



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2007 – 2012

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) has been developed to assist the council to create outcomes that encompass the needs of all members of all the communities within the settlements of the shire district. The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup DAIP 2007 – 2012 has a particular focus on ensuring that residents and visitors within all of the towns and settlements in the district are welcomed with events, facilities and services created with universal access as their aim.

Local governments are multi functional, with extensive responsibilities and activities across property, community and human service areas and, in addition, have the capacity to make policy choices at the local level. Local governments, because of their broad mandate, play a vital role in the lives of people with disabilities.

The DAIP for 2007-2012 has been designed to meet the requirements of the Western Australian Disability Services Act 1993, the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) and the Equal Opportunity Amendment Act, Western Australia (1988). It responds to new initiatives by the State and Federal governments in recent years and sets the stage for responding to diversity by expanding upon previous disability services plans to incorporate the needs of all members of the community.

The DAIP has a particular focus on nurturing a community where diversity, difference and a sense of identity is respected and valued. These values are underpinned by a commitment to the creation of fair and equitable access for all residents and visitors to the shire.

The DAIP is designed not to be a static document but to be flexible and versatile enough to cater for the changing needs within the community as a whole. The Shire has adopted a structure for the plan that aligns with the Disability Commission of Australia recommended format in order to best achieve this outcome.

In accordance with the recommended structure the format will concentrate on six key areas;

1. Quality of existing and future services
2. Access to buildings and facilities
3. Access to shire supported events and projects
4. Information and communication

5. Opportunities to present grievances
6. Opportunities to participate in public consultation

The Shire will endeavour, through ongoing consultation and involvement with the community, identify barriers and challenges to access and inclusion and work toward achieving success in these areas.

INTRODUCTION

Under the Western Australia Disability Services Act (1994), Local Governments have been required to develop an access and Inclusion plan to ensure people with disabilities can access council services, activities and facilities. Annual reports on activities relating to the progress of these plans are reported to state government at the end of each financial year.

Access and Inclusion plans are not just about ensuring buildings have wheelchair access, they also incorporate inclusion at a participatory and service level. This plan will assist the Council to determine the strategies needed to enhance and promote accessibility requirements. It provides the direction and framework for future planning needs beyond the short term so that it can assist integrate design for the development of infrastructure and service well into the future, focusing on the inherent qualities of the location and the attributes of the shire.

This document outlines suggested strategies that can be used to promote a quality of life that is vibrant, creative, diverse and capable of building a community, where people with disabilities are able to participate in Council activities, services and facilities.

The Shire aims to deliver services that meet varied individual needs and expectations and that everyone has equal access to these services regardless of their race, heritage, gender, religious or non-religious belief, nationality, family background, age, disability or sexuality. For the purpose of this document when the terms access or inclusion are used they refer to the following definitions:

Definitions

Access in the context of this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan refers to an individual's physical ability to get to, into, and around facilities. This access is created by removing structural barriers and including mechanisms to enable structural access.

Inclusion in this context refers to an individual's ability to participate as fully as possible in programs and services provided by organizations in an integrated and holistic manner that does not ostracise, embarrass or humiliate an individual.

THE SHIRE OF DONNYBROOK-BALINGUP

Access and Inclusion Plan

Vision Statement

The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup is a thriving community, living in harmony with its unique rural environment whilst cherishing its diversity of heritage and culture.

The Shire believes that people with diverse needs who live in country areas should be supported to remain in the community of their choice. To identify the support most appropriate to offer, the Shire has committed to continue to review barriers to access and inclusion within the towns and settlements of the district with the objective being to systematically implement strategies to remove or minimise as many of them as possible. The Shire acknowledges that for each of the communities within their district there are very different and varied access and inclusion challenges and are committed to continue to consult with the community and service organisations to ensure that barriers to access are addressed appropriately.

The Shire adopted their first Disability Access and Inclusion Plan in 1996 and, with the assistance of an Access and Inclusion committee have been systematically reviewing and updating it. A review in 2006 found that many of the objectives outlined within this plan had been achieved and that a new plan was required.

The strategies and plans outlined in this DAIP for 2007 – 2012 are intended to enhance and improve disability access and inclusion for people with diverse abilities that live in and visit the Donnybrook-Balingup district.

EXAMPLES OF PAST DAIP ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The 1996 Disability Services Plan identified a number of barriers to access and inclusion and outlined strategies that the Shire could adopt to overcome them. Below are some examples of the celebrated outcomes suggested by the 1996 plan that have reduced access and inclusion barriers for people with a disability living in or visiting the region:

1. Chairlift into recreation centre swimming pool
2. Footbridge across river
3. Library staff assistance
4. Main street bus stop

SIX DESIRED OUTCOMES

Access and inclusion can mean different things to different people depending upon the history of their moment. Yet there are some common elements that create barriers to people living in different cultures and with different disabilities. The Disability Services Commission of Australia has identified six umbrella access and inclusion outcomes that, when adhered to, can eliminate many of the common barriers and challenges that may block a persons ability to be fully included.

The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup has structured their implementation plan around these six outcomes as has been suggested by the commission. This structure is clear and easy to understand, and takes us a step closer to being able to include everyone in our future dreams and projects.

The six outcomes upon which our DAIP has been based will assist representatives of the Shire council of Donnybrook-Balingup design and develop fair and equitable disability related policies to guide us into our future. These outcomes are:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised in the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup;
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of the Shire;
3. People with disabilities receive information from the Shire in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it;
4. People with disabilities receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Shire;
5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make grievances to the Shire;
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Shire.

CONTENT OF THE DAIP

In 2006, the Shire undertook to review and update its Disability Services Plan by collaborating with seven other south west Shires on a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan project. A project officer was engaged to assist in the development of each of the eight Shire's DAIP and implementation plans. For this reason the format of the DAIP for the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup is shared with the shires of Boyup Brook, Collie, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Manjimup, Capel and Harvey.

The following DAIP plan for the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup contains:

1. Guiding legislation and strategic links referred to when formulating the DAIP;
2. Information on the role of the Shire in providing facilities and service to the community;
3. A description of the review and consultation process and its findings and recommendations;
4. Information on how the plan is being communicated to staff, people with disabilities and the wider community;
5. A strategy for the review and evaluation of the plan;
6. An implementation plan outlining strategies to address the barriers that includes priorities, timelines and responsibilities

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The DAIP plan provides the background information that informs the shire council of the reasons why change is required to a facility, service or event provided in their district with their support. The DAIP implementation plan states what change has been suggested, who is responsible to make sure that change happens and the date by which the change should be completed.

It is only by itemising future requirements that the shire council can create realistic budgets to complete the work required.

A fair and equitable DAIP implementation plan therefore suggests to the shire where the proposed budget should be allocated and this can only be done by consulting with many different people. The shire ensured that wherever possible consultation was made with representatives from a variety of different sectors of the community including;

- the community with a disability
- the community supporting people with disabilities living within or visiting the district
- the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup
- government representatives
- corporate and private businesses
- disability related organisation practicing in the area
- Sufficient community based consultation to achieve outcomes.

The access and inclusion implementation strategies and objectives that have been developed for the Shire are grouped under the six desired outcomes listed on page seven as is recommended by the Disability Commission of Australia. These outcome areas provide a framework for translating the principles and objectives of the Disability Services Act into tangible and achievable results. This framework has been developed by a national body and includes excellent reviewing and monitoring strategies for the ongoing stages of the plan. The Shire is adopting the recommended framework as a proactive support of the structures that have been developed. By using this format the data we send up to the Disability Commission can be added to the national database to be used to continue to increase all of our knowledge of disability and inclusion challenges and some of their solutions.

FUNCTIONS, FACILITIES & SERVICES

The Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup is responsible for a range of functions, facilities and services in the towns and settlements in the district including:

Services to property:

- Construction and maintenance of council owned buildings
- Construction and maintenance of roads, stormwater drainage, footpaths and cycle facilities
- Land drainage and development
- Waste collection and disposal
- Litter control and street cleaning
- Planting and caring for street trees
- Numbering of buildings and lots
- Bush fire control

Services to the community:

- Provision and maintenance of outdoor playing areas, parks, gardens, reserves
- Provision and maintenance of facilities for sporting and community groups
- Management of recreation centre and swimming pool
- Public library and information services
- Environmental health services
- Citizenship ceremonies and community events
- Home and Community Care (HACC)
- Immunisation and health education.

Regulatory services:

- Planning of road systems, sub-divisions and town planning schemes
- Building approvals for construction, additions or alterations to buildings
- Ranger services, including dog control
- The development, maintenance and control of parking

General administration:

- Provision of general information to the public and the lodging of complaints and payment of fees including rates and dog licenses, permits for burns and motor vehicle licenses

Processes of government:

- Ordinary and special council and committee meetings
- Electors meetings and election of council members
- Ward meetings
- Community consultations.

REVIEW and CONSULTATION PROCESS

Literature review

In order to write a relevant DAIP and to be able to make informed suggestions on the implementation plan it was deemed important that the DAIP be based upon updated knowledge of government legislation, previous shire disability plans and with a knowledge of current disability access and inclusion related research. A review of a variety of disability and inclusion related topics was completed. This included:

- Current federal, state and local disability access and inclusion legislation
- Examination of other council documents and strategies
- Universal access building and facility recommendations
 - The Building Code of Australia and the Draft Building Code
 - Heritage buildings
 - New technology
- Identification of contemporary trends and good practices in access and inclusion
- 1996 Disability Service Plan and subsequent review reports that outline works in progress and achievements completed
- 2007 building audit

The results of these reviews are reflected within the content of the DAIP and the DAIP implementation plan.

Consultation

Consultation for the DAIP is the most important aspect of the process if the resulting plans are to be fair and equitable to all. To ensure that the DAIP project and the plans that resulted from it were based on as much knowledge as possible the following steps were taken.

As part of the review process for this project, and to insure individuality of the DAIP outcomes, strategies and implementation, consultation with key stakeholders, community members and shire staff was an integral factor. In March 2007 representatives from the shire, key stakeholders in the community and community volunteers were invited to form a Disability Access and Inclusion working party to ensure that equity and fairness to all remains the prime objective of the plan as it is implemented.

The DAIP and the implementation plan were directed by the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup, the project officer and the DAIP working party through consultation with many different people including representatives from;

- As many community based individuals and organisations as possible.

Shire Staff

- Quarterly group meetings with Disability Access and Inclusion project team incorporating representatives from 8 shires in the southwest including Boyup Brook, Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Capel, Donnybrook-Balingup, Collie, Manjimup and Nannup. In this document the group is referred to as the combined shires.
- Individual consultation with key staff within the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup
- Individual, team and group consultation with key staff within the shire staff in the satellite towns within the district

Stakeholders

Businesses, private and commercial, disability related organisations, people with disabilities and individuals who support people with disabilities in the community were identified as the most important groups to contact and keep informed of the DAIP. Identifying the stakeholders required:

- Consultation with key disability access and inclusion stakeholders within the state and federal governments
- Consultation with key disability access and inclusion stakeholders within the shire of Donnybrook-Balingup

This process identified the following groups as the stakeholders for this disability access and inclusion project.

- the community with a disability
- the community supporting people with disabilities living within or visiting the district
- Representatives from the Shire and the districts within it
- government representatives
- corporate and private businesses
- disability related organisation practicing in the area

The groups identified were contacted through email, post, phone or in person to ensure that they had the option of being involved in developing the DAIP.

Building consultation into the audit process

A consultant with personal knowledge of disability issues assisted the DAIP project officer to complete a comprehensive building audit of the shire owned or leased facilities. Each building was assessed using a standard checklist, and as the consultant used a wheelchair for mobility, practical assessments were also performed. The consultant later participated in staff training and networking.

COMMUNICATING THE DAIP

Ensuring that the community were aware of the draft DAIP so that they could participate in the formation of the implementation plans if they wished, was considered a priority by the Shire. To do all that was possible to write a fair and equitable DAIP requests for feedback and information was sent out to the community in as many formats as was possible.

These included:

Shire Staff and Services

The staff employed by the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup who deal directly with the public were informed on the draft DAIP using more than one format. This included the staff in:

- shire offices
- visitors centre
- Donnybrook and Balingup Libraries
- Any other service where the shire employ staff to support it

Copies of the draft DAIP were made available at these centres for the public, and information on links made available.

Newspapers

Notices regarding the council passing the draft DAIP and advertising that it was open for public comment were published in the local papers after the council had passed the draft.

Web Site and Computer technology

The draft DAIP was appended to the web site inviting public comment.

Notices regarding DAIP committee meetings, draft plans, and council meetings considering DAIP related information were advertised on the web site.

Mail Out

Key stakeholders identified were sent a letter to inform them that a draft DAIP was ready for review and could either be sent out to them by post or be accessed via the internet, from the shire offices and libraries and that alternative formats could be made available.

Donnybrook-Balingup Shire Council Policy Statement

The Shire has adopted the following statement of outcomes in relation to disability access and inclusion within the shire district.

Outcome 1: Existing functions, facilities and services are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

- Council will endeavour to be adaptable in responding to the barriers experienced by people with various disabilities, including people with physical, sensory, cognitive and psychiatric disabilities.
- Council will ensure that all Policies and practices, when required that govern the operation of Council facilities, functions and services are consistent with Council's Policy on access.

Outcome 2: Access to buildings and facilities is improved.

- Council will undertake to incorporate the priorities regarding access for people with disabilities, identified during the consultations, into its submission for its capital works improvement program. Modifications will commence as funds are made available.
- Council will undertake to liaise with developers to increase their awareness of the access requirements of people with disabilities.

Outcome 3: Information about functions, facilities and services is provided in formats which meet the communication requirements of people with disabilities.

- Council will produce all of its information on Council facilities, functions and services using clear and concise language.

Outcome 4: Staff awareness of the needs of people with disabilities and skills in delivering advice and services are improved.

- Council will undertake to ensure that Staff are aware of the key access needs of residents with disabilities and people with disabilities who visit the local government area in relation to the provision of all services.
- Where required, Council will seek expert advice from the disability field on how to meet the access needs of people with disabilities.

Outcome 5: opportunities for people with disabilities to use grievance mechanisms are provided.

- Council will ensure that information is available in clear and concise language on how residents can participate in decision making processes, public consultations and grievance mechanisms.

Outcome 6: Opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in public consultation are provided

Council will undertake to support people with disabilities to attend meetings of Council.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Legislation outlines that the Access and Inclusion Plan will be reviewed at least every 3 years. The Access and Inclusion Plan may be amended on a more regular basis to reflect progress and any access and inclusion issues, which may arise. Whenever the Access and Inclusion Plan is amended, a copy of the amended plan will be lodged with the Disability Services Commission and endorsed internally through the Council.

Review and monitoring

- The Disability Access and Inclusion Planning Committee will meet every quarter in the first year and as required thereafter to provide direction, set priorities and review progress on the implementation of the strategies identified in the disability access and inclusion plan
- The committee will prepare a report each year on the implementation of the Access and Inclusion plan.
- A status report will be provided in the annual general report.
- Internal staff will be aware of the processes required to communicate activities that may not be included in the plan so that they can be included in annual reports and updates.

Evaluation

Every year in **March**, the Access and Inclusion steering committee will provide notification to the community in a variety of formats, regarding the Access and Inclusion Plan to:

- Review work implemented during the past 12 months
- Seek feedback on the effectiveness of implemented strategies
- Seek feedback on additional barriers not identified in the initial consultation
- Identify additional strategies to consideration.

Elected members of council and council officers will also be requested to provide feedback on how well they believe the strategies are working and to make suggestions for improvement.

DAIP STRATEGIES AND TIMELINES

Strategies

The following strategies have been developed through research, consultation and direction from agencies and individuals with the knowledge and awareness that they are subject to being incorporated in forecasted financial year budget plans. This document is intended to proactively communicate what the Shire is achieving, and what it intends to achieve. It is therefore essential that all projects are accurately reflected in this plan and that communication with the Shire underpins all strategies.

Actions and implementation plans that could be used to achieve these strategies are outlined in Implementation Plans and Timelines document.

OUTCOME 1

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Shire

Objective: To adapt services wherever possible to meet the needs of people with disabilities

Strategy
Disability Access Committee to guide the implementation of Disability Access & Inclusion Plan activities.
Ensure that people with disabilities are provided with an opportunity to comment on access to Shire services and events
Monitor the Shire's Access and Inclusion policy to ensure it reflects contemporary values and practices and supports equitable access to services by people with disabilities throughout the various functions of the Council.
Make the library technology as accessible as possible.
Develop the links between the Disability Access & Inclusion Plan and other Council plans and strategies.
Council will ensure that where reasonable practicable events organised in the Shire are accessible to people with disabilities.
Ensure that Council staff, agents and contractors are aware of the relevant requirements of the Disability Services Act.

OUTCOME 2

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities owned or leased by the Shire.

Objective: To ensure that all shire owned, leased or supported facilities are accessible to people with diverse needs.

Strategy
Ensure all buildings and facilities as reasonably practical, are physically accessible to people with disabilities.
Ensure that all new or redevelopment works provide access to people with disabilities, where practicable.
Ensure that there are enough ACROD parking bays to meet the demand of people with disabilities in terms of quantity and location.
Advocate to local businesses and tourist venues the requirements for and benefits flowing from the provision of accessible venues.
Ensure that parks and reserves are accessible as reasonable practical.
Access to existing and new playgrounds.
Ensure that public toilets meet the associated accessibility standards where reasonable practical
Ensure that all people can easily access public toilets, where reasonable practical.

OUTCOME 3

People with disabilities receive information from the Shire in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it;

Objective: to ensure that relevant information pertaining to council functions, facilities and services use clear and concise language and are made available in accessible formats

Strategy
1. Find out what is required by community 2. Make alternative formats available if reasonably practical

Strategy
Improve community awareness that Council information is available in alternative formats upon request where reasonable practical.
Improve staff awareness of accessible information needs and how to obtain information in other formats.
Investigate Shire's website meeting contemporary good practice.
Provide documentation regarding services, facilities and customer feedback in an appropriate format using clear and concise language
Ensure the public are informed of accessible facilities in the shire

OUTCOME 4

People with disabilities and non-disabled people receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Shire

Objective: Council staff and volunteers working with the public be equipped with the information and skills to enable them to appropriately provide advice and service to people with diverse abilities.

Strategy
Improve staff awareness of disability and access issues and improve skills to provide a good service to people with disabilities.
Improve the awareness of new staff and new Councillors about disability and access issues.
Further generate and sustain staff awareness of disability and access issues.

OUTCOME 5

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire

Objective: Ensure that grievance mechanisms are accessible or that appropriate assistance is given to enable people with diverse needs to make grievances and complaints known to the shire

Strategy
Ensure that current grievance mechanisms are accessible for people with

Strategy
disabilities.
Improve staff knowledge so they can facilitate the receipt of complaints from people with a disability.

OUTCOME 6

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Shire

Objective: To ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in decision making and consultation processes managed by the Shire.

Strategy
Improve community awareness about consultation processes in place.
Commit to ongoing monitoring of the Disability Access Inclusion Plan to ensure implementation and satisfactory outcomes.
Improve access for people with disabilities to the established consultative processes of Council.
Seek a broad range of views on disability and access issues from the local community.