

Access and Inclusion Action Plan

2024-27



Acknowledgement of Country

Gladstone Regional Council would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Bailai, the Gurang, the Gooreng Gooreng and the Taribelang Bunda people.

We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Gladstone Regional Council is committed to cultivating a culture of inclusion and connectedness, acknowledging that our communities are richer when diversity is embraced.



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1.1 Acknowledgements

Gladstone Regional Council wishes to thank all contributors and stakeholders involved in the development of this plan, including:

- The Gladstone Disability Community Network and other key stakeholders who advocated for the plan, shared local community knowledge and context and facilitated community connections
- Residents of the Gladstone Region who participated and contributed to the engagement activities
- All Council Officers who contributed their time and expertise to the development of the Action Plan.

1.2 Message from the Mayor

The introduction of the *Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-27* is a fantastic move forward for our region and positions us to becoming a more accessible and inclusive Council for everyone.

We recognise that people interact with Council services and facilities in different ways, and in February 2024 we invited the community to join the conversation on access and inclusion by sharing their experiences interacting with Council.

The community feedback we received has assisted in the development of this Action Plan and will guide our thinking and actions across the next three years.

Diversity enriches our lives, broadens our perspectives, and ultimately makes our community stronger and more vibrant.

We all have something to contribute, but we must remove the barriers so that all members of our community can actively engage and meaningfully participate.

I am confident Council's Access and Inclusion Plan can set us on the path to achieving this and I look forward to seeing its progress.

I would also like to offer my sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to making this Action Plan possible – from Council employees to the community – as your input has greatly shaped this work.

Matt Burnett
Mayor of the Gladstone Region

1.3 Message from the CEO

I am proud to introduce the Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-27, the next step in our journey towards becoming a Council that serves and supports our entire community.

Inclusivity has always been important to our organisation, so much so that its embedded as one of our core S.E.R.V.I.C.E. values, and many of our teams have individually embraced this value.

The strength of this Action Plan lies in its whole of business approach, closing gaps and seizing opportunities over the next three years to ensure better outcomes for our community as we move towards becoming a more inclusive and accessible Council.

For our people, this means reviewing our policies and practises to embed guiding principles into everything we do, remaining an attractive employer by ensuring our recruitment process offers opportunities to a wider range of candidates, building a workforce that reflects the diverse community who call the Gladstone Region home.

For our community, these actions will improve how they interact with Council day-to-day, ensuring improved access to facilities and services, improving how Council communicates and engages, and advocating for those in our community who still face barriers.

I would also like to thank the community members who made important contributions by sharing their personal experiences to guide the plan and ensure that it meets the needs of our community.

I look forward to seeing the community live the benefits of this plan as it rolls out over the next three years and we continue to take steps in this ongoing journey, together.

Leisa Dowling

Chief Executive Officer

1.4 Our Vision and Role

Vision:

A thriving and inclusive community where diversity is celebrated and all individuals have equal access to opportunities and resources. A region that fosters safety, belonging and prosperity for everyone.

Purpose:

The Gladstone Regional Council Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2024-27 is a series of action items that form a roadmap towards our goal: to improve accessibility and inclusiveness. It is an organisation-wide plan that is designed to benefit all of community. It is a commitment to view accessibility and inclusion as a priority in everything we do, underpinned by our core values; Safe, Ethical, Responsive, Visionary, Inclusive, Community, and Efficient.

Scope:

The scope of this plan includes all Council owned and managed facilities, all services that Council provide to the community, how Council engage with and communicate with the community and also considerations of Council as an employer, creating an accessible and inclusive workplace.

The scope does not include privately owned facilities such as shopping centres, services provided by businesses, organisations, or other levels of government, events that are not managed by or sponsored by Council and employment or training opportunities external from Council. However, where issues have been identified by the community that are outside of scope, the role that Council can play as an advocate have been considered in this plan.

Our Role:

- Provide spaces, places and services that are inclusive and accessible
- Communicate in a way that is easy to understand and uses inclusive language
- Partner with community to develop projects and initiatives that benefit all
- Build a working environment that is supportive and safe for people with diverse backgrounds and abilities
- Advocate for more accessible services and better outcomes for our community
- Lead by example.

Connections with Council Strategies:

Corporate Plan 2021-2026

Goal 1. Connecting Communities We work with you and for you, supporting the success of our communities.	
1.1 Communities are well understood, with programs and services designed to strengthen our region.	1.2 Communities can influence and actively participate in Council decision making.
Goal 3. Resilient Economy We play our part in supporting the success of our region.	
3.2 Increased liveability and visitation to the region.	

Community Development Strategy

Priority Area 2: Place

Creating accessible, vibrant and engaging places and spaces for the community.

Priority Area 3: Connect

Strengthening community connection, participation and activating communities.

Priority Area 4: Wellbeing

Fostering healthy, safe and supported communities.

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2023-2025

The Innovate RAP 2023-2025 outlines the actions Council will take to support lasting and meaningful relationships, encourage respect, and promote opportunities for First Nations people in our region.

The Access and Inclusion Action Plan is connected to and supports the important work that is identified in Council's Innovate RAP.

Document History:

This is Gladstone Regional Council's first Access and Inclusion Action Plan.

Developed in April-May 2024, the document was endorsed by Council on 18 June 2024.

Progress on the deliverables will be reported to Council every six months throughout the life of the plan.

This plan is to be evaluated in its third year, with a decision to be made on whether further plans are necessary.

1.5 Definition of Access and Inclusion

Accessibility is about making sure that everyone, regardless of their age, race, gender, sexuality or ability have equal opportunity to access facilities, services and activities.

Inclusion is about going a step further and ensuring that all people are included as valuable members in all aspects of society.

1.6 Celebrating Our Successes

Prior to the creation of this plan, Gladstone Regional Council has been actively working to enhance accessibility and foster inclusion. Some of the initiatives we have implemented include:

Youth Council

The Gladstone Region Youth Council acts as a formal Advisory Committee to Council on youth related matters within the region. The Youth Council is a shining example of the diversity and passion of young people in our region. They actively advocate for more young people to be involved in their community and to stand up and be heard on youth matters, leading by example through the delivery of the Youth Council Action Plan 2024-2025. The diversity within the Youth Council was highlighted throughout the development of this Action Plan, as a positive sign of inclusion, reflecting a broader shift towards diverse representation within community roles.

Home Library Service

Gladstone Regional Libraries provide a Home Library service to residents of Gladstone, Boyne Island, Tannum Sands and Calliope. The Home Library service caters to the needs of residents who are unable to visit the library due to medical, physical or other reasons ensuring that borrowers receive the same high level of service that all library users enjoy.

The library also provides an Out and About Library service which is an outreach program to the smaller townships of Wartburg, Lowmead, Nagoorin, Builyan and Yarwun, and a digital eLibrary which is also free for library members.

Welcoming Cities Accreditation and Welcoming Week Events


Gladstone Regional Council is a member of the Welcoming Cities network and regularly holds Welcome to the Region events to welcome new residents to our community and connect them to essential services and existing residents.

In April 2024, Council applied to become an Established Welcoming City, undergoing a formal accreditation process. The comprehensive assessment will help better understand where Council is positioned regarding social cohesion and economic participation across the community.

Upon sign off by Welcoming Australia, we are cementing our status as a key member of the Welcoming Australia network and a driver of cultural change, taking action towards becoming a more connected and cohesive community.

Changing Places® Restroom and Seven Senses Playground at Lions Park, Gladstone

To ensure the needs of all community members are being met, Council installed an accredited Changing Places® Restroom in Lions Park, Gladstone. Changing Places® Restrooms provide suitable amenities for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets. Features of the Changing Places® Restroom include a toilet pan, an adult-sized electric height adjustable change table, ceiling hoist, sufficient space and a safe, clean environment.



The facility is accessed by a registered Master Locksmiths Access Key (MLAK) which are available free of charge through the Gladstone Community and Neighbourhood Centre who are based at the Philip Street Communities and Families Precinct, a short drive from Lions Park.

The play equipment at Lions Park is designed to be accessible for all abilities, making the park an ideal location for the Changing Places[®] facility.

Infrastructure Upgrades at Tom Jeffery Park, Agnes Water

In 2023, Heart of Agnes Community Association Inc. crowd funded and purchased a Mobi-Mat to improve beach accessibility at Agnes Water Main Beach. Based on feedback, Council upgraded infrastructure at Tom Jeffery Park to support the Mobi-Mat. Works included installation of a fixed viewing platform and reducing the spacing between fixed boards.

2. Development of the Plan

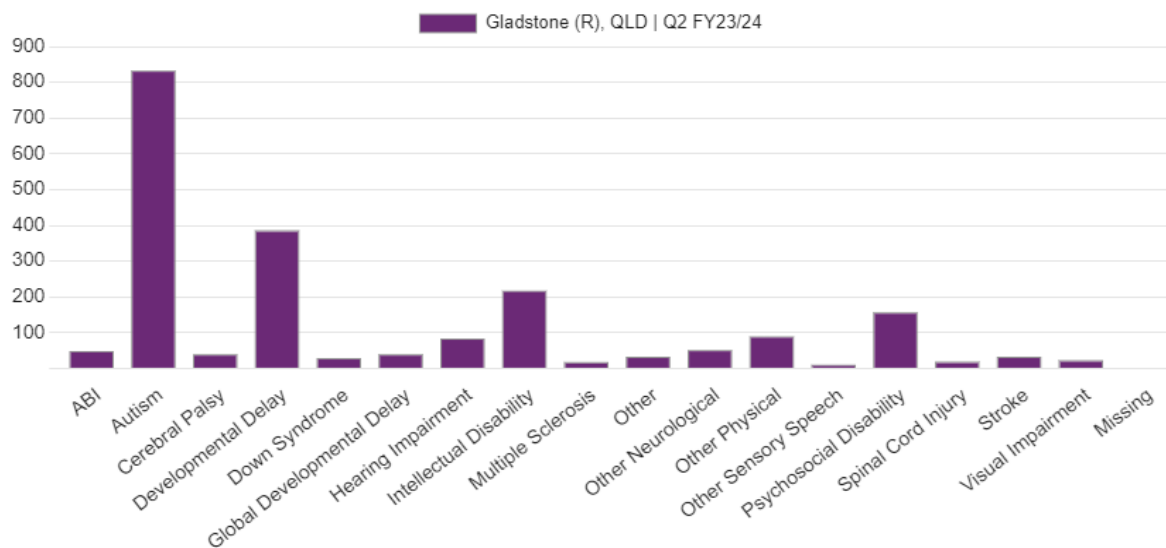
Early in the plan's development, Council made a deliberate choice to adopt a whole of community approach, rather than solely focusing on enhancing access and inclusion for individuals with disability. This broader perspective acknowledges that accessibility and inclusion are fundamental for all community members. However, we also recognise that various groups and individuals may encounter distinct challenges or experiences regarding access and inclusion and prioritised capturing and reflecting these diverse experiences throughout the engagement process.

Intersectionality was a guiding principle in this approach, recognising that individuals may belong to multiple marginalised groups and their experiences are shaped by the intersection of various identities. The engagement process specifically targeted groups such as individuals with disabilities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, seniors aged 65 and above, LGBTIQ+ individuals and First Nations people, ensuring their voices and perspectives were central in shaping the plan's objectives and initiatives.

2.1 Community Profile

Our population is diverse and is growing. The data paints a picture of this diversity and speaks to the importance of considering the varying needs of our community, now and in the future, as we continue to age and diversify.

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data (Gladstone Local Government Area 2021)
 - Population: 63,515
 - Persons who have need for assistance with core activities: 3,663 (5.8 per cent)
 - People with long term health conditions: 19,851 (31.2 per cent)
 - People born overseas: 12,973 (20.4 per cent)
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: 3,946 (6.2 per cent)
 - People aged 65 and over: 8,794 (13.8 per cent).
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) data (Gladstone LGA FY23/24)
 - 2,103 participants in the Gladstone Region
 - 70 per cent of participants are 0-24 years old
 - Most prevalent: autism, developmental delay, intellectual disability, psychosocial disability and hard of hearing, hearing loss or deaf.



Retrieved from: <https://dataresearch.ndis.gov.au/explore-data>

Australian Context

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data (Australia Disability Statistics 2022)
 - 1 in 6 people have a disability
 - It is estimated that approximately 80 per cent of the people with a disability in Australia have a 'non-visible' or 'hidden' disability or chronic health condition that impacts their daily activities. Examples include dementia, mental health conditions, diabetes, sensory and processing difficulties, hearing loss, fibromyalgia, lupus, chronic fatigue and brain injury
- Department of Health and Aged Care data (Mental Health Statistics 2023)
 - Of Australians aged 16–85 from 2020 to 2022, an estimated:
 - 8.5 million had experienced mental ill health at some time in their life (43 per cent of the population).
 - 4.3 million had experienced mental ill health in the previous 12 months (22 per cent of the population)
- General Social Survey (2020)
 - Approximately 4 per cent of Australians described themselves as being LGBTIQA+.

2.2 Guiding Principles

Council embraced the following principles during the development of the Access and Inclusion Action Plan and remains committed to integrating them into everyday operations.

Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability emphasises that disability is a result of the barriers and discrimination that people face in society. These barriers can be physical (e.g. lack of wheelchair ramps), communication-related (e.g. absence of sign language interpreters), attitudinal (e.g. stereotypes and prejudices) or institutional (e.g. inaccessible policies and practices). Removing these barriers offers people more independence, choice and control.

Universal Design

Universal Design is an approach to creating products, environments and systems that are accessible and usable by people of all ages, abilities and background. It aims to promote inclusivity, convenience and usability for the widest range of users possible.

Universal Design Principles

1. Equitable Use
2. Flexible in Use
3. Simple and Intuitive to Use
4. Perceptible Information
5. Low Physical Effort
6. Tolerance for Error
7. Size and Space for Approach and Use

Intersectionality

We acknowledge that the various aspects of a person's identity; such as race, gender, sexual orientation and other social categories, intersect and interact to shape their unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

Equity

We recognise that each person has different circumstances and allocate resources and opportunities as needed to reach an equal outcome.

Collaboration

We work alongside community to create more sustainable, culturally sensitive and community driven solutions that better meet the needs and aspirations of the people involved.

Innovation

We strive to go beyond the minimum standards, to seek out new and innovative ways to improve liveability and wellbeing outcomes for all members of our community.

2.3 Methodology

The Access and Inclusion Action Plan was developed over the course of a year as part of Council's 2023/24 Operational Plan.

Development Process:

1. Research and Auditing
 - A disability access audit of Council facilities and parks
 - A desktop analysis of Council's website, key strategies and plans and social media platforms
 - Policy and legislation review
 - Best practice review
2. Stakeholder Engagement
 - Internal and external focus groups with target stakeholder groups
 - A community survey
 - Consultation and information sharing with key stakeholders
3. Drafting
 - Draft made publicly available for further comment and consultation
4. Endorsement
 - Plan endorsed by Council.

Community Consultation:

- 57 people completed the community survey
- 45 participants across eight focus groups
- 18 Council teams were involved
- 11 people/organisations provided formal feedback on the draft plan

Focus Groups

A series of eight focus groups, seven in person and one online, were held in February 2024. Attendees included community members, Council leaders, and Council officers. The aim of the engagement sessions was to understand the day-to-day experiences of staff and community members. Having a thorough understanding of lived experience allows for the appropriate identification of actions that will help remove the barriers and ultimately increase the inclusion of all community members.

A wide range of topics were discussed throughout the focus groups.

Key themes identified included:

- Accessibility of infrastructure
- Accessible and inclusive events
- Recruitment and employment
- Funding and prioritisation
- Celebrating and promoting inclusivity and diversity
- Representation of diverse groups in leadership positions
- Communication and community engagement.

Survey Results

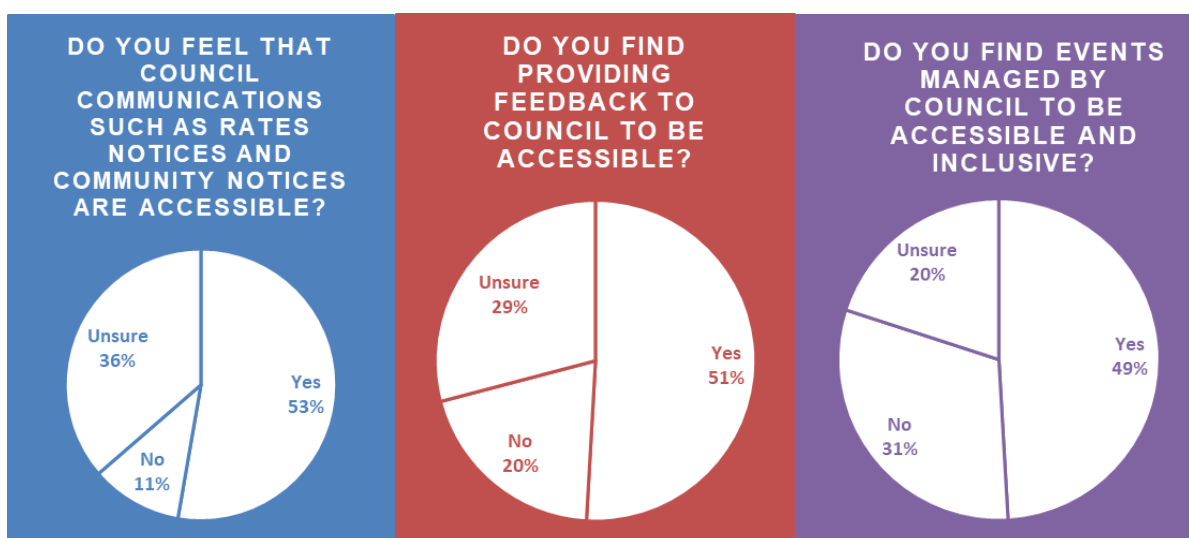
The public survey was designed to seek insights into the current factors within the Council that enhance or potentially limit accessibility and inclusion. Community members and Council officers across the region were invited to undertake the survey to understand the physical, digital and attitudinal barriers that have an impact on people in the Gladstone Region. The survey was open from 9 February 2024 and closed on 2 March 2024.

57 responses were collected with representation from a broad range of demographics, including:

- 18 per cent of respondents identified as having a disability
- 7 per cent identified as culturally and linguistically diverse
- 7 per cent identified as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- 9 per cent identified as LGBTIQ+.

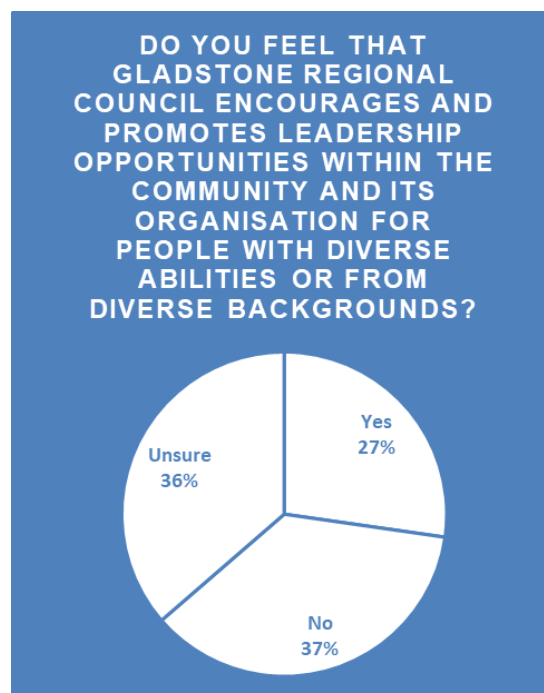
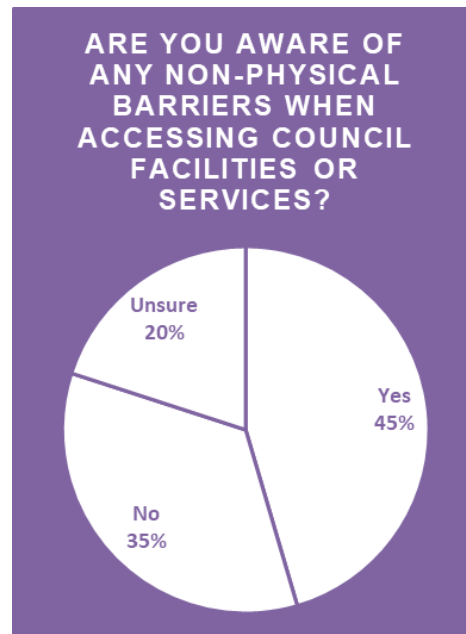
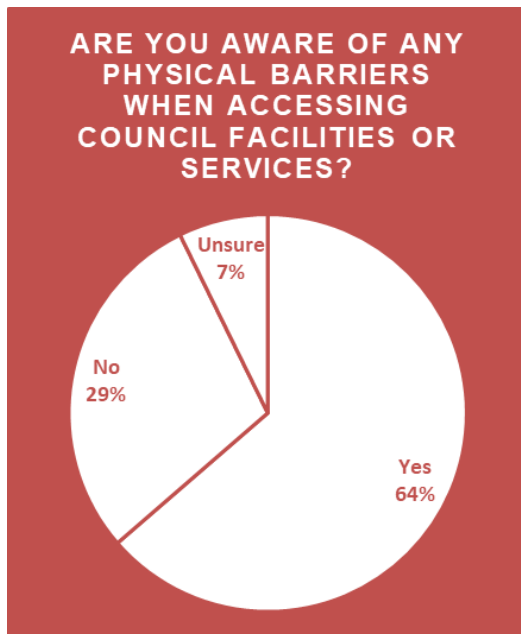
Things we are doing well:

- Most of the survey respondents felt that providing feedback to Council is accessible
- A large number of the survey respondents felt that Council-managed events are accessible and inclusive
- The majority of respondents felt that Council communications such as rates notices and community notices are accessible.



Opportunities to improve:

- Encouraging and promoting leadership opportunities within the community and our organisation
- Addressing physical and non-physical barriers to accessing Council facilities and services.



3. Action Items

3.1 The Six Priority Areas at a Glance

Gladstone Regional Council recognises the importance of having a solid foundation to ensure successful outcomes and transformational change. This plan aims to begin undertaking infrastructure works to improve the accessibility of our facilities and embed the foundational principles of access and inclusion into Council's culture, practices and policies.

We recognise and embrace diversity as our greatest strength and aim to support our region to go beyond the minimum requirements to create a community where all people feel welcome and able to thrive. Through genuine collaboration with community, industries and local businesses, we aspire to foster collective growth, inviting others to join us on this journey towards a more accessible and inclusive Gladstone Region.

Throughout the development of the plan, six priority areas were identified to guide our efforts.

Priority Area 1	Spaces and Places Our facilities and parks are accessible and inclusive.
Priority Area 2	Policies and Procedures Accessibility, Inclusion and Universal Design principles are embedded into our organisational strategies and plans.
Priority Area 3	Employment and Culture We are an employer of choice for people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities.
Priority Area 4	Services The services we provide are accessible and inclusive.
Priority Area 5	Communication and Engagement We provide information and communicate in a way that is easy to understand and inclusive.
Priority Area 6	Strengthening Community Through Advocacy We advocate for more inclusive and accessible services for our community.

3.2 Action Plan

Priority Area 1: Spaces and Places

Our facilities and parks are accessible and inclusive.

What we are currently doing:

- Implementing the Pedestrian and Cycling Strategy
- Delivering the Works Delivery Improvement Program – new maintenance strategies and guidelines.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
1.1	Deliver 2024/25 Operational Plan item.	- A hierarchy for our Facilities and Public Spaces and determination on what level of access and inclusion compliance is applied to each hierarchy - Established triggers in Council's design process to ensure access and inclusion is considered - Prioritised list of deliverables over the next three years; 24/25, 25/26 and 26/27.	Subject to budget allocation	GM Customer Experience and GM Assets and Environment	2024-2027
1.2	Review the Boyne Tannum Aquatic and Recreation Centre (BTARC) development to determine whether the functionality and level of service aligns with Council's desired standards for inclusion and accessibility.	- A design and project plan which aligns with Council's desired standards and the hierarchy determined as part of the 2024/25 Operational Plan item.	Subject to funding	Strategic Projects Specialist and GM Assets and Environment	2024-2025
1.3	Upgrade the amenities at Millenium Esplanade, Tannum Sands and	- Upgrade of amenities to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance	Subject to grant funding	Manager Engineering Asset Solutions	2024-2027

	include a Changing Place.	- Inclusion of a Changing Places restroom.			
1.4	Investigate permanent accessible beach installation at Millenium Esplanade, Tannum Sands.	- Assessment to determine whether Tannum Sands beach environmental conditions are conducive for a permanent accessible beach installation - Decision on whether to deliver a permanent accessible beach installation at Millenium Esplanade - Creation of funding ready project plan with initial documentation completed.	Subject to grant funding	Manager Engineering Asset Solutions	2024-2027
1.5	Deliver an accessible stage for the Gladstone Entertainment and Convention Centre (GECC).	- Delivery of accessible stage - Delivery of staff training in use of new equipment - Promotion of the accessible stage.	Subject to funding	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2025
1.6	Investigate the provision of Changing Places across the region as part of the Parks and Open Spaces Lifecycle Plan.	- Development of Parks and Open Spaces Lifestyle Plan with considerations for Changing Places - Creation of initial documentation for any identified Changing Places locations.	Existing resources	Manager Asset Planning	2024-2027
1.7	Upgrade existing signage and implement new signage at the Gladstone Tondoon Botanic Gardens to provide accessibility information.	- Update of existing signage to include accessibility information - Delivery of new wayfinding and trail information signage.	Existing resources	Manager Tondoon Botanic Gardens	2024-2027
1.8	Create a mobility map of the Gladstone City	- Decision on which facilities will be mapped	Subject to additional resources	Manager Communications	2024-2025

	CBD and Council managed and maintained facilities showing the locations of accessible parking and pathways of travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of mobility map of Gladstone City CBD and other identified Council facilities - Promotion of mobility maps on Council's website and to key stakeholders. 		and Manager Brand	
1.9	Create mobility maps of remaining Council managed and maintained facilities in other townships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision on which facilities will be mapped - Creation of mobility maps of identified Council facilities - Promotion of mobility maps on Council's website and to key stakeholders. 	Subject to additional resources	Manager Communications and Manager Brand	2025-2027
1.10	Work with community to investigate the viability of a portable Changing Place for community use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting with key stakeholders - Decision on Council's role in supporting a community-led project. 	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2027
1.11	Investigate availability of accessible seating in the GECC auditorium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision on whether to increase accessible seating. 	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2025

Priority Area 2: Policies and Procedures

Accessibility, Inclusion and Universal Design principles are embedded into our organisational strategies and plans.

What we are currently doing:

- Prioritising inclusion by having it as one of our core values.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
2.1	As strategies and plans come due for renewal, implement the endorsed changes from the Access and Inclusion desktop review.	- Decision on which changes to implement from desktop review - Creation of updated strategies and plans - Endorsed changes form part of Council's Strategy guidelines.	Existing resources	Manager Strategy and Improvement	2024-2027
2.2	Review the Community Investment Program to identify opportunities to promote greater accessibility and inclusion for Council-sponsored projects and events, including a review of the evaluation criteria.	- Review of Community Investment Program.	Existing resources	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2025
2.3	Investigate the feasibility of implementing an Access and Inclusion Grant to support local sporting and community groups to improve the accessibility of their programs, activities and events.	- Decision on whether to implement an Access and Inclusion grant.	Subject to budget allocation or grant funding	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2025
2.4	Update organisational tools and templates to promote consideration of access and inclusion in project delivery.	- Creation of updated tools and templates.	Existing resources	Manager Capital Program and Manager Strategy and Improvement	2024-2025
2.5	Review emergency evacuation plans with an accessibility lens.	- Review of evacuation plans.	Existing resources	Health, Safety and Wellbeing and Facility Owners	2024-2025

Priority Area 3: Employment and Culture

We are an employer of choice for people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse abilities.

What we are doing:

- Working to improve our organisation culture to create a safe environment where all employees feel supported and included
- Offering flexibility in interviews by providing candidates the opportunity to join face to face, or via telephone or online platforms
- Supporting our employees when undergoing training and development by providing reasonable adjustments when needed
- Providing mental health first aid training for employees to promote greater awareness of mental health issues and help break the stigma around seeking support.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
3.1	Undertake review of the Talent Acquisition Process and implement endorsed changes.	- Review of Talent Acquisition Process - Prioritisation and implementation of recommendations from review.	Subject to resources	Manager People Services	2024-2027
3.2	Review relevant Policies, Corporate Standards and Strategies to ascertain how best to ensure that we are proactively supporting our people by calling out our commitment to reasonable adjustment.	- Review of relevant policies and amendment if necessary.	Existing resources	Manager Governance Supported by: People Services, Health, Safety & Wellbeing	2024-2026
3.3	Investigate the feasibility of creating a Diversity and Inclusion Officer role to develop and implement strategies, initiatives and programs to foster a culture of inclusivity and ensure equality across all aspects of Council.	- Development of proposal - Decision on whether to create new role - Consideration on alternative engagement avenues.	Subject to budget or grant funding	Manager People Services and Manager Community Partnerships	2025-2026
3.4	Explore the opportunity to enable employees to include pronouns in their email signatures.	- Engagement with employees - Decision on whether to implement changes.	Existing resources	Manager Communications	2024-2025

Priority Area 4: Services

The services we provide are accessible and inclusive.

What we are doing:

- Honouring Companion Cards at all Council facilities
- Delivering inclusive and accessible free or low cost workshops and training at our Libraries and Tondoon Botanic Gardens, including our school holiday programs
- Supporting the community to increase their digital literacy skills and bridge the digital divide through the provision of classes, free internet and access to computers at Council Libraries
- Supporting our leaseholders to follow best practice recommendations for access and inclusion, including supporting them to apply for grants to make improvements.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
4.1	Explore mandatory access and inclusion training for employees to continue to support our people to deliver accessible and inclusive services.	- Exploration of mandatory training - Implementation of training if endorsed.	Subject to funding	Manager Culture and Capability	2024-2027
4.2	Develop and implement accessible event guidelines and checklist to ensure accessibility and inclusion is considered from planning to final delivery for all Council and Council supported community events.	- Creation of accessible event guidelines and checklist - Distribution across Council and to Council event grant recipients.	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2025-2026
4.3	Include a sensory or quiet space at all major Council events and promote their availability on event marketing materials.	- Purchase/creation of sensory space resources - Delivery of staff and volunteer training in the set up and implementation of sensory/quiet spaces.	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2027
4.4	Actively seek feedback at Council events on the accessibility and inclusiveness of the event and implement changes to address any identified issues.	- Development of method of feedback collection and evaluation - Record of feedback changes implemented.	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2027
4.5	Develop a process to assign Customer Service Requests related to access and inclusion to the Access and Inclusion	- Development of process to assign requests to working group	Existing resources	Manager Customer Solutions	2024-2025

	Action Plan Working Group for collation and review.	- Updated Connected Knowledge to support Customer Solutions team to respond to community.			
4.6	Consider a range of food vendors for events to support the inclusion of people with food allergies and dietary requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updated Expression of Interest for vendors to identify special requirements provided - Diversity in selection of food vendors to cater to different needs - Promotion of vendors prior to events when possible. 	Existing resources	Manager Arts and Entertainment	2024-2027

Priority Area 5: Communication and Engagement

We provide information and communicate in a way that is easy to understand and inclusive.

What we are doing:

- Including images and representation of people from a diversity of ages, backgrounds and abilities, in Council publications, communications and event promotions to foster inclusivity, representation and positive attitudes towards diversity
- Providing multiple ways for the community to submit compliments, feedback, complaints and enquiries, by email, online chat, telephone, in person or letter.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
5.1	Upgrade Council's website to improve accessibility and user experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) audit - Accessibility widget incorporated into website - Accessibility page on Council website created - Simplified and easy to understand home page created - Accessibility information on facility pages created. 	Existing resources	Manager Communications	2024-2027
5.2	Increase the availability of accessibility information (using access symbols) in promotional material for Council led events and activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of internal process for scoping accessibility information for events/activities - Development of process to produce accessible promotional materials. 	Existing resources	Manager Brand and Manager Communications	2024-2025
5.3	Ensure community engagement is done in a way that all community members have an opportunity to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of community engagement procedures (means of communication, reach, duration, inclusive language, etc.) - Decision on easy read document use and implementation - Update Community Engagement toolkit, which includes information on how to engage with diverse groups/individuals. 	Existing resources	Manager Communications	2024-2027
5.4	Develop an inclusive communication and digital guide and disseminate across	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of inclusive communication and digital guide(s) 	Existing resources	Manager Communications	2024-2027

	<p>Council to ensure communications are accessible and understandable to all community members. Include considerations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inclusive language - providing documents in PDF and Word formats - guidelines around the usage and creation of easy read documents - ALT text on social media and PDFs - video captioning and translation/interpretation (including Auslan). 	- Dissemination of guide(s) across Council.			
5.5	Create and maintain partnerships with local community organisations and networks to strengthen engagement pathways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of stakeholder hub to manage relationships - Creation of formal partnerships where appropriate. 	Existing resources	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2027
5.6	Add inclusive language into our brand guidelines.	- Revised brand guidelines.	Existing resources	Manager Brand	2024-2025

Priority Area 6: Strengthening Community and Advocacy

We advocate for more inclusive and accessible services for our community.

What we are doing:

- Working with Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Ltd (GAPDL) to strengthen accessible tourism across our region
- Providing free community Auslan classes through the Neighbourhood Centre at the Philip Street Communities and Families Precinct to promote the development of local Auslan resources
- Liaising with State agencies in their design of social housing to facilitate specialist disability accommodation (SDA) developments in suitable locations in the Gladstone Region.

What we will do:

	Action	Deliverables	Resources	Responsible	Timeframe
6.1	Support the Gladstone Disability Community Network (DCN) campaign to increase the understanding and usage of Companion Cards.	- Regular attendance at DCN community meetings - Promotion of DCN campaign using Council platforms.	Existing resources	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2027
6.2	Investigate a collaboration with Sport 4 All to promote inclusive sporting opportunities across the region.	- Decision on whether to enter into a collaboration with Sport 4 All.	Subject to additional resources	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2025
6.3	Support local sporting clubs to make their activities more inclusive through sharing resources and showcasing inclusive activities at the Sport and Active Living Expo.	- Sharing of resources and grant opportunities to sporting clubs by Council's Sport and Recreation Officer - Showcasing inclusive activities at Council's Sport and Active Living Expo.	Existing resources	Manager Community Partnerships	2024-2027
6.4	Include an Auslan StoryTime as part of the Libraries StoryTime series to raise awareness and understanding.	- Delivery of one Auslan StoryTime annually.	Existing resources	Manager Regional Libraries	2024-2025
6.5	Promote the benefits of access and inclusion to local businesses.	- Development and coordination of initiatives which include key messages, with dissemination to local business and industry stakeholders.	Existing resources	Economic Development Lead	2024-2027

4. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Council is committed to making ongoing improvements to our services and facilities to ensure greater access and inclusion. To continue this vital work, Council has committed further budget as part of the 2024/25 Operational Plan and will actively seek funding opportunities to deliver action items that require additional funds.

Furthermore, Council will ensure the successful implementation and monitoring of the plan by undertaking the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The plan will be publicly launched with key stakeholders invited to be a part of the event.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An internal working group will be established to drive the delivery of the plan and problem solve any issues/barriers that are identified throughout the delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress reports will be submitted to Council every six months.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An evaluation on the outcomes of the plan will be conducted in the third year of the plan, and a decision made on the creation of a new plan to continue the work of the first plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Access and Inclusion Champions program will be rolled out during the first year of delivery, with employees invited to join and become advocates for implementing and embedding accessible and inclusive thinking and processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training for our people and support for teams to implement action items will be provided to reinforce and sustain activities, with success stories and resources being shared through internal communications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing communication with stakeholders will be maintained throughout the life of the plan, gathering feedback, sharing success stories, and building trust through transparency, including an annual regional forum.

5. Appendix

5.1 Appendix 1 - Legislative and Policy Context

International

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008

Welcoming Cities Standard 2019

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2

Federal

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

Age Discrimination Act 2004

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Disability (Access to Premises Buildings) Standards 2010

Building Code of Australia (BCA)

Multicultural Access and Equity Policy

(Draft) National Autism Strategy

State

Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-27

Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

Human Rights Act (QLD) 2019

Local Government Act 2009

Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009

Multicultural Recognition Act 2016

Queensland Multicultural Policy

Queensland Language Services Policy

Queensland: an age-friendly community

Gladstone Regional Council – related policies

2021-2026 Corporate Plan

Gladstone Region Economic Transition Roadmap 2022-2032

Community Development Strategy 2021-2026

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2023-2025

Youth Council Action Plan

5.2 References

Australian Government (2021). *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*. Retrieved from <https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/ads>

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Department of Health and Aged Care (2023). *Intergenerational Health and Mental Health Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release>

Queensland Government (2022). *Queensland's Disability Plan 2022-27: Together, a better Queensland*. Retrieved from <https://www.dsdsatsip.qld.gov.au/campaign/queenslands-disability-plan/home>

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with a Disability (2023) *Executive Summary, Our vision for an inclusive Australia and Recommendations*. Retrieved from <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

5.3 Contact Us

Do you have an idea, feedback or would like to get involved in improving access and inclusion in the Gladstone Region? We would love to hear from you!

Phone: (07) 4970 0700 and ask to speak to the Community Partnerships team.

Email: info@gladstone.qld.gov.au

Post: PO Box 29, Gladstone. QLD 4680



For hearing and speech difficulties, contact Council through the National Relay Service:

Speak and Listen: [1300 555 727](tel:1300555727)

Type and Listen: [133 677](tel:133677)

Internet relay users: www.relayservice.com.au

For non-English speakers, phone interpretation services are available via TIS National.

How to access an immediate interpreter:

1. Call TIS National on **131 450**.
2. An automated prompt will ask you which language you need. Please state the language that you require.
3. When you are connected to a TIS National operator, you will be asked to confirm the language you need.
4. Stay on the line while the operator finds an available interpreter for you. If there are no interpreters available in the language requested, the operator will ask you to call back, or you are able to request an interpreter in another language.
5. The interpreter will tell the TIS National operator who you need to contact and the operator will proceed to call and connect you and the interpreter to the organisation requested.



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