

Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

2022-2026



Acknowledgement of Country

Georges River Council acknowledges the Bidjigal people of the Eora Nation, who are the Traditional Custodians of all the land, waters and sky within the Georges River region, and we pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Other acknowledgements

Georges River Council would like to acknowledge everyone who contributed their time and expertise to participate in the development of this plan, including:

- Our survey respondents;
- Our community consultation participants;
- Our staff; and
- Accessible Arts.

Alternative formats

Our DIAP is available in Easy English format, including PDF and Word (both available on our website). Hard copy formats (in both large and standard print) are also available upon request.

A note on language

We recognise that there are varying views on language and terminology around disability in Australia and internationally.

We have chosen to write this DIAP using person-first language of 'person with disability' to recognise that disability is just one aspect of a person's life and does not determine who they are. This is currently the preferred language used by governments across Australia. However, we respect that different people have different preferences about language.





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Image on cover: *Rainbow Wildflowers* by M. Sunflower Trad



Foreword



It is our pleasure to present Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for the period of 2022-2026. Having a DIAP is a requirement under the *NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014* for all local government organisations. For Georges River Council, our DIAP goes beyond being a legislative requirement and is something we see as an essential tool in creating a more equitable society and community.

This is the second DIAP Council has delivered and it builds upon the progress we have made over previous years, while acknowledging that there is much more work still to do.

The DIAP is our roadmap, providing us with a strategy to ensure we are building a more inclusive and accessible place for everyone in our local government area (LGA). It focuses on improved access to facilities, events and activities, as well as a commitment to increasing the employment of people with disability within Council and with local businesses. The DIAP also addresses how we can remove attitudinal and behavioural barriers, and how we will ensure access to services is assisted by quality systems and processes.

This plan was developed in consultation with our local community and with our staff, using a combination of community consultation sessions and surveys to seek feedback on what is working and to identify gaps in service. The plan has been informed by the voices of people with lived experience of disability, and guided by carers, support people, service providers and other interested parties. This helped us gain a broader and deeper understanding of the issues and barriers affecting people with disability across our community.

The DIAP is accompanied by an Implementation Strategy and will be incorporated into all aspects of Council business, to ensure it becomes embedded throughout our services. We are committed to ensuring that the future needs of our community are met, by providing the framework to guide the creation and implementation of policies, processes and infrastructure.

We want to work together to make Georges River an accessible place to live, work and play. We would like to thank members of the community for their assistance in helping us to create a more inclusive Georges River area. We are keen to continue collaborating with our community around this area of work, so that we can identify the community's changing needs to further improve the liveability and accessibility of the area over time.

Councillor Nick Katris
Mayor

David Tuxford
Acting General Manager



Introduction

Georges River Council is committed to creating a more inclusive community for all people who live in, work in and visit our area. This means ensuring all people with disability and diverse needs have every opportunity to fully participate in and enjoy the social, business and community life of Georges River.

One in five Australians has a disability – a substantial proportion of our society. Most people will experience some type of disability in their lifetime and many of us are also carers who support friends or family members with disability. Therefore, we need to ensure that our attitudes are inclusive, our environments accessible, our workforces diverse and our processes are universally user friendly.

At Georges River Council, we believe that everyone has the right to participate, engage and contribute. Throughout Australia, there are still barriers to ensuring equitable access to social, civic or employment opportunities for people with disability. Working to remove these barriers is not only good for people with disability but makes things better for all members of our community – including older people, young children, parents and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups.

Georges River Council is passionate about advocating for access and inclusion of all community members through a range of current strategies and action plans such as becoming a Dementia Friendly Council, Council's anti-racism campaign #BetterTogether, the development of our First Nations First Strategy, and

our Social Justice Charter. These strategies and action plans are connected through their mission of providing equitable access for the whole community to enjoy all that the Georges River area has to offer.

The NSW Government has identified four focus areas where significant barriers to access and inclusion should be addressed. These are the pillars under which our DIAP has been developed and framed:

- 1. Attitudes and Behaviours** - towards people with disability which may result in limiting access to employment and/or opportunities to contribute to social, economic and cultural life.
- 2. Liveable Communities** - encompasses the built environment, access to transport, community recreation and social engagement.
- 3. Employment** - supporting pathways to employment and increasing employment rates of people with disability at Council and in the wider Georges River community.
- 4. Systems and Processes** - improving the systems and processes that enable people to access the services and supports they need in the community.

Within these four key areas, a range of actions has been developed which Council will deliver over the next four years, enabling people with disability to have greater access to Council information, services and facilities.

Image: Two women sitting with their arms around each other. One woman is looking directly at the camera and smiling. The other woman to the left is looking at the other woman and smiling.



Who we are

The Georges River Council local government area (LGA) has a population of approximately 160,000, across 38.36 square km; constituting a population density of approximately 4,170 persons per square km. We are located approximately 15 kilometres south of the Sydney CBD area and bordered by the City of Canterbury Bankstown LGA in the north, the Bayside Council LGA in the east, the Georges River in the south, and Salt Pan Creek in the west.¹

As a Council, our mission is to be a leading, people-focused organisation delivering outstanding results for our community and city. Our vision is a progressive, environmentally and culturally rich community enjoying a unique lifestyle. Our values are: united, professional, honest and accountable.

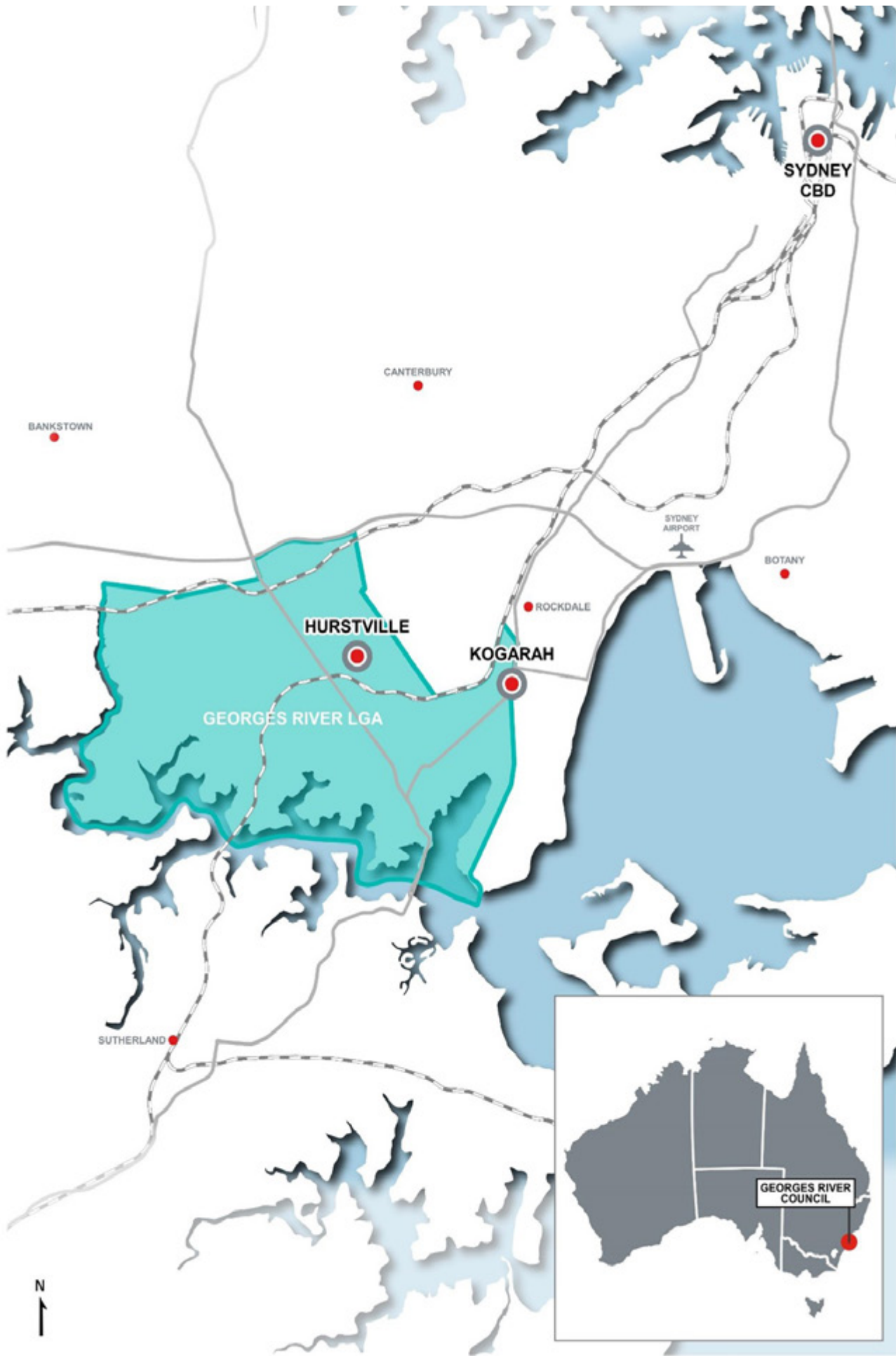
As a local government organisation, we support our community via the provision of:

- Waste and recycling
- Customer service
- Aquatic centres
- Parks and playgrounds
- Libraries
- Community centres
- Community programs.

¹ ID (2021), [Georges River Council area](#).

Image: A young girl with Down Syndrome is wearing a brown woollen hat and pink jacket. She is smiling and holding on to playground climbing equipment rope.





Definitions

Inclusion



Inclusion is the process in which every person (irrespective of age, disability, gender, religion, sexual preference or ethnicity) can access and participate fully in all aspects of an activity or service in the same way as any other member of the community.

According to the research report "Towards new indicators of disadvantage: Deprivation and social exclusion in Australia" published by UNSW's Social Policy Research Centre, dimensions of inclusion include:

- being heard and valued
- meaningful participation
- connection and belonging
- opportunity to access supports
- choice and control in your life.

Inclusion is not about helping others to access the society, it's about changing the society; Inclusion is about making society mean everyone.²

Disability



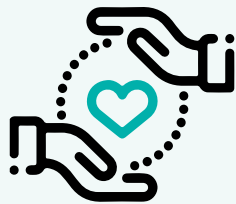
The definition of disability applied in this document includes both definitions provided by the *Disability Inclusion Act (NSW) 2014* and the *Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) 1992*.

The Disability Inclusion Act (NSW) 2014 defines disability as including a long-term physical, psychiatric, intellectual or sensory impairment that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder the person's full and effective participation in the community on an equal basis with others.

The Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth) 1992 defines disability as:

- The total or partial loss of the person's body or mental functions
- The total or partial loss of a part of the body
- The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; and
- A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction.³

Carers



The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 describes a carer as any individual who provides care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail due to age.⁴

Many carers don't use the word 'carer' to describe themselves and they come from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and age groups. Across NSW, there are approximately 854,300 carers, including individuals as young as eight years of age through to the very elderly.⁵

Intersectionality



We understand that the barriers people with disability experience can compound and layer when an individual is part of more than one underrepresented group. Recognising that people's lives are multi-dimensional and complex, we aim to take an intersectional approach in our thinking around accessibility, which means focusing on the points of intersection that multiple identities create.

Intersectionality recognises the diversity of experiences within marginalised groups and provides a framework for recognising and addressing the needs of individuals who are most disadvantaged, setting a pathway for a more just and equitable world.

We are mindful of these intersections and aim to provide good access for people with disability from all backgrounds and lived experiences. This includes First Nations people, CALD people, women and non-binary people, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people from regional and remote areas, Older People, Children and Young People and people from low socio-economic backgrounds.⁶

² Saunders P, Naidoo Y, Griffiths M (2007), [Towards new indicators of Disadvantage: Deprivation and social exclusion in Australia.](#)

³ Carers NSW (2018), [About Carers.](#)

⁴ Reynolds V (2010), [Intersectionality.](#)

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), [Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings.](#)

⁶ Judicial Commission of New South Wales (2022), [Equality before the Law Bench Book — Section 5 — People with disabilities.](#)

Disability in Australia

Georges River Council follows the social model of disability that distinctively signals the difference between a person's individual condition or impairment, and the barriers they experience which are created by the environment and society around them. Instead of the condition, it is the 'barriers' which are disabling, as these limit opportunity, autonomy and self-expression and instead create disadvantage.

Disability can be both permanent or temporary and invisible or visible. We include mental health within our definition of disability, as well as members of the d/Deaf community (who may not choose to identify as people with disability, but instead as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, with their first language being Auslan). We recognise that not everyone who faces these barriers chooses to identify as a person with disability and we understand that identity and disclosure in the context of disability is complex and very personal. We also understand the principles of universal design, in that one size does not fit all and that the complexities of intersectionality exist within disability.

Disability impacts us all. It is a broad diversity group and is commonly experienced by those in our community – with people either directly identifying themselves as a person with disability, being a carer for someone else or having a family member or close friend with disability.

⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission (2000), [Disability and People from Non-English Speaking Background Communities](#).

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15](#).

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), [Disability Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings](#).

¹⁰ Price Waterhouse Coopers, (2011), [Disability expectations - Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia](#).

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008), [National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 2007](#).

¹² Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (2020), [Chronic conditions and multimorbidity](#)

¹³ Access Economics (2006), [The Economic Impact and Cost of Hearing Loss in Australia](#).

¹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020), [Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2018-19](#).



Image: Man with prosthetic right leg standing on a beach wearing a wetsuit and holding a surfboard.



The Australian statistics shared below demonstrate how widespread disability is:



One in five Australians are people with disability (**17.7% or 4.4 million people**).⁷



Of the 7.80 million residents of NSW, **1.37 million (18.34%)** have disability.⁸



People with disability from **non-English speaking** backgrounds face multiple layers of disadvantage and make lower than average use of disability services because they may not be aware what is available and the services may be culturally inappropriate.⁹



Just under half (**45.1%**) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over, experience disability.¹⁰



People with disability are twice as likely to be in the bottom **20%** of gross household incomes.¹¹



Of those with disability in Australia, **45%** are living either near or below the poverty line, more than double the OECD average of 22%.¹²



45% of the population will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lives.¹³



Almost half of Australians (**47% or more than 11 million people**) have one or more chronic conditions.¹⁴



Vision Australia estimates there are currently **357,000** people in Australia who are blind or partially sighted.



One in six Australians are impacted by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 Deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.¹⁵

The Georges River Community



In 2016, **4.9%** (or over 7,000 people) of the population in the Georges River LGA reported needing help in their day-to-day lives, due to disability. As our population ages the number of people needing assistance is likely to increase. In 2015, approximately **1 in 5 Australians** reported living with a disability.



With the estimated residential population in the Georges River Council LGA being 160,272, **up to 32,000 people** living in the Georges River Council LGA could have an ongoing limitation, restriction or impairment which restricts everyday activities.¹⁶



As our population ages, the number of people needing assistance in their day-to-day lives is likely to increase. For example, while only **1.8%** of the population aged between 20 and 59 years old need help in their day-to-day lives, this increases to **51.7%** for residents aged between 85 and over. The increased prevalence of disability as people age will have implications for Council, service providers and the general community.



Analysis of the unpaid care provided by the population in the Georges River area in 2016 compared to Greater Sydney shows that there was a higher proportion of people who provided unpaid care either to family members or others. Overall, **11.8%** of the Georges River population provided unpaid care, compared with **11.1%** for Greater Sydney. This highlights the crucial role that carers play in our community.

(Source: <https://profile.id.com.au/georges-river/about>).

¹⁶ United Nations (2022),

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#).

Image: Woman with Down Syndrome practising yoga on a black yoga mat on a wooden floor. She is wearing maroon long sleeved shirt and dark pants, her hair is in a bun on top of her head and she is looking forward as she stretches.





Legislative context

People with disability have the same rights to choose how they live their lives, to access opportunities, and to enjoy the benefits of living and working in our society as all residents do.

There are a wide range of legislative requirements and strategies which have influenced the development of this DIAP. In recent years, there have been significant changes to law and policy in Australia aimed at ensuring the rights of people with disability are upheld and protected.

A summary of key documents is provided here.

International

Internationally, Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008). This Convention recognises that disability is “an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.¹⁷



Image: Two women face each other across a black table. Facing the camera is a woman in a black shirt with white spots and long brown hair holding two hands up in sign language. Her hands are forming two circles with her thumbs and index fingers. The person opposite is holding up both hands in sign language too.

National

At a federal level, Australia has had a *Disability Discrimination Act* for 30 years (released in 1992). Various Australian Standards and Frameworks support this Act, including the Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards (2010), Building Code of Australia (BCA), Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (2002) and Disability Standards for Education (2005).

Since 2014, Australia has implemented the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to provide Australians with permanent and significant disability with the reasonable and necessary supports they need to live an ordinary life. Residents of the Georges River LGA have had access to the NDIS from 1 July 2017.

In 2019, Australia launched a three-year Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. This inquiry will provide recommendations to government on how to prevent and better protect people with disability from all forms of violence and abuse, neglect and exploitation; achieve best practice reporting and investigation processes; and promote a more inclusive society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Australia has also recently released its new National Disability Strategy (NDS) 2021-2031. The vision sets out practical changes required to fulfill its vision for an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential, as equal members of the community. It helps protect, promote and realise the human rights of people with disability through national leadership, guiding public policy activities, influencing mainstream services and systems and engages the whole community in achieving a more inclusive society.

NSW

At a state level, NSW Parliament passed the *Disability Inclusion Act* in 2014. This Act ensures people with disability have the same human rights in the community and provides the legislative framework to guide state and local government disability inclusion and access planning. *The Disability Inclusion Act (2014)* supports people with disability to access:

- The same human rights as other members of the community and that governments and communities have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights
- Independent, social and economic inclusion within the community; and
- Choice and control in the pursuit of their goals, the planning and delivery of their supports and services.

After extensive consultation by the New South Wales government with people with disability, their families and carers throughout the State, it was decided that all NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plans would focus on four key areas:

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.

¹⁷ www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

Our achievements to date

Attitudes and behaviours

- Employed a Diversity and Inclusion Officer.
- Established and facilitated an internal Diversity and Inclusion committee.
- Established and facilitated an Access and Inclusion Reference Group.
- Co-hosted the Disability Interagency Network with Sutherland Shire Council and Bayside Council.
- Representatives from over 30 local businesses attended the Winning Business Expo and have been provided information on accessibility to attract customers.
- Delivered a range of inclusive events and programs with, by and for people with disability (e.g. Georges River Libraries Harmony Day Living Library program, Jubilee Arts for Mental Health (JAMH), Unplugged and Live and Local).
- Council's Early Learning Centres worked with children with disability, their families and allied health professionals alongside other enrolled children and families to build acceptance and embrace diversity.

Image: Man with one leg is on a climbing wall. He is wearing all black, wearing a harness and holding on to rocks, looking upwards.



Liveable communities

- Completed a detailed footpath audit on our 417km footpath network. This audit captured Council's compliant and non-compliant kerb cut outs (pram ramps). The audit identified 301 trip hazards greater than 35mm. All 301 trip hazards were repaired by 30 June 2019. Civil works funding has been allocated for disability specific projects.
- Supported accessible projects funded through Council's grants programs.
- Provided mobility maps and parking spaces in key areas around the LGA.
- Provided live captioning provided at all of Council's major events.
- Provided extensive resources available for the community, including accessibility and inclusion resources and information at Georges River Libraries.
- Completed accessibility audits and associated works on some of Council's most regularly used community centres, outlining recommendations to meet relevant accessibility codes and standards.
- Designed all-inclusive playgrounds to provide play and learning areas for children of all abilities, providing access and opportunity for children to interact with the equipment.
- Delivered accessible arts and cultural events, including Hurstville Museum & Gallery's in-house designed exhibition Keep in Touch.
- Upgraded existing bus stops, with the addition of new accessible bus shelters, to meet the requirements in the Disability Standards for accessible public transport.
- Developed a Wayfinding Strategy for town centres.
- Facilitated a "walk and talk" audit of Council's inaugural arts festival, Un[contained], which led to the inclusion of a special one-hour, low light and low noise session for people with sensory processing disorders.
- Purchased electronic change tables, listening posts, weighted blankets and other sensory equipment in Council's Early Learning Centres to support children with diverse abilities.

Georges River Council has been working to improve its programs and services for people with disability since 2016, with this DIAP building on existing achievements and actions which are now embedded within Council's daily practices and culture.

A snapshot of key highlights over the life of the previous DIAP (2017-2021) have been included below:

Employment

- Implemented a recurrent Disability Awareness – Train-the-Trainer program, which has been delivered to managers, coordinators and key customer-facing staff across Council.
- Worked in partnership with Disability Employment Agency, NOVA Employment as well as a local high school support unit to offer work experience placements across the organisation, including the Libraries, Museum and Gallery, Customer Service and Children's Services.
- Continued to support the Jubilee Arts for Mental Health program. This has had positive outcomes and feedback from the participants and community. The art skills program is offered each term for 10 people with Autism and people managing or recovering from mental illness. There is an opportunity for participants who are repeat attendees to be selected for a paid position as an assistant tutor on future programs.

Systems and processes

- The Access and Inclusion Reference Group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis.
- Departments within Council such as Events, Community Capacity Building, and the Hurstville Museum & Gallery teams have been undertaking accessibility assessments for events, in line with the Event Strategy commitments towards increasing event accessibility for performers and audiences.
- Key Council documents have started to be translated into Easy English and made available on Council's website.
- Council is using the tool Monsido to regularly monitor the accessibility and quality assurance of Council's website and improve usability and customer experience. Monsido monitors readability, misspelling and broken links to ensure both technical and content accessibility.
- Live captioning and Auslan interpretations continue to be provided at major meetings and via online platforms.

Image: Woman in wheelchair is sitting at a table and waving with her right hand at a laptop. She is wearing a mustard-coloured shirt and beige pants, with a black and white patterned cloth over her knees, which can be seen under the table. She is wearing black ear buds and there is a white coffee cup on the table in front of her.





Case study

Support for children with disability (liveable communities)

Over the past four years, Council's Early Learning Centres have worked with a variety of allied health professionals, such as Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, Speech Therapists and Psychologists, to support children with additional needs.

Through these interactions, our Early Learning Educators have gained hands-on knowledge on how to best support individual children and their families. This partnership has enabled us to learn and grow and improve the care and support that our services offer.


We have worked closely with the Department of Education to support the transition from Long Day Care to primary school for children with additional needs and their families. We have also been able to support families and their children who have been referred to us from the Department of Family and Community Services.

Five out of six of our Early Learning Centres currently provide inclusion support for children that are developmentally delayed or diagnosed as being on the spectrum. In total we would have provided over 100 hours of support per week for children with additional needs.

South Hurstville Kindergarten has developed a partnership with The University of Sydney Health Sciences Department to allow students who are studying Speech Therapy to work with both the children with additional needs and our Educators to better support the children's speech development.

Council's Early Learning Centres will continue to work with allied health professionals to ensure service provision is equitable and support access and inclusion for all children.

Image: Young child in blue and grey hooded top listening on black headphones.







Methodology and consultation

To develop this DIAP, we conducted extensive community and staff consultation and fieldwork, to gather ideas and feedback about what is currently working well and what could be improved. We then partnered with peak body Accessible Arts to develop the DIAP, using their expertise and lived experience of disability.

The types of consultation processes used during the development of this plan will continue throughout the implementation of the DIAP and beyond, to ensure we are receiving feedback directly from people with lived experience to inform our thinking and design of future work.

Image: Two people sitting at a desk together in front of a laptop. One person has their back to the camera and has long wavy brown hair and is wearing a green jacket. The other person is a woman with brown hair, wearing green framed glasses and a pink corduroy coat. She is sitting in a wheelchair.





Consultation

A range of different consultation methods were provided, so people could engage with the DIAP development in a way that suited them. The consultation offerings were promoted extensively via social media, Council's website, The St George and Sutherland Shire Leader newspaper and via Council's five Reference Groups.

Two surveys were conducted as part of the development of this plan:

- DIAP specific community survey – April to Oct 2021 – 77 responses
- Staff Diversity & Inclusion survey – Aug to Dec 2021 – 71 responses

Eight consultation sessions were held online. One was held in November 2020 with disability service providers and organisations and the rest from October to December 2021. The sessions included:

- One internal staff workshop
- Three public sessions
- One CALD group
- One Youth focus group
- One with students with disability and a support teacher.

We also spoke with several local community members and organisations to gather additional feedback.

Through this consultation, we heard directly from people with disability, carers, family members, disability service providers, mainstream/community service providers and staff. Those consulted included Council's Access and Inclusion Reference Group, residents, workers, visitors and those with an interest in our area.

Accessible Arts was engaged to draft the DIAP on Council's behalf and workshops with staff and members of Council's Access and Inclusion Reference Group were run on strategies and actions before the draft was finalised.

Our engagement strategy



Online survey



Community consultation



Reference groups, Council staff



Everyone is encouraged to email, call and write to Council



What the community told us



Attitudes and behaviours

“People with disability are everywhere in our community, yet not having them/their faces visible is something that always annoys me. Promoting disability in pictures and our activities are important.”

(Survey respondent)

“Not all disabilities are visible. Design things so they can be used by all.”

(Survey respondent)

“Nothing is really mentioned about intersectionality or people from CALD communities. Georges River has multicultural groups and people with disability come from different backgrounds. Also, not all are born overseas. More supports and focus on that is needed.”

(Survey respondent)

“Raise awareness through acknowledging and celebrating community, state-wide, national and international events and initiatives.”

(Internal consultation session 8 October 2021)

Summary

You told us that one of the greatest barriers for people with disability has been attitudes and behaviours, and that breaking down the barriers of attitudes and behaviours plays a key role in access and inclusion. You also told us that you believe that a lot of attitude and behaviour barriers stem from people’s ignorance and lack of interaction with people with disability.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Train Council staff in disability awareness
- Ensure people with disability are represented through imagery and events
- Include reference to carers within the DIAP, and consider programs such as Carers + Employers program (to support staff with caring responsibilities)
- Ensure people with disability are included in decision making processes
- Ensure disability is considered using an intersectional lens.



Image: Dark skinned man wearing a red shirt and grey jeans. He is sitting in a wheelchair and smiling at the camera. He is sitting front of a white building and there is a pool next to him on the left.



Liveable communities

“Maintain virtual inclusive events even when lockdowns are over or events with a blended approach.”

(Survey respondent)

“Survey all footpaths and address the abundance of trip hazards and blocked sections (grass edges and overhanging bushes/trees).”

(Survey respondent)

“While mobility is important, mobility isn’t just physical access but also things like dealing with noise, lighting, rest spots if you get disorientated easily, having more clearly marked pick up spots around the area not just at the train station so people can be taken home once it all becomes too much, asking commercial buildings like the shopping centre to consider having sensory quiet rooms for anyone being overwhelmed, reconsidering all the rage for shiny hard surfaces that just makes noises so much worse in public buildings.”

(Survey respondent)

“Families with children with disability feel a disconnect to resources and support, and uncomfortable about coming to events.”

(Community Consultation 20 October 2021)

Summary

You told us the benefits of creating a liveable community with no physical barriers stretched beyond the need of people with disability and wheelchair access. You told us that a more accessible Council touched everyone in the community, from parents with prams to the elderly with mobility issues. The survey showed that the facilities that people are most likely to find difficult to access were footpaths and public toilets, followed by bus shelters, sports and recreation centres, Council events and festivals, and accessible parking.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Make future events more accessible and inclusive, including the continuation of hybrid events and using disability organisations to promote them
- Provide more opportunities for carers (e.g. a support group)
- Provide more community groups and exercise groups open to people with disability
- Improve footpaths
- Provide more accessible parking spaces and public transport
- Provide more accessible public toilets
- Provide more inclusive opportunities for young people
- Ensure all Council facilities (e.g. aquatic centres and playgrounds) are accessible and include things like quiet spaces
- Ensure all types of access requirements are considered, not only physical ones.

What the community told us



Employment

“More opportunities for people with disabilities in the work sector. More awareness so that it’s easier for people with disabilities to fit in to a workplace.”

(Community consultation 3 December 2021)

“Put together morning tea. Offering local business to come and meet young people with disability. Meeting face to face, it helps to remove stigma.”

(Community consultation 13 October 2021)

“Work experience for children with disability – 200 students looking for opportunities. One week per year at Council doesn’t make a significant difference.”

(Community consultation 20 October 2021)

Summary

You told us that people with disability have many skills and assets that businesses can benefit from, yet statistics show that people with disability still have the highest rate of unemployment in the community. You told us that people with disability have access issues attending interviews, that there is a general lack of understanding of disability, and that employers fear that people with disability will cost too much to provide adequate support.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Employ more staff with disability.
- Provide more meaningful work experience for people with disability at Council and within local businesses.
- Encourage local businesses to employ and provide work experience to people with disability.



Image: Two men facing each other and smiling. Man on the left is older, wearing a green shirt and the man on the right is a young man with Down Syndrome. His hands are touching his chin and he is wearing a burgundy cap and burgundy t-shirt.



Systems and processes

“People with disability can lack literacy and numeracy skills. Now more than ever we have gone online – things can be hard for them to access. Face-to-face is still important and needed.”

(Community consultation 13 October 2021)

“Including people with various disabilities through employment and consultation. Getting direct feedback to ensure their needs and interests are addressed and responded to.”

(Survey respondent)

“Recognisable icons/map key included in digital and hard copy brochures, promotional material. For example, an easy to recognise icon acknowledging an accessible toilet, quiet space etc.”

(Survey respondent)

Summary

You told us that while technology has advanced and that there are now many varied ways to communicate and interact, providing information effectively to people with disability still needs improvement.

What you told us you would like Council to do:

- Ensure service centres are accessible.
- Make the website more accessible.
- Maintain face-to-face options for services, as well as online options.
- Make it easier to find information on the website and include more information about access on the website.
- Council’s Your Say page should be easy to read.
- Information should be provided in different formats.

Image: A black laptop is open on a desk. There is an accessible keypad with blue finger pads and large white buttons attached to the laptop.





Key action areas

Our commitment, vision and goals will be realised through a series of actions we will take over the next four years. Based on the feedback received from the community provided through public consultations and Council's own research and staff discussions, Georges River Council has developed actions with respect to the "Key Action Areas" in accordance with guidance set by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

While specific actions for each Key Action Area have been reported under the Action Plan section of this document, Key Action Areas are explained below:




Image: Young woman with long blue and pink hair is smiling and looking into the distance. She is wearing a mustard coloured knitted jumper and has a black prosthetic hand held in front of her chest.

Attitudes and Behaviours

The attitudes and behaviours of the general community towards people with disability have been described as the single greatest barrier to full access and inclusion.

Attitudes and behaviour permeate all aspects of life. Low expectations and negative attitudes about people with disability as employees serve as barriers to professional practice. Developing positive attitudes involves increasing awareness and changing negative perceptions over time.

Liveable Communities

Creating liveable communities for people with disability is more than modifying the physical environment. It covers areas such as access to transport, community recreation and culture, social engagement and universal design.

Employment

Employment rates for people with disability are significantly lower than for people without disability. People with disability experience multiple barriers at all stages of the employment process, ranging from inaccessible interview venues, lack of reasonable adjustments to the work environment, rigid role descriptions and online testing that may place applicants at a disadvantage. These factors reduce their opportunities to gain and retain employment.

Research indicates that organisational commitment to workforce equality and inclusion is closely linked to strong business performance.

Systems and Processes

A common barrier for people with disability is the difficulty navigating systems and processes to access the services, venues and support they need in the community. This could include accessing information, communication, or lack of options to access services.



Action Plan

KEY

- # - Number
- % - Percentage
- - Action taken

This Action Plan, as outlined in the table below:

- describes the actions Council has developed, through consultation conducted to date, under each Key Action Area: (1) Attitudes and Behaviours; (2) Liveable Communities; (3) Employment; and (4) Systems and Processes;
- breaks down each Key Action Area into further sub-areas; and
- prescribes corresponding measures and allocation of responsibility for each action.

Attitudes and Behaviours

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1.1 Staff confidence and competence – Provide training to build staff skills in access and inclusion					
1.1.1. Continue to deliver a program of “disability awareness and confidence training” for all Council staff.	# and % increase of staff that have completed disability awareness and confidence training.				
	# of staff completing relevant specialist training.	○	○	○	○
	% of staff who are satisfied with the level of disability awareness among colleagues (as ascertained through staff survey).				
1.1.2. Design and implement “disability awareness and confidence training” and include in Council staff induction.	# of training sessions delivered.				
	# of new staff completing disability awareness and confidence training.				
	# of new staff reporting an increase in understanding and awareness of the importance of inclusion (as ascertained in feedback survey following delivery of training).		○	○	○



Image: Young boy with disability sitting in an accessible playground swing. He is wearing a green jumper and blue jeans and is looking up to the right with a big smile.

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1.1.3. Include “disability awareness sessions” led by people with disability in Council’s staff ‘Lunch and Learn’ program schedule.	# of sessions delivered to staff. # and % increase in staff attending ‘Lunch and Learn’ sessions.	○	○	○	○
1.1.3. Invite staff members with disability to join Council’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee.	# and % increase of staff with disability who are members of Council’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee.		○	○	○
1.1.4. Actively promote the work of Council’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee to staff and the wider community in continuing to raise disability awareness.	# of promotion activities undertaken annually.		○	○	○
1.2 Council’s Access and Inclusion Reference Group – Harness the expertise of the group to continue to make positive change					
1.2.1. Continue to facilitate quarterly Access and Inclusion Reference Group meetings.	# of meetings conducted per year.	○	○	○	○
1.2.2. Ensure membership of Council’s Access and Inclusion Reference Group continues to include a range of people with different access requirements.	# of members with diverse lived experience with disability and access requirements.	○	○	○	○

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1.2.2. Ensure Councillors and staff across Council consult with the Access and Inclusion Reference Group in planning and development of key Council policies, procedures, strategies and projects across the organisation which affect or impact people with disability.	# of consultation sessions where the Access and Inclusion Reference Group have provided feedback.	○	○	○	○
1.3 St George and Sutherland Disability Interagency steering committee – Maintain involvement in the Disability Interagency steering committee					
1.3.1. Continue partnering with Bayside Council and Sutherland Shire Council to facilitate the St George Disability Interagency Network, to guide and steer disability planning and activities across these areas.	# of meetings.	○	○	○	○
1.4 Visibility and imagery – Ensure Council imagery is representative of people with disability					
1.4.1. Use Council's media channels and platforms, publications, events and sponsorship opportunities to promote inclusion of people with disability.	% of people with a disability featured in Council's publications. % of people attending events who report an increased understanding and awareness of the importance of inclusion (as ascertained through event feedback survey).	○	○	○	○
1.4.2. Actively encourage organisations who administer projects that aim to increase accessibility, inclusion and promote disability awareness in the community to apply for Council's Community Grants Program.	# and % increase of grant applications that relate to accessibility, inclusion and/or awareness raising of people with disability.	○	○	○	○

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
1.5 Local business education – Build disability awareness and confidence in local businesses					
1.5.1. Partner with the 'Zero Barriers' project to educate and support local businesses and services to increase disability awareness and inclusion.	# of local businesses that join the Zero Barriers network and are listed on the Zero Barriers directory.				
	# of local businesses that report increased knowledge and understanding of becoming more accessible and inclusive (as ascertained through feedback survey).	○	○	○	○
	# of local businesses nominated for Zero Barriers Business Excellence Awards.				

Image: Young girl sits playing a game. Her carer is sitting beside her and she is lovingly brushing the girl's hair out of her eyes.



Accessible and Liveable Communities

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
2.1 Council built environment – Ensure all upgrades and works to Council owned buildings consider access holistically					
2.1.1. Continue to improve accessibility of public buildings, facilities and open spaces for people with disability through renewal, upgrades and new works, including identifying opportunities for designated quiet spaces for people with sensory processing disorders.	<p>Audit of Council public spaces and facilities.</p> <p># of designated quiet spaces, including in Council facilities.</p>		○	○	○
2.2 Seating - Provide adequate and appropriate public seating around the local government area					
2.2.1. Ensure Council upgrades and works to seating embeds universal design principles for accessibility, rather than only meeting minimum standards.	% of new Council seating which is universally accessible.	○	○	○	○
2.2.2. Ensure new and upgraded street furniture, bubblers, fixtures and facilities are universally accessible.	% of new recreational spaces with universally accessible furniture and fixtures.		○	○	○

KEY

- Number

% - Percentage

○ - Action taken

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
2.3 Accessible parking - Provide further accessible parking across the local government area					
2.3.1. Explore the provision of charging points for electric bikes and mobility vehicles in public spaces and community facilities where appropriate.	# of charging stations available in the Georges River LGA.		○	○	○
2.3.2. Review the amount and type of mobility parking spaces in the Georges River Council LGA, including examining whether it is necessary to provide additional mobility disability parking spaces.	Implementation of review. # of mobility disability parking spaces.		○	○	○
2.4 Accessible public toilets – Provide further accessible public toilets across the local government area					
2.4.1. Review the current amount and type of accessible public toilets across the Georges River Council LGA, in places like parks, community centres, libraries and walking tracks to ensure the needs of people with disability are being met.	Implementation of review. # of accessible toilets available across the LGA.	○	○	○	○
2.5 Footpaths – Ensure footpaths are accessible and useable					
2.5.1. Continue Council's footpath review and upgrade works, and continue to improve the quality of the footpaths provided across the LGA.	Implementation of review.	○	○	○	○

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
2.6 Wayfinding and signage – Ensure it is easy to navigate around the LGA					
2.6.1. Continue current signage and wayfinding improvements in town centres and Council facilities.	# of new and inclusive signage and wayfinding improvements throughout the LGA.	○	○	○	○
2.7 Programs and events – Provide opportunities to engage with people with disability through community programs and events					
2.7.1. Events and programs - invite and support the participation of people with disability as artists, facilitators and audience members.	# of new initiatives people with disability to participate in as artists and audience members. # of events audited by an access consultant.	○	○	○	○
2.7.2. Develop and implement an access checklist for in-person and online Council events.	Access checklist developed and implemented across all Council events and programs.	○	○	○	○
2.7.3. Following the successful delivery of hybrid and virtual events necessitated by COVID-19 associated public health restrictions, such events should continue to be offered where appropriate and practical, to ensure people with disability and/or immunocompromised people can continue to access and participate in Council events.	# of virtual and/or hybrid events held.	○	○	○	○

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
2.8 Leisure and aquatic centres – Ensure leisure and aquatic centres across the local government area are accessible					
2.8.1. Advocate for, and support, sporting clubs and programs to make recreational and sporting programs accessible for people with disability.	# and % increase of organisations which provide sporting programs accessible for people with disability which were successful in granting funding applications.		○	○	○
	# and % increase of recreational and sporting groups in the LGA that deliver activities for people with disability.				
2.8.2 Advocate for accessible recreation and sporting facilities in the LGA where necessary to ensure there are opportunities for sporting participation amongst people with disability.	# and % increase of organisations successful in funding applications that retain accessible infrastructure for people with disability.		○	○	○
2.8.3 Ensure universal design principles are integrated into future parks and playground designs, linking with NSW government's "Everyone Can Play".	# of new parks and playgrounds which incorporate universal design principles.			○	○
2.9 Sport – Ensure local community sport is inclusive and accessible					
2.9.1. Review Council sporting and recreational facilities to understand which have relevant disability facilities (such as pathways, accessible toilets and parking) and where upgrades may be required.	Implementation of review.			○	○



Employment

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
3.1 Internal employment – Increase the number of people with disability working within Council					
3.1.1. Implement annual diversity and inclusion survey to capture how many current staff identify as a person with disability and the level of satisfaction towards specific needs being met or accommodated at work.	Diversity and inclusion staff survey implemented. # and % of current staff who identify as a person with disability and satisfaction levels are captured.		○	○	○
3.1.2. Review Council's recruitment and selection processes to identify and address any barriers for people with disability.	Implementation of review. # and % increase of new employees recruited who identify as a person with disability.			○	○
3.1.3. Promote Council as an inclusive employer externally (e.g. ensure job ads are shared in accessible formats and promoted through disability networks)	Implementation.			○	○
3.2 Career pathways – Provide opportunities for people with disability to conduct work experience and volunteering within Council					
3.2.1. Review Council's work experience and volunteering program and identify opportunities to adapt the program to meet the needs of people with disability in enabling a more meaningful experience.	Implementation of review. # and % increase of people with disability engaging in suitable work experience and volunteering opportunities at Council.		○	○	○

KEY

- Number

% - Percentage

○ - Action taken



Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
3.3 Support staff with disability – Provide support to retain staff with disability					
3.3.1. Review organisational support to staff, such as during recruitment and onboarding, to identify opportunities where the needs of people with disability could be better met through providing flexible options and adaptation of organisational processes.	<p>% of staff with disability and/or caring responsibilities who feel that their needs are well supported by Council.</p> <p># of managers who complete relevant specialist training to better support people with disability and carers.</p>			○	○

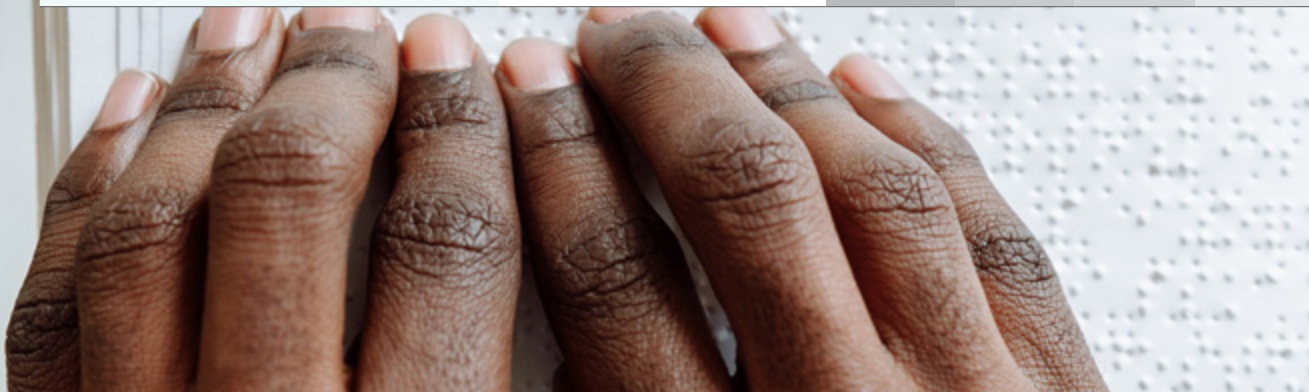
Image: Two women sitting at a table having lunch while working on a laptop. Woman on the left has short dark hair and black rimmed glasses. She has her left elbow on the table with her hand on the side of her face. She is smiling while looking at the laptop. The person on the right is a woman with Down Syndrome. She has brown hair in a ponytail and she is smiling and looking at the laptop.



Systems and Processes

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
4.1 Website - Continue to improve the accessibility of the website					
4.1.1. Implement the recommendations from the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 website audit conducted by Accessible Arts to improve Council's website.	Implementation. Increase in positive feedback on accessibility of Council's website.		○	○	○
4.1.2. Maintain accessible contact details, including a National Relay Service number on Council's website contact page.	Implementation.	○	○	○	○
4.1.3. Ensure that Council's website maintains accurate information about what accessibility services are offered at Council facilities (including service centres, parks, community centres, libraries, aquatic centres etc).	% increase in access by users amongst Council webpages that provide information on accessibility services.	○	○	○	○
4.2 Alternative formats – Increase the amount of Council information that is provided in a variety of accessible formats					
4.2.1. Continue to ensure Council's website and other Council information is provided in an appropriate reading level of Plain English (Australian Grade ¾ Level in accordance with Council's style guide).	Implementation.	○	○	○	○
4.2.2. Provide Council documents and marketing materials in a range of accessible formats, including Easy English, community languages and in formats accessible to people who are Blind or have low vision.	# of documents produced in accessible formats. # of documents produced in community languages.	○	○	○	○

Action	Measures	Timeframe			
		2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
4.3 Access to information – Ensure all information Council provides is accessible and inclusive					
4.3.1. Council's website provides up-to-date and effective information about access and inclusion in the LGA, including a link to the National Public Toilet Map.	Increase in positive feedback on accessibility of Council's website. % increase in people accessing Council's website for access and inclusion information.		○	○	○
4.3.2. Continue to provide up-to-date accessibility maps for city centres across the LGA.	# of accessibility maps available on Council's website.	○	○	○	○
4.4 Social media – Ensure all social media is accessible to everyone in the community					
4.4.1. Implement a more inclusive approach to social media, such as the use of image descriptions and the use of #CamelCase for people who are Blind or have low vision.	# of social media posts that use inclusive approaches.		○	○	○
4.5 Service centres – Ensure Council service centres and resources are accessible for everyone					
4.5.2. Ensure that all Customer Service Centres are physically accessible, and manage access issues such as queuing effectively or quiet trading hours.	% of Customer Service Centres that have actively introduced measures (such as quiet trading hours) for people with disability.		○	○	○



Governance, monitoring and review

Actions within this DIAP will be built into Council's operational planning processes, to ensure they are embedded and delivered.

We are committed to continuous improvement and are keen to draw on ongoing community feedback and work in partnership with relevant organisations to ensure we meet our goals.

To support the implementation of this DIAP, we will continue to work with our Access and Inclusion Reference Group, who will meet regularly to monitor and review DIAP progress.

We may also engage other experts, partners and stakeholders with lived experience of disability to assist us with the DIAP implementation or specific activities as required.

Georges River Council will report on its progress against the achievements towards the commitments outlined in this DIAP annually as part of Council's Annual Report and a copy will be provided to the Disability Council NSW.

Image: Black woman sitting at a table. She has a clipboard on the table in front of her which has a large black capital letter A on a yellow background. She is holding up her right hand in an L shape and is talking to a small boy sitting on a woman's lap opposite her. The boy is wearing a hearing aid and holding up his hand in an L shape with the help of the woman whose lap he is sitting on. The boy is smiling.





Contact us

Our DIAP is available to the public through our website and accessible formats are available on request. This DIAP is also registered with the Disability Council NSW.

We value community feedback on our progress in meeting the goals and actions outlined in our DIAP. We encourage individuals and organisations to share their thoughts and experiences with us to ensure our continued improvement.

Please contact us with questions or feedback via our Community Capacity Building Team:

02 9330 6400 or
communitycapacitybuilding@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au

For a free interpreter call us via the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS): 131 450.

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, please contact the National Relay Service:

Voice Relay number: 1300 555 727

TTY number: 133 677

Hurstville Service Centre

MacMahon and Dora Streets, Hurstville

Kogarah Library And Service Centre

Kogarah Square, Belgrave Street, Kogarah

Phone: 02 9330 6400

Email: mail@georgesriver.nsw.gov.au

Postal address: PO Box 205, Hurstville NSW 1481



Artwork

Artwork Title: Rainbow Wildflowers

Artist: M. Sunflower Trad

Medium: Acrylic on Canvas

Date: 2021

"If you look into the history of abstraction, it always seems to rise when the world is in turmoil. People turning away from the intense struggles of the world for a quiet moment, to try and cope within their own human body so they can continue to be part of the fight to leave the world a better place than we found it. This piece is a part of that practice for me. Using colour and abstract mark making, I transmute the present moment of pain into a pathway towards future regeneration."

- M. Sunflower Trad



About the artist

M. Sunflower is a culturally diverse Australian artist living with disabilities. A descendant of the Aboriginal Warmuli people of the Darug Nation, Lebanese post-war migrants, Chinese gold rush miners and UK convicts, M. Sunflower embodies the diverse ancestral legacy of Australia's painful and complex colonial past.

She holds a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Photomedia) from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney, and in 2016 was an inaugural recipient in the Emerge Program, an engagement project between the Art Gallery of NSW and Front Up, a Western Sydney based arts and culture program and hub. She is currently Co-Director at Firstdraft on the 2021-22 Board of Directors, and 2021 projects included: a solo photographic exhibition in June 2021 as part of Artspace Ideas Platform; and exhibition works for Firstdraft Auction, Fairfield Museum and Gallery, Off The Wall Gallery, and Accessible Arts.

She was also a finalist in the Bluethumb Art Prize 2021. Her interdisciplinary practice encompasses photography, painting, sculpture, video and installation, which she deploys to bring visibility to issues and experiences related to identity, trauma and disability.

A strong believer in art as activism, she is founder and curating contributor of Off The Wall Gallery, Sydney, an outdoor and online exhibiting initiative centred on creating professional development opportunities for her collective of artists with disabilities. She is a strong advocate for human rights and works actively to create opportunities and support for marginalised peoples of all identities.



Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2022-2026



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