

Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC)

Friday 13 March 2026 at 10:00am
Council – Glass Room

MEETING NOTES

MEETING COMMENCED: 10:01am

IN ATTENDANCE:

Clr Amber Schutz (Chair), Kathy Arthur, Director CARS, Danai Keir, Yvonne Thomson, Frank Ross, Joel McCubben, Noal Annabel, Brad Rossiter OAM (via phone), and Melinda Rowell, Executive Assistant to Director of CARS (Minutes).

APOLOGIES:

Catherine Sykes

1 WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Chair, Councillor Amber Schutz, welcomed the committee and delivered the Acknowledgement of Country.

2. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair opened the meeting and noted the apologies. She welcomed new committee members, Danai Keir and Yvonne Thomson.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

3.1 Review of Meeting Notes/Actions from 12 December 2025

The Chair sought confirmation that the minutes from the meeting on 12 December 2025 were read and accepted as a true and accurate record.

General discussions occurred regarding the development of the Creative Arts Strategy and the previous Public Art Advisory Committee were noted.

Kathy advised that the draft Creative Arts Strategy had not yet been released, as it remains under development. She provided an update on the consultation and engagement process.

No objections were raised, and the minutes of 12 December 2025 were confirmed.

Moved: Councillor Amber Schutz

Seconded: Joel McCubben

3.2 Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) 2026-2030 - Consultation Updates

Kathy provided an update on consultation activities undertaken to inform development of the new Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). She advised that DIAC members had been emailed the DIAC Highlights summary, outlining key issues and themes emerging from recent community and internal consultations, along with updated community demographic statistics as at 6 March 2026.

Council engaged with the community and internal teams across Engineering, Planning and Human Resources, identifying several emerging themes and potential actions.

Kathy also presented a PowerPoint summarising outcomes from the DIAC Workshop. The presentation emphasised the need for:

- a whole-of-journey approach to accessibility
- improved consolidation and consistency across Council processes

Pillar 1 - Attitudes and Behaviour

Key group discussion points and potential inclusions:

- **Customer service and communication:** Need to improve customer service quality and apply a consistent communication lens across Council.

Kathy emphasised strengthening Council's communication approach, including working with Communications staff to ensure consistent, accessible communication by both staff and Councillors.

- **Communication barriers:** Challenges noted for people with vocal disabilities, including situations where carers or support persons may unintentionally alter or reinterpret messages.
- **Inclusive employment and neurodiversity:** Importance of supporting neurodiversity, developing inclusive employment pathways, and increasing disability awareness training across Council.
- **Partnership opportunities:** Job Shop and Yumaro highlighted as strong partners. Opportunity to showcase Round Square's inclusive employment model, where a significant proportion of employees identify as having a disability.
- **Learning from others:** Potential to draw on Illawarra's age-friendly initiatives. Possibility of inviting representatives to share insights. Councillor Schutz noted that an individual who performs business accessibility reviews and mapping.
- **Inclusive business recognition:** Support for reinstating inclusive business recognition stickers and associated grants, given the success of the previous program. Kathy advised that the previous program was successful and noted value in possibly reinstating grant opportunities and recognition stickers for inclusive businesses. This would be dependent on funding.
- **Social isolation and wellbeing:** Concerns raised about increasing social isolation, particularly for people living alone. Need to strengthen social connection and support services for people with disability.

Pillar 2 – Systems and Process

Key group discussion points and potential inclusions:

- **Communication and whole-of-journey accessibility:** Communication gaps are evident across Council processes, highlighting the need for whole-of-journey accessibility checks.

Kathy emphasised the importance of considering access and inclusion and whole-of-life impacts when planning and delivering projects, rather than assessing accessibility compliance only at the construction stage.

- **Building applications and accessibility features:** Yvonne raised questions about improving accessibility features through building applications process(e.g. wider doors).

Councillor Schutz explained that accessible housing standards are determined by State Government frameworks. She noted that NDIS-related developments have specific requirements, and housing for older people is guided by the Housing SEPP, which includes bonus provisions. She also outlined the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines, explaining the difference between bronze and silver standards, the incorporation of silver-level features into the NCC 2022 as the minimum requirement, and that some councils must now mandate silver-level features in developments. Councillor Schutz further noted that the NSW Planning Portal is not user-friendly and creates accessibility barriers for applicants.

Pillar 3 – Inclusive Employment

Key group discussion points and potential inclusions:

- **Transport and Access to Employment:** Public transport remains a major issue, which was raised multiple times during the consultation.

Kathy highlighted positive outcomes from the YDrive program, including licence attainment for people with disability.
- **Inclusive Recruitment Approaches:** Discussions included alternative interview formats (e.g. video introductions) and targeted traineeships, to support inclusive pathways.
- **Workplace adjustments and Sensory Needs:** Danai raised sensory challenges (e.g. lighting) and noted the importance of personalised workspaces. Proposal to create short training materials demonstrating inclusive work environments.
- **Business support:** Discussion on opportunities for small grants to help local business become more inclusive, partnerships with the Job Shop, and business education sessions on disability-related challenges.
- **Accessible facilities:** Kathy, referenced the National Public Toilet Map and Changing Places facilities at Corrigan's Reserve and the Bay Pavilions.

Pillar 4 – Liveable Communities

Key group discussion points and potential inclusions:

- **Beach access:** Survey feedback highlighted the need to consolidate beach mats, extend accessible paths closer to the water, and consider ramps as a more reliable option at selected beaches. One or two well-managed mat locations may be preferable. Storm impacts and challenging Surf Life Saving Club processes (managing mats and wheelchair bookings) were also noted.
- **Pathways:** Access improvement request identified for Mogo, Tilba and Bodalla. Bush trails remain difficult due to uneven terrain. Need for more inclusive, image-based signage and long-term planning through masterplans, including opportunities such as raised pathways and broader strategic planning (e.g. Batemans Bay Masterplan).
- **Emergency planning & housing:** Emphasis on whole-of-life considerations, improved emergency preparedness for people with complex disability, and accessible housing priorities.
- **Electric vehicle (EV) charging:** Accessibility issues were raised regarding EV chargers. Councillor Schutz noted accessibility requirements can be mandated on Council-owned land but not on private land.

Additional Notes

At 11:48am, Brad contacted Kathy as he was experiencing technical difficulties on MS Teams. He noted that nominations for the Business Awards are now open, including categories recognising accessible businesses, which is seen as a positive way to encourage greater accessibility across the local business community. He discussed the value of having a person with disability lead workshops or conduct surveys to ensure questions are asked with lived-experience insight. Brad also suggested supportive awareness activities for Councillors; such as navigating spaces in a wheelchair or using a blindfold, to help increase understanding of access challenges faced by members of the community.

Kathy advised that the DIAP needs to be adopted by Council by 30 June 2026.

ACTION:

- 3.2a** Melinda to provide redacted submissions to the committee.
- 3.2b** Councillor Schutz to provide website link for the individual who conducts business accessibility reviews.

4. GENERAL BUSINESS

4.1 Update on the Bay Pavilions Steps/Seating Around the Pool Area

Kathy presented two images showing the before and after condition of the concrete seating and step area in the Bay Pavilions pool precinct. The area was previously bare concrete and has since been coated with blue non-slip paint to improve safety and accessibility for vision-impaired users.

ACTION:

- 4.1a** Melinda to send before-and-after images of the non-slip works completed in the pool precinct.

NEXT MEETING: Friday, 12 June 2026, 10:00am – 12:00pm in Glass Meeting Room.

MEETING CLOSED: 11:55am