

Disability Inclusion and Liveable Communities Forum Report

Aerial UTS Function Centre, Jones Street Ultimo
9 November 2015 - 9:30am – 4:00pm

Attendees included over 100 representatives from over 70 Local Councils, representatives from the NSW Business Chamber, Clubs NSW, Local Government NSW, Sport NSW and Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) districts.

Facilitators: Paul Nunnari, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Margaret Kay, Local Government NSW; and Professor Simon Darcy, UTS Business School.

Uncle Chikka Madden provided a welcome to country followed by Councillor Julie Hegarty, LG NSW Board Member welcoming the attendees.

Minister for Disability Services the Hon John Ajaka MLC officially opened the forum. Minister Ajaka thanked councils for their crucial work in building liveable communities at the local level. When speaking about the [Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#), he pointed out the need for councils to consider those who experience multiple disadvantage when planning delivery of supports and services. Minister Ajaka encouraged all to work in their regions to build cross sector and cross government partnerships. He then introduced the new Disability Inclusion Promotion Officers who are now active in key organisations across NSW and looking forward to working with councils to build inclusive local communities across the state.

Presentations

Disability inclusion developments: what has happened since the last forum?

Richard Hawkins - Disability Access and Inclusion, Department of Family and Community Services

- Richard informed delegates about changes in the disability inclusion space since the 2014 forum, such as the launch of the [Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#), and the release of the [NSW Disability inclusion Plan](#) and [NSW Disability Inclusion Action Planning guidelines](#).
- He emphasised the important role that decision makers in local government can play and the impact that they can have on the lives of people with disability. In developing their Disability Inclusion Action Plans councils should seek broad and frequent input from people with disability and ensure that they have the support of council's leadership team. Don't leave this work till 2017 – it needs to start today.

NDIS: progress and future impact for local government

Melanie Hawyes - Department of Premier and Cabinet

- Melanie provided an update on the NDIS rollout across NSW and discussed the impact for local councils and people with disability. She discussed the numbers of clients and the tight timelines for the introduction of the NDIS, the work government is doing to support individuals into the NDIS as well as building the capacity of the NGO sector and the broad community to support the roll-out. While most councils will not have a direct role in this process, many will be providing community resources and information that will support people with disability to access the community.

Disability Planning and Integrated Community Planning

Karen Legge - Office of Local Government, Department of Planning and Environment

- Karen discussed how local councils can integrate disability inclusion planning within their integrated planning and reporting process. Highlighted was the need for early consultation and the integration of the planning into the budget and infrastructure plans for councils. The guidelines developed to support councils highlight how this integration can take place.

Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines for local government: introducing the new guidelines prepared for Councils

Vicky Critchley - Elton Consulting

- Vicky spoke about the new NSW Local Government Disability Inclusion Action Planning guidelines, which were released at the forum. The guidelines for local governments are available on the [Local Government NSW website](#). The importance of consulting people with disability was highlighted as crucial to the planning process as well as obtaining executive level support for the development of the plan. Many councils shared their own innovations and strategies to develop more inclusive communities, which led to many regional focused conversations taking place.

Insights

Emily Dash - Writer/Actor/Advocate

Emily Dash was supported through the NSW Arts and Disability Partnership and this was crucial as a springboard to her career and a great example of how good government policy and programs can make a real difference to the lives of people with disability. Emily Dash graduated from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology Honours Class I) (Gender Studies) in 2013.

- Emily championed the case for inclusion for all and noted that local government is essential for delivering opportunities to involve all people in society. She shared her personal philosophy on life describing it as “often difficult, sometimes messy and always enjoyable”. Emily spoke about the importance of setting goals in life and of pushing yourself out of your comfort zone. She finished her talk with an inspiring poem she wrote called “I am not a work of art”. This poem explores how people with disability are often misjudged by others due to ignorance and

misconceptions. All of us, no matter what our ability, have the same worth and deserve to be treated with the same respect.

Learning from Experience - Liveable Communities 2014: Councils' experiences as part of the 2014 grants program and current developments in the approach to Liveable Communities

Julie Priest, Nick Guggisberg and Paul Brown spoke about how they have used the funding from the 2014 Liveable Communities Grants Program in their local areas. They highlighted how different communities face different issues, and that concepts that think outside the box can have a lasting impact on the community as a whole.

Celebrate Creative Ageing

Julie Priest - Port Macquarie-Hastings Council

- Julie spoke about the Celebrate Creative Ageing Festival that was held in Port Macquarie between 15 and 29 March 2015 as part of Seniors Week. Partly funded by the 2014 Liveable Communities Grants Program, the festival featured a number of projects and events to engage older people in arts and creative activities for greater health and well being. Some of the activities were designed to bring together people from different generations.

Dementia friendly Kiama

Nick Guggisberg - Kiama Municipal Council

- Nick described the different types of dementia and their impact on people living with dementia and their families. He spoke about a Pilot Study being conducted by Kiama Council, in partnership with the University of Wollongong and Alzheimer's Australia, to make Kiama one of the first dementia-friendly communities in Australia.

Jigsaw Business Solutions

Paul Brown - Jigsaw

- Paul showed councils how Jigsaw's outsourcing model can create employment, training and skills development opportunities for people with disability as well as commercial and inclusion benefits for Jigsaw's partner organisations. He used Jigsaw's existing partnership with Warringah Council to demonstrate the financial and social benefits of digitising council's property and development application files dating back to the 1970s.

Liveable Communities 2015 - Overview of funding and new opportunities

Natalie Williams - Department of Family and Community Services

- Natalie outlined the vision for the NSW Ageing Strategy and discussed opportunities to apply for the 2015 Liveable Communities Grants Program.

Feedback

Feedback surveys were completed by 76 attendees. The feedback was generally positive, with most finding the information and knowledge gained as moderately to completely meeting their expectations and most were somewhat to completely satisfied with the forum.

Based on the responses from almost two thirds of council attendees, the top three take home messages were:

1. Potential to integrate their disability inclusion action planning within their integrated planning and reporting process.
2. Need to consult with all members of the community (from people with disability to key stakeholders and businesses)
3. Development of a disability inclusion action plan is a whole of council responsibility.

When asked if it would be beneficial if we held another forum, most said they would find it beneficial. More than a third of them would like to see examples from other councils such as case studies or lessons learned in a future forum.

Related information

- [NSW Local Government Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines](#) (PDF version)
- [NSW Local Government Disability Inclusion Action Planning Guidelines](#) (Word version)
- [Disability Inclusion and Liveable Communities Forum Presentations](#)
- [Local Government NSW website](#)