

1. POLICY INTENT

For all residents and visitors to the Region to have equitable access to Council facilities, services, programs and activities.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all of the services, facilities, programs and activities of the Tablelands Regional Council.

3. INTRODUCTION

There are persons with disabilities in all parts of the Tablelands and at all levels of society. The rate of people with disabilities is higher within the Tablelands region compared to the rate for Queensland and Australia. As the population ages, this percentage is projected to grow. Both the causes and the consequences of disability vary and those variations are the result of different socio-economic circumstances and of the different provisions Council's adopted for the well-being of their citizens.

Through education and rehabilitation, persons with disabilities have become more active and a driving force in the further development of a disability policy. Concepts of integration and normalisation have been introduced, which reflects a growing awareness of the capabilities of persons with disabilities. This new concept indicates the close connection between the limitations experienced by individuals with disabilities, the design and structure of their environments and the attitude of the general population.

Tablelands Regional Council:

- Recognises that people and visitors with disabilities are valued members of the community who make a variety of contributions to the social, economic, wellbeing and cultural life.
- Believes that a community which recognises its diversity and supports the participation of all of its members enjoys a richer community life.
- Recognises the need to reduce physical, social, organisational and structural barriers that may prevent people with disabilities, their families and carers from accessing and participating in Tablelands Regional Council services, facilities, programs and activities.
- Is committed to consulting with agencies, disability service providers, people with disabilities, their families and associates to reduce the barriers to access are addressed appropriately.

4. BACKGROUND/SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Councils recognises the requirements under the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1992), the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act (1991), and the Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act (1992) to ensure that their facilities, services, programs and activities are accessible and provide equitable services to all members of the community.

Current figures indicate:

- That 4.2 million Australians (18.5%) have a disability and 60% of those with a disability needed assistance with at least one everyday activity (Australia Bureau of Statistics 2012).
- 2,152 people or 4.9% of Tablelands residents had 'Core Activity Need for Assistance'. People with a profound or severe disability are defined as needing help or assistance in

one or more of the three core activity areas of self-care, mobility and communication because of a disability, long term health condition (lasting six months or more), or old age (Medicare Local Tablelands Shire Sub Region Health Profile).

- 813.000 people or 19% per cent of people with a disability identified mental or behavioral disorders as their main condition (Australia Bureau of Statistics 2012).
- 1 in 5 people will experience a mental health problem (for some this may be a brief episode, for others it may be chronic with a long term detrimental effect on their lifestyle). (Queensland Health).

Access issues also affect relatives, friends and supporters of people with disabilities as well as many other people, e.g. parents with prams and pushchairs. It may, therefore, be concluded that people with access limitations are a significant percentage of the population that Tablelands Regional Council services.

Tablelands Regional Council's understanding of "disability" is defined by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (s4)* as:

- a. Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental function.
- b. Total or partial loss of a part of the body.
- c. The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness.
- d. The presence in the body of organisms capable of disease or illness.
- e. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body.
- f. A disorder or malfunction, which results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction.
- g. A disorder, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgements or which results in disturbed behaviour.
- h. The disability presently exists.
- i. The disability previously existed but no longer exists.
- j. The disability may exist in the future.
- k. The disability is imputed to a person.

Tablelands Regional Council understands the term 'accessible' to describe services, functions, facilities programs and activities that are open and available to people with disabilities, are appropriately designed and located and which afford them the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by all other people in the community.

OUTCOMES

Council recognises that to effectively provide equitable access to all people with a disability it will need to review operational practices.

Tablelands Regional Council will work towards progressing the following outcomes:

- Outcome 1. Existing functions, facilities and services will be reviewed over time to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Council will endeavour to be responsive and adaptable in responding to the barriers experienced by people with various disabilities.
 - In doing so, Council will recognise the need for some members of the community to have assistance dogs with them, and will accept that such dogs may include but not limited to Seeing Eye dogs, Hearing dogs, and other animals recognised as assistance animals which are fully trained to specified standards.
 - Council will review all policies and practices that govern the operation of Council's functions, facilities and services.

Outcome 2. Access to buildings and facilities.

- Council will ensure that all future contracts for services to the community include provision for access for people with disabilities.
- Council will ensure that all planning processes will consider the needs of people with disabilities.
- Council will ensure any of its **new** buildings, roads, footpaths, bridges and drains are designed and constructed to meet required standards (Australian Standard "AS 1428.1-2009) to provide equal access for people with a disability.
- Council will encourage input from the community via the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee to identify access issues relating to Council services, facilities, functions, programs and activities
- The issues identified by the Disability Access & Inclusion Advisory Committee will be assessed along with other capital works projects and a recommendation will be made to prioritise and incorporate them into future capital works program as appropriate.

Outcome 3. Information fact sheets about functions, facilities, services, programs and activities are provided in formats, which will meet the communication requirements of people with disabilities.

- In response to demand from the community, Council will endeavour to provide information factsheets regarding Council's functions, facilities and services are provided in clear and concise language, and will consider making this information available in alternative formats.

Outcome 4. Staff to be made aware through team meetings and tool box talks of the needs of people with disabilities and improve their skills in delivering advice and services.

- Disability awareness will be made available to all Council staff, with customer service staff given the highest priority.
- Where required, Council will seek expert advice from the Disability Access & Inclusion Advisory Committee and persons experienced in the disability field on how to meet the various needs of people with disabilities.

Outcome 5. Opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in public consultations, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes will be provided.

- Council will ensure that information is available in clear and concise language.
- Council will endeavour to have all open Council meetings accessible.

Outcome 6. The Manager, Community Services or their delegate will oversee the implementation of this Disability Access & Inclusion Policy together with the establishment of a Disability Access & Inclusion Advisory Committee.

- The Manager, Community Services or their delegate will oversee the establishment and facilitation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- The Manager, Community Services or their delegate in partnership with the Disability Access & Inclusion Advisory Committee will oversee the implementation of the Disability Access & Inclusion Action Plan.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Tablelands Regional Council recognises that people with a disability have a right to quality facilities and services that enable them to live and fully participate in their communities. The development of a Disability Access & Inclusion Policy is the overarching strategy for Tablelands Regional Council

to plan and work towards the elimination, as far as it is practically and financially possible, of disability discrimination from the provision of its services and facilities.

The Tablelands Regional Council has a legislative obligation to ensure the absence of discrimination in all of its processes and procedures, and endeavours to:

- Provide effective information and support of equal employment opportunities as a basis for future planning and development.
- Develop an integrated policy that supports a better quality of life for community through Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies and procedures into Council's processes for the continuous improvement in the management of a diverse workforce.
- Provide a working environment, which actively encourages new and existing staff to contribute to Council's organisational goals whilst promoting employee potential.

Council, in its role as an employer, will ensure people with a disability have equitable access to advertised positions, interviews, equipment, office accommodation, staff training and promotion.

Australian Standard Building Code "AS 1428.1" legislated in 2009.

Equal Opportunity in Public Employment Act 1992.

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

The Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.

The philosophy of this Disability Access & Inclusion Policy is consistent with the current Tablelands Regional Council Corporate Plan 2014-2018:

1.2 - Quality of Living

"A community that supports equity and inclusiveness enabling all people to participate in regional events, cultural activities and celebrations"

1.2.5 - Social Equity

"Support a better quality of life for the community by ensuring equitable access to Council provided services and facilities, particularly for the aged, frail, disabled and disadvantaged members of the community."

6. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the General Manager Community and Regional Planning to monitor the adequacy of this policy and recommend appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every three years or as required by Council.

This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.