



Disability Inclusion and Access Plan

2022-2025

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of the City of Palmerston Disability Inclusion and Access Plan. The feedback provided by people with disability and their families, friends, support workers and advocates and Council staff was deeply appreciated.

We would also like to thank representatives from community organisations who generously gave their time to guide the consultation process and provided valuable insight and advice in the development of the final document.

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Acknowledgement of Country

Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work, the Larrakia People, and pay respect to their Elders, past present and emerging. The Larrakia people are the traditional owners of the Darwin region.

Introduction

Palmerston's Community Plan outlines a vision of a community that is diverse, vibrant, welcoming, and safe for all people.

An essential part of achieving this vision is that people with disability have equal access to participating in all aspects of community life – as employees, students, business owners, parents, customers, clients, patrons, volunteers, colleagues, friends, and neighbours.

In 2021 Council endorsed the Inclusive, Diverse, Accessible Policy Framework, an overarching Framework which ensures Council is meeting the objectives of the Community Plan in a way that reflects, celebrates and includes the diversity of our community.

Equity of access and inclusion for people with disability promotes social cohesion and community growth, innovation, and vibrancy. When a community is truly inclusive and accessible, more people want to visit and live there. When barriers to civic participation are removed, communities benefit from the skills, knowledge experience and perspectives of a more diverse population. When barriers to access are removed, local businesses enjoy the benefits of a larger and more diverse customer base.

The City of Palmerston is committed to creating a city where every individual has equal rights of access to council services, events facilities, and public spaces throughout our community

I am pleased to present the City of Palmerston's Disability Inclusion and Access Plan which will guide Council's actions over the next three years to achieve this goal.

Mayor Athina Pascoe- Bell

How this plan was created

This Disability Inclusion and Access Plan has been developed in collaboration with people with disability as well as those who have lived experience of the impacts of barriers to inclusion and access on people with disability.

The Disability Inclusion and Access Plan adopts a social model of disability, which recognises that a community is made up of people with many abilities and that it is barriers that exist within societal attitudes, practices and structures, that restrict and prevent equity and inclusion, not an individual's impairment.

Consultations began in late 2020 when we spoke with disability service providers and key stakeholders during the development of the City of Palmerston's Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework.

In early 2022 the consultation was broadened to include community members, parents, friends, family members, and people who work in the disability sector who contributed their thoughts, experience, and ideas about what is important and what is most needed. Feedback was sought via online surveys, in person interviews and focus group discussions.

What we learned

Many people provided detailed and specific ideas and opinions, which have been put together to form the priorities, goals and actions outlined in the Disability Inclusion and Access Plan. Some of the most important things we learned were that:

- The City of Palmerston's Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Framework's key principles; Visible, Collaborative, Embedded and Always Improving, are valued and endorsed by our community.
- The skills, knowledge, experiences, and opinions of people with disability must be prioritised when it comes to planning for and taking action to increase inclusion and access.
- Specific, practical actions, such as signs with visual aids, accessible changing rooms and toilets, and the availability of accessible information, are high priorities for people with disability.



Our priorities

The goals and actions in this plan are aligned to the Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework principles and are further grouped together across six areas of local government business (domains), with the following priorities:

Civic Engagement – maximise opportunities and provide equal inclusion and access for people with disability to contribute to planning, decision making and review activities in our community.

Community, Leisure, and Social Participation – build on the work already done to make sure that people with disability participate in and enjoy Palmerston's community programs, events, and activities.

Economic Participation – maximise local employment opportunities for people with disability and support local businesses to provide inclusive and accessible customer service.

Built and Natural Environment – continue to improve inclusion and accessibility in Council's outdoor and indoor spaces, informed by people with disability and lived experience.

Communication – increase the availability of accessible formats for communication – online, in documents and in person.

Council Culture, Services and Operations – to be a disability confident organisation that provides quality, inclusive and accessible services for people with disability.

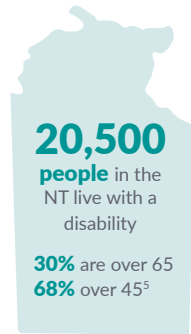
Community Profile



In 2021, 1,487 people in the City of Palmerston LGA reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.¹



In 2021, 2,564 people reported providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition or due to old age.²



Primary disability: (2021)³

	NT	PALMERSTON
Autism	23%	34%
Developmental Delay and Global Developmental Delay	14%	24%
Intellectual Disability and Down Syndrome	19%	16%

Distribution of active participants with an approved NDIS plan (2021)⁴

	NT	PALMERSTON
Indigenous	49%	31%
Non-indigenous	43%	58%
CALD	25%	10%



88.3% for those without a disability)⁸

68% are Aboriginal⁹



For all references, please see page 18

About this Plan

The City of Palmerston's Disability Inclusion and Access Plan complies with and contributes to international, national and Territory commitments, legislation, and strategies.

It aligns itself with the Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022 -2032 and the Northern Territory Disability Strategy Action Plan 2022 - 2025, and sets a path of reform, with actions, within the NT context.

Relevant Northern Territory legislation includes the *Disability Services Act 1993*, the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992*, the *Guardianship of Adults Act 2016*, and the *Carers Recognition Act 2006*.

Our Plan also aligns with Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021 - 2031, which sets a national agenda for change, sitting within the framework of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which Australia has ratified.

The City of Palmerston has obligations under the *Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person because of a disability when providing goods, services, facilities, or access to public premises.

Other laws and standards relating to inclusion and accessibility for people with disability are documented in the City of Palmerston's Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework.

Alignment with Council plans and strategies

The Disability Inclusion and Access Plan sits alongside and intersects with other key Council strategies, frameworks, and plans, including:

- Community Plan
- Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible (IDA) Policy Framework
- Municipal Plan
- Palmerston Local Economic Plan

- Play Space Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Communication Strategy

People with disability – includes people of all ages who have physical, cognitive, sensory, social / emotional disability, people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who are blind or visually impaired.

People with lived experience – includes people with disability, parents, friends and family members of people with disability, people who have lived or are living with episodic disability and those who work with people with disability.

Accountability

The Disability Inclusion and Access Plan 2022 - 2025 will guide decisions and actions taken by Council. Progress towards implementing the actions and achieving the goals will be reported to Elected Members in accordance with Council policies and procedures.

In accordance with the NT Disability Strategy Action Plan, we will submit this plan to the NT Office of Disability so that it can be included in the reporting against Territory-wide disability inclusion and access reporting.

Every year, as part of the City of Palmerston's celebrations of the International Day of People with Disability, Council will report back to the community on our implementation of actions and progress towards the goals set out in this plan.



Accessibility – means that everyone, no matter their age, abilities, background, gender, or circumstances has equal opportunities to participate in their community, to reach their goals and aspirations. Accessibility involves recognising and removing any barriers, physical or otherwise, that make it harder for some people than others, to give and receive information, participate in recreation and social activities, work, study, or volunteer, receive services or otherwise be involved in all aspects that make for a good and satisfying life.

Inclusion – is the act of enabling all groups of people within a society to have a sense of belonging and the opportunity to participate in community life. It is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights. Inclusion occurs when all people feel valued and respected, are connected to their fellow citizens, have access to opportunities and resources and can contribute their perspectives and talents to improve their community.

Intersectionality – recognises that a person or group of people can be affected by multiple forms

of discrimination and disadvantage due to their race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, impairment, class, religion, age, social origin, and other identity markers. Council commits to applying an intersectional and diversity lens when implementing this plan and will be guided by our Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework.

People with disability – includes people of all ages who have physical, cognitive, sensory, social / emotional disability, people who are deaf or hard of hearing and people who are blind or visually impaired.

People with lived experience – includes people with disability, parents, friends and family members of people with disability, people who have lived or are living with episodic disability and those who work with people with disability.

IDA Key Principles

Council adopted four key principles under our Inclusive, Diverse and Accessible Policy Framework. These are:

- Visible
- Collaborative
- Embedded
- Always Improving.

We asked what was important for people with disability under each of them, and this is what we learned:

Visible

What's important

- Signs and information about accessibility options are clear, usable, and obvious.
- There are people with disability working for Council at all levels.
- Council has awards and events that celebrate the contributions of people with disability.
- People with disability are represented in pictures and words used by Council.

Collaborative

What's important

- People with disability are directly involved in guiding Council on inclusion and accessibility.
- Council is a strong advocate for disability inclusion and access.
- Council supports local business and organisations to improve inclusion and accessibility.

Embedded

What's important

- Regular reviews of services, buildings, and public spaces to improve accessibility.
- Training for Council staff by people with disability and lived experience.
- Council policies and processes have specific guidelines for inclusion and accessibility.
- Sensory and psychosocial disabilities are considered as well as physical disability.

Always Improving

What's important

- Council reports back to the community about how it has implemented the Disability Inclusion and Access Plan.
- Council has different ways that make it easy for people with disability to give feedback.

What people said:

"(People with disability) are too often hidden from view in workplaces which is wrong!"

"Visual aids in public spaces are very useful, as we are easily confused or overwhelmed."

"Braille is on the bathrooms, have it in other places as well."

What people said:

"Listen! Listen and ask deeper questions. It's not just about giving access and opportunities but exploring the difference it makes to people with disability at an emotional and empowerment level."

"Assist with re-education of the community about what disability is and debunk old stereotypes of what we can and can't do or be involved in."

What people said:

"Perhaps inclusion and accessibility can be improved when all Councillors and staff are given the opportunity to receive training in Mental Health First Aid or empowering / de-escalating communication."

"All training should be delivered by people with disabilities to share their (life) experience and support disability eco systems. This should be from a range of people with a variety of different types of disability."

What people said:

"Have people with disability lead the conversation and audit Council against their promises and policies."

Priority Areas, Goals & Actions

1. Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is when citizens participate in planning, decision making and policy setting in matters which affect them. Our priority is to maximise opportunities and provide equal inclusion and access for people with disability to contribute to planning, decision making and review activities in our community.

Goal

- 1** More people with disability are involved with Council's consultation, planning and advisory activities.

Actions

- 1.1 Recruit people of all abilities from diverse backgrounds for City of Palmerston committees.
- 1.2 Include guidance about recruitment and engagement with people with disability in committee establishment documents e.g. Terms of Reference.
- 1.3 Implement an Accessible and Inclusive Guide for consultation and committee convenors covering content and format of documents and meetings e.g. Easy Read, Auslan, Large Print, Audio, Braille etc.
- 1.4 Include community forums and consultations in planned events

- 2** People with disability have more opportunities to use and develop their leadership and advocacy skills.

- 2.1 Develop, promote and support leadership and civic engagement programs and activities.

2. Community, Leisure, and Social Participation

Council has an extensive list of celebrations, programs, and events each year – sport, art, social, hobbies, recreation, and more. Our priority is to build on the work already done to make sure that people with disability have equal inclusion and access to this part of community life.

Goal

- 3** More people with disability are participating in Council's community social, recreation and leisure activities and events.

Actions

- 3.1 Ensure that plans for events and activities are designed for all abilities and include identifying and addressing barriers such as promotional material format, physical access, sensory environment, toilets/change rooms, drop off zones, parking, transport, and timing.
- 3.2 Report feedback from people with disability after events and activities.
- 3.3 Consult with young people with disability to identify how we can improve activities for youth and young adults.
- 3.4 Develop and implement 'Accessible and Inclusive Events Guidelines'.
- 3.5 Include clear information in accessible formats about accessibility in promotional material and advertising for events.
- 3.6 Distribute promotion material for events and activities through disability groups, networks, and service providers.

Key Documents

- IDA Policy Framework
- Municipal Plan
- Community Plan

Existing initiatives

- Have Your Say surveys on Council Website
- Informal public forums before Council meetings

What people said

"The (IDA Advisory Group) is important and should represent people from multiple disability backgrounds. It has the right idea and is giving hope for the future."

"Allow verbal expressions of interest (for committees and advisory groups)."

"The mingling period before Council meetings is very good, it makes me feel more comfortable to attend."

Key Documents

- Annual Calendar of Events
- Community Plan
- IDA Policy Framework
- Play Space Strategy

Existing initiatives

- Christmas Wonderland accessible event
- Get Active program to include all abilities classes
- Suburban Sounds sensory break area
- Palmerston Library dyslexic font, audio, and large print resources
- Flicnics outdoor movies captioning

What people said

"All Abilities events and programs are an opportunity for people to do things together and (gain) mutual understanding."

"The library programs are amazing – perhaps (run) some more sessions that adults (with disability) could attend."

"Sometimes there is a lot on, which is good, but it can be over stimulating. (It would be good to have) sectioned off areas for children with sensory overload."

3. Economic Participation

Employment, and opportunities to contribute to the local economy as patrons and consumers, are fundamental to equity and inclusion. Our priority is to maximise local employment opportunities for people with disability and to support local businesses and organisations to provide inclusive and accessible customer service.

4 **Goal**
More local employment for people with disability.

- Actions**
- 4.1 Ensure Council's employment and volunteer policies and procedures meet national standards for inclusion and accessibility.
 - 4.2 Encourage and support local businesses and organisations to access NT and Australian government disability employment programs.
 - 4.3 Purchase goods and services (within local government procurement policy requirements) from local organisations that are run by or employ people with disabilities.

5 **Goal**
More local businesses and organisations benefit from customers and patrons with disability.

- 5.1 Encourage and support local businesses to be disability confident, accessible, and inclusive through Council's business networks and forums.
- 5.2 Review and identify opportunities to increase access and inclusion in the commitments and actions in the Palmerston Local Economic Plan.
- 5.3 Promote the NT Government's disability information hub¹¹ through Council's local business networks.

4. Built and Natural Environment

The built and natural environment includes buildings and facilities owned and managed by Council, playgrounds and outdoor spaces, transport infrastructure projects, streets, and public spaces. Our priority is to continue to improve inclusion and accessibility in Council's outdoor and indoor spaces, informed by people with disability and lived experience.

6 **Goal**
Council facilities and buildings are inclusive and accessible for people of all abilities.

- Actions**
- 6.1 Regular accessibility reviews of existing venues, facilities, equipment, and furnishings.
 - 6.2 Ensure that all infrastructure developments, redevelopments, and refurbishments meet accessibility and inclusion standards and Universal Design principles.
 - 6.3 Seek feedback from and involve people with disability in inclusion and access reviews and plans.
 - 6.4 Implement the access and inclusion improvements in the City of Palmerston Play Space Strategy, which supports the NT Disability Strategic Action Plan 2022 - 2025.
 - 6.5 Install more accessible signage, including visual aids and graphics, Braille, and tactile markers.
 - 6.6 Review and identify opportunities to increase and improve accessible toilet and changing rooms in development, redevelopment and refurbishment plans and strategies.

7 **Goal**
Transport and parking in Palmerston are more accessible.

- 7.1 Review and identify opportunities to improve transport and parking access in the commitments and actions in infrastructure plans such as the Central Palmerston Area Plan.

Key Documents

- Community Plan
- IDA Policy Framework
- Palmerston Local Economic Plan
- NT Disability Action Plan
- Code of Conduct

Existing initiatives

- HR Recruitment Policy

What people said

"Support disability ecosystems – employing people with disabilities. This includes for contracts, trades, and service providers."

"Provide education to help businesses comply with regulatory requirements and promote greater customer service."

Key Documents

- Community Plan
- IDA Policy Framework
- Palmerston Play Space Strategy
- Central Palmerston Area Plan
- NT Disability Action Plan

Existing initiatives

- Audit of all play spaces in Palmerston
- SWELL water and lifestyle precinct
- Where we Live Matters

What people said

"We only go to parks which are well shaded, have) a variety of play equipment for people with different abilities and a fence."

"Providing covered access and walkways reduces exposure (to rain and sun) for everyone"

"Accessible toilets should mean more than just for wheelchairs"

¹¹ proposed in the NT Government's draft Disability Strategy Action Plan 2022 – 2025

5. Economic Participation

This includes the Council website and social media, formal documents, letters, emails, notices and invitations, face to face, online and telephone experiences, feedback, and complaints. Our priority is to increase the availability of accessible formats for communication – online, in documents and in person.

Goal

8 Council information is provided in accessible formats.

Actions

8.1 Review the Council website, social media and council documents to ensure compliance with national standards and guidelines.

8.2 Implement a plan to provide information in accessible formats such as large print, Plain English, Easy Read, dyslexic font, audio recordings, captions, Auslan and Braille.

9 Palmerston residents have accessible choices when communicating with Council.

9.1 Provide multiple accessible and inclusive communication options including online, posters and newsletters, captions for audio visual communication, telephone and in person.

9.2 Review and update Council enquiries, feedback, and complaints' mechanisms to ensure people of all abilities have clear and easy ways to communicate with Council.

6. Council Culture, Services and Operations

It is the people who work for and with Council and the internal systems that guide them which create an organisational culture. Council services and operations include permits, recycling and waste management, community grants, rates collection and environmental initiatives. Our priority is to be a disability confident organisation that provides quality, inclusive and accessible services for people with disability.

Goal

10 Council's commitment to inclusion and access for people of all abilities is embedded in our culture.

Actions

10.1 Assign a lead team within Council to champion this plan.

10.2 Provide staff with Disability awareness, mental health first aid and other relevant training, prioritising training that is developed and delivered by people with disability and people with lived experience.

10.3 Ask people with disability and people with lived experience about their experiences with Council.

10.4 Include questions about disability inclusion and access in Staff surveys.

10.5 Nominate Council staff and Palmerston citizens for exceptional work in promoting inclusion, diversity, and accessibility to local, Territory and Australian inclusion awards programs.

11 Inclusion and Accessibility principles are applied across all Council services, programs, and activities.

11.1 Ensure that online services meet the Australian Government's Digital Service Standard Criteria.

11.2 Include inclusion and accessibility in internal services and work planning processes.

11.3 Identify opportunities to increase inclusion and accessibility in reviews of Council policies, procedures, and processes.

Key Documents

- Community Plan
- IDA Policy Framework
- Social Media Strategy

Existing initiatives

- Captions on social media videos

What people said

"All social media should be accessible – for example, captioned, alt text with visual descriptions"

"Use QR codes on banners and signs to link to accessible formats and make it easier to find information"

Key Documents

- Annual Calendar of Events
- Community Plan
- IDA Policy Framework

Existing initiatives

'A Team Darwin' (young people living with autism spectrum disorder) have been invited to create and deliver neurodiversity awareness training for Council Staff.

What people said

"The biggest (support) is that the people who are there (at Council) are educated and understanding."

"I will always remember the occasion when I was overwhelmed by problems... (Council) staff showed me support, non-judgement, and patience, and no hint of being condescending. My issue was dealt with in a professional and caring way."

References for Community Profile

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census General Community Profile for Palmerston LGA - <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA72800>

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2021 Census General Community Profile for Palmerston LGA - <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/community-profiles/2021/LGA72800>

³ <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/market-monitoring/market-monitoring-nt>

⁴ <https://data.ndis.gov.au/reports-and-analyses/market-monitoring/market-monitoring-nt>

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Data excludes very remote communities

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Data excludes very remote communities

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Data excludes very remote communities

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Data excludes very remote communities

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Data excludes very remote communities

¹⁰ APM Communities, Palmerston, Northern Territory NDIS Current and Projected Data





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