



Access and Inclusion Plan

2024 - 2025

Introduction

In May 2022 a local disAbility advocate approached Council with a written proposal, asking the Borough to increase its engagement with this community to ensure greater access, inclusion and participation of disabled people.

In July 2022 a local group of disability advocates and residents spoke with Council and identified that the contribution of lived experience is essential to ensuring not just adequate access, but true inclusion. It sought to ensure that disability rights were embedded into the core business of Council.

At the August 2022 Council meeting the Borough of Queenscliffe made a decision to establish a Lived Experience DisAbility Group - LEDG).

At that meeting Council said that it wanted the LEDG to inform Council decision making, review key documents and represent the community.

In May 2023 a group of 22 locals; people living with a disAbility, advocates and carers, came together to start planning how LEDG would work and what the LEDG will do.

A key aspiration was the update of the Borough of Queenscliffe Disability Action Plan.

Background

Development of the Draft Access and Inclusion Plan

This plan brings together various ideas that have emerged from multiple conversations with LEDG over the past 18 months.

The individual insights of Lived Experience DisAbility Group Members and prioritised into shorter and longer term goals across a number of group workshops.

This plan focuses on the 'shorter term goals' with most longer term goals flagged for inclusion in the four year plan that will be developed as a key action of this plan.

The process of developing this plan has also drawn on a number of sources and guiding documents including but not limited to:

- Australia's Disability Strategy (2021-2031)
- Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan (2022-2026)
- Borough of Queenscliffe Disability Action Plan (2004)
- Lived Experience Disability Group Priority Actions
- Changing Places Grant Funding Guidelines
- Draft Victorian Disability Inclusion Bill

It was noted that many items from the Borough's 2004 Disability Action Plan remain relevant and so a key element of developing the next four year plan will be to review the items in the 2004 action plan.

The one year plan is deliberately brief, with priority given to actions that are achievable, whilst ensuring the plan is broad enough in scope to embrace opportunities that may arise.

Plan

Summary of Plan Themes and Actions

The Plan has been structured to reflect both the high-level strategic themes of National and Victorian documents and the language of residents. In many cases themes are linked or items cross over more than one major Theme.

Reading the Plan

The plan is set out in two tables.

Table 1 sets out the key themes and the activity aligned to the goals of those themes.

Table 2 sets out:

- The ideas that emerged under each theme through the workshop discussions
- The actions that could further the ideas and objectives within the timeframe of this plan

The majority of actions have been developed based on the ongoing participation and input of the LEDG who will lead the projects with the support of Council officers who will be responsible for administration and supporting the LEDG activity.

Table 1.

Participation	
Activity	Goals
Decision making / Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Council will support and facilitate the LEDG and will engage in a partnership approach to achieving increased access and inclusion for our community.
Social Inclusion and Social Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEDG will provide quarterly updates to Council.
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEDG and Council will develop a four year action plan 2025 to 2029 incorporating a review of the items in the Borough's 2004 plan.
<i>Future opportunities</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEDG and Council to seek opportunities to incorporate lived experience of disability into projects, consultations, and programs.• LEDG to share knowledge of socialisation opportunities and strategies to overcome barriers to participation.• LEDG to consider opportunities for capacity building – examples in Appendix 1.	

Access	
Activity	Goals
Changing Place Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEDG will build knowledge through a 'Changing Places Tour' of existing facilities. • LEDG and Council will Identify a preferred location for a Changing Places facility.
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will engage LEDG in a review of the access guidelines in Council's Events Policy with option to explore 'minimum standards'.
Information and Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEDG and Council will collaborate to further increase accessibility of Council's communications and consultations. • LEDG and Council will collaborate to make the Lived Experience Disability Group project webpage more 'useful'.
<p>Future Opportunities</p> <p>Access activity in the areas of, Beach and Parks, Shops and Facilities and Transport could be informed by the following goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>LEDG to consider opportunities to engage with local event providers to maximise accessibility. Some local providers have already expressed interest in meeting with the LEDG.</i> • <i>LEDG to consider opportunities to engage with local traders group to discuss access issues – Local Traders have already indicated interest in meeting with us.</i> • <i>LEDG to consider conducting a 'Lived Experience Review' of the road crossings already in place in main shopping strips in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale.</i> • <i>LEDG may learn to implement the Universal Mobility Index, or if this is too onerous – at least undertake some 'Lived Experience Reviews' of local sites.</i> 	
Built and Natural Environment	
Activity	Goals
Access and Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional Owners have been consulted on the level of involvement they wish to have in development of this plan. They have advised they would like to see the near final draft and be given an opportunity to comment. This will be done during the public consultation phase.
<p>Future Opportunities</p> <p>Built and natural environment activity in Housing and access in heritage settings, could be informed by the following goals:</p>	

- *The LEDG could look for opportunities to showcase examples of good practice.*

Employment

Activity

Goals

Support access to employment

- Council will review its existing employment policies to improve Access and Inclusion.

Table 2.

Actions 2024–2025

1. Participation	
Ideas from Workshops and other sources	Potential Actions
<p>1.1 Decision making / Advocacy</p> <p>International, Australian and Victorian access and inclusion strategies place the highest emphasis on people with lived experience being fully incorporated into any decisions and actions which affect them.</p> <p>Locally, the Lived Experience Disability Group arose from community advocacy to Council to commit to increasing access and inclusion.</p> <p>Council has committed to a partnership approach with the LEDG to improve access and inclusion in the community.</p> <p>An Access and inclusion ‘Month’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobility Scooter hire ▪ Open days to accessible houses ▪ Walk in my shoes day 	<p>Council will support and facilitate the LEDG and will engage in a partnership approach to achieving increased access and inclusion for our community.</p> <p>LEDG and Council will develop a four year action plan 2025 to 2029. This is to undertake a review of the items in the Borough’s 2004 Plan and identify actions for possible inclusion in the 2025-2029 Plan.</p> <p>LEDG and Council to seek opportunities to incorporate lived experience of disability into all projects, consultations, programs and Council policies.</p>
<p>1.2. Social Connection & Social Inclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'day in the life' experience ▪ Story-telling ▪ Opportunities to hear from and connect with people with disabilities ▪ Reduce stigma and feeling of isolation 	<p>Start planning for an access and inclusion month.</p> <p>LEDG to share knowledge of socialisation opportunities and strategies to overcome barriers to participation.</p>
<p>1.3 Capacity building</p> <p>Take opportunities to provide input to other groups or businesses plans.</p> <p>Existing opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Blues Train ▪ Local traders ▪ Point Lonsdale Lighthouse project 	<p>See comments on capacity building above.</p>

2. ACCESS	
Ideas from Workshops and other sources	Potential Actions
<p>2.1 Access: Changing Places Facility</p> <p>Changing Places are accessible toilets with additional features to enable people with high physical support needs to access the community. Ideally a Changing Places Facility includes an adult change table, ceiling hoist, step free shower and an accessible toilet.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has operated a number of rounds of funding to offset some of the cost of providing such a facility. Based on previous rounds, the Borough could be a high priority for such funding. It is not known if or when there will be a further funding round.</p> <p>A key criteria for the funding has been that the applicant demonstrates community involvement in choosing the proposed location for the Changing Places Facility.</p>	<p>LEDG to build knowledge through a 'Changing Places Tour'</p> <p>LEDG to work with Council to Identify a preferred location for a Changing Places facility in the Borough.</p> <p>Support Council (or other eligible agency) to be ready to submit a grant application for a future Changing Places Funding Round.</p> <p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal Mobility Index audits or 'Lived Experience Reviews' ▪ Access to beaches and parks ▪ Signage and wayfinding ▪ Advocacy Participation and Capacity Building
<p>2.2 Access: Beaches & Parks</p> <p>Ramp access to beach/lighthouse/piers</p> <p>Sand mats and hire service for beach wheel chair How do we marry improved access to beach and park with environmental protection = wholistic and well planned Use the 'universal mobility index' (UMI)</p> <p>Existing opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boat Ramp – Hansa Crane to get on and off boats. ▪ Explore location for Changing Places Facility 	<p>LEDG to consider learning how to do the Universal Mobility Index assessments so we can do our own assessments</p> <p>If too onerous – at least undertake some 'Lived Experience Reviews' of local sites.</p> <p>Review / assess locations in Borough and identify opportunities to enhance access and prioritise for future action</p> <p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support implementation of the Active Transport Strategy
<p>2.3 Access: Shops & Facilities</p>	<p>LEDG to consider opportunities to engage with local traders group to</p>

<p>Access to shops = narrow doorways, steps and busy/occupied shop fronts</p> <p>See if any traders are willing to offer mobility scooter charging for free.</p> <p>Explore solutions outside the box – like encouraging businesses to consider ‘café window’ access where the existing access is poor and difficult to fix.</p> <p>Where there is opportunity, participate in ‘Master Planning’ activities which set the future goals for specific locations.</p> <p>Note: Whilst Council has a lot of statutory power regarding building and structures – It can only enforce the requirements of the relevant legislation at the time a permit is required. For instance, Council has almost no power to make a property owner change an existing building unless they are doing major works.</p> <p>Council’s role includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Footpath condition ▪ Gutter condition ▪ Planning / Building Permits 	<p>discuss access issues – Local Traders have already indicated interest in meeting with the LEDG.</p> <p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal Mobility Index audits or ‘Lived Experience Reviews’ ▪ Advocacy / Education
<p>2.4 Access: Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low floor community bus ▪ Accessible transport ▪ Safe crossing points on the Point Lonsdale Road and Flinders St to access beaches e.g. At Pt Lonsdale Rd/Williams Rd ▪ Electric community bus ▪ More footpaths on the more popular local street e.g. Williams Rd, Kirk Rd ▪ Footpath on Fellows Rd to enable access all the bus stops ▪ Bicycle and e-scooter speed limits on Point Lonsdale Esplanade e.g. 20 km/hr ▪ Make the car parking spaces in Point Lonsdale wider so can easily open car door! 	<p>Group to consider conducting a ‘Lived Experience Review’ of the road Crossings already in place in main shopping strips in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale.</p> <p>In partnership with Active Transport Strategy, explore with officers and community how to maximise transport and access outcomes.</p>
<p>2.5 Access to events</p> <p>Review current BoQ policies and procedures around event management Expect event organisers to have approved access plans Expect event organisers to have targets around employing people with disabilities and volunteers.</p>	<p>Council to engage LEDG in a review of the access guidelines in Council’s Events Policy with option to explore ‘minimum standards’</p>

	<p>LEDG to consider opportunities to engage with local event providers to maximise accessibility. Some local providers have already expressed interest in meeting with the LEDG.</p> <p>Links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Changing Places Facility ▪ Universal Mobility Index audits or ‘Lived Experience Reviews’
<p>2.6 Access: Information/signage</p> <p>Equitable access to information in accessible formats is essential for people living with a Disability to be informed and to participate.</p> <p>The 2025 to 2029 plan could consider including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exploration of how accessibility to Council’s communications and engagements can be maximised. ▪ Exploration of Map apps of accessible toilets and venues/entrances ▪ Improve signage (public and business) ▪ Beach access signage ▪ Connected accessibility (being able to get everywhere you need to go in an accessible way) ▪ Identify where Council’s and other authorities have references to wayfinding in their strategic documents and requirements 	<p>Work collaboratively with Council to further increase accessibility of Council’s communications and consultations.</p> <p>LEDG to consider opportunities to increase awareness of signage standards and requirements for various settings.</p> <p>LEDG to incorporate signage and wayfinding considerations into any access audits or reviews they undertake</p>

3. Built and Natural Environment	
Ideas from Workshops and other sources	Potential Actions
<p>3.1 Housing</p> <p>Access to suitable, affordable and well located housing for people living with Disability is a major issue. Increasing access is a key element in International, Australian and Victorian access and inclusion strategies.</p> <p>This theme generated lively discussion and multiple ideas but was also a comparatively lower priority theme in local conversations.</p> <p>The 2025 to 2029 plan could consider including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creative housing options (long-term vision) ▪ Promotion of dual occupancies to enable 'on-site' carers ▪ Advocate for local developments and projects to do better than just meet minimum access requirements ▪ Explore how the Borough can increase its influence and advocate that all new properties are built to at least 'Universal Design' standard ▪ Explore holding an open day for accessible housing <p>Note: Like 'Access' above, this is an area where Council has a lot of statutory power, but Council can only require and enforce the requirements of the relevant legislation. For instance, Council can't just decree that all new dwellings must be built to 'universal access standards'.</p>	<p>In the coming 12 months the LEDG could empower itself by getting educated on the new building code.</p> <p>The LEDG could also look for opportunities to showcase examples of good practice.</p>

<p>3.2 Access in Heritage Settings</p> <p>Increasing Accessibility within the existing built environment is both a high priority and featured prominently in our local conversations. It was recognised that changes are typically very expensive and limited by resourcing and multiple owners and stakeholders.</p> <p>This becomes even more complex in Heritage settings where the features which promote heritage values can also impede accessibility.</p> <p>The 2025 to 2029 plan could consider including:</p> <p>Explore how heritage and accessibility interact and identify strategies and examples which achieve good outcomes.</p> <p>Explore creating wider footpaths in busy areas.</p>	<p>LEDG to consider opportunities to increase awareness of how Heritage and accessibility interact and identify strategies and examples which achieve good outcomes.</p>
<p>3.2 Traditional Owners</p> <p>It is essential to ensure that changes to increase access in the built and natural environment are harmonised with the values and aspirations of traditional owners.</p> <p>The 2025 to 2029 plan could consider including:</p> <p>Explorations with traditional owners regarding how access can be increased in harmony with traditional ownership.</p>	<p>Traditional Owners have been consulted on the level of involvement they wish to have in development of this plan.</p> <p>They have advised they would like to see the near final draft and be given an opportunity to comment.</p> <p>Traditional Owners will be consulted during the public consultation phase.</p>

4. Employment

Ideas from Workshops and other sources	Potential Actions
<p>In Australia, unemployment and underemployment among people living with a Disability is much higher than in most OECD countries.</p> <p>Increasing workforce participation is a key element in International, Australian and Victorian access and inclusion strategies, but was a much lower priority theme in local conversations.</p> <p>The 2025 to 2029 plan could consider including:</p> <p>Develop an employment plan which seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Contribute to resolving labor shortage in our community▪ Support people to contribute their underutilised skills <p>Work in partnerships with community, business and Council to create inclusive employment practices.</p> <p>Identify regional partners who could work with the LEDG to enhance employment outcomes.</p>	<p>Ask Council to review its existing employment policies to improve Access and Inclusion.</p> <p>LEDG to consider opportunities to increase awareness of employment access and inclusion standards issues and opportunities.</p>

Appendix 1.

Capacity Building

A number of opportunities exist for the LEDG to build the capacity of people with a lived experience of disability to support them to be more informed and effective advocates regarding decisions that affect them.

Capacity building activities that the LEDG may elect to explore include:

- Learn how to do the Universal Mobility Index assessments so we can do our own assessments.
- Consider opportunities to increase awareness of signage standards and requirements for various settings.
- Consider opportunities to increase awareness and knowledge of the new building code.
- Consider opportunities to increase awareness of how heritage and accessibility interact and identify strategies and examples which achieve good outcomes.
- Consider opportunities to increase its knowledge and awareness of how to harmonise improved access with the values and priorities of traditional owners.
- Consider opportunities to increase awareness of employment access and inclusion standards issues and opportunities.