

Shire of Plantagenet

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2024 - 2029

Acknowledgement

The Shire of Plantagenet acknowledges the history and the traditional custodians of our area, the Menang Noongar people, who have lived on these southern coasts and lands of Western Australia for over 50,000 years. We wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the culture and custodians of this land and their Elders past, present and emerging. We thank the Menang Noongar people for allowing us to be here on country.

Thank you

Thank you to all the organisations and individuals who contributed to the development of this Plan, including:

- Shire of Plantagenet residents that participated in a community wide survey to help inform this strategy;
- Local residents who participated in community consultation sessions and shared their personal stories and experiences; and
- Stakeholders who provided insight into the Plantagenet community.

If you have any feedback on this plan, or ideas for improved access and inclusion, please contact the Community Services team.

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Background

About the Shire of Plantagenet

The Shire of Plantagenet is located in the Great Southern region of Western Australia, 350km south of Perth. The Shire is bounded by the City of Albany and the Shires of Cranbrook, Gnowangerup, Denmark and Manjimup. The total Shire area is 4,875km².

The Shire population is approximately 5,669¹ people that support five townsites: Mount Barker; Rocky Gully; Kendenup; Porongurup; and Narrikup.

The Shire is recognised for its liveability, connected community and healthy lifestyle options and is becoming an increasingly popular destination for people seeking a 'tree change'.

Plantagenet has a growing cultural and entertainment scene with numerous galleries, resident artists, a nationally recognised mural trail and theatrical groups.

The Shire also accommodates an array of industrial, agricultural and tourism riches including broad-acre cropping, cattle, sheep and wool production, forestry, viticulture and horticulture. The district incorporates a large portion of the Stirling Range National Park and Walpole Wilderness Area, along with the Porongurup National Park including the popular Granite Skywalk feature.

What is access and inclusion?

Access refers to the ability of all people, including people with a disability and their carers, to enjoy our public places, facilities and natural environments. This includes buildings, recreational and leisure facilities, public amenities, footpaths and nature trails.

Access also includes the appropriate receipt of Shire information, the opportunity to participate in community engagement and accessible employment opportunities with the Shire.

Inclusion means actively including and encouraging everyone with all abilities to participate in all aspects of community life.

Our people with disability

- 13.1% of Plantagenet's population provided unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, health condition or due to old age, compared to 10.7% State average and 11.9% National average²;

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated Resident Population, June 2023

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census Data, August 2021

- 354 people (6.6% of the population) reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability³;
- 35.7% of the population reported one or more health conditions, compared to an average of 29.9% reports of one more health conditions across regional Western Australia. Of this group, 9.9% of people reported a mental health condition³; and
- In 2023 / 2024, 99 residents were recipients of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)⁴.

What is the purpose of this Plan?

The purpose of the Shire of Plantagenet's DAIP is to identify strategies and implement actions across the organisation that will improve access and inclusion throughout the district. The DAIP is for all people who live in, work in or visit the Shire.

Access and Inclusion Advisory Group

The Shire has a Disability Advisory Group (DAG) that comprises Shire staff, community members with a disability and disability service providers, forming a core group of 12 people. The DAG meets regularly to identify ways to improve access and inclusion elements into community events, Shire development projects and works on Shire owned buildings and facilities.

Members on the DAG are volunteers and meetings are open to members of the public.

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan - Framework

The DAIP is a legislative requirement set out in the Disability Services Act 1993 (amended 2004 – WA), while also being informed by the:

- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth); and
- Disability (Access to Premises Buildings) Standards 2010 (under the Disability Discrimination Act).

The Disability Services Act requires the Shire to:

- Lodge a plan that covers a period of maximum five years with the Department of Communities;
- Include actions that address seven outcome areas listed under the Act;

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census Data, August 2021

⁴ NDIS Data Research, June 2024

- Consult with internal and external stakeholders when reviewing the objectives and actions within the plan; and
- Report annually to the Department of Communities on the progress of the plan.

The DAIP is also supported by the State Government's 'State Disability Strategy 2020 - 2030', a vision to protect, uphold and advance the rights of people with a disability in Western Australia.

Annual DAIP reporting includes alignment of the Shire's DAIP strategies with the State Disability Strategy outcomes.

Progress since 2017

Since the adoption of the 2107 Disability Access and inclusion Plan, the Shire has implemented a number of initiatives and made significant progress towards improving access and inclusion for all community members. Some highlights include:

- Launching ‘Celebrating Ability’, a disability awareness campaign that highlighted the skills and abilities of several community members in a series of video clips. The aim of the campaign was to encourage local businesses and services to engage with, employ and train people with a disability;
- Upgrading Shire facilities to improve accessibility, including:
 - New universally accessible toilets, improved parking bays and level access points installed at the Mount Barker Swimming Pool, Frost Park, Kendenup Agricultural Hall, Plantagenet District Hall and the Mount Barker Regional Saleyards;
 - Access ramps installed at the Mount Barker Swimming Pool, Kendenup Community Hall, Old Police Station Museum, Plantagenet District Hall and Kendenup Agricultural Hall;
 - Footpath, pathway and crossing improvements throughout the Mount Barker and Kendenup townsites;
 - New disabled parking bay adjacent to the Mount Barker Bendigo Bank; and
 - Completion of an accessible boardwalk and tourist walk trail at Mount Barker Hill.
- Establishing a home delivery service, promoting free online library services and creating programs to build digital literacy including ongoing support available from the Mount Barker Public Library;
- Introduction of sensory-friendly spaces in Shire parks and recreation areas;
- Disabled sporting programs delivered in partnership with the WA Disabled Sports Association (WADSA) and provision of a WADSA Sports Pack at the Mount Barker Recreation Centre;
- Disability awareness training for Shire staff; and
- Improvements to the Shire website to include accessibility control modules.

How did we develop this plan?

The Shire's Executive and Community Services staff oversee the preparation, review and evaluation of the DAIP, including distributing the Plan throughout the organisation and integrating it into plans and budgets of relevant business groups.

Community Consultation Process

The community was invited to provide feedback from 13 May to 27 June 2024 on how well the Shire is addressing access and inclusion and what improvements still need to be made. The Shire specifically sought feedback from people with lived experience in relation to disability and inclusion including people who volunteer and work in disability services. Feedback was sought through an online and hard-copy survey and a series of in-person focus groups.

The opportunity to engage with a review of the DAIP was promoted through the Shire's online channels, an advertisement placed in the Plantagenet News and posters displayed throughout the Shire's townsites. Invitations were also distributed to all carers and NDIS recipients throughout the Shire.

A total of 250 participants were involved in the consultation, with 92% of respondents identifying themselves as a person with a disability, a carer, family member or friend of a person with a disability, or an employee or volunteer with an organisation working with those with a disability.

Findings of the consultation

Overall, participants provided positive feedback about the Shire's approach to access and inclusion. Community consultation rated access to services, quality of service, and access to events and programs organised by the Shire positively. *'Staff behind the Shire desk have been wonderful with me at the Shire of Plantagenet'* (2024 survey participant).

Areas that received a lower rating and require further improvement include:

- Access into Shire buildings and advocacy to encourage to private businesses to consider and improve accessibility;
- Staff training to improve disability awareness and understanding;
- Disabled parking options and footpaths; and
- Provision of information in accessible formats and available through various channels that cater for all ages and abilities.

Quotes from survey respondents:

'I had to quit a spinning group at Porongurup because I could not fit into the toilet and there is no disabled toilet there. I can't go to anything at Narrikup Hall because of the same issue.'

'Dedicated sealed disabled bays with dedicated sealed pathways would be a great start. It's very difficult to push a wheelchair on gravel.'

'Need to find a way to get information out to the community other than computer based or Plantagenet News.'

Strategies to improve access and inclusion

Strategies have been developed in response to community feedback, to deliver tangible and meaningful action across seven outcome areas:

1. Services and Events;
2. Buildings and Facilities;
3. Accessible Information;
4. Service;
5. Complaints;
6. Consultation; and
7. Employment.

These strategies will guide the actions the Shire of Plantagenet will undertake throughout the duration of the DAIP. Reference is made to the State Disability Strategy outcomes to ensure a cohesive State and Local Government approach, and streamlined annual reporting.

Outcome 1 – Services and Events

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Shire of Plantagenet.

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Accessible and Inclusive events	1. Ensure disability access needs are considered in Shire event planning by adopting and implementing an Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide	Community Services Environmental Health Services	8
	2. Advice on disability access requirements is provided on Event Applications and Checklists to organisers of non-Shire events, including a link to an Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide	Community Services Environmental Health Services	8
	3. Facilitate targeted programs which encourage participation of people with disability, including Seniors Week, International Day of People with Disability or Youth Week programs	Community Services	8
	4. Where possible, provide carers with complimentary entry to events	Corporate Services Community Services	8
	5. Regularly review School Holiday program activities to ensure accessibility and inclusiveness, including promotions and marketing	Community Services	8
Accessible Shire services: All Shire facilities	6. Staff to be trained in access and inclusion principles	Corporate Services	7

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Accessible Shire services: Library	7. Promote the Homebound service	Library Coordinator Communications Officer	8
	8. Develop and promote the Large Print, Audio and Audio-Visual collections	Library Coordinator Communications Officer	8
	9. Develop and promote online Library services	Library Coordinator Communications Officer	8
Accessible Shire services: Pool and Recreation Centre	10. Promote and trial a 'quiet hour' at the Recreation Centre gymnasium for a six month period	Recreation Coordinator Communications Officer	8
	11. Incorporate the WADSA Sports Pack into programs where possible	Recreation Coordinator	8

Outcome 2 – Buildings and Facilities

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities in the Shire of Plantagenet

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Buildings and facilities are universally accessible	12. Accessibility features are considered in the Shire's new and redevelopment works	Development Services Infrastructure and Assets	5
	13. Encourage existing owners and developers of non-Shire buildings to consider access and inclusion through application processes and approvals	Development Services	5
	14. Incorporate access requirements into the Shire's building inspection forms	Infrastructure and Assets Safety Officer	5
	15. Capital projects of significance for people with disability are reviewed by the Disability Advisory Group (and disability stakeholder groups where relevant)	Community Services	5
	16. Review public toilet facilities when constructing new or redevelopment works, with consideration given to an increase in toilet bowl height to assist people who cannot bend or stand/return from standard bowl designs	Development Services Infrastructure and Assets	5
	17. Review the retro-fitting of automatic doors on existing, strategic Shire facilities	Infrastructure and Assets	5

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Roadways and footpaths are universally accessible	18. Ensure footpath capital improvements and maintenance are universally accessible	Infrastructure and Assets	5
	19. Review the crossing on Lowood Road (opposite the Chemist) to clarify pedestrian and traffic requirements	Infrastructure and Assets	5
	20. Increase cleaning of footpaths along Lowood Road when the deciduous trees are shedding leaves and/or seeds	Infrastructure and Assets	5
Parking bays are well planned and accessible	21. Planning for new disability parking bays to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gradient of the land; b. Vehicle approach to the disability parking bay; c. Consideration for parallel bays to accommodate rear loading vehicles; d. Consideration for drive-through bays; and e. Avoiding the use of bollards if possible. 	Development Services Infrastructure and Assets	5, 6
	22. Inspect disability parking bays at least quarterly to ensure parking compliance	Regulatory Services	5, 6
Parks and passive recreation areas are universally accessible	23. Consider the inclusion of a Changing Places facility in the Wilson Park redevelopment	Development Services Community Services	5, 6
	24. Where possible, include power connections in seating areas suitable for charging electric wheelchairs, gophers etc.	Development Services Infrastructure and Assets	5
	25. Plan for accessible seating in parks and along walk trails	Development Services Infrastructure and Assets Community Services	5

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Capital works support access	26. Ensure that the Shire's capital projects plan for access at all stages of development, up to handover, including projects that are being managed by contractors	Infrastructure and Assets	5

Outcome 3 – Accessible Information

People with disability receive information from the Shire in a format that enables them to access the information as readily as other people.

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Shire information is accessible to people of all abilities	27. Review the Shire’s Corporate Style Guide to ensure it is consistent with accessibility standards for information	Corporate Services	15
	28. Include a notation on Corporate documents, including Minutes and Agendas, to advise that information is available in large text or easy to read versions	Corporate Services	15
	29. Conduct an annual Shire website review with the Disability Advisory Group	Community Services	15
	30. Review alternate methods of distributing information targeted to specific Shire demographics	Corporate and Community Services	15

Outcome 4 – Service

People with disability receive the same level and quality of service from staff as other people receive.

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Shire customers are valued, welcomed and supported	31. Providing access and inclusion training for staff that engage with the public	Corporate Services	7
	32. Elected Members are offered access and inclusion training	Corporate Services	7
	33. Investigate ways to improve comfort for elderly customers such as seating at counters	Community Services and Corporate Services	7

Outcome 5 – Complaints

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
Ensure that grievance processes are accessible for people with disability	34. Review current complaints forms and satisfaction survey forms to ensure they are accessible to people of all abilities	Corporate Services	13
	35. Investigate alternate methods for customers to lodge a complaint and receive feedback with the Disability Advisory Group, including but not limited to placing feedback forms in locations such as Empowering Plantagenet Seniors, Plantagenet Village Homes or Wanslea Family Services	Community Services Disability Advisory Group	13
	36. Deliver a complaints training session for staff that engage with the public, to ensure staff are aware of how to constructively receive and respond to complaints using access and inclusion principles	Corporate and Community Services	13

Outcome 6 – Consultation

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation conducted by the Shire of Plantagenet

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
People with disability have the same opportunity to be represented and share their opinions and feedback with the Shire	37. Promote consultation opportunities broadly and accept information in a variety of methods	Community Services	13
	38. Ensure public engagements are held at venues with suitable disability access	Community Services	13
	39. Investigate the formation of a Reference Group to review specific Shire facilities and services in terms of access and inclusion. Promote topics for discussion to encourage participation	Community Services Communications Officer	13
	40. Promote the role of the Disability Advisory Group and Reference Group (if relevant) and encourage involvement	Community Services Communications Officer	13

Outcome 7 – Employment

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Plantagenet

Strategy	Action	Responsibility	Alignment with State Disability Strategy Outcome
To provide opportunities for people with disability to obtain employment with the Shire	41. Incorporate a statement on job advertisements encouraging people of all backgrounds and abilities to apply	Corporate Services	2
	42. Ensure that advertising for positions and prospective information is available in large print formats and easy to read versions	Corporate Services	2
	43. Review selection criteria and job descriptions to ensure they do not disadvantage people with a disability and adjust information where required	Corporate Services	2

Monitoring and Review

This Plan and our progress is monitored by the Shire's Disability Advisory Group on a six monthly basis. Progress on the DAIP is made available to the community through the Shire's Annual Report and during other communication throughout the year. The Shire also reports on our DAIP progress to the Department of Communities on an annual basis.

If you would like a copy of the Shire's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan please contact the Community Services Team by calling 08 9892 1111 or emailing info@sop.wa.gov.au.

Alternative Formats:

The information in this document is available in alternative formats, including large print or easy to read formats, or electronically by email. Please contact the Shire's Community Services Team by telephone on 08 9892 1111 or emailing info@sop.wa.gov.au.