



Shire of Northam
Heritage, Commerce and Lifestyle

Access and Inclusion Plan

2024 - 2028



Acknowledgement of Country

The Shire of Northam acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this country and wishes to pay respect to Ballardong and Whadjuk Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal people seeing this message.



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Source Material

Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2022 Census of Population and Housing
 Department of Social Service. NDIS Demand Map
 Australian Human Rights Commission 2014

Introduction

The Shire of Northam (the Shire) recognises that the needs of specific population groups are diverse. As part of the process in creating this Plan, demographic information and data from within the Shire and externally was reviewed. It is important to note that the groups to which the Plan applies are not mutually exclusive and may be intersecting, resulting in compounding barriers to access and inclusion. For example, diversity within the target groups could include LGBTIQ+ people with a disability, or people with a mental health condition and disability. The data found shows that as a Shire, we must proactively commit to supporting diverse identities and providing opportunities for access and inclusion within the community.

The Shire undertakes a review of the Access and Inclusion Plan together with its Workforce Plan annually as part of the corporate planning process. This includes identification of our major challenges in relation to People, Planet, Place, Prosperity and Performance.

A challenge to the Shire is the capacity to meet increasing community expectations and at the same time, respond to other challenges such as legislative changes, tightened external funding opportunities, rising costs (e.g. materials, contractor services and utilities) and community emergencies. Other factors influencing our capacity include our workforce demographic profile (including an ageing workforce) and intensified competition in the labour market.

Executive Summary

The Access and Inclusion Informing Plan 2024/28 (the Plan) provides a framework for Shire of Northam to create an accessible and inclusive community for all people regardless of their ability, age, culture, sex, gender or sexual orientation.

The associated Action Plan sets out what actions will be implemented over the next four years to deliver on our commitments. The Shire's *Plan for the Future* (Council Plan 2022 – 2032) outlines the community's long-term vision for the Shire to be a vibrant growing community that is safe, caring and inclusive.

Legislative Framework

The development and implementation of this Plan demonstrates the Shire's commitment to plan for people with diverse needs.

This Plan is informed by the following legislation:

- *The Disability Services Act 1993* (amended 2004) (WA);
- *The Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA);
- *The Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) (Cth); and
- The Disability (Access to Premises Buildings) Standards 2010 (under the DDA).

As a public authority in Western Australia, the Shire is required to plan for people with disability under the *Disability Services Act 1993* (the Act).

Under the Act the Shire is required to:

- Lodge a plan that covers a period of maximum five years with the Department of Communities and maintain a current plan;
- Include actions that address the outcome areas listed below;
- Consult with internal and external stakeholders during the review of the objectives and actions within the plan; and
- Report annually to Department of Communities on progress of the plan.

The *Disability Services Act 1993 and the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)*, legislates Western Australian local governments to develop and implement an employment diversity and equal opportunity plan and a disability, access, and inclusion plan. The Shire of Northam have combined the two into one 'Access and Inclusion Plan'. The plan assists the Shire of Northam to plan and implement improvements to access and inclusion across the following outcome areas:

1. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and attend any events organised by the Shire of Northam.
2. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.
3. Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. Both internal and external diverse people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.
5. Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.
6. Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by local governance), conducted by the Shire of Northam.
7. People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.
8. The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and /or discrimination.
9. Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.
10. Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.

Commitment

The Shire of Northam is committed to ensuring that the community is accessible for and inclusive of people with disability, their families, and carers.

The Shire of Northam interprets an accessible and inclusive community as one in which all Council functions, facilities, and services (both in-house and contracted) are open, available, and accessible to people with disability, providing them with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities as other people in the community.

The Shire of Northam is also committed to building an inclusive and diverse workforce that is reflective of the community we serve. We do this by incorporating Equal Employment Opportunity, diversity and inclusion principles through employment policies and practices, and delivering on the initiatives and targets in both our Access and Inclusion Plan and Reconciliation Action Plan.

The strategies included in this plan focus on building a community and organisational culture that enhances our ability to attract, develop and retain an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity in our local community.

The aim to ensure that the community and work environment is free from racial and sexual harassment and that our practices are not biased or discriminate unlawfully against community, employees, or potential employees.

Statistics

People with a disability or requiring assistance, their families and carers:

2,269 people (**31.3%** of the population) in Shire of Northam reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.

11.3% carers across Shire of Northam were providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long-term illness or old age in 2021.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines the CaLD population mainly by country of birth, language spoken at home, English proficiency, parents' country of birth and religious affiliation.

In 2021, **23.9%** of people in Shire of Northam were born overseas. **192** people who spoke a language other than English at home reported difficulty speaking English.

Note: Language barriers can lead to an under-representation of CaLD people where English is used in surveys or is required for self-reported information.

People from the LGBTIQ+ community:

It is now widely recognised that there are disparities in health and wellbeing for LGBTIQ+ communities compared to the general population. Negative experiences have contributed to

barriers in accessing community services due to actual or anticipated experiences of stigma and discrimination. The Shire commits to providing inclusive opportunities for the LGBTIQ+ community.

The Australian Human Rights Commission conclude that up to **11 in 100** Australians may have a diverse sexual orientation, sex, or gender identity (2014).

In the ABS General Social Survey 2020, **4%** of Australians identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than people who described themselves as heterosexual (**30%** compared to **13%**).

People with mental health conditions:

Within Shire of Northam, **9.7%** have a long-term mental health condition, including depression and anxiety.

The NDIS recognises psychosocial disability, which may arise from a mental health condition, and its impacts upon social interaction, self-management, self-care, communication, learning and mobility. These factors can all impose upon a person's capacity to receive equal opportunities for access and inclusion. Therefore, the Shire is committing to plan for all people with mental health conditions within the Plan.

Workforce Profile

149 employees (96 full-time equivalent)

Diversity



2.7%

People with disability



8.1%

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



0.7%

Culturally and linguistically diverse people

Age profile



- 57.7% female
- 42.3% male
- 0.0% indeterminate/intersex/unspecified



- 77.2% permanent
- 6.0% fixed term
- 16.8% casual
- 0.0% other



- 1 Management Tier 1
- 4 Management Tier 2
- 9 Management Tier 3

Action Plans

Outcome 1: Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Promote and celebrate significant days that acknowledge inclusion, e.g. International Day of People with Disability, Harmony Day (celebrate cultural diversity).	Activation & Communications	Ongoing
Communicate the definition of access and inclusion via the Community Grant Guidelines, employee inductions and provide examples to deliver accessible and inclusive events and programs.	Community Development	Ongoing
Deliver accessible, safe and inclusive services, events, meetings and engagement activities through the provision of the following, where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet areas for people with sensory requirements • Safe and inclusive spaces • Adequate accessible parking • Adequate accessible toilet facilities • Clear event/activity and directional signage • Monitor social media comments. 	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Review the Shire's Event Access Checklist and update to include actions to assist with planning events that are accessible and inclusive.	Activation & Communications	Ongoing
Provide clarity on promotional material around why and/or how a service and/or event is accessible and inclusive, e.g. access ramp available, quiet space available.	Organisational wide	Ongoing
Display significant symbols on promotional material to inform if a service and/or event is accessible and inclusive, e.g. assistance dog symbol, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.	Organisational wide	Ongoing

Outcome 2: Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Investigate accessible design options when planning new Shire facilities, to create roadway and pathway connectivity to Shire buildings and facilities.	Engineering Services	Ongoing
Display significant symbols on Shire buildings and facilities that promote an inclusive and safe space.	Engineering Services	Ongoing
Investigate the use of visual cues that provide information about available amenities within Shire buildings and	Engineering Services	Ongoing

facilities, when planning new Shire facilities and/or when upgrading existing Shire buildings and facilities		
Investigate the feasibility and best location within the Shire for a liberty swing (swing suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair).	Engineering Services	Ass per Capital Works Program

Outcome 3: Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

Actions	Who	When
Review and update the Shire's writing style guide to include information about the use of correct terminology and inclusive language in terms of disability, gender and sexual diversity and cultural and linguistic diversity.	Activation & Communications	Ongoing

Outcome 4: Both internal and external people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.

Actions	Who	When
Provide training for customer service staff in inclusion, diversity, disability awareness and mental health first aid training using specialist providers and people with lived experience.	HR	Ongoing

Outcome 5: Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Review the Shire's Complaints Management Procedure for recording complaints to include a section on access and inclusion related complaints.	Governance	Ongoing
Support those making a complaint as required, e.g. provide information in an alternative format on request, provide an interpreter on request.	Organisational wide	Ongoing
Collate compliments, complaints and general feedback and analyse trends and patterns to inform future actions in the Shire's Access and Inclusion Plan.	Governance	Ongoing

Outcome 6: Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by governance) conducted by the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Maintain a relevant Customer Service Charter and Information Statement to promote increased participation in request, consultation and decision-making processes.	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Provide consultation material in alternative formats and/or other support on request to enable participation in community consultation.	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Promote the Shire’s Access and Inclusion Plan to consultants contracted to deliver community engagement for the Shire.	Organisation wide	Ongoing

Outcome 7: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Develop strategies to achieve the Shire’s commitment to increase the representation of people with disability employed by the Shire and support inclusive work environments.	HR	Ongoing
Develop strategies to increase gender diversity to increase the representation of women in leadership positions and support inclusive work environments.	HR	Ongoing
Provide training in inclusion, diversity and disability awareness and associated statutory obligations for all personnel involved in the recruitment, selection, retention, and ongoing management of Shire employees.	HR	Ongoing
Incorporate gender equality, diversity and inclusion in plans, frameworks, strategies, policies, procedures, and guidelines as these documents are reviewed and updated.	Organisational wide	Ongoing

EEO and Diversity Plan Initiatives

Outcome 8 The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and/or discrimination.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
EEO and Diversity values are incorporated into the corporate values, business planning processes and workforce plans.	√		
A positive, inclusive and harassment free workplace culture is communicated and promoted within the organisation.	√		
Performance management criteria for managers includes an ability to recruit a diverse workforce and promote an inclusive work culture.	√		
There is an effective grievance resolution process where staff can raise concerns and issues.	√		
Workplace culture is monitored and assessed to determine that it is inclusive and free from harassment and unlawful discrimination	√		

Outcome 9 Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
Organisational structure and job design provide career paths for all diversity groups.		√	
Recruitment and selection practices provide appropriate flexibility for all diversity groups.	√		
Mechanisms are in place to identify the needs of diversity groups to operate effectively in the workplace (e.g. staff surveys, review of exit interview feedback).		√	
Retention practices are in place to identify, develop and retain staff from all diversity groups (e.g. induction processes, training and development opportunities, working hours and conditions, flexible work options and performance management).	√		

The organisation monitors and assesses employment practices to ensure they contribute positively to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce	√		
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Outcome 10 Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
Demographic data is collected to monitor and report on progress of all diversity groups.		√	
Diversity objectives are identified to reflect the Shire's business needs.		√	
Strategies have been developed to improve employment outcomes for the following diversity groups:			
Women in Management	√		
Indigenous Australians	√		
People from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	√		
Youth and mature workers	√		
People with Disabilities			√

Key successes 2023 – 2024

- Outcome 1:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by the Shire of Northam.
- Upgrade and increase in ACROD parking bays.
 - When planning community events, the Shire of Northam consider elements of access in the planning stages of each event.
- Outcome 2:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.
- Upgrading of buildings through planned maintenance.
 - All development applications to adhere to the new legislation.
 - Wheelchair access points to get onto the footpath have been installed in the CBD.
 - Undesirable growth in footpath crevices have been eradicated via a regular maintenance program.
 - Public toilets have been upgraded to be accessible.
 - Paths and ramps continue to be upgraded.
- Outcome 3:** Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
- The Shire’s website includes a wide range of documents available to the public and it has a functionality which allows the user to alter the text size.
 - Improving employee awareness of accessible information needs and how to provide information in other formats.
 - Ensure that the Council’s website meets good practice.
 - Marketing is consistent to the accessibility standards for information.
- Outcome 4:** Both internal and external people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.
- Ensure that all elected members and employees are aware of access needs and can provide appropriate services.
 - Improve community awareness about disability and access issues.
- Outcome 5:** Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.
- Ensure that grievance mechanisms are accessible for people with disability and are acted upon.
- Outcome 6:** Both internal and external diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by governance) conducted by the Shire of Northam.
- Ensure that diverse people are actively consulted about the Access and Inclusion Plan and any other significant planning processes.

- Ensure that people with disability are aware of and can access other established consultative processes.

Outcome 7: Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.

- Recruitment practices ensure equal opportunity of employment.
- Ensure equal employment principles are upheld and reflected in all workforce development activities.
- Encourage employees to improve positive mental health and wellbeing.

Outcome 8 The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and/or discrimination.

- EEO Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy

Outcome 9 Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.

- Recruitment practices ensure equal opportunity of employment.
- Ensure equal employment principles are upheld and reflected in all workforce development activities.
- EEO Policy

Outcome 10 Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.

- All training programs are developed and delivered equally across the organisation
- All employment programs and practices recognise and include EEO groups.