



Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2020 - 2024

02 A

Foreword

We welcome feedback and comments from our community on our inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. Comments can be provided on this plan through:

Our website at www.renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au/community/disability-access-and-inclusion-plan

By emailing council@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au.

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Glossary and Definitions

Term	Definition or Explanation
Alternative Text	Alternative text provides a textual alternative to non-text content in web pages, such as photographs, logos and other images.
Easy English	Easy English focuses on presenting key information rather than all the detail. Words are combined with images to enhance the message for the reader.
ELT	Executive Leadership Team
Universal Design	Universal Design involves creating facilities, built environments, products and services that can be used by people of all abilities, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptations. ¹

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Rev No	Date	Revision Details	Author	Reviewer	Approver
1.0	July 2020	Draft Plan created, tabled at Council to be released for public consultation	T Tol, K Wetherall, S Baxter	Council	Council
1.1	September 2020	Plan tabled at Council to be endorsed as final version	S Baxter	Council	Council

¹ Words and Acronyms used, <https://dhs.sa.gov.au/services/disability/inclusive-sa/state-plan/appendix-2>

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04 About Us

The Renmark Paringa Council (we) are the custodians of an array of community assets and infrastructure, including:

85 buildings which deliver core services such as Council administration, library services, sport and recreation, culture and the arts, children's services, visitor information, aged and disability services and public amenities.

313 kilometres of sealed roads

267 kilometres of unsealed roads

82 kilometres of footpaths

94 kilometres of kerb and watertable

We are a river-based community, with the Murray River as the lifeblood of the community. We are located approximately 220 kilometres north east of Adelaide and we enjoy a warm semi-arid climate that supports our vibrant tourism, agricultural and intensive horticultural industries.

This is our inaugural Disability Access and Inclusion Plan which we hope marks the commencement of a journey that not only builds on previous work that has contributed towards improved access and inclusion but that creates an opportunity for us to focus on providing an integrated whole of Council approach to strengthen inclusion and access for all and an opportunity for us to demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination.

People with a profound or severe disability are defined as those people needing help or assistance in one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication, because of a disability, long-term health condition (lasting six months or more) or age. We are home to approximately 9,500 people, of which 21% are over 65 years of age and 6.4% of our population need assistance with core activities.¹

The development of this plan is about creating objectives and actions that we will aim to implement to support access and inclusion that will enhance the lives of the people within our community. The plan is also about us, and about our organisation and how we will consider access and inclusion in our respective roles.

Effective acknowledgement and response to the needs of our community, visitors and potential investors will provide lasting social and economic benefit.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 – need for assistance with core activities

The development of this plan has included information sessions and workshops with staff and Elected Members. Furthermore we asked our staff, Elected Members as well as our community to complete surveys to provide us with feedback on the importance placed on access and inclusion and what we may be able to do to improve it.

Approximately 13% of staff and 56% of Elected Members responded to our survey. This response rate suggests that disability access and inclusion may not be a high priority with regard to our respective roles and decision making. However as one staff member said in their survey response, *"...it is not something that is given much thought – not out of disrespect but probably more so I don't know enough about it"*.

The response rate highlights the need for further investigation and research, and this plan will provide the opportunity for us to integrate access and inclusion throughout our organisation.

With the relatively small number of completed surveys coupled with the responses suggesting we do not have a strong understanding of the links between disability access and inclusion and our roles, nor the link between access and inclusion and our Community Plan and decision making, it is evident that we have many opportunities to improve our focus on access and inclusion.

Another clear message from our staff and Elected member surveys is we do see disability access and inclusion more in terms of mobility and physical disability and we don't understand the depth and breadth of disability and inclusion. This was reiterated by the following response when asked what we could do better, *"Give more of a clearer understanding of access and inclusion, that it isn't just wheelchair friendly but rather it touches on so much more (I just need upskilling on what that is)."*

Whilst we recognise the need to improve our focus on access and inclusion, we have undertaken several initiatives that have improved access and inclusion for our community including; our pram ramp upgrade program (which commenced from 2014), the upcoming upgrade of the Renmark Swimming Centre containing an access ramp as well as the design of the playground in James Avenue.

We currently have no Elected Members or staff who have identified as having a disability but several of us have had lived experience of living with and/or caring with people with disabilities.



Staff undertook the survey provided



Elected Members undertook the survey provided

The following diagram illustrates the strategic context of access and inclusion planning.



The National Disability Strategy (NDS) is Australia’s response to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The NDS is a coordinated plan across all levels of government to improve the lives of people living with disability, their families as well as carers.

In 2018, the *Disability Inclusion Act 2018* (SA) was passed because the State Government recognised that a stronger commitment was needed. Inclusive SA was launched on 1 November 2019 and is the South Australian Government’s first State Disability Inclusion Plan. The State Plan is a requirement of the Act and sets a framework to support State authorities to implement the National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (NDS).

Our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is structured around the themes and priority areas of the Inclusive SA: State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019–2023. Inclusive SA’s vision is to ensure an accessible and inclusive South Australia based on fairness and respect. To achieve this vision, Inclusive SA focuses on the following themes:

- Inclusive communities for all
- Leadership and collaboration
- Accessible communities
- Learning and employment.

Our Community Plan contains our vision which is:

Committed to a sustainable future –through innovation, engagement and sustainably growing the community and business.

This vision is supported by our value statements of:

Respect – we listen, value different opinions and views, acknowledge diversity and differing needs, and treat all members of the community and each other with dignity.

Leadership – we are open to new ideas, take calculated risks, responsibly challenge ourselves and others and forward plan.

Integrity – we seek to be valued and build trust in the community with open and honest dialogue and through transparent and accountable decision making.

Innovation – we are open to new ideas and seek opportunities. We are an adaptable organisation, open to change whilst ensuring sustainability.

Pride – we celebrate our achievements and show our pride in the community and each other.

Our vision and values will be reflected through achieving the objectives, strategies and core activities within our Community Plan, those relevant to this plan include:

Objective 1.3

Advocate for services that support accessibility and enhance community health and wellbeing

Strategy 1.3.2

Ensure council infrastructure supports accessibility for families, the aging population and people with disabilities through Council's planning and design principles.

Objective 1.4

Promote opportunities to develop a socially inclusive and connected community

Core Activity:

Promote services and facilities for older community members, people with disabilities and carers.

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Relationship to other policies, strategies, frameworks and organisations

The aims and goals reflected within the actions plans within this plan will be actively considered in the planning and development of our strategies and plans, they will help to inform our decision making and ensure that issues of access and inclusion are considered.

Key Council and Regional plans include:-

- *Community Plan 2016 – 2020*
- *Long Term Financial Management Plan*
- *Annual Business Plan*
- *Infrastructure and Asset Management Plan (IAMP)*
- *Emergency Management Plan*
- *Community Development Strategy 2016 – 2020*
- *Tracks and Trails Strategy*
- *Volunteer Strategy*
- *Rally for Riverland (Social Indicators Report)*

Key Organisations:

- Murraylands and Riverland Local Government Association
- Riverland Local Government Forum
- Riverland G3 Alliance (*Berri Barmera Council, District Council of Loxton Waikerie and Renmark Paringa Council*)

We created and distributed surveys to people with lived experience of disability, stakeholders (carers and service providers), Elected Members and staff.

Surveys to staff and Elected Members were distributed internally, the link to the survey was forwarded to 112 service providers and identified stakeholders. Service providers and other stakeholders were asked to forward the link to clients and carers.

The surveys were promoted extensively on Council's social media platforms, Facebook, website and in our e-newsletter.

We would prefer to have been able to engage much more extensively with our community however restrictions in place due to COVID-19 coupled with concerns regarding face to face and public meetings limited the success of our community engagement. Whilst we did offer assistance to anyone who may have had difficulty in accessing or completing the survey the process was less than ideal. We will take active steps to improve our process when this plan is reviewed in the future without the restrictions of COVID-19.

As mentioned previously, our staff and elected member survey responses indicate that we need to improve our understanding of disability, access and inclusion and this can be achieved through education and training. Our action plan aims to address this. The issues raised by people with lived experience, carers and stakeholders primarily centred on infrastructure related issues and the focus of our first action plan reflects these concerns.

The draft plan was considered by our review team, made up of two community stakeholders, three staff members and an Elected Member prior to being presented to our July 2020 Council meeting. The draft plan was released for further community consultation and received no formal submissions.

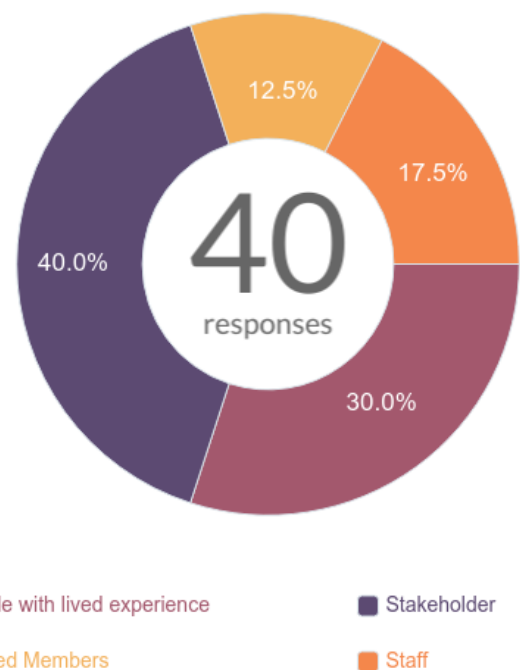


Figure 1: Number surveys completed with respondent breakdown



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The survey responses from our community provided positive feedback with regard to our pram ramp upgrades, 'Murray' the driverless bus trial and our footpath network but also included suggestions for further improvements regarding access and inclusion for our community infrastructure such as footpaths, pram ramps and buildings as well as the provision of additional disabled car parks, especially in the CBD of Renmark. Also highlighted was the need to maintain clear footpaths by ensuring trees aren't overhanging and creating obstacles. Improving access to businesses was also a common theme.

One response that encapsulated much of our community response was, *"...if a person can't access a building, they can't be included in what goes on inside that building. I also feel that people with disabilities are not always included simply because people see them as different and aren't sure how to approach or work with them."*

The challenge for us is to improve the physical access of buildings and infrastructure, as well as, to educate ourselves and the community to reduce any stigma that some of us may have towards persons with disability.

The **Renmark Paringa Council** Disability Access and Inclusion Plan is structured around the themes and priority areas of the Inclusive SA: State Disability Inclusion Plan 2019–2023.

1: Inclusive Communities For All

Social inclusion is a priority for people living with disability as it affects all aspects of their lives. It is our aim that the contributions and rights of people living with disability are valued and understood by all South Australians and that their rights are promoted, upheld and protected. We also want to ensure that people living with disability are supported to advocate for their own rights.

Priority 1: Involvement in the community

Priority 2: Improving community understanding and awareness

Priority 3: Promoting the rights of people living with disability

	Action	State Plan Priority	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measurable Target
1	Provide disability access and inclusion training for all Elected Members and staff, including training options that promote respect and understanding.	1, 2, 3	People and Culture	June 2022	Training offered to all Elected Members. 90% of staff completed training
2	Provide accessible and inclusive library programs that are responsive to the needs of young people with a disability; including alternative low sensory programs and optional small group programs.	1	Chief Librarian	Ongoing	Report annually to Council on the number of programs provided and attendance statistics
3	Investigate the provision of accessible and inclusive library programs that are responsive to the needs of people with a disability including low sensory and small group programs for adults.	1	Chief Librarian	August 2021	Findings presented to ELT for consideration
4	Commence an audit of outdoor recreational signage, wayfinding and accompanying documentation (such as physical and digital resources) to ensure that they are accessible and inclusive.	1, 3	Environmental Officer and Tourism Coordinator	October 2021	A report outlining changes that can be made to signage, wayfinding and associated physical and digital resources
5	Investigate options for establishing best practice outdoor recreation and tracks and trails resources to ensure reasonable access is available (digitising maps and resources centrally through an application)	1, 2	Environmental Officer and Tourism Coordinator	June 2021	Options Paper is submitted to Council for consideration.

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2: Leadership and collaboration

People living with disability want to have a greater role in leading and contributing to government and community decision-making. It is our aim that the perspectives of people living with disability are actively sought and that they are supported to participate meaningfully in government and community consultation and engagement activities.

Priority 4: Participation in decision-making

Priority 5: Leadership and raising profile

Priority 6: Engagement and consultation

	Action	State Plan Priority	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measurable Target
1	Investigate the formation of a reference-group comprising of people living with disability or agencies.	1, 4, 5, 6	Community Development	June 2021	Report presented to Council on investigation findings.
2	<p>Seek expert advice on access and inclusion when developing projects in our built environment, eg playgrounds and parks</p> <p>Consider the provision of unisex toilets designed for left-handed and right-handed people if new toilet facilities are planned in the future.</p>	1, 6	<p>Community Development</p> <p>Infrastructure and Environmental Services</p>	Ongoing	<p>Report on instances where this has been utilised.</p> <p>Advice to be included in Council reports on specific projects.</p>

3: Accessible communities

The accessibility of the built environment, quality services and information is key to ensuring people living with disability are included and have the opportunity to equally participate in all aspects of community life. It is our aim to increase accessibility to public and community infrastructure, transport, services, information, sport and recreation and the greater community.

Priority 7: Universal Design across South Australia

Priority 8: Accessible and available information

Priority 9: Access to services

	Action	State Plan Priority	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measurable Target
1	Investigate different means of sharing information – Easy English forms and alternative methods accessing forms and information	8, 9	Corporate and Community Services (Executive Assistant) Infrastructure and Environmental Services (Executive Assistant)	October 2021	Demonstrate Council platforms that are utilising Easy English and alternative methods available,
2	The Library is committed to developing digital collections, audio books and large print books to support access and provide resources to all members of our community	8, 9	Chief Librarian	Ongoing	Provide reporting on action outcomes annually
3	Library budgeting process and planning to consider and recommend the purchase of identified accessible facilities, furniture and equipment to support equity in library services for people with a disability	8, 9	Chief Librarian	Ongoing	Provide reporting on action outcomes annually
4	Embed access and inclusion and universal design principles in our decision making, planning and budgetary processes.	8, 9	Chief Executive Officer	November 2020	Consideration given within Council reporting
5	Where possible use Alternative Text on Social Media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.	8, 9	Communications Team	Ongoing	Demonstrate where Alternative Text has been used for social media communications.
6	Undertake an access audit of Council's Buildings as part of Buildings, Condition Assessment, Utilisation and Functionality Review	7, 9	Infrastructure and Environmental Services	May 2021	Report tabled at the Asset and Lease Committee with recommendations.
7	As part of the Footpath Defect and Condition Audit project identify accessibility issues and include outcomes in final report.	7, 9	Infrastructure and Environmental Services	May 2021	Report tabled at the Asset and Lease Committee with recommendations.
8	Include sensory based activity options within the School Holiday Activity Packs provided to the community by Council, with expert advice sought on the development of activities.	9	Community Development	June 2021	Materials are included in family activity packs Statistics compiled from distribution.

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4: Learning and employment

Workforce participation is fundamental to social inclusion. It provides economic independence and choice, social connections and friendships, value, identity and belonging. It is our aim that people living with disability have access to inclusive places of study and that education and training provides pathways to meaningful and inclusive employment and volunteering opportunities.

Priority 10: Better supports within educational and training settings

Priority 11: Skill development through volunteering and support in navigating the pathway between learning and earning

Priority 12: Improved access to employment opportunities and better support within workplaces

	Action	State Plan Priority	Responsibility	Timeframe	Measurable Target
1	Continue to review our staff recruitment practices to ensure appropriate access and inclusion requirements are incorporated.	10 & 12	People and Culture	June 2021	Review completed and reported to Executive Leadership Team
2	Review our volunteer recruitment and support to ensure access and inclusion requirements are incorporated within the Volunteer program.	10 & 11	Community Development People and Culture	Ongoing	Number of volunteers with disability increased Statistics provided within our Annual Report



A report will be provided to Council outlining our successes and achievements in September of each year in line with our reporting obligations to the Minister for Human Services.

It is expected that the action plan will evolve and be amended as the achievement of several of the current actions is likely to result in further actions. For example, the access audits of our buildings may identify further works and projects to meet access requirements and these may need to be budgeted for and/or considered in the Infrastructure and Asset Management Plan (IAMP) and prioritised alongside our overall capital works program.

It is noted this is our inaugural DAIP and as such we are at the start of a journey towards ensuring greater access and inclusion on behalf of our community. As we increase our knowledge, skills and maturity in this area we will identify further initiatives and projects and they will be considered for inclusion during future annual reviews of this plan.

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