ program for new starters.
- Volunteering should include people with intellectual disability and aim to lead to paid employment opportunities.
- People with disability have a “cultural load” in educating people about their disability, this should be recognised and supported in the workplace. For example an ‘accessibility passport’ is a creative way to have access needs met without needing to retell your story.
- Training on working with priority communities, as well as role related training is needed, for example, trauma informed service delivery.
- The City of Sydney can support more training for service providers on how to support someone during a mental health crisis and during recovery, and for reporting domestic and family violence and support services for those experiencing or at risk of domestic and family violence.

Encouraging businesses to enhance access and inclusion

- Promote the business case for access and inclusion and support and incentivise local businesses to train staff and employ more people with disability.
- Businesses could show signage or a window sticker to demonstrate they are safe and welcoming of people with a diverse range of disabilities.
- The City of Sydney can provide capacity-building resources to businesses to increase access and inclusion and promote employment of people with disability.

Support for open employment of people with disability

- Australian Disability Enterprises do not promote fair pay and should not be supported.

Grants to support disability-owned businesses

- Provision of grants that support people with disability to start their own business and employ more people with disability should be considered.

Systems and processes

Accessible information and communications

- Create more accessible communications through use of simpler language, Easy Read documents, visual aids, infographics, communication boards, providing different contact methods (online, by phone, or in-person), and social stories for events and programs.
- Key cultural, community, recreation and library information should be available in different accessible formats.
- More Auslan interpreted events and information, as well as more captioning available to promote greater accessibility.
- The City of Sydney website is complex and hard to navigate for people with a diverse range of disabilities and can be simplified with co-designed solutions.
- Capture people's communication preferences, and where possible communicate in the preferred method.

Centralised disability information

- People with disability need to know where to go for information, how to have a say, and how to advocate and create opportunities for change.
- A one-stop shop of disability relevant information is needed, including services, programs and events for people with disability, including information specific to different priority groups.

Continuous feedback and improvement

- Continue to engage with the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel to provide expert independent advice from people with a diverse range of disabilities.
- Have an easy way to submit accessibility issues and provide feedback when they are resolved, for example, mobile phone app.
- Have suggestion box at community facilities to get new ideas and continuously improve.
- Have regular community listening sessions with priority groups.

Discounts, rebates and supports to ease the cost-of-living crisis

- All focus groups included mention of the high cost of living, and a lack of affordability for services, programs and events. Providing rebates or discounts for people receiving the disability support pension, acceptance of Companion Card for carers, and access to discounted, or free programs and events would provide more opportunities to participate in the community and promote greater wellbeing for people with disability.
- Having open days at community centres and community hubs that provide access to support services and food relief and bring people together to connect were highly valued and should be promoted to the disability community.
- An accessible free safe space should be provided for the Aboriginal disability advocacy group to continue to meet, and the group be provided with community development support to promote sustainability and amplify advocacy efforts.

Exploring the role of artificial intelligence in supporting people with disability

- Supporting the role of emerging technologies and artificial intelligence in advancing access and inclusion and improving services and programs for people with disability.

Engagement activities

Overview of engagement

Sydney Your Say webpage

A [Sydney Your Say webpage](#) was created to facilitate this consultation. The page included a copy of the survey, focus group information, roundtable registration link and other key information about the consultation.

Online feedback form

Stakeholders were able to tell us about their experiences using an online feedback form. A link to the feedback form was provided on the Sydney Your Say webpage.

Sydney Your Say e-newsletters

The consultation was included in the Sydney Your Say e-newsletters in July and August 2024 which was sent to 6,650 subscribers.

City of Sydney e-newsletters

The consultation was also included in other e-newsletters in August and September 2024. These included community centres, First Nations opportunities, social housing, Green Square community, library, youth programs and City of Sydney News.

Key stakeholder notification

An email was sent to 121 key stakeholders inviting their input on the survey.

Social media campaign

The consultation opportunities were posted on the City of Sydney's social media channels including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Targeted advertising on LinkedIn and Facebook promoted the consultation opportunities. The consultation was accessed by 1,164 people using the link in these ads.

Posters and flyers

Posters and flyers were distributed and displayed across City of Sydney venues including libraries and community centres promoting the consultation opportunities.

Focus groups

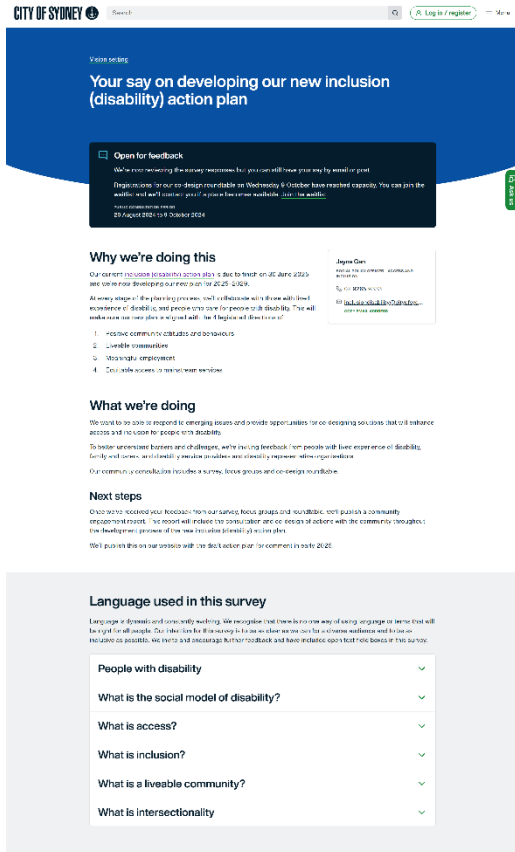
Fifty-three people with disability attended focus groups, along with 12 service providers.

Co-design roundtable

There were 90 participants at the roundtable, facilitating feedback and co-design of actions for the new plan.

Attachments

Attachment A – Sydney Your Say webpage



Focus groups

Each focus group will run for 2 to 3 hours and participants will be paid \$250 for their time.

Each focus group will run for 2 to 3 hours and participants will be paid £120 for their time.

A 2-page discussion paper with background information and some questions to consider will be shared with participants before the focus group.

To apply, complete an expression of interest form to participate in the session listed below that is most relevant to you. All expressions of interest will be assessed, and 8 to 12 participants will be chosen to attend each focus group.

You will be notified of the outcome of your expression of interest at least one week before the focus group.

If you need help filling out this form, you can call the social policy team at 02 9285 6302 or email inclusion@disability.nsw.gov.au.

Focus group: People with Intellectual disability

Thursday 29 August

In person at 414 Fitzmaurice Street, Sandy Hills or online using Zoom

The focus group is peer-facilitated by the Council for Intellectual Disability. If you would like support to apply, you can call Council for Intellectual Disability on 1800 424 065.

Expressions of interest are closed.

Focus group: People of diverse sexualities and genders with disability

Wednesday 11 September

5:30pm to 7:20pm
Online using Zoom

This session is peer-facilitated by Charlie Zada, an experienced facilitator from the Sydney Queer and Disabled community group sidsid.org.au.

Expressions of interest are closed.

Focus group: People with disability from multicultural backgrounds

Tuesday 17 September

Town Hall House, 454 Kent Street Sydney

This session is pre-scheduled by the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association and is co-hosted in partnership with the Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association and Botham's Services International.

If you require a translator, include the language required in the accessibility requirements section or the expression of interest form.

Focus group: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

Thursday 17 October

10:20am to 1:30pm
Redfern Community C

This focus group is moderated by the First People's C.

Expressions of interest are closed.

Focus group: People who are neurodivergent

Thursday 26 September

5:30pm to 7:30pm
Going using Zoom

This focus group is for

Expressions of interest are closed.

Getting support

We recognize that by sharing your lived experience of disability or caring, it may bring up distress or discomfort. If you need to speak with someone for confidential support, you may wish to contact:

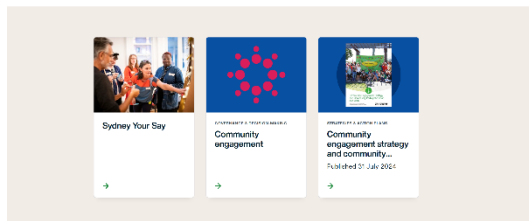
LifeLine
[Show details »](#)

Regional Elite
[Show details »](#)

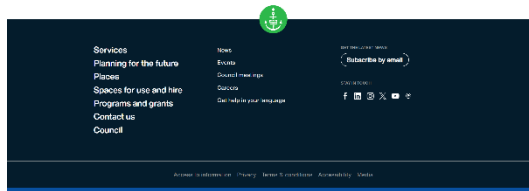
1800 RESPECT
[Show details »](#)

Other ways you can give feedback

Talk to us in person	✓
If you are Deaf or have complex communication needs	✓
If you need an interpreter	✓



Was this page helpful? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Attachment B – Sydney Your Say e-newsletter

Sydney Your Say

CITY OF SYDNEY 



Help shape our new inclusion (disability) action plan

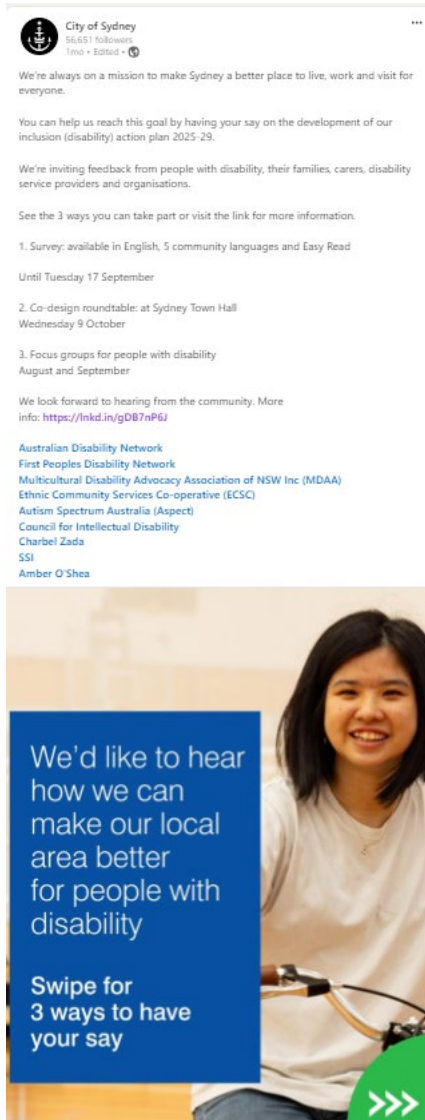
People with lived experience of disability, family, carers, service providers and organisations are encouraged to provide feedback and share their experiences to inform and co-design the 2025–2029 plan.

Have your say by Tuesday 17 September.

[Read more](#)

Attachment C – Social media posts

LinkedIn



City of Sydney
16,651 followers
1mo • Edited •

We're always on a mission to make Sydney a better place to live, work and visit for everyone.

You can help us reach this goal by having your say on the development of our inclusion (disability) action plan 2025-29.

We're inviting feedback from people with disability, their families, carers, disability service providers and organisations.

See the 3 ways you can take part or visit the link for more information.

1. Survey: available in English, 5 community languages and Easy Read
Until Tuesday 17 September
2. Co-design roundtable: at Sydney Town Hall
Wednesday 9 October
3. Focus groups for people with disability
August and September

We look forward to hearing from the community. More info: <https://lnkd.in/gDB7nP6J>

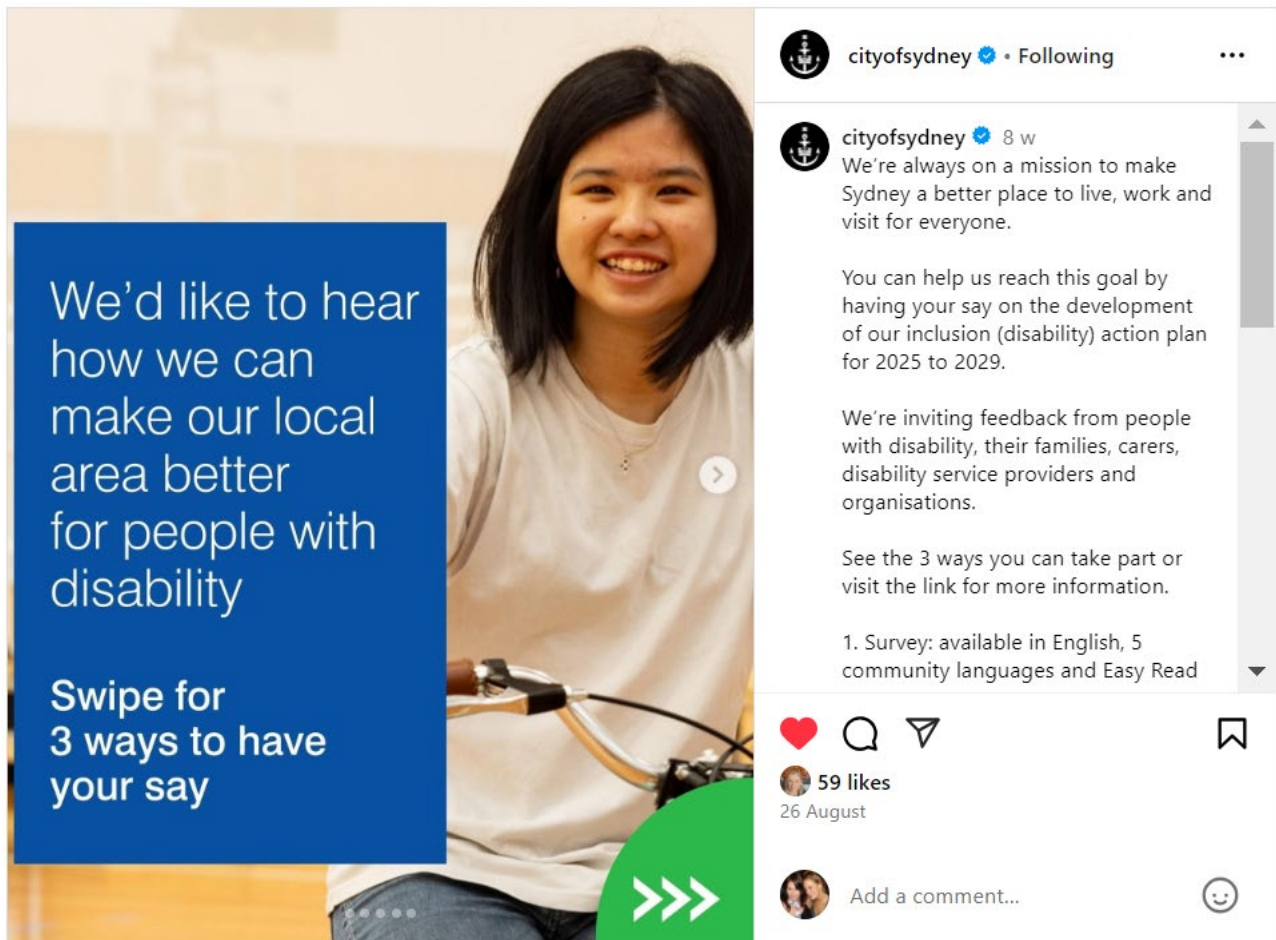
Australian Disability Network
First Peoples Disability Network
Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW Inc (MDAA)
Ethnic Community Services Co-operative (ECSC)
Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)
Council for Intellectual Disability
Charbel Zada
SSI
Amber O'Shea

We'd like to hear how we can make our local area better for people with disability

Swipe for 3 ways to have your say

>>>

Instagram



Facebook

City of Sydney August 26 · 🌐

We're always on a mission to make Sydney a better place to live, work and visit for everyone. You can help us reach this goal by having your say on the development of our inclusion (disability) action plan 2025-29.

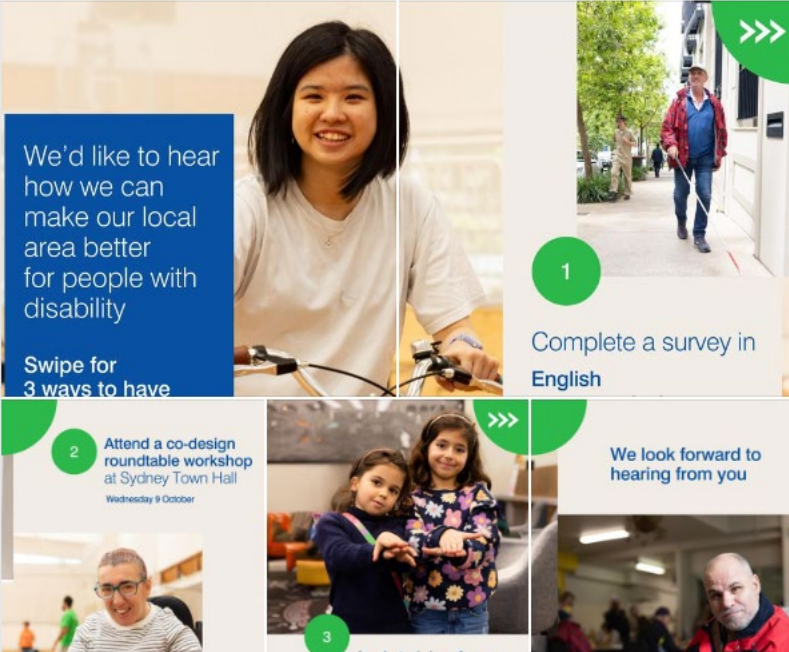
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Until Tuesday 17 September
2. Co-design roundtable: at Sydney Town Hall
Wednesday 9 October
3. Focus groups for people with disability
August and September

We look forward to hearing from the community: <https://city.sydney/yoursay-idap>

Australian Disability Network
First Peoples Disability Network
Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW
Ethnic Community Services Co-operative
SSI - Settlement Services International
Council for Intellectual Disability



We'd like to hear how we can make our local area better for people with disability

Swipe for 3 ways to have

1 Complete a survey in English

2 Attend a co-design roundtable workshop at Sydney Town Hall Wednesday 9 October

3 We look forward to hearing from you

Attachment D – Marketing and communications

Poster



Help shape our new inclusion (disability) action plan

People with lived experience of disability, family and carers, and disability service providers and organisations are encouraged to provide feedback and share their experiences to inform and co-design the 2025–2029 plan.

Take a survey by Tuesday 17 September
The survey is available online in English, simplified and traditional Chinese, Thai, Spanish and Indonesian. An Easy Read version is also available and printed copies can be requested at any of our libraries, community or customer service centres.

Join a focus group
People with lived experience of disability in our diverse communities can apply to participate in focus groups.

Join the co-design roundtable
Register to attend this workshop on Wednesday 9 October at Sydney Town Hall.

You can give feedback on the plan at
city.sydney/inclusion-disability

More information
Jayne Gan
Social Policy Officer - Access and Inclusion
02 9265 9333
inclusiondisability@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
Translating & Interpreting Service: 13 14 50



CITY OF SYDNEY 

city.sydney/inclusion-disability

Attachment E – Focus group for people with intellectual disability

When: Thursday 29 August 2024

Partners: Council for Intellectual Disability

Participants: 7

About the focus group

Eight people with intellectual disability took part in the focus group. Seven attended as participants and one person co-facilitated the group with a Council for Intellectual Disability staff member.

The focus group ran for 2 hours in a hybrid model of online and in-person participation. Four people attended in person and 3 joined online with Microsoft Teams.

At the start, participants were supported to become familiar with the topic and purpose of the focus group.

The right to stop the discussion at any stage was confirmed for all participants. Participants confirmed feeling comfortable and consented to the focus group. Participants were made aware that their personal information would not be shared and that all feedback would be de-identified.

Due to specific support needs of participants with their focus and level of cognition, the facilitators used discretion in selecting questions to bring out responses during the session. PowerPoint slides in Easy Read format were used to aid content comprehension.

The following summary report looks at the responses and themes of the participants involved:

- strengths/assets
- barriers/challenges
- positive attitudes and behaviours
- liveable communities
- meaningful employment
- improving systems and processes
- ideas for future actions.

The report was prepared by inclusion projects officer Jonathon Kelleher and inclusion services manager Jemima Macdonald at the Council for Intellectual Disability.

Summary report

Strengths / Assets	Barriers / Challenges
The city has many events and spaces to visit	Lack of kerb ramps for people who use wheelchairs
The city has good services	Lack of mobility parking spaces in the city centre
People with intellectual disability can have a “strong voice” and opportunities to have a say in the City of Sydney	Lack of representation of people with intellectual disability
Community centres and programs are inclusive of people with disability	Lack of positive images and communications that show the ability of people with intellectual disability
City of Sydney has a good atmosphere with communal spaces and is inclusive of everyone	Lack of awareness of intellectual disability
City of Sydney is a place where “all opinions and choices are welcome”	Lack of lifts in public places
If you cannot access a place, you can write to the City of Sydney to do something about it and improve access	Accessibility of streets and places can be a challenge for wheelchair users

Positive attitudes and behaviours	Liveable communities
People have negative attitudes towards disability, thinking you’re inconvenient or “too hard” and need to be accommodated for.	Easy Read signs and information in the city would help, with audio options to help people who cannot read well, and the ability to give directions.
“I think I feel more welcome with people being non-judgemental” – “I can be who I want to be” in the City of Sydney.	More green spaces would be good to make people feel uplifted and calm.
It depends, some people treat you nicely and others don’t.	Quiet spaces in the city would be good to take a break when needed. This would assist people who get sensory overload.
“I feel included with the support of my family who make me feel comfortable and help a lot. However sometimes when I am outside without my family there are things that make me feel uncomfortable.”	Places and facilities should have plain English and phone numbers to be able to speak to someone to answer questions or ask for help.
The City of Sydney could showcase the contributions of people with intellectual disability.	Listen to the difficult experiences of people with intellectual disability and help create a space where “everyone can be together”.
“I have the freedom to go wherever I want, like to the parks.”	Areas like Chinatown have so many little and big neon signs that can be hard to read and

Positive attitudes and behaviours	Liveable communities
	understand – the important parts need to be more prominent.
	Communal spaces are good for people to feel included and part of something – “I love going to cafes where they have those big tables.”
	For public spaces and buildings in the City of Sydney, everyone should be able to access – “it can be hard for people with disability to get to work or do things” so all places should be accessible.

Meaningful employment	Improving systems and processes
A few participants had experience volunteering. They agreed that volunteering should lead to employment opportunities at the City of Sydney.	Use a “mind map” for consultation to support people with communication barriers to be able to contribute and give ideas.
One participant shared they volunteered at a City of Sydney service for 11 years but had to stop when funding was cut. The participant said they would have “loved to have been paid”.	“Provide a suggestion box at community facilities to get new ideas”.
Open employment of people with disability should be promoted by the City of Sydney (not Australian Disability Enterprises)	The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower is a way the City of Sydney can support people with non-visible disabilities to be able to get support or help.
Most participants wanted a paid job but had not found one due to challenges faced due to employers not understanding their disability.	There is a lack of accessible information about City of Sydney services and programs in Easy Read.
Part-time or casual paid employment should not affect people’s Disability Support Pension. Workers with disability are entitled to the same rights as workers without disability.	The grants and sponsorship program should be promoted more for people with disability to apply.
Many participants had Cert III or TAFE qualifications, but employers would not give them an opportunity.	“Make sure there is a strong voice of people with disability so they can have their say.”
The City of Sydney can showcase best practice with disability employment to help create change.	People with disability should have the option to contact services on the phone or attend in person.
One participant would like to start their own business and employ other people with intellectual disability.	Paying to use printers at libraries and City of Sydney centres is hard as not everyone has the money to pay.

Meaningful employment

Ongoing support in jobs for people with intellectual disability is important to help with job security.

There should be equal pay for people with disability who get jobs in City of Sydney.

One participant was fired from their job in the city because of their intellectual disability. This person wants a job “that I don’t have to worry about getting fired from” and that is not a short-term contract.

Improving systems and processes

Ideas for future actions

New electronic wayfinding system that includes plain English, Easy Read and directions.

Translate a guide to council decision-making to Easy Read and promote and make easily accessible on the website.

Disability awareness training for City of Sydney employees on intellectual disability, including people with lived experience.

Employment opportunities (traineeships, work experience and volunteering) for people with intellectual disabilities at the City of Sydney.

Create more social groups for people with disability to meet up at in the community – people with or without disability can be welcome, to practice inclusion.

What’s On should be an app with events in Easy Read with accessibility features all listed.

There should be a report it app that people disability can just take a photo and send accessibility issues or barriers to easily.

The accessibility map should be available as an app and promoted more for people with disability to know about and use.

The cultural walks and library apps should be made into Easy Read for people with intellectual disability.

The City of Sydney can establish an internship program for people with intellectual disability in collaboration with the Council for Intellectual Disability to support employment pathways.

The City of Sydney can provide training for people with disability to start their own businesses and seek funding through the grants and sponsorship program.

People with intellectual disability could volunteer as City of Sydney ambassadors to gain skills and experience and help to change attitudes

Join the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program and roll it out across the city

Ideas for future actions

Training for customer facing staff on how to communicate with people with disability that use communication aids.

Recharge stations available across the City of Sydney local area for people who use electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Quiet spaces in Central Sydney available and promoted for people who need to take a break.

The City of Sydney to provide specific training for people with intellectual disability when they get jobs.

There should be more Easy Read information about what is going on in the city, events and new projects.

The government needs to put more funding into services that support inclusion and employment of people with intellectual disability.

The City of Sydney website is hard for some people to read and could be made more accessible in Easy Read.

Fix kerb ramps, make sure there are more disabled toilets and more accessible parking spaces.

Recognise the contributions that are being made by people with intellectual disability in the City of Sydney area – for example if a person with intellectual disability has assisted in creating something, have a note/symbol that informs people of this.

Attachment F – Focus group for people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability

When: Wednesday 11 September 2024

Partners: Sydney Queer and Disability community group

Participants: 11

Strengths / Assets	Barriers / Challenges
Aquatic centres have events that are welcoming of people of diverse sexualities and genders.	Difficulty navigating bus interchanges.
Libraries are inclusive.	Lack of spaces that welcome people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.
Lack of affordability and cost-of-living crisis affecting people on limited income.	Major events are less accessible due to noise, there is a need for more quiet spaces.
The City of Sydney promotes diversity and inclusion	Lack of positive images and communications that show the ability of people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.
	Lack of awareness and training on people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.
	Lack of awareness of people who are neurodivergent.
	Lack of awareness about assistance animals.
	Lack of wheelchair accessibility on streets and public facilities.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

People can have negative attitudes towards people of diverse sexualities and genders or people with disability, or both. More training and promotion of positive stories is needed.

I feel a sense of belonging and quality of life in the City of Sydney ... I feel safe and connected.

City of Sydney events bring people together to connect and feel included.

Reflect the National Autism Strategy in increasing positive images of people who are neurodivergent and training for greater understanding of neurodiversity.

There is a lot of 'cultural load' for disability, to educate others and change attitudes and behaviours. The City of Sydney can lead this education and awareness raising to lessen the burden experienced by people with disability.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

Celebrate and promote days of significance for people of diverse sexualities and genders to be inclusive of people with disability and have accessible Pride events, such as Mardi Gras and more inclusive mainstream events, for example Fringe Festival.

Businesses could have a rainbow sticker or sign on facilities that are welcoming of people of diverse sexualities and genders, where staff are trained and aware to offer support.

Have a program that encourages businesses to be inclusive and supportive of people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability and provide free inclusion (disability) awareness training for businesses.

Employees trained on assisting people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability and intersectionality. Training should be co-designed with intersectional people with disability.

The City of Sydney joins the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program and undertakes mandatory training to ensure employees are educated to support people with non-visible disabilities.

I am happy and feel welcome, but barriers like transport and physical access impact my ability to feel included.

Stigma is amplified with an intersectional identity, such as people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.

The City of Sydney is very overt in its support of people of diverse sexualities and genders, which promotes inclusion and safety.

I love libraries, museums, the pool and my university.

Liveable communities

Lack of affordable and accessible housing. For example, in Manchester where fixed percentage of new developments are required to be affordable and accessible for people on low incomes.

Free shuttle buses around the city to enhance accessibility.

Quiet spaces in the city would be good to take a break when needed.

Need to invest in making public infrastructure more accessible to a diverse range of disabilities, for example parks and community facilities.

Lack of accessibility for wheelchair users in Newtown (it is unsafe to travel on the road).

Police are intimidating, making the city less liveable. First Nations training and advocacy could support change.

Support to apply for NDIS could really assist people with disability. The City of Sydney should partner with NDIS local area coordinator to provide support.

Assistance for filling out forms, and for help using technology could support people with disability.

Liveable communities

Reflect the National Autism Strategy in providing space for support groups for people who are neurodivergent and quiet places that are sensory friendly.

Greater lighting is needed at events for safety for people with disability, for example Vivid at Kings Cross.

Need for more lifts in public spaces.

Better signage and wayfinding would enable more people with disability to feel confident going out in the city.

What's On should promote accessibility features and disability-inclusive events.

Access audits of public spaces and community facilities would identify areas to enhance access and inclusion for a diverse range of disabilities.

Grants could prioritise enhancing access and inclusion of facilities, programs and events.

More mobility parking spaces in the city.

More green spaces that are physically accessible make the city more liveable.

Meaningful employment

Volunteer work does not seem to fall under anti-discrimination legislation and is limited.

Disability Employment Services are not helpful, and the current system is punitive.

Advocate for a strengths-based employment and ongoing support for employees with disability to retain work.

NSW Health has a diversity and inclusion job board, this may encourage people with disability to apply as they know the organisation is supportive and inclusive.

Challenge attitudes about employing people with disability so they are seen as an asset and are valued employees.

Include a statement such as “we value your insights because you have lived experience and a unique skill set”.

There is a gap for people who cannot work full time, and people who need support workers for employment. There needs to be more flexible working conditions and part-time roles for people with disability.

Need to switch thinking from ‘accommodating people with disability’ to empowering and optimising.

There needs to be more opportunities to convert volunteer work to employment pathways for paid employment.

Meaningful employment

Flexible working conditions and hours will enable more people with disability to be employed, including online work and part-time work. Clear policies that are promoted to target people with disabilities.

There need to be inclusive employment policies, for example workplace optimisation supports, more time and patience, trained supportive managers and greater opportunities.

It would be best not to have to mask and hide intersectional identities within inclusive workplaces as this is tiring and impacts wellbeing.

There is a lot of stigma and judgement around mental health, people think you're unsuitable for work and there is discrimination. "It's important to treat everyone fairly, and give everyone a chance to work".

Case studies showcasing the talents and abilities of people with disability in the workplace will help to challenge stigma and stereotypes.

There should be people with disability supported into leadership positions.

There should be more support for people with communication disabilities to support access to employment.

Funding and training for organisations to create employment opportunities.

Improving systems and processes

Online feedback is sometimes not accessible, there needs to be multiple ways to give feedback and receive information, including in-person.

Review and consult on the use of identity first language, for example Autistic person.

Ensure the National Autism Strategy is reflected in the next inclusion (disability) action plan.

Promote Companion Card acceptance at City of Sydney facilities, which allows support workers or carers to have free entry.

Promote public access computers free to use with accessibility features.

Embed accessibility features into the website, for example screen readers.

Capture people's communication preferences and where possible communicate in that accessible way, make this a standard operating procedure at the City of Sydney.

More Easy Read information and writing in plain English across the City of Sydney and embedded in policies.

More Auslan interpreted events, information and trained employees.

More captioning available to promote greater accessibility.

Improving systems and processes

More grant funding and training support for access and inclusion outcomes for people with disability.

City of Sydney have a phone app that is accessible.

Promote and ensure people with disability are represented in decision making by using inclusive and accessible engagement methods.

Ideas for future actions

Better wayfinding system that includes plain English, directions and more signage, especially at transport hubs.

Regular events and support groups for people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability to come together and connect.

Disability awareness training for City of Sydney employees, including intersectional experiences of disability.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower should be rolled out across the City of Sydney to know staff are trained and supportive and promotional signage displayed at facilities.

Make more affordable leisure and recreation opportunities , for example free tai chi in Green Square, free internet in public spaces.

Continue to advocate for more affordable and accessible housing.

Provide training and signage welcoming assistance animals at City of Sydney facilities.

Safe spaces for people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability to regularly meet.

Partnership with NDIS local area coordinator to provide assistance at City of Sydney facilities for accessing NDIS to assist with workshops and applying for NDIS.

Support quiet spaces in City of Sydney are that are sensory-friendly and welcoming of people with disability.

Accessibility audits of key facilities and works to upgrade facilities to Australian Standards.

Advocate for open employment of people with disability in inclusive workplaces.

A coordinated workforce strategy supported with policies that empower people with disability by aiming to recruit, retain and develop people with disability.

Promote the support at the City of Sydney available to recruit, retain and develop employees with disability, including real stories from current employees and workforce optimisation supports that are available.

Support programs that encourage businesses to be accessible and inclusive of people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.

Ideas for future actions

Conduct access audits of key community facilities and create a schedule of works to enhance access and inclusion for a diverse range of disabilities.

Sporting, leisure and recreational facilities be accessible and promoted for use of people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability.

Support given to fill out forms and use public technology, and investigate programs that support technology training.

Attachment G – Focus for people with disability from multicultural backgrounds

When: Tuesday 17 September 2024

Partners: Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association, Settlement Services International, Ethnic Community Services Cooperative

Participants: 9

Strengths / Assets	Barriers / Challenges
In parks and aquatic centres, I see children who are learning to be respectful of people with disability.	Sydney Town Hall requires signage upgrades for accessible entry points for people with disability.
There are a variety of restaurants and attractions that make the city great.	Wayfinding is difficult in Central Sydney for people with disability.
Diversity and inclusion are important in the City of Sydney area.	There isn't any accessible and safe drop off points close to Sydney Town Hall which can make drop-offs and pick-ups unsafe for people with a diverse range of disabilities.
Tourist attractions like the Harbour Bridge and Opera House are showcased by City of Sydney, for example Sydney New Year's Eve.	Transport is a barrier to access in the city as well as a lack of training for transport staff on disability awareness.
All are welcome and included, including people from multicultural communities.	Lack of respect and negative attitudes to people with disability.
City of Sydney employees have positive attitudes.	Time limit on accessible toilets, for example the doors close on you and you cannot open them.
Respect and love are shown.	Technology (access to internet and knowledge of use of devices) can be a barrier for people with disability.
Customer service is friendly and welcoming.	Lack of accessible businesses with physical accessibility and disability awareness education.
People are positive and open.	Sometimes family and carer attitudes can be a barrier towards decision-making and participation in the community.
	Obtaining a driver licence can be a barrier to employment for people with disability.
	Cost-of-living crisis is impacting many people with disability of low incomes.
	Mental health stigma is a big problem.
	Discrimination and ableism are widespread.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

Training for staff on disability awareness, engaging with people with disability, working with people with a diverse range of disabilities, and on disability-affirming language is needed to create positive attitudes and behaviours.

Greater awareness and support of people with mental health conditions is needed.

International Day of People with Disability should be all year round to celebrate disability and break stereotypes and stigma. More inclusive mainstream events are needed to provide greater opportunities for participation for people with disability.

More positive images and opportunities to hear lived experience of disability are needed.

There is still discrimination against people with disability, attitudes need to change to challenge discrimination and ableism with information, education, communication and resources.

Mental health awareness, positive images and case studies should be promoted to change attitudes and challenge stigma and stereotypes.

Liveable communities

Improved safety and security for people with disability is needed when out and about in the City of Sydney area.

Golf cart access at major events that accommodates wheelchairs is needed, for example Sydney New Year's Eve and Vivid.

Advocacy for travellers at transport hubs could support people with limited mobility, for example there used to be one at Central train station.

Better wayfinding and signage are needed across Central Sydney, for example transport hubs, accessible entrances and lifts.

More inclusive communal spaces to come together and connect and more inclusive universal design needed for public spaces and places. For example, Singapore food courts have tables with spaces for wheelchair users.

More inclusive community events and more promotion of what's available and the accessibility features.

Subsidies for leisure and recreation for people with disability on low income could support participation and inclusion, and promotion of Companion Card.

More recycling bins, more 'return and earn' stations and sustainability education to curb pollution. In Japan there is a no waste policy.

Homelessness is a big issue. There needs to be more shelters, and affordable and accessible housing and the City of Sydney could explore use of vacant buildings to support people experiencing homelessness.

Quiet time in community and aquatic facilities can support inclusion for people with sensory disabilities, for example Ryde aquatic centre.

Liveable communities

Help points with clear signage in community facilities are important for people with disability to seek assistance.

More disability awareness and education is needed among Sydney businesses.

The City of Sydney needs to address safety for people with a disability, for example help points or safe houses.

Disability-inclusive events and programs should be promoted to allow people with disability to connect and meet for people with disability to reduce social isolation and loneliness.

More rubbish bins are needed to reduce litter and pollution and promote sustainability.

Parks and green space could be more accessible.

Signage and wayfinding in the city needs to be improved to enable people with disability to independently get around and access Central Sydney.

Help points could be made available at customer service points scattered across the city where staff are trained to support people with a diverse range of disabilities.

Meaningful employment

Accessing work can be a barrier. Workplaces should be accessible and inclusive.

Attitudinal barriers towards employment of people with disability need to be addressed, including challenging false assumptions – I was told “give me a good reason why we should employ you when we can employ an able-bodied person”.

Identified positions for people with disability with employment pathways and entry level positions, through to leadership roles are needed.

Positive case studies of employing people with disability, and events that share lived experience to create greater awareness, understanding and inclusion.

Managers need to be trained to enable unbiased recruitment and provide support to retain people with disability.

Leadership is needed to change unemployment rates – “If someone wants to work, they can, and they should”.

Position descriptions should only have minimum mandatory qualifications or experience as having higher qualifications could rule out some people with disability.

Normal recruitment processes can be difficult for people with intellectual disability or people who are neurodivergent, for example cover letters, selection criteria responses. Recruitment processes may need revision to target employment of diverse people with disability with a dedicated recruitment program, for example Australian Public Service’s RecruitAbility.

The City of Sydney should work with proactive and progressive disability employment agencies to create pathway programs to employment for people with disability.

Meaningful employment

Peer support or mentors can support people with disability to retain employment.

Workplace policies should promote respect and eliminate discrimination of people with disability.

Challenge stereotypes and low expectations of people with disability by “promoting diversity is good and profitable for workplaces” and people with disability can do and excel at different jobs.

Burnout for people with disability is real and impacts wellbeing, there needs to be more awareness and understanding of this, and flexible working options and workplace optimisation supports to address and enable people to retain employment.

CEO's and leadership spend time with employees with disability to see what people with disability can do, for example mentoring.

Have grants that help people with disability to start their own businesses, and be their own bosses.

Improving systems and processes

City of Sydney website should use plain English and no jargon.

Greater patience and understanding from customer service staff is needed.

Use emerging technologies and artificial intelligence to increase accessibility for people with disability.

Scatter City of Sydney customer service across the city for greater access for face-to-face services.

Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel is a good resource to provide advice to the City of Sydney.

Technology can be a barrier, there needs to be printed materials available on request and face-to-face customer service.

People with disability need to know where to go for information, how to have a say, and how to create opportunities for change.

Information needs to be available from multiple sources, websites, social media, printed at community centres and customer service hubs, in-person and QMS advertisements.

Ideas for future actions

Entry level identified positions for people with disability, through to leadership positions – a disability workforce strategy covering a whole City of Sydney approach to recruitment, retention and development of people with disability (including flexible recruitment and recruitment program, flexible working and workplace optimisation supports policies). Actively promote this to people with disability so they know the City of Sydney is a disability-inclusive workplace, including on social media.

Ideas for future actions

Recruitment processes should be reviewed to remove barriers for people with a diverse range of disabilities and co-designed recruitment pathways developed for targeted employment of people with disability.

Disability awareness training by people with lived experience implemented to change attitudes, showcase positive stories, and give the business case for employing more people with disability.

Leadership in promoting disability awareness and inclusion to businesses in the City of Sydney area.

Access audits of City of Sydney facilities and a prioritised works schedule for upgrades created.

Quotas for employing people with disability to demonstrate commitment and leadership to employ more people with disability.

Opportunities for placemaking to create opportunities for connection for people with disability should be explored in planning and design, for example universal design.

Quiet times and quiet spaces at community facilities and recreation centres to promote inclusion of people with sensory disabilities.

Opportunity to use vacant buildings for homeless people and more accessible and affordable housing should be investigated.

Explore how artificial intelligence could enhance accessibility for people with disability.

Consider a disability leadership mentoring programs to help City of Sydney employees with disability and a buddy or peer-support training system for new employees with disability to help them navigate the system and have ongoing support to retain employment.

Attachment H – Focus group for people who are neurodivergent

When: Thursday 26 September 2024

Partners: Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)

Participants: 10

Strengths/ Assets	Barriers/ Challenges
Events and festivals, Mardi Gras.	Lack of housing affordability and cost of living.
"Overall, I feel welcome, like the city is my backyard".	Wayfinding is difficult in Central Sydney.
Volunteering for the City of Sydney for Sydney New Year's Eve.	Lack of understanding of neurodiversity, greater awareness is needed, for example Inner West Council neurodiversity awareness training.
City of Sydney website	"At first I didn't feel welcome, but with time I did".
Cultural diversity.	Lack of 'adjustments' for people with disability.
Always something to do.	Lack of quiet spaces and relaxed performances.
Good people, connections.	Lack of awareness about support workers, for example talk to the person with disability, not the support worker.
Good transport systems and close to everything.	Being independent in the city is hard due to busyness – Hidden Disabilities Sunflower would help me feel more confident as well as quiet spaces.
Cafes, shops, services, galleries, art, nightlife, bars, harbour.	Bike paths and feeling unsafe due to e-bikes.
Pools, parks and greenspace.	Discrimination still occurs, and we can play a key role in changing this.
Areas such as Newtown and Chinatown.	Employment for people who are neurodivergent is a big issue. Need businesses to be trained and willing to give people a go.
Walkability and bike paths.	Commercial places shut early, for example 3pm, we need longer hours.
	Safety can be an issue, unfriendly places, for example Devonshire Street tunnel.
	Pay inequity and work-life balance is challenging.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

More neurodiversity training is required for City of Sydney employees as well as businesses with a need to “celebrate that diversity means we are all different, and that’s what makes us the same”.

Greater awareness and support of people with mental health conditions is needed.

Greater efforts to promote social cohesion, inclusivity and a sense of belonging are needed.

Accountability is needed through accreditation and commitment towards mandatory training to become disability-inclusive, for example sign or sticker in front window for businesses.

There is still much discrimination against people with disability, attitudes need to change to challenge discrimination and ableism.

The City of Sydney should educate and promote the rights of people with disability through free training and communications campaigns.

Increase representation of priority groups and conduct regular community engagement with people with disability for continuous feedback and improvement.

Liveable communities

Quiet spaces in Central Sydney are needed, otherwise some people are forced to use public toilets which are not well suited and don’t promote dignity.

No MLAK keys should be required for public toilets, they should all be open and free to use, with regular serviced and maintained, and the accessible public toilet map needs to be more widely promoted.

Flexible seating in public spaces is needed.

More disability and neurodiversity awareness are needed for City of Sydney employees and businesses.

Better wayfinding and signage are needed across Central Sydney, for example transport hubs, public spaces, with a map and a phone number to call if you require help.

Busyness and wayfinding at public transport can be a problem, there is a need for quiet spaces, trained staff and clear signage.

More inclusive community events and more promotion of what’s available and the accessibility features, for example safe quiet spaces.

A sensory map of the local area and a central list of businesses’ quiet hours is needed.

Affordable and accessible housing is an issue, with people forced to leave the area due to rising costs. Selling of assets for affordable housing and utilising unused space in Central Sydney could provide more affordable housing.

Provide a technology platform that connects people with disability in the City of Sydney area and a community cafe or community centre safe space for regular connection opportunities. For example,

Liveable communities

community hub drop-in centre or 'safe haven' with a sensory cafe that is a social enterprise run by people with disability and providing job training skills.

Bicycles made a participant feel unsafe, for example e-bikes are fast and can create dysregulation.

Footpath dining can make it difficult to pass on footpaths, there still needs to be an accessible path of travel.

The City of Sydney should improve accessibility of public spaces and inclusivity for people with disability.

Community gardens provide the opportunity for people to connect and are welcoming for all people.

There should be a Report It App to easily report things that need to be fixed and to track response and resolution.

Grants should be available for businesses to become more accessible and inclusive.

The City of Sydney should promote an independent complaint mechanism. For example, disability advocacy organisations to support people with disability to have their complaints or issues resolved and consider partnering with not-for-profits such as Disability Law.

Major events and festivals need to have more consideration of people who are neurodivergent, for example sensory maps, audio description, tactile and braille signage, fragrance free policies, clear signage and communication, communication support, text-based communication, and social stories, as well as neurodiverse-led events and programming.

Enhance language support for people from diverse communities and develop culturally sensitive programs and services

Meaningful employment

The benefits of hiring people with disability need to be promoted, for example 'out of the box' thinking, challenging assumptions, giving organisations a competitive advantage, and attention to detail.

Attitudinal barriers towards employment of people with disability need to be addressed, including challenging false assumptions.

There should be clear targets for employment of people with disability for transparency and accountability, as well as identified traineeships or entry-level positions to create employment pathways for people with disability.

Job sharing or part-time work can create more opportunity for people with a diverse range of disabilities to maintain employment, for example job sharing according to strengths.

Accessing work can be a barrier. Workplaces should be accessible and inclusive, with clear policies and procedures, for example workplace optimisation/adjustments policy.

Volunteering should be used as a pathway to paid employment.

Meaningful employment

Psychological safety is important for people to openly disclose they have a disability. The culture must be accepting of diversity and value employees with disability as assets.

Recruitment processes may need revision to target employment of people who are neurodivergent.

The City of Sydney should facilitate a workshop or forum with businesses to promote the economic business case for access and inclusion presenting research, case studies and lived experience. This will challenge stigma and stereotypes.

There could be targets and rewards for businesses or social enterprises supporting employees with disability.

There needs to be consideration of 'meaningful employment roles' where people are also supported in their roles to grow their career and retain employment.

The City of Sydney can lead the way in employment of people with disability and can post job opportunities to target promotion for people with disability.

Flexible working is important for people with disability to be able to retain work. For example, working from home, as well as education and training for managers, and support and training on the job for employees. For example, do you require degree/diploma qualifications for the role or can you learn on the job?

It's important for managers to receive education and training on neurodiversity to focus on strengths and reasonable adjustments/workplace optimisation, rather than weaknesses.

The City of Sydney can support business incubators to target disability-led businesses.

The City of Sydney should create a best-practice model in disability employment and showcase the model to other councils and businesses in Sydney.

Mentorship and peer support programs provide disability specific training programs and vocational education and training.

Have social enterprises at public spaces and community gardens which employ and train people with disability.

Caring can create limitations on work with managing time and the stress and challenges involved, requiring flexible working arrangements.

The City of Sydney could create a pilot program and create career opportunities for people with disability and support them to excel and succeed.

Employers should remember "a little support goes a long way" and the positive effects will come back 100-fold through productivity and loyalty all the way through to the community.

Improving systems and processes

People who are neurodivergent may like to plan ahead. Having an app that is user friendly and helps us to pre-plan and prepare for our environment empowers people who are neurodivergent. For example, including the accessibility map and facility access information at events.

Improving systems and processes

Customer service could be helpful to provide step-by-step instructions, and let people know that they will help through each step along the way.

There could be a disability advocate in customer service to assist people with disability to navigate the system.

It would be great to promote that the City of Sydney supports the Companion Card, offering free entry to a support worker or carer to assist with affordability for people to attend events and programs.

It's important to be able to say 'I don't know, but I can find out for you'.

Plain English website information and documents available in Easy Read will help with accessibility of information.

Information needs to be available in a variety of formats, including printed posters and flyers at facilities, including the website, social media, apps and email.

It would be good if the website has the text-to-audio function embedded and easily available to use.

Grants for businesses to enhance access and inclusion.

The City of Sydney could support disability-led businesses and social enterprises through procurement.

Quiet hours at City of Sydney facilities and relaxed programs/events.

Ideas for future actions

An app for City of Sydney information, such as reporting issues and pre-planning accessibility information, for example the accessibility map would assist people with disability.

Showcase best-practice employment through case studies that feature real employees and how they have been supported in their roles to retain employment and grow their career.

Become a member of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program and provide mandatory training on non-visible disabilities and neurodiversity across the organisation.

Targets for disability employment, entry level to leadership.

Provide and promote job-sharing opportunities for employment for people with disability.

Facilitate an online social group for people who are neurodivergent to come together across the city and opportunities for safe spaces for people who are neurodivergent to connect.

Support the creation of social enterprises that are disability-led and support employment and skills development and training.

Provide continuous opportunities for feedback and engagement with people with disability to allow the City of Sydney to continuously improve its services and programs.

Ideas for future actions

Provide a workshop or forum for people with disability to understand their rights and advocate to achieve them.

Quiet times at community facilities and recreation centres to promote inclusion of people with sensory disabilities.

Opportunity to utilise unused assets for accessible and affordable housing should be investigated.

Customer service have a trained disability advocate to support people with disability to navigate the system step-by-step.

Provide information for people with disability to get supports and advocate for their rights on the website and on how to give feedback or complaints in Easy Read format.

Consider a disability leadership mentoring program to help develop employees with disability and a buddy or peer-support training system for new employees with disability to help them navigate the system and have ongoing support.

Provide sensory quiet spaces in Central Sydney and promote them for people with disability.

Attachment I – Focus group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

When: Thursday 17 October 2024

Partners: First Peoples Disability Network

Participants: 16

Strengths / Assets	Barriers / Challenges
Unpaid carers supporting people with disability save the government money and should be celebrated and supported.	Need for safe trauma informed spaces in the City of Sydney local area.
Meals on Wheels is a great service.	Lack of respect and negative attitudes towards Aboriginal people with disability.
The City of Sydney's support for people experiencing homelessness.	Access to NDIS is difficult and more advocacy and support is required.
Music therapy is great for some people with disability.	Having a family and caring can be a barrier.
The City of Sydney is open to listening to community and wanting to support solutions.	Cost-of-living crisis is impacting many people with disability on low incomes.
	Mental health stigma is a big problem.
	Racism is overt since the no vote. More support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is needed with an anti-racism campaign.
	Discrimination and ableism are widespread.
	Not enough mobility parking spaces in the City of Sydney local area. There is an increasing need for more.
	Advocacy for more respite is needed to support carers.
	More food programs for people experiencing homelessness.
	Lack of accessibility leads to isolation.
	Trauma from experience from the Stolen Generation.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

Training for staff on disability awareness and cultural awareness.

Positive attitudes and behaviours

Greater awareness and support of people with mental health conditions is needed.

More positive images and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are needed.

Training and a campaign for anti-racism is needed as there is much overt racism since the 'no vote'.

Training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability about their 'rights' and how to self-advocate and advocacy supports available.

Greater awareness raising and training of non-visible disabilities.

Liveable communities

There is a need for safe trauma informed spaces in City of Sydney local area where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability can come together and connect. Spaces could be co-designed with the community.

More inclusive spaces in public spaces and parks, for example wheelchair spaces with public seating.

Kerb ramps are not always in line at opposite sides of the road, and aren't available at every intersection, which can make it difficult for people who use wheelchairs to navigate and can be a safety issue as people are required to go into traffic.

There are not enough mobility parking spaces, and no knowledge that people with mobility parking permits can park in any regular parking space. More mobility parking spaces and community awareness about the drop-off and pick-up in 'loading zone' and 'no parking' is needed for people with disability to know the rules that apply to them.

The City of Sydney can advocate to Transport for NSW for carers to be provided an additional mobility parking permit, for example difficulty when there are multiple carers or supports needing to access one permit.

More supported independent living and specialist disability accommodation is needed in City of Sydney local area.

More community support for people with mental health conditions is needed. Advocacy and support for more and culturally sensitive service providers is needed in the City of Sydney local area.

There is a problem with domestic and family violence against Aboriginal people with disability, and more support is needed.

The City of Sydney can do more to clean up the environment, there is too much rubbish.

The use of wattle should be minimised due to allergies. Native plant selection should be done in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Liveable communities

Large trees are being planted on verges next to footpaths and they are cracking the pavement which makes it difficult for people with limited mobility to navigate.

More outreach services are needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the City of Sydney local area to select suitable native plants.

More training and awareness are needed on assistance animals being welcome in City of Sydney facilities, with signage at facilities and ongoing support for partnerships to train assistance animals is needed as the cost is prohibitive.

There are a lot of syringes on Wellington Street and Gibson Lane, Waterloo close to Mount Carmel School. Council needs to regularly clean up the syringes in this area as it's a safety risk for the children.

There needs to be a special free space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to use and share, for example 119 Redfern.

More art therapy is needed for people with disability, for example Mundine-led workshops in Redfern.

Bus drivers need more training, it can be difficult to use the accessible ramp onto a bus, and drivers are sometimes reluctant to use it.

Police are not trained on disability awareness and can mistakenly perceive some people with disability as aggressive in their behaviour and there is rapid escalation. There is also increased criminalisation of people with disability, as police are often the first responder for mental health crisis. Suggestion to invite the police liaison officer to a group meeting to raise awareness and understanding.

More disability awareness at restaurants and with businesses is needed, especially those under new management.

High cost of living is making it difficult, for example to cover housing, and still buy medicine and food and other living essentials.

There is not enough accessible and affordable housing in the local area.

More free activities for people with disability to keep people active and connected.

There needs to be better wayfinding and signage in Central Sydney.

Meaningful employment

Accessing work can be a barrier. Attitudes need to be changed and identified positions promoted to Aboriginal people with disability.

Positive case studies of employing people with disability, and events that share lived experience to create greater awareness, understanding and inclusion.

Meaningful employment

At interviews, people don't understand when you have non-visible disabilities – greater awareness and training is needed. Centrelink can also be difficult as there is a lack of awareness and understanding of non-visible disabilities.

More identified entry level positions are needed.

Improving systems and processes

City of Sydney website should use plain English and no jargon and give information in various formats, including in-person supports.

Greater cultural awareness and disability awareness from customer service staff and rangers is needed.

A separate community listening/focus group take place with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, including Carers NSW.

Promote 'A guide to council decision making' and ways people with disability can participate and have a say on matters important to them.

Feedback from this focus group and the draft inclusion (disability) action plan 2025–29 should be presented the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Panel.

Regular meetings such as the focus group, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability can openly share and advocate.

Ideas for future actions

Anti-racism campaign needed in City of Sydney local area, for example "Racism not welcome here" on banners with stories in media and news promoting positive images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. "We need a city that rejects racism, transphobia and ableism".

The group to regularly meet at 119 Redfern to discuss issues and connect to First Peoples Disability Network individual advocates and supports.

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers support group be established and run regularly at 119 Redfern or Redfern Community Centre.

A monthly community hub be established in Redfern with Centrelink, Legal Aid, NDIS, First People Disability Network advocates, mental health and disability services, and carers support services.

Have regular NDIS help desk with Aboriginal local area coordinator at Redfern Community Centre to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to NDIS.

Disability awareness training with Aboriginal people lived experience implemented to change attitudes, showcase positive stories, and give the business case for employing more people with disability.

Advocate to provide disability awareness training to local businesses, police and Centrelink.

Ideas for future actions

Awareness campaign for mobility parking permit holders and more mobility parking spaces.

Advocate and support more supported independent living and specialist disability accommodation in the City of Sydney local area.

Advocate and support community mental health service providers to service City of Sydney local area.

Training for people with disability about their rights and how to advocate and where to go for advocacy support.

Signage at City of Sydney facilities be reviewed, and new signage developed including assistance animals are welcome.



Image: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability focus group participants. Photo by Margaret Sevenjhazi

Attachment J – Focus group with disability service providers

When: Wednesday 16 October 2024

Participants: 12

Strengths / Assets	Barriers / Challenges
In the City of Sydney local area there is a strong interest in collaboration across all sectors.	More opportunities for socialisation and connection in safe and welcoming spaces as there are limited venues that offer after hours programs and limited programming on weekends.
A lot of organisations are really interested in understanding the needs and support gaps and hold focus groups and workshops to work collaboratively to help support the community.	Transport signage is an ongoing problem, lack of signage to help connect your journey of travel, for example no visibility of signage for lift access to the train station.
City of Sydney held events during International Day of People with Disability – the events were diverse, and across different venues. There are visible improvements that the City of Sydney makes each year. Communication was accessible	Bus timetable changes are not communicated to the community and buses do not turn up on time or at all.
The City of Sydney has a lot of inclusive sports programs. There are a variety of different sports that community can participate in across a variety of different venues, for example pickle ball, and basketball which provide opportunities to socialise.	Accessible taxi and Uber drop-off and pick-up points are an issue as there are not enough around the city to safely drop off and pick up someone. This becomes a safety issue for people with disability.
	Property development updates are not communicated to the community. Accessible pathways are often blocked off or blocked with cars during construction periods.
	There is still work to be done for inclusive employment that offers continued support.
	Not enough accessible and affordable housing available in the City of Sydney area. More advocacy is needed and opportunities are needed.

Opportunities	Needs / Gaps
The City of Sydney can work with smaller events to promote access and inclusion at events, including promoting and mandating the inclusive and accessible event guidelines.	More work needs to be done for visibility of people with disability through promotions and marketing campaigns and sharing positive stories.

Opportunities	Needs / Gaps
Opportunities to look into applications for sharing regular updates on transport and pathway access.	Making sure that people with disability are leading the conversation, have a seat at the table and are co-designing programs and co-production.
Cross collaboration across Council boundaries for opportunities of shared resources and capacity building.	Community centres provide free community spaces and should be promoted as safe spaces for people with disability to drop in.
Local businesses to offer employment opportunities to school leavers and support of transition programs.	Best practice across all programs and events to provide information in plain English and Easy Read versions.
Establish a platform for communication with local businesses to enhance employment of people with disability.	Making sure there are clear pathways at major events and provide disability awareness training to staff before the event.
	Advocate for more Uber/taxi support for people with disability attending appointments. Services are unavailable, or unreliable.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Training for organisations and businesses on disability awareness, to challenge bias, and stigma.

Positive images for promotion and marketing, using images of people with disability can help create more understanding and educate the community. Engage people with lived experience to participate in promotion and marketing and opportunities to share and learn from lived experience.

More opportunities to share positive news stories of people with disability, and promote positive case studies in mainstream communications.

Provide all communication with a disability lens, for example always have Auslan interpreters at events and not just for when someone requests it.

We need people with lived experience to provide advice – consult regularly with diverse people with disability.

Provide training to staff before major events for people with disability.

Consult with people with disability when planning for advice and preference access and inclusion, for example hearing impairment, clear pathways around major events, for example at Vivid.

Ensure that people with disability are involved in co-design and co production.

Liveable communities

Understand housing needs and ensure universal design is applied to new developments. The City of Sydney can advocate this in planning controls to support affordable and accessibility housing options,

Liveable communities

and advocate for liveable housing design guidelines to be mandatory, and promote more specialist disability accommodation in the City of Sydney local area.

Providing designated accessible drop-off areas for taxis and Uber around Central Sydney, specifically at City of Sydney facilities, for example Sydney Town Hall and community centres.

Opportunities for quiet and safe spaces and spaces for socialising and connecting with others should be available for people with disability, for example community centres.

The City of Sydney should advocate for more wheelchair accessible taxis in the local area.

Inclusive and accessible public domain guidelines should be promoted for best practice.

Access to information relevant for people with disability, including local service information and directories and disability advocacy should be provided on the City of Sydney website.

Support and information for people with disability experiencing domestic and family violence should be provided.

Meaningful employment

The City of Sydney should advocate to phase out segregated employment and Australian Disability Enterprises and support open employment of people with disability and fair pay.

Provide more pathways to open employment and improve recruitment pathways to suit individual needs. For example, partner with disability organisations such as Council for Intellectual Disability and University of NSW to employ more people with intellectual disability.

Work with businesses to promote more employment of people with disability and advocate and communicate the economic business case for employing people with disability.

Provide incentives for businesses to employ more people with disability and provide capacity building resources and workshops to make it easy.

Provide grants to help businesses improve access and inclusion to employ more people with disability.

Updating position descriptions to be available in Easy Read and provide support for people with disability applying for roles.

Advocate to raise the minimum wage for people with disability.

Have inclusive and transparent employment policies , for example reasonable adjustments.

Provide support to retain people with disability in the workplace, for example peer support and mentoring, reasonable adjustments and flexible working.

Provide funding and resources to support businesses to be able to offer Easy Read documentation.

Provide opportunities for people with disability to be role models, for example leaders with disability and women in leadership roles.

Meaningful employment

People with disability often have a fear to disclose and there is a lack of mainstream employment opportunities. There is a need to create a safe workplace to encourage people to disclose their disability, promote a safe and inclusive workplace culture.

Lack of awareness of the funding opportunities that Job Access has available for business and organisations to support people with disability in the workplace. More promotion and distribution of resources is needed to raise awareness.

Australia Post has a mentoring up program with opportunities available for people with disability to mentor people in leadership.

Processes in place to provide psychosocial safety for people with disability to feel safe to disclose.

Provide support for people with disability to start their own businesses.

Systems and processes

Ensure the website meets WCAG 2.2 and ensure all information is in plain English and provide documents in Easy Read and audio.

Ensure that the City of Sydney website is updated regularly, and the entirety of the website is accessible. Look at options to add a screen reader for content to be provided in audio format.

Do user testing with the website with people with a diverse range of disabilities to identify areas for improvement for access and inclusion.

Ensure customer service staff have disability awareness training to better enable support of people with disability. Have diverse disability training with people with lived experience to build customer service disability confidence and awareness, for example low vision, d/Deaf, Neurodivergent.

Ensure grant application forms are accessible, as a baseline all application forms should be in plain English and Easy Read.

Strengthen procurement processes and ensure no Australian Disability Enterprises as suppliers.

Vision

People with disability are engaged in any project from start to finish and not just for providing feedback. Best practice is co-design and co-production. People with disability need to be included in the decision making with a seat at the table.

Equitable job opportunities, identified roles and targets.

Able to access services.

Universal design principles.

Accessible accommodation is available.

Vision

Empowered people with disability who can make their own choices and advocate for the supports they need.

Principles

Participation

Engaged

Participatory

Social justice

Accessible

Empowerment

In the driver's seat – with choice and control

Engaged

Self-advocacy

Attachment K – Feedback from pop-up stalls at community events

To engage more community members on the new plan, pop-up stall engagements took place at various community events in August and September 2024. A summary of these is provided below.

Wear It Purple Day event – 28 August 2024

On 28 August 2024, the City of Sydney held an event to mark Wear It Purple Day at Reginald Murphy Community Centre, Potts Point.

When we asked attendees “What can the City of Sydney do to be more inclusive of young people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability?”, feedback included:

- sensory quiet space
- less loud noises
- visibility in marketing
- more awareness and resources for young people in the workplace
- seats at the bus stop outside Gadigal metro station
- gender-neutral bathrooms
- better wayfinding.

R U OK? Plant Swap event – 9 September 2024

On 9 September 2024, the City of Sydney held a plant swap event to mark R U OK? Day at Pyrmont Community Centre.

When we asked attendees to “Help us plant a seed and grow our inclusion disability action plan”, feedback included:

- connect with Pyrmont support group, Jacksons Laundry, provide mobility aids, Monday AM
- more rails for steps
- more community garden visits and gardening groups, and afternoon teas for older people
- more art and craft activities at community centres
- no paid tickets at Sydney New Year’s Eve (not accessible)
- more parking permits for support workers
- better pathways to volunteering, mentoring about how to get involved
- more activities for men, such as a book club
- greater staffing at community centre.

Moon Festival community event – 12 September 2024

On 12 September 2024, the City of Sydney held an event to mark the Moon Festival.

When we asked attendees “How can the City of Sydney be more accessible and inclusive of people with disability”, feedback included:

- ramps
- dancing and music classes for adults
- more buses to Waterloo
- parking
- social groups for adults with autism
- bus services from Pyrmont.

R U OK? Pancake Day event – 13 September 2024

On 13 September 2024, the City of Sydney held an event to mark R U OK? Day at Cliff Noble Community Centre.

Stage 1

When we asked attendees “How can the City of Sydney be more accessible and inclusive of people with disability”, feedback included:

- community gardens in Waterloo
- shelters and seating at bus stops
- improved footpaths without obstructions
- more mobility parking and street parking
- more buses in Alexandria and Erskineville
- transport to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital
- speed limits for scooters and bikes.

