

Public Exhibition - Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-29

File No: X109038

Summary

Under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the City of Sydney is required to develop a disability inclusion action plan in line with the 4-year integrated planning and reporting cycle. The City's draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 (the Plan) will be the City of Sydney's sixth disability action plan and must be in place by 1 July 2025.

The plan was developed through consultation with over 350 people with disability, their families and carers, disability service providers and disability representative organisations, the City of Sydney's Inclusive City disability employee network and Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel. The Engagement Report is included as Attachment B.

Public exhibition of the draft plan will provide a further opportunity for comment on the plan. Feedback received from public exhibition will be incorporated into the final plan before it is presented to Council for adoption in June 2025.

The draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 outlines how we plan to make our city more inclusive and accessible by continuing to remove barriers, protecting the rights of people with disability, and promoting the value of diversity and inclusion across the community.

The draft plan includes actions under 4 key directions set by the NSW Government:

- (a) positive community attitudes and behaviours;
- (b) liveable communities;
- (c) meaningful employment; and
- (d) systems and processes.

Progress on the implementation of the plan will be reported annually to the Minister for Families and Communities and Disability Inclusion, the NSW Disability Council and to Council in line with the City of Sydney's annual reporting process. At the end of the 4-year period the City of Sydney will review the broader impacts of the plan and identify any new priorities that need to be considered to continue to deliver on the long-term vision.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council note the ongoing contribution of the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel in development and implementation of the City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) action plans;
- (B) Council approve the draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029, as shown at Attachment A to the subject report, for public exhibition for 28 days;
- (C) Council note that the draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029, including any recommended changes, will be reported to Council for consideration following the exhibition period;
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make minor editorial amendments for clarity or correction of drafting errors prior to the exhibition of the draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029; and
- (E) Council note the engagement report summarising consultation for the development of the Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029, as shown at Attachment B to the subject report

Attachments

Attachment A. Draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-29

Attachment B. Engagement Report - Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-29

Background

1. According to the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics report, 5.5 million (21.4%) Australians have with a disability, and 11.9% of all Australians living in households are carers. In addition, 22% of Australians have a mental health condition, according to the most recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (NSMHW).
2. The likelihood of experiencing disability increases as we age, with nearly one in 2 people over the age of 65 living with some form of disability. These statistics reveal that disability is part of the human experience and that most people will, at some point in their lives, experience some form of disability, a lived experience of a mental health condition, or be a carer.
3. The City of Sydney has a responsibility to ensure that our city is inclusive and accessible for all. Inclusive cities are easy to get around, they provide people with disability with opportunities for participation in the diverse social, cultural life of the city and access to meaningful employment opportunities. An inclusive city benefits everyone, not just people with disability.
4. On 3 December 2014, the NSW Government introduced the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, followed by the NSW Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022. This legislation aims to better recognise the human rights of people with disability and mandates local councils to develop disability inclusion action plans to be reviewed and remade every 4 years.
5. The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 requires that councils report on implementation of their plan in their Annual Report and forward a copy to the Minister Families and Communities and Disability Inclusion and the NSW Disability Council by 1 July each year. These plans must:
 - (a) outline how councils will deliver on four areas of action
 - (b) be developed in consultation with people with disability
 - (c) be reviewed every 4 years and remade
6. Over the last 4 years, through implementation of the current Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2021-2025 (the Plan), the City of Sydney has continued to address priorities identified by our communities, including addressing physical barriers in the built environment to ensure that everyone is able to access streets, parks, playgrounds and open spaces.
7. We have upgraded footpaths, built new access ramps, and opened new inclusive and community facilities. We have also continued to improve access for people with disability to information and services, programs and events. The draft plan continues to build on these strengths, whilst also harnessing opportunities to address emerging issues within our community.
8. Community expectation levels have continued to grow since the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) review and the Final Report for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

9. The City of Sydney continues to review and change the way we do business to ensure our practices are inclusive for everyone, including people with intersectional identities, and those with non-visible disabilities.
10. The draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 is the City of Sydney's sixth plan. The first Action Plan for People with Disabilities in 2002 primarily focused on physical disability and access in the physical environment.
11. The City of Sydney's second plan, which covered the period from 2007 to 2011 expanded in scope to include other important aspects of inclusion to promote participation by people with a disability.
12. The third plan (2014-2017) was developed in consultation with the City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel (the panel). It aimed to build on the successes of previous plans by continuing to embed inclusion and access as core considerations across all council services and processes and to deliver meaningful outcomes for people with disability and their families and carers.
13. Implementation of the plan resulted in substantial and ongoing improvements in the accessibility of public spaces and the development of inclusive programming and accessible information across services.
14. The fourth plan (2017-2021), developed in consultation with people with disability and the panel, included practical steps to embed inclusion across the organisation. A key focus of this plan was to provide greater access to our built environment including City of Sydney parks, streets, playgrounds and facilities.
15. The fifth, and current plan (2021-25), continues our commitment to addressing barriers for people with disability. This includes through continuing to provide a range of inclusive programs, services and events, implementing improvements in public spaces and facilities, and providing accessible and inclusive communications, decision-making and engagement opportunities. In addition, to working to increase understanding of barriers faced by people with non-visible disabilities and working to improve our recruitment and retention practices.
16. The City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel has provided ongoing advice during development of this draft plan. The panel will continue to play a critical role in monitoring the implementation of the 2025-2029 plan, once adopted.
17. In line with requirements under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022, we have used an extensive range of engagement approaches in developing the plan, capturing the feedback and ideas of over 350 people through:
 - (a) an online survey promoted on the City of Sydney's Sydney Your Say webpage from 20 August to 17 September 2024. There were 158 submissions received through the web page and 2 via an Easy Read version of the survey
 - (b) five focus groups with people with lived experience of disability during August to October 2024. A total of 53 people attended. Each session was delivered in partnership with specialist disability organisations and were peer-facilitated by a person with disability. These included a focus group each for:
 - (i) people with intellectual disability, in collaboration with Council for Intellectual Disability

- (ii) people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability, in collaboration with Sydney Queer and Disability Community Group (SQuAD)
 - (iii) people with disability from multicultural backgrounds, in collaboration with Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA), Ethnic Community Services Co-operative (ECSC) and Settlement Services International (SSI)
 - (iv) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, in collaboration with First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FDPN)
 - (v) people who are neurodivergent, in collaboration with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)
- (c) an additional focus group with 12 representatives from disability service providers who are members of the City of Sydney and Eastern Sydney Ageing and Disability Interagency network
- (d) a roundtable workshop attended by 90 people, which included people with disability, family members and carers, disability service providers and disability representative organisations, and our employees. Members of the City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel, and members of the City of Sydney's Inclusive City disability employee network peer-facilitated table-based workshops
- (e) multiple, in-person pop up engagements at R U OK Day, Wear it Purple and Lunar Moon festival events at our community centres
- (f) feedback via phone or email. Two submissions were received via email.
18. A summary of key feedback and suggestions raised during the consultation period have been captured are included within the Engagement Report (Attachment B).
19. The draft plan includes 29 actions under 4 key directions that address barriers for people with disability across a range of key areas. Under this plan the City of Sydney will:
- (a) continue to provide a range of inclusive programs, services and events; implement access improvements in public spaces and facilities, and provide accessible and inclusive communications, decision-making and engagement opportunities with a greater focus on intersectionality and non-visible disabilities
 - (b) address key findings from the Disability Royal Commission
 - (c) continue to invest in our people to recruit and retain employees with disability, with a strategic approach from entry level to leadership, and continue to develop a culture of diversity and inclusion
 - (d) develop disaster preparedness and climate adaptation initiatives that empower people with disability to be prepared for and respond to emergencies and disasters

20. The new plan incorporates feedback gathered through the engagement process, key findings from the Disability Royal Commission, suggestions by the City of Sydney's Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel, and Resolutions of Council. These include commitments to:
- (a) report through the plan and our 10-year forward program of specific timelines for the delivery of accessible streets and public places
 - (b) consult with peak bodies and with people with disability to provide expert advice on the review of our local housing strategy, including the requirement for accessible and adaptable housing in the Sydney Development Control Plan
 - (c) review relevant policies to ensure City of Sydney services don't procure from, create, fund or participate, or award new grants for, organisations that participate in segregated services or employment, or engage in restrictive practices, including Australian disability enterprises (ADEs) and/or any organisations that provide sub-minimum wages
 - (d) work to empower communities to identify, report and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability through programs, training, resources and advocacy along with provision of information about how and where to report
 - (e) deliver programs, training and advocacy to aid the prevention and response to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability ensure the City of Sydney's learning and development programs continue to increase awareness of opportunities to include people with disability, with a focus on intersectionality and people with diverse disabilities
 - (f) continue to collaborate with local businesses and organisations to build their capacity to be more inclusive and accessible
 - (g) continue to prioritise the use of positive authentic videos, images and stories of people with diverse disabilities for use in publications, digital platforms and media channels including those about people with a severe disability and people with intersectional identities
 - (h) continue to provide equal access to our information and services, promote accessibility features of our facilities and open spaces and develop and produce marketing and communication strategies to raise awareness and ensure increased autonomy and access. This includes creating a dedicated landing page on the City of Sydney website to increase information available to people with disability
 - (i) continue to produce and encourage major events in line with our recently reviewed Inclusive and Accessibility Events Guidelines
 - (j) review the City of Sydney's current wayfinding pylon flag and finger signs and braille and tactile signs, and develop recommendations for consideration in the signage asset renewal process
 - (k) advocate for more effective mechanisms for effective enforcement of relevant disability legislation and standards including a dedicated Minister for Disability, a department for disability, equality and inclusion and an Australian Disability Rights Act to further realise the human rights of people with disability

- (l) focus on removing systemic barriers to employment through applying a strategic approach towards recruitment, retention and development of employees with disability, from entry level to leadership and continue to review and inform relevant City of Sydney processes and procedures to increase the number of employees with disability, including an aim to have 5% of our workforce identifying as people with disability by 2029
 - (m) investigate opportunities for additional data capture and measurement around how we record dollar spend and number of suppliers that are disability-led
 - (n) strengthen our procurement practices by building relationships with disability-led organisations and businesses and investigate pathways to further support disability-led businesses we engage, and identify and remove any barriers within the procurement process
 - (o) identify opportunities for collaborating with the Disability Employment Centre of Excellence, supporting disability-led businesses and organisations and employment of people with disability
 - (p) investigate the possibility of collaborating with other councils on a sector-wide approach to procurement that supports disability-led businesses
21. In addition, the City of Sydney has a 10-year forward program of public domain renewal and upgrades projects committed in the Resourcing Strategy, thereby providing specific timelines for the delivery of accessible streets and public places.
22. Renewal and upgrade of the public domain (streets and public spaces) is guided by our Inclusive and Accessible Public Domain Policy and guidelines. The City of Sydney reports regularly to Council and the community via the Inclusion (disability) Action Plan annual report and delivery program progress reports on:
- number of pedestrian ramps we install/upgrade each year
 - area of footway we renew each year
 - progress on lighting improvement programs
 - increased numbers of disability parking spaces
 - timing of delivery of major projects improving the public domain
23. The City of Sydney has proposed increasing the requirement for accessible and adaptable housing in the Sydney Development Control Plan to 100% Silver performance levels against the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines for all development and 15% Platinum and for larger new residential developments. This proposal has been on public exhibition and submissions are being considered. It will be reported back to Council for consideration later this year.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan

24. The City of Sydney's draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 has been designed to align with the four directions established in the NSW Disability Action Plan and to build on the progress made by previous plans.

Strategic Alignment - A City for All - Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan

25. This plan aligns with the City of Sydney's long-term vision for a just, inclusive and sustainable Sydney which is embodied in the Social Sustainability Policy and Action Plan - A City for All. The plan supports delivery on our commitments with A City for All, in particular the principles that "Sydney is a just city that respects human rights and dignity" and that "Sydney is a safe and accessible city for people of all ages and abilities".

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

26. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050: Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This plan is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
- (a) Direction 1 – Responsible governance and stewardship - People with disability are supported to participate in decision-making at the City of Sydney.
 - (b) Direction 5 - A City for Walking, Cycling and Public Transport - Accessible streetscapes and infrastructure to enable people with disability to navigate our city.
 - (c) Direction 6 – An Equitable and Inclusive City – Everyone can participate, prosper and reach their full potential in a city that is fair and just, including people with disability.
 - (d) Direction 7 - Resilient and Diverse Communities - We are committed to building resilience and ensuring social justice and equity for all, including people with disability.
 - (e) Direction 8 - A Thriving Cultural and Creative Life - People with disability have opportunities to participate in, contribute to and benefit from cultural and creative life within the city.
 - (f) Direction 10 - Housing for All - People with disability have access to high quality, affordable and diverse housing types.

Organisational Impact

27. The City of Sydney has responsibilities under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 to provide equitable access to its facilities, infrastructure and services for people with disability. We have responsibilities under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 to develop a disability inclusion action plan that addresses barriers to inclusive participation faced by people with disability.
28. The draft Inclusion (Disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 includes practical steps the City of Sydney will take to address barriers for people with disability to ensure inclusive participation in city life, access to mainstream services and meaningful employment.

29. These actions have been designed to build on our ongoing commitment to inclusion, the successes of previous plans, and harness emerging opportunities, with the aim of ensuring inclusion access and are core considerations across all City of Sydney services and facilities.
30. The actions are deliverable within existing staffing and operational budgets or will be delivered through future planned capital works projects, procurement contracts and agreements.

Risks

31. Any identified risks arising from the adoption of the plan are within the City of Sydney's risk appetite, which states:
 - (a) We make decisions that align with our corporate objectives, policies and strategies and are committed to conducting our activities in full compliance with applicable laws, regulations and relevant industry standard and;
 - (b) We acknowledge that some financial risks may be necessary to achieve our goals, particularly when investing in new initiatives that align with our strategic objectives. We carefully evaluate financial options and risks and consider the potential impact on our financial position, cash flow, and overall stability and; .
 - (c) We acknowledge the diverse expectations of our stakeholders, including the community, ratepayers, regulatory bodies and elected officials. Our risk appetite considers stakeholder expectations and seeks to align infrastructure management practices with their needs, while maintaining a responsible and sustainable approach.
32. Specific to deadlines for adoption of the plan, if the Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-2029 is not endorsed by 1 July 2025 the City of Sydney will not meet its legislative requirements under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014.

Social / Cultural / Community

33. This plan's purpose is to foster the development of an inclusive and accessible city for everyone. The delivery of actions within the plan will work towards people with disability who live, work in or visit the city experiencing more equitable opportunities for social and economic inclusion.
34. Inclusive cities benefit everyone, not just people with disability. By implementing key actions within this plan and continuing to build a city that is easy to get around, we provide equitable opportunities for participation in the diverse social, cultural life of the city and access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Economic

35. The draft plan contains actions to improve access to the public domain and participation in events run by the City of Sydney. The plan also includes actions to support businesses in the city, particularly those within the hospitality and retail sectors, to be more inclusive and accessible to people with disability. Improving access in these ways encourages a wider diversity of people to come to the city and therefore opens up potential market opportunities for businesses.

Financial Implications

36. The proposed actions in the draft Inclusion (disability) Action Plan 2025-29 will be delivered within the resourcing levels included in the draft 2025/26 operational and capital works budgets and future year forward estimates, subject to Council approval. These resourcing levels are consistent with previous iterations of the City of Sydney's budgets.

Relevant Legislation

37. Local Government Act 1993.
38. Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth).
39. Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022.
40. Carers Recognition Act 2010.
41. Anti-Discrimination Act 1977.
42. Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987 (Cth).

Public Consultation

43. The plan incorporates extensive consultation with people with disability and their carers, and other people with lived experience of disability, as noted in the subject report. Further consultation will be sought during the proposed period of public exhibition.
44. During the public exhibition period, the draft plan will be open for comment on the City of Sydney's Sydney Your Say webpage. It will be published in a range of accessible formats including:
 - (a) accessible PDF
 - (b) large print
 - (c) Easy Read.
45. The draft plan will also be circulated to key disability sector organisations and people that participated in the consultation process for comment. These include organisations representing people with physical disability, people with intellectual disability, people who are neurodivergent, people with disability who are from multicultural backgrounds, and people of diverse sexualities and genders, amongst others.

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