How local governments can increase the social and economic participation of people with disability

Plan, implement and measure outcomes

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Overview

Local governments increase the social and economic participation of people with disability by using strategic planning processes which identify and respond to community needs. Local governments in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia are required by state legislation to develop specific disability action plans. In other states and territories without this legislation, many local governments still develop disability access and inclusion plans, whilst others use a range of different approaches.

Some local governments have had specific plans for accessibility for a number of years and are up to their third or more plan. Others have only recently developed their first plan. However, almost all who develop plan consult widely with people with disability their families and carers and with disability
service providers.

This section provides information about how local governments set targets and develop plans to increase social and economic participation, how actions are implemented, and how outcomes for people with disability are measured.

Set targets

Most local governments set targets and timelines for actions to increase the social and economic participation of people with disability as part of strategic planning; for example, during disability action planning, often in conjunction with people with disability. Some local governments have developed plans with their advisory committees and some engage people with disability and the community more broadly. Local governments recognise the need to establish targets and performance measures in order to establish a benchmark from which to monitor outputs as well as outcomes, i.e., whether the strategies, policies and programs they implement have increased the social
and economic participation of people
with disability.

WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – SETTING TARGETS WITH THE COMMUNITY AND MEASURING OUTCOMES

(Urban Regional)

About 5.8% of the community in Wollongong live with a profound or severe disability. As part of the development of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan, Council engaged a range of people with disability and their carers to understand what was most important to them in community life and what to improve.

The principal actions in the plan will become part of Council's four-year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan. Council will report progress as part of the Annual Report and provide updates on the website. An evaluation framework has been developed, which includes performance indicators to measure change and the effectiveness of the plan for:

- Creating liveable communities for people with disability

- Access to employment for people with disability

- Access to Council information and consultation processes

- Community attitudes and behaviours.

Changes in these performance indicators are measured using Council data, a disability access and inclusion survey, and accessibility audits of Council publications.

See: Disability Inclusion Action Plan (www.wollongong.nsw.gov.au/council/publicdocuments/Documents/Disability Inclusion Action Plan.pdf)

Develop and integrate action plans

Disability action plans are most effectively implemented and monitored when integrated into other strategic planning and reporting processes, for example, the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework in New South Wales. This is because the actions for social and economic participation appear in the operational or corporate plans, which then inform division or departmental annual work plans. Accountability is critical and according to the national survey most local governments assign responsibility and timeframes for actions and report on progress annually.

COONAMBLE SHIRE COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS FOR INCLUSION

(Rural and Remote)

In 2016, the Shire developed its first disability inclusion action plan in response to the New South Wales Disability Inclusion Act 2014 which requires all local governments to adopt such a plan by 30 June 2017. A number of improvements to the accessibility of Council facilities and services were identified through engagement with the community and staff, to be delivered over a three-year period.
These included:

- Improving access to information on the Council website

- Delivering disability awareness training for all staff

- Raising awareness of disability in the community

- Ensuring access to key Council infrastructure and facilities.

These actions are integrated into Council's Annual Plan to ensure that responsibility is assigned and progress is monitored and reported annually.

GLENORCHY CITY COUNCIL, TASMANIA – ASSIGNING ACCOUNTABILITY

(Urban Fringe)

Council recently consulted the community about their long-term vision and adopted a 25-year Community Plan (2015-2040). The plan includes five community goals promoting the feel of inclusiveness for all.

Tasmania's legislated ten-year Strategic Plan (2016-2025) then outlines the strategies to meet the community goals and the four-year Annual Plan identifies the actions to deliver these strategies. One action includes the implementation of Council's Access Action Plan. Responsibility for this is assigned to the Community, Economic Development and Business Directorate.

Regional planning can also be important where the needs of communities and/or where the issues around service provision are similar and nearly half of Australia local governments consult with their neighbours when planning for social and economic participation.

WUJAL WUJAL ABORIGINAL SHIRE COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – REGIONAL PLANNING FOR DISABILITY

(Rural and Remote)

Wujal Wujal is a small council bordering Hopevale Aboriginal Shire and Cook Shire Councils. As Aboriginal Councils, Wujal Wujal and Hopevale deliver the majority of disability and aged care services in their communities with significant Australian and State government funding. Cook Shire Council covers most of the eastern and central parts of Cape York. The majority of other service providers are based in Cairns, at least five hours away, and provide limited outreach services to the region.

Given their close proximity and service challenges, the three councils have historically shared assets and infrastructure and jointly made representations to the Australian and State governments for better services. For example, the councils currently share accessible buses and are advocating for an increase in accessible social housing stock in the region to avoid the extensive modification of existing stock.

With the implementation of the NDIS in the region from 1 July 2018, the three councils have undertaken a regional service review and capacity assessment to determine what services to register to provide under the NDIS. This has led to high levels of consultation and alignment of strategic and operational plans to create complementary strategies, actions and resourcing to support people with disability in the region.

Disability action plans should be reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to the meet the needs of the local community and adjusted accordingly. Where these plans are legislated, the review period is fixed, for example, every four years in New South Wales.

PENRITH CITY COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – CHANGING EMPHASIS OVER TIME

(Urban Fringe)

Council is about to adopt its third four-year disability inclusion action plan. The strategies and actions have changed with each plan to reflect the previous plan's achievements and changes in making Penrith an accessible and inclusive community. The first plan mainly focused on creating accessible infrastructure and facilities. The second focused on five themes to build the capacity of people with disability through inclusion:

- Leadership and partnerships – working with City partners to promote access and inclusion

- Environmental, local and transport planning – planning for accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods and improved transport and recreation options

- Development, design and built environment – improving the

way the built environment facilitates access and interaction

◎ Equality in employment and training

◎ Improving access to Council information.

In undertaking disability inclusion action planning for the third time, rather than creating a separate document, disability inclusion action planning has been incorporated into Council's four year delivery program. The Disability Inclusion Action priorities that were developed for the Delivery Program align with the key outcome areas outlined in the New South Wales Government Disability Inclusion Action Plan Planning Guidelines. These latest actions reflect the need to continue to build staff capacity to create inclusive services and communities.

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – SETTING TIMEFRAMES AND BUDGETS

(Urban Regional)

Toowoomba has high population growth, in particular from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and an ageing population. Council was formed in 2008 as an amalgamation of eight councils, each with varying accessibility standards for infrastructure and facilities.

Council recently adopted its first Access and Equity Plan (2016-2021). The plan aims to guide decision-making to provide services and facilities to make the Toowoomba region an inclusive and accessible community. The plan contains a range of actions across six focus areas identified by their community:

◎ Pedestrians, parking and transport

◎ Community facilities, amenities and open space

◎ Planning and services

◎ Training and employment

◎ Communication and community engagement

◎ Programs and events.

Each action is allocated an indicative budget, timeframe and responsibility. The plan is heavily focused on reviewing and auditing the accessibility of Council infrastructure and services which will help inform plans for upgrading, consolidating and rebuilding infrastructure and facilities across the region.

In some local governments, disability planning is embedded across related community sectors such as ageing, youth and health. Collaboration across different departments within local government is one of the key enablers of this much more holistic 'whole-of-person' approach.

MAROONDAH CITY COUNCIL, VICTORIA – COMMITMENT ACROSS PORTFOLIOS OF RESPONSIBILITY

(Urban Developed)

Council has a long history of disability planning. It has an ageing population and recently adopted the Maroondah Housing Strategy 2016 to plan for future growth and increases in population density.

One focus of this strategy is to increase accessible housing in areas close to transport, employment clusters and community services. Another is to investigate how to incorporate universal design principles into design and development to ensure accessibility and safety for all ages and abilities.

A key enabler for the Housing Strategy is the Greening the Greyfields project. This is a federally backed project, together with Swinburne University, to promote sustainable housing regeneration in the 'middle suburbs' by landowners working with local government to develop more intense and liveable housing precincts. Council's involvement in this project is setting the foundations to help meet the accessible housing targets and outcomes for people with all abilities. It is anticipated that on the ground precincts will start to roll out within the next 5 years.

The Maroondah City Youth Plan (2012-2016) also delivered cross-departmental outcomes by developing and delivering mental health and disability programs for young people aged 12-25.

Deliver accessible infrastructure

Access allows people with disability to participate in everyday activities and local governments are aware of and aim to comply with all relevant standards and codes, such as those under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Building Code of Australia. The national survey showed that almost all local governments consider that the provision of accessible infrastructure and public facilities is one of their key roles.

The Building Code of Australia outlines the minimum standards when designing and delivering new, or upgrading existing, infrastructure. In addition, local governments are responsible for approving Disability Discrimination Act assessments for private developments.

However, most local governments feel that the current Building Code of Australia standards need to be updated because they frequently do not:

- Accommodate all dimensions of disability, i.e., the minimum standards primarily support access for people with mobility issues rather than intellectual, vision or hearing impairments

- Keep up to date with assistive technology developments, i.e., latest motorised scooters can be wider and have different turning circles to traditional motorised wheelchairs

- Reflect leading practice in designing and planning infrastructure, i.e., universal design principles.

In response to these issues, some Local governments go beyond compliance and develop locally tailored standards and processes to:

- Identify access issues from the perspectives of people with disability and/or through universal design frameworks

- Ensure resources are dedicated for enabling higher standards of access and inclusion

- Lobby private developer and businesses to consider disability perspectives and/or consider a universal design framework.

Universal design

Universal design places human diversity as the focus of the design process so buildings and environments can be designed to meet the needs of all users.

It therefore considers all people, regardless of their age, size, and physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual ability. It is about achieving good design so that everyone can access, use and understand the environment to the greatest extent and in the most independent and natural manner possible, without the need for adaptations or specialised solutions.

See: Building for everyone: a universal design approach universaldesign.ie/Built-Environment/Building-for-Everyone/1-External-Environment.pdf

Some local governments conduct audits to identify and address access issues. Access audits, when combined with community consultation and usage statistics can also help determine priorities for change. Actions can then be integrated into infrastructure delivery plans.

current usage and demand patterns.

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – CONDUCTING ACCESS AUDITS TO IDENTIFY ISSUES
(Urban Regional)

Council has a significant number of heritage listed buildings and older facilities. Many of these require major upgrades to make them accessible, safe and financially sustainable to maintain. Council has committed to audit all existing infrastructure and facilities against the Building Code of Australia in its first Access and Equity Plan (2016-2021).

The audit will inform Council's Asset Management Plan and help decide whether to upgrade, sell or demolish existing facilities or build new facilities in a number of towns. These decisions will take into account the current use of facilities, where the community could share multipurpose facilities and where there are gaps in the suitability of existing facilities for some community groups.

As part of the audit, Community Liaison Officers are working with a number of community groups, including those which deliver services and programs for people with disability, to understand

To further support decision-making during the design phase of infrastructure projects some local governments organise disability awareness site visits for key decision-makers and planners to help them better understand and consider the perspectives and experiences of people with disability. Often this is a role for the disability advisory committee.

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF THE COPPER COAST, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – INTEGRATING PERSPECTIVES TO ENABLE ACCESS
(Rural and Remote)

Council is about to embark on the redevelopment of the Kadina town centre. During the concept phase, the Disability Discrimination Act Committee organised an experiential disability awareness excursion for elected members and senior executives. This provided significant insights into the perspectives and experiences for people with disability and their carers to safely navigate the CBD.

The visit led to a significant change from a vehicle-focused to a pedestrian-focused design. Plans were amended to incorporate additional cut-ins for shorter street crossings and vehicle

diversion measures. The design will also influence plans for redevelopments in the other two major district centres.

and tactile signage throughout.

The centre is also now used by community groups to deliver sports and aquatic programs for people with disability.

Many local governments aim to exceed the Building Code of Australia by incorporating universal design principles in major redevelopments of infrastructure.

The lack of availability and incorrect use of disabled parking the source of many community complaints. Some local governments have responded by undertaking research and providing additional access permits to both residents and visitors to their respective local government areas.

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – INCORPORATING UNIVERSAL DESIGN INTO THE AQUATIC AND RECREATION CENTRE

(Urban Developed)

Council recently built a new aquatic and recreation centre to replace its ageing recreation centre and consolidate the centre with the Council swimming pool.

Led by the Mayor, plus member of Council and staff, who are strong advocates for people with disability, the tender specified that universal design principles needed to be incorporated across the whole facility. The centre is now fully accessible for people with disability, including ramps into the swimming pool, disabled change facilities which exceed the Building Code of Australia, viewing areas which are all accessible for people with low mobility and braille

CITY OF MELBOURNE, VICTORIA – CITY ACCESS PERMITS

(Capital City)

A City Access Permit provides extra parking time for holders of a valid Parking Permit for People with Disabilities to regularly attend work, study or specialist medical appointments in the City of Melbourne.

ELIGIBILITY:

To be eligible for a City Access Permit, applicants must hold a valid Parking Permit

for People with Disabilities issued in their name.

Applicants must also provide a letter on company letterhead from one of the following:

- Their workplace confirming their employment

- Their educational institution confirming their enrolment

- A medical specialist confirming their ongoing requirement for medical treatment within the municipality.

The workplace, educational institution or specialist medical appointments must be within the City of Melbourne.

Applicants may nominate up to three vehicle registration numbers on the permit.

Local governments often form partnerships with key stakeholders and community members, for example local businesses and people with disability, to develop local standards to improve access.

WARRNAMBOOL CITY COUNCIL, VICTORIA – PROMOTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

(Urban Regional)

Council recognises the importance of enabling city centre accessibility for people with disability to increase social and economic participation.

As such, Council engaged local businesses through the implementation of the Welcoming Business Program. To receive Welcoming Business endorsement, businesses must satisfy a set of minimum standards relating to physical access, communication and customer service. The physical access requirements are consistent with the Australian Standards for access and mobility, and relate to features such as the accessibility of the front entrance, aisle width, provision of accessible toilet facilities, and signage. Staff awareness of the needs of people with disability is vital.

Businesses which meet these standards are issued with a Welcoming Business sticker to display prominently at the point of entry to advise people with disability their premises are accessible.

Over 250 businesses in the Warrnambool city centre are Welcoming Businesses and participation in the program continues to grow. The Welcoming Business Program has also been introduced in the surrounding Corangamite and Moyne Shires, and it can be easily replicated in other local government areas.

In addition, those local governments which enable access to infrastructure or purpose build facilities attract residents and visitors with disability, which contributes to the vibrancy of their communities.

WOLLONGONG CITY COUNCIL, NEW SOUTH WALES – THE IMPACT OF DELIVERING PLAYGROUND ACCESSIBILITY

(Urban Regional)

Council identified the Wollongong Botanic Gardens as a priority site to increase recreation, in particular visitation by people with disability, their families and carers. In 2008, Council installed a large accessible playground and over 70% of visitors now go to this part of the gardens. The playground has been the main driver for a huge increase in visitation, from 200,000 to 520,000 per annum, and these numbers are the largest for any botanical gardens in Australia outside Brisbane.

Council is currently in the process of constructing an accessible rainforest pathway around the rainforest collection and has plans to complete a raised walkway up through the canopy in the future. The Garden also has a 12-person electric vehicle for guided tours and two free mobility scooters for use by visitors.

Deliver programs and facilitate access to programs

All local governments view the provision of accessible programs and activities as core business. Generally, they support social participation for people with disability by facilitating and delivering universally accessible activities, programs and events. The national survey showed that around two thirds of local governments deliver all of their community programs with universal access, often in response to feedback from the community.

CITY OF WHITTLESEA, VICTORIA – ACCESSIBLE ART EXHIBITION

(Urban Fringe)

The City has a strong arts and culture program and holds a number of annual art exhibitions at the Council chambers. Rather than hold exhibitions specifically for artists with disability, the City now makes all exhibitions universally inclusive.

For example, the annual Accessible Art exhibition began as an exhibition specifically for artists with disability. Due to low participation and feedback from local artists that the exhibition discriminated against artists without disability, the exhibition is now open to all local artists irrespective of their abilities. This has seen a rise in participation by artists, including those with disability, and there are no references about the artists' abilities in the exhibition.

About one third of local governments also deliver programs and activities specifically for people with disability, their families and carers.

MAROONDAH CITY COUNCIL, VICTORIA – DELIVERING DISABILITY-SPECIFIC AND UNIVERSAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

(Urban Developed)

Council supports a range of programs for people with disability, their families and carers.

The Stroke-a-Chord Choir was formed in 2010 with the assistance of Maroondah City Council. Stroke survivors with communication difficulties meet weekly and express themselves through song. It supports similar choirs to develop across Victoria.

The Pathways to Carers program offers carers of people with disabilities or mental health issues an opportunity to walk together in the municipalities of Manningham, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges. Walks are held in each municipality once a month with guest walkers from the Australian and state governments and non-government organisations. Representatives from the Department of Social Services and Transport Victoria have joined walks to discuss policy and infrastructure plans. This has been so successful that other organisations have approached Council to participate as guest walkers.

Different Journeys is an organisation that provides support for Teens, Adults and their families living with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It provides an opportunity for those living with ASD to socialise in a sensory safe environment. It builds connections, opportunities and communities. The council supports the program by providing facilities, producing promotional materials and providing administrative support.

Council also delivers a range of youth programs and made a commitment in their latest youth program to deliver an action focused on disability. This resulted in the Youth Services Team working with the Disability Access Officer and a disability service provider to produce Different but Same, a video highlighting the social experiences of children aged 8-10 with disability. The video has had more than 12,000 views on social media and has led to the Maroondah Council Youth Centre being used for program delivery by a disability service provider.

Council also delivers a range of other social programs through the HACC Social Inclusion and Wellbeing Program and ensures these are universally inclusive, including for people with disability.

CITY OF PLAYFORD, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – DELIVERING DISABILITY-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

(Urban Fringe)

The City partly funds a Disability Community Programs Coordinator to deliver a recreation and day options program for adults with disability. This includes the Friends group program, a three day a week recreation and skills programs for adults with disability designed to encourage independence and self-growth through group interaction. Members pay a small fee to participate in community centre-based activities, including craft, cooking, music and various workshops as well as regular community outings. The cost includes transport and lunch. The City partners with other services providers and businesses, such as Lolly Jar Circus, Centacare and Department of Education, Disability Services SA, to deliver a broad program which meets the needs of participants.

There is also a Friends after-hours program one night per week and on Saturdays.

Council also partnered with the Northern Carers Network to deliver the Saturday Kids program for children with disability and runs a monthly disco for young people with disability aged 16 and over, including free entry for carers.

The Disability Community Programs Coordinator also delivers the Reach Out Mums program which is a free, weekly information and support group for mothers with disabilities whose families may be at risk.

Where local governments do not directly deliver particular programs and activities, they encourage and support community organisations to deliver inclusive programs and activities, especially via accessibility checklists for event organisers.

TOOWOOMBA REGIONAL COUNCIL, QUEENSLAND – SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE SPORTS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES

(Urban Regional)

Council specifically upgrades facilities used by local sports and recreation clubs who provide participation opportunities for people with disability.

After the 2016 Paralympic Games, members of the community with disabilities expressed an interest in participating in sailing and cycling. The Sailing Club researched the Sailability program, an international not-for-profit program to facilitate opportunities for people with disability to sail. Sailability Queensland provide assistance in all aspects of setting up, training, insurance, web listing, publicity, volunteer recruitment and funding but require clubs to erect accessible

wharfs. To enable wharf access, Council installed a hoist for people with mobility issues to access the boats.

The Darling Downs Cycling Club purchased a number of tandem bicycles so that people with vision impairments could participate in cycling. However, these bicycles did not fit inside the existing storage facility. Council funded the building of a new, larger storage facility.

Measure outcomes

Most local governments with disability action plans provide progress reports at least annually to their Councils. However, there is little evidence that local governments measure how and whether their actions increase the social and economic participation of people with disability. Actions are often reported but outcomes and impacts are often seen as being too hard to assess because the success of policies and programs is dependent on a range of factors (some of which are beyond the control of local government) and it is often hard to attribute outcomes to specific local government actions.

CITY OF SALISBURY, SOUTH AUSTRALIA – EVALUATING ACCESS AND INCLUSION PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS
(Urban Fringe)

The City worked with a social profit agency, JFA Purple Orange, to design a tool to enable local governments to quantify the current status of access and inclusion and develop capacity to deliver infrastructure, programs and services to the community which are accessible by, and inclusive of, people living with disability. The tool was trialled across various divisions within Council which provided a benchmark for Council to see how accessible and inclusive their facilities and services are. Further trialling is required to further develop this evaluation instrument so that it is robust and adaptable to different contexts.

Measuring outcomes

Based on this resource, local governments could use an evaluation
framework approach to measure outcomes based on:

- Engagement – did we engage the right people about the right things at the right time and did our engagement with them make an impact on what we were trying to plan or implement?

- Plan, implement and measure outcomes – did we use the right processes to plan for change and are we seeing increased social and economic participation as a result of our actions?

- Build capability and capacity – have we built the right capabilities within our own local government and with others in terms of leadership and skills to ensure our thinking has social and economic participation as part of decision-making? Have we allocated sufficient resources to our policies and programs and were they used efficiently and effectively?

- Build networks and partnerships – how have our networks and partnerships contribute to strong outcomes for our community?

- Advocacy – how were we able to advocate increasing social and economic participation within the local government sector, with other levels of government and with other non-government organisations?

- Boost local employment – what has been the impact of our actions on local employment and what has been the impact on our local community as a whole?

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