

1. Introduction

Everybody at some stage in his or her life will either personally experience a disability, or will care for or interact with a person who has a disability. Council as the custodian of the community assets, has a responsibility to ensure that services and facilities provided are accessible to all citizens. This is particularly crucial in the promotion of social sustainability or community well being.

It is in this context that Council has developed and will implement the Disability Action Plan.

The focus of the Plan is to shift from a medical model approach where the focus is on the person with a disability, to social attitudes and values and to focus on the built and social environment. Using this approach, Council will eliminate barriers that prevent people from participating fully in the community.

Using a social model of disability, rather than focussing on a person's impairment, a stronger emphasis is placed on the social causes that exclude people with disabilities from being participating members of society. This view acknowledges the need for structural changes in facilities and organisations that service the whole community. It also highlights the need for attitudinal change towards people with disabilities. (*Macarthur Disability Services, 2003*).

Disability should therefore be defined as “people who are unable to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others by imposed physical or social barriers” (*Hauritz and others, “Justice for People with Disabilities”, 1998*).

Camden Council values diversity and the unique contribution people of all abilities make to our local government area. In adopting the social model, Camden Council strives towards a united community with equal access for all.

What is the Disability Action Plan?

A Disability Action Plan (DAP) is a strategy for changing those Council practices that may result in discrimination against people with disabilities.

A DAP will help Council to identify those practices and offer a blueprint for change.

The aim of the Action Plan is to assist Council to identify and remove barriers in policies, programs and services for people with a disability and so meet its obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. The Plan is also about taking a pro-active approach to important issues affecting a growing population of people who have or will have a disability, be they the person directly, their family or those associated with them.

Equity of access is central to the planning and provision of all facilities and services. Quality of life for all individuals is also dependent on ensuring Camden's places are accessible. Many barriers exist which may prevent people from fully enjoying public places, facilities and amenities.

The primary concern of people with a disability and those who care for them, is access to and within the community. This includes the ability to participate in the social, cultural and political life of the community. In order to achieve meaningful and safe participation, people with a disability must be able to move freely and express themselves independently without barriers. This involves issues of managing the urban growth to plan for appropriate infrastructure, promoting accessibility to ensure equitable access to facilities and services; the environment and development to ensure that the environment is able to be enjoyed by everybody and access to participation in community life is enhanced; participation in decision making and employment opportunities.

The Disability Action Plan is a strategic document that assists Council in achieving:

A Camden that provides convenient and equitable access to services, facilities and places for all members of the community through a range of technological and physical opportunities.

Accessibility outcome, Camden 2025

At the Commonwealth Level

- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1992 is Commonwealth legislation that makes it unlawful to treat people with a disability less favourably than people without a disability.
- The legislation aims to ensure full and equal access to all public buildings, places of employment or education, provision of goods and services, accommodation, recreation and sporting areas and facilities.

Developing and implementing a Disability Action Plan is a voluntary, proactive approach to DDA compliance.

At the State Level

- In 1998 the NSW government endorsed a Disability Policy Framework with the aim of a whole of government approach to providing accessible generalist services to people with a disability and to planning specialist disability and generalist services.
- The Policy Framework requires all NSW government agencies to develop Disability Action Plans every three years. Local councils may choose to voluntarily participate in the development of action plans within this framework.

At the Council Level

Council's Community Plan (1999) produced a Target plan for People with a Disability. One of the recommendations was the development of a Disability Action Plan to assist in meeting Council's accessibility objectives, access and equity responsibilities and the issues raised under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

How will the Disability Action Plan be used?

The Disability Action Plan (DAP) will be a working document that will be utilised by all sections of Council. The strategies and actions within the Plan have a responsible officer or section to perform identified tasks over a specific timeframe.

Strategies will also be considered for inclusion in Council's Social Plan and Management Plan. Actions that have a budgetary component are and will be considered in Council's budget process over the coming 5 years.

The following diagrams set out how the DAP links within Council's strategic planning framework.

The Plan will also be evaluated on a 6 to 12 monthly basis, working in collaboration with Council and the Community Advisory Group to monitor strategies and actions.