

Minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Committee Meeting held Wednesday 20 July 2022

Venue:

Microsoft Teams online meeting

Time: 10.00am

Present:

Karen Sculley (Chair), Suzanne Hudson (Deputy Chair), Kyle Sculley, Wendy Buckingham, Vanessa Riggs (Community Representatives), Cr Meredith Dennis, Cr James Owen, Helen Carter, Giselle Benitez Hetherington Iain Lonsdale (Tweed Shire Council), Alex Manning (NSW Public Works Advisory), Daniel Tracey Barrell – Wheelie on Accessible Housing (WOAH).

Apologies:

Colin Usher, Tarhnee Wilson (Community Representative); Stewart Brawley, Ray Clark, Robert Noakes, Sandra Freeman (Tweed Shire Council)

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

It was noted that Minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Committee meeting held on Wednesday 11 May 2022 were to be tabled for Council to consider endorsing at meeting in August 2022.

Agenda Items:

Welcome, Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country

Karen welcomed the members and opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Giselle acknowledged community member Wendy Buckingham's birthday. Warm wishes were shared by all attendees.

A1. Administration

Giselle noted the minutes from previous meeting in May were yet to be tabled for Council's consideration, due to the July meeting being held as an extraordinary session and would aim to table at first available meeting.

A2. Update on Advisory Committee expressions of interest (EOI) process

Giselle advised that the EOIs received by community members were being assessed by an evaluation panel, with recommendations to be tabled for consideration by Council at upcoming meeting. It is expected that once Council approves and adopts the members, the current Committee members will end their functions, and the new Committee will be announced, and a meeting convened to induct them – likely in September.

Giselle noted the tremendous achievements and output of current members, meeting 8 times during 2021 despite COVID-19 lockdowns and staff changes, and participating in projects including:

- Concept design for Goorimahbah: Place of Stories Inclusive Park and Easy English documentation for exhibition
- Meeting with the NSW Minister for Families, Community & Disabilities and Geoff Provest MP
- Draft Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan and Cycling Plan consultation
- Draft Norries Headland Master Plan consultation
- Redesign of Council websites, including user acceptance testing
- Promotional videos for International Day of People with Disability 2021
- Development of the draft Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan, including preparation of Easy English, Easy Read versions of community survey and other documents.
- Consultation with Transport for NSW on the draft Tweed Transport Plan.

Helen Carter thanked committee members on all these achievements. Karen Sculley thanked Giselle, Helen and everyone at Council, and Councillors for their support.

A3. Draft Access and Inclusion Plan 2022-2026

Members continued discussion from May meeting on the directions and draft actions.

Feedback on Focus area 2: Liveable and accessible communities

Giselle noted this focus area is about open spaces & built environment, and actions will need to be worked with a variety of council areas and staff. Draft actions discussed included:

1. Learn and put access issues first. Under the current plan has been applied to Council halls and public toilets. Adapting this to other facilities.
2. Increase access to facilities and public spaces.
3. Promote universal design.
4. Collaborate with NSW government.
5. Support community and business, working with Tweed Tourism.
6. Support social participation, developing a map of accessible facilities and features in Tweed.

Members raised concerns about areas where there is limited accessibility such as sporting grounds including at Piggabeen. Members also discussed the importance of communicating the degrees or levels of access, like using a numbering system, so people with disability and their carers can consider any risks and decide whether they are able to access the site. Cr Owen noted the efforts of Piggabeen Club to improve accessibility. Members discussed temporary options including in wet weather like matting.

Members agreed that promoting companion cards to Tweed businesses and facilities was a priority, to remove additional cost barriers for people with disability and their support workers or carers to participate anywhere. Kyle Sculley suggested radio outlets were a good source of information to promote the companion cards scheme along with *What's on in the Tweed*.

Feedback on Focus area 3: Access to meaningful employment

Giselle noted that the NSW Government has set a 5% target of people with disability in the public sector. Draft actions discussed include:

1. Exploring and researching employment and volunteer opportunities in Council.
2. Commitment to improve Council's recruitment process.
3. Council as an inclusive and accessible workplace.

Feedback on Focus area 4: improving access to services through better systems and processes

1. Build online access to information and services, we have met the current standards and work as these standards change.
2. Provide a variety of other accessible information, work with staff on preferred methods of communication on projects and share this across the organisation.
3. Feedback and consultation, develop an access checklist.
4. Inclusive events, updating policies and funding criteria.
5. Working with people with lived experience.
6. Improving policy and corporate practices, to have greater consistency and reduce barriers.

Members were supportive of the directions of Focus areas 3 and 4. Kyle Sculley commented that video blog subtitles are particularly helpful to gain a deeper understanding of topics.

Giselle thanked members and advised that the next steps will be to consult on these directions and draft actions with staff, to ensure they align with service delivery plans.

A4. Projects update

1. Reconnecting Regional NSW – Community events

Council invited expressions of interest from community groups and businesses keen to host events that would reconnect community, which closed on 6 June. Despite the tight timeframe, 36 applications were received which were reviewed and short-listed by an assessment panel to form part of Council's application for \$392,000 of state government funding. Council's application was submitted in early July for assessment by Regional NSW. A component of the funding includes a resource to support organisers to ensure that their events are accessible and inclusive of people of all abilities.

Members agreed this was a great opportunity to build capacity across community to improve understanding of accessibility and inclusion and enable people with disability to reconnect with each other and broader community.

2. IDPWD celebration event

Council is working to engage an event planner to support Council to celebrate the day. The planner would be expected to consult an/or collaborate with the Committee, as well as disability support network, Council's Communications staff.

Members shared ideas about the event style such as a festival with music, rides and activities if possible and noting the need to manage risks of wet weather and COVID-19.

3. Wayfinding project

Council is working to engage an access specialist to be involved in the project – in two parts:

- a) Review of Council's signage standards manual – to include wayfinding principles and strategies

- b) Apply the findings of part a) to Goorimahbah Place of Stories – Inclusive Play Space and Park, which is planned to start construction on the approved concept design.

4. Draft Tweed Transport Plan

Members referred and noted the written update by Transport for NSW, which provides for ongoing consultation with Council and the Committee as the project progresses.

A5. Northern Rivers Rail Trail

The Committee was joined by Iain Lonsdale, Project Director, Alex Manning - Project Manager, NSW Public Works Advisory, Daniel Rose, Hazel Brothers (construction company) and access specialist Tracey Barrell, OAM, Wheelie on Accessible Housing (WOAH).

Iain introduced members to the project as a 24km recreational shared user path between Murwillumbah to Crabbes Creek. Iain shared the following key messages:

- a) Construction is underway by Hazel Brothers and has been delayed by the flood and supply-chain issues.
- b) Surface treatment will be fully sealed at stations in rural villages, and between Burringbar to Mooball and Murwillumbah station to the Tweed Regional Art Gallery. In other areas, the surface will be highly compacted crushed gravel as a stable and secure surface.
- c) There are known access limitations in parts due to topography and elevation of the trail, age, condition of facilities and connections with the trail as well as aiming to risks to various users including walkers and cyclists.
- d) The trail is expected to open in early 2023 with limited accessibility, focussed initially at key sites including Murwillumbah Station and Burringbar Station. This will be the beginning of ongoing upgrade works to improve the trail's access toward being a "mature" facility which can be used by people of all abilities, along the entire length.
- e) Tracey Barrell, OAM has been appointed to review the design and provide advice on the level of compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- f) Tweed Development Plan and Master Plan being prepared by Hazel Brothers, will identify the key aspects and aim to include Tracey Barrell's recommendations.

Suzanne Hudson asked about the feasibility of providing a trail alongside the railway tracks so that heavy rail services could resume, noting that public transport in the Shire is terrible in terms of access and frequency of services. Iain advised that this was highly unlikely, due to the following factors:

- a. Economic feasibility analyses finding that approximately \$1billion is needed to reinstate the rail service.
- b. Environmental constraints including rainfall and flooding are too great to build a trail adjacent to the railway tracks

Giselle suggested the draft Tweed Transport Plan is appropriate for the Committee to advocate strongly about the experience of people with disability using public transport in the Tweed.

Meredith raised concerns about horse riders not being able to use the trail. This opened discussions about the significant risks of interactions and safety with users with dogs on leads and/or assistance animals.

Minutes

Tracey Barrell detailed the scope of her review and audit of accessibility, to include the rail trail (pathway) and amenities located as station and village nodes. Tracey's approach will be solution-based and as broad to all abilities as possible, within reason and noting the limitations of the location.

Members asked about the opportunity to inspect sections on-site, when the trail is accessible and safe. They also asked about whether they could be involved in the opening, and if it could align with the International Day of People with Disability on 3 December 2022. Iain noted their interest and would revisit the opportunity for members.

Action: *Iain will present the draft Tweed Development Plan and Master Plan to the Committee, when available, for review and feedback, with the advice and findings of the access assessment conducted by Tracey Barrell, OAM. Iain suggested this workshop could focus on what is possible and able to be delivered with the first opening of the rail trail.*

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Equal Access Advisory Committee will aim to be held in November 2022, date to be confirmed.

Meeting closed: 12.00pm.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

Nil.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nil.