

Relevant Information for Council

FILE: X109038 **DATE:** 20 June 2025

TO: Lord Mayor and Councillors

FROM: Emma Rigney, Executive Director City Life

THROUGH: Monica Barone PSM, Chief Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Information Relevant To Item 9.3 – Post Exhibition - Inclusion (Disability)
Action Plan 2025-2029

For Noting

This memo is for the information of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

Purpose

To provide Councillors with information about the Inclusion (disability) Action Plan.

Background

At the meeting of the Equity and Housing Committee on 16 June 2025, further information was sought on the following:

Specific targets and actions in the Community Strategic Plan

The Inclusion (disability) Action Plan includes a target to have 5% of our workforce identifying as people with disability by 2029. Whilst we do not have specific targets for other areas of the plan, it does include a range of projects and timelines consistent with the long-term financial plan, community strategic plan and resourcing strategies.

Many of those involved in the consultation process, including peak bodies and members of our Advisory Panel, understand how the City delivers our programs, specifically the public domain programs, that enhance and increase accessibility in the public domain. Priorities, needs and timelines are subject to change and therefore the plan identifies key projects and tracks progress and timelines of these. For example, the City of Sydney has a 10-year forward program of public domain renewal and upgrade projects committed in the Resourcing Strategy. This is currently reported every 6 months on a range of infrastructure projects including the number of pedestrian ramps installed or upgraded each year, total area of footway renewed, progress on lighting improvement programs, increased numbers of disability parking spaces, and timing of delivery of major projects improving the public domain.

The City of Sydney is committed to continuously improving the public domain for people with disability. During this plan we will focus on creating a methodology to create a baseline to be able to include specific targets for accessible facilities and public domain for the next plan (2029-2033).

Through the implementation of our Housing for All Strategy and the previous plan, planning controls were approved to increase the requirement for accessible housing in the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 to require all dwellings be delivered to a minimum Liveable Housing Design silver performance standard and in larger new residential developments, 15% of dwellings will continue to be delivered to the Australian Standard (Adaptable Housing). The City of Sydney uses every lever available to maximise the amount of affordable and diverse housing in our local area. We do this through our planning controls, by levying affordable housing contributions from developers and distributing them to community housing providers, selling council owned land and properties at a discount, and providing grants of up to \$3m from our Affordable and Diverse Housing Fund. We will continue to work with people with diverse disabilities to better understand needs, barriers and opportunities to provide for more accessible and diverse housing for people with disability, as reflected in action 12: Consult with peak bodies and people with disability to provide expert advice on the review of the City of Sydney local housing strategy.

Actions to achieve the plan, along with associated resources and budgets, are integrated into the City of Sydney's Operational plan and reported on quarterly as part of operational plan reporting. Biannual meetings are held between responsible officers to ensure information sharing and to track progress against actions.

In addition, the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 requires Councils to develop an annual report on progress against the Inclusion (disability) Action Plan to submit to the NSW Minister of Families and Communities and Disability Inclusion and Disability Council NSW. This report goes to Council for endorsement annually.

Further submissions received (Council for Intellectual Disability / Vision Australia)

The Council for Intellectual Disability and Vision Australia were part of extensive consultation in the development the plan. Both organisations were invited to participate in the Stage 1 Sydney Your Say survey regarding the plan, the co-design roundtable as part of the development of the plan, and to comment on the draft plan.

In addition, the Council for Intellectual Disability was heavily involved in the consultation leading up to the new action plan. They formed the focus groups, workshops and roundtables and helped form the new action plan.

The additional submission received from the **Council for Intellectual Disability** was complimentary and highlighted the following issues:

- Wayfinding in Central Sydney was highlighted as difficult for some people with disability.

Wayfinding will be reviewed in consultation with people with disability, we will develop a feasibility study and pilot new ways of wayfinding with the view to develop a business case to upgrade wayfinding across Central Sydney.

This is covered by Action 4: Continue to improve the accessibility of streets, footpaths, parks and open places through renewal programs, upgrades and new capital projects in compliance with the Inclusive and accessible public domain policy and guidelines.

- Concerns about lack of affordable housing , feeling unsafe in public housing and not being provided the support they need by Homes NSW to resolve issues with their neighbours

The City will consult with people with intellectual disability as part of *Action 12: Consult with peak bodies and people with disability to provide expert advice on the review of the City of Sydney local housing strategy.*

The City will pass on feedback about safety in public housing to Homes NSW.

- Issues with Police crowd control during major events. CID report that sometimes Police have not made reasonable adjustments for people with visible and invisible disabilities—particularly when train stations are closed due to overcrowding, forcing individuals to walk long distances they are unable to manage.

City staff will speak to police and other major events organisers.

- Use affirmative action to employ people with intellectual disability:

The City has an affirmative action employment policy that fast-tracks people with disability to interview stage should they meet the minimum requirements for a role.

Identified positions for people with disability will be considered during the upcoming review of the People Strategy, to be co-designed in consultation with employees with disability.

These actions are covered by *Action 20: Develop a more strategic approach for the City of Sydney to be inclusive of employees with disability, from entry level to leadership.*

- People with intellectual disability have trouble navigating complex websites and forms:

The City designs our websites and digital communications to comply with current web accessibility standards, in line with the City's Digital and Print Accessibility Policy and Guidelines. We also champion the use of plain English.

However, we recognise that WCAG 3.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) do not fully address the needs of people with intellectual disability. That is why we always maintain ways for people to get help and provide feedback over the phone, or in person, should they have difficulty navigating websites and forms.

These actions are covered by *Action 26: Continue to provide equal access to our information and services by ensuring our websites and printed materials adhere to our digital and print accessibility policy.*

In response to the additional submission received from **Vision Australia:**

Safety concerns of people who are blind or have low vision because of safety concerns about infrastructure such as; continuous footpaths, floating bus stops and other design aspects

Covered by Action 4: Continue to improve the accessibility of streets, footpaths, parks and open places through renewal programs, upgrades and new capital projects in compliance with the Inclusive and accessible public domain policy and guidelines.

As part of the review of the public domain guidelines in 2025/26, we will consult with people with diverse disabilities including people who are blind or have low vision and our Inclusion (disability) advisory panel. We will also consult with people with disability in 2026/27 to identify specific barriers in the built environment to assist with prioritising and targeting accessibility improvements for streets, footpaths, parks and open places. It should be noted that continuous footpath treatments are designed to comply with relevant Australian Accessibility Standards.

The City of Sydney has used bus stop platforms across 10 locations since 2010 and has found the design, with zebra crossings, to be a safe way of giving priority to people walking across the cycleway and to improve walking amenity along the street by providing extra space for bus stop infrastructure and for passengers to wait, out of the walking path of travel along the footpath.

The City of Sydney is committed to working with Vision Australia to explore the barriers of concern including; continuous footpaths, floating bus stops and other design aspects, in collaboration with people who are blind or have low vision. These insights will help to inform the review of both the Inclusive and accessible public domain guidelines and Sydney Streets Code accessibility review.

It should be noted that, pending Council approval, Vision Australia will be represented on our new Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel, and as such will have opportunity to advocate for people who are blind or have low vision.

Consultation process

In line with requirements under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and Disability Inclusion Amendment Act 2022, we used an extensive range of engagement approaches in developing the plan. This included capturing the feedback and ideas of over 350 people through 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.

Five focus groups with people with lived experience of disability were held 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:

- people with intellectual disability, in collaboration with the Council for Intellectual Disability,
- people of diverse sexualities and genders with disability, in collaboration with Sydney Queer and Disability Community Group (SQuAD),
- 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),
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, in collaboration with First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FDPN), and
- people who are neurodivergent, in collaboration with Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect).

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 was held, along with 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 at the workshop. A total of 38 disability and peak organisations attended, including the Australian Disability Network, People with Disability Australia, Australia Human Rights Commission, Accessible Arts, Council for Intellectual Disability, and Mental Health Commission NSW.

Multiple, in-person pop up engagements at R U OK Day, Wear it Purple and Lunar Moon festival events at our community centres were also held. The draft plan was placed on exhibition on the City of Sydney's Sydney Your Say webpage from 13 May to 11 June 2025. A total of 16 submissions were received during the exhibition period.

The City of Sydney's previous Inclusion (disability) Advisory Panel were heavily involved in the development of the plan. The new plan, once approved by Council, will be the first item taken to the new panel when they meet in July 2025.

The panel will guide implementation of the plan over the next 4 years, and we will take on board their feedback and suggestions in line with the Terms of Reference for the panel, which state that the purpose of the Inclusion (Disability) Advisory Panel is to provide strategic, expert and impartial advice to the City of Sydney. This includes the development, implementation, monitoring and review of City of Sydney policies, strategies and plans to advance the inclusion of people with disability. In addition, the panel will help set the pathway for the City of Sydney's contribution on improvements to policy, process and the public domain to support people with disability. This includes providing feedback and advice to aid in the development and implementation of the City of Sydney's inclusion (disability) action plan.

Memo from Emma Rigney, Executive Director City Life

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Approved

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