ALGA
Australian Local Government Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disability inclusion for local government

A practical guide for councils

This is an overview of the Disability Inclusion Guide for Local Government. The Guide helps councils improve disability inclusion across their services, infrastructure and community.

Access the full Guide at the QR code or by visiting lgdisabilityinclusion.au

Acknowledgement of Country

ALGA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. As a federated body, ALGA's member associations are based and work across the country, and ALGA acknowledges Australia's First Nations Peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters on which we all work and live.

Acknowledgement of Disability

We acknowledge the lived and living experience of people with disability, neurodivergent people and unpaid carers as we strive for a more accessible and inclusive society.

What's in the Guide for councils

In the Guide, councils will find:

1. **An overview of disability in Australia** including the main policies and legislation.
2. **Principles** to guide better understanding and inclusive practice across council work.
3. **Practical guidance for inclusion on key areas** of council work:
    - Leadership and decision-making
    - Inclusive employment and procurement
    - Engagement and communications
    - Accessible infrastructure and services
    - Community safety and emergency management.
4. **Steps** to develop, update and review your disability action plan.
5. **Case studies, tools and resources** to help turn intent into action and learn from other councils' experiences.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) produced the Guide with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. It supports more accessible communities under **Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031**.

About the Guide

The Guide is a digital, accessible online resource. This means it stays up to date as key policies, laws and practice evolve. It replaces the 2016 Disability Inclusion Planning – A Guide for Local Government.

The Guide helps all local council staff in a range of different roles. Disability inclusion is a shared responsibility across council functions. It requires collective accountability beyond dedicated access and inclusion roles.

The Guide provides ideas that are scalable to budget, local needs and other community considerations. This makes sure that meaningful progress can be made regardless of a council's size or budget.

Suggested starting points

- **New to disability inclusion planning?** Start with *'Principles to guide disability inclusion'.*
- **Starting or updating a plan?** Go to 'D*eveloping your disability action plan'.* Find your state or territory requirements and use the step-by-step process and checklist.
- **Planning an event or engagement activity?** Review the guidance and ideas for '*Inclusive Community Engagement'.*
- **Working on a major project?** Use the '*Accessible infrastructure and services'* section to embed inclusion and accessibility in your planning.

Disability in Australia

1 in 10 people with disability reported experiencing discrimination

52.3% of people aged 65 years and over had disability

Just over half (56.1%) of people with disability were employed, compared with 82.3% of people without disability

Almost 90% of disabilities are 'invisible' disabilities such as chronic pain disorders, diabetes or depression

Almost one-third (33.1%) of Australians with disability aged 15 and over avoided situations because of their disability. One of the most common situations avoided were going to shops, banks etc.

In the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), a person is considered to have disability if they have any limitations, restrictions or impairment which restricts everyday activities and has lasted, or is likely to last, for six months or more.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2022.

Key takeaways from the Guide

Principles to guide council inclusion work

The Guide sets out six principles to embed disability inclusion in everyday council work.

Respect and uphold disability rights: apply a human rights and social model approach.

Centre people with disability in decision making: recognise lived experience as expertise, and design with people with disability — not for them.

Apply an intersectional approach: understand that disability intersects with culture, age, gender, sexuality, location and other factors.

Use trauma-informed practice in planning: prioritise safety, trust, choice, collaboration, empowerment and respect for diversity.

Use respectful and inclusive language: follow the lead of people with disability and use clear, contemporary wording.

Use Universal Design: design services, places and communications to be usable by as many people as possible from the start.

Why disability inclusion is important in local government

Councils help uphold the rights of people with disability to access all parts of community.

Council decisions need to align with disability rights and discrimination laws and policies.

- The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 protects the rights of people with disability. It supports Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).
- All Australian, state and territory governments have signed Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031.
- Each state and territory has its own requirements, disability inclusion act and laws.

Council decisions, planning and programs are key to building accessible, inclusive communities. Councils also shape inclusion outcomes through local employment and the goods and services they buy.

Disability access and inclusion deliver immediate and long-term community benefits. Designing for accessibility benefits everyone. It:

- reduces isolation
- improves health outcomes
- supports participation in work and community life
- attracts more visitors and economic activity.

People with disability make up about 20% of the Australian population. This makes them a big part of your community.

Making sure council workplaces and services are inclusive broadens the talent pool and strengthens local capacity. People with disability and their families are not only community members. They are employers and business owners, professionals and leaders.

Disability action planning in local government

The Guide helps councils to develop a disability action plan.

Requirements for disability action plans vary across states and territories. Plans may be called Disability Action Plans (DAPs), Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs), Disability Inclusion Action Plans (DIAPs) or similar.

The Guide includes a step-by-step process to plan, develop, implement, monitor and review a disability action plan.

The Guide fits alongside your council's broader planning and accounts for your state or territory's requirements. It provides resources and ideas you can incorporate at each step.

- **Contact your state or territory government for the most up to date information about their requirements.**

Supporting collaboration and leadership across councils

The Guide helps councils learn from each other and build inclusive practices that benefit all communities. It encourages councils to:

- explore case studies and examples in the Case Studies and Resources section
- visit the Guide regularly and share feedback if something is missing or needs updating.

How the Guide was developed

The Guide was developed by ALGA in partnership with The Social Deck in 2026. It draws on contributions from councils across Australia. It also includes input from disability peak bodies, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Centre of Excellence for Inclusive Employment, subject matter experts, state and territory local government associations and government departments, and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

ALGA monitors changes in disability policy and legislation to keep the Guide current. Changes underway include the review of the Disability Discrimination Act and ongoing reviews of the Disability Standards. These changes cover transport, premises and education. State and territory requirements also continue to change. The digital format means the Guide is updated as key changes occur, and new examples and resources can be added over time.

With thanks

Councils across Australia are already demonstrating strong leadership in best practice. Community of Practice members from 35 councils helped ALGA shape the Guide. They will continue to contribute new information, examples and case studies.

We also extend our thanks to state and territory associations and the many other stakeholders who helped in the development of the Guide.

Get in touch

Contact the Disability Projects team at ALGA on:
disabilityinclusion@alga.asn.au or **(02) 6122 9400**
during business hours.

Access the full Guide at the QR code or by visiting
lgdisabilityinclusion.au