

I am delighted to present the third North Sydney Council Disability Discrimination Action Plan and Policy.

This document has been produced by the Council's Age & Disability worker and the North Sydney Access Committee. The action strategies and priority works contained in this report were informed by community consultations, access audits and individual representations. This plan also incorporates the recommendations contained in the evaluation of the second Action Plan.

It has been designed as a practical working document in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 which requires councils to provide more responsive programs as well as safe accessible environments for people with disabilities.

The plan will be the subject of regular progress reports to the North Sydney Access Committee and reviewed annually in June.



Cr Genia McCaffery
Mayor
North Sydney Council

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ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN

The objective of the Plan is to ensure that North Sydney Council is more responsive to its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and to the Access requirements of people who live, work and play in the North Sydney Council area.

METHODOLOGY

The plan was formulated following a range of consultative processes which included community consultations, access audits, discussions with Council officers and issues raised by the Access Committee. During the implementation stage of the plan further consultation will be held, additional audits made and the existing liaison between Council staff and the Access Committee will continue.

The North Sydney Council Action Plan has also been informed by the NSW Government Disability Policy Framework, (1998).

ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN

The North Sydney Council Disability Discrimination Action Plan is divided into two parts.

Part One is mainly concerned with the policy statement and definitions. The Policy is intended to act as a clear guide for Council officers and elected representatives with regards to Councils commitments and obligations in ensuring Access in the North Sydney area.

Part Two contains a number of key Access action strategies designed to monitor and improve the way in which North Sydney Council delivers its services, plans and develops its community facilities, and encourages others to do the same. Where applicable timeframes are also stated.

COMMUNICATION

Following adoption by Council, and a public exhibition period (twenty eight days), the plan will be communicated to council staff through Disability Awareness training, supported by Divisional Directors and Managers. It will also be available for viewing on Councils computer network and homepage.

EVALUATION

The progress of this plan will be the subject of a report to each Access Committee meeting. The plan will be reviewed annually by the Community Worker (Age & Disability) and the Access Committee. This will inform the development of an annual report, which will be presented to the Access Committee, and to Council.

PART 1 POLICY STATEMENT AND DEFINITIONS

1 STATEMENT OF INTENT

North Sydney Council is committed to maximising access to services for people with disabilities and to integrate and include people with disabilities within all aspects of Council's business.

Specifically, this Policy aims:

- i To ensure that all people, regardless of their disability, have equitable access to all aspects of Council's business,
- ii To ensure that all people, regardless of their disability, are aware of their rights and responsibilities in regard to Council, as members of the local community,
- iii To encourage participation by all people, regardless of disability, in Council's activities,
- iv To promote positive and inclusive images of people with disability within Council and the community,
- v To enhance the relationship between Council and people with disabilities in the area,
- vi To complement existing policies and instruments within Council which relate to discrimination, ie
 - The North Sydney Council Equal Employment Opportunity Policy
 - The Development Control Plan.

2 PRINCIPLES

Council's Policy is underpinned by Councils customer service focus and core values:

- Provision of services to the community through co-operation and understanding
- Responsive government based on open government and community participation
- Honesty and integrity in all that we do
- Fairness and equity
- Innovation and excellence

3 APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all Councillors and employees of North Sydney Council and to all services and facilities provided by Council.

4 TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

North Sydney Community

This comprises all people who are residents, workers, students, property owners or visitors within the North Sydney Council area, regardless of their disability. North Sydney is a unique community; the 2001 ABS Census indicates that over 56,000 live in North Sydney, a further 50,000 come into the area to work. North Sydney also has 10,000 non-resident students.

Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 defines a disability in relation to a person, as:

- (a) Total or partial loss of the persons bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) Total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- (d) The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- (e) The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a persons body; or
- (f) A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person Without the disorder or malfunction; or
- (g) A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of Reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour.

The DDA (1992) includes disabilities that are physical, intellectual, sensory, and neurological, a learning disability, a physical disfigurement, and the presence in the body of a disease-carrying organism.

The definition includes a disability that presently exists, previously existed but no longer exists, may exist in the future, or is imputed to a person (eg assumes a person has a disease).

This is a wide definition and includes all obvious categories of disability, such as physical disability and intellectual disability, and extends to other conditions such as people who are HIV positive or have AIDS-related conditions and people with attention deficit disorder.

Handicap

A handicap results from a disability which limits a person's ability to perform tasks of daily living. The limitation must be in relation to one or more of the tasks of: self-care, mobility, verbal communication, schooling or employment.

Universal Access

Universal Access ensures that all members of the North Sydney community will be able to utilise services and facilities provided by Council.

Services and Facilities

This includes all services provided by Council, including those that are part funded but delivered by other organisations. Facilities refers to all physical facilities provided or managed by Council, including open space areas.

Consultation

This is the act of seeking information, suggestions or advice from people who are members of the North Sydney community. Public consultation may also involve the provision of information to, or conferring with, members of the North Sydney Community.

Participation

This refers to all forms of participation in North Sydney Council that are open to the North Sydney community. This may include, but is not limited to, written comment, public consultation, focus groups and membership of committees.

5 PROVISIONS

Council's policy priorities and plan strategies are based on the following provisions:

Action Plan

The Action Plan is designed to ensure effective achievement of the Policy goals. Existing staff will assume all roles.

Access

North Sydney Council will also consider access issues - as outlined in the Council's Development Control Plan - in design and provision of all services and facilities.

Information

In providing information to the North Sydney community, Council will ensure that all public information provided by Council is user friendly, accessible by all residents and demonstrates that people with disabilities actively contribute to our community.

Community Relations and Image

At all times images and themes used in promoting Council will reflect and affirm the positive role of people with disabilities in the North Sydney community.

Staff Training

Staff involved in client contact or customer service will receive appropriate training in disability awareness, access issues and appropriate communication skills for a wide range of disabilities.

Inclusiveness

Council's objectives will apply to other key policy areas, that is Access Action objectives will be integrated and reflected in all Council policies such as 2020 Vision Strategic Plan, and Management Plan.

Effectiveness

The Policy objectives will be achieved with a focus on maximising the effectiveness of existing resources and achieving an equitable distribution of resources within Councils existing budget.

6 IMPLEMENTATION

This policy and plan will be available for viewing on Council's computer network.

A copy of this policy and plan will be forwarded to the Chairperson of each precinct and to all persons responsible for the management of Council services and facilities.

Copies of this policy and plan will be available for viewing in Council Chambers and Stanton Library.

Public notification of release of this policy and plan will appear in Council's composite advertisement at an appropriate time.

7 RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY

Elected Council

The Elected Council is responsible for:

- Ensuring that all council decisions reflect the policy principles and priorities,
- Ensuring that there is an equitable allocation of resources,
- Ensuring that people with disabilities in North Sydney are able to participate in the community.

General Manager and Division Directors

The General Manager and Division Directors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the policy and plan is implemented across all Council's activities and functions and that goals are achieved,
- Coordinating policy and plan implementation within their areas of responsibilities.
- Informing staff about the policy and plan and ensuring its provisions are reflected in the Division's general work,

- Nominating and releasing relevant staff, particularly client contact and service providers, to attend disability awareness and communication skills training programs,
- Ensuring that all policies reflect policy principles,
- Ensuring that people with disabilities are consulted effectively,
- Ensuring that any reviews of customer service or assessment of needs takes the requirements of people with disabilities into account,
- Ensuring that budgets are allocated equitably on a needs-based planning basis,
- Providing updates on progress to the Access Committee and Council as required,
- Providing an annual update on strategies and a forward strategic plan for each financial year, specifying priorities, outcomes to be achieved, strategies, time-frame and person responsible,
- Providing an annual report on the achievement of goals and the effectiveness of strategies.

Action Plan Coordinator

The Role of the Action Plan Coordinator includes:

- Managing the implementation of the policy and plan,
- Ensuring awareness of the policy and plan by Council staff and key stakeholders,
- Liaising with Directors to monitor progress in regard to implementation of the policy and achievement of outcomes,
- Facilitating the provision of information about the policy and plan to and between Councillors and Directors,
- Coordinating the implementation of across council policy strategies,
- Coordinating the implementation and annual revision of the policy action plan, including notifying each division about the data required evaluating the plan,
- Coordinating preparation of an annual Disability Discrimination progress report to Council,
- Conducting open forums annually to advise and inform external stakeholders about Action Plan developments, and obtain their input,

The Access Committee

The North Sydney Access Committee is responsible for advising on implementation of the strategies and their evaluation,

8 FINANCIAL

The Action Plan will be funded through Council's annual operating budget and capital works programme as required.

9 REVIEWS AND EVALUATION

The policy and plan will be evaluated and reviewed as part of Council's planning and management review cycle. Policy objectives and critical success factors will be incorporated into Council's Management Plan. This will involve the annual development of a list of priority access works.

The effectiveness of the policy and action plan will be independently evaluated every three years. This process will be supplemented by an annual report to the Access Committee of achievements and outcomes.

PART 2 ACTION STRATEGIES

Disability Discrimination Action Plan 2005 -2008

Council Activity, Action Statement and Strategies	Timeframe	Area Responsible
1 TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT		
North Sydney Council will ensure that all people are given equal employment opportunity and employees are provided with adequate training to provide quality services to people with disabilities		
1.1 Provide Council and Community centre staff with training in disability awareness. Where necessary training will be provided to enable Council staff to use specialist equipment such as hearing loops and ensure greater awareness of specific disabilities.	Held annually	Community Development Corporate Services (Human Resources)
1.2 As part of ongoing monitoring of EEO an annual review of employment opportunities for people with disabilities will be carried out and future opportunities identified. NSC to adopt best practice principals to encourage people with disabilities to seek employment with the organisation.	Reported on annually	Community worker aged and Disability. Corporate Services (Human Resources)
2 PLANNING, MECHANISMS AND PROCEDURES		
North Sydney Council will ensure that in all planning and assessments building in North Sydney Council takes into account the needs of people with disabilities and the requirements of the DDA.		
2.1 Annually review Development Control plans to ensure it includes up to date information about Access standards.	Annually	Planning and Development Services Community Development Human Resources
2.2 Provide planning staff with relevant training and information on changes to the BCA (Access provisions) DCP and Australian Standards (Access).	Training to be held annually. Information provided to Planning and Assessment staff as required.	Planning and Development Services. Corporate Services (Human Resources)

A C T I O N P L A N A N D P O L I C Y

july 2005 - june 2008

Council Activity, Action Statement and Strategies	Timeframe	Area Responsible
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3 COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

North Sydney Council will develop communication systems which are accessible to employees, residents and visitors with a disability.

3.1 Information on North Sydney Council facilities to be provided in different formats.	Two sets of information produced in alternative formats (annually)	Corporate Services Communications Community Development
3.2 Selected Council web pages modified to be more accessible to people with vision impairments.	Access information updated and reviewed by December 2006	Corporate Services Communications Community Development
3.3 All Council facilities and Street Signage to be reviewed and designed to relevant for greater visibility.	Progress reviewed by July 2007	Engineering and Property Services. Access Committee.

4 CUSTOMER SERVICES

North Sydney Council will aim to provide quality customer services to all people with disabilities.

4.1 Complaints and requests concerned with Access issues to be monitored. A report to be prepared by Community Worker (Age and Disability).	Reviewed Annually	Corporate Services (Customer Services). Community Development.
4.2 The Customer Service centre and public meeting areas to be provided with appropriate hearing and visual aids to provide information about Councils services and staff to undertake appropriate training.	Reviewed Annually	Corporate Services (Customer Services).
4.3 Access information about Councils facilities to be provided for Customer Service officers via the Internet/intranet.	Reviewed Annually	Corporate Services (Customer Services). Community Development Access Committee.

5 ACCESS AWARENESS

North Sydney Council will consult with the community and liaise with Governments to promote the provision of accessible facilities and services to people with disabilities.

5.1 Oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. Promote action plan within Council. Organise evaluation and produce annual report.	Annual Report. The report is independently evaluated by July 2008	Community Development. Access Committee.
5.2 Hold one a event each year that promotes Access awareness.	Report on annually	Community Development. Access Committee. Councillors.
5.3 Liase with State and Commonwealth Government agencies on access issues of joint interest.	Ongoing	Community Development. Access Committee Working Party. Councillors.

Council Activity, Action Statement and Strategies	Timeframe	Area Responsible
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6 COUNCIL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

North Sydney Council will aim to provide Universal access to council buildings and facilities.

6.1 Continue to prioritise and cost the work outlined in the Access Audits. Undertake at least two new Access audits each year.	Annually	Engineering and Property Services, Community Development. Access Committee.
6.2 Identify and map direct pedestrian pathways between different suburbs. Update and provide mobility maps for key council areas.	By 2007	Access Committee. Community Development.
6.3 Monitor and report garbage disposal complaints and problems experienced by residents with disability.	Report Annually.	Open Space and Environmental Services. Consultation via Precinct news. Coordinated by Community Development.
6.4 Review Severe Domestic Squalor information package.	By 2007	Community Development.

7 RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

North Sydney Council to ensure that all its Recreational and Cultural activities take into account Access issues and where appropriate promote positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

7.1 All major arts and cultural events to consider Access, and positive roles for people with disabilities.	Produce guide for accessible arts and culture festivals by 2007	Arts and Culture. Community Development.
7.2 Promote and support cultural activities that include people recovering from mental illness and promote wellbeing in the North Sydney community.		



ACTION PLAN AND POLICY

**in accordance with the
Disability Discrimination Act (1992)**

july 2005 - june 2008