

Draft Access and Inclusion Plan

2018-2021

(NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan)



Access means you can go where you want to in the community: into buildings and outdoor places, on transport and to events. It means there are toilets you can find and use.

Inclusion means you feel part of the community and are treated with dignity and respect as a valued and equal member of society.



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Acknowledgement of Country

'We wish to recognise the generations of the local Aboriginal people of the Bundjalung Nation who have lived in and derived their physical and spiritual needs from the forests, rivers, lakes and streams of this beautiful valley over many thousands of years as the traditional owners and custodians of these lands.'

Mayoral message



I am very pleased to introduce Tweed Shire Council's *Access and Inclusion Plan 2018 - 2021* (the Plan). The Plan shows what Council will do to make our community a place everyone can enjoy. We want people to have equal and dignified access to all aspects of community life. This includes social, business, employment, educational and leisure activities.

Throughout our lives we all become aware of the need for access. This could be as parents pushing a pram, through injury or illness, temporary or permanent impairment, or the process of ageing. We will all want to continue going to places and doing the things that make up our lives. Access and Inclusion Plans help local governments make this possible.

Tweed Shire is a wonderful place to live and to visit. We have a beautiful natural environment of forest, coast and farmland, historic villages and urban centres. It is important for all residents and visitors to enjoy these places. Access is good for social life and for the economy.

I commend Council's Equal Access Advisory Committee, staff and all those community members who contributed to this document and look forward to reporting on progress into the future.

Cr Katie Milne
Mayor of Tweed Shire

Statement of Commitment

Our vision is for a community where everyone can participate.

As a local Council we want all our residents and visitors to be able to live safe and fulfilling lives.

This plan, through the NSW Disability Inclusion Act, focusses on people with a disability. Living with a disability or the challenges due to ageing covers a wide range of experiences and conditions. Almost everyone or someone we know will experience physical or psychological challenges through their lives.

Inclusion is about everyone in a community feeling they belong. This means we all have access to resources and opportunities for a full and productive life. It means we celebrate our common humanity in all its diversity.

We (Council) aim to make our community as accessible and inclusive as possible. We will do this through a universal design approach. This means we design places, things, information, communication and policies with everyone in mind.

Over the next few years we will strive to do everything within our resources to achieve this goal. We will support and assist local businesses, recreation groups and the general community to make sure people are included in community life. We will also advocate at state and federal levels for assistance when we need extra resources.

About Tweed Shire

The place

Tweed Shire covers a large area of about 1300 square kilometres. Our natural landscape includes coastline, national park, wetland and forest. Many different people live in Tweed Shire and our residential areas are growing. Most people live in the north around Tweed Heads and Banora Point. We also have a number of towns and villages. The biggest is Murwillumbah.

The people

People with disabilities and older people with challenges due to ageing live in all parts of Tweed Shire. We need to plan for an accessible and inclusive community so that everyone has the same opportunities for a fulfilling and productive life.

In 2017 the population of Tweed Shire was 94,547.

One in four or 25% of people living in Tweed Shire are over 65 years old. This compares with 16% for the rest of NSW. Older people are more likely to have a disability or experience challenges due to ageing.

In Tweed Shire about 18,000 people live with a disability. Over 6,500 people with a disability need assistance with daily living.

There are also many people in Tweed Shire caring for family members or others because of a disability, illness or old age. About 12% of Tweed residents are caring for others.

Research shows that there is a relationship between socio-economic status and disability. In areas such as income, employment, education, internet connection, housing and transport, people with disability experience greater disadvantage than the general population.

*Source: ABS Estimated Resident Population, prepared by .id , the population experts.
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016.
ABS 2015 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC)*

Background

In 2014 Council made our first Disability Inclusion Action Plan (the Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan). That plan ends in 2018 so we have made a new one.

In 2014 the NSW government passed the *Disability Inclusion Act*. This law says that all Councils in NSW must make a Disability Inclusion Action Plan by 1 July 2017.

In Tweed we already had our Access and Inclusion Plan 2014-2018 in place. We had to make a few changes to show that our Plan was in line with the new Act.

Under the 2014 *Disability Inclusion Act* the NSW Government asks Councils to cover four areas.

These are:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to services through better systems and processes

Other laws and policies

There are other laws and policies that support inclusion for people with disabilities.

The main ones are:

- Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2007
- National Disability Strategy 2010-2020
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme 2013

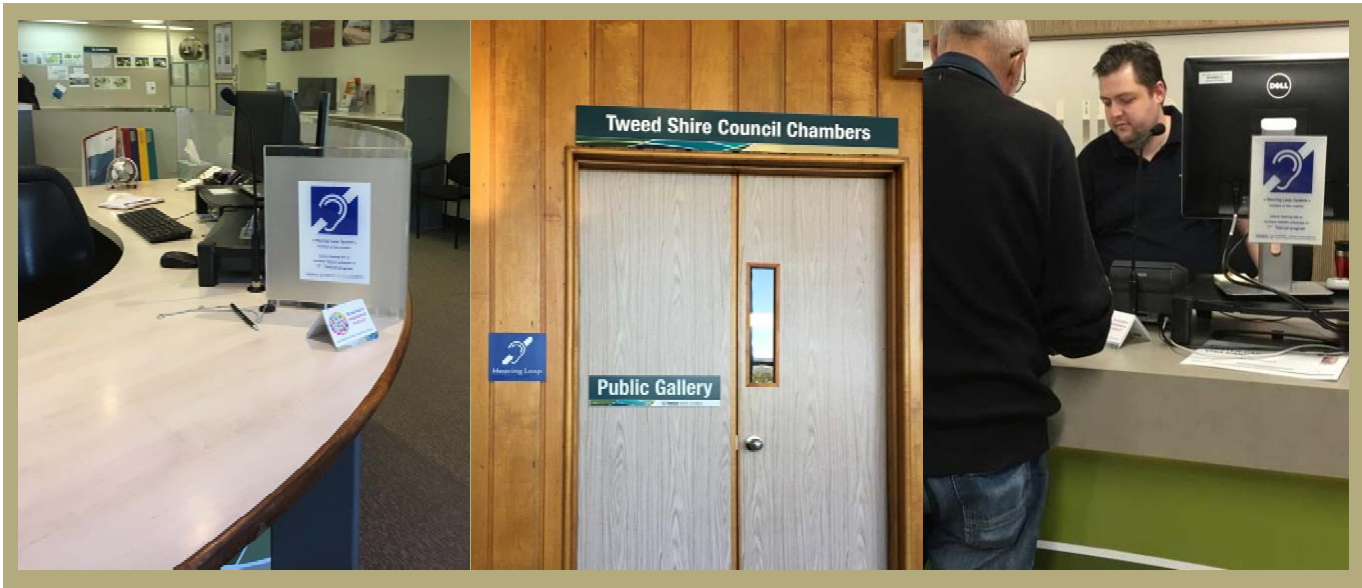
What we achieved in the first Plan

In the first Plan we achieved quite a lot. The Plan had 52 different actions to achieve over four years. Every part of Council was responsible for actions in the Plan.

To date 38 actions were achieved. We started work on the other fourteen actions and they will be carried over for further work in the next Plan.

Here are some of the things we achieved:

We installed hearing augmentation in Council buildings



We adopted the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan and completed many footpath upgrades



We run the annual Access and inclusion Awards (running for five years). The Awards are held for International Day of People with Disability and recognise businesses doing outstanding work to make sure people with disabilities are included.



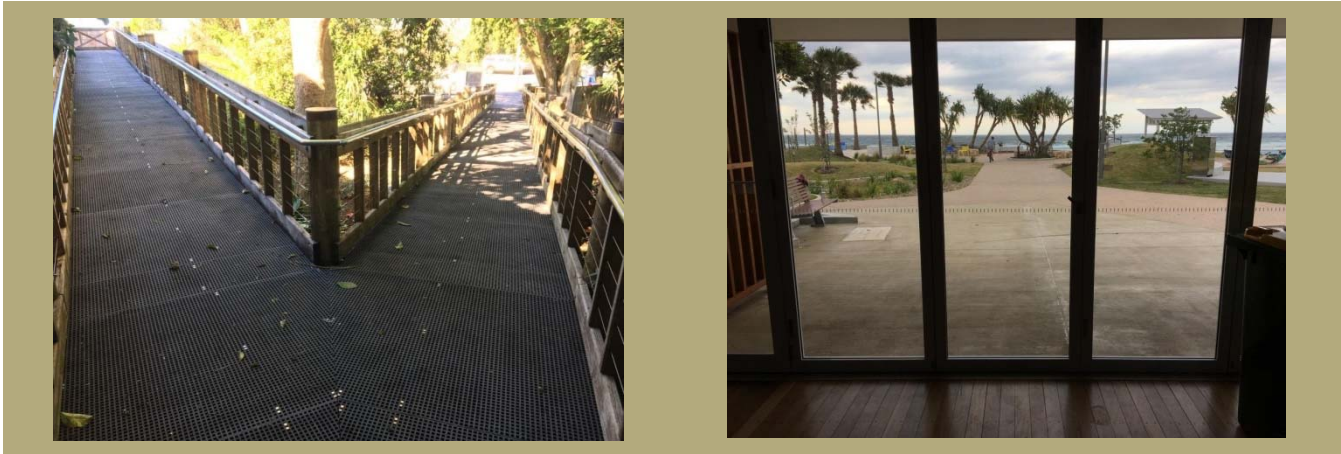
We reviewed and upgraded 36 accessible public toilets across Tweed Shire



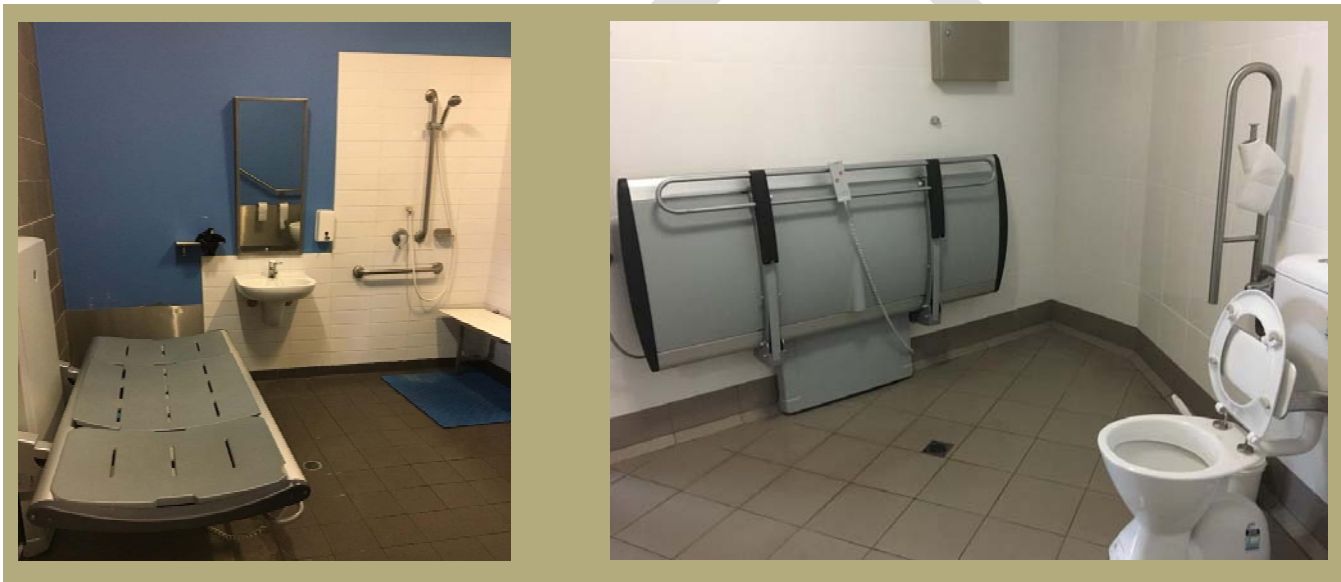
We reviewed access to coastal foreshores and waterways and commenced upgrades



We did a professional access audit of 11 Council public buildings and commenced upgrades



We built and outfitted adult change facilities in Murwillumbah and Kingscliff aquatic centres



We provided training for 53 specialist Council staff on Australian legislation and building standards for access and mobility

Tweed Shire Equal Access Advisory Committee

This committee is made up of different people who are dedicated to making our community accessible and inclusive. Members include people with disabilities, Council staff and Councillors.

The committee has been giving advice to Council for many years. The committee meets every two months with minutes presented to Council meetings. The committee provides advice and guidance in the preparation of Council's Access and Inclusion Plans. Committee members are also involved with the annual Access and Inclusion Awards and in projects such as the review of all our accessible public toilets.

About the Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2021

The 2014 *Disability Inclusion Act* says all Councils in NSW must make Disability Inclusion Action Plans. In Tweed we call it our Access and Inclusion Plan as recommended by Council's Equal Access Advisory Committee. The Committee wants the community to understand that access and inclusion benefit everyone not just people with a disability.

Making the plan helps us find out where the barriers are and how to remove them so communities are more inclusive for everyone. In the second Plan we want to build on the work we started in the first Plan.

Funding the Plan

This plan is funded under Council's Long Term Financial Plan (LTFP) which provides the budget for the *Community Strategic Plan 2017–2027* (CSP). This includes Access and Inclusion Plan Funding and funding for Ageing and Disability Community Development. External funding through grant applications may also be needed.

How the Plan fits into Council planning

The NSW *Disability Inclusion Act* says Councils must report on our progress as we work on the plan. We must do this through our Community Strategic Plan. This means that all parts of Council have responsibilities in the Access and Inclusion Plan. Actions in this Plan will be included in our four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan.

How the Plan was made

We made the second Plan after talking with people in the community and staff within Council. We found out what people think are the most important things we need to do to improve access and inclusion in Tweed Shire.

Some things the community told us are outside Council's control but we can advocate for change with other parts of government and in the community.

Some things in the second Plan were already scheduled to happen in our works program or we are carrying over from the first Plan.

This plan cannot do everything we want or need to do for access and inclusion. We had to work out what we are able to do over the next three years. Our decisions about what to put in the second Plan came from what the community told us were important.

Who we talked with

To find out about the barriers to access and inclusion in Tweed Shire we talked with many different people of all ages and abilities. We talked with older people and people with dementia, people with disabilities, parents, carers, workers and volunteers.

The people we talked with live in all parts of Tweed Shire. We also included visitors and tourists. We talked with individuals and small groups. People also filled out our surveys. A consultation report giving more detail on who was included is available.

We also took information from other sources such as our record of complaints to Council and community feedback on other plans such as the Community Strategic Plan and the Rural Villages Strategy.

What the community said

We asked people to tell us about things that are working well for access and inclusion and the barriers that stop them being involved in the community.

People told us that overall Tweed is a friendly and welcoming place. Many people said this is because we are a smaller community and people get to know each other. Most people feel they are accepted in the community along with everyone else. They said staff at most large supermarkets are very helpful. People said there are a lot of activities for older people to be involved in if they want to.



Most people said contact with Council was positive with friendly staff and quick response times.

People said a lot more can be done to make sure we all feel included in the community. They said there are many barriers to access which need to be fixed or upgraded.

Many people commented about shops, cafés, restaurants and other businesses not being accessible because they had steps and no accessible toilets nearby.

There were many other concerns about pedestrian access and safety. The state of footpaths in suburban streets away from the main business and shopping areas was a common issue.

People also said physical barriers are not the only thing stopping them from going about their lives. The behaviour of others was also mentioned. They said people parking over footpaths and kerb ramps or in designated accessible parking bays was a common problem.

In particular people with vision impairment said they experience a lot of problems when they go out in public. They said people don't seem to understand a long cane (or white cane) or a guide dog means the person has low vision or is blind. As pedestrians they said this is quite dangerous when people using their mobile phones don't look where they are going and expect others to move around them.

Some people said behaviour is the hardest thing to change while others felt community education could make a difference.

What Council staff said

Council staff got together in a working group to share information and decide what we can do to make our organisation more accessible and inclusive. This means the projects we work on for the community and how we support diversity in our organisation. The working group decided on three important ideas:

- make sure the way we plan and build new facilities or upgrade existing facilities is done to the best access standards
- include the right people at the right time in the planning process to make sure this happens
- make sure that the information we provide, including on our website, is accessible to the widest number of people in the community

How the Access and Inclusion Plan is put together

The Plan is organised under the four areas given by the NSW Government we mentioned earlier.

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to services through better systems and processes

Under each area we list the things we want to do over the next three years. This document has been written so that people using the speech function on their devices can also find out what is in the plan.

We have also prepared a more detailed table of the actions including when they will happen, what we want to achieve, how we will measure our progress and what part of Council is responsible.

Focus area 1: Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours

This means a community where everyone feels they belong

The actions in this section aim to promote inclusion and change behaviour that excludes people from community life.

1.1 Community Education and information to promote access for inclusion

Council has an important community education role in many different areas. We want to take the lead in changing community attitudes and behaviours so everyone can go about their business as easily and safely as possible. This means access for inclusion. People told us about some of the things that are causing concern and we will concentrate on these in the plan.

Pedestrians

It is everyone's responsibility to take notice of and respect the needs of all pedestrians. This is particularly important for the safety and inclusion of people with vision and hearing impairment, people using mobility aids, assistance animals and small children.

- We will create, promote and distribute information on how to share the footpath so that all pedestrians have safe accessible paths to travel.
- We will monitor complaints and provide information to businesses and residents on the importance of keeping the footpath clear.

Designated Accessible Parking Bays

Designated accessible parking bays (DAPBs) provide reserved parking for people with an authorised parking permit. Commonwealth law covers where these spaces go and how they are designed. NSW law covers the use of these spaces. Council has authority to patrol the use of DAPBs on roads and in public car parks.

Council does not have authority to patrol spaces in car parks on private land like shopping centres and other businesses unless we have an agreement with the business owner. Everyone has a responsibility to make sure designated accessible parking bays are for authorised users only.

- We will create, promote and distribute information on the importance of leaving these spaces for authorised users.
- We will monitor complaints and provide information to businesses on how to keep these spaces for customers who are authorised users.

Guide Dogs and Assistance Animals

People have assistance animals for many different reasons. These animals are specially trained to assist people with conditions such as hearing loss, autism, mental illness and mobility impairment. Guide dogs assist people who are blind.

Assistance animals and guide dogs are essential for the safe access and inclusion of their owners. They are protected under the Disability Discrimination Act. Everyone has a responsibility to make sure these important animals can do their job properly.

- We will create, promote and distribute information on how to be a responsible pet owner to protect guide dogs, assistance animals and their owners.
- We will create, promote and distribute information on the rights of guide dogs and assistance animals so their owners can safely go about their business in the community.

Community Groups, Organisations and Businesses

Accessible and inclusive businesses are essential for people to go about their lives in the community.

Tweed Shire also includes many community groups and organisations that provide opportunities for people to participate in different activities. These groups help people connect with others in social situations.

- We will provide advice and support to community groups, organisations and businesses on how to be inclusive. This could include how to improve physical access as well as using more inclusive communication and information.

1.2 Maintaining our skills and knowledge in Council

In the first plan we made sure that key staff had the opportunity to increase their understanding and knowledge about the laws and standards on accessibility. This has had a positive impact on how we design and build facilities. We also use this knowledge to educate developers and construction companies.

- We will build on the training provided in the first plan so that everyone in Tweed Council can fulfil their responsibilities and be champions of access for inclusion. In this plan we want to focus on universal design to broaden our thinking about inclusion.

1.3 Partnerships to promote access for inclusion

Council works with the community in many different ways. We work as partners with different sections of the community and on projects and programs with community organisations, businesses and other groups. We will use these partnerships and relationships to promote and advocate for access and inclusion.

- We will focus on partnerships in the dementia community, the tourism industry, the youth sector, the creative industries, and with organisers of festivals and events.

Focus area 2: Liveable and accessible communities

This means the barriers removed so people can get on with living

The actions in this section aim to make sure buildings and open spaces are accessible for all. This includes planning, design, construction and use.

2.1 Universal Design

Universal design means the design of everything with everyone in mind. This includes places, things, information, communication and policies. It is a commitment above and beyond minimum standards for access and mobility.

Mandatory minimum standards on access and mobility apply to a limited number of situations. There are many other guidelines and creative examples that use universal design thinking.

This means building skills and knowledge of key staff. It means writing new or changing existing guidelines so that everything we do follows the universal design approach. This includes decisions from the fixtures and fittings we buy to involving community partners such as the Equal Access Advisory Committee.

- We will develop guidelines on applying a universal design approach to assist Council planning, projects, activities and services to create a liveable and accessible community.

- We will look at all stages of the project planning process. This includes who we talk with and how we communicate, the information we provide and ask for. We want to make sure the end result meets our expectations for a universal design approach.
- We want to make sure all Council facilities are designed and constructed to meet the needs of as wide a section of the community as possible.
- We want to make sure contractors understand and follow universal design principles when designing and building community facilities for Council. This includes a checking process to make sure contractors meet Council's expectations and standards of construction before we take responsibility for the facilities.

Outdoor spaces

Council is responsible for many outdoor spaces. These include parks, playgrounds, sports fields, streets and footpaths and beaches. We want to make sure that everyone can enjoy these spaces and benefit from a healthy outdoor life.

- We will incorporate a universal design approach into plans and strategies for outdoor spaces. This is already happening in the Open Space Strategy. We are also about to start making the Tweed Open Beaches Coastal Management Plan.
- We will write guidelines on some key principles for universal design to assist in the design, construction, upgrade and fit out of our parks.
- We will implement the NSW Government 'everyone can play' program to improve access and inclusion in children's playgrounds.
- We will continue to implement the recommendations from the review of beaches and inland waterways from the first plan subject to funding.

2.2 Footpaths and Pedestrians

In 2014 Council adopted the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) and its recommendations. The PAMP covered five business districts and surrounding suburban areas including Tweed Heads, South Tweed Heads, Banora Point, Kingscliff and Murwillumbah.

- We will review the PAMP with a focus on key suburban areas and villages that the community has told us need attention.
- We will work with local businesses on the footpath trading policy to reduce barriers on the footpath that affect people with vision impairment.

2.3 Parking

Many of our Designated Accessible Parking Bays (DAPBs) both off road and on road are old and do not meet the current minimum standard for access and mobility. We are gradually upgrading these spaces especially in the Tweed Heads business district.

- We will continue to upgrade our DAPBs across the Tweed Shire along with scheduled road and building upgrades.

- We will focus on DAPBs in two villages. The first will be Pottsville and the second Murwillumbah. We will work with the village communities to plan and design the location of DAPBs. This will give us a model to use with other villages and precincts in future plans.

2.4 Public Transport

Council works with the NSW Government to make sure people have access to public transport. Many people with a disability and older people who have had to give up their driver's licence rely on public transport to participate in the community.

Council is responsible for constructing bus stops and bus shelters. We do not have authority to install new bus stops along transport routes but we work with the NSW Government and major transport companies to respond to community requests and concerns.

- We will continue to upgrade bus stops under the Country Passenger Transport Grants Scheme. This brings them up to current standards for accessible transport.
- We will continue our role as advocate for the community to improve access to public transport.

2.5 Wayfinding

The one thing that can make a journey easy and enjoyable is the ability to find your way around. A good wayfinding approach links locals and visitors to businesses and other venues.

The most important thing for good wayfinding is the signs need to be consistent. This means they are designed to say the same thing in the same way. This helps everyone get to where they need to go. It is really important for people with vision-impairment, brain injury and other conditions affecting understanding. It also helps people with limited English language or literacy skills.

- We will develop a wayfinding plan for Tweed Shire. This will include a style guide for signage in public open spaces.

2.6 Information

Finding out what is going on and participating in community activities depends on information. To make sure everyone in the community has equal access to this information a universal design approach is necessary.

When planning to go out people need accurate and easy to source information on what is accessible in the community and at different locations.

- We will update our website to include information on what is accessible in our parks, open spaces, cultural venues and community buildings.
- We will make sure that everyone can participate in cultural activities at the Tweed Regional Museum and Gallery.

- We will redesign our brochures and other information to meet the needs of all our customers.
- We will provide news and other Council information in a variety of different ways so that everyone has access.

Focus area 3: Supporting access to meaningful employment

This means the same opportunities as everyone else for a fulfilling and productive life

The actions in this section aim to make sure Council can lead by example as an inclusive employer.

3.1 Tweed Council as an employer

Council is the largest employer in the Tweed Shire. We want to continue our efforts as an inclusive employer that attracts and retains a diverse workforce.

- We will promote Council as an inclusive employer and encourage people with disabilities to apply for jobs with Council adjust work spaces to meet their needs.
- We will update current training to include information on unconscious bias and raise awareness about inclusion.
- We will continue to upgrade Council offices and other work sites as per recommendations from the 2015 access audit and carry out access audits on our other buildings.
- We will encourage and support people with disabilities to volunteer with Council and adjust work spaces to meet their needs.

Focus area 4: Improving access to services through better systems and processes

This means obtaining what the rest of the community would consider an ordinary life

Council has a key role in the community as a provider of services. We need to make sure that our service systems support equal access for all. We also provide information on other services as we are often the first point of contact for residents and visitors.

4.1 Council as a provider of information

We need to make sure the information we provide to the community is in accessible formats. This includes our website and other online platforms and our printed information.

- We are developing a new digital strategy with accessibility as the key principle. This includes the redesign of our website.

- We will update our style guide so that any staff preparing information for the public can use formats that people can easily read.

4.2 Council as a source for information

We also want people to be able get the information they need from Council as easily and quickly as possible. We want to encourage people to provide us with feedback about life in the community.

- We will make sure we cater to a wide variety of needs and work with people to make communication work well for all.
- We will make sure the system that makes this possible is accessible to anyone who wants to get involved.



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