

Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC)

Friday 12 December 2025 at 10:00am

Council – Glass Room

MEETING NOTES

MEETING COMMENCED: 10:04 am

IN ATTENDANCE:

Clr Amber Schutz (Chair), Kathy Arthur, Director CARS, Catherine Sykes, Joel McCubben, Noal Annabel, Brad Rossiter OAM (via MS Teams), Indi Carmichael (Guest), Jodie Hodgetts (Guest), Melinda Rowell, Executive Assistant to Director of CARS (Minutes).

APOLOGIES:

Frank Ross.

1/2. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair, Councillor Amber Schutz, kindly welcomed the committee and provided Welcome to Country.

3. Introductions and apologies

The Chair, Councillor Amber Schutz, started the meeting with introductions and noted apologies.

AGENDA ITEMS

4.1. Development of a Creative Arts Strategy

Indi Carmichael delivered a PowerPoint presentation outlining the need to review and update the Strategy, which was originally adopted in 2019. She explained that significant infrastructure changes have occurred since its adoption, making it important to ensure the document reflects current needs and priorities. Indi acknowledged the delay in presenting this update and expressed appreciation for the committee's understanding. She welcomed feedback to help shape the revised Strategy.

Attendance Update: Jodie arrived 10:08am.

Community Needs and Aspirations:

This item aims to identify what is working well and where improvements can be made.

The committee discussed exploring community needs and aspirations, focusing on inclusion in public art and opportunities for emerging artists.

Melinda Rowell will circulate Indi's paperwork to assist with planning.

Artists and Creative Practitioners:

This item plays a vital role in shaping cultural identity and community engagement.

The committee noted that public art is performing strongly at present, with the recent statue installations generating significant interest.

A key example, that Noal Annabel highlighted is the recently installed Gorilla statue at Batehaven, which was cited as a successful piece of public art. Committee members noted that these sculptures are intended to attract tourism and spark community conversations. The Gorilla sculpture stands out due to several reasons; its size and design creating a strong visual impact, the location is highly accessible, and positioned in an unexpected location, adding intrigue and encourages exploration.

Brad Rossiter highlighted the importance of considering other senses, such as hearing, for individuals with visual impairments. Indi emphasized the need to create experiences that combine all senses, ensuring art is accessible and engaging for everyone. Brad added that people should never feel excluded from participating, art should be available in all forms and should be embraced in multisensory approaches.

Audiences and Participation:

The group explored previous experiences with events such as the Red Hot Summer Tour and Bay Pavilions Theatre events, highlighting challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Key issues included transport and parking limitations, unreliable lifts at some business locations, and poorly sized toilets at the Red Hot Summer Tour, as they were too small for support workers to assist. Seating arrangements were also problematic, with no designated accessible areas at the Red Hot Summer Tour. This often left people feeling isolated from their friends and unable to participate comfortably.

Committee discussions suggested creating an end-to-end accessible experience, starting from the booking process through to attendance. This would involve engaging disability groups early in planning, ensuring venues meet accessibility criteria, and incorporating features such as audio-described performances. Marketing could include an accessibility guide to inform attendees about available facilities and services. Future planning should prioritise inclusive seating, reliable amenities, and programming that appeals to a diverse audience.

Councillor Amber Schutz raised the question of whether covered areas were available, noting that seating at these events is often taken quickly. She emphasised that venues need to provide designated accessible spots to ensure equitable participation.

Councillor Amber Schutz also suggested that the events team could review accessibility considerations for upcoming events to ensure consistency and inclusivity. She noted that providing a small accessibility guide as part of marketing materials would help attendees understand available facilities and services. This proactive approach could improve participation and create a more welcoming experience for all community members.

Economic and Social Impact:

This item focused on the economic and social benefits of arts and cultural initiatives, highlighting successful practices and future opportunities for community engagement. The committee emphasized the importance of accessibility, inclusivity, and innovation in delivering these programs.

Jodie Hodgetts highlighted the value of visual arts as an interactive experience, where people can observe artists at work and engage with the creative process. Indi Carmichael noted that libraries provide online access to exhibitions and suggested live streaming as a way to broaden participation. Kathy Arthur shared that the library is setting up screens for virtual tours of exhibitions in Canberra, which will be particularly beneficial for older community members who cannot travel. Brad Rossiter

expressed enthusiasm for virtual experiences, describing them as transformative for individuals with vision impairments. Brad also added a personal perspective, sharing his love for cricket and how, despite vision issues, he experiences the game through sound, the crowd, the microphone, and the overall sensation of being there. He explained how artificial intelligence (AI) enables creative expression through sound-based sensations, such as the atmosphere of a cricket match. QR codes were also suggested to enhance engagement and interactivity.

The discussion then turned to ideas for community art programs. Councillor Amber Schutz proposed supporting artists with vision impairments and facilitating art activities for families. Catherine suggested using school art rooms for clay-making workshops and similar programs for older people. Other ideas included creating a wet room at the BAS for art workshops, hosting open days where materials like paint are freely available, and developing collaborative art projects that go beyond painting. Indi proposed mentoring programs to support emerging artists, while Catherine referenced Sydney's week-long art festival as an inspiring model. Noel Annabel mentioned the River of Art as an example of successful local engagement.

Transport and cost were identified as significant barriers to participation. The group agreed that making art more accessible and affordable is essential for inclusivity. Leveraging technology, fostering collaboration, and creating opportunities for people of all ages and abilities were seen as key strategies for future success.

Opportunities and Innovation:

The discussion on this item explored a range of creative ideas to enhance engagement and inclusivity. Indi Carmichael introduced the concept of incorporating AI into future projects, highlighting its potential to transform experiences and create new forms of interaction.

Councillor Amber Shchutz suggested soundscapes as an artform and proposed virtual tours of iconic spaces such as opera houses or exhibition venues. Catherine Sykes added that artists could send their works to different locations, while Brad Rossiter emphasized the importance of inclusivity and the need for a curator to manage these experiences. Kathy Arthur shared a creative idea of making curation fun, recalling an example where a curator used a trolley to create an engaging and memorable experience.

Indi stressed the importance of encouraging public art beyond traditional sculptures or statues, suggesting more interactive and sensory approaches. Jodie Hodgetts supported this by sharing her experience at Carol College Highschool with virtual reality (VR), describing how immersive technology provided a sense of touch and presence without physical interaction. This sparked further discussion on using VR to create accessible experiences for those who cannot attend in person.

The conversation also touched on neurodiversity and digital creativity. Councillor Amber Schutz highlighted the success Muddy Puddles used for platforms like Minecraft in supporting learning outcomes and fostering creativity through virtual environments.

Indi noted that there is significant opportunity for music integration within these innovative approaches, reinforcing the idea of multi-sensory engagement.

More thoughts and further feedback opportunities:

Indi Carmichael thanked the committee for their valuable input and encouraged members to reach out to her anytime with questions or to discuss matters further.

Indi advised that she will be on leave until mid-January 2026. If the committee has any questions before the end of January, please direct them to Melinda Rowell.

To provide feedback or to direct others to do so, please visit Council's website and complete the survey located at the bottom of the page.

ACTION:

- 4a. Melinda Rowell to send Creative Arts Strategy questions to the committee members.

4.2 Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) Consultation Update

Jodie Hodgetts provided an updated to the committee on the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) consultation. Jodie reported that approximately 30–40 survey responses have been received so far, noting that engagement has been limited due to survey fatigue, competing surveys, and the time of year. To address this, the consultation period will be extended until mid-January 2026, and additional strategies will be implemented to encourage participation.

Jodie outlined recent and upcoming engagement activities, including face-to-face consultations at community events such as the CWA meeting in Batemans Bay, the Round Squares event, and a friendship group meeting. Other initiatives include pop-up desks, phone consultations, and a walking tour to experience accessibility challenges firsthand. Hard copies of the survey are available in libraries, and online consultation continues. Jodie also suggested creative ideas such as a Mayoral competition and photography initiatives to showcase diversity, as well as collaboration with local networks, schools, sporting clubs, and Surf Life Saving groups.

The committee discussed further opportunities to promote inclusivity, including embedding disability considerations across all policy documents, not just the DIAP. Suggestions included radio engagement, online training for sporting communities, and outreach to clubs to support children with disabilities. Jodie highlighted accessibility issues for vision-impaired residents and raised concerns about the discontinuation of Click & Collect services, which previously supported people reliant on carers.

Jodie also added that The Community Health Expo was successfully completed. Congratulations to Brad for a beautiful event, which gave Jodie an opportunity to speak to attendees.

Jodie expressed interest in speaking with the Chair and encouraged committee members to share information through their networks, including the Eurobodalla Family Network, State Member, local land councils, and schools.

4.3 Confirmation of Minutes from 10 October 2025

The Chair, Councillor Amber Schutz, confirmed that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2025 had been read and were accurate. There were no objections from committee members. Noel Annabel seconded that he was satisfied with the minutes.

GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Accessibility & Liveable Sticker/Award Initiative

Catherine Sykes proposed a sticker initiative to recognise businesses and premises that demonstrate accessibility. Kathy Arthur noted that Council has previously run an Accessibility Award for several years and suggested that the checklists used in that program could form the basis of this new initiative.

Councillor Amber Schutz discussed introducing a tiered recognition system, such as gold, silver, and bronze stickers, based on how accessible a venue or property is. The idea includes a Council branded sticker or stamp that could be displayed by participating businesses. This approach could encourage companies to improve accessibility and promote inclusion.

Brad Rossiter supported the concept but raised concerns that it may exclude tenants who do not own their premises, as they may have limited ability to make structural changes. He recommended incorporating an education component for businesses and landlords to ensure broader participation and understanding.

Councillor Amber Schutz also suggested that accessibility of menus and pricing should be considered as part of the criteria. They emphasised that the requirements for achieving each tier must be specific and measurable. Some elements may intersect with development application (DA) requirements, so clarity will be needed to avoid confusion or unintended regulatory implications.

Suggestions will be considered as part of the draft DIAP development, factoring in resourcing and costs.

5.2 Additional Membership Update

Following Loretta Parsley's resignation from the committee in August, an Expression of Interest for new members was advertised. Several applications have been received to fill the vacancy. The application period closed after the December meeting deadline, and new members will be confirmed at the first Council meeting of 2026, ahead of the first DIAC meeting in 2026.

This provides an excellent opportunity for community members to join the committee and contribute to its important work.

5.3 Eurobodalla Health and community Expo Update

Brad Rossiter provided an update on the Eurobodalla Health and Community Expo, which was held for the ninth time on 20 November. The event attracted 65 registered exhibitors, including rescue services, Council teams, and other community groups. Highlights included three live performances, an impromptu drum display, and a range of family activities such as gymnastics and kids' events. Approximately 580–600 people attended throughout the day, with many staying to enjoy the performances and network. Despite Dr Holland being unable to return in time for his session, the day was considered a great success, thanks to major sponsors and strong community engagement. Brad encouraged everyone to come along next year. Kathy added that the Council team had a fantastic day and gained a lot from the event, thanking everyone involved.

5.4 Message from the Chair

Councillor Amber Schutz thanked the committee for their contributions throughout the year and wished everyone a joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year. The committee was invited to raise any additional matters they wish to discuss. If there is anything we need to consider as a group, please feel free to email those suggestions through.

NEXT MEETING: Glass Room on TBA from 10am to 11.30am

MEETING CLOSED: 11:10 AM