

Lithgow

Disability Access Plan 2014-2018



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Mayoral Preface

As the Chair of the Disability Access Committee, I am pleased to present Lithgow City Council's Disability Access Plan 2014-2018. Council is committed to providing improved access for people with a disability and this Plan outlines the ways in which we intend to do this, both within Council and the broader community. Council is extremely proud of the achievements in this area to date, and looks forward to continuing this work into the future.

In the Lithgow LGA, the latest Census figures from 2011 show that 1,162 or 5.8% of people with severe or profound disability identified themselves as being "in need of assistance". The number of people aged over fifty five is growing too, up from 5,500 in 2006 to 6,500 in 2011. This ageing trend is expected to continue, and along with this a greater number of people with a disability can be anticipated. This is why it is critical that we plan for this changing demographic.

It is important to thank the many community members, organisations and Council staff who have contributed towards the development of this Disability Access Plan. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the efforts and input of the Disability Access Committee. As a Council we are proud to commend this plan to you. Copies are available in many formats, so if you would like a copy of this document in large print, audio or electronic format, please contact Council's Community & Culture Division on (02) 6354 9999.

Councillor Maree Statham

Mayor of Lithgow

The Disability Action Plan

The aim of the Disability Action Plan 2014-2020 ("the Plan") is to provide a framework for aligning Council's activities with the goals of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) which makes it unlawful to treat people with a disability less favourably than people without a disability. Lithgow City Council seeks to eliminate physical barriers as well as discriminatory practices and procedures. The Plan has been developed in keeping with the following principles:

1. People with a disability have the same fundamental rights as all members of the Lithgow community.
2. Every attempt will be made to ensure that no person who lives, works in, or visits Lithgow shall be denied access to any Council facility or service on the grounds of personal disability.
3. People with a disability (within the Lithgow LGA) should have the same opportunity as other residents to participate in the workforce, public consultations and decision-making processes.

The Plan's objectives are aligned with the provisions set out in the DDA, as well as the principle activity areas in Council's Community Strategic Plan 2025. In addition, the Plan informs and is informed by a number of supporting strategic and operational plans, including:

Community Strategic Plan 2013-2026

The *Caring For Our Community* section of the Community Strategic Plan sites a number of issues that need addressing in the area of access. These include:

- The need for more health services
- The need for more diversity of housing
- The need for more Aged Care facilities.

Furthermore, providing access to Council services and facilities is listed as a desired outcome and sites a number of actions, which includes:

- Increased access to public transport, health, education, housing, recreational and other essential community services.

Ageing Strategy

A large number of access issues were identified during the consultations for the Ageing Strategy. These include:

- Footpath safety and amenity
- Car park spaces are too small for frail aged people
- Poor signage and lighting
- Access to shops and other buildings
- Suitable and accessible housing

Lithgow Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP)

The Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) is completed and will look at making improvements to walking facilities along the Great Western Highway (the Highway) through Lithgow to cater for the existing and future needs of Lithgow residents and visitors. The objectives of the PAMP Study are:

- To improve the level of pedestrian access and priority, particularly in areas of high pedestrian concentrations.
- To reduce pedestrian access severance and ensure safe crossing of roads.
- To improve the level of personal mobility and safety for seniors and people with disabilities.
- To provide links with other transport services to achieve an integrated network of facilities.

Open Space and Recreation Needs Study

The Open Space and Recreational Needs Study highlights that Council should strive for the following when developing an open space network:

- provide recreation and sporting parks in line with current and emerging community needs
- provide a diverse range of activity opportunities and landscape settings to encourage healthy lifestyles and maximise opportunities for engagement in physical activity

- provide safe, attractive places and equitable and convenient access to recreation, sport and open space infrastructure.

The Plan is an active document and it is expected it will be reviewed and evaluated over time as the practical implications of the DDA and the Community Strategic Plan 2025 are addressed. The Plan details Council's objectives and actions in relation to improving accessibility and will ensure that people with disabilities, their carers and associates can appropriately access Council services and facilities and participate in the planning and review of these.

Disability Profile

For the purpose of this profile a disability is defined as any limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least six months and restricts everyday activities. This includes physical, sensory (vision, hearing, speech), intellectual, cognitive, psychiatric and neurological disabilities.

People with a disability are represented in every age group, all socio-economic levels, a variety of housing and living situations and across all employment and education fields. Disability touches on a large proportion of the population as most people will have or know a friend or family member who has a disability.

In Australia, 18.5% of the population or 4.2 million people have a disability of some type.¹ Together with their friends and families, the number of people affected by a disability is bigger still.

In the Lithgow LGA, the latest Census figures (2011) show that 1,162 or 5.8% of people are identified as being "in need of assistance". This figure relates to people with severe or profound disability. Further, the number of people over the age of 55 is up from 5,523 in 2006, to 6,506 people in the 2011 Census.² This is an 18%

¹ 2012 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2012.

² ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Lithgow © (LGA14870) 4511.9 sq Kms, B18 CORE ACTIVITY NEED FOR ASSISTANCE BY AGE

increase in 5 years. According to Lithgow Council's Ageing Strategy this growing number of older people is expected to rise. Consequently, a rise in the number of people with a disability can be anticipated. Therefore, it is critical that Council's planning accounts for this changing demographic.

Figures 1 and 2 below compare the age structure of Lithgow LGA with NSW and Regional NSW in 2011. While Lithgow has similar percentages of 0-9 and 10-19 year olds as NSW, there is a significant loss once people reach 20 years old. This loss doesn't reverse until age 45 after which Lithgow has significantly higher percentages than NSW in almost all age groups.

Figure 2 shows that Lithgow LGA had a slightly smaller percentage than Regional NSW of its population in the younger age groups and a higher percentage of its population in the 45 to 74 year age groups.

Figure 1

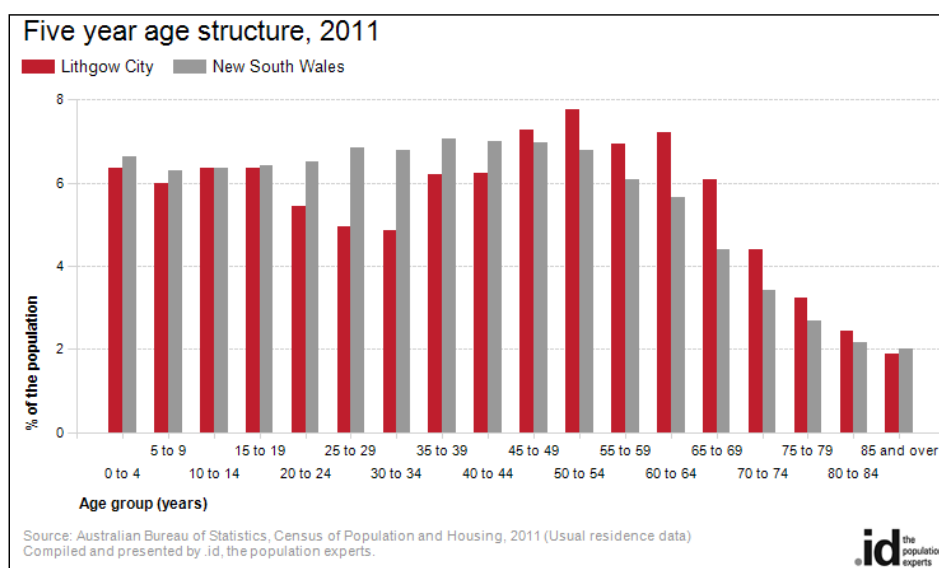
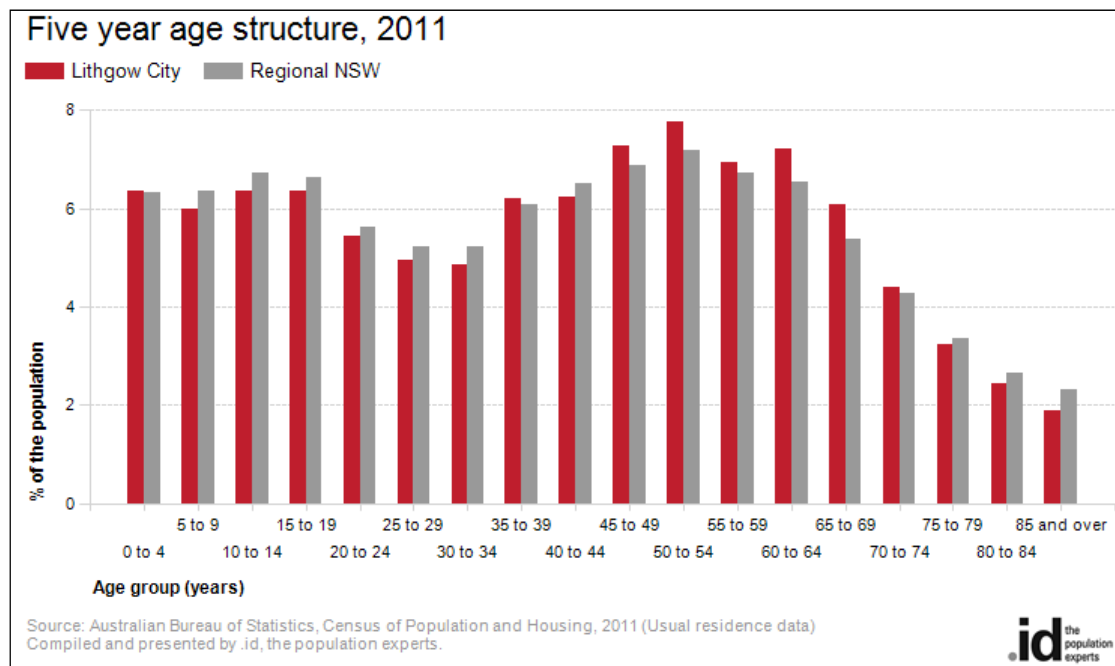


Figure 2

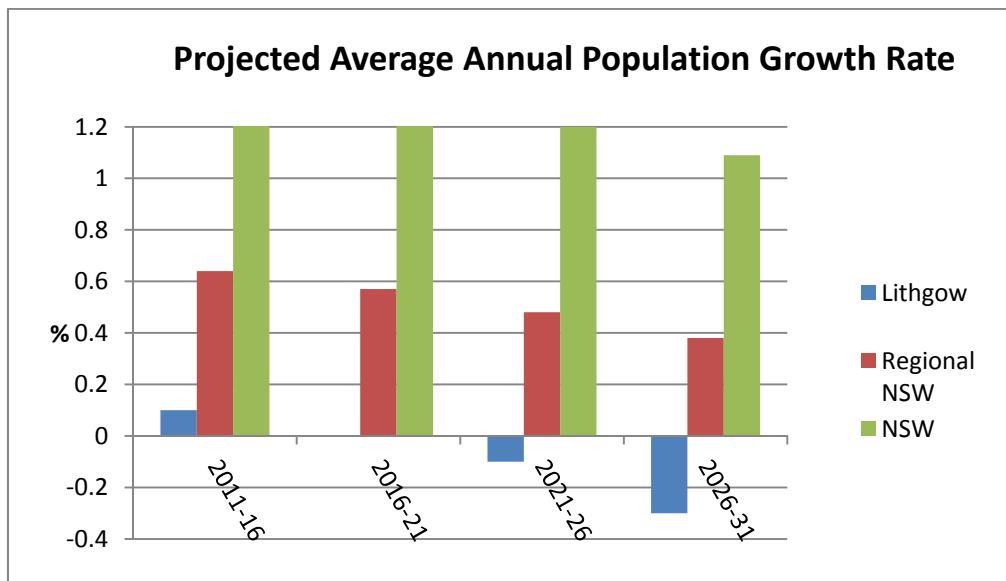


Figures 3-5 below show for the period out to the year 2031, the projected annual population growth rate and the percentage of people aged 55⁺ in the Lithgow LGA compared to NSW, Regional NSW and to the surrounding Blue Mountains, Bathurst and Mid Western Regional LGA's.

These projections are produced by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment based on historical trends, current settlement patterns and demographic modelling techniques. These are projections only, and significant changes in economic factors, fertility rates, government population policy, immigration levels and other factors may affect these projections.

Figure 3 shows that Lithgow's projected rate of annual population growth to the year 2031 is either close to zero or negative, whereas NSW and Regional NSW are projected to have significant positive growth in each 5 year period.

Figure 3



Source Figures 3,4 and 5 and Table 1: NSW Department of Planning and Environment: New South Wales State and Local Government Area Population, Household and Dwelling Projections: 2014

Figure 4 shows that all surrounding LGA's are projected to have a greater average annual rate of population growth than Lithgow to the year 2031

Figure 4

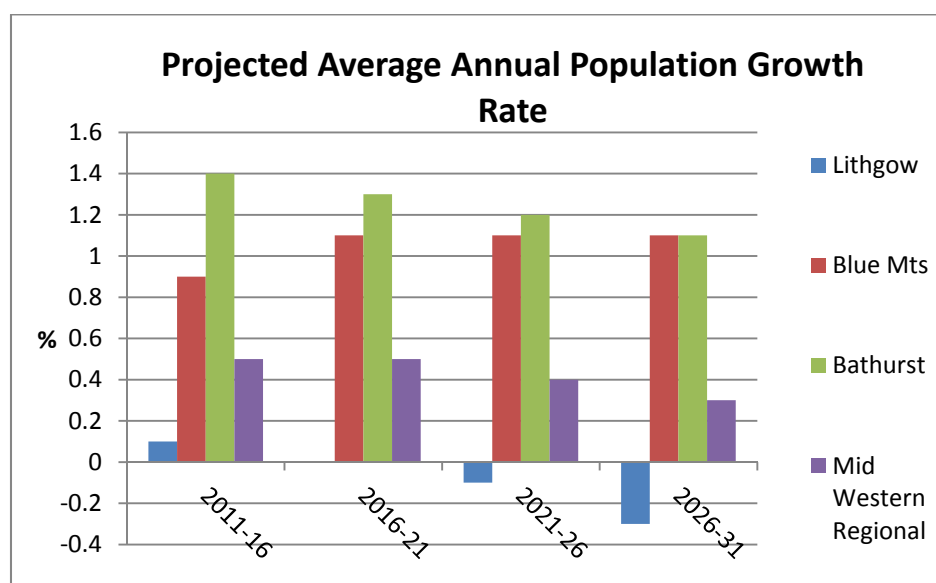


Figure 5

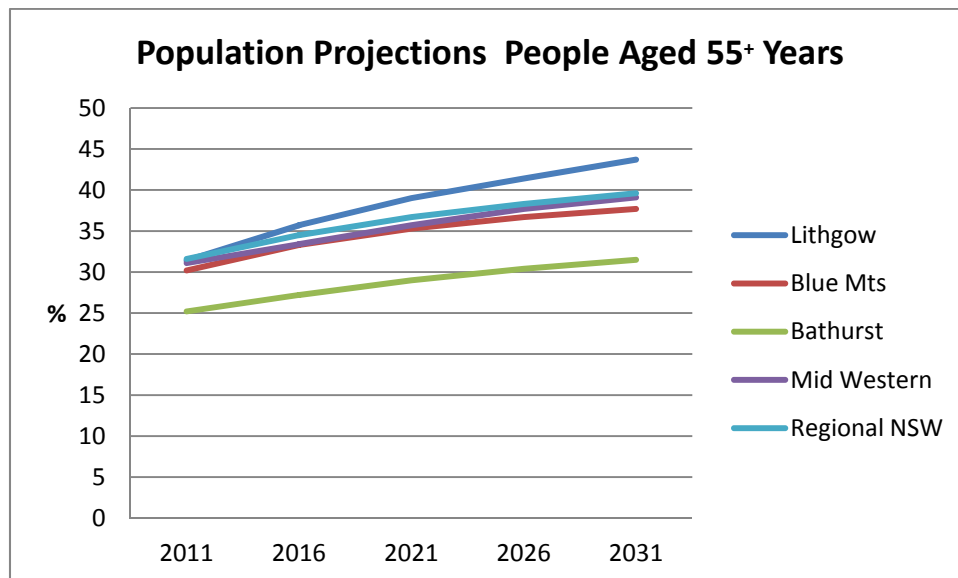


Figure 5 shows projections for the percentage of the total population that will be aged 55+ out to the year 2031 in Lithgow and surrounding LGA's. Table 1 shows the projected numbers of people aged 55+ in Lithgow in the same period.

Table 1

Year	Projected Total Population 55+
2011	6,550
2016	7,500
2021	8,200
2026	8,650
2031	9,000

The correlation between ageing and disability is well cited in numerous research papers produced by the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, the World Health Organisation and the Department of Health and Ageing.

Therefore, the above ageing projections highlight the need for Council to plan ahead for its ageing population and provide appropriate information, services and support for this age group.

Table 2 below shows that the 'need for assistance' greatly increases in the 60⁺ age group and this need continues to rise throughout the life cycle. However, the total percentage of Lithgow residents 'in need of assistance' is 5.8%, which is on a par with regional NSW, and a slight increase from 2006, where 5.5% of people needed assistance.

Table 2 Need for assistance with core activities

Lithgow City		2011			2006		Change
Assistance needed by age group (years)	Number	Lithgow % of total age group	Regional NSW % of total age group	Number	% of total age group	Regional NSW	2006 to 2011
0 to 4	9	0.7	1.1	14	1.2	1.0	-5
5 to 9	30	2.5	3.0	35	2.7	2.2	-5
10 to 19	78	3.0	2.6	62	2.2	2.0	+16
20 to 59	372	3.7	3.2	342	3.3	2.9	+30
60 to 64	96	6.6	7.3	89	7.1	6.4	+7
65 to 69	101	8.2	7.7	76	8.1	6.3	+25
70 to 74	91	10.3	9.6	72	9.7	8.9	+19
75 to 79	116	17.7	14.8	88	14.0	14.8	+28
80 to 84	109	21.9	24.7	125	30.1	26.7	-16
85 and over	158	41.1	48.3	175	55.0	49.4	-17
Total persons needing assistance	1,160	5.8	5.8	1,078	5.5	5.1	+82

The Disability Access Committee (DAC)

The Disability Access Committee (DAC) was established in 2011 to guide the development of the Disability Access Plan. Since then, it has played a crucial role in advising Council on matters of access, mobility and social inclusion. The DAC has a broad membership, made up of Councillors, Council staff and community representatives who are residents, carers and service providers.

The DAC's role is to:

1. Identify the access needs of people that are frail aged and/or living with a disability within the Lithgow Local Government Area.
2. Work with the community to identify strategies to improve access to and within public buildings, parks and other public facilities.
3. Develop an Access Plan in line with Council's Management and Strategic Plans and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992).
4. Inform and educate the community about access issues.

The DAC is a central reference point for staff and community consultation in relation to responding to access needs. The DAC however, does not undertake or provide detailed technical or operational advice. In these instances, Council will seek advice from independent access consultants. Lithgow Council extends its sincere thanks to all the members of the DAC who provide their time and expertise, and assist in the development of this report.

In August 2012 Council and the DAC made a call to the community for submissions regarding access issues within the Lithgow LGA. The information received has been used to inform the objectives and actions of this report. The DAC will request submissions regarding access via the Lithgow CBD Revitalisation Program's submission process.

Current Access Initiatives and Future Programs

Union Theatre

The Union Theatre toilets have recently been upgraded to meet universal access standards and are completed. An accessible ramp has been built along the side of the building, and the old steps leading to the toilet facility have been eliminated and

replaced with a graded floor. Furthermore, the grade of the footpath at the main entrance of the theatre has been changed to meet current access standards, and ramps have also been installed at the door. The total cost of this project is estimated to be \$330,000 and was completed with funding from Council, Community Building Partnership Grant, and the Mineworkers Trust.

Eskbank House Museum

Access to the veranda of the museum has been graded to meet current standards, and installation of a drop in access ramp at the side entry point is now completed. A Development Application (DA) has been approved to upgrade the toilet inside the museum. It is anticipated that works will commence in 2014. In addition, a further two more DA's have been approved to upgrade the back entry of the house and redo the fence line around the rear garden. Disability access parking is now available at the entry point of the museum and is well signed.

Lithgow Pool

Stage one includes a new amenities block, new public access, children's splash park, new parking area, public toilets, new concourse area and demolition of existing structures. The new pool entrance and amenities block has been modified to ensure safety and easy access for people of all abilities. This means that people will no longer need to negotiate the steep hill from the Wyld Street frontage. The heating capacity of the main pool, as well as the splash park, has been enhanced to reach a temperature of 27-28 degrees Celsius. Furthermore, tenders have been awarded for stages 2 and 3, which include the development of an indoor heated pool, 2 new disabled parking spaces, and a meeting room inside the foyer area. It is anticipated that works will be finalised by 2015.

Main Street Lithgow

Council is working progressively on redoing some of the spillways on Main and Methven streets. In addition, a community survey has been undertaken regarding the preferred locations of new public toilets in the Lithgow CBD area. The new public toilets will meet universal access standards and cater to people of all abilities. The data from the survey has been reported to Council and used to inform the location and style/ design of the facility. In addition, external consultants have been appointed

for the Main Street Revitalisation Program and undertook a site inspection in March 2014. The project is currently in its investigation and analysis phase. A broad community engagement process is underway, which includes a shopfront drop-in centre, pedestrian surveys and online questionnaires. The DAC has provided the Main Street Revitalisation Program Steering Committee with recommendations around universal standards.

Valley Plaza Lithgow

Council staff have been working in partnership with management from Lithgow Valley Plaza to implement access initiatives across the precinct. As a result the signage for accessible car spaces has been upgraded and is clearly marked; the layback at the plaza exit on Lithgow street has been fixed; the carpark has been upgraded and lighting improved; and Council is currently working on installing another entry ramp to the car park on Bent street.

Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP)

Lithgow City Council identified the need to develop a Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) which investigated the need for improvements to walking facilities along the Great Western Highway through Lithgow to cater for the existing and future needs of Lithgow residents and visitors in this section of Lithgow.

The objectives of the PAMP for the Great Western Highway through Lithgow were:

- To improve the level of pedestrian access and priority, particularly in areas of high pedestrian concentrations.
- To reduce pedestrian access severance and ensure safe crossing of roads
- To improve the level of personal mobility and safety for seniors and people with disabilities
- To provide links with other transport services to achieve an integrated network of facilities
- Continuing promotion of walking as a transport mode in its own right
- Development of an engineering works program

A detailed study was conducted which included;

- Analysis of community consultation
- Analysis of stakeholder consultation
- Examination of the existing facilities
- Examination of existing land uses
- Identification of the pedestrian, public transport and road network
- A facility audit and observation of pedestrian movements.
- Future contexts for the study area

From the PAMP study a list of identified works was developed. These works include high, medium and low priority works and estimated costs for completion. Council shall now use the works list to develop a prioritised works schedule and time line to address the identified works as discussed in the PAMP.

Other Initiatives

- A chair lift has been installed in the Portland Crystal Theatre to provide access to the main hall.
- The main entrance to the Civic Ballroom is now accessible and accessible parking is also available.
- Work has been programmed for the installation of a hand rail on Williwa Street in Portland.
- A replacement lift has been installed in the Council Administration Building.
- Two new accessible ramps have been constructed at the Meadow Flat Hall.
- An accessible boardwalk has been installed at the Hassan's Walls Lookout.
- Pathways are being upgraded at Lake Pillans to provide disabled access.
- An accessible viewing platform is being constructed at Pearson's Lookout Capertee with scheduled completion by 30 June 2014.

Future Programs

Council is committed to ensuring access to all its buildings, services and facilities and will make changes over time with input from the DAC and the community. As a result, some of the future initiatives that Council could undertake, include:

- Ensuring compliance of all its libraries
- Work towards establishing a reasonable level of “preparedness” for the employment of a person with a disability (eg/ have low reception counter/s, a disabled car space at the front of the building, disabled toilet facility and easy entry into both the Administration and Hartley buildings)
- Provide a disability parking space in front of the Council Administration Centre
- Install an all-abilities toilet in the Hartley building and ensure compliance of the toilet in Administration building
- Ensure all doorways and entry points into both buildings meet current standards for wheelchair access
- Install a low level counter at the Council Customer Service area.
- An accessible pathway between Blast Furnace Park and Lake Pillans is scheduled to be built in 2014/2015.

Objective 1. Council and the broader community to be more aware and informed of issues relating to disability and access.

1.1	Aim	Action	Responsibility
	Ensure Council acts as a leader and role model for universal access.	<p>Incorporate actions of the Plan into all Council corporate documents.</p> <p>Work towards all Council facilities (e.g. parks, ramps, buildings etc) being fully accessible within budgetary constraints.</p> <p>Develop a database of accessible buildings.</p> <p>Create an online map on Council's website, of disability parking spaces and toilets in the Lithgow LGA.</p> <p>Upload web content on Council website that is accessible and in line with <i>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines</i> (WCAG) 2.0.</p> <p>Distribute information on Council meetings, Committees and activities widely and in a variety of accessible formats, for e.g., large print, electronic, audio etc.</p>	<p>Corporate and Community</p> <p>Community & Culture and Operations</p> <p>Information Technology (IT)</p> <p>Information Technology (IT)</p> <p>Information Technology (IT)</p> <p>All departments</p>
1.2	Ensure relevant Council staff are aware of the requirements under the <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (DDA) and the Building Code of Australia (BCA).	<p>Training of relevant staff on the access needs of people with a disability in the workplace.</p> <p>Provide in-house education and training about effective communication and disability etiquette.</p> <p>Incorporate the DDA into Council's induction processes and Training Modules</p>	<p>Organisational Development</p> <p>Organisational Development</p> <p>Organisational Development</p>

	Aim	Action	Responsibility
1.3	Ensure views and needs of people with a disability are heard by the community and decision-makers.	<p>Advocacy.</p> <p>Support community events that raise awareness about disability issues.</p> <p>Keep up to date on issues related to disability and convey it to Council and the community.</p> <p>Seek input and have regular contact with service providers.</p>	<p>Community & Culture</p> <p>Community & Culture</p> <p>Community & Culture</p> <p>Community & Culture</p>
1.4	Encourage state and federal government support to provide universally accessible services and facilities that are beyond the ability of local government.	<p>Lobby for additional funding for projects related to improving accessibility within the LGA.</p> <p>Make representations regarding access issues.</p> <p>Promote and advocate a rights-based system where individual needs are looked at more closely.</p>	<p>Disability Access Committee</p> <p>Disability Access Committee</p> <p>Disability Access Committee</p>

Objective 2. Council to ensure accessibility is provided to its buildings, services, facilities, parks and recreational areas to cater for people of all abilities.

Aim	Action	Responsibility
2.1	Upgrade Council buildings and facilities to improve access for people with disabilities.	Environment and Development, Community & Culture and Disability Access Committee
	Undertake community consultation regarding access through the submission process of the Main St Revitalisation Program.	Community & Culture and Disability Access Committee
2.2	Ensure there are adequate accessible parking spaces for people with disabilities.	Community & Culture and Operations
	Create more accessible parking spaces in high usage areas.	Operations.
	Create a Tourism app that shows where disability parking is located within the LGA.	Information Technology and Visitor Centre
2.3	Promote and ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the Building Code of Australia.	Environment and Development.
	Encourage accessible commercial and residential development within Council and across the community.	
2.4	Ensure that access works on Council buildings and facilities are planned and carried out within resource constraints.	Operations and Environment and Development.
	Disability Access Committee, as well as broader community, to be notified of major projects in relation to accessibility.	
	Inform the community on Council's plans for accessibility.	Operations and Environment and Development.

Objective 3. To ensure that people with a disability have equal access to employment opportunities within Council and are afforded access to facilities, services and opportunities to meet their specific employment needs.

Aim	Action	Responsibility
3.1	<p>Identify barriers to physical access within Council buildings, infrastructure and facilities to increase preparedness and ability to employ people with disabilities.</p> <p>Conduct a compliance audit of the Council Administration and Hartley building/s, as well as the Lithgow library and branch libraries.</p> <p>Create a list of priorities after the audit and look to undertake works on a progressive basis and within budgetary constraints.</p>	Community & Culture, Environment and Development and Disability Access Committee.
3.2	<p>Raise awareness of staff involved in staff selection processes about relevant DDA provisions and the <i>Principle of Reasonable Adjustment</i> in the workplace.</p> <p>See Objective 1, Action 1.2. Ensure the inclusion of DDA requirements in Council's Recruitment and Selection Training.</p> <p>Provide in-house education and training about effective communication and disability etiquette.</p> <p><i>The Principle of Reasonable Adjustment</i> in the workplace to be included in Council's Recruitment and Selection Training.</p>	<p>Organisational Development</p> <p>Organisational Development</p>
3.3	<p>Take measures to provide employment opportunities for people with a disability.</p> <p>Work with relevant organisations to implement innovative strategies to provide employment opportunities for people with a disability within Council.</p>	Community & Culture, Environment and Development and Operations.

Objective 4. Work towards improving community transport options for people with disabilities within the Lithgow LGA.

4.1	Aim	Action	Responsibility
	Increase access to and awareness of community transport.	<p>Collaborate with local transport service providers to review services.</p> <p>Promotion of services.</p> <p>Gather information on the unmet transport need in the community.</p> <p>Investigate supplementary support programs within the community.</p> <p>Work with transport service providers to advocate for more frequent, widespread and accessible services.</p>	Community & Culture, Environment and Development, Disability Access Committee and Translinc.