

## 5.10. SUBMISSION: TOWARDS AN ALL ABILITIES QUEENSLAND

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### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council note and support a formal submission in response to the Queensland Government's consultation paper *Towards an all abilities Queensland* which will assist in the development of a new disability plan for the State.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Queensland Government is developing a new disability plan for Queensland and a consultation paper '*Towards an all abilities Queensland*' is now available at [www.qld.gov.au/allabilitiesqueensland](http://www.qld.gov.au/allabilitiesqueensland) .

Local Governments are one of the key providers of services at a local level, with responsibilities including the provision of essential community services, recreational and cultural facilities. Local Governments play a key role in building more inclusive communities through the provision of accessible information, services and facilities.

Local Governments in Queensland have been invited by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to prepare formal submissions in response to the discussion paper.

The discussion paper is seeking responses which will help identify practical ways that support the proposed vision of "a Queensland where people of all abilities can live the life they choose".

The discussion paper '*Towards an all abilities Queensland*' outlines a proposed vision and priority areas for a new disability plan which has people with a disability, their families and carers being central to its focus.

The discussion paper proposes five priority areas:

- Personal and community relationships
- Recreation and tourism
- Working and learning
- Key services
- Leadership and contribution

Submissions are required by 10 February 2017.

### BACKGROUND

Council has a commitment to creating a more accessible and inclusive region. Since deamalgamation Council has undertaken a number of Operational Plan initiatives and allocated capital works funding specifically catering to local residents and visitors to the region who may be living with a disability. These include the:

- Access Douglas Directory – to assist people living with a disability access goods, services and facilities.
- Missed Business Resource - Assisting small businesses to be more accessible.
- Allocation of \$30 000 for improving wheel chair access to Four Mile Beach.
- Undertaking of a Community Access Audit for areas in Douglas Shire, outside of town centres, to ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act and Australian Standards.

Council has developed a submission in response the discussion paper '*Towards an all abilities Queensland*' that includes practical ideas and solutions that will support the endeavors of making the Douglas region more accessible and inclusive.

## COMMENT

A new disability plan for Queensland aims to make Queensland a place where people with disability are welcomed, valued, included and enabled to participate in all aspects of life.

## PROPOSAL

That Council notes and supports a formal submission in response to the Queensland Government's consultation paper *Towards an all abilities Queensland* which will assist is the development of a new disability plan for the State.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Minimal to no financial risk.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Minimal to no risk implication.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** Communities which are more accessible and inclusive allow people of all abilities to better participate in education/ training and employment; enabling people with disabilities to better access and participate in local economies e.g. purchasing goods and service.

**Environmental:** Minimal sustainability implications.

**Social:** Inclusive and accessible communities allow people who are living a disability to feel more valued. Greater access to public recreational, sporting and cultural facilities improves general health, wellbeing and quality of life.

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

#### Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

*1.1.4 - Support and encourage a healthy, active and capable region through sporting, cultural and recreational opportunities, and community wellbeing initiatives.*

*1.1.5 - Support local non-profit community, sporting and cultural organisations to build their capacity.*

*1.1.6 - Encourage and promote volunteering opportunities throughout the Shire.*

*1.2.2 - Actively participate in and promote throughout the community the “Closing the Gap” initiatives for Indigenous members of our communities.*

*1.2.3 - Develop and support opportunities to build resilience and sustainability of community groups and agencies.*

*1.2.4 - Network, advocate and partner with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes.*

*1.3.1 - Take a proactive role in supporting the provision of improved facilities and services directed at assisting and caring for vulnerable groups in our communities.*

*1.3.2 - Develop and implement the ‘accessible Douglas’ directory.*

*1.3.3 - Foster and support the role of local artists, writers and performers to encourage community vibrancy and wellbeing.*

*1.3.4 Provide and enhance community facilities and opportunities that cater for the arts, recreational and cultural pursuits.*

## **Theme 2 - Building a Sustainable Economic Base**

*2.1.1 - Develop management plans for all Council assets and adequately resource their implementation.*

## **Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance**

*3.1.2 - Identify and implement opportunities to create vibrancy in high profile areas, such as Daintree Gateway and Mossman town centre.*

## **Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner**

*4.2.2 - Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.*

## **Theme 5 – Governance**

*5.1.1 - Establish and develop long term financial, resource and infrastructure planning to ensure ongoing capacity to fund operations and capital works programs.*

*5.2.2 - Implement adopted policies and guidelines to ensure consistency in administrative management which also encourages innovation in Council operations.*

*5.3.5 - Develop a workforce that is highly effective, efficient and productive, proud to deliver value for money for ratepayers and residents.*

## **COUNCIL'S ROLE**

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

**Advocate**                Supporting communities and groups by advocating for certain actions from other organisations (usually other levels of government)

## **CONSULTATION**

**Internal:**                Council Operational Plan 2014 –2015  
Council Operational Plan 2015 – 2016  
Council Operational Plan 2016 – 2017  
Douglas Shire Council Corporate Plan 2014 - 2019

**External:**                Ongoing engagement with people with a disability and disability service providers in relation to Council Access and Equity initiatives and projects.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1.        Submission - Towards an all abilities Queensland **[5.10.1]**

# Submission: *Towards an all abilities Queensland*

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## Introduction

The Douglas region has a population of approximately 11 661 people<sup>1</sup>. As at June 2016 there were approximately 503 (or 5.3%) local residents who received a disability support pension and 235 (or 2.5%) local residents receiving a Carers Allowance<sup>2</sup>. Approximately 422 persons (or 3.9%) within the region were in need of assistance with a profound or severe disability<sup>3</sup>.

Council considers carefully and understands the important role it has to play either as an advocate, facilitator or as the provider (owner) of Local Government infrastructure, information or services which needs to be readily accessible to people of all abilities. Council within its sphere of influence and resources endeavours to ensure the Douglas region is inclusive and accessible; and is able to meet the varied and extremely diverse special needs and aspirations of our local residents who may be living with a disability.

In Australia it is the right of every person with a disability to be able to access goods and services like every other customer. This is very important for a region such as Douglas where the tourism industry is a significant driver of the local economy. Almost 1 in 5 people in Australia are living with a disability this accounts for approximately 4 million people<sup>4</sup>. People with a disability spend \$8 billion a year on Australian tourism accounting for 11 per cent of total tourism expenditure. 88% of people with a disability take a holiday each year and accounts for some 8.2 million overnight trips<sup>5</sup>. Improving access and inclusiveness not only improves the social wellbeing of a community but can also contribute significantly to local economies reliant on tourism.

Douglas Shire Council seeks to help foster a community which recognises its diversity and supports the participation of all of its members to enjoy a richer and fulfilling community life. Council has a commitment to a medium term goal of removing all barriers (physical, social, organisational and structural) which may prevent vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities including people with disabilities, their families and carers from accessing and participating in Council facilities and programs<sup>6</sup>.

## Considerations in developing a new Disability Plan for Queensland:

### Communication – The role of Local Government:

At a local level within the Douglas region, regular monthly Community Agency Network (CAN) meetings are conducted with community, government organisations and service providers which deliver a range of health, community and social services to the broader community which include disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as those who may be living with a disability and their carers. Such important networking opportunities allows Council to keep abreast of projects, initiatives and issues that may be relevant to people living with a disability; or require a response or action by Council.

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<sup>1</sup> ABS 3218.0, Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2014-15

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Services, Payment Demographic Data

<sup>3</sup> ABS, Census of Population and Housing, 2011, Basic Community Profile - B18 (usual residence)

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, Survey of Disability, Aging and Carers (2009)

<sup>5</sup> National Visitor Survey (2003) as analysed by Darcy and Dwyer (2008)

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Shire Council Corporate Plan 2014 - 2019

Regular communication is also achieved with the CAN via a centralised email database which is coordinated/ managed by Council and regularly broadcasts relevant and appropriate information, and notifications which at times relate to subject matter pertaining people living with a disability. Council also has the ability to share information more broadly with the wider community via social media (e.g. Facebook) and community notices in local newspapers.

From a Douglas perspective Council can play an important role in supporting the dissemination of disability resources, information and key messages. This is most relative and important to supporting a new disability plan for Queensland and the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Communications and information sharing at a local/ regional level can assist with the dissemination of information that may be specifically associated with the five (5) priority areas identified in the *'Towards and all abilities Queensland'* discussion paper:

- Personal and community relationships;
- Recreation and tourism;
- Working and learning;
- Key services;
- Leadership and contribution.

It may also be likely with the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) that Councils may be contacted as a source of information or for referral advice. Councils can potentially assist as a conduit for sharing relevant information and referral to services and organisation. The new disability plan should include Local Governments as being integral to supporting an engagement or communication strategy that seeks to reach community at local organisational and community (grass roots) levels.

#### **Local Government Access to Resources and Supports:**

Councils are an essential component to creating inclusive and accessible communities. To help meet the objectives and priorities of a proposed new disability plan consideration should be given especially to smaller Local Government Areas (LGA) that have limited resources and may not have dedicated Ageing and Disability or Access and Equity Officers. Smaller Councils such as the Douglas Shire with limited resources at times face the challenge to best meet the community needs of several different target groups which include those who have special needs and are vulnerable such as people who are living with a disability and their carers.

Councils with access to best practice disability resources, tools and templates tailored for Local Governments can better help create more accessible and inclusive communities. Resources that can help Councils could include:

- guidelines and templates to develop Disability Inclusion Strategies and Action Plans;
- guidelines and checklists for undertaking Community Accessibility Audits;
- guidelines and checklists for undertaking website Audits.

Templates, guidelines or other disability related resources would simplify the process for those Councils without staff dedicated to the development of local strategies and action plans; and to create facilities, information and services which are more inclusive and accessible.

### **Supporting Small Business**

Douglas Shire Council in supporting economic development within the region developed a guide called [Missed Business](#) which was based on a similar resource produced by Marrickville Council (NSW) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The resource aims to help businesses to create more accessible physical environments and services for potential customers who may be living with a disability. Since launching the resource in May 2015 – January 2017 there has been over 12 600 downloads of the [Missed Business](#) resource.

A new disability plan for Queensland that helps to create resources, guidelines and factsheets that support small business would not only help to create more inclusive and accessible communities but could also help support regional economic development and growth.

Resource materials of this nature could be disseminated and promoted via relevant State Government Departments, Chambers of Commerce and Local Governments as part of a community engagement/communication strategy.

### **Funding Opportunities**

Many Local Governments face the challenge of finding financial resources to provide additional services and facilities which are above and beyond those which are essential core business. This is particularly relevant to smaller Councils with limited income streams due to smaller rate bases.

A new disability plan which could provide funding opportunities for local governments to implement new projects, initiatives and infrastructure which aligned with improving disability access and inclusiveness would greatly benefit local communities, especially those in more regional and isolated locations.