



2025-29

Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Make a Bigger Circle



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS COUNCIL

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Doonghan Dancers,
NAIDOC Week 2025



Acknowledgement of Country

Yii Birrbay Barray

This is Birpai Country

Nyura yii gu mara la barray gu, nyaa gi, ngarra gi

You have come here, to the Country to see, listen and remember

Gathay Nyiirun Wakulda

Let's all go together as one

We acknowledge that we are on Birpai Country and pay respect to all Elders past and present. We acknowledge the ongoing connection to the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters of the Port Macquarie Hastings region.

This Birpai Country acknowledgement is delivered verbally at gatherings and as a written statement in formal Council documents.

The story behind the name

The name, Make a Bigger Circle, emerged during the engagement forums on culture and inclusion, when a participant shared a simple yet powerful statement:

“When there’s not enough room around the fire, we make a bigger circle.”

This saying turned heads. It captured the spirit of inclusion, generosity, and adaptability that defines our region’s aspirations for inclusion. It was all about bringing people in - a practice of welcoming people to the table or fire.

As in-depth feedback from small group settings and survey data were reviewed and interpreted, the phrase “make a bigger circle” stood out as capturing the essence of what our community consistently told us. Everyone wants to belong and to feel valued. We’ve adopted this phrase in our community planning as a guiding concept.

It reminds us that inclusion is not a fixed space - it’s a dynamic circle that can grow to include new voices, stories, and perspectives.

Whether we’re creating intergenerational programs, designing inclusive events, or reimagining public spaces, we’ll return to this idea:

There is always room for more.

The name, Make a Bigger Circle, has been adopted for the Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2025-29, and extended to ‘Growing the Circle’ for the Cultural Plan, 2025-29.

Smoking ceremony, NAIDOC Week flag raising ceremony

When there’s not enough room around the fire, we make a bigger circle.

*- Participant,
multicultural forum,
CSU April 2025*

Council’s Vision

Imagine2050 Community Strategic Plan

The most liveable, sustainable, and innovative place in Australia.

Our Vision

2026-29 Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan

A welcoming, inclusive, and resilient community where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

Our vision reflects our shared commitment to equity, dignity, and community belonging. It is built on the belief that everyone in our region deserves the opportunity to participate fully in community life, regardless of background, beliefs, identity, or ability.

This vision has been shaped by extensive community engagement, and informed by best practice and legislative frameworks. It recognises that diversity is a strength and that equity and access are essential to our shared success.

By removing barriers, enabling participation, and amplifying voices, we aim to build a community where:

- Everyone belongs, feels safe, and can contribute
- Difference is not just accepted; it is valued
- Everyone’s story matters

This plan supports our Community Vision: to be ‘the most liveable, sustainable, and innovative place in Australia’.

The Case for Inclusion

Inclusion is essential to creating strong, liveable, sustainable and innovative communities. When people feel welcome, safe and able to contribute, the whole community benefits. Inclusion strengthens connection and trust, builds resilience, and supports people to live with dignity and purpose.

The evidence

Research shows the positive impact of inclusion on community wellbeing:

- People who feel a strong sense of belonging are 3x more likely to report good health and 5x more likely to contribute to community life (Vic Health, 2020)
- Inclusive public spaces and events can lead to a 30–50% increase in participation, particularly among people with disability and older residents (AHRC, 2014)
- Universal design and inclusive services reduce long-term costs, improve access, and increase uptake across the whole population (Centre for Universal Design Australia, 2018)

The benefits of inclusion

Inclusion does not only remove barriers for individuals; it creates stronger communities. It supports participation in civic, social, economic and cultural life, unlocks innovation and creativity, and fosters fairness and mutual respect. Communities that embrace inclusion are healthier, more cohesive, and better prepared to face challenges together.

Inclusion is everyone's responsibility

By its nature, inclusion involves all of us - individuals, families, community groups, businesses, service providers, and every level of government. Each has a role to play in building environments where people feel that they belong and can contribute.

Inclusion creates stronger outcomes

When inclusion is embedded, the benefits are felt across every aspect of community life:

PILLAR	DEFINITION
Social	Strengthens connection, fairness, and wellbeing
Economic	Increases participation, innovation, and opportunity
Environmental	Supports community stewardship of shared spaces
Civic/Governance	Improves trust, representation, and local decision-making

Council's role

Within this whole-of-community effort, Council has a particular role as the level of government closest to everyday life. Council's role may involve one or more of the following:

- **Deliver:** leading the planning and implementation of initiatives
- **Partner:** working collaboratively with community groups, service providers, or other levels of government
- **Support:** enabling or assisting others through funding, promotion, resources, or capacity building to strengthen inclusive community action

Purpose of this plan

This plan is delivered with the understanding that it embeds Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

It sets out how Council will play its part in building an inclusive community, particularly for people who face barriers to participation, including people with disability, people who identify as neurodivergent, people living with dementia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ people, carers, people experiencing social or financial disadvantage, and people of all ages. It also embeds Council's role in the primary prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence, recognising safety and dignity as fundamental to inclusion.

This plan is our commitment to remove barriers, build on community strengths, and create opportunities for everyone to take part in local life - safely, meaningfully, and with dignity.



Legislative, policy and strategic context

Following are national, state and local frameworks that inform this plan

PMHC Strategic documents

Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Suite

- Imagine 2050: Community Strategic Plan
- 2025 - 29 Delivery Program
- Operational Plan (annual)
- Resourcing Strategy (including Workforce and Asset Management Plans)

Additional Council Strategies and Plans

- Liveable Communities Strategy (draft)
- Social Strategy (draft)
- Cultural Plan 2025 - 2029
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Activation Plan (new in 2026)
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy (draft)

- Places to Play Plan
- Asset Management Plans
- Generic Plans of Management
- Integrated Transport Plan
- Regional Integrated Transport Strategy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Local Strategic Planning Statement
- Recreation and Open Space Action Plan
- Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Policy

Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Legislation and Mandates

- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- NSW Government Sector Employment Act 2013
- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)

Strategic Frameworks and Policies

- Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap (2020)
- Aboriginal Outcomes Strategy 2022-2025
- NSW Ageing Well in NSW: Seniors Strategy 2021–2031
- NSW LGBTQIA+ Health Strategy 2022–2027
- NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026
- Pathways to Prevention, NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028
- NSW Multicultural Principles (Multicultural NSW Act 2000)
- NSW Regional Youth Framework

Connection with our Integrated Planning and Reporting

The Community Inclusion and Disability Inclusion Action Plan supports the delivery of Council's key strategic plans within the Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) Framework. It ensures inclusion, equity and accessibility are embedded across Council's operations, services and community engagement.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) is embedded within this plan, ensuring Council meets its obligations under the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and takes meaningful action to remove barriers and improve participation.

As a whole-of-Council plan, it aligns with multiple Community Strategic Plan outcomes and is managed through the Delivery Program (DP) 2025-29 Principal Activity 2.1.1: Community Activation. Progress is reviewed and reported on annually alongside the Operational Plan and Budget, to allow the action plan remain responsive and achievable.



Community Outcome 2: Liveable

We are a safe, inclusive and vibrant region, with an active, healthy and connected community

QBL alignment*

SOCIAL CIVIC ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIC

CSP Strategy

2.2 Plan and activate our town centres and villages to support local business and create places for people to enjoy day and night

2.3 Provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to connect and participate in programs and events that celebrate diversity, culture and the arts

Community priorities



* **Quadruple Bottom Line:** We are committed to a sustainable and balanced approach to decision-making, guided by the Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL). The QBL framework ensures that environmental, social, economic and civic leadership considerations form part of all aspects of our planning, operations and decision making.

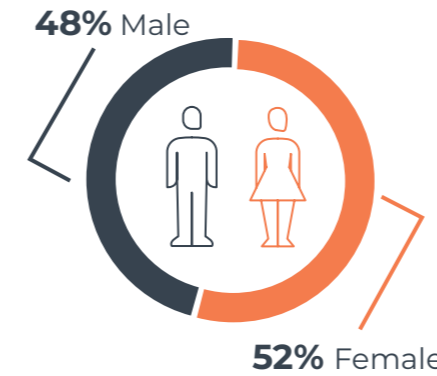


Painting in the Park
seniors activity

Our community snapshot

Population

92,650
in 2025



- **5.5%** Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- **17.3%** born overseas
- **8.0%** need disability assistance (above NSW average)
- **3.0%** living with dementia
- **20%** report experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress

Households



39,259
in 2025

- **2.3** average number of people per household
- **34.3%** couples without children
- **28.5%** single person
- **22.9%** couples with children
- **11.3%** one parent families
- **2.9%** extended family or group
- **2,192** people counted sleeping rough in NSW

Education

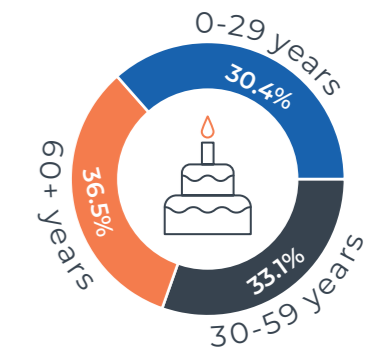


60.1%
completed year 12

- **46.7%** Vocationally Trained (Certificates, Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas)
- **20.8%** University Educated (Bachelor Degree level and above)

Age

49
years (median age)



* Statistics sourced from:
REMPAN Economics 2021, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics, Research and Health Needs Assessment 2025 - 28, Healthy North Coast and Homes NSW 2025 NSW Street Count

Looking back

Reflecting on our 2022-25 Plan

The Port Macquarie Hastings Council's Community Inclusion Plan 2022-2025 took a strategic and community-focused approach to building a region that is welcoming, accessible, inclusive, and resilient across five key focus areas.

The outcomes below showcase a range of initiatives delivered through the 2022–2025 Plan in partnership with our community.

OUTCOME 1: A CONNECTED COMMUNITY



Council delivered a broad range of inclusive events and programs:

- Flagship events included ArtWalk (up to 25,000 attendees annually), Christmas Fairs (up to 15,000 attendees annually), and Harmony Week.
- Initiatives such as the Matildas live site, school holiday programs (617 youth participants), and 57 active volunteers across Council services supported social connection.
- Community Grants distributed up to \$200,000 annually
- MyCommunity Directory was launched to improve access to services and support.

OUTCOME 2: AN ACCEPTING COMMUNITY

Council supported programs that celebrated diversity and promoted inclusion:

- International Day of People with a Disability events supported disability inclusion.
- Harmony Haven and Cultural Connections events celebrated cultural diversity.
- Mid North Coast Indian Association delivered Diwali - Festival of Light, attracting more than 4000 people.
- 150 community members attended the Queer Screen Festival 2025 at the Glasshouse, sharing LGBTQIA+ stories and voices to promote understanding and acceptance.
- Pineapple youth-led program and Hastings Youth Voice (HYV) gave youth a platform for leadership.
- Council collaborated with Birpai and Bunyah LALCs and supported NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, and Aboriginal-led projects including art installations and the Ironbark Falls Prevention Program.
- Seniors Festival events attracted over 300 participants.
- Council supported a range of interagency networks and made submissions to NSW Parliament on regional community safety.

OUTCOME 3: A LIVEABLE COMMUNITY

Efforts focused on access and equity:

- Over 3,200 metres of new accessible pathways and upgrades to parks, BBQs, shelters, and drinking fountains were delivered.
- The Graffiti Blaster service logged 633 volunteer hours, with additional support for youth offenders through justice programs.
- A new PMHC Disability Reference Group was formed.
- Council reviewed development plans with access and safety in mind, including playgrounds, boat ramps, and public spaces.



OUTCOME 4: A RESILIENT COMMUNITY

Council improved community preparedness and recovery capacity:

- Emergency pop-ups, workshops, and the Recovery Outreach Program supported disaster-affected residents.
- The Disaster Dashboard and emergency hub provide vital preparedness information.
- Grant writing workshops and interagency collaboration have funded cultural and social recovery programs.
- Bushfire/flood readiness workshops reached 89 residents, and several communities (e.g. Pappinbarra) began their own Emergency Response Plans.

OUTCOME 5: A COMMUNITY LEADER

Council is embedding inclusion across internal practices:

- Staff participated in Aboriginal cultural and education sessions, with further cultural training planned for FY25-26.



- Internal strategic actions include diversity hiring programs, a Flexible Working Policy, and recognition at the Australian HR Awards for inclusion efforts.
- Corporate volunteering supported local spaces, and staff actively engaged in the Sea Country Project and Reconciliation Action Plan development.

Looking forward

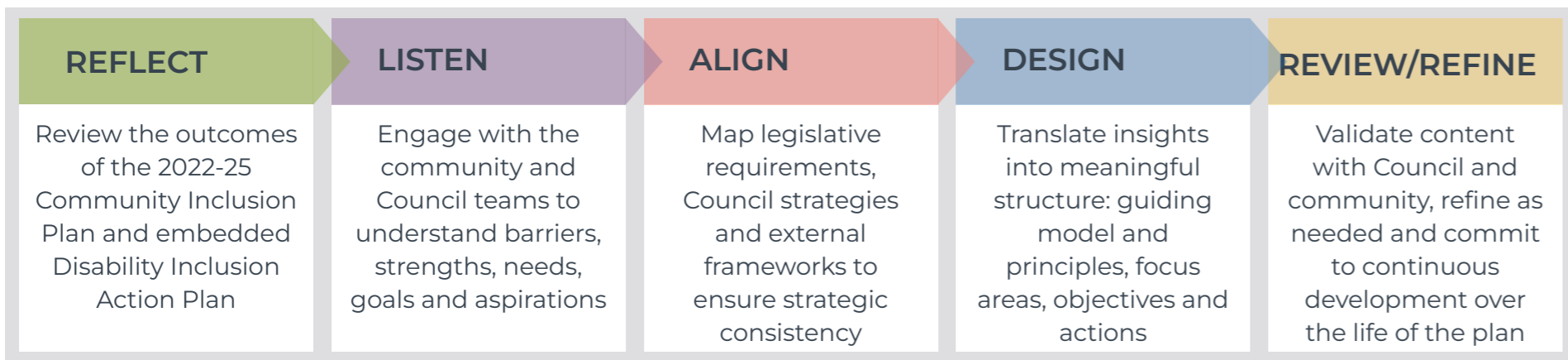
Developing our 2025-29 Plan

This new plan builds on the foundations laid by the 2022-25 Community Inclusion Plan, and embedded Disability Inclusion Action Plan, acknowledging progress made while responding to emerging needs, growing expectations, and shifting community dynamics. Over the past year, we've revisited our goals, strengthened our partnerships, and reflected on lessons learned to ensure this plan is not only relevant but responsive. We've worked to ensure the plan is:

- Authentic and grounded in lived experience, drawing on the voices of those most impacted by exclusion and inequality.

- Informed by data and evidence, including community engagement findings, demographic analysis, and legislative requirements.
- Aligned with broader Council strategies and frameworks, including the Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program, and legislative obligations under the Local Government Act 1993 and Disability Inclusion Act 2014.
- Cohesive and shared, created in close collaboration with the development of the Cultural Plan to reflect our community's unified aspirations for inclusion, cultural expression, and a strong sense of belonging.

Development process



Engagement

Two stages of community engagement informed the development of this plan:

1. Initial engagement: to shape the plan's priorities, structure, and focus areas.

2. Public exhibition: to invite community feedback on the draft and refine the final version.

We designed our engagement program to reach a broad and diverse cross-section of the community, ensuring people with varied needs, perspectives, and lived experiences could contribute.

To capture local priorities and experiences of inclusion and exclusion, we also undertook focused outreach with groups often underrepresented in consultation, including:

- Seniors
- Youth
- Multicultural communities
- LGBTQIA+ community
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- People living with disability
- People living with dementia
- Domestic, family and sexual violence specialist services

Engagement activity snapshot

Initial engagement activities included:

- **Surveys:** A public survey was hosted on the 'Have Your Say' platform from 1 April to 5 May 2025, inviting broad community participation.
- **Focus Groups:** Targeted group discussions ensured deeper engagement with specific community segments, enabling a detailed understanding of their unique needs.
- **Community Events:** In-person and online events provided additional opportunities for engagement, encouraging face-to-face dialogue and direct feedback.

Public Exhibition methods included:

- Exhibition of draft plan and Easy Read version on Have Your Say platform, with submissions accepted via the platform, email, and phone
- Focus group sessions

We know that people's experiences aren't shaped by just one part of who they are. In listening and reviewing feedback, we considered intersectionality (the way different aspects of identity overlap) to better understand how inclusion and exclusion show up in everyday life. This helped us interpret feedback in a way that reflects the complexity of people's experiences and informs the plan's actions.

Our community's insights

Community members shared the conditions that support inclusion: welcoming language, spaces that work for everyone, meaningful partnerships, and systems that respond to people's real needs.

These insights shaped how we developed the plan and its priorities.

What we heard

LANGUAGE MATTERS

Inclusive, respectful language helps people feel seen, welcomed, included, and valued.

EXCLUSION IS OFTEN INVISIBLE

Social and system-level barriers can make people feel unwelcome, even when physical access is provided.

DESIGN FOR EVERYONE

Universal design makes spaces safer and more usable - not just for people with disability, but for all.

SMALL ACTIONS COUNT

Thoughtful, practical steps, like flexible processes or multilingual signs, can have a big impact.

PARTNERSHIPS MATTER

People want to work with Council in meaningful ways and be recognised for their contributions.

CONNECTION SUPPORTS WELLBEING

Welcoming spaces help build trust and belonging, especially when they make space for vulnerability.

INCLUSION TAKES TIME

Communities want Council to keep listening, adapting, and embedding inclusion in everyday practice.

INCLUSION IS LAYERED

People's needs and strengths are shaped by many intersecting parts of who they are — inclusion must recognise that complexity.

GENERATIONS NEED EACH OTHER

People value opportunities for younger and older community members to connect and learn together.

SAFETY MATTERS

People want spaces, services, and events where everyone is able to participate without fear of harm or exclusion.

Everybody feels welcome.

Being welcomed without judgement. Not having to change who you are to take part.

When things are easy to understand, and you don't feel like a burden for asking.

If you're included, you don't have a feeling you need inclusion.

Inclusion was described as feeling seen, heard and valued, and having fair opportunities to participate and contribute.

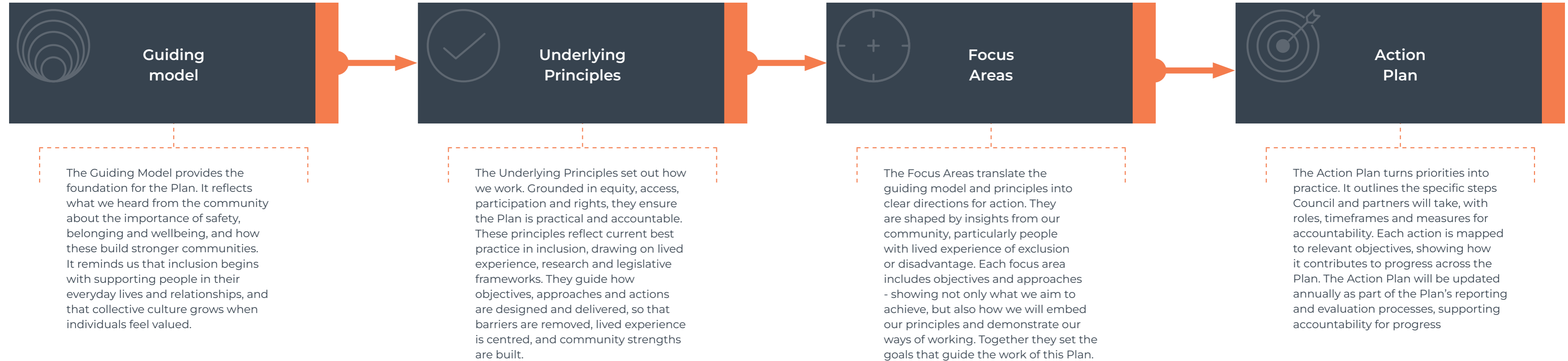
It's about respecting identity, removing unnecessary barriers, and supporting people to take part in community life on their own terms.



Youth Homelessness Matters Day 2024

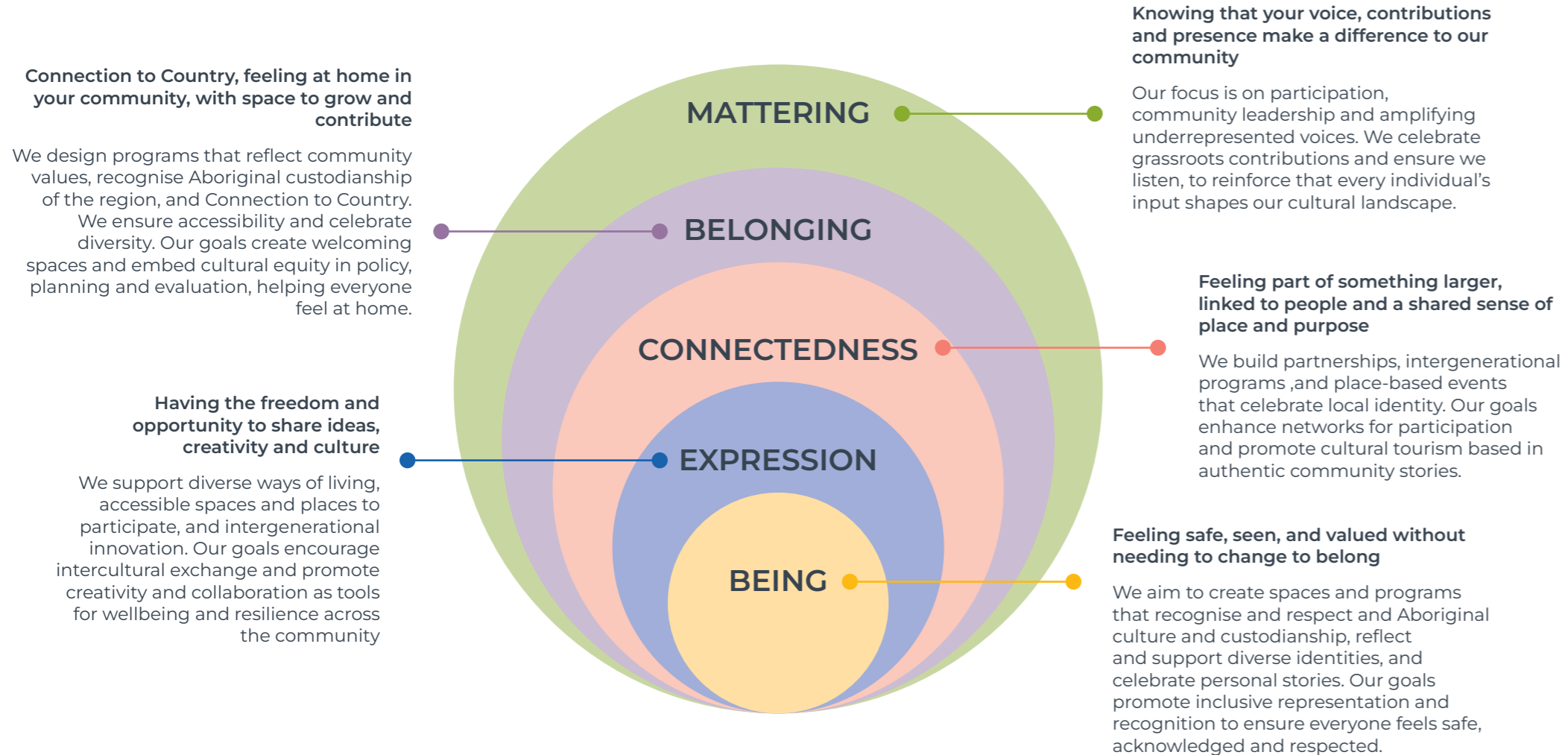
Plan design

The Community Inclusion Plan has been shaped around clear design principles. It builds on a guiding model defined through community consultation, applies underlying principles to guide decision-making, and sets out focus areas and actions that strengthen inclusion across the community.



Guiding model

A Guiding Model was developed from themes identified through extensive community engagement and informed by research on wellbeing, culture, belonging and inclusion. The model reflects the cyclical relationship between individual wellbeing and collective culture - that supporting individuals helps build stronger communities, and in turn, strong communities create environments where individuals can thrive.



Underlying principles

These principles build on our Guiding Model and are grounded in the Social Justice Principles of equity, access, participation and rights. Shaped by community insights and lived experience, they show how we'll work — removing barriers, building on strengths, and creating space for everyone to take part. They also draw on trusted frameworks to reflect current best practice.

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
Dignity and Self-Determination	Everyone has the right to participate in community life, be treated with dignity and respect, and make their own informed choices.
Intersectionality	People have overlapping identities (e.g. culture, disability, age, gender, sexuality) that shape how they experience inclusion or exclusion.
Co-Design and Lived Experience	We work with people who have lived experience of exclusion to design better programs, services, and decisions.
Barrier Removal and Universal Design	We aim to identify and remove barriers that prevent participation, and to design environments, services, and systems that can be used by everyone.
Strengths-Based Community Building	We focus on what our community does well - building on local strengths, relationships, and resilience.
Continuous Improvement	We learn from what works and what doesn't, adapt based on evidence and feedback, and improve over time.

These guiding principles are informed by a range of legislative, theoretical, and community-based frameworks that support inclusive practice across diverse groups. See appendix for full list.

Focus areas

The focus areas guide how this Plan is delivered. They reflect what we heard through community engagement and from people with lived experience of exclusion, disadvantage, or marginalisation. They also incorporate the outcome areas required under the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), which is embedded within this broader Community Inclusion Plan.

Together, the focus areas set the framework for achieving the plan's goals and outcomes. The following pages outline each focus area in more detail, including objectives, approaches, and success measures. The accompanying Action Plan identifies the specific actions and projects that will deliver these objectives.

FOCUS AREA	DIAP OUTCOME	GOAL
 1. WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING	Attitudes and Behaviours	Ensure people feel safe, respected, included, and able to be themselves in community life.
 2. ACCESSIBLE AND LIVEABLE	Liveable Communities	Promote environments that are accessible, usable and enhance everyday safety, participation, and wellbeing.
 3. RESILIENT AND PREPARED	Attitudes and Behaviours	Work alongside communities to strengthen their ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from disruption and adversity.
 4. ENGAGED AND REPRESENTED	Employment, Systems and Processes	Ensure the diversity of our community is represented and reflected in leadership, civic life, decision-making, and employment.
 5. EVALUATING AND EVOLVING	Liveable Communities, Systems and Processes	Use data, feedback, and lived experience to strengthen accountability and continuously improve inclusion outcomes.

All abilities program:
Painting in the Park





Focus area 1: Welcoming and Affirming

DIAP FOCUS AREA

Attitudes and Behaviours

GOAL

Ensure people feel safe, respected, included, and able to be themselves in community life.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

- People want to feel seen, respected, and able to express their identity without fear of judgment, harm or exclusion.
- Storytelling, cultural events, and inclusive language help foster belonging.
- Seniors, youth, and newcomers highlighted the need for better communication and visibility of opportunities.
- Intergenerational connection was seen as a way to break down stereotypes and build empathy.
- People told us visible signs of inclusion and allyship (such as flags, language, and accessibility features) help them feel safe and welcome in community spaces.

REF	OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL'S ROLE	APPROACHES
1.1	Council spaces, events and communications are safe, welcoming, and affirming of our diverse community.	Deliver, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to reflect local culture and connection to place in Council spaces and events. • Apply inclusive language, design, and signage across Council spaces, events and initiatives. • Ensure Council communications, campaigns, and visual materials reflect diversity, inclusion, respect, and safety. • Promote intergenerational participation and connection.
1.2	People have opportunities to build empathy, understanding and connection across cultures, identities and lived experiences.	Deliver, Partner, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver and support events that celebrate diversity and bring people together through shared learning and connection. • Promote opportunities for mutual understanding and respect across different cultures, beliefs, identities, and life experiences. • Collaborate on local campaigns that raise awareness, champion inclusion, and advocate for equity.
1.3	Community-led efforts to build inclusion, belonging, safety, and respect are supported and recognised.	Partner, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Community Grants Program to support initiatives that strengthen inclusion, connection, respect, safety, and belonging. • Build and strengthen relationships with inclusion-focused community, advocacy, and business networks to stay informed and responsive to community-led priorities.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Growth in the number or reach of locally-led inclusion initiatives supported through Community Grants, promotion or partnerships
- Increased visibility and representation of diverse cultures, beliefs, identities, languages, age groups and unique lived experiences in Council's public communications and event programs
- Increased participation in community events by a broader cross-section of the community, including often-underrepresented groups
- Improved community satisfaction scores related to feeling welcome, respected, or included



Focus area 2: Accessible and Liveable

DIAP FOCUS AREA

Liveable Communities

GOAL

Promote environments that are accessible, usable and enhance everyday safety, participation, and wellbeing.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

- People with disabilities, seniors, and families want better access to venues, transport, and information.
- Barriers include digital exclusion, inaccessible infrastructure, and lack of inclusive design.
- Community called for more inclusive public spaces, shaded seating, and walkable neighbourhoods.
- Accessible communication and signage were seen as essential to participation.
- Community members highlighted the need for Council to take action that helps prevent violence and promotes respect.
- Disability and Dementia advocacy representatives highlighted that carers and support networks play a vital role in helping people access community life and should be considered in planning and design.

REF	OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL'S ROLE	APPROACHES
2.1	People can access and use public spaces, places and facilities with comfort, safety and dignity.	Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply universal design principles when planning, upgrading, or renewing infrastructure. • Prioritise upgrades that address access gaps and safety issues identified through lived experience feedback. • Conduct facilities audits to identify and address barriers to access • Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to enhance safety in public spaces. • Ensure people with lived experience are involved in planning
2.2	Community events and activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible.	Deliver, Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with people with lived experience, carers, and advocacy groups to identify needs and improve event accessibility. • Provide clear accessibility information in the promotion of events. • Align Community Grant priorities with CIP/DIAP objectives to support inclusive and accessible community-led initiatives.
2.3	Council communications are accessible and inclusive across digital and physical platforms.	Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Council's websites and digital communications meet recognised accessibility standards. • Apply accessibility principles in the design of signage, maps, and wayfinding materials. • Review and update communication tools and platforms to improve accessibility and user experience.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Number of public spaces and facilities upgraded to improve physical accessibility
- Positive community feedback on comfort, safety and usability of public spaces and places
- Growth in the number of inclusive and accessible events delivered or supported by Council
- Greater reach and engagement with Council communications across diverse community groups



Focus area 3: Resilient and Prepared

DIAP FOCUS AREA

Attitudes and Behaviours

GOAL

Work alongside communities to strengthen their ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from critical events and periods of adversity.

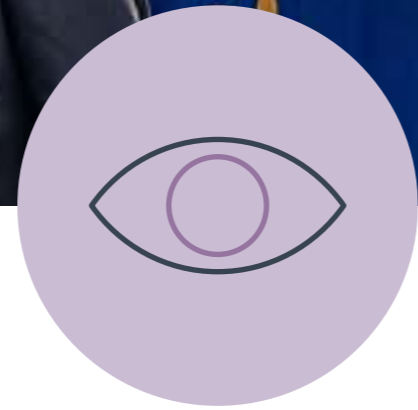
COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

- Communities want to be better connected and supported before, during, and after disruption.
- Intergenerational knowledge-sharing and local leadership were seen as key to long-term resilience.
- Participants highlighted the need for practical tools, infrastructure, and mental health support.
- Collaboration between Council, services, and community groups is essential for preparedness and recovery.
- People living with disability advocated for the need to be considered in rescue, evacuation, and emergency response planning to ensure safety and access to support during crises.

REF	OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL'S ROLE	APPROACHES
3.1	Communities are connected to timely, accessible information before, during and after emergencies and critical incidents.	Deliver, Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with emergency services and community networks to help share timely, accurate and accessible information with all residents, including people who may be harder to reach. • Maintain Council's Emergency Hub webpage as a trusted central source for local emergency information and support. • Keep MyCommunity Directory updated to help residents easily locate services and support before, during and after emergencies.
3.2	Community-led networks and groups are supported to build local capacity, strengthen social connectedness, and foster community wellbeing and resilience.	Partner, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support towns and villages across our region to increase preparedness, such as developing community Emergency Response Plans, including supporting people with disability. • Offer training and knowledge sharing opportunities between volunteer-led community groups involved in preparedness, response, and recovery. • Promote initiatives that strengthen inclusion, connection, and wellbeing before, during, and after disruptions. • Apply lessons learned from disruption events to improve future inclusion and accessibility planning.
3.3	People with disability and other priority groups can access Council services and provide input during times of disruption.	Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure communication tools and materials used during disruptions are accessible and inclusive. • Engage people with lived experience and advocacy groups to inform how Council plans for and provides support during times of disruption. • Monitor and review access and engagement barriers that emerge during periods of disruption.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Improved accessibility of disruption-related communications (e.g. alternate formats, languages, non-digital resources)
- Increased engagement with priority groups during disruptions, measured through feedback and participation data
- Expansion or strengthening of local community networks contributing to resilience and recovery efforts
- Positive community feedback regarding communication clarity and access during service interruptions or emergencies
- Increased participation in local networks or programs that reduce isolation and support wellbeing



Focus area 4: Engaged and Represented

DIAP FOCUS AREA

Employment, Systems and Processes

GOAL

Ensure the diversity of our community is represented and reflected in leadership, civic life, decision-making, and employment.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

- People want to see themselves reflected in decision-making, leadership, and public life.
- Underrepresented groups, including people living with disability, youth, Aboriginal people, multicultural and LGBTQIA+ communities, called for greater representation in decision-making and leadership opportunities.
- Recognition of volunteers and community leaders helps build pride, participation, and belonging.
- Community members asked for clearer and more inclusive pathways to civic participation and employment.
- Carers and people with additional responsibilities highlighted barriers that limit their ability to participate in leadership, employment, and civic opportunities.

REF	OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL'S ROLE	APPROACHES
4.1	Council engagement processes enable equitable participation and reflect the diversity of our community.	Deliver, Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the principles in Council's Community Engagement Strategy to ensure inclusive, accessible and representative engagement processes. • Continue to build trusted relationships with community connectors to reach and involve often underrepresented groups in community engagement activities. • Provide flexible and varied engagement opportunities that reduce barriers for people with different needs and responsibilities.
4.2	Diverse community perspectives are represented in leadership, advisory, and decision-making processes.	Deliver, Partner, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and promote opportunities for diverse community members to contribute to Council planning and decision-making processes. • Strengthen relationships and collaboration with community and interagency networks to bring diverse perspectives into Council planning and decision-making. • Support initiatives that build leadership capacity among diverse community members. • Recognise and celebrate the contributions of diverse community members in civic and regional leadership.
4.3	Employment and volunteer pathways are inclusive, with barriers to participation recognised and addressed.	Deliver, Partner, Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Council's inclusive recruitment processes and employment pathways. • Collaborate with local businesses and industry to strengthen inclusive employment and workplace training opportunities. • Promote volunteering as a meaningful and accessible way for people to contribute, connect, and build skills.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Greater diversity reflected in Council-supported leadership, advisory, and volunteer roles.
- Positive community feedback from often underrepresented groups on Council's engagement processes
- Growth in partnerships or initiatives that strengthen inclusive employment, volunteering, and leadership pathways.



Focus area 5: Evaluating and Evolving

DIAP FOCUS AREA

Liveable Communities, Systems and Processes

GOAL

Use data, feedback, and lived experience to strengthen accountability and continuously improve inclusion outcomes.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

- Community members want to see how their feedback leads to change.
- People value transparency in how inclusion progress is measured and reported.
- Lived experience should inform evaluation and decision-making, not just service design.
- Participants called for more storytelling and qualitative insights alongside data.

REF	OBJECTIVE	COUNCIL'S ROLE	APPROACHES
5.1	Lived experience feedback informs Council's evaluation processes and supports ongoing improvement in inclusion outcomes.	Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for community input through co-evaluation and reflection activities. • Work with lived-experience representatives to identify inclusive evaluation practices within Council's review processes. • Collect and analyse feedback in ways that recognise the intersection of multiple identities and experiences.
5.2	Inclusion outcomes are measured and reported on in transparent, meaningful, and accessible ways.	Deliver, Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate community insights into progress tracking and outcome reporting. • Implement impact-tracking tools to understand how inclusion efforts strengthen community wellbeing and equity. • Share progress and outcomes in accessible formats.
5.3	Progress on inclusion is regularly reviewed and shared to strengthen accountability and guide continuous improvement.	Deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align annual review and reporting with Council's Operational Plan and budget cycles. • Share progress updates and next steps in clear, accessible formats. • Use evaluation findings to inform future actions and adjust priorities as needed.

SUCCESS MEASURES

- Increased participation of underrepresented groups in feedback and co-evaluation processes over the life of the plan
- Lived experience insights are more visible in planning and reporting documents
- Evidence that evaluation findings are informing updates to programs, actions, or priorities
- Annual community report is published on Council's website in accessible formats.
- Improved community confidence, reported via engagement activities and community satisfaction survey, that feedback is heard and acted on.

Action plan

To deliver on the objectives of this Plan, the Action Plan sets out the specific actions Council and partners will undertake. Actions are divided into phases to reflect the type of work involved, such as planning, delivery and evaluation.

The Action Plan will be reviewed and reported on annually. As part of this process:

- All investigative actions will be reviewed, with outcomes informing new or revised actions.
- Actions may shift between phases as work progresses (for example, from planning to delivery).
- Additional actions may be introduced through ongoing evaluation and community consultation, in line with Focus Area 5: Evaluating and Evolving.
- All DIAP-related actions will be reported in line with NSW legislative requirements.

Note: Community partners column in this Action Plan lists community partners identified at the time of publishing this Plan. In line with the objectives under Focus Area 5, Council will continue reviewing community partnerships, with the aim to engage with all relevant existing and new local organisations, groups and individuals who emerge over the life of the Plan.

Timeline key:

- Short (within 1 -2 years)
- Medium (2-3 years)
- Long (3-4 years)



Review

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Align the Alcohol in Public Spaces Policy with vibrancy reforms and the goals of a safe and inclusive night-time economy	1.1, 2.1, 4.1	Attitudes and Behaviours	2.2.1, 2.4.1, 5.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Activation • Economic Development • Strategic Planning • Glasshouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hastings Liquor Accord • Local hospitality industry • Local business chambers • NSW Police 	Short
Review mechanisms for lived-experience input into the planning and delivery of this plan	5.1	Systems and Processes	5.5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency Network • Community Resilience Network • Enable Disability Network • Hastings Youth Voice • Local Aboriginal Land Councils • Strong Spirit Aboriginal Services 	Short
Review Council's "Report an Issue" forms to ensure inclusive language and clearer options for reporting accessibility and safety issues	2.1, 2.2, 5.1	Liveable Communities	1.2.2, 2.1.2, 2.2.1,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Activation • Infrastructure • Facilities • Spaces and Places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable Disability Network 	Short

Plan

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Develop a calendar of significant dates that recognise community culture and inclusion	1.2, 4.2	Attitudes and Behaviours	2.3.1, 5.1.1, 5.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Communications People, Safety and Performance Community Voice Libraries Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and interagency networks Council-led working groups 	Short
Conduct regular internal meetings to review accessibility needs across infrastructure, facilities, and spaces and places	2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 5.1, 5.2	Liveable Communities	2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.3.1, 5.1.1, 5.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Infrastructure Facilities Spaces and Places 		Ongoing

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Use findings from whole-of-council health check (see action in delivery phase) to guide next steps for embedding prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence across Council's domains of influence	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3		2.4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole of council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency Network Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services Lived Experience advocates MNC Local Health District NSW Police Social services Strong Spirit Aboriginal Corporation Werin Aboriginal Corporation 	Medium

Deliver / implement

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Facilitate the Community Resilience Network (CRN) to build resilience, preparedness and recovery capacity	3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.1		2.3.1, 3.5.1, 5.1.1	• Community Activation	• Combat agencies • Local Emergency Management Committee • Government agencies • Social services • Volunteer organisations	Short
Conduct 4 Council facility accessibility audits per year	2.1, 2.3, 5.1, 5.2	Liveable Communities	2.1.1, 2.3.1, 5.1.1, 5.2.1	• Community Activation • Facilities • Spaces & Places	• Enable Disability Network	Ongoing
Fund initiatives that build inclusion, connection and equity through the annual Community Grants Program	Across all focus areas		2.3.1, 5.1.1, 5.2.1	• Community Activation		Ongoing
Deliver Graffiti Blasters as a volunteer program that fosters pride, safety, and community connection	1.3, 2.1, 5.1, 5.3		2.1.2, 2.3.1, 5.1.1	• Community Activation	• Graffiti Blasters volunteers	Ongoing

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Promote and deliver Citizen of the Year Awards annually	5.3			• Community Activation • Communications		Short
Coordinate youth-led initiatives to build capacity, amplify youth voices, foster belonging, and support participation in decision-making	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 5.1		2.3.1, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 4.3.1, 5.1.1	• Community Activation • Economic Development • Community Voice	• Government agencies • Hastings Youth Voice • Youth Provider Network	Ongoing
Conduct a whole-of-council health check, using the Local Government Guide and Toolkit, to identify actions for preventing domestic, family and sexual violence.	1.1, 2.1, 5.2		5.1.1	• Whole of council		Short

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Continue participation in local networks and working groups that support goals and objectives	3.2, 5.1	Systems and Processes	2.3.1, 3.5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bearlay Aboriginal Interagency Network Hastings Homelessness Interagency group Hastings Liquor Accord Hastings Macleay Ageing Connections Headspace Consortium Youth Provider Network Mid North Coast Disability Network NAIDOC Week Planning Committee Police and Aboriginal Consultative Committee 	Ongoing
Conduct footpath condition audits to inform accessibility upgrade priorities	2.1	Liveable Communities	1.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Disability Network 	Short

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Finalise the Flag protocol, which will provide a clear process for community requests to fly flags representing other nations or causes	1.1, 1.2, 1.3,		2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 		Short
Embed inclusive recruitment policies and Council's Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to attract, support and retain a diverse workforce	4.3	Employment	5.5.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People, Safety and Performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local employment services Mid Coast Connect Schools and education providers 	Ongoing
Develop a resource mapping this plan's objectives to those of its informing frameworks, strategies, and plans, to assist with reporting.	5..3		2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 		Short
Conduct accessibility audit of Council-led events to identify opportunities for improvement	1.1, 2.2	Liveable Communities	2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Disability Network 	Short

Investigate

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Investigate dual naming signage for Council assets and public spaces	1.1, 4.2			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Facilities Spaces and Places Airport Glasshouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Djuyalgu Wakulda Local Aboriginal Land Councils Murrumbidgee Aboriginal Language and Culture Co-op 	Medium
Investigate updates on MyCommunity Directory & 'What's On' calendar user interface, database, and promotion	2.3, 4.2	Systems and Processes	2.3.1, 5.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Community Voice Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local networks and working groups Community service providers 	Short
Investigate trial of accessibility matting to improve inclusive access to beaches	2.1, 2.2	Liveable Communities	2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Disability Network 	Short
Consult with community to identify barriers to participation in programs and events that celebrate diversity, culture and the arts	2.2, 4.1, 5.1	Liveable Communities	2.3.1, 2.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Community Voice Glasshouse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad community with a focus on engaging with diverse groups 	Short

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Investigate options for increased accessible parking across LGA	2.1	Liveable Communities	2.3.1, 1.2.1, 1.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable Disability Network 	Short
Investigate becoming a Dementia Friendly Council	1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2	Systems and Processes Liveable Communities	2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Executive Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dementia Friendly Community Alliance 	Short
Investigate volunteer models that support social connection and reduce social isolation across the community	3.1, 3.2, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2		2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hastings Youth Voice Hastings Neighbourhood Services Volunteer Resource Centre 	Medium
Investigate ways to improve accessibility across Council's communications and education channels, including website and print materials	1.1, 2.3, 3.3, 4.2	Systems and Processes	2.3.1, 5.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Community Voice Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Communities and Justice Enable Disability Network 	Medium

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	COMMUNITY PARTNERS	TIMELINE
Investigate opportunities to support local businesses to participate in diversity and inclusion projects, workplace training, and awareness initiatives.	1.2, 1.3, 3.2, 4.3	Employment	2.2.1, 4.2.1, 4.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Economic Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business chambers Local industry networks 	Medium



Support

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	TIMELINE
Support / participate in NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week to promote cultural safety, recognition, and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	1.1, 1.2, 1.3		2.3.1, 5.1.1, 5.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Community Voice Communications Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NAIDOC Week Planning Committee Yearly
Support and promote inclusive community recognition events, including Youth Week, Seniors Week and National Volunteer Week	1.2, 4.2		2.3.1, 4.1.1, 4.2.1, 5.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation Community Voice Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hastings Macleay Ageing Connections Hastings Youth Voice Local Aged Care providers Youth Provider Network Yearly

ACTION	CIP REF	DIAP OUTCOMES	DELIVERY PROGRAM ALIGNMENT	COUNCIL DELIVERY TEAM	TIMELINE
Support community-led events and campaigns that promote gender equality, safety, and respectful relationships.	1.2, 1.3		2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cheers Queers Headspace Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services MNC Local Health District NSW Police Reclaim the Night working group Werin Aboriginal Corporation Yearly
Maintain Council's advisory role on the Hastings Club Grants Committee to support strategic funding decisions aligned with Council's inclusion priorities	1.3, 5.1		2.3.1, 5.1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hastings Club Grants Committee Ongoing

Monitoring and evaluation

As outlined in Focus Area 5: Evaluating and Evolving, we will continue engaging with our community to track progress and adapt the Community Inclusion Plan over time.

Progress will be evaluated regularly, to reflect on achievements and guide ongoing improvements. Progress and outcomes will be reported on to Council, community, and the State Government on an annual basis as per legislative requirements.

New Council-led actions will be embedded in subsequent Operational Plans and aligned with the four-year Delivery Program.

How the plan is funded

Council's Operational Plan allocates an annual budget of \$200,000 for the Community Grants program and \$114,000 for the Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

The Community Inclusion Plan does not have a dedicated funding stream. At this time, many of the actions in this plan are designed to improve inclusion in our existing programs, services and responsibilities and will draw on those project budgets where available. Where new or expanded initiatives are proposed, Council will consider priorities as part of broader planning and budget processes and may seek external funding to support delivery.

Appendix

Guiding Model' Reference List

- Maslow, A. (1943). Hierarchy of Needs
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). Ecological Systems Theory
- Crisp, R. (2010). Belonging, connectedness and social exclusion
- Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995). The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments
- Prilleltensky, I. (2014, 2020). Community Psychology and Mattering

Guiding Principles influencing theories and frameworks:

- NSW Social Justice Principles, legislated under the NSW Local Government Act 1993
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991)
- Universal Design principles and national accessibility guidelines
- Co-design and participation frameworks, including the IAP2 Spectrum and inclusive design practice
- Strengths-based and asset-based approaches, such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)
- Insights from community engagement and lived experience

The Community Inclusion Plan and Disability Inclusion Action Plan are managed by Council's Community Activation Team, within the Community, Planning and Environment division. If you have any questions, want to share feedback, or need a copy of the plan, we're here to help.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council

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