Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017:

Achieving universal access and inclusion in the life of Brisbane, Australia’s new world city
Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners
Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and their unique relationship with their ancestral country. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of Brisbane, and recognise their strength and wisdom.
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Lord Mayor’s introduction

I am proud to present the Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017. This plan is about universal access and inclusion so that everyone can use public facilities, participate in Brisbane City Council programs and receive full benefits from our local government services. It is also about boldly confronting some myths about disability. The reality is that more than 18% of us have some form of disability and most of us will have some form of impairment at some point in our lives.

As Australia’s Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, says so well, disability is not so much about an individual’s particular impairment. It is primarily about “the interaction between a person’s impairment and social environments, systems, structures and attitudes which are too often disabling and excluding in their effect, instead of being enabling and inclusive”.

Council is well known for its innovation in providing facilities, programs and services that are accessible and inclusive. Highlights include:

- Australia’s first Braille trail in Queen Street Mall
- Prime Minister’s award for our Reasonable Adjustments Policy in employment
- accessible CityCat and bus fleet ahead of targets in national standards
- accessible swimming pools and change facilities
- excellence in customer service through the Contact Centre.

This proud record comes from a ‘can do’ organisational culture. Council rarely does the minimum required, and we will continue to lead the way with key initiatives such as:

- proactive auditing and access improvements for Brisbane’s public buildings
- web accessibility and online customer interface
- designing inclusive play experiences in Council parks
- conducting a feasibility study into a Brisbane Mobility Centre.

In presenting this plan, I would like to acknowledge members of the Access Brisbane Reference Group who provided feedback on the draft plan and advised on our community consultation process. They are some of Brisbane’s most experienced community advocates and I am thankful for their contribution.

This Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 is ambitious but it is also focused on our local government role and responsibilities and what we can realistically achieve in a resource-constrained environment over the next five years.

Graham Quirk
LORD MAYOR
Executive summary

The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 aims to achieve universal inclusion of all residents and visitors in the life of Brisbane, Australia’s new world city. The purpose of the Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan is to document an integrated whole-of-Council approach to becoming a local government organisation that places priority on achieving equitable access and inclusion for everyone. This plan is focused on our local government role and responsibilities. It highlights more than 120 ongoing programs of Council that are already providing significant benefits across the community and identifies a range of new initiatives that we can realistically achieve over the five years from 2012-2017.

Principles

The following principles underpin the Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017:

• abilities, not disabilities
• fundamental rights for all
• genuine dialogue and participation
• improving access and inclusion for all
• judicious utilisation of resources
• the benefits of working across sectors
• universal design.


Everyone will benefit from better access and inclusion

Council recognises that better access and inclusion will benefit all Brisbane residents and visitors – and, in particular, people with a disability, people with chronic illness, people experiencing temporary impairment, seniors, parents with young children and associated family, friends and carers.

Council’s history of access and inclusion initiatives

Council’s efforts to improve accessibility of services, premises and operations began more than 25 years ago. In 2012, Brisbane’s status as a new world city demands more sophisticated initiatives to respond to people’s expectations about their inclusion in the life of the city. This plan will for the first time place Council’s access initiatives in a comprehensive and cohesive framework.
Council’s local government role and responsibilities

In the Australian system of government, there are clear roles and responsibilities for each level of government in relation to access and inclusion. The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 articulates an innovative local government role for Council, in the context of Queensland and Commonwealth government responsibilities. Council’s primary responsibilities as a local authority are to:

- enhance the quality of life of the people of Brisbane
- build vibrant communities
- support the sustainable development of the regional economy
- improve the city’s infrastructure
- manage critical services including roads and public transport
- protect and enhance the city’s natural and built environments
- improve the quality and value of services
- ensure the financial success and viability of Council.1

How this plan was developed

The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 was developed in two stages. In the first stage, Council developed a draft plan that summarised our understanding of access and inclusion in Brisbane based on community feedback received in the course of our business. It outlined how Council is responding to access and inclusion issues and proposed new initiatives to make Brisbane a more universally accessible city.

In the second stage, we invited feedback on the draft plan from Brisbane’s disability services, advocacy groups, government agencies and the broader community. Between May and August 2011, Council conducted workshops involving more than 400 people, collected 1200 responses to a community-wide survey on access and inclusion and received 34 written submissions. This consultation shaped the final plan.

Summary of community feedback

In the community consultation process, we learned about many key community concerns that we have documented and responded to in the relevant sections of this final plan.

- Attitudes are a real barrier and we need to foster a culture of thoughtfulness and an attitude of respect in the wider community.
- The experience of disability is more diverse and prevalent than commonly understood and includes mental illness, neurodiversity and chronic conditions such as arthritis and diabetes.
- Getting around Brisbane as a pedestrian is still difficult for many people.
- Everyone needs access to public toilets that they can use with ease and dignity.
- On-street loading of passengers in wheelchairs can be dangerous due to fast moving traffic.
• While many buses are accessible now the instability of wheelchairs and mobility devices stops people from using them.
• People with low vision or low hearing risk missing their bus or missing their stop, especially at busy busways and bus stations.
• All abilities play spaces must have supporting, accessible park visitor facilities.
• Mobile web devices are opening new possibilities for breaking down access barriers, in particular for wayfinding and for communication support.
• Customer service needs to be considerate and respectful of people’s different communication styles and needs.
• Brisbane’s disability advocates are keen to see Council develop mechanisms for ongoing monitoring as well as partnerships to inform the implementation of this plan.

Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017

This plan identifies five areas of work and 21 outcomes that we are working to achieve to ensure access and inclusion for everyone.

1. Pedestrian mobility and transport
   • Brisbane residents and visitors are able to reach destinations across the city easily, safely and efficiently.
   • Equitable access for Brisbane residents and visitors to high-quality public transport services with a modern fleet and a focus on customer service.

2. Planning, development and infrastructure
   • Residents work with us to carefully plan for the future of Brisbane.
   • Brisbane’s built environment is well designed, making our subtropical city accessible and inclusive.
   • All Brisbane residents benefit from civic infrastructure that enhances and sustains the City of Brisbane.

3. Public buildings, venues and outdoor spaces
   • People experience Council’s public buildings as friendly, welcoming and accessible.
   • Brisbane visitors and residents enjoy people friendly public spaces as well as a unique subtropical outdoors lifestyle in a variety of urban settings.
   • People connect with one another in local community halls, sports clubs, swimming pools and other community meeting places.
   • Brisbane is a safe, attractive and shady city with diverse opportunities for leisure and recreation in our parks and natural areas.
4. **Vibrant, informed and caring communities**

- Brisbane is a socially cohesive and connected city where people show willing friendship and compassion by helping others.

- Brisbane residents and visitors experience a city that is innovative and creative where they can actively participate in cultural programs that foster inclusion across Brisbane’s diverse communities.

- Residents are supported in their choice of physical activity, play or sport and appreciate the value of good health and well-being.

- Our libraries are vibrant hubs where different lifelong learners share their knowledge in a rich exchange of experience and ideas.

- Brisbane residents and visitors are inspired to work with us to make Brisbane a sustainable city.

5. **Customer service and governance**

- Brisbane residents are active citizens of the city and experience effective, accountable and democratic local governance.

- Residents actively and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives and the future of Brisbane, feeling confident in having their say.

- We want to be a customer-focused organisation delivering the highest level of service to all Brisbane residents, being responsive, understanding and engaging with people’s needs and making it easy to do business with us.

- Council’s local laws are fair and relevant for everyone, reflect community concerns, and support access and inclusion.

- Residents and visitors work with us to keep Brisbane clean, reduce our waste and prevent air pollution.

- Our aim is to be a disability confident organisation and be an Employer of Choice for people with a disability.

- We want to ensure that all employees, customers, residents and visitors can use the facilities, systems and services we provide.

This plan is available on Council’s website www.brisbane.qld.gov.au or by emailing AccessandInclusionPlan@brisbane.qld.gov.au or phoning (07) 3403 8888.
Introduction to the plan

Mother’s Day. A young boy who is unable to speak uses Boardmaker communication symbols to tell his mum he loves her. ²

“It seems clear to me that a sustainable community is one that does not compromise the future of our children … by constructing buildings and services that are accessible only to those who do not have a disability … by perpetuating the myths about people with a disability, and by continuing to not welcome us into the broader community.”³

Graeme Innes AM, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
Our shared vision for Brisbane

The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 is one of many medium term strategic plans that detail how Council is working towards the Living in Brisbane 2026 vision. Living in Brisbane 2026 is the vision that Council shares with the people of Brisbane. All of Council’s forward planning is guided by this vision.

Brisbane is a youthful and enthusiastic city – spanning city to bay and hills to bush. It is appreciated by residents and visitors for its friendliness and optimism, and respected for its leadership and achievements.

Brisbane’s leadership in civic governance and technology will deliver active and healthy communities, drive a strong economy, sustain a clean and green environment, create a city of cultural vibrancy and provide an enduring legacy of liveability for future generations.

The realisation of Council’s vision is dependent on the achievement of 20 city-wide outcomes. Delivery on at least 13 of these outcomes is dependent on embedding access and inclusion into all facets of planning and service delivery. These outcomes include:

- inclusive, caring communities
- active and healthy communities
- connected and engaged communities
- learning and informed communities
- well-designed, responsive built environment
- well-designed, subtropical city
- safe communities
- healthy economy
- better public health
- green and active transport
- effective growth management
- outstanding city profile
- cooperative city governance.
Purpose

The purpose of the Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 is to document an integrated whole-of-Council approach to becoming a local government organisation that places priority on achieving equitable access and inclusion for everyone.

This plan will guide us in making mainstream facilities and services universally accessible to all residents and visitors, be they people with a disability, carers, seniors, people with temporary impairments or parents with young children.

This plan is focused on our local government role and responsibilities and what we can realistically achieve over the five years from 2012-2017.

The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan has several aims.

• Eliminate, as far as practicable, direct and indirect discrimination in the provision of Council’s services to Brisbane’s residents and visitors.

• Eliminate, as far as practicable, physical access barriers in Brisbane’s public buildings and public spaces.

• Provide leadership in the development and implementation of initiatives that contribute towards an inclusive Brisbane, particularly in the planning and design of accessible centres and neighbourhoods.

• Become an Employer of Choice for people with a disability.

• Provide better customer support, safer public and work environments and more efficient and effective services.

• Provide a mechanism for advocating to other levels of government to improve services and access for everyone.
Principles

The following principles underpin the *Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan*. They affirm the principles of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *City of Brisbane Act 2010*.

1. **Abilities, not disabilities.** Differences in physical, sensory, intellectual and mental abilities and wellbeing are the norm of human experience. It is only in their interaction with physical, environmental and attitudinal barriers that differences in abilities come to be perceived as disabilities.

2. **Fundamental rights for all.** All members of the community have the right to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the city.

3. **Genuine dialogue and participation.** People who experience access barriers have the right to participate meaningfully in decision-making about current and future issues affecting the city, both as a community in their own right and as members of the public with broad issues and interests.

4. **Improving access and inclusion for all.** Improvements to the accessibility and inclusiveness of the physical and social environment will benefit the whole community.

5. **Judicious utilisation of resources.** Governments at all levels should utilise resources in a judicious and efficient manner that considers the needs of all residents and visitors and delivers maximum benefit to the greatest number of individuals.

6. **The benefits of working across sectors.** Governments, organisations and communities need to work together in new and flexible ways to achieve positive outcomes for the whole community, especially for individuals who are typically excluded from public and professional life.

7. **Universal design.** Universal design allows everyone, to the greatest extent possible and regardless of age or disability, to use buildings, transport, products and services without the need for specialised or adapted features.
“Having Jellybean accredited as my aid dog has exploded my life open ... We have flown Virgin Blue, been on CityCats, ferries, trains, taxis and buses.

I am keen to promote the role that aid dogs play in freeing people with disability of many kinds, from physical to mental, from their often solitary confinement, so they can once again step out into the stream of life and live it to their fullest potential.

Whenever I am up to it I do this myself, but the point of having a disability aid dog is to make my life easier and less stressful. When I am sick, sore and weak, which can come on suddenly, this is too much for me to do.”

Mary Martin, Newstead
A profile of people who benefit from better access and inclusion in Brisbane

Council recognises that better access and inclusion will benefit all Brisbane residents and visitors and, in particular, people with a disability, people with chronic illness, people experiencing temporary impairment, seniors, parents with young children and associated family, friends and carers.

This plan uses the definition provided in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* where disability refers to all kinds of impairment from birth or acquired through illness, accident or ageing. It includes cognitive, physical, sensory and developmental disabilities, neurodiversity, mental illness and chronic illness such as arthritis or diabetes. This plan embraces the World Health Organisation understanding that ‘disability is a complex phenomenon reflecting an interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives’.  

‘Carer’ in this context refers to all those who provide care, support and assistance to a person with a disability as a family member, friend, support worker, neighbour or work colleague.

People with a disability

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), approximately 4 million people (18.5% of the population) reported having a disability in 2009. The incidence fell 1.5% from 20% in 2003. ABS defines disability as ‘any limitation, restriction or impairment that restricts everyday activities and has lasted or is likely to last for at least six months’.

Of those Australians with a reported disability, 87% (or 15% of the total population) had an impairment restricting their ability to perform communication, mobility or self-care activities, or a restriction associated with schooling or employment:

- 2.9% of the total population experienced a profound limitation (635,000 Australians)
- 2.9% experienced a severe limitation (635,000)
- 3% experienced a moderate limitation (660,000)
- 5.6% experienced a mild limitation (1.2 million).

The following estimates summarise the prevalence of different forms of disability in the Australian population:

- about 14% of Australians (over 3 million people) have some form of physical disability
- about 5% have a significant hearing loss and approximately 30,000 are totally deaf
• nearly 2% have substantial vision loss and around 20,000 are totally blind
• about 2% have an intellectual disability
• about 1.5% have a major form of mental illness
• one in five adults has, or will develop, some form of mental illness
• nearly one in five Australians (3.9 million) live with arthritis, a debilitating condition for some individuals.

All of us as we grow older

Many of us will experience some form of a disabling condition as we grow older. As shown in the graph below, in 2009, 40% of 65-69 year olds reported at least one type of disability and the rate increased rapidly every five years, reaching more than 75% among people aged 85 and older.

Another way to think about the link between disability and ageing is to look at how many years an average person can expect to live with a disability in her or his life. A 2003 study by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that:

• men could expect to live an average of 18.6 years with some form of disability, 5.4 of which would be lived with a severe or profound core activity limitation
• women could expect to live an average of 20.7 years with a disability, including 8.3 with a severe or profound limitation.
People living in all parts of Brisbane

With a population of 1,067,279, Brisbane in 2011 has approximately 210,000 residents with a disability.

In the 2006 Census, 3.5% of Brisbane’s residents reported having a disability that required assistance with core activities. This was below the national rate of 4.1%. However, 27% of suburbs had a higher concentration of people who needed assistance than across Australia as a whole and 41% of suburbs had a higher concentration of people who needed assistance than Brisbane as a whole.

The below map (based on 2006 ABS data) identifies Brisbane suburbs with high concentrations of people who require assistance with core activities, with the suburbs marked in red highlighting suburbs with the highest concentration. Awareness of these areas is important for planning and delivery of local government services.

There is also a strong correlation between socio-economic status and severe disability in capital cities in Australia, with higher levels of disability in communities where residents have fewer economic resources.\textsuperscript{13}

Figure 3: Map of Brisbane suburbs with a high concentration of people with a disability requiring assistance with core activities (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006).
Family, friends and carers

A recent national report on the experience of people with a disability and their families in Australia heard from hundreds of people “just like all other Australian citizens, individuals with their own needs, abilities, ambitions and priorities”. It concluded:

“Many Australians with disabilities, along with their families, friends and carers, are still experiencing systemic disadvantage. … Many said they face a constant struggle to obtain what the rest of the community would consider to be an ordinary life. They do not want special treatment – they just want the barriers removed so they can get on with living.”

In the 2006 Census, 72,000 Brisbane residents (9.2% of the population) reported that in the last two weeks they had spent time providing unpaid care, help or assistance to family members or others because of a disability, a long-term illness or problems related to old age.  

Disability affects 3.4% of pre-schoolers and 8.8% of children and impacts on their families as they navigate key times of transition through life stages such as schooling, entering the workforce, living independently, starting a family, career transitions, retirement and frail age.

All of these transitions have their own particular challenges depending on the nature of the person’s disability and their family circumstances. Family, friends and carers have key roles in supporting people through these transitions. At different stages they will look to government for support and are likely to experience the frustration of having to understand the different roles and responsibilities of Local, State and Federal governments. One of the purposes of this plan is to make the local government role clearer for people navigating the complexities of these life choices.
Council’s history of access and inclusion initiatives

Council’s efforts to improve accessibility of services, premises and operations go back at least 25 years, as shown by some of the highlights below.

1987 Collaboration with occupational therapists from Royal Brisbane and Greenslopes hospitals to make access modifications to buses.

1989 Construction of Australia’s first Braille trail in the Queen Street Mall, a tactile pavement for the orientation of pedestrians with low vision.

1993 Commitment to purchase only low floor buses and accessible CityCats and to design accessible bus stops and ferry terminals.


1997 Suburban Centre Improvement Projects began incorporating disability access audits prior to design.

1999 Refurbishment of Queen Street Mall according to Disability Discrimination Act guidelines and with broad disability sector consultation.

2003 Council won the Prime Minister’s Disability Award for the Reasonable Adjustment and Recruitment and Selection policies.

2005 Transport and Traffic audit of all bus stops for disability access.

2007 Memorandum of Understanding signed with WorkFocus Australia to promote and support Council’s employment of people with a disability.

2009 Vision Australia commissioned to assess the accessibility of Council’s website and documents. Accessibility changes implemented in the new Content Management System.

2010 Fully accessible swimming pool and change room at Colmslie Pool wins Inclusive Communities Award from the Spinal Injuries Association.

Access Improvement Program launched, directing revenue from fines for parking illegally in disability parking areas to initiatives improving access.
Reflection on Council’s changing approach to access and inclusion

John MacPherson started his working life with Brisbane City Council as a 17 year old junior clerk in the Works Department in 1976. He has been the Disability Partnerships Officer since 1990. He reflects on the changes he has seen.

Council’s engagement with disability-related matters has evolved over time. Our emphasis has steadily moved from concentrating on ‘hard’ issues such as the built environment and public transport vehicles to the ‘soft’ infrastructure of community engagement, online systems and employment policy. Over the years, many parts of Council have done a lot of very good work. There are many dedicated and determined staff throughout the organisation who have seized the initiative and quietly led the way in their own field. Consequently, much of the good practice for which Council is renowned goes beyond the minimal requirements of legislative compliance. It is simply good public servants seeking to deliver the best possible customer service to Brisbane’s residents and visitors including those who happen to have disabilities.

In 2011, we find ourselves in the situation where Brisbane’s status as a new world city and the increasing expectation that people have for their inclusion in the life of the city demand ever more sophisticated initiatives in existing and emerging fields. This Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan will for the first time provide a single, cohesive framework for a wide range of initiatives across the organisation.

1990s: From ad hoc reactions to city-wide strategic responses

Prior to 1990, most Council reactions to requests for disability access were ad hoc problem solving rather than coordinated initiatives. While locally effective, these were of little strategic value. This changed in 1992 when Brisbane’s Urban Renewal Taskforce commissioned a study of the New Farm and Fortitude Valley precincts focusing on how residents with a disability coped with the antiquated infrastructure, unsuitable housing and the impact of rapid development. This provided the impetus for updated technical specifications for infrastructure (Council Standard UMS Drawings) and a dedicated Works Schedule 51 for the city-wide upgrade of kerb ramps. Schedule 51 was our first city-wide, strategic response to an identified access issue and has a lasting legacy in improved accessibility of street crossings.

From the late 1990s, Suburban Centre Improvement Projects (SCIP) and other urban renewal programs have revitalised suburban areas. As part of the process, pedestrian infrastructure has been upgraded to the latest technical specifications wherever practicable, meaning a far more accessible environment for all the public.
In the mid 1990s, Council began taking on more of a role in developing community cohesion, resilience and capacity through libraries, local planning, community development, community arts and other community focused programs. Increasingly assertive following their major court victories against the Queensland and South Australian governments, people with a disability expected to be included in this expanded service delivery. Council responded by designing programs that were deliberately inclusive of a much greater range of people. Libraries in particular greatly increased the range and type of product on offer to the public.

**Early 2000s: Strategic responses to prescribed disability standards**

Following conciliation in the Anti-Discrimination Commission of Queensland in 1993, Council adopted a policy of only acquiring low floor buses and accessible CityCat ferries and upgrading bus stops and ferry terminals. This initiative put us in a good position when, in 2002, the Commonwealth Government established *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT)*, setting milestone dates for compliance. Because of its early start and strict procurement policy, Council’s bus and ferry fleets are well ahead of schedule, and infrastructure such as bus stops and ferry terminals are on target for 55% compliance in December 2012.

Since 2004, Council premises have been constructed to the draft of the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards* enacted by the Commonwealth in 2010. This has ‘future proofed’ Council premises constructed since 2004 for no real added project cost. Existing premises are another matter, unfortunately. Work has been undertaken since the mid 1990s to upgrade public buildings, community halls, swimming pools and libraries in particular, but many of these structures are heritage listed.

**2002: Award-winning equity and diversity employment initiatives**

The *Reasonable Adjustment Procedure* and associated *Recruitment and Selection Procedure* have given Council an enviable record as an employer of people with a disability. In fact, Council won the Prime Minister’s Disability Award in 2003. Council’s *Equity and Diversity Framework 2011-2015* will ensure the organisation remains an Employer of Choice for people from diverse backgrounds including, of course, people with a disability.

**2005: Keeping pace with changing technologies**

Globally, information and business technologies have developed rapidly in the first decade of the 21st century and, by the middle of the decade, Council was retrofitting newly purchased systems for accessibility and finding little scope for modification. This remained the case until 2009 when Council undertook to develop an access and inclusion policy that would drive information technology purchasing and product development.
This development and the establishment of a Web Accessibility Working Group in response to a public complaint about inaccessible documents, has led to electronic workplaces and public online environments that are far more accessible. In 2009, Customer Services branch commissioned Vision Australia to assess and recommend changes to Council’s website to enhance access by people who use assistive software. This reflects another shift where Council is increasingly working in partnership alongside key stakeholder groups.

**2009: Universal accessibility**

Led by the recommendations of the Lord Mayor’s Taskforce into Retirement and Aged Care, the emphasis in 2011 has shifted to universal design so that physical environments, services and programs are designed in such a way that everyone finds them easy to access and use. This will have significant benefits for people with a disability, older people, parents with young children and for the wider community, avoiding the unnecessary costs of retrofitting premises and systems. This is a long way from the early 1990s when we saw access and inclusion as a matter of tailor-making a particular ad hoc solution for a particular situation or circumstance. The emphasis in universal design is to plan it well, get it right so it works for everyone everywhere, then make it the design standard that is rolled out by a whole range of providers.

**How this plan was developed**

The *Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017* was developed in two stages. In the first stage, Council developed a draft plan based on our understanding of access and inclusion barriers experienced by people with a disability, carers, seniors and parents with young children in Brisbane. This understanding was shaped by feedback received from community members through our regular day-to-day business. The draft plan documented what Council was already doing in response to these barriers and proposed new initiatives to address emerging issues of which we were aware.

The second stage began with Council’s release of the *Draft Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017* for public comment in May 2011. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback on the plan until the end of August 2011.

When the draft plan was released, Council established the Access Brisbane Reference Group (ABRG) with eight key members of Brisbane’s disability sector. The ABRG guided and supported the community consultation process and provided feedback on the draft plan. The following eight organisations were represented on the ABRG: Carers Queensland, Deaf Services Queensland, Disability Councils of Queensland, Guide Dogs Queensland, Queensland Parents for People with a Disability, Queenslanders with Disability Network, Spinal Injuries Association and Vision Australia.
With the support of the ABRG, Council conducted workshops involving more than 400 people to obtain feedback from people with a disability and their carers and family members, as well as advocates, service providers, seniors interested in access issues and representatives of relevant government departments. A survey on access and inclusion was distributed through the Your City Your Say newsletter, with responses submitted by nearly 1200 residents. Council also received 34 written submissions on the draft plan.

In the community consultation process we learned about key community concerns that have been summarised and responded to in the relevant sections of this plan. The detailed feedback we received on specific access issues across Brisbane has also been thoroughly documented and passed on to relevant parts of Council, providing a high level of detailed information that will inform the implementation of the plan.

The resulting final version of the Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 benefits from the ideas of many individuals who shared their views on how to make Brisbane a universally accessible city.
Implementation, monitoring and reporting

There are several arrangements through which Council will monitor and report on implementation of the *Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017*.

- We will establish the Lord Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Access and Ageing to advise on implementation of this plan and the *Seniors Strategy 2012-2017*.
- An internal project control group will coordinate implementation and reporting across the organisation.
- A cross-Council access and inclusion working group will provide Council staff involved in implementation with opportunities for professional development, shared learning and collaboration across branches.
- The working group will also provide opportunities for dialogue with key external stakeholders including researchers, advocates and groups with insight into particular needs and issues.
- Actions, new initiatives and extensions identified in this plan will be implemented and monitored by the relevant program areas within Council over the life of the plan (2012-2017) through the usual work planning, budget allocation and reporting processes.
- The new Access and Inclusion Partnership Grants will support practical Council-community partnerships and ongoing dialogue to support implementation of the plan.
- An annual report and priority plan documenting outcomes for the previous year and priorities for the coming year will be tabled with the Lord Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Access and Ageing. Highlights will be included in Council’s *Corporate Plan* and *Annual Report* each year.

These mechanisms provide the monitoring, transparent reporting and ongoing partnership that the Brisbane community identify as important to inform the implementation of this plan.
“I came to Council with the help of a wonderful lady from Vision Queensland Employment Services. With her help I am now 10 years into a career with an organisation that, by my reckoning, sees people first and their disability second. With the support of amazing colleagues I have been able to gain back what 12 years of rejection had eroded away – my self-belief and confidence.

I am a specialist working in the area of business improvement within Council’s award-winning Customer Contact Centre. I spend most of my days crafting new customer focused solutions as well as maintaining existing systems that aid the smooth running of the centre.”

Adrian Beech, Technical Specialist, Customer Services, Brisbane City Council
An innovative local government role

In the Australian system of government, there are clear roles and responsibilities for each level of government in relation to access and inclusion. The Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017 articulates an innovative local government role for Council, in the context of Australian and Queensland government responsibilities.

Australian Government role and responsibilities

The Australian Government has primary responsibility for establishing a national policy framework for access and inclusion that includes:

- international relations, including obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- administration of Commonwealth laws including the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
- Disability Standards that specify rights and responsibilities of service providers under DDA
- Australian Standards providing various design specifications
- Building Code of Australia
- Australian Human Rights Commission

The National Disability Strategy guides policy and program development by all levels of government and actions by the whole community. The goal is to enable people with a disability to realise their aspirations, maximise their independence and participate in their communities.17

Of the 25 national policy directions adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in the National Disability Strategy, there are seven in which local government has a significant role.

- Increased participation of people with a disability, their families and carers in the social, cultural, religious, recreational and sporting life of the community.
- Improved accessibility of the built and natural environment through planning and regulatory systems, maximising the participation and inclusion of every member of the community.
- Improved provision of accessible and well designed housing with choice for people with a disability about where they live.
- A public, private and community transport system that is accessible for the whole community.
- Communication and information systems that are accessible, reliable and responsive to the needs of people with disability, their families and carers.
- Remove societal barriers preventing people with disability from participating as equal citizens.
- Increase access to employment opportunities as a key to improving economic security and personal wellbeing for people with a disability, their families and carers.
As well as its role in establishing a national policy framework, the Australian Government also has primary responsibility for funding or delivery of:

- income support through Centrelink
- university education
- health and aged care services.

Queensland Government role and responsibilities

The Queensland Government has primary responsibility for provision of many public services including:

- hospitals and health services
- community services including the disability service system
- Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission
- housing
- school and TAFE education
- TransLink integrated public transport system for South East Queensland
- main roads
- setting parameters for planning, approving plans and reviewing development decisions
- major venues, festivals and facilities.

In 2011, the Queensland Government released Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability, a 10 year action plan identifying 10 priorities for improving quality of life and opportunities for Queenslanders with a disability. The plan identifies the need to work closely with local governments and other partners ‘to bring Absolutely everybody to life in ways that are real and relevant across Queensland’s diverse communities.’ In particular, it identifies an important role for local governments in achieving several strategies.

- Maximise the participation of people with a disability in all aspects of community life.
- Develop approaches to increase the provision of universal design in public and private housing in both new builds and modifications to existing stock.
- Provide public information, including safely information during emergency situations, in a range of accessible formats, modes and technologies that are appropriate to the diverse communication needs of people with a disability.
- Increase the range and availability of accessible public transport.
- Increase the availability of accessible mainstream and assistive technologies in public places and services such as libraries and local government services and agencies.
- Increase recruitment, retention and career opportunities for people with a disability in the public sector.
- Facilitate social enterprises as a means of raising employment and enterprise opportunities in the private and community sectors for people with a disability.
Council’s obligations to prevent discrimination

Council is legally bound to prevent disability discrimination in service provision and to ensure goods and services are delivered in an efficient and cost-effective manner that meets the needs of all customers. Council’s obligations are enshrined in a number of legal instruments including:


The *Disability Discrimination Act* (*DDA*) specifies obligations of public service providers including local government. *DDA* aims to promote the principle that people with a disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community. It prohibits discrimination in many areas of public life including:

- service provision
- public access to premises
- employment policy and practice
- internal and external communication
- local laws.\(^{20}\)

*DDA* encourages public service providers to develop Disability Action Plans to enable an integrated and staged approach to *DDA* compliance. Disability Action Plans do not assume an immediate removal of all access barriers as this is generally not feasible nor practicable, but provide a blueprint for a coordinated process of improving access and inclusion over time. The Australian Human Rights Commission recommends that these plans be lodged publicly with the Commission to demonstrate an organisation’s commitment to its *DDA* obligations.

Council will be following this advice and lodging this *Brisbane Access and Inclusion Plan 2012-2017* with the Australian Human Rights Commission.
Council’s local government role and responsibilities

Council’s primary responsibilities as a local authority are to:

- enhance the quality of life of the people of Brisbane
- build vibrant communities
- support the sustainable development of the regional economy
- improve the city’s infrastructure
- manage critical services including roads and public transport
- protect and enhance the city’s natural and built environments
- improve the quality and value of services
- ensure the financial success and viability of Council.\textsuperscript{21}

More specifically in terms of access and inclusion, this plan identifies clear responsibilities across five areas:

1. pedestrian mobility and transport
2. planning, development and infrastructure
3. public buildings, venues and outdoor spaces
4. vibrant, informed and caring communities
5. customer service and governance.

For each of these topics the plan documents Council’s role and responsibilities, where we are in enabling access and inclusion, where we want to be, existing actions that will continue and new initiatives or extensions to which Council is committed.
“The Braille trail in the Brisbane Queen Street Mall is becoming increasingly difficult to safely use, largely due to the general public’s lack of awareness about the purpose of the trails.

I am aware of an increasing number of pedestrian (trail) rage incidents when people who are blind/vision impaired accidentally walk into members of the general public who are standing stationary on [obstructing] the Braille trails.

A number of these incidents have resulted in the verbal abuse of blind/vision impaired users of the Braille trails.”

Tracey Dutton, Project Manager, Queensland University of Technology and vision impaired Braille trail user
1. Pedestrian mobility and transport

Brisbane is a fast changing and expanding city, with a complex web of pedestrian pathways, road networks and public transport system. Council is committed to ensuring that all residents and visitors are able to:

1. walk, wheel and drive safely around Brisbane
2. catch high quality public transport.

What you have told us

In community consultation, we received detailed feedback on people’s experience of pedestrian facilities and public transport, and it is clear that these are very significant for an accessible Brisbane. Community feedback identified 11 key community concerns that we have summarised below. Each of these has been considered by Council and a response identified in the relevant section of this plan.

- **On-street passenger loading can be dangerous.** There are places in Brisbane where wheelchairs have to go onto a busy road when getting in or out of maxi-taxis or cars. We need safer set down bays with a clear path of travel for a wheelchair and either level access onto a footpath or multiple kerb ramps.

- **Ramp gradients – small changes would make a big difference.** Many carers and wheelchair users are older and struggle pushing chairs up ramps, especially ramps that are outdoors and get slippery when wet. They need highly slip-resistant surfaces and lower gradients that make it easier and safer for a person with limited strength and stability to push a wheelchair.

- **Getting around Brisbane as a pedestrian is still difficult for many people.** Footpaths are getting better but if you have mobility impairment there are many places you cannot go and many hazards along the way, and if you have low vision there are many obstacles in a changing city landscape. There are many places where Council has not provided a continuous path of travel. Sections of footpath or ramps are missing and it only takes one blockage to stop someone getting to their destination.

  » Nearly 65% of *Your City Your Say* survey respondents felt the footpaths they use on a regular basis are acceptable or better. However, people with a disability, and particularly those with a physical disability, rated the quality of footpaths worse than the total response group. “There are relatively few paved footpaths, they tend to end abruptly, and often one has to criss-cross the road to stay on the paved area.”
• **Safety at signalised pedestrian crossings.** People with low vision rely on audio signals for safety and direction at signalised pedestrian crossings. It is good that Council uses a signal button unit that provides audio and vibrating signals. However, Council’s guideline for modifying the hours of operation in response to noise concerns means that people who rely on these signals cannot use parts of the city later at night and in the early morning.

  » More than 80% of survey respondents felt that pedestrian crossings are acceptable or better. However, people with a disability, and in particular those reporting blindness or low vision, had a much less favourable view of pedestrian crossings.

• **Collisions and near-misses between pedestrians and cyclists.** People with low vision or hearing loss or those who are frail, unsteady on their feet or use wheelchairs, can find encounters with speeding bicycles particularly frightening and dangerous. Shared pathways are sites of ongoing tension and risk and cyclists on busy footpaths are perceived as a hazard.

• **Instability of wheelchairs and mobility devices on buses.** People in wheelchairs and mobility devices travelling on Council buses feel at risk of unwanted movement or being tipped over when the bus turns a corner or brakes suddenly. This safety concern stops many people from using buses.

  » More than 66% of survey respondents said they felt secure in their seat or wheelchair space while they are travelling on Council buses. However, among respondents with a disability, this figure went down to 56% and among online respondents with a disability it was only 34%. “I get thrown around as the bus corners, starts and stops. Wheelchair brakes are not up to the forces experienced in a bus. Restraints of some type are required for safety.”

• **Footpath clutter obstructing the boarding point at bus stops.** At some Council bus stops, particularly in the inner city, signage poles, rubbish bins and shelters intrude on the circulation space required to manoeuvre a mobility device onto a bus ramp.

• **Bus driver awareness.** Generally, Brisbane’s bus drivers go out of their way to assist passengers and we heard several positive stories of drivers going out of their way to be friendly and assist passengers. However, there is room for improvement in making sure all bus drivers wait for people to be seated before driving away, take corners carefully, look out for obstacles before deploying the ramp, raise seats for passengers who cannot do it themselves, issue concession and Companion Card tickets correctly, and understand how to engage with a wide range of passengers.

• **Awareness and understanding among fellow passengers.** People with visible disabilities are discouraged from using buses and CityCats when they experience lack of respect and patience from other passengers. For example, people on mobility devices are uncomfortable when they experience negative non-verbals from other passengers when they try to board at peak travel times.
• Council’s public transport fleet and infrastructure lacks the kind of audio-visual announcement system common in other cities. Public transport in other cities has digital displays and audio announcements that identify approaching buses, trams and stops. In Brisbane, people with low vision risk missing their bus, CityCat, ferry or their stop because the current boarding and set down cues are predominantly visual. Passengers with hearing loss also risk missing their stop and cannot easily communicate with the driver to find out where they are.

• Accessibility of CityCats. People in wheelchairs and mobility devices find the boarding gangplanks that connect pontoons to CityCats difficult because the camber is steep, it varies with changing levels between the ferry and the pontoon, and it can change suddenly with the wash of a passing boat. It is often difficult to traverse and threatens to tip people out of their wheelchairs. They appreciate the help they receive from deckhands to board and exit. CityCats have limited circulation space and once they have a mobility device or two and a couple of prams on board, these block the circulation space for other passengers.

» Nearly 65% of survey respondents said they felt safe when boarding Council ferries. Safety concerns were most prominent among respondents with a physical disability. “Older people like myself find the moving of both boat and landing unnerving.” “Movement on gang plank makes me stumble, but staff are very good with assistance.”

1.1 Walking, wheeling and driving safely around Brisbane
Council manages, designs, builds and maintains local roadways, verges, footpaths and pathways and the associated parking and pedestrian infrastructure throughout the city and suburbs.

Where we are
Council installs and maintains infrastructure to support pedestrian access and safety, including sealed footpaths, kerb ramps, signalised pedestrian crossings and tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs). We welcome requests from individuals with particular needs in particular locations and will investigate and prioritise responses.

Council recognises that detail is important in the design of accessible pedestrian infrastructure. Some of our work has set the benchmark for good practice that is being adopted nationally. We have developed and published some well-researched design specifications (Brisbane City Council Standard Drawings).

Council’s Subdivision and Development Guidelines specify that where a developer is responsible for ‘contributed assets’ (e.g. footpaths and kerb ramps), they should comply with the relevant Standard Drawings and Reference Specifications. Council’s Brisbane Streetscape Design Guidelines recognise that developers often contribute footways to the urban environment and specify shady, accessible pedestrian infrastructure that reflects the adjacent land use and likely pedestrian traffic.
Brisbane has an extensive and growing network of shared pathways that Council is currently extending and enhancing through a significant budget allocation. Where possible, those paths are a minimum of three metres wide to allow easy shared usage among pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchairs, prams and mobility devices. Some are wider. Some high usage paths have designated or separated bike paths to keep pedestrians safe from speedy bicycles.

Council’s provision of on-street disability parking bays in many city and suburban shopping precincts exceeds the *Building Code of Australia* minimum for shopping centre parking areas.

There are some challenges facing Brisbane.

- We do our best to install and maintain sealed footpaths with firm, even surfaces in good condition. The challenges are that Brisbane has thousands of kilometres of footpaths, a hilly topography and many mature trees with roots that cause damage. Council has committed significant resources to maintenance and upgrades in recent years but in a big city, there are still areas where pathways require improvement. We are trialling innovative construction techniques that aim to keep pathways even.

- We recognise that tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) can create tripping hazards for people using a cane or walker, people pushing prams and people in wheelchairs. While TGSIs are becoming a more common and welcome addition to our streetscape, we also heed the warning in the *Australian Standards* against their unnecessary proliferation and are monitoring their use and impact. We recognise that temporary blockage of TGSI trails can interfere with wayfinding.

- We recognise that some common forms of temporary fencing and some of our street furniture can present tripping and entrapment hazards.

- We do our best to install and maintain kerb ramps with appropriate incline and orientation. However, Brisbane’s hilly topography and obstacles e.g. underground gas pipes and service pits provide challenges that mean we sometimes cannot install to our preferred specifications.

- As a rule, we determine which streets get kerb, channel and sealed footpaths based on vehicle and pedestrian traffic volumes specified in the *Australian Model Code for Residential Development (AMCORD)*. We also investigate and respond to requests for particular localities but often encounter local opposition from residents who prefer unsealed footpaths. We make decisions in those cases based on a majority of support by local residents and consideration of the hardship experienced by people with access concerns.

- Many shared pathways have limited shade cover, lighting, seating and drinking water that would make them much more comfortable and user-friendly.
- Council is responsible for local roadways and verges, while the Queensland Government (Department of Transport and Main Roads) is responsible for state controlled (main) roads. We have agreements in place that give Council responsibility for footpath maintenance on some state controlled roads. These arrangements present challenges with coordination, especially where different standards are used. However, we are committed to working together to coordinate our efforts.

**Where we want to be**

We want Brisbane residents and visitors to be able to reach destinations across the city easily, safely and efficiently.

**Our objectives**

1. Coordinate our design, construction and maintenance schedules so that Brisbane has an accessible, connected, legible, enjoyable and safe pedestrian and public transport network on which all people can get to the places they want to go.

2. Provide a level of accessible car parking for people with a disability that meets demand in localities across the city.

3. Adopt guidelines that inform decision-making in situations where there has been a request for pedestrian infrastructure and there may be some opposition from local residents or businesses.

4. Monitor usage volumes and patterns on our shared pathways network and, where appropriate, make these paths three metres wide, and put in designated separated pathways to allow easy and safe shared usage.

5. Where appropriate, plant shade trees and install facilities to make shared pathways more comfortable and user-friendly.

**Existing actions that will continue**

**Audio-tactile signals at signalised pedestrian crossings.** We will continue to install audio-tactile crossing signals at all signalised pedestrian crossings and continue to investigate and respond to requests for their activation at particular crossings, subject to consultation with local residents where required. We will also continue to turn off the audio component at night in residential areas. However, in response to community feedback, we will work with key Brisbane stakeholder groups to review our guideline for audio-tactile signals and investigate the feasibility of new technologies to make signalised crossings safer for people with low vision.

**Walk times at signalised pedestrian crossings.** Council follows Austroads Guidelines for walk/don’t walk times. Council will continue to consider and respond to requests to extend the allowed pedestrian time at particular traffic lights, balanced against the needs of other road users. Extended walk times are currently provided in locations where there is high use from specific user groups that require the additional time to cross safely.
Unsignalised pedestrian crossings. We will continue to create safer pedestrian crossings including the design and installation, where appropriate, of footpath build-outs and pedestrian refuge islands. We will continue to investigate and prioritise requests for particular localities in response to the needs of individuals and pedestrian demand.

Brisbane Mobility Map. We will review and update the Brisbane Mobility Map which shows path gradients, accessible paths of travel and accessible premises in the central business district (CBD).

Queen Street Mall Braille trail. We will continue to maintain and extend the Braille trail network in the CBD in dialogue with key user groups.

Kerb ramps. We are particularly proud of Brisbane City Council Standard Drawing UMS 213 Kerb Ramp which specifies orientation as well as ramp incline. We will continue to install to this specification and to make it a condition of development approvals that include footpath conditions. We will also retrofit old kerb ramps in response to requests.

Three metre-wide kerb ramp. Council’s guideline for kerb ramps (Standard Drawing UMS 213 Kerb Ramp) contains provision for ramps to match width of paths (e.g. three metres-wide) which will enable easy and safe access to three metres-wide shared pathways. We will install these ramps at appropriate locations across the city and make these drawings available for developers and others to use.

Tactile ground surface indicators. We will continue to install tactile ground surface indicators (TGSIs) according to Australian Standards at locations of high use and on request. TGSIs at kerb ramps are installed on the flat surface on the top of the kerb (as shown on Brisbane City Council Standard Drawing UMS 213 Kerb Ramp), as mutually agreed by interest groups.

Path widths. We will continue to increase current sub-standard path widths to a minimum width of 1.2m (or greater if demand requires) where opportunity exists through current maintenance and rehabilitation process.

Consistent, firm, even pathways. We will continue the assessment and implementation of new path joint systems to help prevent the creation of new displacements and trip hazards.

Shared pathway network. We will continue to build a bicycle and shared pathway network across Brisbane, reviewing usage patterns and volumes, making those paths a minimum of three metres wide and, where appropriate, putting in designated separated paths to allow easy and safe shared usage. When we revise Council’s Active Travel Strategy, we will consider concerns about the safety of vulnerable pedestrians encountering bicycles on shared pathways and footpaths.

Lighting of bikeway (shared path) network. Where appropriate, we will continue to install lighting and solar markers for enhanced path delineation and guidance, and will review our lighting policy to support access and safety.
Linkages between pathways/bikeways and other public infrastructure. Where possible, we will continue to build accessible linkages from pathways/bikeways to bus stops, toilets and other destinations. We are developing a standard drawing for the ways that pathways/bikeways should link with bus stops and other public infrastructure including parks infrastructure.

Safe Routes to School. Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a national road safety program that Council implements in Brisbane in partnership with the Queensland Government. We will continue to investigate and respond to requests from school communities for improved pedestrian infrastructure.

Safe School Travel. Safe School Travel (SafeST) is a partnership with the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads that improves transport safety for all children regardless of whether they walk, cycle or travel as passengers in buses or cars. Council will continue to investigate and respond to requests from school communities for improvements to local road, parking, pick-up, footpath, bus stop and pedestrian crossings.

Parking for people with a disability. We will continue to provide a minimum percentage (2%) of designated parking bays for people with a disability in the Brisbane CBD and our CBD carparks. We will continue to retrofit suburban shopping areas with street parking bays for people with a disability at a rate that meets or exceeds the standards for commercial areas specified in the Building Code through the rollout of the Strategic City Improvement Program across the city. In addition, we will consider requests to set up more parking bays when there is a need in a particular locality.

New initiatives or extensions

1.1.1 Internal coordination of pathway scheduling. We will establish a new internal mechanism to coordinate design, construction and maintenance schedules on our pedestrian and public transport networks to ensure (where practical and where there is a need in the community) that different infrastructure elements link up to provide an experience of seamless access.

1.1.2 Tactile street signs. We have installed tactile street signs at several road crossings adjacent to Queen Street Mall in the CBD. We will evaluate this trial, identify priority localities across the city in consultation with appropriate community and advocacy groups and establish a schedule for installation over the life of this plan.

1.1.3 Guidelines for prioritising requests for pedestrian infrastructure. In consultation with local councillors and relevant work units, we will develop guidelines to evaluate requests and inform decision-making in situations where there has been a request from the public for improved pedestrian infrastructure. Where there may be some opposition from local residents or businesses, we will provide materials explaining the importance of accessible pathways for affected pedestrians.
1.1.4 **Review of footpath hierarchy.** We will review our footpath hierarchy (and, in particular, Council’s Standard Drawings 231 Concrete Footpath 1.2m Wide and Standard Drawing 233 Concrete Footpaths Width Requirements and relevant sections of the Subdivision and Development Guidelines) with a view to determining circumstances where we would specify a minimum footpath width of 1.5m and then apply that to future planning and construction.

1.1.5 **Passenger loading zones with a clear path of travel away from traffic.** We will identify appropriate and practical sites for passenger loading that have the potential to provide a clear path of travel away from traffic at key destinations. Where necessary we will modify and sign them as appropriate. We will then promote them via the taxi industry, stakeholder groups, Access Brisbane website and the Brisbane Mobility Map.

1.1.6 **Keeping gradients as gentle as possible.** Where practical new pedestrian ramps in public spaces will be installed with a gradient no greater than 1:20. Where site constraints do not permit this, new pedestrian ramps will be installed at the lowest grade possible with appropriate slip resistant surface finishes.

1.1.7 **Pedestrian alerts.** We will work with Brisbane stakeholder groups to extend our use of internet and mobile devices to provide updates on temporary obstacles or closures affecting pedestrians.

1.2 **Catching public transport**

In Brisbane, public transport is provided through a series of arrangements involving different partners.

TransLink Transit Authority (TTA) is the Queensland Government statutory authority responsible for the management of South East Queensland’s public transport system including: planning routes and services; fares and ticketing; information, timetables, journey planner and customer feedback; train stations; and busways and busway stations.

Council has several roles.

- We develop strategy, plan for public transport and make recommendations to TTA.
- We own Brisbane Transport, the major provider of bus services, operating the second largest fleet in Australia with more than 1100 buses.
- We design, build and maintain local bus stops and shelters.
- We own and manage the ferry services on the Brisbane River.
- We own and lease ferry terminals, and are designing and building new and upgraded ferry terminals along the river.

There are many other private bus and public transport operators who provide services in the City of Brisbane under contract with TTA.
Queensland Rail owns and manages Brisbane’s suburban train network.

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002 (DSAPT) provide detailed guidelines and time-bound accessibility targets for providers of public transport services including both infrastructure (bus stops, ferry terminals, etc) and conveyances (in our case buses, CityCats and ferries). Council must meet these DSAPT compliance targets: 25% by 2007, 55% by 2012, 90% by 2017 and 100% by 2022.

Where we are

- We are on track to meet DSAPT targets.
- 864 buses out of a fleet of 1117 (77.4%) operated by Brisbane Transport are compliant with DSAPT, already exceeding the 55% target for December 2012.
- 2477 bus stops out of 6559 (38%) are estimated to at least partially comply with DSAPT. An audit is required to accurately determine the current level of compliance with the detailed requirements. Council has allocated $2 million in 2010/11 to ensure the upgrading of bus stops is on-track to meet DSAPT compliance targets.
- Council’s 19 CityCats will be fully DSAPT compliant by December 2012, while the nine monohull ferries (CityFerries) require modification and will be only partially compliant by this date. As a result, the total fleet of 28 vessels will be 68% compliant by the end of 2012.
- The exact level of compliance of the 23 terminals used for ferry services (including three privately owned terminals) has not been specifically measured as yet; it is challenging to do so on a tidal river with some steep riverbanks. Following the flood disaster of January 2011, a number of the ferry terminals were extensively damaged. The upgrade of terminals to meet DSAPT compliance specifications will continue as funding following the recovery becomes available.

Our public transport infrastructure is built to carefully designed specifications published as Brisbane City Council Standard Drawings. Few other local authorities have bus stop technical drawings and ours currently provide national guidance referenced in DSAPT.

Brisbane Transport is committed to ensuring that our bus operators are aware of their obligations and have the knowledge and skills to support customers who require assistance in accessing services. Our bus operators undertake nationally accredited induction and in-service training with an emphasis on understanding and supporting passengers who have disabilities. Similarly, our contracted ferry operator provides tailored training to ensure people with a disability are provided with personalised service.
Council also facilitates a subsidised Council Cabs service that seniors and people with a disability can access for trips to the local shops, weekly in most Brisbane suburbs and twice a week in some areas.

Brisbane Transport also has a longstanding partnership with the House of Happiness, a charity that provides support for children with disabilities including a retreat centre on Bribie Island. It started with a Council tram driver organising some friends to take children with polio to the Royal Brisbane Show (Ekka) in 1951. This ongoing commitment involves weekly donations by payroll deduction by over 500 bus drivers as well as events and fundraising, and continuing to provide bus rides to the Ekka.

**Where we want to be**

We want equitable access for Brisbane residents and visitors to high-quality public transport services with a modern fleet and a focus on customer service.

**Our objectives**

1. Assess all Council owned public transport infrastructure to accurately determine current level of compliance with DSAPT.
2. Achieve 55% compliance with DSAPT for bus and ferry fleet, ferry terminals and bus stops by 2012.
3. Achieve 90% compliance with DSAPT by 2017.
4. Ensure that bus and ferry operators provide aware, informed and skilled customer service.
5. Respond to people’s individual needs by scheduling accessible buses where we can, prioritising bus stop upgrades in response to requests and providing alternatives where appropriate and reasonable in the case of service disruptions or where regular services are not viable.
6. Provide as far as possible water transit services that are accessible by ensuring all new ferry terminals and terminal upgrades achieve DSAPT compliance.

**Existing initiatives that will continue**

**Procurement of accessible buses.** We will continue to purchase low floor, accessible buses.

**Upgrade of bus stops.** We will continue to upgrade bus stops in Brisbane to include features such as level standing areas, tactile ground surface indicators and bus shelters. We will continue to plan bus stop upgrade works and to prioritise works in response to requests and required bus operation network changes. We will endeavour to link bus stops to accessible pathways and other accessible infrastructure e.g. public toilets. In response to community feedback we will inspect our bus stops and where possible relocate objects intruding into required circulation space at boarding points.
Bus operator induction and in-service training programs. Brisbane Transport will continue to conduct comprehensive training for its bus operators on their obligations to customers. Nationally recognised units of competency are completed by trainee bus operators as part of the ongoing development program, which is under continual review to ensure it addresses contemporary and emerging areas of need (for example instructing drivers to wait until passengers are seated before leaving the stop).

In response to community feedback we will review the content of our bus driver training to ensure the following topics are adequately covered: the importance of waiting for passengers to be seated; careful braking and cornering; looking out for obstacles before deploying the ramp; raising seats for passengers who cannot do it themselves; Companion Card ticketing; and understanding passengers with a diverse range of needs.

We will also encourage members of the public to tell us about their experiences with drivers who provide good service, so they can get appropriate recognition in the workplace.

CityCat operator training. Council will continue to require that staff on CityCat services are trained to respond to the needs of all passengers.

Passenger initiated bus allocation. In one-off instances where we know that a passenger needs a low floor, accessible bus at a particular bus stop at a particular time, Brisbane Transport will schedule an accessible bus onto that route and alert the driver provided there is at least 24 hours’ notice.

Pick up for passengers with visual impairment (VIP). Passengers with low vision can advise they will be waiting at a particular bus stop by calling Council’s Contact Centre and the information will be passed on to alert the relevant driver to expect them.

Council Cabs. We will continue the Council Cabs service, providing low cost shared taxis at scheduled times for residents who find it difficult to get from their home to their local shops and services.

Service disruptions. Where regular services are disrupted (e.g. for refurbishment of stops or terminals), we will continue to respond to requests from people who are inconvenienced and seek to provide a viable alternative.

House of Happiness partnership. Brisbane Transport will continue to support the House of Happiness which provides respite and recreational activities for children with a disability.

Advocacy for accessible public transport. We will continue to advocate to Queensland Transport, TransLink and other authorities when we become aware of access issues in parts of the public transport network in Brisbane that are beyond our control.
Encouraging good practice in the public transport industry. We will continue to take a leadership role in public transport industry networks and forums, demonstrating good practice and encouraging other providers and industry partners in Brisbane to be proactive and innovative on access and inclusion issues.

New initiatives or extensions

1.2.1 Review of standard design for bus stops. We will review Council’s Standard Drawings for Standard Bus Stop with a view to specifying that an appropriate kerb is installed in front of the stop to allow deployment of a ramp at an appropriate grade and construct future stops to that standard.

1.2.2 Disability Discrimination Act compliance of fleet and infrastructure. Council will upgrade ferry terminals and bus stops and replace monohull ferries with Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) compliant vessels to ensure public transport infrastructure and entire ferry fleet is accessible by 2022. Where possible, public transport infrastructure upgrade works will incorporate pathway connections to other transport modes (e.g. nearest drop-off point or bus stop).

1.2.3 Audit of CityCat accessibility. We will commission an audit of the accessibility of our CityCat fleet.

1.2.4 Researching better boarding gangplank design. We will review the performance of our boarding gangplanks on the new generation pontoons, and investigate the feasibility of a different design. Our aim is to select and trial preferred options and develop a schedule for installation on all pontoons.

1.2.5 Restraints for mobility devices on buses. We will investigate the feasibility of different types of restraints on buses for wheelchairs and mobility devices.

1.2.6 On-board passenger awareness campaign. We will create and run onboard advertising campaigns encouraging patience and respect between passengers.

1.2.7 TransLink’s 2012 trial of Real Time Information. We will review the findings of TransLink’s 2012 trial of ‘Customer First’ Real Time Information. If the findings are positive, we will work with TransLink to assess the feasibility of adopting the system across Council’s fleet and infrastructure. In the meantime, we will continue to encourage CityCat deck hands (who leave the vessel and stand on the pontoon at every stop) to be proactive in initiating a brief, friendly conversation with passengers who look like they are unsure or might need assistance. We will also encourage passengers to initiate these interactions.
Planning, development and infrastructure

Strong colour contrast on Jacob’s Ladder defines path of travel for people with low vision.

“As a wheelchair user access to premises and particularly private premises (e.g. 95% of houses) has made life rather difficult at times. Finding a home to live in was particularly harrowing. The social isolation of not being able to visit almost any private homes can be tedious.”

John MacPherson, Disability Partnerships and Programs Officer, Brisbane City Council
2. Planning, development and infrastructure

Brisbane is at the centre of the fastest growing urban region in Australia. The major challenge facing the city is to respond to the Queensland Government’s South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031 and to accommodate sustainable population and employment growth while enhancing lifestyle opportunities and environmental outcomes for the city.

Council manages our city’s growth and development by engaging the community in planning for the future. Our goal is to ensure Brisbane is Australia’s most liveable city, has a distinct subtropical character and is well designed and efficiently serviced. Our planning, development assessment and infrastructure programs provide opportunities for all Brisbane residents to:

1. participate in planning an accessible and growing city
2. enjoy a well designed built environment
3. appreciate the benefits of civic infrastructure.

What you have told us

When we asked for feedback on the draft plan, we learned about three key community concerns in relation to Council’s role in planning a well-designed built environment. A response to each concern has been identified in the relevant section of the plan.

• **Inclusive Brisbane Board.** Council’s Inclusive Brisbane Board would benefit from the inclusion of a member with a disability perspective who can inform deliberations about how to make Brisbane more inclusive and could keep the disability sector better informed about planning in Brisbane.
  
  » 68% of survey respondents feel they have opportunities to be involved in planning in Brisbane, while 21% do not, and 11% don’t know or have never tried. “People with disabilities themselves should be involved in planning decisions. At the moment able bodied people make these decisions. There should be a task force of people with disabilities involved in each new venture.”

• **Lack of accessible housing.** Many people in Brisbane’s disability community identify the lack of accessible housing as an important issue for making the city accessible and inclusive. Their experience is that limited stock of accessible housing in Brisbane means people with a disability have limited housing choices. People who acquire disability through illness or injury often cannot go home or face substantial retrofitting cost at a time they can least afford it. Many people miss out on the basic social experiences like visiting family, attending kids’ parties or talking with friends on the back deck. Brisbane’s ageing population also needs a much greater stock of accessible housing so that seniors can stay longer in their own homes and age in place.
In the Your City Your Say survey, 29% of respondents with a disability and 37% of carers said they had tried to buy or rent accessible private accommodation. “The most important building in anyone’s life is their home. We have endless laws on equal access to public buildings and space but nothing on access to dwellings. Why? Where are we to live? Public space? Council must do its utmost to regulate universally designed dwellings — regulate, not encourage or promote.”

- **Shops with a step-up entrance.** There are hundreds of shops across Brisbane that have a step-up entrance from the footpath preventing access for many people (e.g. on the Queen Street Mall and in older suburban shopping strips).

### 2.1 Being actively engaged in planning an accessible city

Planning in Brisbane is a shared responsibility between Council and the Queensland Government. All development in Brisbane is directed by statutory plans that show where new development can go, what can and cannot be built and shape what our communities will look like in the future.

- **South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031** is the Queensland Government’s overarching plan to manage growth in South East Queensland. It limits urban development to certain areas, shows planned new infrastructure and sets the direction for plans made by local government.

- **Brisbane City Plan 2000,** produced by Council and approved by the Queensland Government, guides and controls how development occurs in the city. It aims to translate our Living in Brisbane 2026 vision into desired development outcomes that achieve the safe, sustainable and subtropical city that Brisbane residents want. It shows what particular properties can be used for, and sets rules on development including height, design and infrastructure.

- **Neighbourhood Plans,** created by Council in consultation with local residents, provide a vision and framework to direct development in local communities. Neighbourhood Plans are developed one neighbourhood at a time with priority given to areas likely to experience change.

Council’s approach to planning acknowledges the sophistication and maturity of our community and people’s strong desire to have their say and be involved in planning for the future of Brisbane.
Where we are

In planning for a growing city, Council is committed to making Brisbane more accessible and inclusive. Several key initiatives focus on these issues.

While we have heard community concerns about lack of accessible housing, we acknowledge that Council has a limited role in these matters which are regulated by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments.

Council has appointed the Inclusive Brisbane Board to provide advice on community issues in high growth areas, affordable housing provisions, provision of social infrastructure, community engagement strategies and the integration of state and local government projects. Members represent Queensland Government, business, industry and community organisations and networks.

Neighbourhood Planning processes are inclusive of a wide range of people from the local community and we encourage everyone to participate in Community Planning Teams to provide local advice and guidance to Council.

Council also has a role in implementing its plans and has hundreds of urban design and other projects underway in local communities that often focus on improving access and inclusion – including Neighbourhood Enhancement Projects and Strategic City Improvement Projects.

Each year, selected Brisbane streetscapes undergo a significant upgrade, particularly to the public footway, through Council’s capital works and maintenance programs and private development contributions. Council has published Brisbane Streetscape Design Guidelines, a planning scheme policy under Brisbane City Plan 2000, specifying standards designed to deliver accessible footways that reflect the adjacent land use and the likely pedestrian traffic, provide vegetation for shade and add to the city’s subtropical image, and are constructed and maintained to a consistent standard including provisions for accessibility.

In 2009, the Lord Mayor’s Taskforce into Retirement and Aged Care investigated ways to encourage more retirement and aged care accommodation in Brisbane through Council’s City Plan framework. The objective was to ensure older residents could “age in place”, remaining within their neighbourhoods as their housing needs change.

We will be reviewing Brisbane City Plan 2000 and investigating provisions that would enhance access and inclusion.

- We recognise that people with a disability, students, families and older residents are struggling to find homes to suit their needs. Our goal is to provide a diversity of housing, close to services, to meet diverse needs within the community.
• In partnership with the building and development industry, the Queensland Government and other interested parties, Council will explore the potential for new apartment buildings to include units that feature ‘universal design’. This means some units would be designed for people of all ages and abilities through features such as wide hallways, easy gradients on the property and showers without steps and walls that are strong enough for support rails.

• Additional provisions may be required to ensure community spaces in centres can be easily accessed via paths through the centre and connected to the broader surrounding network of walking and cycling paths.

• New regulations will be included in the City Plan to help create safer environments. These will focus on the design of buildings and spaces, security monitoring and techniques to minimise graffiti and ensure equitable access.

Where we want to be

We want all residents to work with Council to carefully plan for the future of Brisbane.

Our objectives

1. Include innovative provisions including codes, standards and guidelines in our plans that will encourage universal design to improve access and inclusion for everyone.

2. Provide opportunities for everyone to have their say in Neighbourhood Planning and other planning processes, in particular people who are often excluded from such processes, and encourage and support their participation on community planning teams.

3. Provide draft plans and community consultation materials in accessible formats.

4. Use new media and communications technologies to engage a wide range of individuals in planning processes.

Existing actions that will continue

Inclusive Brisbane Board. Inclusive Brisbane Board will continue to provide advice on access and inclusion in planning for Brisbane. In response to community feedback, we will consider the appointment of a new member of the Inclusive Brisbane Board to provide a disability perspective the next time we review membership.

Lord Mayor’s Taskforce into Retirement and Aged Care. We will continue to work towards implementing taskforce recommendations enabling people to ‘age in place’.

Neighbourhood Planning. We will continue to include people who have an awareness of access issues on community planning teams and ensure our engagement processes and materials are accessible.
Neighbourhood Enhancement Projects. We will continue to plan and implement practical projects to make neighbourhoods better places to live with a focus on access and inclusion for everyone.

Strategic City Improvement Projects. We will continue to breathe new life into our urban environments by upgrading or creating new and more accessible facilities such as landscaped public spaces.

New initiatives or extensions

2.1.1 Targeted engagement in planning using new technologies. We will investigate the potential to use our Virtual Brisbane platform and other new media and communication technologies to engage a wide range of stakeholders in our planning processes.

2.1.2 City Plan support for accessible housing. We will review Brisbane’s City Plan (including Neighbourhood Plans, Urban Renewal Plans, codes and the strategic framework) to encourage accessible housing design, universal design of facilities, innovative local aged care, supportive housing and safety in public space.

2.1.3 Making more shop entrances accessible. Where site conditions permit, we will design and build footpaths to achieve accessible shop entrances.

2.2 Enjoying a well-designed built environment

Council is responsible for setting conditions, accepting applications and approving property development in Brisbane in accordance with the Brisbane City Plan 2000. The Queensland Government also plays a role in development in Brisbane with responsibility for:

- Sustainable Planning Act 2009 and state planning and development policies, codes and regulations
- Building Act 1975 and Queensland Development Code
- development assessment for certain types of development
- dispute resolution, appeals and the Planning and Environment Court.

Where we are

The Australian Human Rights Commission takes the view that councils have a critical role to play in ensuring development complies with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA). Several Commission and Federal Court decisions show that councils can be liable under section 122 of the DDA for permitting discriminatory acts when exercising their development approval responsibilities, as summarised below.

- Development approval bodies must take the requirements of the DDA into account when processing applications.
• They should also establish mechanisms to ensure a thorough assessment of any claim by a developer that providing full access would impose an unjustifiable hardship.

• The approval body may decide to allow a development with less than full access if it believes the requirement would be too onerous and would only face a liability if its decision was proved to have been wrong following a successful complaint against the developer.

_Brisbane City Plan 2000_ specifies strategies that are particularly important for access and inclusion:

• enhance social diversity, choice and accessibility
• achieve a safe, secure, equitable and comfortable city
• require development to enhance the amenity, environmental and cultural contexts of its locality
• promote a pattern of development that reduces private motor vehicle dependency and increases potential for use of public transport, cycling and walking.

In the development assessment process, Council examines the ways any proposed development provides for access and inclusion.

• Assessing all development applications for compliance with the City Plan using the Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS) established under the Sustainable Planning Act 2009.

• Ensuring development applications comply with the Non-discriminatory Access and Use Code in City Plan.

• Taking into account non-discriminatory access requirements regulated under the Building Code of Australia and, where necessary, raising issues with applicants.

• Taking into account guidelines published by the relevant Queensland and Commonwealth government agencies responsible for administering the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act and the Disability Discrimination Act respectively and, where necessary, raising issues with applicants.

• Assessing the potential for disruptions to access during the construction period and providing conditions that mitigate those impacts.
Where we want to be
We want Brisbane’s built environment to be well-designed, making our subtropical city accessible and inclusive.

Our objectives
1. Review the policies and standards we use in the assessment of development applications so they reflect current good practice in providing for an accessible and inclusive built environment.
2. Provide training for relevant development assessment staff to support them to understand the significance of relevant provisions and conditions for access and inclusion.
3. Advocate, where appropriate, for the Queensland Government to enhance access and inclusion provisions of relevant state development policies, codes and regulations.
4. Demonstrate leadership and good practice in our own development projects.

Existing actions that will continue
Assessment of development applications. We will continue to examine the ways any proposed development provides for access and inclusion under the provisions of Brisbane City Plan and relevant Queensland and Commonwealth legislation including disruptions to access during the construction period, and liaise with applicants where necessary.

New initiatives or extensions
2.2.1 Review of policies and standards used in development assessment. We will conduct an internal review of the policies and standards we use in the assessment of development applications against current national good practice in providing for an accessible and inclusive built environment.
2.2.2 Training for development assessment staff. We will provide induction and refresher training for relevant development assessment staff with a focus on understanding the significance of relevant provisions and conditions for people with access concerns and to encourage them to be rigorous in their interpretation and application.
2.2.3 Advocacy for enhanced Queensland Government planning and development provisions. We will advocate, where appropriate, for the Queensland Government to enhance access and inclusion provisions of relevant state development policies, codes and regulations.
2.3 Appreciating the benefits of civic infrastructure

Council has made a priority of ensuring that appropriate infrastructure projects are identified and sequenced to support employment growth, population growth, exports and investment. In recent years these have included partnerships with the Queensland and Commonwealth governments and industry to deliver the Clem Jones Tunnel, Go Between Bridge, Eleanor Schonell Bridge, Legacy Way, Airport Link, Road Action Program and Howard Smith Wharves redevelopment.

High levels of population and employment growth in Brisbane are imposing an increasing strain on the capacity of Brisbane’s transport, energy, water and sewerage and social infrastructure. Council’s Draft Brisbane Long Term Infrastructure Plan 2011-2031 and Priority Infrastructure Plan identify actions to deliver infrastructure to meet the needs.

Council’s Road Action Program is a major infrastructure investment that fast-tracks 15 years of road works into four years. The program tackles Brisbane’s 21 worst congested roads and delivers traffic congestion reduction, increased safety and improved access across Brisbane’s road network.

Where we are

Council’s recent civic infrastructure projects have presented access and inclusion challenges to which we have responded in creative ways.

- In 2006, the Eleanor Schonell Bridge replaced the previously inaccessible Dutton Park ferry service as the eastern access to the University of Queensland. It is the first bridge in Australia exclusively designed for buses, cyclists and pedestrians. It features good disability parking and drop-off zones and a shaded walkway. The bridge is appropriately named as Dr Eleanor Schonell was an academic who made a significant contribution to work with children with dyslexia, cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities in Brisbane.

- Pedestrian access to the Go Between Bridge, which opened in 2010, features wide paths, high levels of lighting, shaded walkways and ramps at a low gradient. The bridge provides highly accessible connectivity to the Bicentennial Bikeway, Riverside Drive and the Gallery of Modern Art precinct.

- Former Lord Mayor Campbell Newman’s commitment to provide new bikeway infrastructure is providing upgrades and extensions across the network, improving safety by widening our busiest shared pathways and, in some places, separating pedestrians and cyclists.
Where we want to be

We want all Brisbane residents to benefit from civic infrastructure that enhances and sustains the City of Brisbane.

Our objectives

1. Include all key stakeholders in community consultation that informs the planning and design of new infrastructure.
2. Design new civic infrastructure that demonstrates innovation and leadership in providing for access and inclusion.
3. Proactively promote employment opportunities so that people with a disability are part of the workforce delivering infrastructure projects.

Existing actions that will continue

Draft Brisbane Long Term Infrastructure Plan 2011-2031. We will continue to work towards infrastructure provision that is consistent with Brisbane’s aspiration to be an accessible and inclusive city.

Community engagement. We will continue to design and implement community engagement processes that proactively include all key stakeholders in consultation that informs the planning and design of new infrastructure.

Innovative design features that enhance accessibility. We will continue to design new civic infrastructure that demonstrates innovation and leadership in providing for access and inclusion.

Employment opportunities on infrastructure projects. We will continue to ensure that trainees and apprentices make up 10% of the workforce on major infrastructure projects and proactively promote employment opportunities so that people with a disability are part of the workforce delivering infrastructure projects.
In July, National Disability Services publicised details of the new fully accessible toilets/change rooms in the Brisbane inner city and at the Colmslie swimming complex. It was only recently that I was able to check out the city amenity. As the mother of a young man with severe physical disabilities, I was very impressed. Facilities that cater to the needs of people with severe disability are almost non-existent in Queensland. Your initiative will, hopefully, serve as a splendid example and incentive to other councils. Thank you for your leadership.”

*Thea Summerville, Nambour*
3. Public buildings, venues and outdoor spaces

Brisbane is one of the world’s most liveable subtropical cities. When we ask residents what they like about Brisbane, 80% agree that our friendliness, green open spaces and outdoor lifestyle are the most valued aspects of Brisbane life.

Council wants all Brisbane residents to experience:

1. public buildings that make you feel welcome
2. people-friendly public spaces
3. local meeting places where you connect with your community
4. parks and natural areas where you enjoy the great outdoors.

What you have told us

When we asked for feedback on the draft plan, we learned about six key community concerns in relation to Council’s role in providing accessible and inclusive public buildings, public spaces, community facilities and outdoor spaces. A response to each concern has been identified in the relevant section of this plan.

• **Everyone needs access to public toilets they can use.** Brisbane residents and visitors have difficulties with finding and using accessible public toilets. Many people reported making their way to accessible toilets only to find them locked, and people with limited hand dexterity and grip reported difficulties with locking systems. To participate in the life of the city, everyone needs access to public toilets they can use with ease and dignity.

• **Wayfinding tools for navigating to and within Council buildings.** People with low vision or those who are Deaf or have hearing loss need access to information about how they can navigate Council buildings, venues and public spaces to get to the services they need. Brisbane lacks public audio-visual consoles that provide this information. Tactile ground surface indicators, Braille trails and raised or Braille signage still have their place, but they are rapidly being superseded by digital mobile devices offering new possibilities for creating wayfinding tools.

• **Heated swimming pools for therapy.** Access to heated swimming pools can have a big impact on people’s physical health, activity and wellbeing, in particular for people with musculoskeletal conditions. There are too few in Brisbane to meet growing demand.

• **‘Must-haves’ for all abilities playgrounds.** People are very positive about the Lord Mayor’s leadership on accessible playgrounds and are keen to see accessible play equipment alongside other vital access infrastructure in Council parks. The things identified as most important are:
  » disability parking with safe set down points
  » continuous path of travel with pathways wide enough for a chair and a carer side by side
» accessible toilets with adult-sized change table
» a variety of all abilities equipment designed to support interaction between children and their parents or carers and between parents or carers
» shaded and accessible seating and picnic settings
» natural enclosures or fencing to help keep children safe, in particular those whose conditions make them likely to suddenly run away.

Where one or more of these elements is missing, it has a big influence on who can use those places for different types of recreation.

• **Drinking bowls for companion animals.** Guide dogs and companion animals are becoming more common and in a subtropical climate their owners need easy ways to get them a drink of water.

• **Calm places for people experiencing sensory overload.** People who experience sensory overload, particularly in a subtropical urban environment like Brisbane, need quiet, calm, cool spaces where they can retreat when overwhelmed and different types of facilities and urban design to support their navigation of public space and participation in public events. Brisbane has some world-leading researchers in this emerging field of neurodiversity at the Queensland University of Technology.

### 3.1 Public buildings that make you feel welcome

Council is responsible for hundreds of buildings across the city including community halls, libraries, customer service centres, environment centres, shopfronts, commercial and industrial buildings, cultural performance venues and sports facilities. Management of this substantial corporate property portfolio is a huge task that involves sophisticated systems for building, leasing, occupying, maintaining and disposing of properties.

The *Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010* provide detailed national minimum standards for compliance with the *Disability Discrimination Act* in relation to buildings. These provisions have now been incorporated into the *Building Code of Australia*. In addition to these minimum standards, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has published *Access to buildings and services: Guidelines and information* that set the benchmark for good practice.

**Where we are**

Council has used the draft *Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards* to guide construction and renovation of Council premises since 2004. Our newer buildings (e.g. Green Square, Brisbane Square, Customer Service Centres) and the majority of Council libraries generally provide good access. Where this is not the case, we are keen to hear about it and will do all we can to rectify the situation.
We have also used the more detailed AHRC guidelines which means that on some recently completed projects (e.g. Ashgrove and Grange libraries) we provide accessible linkages from the building to the car park area and external facilities. In many newer buildings, we provide tactile pathways, diagrams and Braille coded signage, and hearing loops to help people feel welcome.

Council’s portfolio of premises includes many old community halls, libraries and other structures that are either partly or fully inaccessible (e.g. West End library, Ann Street School of Arts and some older swimming pools).

We are committed to retrofitting facilities to make them as accessible as possible but, in many cases, heritage laws protect the heritage value of these buildings and may present compliance issues that are too cost-prohibitive to resolve. For example, City Hall is Brisbane’s iconic building. Since its opening in 1930, City Hall has been a symbol of civic pride and has played an important role in the lives of our community in times of war, peace, celebration and refuge. When it was built in the 1920s, it was the second largest construction of its time in Australia after the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the first major Australian concrete ‘column and beam’ building. With areas of floor at multiple heights throughout the building, its current restoration will enhance access but the original design and heritage constraints mean some areas will not be fully accessible.

In 2010, Council installed a toilet with a hoist and change table in Roy Harvey House (157 Ann Street), allowing people with high support needs and their carers to enjoy extended time in the Brisbane central business district (CBD).

**Where we want to be**

We want everyone to experience Council’s public buildings as welcoming, accessible and enjoyable places.

**Our objectives**

1. Demonstrate corporate leadership by continuing to use the more comprehensive guidelines of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) as our benchmark for access and inclusion for public buildings, rather than just minimum compliance with the Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards and the Building Code of Australia.

2. Develop and implement an access and inclusion policy, plan and guidelines for the corporate property portfolio.

3. Develop an easy-to-use audit tool that enables Council staff to identify access issues and undertake in-house assessments.

4. Identify buildings that need accessibility upgrades and establish a schedule to complete these upgrades.

5. Identify any buildings or parts of buildings that will never be accessible and schedule their disposal or replacement, or develop a rationale for their retention.
Existing actions that will continue

**Accessible new buildings.** We will continue to ensure high levels of access and inclusion in new Council owned buildings.

**Asset Condition Reports.** We will continue to incorporate access requirements as part of the methodology for completing Asset Condition Reports.

**Retrofitting older buildings.** We will continue to retrofit older buildings e.g. community halls and libraries to make them as accessible as possible.

**Access during construction and maintenance.** We recognise that construction, refurbishment and maintenance activities can impact on accessibility and will continue to provide for access when constructing and maintaining Council property.

**Complimentary entry for carers.** Council’s major venues will continue to accept Queensland Government Companion Cards, providing complimentary entry for teachers and carers supporting people who need assistance to attend activities at the Hibiscus Sports Complex, Planetarium and Acacia Ridge Leisure Centre.

New initiatives or extensions

3.1.1 **Review of Condition Assessment Reports.** We will review our existing Condition Assessment Reports and identify action required to meet Australian Human Rights Commission accessibility guidelines.

3.1.2 **Access and inclusion audit tool.** We will develop an easy-to-use audit tool that gives Council staff a checklist enabling ready and simplified assessment of accessibility during in-house inspections.

3.1.3 **Staff training.** We will develop and implement the training required to enable Council staff to identify access and inclusion issues in design, maintenance, condition assessment and refurbishment processes.

3.1.4 **In-house accessibility assessments.** We will undertake in-house assessments of 20% of our assets each year over the life of this plan as part of our regular inspection regime and have a documented access assessment for all of our properties over five years.

3.1.5 **Management of existing properties for Disability Discrimination Act compliance.** Every year for the next 10 years, we will identify 10% of total properties requiring upgrades and schedule and complete those works in line with budgetary constraints. We will identify any buildings that will never be accessible and develop a strategic position for their retention or disposal.

3.1.6 **Review of public toilet design and provision.** We will review the design of Council owned public toilets with a focus on doors, locks and ‘in use’ indicators that everyone can use.
These will be documented as *UMS Standard Drawings* and referenced in design, planning and development assessment materials. These design specifications will be used for all new public toilets we build and inform retrofits as opportunities arise or in response to identified priorities over the life of this plan.

The review will consider the appropriate number and locations for accessible toilet facilities (including which have a change table and hoist system), provision of options that suit people with a range of disabilities and appropriate management systems to facilitate access.

When the review is completed, we will make the data available for development of applications for digital devices to provide online information about which accessible public toilets will suit different users.

### 3.1.7 Wayfinding applications for mobile devices

We will make data on Council’s public buildings, public spaces, venues, programs and services available as a priority in the Open Data Project and work in partnership with Brisbane access consultants and advocates to develop new applications for digital devices that provide information about accessibility.

### 3.2 People friendly public spaces

Brisbane has many public spaces where people meet friends, browse markets, attend events, pause to appreciate performers, gather for public rallies or just move through as pedestrians on their way to other destinations.

Council owns and manages many of the public spaces in Brisbane and is responsible for their design, maintenance, refurbishment and ongoing use. They include King George Square, ANZAC Square, Queen Street Mall, Chinatown Mall, Brunswick Street Mall, Riverstage and Brisbane’s cemeteries. In recent years, we have worked with the community to refresh and reuse different types of public space, bringing life to laneways and creating subtropical boulevards.

Many privately-owned property developments also feature areas with high levels of public pedestrian access, typically at ground level. Riverside Centre Plaza and Riparian Plaza in Eagle Street are good examples, providing access to the Brisbane River and the Riverwalk pedestrian pathway.
Where we are

Council has taken a proactive approach to access and inclusion in the public spaces for which we are responsible. Our efforts have to take into account challenges presented by Brisbane’s hilly topography, subtropical climate and natural environment. Over the years, our approach has been to adopt design solutions that work with the terrain and not resort to engineered solutions that require extensive regrading and consequent impact on site character, vegetation and soils.

In 1989, refurbishments to the Queen Street Mall led to the installation of the first Braille trail in Australia. This has evolved into a growing network of tactile trails in the CBD that we are continuing to extend. One of the challenges with these trails is keeping them clear of obstacles and there have been instances of users bumping into people standing on a tactile trail or tripping on objects placed on or beside the trail. Council officers ask people who congregate on the trail to move off it and we continue to promote Braille trail safety.

We have also been careful with the placement of our street furniture and infrastructure including seating and bins, to enable people with low vision to use ‘shorelining’ techniques to navigate the pedestrian environment along the front walls of buildings. However, many areas that appear to be public are actually private property and business owners can place hazards there that are beyond our control.

As part of the recent City Centre Masterplan, the new subtropical pedestrian boulevard that opened in late 2010 at the Eagle Street end of Queen Street demonstrates good practice in accessible design.

Where we want to be

We want all Brisbane residents and visitors to enjoy moving through and gathering in Brisbane’s public spaces, appreciating our unique subtropical outdoors lifestyle in a variety of urban settings.

Our objectives

1. Design and construct new public spaces and refurbishments to showcase the best in universal access and inclusion.

2. Review public space design guidelines to provide for universal access and inclusion.

3. Develop guidelines and systems to keep our public spaces free of hazards.
Existing actions that will continue

**Queen Street Mall Braille trail.** We will continue to maintain and extend the Braille trail in continuing dialogue with key user groups and promote awareness and safe use of the trail by the general public.

**Public space network.** We will continue to manage and upgrade our network of public spaces with accessibility as one of the key considerations.

**Suburban Centre Improvement Projects.** We will continue to upgrade suburban public spaces in local shopping areas across Brisbane with inclusive urban design including more accessible pedestrian infrastructure and facilities.

**Public art.** We will continue to commission public artworks that celebrate the diversity of the Brisbane community including themes of access and inclusion.

**Riverstage wheelchair platform.** In 2010, we installed a new platform area for patrons in wheelchairs attending concerts and events at Riverstage. This platform has greatly enhanced the viewing of the stage for these patrons and has improved access to toilets and other facilities at the Riverstage complex. We will continue to promote the availability of this new facility.

New initiatives or extensions

3.2.1 **Specification for temporary fencing.** We recognise that some common forms of temporary fencing (e.g. chain mesh with protruding footings) can be difficult to see and can present tripping and entrapment hazards for people who use canes for wayfinding. We will work with relevant community and advocacy organisations to develop guidelines and specifications for these situations. We will investigate the potential to make these guidelines a condition of development through development assessment, a condition of hire for events at Council owned venues and enforceable under local laws.

3.2.2 **Review of public space design guidelines.** We will review our public space design guidelines to ensure they provide for universal access and inclusion, and explore potential integration of universal access and inclusion into Brisbane Streetscape Design Guidelines or other appropriate planning documents.

3.2.3 **Guidelines for temporary blockage of tactile ground surface indicator (TGSI) trails.** We recognise that temporary blockage of TGSI trails is sometimes unavoidable (e.g. when construction sites or events infrastructure encroaches within one metre either side of TGSIs). We will work with relevant community and advocacy organisations to develop guidelines for these situations.

3.2.4 **Protocol for maintaining the integrity of TGSI trails.** Once installed, TGSI trails are often compromised by subsequent construction or maintenance works. We will develop a new protocol to address responsibilities and mandates for the various authorities and providers carrying out maintenance and upgrade works where TGSI trails have been installed.
3.2.5 **Braille trail public awareness campaign.** We will develop creative new materials and events to promote awareness and good trail protocol among the general public.

3.2.6 **Pathways at Mount Gravatt Cemetery.** We will investigate the feasibility of installing concrete pathways that meet access standards in certain monumental areas at Mount Gravatt Cemetery.

3.2.7 **Calm, quiet, chill-out places in public space.** We will investigate good practice to create safe public spaces which balance the need for surveillance (using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles) with the needs of people who experience sensory overload. We will trial portable design solutions, seek feedback on their suitability and effectiveness and incorporate what we learn into our event planning and urban design work.

3.2.8 **Drinking bowls for companion animals.** Where appropriate we will install more animal drinking bowls on public water bubblers and taps in public space and, in particular, respond to requests from regular visitors to particular sites. We will add companion animal drinking bowls to our UMS Standard Drawings to be referenced in design, planning and development assessment materials. We will promote the location of these bowls on the Access Brisbane website, to partner organisations, and make their location available for digital mobile device applications.

### 3.3 Local meeting places where you can connect with your community

Brisbane residents have access to a broad range of community facilities providing recreational, social and cultural opportunities in suburbs across the city. Council is responsible for most local and district community facilities in Brisbane including:

- 20 public swimming pools and aquatic centres
- 14 suburban community halls that are available for groups and families
- 550 community leases such as sports and recreation clubs, community arts groups, Meals on Wheels and seniors’ centres
- outdoor recreation facilities, sports fields and hard courts across the city and suburbs.

Other important local facilities used for community purposes are owned by the Queensland Government (state schools, TAFEs and community health centres), universities, religious organisations, sports, recreation and service clubs and community organisations.
Where we are

Council is committed to providing accessible and inclusive community facilities. Our challenge is that our portfolio of community facilities includes many old community halls, scouts huts, guides huts, sports clubs and other structures that are either partly or fully inaccessible.

Of the 20 public swimming pools Council owns around the city, nine have access ramps and four have pool access hoists to assist in lifting people in and out of the pool. In 2009 and 2010, new pools at Runcorn, Mt Gravatt East and Colmslie were built with high levels of accessibility, and the upgrades to the Manly and Ithaca pools have included new access ramps into the pools.

The vast majority of Council’s community facilities are leased to community groups across the city and are managed by volunteers who have different levels of appreciation and understanding of the diverse needs within the community.

Council’s community grants fund non-profit organisations to upgrade their facilities. Some recent examples have had a focus on access and inclusion:

- Community Initiatives Resource Association, West End, construction of a ramp to provide access to community centre
- Women’s Legal Service, Annerley, building renovation provided for disability access
- PCYC Bayside Branch, Lota, installing a ramp for the hydrotherapy pool
- Autism Queensland Inc, Brighton, developing a sensory-based recreational space.

Where we want to be

We want Brisbane residents and visitors to connect with one another in local community halls, sports clubs, swimming pools and other community meeting places.

Our objectives

1. Ensure all Council owned community facilities are accessible, fit for purpose and have good asset and risk management plans that maintain public safety.
2. Provide accessible signage regarding facilities and services, and documentation in accessible formats using clear and concise language.
3. Improve staff awareness of access and inclusion issues, enhance their skills to relate to users with different types of needs and provide advice to stakeholders enquiring about accessibility.
4. Encourage inclusion of all community members in a variety of activities through proactive programming.
5. Provide leadership through practical good practice examples, where appropriate, to demonstrate to other community facility owners the value of providing access and inclusion features over and above the minimum standards.
Existing actions that will continue

Audit and retrofitting community halls. We will continue to audit and retrofit community halls to enhance accessibility.

Accessible public swimming pools. As we build new or upgrade existing swimming pools, we will continue to include improvements to access. We will review our swimming pool asset management plans and prioritise capital works that address access issues.

Planning more accessible facilities. When planning for construction or refurbishment of our local community facilities, we will continue to focus on design for universal access (and, where appropriate, particular accessibility features to make them fit-for-purpose) from the initial briefing through to final specifications and operational arrangements.

Facilities grants. We will continue to provide community grants for non-profit organisations to upgrade their facilities and over the life of this plan will prioritise allocations to projects with a focus on enhancing access and inclusion.

New initiatives or extensions

3.3.1 Community facilities – accessibility audits. We will equip staff with an easy-to-use audit tool (developed in New initiative 3.1.2) to assess the accessibility of our community facilities when they do regular condition audits and look at practical ways to improve accessibility.

3.3.2 Promoting access in community leased facilities. We will work with community organisations that lease our community facilities and support them to understand the benefits of accessible facilities and to take appropriate action to be more inclusive in their programs.

3.3.3 Supporting community lessees to provide access enhancements. When groups that lease our community facilities want to renovate or make improvements, we will review their plans to ensure they provide appropriately for universal access and provide advice, information and support to enhance access and inclusion.

3.3.4 Access awareness training. We will develop and deliver a training program for people who manage our community facilities on enhancing accessibility and inclusion of their facilities.

3.3.5 Review provision of heated pools across Brisbane. We will review the demand for heated pools for therapy and, if necessary, plan for expanded provision over the life of this plan in partnership with other providers such as Queensland Health.
3.4 Parks and natural areas where you enjoy the great outdoors

Brisbane’s parks and natural areas form part of an extensive network of open space located across the city. These parks and natural areas support Brisbane’s biodiversity, provide a variety of experiences for the community and contribute to achieving many elements of Council’s Living in Brisbane 2026 vision.

Where we are

Council plans for, develops, manages and maintains an extensive and expanding network of more than 2000 parks and natural areas. These cover an area of almost 6000 hectares of parks and more than 7700 hectares of bushland and wetland.

Council’s aim is to create a playful, friendly city for everyone which builds on the goals of Living in Brisbane 2026. The play opportunities and experiences provided in Brisbane’s parks and natural areas are being tailored to park type and park hierarchy with accessible and inclusive designs being focused mainly in the district, metropolitan and regional parks. Design parameters balance a number of factors including recreation, cultural and environmental values, safety and risk, access and equity, community benefits and facility functions.

There are challenges in delivering completely accessible and all inclusive facilities in our parks and natural areas - particularly in relation to the design, installation and maintenance of facilities which have to be not only functional for their purpose but also cost effective and easy to access, use and maintain. In spite of these challenges, Council provides many accessible facilities in parks and natural areas.

- Connected and accessible pathways (e.g. the foreshores parks running from Brighton to Shorncliffe and Wynnum to Lota, Boondall Wetlands walking track, City Botanic Gardens and New Farm Park). The very popular Mount Coot-tha Botanic Gardens have multiple pathways linked to a main, accessible car park in a challenging topography.

- Creative and inclusive interpretive signage at the Mountains to Mangroves Senses Trail at the Downfall Creek Bushland Centre in McDowall.

- Accessible recreational activities and facilities:
  - fishing, sailing, canoeing and other water based activities at Shorncliffe Pier and Cameron Rocks, Hamilton
  - facilities on the Brisbane River at Orleigh Park in West End with ‘Sailability’ programs
  - birdwatching along tracks and trails and in birdhides located throughout Brisbane at Karawatha and Toohey Forests, Boondall Wetlands, Tinchi Tamba Wetland Reserve and Wynnum Mangrove Boardwalk
  - a range of outdoor fitness equipment at several parks including Seventh Brigade Park in Chermside and Maisie Dixon Park in Eight Miles Plains
  - picnic and play facilities and public toilets in many parks and natural areas.
• Inclusive participation activities and educational programs are offered throughout the parks and natural area network (e.g. Active Parks, Growing Old and Living Dangerously, Real Adventure Women, Learning Naturally – Brisbane Botanic Gardens Schools Program, Habitat Brisbane and Get Wild).

• Picnic shelters located close to car parks are designed for people in wheelchairs to be able to access the shelter and sit at the picnic table.

Many existing park facilities were built to the regulations of the day. Consequently, a lot of older facilities and furniture is not compliant with current legislative requirements. Council is addressing this through a recently approved suite of designs for accessible picnic tables that are being used in new facilities and in refurbishment of existing park furniture across the city.

There are some parks and natural areas where accessible facilities are provided but may not be accessible by a continuous path of travel.

Where we want to be

We want all Brisbane residents and visitors to experience Brisbane as a safe, attractive and shady city where they enjoy our subtropical lifestyle including opportunities for leisure, learning and recreation in our parks and natural areas.

Our objectives

1. Provide facilities that enable people of all ages and abilities to play together in well maintained and safe environments.

2. Provide creative interpretive signage and communication technologies that engage and inform everyone about park and natural area values including historical, environmental and cultural significance.

3. Provide and maintain easy to use park furniture and facilities, using our asset management plans to increase access and compliance over time as we install new or replace existing furniture and facilities.

4. Design park tracks, pathways, landscaping, furniture and facilities that provide appropriate accessibility in response to site-specific characteristics in Brisbane’s often challenging hilly topography.

Limitations on what Council can provide in terms of services and facilities in parks and natural areas will be determined by many factors including cost, function, topography, location and values. Council’s policy and planning tools will be used to assist in making these determinations as not every park and natural area in Brisbane will provide for, or cater for, every individual.
Existing actions that will continue

Design and provide accessible park furniture, pathways and facilities. We will continue to innovate in design and provision of facilities that make it easy for everyone to enjoy our parks and natural areas. Council has developed and documented standard specification drawings for park furniture and facilities that meet Australian Human Rights Commission’s advice on Disability Discrimination Act compliance. We will continue to develop these specification drawings and make them available on our website.

Strategic asset management. We will continue to manage our parks and natural areas in accordance with strategic asset management plans that address asset life cycles and statutory obligations for accessibility including progressively replacing old picnic facilities with more sustainable materials and more accessible designs.

Master planning. We will continue to engage people with access constraints in consultation processes when we develop master plans for parks and we will continue to include access and inclusion features in the design of new parks and refurbishment of existing parks with a particular focus on our district and metropolitan level parks.

New initiatives or extensions

3.4.1 Access audits. We will include accessibility components into our regular condition audits of toilets, barbecues, picnic facilities, playgrounds and car parks in parks and dog off leash areas to identify instances where they are not accessible and prioritise their upgrades within existing schedules.

3.4.2 Prioritising paths of travel to public toilets. We will conduct an audit of access to public toilets and develop a schedule for design and construction of accessible pathways to toilets, where reasonable, within existing rehabilitation schedules.

3.4.3 Designing inclusive play experiences. As we plan, design and install new and revitalised play experiences in our district, metropolitan and regional parks, we will ensure they cater for all ages and abilities. This new initiative will not be limited to providing playgrounds but will also include a holistic approach to park upgrade or development. We will engage families and groups who will use these facilities in the design of these play experiences.

3.4.4 Desired standards of service and design specifications for all abilities play spaces. We will work with Brisbane stakeholder groups to agree on a set of criteria defining all abilities play spaces, document these as desired standards of service and design specifications, negotiate a memorandum of understanding with key stakeholders and then work to implement the standards and specifications with park upgrades over the life of this plan.

3.4.5 Promoting inclusive play experiences. We will list the parks that have accessible and inclusive play experiences on the Council website.
3.4.6 **Track standards.** We will ensure all new tracks are graded and signed to indicate difficulty (to *Australian Standards*), providing more information about risk and required level of experience and mobility.

3.4.7 **Interpretive trails.** We will implement technologies and signage for interpretive trails in parks and natural areas that enhance use and experience, where possible. In particular, we will link them to education extension programs and environment centres where relevant.

3.4.8 **Online bushwalking.** We will investigate the creation of online virtual walking tracks that communicate the experience of bush walking to people who might not easily access the bush and encourage them to go on an online bushwalk themselves.

3.4.9 **Recreational fishing.** We will work with peak bodies, government agencies, recognised clubs and organisations to evaluate current extent, usage and access of recreational fishing opportunities within Brisbane’s open space network to inform future planning and management.
“I like this photograph because it depicts the struggle that people with a disability, no matter what the disability, face each day, and at times that struggle can be mammoth like the sphere. Ordering a meal, getting from point A to point B, this all needs planning and our lives are rarely able to be spontaneous.”

Heather Beech, Senior Contact Centre Consultant, Customer Services, Brisbane City Council 22
4. Vibrant, informed and caring communities

The social, cultural, physical and environmental wellbeing of our diverse communities is critical to maintaining our current high standard of living in Brisbane. Council provides a variety of community programs giving opportunities for all Brisbane residents to:

1. experience the support of inclusive, safe and diverse communities
2. be part of a vibrant arts and cultural scene
3. stay active and healthy
4. appreciate Council’s libraries as hubs for lifelong learning
5. contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly city.

What you have told us

When we asked for feedback on the draft plan, we learned about six key community concerns related to Council’s community programs. A response to each concern has been identified in the relevant section of this plan.

• **Need for monitoring, reporting and partnerships to inform implementation of this plan.** Brisbane’s access advocates are keen to see Council develop mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and partnerships to inform the implementation of this plan. Transparency is important, and Council should put in place a reporting process that is open and accountable, identifies annual priorities and provides feedback along the way.

• **Reluctance to access mainstream community services and programs.** Many people with a disability experience ‘siloing’ of services and opportunities. Many do not access services and programs run by mainstream community organisations as their experience is that these do not meet their needs so they gravitate to specialised disability services and programs. Some mainstream organisations, on the other hand, are keen to know how to make their services and programs more accessible and inclusive.

• **Social isolation is significant for people with a disability from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.** Many people with a disability who do not speak English well are in a position of multiple disadvantage, often socially isolated in their own communities and unable to access Council programs or disability support services. Some disability support organisations, on the other hand, are keen to promote themselves to a wider range of cultural groups.
• **Many arts and cultural events are not inclusive.** Over 40% of survey respondents agree they are able to easily attend Council’s recreational and cultural activities but this drops to 26% for respondents with disabilities. More than 37% of respondents do not attend any events, increasing to 43% of those with disabilities. There are several reasons for this.
  » Many are held at inaccessible sites lacking accessible toilets.
  » Some ticketed events do not honour the Companion Card.
  » There is usually little information about how events have been made accessible.
  » Wayfinding in a crowded and chaotic temporary festival environment with uneven gravel paths is often very challenging.
  » People who experience sensory overload need quiet ‘time-out’ space to get away from the intensity that may trigger behavioural issues.

• **Limited awareness of Companion Cards.** Council has not had a consistent approach to the Companion Card which provides free entry to venues for the card owner’s companion. Some of our venues have been proactive while others have not and there is limited awareness in the community of the benefits available through these cards.

• **Brisbane lacks accessible short-stay accommodation.** There are not enough accessible hotel rooms and holiday apartments in Brisbane. Many that advertise themselves as accessible are not and there is not a reliable source of information for visitors who often show up and find they can’t get over a step-up entry or through a narrow doorway. There is a growing international market in accessible hospitality and travel but people coming to Brisbane for business have had to stay on the Gold Coast.

**4.1 Experiencing the support of inclusive, safe and diverse communities**

Brisbane is known for its relaxed lifestyle, community feel and friendly atmosphere. However, we face many challenges in maintaining our sense of community including rapid growth, difficult economic conditions, increasing cultural diversity, an ageing population and limited access to services and affordable housing for people who are disadvantaged.

Council has a vision for a friendly and safe city, with strong, welcoming, caring and inclusive communities. We have a clear local government role in promoting social cohesion and connection and supporting our diverse communities to play an active part in the life of Brisbane.
Council shares the responsibility for social inclusion initiatives with partners including other spheres of government, community groups and organisations and the business sector. These partnerships strengthen our ability to monitor and respond to emerging needs and provide ways for us to advocate for improved services and programs.

The Queensland and Commonwealth governments have primary responsibility for the provision of welfare and community services including family support, child safety, public housing and the disability service system.

The Queensland Government also has primary responsibility for supporting carers and has introduced both the Carer Business Discount Card providing discounts and incentives from participating businesses and the Companion Card providing free entry for carers at venues that honour the card.

**Where we are**

Council has a high level of awareness of the social and community needs of people with a disability. We are aware that key Queensland and Commonwealth government funding programs are not meeting the demand for support services and many people and their families and carers are under personal and financial stress from the responsibility of care. We will continue to advocate for appropriate levels of funding to meet the needs of our growing population.

The role in which Council makes a significant contribution to community wellbeing in Brisbane is supporting local community groups to implement their own initiatives to meet local needs. Current community projects with a focus on inclusion:

- Men’s Sheds in Carina, Mount Gravatt, Nundah, Enoggera, Sandgate, Toowong, Bardon, Ashgrove
- supporting new community spaces at Acacia Ridge, Bowen Hills, Stafford and Bracken Ridge
- establishing new community centres in Kenmore, Jamboree, Woolloongabba and Fortitude Valley
- supporting groups to set up community gardens in Banyo, Geebung, Kelvin Grove, Toowong, Coorparoo, Holland Park and Wynnum
- supporting interagency networks that coordinate services across community and human service organisations
- supporting National Neighbour Day every March
- supporting Yes We Care initiative to assist older people outside of Home and Community Care (HACC) program with home and garden maintenance using volunteers
- supporting local groups to raise awareness in Mental Health Week.
Council’s community grants fund non-profit organisations to build their capacity and run projects responding to local community issues. Some recent examples have had a focus on access and inclusion.

- CO AS IT Italian-Australian Welfare Association encourages socially isolated Italian Australians with language difficulties and mental health issues to connect with mainstream activities.
- West End Family Care Services creates and self-publishes online the digital stories of people with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
- Mantle Housing Limited develops the strategic and governance capacity required to become a long-term housing provider for people with schizophrenia.
- The Grove Uniting Church runs the Tuesday living room project for people with intellectual disabilities.

We also support social enterprises that provide opportunities and employment for long-term unemployed people including people with a disability.

- Nundah Community Enterprises Co-op creates sustainable employment and training opportunities for people with mental illness, learning difficulties or intellectual disabilities through coffee shop, catering and parks maintenance enterprises.
- Endeavour Foundation operates Council’s Tip Shop at Acacia Ridge, supporting people with a disability in selling quality used, recycled and second-hand products salvaged before going to landfill.
- Northey Street City Farm demonstrates environmental and economic sustainability in a healthy, diverse and supportive community, hosting many programs that are accessible and inclusive.

In addition to these community partnerships, there are several Council community programs that provide direct benefits for people who experience disadvantage related to illness and disability.

- Our Visible Ink youth spaces are used regularly by groups supporting young people with a disability and are a key site for integration with young people from all sorts of backgrounds.
- The Resilience Partnership with the Child and Youth Mental Health Service is training frontline Council staff and community workers in mental health first aid, prevention and early intervention.
- Homeless Connect events, Public Space Liaison Officers and affordable housing programs support some of Brisbane’s most vulnerable people, many with mental health issues and other disabilities. We also liaise with Brisbane’s street vans that provide food and support for people on the streets.
• The Domestic Blitz pilot project assists people who are faced with Public Health Orders due to domestic squalor and compulsive hoarding.

• The new Access Improvement Program allocates all money collected from fines issued to people parking illegally in disability zones to initiatives that improve access to services and facilities.

Our Indigenous and Multicultural team also build networks with grassroots community groups across the city to ensure that our services and projects are inclusive of all people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Where we want to be

We want all Brisbane residents and visitors to experience Brisbane as a socially cohesive and connected city, where people show willing friendship and compassion by helping others, welcoming new residents, taking care of people who are disadvantaged, celebrating cultural diversity and holding high regard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Our objectives

1. Be well informed and responsive to the needs of people with a disability and their families and carers, and well connected with stakeholder groups across the city.

2. Support local community initiatives and broker partnerships with community groups, businesses and other levels of government to respond to access and inclusion challenges.

3. Support social enterprises that provide employment opportunities for people who face barriers in the labour market.

4. Monitor emerging needs of people with a disability and their carers at a local community level and advocate for appropriate Queensland and Commonwealth government service responses.

5. Liaise with Brisbane’s diverse communities to identify and overcome barriers preventing people from accessing Council information and services.

Existing actions that will continue

Disability Partnerships Officer. We will continue the Disability Partnerships role to:

- seed innovative responses and strategies
- advocate for Queensland and Commonwealth government services
- ensure legislative requirements are met for accessible public infrastructure and the pedestrian environment
- provide education and guidance within Council to meet the obligations of the Disability Discrimination Act
• provide information on disability access in the built environment

• facilitate access and inclusion initiatives across Council.

**Access Improvement Program.** We will continue to allocate fines for parking infringements in disability parking zones to initiatives that improve access to Council services and facilities.

**Visible Ink youth spaces.** Our Visible Ink youth spaces will continue to provide opportunities for a wide range of young people including individuals and groups who have disabilities. Anyone who wants to attend a Visible Ink program is invited to contact us to discuss their support needs and we will do our best to make sure they can participate.

**The Resilience Partnership.** This partnership with Child and Youth Mental Health Service will continue training frontline Council staff and community workers in mental health first-aid, prevention and early intervention.

**Community development projects.** Community development officers will continue to support community groups and local networks to implement their own initiatives to meet local needs.

**Indigenous employment linkages.** We will continue helping employment organisations that support people with a disability to connect and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

**Support for former refugees who have experienced trauma.** We will continue to support former refugee communities in Brisbane and, in particular, those who have mental health difficulties as a result of trauma experiences prior to settlement. We will continue to raise awareness among our uniformed local laws officers about issues that may arise when they interact with people who have been traumatised by bad experiences overseas with military or police officers.

**Public Space Liaison Officers.** We will continue to patrol parks, malls and other public spaces, connecting with people who are sleeping rough, many of whom are living with mental health issues and other disabilities, and assisting them to find accommodation and access services.

**Social enterprise and social procurement.** We will continue to support social enterprises providing opportunities for people who face barriers in the labour market.

**Homeless Connect.** We will continue to host a friendly and welcoming event where people who are homeless can access services and support.

**Men’s Sheds.** We will continue to support the new Men’s Shed groups in Brisbane to provide safe, supportive and friendly environments for men of all ages to gather, volunteer, work and seek fellowship with other like-minded people.

**Disaster management and recovery.** We will continue to consider the particular needs of vulnerable people in our disaster management planning and coordination with the Queensland Government and in our role in recovery after extreme weather and other disaster events. We have recently updated the *Brisbane Disaster Management Plan* to incorporate lessons learned in the January 2011 floods.
New initiatives or extensions

4.1.1 Lord Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Access and Ageing. We will establish a Lord Mayor’s Advisory Committee on Access and Ageing to provide advice to Council on the implementation of this plan and the Seniors Strategy 2012-2017.

4.1.2 Access and Inclusion Partnership Grants. We will establish a community grants program to provide funding to community organisations for one-off projects to support Council-community partnerships in the implementation of this plan. We will encourage mainstream community organisations to apply for projects making their programs more accessible and inclusive.

4.1.3 Feasibility study on Brisbane Mobility Centre. We will conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a mobility centre to provide access to mobility aids in the central business district and investigate the potential for partnerships with existing providers and satellite sites in other locations across the city.

4.1.4 Recharge Scheme. We will investigate the feasibility of establishing a recharge scheme providing publicly accessible power points in Council buildings, community facilities and supportive local businesses across the city for people to recharge their electric chairs and scooters.

4.1.5 Carer Business Discount Card. We will encourage business units across Council to sign onto the new Queensland Government Carer Discount Card, providing discounts on fees and other incentives for carers.

4.1.6 Honouring and promoting Companion Cards. We will develop a consistent approach to honouring the Companion Card and be proactive in promoting its benefits to Brisbane residents and visitors.

4.1.7 Overcoming language barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse people. We will disseminate information on Council access and inclusion initiatives to culturally and linguistically diverse communities through avenues such as 4EB Radio and community networks, organisations and associations. In response to community feedback, we will publish a factsheet in a range of community languages promoting Council’s access and inclusion programs and distribute it through community organisations and bicultural community workers. We will also provide the fact sheet online in Auslan.

4.1.8 Proactive engagement of Indigenous Australian and culturally and linguistically diverse people. We will meet with groups and organisations that provide services and advocacy for people with a disability from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and invite them to participate in Council forums, networks and consultation processes.
4.1.9 **Online information on accessible accommodation.** The Access and Inclusion Partnership Grants will provide an opportunity for Brisbane community groups to develop a project auditing short-stay accommodation in Brisbane, publishing the information online and providing business owners with information about the benefits and practicalities of making their accommodation accessible.

4.2 **Enjoying Brisbane’s vibrant arts and culture scene**

Brisbane is a creative city with diverse and accessible arts and cultural programs and a growing creative industries sector. Council has a vision for a community that is innovative and creative, with opportunities to actively participate in the cultural life of our diverse and vibrant city.

Council owns Brisbane Powerhouse, Museum of Brisbane and Riverstage, major venues that host international performances and exhibitions, and also provide opportunities for diverse community participation in cultural activities. Council is a partner in signature city festivals including Brisbane Festival, Queensland Music Festival, Peaks to Points, Brisbane Writers’ Festival, Brisbane International Film Festival, Buddha’s Birthday, Valley Fiesta, Chinese New Year and August Moon festivals, as well as more than 40 local community festivals.

Council’s main role is to support local festivals and events, public performances, young and emerging artists, public art and community arts projects across the city and suburbs that express Brisbane’s cultural life and creativity and animate our public spaces. We work in partnership with local community and arts organisations.

**Where we are**

Council’s mainstream arts and culture programs have been implemented by event producers and community cultural development workers who have a personal and professional commitment to inclusion, reflecting the strong support for inclusion that is an essential feature of Brisbane’s arts and culture scene.

Brisbane Powerhouse is our leading arts performance venue and often provides programming that is accessible and celebrates inclusion. The Museum of Brisbane explores Brisbane’s people, places, communities and stories. The award winning *Remembering Goodna* exhibition recognised the social history of one of Brisbane’s mental health institutions.

Council’s Community Grants program provides funding to local non-profit community groups to promote creativity, culture or the arts. Several recent projects have had an access and inclusion focus:

- **Artist Citizens**, an exhibition showcasing the works of artists with mental illness
- Cerebral Palsy League of Queensland, theatre workshops for young people with and without disabilities, culminating in the *Screech* theatrical production
- Deaf Services Queensland, holiday arts workshops for teenagers
• Artrageous Community Arts Centre, photographic project and exhibition for seniors and people with a disability
• Queensland Association for the Deaf, Deaf Festival 2009
• Sunshine Welfare and Remedial Association, musical theatre adaptation of the screenplay of ‘Grease’.

We take on board community feedback that many arts and cultural events are not inclusive and will work to address these issues over the life of this plan.

Where we want to be

We want all Brisbane residents and visitors to experience a city that is innovative and creative where they can actively participate in a range of cultural and arts programs that foster inclusion across Brisbane’s diverse communities.

Our objectives

1. Be an inspirational leader, working in a range of cultural and arts partnerships that foster inclusion.
2. Support Brisbane artists who have a disability to express themselves and find an audience for their work.
3. Make our festivals, events and community celebrations more accessible and welcoming for everyone.

Existing actions that will continue

Museum of Brisbane. The Museum of Brisbane will continue to have an inclusive approach in its exhibitions, installations and events celebrating the communities and culture of Brisbane.

Creative Sparks and Community Grants. We will continue to provide funding to local artists and non-profit community groups to promote creativity, culture and the arts – encouraging applications over the life of this plan for projects with a focus on access and inclusion.

City Entertainment program. We will continue to provide free concerts in accessible venues around Brisbane.

Lord Mayor’s Young and Emerging Artists Fellowships. We will continue to support young and emerging Brisbane artists and arts workers aged between 17 and 30 who wish to join national or international training and development programs – encouraging applications from artists with disabilities or whose work has an access and inclusion focus.

Inclusive Community Arts Activities. We will continue to support inclusive community arts activities to facilitate creative learning experiences that bring together diverse groups of people in highly accessible and supportive environments. These activities will feature artists and arts workers with disabilities, adding to the numbers in Brisbane with skills and experience in facilitating accessible and inclusive creative processes.
**New initiatives or extensions**

4.2.1 **Museum of Brisbane carers’ exhibition.** The Museum of Brisbane will schedule an exhibition exploring the experiences of carers in Brisbane and celebrating their contribution to the life of the city.

4.2.2 **Photo exhibitions.** We will continue to use photography or other creative media to raise awareness of the experience of disability in Brisbane and celebrate International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

4.2.3 **New guidelines to develop a consistent approach to events.** We will establish new guidelines for Council events (building on the Green Events guidelines being developed in 4.5.3) to ensure that different work units take a consistent approach to delivering events that are accessible and inclusive.

4.2.4 **Accessible and inclusive festivals.** We will make implementation of the accessible events guidelines a condition of Council funding for signature city festivals (e.g. Brisbane Festival, Valley Fiesta, Queensland Music Festival and Brisbane International Film Festival). We will encourage the suburban community and multicultural festivals we support to adopt these guidelines and work with them to enhance their capacity to implement the guidelines.

**4.3 Staying active and healthy**

Brisbane is an active and healthy city and Council provides facilities and programs that support a wide range of sport, leisure and recreational activities.

Our Active and Healthy programs offer a wide variety of recreational activities in locations across the city through the Gone Walking, Active Parks, Chill Out, Real Adventure Women, and Growing Older and Living Dangerously programs. In these programs, participants experience new activities (such as canoeing, abseiling, water aerobics, orienteering, martial arts, tai chi and archery).

We also manage some significant public health programs that protect Brisbane’s residents including:

- maintaining food safety standards and licensing food premises through the Eat Safe Brisbane scheme
- pest, rodent and mosquito control
- responding to complaints about dangerous and nuisance animals
- immunisation services for infants, children, seniors and adolescents in partnership with Queensland and Commonwealth governments.

Council also has a clear role to play in the promotion of physical and mental health and wellbeing among Brisbane’s residents through the provision of facilities and coordination of community programs. By partnering at the local level with a range of programs funded by Queensland and Commonwealth governments, Council enhances health outcomes for the people of Brisbane, in particular those who have a disability.
Apart from these programs, local government has a limited role in health. The Queensland and Commonwealth governments are responsible for hospitals, community health centres, medical services, mental health services, dental services, nursing homes, rehabilitation services, home and community care services, respite and home nursing services, home modifications and health-related transport services.

**Where we are**

Council’s public health programs are important for everyone but especially for people with a disability who are more likely to have difficulties with their physical and mental health than Australians without a disability.23

Our immunisation and pest control programs prevent diseases that can result in short and long-term experiences of impairment. For example, in 2009, Brisbane had 29.1 cases of debilitating, mosquito-born Ross River Fever per 100,000 head of population, well below the South East Queensland rate of 40.9.

Council’s response to complaints about dangerous and nuisance animals benefits everyone. It is not common for people to encounter stray animals in streets, parks and public places, testimony to the effectiveness of Council’s animal control services including registration and impounding.

Many of the activities in our Active and Healthy program calendar are suitable for people of different levels of ability and are indicated as such in program promotional materials. Some have been specifically designed for inclusion and some are facilitated by instructors who have a disability. We recognise that with careful choice of venues, facilitators and design of activities, more of these activities could be accessible and inclusive.

Council’s Community Grants program provides funding to local non-profit community groups to promote active and healthy lifestyles. A recent recipient with an access and inclusion focus was the Kidney Support Network’s project to provide information and peer support for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds who have or are at risk of developing chronic kidney disease.

**Where we want to be**

We want all Brisbane residents to have an active and healthy lifestyle, supported in their choice of physical activity, play or sport, and appreciating the value of good health and wellbeing.

**Our objectives**

1. Provide opportunities for everyone to participate in our Active and Healthy programs and increase awareness of these opportunities among Brisbane residents and visitors.

2. Minimise the incidence of debilitating illness and disease.

3. Keep the streets safe from dangerous and nuisance animals.
Existing actions that will continue

**Accessible immunisation programs.** We will continue to provide free immunisations through a mobile team visiting accessible venues to protect our infants, children, young people and seniors.

**Mosquito and pest control.** We will continue to minimise the incidence of debilitating illness through effective mosquito and pest control programs.

**Animal control services.** We will continue to keep the streets safe from dangerous and nuisance animals.

New initiatives or extensions

4.3.1 **Promoting the Active and Healthy program.** We will produce new promotional materials providing improved information on accessibility of these programs and circulate the promotional material through community networks in Brisbane.

4.3.2 **Providing accessible and inclusive Active and Healthy activities.** The next procurement process to establish a panel of suppliers for Council’s Active and Healthy program will include new specifications about the suppliers’ ability to provide accessible and inclusive programs.

4.3.3 **Community grants for physical activity projects.** We will encourage applications from local non-profit groups for physical activity projects with a focus on access and inclusion.

4.4 **Using libraries for lifelong learning**

Council’s public library service is a network of 33 branches in suburbs across Brisbane as well as City Archives and a mobile library. Through this network, over 6 million visitors every year access information and opportunities for lifelong learning, recreational reading and cultural activities that are integral to a smart-thinking, easy-living, world class city.

Membership is free and gives access to physical and online collections and resources, borrowing from one branch and returning to another, recreation and learning programs catering for all ages and skill levels and friendly, skilled library staff.

Where we are

Council’s library services are offered in a variety of formats, physical and online, to allow our customers to choose their preferred mode of access.

Library buildings are physically accessible. All have accessible entrances and internal library space allows for movement of wheelchairs, after hours’ book return chutes are at an accessible height, public toilets in libraries are wheelchair accessible and there are hearing loops in community meeting rooms at Brisbane Square and Kenmore Libraries. However, community members have reported that some library facilities (such as computer desks) are difficult to access for people in larger electric wheelchairs or mobility scooters.
Library collections are available to all library members for recreation and information. The collection includes large print books and magazines, audio books, subtitled DVDs, literacy materials and downloadable content. Health information is available in print and online formats, giving customers, including carers, up-to-date information to assist them with disability or illness. Audio and video materials such as CDs and DVDs are monitored to ensure they are in good condition. We appreciate feedback from customers when they return items to assist us to keep these items in good working order.

Library staff liaise with various community organisations about the needs of their members and organise inclusive responses. For example, in partnership with Deaf Services Queensland we have delivered a four week computer course to members of the Deaf community at the Brisbane Square and Garden City libraries. Libraries employ a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve and library staff have been trained to recognise and respond to their customers’ needs.

In a world increasingly driven by technology, our library services are constantly challenged to keep up with the latest developments in assistive technologies. New electronic and digital formats for books, games and other mixed media are continually emerging with the expectation that these be publicly available and accessible. The challenge for our libraries is to respond to these opportunities within budget and human resource constraints.

**Where we want to be**

We want our libraries to be vibrant hubs where all sorts of lifelong learners share their knowledge in a rich exchange of experience and ideas, relax on their own with a book, attend learning activities and use technologies to create and distribute their own material.

**Our objectives**

1. Continue to build an accessible and inclusive collection featuring materials in new media.
2. Respond to community needs with appropriate services, programs and learning opportunities that are inclusive of everyone.
3. Extend our connections with appropriate stakeholders to create awareness of Council’s library services so that their members come with an anticipation of inclusion when they visit our libraries or access services online.
4. Explore the potential for new technologies to increase accessibility of information, recreational materials and learning opportunities.
Existing actions that will continue

Accessible materials for people to borrow. We will continue to build an accessible collection that includes new large print books and magazines, audio books, downloadable content, subtitled DVDs and literacy materials. We will also continue to work with various groups and organisations who have specific requests to ensure that our collections represent the varied information interests and needs of the community.

Home Library Service. We will continue to deliver library items to people’s homes every 28 days as a free service to Brisbane residents who are unable to visit a library due to illness, disability or frailty. Customers with internet access are able to select and place holds on items which are then included in their usual delivery. Customers who do not have internet access receive items that are selected for them on the basis of their stated preferences.

Audio Book Postal Service. We will continue our service whereby library staff select and post audio books to customers who are legally blind and reside in Brisbane. Postal costs are fully absorbed by Australia Post.

Technology in libraries assisting accessibility. We will continue to provide accessible Information and Communications Technology facilities.

- All public internet computers have an interface that includes on-screen keyboard, narrator and magnifier.
- Customers using library computers have access to adaptive peripherals that include BigKeys keyboards and ergonomic mice.
- Every library has some public computers with ergonomic arms so the position of the monitor can be adjusted to meet the needs of different users.
- Self checkout machines are easy for most people to use and library staff assist customers who are not able to or do not wish to use self checkouts.
- Our eLibCat library catalogue is compatible with screen reader software, whether accessed in the libraries or at home via the internet.
- Free Wi-Fi is available to library members at all branches.
- In response to community feedback, as funding and space permits we intend to make all computer desks for customers accessible by people in large electric wheelchairs.

Inclusive computer classes. We will continue to provide iSkills computer classes at all library branches. No cost is involved and all skill levels are catered for. We will customise computer classes to meet specific needs by arrangement with community organisations.

Ask a Librarian. We will continue this online service which enables customers to email queries and requests to Library Services.

Library programs celebrating diversity. We will continue to offer free programs such as music, talks and seminars including some with a focus on celebrating diversity and inclusion.
New initiatives or extensions

4.4.1 **Partnerships to design inclusive programs.** Over the life of this plan, we will continue to work with Deaf Services Queensland to offer learning opportunities including computer classes and Auslan/English storytimes, work with Vision Australia and others to investigate opportunities for book talks for customers with low vision and explore new opportunities with other community groups.

4.4.2 **New technologies transforming accessibility.** We recognise that new technologies have the potential to transform the accessibility of our library services. Over the life of this plan, we will:

- complete the rollout of ergonomic arms to all public computers in libraries
- rollout new Radio-Frequency Identification technology that will make the process of borrowing materials easier
- install on catalogue computers in libraries the same interface (with on-screen keyboard, narrator and magnifier) that we currently have on our public internet computers
- develop a closer working relationship with Council’s Information and Communication Technology Accessibility Forum and Web Accessibility Working Group to seek advice on proposed new technologies.

4.5 **Adopting a more sustainable lifestyle**

Our vision is that Brisbane will be Australia’s most sustainable city. Council’s role is to show leadership and engage residents and businesses in practical and affordable actions to measurably reduce environmental impacts at an individual, household, neighbourhood, city-wide and regional level.

We work in partnership with the Commonwealth and Queensland governments, schools, businesses and community groups across the city on a range of environmental sustainability programs including:

- Green Heart Homes, Green Heart Schools and Green Heart Community
- Cityswitch Green Office program
- Green Heart displays and events
- EzyGreen energy reduction program.

**Where we are**

Our environmental sustainability program provides information, events and advice which we are working to make more accessible and inclusive.

- Our environment web pages are predominantly text and link-based with a facility to increase font size.
- For printed material, our designers are instructed to follow accessibility standards for fonts, colours and layout. However, we recognise that some of our key documents have been creatively designed to give an ‘organic’ look and feel, and we have not always used designs, colours and fonts that are easy to read.
• All new PDFs of our publications are tagged and in HTML format for ease of access by screen readers. They are also at low resolution for quick download and printing. However, we are circulating some older documents as PDFs that have not been tagged for screen reader access.

• Often our events include an official opening by the Lord Mayor, Chairman or Councillor and keynote speeches or talks on particular topics. We are keen to make these accessible to everyone and when events are by invitation or require a response, requests for auditory or visual assistance will be encouraged on the invitation.

• We make sure we provide sufficient space for movement of prams and wheelchairs when setting up our large sustainability stands and displays. Our staff are aware of diverse community needs when they invite people to engage and interact.

• While the interpretive signs on our stands are always in large print on a white background, our displays do not specifically make provision for people with low vision.

Where we want to be
We want Brisbane residents and visitors to be inspired to work with us to make Brisbane a sustainable city, reducing the city’s carbon footprint, reducing waste, preventing pollution, protecting our wealth of biodiversity and keeping the streets and roadways clean and litter free.

Our objectives
1. Design and publish printed information materials on sustainability which consistently incorporate accessibility design guidelines.

2. Adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) for readability of our web pages including balance of text and design, and provide HTML or Word formats as well as tagged PDFs for documents that are accessed online.

3. Develop guidelines for accessible and inclusive public events, workshops and school visits. This will include a phone call or RSVP to identify the support required by participants which may include ramp access to the stage, designated seating areas, clear signage, accessible information, inclusive presentations, real-time captioning, Auslan interpreters, provision for companion animals, and/or support with wayfinding.

4. Provide an audio loop when speeches are being delivered or talks given over a public address system.

5. Promote our green events to key stakeholder groups through more inclusive media channels, and advertise that Auslan interpreters (as appropriate) will be available at our events.
Existing actions that will continue

Cultivating Community Gardens Grants. We will continue to fund local groups to establish, develop and maintain community gardens on Council owned and other land to bring diverse groups (such as seniors, young people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds) together to make Brisbane more sustainable.

New initiatives or extensions

4.5.1 Provision of Auslan interpreters at Green Heart events. We will use the Auslan interpreter service (action 5.3.7) when major keynote speeches are being delivered or talks given, particularly when the Lord Mayor or a Councillor is making a keynote speech, launching an event or honouring community members.

4.5.2 Hearing loops at major Green Heart events. We will provide a well-signed audio loop area (minimum of 10% of area) when we are using a public address system at public events.

4.5.3 Access and inclusion guidelines for Green Events. We will develop accessibility guidelines to incorporate into our Green Events guidelines and provide copies to our major event organisers as well as Natural Environment and Sustainability staff.

4.5.4 Easy-to-read publications. We will ensure our publications, while maintaining our ‘Eden-style’ approach, also incorporate accessible design standards including standards for fonts, colours and layout and a variety of contact methods (such as web, Contact Centre, mail, interpreter).

4.5.5 Green Heart Schools and Green Heart Community. When organising visits to schools and community groups, we will aim to establish the specific access needs a particular group may have prior to our visit to ensure we bring accessible resources and make inclusive presentations.

4.5.6 Event promotion through inclusive media channels. We will promote the accessibility of our sustainability events through Council and community networks, community radio, Vision Australia Radio and the Vision Australia events website, Deaf Services Queensland, and recorded information on Council’s Contact Centre ‘on hold’ messages. We will advertise when Auslan interpreters and audio loops (as appropriate) will be available at our events. We will develop a contact list using Council’s Redcoal platform for text (SMS) messaging to residents who are Deaf or have hearing loss.
“As a deaf person, access to new technology has made my life easier. This includes the internet (e.g. for enquiries and paying bills), digital TV (for subtitles), smart phones (SMS and visual features) and the infrastructure to support this.

Local government should maximise use of technology to ensure access to services that is suitable to all people … and continue to ensure their cities are attractive places for investment in digital and communications infrastructure so that we can all continue to enjoy the benefits.”

Peter Kuras, Senior Officer-Engineer, Water Resources, Brisbane City Council
5. Your Council, working with you

Council is an open, accountable and transparent local government committed to responsibly managing the city on behalf of its residents.

Our customer service and governance programs provide opportunities for all Brisbane residents to:

1. be an active citizen in an inclusive democracy
2. have a say on the work we do that matters to you
3. communicate and easily do business with us
4. understand how local laws, rules and procedures enhance access and inclusion
5. keep Brisbane clean, recycle waste and breathe clean air
6. apply for Council jobs and potentially work in a disability confident organisation
7. know that rates, fees and charges have been well used to purchase facilities, systems and services that are accessible and inclusive.

What you have told us

When we asked for feedback on the draft plan, we learned about seven key community concerns in relation to Council’s customer service and governance programs. A response to each concern has been identified in the relevant section of this plan.

• **Attitudes are a real barrier.** Many of the biggest access and inclusion issues in Brisbane in 2011 arise from lack of public awareness and indifferent or discriminatory attitudes. We need to foster a culture of thoughtfulness and an attitude of respect in the wider community. People would love opportunities to share stories of their own personal experiences of access and inclusion in Brisbane as a way of raising awareness among the wider community.

• **Supporting visionary thinking and action.** Brisbane is a reasonably progressive city but there is a lot to learn from other parts of the world about the latest ways to address access and inclusion issues. We need to continually expose ourselves to international examples of innovation and good practice. Council’s long-term community plan, *Our Shared Vision: Living in Brisbane 2026*, could have a stronger enough focus on universal access and inclusion.

• **Council’s written documents can be too technical and bureaucratic.** There has been a noticeable improvement in recent years but many people still find that Council documents use long sentences and jargon they find hard to understand.

• **Mobile web devices are opening up new possibilities.** Web-enabled mobile devices (including smart phones and tablets) are changing the ways people interact with their environment and communicate with others.
• **People need patient and understanding customer service.** Some people with disabilities have had negative experiences of lack of awareness, understanding and sensitivity in interactions with Council staff. They sometimes feel stigmatised or perceived as being “too hard”. People with speech difficulties or complex communication needs say it is difficult to get someone to listen patiently and put in the time to understand them enough to actually resolve their issue. Many prefer to conduct business with Council via the telephone or website, but have experienced difficulties in communicating their concerns over the telephone and find some online forms and systems inaccessible. It is frustrating when there is a lack of follow-up and they have to keep chasing a response.

• **There are new ways of meeting complex communication needs.** Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) systems are being increasingly used in schools, speech therapy, support groups and families. They provide new opportunities for people with complex communication needs to interact with others and their environment, especially using smart phones and tablets in interactions with the broader community. There are interesting possibilities for a wide variety of public settings including using the Wi-Fi that Council is installing in parks, libraries and public spaces.

• **Disability parking bays are often full and misused.** People who need them often find disability parking bays full when they get to their destination, particularly at suburban shopping centres and near health facilities. There is a strong perception that the bays are being misused and there are sometimes heated altercations with people who are not entitled to use them.

### 5.1 Being an active citizen in an inclusive democracy

Council’s elected members comprise the Lord Mayor and 26 Councillors. Council elects seven Councillors to chair Standing Committees that oversee Council’s work. Meetings of full Council and most committee meetings are open to the public.

**Where we are**

Council is committed to making local councillors, Council meetings, civic events and elections accessible and inclusive.

• We work with the Electoral Commission of Queensland to deliver transparent, fair and accessible local government elections.

• Council’s meeting chamber is accessible to members of the public and the venue provides for wheelchair access, accessible toilets, Braille signage and headsets.

• Council meeting minutes are made available on the corporate website and are tagged for accessibility. Libraries hold audio recordings of Council meetings.
• Members of the public can apply to speak at Council meetings on matters of public interest. If approved, speakers have a maximum of five minutes, without interruption, and the Lord Mayor or a Committee Chairman may respond on Council’s behalf.

• Civic functions, ceremonial events and receptions (such as Keys to the City presentations, Official Dignitaries Visits Program, citizenship ceremonies and other major community events) are conducted in accessible venues.

Where we want to be
We want all residents to be active citizens of the city and to experience effective, accountable and democratic local governance.

Our objectives
1. Ensure that meetings of Council and committees, civic functions, events and receptions showcase good practice in access and inclusion.
2. Equip councillors to provide a high level of responsiveness to the access and inclusion needs of their constituents.

Existing actions that will continue
Accessible Council meetings. We will continue to conduct meetings of Council and committees in venues with wheelchair access, accessible toilets, Braille signage and headsets.

New initiatives or extensions
5.1.1 Encouraging people with access concerns to speak at Council meetings. In the life of this plan we will encourage people with access concerns to speak at Council meetings on matters of public interest.

5.1.2 Access and inclusion information kit for councillors and ward offices. We will develop an information kit and conduct information sessions for Councillors and ward office staff to support them in their provision of customer service to their constituents.

5.2 Having a say on the work we do that matters to you
Community engagement is an integral part of Council business that varies according to the project and may involve the following:
• providing clear and relevant information to the community
• seeking input, feedback and information from the community about Council directions and initiatives
• actively encouraging participation from a cross-section of the affected community
• providing prompt and comprehensive feedback to the community on the views expressed, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions.

Council’s Community Engagement Centre of Excellence was established in 2005 and given the responsibility of helping us achieve our vision that by 2026 Brisbane will have Australia’s highest level of citizen participation in community action and public decision-making.

Where we are

Council’s community engagement programs are implemented with the support of the Centre of Excellence and we have achieved greater access and inclusion in recent years through several initiatives.

• Many staff from across the organisation have undertaken accredited training using International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) programs and materials which encourage accessible and inclusive community engagement processes.

• We use World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliant online tools that provide people with the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes including online surveys that are clear, effective and accessible for diverse communities.

• Our use of multimedia and online tools moves us beyond consultation on documents and enables participation by people with low vision, people who are housebound and individuals who would prefer to have a say on their own terms, in their own time, and in the comfort of their home.

• Our Community Engagement Policy and Guidelines provide a tool for Council employees and external consultants to use when engaging the community and recognise the importance of including everyone in the community engagement process. However, we would like to include more specific tools for enhancing access and inclusion and provide templates and case studies that demonstrate good practice.

Where we want to be

We want all residents to actively and meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives and the future of Brisbane, feeling confident in having their say and valued in the process.

Our objectives

1. Promote opportunities to have a say through communication channels that will reach people who are typically difficult to reach in engagement processes.

2. Develop guidelines and resource materials for enhancing access and inclusion in engagement processes.
Existing actions that will continue

Accessible engagement activities, materials and techniques. We will continue to use accessible venues for consultation with residents, tailor our activities to minimise obstacles to participation, and use materials and techniques that enhance the participation of all community members.

Online engagement tools and forums. We will continue to use World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) compliant online tools that give everyone an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes.

Your City Your Say newsletter in alternative media formats. We will continue to produce the quarterly Your City Your Say newsletter on CD-ROM and make tagged PDFs available on the corporate website. We will also continue to use accessible font, colour and other design elements for the printed version of the newsletter.

New initiatives or extensions

5.2.1 Opening up communication channels. We will outreach to key community groups and organisations and establish communication channels that their members experience as inclusive.

5.2.2 Tools for enhancing access and inclusion in engagement processes. We will develop tools for enhancing access and inclusion in engagement processes including workshop materials, templates and workshop plans that can be used by work units across the organisation.

5.2.3 Training for enhancing access and inclusion in engagement processes. We will develop and run a short workshop for project officers and facilitators to build skills and awareness in accessible engagement techniques and materials to build upon our existing IAP2 framework and training.

5.2.4 Showcasing good practice in inclusive engagement. We will include good practice examples of inclusive engagement at the Community Engagement Centre of Excellence’s regular showcases.

5.2.5 Highlighting access and inclusion in Council strategic documents. We will highlight access and inclusion in Council’s strategic documents e.g. the corporate plan and annual report, and will give it an appropriate level of priority when we review Council’s long-term community plan, Our Shared Vision: Living in Brisbane 2026.
5.3 Communicating and doing business with us

Council is committed to keeping residents informed and making it easy for conducting business. Brisbane’s Customer Charter documents our values, service standards and what customers can expect from us. It commits us to:

- relate to all people with honesty, fairness, sensitivity and dignity
- meet specified service standards to communicate in a timely manner
- deliver value services
- be clear and open in reporting decisions and actions
- consult on key decisions
- deal with complaints fairly, promptly and professionally.

We currently provide four contact channels for customers: mail, face-to-face, telephone and online. The phone and online channels are a 24-hour a day, seven-day-a-week service. We offer a wide range of payment options including through third party providers.

We also communicate published material in a range of formats including brochures, fact sheets, newsletters, reports, advertisements, billboards, website, Twitter, Facebook, and a new platform for mobile devices.

Where we are

Our Customer Focus Strategy has three principles that provide a strong foundation for accessible and inclusive customer service:

- engagement – understanding and involving customers
- simplicity – making it simple and convenient to deal with Council
- integrity – delivering on established customer service standards.

We are proud of our Contact Centre and have received recognition for its personal customer focus. Contact Centre staff are a diverse and highly professional group who are trained in providing quality customer service for all callers. We encourage diversity and fairness and provide the facilities needed so that staff who have a disability can be comfortable and productive in their workplace. Staff are experienced in using the National Relay Service to communicate with customers who are Deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment but we recognise that this is an outdated technology and are exploring how SMS, email and web-chat technologies could better facilitate communication.

Social networking, multimedia and mobile devices are transforming communication and our digital marketing team, established in 2010, is exploring the potential for using these technologies to make our communication channels more accessible and inclusive.

At the end of 2009, we commissioned Vision Australia to undertake an audit of the corporate website for general accessibility compliance and accessibility of PDF documents. The Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy, endorsed by the Australian Government Information Management Office in 2010, is guiding the way Council’s online environment is shaped. We are evaluating requirements for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) transition and implementation.
Council provides Auslan interpreters to facilitate communication on involved matters and we are developing a new procedure to inform our staff about how to use these services to better meet customer needs.

Our Information and Communications Technology Policy recognises that many Council activities are conducted online, and the importance of ensuring that external customers and internal employees can benefit from the medium.

Where we want to be

We want to be a customer-focused organisation delivering the highest level of service to all Brisbane residents, being responsive, understanding and engaging with people’s needs and proactively managing their expectations. We want to minimise the barriers that make it hard for some members of the community to communicate and do business with Council.

Our objectives

1. Enhance our style guides and guidelines to achieve contemporary good practice in publishing accessible and inclusive information materials.

2. Provide an Information and Communications Technology environment for employees and the community that is as accessible, understandable and useable as possible.

3. Achieve level A compliance of our corporate website with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 by December 2012, and level AA by December 2014 (except guideline 1.2, use of multimedia).

4. Promote and become adept in the day-to-day use of Auslan and other interpreter services.

5. Explore the potential for new technologies to provide innovative ways for customers to communicate with Council.

Existing actions that will continue

Contact Centre National Relay Service interface. Council’s Contact Centre will continue to use the National Relay Service for communicating with customers who are Deaf or have hearing or speech impairments, promoting this channel on Council information materials.

Communication platform for mobile devices. brisbanecity.mobi, Council’s communication platform optimised for all internet enabled mobile devices, was launched in 2010 and opened new communication channels. We will continue to extend the use of the platform so our services are more accessible and inclusive.

Digital marketing. Our Digital Marketing team will continue to explore how to make our communication channels more accessible and inclusive in online, mobile, multimedia and social networking environments.
Corporate website accessibility upgrade. We will continue to take action on the recommendations of the Corporate Website Accessibility Audit undertaken by Vision Australia at the end of 2009 including implementation of consistent guidelines for web content producers across Council.

Web Accessibility Working Group. We will formalise this working group where Council staff working on web access issues across the organisation will continue to coordinate efforts to make our online content accessible and inclusive.

New initiatives or extensions

5.3.1 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 compliance for forms. We recognise we have a legacy of forms in formats that some (particularly older) versions of screen reader software struggle with. Over the life of this plan, we will continue to respond to requests to make particular forms accessible and keep up-to-date with new technologies to make online forms as accessible as possible. Our work units will be encouraged to explore direct assistance as an alternative where the complexities are too great or the costs are prohibitive given the number of users.

5.3.2 WCAG 2.0 compliance for web content. We recognise that we will need people across the organisation to become competent with WCAG 2.0 and will provide information, advice and training to meet staff needs. In particular, we recognise that we have a legacy of non-HTML content on the corporate website and CityWeb (Council’s internal intranet) and will provide alternative display methods for such content over the life of this plan.

5.3.3 Open data for access and inclusion applications. We will make access and inclusion a priority for our Open Data Project. A design competition will encourage innovative applications that enhance awareness and usage of Council facilities by people with complex sensory and communication needs.

5.3.4 Enhancing style guides. Council’s written materials follow writing, web and visual style guides that require the use of easy words, concise sentences, active voice, accessible fonts and uncluttered layout. In the life of this plan, we will enhance these style guides, with a view to incorporating the latest understanding and community feedback about accessible and inclusive communication.

5.3.5 Plain Language Project. We will use the outcomes of the Plain Language Project (a partnership between Council and the University of Queensland in 2011-2012) to create documents that are easy for everyone to understand. We will avoid jargon and bureaucratic wording, replace complex sentences with concise ones, and design and layout our documents to make them as accessible as possible.

5.3.6 Training in creating accessible documents. We will provide information and training to Council staff responsible for producing documents so they understand that design and layout can have a big effect on the accessibility of the documents they produce.
5.3.7 **Auslan and other interpreter services.** Over the life of this plan, we will promote the day-to-day use of Auslan and other interpreter services for communication with customers, and collect information on the usage of these services.

5.3.8 **Webchat or SMS customer interface.** Over the life of this plan, we will investigate and implement an interface for customers to initiate a webchat or SMS communication with our Contact Centre.

5.3.9 **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy review.** We will review accessibility provisions in our ICT Policy and expand current content beyond the online environment. This recognises the importance of an ICT environment for employees and the community that is as accessible, understandable and useable as possible and will ensure adequate provision for accessibility is included in our ICT solutions.

5.3.10 **ICT Accessibility Procedure.** We will develop and adopt a new ICT Accessibility Procedure to guide employees who plan, design and procure ICT goods and services.

5.3.11 **Complex Communication Working Group.** We will establish a Council-community working group to explore how we can use Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) to enhance inclusion for people using our parks, libraries, customer service and community programs.

5.3.12 **Customer Focus and training.** We will bring access advisors in to train our staff to understand and respond positively to the diverse needs of their customers and make this a priority for our Customer Focus program over the life of this plan.

5.3.13 **Public awareness campaigns.** We will work with Queensland and Commonwealth governments and Brisbane community groups supporting their public awareness campaigns that focus on building awareness on access and inclusion issues and preventing discriminatory behaviour.

5.3.14 **Including positive images in Council materials.** We will ensure Council publications and promotional materials support positive perceptions of diversity by including positive images of people with a disability of all cultural backgrounds in corporate publications.
5.4 Understanding how local laws, rules and procedures relate to you

Under the City of Brisbane Act 2010, Council has the authority to make and enforce local laws, and is also responsible for administering some Queensland Government laws.

The local laws include: parking regulations; natural assets (e.g. overgrown land and noxious weeds); animal management; abandoned vehicles; neighbourhood nuisances (e.g. noise, illegal dumping and smoke); camping; health, safety and amenity (e.g. graffiti, abandoned trolleys, community newspapers and junk mail); signage; food hygiene; footpath dining; illegal use of premises; and littering and refuse control. Council continually updates its legislation so that it remains relevant and reflects community concerns, and works to make Council rules and procedures easy for everyone to understand.

The Queensland and Commonwealth governments also have significant legislation that affects people with a disability (e.g. the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dog Act 2009). Council also reviews new legislation proposed by the Queensland and Commonwealth governments and advocates when necessary to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation and the City of Brisbane.

Where we are

Council’s local laws contain many provisions that relate directly to access and inclusion. These include pensioner discounts on rates and other fees and charges. Footpath dining permits and standing vehicle permits are issued with conditions that ensure pedestrian access. When we assess applications from cafes and restaurants and issue footpath dining permits, Council requires that in the central business district clear pedestrian access be maintained.

Caravan park permits require accessible toilets and that a percentage of accommodation is accessible. Entertainment event permits are issued containing conditions to ensure disability access.

We recognise that vehicles parking across footpaths in both residential and commercial neighbourhoods create a significant hazard, particularly with Brisbane’s busy roads and hilly topography.

We have a range of initiatives that support people who, because of their disability, cannot comply with our local laws. For example, while we support initiatives requiring that all swimming pools in Brisbane must be enclosed by fencing that meets with Queensland Government legislation, Council accepts and assesses applications for exemptions where the owner can demonstrate that compliance would affect accessibility for someone with a disability.

We recognise that people with communication difficulties can find interactions with our compliance and enforcement officers difficult. Council strives to ensure that all options are taken to facilitate effective communication to achieve positive outcomes.
Where we want to be

We want to govern the city with local laws that are fair and relevant for everyone, reflect community concerns and support access and inclusion. We want our rules and procedures to be easy for everyone to understand and enforced without causing disadvantage to anyone.

Our objectives

1. Review the terms and conditions we put on permits, where there are access and inclusion implications, and revise our publications to encourage good practice.

2. Raise community awareness of the impacts of blocking footpaths and take action against repeat and recalcitrant offenders.

3. Provide training for our local laws enforcement officers to raise awareness of access and inclusion issues they may encounter and to develop their understanding and skills to respond appropriately.

Existing actions that will continue

**Rate and fee remissions for pensioners.** We will continue to provide pensioner remissions on rates and other fees and charges for people on disability support pensions and carers payments.

**Dog registration concessions.** We will continue to charge lower dog registration fees for people on disability support pensions, and to register guide, hearing and assistance dogs free of charge.

**Conditioned permits.** We will continue to include access and inclusion conditions on our footpath dining, standing vehicle, caravan park and entertainment event permits.

**Dealing with pest birds and plants.** We will continue to accommodate people with a disability by assisting with relocating scrub turkeys and clearing of pest plants.

**Unsightly vegetation.** Council will engage community groups to support people unable to clear unsightly vegetation because of mental illness or other disability.

**Disability exemption for swimming pool fencing.** Council will continue to receive and assess applications for exemption to pool fencing requirement in cases where compliance would prevent a person with a disability from gaining entry to and exiting from the pool enclosure.
New initiatives or extensions

5.4.1 **Awareness training for local laws enforcement staff.** We will develop and implement training for compliance officers to develop their understanding and skills to respond appropriately to access and inclusion issues e.g. to make the best use of interpreters when required or to identify possible mental health issues. This will empower officers to use their discretion when dealing with their customers.

5.4.2 **Revision of Standard Operating Procedures.** We will revise our procedures to take into account key strategies to ensure that no one in the community is disadvantaged.

5.4.3 **Review of publications.** We will review our publications (e.g. Footpath Dining Permit Guide) and, where necessary, revise them to provide up-to-date information on access and inclusion (e.g. to provide the safe passage of pedestrian traffic along the footpath).

5.4.4 **Targeting parking non-compliance hot spots.** As well as continuing to proactively enforce Council’s kerbside disability parking zones as part of normal business, we will encourage members of the public to report sites where Council disability parking bays are illegally occupied. We will act on these reports by dispatching council officers in a timely manner to deal with the breach on the day, collating information received as the basis for targeted enforcement action plans, and briefing our enforcement officers on identified hotspots so they can monitor these sites during their normal patrols.

5.4.5 **Disability parking infringement public awareness campaign.** When we fine people for parking illegally in disability parking bays, we will also attach information explaining the impact this has on people who need those spaces.

5.5 **Keeping Brisbane clean, recycling waste and breathing clean air**

As Australia’s largest local government authority, Council faces a continual challenge to sustainably manage the waste of a large and growing city. Our *Living in Brisbane 2026* vision is to set the city on a course *Towards Zero Waste*.

Council has given high priority to implementing the sustainable policies and actions needed to achieve this vision. We have made commitments to:

- encourage the community to change their current purchasing practices to reduce waste generation
- promote reuse as a waste prevention opportunity
- improve our collection and sorting processes for recyclable items to ensure we provide quality products for manufacturers to use
- work with industry sectors to build strong markets to process waste resources into useable end products
- promote industries that produce quality re-useable products
• continue providing and promoting our successful kerbside recycling program to residents
• enhance recycling opportunities away from home to ensure that our residents and visitors to Brisbane can ‘recycle at work, school and play, just like it’s done at home’.24

Council also has a key role in Environmental Licensing and Compliance, preventing impacts on the community and the environment posed by pollution and dangerous goods by implementing risk-based licensing of industry, targeted industry environmental improvement programs, investigation of complaints and incidents, and enforcement and prosecution of offences.

Where we are
We recognise that to achieve our vision we need all of Brisbane’s citizens and visitors to work with us in their everyday lives, a people’s movement committed to keeping the city clean, recycling waste and preventing pollution.

• We work hard to keep the streets of Brisbane, and the central business district (CBD) in particular, clean and free of litter which can cause tripping hazards.
• 57% of the litter we find on the ground in the CBD is discarded chewing gum which can create havoc for people in mobility devices and users of white canes. We are particularly careful to monitor the state of our Braille trail and tactile ground surface indicators and keep them clean of chewing gum.
• We install rubbish and recycling bins on the kerbside of the footpath to keep the footpath along the building frontage free of clutter which helps pedestrian flows generally but is particularly important for people with low vision who practise ‘shorelining’ (i.e. following the walls) as a key strategy to find their way.
• If a resident has a physical disability and cannot manage to put the residential waste, recycling and green waste wheelie bins out for collection, Council will instruct its waste contractor to enter the property and collect the bin.

We recognise that more people die each year from pollution related illnesses than from car accidents. Air pollution affects our health, particularly in children, older people and those with allergic and respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, lung damage and emphysema. Brisbane has clean air compared to many major cities and air pollution levels generally meet national standards. However, Brisbane has Australia’s highest potential for smog due to the regional topography, climate and high population growth. We recognise that clean air is particularly important for people with breathing difficulties and work hard to reduce air pollution under our Brisbane Air Quality Strategy.
Where we want to be

We want all residents and visitors to work with us to keep Brisbane clean, reduce our waste and prevent air pollution.

Our objectives

1. Seek feedback on the barriers that may make it hard for people to prevent waste, to think of waste as a resource, and to reuse and recycle.
2. Enlist people who are most impacted by air pollution and litter to raise community and industry awareness of the impacts.

Existing actions that will continue

Residential rubbish bin collection. We will continue to provide a free in-home bin collection service for residents with a disability who are unable to put their own wheelie bins out.

Street cleaning. We will continue to keep our footpaths clean and litter free, particularly in busy public areas like the CBD and Valley Malls.

Graffiti removal. Council will support people who are unable to remove graffiti from their properties by sending in our graffiti removal teams.

Clean air strategy. We will continue to minimise the release of harmful pollutants to the air and the impact of pollution on people.

New initiatives or extensions

5.5.1 Identifying barriers to waste minimisation. We will partner with diverse community groups and networks to seek feedback on the barriers that make it hard for people to reduce, reuse and recycle.

5.6 Working in a disability confident organisation

Council employs over 8000 people and is committed to building an adaptable and capable workforce by attracting, developing and retaining skilled, enthusiastic, well trained and appropriately resourced employees. We also contribute to building Brisbane’s skills and capability through community-based employment programs.

A disability confident organisation understands how people with a disability relate to its business as potential and existing employees. It creates a culture of inclusion, removes barriers and adjusts processes to enable individuals to contribute fully to the work of the organisation.25
Where we are

Council has been a leader in the employment and retention of employees with a disability since the early 1990s. In that time we have established:

- an internal Disability Advisory Group that provides guidance on both internal as well as external access concerns
- employment programs and recruitment initiatives including designated traineeship intakes, targeted recruitment and community employment programs
- a regularly reviewed target for the employment of people with a disability as part of our Workforce Equity and Diversity Framework which focuses on five equal employment opportunity groups
- career development initiatives for employees with a disability
- partnerships with disability organisations and employment agencies
- an award-winning Reasonable Adjustments Policy (2003) which outlines processes for modifying workplaces to accommodate specific access requirements
- enhanced access to Council’s internal websites
- improved procurement and upgrade of equipment and systems through our Information and Communication Technology Forum.

While we have made progress in many areas, including recruitment, promotion and retention of employees with a disability, the percentage of employees with a declared disability is still below our target of 10.7%. In September 2011, we were at 6.5%. Part of this may have to do with a preference by some employees to not disclose their disability status as the reporting system is voluntary.

Where we want to be

Our aim is to be a disability confident organisation and an Employer of Choice for people with a disability. We want to attract and retain a workforce reflective of the community we serve, benefiting from the particular skills, knowledge, experience and passion that people with a disability can contribute towards our vision for Living in Brisbane 2026.

Our objectives

1. Achieve our target of having 10.7% of Council’s workforce made up of people with a declared disability by 2015, with a long-term goal of equitable representation across all band levels by 2020.

2. Support recruitment centre staff, interviewers and supervisors to better understand the employment potential of people with a disability and to provide barrier-free recruitment practices, so everyone can compete for employment opportunities on equitable terms.
3. Provide accessible work environments where all employees are able to access all Council buildings and fully participate in all work-related systems and processes including adjustments, appropriate technology and compatibility of Council’s systems with assistive software.

4. Improve employees’ mental health and wellness and assist individuals affected by mental health issues as well as their team leaders and team members.

5. Lead the way as a role model for other employers in demonstrating the value of innovative employment policies, programs and practices.

Existing actions that will continue

**Workforce Equity and Diversity Framework.** In the life of this plan, we will implement our *Workforce Equity and Diversity Framework 2011-2015* with a focus on achieving or exceeding our employment target for people with a disability, and becoming a disability confident organisation with a focus on accessible work environments and improved capabilities around promoting mental health in the workplace.

**Disability Advisory Group.** The Disability Advisory Group will continue to advise Council on accessibility of Council services and operations. It will have new status within the organisation with representation on the new Equity and Diversity Leadership Group established under the *Workforce Equity and Diversity Framework 2011-2015*.

**Target for employees with a disability.** We will continue to review our target for the employment of people with a disability using the latest demographic and workforce participation data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and monitor and report on how we are performing. This target sits alongside our four other equal employment opportunity targets for women, people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people from a refugee background.

**Recruitment and employee support partnerships.** We will continue with our partnerships with WorkFocus Australia, Vision Australia and the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service that assist with recruitment of a diverse workforce and support our employees.

**Targeted recruitment and selection opportunities.** We will continue advertising internal Band 2-4 roles to applicants who have a disability and shortlisting at least one candidate with a disability if selection criteria are met.

**Reasonable Adjustments Policy.** We will continue to promote the *Reasonable Adjustments Policy* which outlines processes for modifying workplaces to accommodate specific access requirements. We will continue to provide workplace modifications where required.
Office accommodation guidelines. Council’s office accommodation guidelines will continue to include a specific design brief for accessibility that addresses access and inclusion in the design and construction of interior fitouts.

Participate in Prosperity program. We will continue to seek Queensland Government funding for community-based Participate in Prosperity (PiP) programs that assist people who face multiple barriers to finding employment and securing a stable and positive lifestyle for themselves and their families.

Wellness Centre programs. We will continue to offer accessible programs at our Wellness Centres and continue to train Wellness Centre staff in tailoring sessions to cater to the different needs of our diverse workforce. We will also continue to promote mental health initiatives through Wellness Centre programs.

Career guidance and targeted learning opportunities. Council will continue to support the career advancement of employees with a disability through targeted learning and career development opportunities.

Information Communication Technology (ICT) Accessibility Forum. We will continue our internal forum on the accessibility of ICT for employees and customers, providing guidance in procurement of new systems as well as retrofit solutions where there are problems with existing systems.

New initiatives or extensions

5.6.1 Building career foundations. We will focus on working towards our employment target of 10.7% by assisting a wide range of work areas (both in Council and other Brisbane employers in our Prosperity Network) build supportive environments to successfully recruit and retain employees with a disability, supporting prospective employees to be job ready and competitive, and equipping employees to manage their careers.

5.6.2 Work environments accessibility audit and retrofit plan. We will equip divisional staff with an easy to use audit tool (developed in New Initiative 3.1.2) so that they can assess all Council workplaces and develop a plan to retrofit problem areas.

5.6.3 Improving psychological wellness. We will increase awareness of mental health in the workforce, develop and implement early intervention programs to support employees and improve team leaders’ skills and confidence to support employees with mental health issues.

5.6.4 Improving recruitment processes. In order to achieve Council’s employment target for people with a disability, we will continue to advertise internal Band 2–4 positions through the disability employment network, partner with disability employment agencies, universities and other institutions to access applicants who have a disability, improve our ability to capture data about applicants with a disability and encourage existing employees with a previously undisclosed disability to identify in the Equity and Diversity survey.
5.6.5 **Review of Reasonable Adjustments Policy.** We will review the effectiveness of our *Reasonable Adjustments Policy* and identify areas for improvement.

5.6.6 **Recruitment website.** We will improve the way we present Council as equal employment opportunities Employer of Choice through our website and by advertising weekly to recruitment agencies.

### 5.7 Knowing your rates are paying for accessible services

Brisbane City Council is the biggest local government in Australia with an annual operating budget of approximately $2 billion. We practise sound financial management and deliver value for money outcomes that serve Brisbane’s community.

Like all local government in Queensland, Council’s procurement (purchasing of goods and services) operates under Queensland and Commonwealth legislation. For Council, this includes the *City of Brisbane Act 2010*.

Council’s Strategic Procurement Office (SPO) has been established with a mission to source goods, services and works that meet the requirements of users and represent the best value for Brisbane. Council has developed a procurement model that identifies the key objectives for social, community, environmental, workplace health and safety, business development, financial and compliance outcomes.

**Where we are**

We recognise that we have an obligation to ensure all customers, residents, visitors and employees can use the facilities, systems and services that we provide or that are provided on Council’s behalf.

Our SPO is aware of access and inclusion considerations and provides leadership through procurement Corporate Rules. Council was recognised as a national leader in social benefit procurement in the 2010 report *Social Procurement in Australia*.

As one of the biggest purchasers of goods and services in Brisbane, we recognise that our procurement decisions have the potential to generate social benefits and impact positively on people with a disability as both users and providers of services.

**Where we want to be**

We want to ensure that all employees, customers, residents and visitors can use the facilities, systems and services that we provide or that are provided on Council’s behalf.

**Our objectives**

1. Improve online guidance so Council officers undertaking procurement are more aware of the need to incorporate access and inclusion requirements.

2. Improve the specification drafting template and guideline to directly prompt staff to identify and address access and inclusion considerations when drafting specifications.
Existing actions that will continue

Online guidance for procurement. We will continue to provide online guidance to Council officers undertaking procurement activities which prompt review of applicable Council policies before developing specifications to ensure alignment.

Guidelines and templates for procurement specifications. We will continue to maintain guidelines and templates for specification writing which reinforce the importance of:

- identifying customer or user needs through the consultation process and giving full consideration to their requirements in the details of the specification
- consultation with purchasers who have similar requirements such as other Local, State and Federal governments
- legislative requirements, Council directives and codes of practice and current best practice
- domestic standards (such as Australian Standards) and international standards
- acceptance testing and potentially independent verification
- protecting the community’s interests and safety
- achievement of Council policy objectives
- compatibility requirements and standardisation.

Social procurement roundtable. We will continue this internal collaboration that explores the potential for Council to achieve social outcomes from our procurement processes.

New initiatives or extensions

5.7.1 Improved template and guideline for procurement specifications. We will improve our specification drafting template and guideline to directly prompt staff to identify and address access and inclusion considerations when drafting specifications.
References

2. Photograph by Andrew Chesterman.
8. Australian Human Rights Commission website – this citation pertains to the first five statistics
15. Profile.id 2010, Brisbane City Community Profile, Id Consulting, Brisbane.
16. Photograph by Tricia O’Sullivan.
18. Disability and Community Care Services 2011, Absolutely everybody: enabling Queenslanders with a disability, Department of Communities, Brisbane.
22. Photograph by Audrey MacPherson.
Artist Stephen Wiltshire drawing Brisbane Panorama.