

Berri Barmera, Loxton Waikerie and Renmark Paringa Disability Access and Inclusion Plan Consultation Report

JANUARY 2026





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Introduction

"It can often be simple things that can make a difference in daily living and reduce frustration with the world." – Quote from community workshop

JFA Purple Orange (JFAPO) was engaged to lead a community engagement process to inform a new joint Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) for Loxton Waikerie, Berri Barmera and Renmark Paranga Councils.

The key activities of this project include:

- Development of a community survey (online and hard copy).
- Preparation and facilitation of 3 workshops for council staff and Elected Members, one for each council.
- Preparation and facilitation of 4 community workshops for people with disability¹, family members, other community members and service providers in Loxton, Waikerie, Renmark and Berri.
- Preparation and facilitation of a workshop with the Our Voice SA peer network of people with intellectual disability in Berri, with members from the three council areas.
- Collation/review of survey results and engagement outcomes.
- Development of a summary report, with suggestions from the community and council staff about what to include in the DAIP.
- Development of DAIP actions which align with this report.

This report presents a summary of the input received throughout the consultation, including suggestions made by council staff and community members about what could be included in the joint DAIP. Each council

¹ Please note that this report uses both person-first and identity-first language. Please refer to JFAPO's Language Guide for more information <https://purpleorange.org.au/library/language-guide/>

should read their council section along with the Our Voice SA and survey sections.

Many suggestions are presented in this report, and not all necessarily align with JFAPO's views. JFAPO will analyse the suggestions received and propose which should be included (as joint or council-specific actions) in the new DAIP, drawing on our own expertise and experience supporting state authorities to develop DAIPs.

Methodology

This consultation took place across the three council areas: Loxton Waikerie, Berri Barmera, and Renmark Paringa. Our methodology included eight face-to-face workshops and a survey which was available online and in hard copy through the three councils.

Workshops

The first workshop was held with Our Voice SA in October 2025 in Berri. Our Voice SA is a peer network and advocacy group for people with intellectual disability. The workshop was attended by 14 Our Voice SA members with disability, 7 support workers and two staff from two different councils. The group focused primarily on key issues regarding access and inclusion, rather than generating ideas for the councils' joint DAIP.

In November 2025, JFAPO travelled to the Riverland to facilitate in-person workshops for staff and Elected Members and separate workshops for community members. These took place as follows:

- 17th November 2.30-4.30pm Berri Barmera council staff and Elected Members – 13 attendees
- 17th November 6.30-8.30pm Berri Barmera community – 18 attendees
- 18th November 9.30-11.30am Renmark Paringa council staff and Elected Members – 20 attendees
- 18th November 1-3pm Renmark Paringa community – 17 attendees
- 19th November 1-3pm Loxton Waikerie council staff and Elected Members – 24 attendees
- 19th November 3.30-5.30pm Waikerie community – 2 attendees
- 20th November 9-11am Loxton community – 5 attendees

Overall, 54 staff and Elected Members took part in these workshops, as well as 45 community members.

During each workshop, JFAPO staff provided an overview of JFAPO, Disability Access and Inclusion Plans (DAIPs) and the workshop content. JFAPO split the participants into three groups, with one staff member joining each group. The groups worked through the questions (see Appendix B) at the same time. The group discussions were recorded, and these recordings were used to write this report.

Not every question was asked at every workshop. Each group took different amounts of time to discuss topics and focused on different topics.

Survey

Staff from the three councils and JFAPO together designed a survey that asked in-depth questions about the community's experience of access and inclusion. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix 1.

The survey was completed by 52 people and provided valuable information for each council. It was made available online for 28 days from the 27th of October and hard copies were available at the workshops and at the front desk of some council offices.

Berri Barmera consultation

JFAPO facilitated two workshops in Berri Barmera: one for council staff and Elected Members, and one for community members.

This section summarises the feedback received and provides recommendations for inclusion in the three councils' joint DAIP, presented under the five Domains and their subtopics of the State Disability Inclusion Plan.

Domain 1: Inclusive environments and communities

Accessibility: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"Have you noticed any accessibility issues for people with disability at council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What would you like to see council do to make spaces more accessible?"**

We then asked community members **"How accessible do you find local council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What does council need to do to make these more accessible?"**

Council staff and Elected Members identified several accessibility challenges for people with disability as well as opportunities to improve accessibility across council events, buildings, parks, and public spaces. Key issues included:

- Paths are difficult for mobility aids.
- Limited wheelchair access at the Town Hall and Booney Theatre.
- Insufficient accessible toilets and sanitary bins for continence support.
- Poor audio at council meetings for people with hearing impairments.
- Limited digital accessibility - the council website and forms are difficult to navigate.
- Events often lack firm paths and accessible parking.

- Playgrounds could benefit from communication boards and inclusive equipment
- Consultations and communications are not always accessible.

Community members echoed these concerns and highlighted additional issues:

- Accessible parking spots are often used by people without permits.
- There are insufficient accessible parking spaces, poor marking, and loading zones that force wheelchair users into traffic.
- Footpath curb cuts are hard to navigate, often requiring people to go onto the road.
- Steps to pontoons on the riverfront lack handrails, limiting safe access.
- Uneven or incomplete footpaths create barriers and community members sometimes park on footpaths, blocking access.

Accessibility: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Have sanitary bins available in all public bathrooms, regardless of gender, to support continence aid users.
- Improve audio and captioning at council meetings.
- Use modular rubber paths at community events.
- Simplify website navigation and council forms, include Easy Read versions.
- Enforce accessible parking and improve signage.
- Upgrade physical accessibility at the Town Hall.
- Upgrade paths and footpaths for consistency.
- Enhance Booney Theatre access.
- Design inclusive consultation processes.
- Provide staff training on disability inclusion.

- Raise community awareness of disability access and inclusion, e.g. explain why footpath parking affects accessibility.

Community attitudes: Feedback received

We asked community members and council staff and Elected Members, **“How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?”**

Feedback from staff and community members showed mixed perceptions of attitudes toward people with disability. While some staff felt attitudes are positive within their circles, others report that the broader community can be uninformed or lacking in tolerance. Community members shared experiences of stigma (“treated like a leper”) and emphasized the need for decision-making to include people with lived experience. Both groups agreed that education, visibility, and inclusive practices are essential to foster understanding and respect.

Community members told us:

- People often focus on what individuals *cannot* do rather than what they *can* do.
- Decision-making is dominated by “non-disabled” perspectives; inclusion of people with disability is essential.
- There is a lack of recognition of invisible disabilities and understanding that “everyone is different.”

Staff and Elected Members said:

- “It’s not prioritised. Budgets are allocated but not spent”
- “Council needs better awareness and communication about non-physical disability including people on staff or in chamber living with disability”.

- Disability is assumed to be an infrastructure need e.g. for mobility issues and sits in infrastructure budgets, which may limit impact and understanding.

Community attitudes: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Increase visibility and communication e.g. share stories of lived experience, celebrate IDAY, and co-facilitate events with community providers.
- Deliver disability awareness sessions for staff, including Q&A, with a focus on invisible disabilities.
- Introduce inclusive communication tools e.g. add captioning at meetings, braille or pictorial signage in public facilities.
- Embed disability considerations in event and infrastructure planning, expand footpaths, improve transport options, and increase accessible parking.
- Ensure allocated funds for accessibility are fully utilised and initiatives go beyond infrastructure to cultural change.
- Involve people with lived experience in storytelling and consultations.
- Practical improvements like more accessible parking and audits of town accessibility.
- More community education, revisiting progress since the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) and celebrating International Day of People with Disability (IDAY).
- Empathy-building activities like "wheelchair for a day," disability inclusion training for staff, and Q&A sessions.

Closing the Gap: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"What would a Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability look like for this council?"**

Berri Barmera Council is at the early stages of their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). While some initiatives are underway- such as caring for country programs, works departments projects, and partnerships with Aboriginal organisations- the council acknowledges challenges in this space. There is a need for greater understanding of cultural differences and disability inclusion.

Despite these challenges, the council has established strong relationships with key organisations, including the Riverland Regional Aboriginal corporation (RRMAC), the Gerard Community works program and the Aboriginal Sobriety Group. Collaborative events such as the Landcare Turtle Event at Lake Booney, have demonstrated the potential for meaningful engagement and cross-cultural connection.

Closing the Gap: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Deliver cultural awareness training for council staff and Elected Members.
- Proactively contact local First Nations organisations and groups when there are community consultation opportunities.
- Integrate disability access measures into Reconciliation Action Plan initiatives and community events.
- Create identified positions for Aboriginal people within council or through supported employment programs.

Decision-making: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **"How could council better engage with the local disability community and include representatives in council decision making?"**

Feedback from staff and Elected Members highlighted that disability representation already exists within the council chamber, including councillors with visible and invisible disability. However, this representation is largely informal and not openly discussed, supported or embedded into council systems. We heard:

- Some people with disability are already part of council, including councillors with visible and invisible disabilities. This is not usually talked about, and there are no formal supports in place.
- A small number of people with disability have been involved in council decisions in the past. Their involvement has been occasional rather than ongoing.
- Staff and councillors would like to better share and celebrate the positive changes council is making to improve accessibility.
- Council is not currently well connected with the local special school or some disability groups, and this was seen as a missed opportunity.
- Staff felt that council should include people with lived experience of disability before making any decisions or changes.

Decision-making: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Ask people with disability who have previously provided advice/made decisions what made the experience positive and/or negative.
- Create list of local disability providers, groups and organisations and ensure they receive council communications.

Accessible information and communication: Feedback received

We asked community members **"How do you find information about council services and events? How could this be made more accessible for people with disability?"**

Community members find information about council services and events in different ways, and no single method works for everyone. People felt that council needs to share information more widely, in simpler formats and through multiple channels at the same time. There was strong support for recording council meetings, improving online information and providing easy-read version of all key materials.

We heard:

- Attendees acknowledged that regardless of how information is shared, some community members will still say they did not know about it.
- Facebook is used but some people, but others said they still don't know what is happening locally.
- Some community members rely on local radio to find out about council news and events.
- There was a strong support for recording meetings and making them available on the council website as current meeting minutes were seen as very limited.
- Having clear local contacts or roles (such as a town coordinator) was seen as helpful for sharing information within the community.
- People said communication should depend on what information they are trying to find, and that council needs to use a range of approaches.
- Better use of social media was suggested, including clearer wording, hashtags and language that works with social media algorithms, so posts reach more people.

- There was strong agreement that easy-read versions of council information are essential with community members calling for all key documents and event information to be available in accessible formats.

Accessible information and communication: Suggestions from community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Train key marketing and communications staff in Easy Read.
- Commit to providing an Easy Read versions of key council materials including council meeting minutes and information about events.

Disability Advisory Group: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **"Are you interested in having a community disability advisory group as part of DAIP?"**

There is strong interest in establishing a community disability advisory group as part of the DAIP. Participants emphasised that the group should include staff and Elected Members who have lived experience of disability to ensure diverse perspectives. Additionally, it was suggested that this initiative be developed as a collaborative effort through the Riverland G3 Alliance, fostering shared responsibility and engagement across the 3 councils and community stakeholders.

Disability Advisory Group: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Form a Community Disability Advisory Group, aligned with DAIP objectives.

- Ensure representation from staff, Elected Members and community members with disability.
- Develop the group as a collaborative initiative through the Riverland G3 Alliance, with clear terms of reference and meeting schedules.
- Aim for quarterly meetings to provide ongoing input into accessibility planning and implementation.

Domain 2: Education and Employment

Volunteering and employment: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“What could council do to become a more inclusive and accessible employer?”**

Staff and Elected Members said council could do more to become a genuinely inclusive and accessible employer for people with disability. Key issues raised included barriers in recruitment processes, workplace design, and unspoken assumptions about capability. There was strong support for removing unnecessary requirements for roles, creating safer pathways for disclosure, and embedding disability awareness into leadership and induction processes. Attendees told us that:

- Council should position itself as a true equal opportunity employer and clearly state this in job advertisements.
- Some job requirements may be unnecessary barriers, such as:
 - Driver’s licence requirements where driving is not essential
 - Requesting medicals or hearing tests at application stage can create fear that people will be excluded if they “fail”.
- Large, open-plan office environments can be challenging for people with ADHD, autism and sensory sensitivities.
- Vacant positions are mainly advertised on platforms like Seek, which may not reach people with disability.

We then asked community members, **“How could council support people**

with disability to volunteer and find employment within and outside council?"

Community feedback highlighted ways council could support people with disability to volunteer and seek employment, such as assistance with security clearances, ID checks, and form completion. Suggestions included partnering with Volunteer SA, developing a council-led volunteer program, and providing clear information about council roles to encourage people with disability to apply.

Volunteering and employment: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Update job ad templates to include a statement of support regarding equal opportunity and disability inclusion.
- Review selection criteria to remove non-essential requirements from job descriptions.
- Explore alternative recruitment channels that are accessed by people with disability.
- Share clear information about council roles and what they entail to encourage applications by a broader range of people.
- Provide form-filling support for volunteer and employment applications, possibly through the libraries and/or Justice of the Peace services.
- Establish confidential disclosure and reasonable adjustments policies.
- Introduce sensory-friendly workspace guidelines.
- Provide disability inclusion training (including refresher sessions) to staff and Elected Members.
- Create an internal disability contact or officer so staff feel safe to disclose access needs.
- Ensure that council meetings and chamber interactions follow universal design principles.

- Ensure induction processes for Elected Members include disability awareness and create space for Elected Members to disclose their own access needs if they choose.
- Make simple adjustments, such as allowing ear plugs or noise-reducing tools, to make workplaces more accessible.
- Report annually (internally) on progress in disability inclusion and share success stories.
- Partner with Volunteer SA to explore local outreach.
- Develop a Council Volunteer Program inclusive of people with disability.

Domain 3: Personal and Community Support

Connecting people to services and supports: Feedback received

We asked community, **"How could council connect people with disability with community services and supports?"**

Community members told us it is hard to find clear, up-to-date information about local services and supports. Information is spread across too many places, therefore smaller events and services are often missed. People felt council could help by creating one clear source of information, improving how events are listed and making sure new residents are given information about local supports when they arrive. We heard that:

- People supported the idea of a central database listing community services and supports.
- Council's event listings on their website exist, but many community members said they do not use it or not aware of it.
- Local community columns and printed listings such as those prepared by community members who regularly promote events were seen as valuable ways of sharing information.
- Council's Facebook page is useful but there were concerns that important notices get lost among other posts.

- Advertising is often focused on large events so smaller community activities and supports are easily missed.
- A Riverland based website listing local service providers was strongly supported with emphasis on including all providers, not just NDIS registered services.
- Some community members suggested a regional advisory group to help coordinate information sharing and improve connections between council services and the disability community.

Connecting people to services and supports: Suggestions from community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop a centralised Riverland-based website listing all local providers (including non-NDIS registered services).
- Create a welcome pack for new residents that includes information on how to connect with local services, supports and community groups.
- Improve council's event listing system to reduce fragmentation and ensure smaller events are visible.
- Explore forming a regional advisory group to coordinate service information and engagement.

Stakeholder collaboration: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **"Which other stakeholders could council collaborate with to make the local community more accessible and inclusive for people with disability?"**

Council staff suggested strengthening accessibility and inclusion by collaborating with partners such as the local special school, parents and carers, disability service providers (Novita, Community Bridging Services, Enhanced Lifestyles), Riverland Active/Thrive Café, Riverland Respite

Recreation Services, peer networks like Our Voice SA (OVSA), schools, healthcare providers, and other disability agencies.

Staff suggested forming a small subcommittee to coordinate engagement and using the council's Communication and Engagement Officer for outreach.

Stakeholder collaboration: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Form a small subcommittee within council to coordinate stakeholder engagement.
- Utilise the Communication and Engagement Officer for outreach and relationship building.
- Send quarterly newsletters to stakeholder groups.
- Invite stakeholders to join council meetings from time to time to maintain dialogue.

Domain 4: Health and Wellbeing

Wellbeing programs: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **"Which programs does council currently offer or could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?"**

We then asked community members, **"What sort of programs could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?"**

Council currently supports accessibility and wellbeing through initiatives such as community grants. There is an opportunity to strengthen this approach by introducing an accessibility checklist for hire and leasing of community assets to ensure compliance with accessibility standards. Community feedback emphasised practical improvements, such as joining

the Hidden Disability Project, facilitating participation in Disability Inclusion Training, creating a culture of safety, and providing access guides for events.

Suggestions also included workshops, education, easy ways to log complaints and suggestions, and reviewing existing programs to ensure they are disability friendly. Specific facility upgrades were noted, such as improving pool change rooms, toilets, and installing a hoist.

Wellbeing programs: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop and implement an accessibility checklist for all community asset hire and leasing agreements.
- Widely promote community grants that prioritise disability access improvements.
- Join the Hidden Disability Project and facilitate community participation.
- Provide access guides for all council events.
- Hold workshops and education sessions on accessibility and wellbeing.
- Review and update current complaints and feedback systems for accessibility.
- Review all existing council run programs to ensure they consider a variety of access needs.
- Start planning and identifying funding which will support an upgrade to pool facilities (change rooms, toilets, hoist).

Domain 5: Safety, Rights and Justice

Time did not allow us to discuss this topic during the workshops. We did, however, receive useful feedback and ideas on this topic through the survey.

Loxton Waikerie consultation

JFAPO facilitated 2 workshops in Waikerie: one for council staff and Elected Members and one for community members, as well as one workshop in Loxton for community members.

This section summarises the feedback received and presents suggestions made by participants for inclusion in the three councils' joint DAIP, under the five Domains of the State Disability Inclusion Plan.

Domain 1: Inclusive environments and communities

Accessibility: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"Have you noticed any accessibility issues for people with disability at council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What would you like to see council do to make spaces more accessible?"**

We then asked community members **"How accessible do you find local council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What does council need to do to make these more accessible?"**

Council staff, Elected Members and community members identified common accessibility barriers and opportunities to improve accessibility across council events, buildings, parks, and public spaces. We heard:

- Access to the river is challenging due to the steep terrain. Stairs were installed without a lift.
- There is a lack of accessible parking spaces throughout the town, resulting in people having to park on grass.
- There is a lack of accessible toilets in the town, and challenges to find accessible parking near toilet facilities.

- There is a lack of footpaths in the town and footpaths are poorly connected and maintained, meaning residents are forced to walk in the road. A lack of footpaths around key intersections results in residents making unsafe road crossings.
- The town's amenities are not well connected by the footpaths. Often people will need to walk across grass between amenities, such as the playground and toilets.

The discussion amongst council members and staff acknowledged that implementing accessibility is a gradual process, and this can be exacerbated by conflicting needs in the town. They gave the example of how when people complained about the dust in the sporting club's car parks, they put down gravel to minimize the dust. Unintentionally, the gravel meant that the car parks became inaccessible for people using mobility aids.

They also noted that often the conditions of funding sources and building codes can directly conflict with accessibility requirements, which is an ongoing issue when developing new projects.

Community members shared concerns about the same accessibility issues as council members. They also shared substantial feedback about the accessibility of private businesses in the town. They noted that council-owned buildings are often much more accessible than individual privately-owned buildings, which is a significant barrier to everyday activities. They gave several examples where businesses were not accessible, except for entering round the back of the building. They highlighted that many building landlords no longer live in the town and believed the landlords were not interested in investing in improving accessibility. The community requested that the council provide funding to local businesses to improve accessibility and/or directly advocate for people with disability to local business owners. A participant noted that building codes are not developing at the same pace as mobility and assistive technology.

There were conflicting views between how council staff and Elected Members perceived the accessibility of local events, and the community's

lived experience attending them. The area holds several events throughout the year, including the Loxton show, Lights Up, the harvest Mardis Gras and sporting events. The council viewed the events that took place on the main street as accessible and noted that events outside the main town were inaccessible. The community members shared the opposite – that the events were not safe, and the same barriers that prevent them accessing the main street still applied during events. Many events are held on grass areas which is not suitable for many mobility aids due to the soft and uneven surface. They were supportive of the sensory cave which is included as part of the Christmas pageant.

Both council staff and community members noted the progress made in improving the town's accessibility, including:

- They are currently consulting on plans for a changing place to be built in Loxton.
- All new toilets are implemented braille signage, and they are retrofitting signage onto older toilets.
- They have added accessible swings and a carousel to the accessible playground. There is a ramp to access the playground.
- The Loxton pool has accessible handrails and stairs into the pool, and they are looking at adding a ramp.
- They have moved some of the accessible parking spaces in Loxton closer to the central amenities and added ramps to improve access to them.
- They are improving connectivity between the town services, adding bitumen paving and multiple ramps.
- Accessible parking spaces have been improved to include space on both right and left of the parking space, so both drivers and passengers with a disability have safe space to exit/enter the vehicle.
- The library is physically accessible and welcomes assistance animals.

- Community members are only able to find information about the town's accessibility on the council website, and this is often limited to major projects.

Accessibility: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Include accessibility in risk assessments and action plans for town events.
- Fit the swimming pool with hoists, lifts and changing places (seek co-funding).
- Consult with planning regulators to understand how they can improve accessibility in line with building regulations and standards.
- Prioritise implementing safe pedestrian crossings.
- Consider installing a lift to allow access to the river.
- Work directly with local businesses and landlords to retrofit accessibility to existing buildings.

Community attitudes: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?"**

We then asked community members **"How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community? "**

Feedback from staff and community members showed mixed perceptions of attitudes toward people with disability within the community. All groups noted that discussions around disability do not take place often enough, even though there is space for them at council and community forums.

The council staff and Elected Members shared that they have not had formal training around disability access and inclusion, so staff attitudes towards disability are largely a reflection of their personalities and personal experiences. They discussed how they could improve the broader council's attitudes by representing people with disability in their imagery use and could create more safe spaces for people with disability, for example quiet spaces. They noted that upgrading public facilities can showcase people's negative attitudes, with people questioning why accessibility is needed or prioritised. Staff and Elected Members noted that in those moments it is their responsibility to advocate for the needs and inclusion of people with disability and explain how accessibility benefits all members of community.

Community members had mixed views on the community's attitudes towards disability. Participants noted that people with disability are more visible in the community now than ever before. They gave the example of a person with disability attending a community event and wearing headphones or communicating differently being welcomed. They highlighted how more children with disability attend mainstream schools and acknowledged that the council tries to include people with disability in all aspects of life to show that disability is a typical and accepted part of community. One participant felt that the community was overall kind and accepting, and that people were embracing change.

However, participants with disability had experienced attitudes that made them feel like a minority in the community, and that people tend to 'look the other way'. They felt that people with complex disabilities faced direct discrimination and gave the example of being ignored and stood in front of at community events, blocking their sight of the event.

They discussed how local disability champions could boost the profiles of people with disability in the community. They noted that there are already some individuals who have this role, but they would like to see people with a greater variety of disabilities being celebrated.

Community attitudes: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Deliver disability access and inclusion training to council staff and Elected Members, focusing on universal design. Council staff expressed interest in training that would outline the difference between minimum standards of accessibility and best practice.
- Develop resources on best practice accessibility that council can provide to the wider community, including an accessibility checklist for new projects and events (note that DHS is currently developing a new accessible events toolkit).
- Fund more community initiatives and provide grants to community clubs to improve inclusion.
- Encourage Elected Members to spend more time out in the community, meeting and talking with residents to understand their lived experience.
- Identify opportunities to celebrate people with disability, e.g. a disability-specific annual citizen award.

Closing the Gap: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“What would a Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability look like for this council?”**

Loxton Waikerie Council is in the early stages of their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). They have planned to host community workshops to inform the RAP next year. The council has also planned cultural awareness training. The council has established good relationships with Aboriginal-led organisations in Berri.

When discussing community attitudes towards disability, some community members expressed they felt that council did not support First Nations communities well. Others celebrated the introduction of the indigenous garden that is being developed and celebrated that Aboriginal community elders and organisations have been involved in the planning and site selection.

Closing the Gap: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Deliver annual cultural awareness training for council staff and Elected Members.
- Explore the term 'intersectionality' and consider how it applies for First Nations communities and the broader disability community.
- Integrate disability access measures into RAP initiatives and community events.

Decision-making: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **"How could council better engage with the local disability community and include representatives in council decision making?"**

Discussion with council staff and Elected Members showed that people with disability are not directly engaged in the council's decision-making process. Whilst people with disability are welcome to engage with council activities and apply to be an elected member, there are no strategies in place to directly engage people with disability in council activities.

The group discussed how people with disability are consulted in council's decision-making process, noting:

- There is no current disability advisory group to council.

- They engage access consultants to inform large projects, which can include people with lived experience.
- Council meetings are currently held in person and live streamed online, but there is no option to join the meeting and interact online.
- Council's primary form of communication and consultation is through the website, surveys, flyers and social media, which are not accessible to all communication access needs.
- Staff lack confidence in understanding accessibility and would benefit from disability access and inclusion training.

Decision-making: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Improve the accessibility of consultations and how to advertise consultations in a more accessible way.
- Provide in-person support during consultations, where council staff meet and sit with community members to hear their feedback. Consider how to raise awareness that this support is available.
- Prioritise identifying and building relationships with community members with disability. Begin by building relationships with local service providers and community groups.
- Develop a Riverland-wide database of people with disability who could be consulted with.

Accessible information and communication: Feedback received

We asked community members **"How do you find information about council services and events? How could this be made more accessible for people with disability?"**

Community feedback echoed the concerns of council staff and Elected Members about current approaches to engaging people with disability. They noted that they often only find information through social media and council mailing lists, which are only available in email format. They noted that this is inaccessible to those that do not have internet access or might have communication access needs.

The group shared concerns that the broader community is not aware of what council services are available to support them. If council could share this information proactively, it might reduce council having to manage calls and complaints from community members with unmet needs.

Participants also noted that when they have attended council buildings in person, they have not been able to meet with people or find the information they are asking for, which contrasted with what the council members suggested they could offer.

Many of the suggestions from the group on how to improve access to council information centred around how council could build relationships with the local disability community.

Accessible information and communication: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop a publicly available organisation chart for the council staff and Elected Members, introducing who they are and what their role is.
- Increase visibility of Elected Members in the community, including by attending community events and clubs.
- Have Elected Members conduct listening posts in popular community areas, rather than council buildings. For example, on the main street, in the local Foodland or in the library.
- Have a key person in the library who can support people with disability to access community information.

Disability Advisory Group: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“Are you interested in having a community disability advisory group as part of DAIP?”**

There was hesitation when discussing the establishment of a community disability advisory group as part of the DAIP. Whilst council staff and Elected Members want to include people with disability, they had concerns about whether anyone in the community would be interested or could commit. We also heard concerns that this would only be an opportunity for community to voice their criticisms of council, rather than to work together.

Disability Advisory Group: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Consult with existing community groups to establish whether there is an interest in developing a disability advisory group.
- Contact local disability service providers to recruit participants for an advisory group.
- Collaborate with other Riverland councils to develop a holistic advisory group, if there is not appetite to develop one specifically for Loxton Waikerie council.

Domain 2: Education and Employment

Volunteering and employment: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“What could council do to become a more inclusive and accessible employer?”** We then asked community members, **“How could council support people with disability to volunteer and find employment within and outside council?”**

The discussion between council staff and Elected Members highlighted that the council is already an inclusive and flexible employer, with good representation of employees from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and flexible working arrangements for staff who are parents. The conversation emphasised that the council should consider how to improve the volunteering and staff recruitment process to be more encouraging for people with disability.

The council staff, Elected Members and community members all noted that there likely are already people with disability working within council, though they may not have disclosed their disability.

Community feedback emphasised how the wider community would benefit from discussions about how to make adjustments that support people with disability and reduce unconscious bias and assumptions that access needs will be burdensome. The group noted that many community members with disability will rely on community support to age in place, and therefore it is important to improve the community's understanding of disability. Whilst attitudes are improving and younger generations are considered more inclusive and accepting of access needs, people with complex access needs are still excluded from community and cannot find employment.

Volunteering and employment: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Provide disability inclusion training to all council staff and Elected Members.
- Organise disability inclusion training options for local businesses and organisations.
- Create traineeships and work experience opportunities within council for people with disability.

Domain 3: Personal and Community Support

Connecting people to services and supports: Feedback received

We asked community, **“How could council connect people with disability with community services and supports?”**

Community members described how community services and supports are rarely accessible to people with disability and further constrained by the need to travel across towns. They discussed how information about community services and supports could be made more accessible. We heard:

- Efforts should be made to champion community members, including people with disability.
- Non-sporting community clubs (such as table-top games run in the library) have previously been successful but often fizzle out over time.
- Many community events and services are dependent on people being able to independently travel to them.
- Council is exploring how to improve connection with the ageing population, including printed notices and light-up notice boards.
- Justice of the Peace services are held in Loxton on Thursday mornings and community members attend this.
- Community members are independently developing a database of service and support providers in the area.

Connecting people to services and supports: Suggestions from community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop a centralised Riverland-based website listing all local providers (including non-NDIS registered services).

- Hold events in accessible community spaces where community members feel most comfortable, like the library and information centre instead of council facilities.
- Champion valuable members of community outside of normal sporting events and well-known families.
- Regularly attend the JP services in Loxton, to build relationships with community members, provide information on services and encourage attendance at events.

Stakeholder collaboration: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“Which other stakeholders could council collaborate with to make the local community more accessible and inclusive for people with disability?”**

Council staff suggested strengthening accessibility and inclusion by collaborating with partners such as local business owners, supported living facilities and disability service providers such as Waikerie Mobility. The group noted that they do not have a community development team. Council staff often take on multiple roles and responsibilities, so everyone in council should begin building relationships with the community. They discussed improving information sharing with central community areas such as streets, the riverfront, supermarkets, schools and caravan parks.

Stakeholder collaboration: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Establish a community development team or subcommittee to coordinate stakeholder engagement.
- Establish a single lead point of contact within council for community members to discuss accessibility and inclusion concerns.

- Build relationships with central community areas and begin regular information sharing with them. Consider writing access plans for these areas.

Domain 4: Health and Wellbeing

Wellbeing programs: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“Which programs does council currently offer or could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?”** We then asked community members, **“What sort of programs could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?”**

Council currently supports community wellbeing by creating and maintaining ‘third spaces’ for people to rest, move and spend time in community. These include community spaces such as the library, accessible community gardens with hard paths and raised beds, and walking trails, some of which are accessible. The library provides wellbeing initiatives and activities during school holidays, and the council has an Ageing Well plan for the community. It was noted that the local Rotary Club also offers activities.

Community feedback described how some community clubs that had previously provided support were unable to continue due to funding concerns. For example, the Lions club lost their storage area and folded, and activity clubs run by local service providers were closed due to funding issues. The discussion highlighted that wellbeing initiatives specifically for people with disability are lacking, and information about the accessibility of third spaces and clubs is not readily available.

Wellbeing programs: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Add communication boards in community spaces (such as local playgrounds) in Easy English. Renmark Paringa are replicating the board used at the Riverland Special School for all community playgrounds so that it is consistent across community for children with disability. Extend this use across all three councils so signage is consistent.
- Implement quiet community spaces for people with sensory access needs to meet and socialise.
- Identify council resources that can support community clubs that contribute to the health and well-being of the community (e.g. buildings, storage, tools, information etc).
- Provide funding for subsidised transport to and from community events, activities and well-being initiatives.
- Promote community grants prioritising disability access improvements.
- Review all existing programs to ensure they are disability inclusive.

Domain 5: Safety, Rights and Justice

Prepare for and respond to emergencies: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members, **“How could council better support the disability community to prepare for and respond to emergencies?”** We then asked community members, **“How could council better support the disability community to prepare for and respond to emergencies?”**

Feedback from council staff and Elected Members highlighted that they have an emergency plan, an out-of-hours staff schedule for emergency events and a business continuity plan to keep essential services running during emergencies.

Community feedback discussed how emergency planning is typically a community effort, and procedures for people with disability were not widely communicated. They discussed the example of how in previous flooding

emergencies sandbags were available for delivery to people with disability who couldn't collect themselves, but they needed to call to request them.

A community member noted that local service providers had undertaken extensive emergency planning.

Prepare for and respond to emergencies: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Regularly share emergency plans through community newsletters and with local community hubs, such as the library and supermarket notice boards.
- Write Easy English versions of all emergency documents.
- Review and communicate which bushfire last resort areas have which facilities.
- Work with local service providers to review council's emergency plan and identify how to ensure people with disability are considered fully.
- Continue to build relationships with community members with disability, to understand what their access needs are and how to support them during emergency planning.

Renmark Paringa consultation

JFAPO facilitated 2 workshops in Renmark: one for council staff and Elected Members, and one for community members.

This section summarises the feedback received and presents participants' suggestions for inclusion in the three councils' joint DAIP, under the five Domains of the State Disability Inclusion Plan.

Domain 1: Inclusive environments and communities

Accessibility: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"Have you noticed any accessibility issues for people with disability at council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What would you like to see council do to make spaces more accessible?"** We then asked community members **"How accessible do you find local council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What does council need to do to make these more accessible?"**

Staff, Elected Members and community members identified widespread accessibility barriers across council buildings, events and public spaces, particularly relating to parking, building access, pathways, sensory inclusion and accessible information. There was a strong call for consistent, proactive and better communicated accessibility improvements. We heard:

- There is not enough accessible parking and spaces often lack adequate clearance.
- Many council buildings are hard to access, particularly older buildings.
- Ramps, curb cuts and driveways are frequently too steep or poorly designed.
- Access to buildings is often indirect (e.g. around the back) and difficult to navigate.

- Riverfront paths and park-based events are not suitable for wheelchair use, particularly in wet weather.
- Some towns lack footpaths altogether and existing paths are uneven due to tree roots and lack of maintenance.
- Key community facilities, like the Alan Coulter Recreation Centre, lack connected footpaths, accessible toilets, accessible changerooms, hoists and changing tables.
- There is no Changing Places facility within the council area.
- Sensory-inclusive initiatives exist (e.g. sensory hour at the pageant) but are limited and not promoted clearly.
- Community misunderstandings of sensory-friendly initiatives highlight a need for education.
- Council information, including rates notices, are difficult to read and not available in accessible or easy read formats.
- Lack of access information causes anxiety for people attending events and facilities.
- Cars parking on footpaths creates safety and mobility barriers for wheelchair users.

Accessibility: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop and publish access guides for all council buildings, facilities and major events, to be hosted on the council website with some physical copies available at other community hubs.
- Undertake a comprehensive accessibility audit of council buildings, parks and streetscapes, prioritising parking, ramps, curb cuts and path connectivity.
- Expand sensory-friendly initiatives across more events and clearly communicate their purpose to the public to build understanding and support.

- Plan for the improvement/addition of accessible facilities at key community venues.
- Introduce easy-read and accessible communications for notices, newsletters and rates information.
- Improve footpath maintenance and enforcement including managing vegetation overgrowth and illegal footpath parking.

Community attitudes: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **“How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?”** We then asked community members **“How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?”**

Staff and Elected Members reported growing inclusion efforts (in schools and council projects) but noted that many initiatives are not clearly communicated or widely understood. Community voices called for more education, training and inclusive practices across schools and workplaces to normalise disability inclusion.

We heard from Staff and Elected Members that:

- Schools are teaching about disability and modelling inclusion (e.g., buddy benches).
- Visibility of people with disability is helping attitudes improve.
- Staff want to know community views and see council lead by example.
- Council should explain why access measures exist and communicate initiatives more clearly.
- Some staff find it hard to empathise with access needs they have not had personal experience of them.
- Inclusive customer service needs attention (e.g. high counters and no access to communication boards).

- Desire for multi-format, accessible communications (video with captions, Auslan, Easy read) and to "share the wins".
- The DAIP should be respected and woven through all council work.

The community said that:

- More education is needed to improve attitudes towards disability.
- Inclusion should start in schools to reduce/avoid segregation and train teachers on the rights of people with disability.
- Employers need education about different disabilities and reasonable adjustments.
- Closing the Gap considerations were raised in the context of disability inclusion.

Community attitudes: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Require all council staff and Elected Members to take part in disability and inclusion training.
- Offer public sessions of disability inclusion training, including to private business owners.
- Engage local members of the disability community (and pay them) to take staff along with them as they go about their day to show them what inaccessibility looks like practically.
- Create simple communication boards for events and council business, with physical and digital versions available.
- Refer to the DAIP when reviewing existing infrastructure plans to ensure alignment.
- Review communications plans and practices to ensure that key documents are provided via multiple methods (digital, physical) and

communicated via multiple methods (written, easy English, Auslan and captions on videos).

- Review communications plans and practices to ensure that captions are added to every video released by council, whether short or long.
- Ensure there are allocated funds for accessibility and that they are fully utilised and initiatives go beyond infrastructure to cultural change.

Closing the Gap: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected members **"What would a Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability look like for this council?"**

Staff and Elected Members noted that council does not yet have a Reconciliation Action Plan and has limited relationships with local Aboriginal organisations. They also shared feedback that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may feel unsafe or unsure when accessing mainstream services. There was interest expressed in strengthening relationships and improving engagement.

Closing the Gap: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Review the RAPs of nearby councils and the process they used to develop it. Ask them what they learnt through the process and what they would do differently.
- Connect with local First Nations organisations and ensure they know what council can offer.
- Recognise that there may be only a few organisations in the region and they may not have capacity to work with each council individually. Consider engaging a specific RAP consultant to relieve the pressure on local organisations, while offering them the chance to consult if they wish.

Decision-making: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **“How could council better engage with the local disability community and include representatives in council decision making?”**

Staff and Elected Members said that engagement with the local disability community is limited by consultation methods, communication approaches and capacity. They noted missed opportunities to reach people, uneven access to information and the need for simpler, more accessible ways for people with disability to be involved in council decision-making. We heard:

- Current consultation methods do not work for everyone, particularly where transport is required to attend in person.
- Elected Members have conversations with community members but are aware they do not hear from everyone.
- Event and consultation promotion relies heavily on digital communications like email and limited printed materials.
- Removal of printed posters at the visitor centre means some people miss information about events and consultations.
- The council website has an accessibility widget, but usage and impact are not well understood. Language translation appears to be the most used feature.
- Engagement and consultation work is resource intensive and difficult to keep up with given current capacity.
- Playgrounds were identified as an example where a disability advisory group could provide input into plans.
- Staff noted value in asking the community directly what information they need and how they prefer to receive it.
- While council post-meeting summaries are provided, there was interest in using additional formats such as video.
- Easy read documents are needed but staff training and cost are barriers.

Decision-making: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Review consultation and engagement methods to identify more accessible options, including transport support where needed.
- Expand the formats used to share council information and consultation opportunities.
- Improve website tracking and therefore understanding of how accessibility features on the council website are being used.
- Build staff capability in accessible engagement practices including Easy Read document development.
- Explore opportunities to involve people with disability earlier in decision making such as advisory input on projects.
- Strengthen feedback loops by asking the community how they prefer to receive information and participate.

Accessible information and communication: Feedback received

We asked community members **“How do you find information about council services and events? How could this be made more accessible for people with disability?”**

Community members said they access council information through a mix of online and offline sources, with not all formats being accessible to everyone. They identified gaps in accessible language, with limited paper-based information and a lack of clear access details that help reduce anxiety when attending events or services. We heard that:

- People find council information through multiple channels including the internet radio, social media, local newspapers and council email lists.
- Some community members miss information because they do not have a postal address or reliable internet access.

- Increased reliance on digital only communication means some people are excluded.
- Forms, notices and written information are not always in accessible or easy read language.
- There is a need for printed information for people who cannot access digital formats.
- Clear access information is important including parking locations and accessibility features of council spaces, services and events.
- Access guides for council facilities were identified as helpful in reducing uncertainty and anxiety and increasing attendance.
- A welcome pack for new residents was suggested.
- Easy read options are needed across council communications.

Accessible information and communication: Suggestions from community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Use a mix of communication channels, including digital, print and broadcast media.
- Provide accessible and Easy Read versions of key council information.
- Develop and distribute access guides for council facilities and events in digital and physical forms.
- Include clear access and parking information in event and service communications.
- Consider a welcome pack for new residents with information on council spaces, services and events using simple language so it is accessible to more people.

Disability Advisory Group: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **“Are you interested in having a community disability advisory group as part of DAIP?”**

Staff and Elected Members showed mixed awareness of whether a community disability advisory group already exists. While there was some uncertainty about what this group would look like and how to find members, participants generally agreed it was worth exploring and considered it important. Discussion highlighted the need to recognise disability across all ages and types and to think broadly about representation.

Disability Advisory Group: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Define the purpose and possible formats of an advisory group (e.g. regular meetings or project-based input).
- Work with the disability community including service providers, peer groups, disability organisations and individuals, to support recruitment of advisory group members.
- Ensure any advisory group represents a broad range of disabilities and ages.
- Consider whether a broader advisory model (e.g. a wellness or inclusion group) could provide intersectional perspectives from a range of community cohorts including people with disability.
- Consider and test whether the group would be council specific or if a cross-council group would be best.

Domain 2: Education and Employment

Volunteering and employment: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **“What could council do to become a more inclusive and accessible employer?”** We then asked community members **“How could council support people with disability to volunteer and find employment within and outside council?”**

Staff and Elected Members said that inclusive volunteering and employment at council is limited and not well coordinated. Volunteering opportunities have reduced over time, with only a small number of long-term volunteers currently involved. There are few clear pathways connecting volunteering, work experience, traineeships and employment, and inclusivity is not consistently considered.

Recruitment practices can create barriers, including generic job descriptions, unnecessary role requirements, online-only advertising and application processes that rely heavily on written responses. Access to adjustments are sometimes made but are not clearly documented or promoted. Staff also noted that the council could more clearly communicate that it is an inclusive and flexible employer, and that the workforce does not yet fully reflect the diversity of the community.

Community members and service providers said there are significant barriers to people with disability volunteering or gaining employment through council. Providers reported difficulty engaging with council and a lack of clear pathways for volunteering, traineeships or employment. Some felt council was reluctant to employ people with disability due to concerns about accessibility and workplace adjustments, despite available supports.

Inaccessible council spaces, transport barriers and unapproachable staff attitudes were also identified as factors that discourage participation. There was strong feedback that council should lead by example and take a more active role in connecting providers and creating opportunities. We heard there is:

- Perceived resistance to employing or involving people with disability
- Difficulty engaging with council and a lack of clear pathways for roles

- Inaccessible council buildings and transport barriers
- Limited collaboration with employment and disability providers
- Missed opportunities to use available employment subsidies
- Staff attitudes impacting people's sense of welcome and inclusion
- A need for traineeships and supported pathways into work.

Volunteering and employment: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop a clear and inclusive approach to volunteering, with defined pathways into work experience, traineeships and employment.
- Review job descriptions, recruitment and application processes to remove unnecessary barriers.
- Expand recruitment beyond online-only advertising.
- Clearly communicate council's commitment to being an inclusive and flexible employer.
- Document and promote access adjustments, flexible work options and available employment supports.
- Review the accessibility of council workplaces and facilities.
- Explore job sharing and job carving opportunities.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools, training providers, disability and employment service providers.
- Strengthen council's role as a connector between community organisations and service providers.
- Build staff capability in inclusive and accessible customer service practices.
- Embed and celebrate diversity and inclusion across council workplaces.

Domain 3: Personal and Community Support

Connecting people to services and supports: Feedback received

We asked community members **“How could council connect people with disability with community services and supports?”**

Community members said that people with disability often struggle to find and access local services, activities and supports. They emphasised the need for council to listen, respond and help people navigate what is available locally. Clear, up-to-date information and strong follow-through were seen as critical. We heard:

- Community organisations offer diverse and flexible volunteer roles suitable for people with disability.
- Some community groups want to be better known as safe and welcoming spaces.
- Information about services and supports is not always easy to find or kept up to date.
- A welcome pack for new residents was seen as a helpful way to share local information.
- There was support for community organisations being able to add or update their details themselves on the council website to keep it up to date.
- Community members stressed the importance of council listening, acknowledging issues and taking action.

Connecting people to services and supports: Suggestions from community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Improve how council shares information about local services, supports, activities and volunteering, with multiple methods of communication and direct sharing with key groups and organisations.
- Provide simple, accessible pathways for people with disability to find and connect with community supports.
- Explore the possibility of community organisations being able to update their own information through the council website, or the simplest methods to do so.
- Consider re-introducing a welcome pack for new residents with local information, written and provided to be accessible to people with a broad range of literacy skills.
- Promote inclusive community organisations and volunteering opportunities.
- Build trust by actively responding to feedback from people with disability and the community and communicating when changes are made based on their feedback.

Stakeholder collaboration: Feedback received

We asked council staff and Elected Members **"Which other stakeholders could council collaborate with to make the local community more accessible and inclusive for people with disability?"**

Staff and Elected Members said that collaboration with local partners is essential to improving accessibility and inclusion. Schools, disability providers, community organisations and businesses were identified as key stakeholders. While many individual connections already exist, these are often informal and not coordinated across council, limiting their impact. We heard:

- Schools were identified as key community leaders and partners, particularly for work experience opportunities.

- Disability providers were seen as important partners for volunteering and inclusion.
- Council was seen as a connector, rather than the organisation that runs all programs.
- Staff are building partnerships individually, but connections are not well shared across council.
- A new internal database and intranet has begun mapping community organisations.
- Community engagement roles have limited time and broad responsibilities.
- It would be helpful to clearly identify approved and inclusive volunteer organisations.
- In the longer term, there may be opportunities to use community grants to promote access and inclusion.

Stakeholder collaboration: Suggestions from staff and Elected Members

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Build and strengthen partnerships with schools, disability providers and community organisations.
- Position council clearly as a community connector to support inclusion and participation.
- Improve internal coordination so community relationships and knowledge are shared across council.
- Continue developing and maintaining a central database of inclusive community partners.
- Identify and promote organisations that offer inclusive volunteering and participation opportunities.
- Explore future funding or grant opportunities that support access and inclusion.

Domain 4: Health and Wellbeing

Well-being programs: Feedback received

Staff, Elected Members and community members said that connection, inclusion and belonging are central to well-being for people with disability. Many people experience loneliness and find it hard to access or find activities and programs. Council was seen as having an important role in bringing people together, sharing information, supporting inclusive community activities, and advocating where gaps exist, rather than delivering all services directly. We heard:

- Many people with disability feel lonely and socially isolated.
- Connection to community activities and other people is important for wellbeing.
- Council facilities and programs support wellbeing, but are not always easy to find, access or join.
- Information about activities and events is spread across different sources and can be hard to keep up with.
- Printed information is still important for people who cannot access digital platforms.
- Council is seen as a connector, not the provider of all services.
- Volunteering supports well-being but is not always inclusive or accessible.
- Community groups and events are not always confident about including people with disability.
- Attitudes and lack of understanding can create barriers to participation.
- People with disability often feel pressured to explain their needs or advocate for access.

Well-being programs: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Prioritise connection, belonging and reduced isolation as key well-being outcomes.
- Make information about activities and events easy to find, using both digital and printed formats.
- Provide printed flyers and notices at libraries, visitor centres and community spaces.
- Strengthen council's role as a connector for and between people with disability, community groups and service providers.
- Support inclusive volunteering opportunities as a pathway to connection and wellbeing.
- Use council funding and support to improve the capacity of community groups to be inclusive of people with disability.
- Help community groups learn practical ways to include people with disability.
- Build community understanding of disability and reduce stigma and unconscious bias, for example supporting and facilitating workshops for community.
- Take pressure off people with disability to constantly explain their access needs by providing Disability Inclusion Training.
- Ensure council supported events are accessible and welcoming to everyone.
- Improve signage, wayfinding and communication supports in public spaces.
- Introduce and expand supports such as communication boards and explore joining the Sunflower Program.
- Support low-cost well-being ideas raised by the community, such as:
 - community gardens

- o nature based or shared community spaces
- Advocate to state and federal governments where well-being gaps are identified.

Domain 5: Safety, Rights and Justice

Prepare for and respond to emergencies: Feedback received

We asked Staff and Community **"How could council better support the disability community to prepare for and best respond to emergencies?"**

Staff and Elected Members reflected on recent emergency experiences and identified opportunities to improve communication, learning and community feedback. We heard;

- Emergency communication during the flood differed locally compared to state-level messaging.
- Staff felt council responded well, but state messaging and media reporting caused confusion and anxiety.
- Community meetings were held about scenarios that did not eventuate and frustration was expressed as community was unsure why.
- There is a need to ask the community how council performed during the last emergency.
- Staff suggested seeking feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.

Prepare for and respond to emergencies: Suggestions from staff, Elected Members and community

During the workshops, participants suggested that council could incorporate the following into their DAIP actions:

- Develop and share accessible emergency information in multiple formats including plain language and/or easy read.
- Seek feedback from the disability community after emergency events to understand experiences and identify gaps.

- Use learnings from recent emergencies to guide future planning and communication.
- Clearly define council's role in local emergency preparedness and response for people with disability.

Community survey

The community survey had 51 respondents from across the three councils. It was written to seek feedback from residents on each of the five domains of the State Disability Inclusion Plan. The data has been presented quantitatively and qualitatively; in themes and with quotes to highlight individual responses, and graphs to illustrate response numbers. The responses from all three councils have been presented together to provide an overview. Some council or venue, park, event specific information was provided by respondents and has been included in the relevant sections.

Domain 1: Inclusive environments and communities

How physically accessible is your local community for people with disability? What could your local council do to make the community more accessible?

Accessibility of the community

Footpath and Ramp Improvements

- Many respondents called for better footpaths with smooth surfaces, no lips or steps, and proper ramps.
- Example: "Improved footpaths for wheelchair access across the region... Accessible footpaths to BBQ areas down the lake/Martin's Bend/Berri Marina."
- Respondents expressed safety concerns: "Footpaths – deep drops to step down... my brother stepped down and twisted one ankle and broke the other... Was extremely traumatic for him."
- "Foot paths need urgent attention with proper ramps that lead straight to the next ramp on the other side that is also built to current code."
- "Ensure paths are accessible for people with disabilities."

Accessible Facilities

- Respondents highlighted a lack of accessible toilets and inclusive amenities at venues.

- Example: "Renmark Netball club doesn't have a disability toilet... The netball courts only have female toilets and one unisex toilet which isn't inclusive of our LGBTQIA+ community."
- Respondents requested baby-changing facilities and wider doorways.

Playground and Public Space Accessibility

- Respondents called for inclusive playgrounds with wheelchair-friendly equipment and sensory features.
- Example: "Make Monash Playground picnic tables accessible for wheelchairs."
- "Add sensory equipment e.g. musical instruments."

Parking and Transport

- Respondents requested more accessible parking spaces near event venues and shops.
- They also called for more accessible public transport options for people with mobility challenges.

Shade and Comfort

- Respondents asked for more seating and shaded walkways.
- "Shade is so important in making the community more accessible".

Signage and Communication

- Respondents suggested providing clear signage with visual supports and communication boards in public spaces.
- Example: "Put up signs with Compic signs."

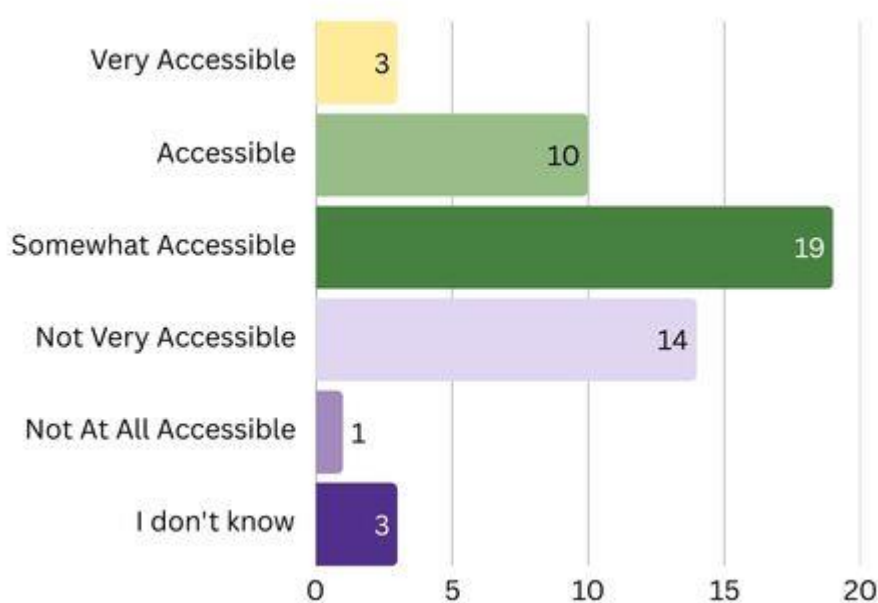
Safety and Maintenance

- Respondents called on council to fix uneven surfaces, tree root damage, and trip hazards.
- They also called on council to ensure ramps and pathways meet current accessibility codes.

Accessibility of local events

"The more events you have that are disability friendly, the more the community can get involved and have more exposure to those living with disabilities." – Survey respondent

How accessible are local community events for people with disability?



This graph illustrates that the Riverland communities can be broadly considered as 'Somewhat Accessible'.

Accessible Pathways

- Respondents emphasised the need for temporary and permanent solutions for mobility access.
- Example: "Investigate temporary rubber or plastic footpaths for better accessibility during events (markets, shows etc)."
- "Easier pathways to walk, not bumpy or bricks lifting."

Parking and Toilets

- Respondents called for more accessible parking (especially at events) and toilets.

- "Provide more disability parking and make sure the parking is in a suitable location and has access for the person to get up onto the footpath without being in the road."
- "Disabled toilet facilities, easy pathways for wheelchair residents."
- "Loxton Community Theatre does not have wheelchair accessible toilets or access to the stage."
- "There has been NO specific disability access parking provided for events such as the Christmas pageant or the Australia Day celebrations on the oval."
- "If we wanted to go to the Christmas carols in the garden, I would have to find a disabled park and in that area there are only 2. Not to mention finding a seat on the grass. The ground is full of tree roots which have come to the surface and are huge trip hazards."

Event Location and Layout

- Respondents requested councils make community events more physically accessible.
- "Barmera Markets are held in the park on the lakefront. It is very difficult for anyone with wheels to move around on the grass... blocking off the road along the lake and putting the stalls there would be a better option."
- "More common spaces like food truck areas on concrete or blocked off road not lawn. Wheelchair users find lawn difficult and tiring."

Sensory-Friendly and Quiet Spaces

- Respondents called for sensory-friendly events with quiet spaces at community events.
- "Consider accessible seating at community carols – particularly important for older residents. Sensory spaces for people with Autism at local pageants, market days, etc."
- "Help make events more sensory friendly. Also have an area where people can have a quiet place to go to if they need."

Communication and Information

- Respondents requested council to share information before events about accessibility.
- "Put it on their website to tell people what is accessible."
- "Downloadable guides beforehand with maps, quiet areas, and what to expect."

Inclusive Seating and Facilities

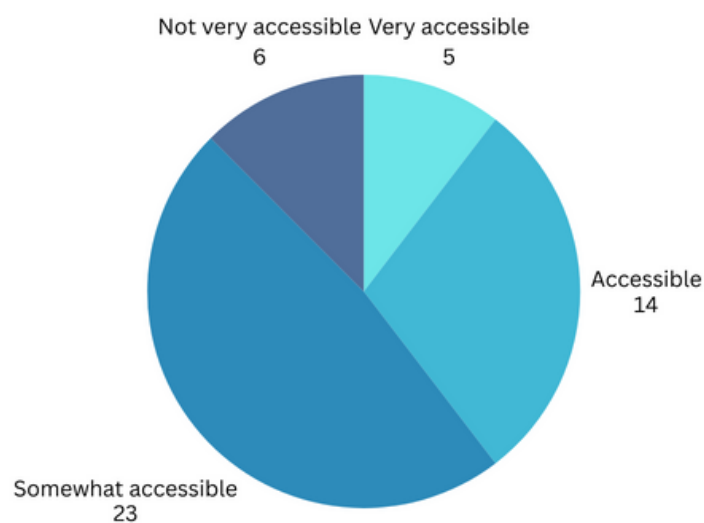
- Respondents called for inclusive, accessible seating and access at events.
- "Seating available for those who can't stand for long, i.e. markets on grassy areas."

Consultation and Representation

- "Actually engage with people that have real world and first-hand experience living with disabilities... I would even go as far as getting council event organisers to use assistive technology."

Inclusive and welcoming community

How inclusive and welcoming are the places you visit most in the community?



Accessible Public Toilets

- Respondents called on councils to re-design accessible toilets to include separate cubicles for carers and clients.
- One respondent expressed a desire for more privacy within accessible toilets for people with disability, so they can be separated from their support person: "When planning public toilets it needs to be considered to have a separate toilet cubicle inside the disabled toilets... I have a 26-year-old son that needs help with toileting."

Community Engagement

- Respondents called for more opportunities for people with disability to have a voice. They also suggested building alliances between councils and disability support providers.
- "Inviting locals living with a disability to voice their concerns and points of view to help inform inclusivity and improve community participation."

Inclusive Infrastructure

- Respondents called for more public seating and shaded areas for carers and wheelchair users.
- They also requested wider doorways, automatic doors, and accessible footpaths.
- Playgrounds were referred to several times, including: "Playgrounds with nonverbal signage (as per Adelaide and other cities), disabled swings etc."

Empathy and Awareness

- Respondents called for disability inclusion training and campaigns (similar to LGBTQIA+ and gender awareness campaigns).
- "It is surprising if people sit in a wheelchair themselves... This will bring to their attention what is needed."

Training and Education

- Respondents called for training for businesses on inclusive practices and communication strategies.

- "Support local businesses to consider how accessible cafes and shops are by promoting trainings that describe strategies that support people who use walkers or wheelchairs."
- Respondents called for education on existing campaigns which promote inclusion.
- "There is a Universal scheme called 'Hidden Disabilities Sunflower'... Have stickers, lanyards, wrist bands etc."

Community hub

- "It would be nice to have a disability friendly hub in Barmera that people can go to learn, connect, share, and be themselves."

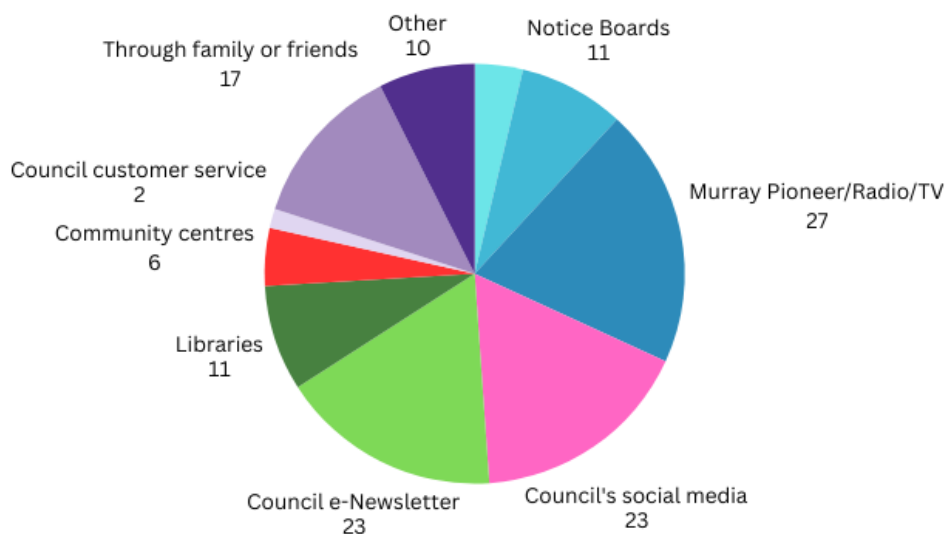
Holiday options

- "Maybe subsidise accommodation providers in building/renovating rooms so have accessible accommodation, so can still have a holiday within our own region."

Sources of local information

Where do you get information about what happens in your town?

Main sources of local information:



Key Insights

- Residents rely on a mix of traditional and digital channels, with newspapers/radio and council social media being the top two.
- Council social media platforms play an important role in community communication.
- Physical methods (notice boards, libraries) remain important for those without internet access.
- Word-of-mouth plays a notable role, highlighting the need for consistent messaging across all channels.
- Libraries and notice boards are valued by the community, especially those without internet access.

Physical Communication

- Many respondents requested more printed materials and letterbox drops.
- "Not all of the council's residents have access to a computer or know how to use one so, more letterbox drops are needed."
- "More physical flyers, more social media ... with plenty of notice."
- Respondents suggested website updates and social media improvements.
- "Using social media, accessibility updates to websites and other media."
- "Facebook posts with images need description of the images."
- "For the Berri Barmera Council website, you can look at making it more accessible: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-intro/>."
- "Simply call me on xxx [number supplied in the survey response] and I will come in and we can get the event organisers to use the assistive technology in these settings to show them how bloody hard they make things."

Face-to-Face Opportunities

- Respondents suggested pop-up information sessions for libraries and shopping plazas.
- "More opportunities to speak with council staff face to face."
- "Council do not inform their residents of anything happening in our community. If you don't work for the council, you don't know that things are on or happening."

Accessible Formats

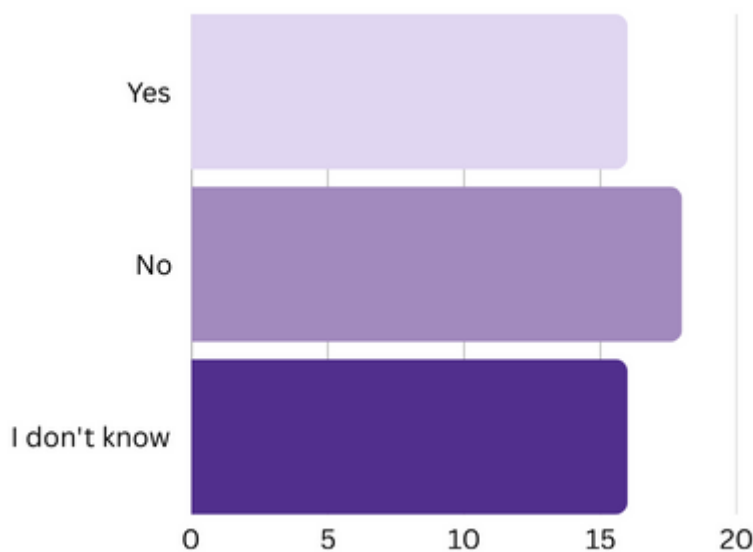
- Respondents called for plain language summaries and communication boards.
- "Communication boards in public places."
- "Contents list on emails – they are crowded and hard to get to the parts you need to read."

Inclusive Communication Practices

- There were calls for more inclusive communication practices by council and local businesses.
- "Maybe businesses could make commitment to use simple Auslan and display an Auslan-friendly sign."
- "Council general meetings each month be live streamed and available to public."

Having a say on local council matters

Do you feel like you have a say on local council matters?



Key Insights

- Responses are almost evenly split, with slightly more people saying No than Yes.
- A significant number (16) answered I don't know, which suggests uncertainty about how to engage with council processes.
- This indicates a need for clearer communication and more inclusive engagement strategies to ensure people feel their voices matter.

Including people with disability in council decision making

How could we better include people with disability in local council decision making?

Create Dedicated Committees

- Many respondents suggested forming advisory groups or committees that include people with disabilities.
- Example: "Establishing a committee comprised of people with a disability, professionals, support providers and laymen to be involved in local council decision making."

Direct Engagement and Consultation

- Respondents suggested council reach out to local people with disability more proactively to seek their input.

- "Invite them to council meetings and have regular conversations and actually act on what's talked about. Actions speak louder than words!"
- "Go where they are instead of asking them to go to you."
- "Speak to the Special School and ask to speak to parents from your council area. Consult with special school staff."

Representation and Lived Experience

- Respondents suggested including people with disability on relevant boards, panels and working groups.
- "Have a lived experience rep on council working groups."
- "Try and think if you were in the shoes of someone living with a disability yourself or a loved one. What would you want changed?"
- "Do councils have people living with a disability on panels, boards etc when making decisions that affect them?"

Accessible Communication

- Suggestions included easy-to-read agendas, surveys, and letterbox drops.
- "Ensure communications are accessible. Provide multiple ways of gaining feedback."
- "Ask them to attend council meetings or write up the council meetings agenda in an easy to read format."

Regular Feedback Opportunities

- Respondents indicated that the disability community is keen to provide feedback on matters that affect their lives.
- "Regular opportunities to provide feedback."
- "Surveys like this."

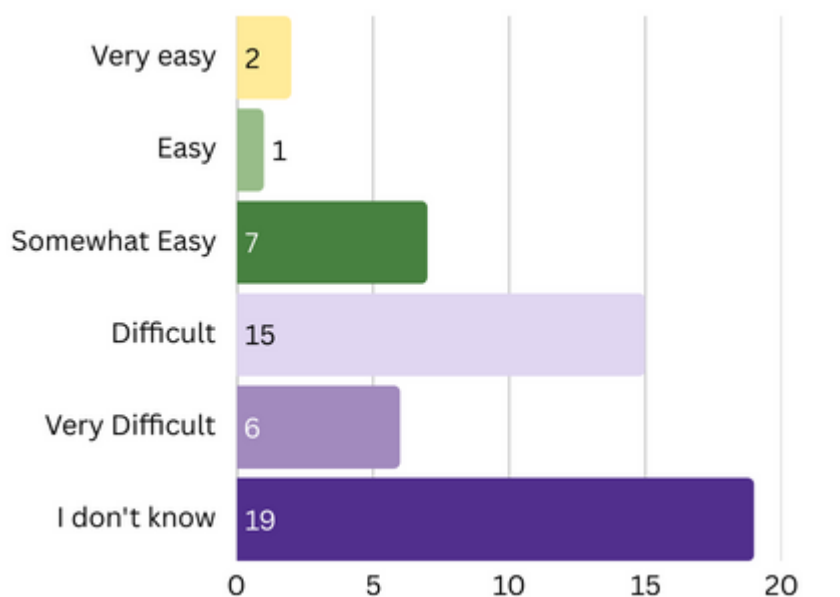
Face-to-Face Meetings

- Respondents suggested that council meet with people with disability where they work/live/learn.
- "Have meetings at Warrawee, senior [citizens] and lifestyle village."
- "Councillors could meet with disabled people at a workplace or school or health facility."

Domain 2: Education and Employment

Finding employment in the Riverland

How easy/difficult is it for people with disability to access meaningful employment in the Riverland?



Key Insights

- The majority of respondents (24 out of 34 who answered) believe it is difficult or very difficult for people with disabilities to access meaningful employment.
- Only 3 respondents rated employment access as easy or very easy, highlighting a significant barrier.

Common themes

- Employer Attitudes: "Employers are not accepting of people with disabilities... disability employment service organisations sometimes don't follow up on things."
- Council role: "Work with businesses that are already championing this to help expand their programs. Offer opportunities to those with disabilities to experience paid work in council programs and events."

- Awareness and Education: "To have educational programs for employers and workplaces about why hiring someone with a disability is important."

Supporting people with disability to find employment

Employer Incentives and Training

- Many respondents suggested offering financial incentives and education for businesses.
- Example: "Create an incentive for employers, provide the employer/management with training so they have the correct tools to be able to employ a person with a disability."
- "Provide incentives – could be reduced rates, in-kind support, publicity."

Council-Led Opportunities

- Respondents encouraged council to find ways to employ more people with disability.
- "If they don't already do so, employ people living with a Disability."
- "Work with businesses that are already championing this to help expand their programs. Offer opportunities to those with disabilities to experience paid work in council programs and events."
- "Look for work opportunities in their own workplace."

Awareness and Education

- Respondents called for council training on disability inclusion and how to be an inclusive employer.
- "To have educational programs for employers and workplaces about why hiring someone with a disability is important. Also for these educational programs to educate them about the different types of disabilities, including invisible disabilities."
- Mention of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program as a resource for training and awareness.

Simplifying Job Criteria

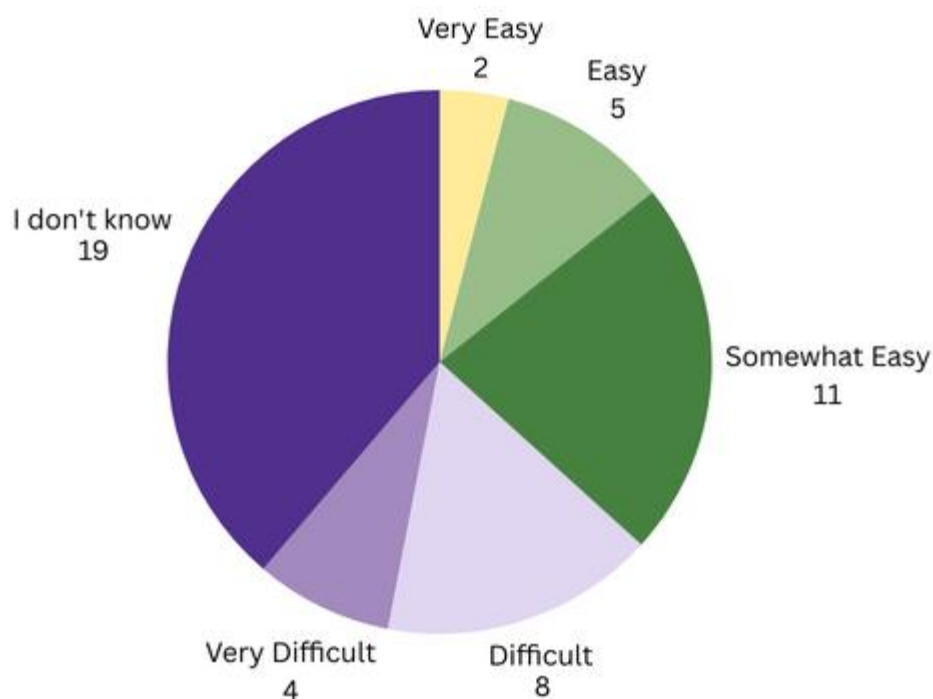
- Respondents called on council to make the job application process simpler for council roles, with clearer descriptions with less industry jargon.
- Respondents noted that literacy can be a barrier for people through the job application process.

Advocacy and Promotion

- Respondents suggested supporting local employers and promoting the benefits of diverse workplaces.
- "Talk to employers about their responsibilities to the community and how they can access help to employ someone with a disability."
- "Feature those with disabilities in employment in social media and include what benefits the employers feel."

Finding volunteering opportunities in the Riverland

How easy/difficult is it for people with disability to find volunteering opportunities in the Riverland?



Key Insights

- The highest number of respondents (11) said it is somewhat easy, but 12 responses rated it as difficult or very difficult, showing barriers still exist.
- Only 7 respondents (very easy + easy) feel volunteering is straightforward, indicating limited accessibility and visibility of these roles.

Supporting people with disability to find volunteering opportunities

Centralised Information and Listings

- Many respondents requested a clear, accessible register of volunteer opportunities.
- Example: "Both on their website and in the office have a collated list of as many organisations as possible that need volunteers and what roles they need them for."
- "Identify the volunteering opportunities and make it public via newspaper, circulate to various agencies who are supporting disabled people."

Education and Awareness

- Respondents called on council to educate businesses and encourage them to provide more volunteering opportunities for people with disability.
- "Educating organisations about including people with disability."
- "Have more local businesses open to having people with disabilities as volunteers. Again, this comes down to education and explaining the benefits."

Council Role and Support

- Respondents made suggestions for how to support positive volunteering opportunities within council.

- "Actually allow people to volunteer! Every time my husband has offered to stack books for the library, they say they will only take paid staff!"
- "Have a support worker accompany them."
- "Give on-the-job training."

Promotion and Visibility

- Respondents suggested ways to promote the benefits of employers taking on volunteers with disability.
- "A Volunteering Facebook page available for all to use and the Council to administer."
- "Feature those with disabilities in volunteering roles on social media and include what benefits the groups feel."

Accessibility and Inclusion

- Respondents called for more inclusive workplaces to enable people with disability to take up volunteering and employment opportunities.
- "Provide adjustments to ensure a positive experience."

How to make council a more inclusive and accessible workplace

Physical Accessibility

- Respondents highlighted the need for flat, open spaces and accessible buildings and facilities and illustrated that current employees are finding workplaces inaccessible.
- Example: "Need to have – Flat and easy access to the building, flat and open work space, appropriate disabled toilets."
- "Ensure that areas are easily accessible such as toilet areas, they can reach door handles, desks are at a level that best suits them."
- "I am based in a major State government building in Berri that is across three floors and still has no lift access... I am unable to attend the office when this is flaring up as I have to go upstairs to go to the toilet or access the lunch room."

Inclusive Design

- Respondents called for inclusive, sensory-friendly workspaces that allow people to bring support workers if needed.

- "Not so crowded."
- "Support workers to help you in a job."

Attitudes and Culture

- Respondents highlighted a need for inclusive attitudes among staff.
- "Be inclusive of everyone in a safe environment."
- "Open mind by staff and establishment."

Domain 3: Personal and Community Support

Connecting with community services and supports

Transport Limitations

- Several noted lack of transport and limited services: "Only within their local community due to lack of transport to other towns."
- "It can be an issue that the Riverland has very limited transport especially to other Riverland towns. And even harder if you have a Disability."
- "Connecting with community services can be difficult accessing places, daily care and accessing other support services."

Information Gaps

- Some respondents were unsure or unaware of available services: "I don't know enough about what's available to comment."
- "Difficult – most want you to call them, which isn't accessible to a lot of people with disabilities. Also, no central place to find available services and supports."
- "The services are not obvious to people without a disability, not sure how someone with a disability would find anything."

Quality and Reliability of Services

- "Some community services and supports, in my experience have been inadequate or misleading. It's important to have honest, reliable, engaging, caring, and encouraging supports and services available."

- "Incredibly difficult. We are very resilient people in the region because we make do with the services we can access."

Eligibility and Age Issues

- "It can be quite difficult to find the services that fit best... Also there needs to be something done for those who are not able to get on the NDIS and too young for aged care."
- Many highlighted barriers after leaving school: "It is easy when at school as they assist but outside of school it is much harder with support workers."

How council could connect people with services and supports

Centralised Information Hub

- Many respondents suggested creating a single, accessible register/web page for all disability-related services.
- Example: "Have lists of services available...with phone numbers and contact people and what each service does."
- "A central website with disability support services, what council provides, volunteer/work opportunities, etc. would be extremely helpful."
- "Promote the best places to find services and supports."
- "Use of a Facebook site managed by the Council/s, use of services for those with disability and including health, education, ageing, disability and other social groups."

Community Events and Expos

- There were several calls for expos to increase community awareness of available services and supports.
- "Hold information afternoons/evenings and ensure that there is a representative from each provider and NDIS."
- "Having a specific time at least once a year for a disabled services expo within the Riverland."
- "Riverland Special School has been running yearly disability expos on top of their teaching responsibilities; council should be supporting

this and growing it so it doesn't fall on school staff to do on top of their jobs."

Partnerships with Service Providers

- "Engage with local government outlets like Mission Australia, Focus One Health etc to promote them."
- "Work with services and clients to establish a site similar to Our Town Berri's, River Family First's site for young families."

Accessibility and Transport

- "More accessible transport."
- "Local public transport if not driving anymore."

Advocacy and Support

- "By providing information to people with disabilities and connecting with caregivers and professionals."
- "Council to inform people with a disability have access to disability advocate to explain employment opportunities."

Domain 4: Health and Wellbeing

Council initiatives to improve health and wellbeing for people with disability

Information and Education

- Respondents called for information sessions both for providers and people with disability.
- "Holding information nights on inclusivity and communication with Healthcare workers, Allied Health professionals and support providers."
- "Provide informed sessions during the day for people to attend with support workers."

Accessible Facilities

- Respondents emphasised that accessibility remains a barrier to wellbeing activities and community participation.

- "Facilitate spaces for community groups to meet that are accessible – e.g. the Bonney Theatre stage is inaccessible for someone with mobility issues who wants to perform without going outside."
- "Ensure areas are accessible for events and activities."

Aquatic and Fitness Infrastructure

- "I believe the Riverland NEEDS an aquatic centre... The perfect location would be in Berri to expand the existing Hayden Stoeckel Swimming Pool."
- "That heated pool would be great."

Inclusive Sports and Social Activities

- There were several calls for more inclusive sporting and social activities.
- "More inexpensive sporting activities, clients love taking part in a variety of activities."
- "Managed social activities for those with disabilities and their carers (like a lawn bowls session once a fortnight, or maybe an open music making session)."
- "More funding for inclusive sports within town clubs e.g. Berri have inclusive basketball – would be wonderful to see inclusive netball/football/soccer/tennis/swimming."
- "Renmark netball club would work with council to run an inclusive sports session/s."

Transport and Access to Healthcare

- Transport was raised as a key barrier to healthcare access.
- "Possibly support the local community centre to purchase a community bus for transport."
- "Somehow have more accessibility to doctors or nurses. Instead of having to go to Berri as I can't get there."

Mental Health and Social Connection

- Respondents see a role for council in providing more opportunities for social connection.

- "General catch ups with the council just for disability people so they are not overwhelmed."
- "A focus on socialising, activity and connection."

Advocacy and Awareness

- "Campaign for government to include wheelchair accessible buses to and from Adelaide. All kinds of disabilities being presented in media, posters etc help those feel valued and seen."

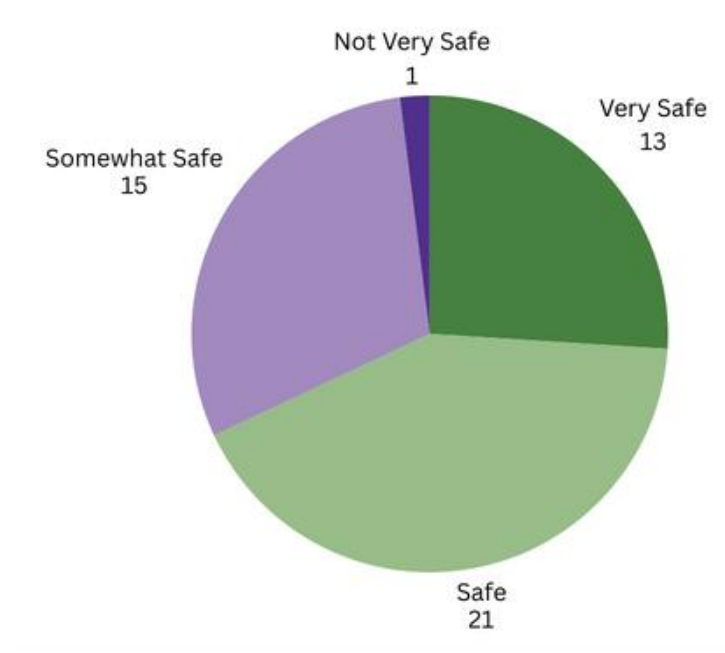
Availability and wait times

- "I have plantar fasciitis in both feet and have been waiting to see a Country Health Connect podiatrist for over 18 months."

Domain 5: Safety, Rights and Justice

Safety in the local community

How safe do you feel in the local community?



Key Insights

- The majority of respondents (34 out of 50) feel safe or very safe in their community.
- 15 respondents feel only "somewhat safe," indicating some concerns.

- Very few (1 respondent) feel “not very safe,” and none reported feeling “not safe at all,” which suggests overall positive perceptions of safety.

How council could make people with disability feel safer

Improved Lighting

- This was the most common suggestion across responses.
- Example: “Better lighting. E.g. Zante Road near pool, lights have been out for months.”
- “Better street lighting on side streets, for all reasons. For example: Pyap Street, between 16th and 17th Streets has some very dark areas.”
- “Lighting is always important!”
- “Better lighting on walking paths.”

Safer Footpaths

- Footpaths were flagged as a concern in response to several of the survey questions, including with respect to safety.
- “Better safer footpaths so people using assistive technology do not have to ride on the road.”
- “Improving footpaths.”

Emergency Preparedness and Communication

- Feedback on emergency preparedness mostly related to communication with the community.
- “Major disasters such as Fire & flood need to have more up-to-date information on the situation... We needed precise information such as ‘it is now 5km, 2km or meters from a certain point.’”
- “Better communications than emergency services gave [during the flood].”

Medical and Disability Support

- Respondents indicated a lack of quality medical and disability support services in the local area.
- “Put incentives in place to attract adequate medical services.”

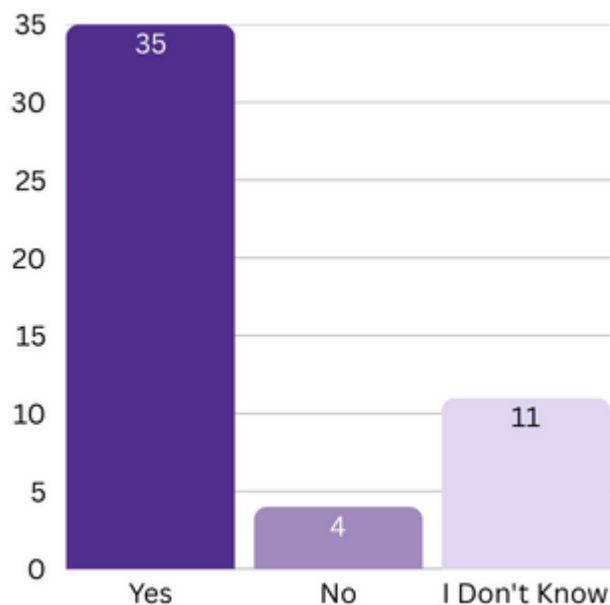
- "As mentioned before, have disability hubs in all major Riverland towns. Also, to have an ethical disability advocacy service that is actually open, useful, and helpful in the Riverland would be great!"

Traffic and Parking Safety

- Respondents flagged concerns about the safety of roads and the positioning of accessible parking.
- "Ensure roads are safer. Adequate parking provision in high use areas."

Emergency preparedness

Would you feel prepared in the case of an emergency?



Key Insights

- Most respondents (35) feel prepared for emergencies.
- 15 respondents either said No or I don't know,
- This suggests that there is strong preparedness for emergencies, with some gaps in confidence and a need for better communication, resources, and planning for emergencies.

How council could improve emergency preparedness

Improved Communication and Information

- Many respondents emphasised the need for clear, timely, and accessible emergency updates.
- Example: "Provide clear, targeted communication about local risks and preparedness measures."
- "Better communications than emergency services gave... We needed precise information such as 'it is now 5km, 2km or meters from a certain point.'"

Education and Resources

- Respondents called for more accessible information and resources prior to and during emergencies, delivered in person as well as online.
- "Give talks to various groups on what to do in different situations."
- "Having helpful resources available would be good... Communication should not only be online or through social media, the need for in-person face-to-face sessions would be helpful too."
- "Develop resources, additional communications, improve systems."
- "More up-to-date information during major disasters such as fire & flood."

Technology and Connectivity

- "NBN and phone coverage at Lyrup is a good start for local residents."

Infrastructure and Signage

- "Just make sure that all your emergency locations are fully accessible."
- "Not sure what the local fire emergency location point signage is like around the place. Maybe something consistent across the whole Riverland could help?"
- "Upgrade roads."

Our Voice SA consultation

Our Voice SA (OVSA) is an incorporated (since 2007) peer-led self-advocacy organisation for adults with intellectual disability. OVSA's mission is to increase the skills and knowledge of people with intellectual disability in the areas of self-advocacy, human rights and decision-making. OVSA works to ensure the voices of people with intellectual disability are heard.

OVSA provides capacity building in self-advocacy and influences decision makers by participating in consultations, preparing submissions, and advocating on matters that are important to people living with disability.

There are OVSA peer networks across South Australia, including in Adelaide, Mount Barker, Mount Gambier, Whyalla and Berri.

This hour-long consultation was led by a JFAPO staff member who is a Riverland local. One staff member from Berri Barmera attended and one from Loxton Waikerie. 14 OVSA members and 7 support workers attended the meeting.

Many OVSA members had not heard of a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) before, but when asked what they thought might be in a DAIP, OVSA members said: funding, moving out – having your own room in your own house, transport, mental health support and not leaving anybody out.

Domain 1: Inclusive environments and communities

Accessibility and community attitudes

Attendees were asked if they felt welcome and included in their community and what stops them from going places, visiting people and doing activities. Attendee shared their experiences and suggestions for changes.

Events and places

- Riverland Field Days – Some wheelchair users have trouble accessing these, especially if it has been raining as wheelchair users cannot get around in the mud. At the last Field Days, the grass had

not been mowed recently on the walkways, which made it very tough to push through with a wheelchair or walker.

- Any events that are on an oval or on grass, if there are not paths then wheelchair users find it hard to participate. One attendee has previously hired different wheelchairs just to attend events. If it has rained you have to drag the wheelchair backwards, it cannot even be pushed forward.
- Small adjustments to the placement of markets (e.g. Barmera) could make all the difference. For Barmera there is a roadway that could be utilised for markets.
- Event applications to council should include thinking about inclusion and accessibility.
- Request to for councils to buy or borrow matting that they can share to make a walkway for wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility aids, maybe an accessibility market kit for the three councils.
- One attendee did not attend Field Days this year because there was no concession ticket and companion cards were not being accepted, so people had to buy two full price tickets for them and their support worker. This meant that many people did not go at all.
- Swimming pools are closed during the day open in the morning and afternoon. Many members can only go to the pool in the daytime. Council staff suggested the group contact the pools to show that they would go at this time, as the pools are closed at that time due to low attendance.
- The caravan park pool in the middle has ramp access and the public can go outside of school holiday times for a fee, which attendees enjoyed. Not open to public during Christmas break when it is hottest.
- One section of the new Waikerie Football Club building had no rails, an issue that was known to staff.

Parking

When shopping in Renmark Plaza people felt excluded and unable to get around for several reasons. While the Plaza is privately owned, it was clearly a significant barrier for attendees and has therefore been included.

- The white buses parking across the path and right by the shops, so pedestrians have to walk around into the road. One person had told the shopping centre more than once to ask the buses to park somewhere else. Attendees wondered if the Plaza owners could put signs up saying 'buses cannot park here'. Council has also sent out correspondence to the bus company owners, with no change.
- In the car park large 4-wheel drives can block routes to and from the Plaza.
- When in the car park and exiting a van with ramps, people are coming out into a driveway or onto a road, which is a big safety concern.
- The issue is both the placement of the accessible parks and that there are not enough, at the Plaza and elsewhere.
- Council staff made the point that the Plazas are privately owned, not council owned. They also said that that does not mean that council can't be part of these conversations, and councils could put forward suggestions like others do. They noted that they would like to see parking changes reflected in the planning acts and asked if it would work to have same car park types that they have now, and some that allow back access for safe exit/entrance? Attendees said yes.
- As a group OVSA plan to write to the Plaza management.
- Crossing the highway from community centre to the Plaza is also very difficult. There are very few places that are easy to get a wheelchair up and over, which is uncomfortable for the wheelchair user. The crossing highway itself is a major hazard, where people might be waiting 5/10 minutes to get a gap in traffic big enough to cross. There should be a crossing there with enough time for people moving at a slower pace. Council staff were unsure if this section of the highway was under the state Department of Infrastructure and Transport or council

managed. Even if it is DIT, council staff felt that part of their role is to advocate to the State Government on behalf of groups like OVSA.

Transport

- Attendees said there are not enough buses around, particularly in the afternoons or on the weekends. This means they cannot go out on the weekend sometimes at all and miss out on going out with mates in other towns. Council said they have been working with DIT around this and hear it often.
- A lack of transport also meant attendees missed out on events for example at local hotels. Council suggested writing to the hotels about this as they are community run and managed. This could be especially useful when the hotels have events on, as they will want to bring as many people in as possible.

Accessible information and communication

Attendees were asked if they knew what their local council offers and how they found local information.

- Members were not immediately sure which were council buildings but had been to events and activities at several including Berri town hall – which OVSA has used for discos, Chaffey Community Centre, Loxton playground, Monash playground, Berri basketball stadium and local libraries.
- When asked how they heard community news, word-of-mouth was emphasised, with some expressing that they had access to email. The group had experienced difficulties finding information in places other than online.
- As an advocacy group, they had written to councils on several occasions and knew they could raise issues that way.
- An attendee asked about the app My Local and it was confirmed that this app is in use for the councils. There was a discussion about what could be found on the app, including the ability to report a problem and find out when your bins have to go out. Council staff encouraged the use of this app for those who have mobile phones. An example was

given of the barbeques in the marina having run out of gas, and an attendee used the app to report that.

- The group had not had much direct contact with council staff. They had met one of the council Mayors but had become unsure what their role was.
- During the meeting a council staff member told the group that the Loxton Waikerie swimming pools are old and leaking, that the council will be looking at new swimming pools in the next few years and that there will be opportunities for the community to have input.
- One attendee asked if mental health for people with disability would be part of the DAIP. They gave an example where a person they support was turned away from the hospital and given a number to call for mental health support, but when the worker rang no one answered. The person did not get any mental health support. Council staff said that a new staff member from Preventative Health SA was working on an implementation plan and that mental health might come into those spaces.

Domain 2: Education and Employment

Volunteering and employment

There were many examples given of where members of the group had volunteered, what their roles were and what experience they had. There was great enthusiasm for volunteering roles, and the group took pride in their work. One attendee shared that they worked at Woolworths and was well known because of this and their other community roles. Attendees had volunteered at:

- Foodbank
- Loxton Historical Village – very organised, lots of different roles, great manager
- Caravan Park – weeding, using the blower on the golf course
- Paringa museum – less organised than Loxton HV, “you’re not sure what you’re doing”

We heard that many places advertise for volunteers, but when support workers contact them they “only get so far and it gets too hard, then I get stonewalled.” This worker explained that they know 12 strong people who are looking for volunteering. They were told several times that Landcare (difficult to hear in the audio) is always looking for volunteers. However, when they tried to find out about opportunities for the people they support, they were told “we’ll get back to you” but there is never any follow up. Several OVSA members expressed frustration over this same experience. “Even explaining that a support worker will be with them don’t help. They say they’re inclusive but don’t follow up.”

Another attendee raised an unnamed business that promotes that they are inclusive “all over their website” for volunteers and with an employment program, but does not get back to anyone.

Conclusion

One of the most significant findings from this consultation is that there is a large number of people with disability across the three council areas, and they are eager to contribute to making the local community more inclusive and accessible for everyone. Consultation participants demonstrated extensive knowledge, experience, insights and ideas that could help to improve access and inclusion.

The disability community is keen to see which actions councils include in their new joint DAIP, and there is willingness help to shape those changes through further consultation or co-design. One survey respondent commented that “[t]he most important thing is once you have all the feedback you need from this survey, before spending money and implementing big changes, have consultation sessions with people in the community.”

When it comes to DAIP implementation, JFAPO encourages councils to consider how to maintain engagement with the local disability community. This could occur through the creation of a Disability Advisory Group that provides advice on DAIP implementation and other access and inclusion matters across the three councils. Another option could be to establish project-specific co-design groups to advise on how to implement significant actions.

The next step for JFAPO is to analyse the data received through the consultation and develop draft actions for inclusion in the joint DAIP. These will be based on the input received, our own expertise and lived experience, and our work with other councils and state government departments on their DAIPs.

Appendix A



Disability Access & Inclusion Survey

The councils of Berri Barmera, Loxton Waikerie and Renmark Paringa are creating a joint Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP). This Plan will contain shared actions for all three councils to complete by 2029, as well as actions specific to each council where appropriate. The purpose of a DAIP, as per the State Disability Inclusion Plan 2025-2029, is to create fairer, more inclusive and accessible communities for everyone.

We would like to invite people who live, work and spend time in these three council areas to share their experiences and ideas on what would make their community more inclusive and accessible. A DAIP is an action plan for councils, so please focus on the items that sit within your council's responsibility (e.g. town planning, waste, local roads, local events/programs, community services).

The joint DAIP will cover the following topics:

- Inclusive environments and communities
- Education and employment
- Personal and community support
- Health and wellbeing
- Safety, rights and justice

This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time.

Demographic questions

Name*

Postcode*

Age range* (Select one):

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ☐ Under 10 | ☐ 35-44 | ☐ 65-74 |
| ☐ 11-17 | ☐ 45-54 | ☐ 75-84 |
| ☐ 18-24 | ☐ 55-64 | ☐ 85+ |
| ☐ 25-34 | | |

*Questions marked with a * are required*



What is your gender? *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Which category best describes you? *

- ☐ A person with disability
- ☐ A person with proximity to disability (family member, partner, carer etc)
- ☐ A disability sector worker
- ☐ A local government staff member
- ☐ An interested resident

If you're comfortable sharing, which cohort(s) do you identify with? (Select all that apply)

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Intellectual disability | ☐ Deafblind |
| ☐ Physical disability | ☐ Psychosocial disability |
| ☐ Neurological disability | ☐ Neurodivergent |
| ☐ Acquired brain injury | ☐ Chronically ill |
| ☐ Blind or low vision | ☐ Prefer not to say |
| ☐ D/deaf or hard of hearing | ☐ Not applicable |
| ☐ Other (please specify) | |

If you're comfortable sharing, which cohort(s) do you identify with? We will use this information to better understand and respond to the needs of particular groups in the local disability community. (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- ☐ LGBTQIA+
- ☐ Culturally and linguistically diverse
- ☐ None of the above

Inclusive environments and communities

How physically accessible is your local community for people with disability? *

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ Very accessible | ☐ Not very accessible |
| ☐ Accessible | ☐ Not at all accessible |
| ☐ Somewhat accessible | ☐ I don't know |

*Questions marked with a * are required*



What could your local council do to make the community more accessible? (e.g. playgrounds, public buildings, public spaces, facilities) Please provide specific examples and locations, if relevant.

How accessible are local community events for people with disability?

- ☐ Very accessible
- ☐ Accessible
- ☐ Somewhat accessible
- ☐ Not very accessible
- ☐ Not at all accessible
- ☐ I don't know

What could your local council do to make community events more accessible? Please provide specific examples and locations, if relevant.

Overall, how inclusive and welcoming are the places you visit most in your community? *

- ☐ Very inclusive
- ☐ Inclusive
- ☐ Somewhat inclusive
- ☐ Not very inclusive
- ☐ Not at all inclusive
- ☐ I don't know

*Questions marked with a * are required*



What could your local council do to make the community more inclusive and welcoming?

Where do you get information about what happens in your town?

- ☐ Council website
- ☐ Through service providers
- ☐ Notice Boards
- ☐ Murray Pioneer/Radio/TV
- ☐ Councils social media
- ☐ Council Newsletter
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ Community centres
- ☐ Council Customer services
- ☐ Through family or friends
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

How could your local council communicate in a more accessible way? (e.g. changes to the website, more physical flyers and information, more opportunities to speak to council staff face-to-face, different communication avenues like communication boards)

*Questions marked with a * are required*



Do you feel like you have a say on local council matters?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

How could we better include people with disability in local council decision making?

Education and employment

How easy/difficult is it for people with disability to access meaningful employment in the Riverland?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult
- ☐ I don't know

How could your local council help people with disability to find meaningful employment?

*Questions marked with a * are required*



How easy/difficult is it for people with disability to find volunteering opportunities in the Riverland?

- ☐ Very easy
- ☐ Easy
- ☐ Somewhat easy
- ☐ Difficult
- ☐ Very difficult
- ☐ I don't know

How could your local council support people with disability to find volunteering opportunities?

If you have experience working (or applying to work) for your local council, can you describe how the workplace could be made more accessible and inclusive?

Personal and community support

How easy is it for people with disability to connect with community services and supports?

*Questions marked with a * are required*



How could your local council help people with disability to connect with community services and supports? Please provide specific examples and locations, if relevant.

Health and wellbeing

What initiatives could your local council provide to improve health and wellbeing for people with disability? Please provide specific examples and locations, if relevant.

Safety, rights and justice

How safe do you feel in your local community?

- ☐ Very safe
- ☐ Safe
- ☐ Somewhat safe
- ☐ Not very safe
- ☐ Not safe at all
- ☐ I don't know

What could your local council do to help you feel safer? Please provide specific examples and locations, if relevant.

*Questions marked with a * are required*



Would you feel prepared in the case of an emergency?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

What could your local council do to make you feel more prepared for emergencies?
(e.g. develop resources, additional communications, improve systems) Please provide
specific examples and locations, if relevant.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about accessibility and inclusion for
people with disability in your area?

Would you like to be kept up to date on the progress of our Disability Access and
Inclusion Plan? If yes, please enter your name and email address below.

*Questions marked with a * are required*



What happens next?

We will hold a series of workshops for the general community and for council staff and Elected Members in the week of 17 November in each council area. Please find further details via: <https://engagement.renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au/DAIP/>

The survey results and feedback from the workshops will help to inform our draft DAIP. The draft will be released for public comment in early 2026. Once this feedback has been incorporated, the DAIP will be endorsed by the three councils before being launched publicly.

Contact Information

If you would like any further information on the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, please contact your local Council via:

District Council of Loxton Waikerie

- council@lwdc.sa.gov.au
- 08 8584 8000
- 35 Bookpurnong Terrace, Loxton or Strangman Road, Waikerie
- PO Box 409, Loxton SA 5333

Berri Barmera Council

- bbc@bbc.sa.gov.au
- 08 8582 1922
- 5 Riverview Drive, Berri SA 5343
- PO Box 229, Berri SA 5343

Renmark Paringa Council

- council@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au
- 08 8580 3000
- 61 Eighteenth Street, Renmark SA 5341
- PO Box 730, Renmark SA 5341

Appendix B

Workshop questions

Staff workshops

- Have you noticed any accessibility issues for people with disability at council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What would you like to see council do to make spaces more accessible?
- How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?
- What would a Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability look like for this council?
- How could council better engage with the local disability community and include representatives in council decision making?
- Are you interested in having a community disability advisory group as part of DAIP?
- What could council do to become a more inclusive and accessible employer?
- Which other stakeholders could council collaborate with to make the local community more accessible and inclusive for people with disability?
- Which programs does council currently offer or could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?
- How could council better support the disability community to prepare for and respond to emergencies?
- Is there anything else you wish council could do to strengthen access and inclusion for people with disability? Imagine that time and cost are no barrier.

Community workshops

- How accessible do you find local council events, buildings, parks and other public spaces? What does council need to do to make these more accessible?

- How could council improve attitudes towards people with disability in the local community?
- How do you find information about council services and events?
How could this be made more accessible for people with disability?
- How could council support people with disability to volunteer and find employment within and outside council?
- How could council connect people with disability with community services and supports?
- What sort of programs could council offer to increase wellbeing for people with disability?
- How could council better support the disability community to prepare for and respond to emergencies?



This paper was prepared by

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