

Unconfirmed Minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Committee held Thursday 27 June 2024

Venue: Mike Rayner Room, Tweed Administration Office and MS Teams

Time:

10:03am

Present:

Pat Miller (Chairperson), Colin Usher, Kyle Sculley (and carer Sequoya), Karen Sculley, Suzanne Hudson, Cr Meredith Dennis, Cr James Owen (joined at 10.45am via Teams) (Committee Members); Shannon Carruth, Lisa Francisco, Giselle Benitez Hetherington (Secretariat and Minutes Officer) (Tweed Shire Council). Note part-time presence of some members.

Apologies:

Vanessa Riggs.

Guests:

Jodie Hewett (Tweed Shire Council).

Agenda Items:

A1. Meeting open and Acknowledgement of Country

The meeting commenced with the Chair welcoming attendees and acknowledging First Nations Elders past, present, and emerging.

Absences were noted and apologies received from Vanessa Riggs. Quorum was noted as established.

The Chair proposed adding the following matter to item A3 Business Arising, and suggested cutting the timeframe for subsequent items to accommodate this:

1. Discussion on accommodation issues affecting community members.

A2. Recreation Infrastructure Program - Jodie Hewett, Recreation Planner

Jodie presented draft concept plans for 3 recreation upgrades and introduced draft guidelines for an Accessibility Framework. A checklist aimed at applying Accessibility and Inclusion (A&I) principles to recreation spaces was also introduced, intended as a template for future projects.

Members reviewed the A&I checklist for new and existing asset audits, focusing on key areas such as open spaces, pathways, park amenities, lighting, signage, playgrounds, parks, carparks and community buildings. The guidelines and checklist will undergo an initial pilot phase, with potential rollout to all Community Asset Program (CAP) projects upon successful implementation.

Members queried and discussed the following inclusions:

- a. **Community engagement** - Jodie explained Council's Community Engagement and Participation Plan, emphasising adaptable engagement framework based on project scale and type.
- b. **Design inclusions** – Committee suggestions included recessing seating areas off pathways to accommodate wheelchair access and ensuring drinking fountains can fill water bottles. Jodie confirmed these considerations would be integrated into future planning processes.

- c. **Bollards** – Members discussed the pedestrian safety of bollards and requested considering illumination, height, and tactile markers for mobility-aid users and vision-impaired individuals.
- d. **Braille** - Recommendations were made to include Braille in consistent locations on signage and wayfinding systems, extend current toilet signage standards, and use QR codes for concise audio information.
- e. **Toilets** – Members supported the inclusion of unisex toilets and change facilities in regional or high-use areas, ensuring proximity to accessible parking and drinking fountains. Concerns were raised regarding reflective surfaces and mirrored doors.
- f. **Car parking** - Standards for accessible parking spaces were noted (one per 50 spaces, two per 100 spaces). Concerns were raised about missing accessibility features at Crabbes Creek and the availability of loading zones with specified timeframes for all abilities and unlimited use by disability permit holders.

Cr James Owen joined the meeting at 10:45am

Jodie invited members to provide further feedback to Giselle on the draft guidelines for the Accessibility Framework and the A&I checklist for recreation spaces.

The Chair thanked Jodie for the Accessibility Framework and its application to the projects.

Action Item: *Committee members are requested to review the draft guidelines for an Accessibility Framework and the checklist for applying Accessibility and Inclusion (A&I) principles to recreation spaces. Please provide feedback to Giselle within 2 weeks from the meeting date, Note: This timeframe is adjusted to 24 July.*

A3. Business Arising - Review of Committee Business over Term

Giselle conducted a review of the Action Register, commending the Committee's dedication over the past 2 years. During this period, the Committee held 10 meetings and conducted 2 site visits, resulting in significant progress across various Council projects. Key achievements include:

1. Finalising the Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan (Disability Inclusion Action Plan - DIAP), which was adopted by Council in December 2023.
2. Advancing infrastructure projects such as the Northern Rivers Rail Trail (NRRT) and the Everyone Can Swim initiative at Jack Evans Boat Harbour.
3. Participation in International Day of People with Disability celebrations in 2022 and 2023, including feedback on promotional strategies and event participation.
4. Contributing to the Disability Inclusion Emergency Planning workshop in June 2023.
5. Providing input on draft plans and policies, including the draft Pedestrian Mobility Access and Bike Plan, draft Energy Access and Poverty Plan, and draft Assistance Animals in Council-managed places policy.
6. Improving systems and communication within the Committee and Council.

Giselle provided specific updates on remaining open items:

1. Action dated 5 February 2024 - A3. Debrief of Committee's Site Visit of Northern Rivers Rail Trail:

- The Heritage Application to install an access ramp connecting the platform for full building access is pending approval, as a priority project.
- The accessible toilet facility at the Southern Entry is progressing as part of the CAP, reported by Jodie Hewett.
- An S.60 heritage application to install over 24 new accessible seating units is submitted, with implementation expected by year-end, pending approvals.

- Cycling Without Age (CWA) Service to set up at Burringbar rest stop, with lease arrangements, insurances, and training underway. A media launch is planned post-confirmation of dates involving the Mayor and CWA.

2. Action dated 10 April 2024 - B5. Tweed Mall Redevelopment Proposal:

This project will be determined by the Northern Regional Planning Panel (NRPP). The Committee Chair will recuse himself due to a conflict of interest as a panel member. The Committee will limit its agenda to matters involving or determined by the Council. Members are encouraged to make individual submissions during the public exhibition of the Development Application.

3. Actions dated 5 February 2024 - A5. Update on Focus Area 3: Access to Meaningful Employment and Action 10, 10 April 2024 - B4. Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan Reporting:

An Inclusive Employment workshop is planned for the new term. The Chair expressed interest in annual reporting on the impact on people with disabilities in this area.

Members recommended carrying over the following five open actions to the new term:

1. Action dated 19 July 2023 - A7.e. "Councillor Recommendations".
2. Action dated 5 February 2024 - A3. "Debrief of Committee's Site Visit of Northern Rivers Rail Trail - Monday 5 February at 9:00 am to 10:30 am".
3. Action dated 5 February 2024 - A5. "Update on Focus Area 3: Access to Meaningful Employment".
4. Action dated 10 April 2024 - B4. "Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan Reporting".
5. Action dated 5 February 2024 - A6. "Activity series - Celebrating Inclusion and Sharing Stories".

Members also proposed three priorities for consideration by the new Committee:

1. Pedestrian access auditing, noting Council adoption of the Pedestrian Mobility Access and Bike Plan.
2. Reporting of Customer Service Requests related to accessibility.
3. Education campaign for local businesses and visitors on the appropriate use of designated accessible parking bays.

Due to the lengthy discussion of this item, the Chair withdrew the earlier proposal to include "Discussion on accommodation issues affecting community members".

A4. Performance Review

Giselle presented the results of the anonymous self-assessment feedback. Four responses were received.

Key Findings of the Self-assessment questionnaire:

Noting the Committee's purpose is to provide advice and recommendations to the elected Council on access and inclusion issues across various Council projects, the impact and effectiveness of recent changes was rated 4.2 out of 5.

1. **Forum for Public Access Issues:** All respondents agreed the Committee provided a forum to address public access issues raised by the community.
2. **Advice and Recommendations to Council:** All respondents confirmed the Committee provided advice and recommendations on relevant access issues.
3. **Raising Public Awareness:** All respondents agreed the Committee helped raise awareness of access and inclusion issues.

4. **Informing Council:** All respondents indicated the Committee kept Council informed on access and inclusion issues.
5. **Addressing Needs and Concerns:** The Committee's effectiveness was rated as follows:
 - a. 3 respondents rated it 4 (Somewhat well).
 - b. 1 respondent rated it 5 (Very well).
6. **Collaboration and Communication:** The Committee's collaboration with Council staff was rated:
 - a. 2 respondents rated it 4 (Somewhat effectively).
 - b. 2 respondents rated it 5 (Very effectively).
7. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** All respondents indicated they had not encountered accessibility or inclusivity barriers within the Committee.
8. **Effectiveness of Outcomes:** The outcomes delivered through meetings were rated:
 - a. 3 respondents rated it 4 (Somewhat helpful).
 - b. 1 respondent rated it 5 (Very helpful).
9. **Areas for Improvement:** Respondents suggested including individual responses for more detailed feedback.

Individual Reflections:

- a. **Contributions:** Members contributed to various Council projects on disability inclusion and actively participated in meetings.
- b. **Positive Impact:** Examples include positive impacts on projects such as the Disability Inclusive Emergency Planning Workshop, Northern Rivers Rail Trail and Goorimahbah Place of Stories Inclusive Playground.
- c. **Advice for New Members:** New members should be aware of the structured nature of meetings and the importance of being honest and proactive in their contributions.

Overall, the self-assessment indicates the Committee has been effective in achieving its objectives, with members actively contributing to discussions and projects. Members discussed their experiences, challenges, and suggested areas for improvement include enhancing feedback mechanisms and ensuring continuous engagement and inclusivity of people of diverse abilities.

Members thanked Councillors for their participation and commitment to the Committee and its advocacy. Councillors shared their positive experiences, highlighted achievements, and praised the Committee's efforts.

A5. Closing and Celebrating the Current Term

The session, led by the Secretariat, marked the conclusion of the current term. Discussions centred on a transition program for the upcoming term. Caretaker mode will begin on 16 August, with no further activities planned for the current Committee during this period. In August, the Corporate Governance team will issue a call for new members across all Council Sub-Committees.

The term will culminate in a celebratory lunch on Thursday 1 August at the Minjungbal Museum and Cultural Centre, jointly hosted for the Aboriginal and Equal Access Advisory Committees. Invitations will be distributed shortly.

Photography and videography may be present to capture highlights and achievements discussed during the event, aligned with the Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan. The aim is to launch a video on International Day of People with Disability on 3 December showcasing the Committee's and

Minutes

Council's accomplishments in 2024. Pat Miller was nominated to speak about a highlight achievement during the event.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Outcomes Tool will be deferred for consideration in the new term.

In closing remarks, Kyle expressed gratitude to all Committee members for their contributions and acknowledged Wendy's dedication during her tenure with the committee.

The meeting was closed at 12:05 pm.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

Nil.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nil.