Central Coast Council Draft Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2026-2030

Engagement Report June 2025

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Introduction

Background

Central Coast Council (Council) is developing a new Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). The DIAP is a four-year roadmap for Council, partners and community to work together to build a more accessible and inclusive local government area for people with disability. The DIAP will outline actions under the following four focus areas:

- positive community behaviours and attitudes
- liveable communities
- meaningful employment, and
- systems and processes.

Council engaged Cred Consulting to undertake community and stakeholder engagement to inform the Plan.

Purpose of engagement

The purpose of the engagement program was to understand:

- how effective Council has been over the last four years
- what's working well for people with disability
- what can be improved, and
- ideas to improve access and inclusion.

Engagement program

Over 330 people participated across all engagement activities.

The engagement program consisted of a mix of online and in-person opportunities for community and stakeholders to participate. It included:

- an online survey
- one pop-up stall
- 11 interviews
- four in-person workshops
- five online workshops, and
- a Council staff meeting.

Table 1 summarises the community and stakeholder engagement program, including number of participants by activity.

Table 1 - Summary of engagement activities

Activity	Who	Location	Date	Number of participants	Number of participants invited (if known)
Survey	Broad community	Your Voice Our Coast	Wednesday 9 April to Friday 9 May 2025	176	
Pop-up	Broad community	Westfield Tuggerah	Wednesday 7 May 2025	35	
Interviews	People with disability; AIRG members	Online via Zoom	April 2025	11	12
Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) meeting	AIRG members	The Erina Centre	Thursday 10 April 2025	3	12
In-person workshops	Deaf community	Central Coast Leagues Club	Wednesday 7 May 2025	5	Open invitation to the Deaf community posted on Deaf Events Facebook page
	Broad community	Council offices in Wyong	Thursday 8 May 2025	4	16 (registered)
	Studio Gossie participants	Gosford Regional Gallery	Thursday 15 May 2025	10	12
	Seniors	Council offices in Wyong	Wednesday 28 May 2025	6	
Online workshops	Council staff with lived experience	Online via Teams	Wednesday 30 April 2025	8	10
	Education stakeholders		Tuesday 6 May 2025	8	10
	Accessible sport and recreation stakeholders		Tuesday 6 May 2025	3	23
	Employment stakeholders		Friday 9 May 2025	2	7
	Autism and neurodivergent community		Friday 9 May 2025	2	4

Disability interagency meeting	Disability interagency members	Erina Trust Hall	Thursday 8 May 2025	30	
Council staff workshops	Council staff	Council offices in Wyong	Thursday 8 May 2025 and Monday 26 Mayu 2025	30	72
Total reach				**335**	

Summary of key findings

This section provides a summary of key findings across all engagement activities.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Community awareness is improving, but stigma and judgement are still prevalent

Across interviews and workshops, we heard community awareness of disability is improving, and there is greater representation of people with disability in Council materials. In particular, campaigns like Think Outside the Chair and the Sunflower Lanyard program have helped shift perceptions, increase visibility and create safer spaces for people with disability.

However, only one in four survey participants agreed that the Central Coast community has positive attitudes towards people with disability. This was supported by other feedback where participants shared they often feel judged by members of the public, noting that despite awareness increasing, stigma and microaggressions remain common. In particular, we heard people with invisible disability often feel judged when using accessible parking or toilets and spoke of being dismissed when experiencing sensory overload.

Education and awareness campaigns that are co-designed will help improve attitudes

Three in four survey participants said that better understanding of different types of disability would help shift community attitudes. This was echoed across all engagement activities with consistent calls for more education across schools, businesses, hospitals and the general community. We also heard that making spaces, events and services more inclusive and accessible would improve attitudes, as people with disability would interact with the community more.

Select quotes:

"The Sunflower Lanyard program is great. If you go to Tuggerah or Erina Fair all the places are starting to display it."

"The more people with disability are visible in the community the more we will see improved attitudes."

> "The overall community attitudes are extremely poor towards people with disabilities. Unseen disabilities are often dismissed, seen as an excuse and is near impossible to get help during crisis".

> "I feel like I have to explain my disability to everyone."

Ideas

- **Continue to deliver education campaigns** about the diversity of disability with a focus on invisible disabilities such as autism, dementia and chronic illnesses.
- **Co-design education campaigns** with people with lived experience.
- **Promote inclusive imagery and storytelling** featuring people with disability in Council's communications and events.
- **Deliver targeted education** with schools, businesses and health services to promote respectful interactions.
- **Continue supporting and promoting programs** like the *Sunflower Lanyard* program across all Council-managed spaces and events.

Liveable communities

Natural assets and community spaces are becoming more accessible, but there is room for improvement

Across all engagement activities, people shared their appreciation for Council's efforts to make beaches, libraries, playgrounds and walking trails more accessible and inclusive. Libraries were rated as the most accessible facility by survey participants, while accessible beach infrastructure and sensory-friendly library programs were also praised.

However, more than half of survey participants said beaches and natural spaces were not easy to access. Barriers included beach mats not reaching the water, broken or missing beach wheelchairs and a lack of ramps or signage. Other barriers to accessing spaces, places and services include uneven or missing footpaths, a lack of accessible toilets and disability parking and audio-only experiences (e.g. in galleries or in parking garages). Participants also spoke about the mental load involved in researching whether spaces are accessible, and that sometimes they have to go home if they can't find appropriate parking or the space is not accessible.

There are not enough accessible community events or programs

We heard there are not enough accessible events on the Central Coast. In particular, participants want events that have wheelchair access, sensory spaces, easy to read signage and Auslan interpreters. They suggested these events could be better promoted, including through targeted Facebook groups (e.g. deaf events Facebook page), Council social media pages (e.g. Central Coast Libraries) and local newsletters. It is important that the accessibility features are included in all promotional materials for events.

We also heard there was support for ongoing, inclusive cultural and creative programs, such as music, dance, cooking and karaoke. This includes programs specifically for people with disability, and mainstream programs that are accessible and inclusive.

Select quotes:

"Compared to Sydney, we have a lot more accessible nature-related activities. We are able to spend weekends walking or going to the beach which we couldn't do in Sydney."

"We need more accessible parking, and these spots need more patrols as usually they are taken by people with false or no permits."

"Public toilets are a nightmare to navigate. Disabled toilet doors are extremely heavy too open and close, often too heavy for people in wheelchairs to open".

"Many festivals and markets are reliant on audio announcements for important information and lack of signage for hearing impaired".

"We need to prioritise access when we ask for footpaths, this isn't a smooth ride for people who have difficulty walking, use a wheelchairs or walker to get from point A to B. There is very little consideration given to our aging community and as I support my parents, I see the challenges they face".

"I have just moved from the Blue Mountains where there was a wide range of support services for autistic people, their families and carers. There seems to be very few of these on the Central Coast unfortunately".

"More social interest groups on the Central Coast such as arts, crafts, and up-skill programs run by Council to help assist people with disability in engagement and co-creating".

"If I don't know a place is accessible, I won't bother going as it's too hard."

"We cannot access local services that are down the street because there is no footpath access for the wheelchair, we have to drive to access local shops".

Ideas

- **Upgrade and maintain footpaths and crossings** near community hubs, bus stops, health services and town centres.
- **Create a 'safe space' program to educate and incentivise local businesses** to make their spaces more accessible and promote these features to the community.
- **Install more changing places and MLAK-accessible toilets** in town centres and near beaches.
- **Expand beach accessibility features** including more beach matting and better beach wheelchairs.

- **Provide detailed accessibility information** for all Council events, spaces and facilities including maps, photos, social stories and sensory guides.
- **Run walkthroughs before major events with** people with disability to gather feedback.
- **Build more accessible playgrounds** that cater to both children and young adults with disability all across the Central Coast.
- **Provide more quiet, sensory friendly spaces at Council-run events and facilities.**

Meaningful employment

People with disability want to work, but inflexible workplace practices exclude them

People with disability on the Central Coast are skilled, experienced and motivated to work, but employment systems often fail to recognise their value or provide appropriate flexibility. More than two in five survey respondents said Council is not doing well at creating employment opportunities for people with disability. Barriers include rigid recruitment processes and position descriptions, a lack of flexible work options (e.g. work from home), inaccessible workplaces (e.g. not enough accessible toilets or parking spaces) and a lack of employer awareness about programs like JobAccess. Participants also shared that employers often assume people with disability are only suitable for low-skilled roles, even when they have qualifications or tertiary education. Neurodivergent participants spoke about inaccessible job interviews, overstimulating workplaces and the assumption that flexible working is a privilege rather than a necessity.

Council can lead and influence change

Participants want Council to model best practice by improving internal hiring processes, promoting safe disclosure, and using inclusive language in job ads. Some Deaf participants noted employers assume hiring them will be difficult or expensive, despite funding being available. Several Council staff said disclosure of disability still feels risky, especially for those with mental health conditions.

Internally, some Council staff said they do not feel safe disclosing disability due to fears of discrimination or being perceived as “difficult”. Externally, Council has the opportunity to influence other local employers through education and leadership. Across the survey the top idea for Council was employer education to improve inclusive hiring practices.

Select quotes:

“The biggest barrier to employment is flexibility. For people with disability working from home is important as we have access to our own accessible bathrooms. Having these options allows for more skilled people with disability to gain employment.”

“Lots of people with disability don’t even bother accessing employment as the current model just doesn’t work for us.”

“I don’t feel psychologically safe to talk about my disability because my perceptions and experience is that there will be discrimination involved.”

"Just because there's a standard doesn't mean that's all we should do—we should exceed it."

Ideas

- **Partner with schools and disability employment services** to explore opportunities to develop career pathways for people with disability.
- **Provide micro-employment options** such as 1–2 hour shifts, project-based contracts or job sharing.
- **Review internal recruitment practices** to remove bias and improve accessibility.
- **Provide inclusive job ads** in easy read or visual formats and promote flexibility options upfront.
- **Create an internal reference group** to provide feedback to Council.
- **Educate local employers** on inclusive hiring, job flexibility and the benefits of diversity. This could be through a partnership with the Chamber of Commerce.
- **Offer work experience, internships and mentoring**, especially for young people or people returning to work.
- **Reboot programs** like **Launchpad** to support self-employment and social enterprise.

Systems and Processes

Council has made progress, but there is room to build trust and consistency

Across engagement activities we heard Council is doing well under systems and processes, particularly around the work with gathering feedback from the AIRG. However, **just under one in two of survey participants said Council is not doing well** at making it easy to interact and get information from. Some of the barriers include Council's website is not accessible, limited Auslan and easy read formats or interpreters at meetings, customer service not accepting the National Relay Service and slow or unclear customer service processes. These issues create stress for people with disability who are trying to find information, lodge a request or provide feedback, especially those with cognitive disability, low digital literacy or limited support networks.

People with disability should be listened to

Participants want to feel seen and heard in Council's processes. They want to see genuine and meaningful consultation and co-design processes in service planning, infrastructure and events.

Select quotes:

"One of the biggest things about being disabled is knowing where to get information, it can be really overwhelming."

"I went onto the Council website and did a search. I found it really difficult to find information."

> “Council has been really open to hearing ideas and feedback. They really want to improve things for people with disability.”

> “Basically, there is no access to Council information, the disability register needs to be up to date and easy to read and easy to gain information from”

> "The website is too hard to navigate—too much text, too many clicks."

Ideas

- **Create a dedicated disability liaison role** or “navigator” as a direct contact point.
- **Improve Council’s website accessibility** by using alt text, screen reader compatibility, Easy Read summaries and video/Auslan options.
- **Provide Auslan, captions and translated materials** at all public consultations and events.
- **Offer multiple formats for feedback**, including phone, paper, visual forms and in-person options.
- **Embed access and inclusion** into planning and procurement processes.

Online survey

About the online survey

An online survey was available online via Central Coast Council's Your Voice Our Coast platform from 9 April to 9 May 2025. In this survey the participants answered a series of questions to identify the current state of access and inclusion in the Central Coast, and their ideas for the new DIAP. See Appendix 1 for the survey questions.

A total of 176 surveys were completed.

Key insights

Attitudes towards people with disability remain a barrier to inclusion

- One in two participants think Council is not doing well at raising awareness about inclusion for people with disability, and only one in four agree that people on the Central Coast have positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability. Ideas to improve attitudes and behaviours include education around the diversity of disability and more accessible and inclusive activities and events.

Beaches, events, public toilets and footpaths are hard to access

- Two in five participants found libraries easy to visit. However, more than half of survey participants find it hard to access beaches, natural spaces, events and festivals, public toilets and footpaths. Barriers include uneven or poorly maintained footpaths, lack of accessible toilets and parking, and venues without lifts, sensory rooms or wayfinding features.
- Three in five participants rated accessing the NDIS as not easy, with key barriers including not enough information, waitlists, not knowing where to start and cost.

Employment opportunities are not inclusive

- Over two in five participants think Council is not doing well at creating more employment for people with disability. Ideas to improve this include educating employers on the benefits of inclusive employment, creating more inclusive workplace cultures and improving physical accessibility in workplaces.

Council can do more to build trust and improve the way they communicate with people with disability

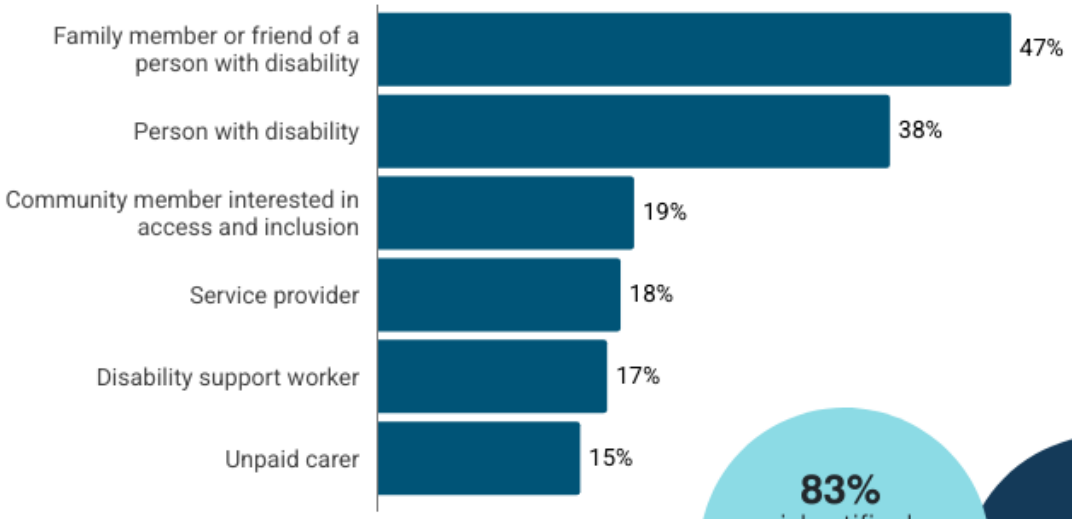
- Just under one in two participants think Council is not doing well at making it easier and more accessible to interact with Council.

- The most common idea was for Council to listen more directly to people with disability, followed by sharing more information about the accessibility of events and programs and training frontline staff to deliver friendly and inclusive customer service.

Who we heard from

Figure 1 provides a snapshot of the participants who completed the survey.

Figure 1 - Snapshot of survey participants

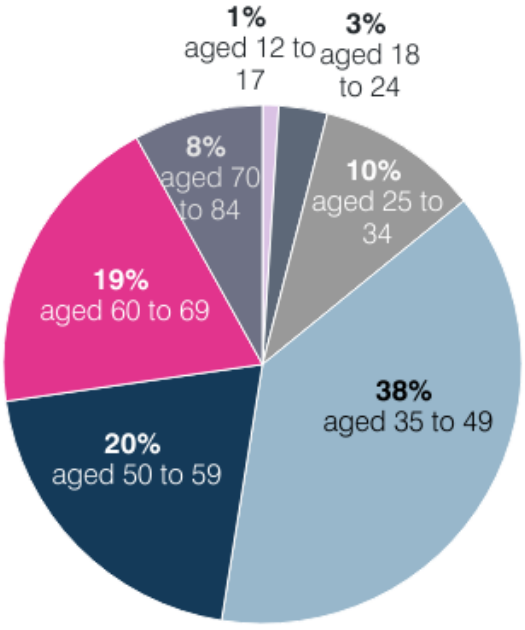


Participants were able to select more than one option, as such percentages will not add up to 100%.



Top suburbs of participants:

Umina Beach (6%)
Long Jetty (5%)
Woy Woy (5%)
Lak Munmorah (4%)





85%
are born in Australia



9%
speak a language other than English



4%
Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



12%
Identify as LGBTIQA+

What we heard

Current state of access and inclusion on the Central Coast

Survey participants were asked to rate, on a scale from extremely well to not at all well, how Council is doing in certain aspects of accessibility and inclusion. As shown in Figure 2 while roughly one third of survey participants think Council is doing 'somewhat well' across all indicators, almost half indicated that Council is not doing well:

- raising awareness about inclusion (54% selected 'not at all well' and 'not very well')
- making more areas accessible (51%)
- improving the accessibility of our community and recreational facilities (50%)
- making it easier and more accessible to interact with and get more information from Council (47%)
- creating more employment for people with disability (45%), and
- making Council events more inclusive (41%).

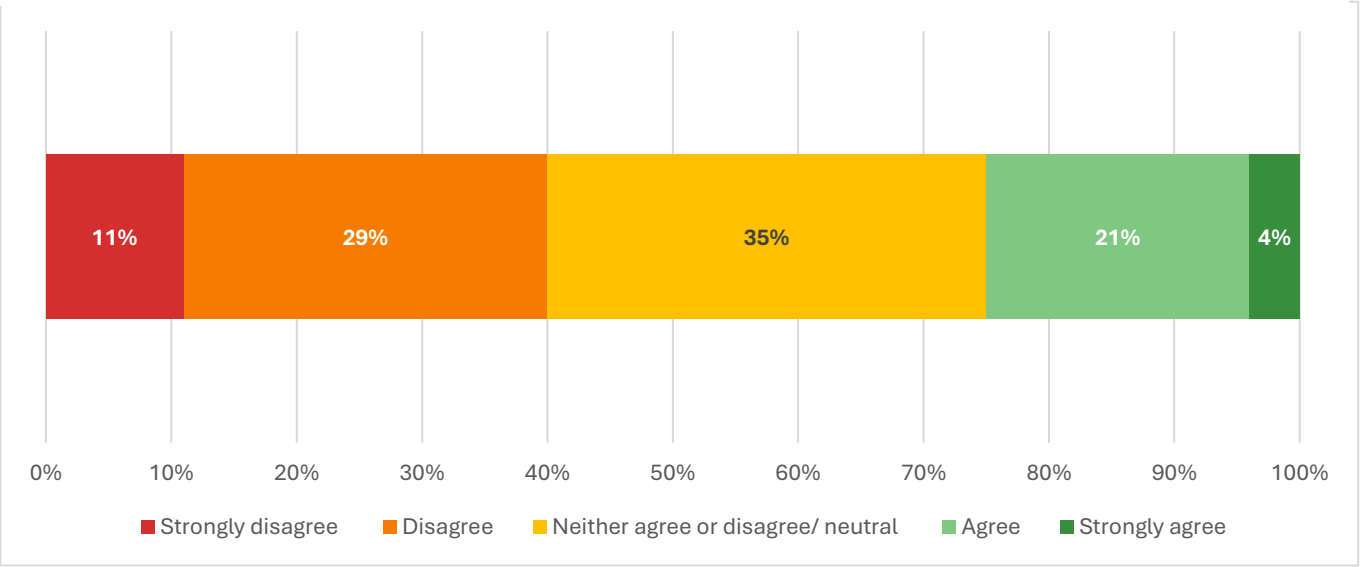
Figure 2 - On the scale from extremely well to not well at all, tell us how well do you think Council is doing in the following aspects of accessibility and inclusion. (176 responses)


Creating more employment for people with disability
20%
25%
25%
28%
Raising awareness about inclusion
19%
35%
36%
6%
Improving the accessibility of our community and recreation facilities
19%
31%
40%
10%
Making it easier and more accessible to interact with and get more information from Council
17%
30%
30%
6%
17%
Making more areas accessible
16%
35%
38%
10%
Making council events more inclusive
12%
29%
37%
9%
12%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Not at all well
Not very well
Somewhat well
Very well
Extremely well
I'm not sure

Positive attitudes and behaviours

Survey participants were asked to rate how strongly they agree that the Central Coast community has a positive attitude and behaviours towards people with disability. As shown in Figure 3, 40% of survey participants ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘disagree’ that there are positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability, while 25% ‘strongly agree’ or ‘agree’.

Figure 3 - How strongly do you agree that the Central Coast community has positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability (176 responses)

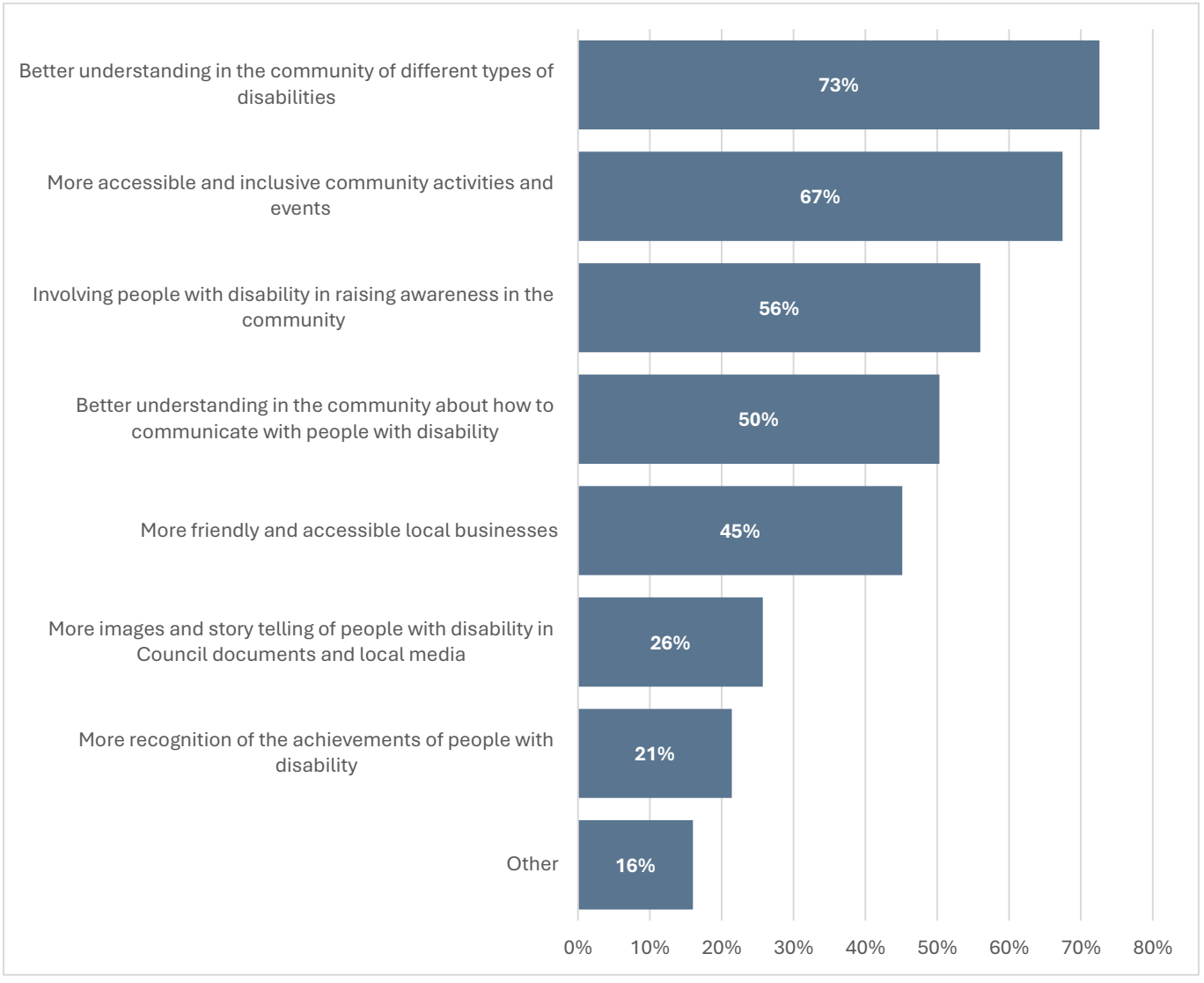


Participants were then asked what would encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability on the Central Coast. As shown in Figure 4, the top ideas selected by participants include:

- better understanding in the community of different types of disabilities (73%)
- more accessible and inclusive community activities and events (67%), and
- involving people with disability in raising awareness in the community (56%).

A number of participants (16%) provided other ideas for how to improve attitudes and behaviours. Ideas include engaging with people with disability around services and spaces, more education, greater awareness of road safety for mobility scooter users, more job opportunities, more information about inclusivity in workplaces and increased safety in public spaces.

Figure 4 - What types of things would you like to see on the Central Coast to encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability? (175 responses)



As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 4 will not add to 100%.

Liveable communities

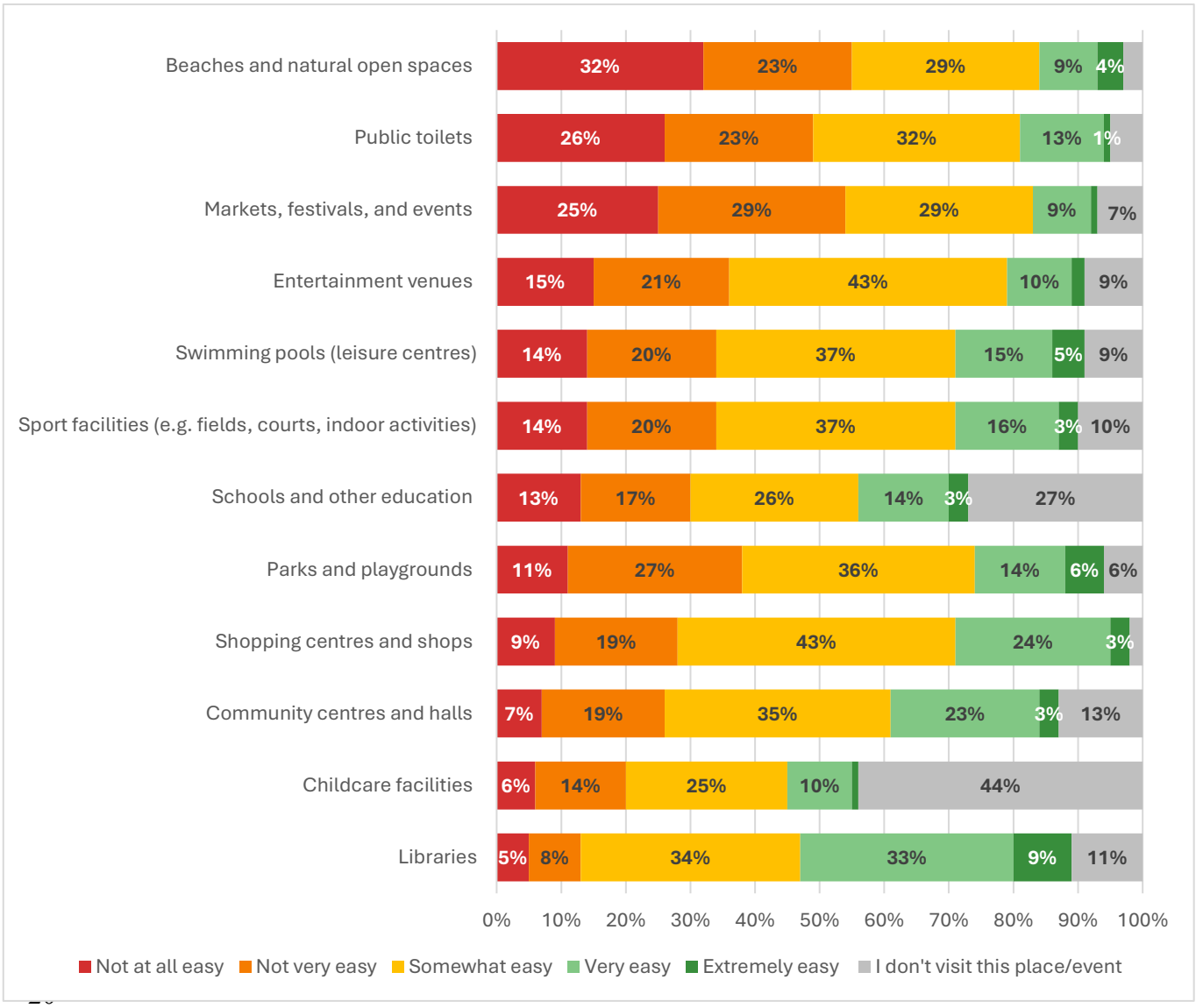
Accessing places, spaces and events

Survey participants were asked how easy it is to visit a list of places and events in the Central Coast region. As shown in Figure 5 the places and events participants rated as the most difficult to visit include:

- beaches and natural open spaces (55% rated as 'not at all easy' or 'not very easy')
- markets, festivals and events (54%), and
- public toilets (49%).

Libraries were rated as the easiest to visit (42% rated as 'extremely easy' and 'very easy'). This is followed by shopping centres and shops (27%).

Figure 5 - How easy is it for you to access and use the following places on the Central Coast? (175 responses)



Participants were then asked about the specific places, buildings, open spaces and events that are not accessible and why.

Buildings (125 responses)

Survey participants identified many barriers to accessibility in buildings across the Central Coast. The most common include poorly maintained or lack of footpaths, a lack of disability parking or disability parking located far from building entrances, lack of appropriate signage, inaccessible toilets and buildings without lifts. Some participants told us that buildings often lack sensory rooms, particularly stadiums and shopping centres, which can be a barrier for people with sensory needs and invisible disability. Specific locations that participants told us were not accessible include:

- Gosford Train station due to the lack of lifts.
- Gosford Racecourse, Blue Tongue Stadium and Central Coast Stadium due to limited disability access, no lifts and no sensory rooms.
- Gosford Hospital and Wyong Hospital both have an incline making it inaccessible for people in wheelchairs and mobility aids.
- The Entrance Town Centre due to shops having steps and no wheelchair access.
- Umina and Soldiers Beach due to lack of accessible footpaths and facilities.
- Toukley Village Green due to uneven paths, including around the outdoor stage.
- Erina Hoyts cinema due to disabled parking being located far away from the entrance
- Love Lane and Hely Street due to steep footpaths.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"The rooms and doors at doctors and specialist buildings are often too small to fit a walker or wheelchairs and hardly any railings to hold onto".

"Shopping centres are overly crowded for people who don't like loud noises, and they don't offer any quiet spaces for people with disabilities to relax and get away from the busy spaces"

"There are not enough accessible toilets for families or disabled toilets with room for carers".

Open spaces (124 responses)

Survey participants identified many barriers to accessibility in open spaces such as parks, sport fields, reserves, beaches and foreshores across the Central Coast. The most common barriers are the lack of continuous, wide and even footpaths. We heard that footpaths are obstructed by overgrown vegetation, tree roots, potholes, are poorly maintained, and often include stairs. Many participants also told us there is a lack of accessible and well-maintained toilets and changing places, and a lack of disabled parking options, with existing ones often located far away. Specific locations that participants told us were not accessible include:

- Umina, Ettalong, Terrigal and Putty Beach due to uneven footpaths, lack of disabled parking and a lack of accessible toilets. Some participants mentioned that where there are beach mats, they often don't extend far enough to reach the water.
- The Entrance and Long Jetty Foreshore due to uneven footpaths, stairs with no ramps and soft ground.
- Crackneck Lookout due to lack of accessible toilets.
- Wyrrabalong, Bouddi and Brisbane Water National Parks due to terrain and trails not being wheelchair accessible.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"We need more accessible parking, and these spots need more patrols as usually they are taken by people with false or no permits."

"Public toilets are a nightmare to navigate. Disabled toilet doors are extremely heavy too open and close, often too heavy for people in wheelchairs to open".

"Many parks have obstacles that make accessibility difficult for vision impaired".

"Public disabled toilets are not big enough".

Programs, events and activities (109 responses)

Survey participants identified many barriers to accessibility for programs, events and activities across the Central Coast. The most common barriers include a lack of nearby disabled parking, steep ramps and uneven footpaths. Some participants told us that there are also not enough accessible toilets that are big enough and suitable for people who use mobility equipment such as walkers or wheelchairs.

Participants told us that events are typically held in locations that are physically difficult to navigate and inaccessible. This includes outdoor grassy or sandy areas without any hard surface pathways and venues without lights, ramps and handrails. For people with cognitive or invisible disability, common barriers included a lack of quiet or low-sensory spaces, loud noises and poor signage. We also heard that not enough events have Auslan interpreters. Some participants mentioned there is limited accessible public transport at large events, and event websites lack information about the accessibility features of events. Specific events and programs that participants told us were not accessible include:

- Community markets including Avoca markets due to inaccessible grass areas and lack of considered signage for hearing and vision impaired people.
- Fitness programs due to limited or no adaptive public equipment.
- Love lines festival due to steep surfaces.
- New Years Eve fireworks due to lack of designated area for children and people with sensory sensitivity.
- Blues Festival due to having steps and no ramps.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"No learn to swim for kids with disabilities"

"I do not know of any events (other than events organised by people with disabilities) that have sensory friendly spaces".

"Many events on the Central Coast are held on grass flooring, sand or uneven surfaces".

"Many festivals and markets are reliant on audio announcements for important information and lack of signage for hearing impaired".

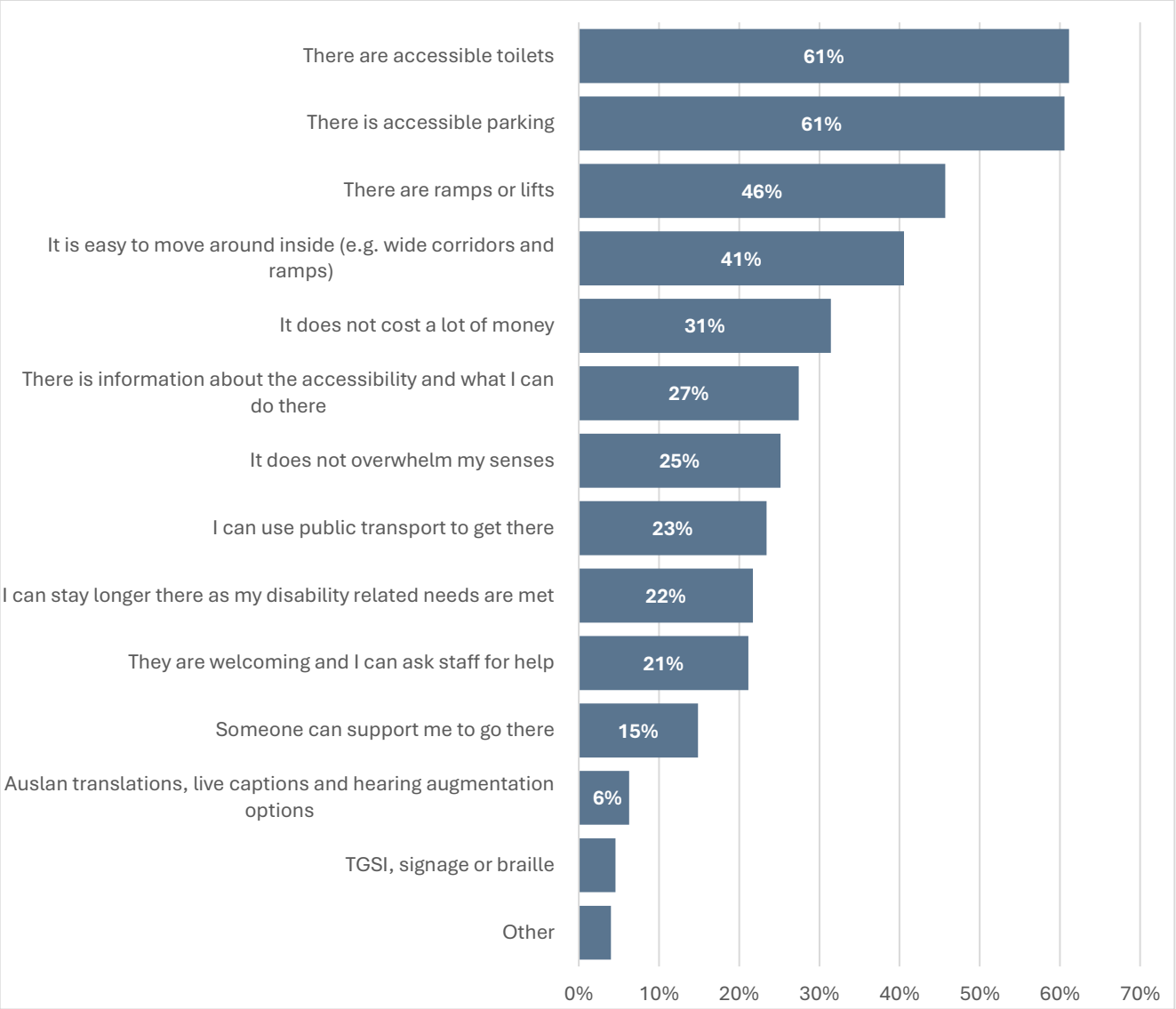
"If regular markets change locations, layout of stalls and wayfinding access, it makes it difficult for people with vision impairment".

Participants were then asked to select which options were most important to them to make places and events accessible. As shown in Figure 6, the top ideas selected by participants include:

- accessible toilets (61%)
- accessible parking (61%)
- ramps or lifts (46%), and
- easy to move around inside (41%).

A few participants (4%) provided other ideas to improve access to places, spaces and events. Some of these include seating with shade options for weather protection and events that create opportunities to integrate with the broader community.

Figure 6 - Which of the following things are most important to make places and events accessible? (176 responses)



As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 6 will not add to 100%.

Getting around

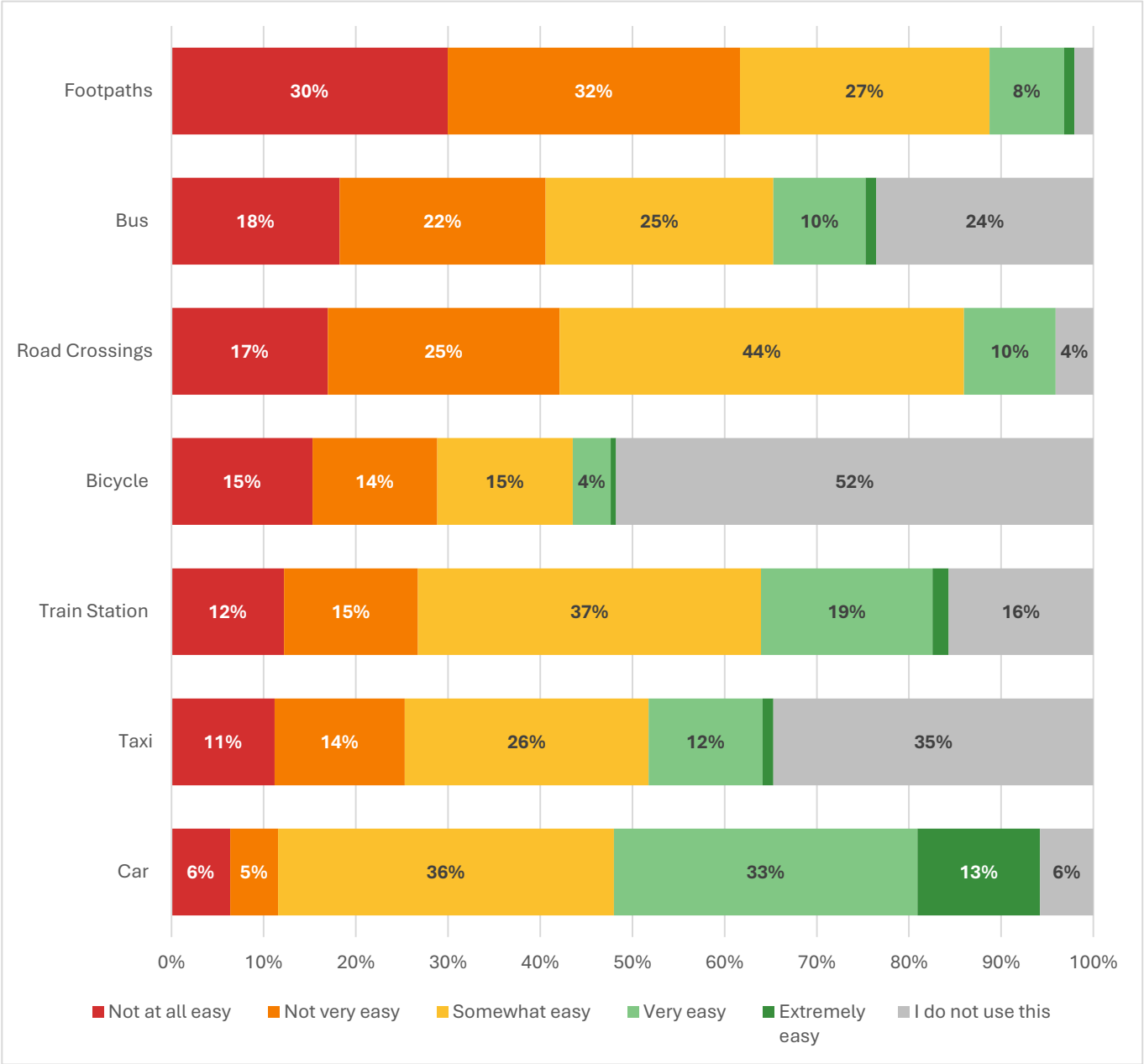
Survey participants were asked how easy it is for them to get around the Central Coast region using different types of transport. As shown in Figure 7, the most difficult forms of transport for participants to use include:

- footpaths (62% rated as ‘not at all easy’ and ‘not very easy’)
- road crossings (42%), and

- bus (40%).

Car was rated as the easiest to get around in (46% rated as ‘extremely easy’ and ‘very easy’).

Figure 7 - How easy is it for you to get around on the Central Coast by (174 responses)



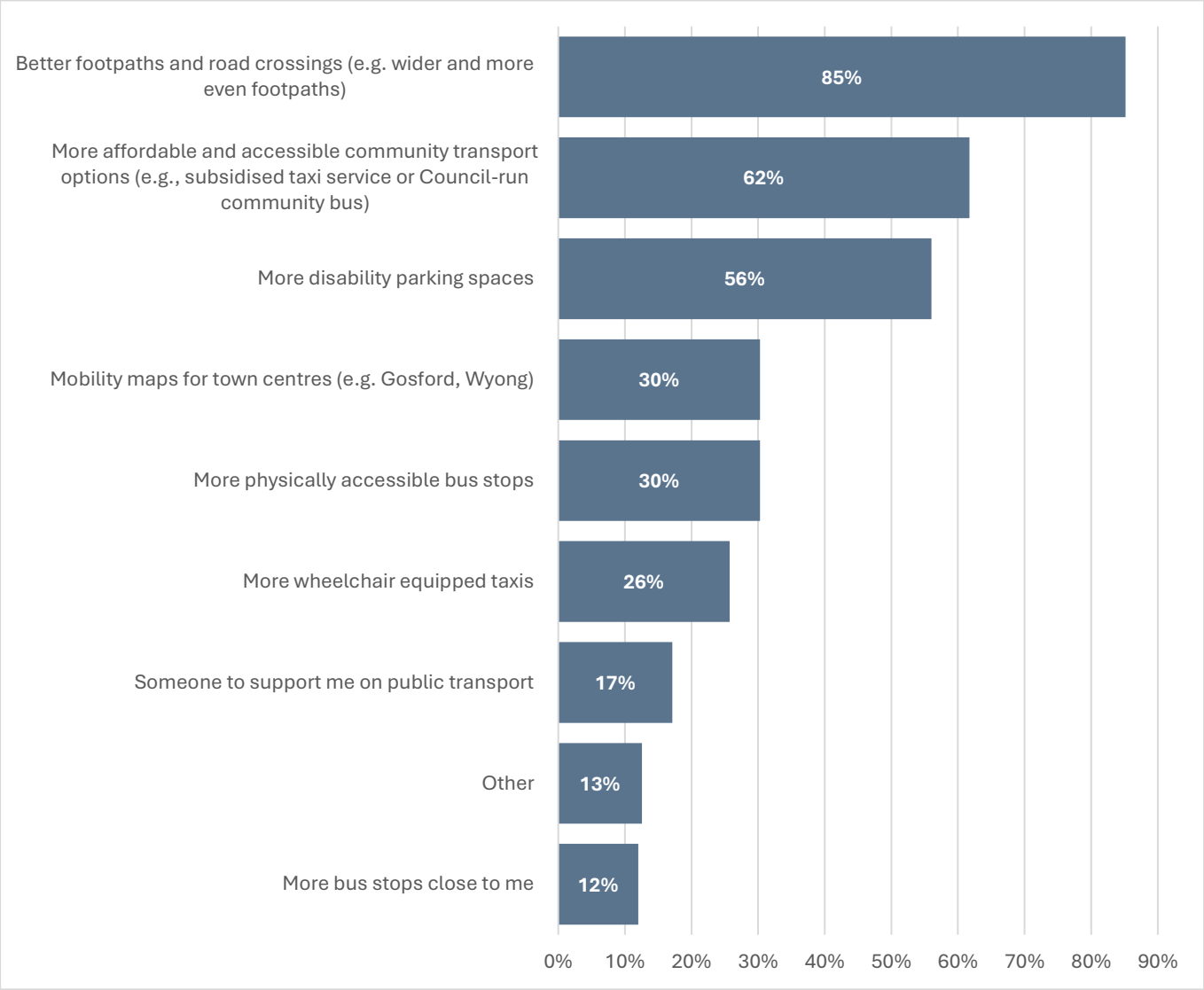
Participants were then asked to select which options could be improved to help get around the Central Coast region. As shown in Figure 8, the top selected options include:

- better footpaths and road crossings (85%)
- more affordable and accessible community transport options (62%), and

- more disability parking spaces (56%).

A number of participants (13%) provided other ideas to help them get around the Central Coast. Ideas include more comfortable seating and easier access to public spaces such as buildings, beaches, and beach front spaces, better public transport including buses with ramps, smaller gaps between trains and platforms, and more reliable bus and trains services that start earlier and finish later. Participants also suggested providing drop off zones for Ubers for people who don't qualify for disabled parking.

Figure 8 - What could be improved to help you get around the Central Coast? (175 responses)



As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 8 will not add to 100%.

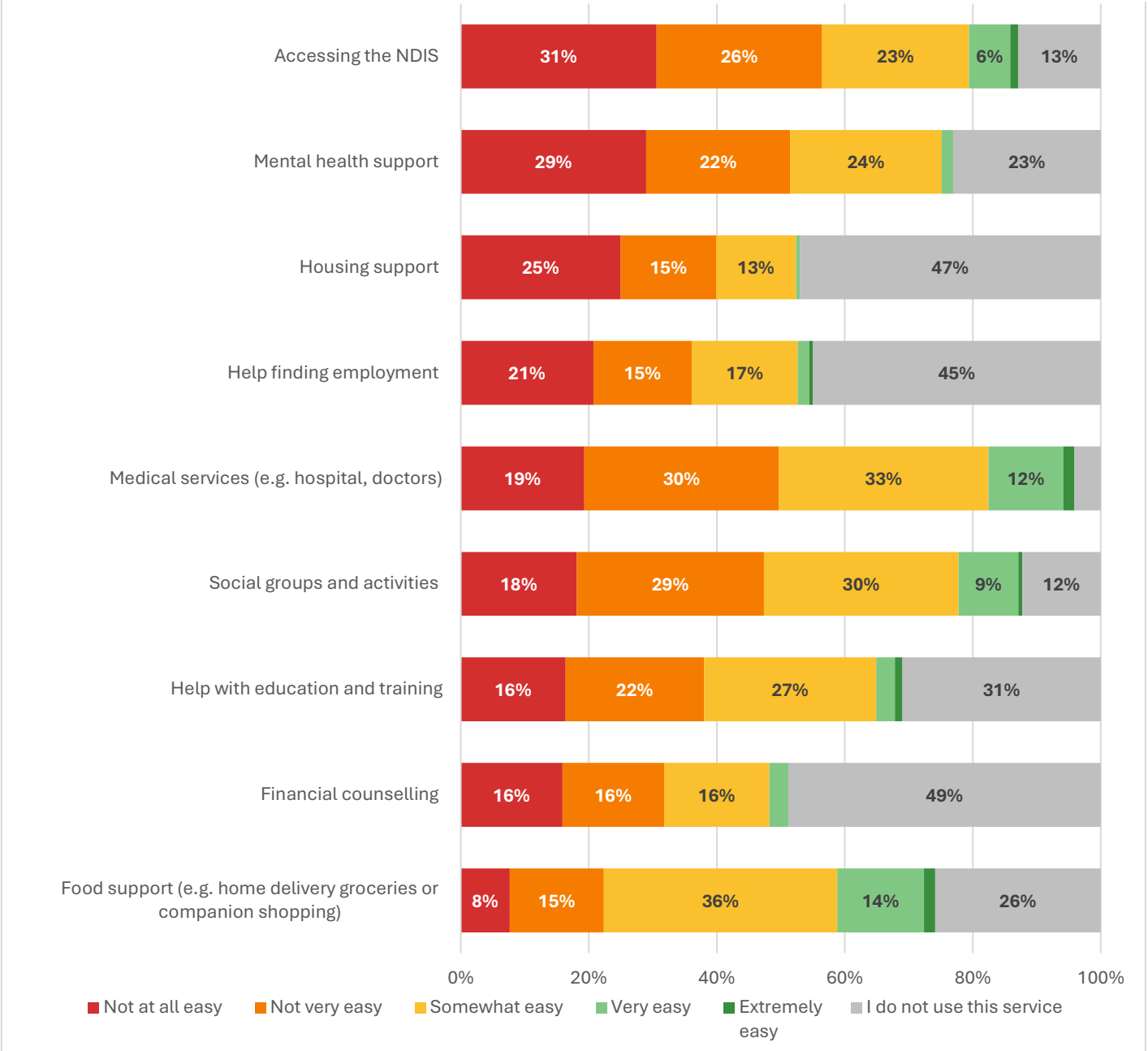
Accessing services

Survey participants were then asked how easy it is for them to access services in the Central Coast region. As shown in Figure 9, the most difficult services to access include:

- NDIS (57% rated as 'not at all easy' and 'not very easy')
- mental health support (51%), and
- medical services (49%).

Food support was rated as the easiest to access (16% rated as 'extremely easy' and 'very easy').

Figure 9 - How easy is it for you to access and use the following services on the Central Coast? (172 responses)

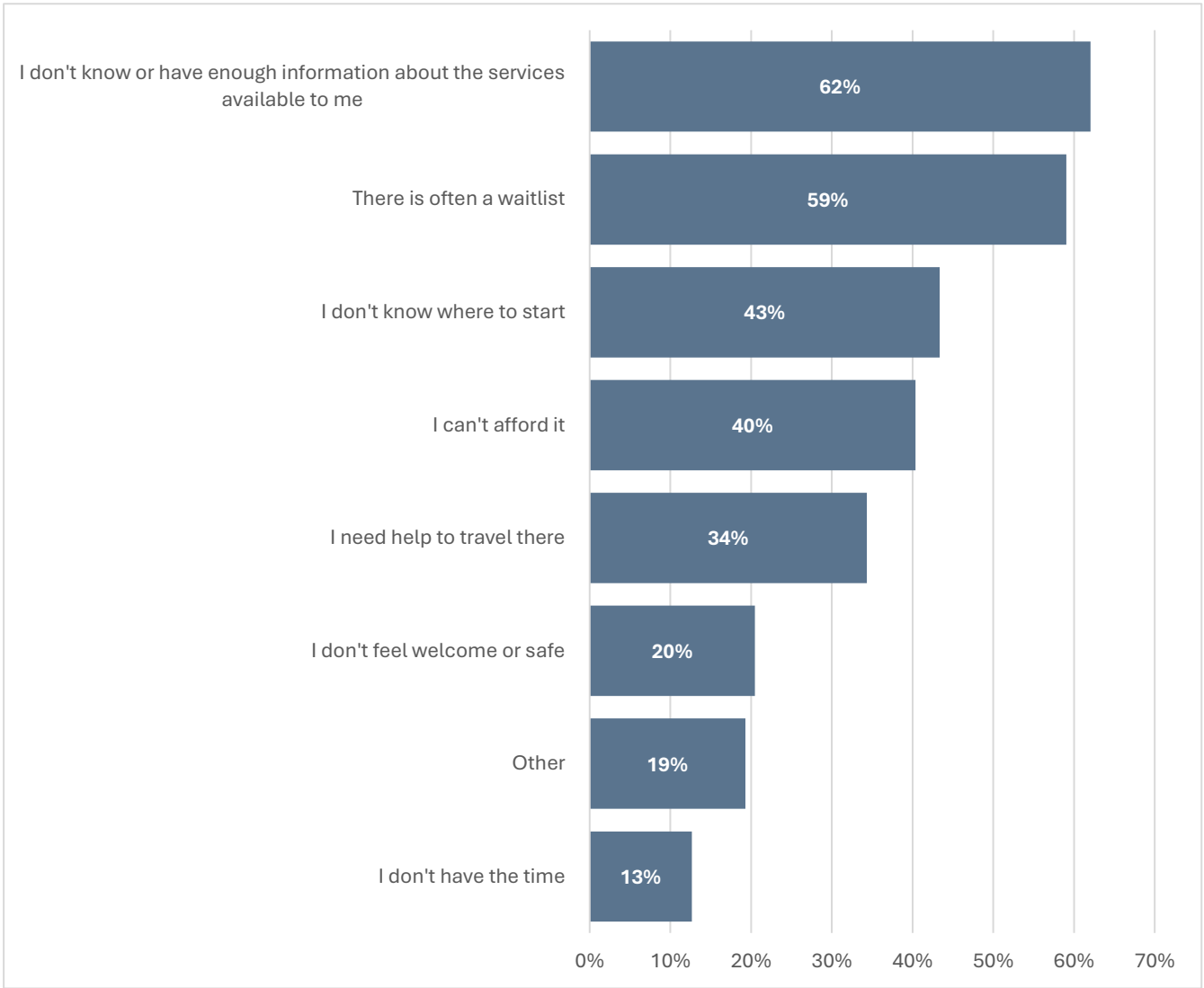


Participants were then asked what makes it difficult to access and use these services. As shown in Figure 10, the top selected options include:

- I don’t know enough information about the services available to me (62%)
- there is often a waitlist (59%)
- I don’t know where to start (43%), and
- I can’t afford it (40%).

A number of participants (19%) shared that many areas in the Central Coast remain isolated with limited access to essential services and specialists. Participants told us that accessible infrastructure is a main barrier including disability parking, and buildings that don’t have ramps, automatic and wide doors. Some participants also mention that cognitive or hidden disabilities often aren’t recognise by NDIS making it difficult to receive assistance.

Figure 10 - What makes it difficult to access and use these services? (166 responses)



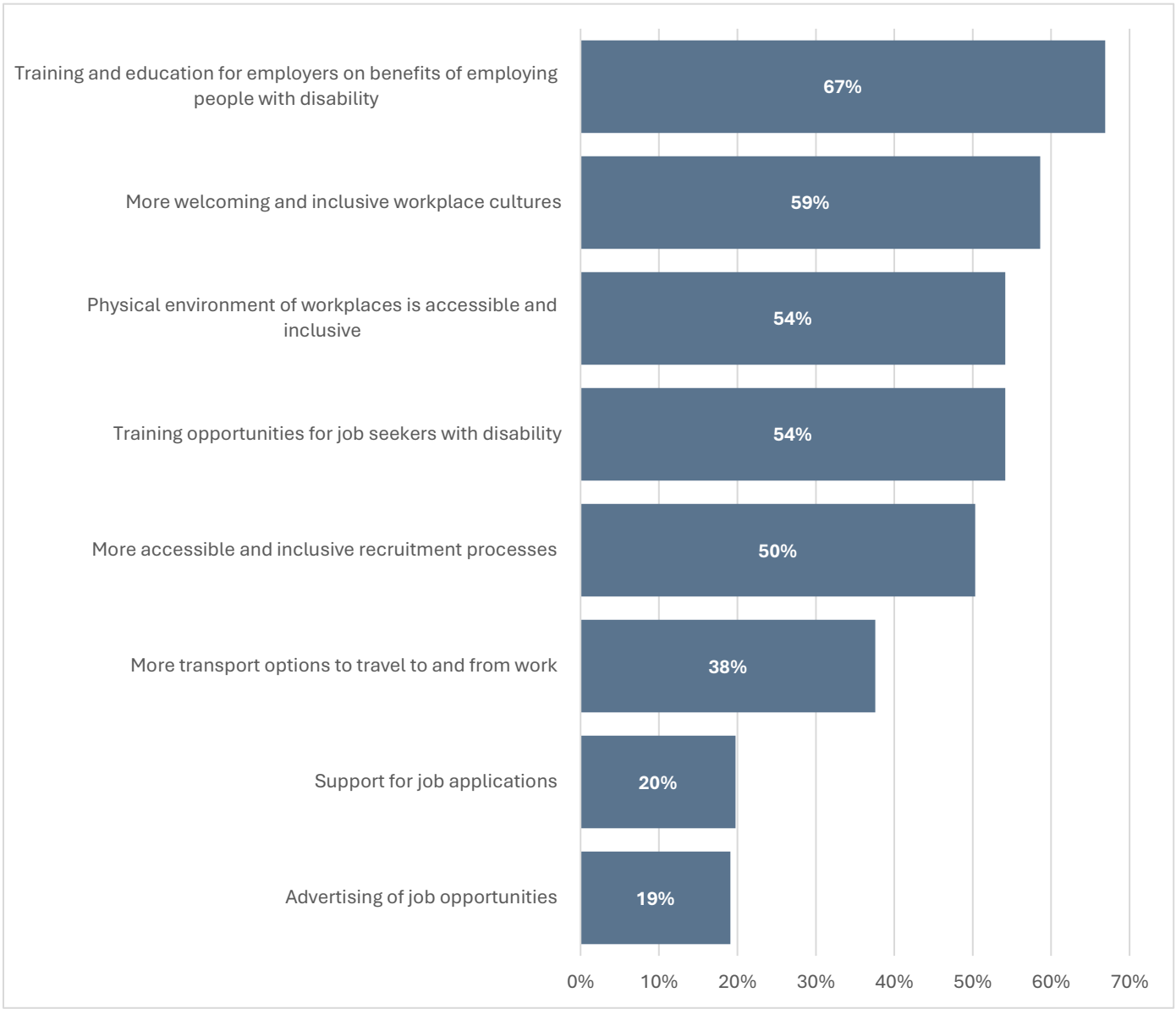
As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 10 will not add to 100%.

Meaningful employment

Survey participants were asked what would make it easier for people with disability to access meaningful employment. As shown in Figure 11, the top options include:

- training and education for employers on the benefits of employing people with disability (67%)
- more welcoming and inclusive workplace cultures (59%), and
- physical environment of workplaces is accessible and inclusive (54%).

Figure 11 - What could be improved to make it easier for people with disability to access meaningful employment? (157 responses)



As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 11 will not add to 100%.

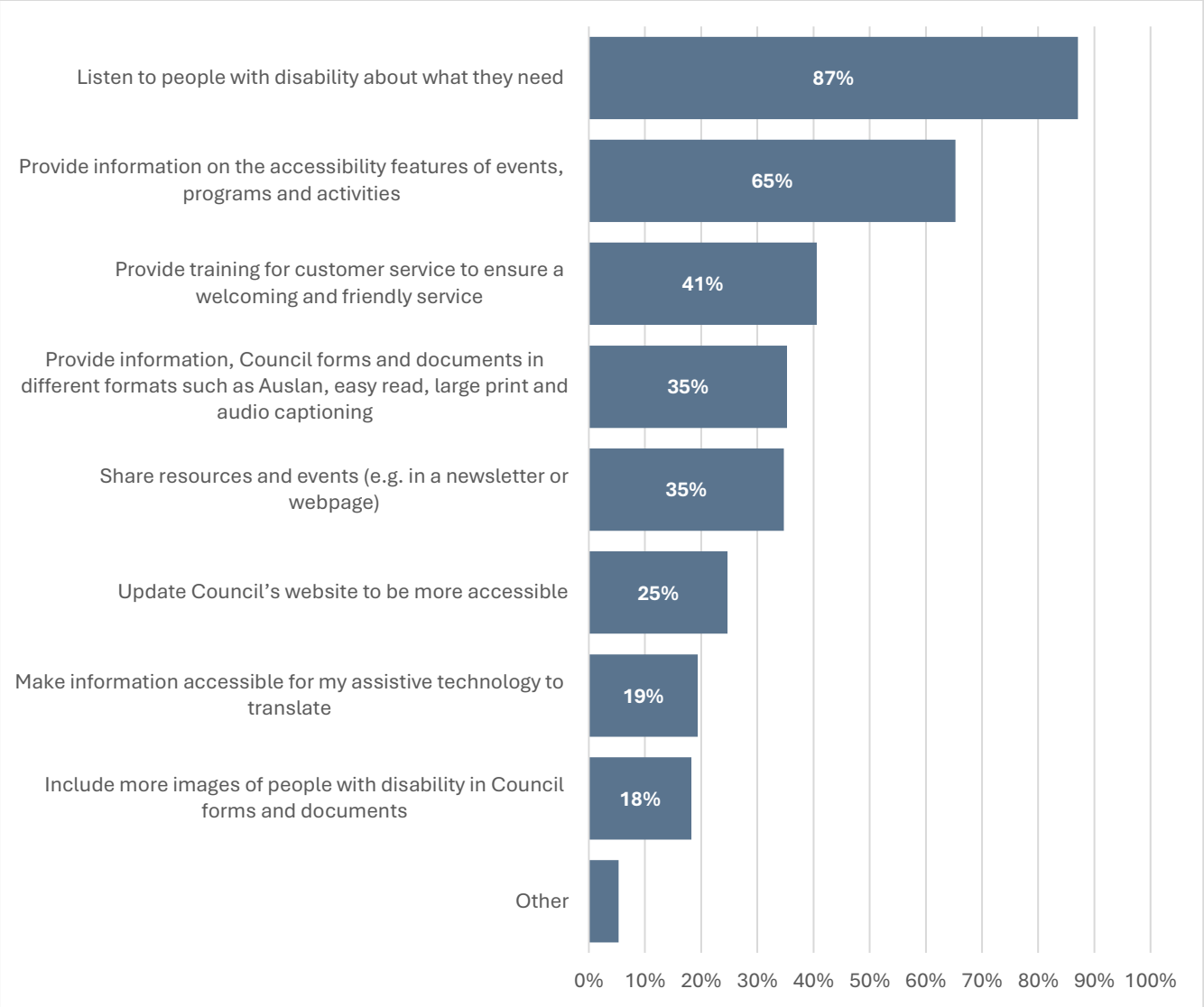
Systems and processes

Survey participants were asked how Council can better communicate with people with disability and their networks. As shown in Figure 12, the top options include:

- listen to people with disability about what they need (87%)
- provide information on the accessibility features of events, programs and activities (65%), and
- provide training for customer service to ensure a welcoming and friendly service (41%).

A number of participants (5%) provided other ideas, including creating an email register for people living with disability to share relevant events and services and providing more printed materials such as posters and flyers to reach older people living with disability who may not use digital platform.

Figure 12 - How can Council better communicate with people living with disability and their networks on the Central Coast? (170 responses)



As participants were able to select more than one response, numbers in Figure 12 will not add to 100%.

Other ideas and needs

Survey participants were asked, via open-ended question, if there were other priorities or needs to address in the DIAP. The key themes from this include:

Make infrastructure more accessible and inclusive (41 comments)

Survey participants told us there is a lack of accessible public infrastructure across the Central Coast. The biggest need identified is for continuous, safe and well-maintained footpaths particularly in the north where there is a growing ageing population. Participants told us that footpaths are often blocked by parked cars, and the lack of continuous footpaths makes it difficult to move independently through public spaces or to shops. Participants also indicated that while progress has been made around the accessibility of beaches, there are

still barriers including the limited available of accessible changing places and that beach mats are not structurally strong enough and get stuck in the sand.

There is also a need to improve the design and availability of accessible public toilets, with desire for more well-designed changing places facilities including adult sized change tables and hoists, and ensuring there are automatic doors, bins, soap, shelves and hooks available in all. Some participants told us that newer toilet blocks including those with ramps can still fail to accommodate all users including wheelchairs users, participants suggest testing plans with people living with disability before building or implementing designs.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"We need to prioritise access when we ask for footpaths, this isn't a smooth ride for people who have difficulty walking, use a wheelchairs or walker to get from point A to B. There is very little consideration given to our aging community and as I support my parents, I see the challenges they face".

"Toilets that are accessible and provide a hoist for those needs' assistance with personal care while out in the community. These options are few and far between and places limits on people when accessing the community".

"There needs to be changing places bathrooms at every beach, I should be able to swim and change like the able-bodied community".

"Take away the stigma of disabled people when building new projects, so it is accessible for everyone, without the need for disabled signs everywhere".

Improve the safety and reliability of public and community transport (18 comments)

Survey participants expressed the need for reliable, frequent and accessible public and community transport options across the Central Coast, particularly in more remote and ageing areas. Participants told us that the area is very reliant on car travel, which excludes many people living with disability who can't drive independently. Some participants also told us that public transport can feel unsafe, especially after dark. Ideas to make public transport more accessible include low-floor buses, audio-visual announcement and ensuring there is adequate space for wheelchair users. Some participants also suggest providing reliable community transport to get around especially to shopping centres, community events and services.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"Transport in the Central Coast is inadequate, and everything is structured around needing and being able to drive".

"Public buses need to be accessible including being able to access the bus stop".

"I think many people with disability do not feel safe when moving around the community especially after dark or when using public transportation".

More inclusive programs, spaces, events and services (15 comments)

Participants want to see more inclusive programs, spaces and events that encourage social inclusion, access to support services and integration into the broader community, particularly for young people and people with invisible disabilities. Ideas include safe, accessible and welcoming social spaces where people with disability can connect, more accessible community events such as music and arts festivals and better access to support services including carer, family support groups and disability friendly GPs. Participants want to see Council have a more active role in building an inclusive community that is supportive of people with all types of disabilities.

Select quotes from survey participants:

"Support young people to be included in local sporting clubs and social club activities".

"I have just moved from the Blue Mountains where there was a wide range of support services for autistic people, their families and carers. There seems to be very few of these on the Central Coast unfortunately".

"More social interest groups on the Central Coast such as arts, crafts, and up-skill programs run by Council to help assist people with disability in engagement and co-creating".

"Availability of access to funding to provide more disability programs to increase awareness".

More education and awareness raising campaigns (12 comments)

Participants have expressed the need for more education and awareness around disability, particularly invisible disability. Participants suggested there could be educational, and training provided for Council staff, businesses, schools and the community about the diversity of disability around how to provide support and avoid judgment. Some participants raised the Sunflower Lanyard program as a great example.

Some participants also noted the need for more inclusive workplaces and education on how to accommodate people with disability in the workforce. Participants mention that Council should lead by example through actively hiring and supporting people disability. Some suggested introducing a disability advisory council that provides advice and ensures people with lived experience are directly involved in shaping inclusive policies across the Central Coast.

> **Select quotes from survey participants:**
>
> "The overall community attitudes are extremely poor towards people with disabilities. Unseen disabilities are often dismissed, seen as an excuse and is near impossible to get help for during crisis".
>
> "More awareness needs to be raised that not all disabilities are visible to the eye".
>
> "Increase awareness of invisible disabilities and education that any of any background and age can have an invisible disability so people are less judgmental".
>
> "Provide more education on how to accommodate for people living disability in the workplace".

Other ideas and priorities

Participants provided additional prioritises or needs that should be address in the DIAP. Some of the comments include:

- Use inclusive and respectful language when referring to people living with disability.
- Acknowledge and include all types of disability including physical, cognitive and hidden.
- Consider the needs of both carers of people with disability and disabled parents or carers.
- Involve people with all types of disabilities in all decision-making processes.
- Connect job seekers and employers through disability inclusive employment.

Pop-up

About the pop-up

Council staff held a pop-up stall on Wednesday May 7 at Westfield Tuggerah. The aim of the pop-up was to reach people who live, work and visit the area who may not otherwise participate in engagement activities such as workshops or surveys. Council spoke to approximately 35 people.

Key findings

- **More community education will help improve community attitudes and behaviours**, particularly for people with invisible disability. This includes broad awareness campaigns and targeted education for local businesses and health services.
- Accessible infrastructure like beach matting and library spaces are valued but not always available. There is a need for **better physical access to public spaces** (e.g. paths, ramps, parking, changing facilities) and more inclusive recreational programs and events.
- **Employment opportunities must be flexible and tailored to individual employees**, with ideas around inclusive hiring practices, and low-hour or short-term positions.
- **Council processes and information can be more accessible**, with suggestions for offline service options and better visibility of opportunities such as grants and waste support for people with disability.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Pop-up participants noted that while awareness is improving, there is a need for more community education to further improve attitudes and create respectful and inclusive interactions for people with disability, particularly around invisible disability. This includes education for the broad community and targeted education including for doctors and local businesses.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Better promotion of the Sunflower Lanyard program for invisible disability, including messaging that highlights people with invisible disability are eligible for accessible parking.
- Ongoing forums and opportunities to hear directly from people with disability.
- Better community education and awareness campaigns including for doctors, local businesses and the broad community.

Liveable communities

Pop-up participants value the accessible beaches in the Central Coast, although noted beach matting is not always extended to the water, and mobility aids (e.g. beach wheelchairs) are sometimes broken or poorly maintained. They also value the local libraries and their accessible features, local accessible events and pools. However, key challenges include a lack of accessible parking spaces (e.g. at The Entrance Baths and Hilston Moore Oval), poorly maintained or non-existent footpaths (e.g. Walkabout Park), steep ramps (e.g. Haleculani Post Office), inaccessible doctors' rooms and local businesses and not enough accessible toilets and changing facilities.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Expand the beach matting to more beaches across the Central Coast including Soldiers Beach and ensure it goes further towards the water.
- More accessible changing facilities across the Central Coast including at Westfield Tuggerah and other shopping centres.
- More inclusive library programs and workshops during weekdays and on weekends.
- Develop more accessible and inclusive playgrounds for both children and adults with disability including accessible equipment, fences and soft fall surfacing and shade.
- Explore opportunities to run more inclusive and accessible sport and recreation programs such as accessible fitness classes (e.g. seated fitness), organised sport, BMX and swimming programs.
- Explore opportunities for more accessible and inclusive events such as Waves Disco and Comicon.
- Include more quiet sensory spaces in local libraries.
- Provide more information on accessible outdoor and nature related activities.
- Ensure all Council pools have hoists and change rooms with benches.

Meaningful employment

Pop-up participants want employment opportunities to be flexible, inclusive and equitable for people with disability. In particular they emphasised the need to take a tailored approach for each individual employee, rather than a one size fits all approach.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Provide equal pay and traineeship opportunities for people with disability.
- Offer short-term or low-hour positions (1–2 hours) for those who may not be able to work longer hours.

Systems and processes

Pop-up participants noted there is not enough information around events, programs, and their accessible features, especially on social media and Council platforms. They also shared that many of Councils processes are online only.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Provide more information on the accessible features of activities, programs and events in the Central Coast.
- Explore opportunities for lodging Development Applications offline.
- Provide more information on grant funding opportunities for people with disability.
- Offer an exemption or tailored support for people with disability especially those dealing with mental health or hoarding who may need more frequent collections.

Interviews

About the interviews

Ten interviews were conducted in April and May 2025 with stakeholders identified by Council. Cred Consulting facilitated interviews via Zoom or phone.

The purpose of the interviews was to gather feedback on how well Council has delivered on the previous DIAP focus areas, understand current barriers and challenges faced by people with disability and collect ideas to help shape the next DIAP.

Interview questions can be found at Appendix 2.

Key findings

- While there's been an **improvement in visibility and representation of people with disability** in public spaces and Council materials, **everyday stigma** especially towards people with invisible disabilities like dementia and autism remains a barrier to people with disability feeling safe and welcome.
- Participants greatly value the Central Coast's accessible natural environments and recent infrastructure upgrades (e.g. playgrounds, beach matting and changing places), but a **lack of footpaths, disabled parking and accessible public transport are challenges**. There are also not enough accessible community events.
- A **lack of flexible work models**, and **limited employer education** around reasonable adjustments and how to implement them, remain key barriers to meaningful employment for people with disability.
- There are **opportunities t**o **improve Council's digital platforms and consultation practices** to better engage with and listen to people with disability.

Who we heard from

11 people were interviewed including members of the AIRG who were unable to attend the in-person meeting on Thursday 10 April, a member of Youth for Youth and other Central Coast residents with disability.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Across the interviews there were mixed views about how Council is performing in promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability. Many participants felt things are improving, particularly with greater representation of people with visible disabilities in Council's marketing and promotional materials. We also heard the Sunflower Lanyard program, which both Council and private businesses support, is effective in building

awareness and making people with disability feel more welcome and safe in public spaces. One participant noted that Council should focus more on supporting the Sunflower Lanyard Program rather than developing its own campaigns, like the '*think outside the chair*' campaign.

However, participants noted the work Council is doing to build awareness does not always translate into improved behaviour. We heard that people with disability still face intrusive or rude questions, stares, assumptions and are made to feel unwelcome and unsafe. In particular, we heard there is still significant stigma around invisible disabilities such as autism and dementia, which participants felt was fueled by a lack of education and understanding. Hospitals and health services were also raised as not being as inclusive or welcoming as they could be.

Select quotes from interview participants:

"They've done really well at raising awareness. I've noticed more inclusion of people with visible disability in promotional materials."

"The Sunflower Lanyard program is great. If you go to Tuggerah or Erina Fair all the places are starting to display it."

"There is lots of stigma and stereotypes around dementia and autism. I think there is a lack of education out there and they don't always recognise the challenges. We need more education to break down this stigma."

"I don't think community attitudes have changed much. I still get asked questions like why a blind person does karate, or what do you mean you have a job?"

"The more people with disability are visible in the community the more we will see improved attitudes."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Continue to align with globally recognised campaigns (e.g. Sunflower Lanyard program) to improve attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability and advocate for local businesses such as shops, cafes, hospitals and gyms to support this initiative.
- Support public events and spaces to be more accessible and inclusive, making people with disability more visible in everyday community life.
- Advocate to hospitals and health services to improve accessibility and attitudes which could be through training or listening to feedback from people with disability.
- Create targeted education campaigns to reduce stigma around disabilities like dementia and autism, including what certain behaviours might mean and how to respond respectfully.
- Partner with schools to run educational campaigns and promote inclusivity from a young age.

- Run community awareness campaigns to highlight that small actions that can make a big difference (e.g. keeping footpaths clear of bins for wheelchair users).

Liveable communities

Interview participants had mixed views on the accessibility of public spaces, services, events and transport on the Central Coast. In terms of what's working well, participants value the region's accessible natural environments with local beaches, walking tracks and playgrounds highlighted. We also heard the local libraries cater to both physical and cognitive needs and the rollout of facilities like accessible adult changing facilities in new developments is a key to making the Central Coast more liveable for people with disability. Many noted that when infrastructure is made accessible for people with disability, everyone in the community benefits.

However, there are not enough footpaths in the Central Coast, and in areas where there are footpaths, they are often uneven and poorly maintained. The lack of footpaths and uneven footpaths make moving around and getting to spaces and events in the Central Coast difficult for people with disability. We also heard that there are not enough disabled parking spaces, accessible toilets and public transport is limited. On the issue of accessible toilets, participants shared that toilets that don't require an MLAK key are often small, inaccessible, dirty and can sometimes be locked. Participants also highlighted gaps around the beach matting, noting it is often poorly maintained, uneven and does not go far enough down to the beach, leaving them sitting in their wheelchair in the middle of nowhere.

In terms of Council events, there are many events that participants do not know if they provide the level of accessibility features to make them feel safe and they often do not have enough accessible parking or drop-off zones.

Select quotes from interview participants:

"Compared to Sydney, we have a lot more accessible nature-related activities. We are able to spend weekends walking or going into the beach which we couldn't do in Sydney."

"It's becoming a really accessible place for people. The urban planning in Gosford is inclusive and really thought about."

"I've noticed the playgrounds have become more accessible with liberty swings. Beach access is also getting a lot better with the beach matting for wheelchairs."

"Some of the streets don't have sidewalks which is a huge barrier to using a wheelchair and getting around."

"Parking is a big issue. Often, we go to Norah Head and the disabled car parks are always taken and we have to go home."

"The playgrounds are mostly designed for kids, but my brother is 19 and disabled and loves going on the swings but he struggles because he is too tall for the liberty swing."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- **Run accessibility walk-throughs** before events with people of diverse disabilities to identify barriers and ensure the event is accessible and inclusive.
- Explore opportunities to make playgrounds more inclusive by creating sensory spaces, spaces and equipment for older children or young adults with intellectual disabilities and adding wading pools for wheelchair users. One participant noted Robelle Domain in Queensland as a good example.
- Provide online information sessions, guidelines and incentives for local businesses to make their spaces more accessible. Council should also recommend these businesses promote their accessibility features on their website.
- Provide information around accessibility features on promotional materials for Council events.
- Develop social stories for key spaces in the Central Coast including swimming pools and libraries and advocate to local health services to provide these as well.
- Provide more sensory activities and spaces for people with disability at Council events such as play dough, kinetic sand or water features.
- **Extend accessible beach infrastructure** such as mobi-matting further into the sand to allow better access to the water, and ensure this matting is regularly maintained.
- Explore opportunities to display exhibitions and artwork by people with disability outside of galleries such as in shopping centres, libraries and outdoor spaces.
- Install wheelchair accessible picnic tables at all local parks in the Central Coast.
- Provide MLAK keys for all accessible bathrooms in the Central Coast.
- Install power boxes and power points in public spaces to allow for electric wheelchair charging, with one idea being to have these locked and provide keys to wheelchair users similar to the MLAK key.
- Install braille and large print signage on pedestrian crossing lights and street signs.
- Provide braille and other accessible format brochures and pamphlets at Council run spaces including galleries.
- Advocate to taxi companies to operate accessible taxis more frequently.
- Advocate for new developments to be accessible and universally designed.
- Provide more events to connect people with disability to each other or provide support for existing non-Council event such as the Wave Disco at Central Coast Leagues Club.
- Prioritise improvements and maintenance of footpaths and crossings to ensure safer and easier navigation for people with mobility aids.
- **Provide more disabled parking.**
- **Raise awareness of shared pathway etiquette** for e-bikes and scooters through school education and signage to protect people with mobility or sensory impairments

Meaningful employment

While some participants felt there are growing employment opportunities for people with disability on the Central Coast, the majority felt there are still significant barriers. We heard the biggest barrier is inflexible working models that require people to commute into the office, where home setups have accessible bathrooms and provide more comfortable spaces for people with disability. Participants also shared that for people with invisible disability, overstimulation withing the workplace can be a challenge. They worry that without flexible arrangements such as hybrid work or flexible start times, their career development will continue to suffer. Concerns were also raised about current actions around volunteering in the DIAP that do not offer a living wage.

We also heard that meaningful employment means moving beyond minimum wage, factory work for all people with disability, and providing and support employment opportunities that allow people with disability to use their skills, experience and education in a meaningful way. Participants indicated that Council should become a leader in this space and highlight to employers why it is important and the benefits of hiring people with disability.

> **Select quotes from interview participants:**
>
> "Employment is increasing in workplaces and it's becoming more accepted which is great to see."
>
> "The biggest barrier to employment is flexibility. For people with disability working from home is important as we have access to our own accessible bathrooms. Having these options allows for more skilled people with disability to gain employment."
>
> "I went to a job agency to help me find work and they only wanted to find me minimum wage jobs in factories packing boxes. I have three university degrees; I shouldn't be put up for jobs where I am just sitting packing boxes."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Hire more people with disability and become a leader in this space.
- Develop a flexible work model to support people with disability that leads by example for other employers in the Central Coast.
- Proactively advertise willingness to negotiate adjustments for the right candidate, including remote work options.
- Provide upskilling and workplace readiness training for both employees with disability and support workers to build confidence and reduce initial anxiety.
- Raise awareness of programs such as JobAccess through Council channels, expos and the Chamber of Commerce to provide access to information available about accessible and inclusive hiring practices.
- Better promoter Council's Launchpad program.

- Run networking events connecting people with disability to employers, educational institutions and peer mentors.

Systems and processes

Many participants told us they find it straightforward to communicate and interact with Council including by phone or email. Participants who were members of the AIRG noted the reason they found it easy is because they have a more direct line to Council through their meetings. However, we heard Council's website is not compliant with the current requirements, nor is their information on how deaf or deafblind people might access Auslan or relay services. One participant noted that when you search 'disability' on the website the first hit is not about the services and how to access support, and they noted the community directory has no information under the sub-headings.

Select quotes from interview participants

"Everyone I've met in Council is good at asking what I need."

"I find it easy to talk to Council, but I am a digital person and involved in the AIRG which helps."

"One of the biggest things about being disabled is knowing where to get information, it can be really overwhelming."

"I went onto the Council website and did a search. I found it really difficult to find information."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- **Create clear, step-by-step transport guides** for people using wheelchairs to help them know how to catch buses or trains independently.
- Provide a clear link to an updated and complete community directory for services on the main webpage.
- **Establish dedicated inclusion grants** with tailored guidance on application writing to help community groups and businesses fund accessibility improvements.
- **Improve website accessibility and functionality** by streamlining pathways to key information, ensuring ongoing compliance with accessibility standards and adding features such as direct-link feedback forms for people with disability.
- **Provide a Council liaison** for disability matters, offering a direct contact point for feedback, queries and follow-up on plan actions.
- **Embed feedback loops into every project** so that whenever Council upgrades infrastructure (for example, sidewalks or kerb ramps), people with relevant lived experience are consulted before, during and after implementation.

- **Broaden communication channels** to include Auslan interpretation, relay services and AI-assisted tools, and promote “Your Voice, Our Coast” through multiple formats and technology platforms.
- Continue to explore current technology and AI trends and how they can help improve communication between Council and people with disability.

Access and Inclusion Reference Group (AIRG) meeting

About the AIRG meeting

The AIRG meets quarterly to support ongoing, meaningful conversations between Council and people with disability. The group helps make sure the DIAP actions stay relevant, practical and focused on achieving full community participation for people with disability. Members are chosen for their knowledge and experience in areas like accessibility, inclusive communication, advocacy, planning and disability-related legislation.

An extraordinary AIRG meeting was held on Thursday 10 April 2025 with three members attending. The purpose of this meeting was to gather feedback on how well Council has delivered on the previous DIAP focus areas, understand current barriers and challenges faced by people with disability and collect ideas to help shape the next DIAP.

Members who were unable to attend were offered one on one interviews, which are reported in section 5.

Key findings

- Council initiatives like the '*think outside the chair'* campaign and global initiatives like the Sunflower Lanyard program have improved visibility and understanding of invisible disability. However, there are **opportunities to better educate the community around the diversity of disability experiences**.
- **Council-managed spaces** such as parks and libraries are **generally accessible**. However **private businesses and events are less accessible**. Key barriers include the mental load in having to research accessibility features, uneven footpaths and limited disabled parking.
- **Participants want to see a 'safe spaces'** program to support private businesses in making their spaces more accessible and inclusive.
- **Employment opportunities remain challenging** due to employer attitudes, inflexible work models and inaccessible recruitment processes.
- **Participants value the opportunity to provide feedback through the AIRG,** outside of this people with disability find contacting Council stressful.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

AIRG members felt that Council has made good progress in representing and including people with disability across its work and publications. Programs like '*think outside the chair* and the Sunflower Lanyard initiative were highlighted as especially valuable in improving

community understanding of invisible disabilities. Members shared that knowing spaces partner with the Sunflower Lanyard program helps people feel safer and less judged if they experience a meltdown or panic attack in public.

At the same time, members felt there is more Council can do to better represent invisible disabilities in its communications beyond just using imagery. They also noted a need to challenge common assumptions around visible disability. For example, people using wheelchairs may still be able to stand or walk short distances. One participant described feeling judged when standing while using their wheelchair, despite using it to manage pain and describing it as a 'freedom chair' to help theme experience the world.

While outside of Council's direct control, members also raised concerns about their experiences with the healthcare system, particularly in emergency departments. This highlights issues around a lack of education and support within healthcare systems for invisible disabilities.

Select quotes from AIRG members:

"I recently had a horrific experience at emergency. I was left waiting four hours with my neurodivergent child who had multiple meltdowns. There were no disability specialists or social workers there. You really need someone who knows what to do, even just having stickers or images pointing to different support options for people with invisible disability or quiet rooms would be great."

"The think outside the chair initiative was great. I actually thought it was a state-wide initiative but found out recently it was just the Central Coast. I loved that it showed not all disabilities are visible. I am an ambulant wheelchair user and sometimes people glare at me if I stand up, so it was really great to see."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Expand the '*think outside the chair'* to more locations in the Central Coast including billboards in car parks and signage on the backs of public toilet stall doors. They suggested it could include more images of people who use wheelchairs but aren't wheelchair bound to show that wheelchairs can help people experience the world without being in pain but doesn't mean they are unable to walk or leave the wheelchair.
- More images or representation of people with invisible disabilities such as autism included in Council publications and social media.
- Partner with local hospitals to develop signage that provides support options for people with invisible disability and makes them feel comfortable to share this with the hospital so they can access support or quiet spaces as needed.

Liveable communities

AIRG members shared a range of experiences around accessing places, spaces and events on the Central Coast. While some described the Central Coast as a relatively accessible

place to live, others highlighted challenges around parking, public toilets and footpaths. Overall, members felt Council spaces such as parks and libraries are typically more accessible than private businesses.

One of the biggest challenges discussed was the mental load for people with disability to research and find out if the places or events are accessible. This often includes emailing and calling businesses, with one participant sharing they have a template they use each time which includes things like is the venue wheelchair accessible, does it have stairs, is there space for a wheelchair to be seated at a table and is there an accessible bathroom. We heard the information coming through is sometimes wrong, or businesses are unable to provide responses to everything. This often means people with disability are unable to go out and participate the way they would like. We also heard finding disabled parking spots is a challenge to accessing spaces and events in the Central Coast.

Select quotes from AIRG members:

"If I don't know a place is accessible, I won't bother going as it's too hard."

"The Avoca Theater has done lots of work to become accessible. It is my favourite place to go. They have a wheelchair spot out the front and when I first contacted them, they met me out the front and gave me a tour of the space, I had the best time. It was so easy for them to do, and I go there all the time now."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Develop a 'safe spaces for people with disability' program that incentives and educates businesses on how to be a safe space for people with disability (similar to the ACON queer friendly spaces program). Ideas about what this could include or how this works are:
  - A self-assessment template for business to evaluate and describe their accessibility features. After they complete this they should create a section on their website that lists accessibility information including wheelchair access, sensor environment (e.g. background music, kitchen noise), staff training and quiet spaces.
  - A register on Council's website of businesses that complete the assessment and commit to being accessible and inclusive. Each business should be provided with a sticker to place in their windows to indicate they are a safe space for people with disability.
  - Explore a membership program or social impact model for participating businesses and offer benefits such as training, promotion, networking and discounts.
  - Provide education around how many people living in the Central Coast have disability and how making their spaces more accessible and inclusive can benefit their business.
  - Provide a way for community members to provide feedback and ensure there is someone at Council to follow up and monitor every 6-12 months.

- Ensure Council-run events are accessible and inclusive for everyone in the community. This includes promoting accessible features of events on flyers and marketing collateral, providing social stories and providing quiet rooms.

Meaningful employment

We heard that accessing meaningful employment is still a challenge for people with disability on the Central Coast. Some of the barriers shared by members include:

- Employer attitudes around people with disability being a liability to the workplace.
- A lack of flexibility, such as requiring full-time work or denying work from home options.
- Workplace culture that assumes everyone works the same way or has the same needs.
- Inflexible job descriptions that may unnecessarily exclude people with disability.
- Inaccessible recruitment processes.

Select quotes from AIRG members:

"People with disability can't always work full-time. 70% of neurodivergent people don't access employment due to inaccessible recruitment processes. We also have to deal with the social dynamics of working in an office which is draining."

"Lots of people with disability don't even bother accessing employment as the current model just doesn't work for us."

"I've had bad experiences in the workplace. I need to see safety first and that I won't be made to feel like it's a crime for existing if I share what I need."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Educate local businesses and employers on the benefits of hiring people with disability, how to hire for flexibility, how to refine position descriptions to make them more accessible and inclusive (e.g. rather than saying you need to have a license and drive, you could say you need to be able to get to certain places) and how to make recruitment processes more accessible (e.g. writing a paragraph in one minute might not be viable for someone with disability).
- Encourage businesses to run training sessions to understand different working styles and create safe work environments for neurodivergent people.
- Provide support for people with disability wanting to start a business to allow them more opportunities to live flexibly as needed. This could include building on the old launchpad program which offered workshops on writing business plans, pitching and funding opportunities.
- Attend career expos or visit local high schools to connect with young people with disability to better understand their barriers and needs in the employment space

- Explore opportunities for mentorship and peer work.

Systems and processes

Overall, AIRG members felt Council is doing well when it comes to communicating with people with disability. They felt their involvement with the AIRG has been an important way to connect with Council, and they feel that Council has been open to hearing their ideas and feedback. However, outside of the AIRG they discussed contacting Council can involve a lot of mental load and stress.

> **Select quotes from AIRG members:**
>
> "I have a life admin task I need to do with Council but have in my mind it will be really stressful to call customer service, find the right person, leave a message and then not be sure if they're going to call back. This is the image I have of having to contact Council."
>
> "Council has been really open to hearing ideas and feedback. They really want to improve things for people with disability."

Ideas

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Provide training to frontline staff so they have knowledge of disability and cognitive challenges and how these might impact the way people communicate and share information.
- Create a 'disability navigator' role with someone who is trained or has lived experience to help people with disability navigate contacting Council. This should be promoted as a specific phone line or email address on Council's website that is easily accessible.
- Create a section on Council's website where people can provide feedback on accessibility issues they notice out in the community.
- Include an acknowledgement of people with disability on all Council communication.
- Explore opportunities to bring AIRG members to Council meetings to share their lived experience.

In-person workshops

About the in-person workshops

A series of in-person workshops with different stakeholder groups were held in May 2025. The purpose of these workshops was to gather targeted feedback relevant to the stakeholder group on how well Council has delivered on the previous DIAP focus areas, understand current barriers and challenges faced by people with disability and collect ideas to help shape the next DIAP.

Table 6 shows the stakeholder groups we spoke to and how many people participated.

Table 2 – In-person workshops

Stakeholder group	Date	Number of participants
Deaf community workshop	Wednesday 7 May 2025	5
Community workshop	Thursday 8 May 2025	4
Studio Gossie workshop	Thursday 15 May	10
Seniors	Wednesday 28 May 2025	6

Key findings across the workshops

- **Community attitudes need improving**, with participants calling for broader public education campaigns, respectful communication about disability and more people with disability in Council promotions and materials.
- **Key liveability challenges** include steep gutters, poor footpath, inadequate public transport and a lack of disabled parking spaces.
- **Council communications and engagement processes often exclude people with disability**, especially deaf community members, due to a lack of Auslan interpretation and accessible formats.
- **Meaningful employment remains a challenge**, with a need for more awareness among employers and support for creative and vocational pathways.
- **Council initiatives are appreciated but must be expanded**, better resourced, and made more consistently accessible across the region.

Community workshop

A community workshop was advertised on the website and through Council's social media channels for people with lived experience of disability and/or their families and carers to attend. The workshop was held on the Thursday 8 May 2025.

Four participants attended (bad weather could have been a deterring factor in getting higher numbers). Participants were all physically disabled, one also had a cognitive disability, one

used a wheelchair, and one used a scooter. One participant was a carer of another participant.

What we heard

Transport and accessibility, especially accessibility of pathways remains key issues for people living with physical disability on the central coast. Participants felt there were many positives for people living with disabilities on the Central Coast and that planning for their needs is taken into account at events by Council but that sometimes Council does not listen to people with disabilities or don't understand the experience of disability and don't understand that people with disability know what they need.

- All participants were aware of Council's current Disability Inclusion Action Plan.
- Transport options need to be improved. More accessible taxis are needed. Accessible taxis, not being able to be booked is a real issue also the fact that they do not run on Sundays. Lack of public transport that can take people directly to their homes is an issue.
- Gutters on footpaths are very steep in some areas and footpaths can be hard to navigate or not have easements where they are needed. It can be a struggle to access pathways and to cross streets where there are not safe median strips for wheelchair users. There needs to be easements for wheelchairs at all bus stops.
- Disabled toilets are dirty and often people are not using them. There are issues with MLAK keys and because Council will not lock accessible bathrooms during the day they are sometimes vandalized and not clean.
- There are activities for people with disabilities on the Central Coast (such as disability surfing) and one participant and their carer found that their needs had been thought of at council and other events like markets in a way that they hadn't been in their previous LGA.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"When people are setting up services to meet your needs, they presume you don't know what you need".

"It has swung back – now we see people with a range of disabilities but never see people with a wheelchair in promotional materials."

"Disabled toilets on the Coast are very dirty and unhygienic".

"We cannot access local services that are down the street because there is no footpath access for the wheelchair, we have to drive to access local shops".

"Everything is good about living on the Central Coast. The people - it has given us a new lease on life – we didn't feel that there was much to do for people with a disability in Newcastle."

"Attitudes need to be improved".

"Water activities are great – I received a booklet about the accessibility of facilities and beaches, and it has been a great resource".

"Council officers are not understanding the experience."

"Outside of the centre radius, transport needs to be improved, it takes too long to get places, and more accessible buses are needed."

Ideas

- Increase representation of people with wheelchairs in promotional material.
- Council could work to help residents understand the different types of disabilities that people living on the Central Coast live with – possibly through promotional pamphlets.
- Exploring where there needs to be more easements on footpaths, especially near bus stops.

Deaf community workshop

A workshop with members of the deaf community was held at Central Coast Leagues Club in Gosford on Wednesday 7 May 2025.

Five community members attended the workshop, and an Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreter was available.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Participants indicated there is a need to raise awareness and understanding of deaf people and Auslan as a language. They suggested Council should include deaf people and their lived experiences in campaigns and publications.

Ideas under this focus area:

- Hold regular deaf community drop-in and engagement sessions with interpreters to gain a better understanding of lived experiences of people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For example, Council should deliver a face to face, Auslan interpreted presentation of the new DIAP when it goes to public exhibition.

Liveable communities

Throughout the workshop, participants shared that many spaces, facilities, and services remain inaccessible to members of the deaf community. Examples included car park emergency buttons that are audio-only, hospital interactions that often require written notes due to a lack of interpreters or assistive technology and gallery exhibitions that provide information through audio-only formats.

Participants also spoke about the removal of the Deaf Connect office impacting on their ability to access services and information and needing to travel to Newcastle now.

Ideas under this focus area:

- Provide iPads with Auslan translation at public exhibitions art local art galleries.
- Provide Auslan alphabets in playgrounds across the Central Coast.
- Ensure all Council-run events provide an Auslan interpreter and ensure this is included on promotional materials.
- Promote Council-run events with Auslan interpreters through local Facebook pages such as Central Coast Deaf Events Facebook group.

Meaningful employment

Participants noted the bigger barrier to meaningful employment for deaf people is often a lack of education around what deaf people need, and what support employers can access to support deaf employees. For example, participants noted that deaf employees generally do not require full-time interpreters. They also noted that programs like Job Access can provide funding for interpreters and disability awareness training for employers.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Education of local employers on Central Coast on education on Job Access and how it can support hiring people from the deaf community.
- Promote Central Coast Council jobs as deaf-friendly.

Systems and processes

Participants noted that Council's current communication and engagement processes are largely inaccessible to the deaf community. This includes Council's website, have your say page and processes for querying bills and notices. This is because there are either no Auslan translations or interpreters available. We also heard that Council's customer service process does not allow calls from the National Relay Service.

Ideas under this focus area

- Embed Auslan translations on Council's website and for key strategies and documents, such as the DIAP.
- Improve internal processes to allow calls from the National Relay Service and Convo Australia.
- Ensure all Council meetings, workshops and information sessions open to the public are Auslan interpreted.

Studio Gossie workshop

A workshop with Studio Gossie participants – an inclusive and accessible studio arts program presented by Central Coast Council and Gosford Regional Gallery for people with disability – was held on Thursday 15 May 2025.

10 participants attended.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Participants shared their experiences of exclusion during schooling years, reflecting on being taken out of classrooms for disability support, which limited both their learning and ability to form strong social connections. They noted that improving visibility of people with disability in everyday life and activities, including in schools, would help improve attitudes and behaviours.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Explore opportunities to run education sessions and awareness campaigns in local schools across Central Coast. For example, immersive experiences like "a journey without sight or sound" or workshops with groups like Deaf Connect to build understanding and empathy.
- Ensure all Council communications, documents and policies use respectful language and avoid tokenistic attitudes towards people with disability.

Liveable communities

While participant praised the Studio Gossie program, they wanted to see more ongoing, long-term, inclusive cultural programs across the Central Coast such as music, dance, karaoke, and cooking workshops. They also want to see more mainstream programs and activities that are open to everyone be more accessible to people with disability.

Participants identified a number of other challenges under the liveable communities focus area. This includes inaccessible spaces and facilities (e.g. too many stairs), including entertainment venues, poor public transport connections and the lack of accessible and affordable activities in the northern end of the Central Coast. Participant also noted that while the beaches are becoming more accessible, the beach wheelchairs are bulky and overly visible.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Advocate to local businesses to provide clear, standardised information on the accessibility of their venues.
- Explore opportunities to provide a community centre with a garden, where people with disability can grow and cook their own vegetables.

- Run more affordable, accessible and inclusive cultural and creative programs across the whole Central Coast. One idea was to run pop-up events using facilities like “the container”. It is also important these are resourced appropriately through a staff with a mix of arts and disability experience and First Aid training.
- Provide more support for exhibiting artists with disability in Council facilities, including the new Regional Library.
- Ensure all Council run-events and venues display accessible information and clear entry instructions.
- Explore alternative options for beach accessibility such as cement or recycled plastic pathways to the water.

Meaningful employment

Participants noted that Studio Gossie provides an important pathway to becoming practiced artists, allowing participants to be seen as artists rather than clients. However, they identified some barriers to employment including being able to access medical support and mental health needs.

Under this focus area, participants indicated a need to invest in long-term arts programs to build confidence and skills of people with disability to become employed in the creative space.

Systems and processes

Participants felt there was room for improvement around Council communications and engagement with people with disability.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Provide Auslan interpreters and/or captioning for Council meetings and events.
- Use more images and simple formats in public information to support people with low literacy or vision impairments.

Seniors workshop

A workshop with members of the deaf community was held on Wednesday 28 May 2025.

Six community members attended the workshop.

What we heard

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Deliver Sunflower training to volunteers at the Seniors Centre.

- Publish stories and information about inclusion in the Council's newsletter, quarterly magazine and GOAL magazine.
- Provide clear, step-by-step guidance on how to obtain a MLAK, including via local GPs.
- Distribute resources and information at events such as the Mingara Expo.
- Run an education campaign promoting available support services and how to access them.

Liveable communities

Participants highlighted key challenges around poorly maintained footpaths, parking and access to community centres. We heard that poor maintenance, lack of ramps or inaccessible design features (e.g. fire exits or lack of handrails) made it difficult or unsafe to participate in daily life. In fact, participants shared that some people don't visit the senior's centre due to the lack of parking.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Improve the proximity and accessibility of parking near seniors' centre.
- Extend and better manage drop-off zones for people with disability.
- Repair uneven and poorly maintained footpaths, including maintaining overgrown grass.
- Ensure there are appropriate handrails in the seniors' centre.
- Redesign or lower high handrails that are unsuitable for people with limited mobility.

Meaningful employment

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Offer volunteer and mentoring opportunities for older resident.
- Reimburse travel and participation costs to remove financial barriers to volunteering.
- Match volunteering roles with skills, such as administration or finance.

Systems and processes

Participants noted the customer service system is good, but some participants were disappointed that issues they raised were not addressed, or that no follow-up occurred. There were also concerns about the accessibility of Council's website and the difficulty in finding relevant information or services.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Develop a simple, easy-to-navigate online portal for access and inclusion information.
- Improve accessibility of the Council website.

- Strengthen follow-up processes for customer experience enquiries to ensure residents receive updates on outcomes.
- Provide consistent feedback to residents on the status of reported issues and action taken.

Online workshops

About the online workshops

A series of online workshops with different stakeholder groups were held in April and May 2025. The purpose of these workshops was to gather targeted feedback relevant to the stakeholder group on how well Council has delivered on the previous DIAP focus areas, understand current barriers and challenges faced by people with disability and collect ideas to help shape the next DIAP.

Table 7 shows the stakeholder groups we spoke to and how many people participated.

Table 3 - Online workshops

Stakeholder group	Date	Number of participants
Council staff with lived experience	Wednesday 30 April 2025	10
Education	Tuesday 6 May 2025	8
Accessible sport and recreation	Tuesday 6 May 2025	3
Employment	Friday 9 May	4
Autism and neurodivergent	Friday 9 May 2025	2

Key findings

- **Education and awareness campaigns are needed to shift attitudes**, especially around invisible disability.
- **Council-run spaces like libraries, leisure centres and accessible beaches are valued**. However, poor signage, inaccessible footpaths, a lack of parking, inadequate accessible toilets and the lack of sensory spaces limit accessibility. There is a need to embed lived experience into the planning and design of facilities.
- **Barriers to meaningful employment exist at Council and external employers**, including inaccessible recruitment practices, lack of flexible work models, feeling psychologically unsafe, stigma and discrimination, poor understanding of access needs by employers and insufficient transition pathways, especially for young people and those acquiring disability later in life. Participants want Council to be a leader in inclusive employment and design.
- **Council's website and communications can be difficult to navigate**. Key issues include a lack of Easy Read formats, not knowing who to contact and customer service experiences driven by KPIs, rather than genuine support.

Council staff with lived experience workshop

An online workshop was held with Council staff with lived experience on Wednesday 30 April. An additional interview was held with a staff member who was unable to attend, these findings have been incorporated into this section.

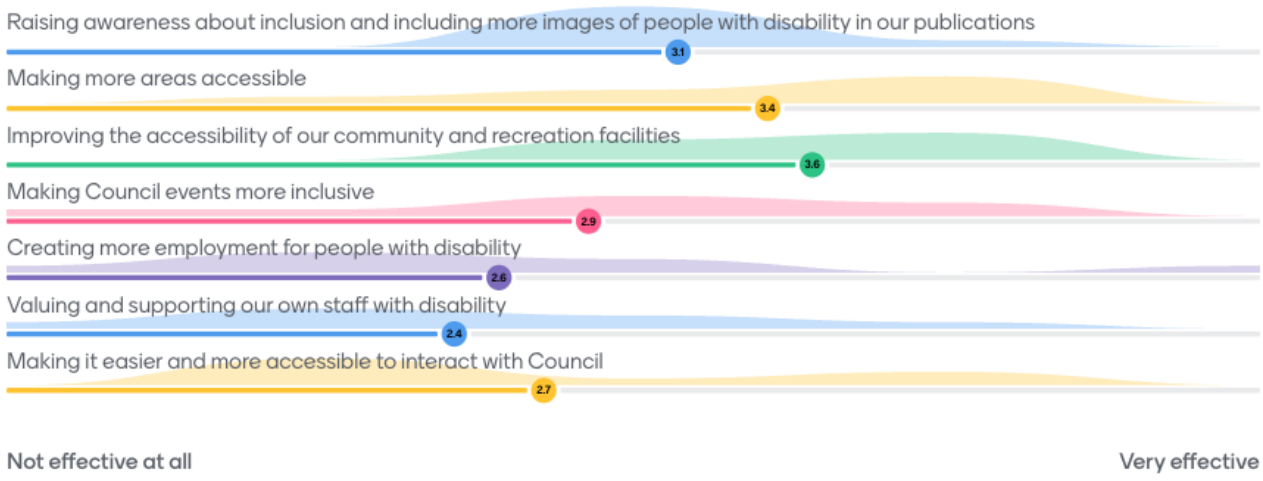
10 participants attended the workshop and interview.

Current state of access and inclusion

Workshop participants were asked to rate how effective Council has been in achieving a range of access and inclusion outcomes. As shown in Figure 13, the areas where Council is doing the best in are improving the accessibility of our community and recreation facilities (3.6 out of 5) and making more areas accessible (3.4). The areas where there is the most room for improvement are valuing and supporting Council staff with disability (2.4) and creating more employment for people with disability (2.6).

Participants shared that while there has been some progress in external-facing work, internal culture and infrastructure still pose barriers. Staff reported feeling psychologically unsafe to disclose disability due to fears of discrimination—whether conscious or unconscious. Many staff with disability do not feel confident that their needs will be met without judgment, and some reported being required to justify their disability or access needs to peers or supervisors.

Figure 13 - How effective has Council been in:



What Council is currently doing in the access and inclusion space

Participants were then asked to provide insights into what Council is currently doing in the access and inclusion space. This includes:

- Considering access and inclusion in plans and masterplans by having discussions with the Access and Inclusion Officer to improve outcomes.

- Exploring opportunities in the procurement space for the use of disability organisations under the Local Government Act.
- Rolling out the Sunflower Lanyard program within Council and at Council venues and spaces.
- Ensuring all communications are simple and clear so everyone can understand the information given out.
- Collaborating across Council teams and units to ensure expert advice on best practice is provided for each project.
- Providing education to Council staff around what the legislation in the heritage space means for disability access to make people more confident in what work they can do and how they can do it.

Challenges facing Council staff in the access and inclusion space

Workshop participants were asked what challenges they face in improving access and inclusion. This includes:

- Poor internal process and procedures across the whole of Council, not just in the access and inclusion space.
- A lack of collaboration between teams.
- A lack of understanding around what constitutes a disability service organisation for procurement purposes.
- Expectations of having to find and access important information on your own.
- All training being shifted to online and in your own time which reduces the effectiveness, makes it feel more like a tick a box exercise and removes networking opportunities across teams.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Workshop participants shared they experience judgement and stigma when accessing disability spaces or parking, particularly if they have an invisible disability. They also noted this judgement can extend to Council's workplace, with fear around discrimination when disclosing a disability.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"I feel like I shouldn't access disability services or parking spaces as I don't at first glance look like I have a disability and people question why I access these things. There needs to be more awareness that disability comes in all different forms."

"I feel like I have to explain my disability to everyone."

"I don't feel psychologically safe to talk about my disability because my perceptions and experience is that there will be discrimination involved."

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Conduct more community awareness campaigns to challenge assumptions about disability, particularly around the use of accessible facilities.
- Roll out an internal “Think outside the chair” campaign to promote understanding that disability takes many forms, with a focus on invisible disability.
- Collect and share stories of staff with disability to build awareness and reduce stigma, while ensuring these stories are shared safely and with consent.
- Provide Council staff with more education opportunities to promote awareness of different disabilities and reduce the pressure on staff with disability to repeatedly explain or justify their disability.

Liveable communities

Key issues identified by participants under the liveable communities focus area include the misuse of accessible toilets and parking spaces, noisy public spaces without quiet spaces (e.g. as Gosford Stadium) and limited information about the accessibility features of spaces and events. Participants also spoke about the challenges of finding affordable and appropriate housing for people with disability.

Participants also highlighted that accessibility is not just a public issue but also a workplace issue. The physical layout of Council’s own offices, including long uphill walks from public transport and difficult access routes between buildings, not enough well-maintained accessible toilets, lack of accessible and compliant parking spaces (e.g. the car park at the Central Atrium two spaces are adjacent to commercial garbage bins and loading zones) makes day-to-day navigation difficult for staff and visitors with disabilities. The lack of accessible parking can make getting to work in time stressful.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Advocate to local shopping centres to expand quiet hour offerings, using Wadalba’s Coles and Woolworths as best practice examples.
- Increase the number of fenced playgrounds and provide more sensory play spaces for children.
- Explore the option to allow people with disability to use parent parking spots when needed.
- Provide clear information on accessible features at Council facilities and encourage private venues to do the same.
- Address safety concerns around e-bike and scooter use on footpaths.
- Improve the condition and consistency of footpaths, especially in the northern suburbs.
- Ensure all signage is clear, visible and easy to understand.
- Support staff to integrate accessibility upgrades into project planning and seek dedicated annual funding.

- Promote the use of social stories and pre-event information to help people prepare for sensory environments.
- Encourage event organisers to offer earphones for hire and promote the availability of this offering before the event.
- Advocate for more accessible and affordable housing options for people with disability.
- Encourage businesses to address physical access challenges, such as stairs-only entry.

Meaningful employment

Participants shared that people with disability face barriers to both securing and sustaining employment. These include inflexible working models such as a lack of work from home opportunities, a lack of understanding from employers and support services not always acting in the best interest of the employee. Some participants felt Council itself could do more to be a supportive, accessible and inclusive workplace. Several staff shared that their disability had been raised in recruitment settings or cited to block internal progression. Others reported being treated as though they had behavioural issues simply because of a health condition or access request. We also heard that recruitment experiences stigmatise people with mental health conditions and the need to prove they can manage their disability/mental health before being hired.

Staff noted that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work, and that some employees may only need accommodations for meetings or tasks—not full-time adjustments. However, there is limited understanding or flexibility in applying this.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Review internal recruitment practices to remove unnecessary barriers and improve accessibility.
- Offer more flexibility in working hours and arrangements, especially for carers and people with disability.
- Create a safe space for employees to share access needs or changes in their circumstances without fear of judgement.
- Educate HR staff and hiring managers on inclusive practices and the benefits of employing people with disability.
- Build partnerships with local schools units to create employment pathways for young people with disability.
- Provide more opportunities for staff with disability to speak out in a safe and supported way.
- Raise awareness of NDIA-funded employer supports and subsidies that promote long-term employment outcomes.

Systems and processes

Under the systems and processes focus area, participants raised concerns around the accessibility of Council's website and forms and internal processes that prioritise KPIs over real outcomes.

Staff also highlighted that policies and culture need to shift toward more inclusive systems, including trauma-informed approaches and co-designed processes. There was concern that staff with mental health or medical needs are often grouped together and perceived as having behavioural challenges, which contributes to stigma and inappropriate generalisation. Some staff feel unsupported, forced out, or are "marking time" until retirement.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Establish an internal staff reference group to advise on accessibility improvements based on lived experience.
- Review and simplify all forms, ensuring they are accessible and available in multiple formats.
- Promote awareness of communication preferences and ensure customers receive updates in their chosen format (e.g. phone, email, in-person).
- Educate staff that KPI targets for response times should focus on meaningful customer outcomes, not just task closure, and that acknowledging a delay or need for more time is a valid response.
- Review Council websites and digital tools to ensure compliance with accessibility standards and keep it simple.
- Streamline portals and reduce the number of platforms used to access services.
- Provide more face-to-face and customised training to allow for networking and professional development learning.

Education stakeholders workshop

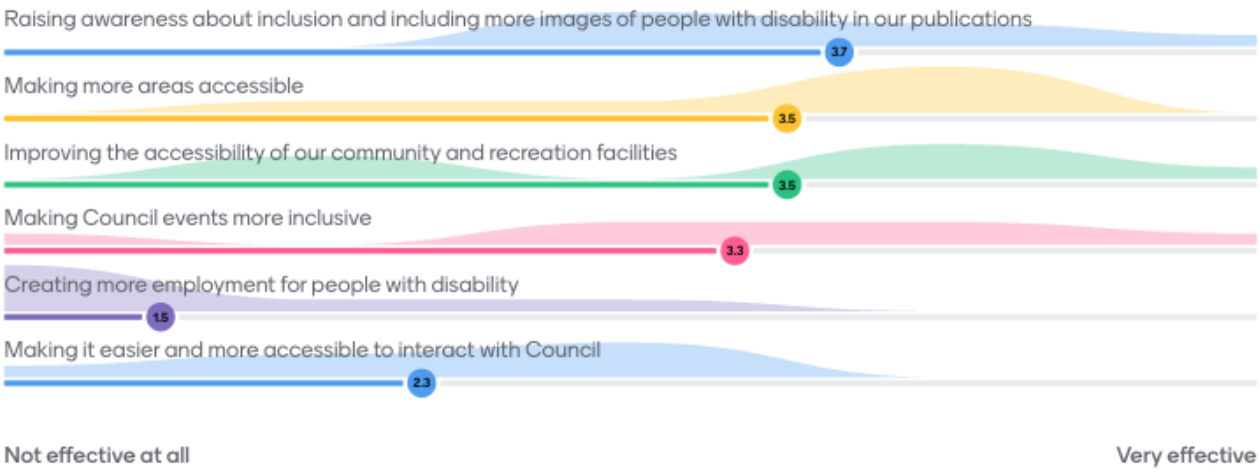
An online workshop was held with stakeholders working in the education space on Tuesday 6 May 2025.

8 participants attended.

Current state of access and inclusion

Workshop participants were asked to rate how effective Council has been in achieving a range of access and inclusion outcomes. As shown in Figure 14, the areas where Council is doing the best in are raising awareness about inclusion (3.7 out of 5). The areas where there is the most room for improvement are creating more employment for people with disability (1.5) and making it easier and more accessible to interact with Council (2.3).

Figure 14 - How effective has Council been in:



Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Workshop participants indicated there is growing awareness of disability across the community, especially among those connected with Council programs or reference groups. However, we also heard that some of these stakeholders include a section on Council's DIAP in their curriculum and for many of their students this is the first time they hear about it, despite studying in the ageing and disability space. Although many noted the uptake of the Sunflower Lanyard program has been a strength of the Central Coast community and Council in recent years, they indicated there is still work to be done to raise awareness around invisible disability and what the Sunflower Lanyard program means. We also heard there needs to be more education and awareness across private businesses, including local RSLs.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Explore opportunities to use Central Coast Council Libraries Facebook page to promote awareness campaigns and education around disability to the wider community.
- Undertake education and training with local businesses such as RSLs and clubs to improve attitudes and behaviours. One idea could be more mental health education to support people with disability
- Promote sporting clubs on the Central Coast that offer disability inclusion programs.
- Use Council's rate notice to provide information on disability inclusion and provide education to the community.
- Connect community groups and stakeholders regularly to share good practice and maintain momentum for inclusion

Liveable communities

We heard that many Council-run facilities and services are inclusive and well-used – particularly libraries, leisure centres and the accessible beaches. We also heard that programs such as Plot Play foster belonging for people with diverse needs. Community groups and Council initiatives are actively promoting inclusive participation, and newer infrastructure often incorporates thoughtful design features. However, gaps remain in liveability and accessibility. Pathways, public transport and wayfinding are often inadequate or unclear, especially for people with mobility restrictions or temporary disability. Accessible features are sometimes present but not obvious or usable, and promotional efforts don't always reach the broader community.

Ideas under this focus area include

- Prioritise safe, accessible paths and parking across the LGA, especially near community hubs, services and public transport – not just in town centres.
- Ensure universal design principles are applied in all new builds and retrofitted in existing infrastructure wherever possible.
- Improve signage and promotion of accessible resources such as bushwalks, beach mats, community transport and MLAK keys, using multiple channels to reach different audiences
- Continue to develop inclusive, intergenerational programs that welcome people with diverse ages, abilities and interests, avoiding siloed or niche approaches
- Strengthen opportunities for people with disability to be involved in shaping projects, either through advisory roles, paid input, or less formal feedback mechanisms
- Work with leisure and arts providers to promote inclusive programs like relaxed performances, and collaborate early to ensure accessible options are well used

Meaningful employment

We heard that Council has been making efforts to employ people with disability, provide traineeships and offer staff training. However, outside of Council, inclusive employment remains limited. Many local businesses are unsure how to offer jobs to people with disability or where to go for support. There's strong interest in seeing Council take a leadership role in this space, by not only building inclusive practices internally, but helping the broader community to do the same.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Partner with local employment services and advocacy groups to build awareness and confidence among employers
- Offer resources such as toolkits or workshops for businesses wanting to improve their inclusive hiring practices
- Showcase positive local stories of inclusive employment, helping to break down stigma and demonstrate what's possible

- Continue to expand Council's own inclusive employment and traineeship programs and using this as a model for others to follow.

Systems and processes

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Upgrade its website and communication channels to meet best practice accessibility standards, ensuring clear navigation, Easy Read content, screen reader compatibility and translated materials
- Offer Auslan interpretation, captioning and other supports more consistently across events, consultations and service interactions
- Embed accessibility and inclusion checks early in project planning, event approval processes and procurement, supported by practical tools and staff training
- Establish clear, inclusive pathways for community feedback, such as accessible surveys or phone-based options, and ensure people know how to raise access concerns
- Provide regular disability awareness training tailored to different teams, including frontline, communications and infrastructure staff
- Strengthen internal systems for tracking and following up on access improvements to ensure accountability and continuous learning

Accessible sport and recreation stakeholders workshop

An online workshop was held with stakeholders working in the accessible sport and recreation space on Tuesday 6 May 2025. 3 participants attended.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

We heard there is growing awareness around access and inclusion in sport and recreation with many sporting clubs across the Central Coast offering disability inclusion programs. However, we heard there is consistency across these clubs and programs, with some clubs unaware of the importance of access and inclusion or unsure how to take meaningful steps.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Provide inclusive imagery in Council publications
- Increase the visibility of people with disability in community and sporting contexts
- Establish a central noticeboard or directory for accessible and inclusive sport and recreation opportunities
- Encourage peer sharing and lived experience storytelling to shift attitudes and expectations

Liveable communities

While some sporting and recreation facilities are making progress on accessibility, there are challenges across others. Key barriers include inadequate parking, inaccessible toilets and poorly maintained footpaths. In particular, the lack of parking makes it hard to drop off and pick up children for training or games. We also heard many sporting clubs offer trial days, or one-off sessions for people with disability rather than ongoing sporting programs.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Improve accessibility of community and recreation infrastructure, including universal design features and better pathways.
- Install or trial temporary traffic solutions for drop-off zones and accessible parking during events.
- Develop and promote social stories to support participation and familiarity with clubs and venues.
- Embed access, inclusion and universal design into all facility upgrades and planning processes.
- Address specific facility issues, such as the lack of accessible female toilet facilities at key sites.

Meaningful employment

No feedback was provided on this focus area.

Systems and processes

We heard the current system is fragmented and difficult to navigate. Providers, clubs and families often don't know who to go to for what, and there is significant duplication across programs. We also heard that Council has limited authority to enforce inclusion, and state sporting bodies are better placed to drive system-wide change, but this alignment is not always in place.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Establish stronger strategic partnerships across levels of government, sporting bodies and clubs to address key needs for accessible sporting and recreation programs and reduce duplication.
- Strengthen internal feedback loops for Council-run programs to inform continuous improvement
- Support dedicated roles or functions that focus on inclusion and system coordination

Employment stakeholders workshop

An online workshop was held with stakeholders working in the employment space on Friday 9 May 2025.

2 participants attended.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Participants noted there has been progress in raising awareness about the inclusion of people with disability. However, there is also room for improvement including more inclusive and visible representation of people with disability in publications and marketing materials.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Continue increasing visibility of people with disability in publications and marketing materials.
- Ensure all documents and communications are accessible, with attention to accessibility features such as font size and formatting.
- Promote more inclusive campaigns showcasing people with disability.

Liveable communities

We heard that a number of public spaces and recreation facilities are more accessible to people with disability, including beaches and playgrounds. However, more consideration needs to be given to quiet spaces within these facilities, and ensuring all spaces continue to evolve to meet diverse needs.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Maintain and expand the accessibility of public areas, including beaches, parks, and playgrounds.
- Promote accessible venues through community initiatives and campaigns.
- Support the development of quiet spaces at venues and in public areas for people with autism or sensory processing disorders.

Meaningful employment

While there has been progress made to create more employment opportunities for people with disability, there are a number of challenges. This includes difficulty obtaining work experience, transitioning to new industries after acquiring a disability and employer discrimination. Participants told us that initiatives such as work placements, internships and tailored support for employers are helping to improve the situation.

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Develop more work experience and volunteer placement opportunities, especially in public-facing roles like libraries and customer service.
- Offer employer education around the value of hiring people with disability and the support available through programs like JobAccess.
- Encourage workplace flexibility, including reasonable adjustments such as flexible start times, unpaid breaks or modified work tasks.
- Promote inclusive employment models by showcasing success stories, such as businesses that have successfully hired individuals with disabilities.
- Organise targeted apprenticeships for young people with disability, including those who may have acquired a disability later in life.
- Highlight the success of inclusive businesses, such as the accessible café in Tuggerah, as examples of potential employment opportunities.

Systems and processes

Participants indicated that while Council's website is generally effective, there are gaps. For instance, delays in Council responses to employment agencies and lengthy probity checks can result in lost opportunities for clients eager to pursue work placements. There is also a need for clearer communication about who to engage with regarding employment and support services.

Ideas under this focus area include

- Streamline and improve response times for employment-related inquiries and work placements.
- Provide clearer information on required probity checks and communicate these requirements earlier in the process to maintain client engagement.
- Establish a waiting list or pre-engagement process for clients, ensuring they are not left in limbo during bureaucratic delays.

- Increase awareness of the potential for microenterprise development among people with disabilities, offering support for self-employment and small business start-ups.
- Create an accessible forum or platform for employers and people with disabilities to connect, share experiences, and explore employment opportunities.
- Enhance employer engagement through targeted outreach, such as focus groups or workshops, to educate employers about disability inclusion and how they can adjust their processes.

Autism and neurodivergent community workshop

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Educating the local community and local businesses about the needs of autistic and neurodivergent people.
- Work more closely with local school-based support teams to understand and meet the needs of neurodivergent students.

Liveable communities

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Include quiet, sensory spaces at events and in libraries, particularly during Storytime.
- Provide more opportunities for inclusive sports programs for both neurodiverse children and adults.
- Include more playspace with sensory equipment and secure fencing or barriers to support safety for children.
- Provide more inclusive performances at The Laycock and other venues.

Meaningful employment

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Explore alternative recruitment methods at Council that better suit neurodivergent people.
- Ensure flexibility in working conditions, including options around sensory environment and scheduling.
- Identify roles that align with the strengths of neurodivergent workers.

Systems and processes

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Better engage with young people with disability through targeted consultation.
- Provide social stories on Council's website to help neurodivergent people and families prepare for visiting facilities and events.

Disability interagency

About the disability interagency

The **Central Coast Disability Interagency** is a collaborative network that brings together local service providers, community organisations, advocates, and individuals with lived experience of disability. It operates on the Central Coast of NSW and serves as a forum to:

- share information and updates across the disability sector
- coordinate responses to emerging needs
- strengthen local partnerships, and
- support advocacy and inclusive practice across the region.

We attended the Disability Interagency meeting on Thursday 8 May 2025 with 30 representatives from disability organisations, advocates, and TAFE teachers and students in the disability space.

Key findings

- **Most service providers were not aware that Council had an existing Disability Inclusion Action Plan** and most of those who were aware had not read it.
- **Community awareness and attitudes are improving**, such as increasing supermarkets creating times for access for people with sensory issues. However, there is still a need for more education on the diversity of disability experiences.
- **The Central Coast is becoming more accessible and inclusive** with beach access, playgrounds and accessible community events**.** However, transport and travel (e.g. limited accessible taxis) and a lack of parking are key barriers to people with disability participating in daily life.
- **Participants felt that in some areas there were improvements or some positive changes for people with disability** on the Central Coast such as increased numbers of support workers and numbers of disability organisations that were offering programs.
- A **lack of flexible roles** and **unreliable and inaccessible transport** remain **key barriers to employment.**
- **Council systems can be hard to navigate**. It often takes a long time to have issues resolved, and information is often outdated
- Council needs to **embed lived experience** into their operations.

What we heard

Positive community behaviours and attitudes

Participants felt that there was more knowledge of a range of disabilities including mental health disabilities than there used to be and more positive representation in media and in publications generally.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"Supermarkets - quiet times for people with sensory issues. Quiet times for parents to shop with children who live with a disability."

"People are slowly accepting that PWD are able to contribute to the community like everyone else."

"Lots of support workers available, there are some good organisations."

"There's a lot more support services now."

Liveable communities

Participants felt that the Central Coast was generally becoming more liveable for people with disabilities in many ways – festivals and street events were taking disability access into account and specific equipment was being installed at beaches and swimming pools and bikes tracks and pathways. However, there was a lot of discussion of the impact of inadequate public transport and taxis, maintenance of pathways, and lack of accessible parking in CBD areas such as Terrigal, The Entrance and Gosford.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"Being a coastal community accessibility to our beaches has been well developed."

"More play spaces are having upgrades with inclusive equipment and infrastructure."

"There is no up to date register of disability services that is kept current e.g. services such as vision care and which doctors bulk bill. It's hard to find out all that is out there"

"Gosford pool – hoist was out of action for a number of weeks – took a number of times to get it serviced and fixed up. Shouldn't take that long to follow up. Did get fixed in the end"

"More play spaces are having upgrades with inclusive equipment and infrastructure."

Meaningful employment

Employment is hard because of both the lack of understanding of accommodations that can be made, the lack of willingness of employers to do this, the lack of meaningful jobs for

people with disabilities but especially because of the lack of suitable transport for people with a disability on the Central Coast, especially enough taxis that can take electric wheelchairs.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"Deaf community have given up on education system – no deaf specific high school. People live in fear everyday "will my interpreter turn up" or "will NDIA have changed my plan to agency managed which means than I can't access my AUSLAN interpreters?"

"Because there are not enough taxis that can take electric wheelchairs you can get stuck at stations, especially going to work."

Systems and processes

Council's website effectively hides disability information from those that are searching for it. Sometimes those working in disability or those using disability features of Council services such as pools and hoists have to repeatedly report issues with them before they are fixed which can make using them complex and unreliable for users. Participants appreciate consultation.

Select quotes from workshop participants:

"Basically, there is no access to Council information, the disability register needs to be up to date and easy to read and easy to gain information from"

"It is good to know the council is trying to engage and get more feedback from the community on what to improve".

"It's hard to communicate with Council because of the constant roadblocks and being redirected to other departments."

Ideas

- Council hiring a person with lived experience of disability to be an accessibility consultant to Council and businesses.
- More regular meetings/ engagement council and disability providers.
- Advertising to employers about incentives for employers to take on staff with disability.
- Council to lead creating more awareness on the wide variety of different disabilities people on the coast are living with.
- Circulate the new action plan widely through the disability action plan at various stages through its life.
- Virtual reality headsets offering dementia/deafness/learning disability experiences so people without disability could experience it.

Council staff workshop

About the Council staff workshop

A meeting of Council staff was held on the Thursday 8 May 2025 to gather feedback from staff about their perception of delivery on the previous DIAP, understand their opinions of current barriers and challenges faced by people with disability on the Central Coast as well as their ideas of opportunities that exist for Council in this space and to collect ideas to help shape the next DIAP. Internal Council staff from the key functional areas who will be responsible for implementation and delivery of the actions in the new DIAP were invited to attend. A second meeting of Council staff was held on Monday 26 May 2025 for staff who were unable to make the first session.

30 Council staff attended the first session and 365 staff attended the second session.

Key findings

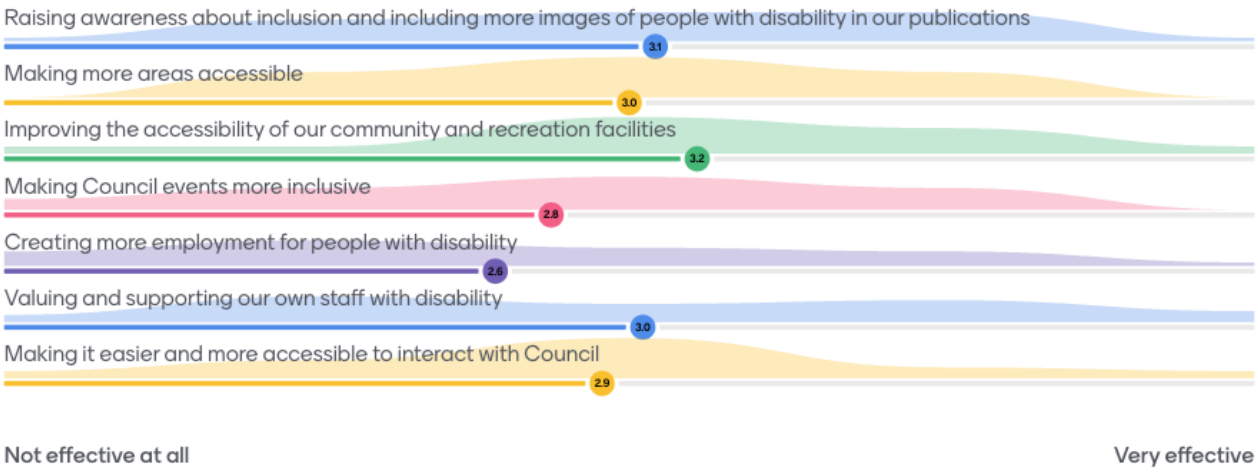
- Council staff reported that **disability is better understood and more frequently acknowledged in internal Council initiatives**. However, there is a need to continue both internal and external education to reduce stigma and further improve attitudes and behaviours.
- **Built infrastructure in the Central Coast is becoming more accessible, but challenges persist** around uneven footpaths, parking and a lack of public transport. There is a need to Council to consider how people navigate between places when planning and consider going beyond compliance.
- **There is room for improvement in Council employment practices.** Key barriers facing employees include inaccessible office spaces and toilets, inflexible processes and a lack of support.
- **DIAP implementation needs resourcing, ownership and accountability**. This means all actions must include budget allocations, clear action owners and performance indicators.

What we heard

Current state of access and inclusion

Workshop participants were asked to rate how effective Council has been in achieving a range of access and inclusion outcomes. As shown in Figure 15, the areas where Council is doing the best in are improving the accessibility of our community and recreation facilities (3.2 out of 5) and raising awareness about inclusion (3.1). The areas where there is the most room for improvement are creating more employment for people with disability (2.6) and making Council events more inclusive (2.8).

Figure 15 - How effective has Council been in: (Results from first staff workshop)



Participants shared ways they felt things have changed for people with a disability due to the last DIAP, including:

- There has been increased awareness of disability across Council teams and the community, with staff noting the DIAP is referenced in the development of facilities and programs. In particular, staff felt there was increased awareness of invisible disability.
- There have been some improvements to build infrastructure across the Central Coast.

Positive community attitudes and behaviours

Council staff acknowledge that public attitudes have improved and that disability is now more often recognised beyond just physical impairments (such as neurodivergence). They emphasised the importance of inclusive communication and diverse representation, while noting the ongoing need to embed access and inclusion across all Council events and communications. Staff reflected on the value of internal reference groups and hearing lived experience stories to build empathy and inform planning. However key challenges in addressing this focus area include breaking through misconceptions, competing priorities and cost. These barriers highlight the need for continued education and awareness-raising to create a psychologically safe and welcoming Central Coast.

Select quotes from Council staff:

"Disability is now known and discussed as more than just people in wheelchairs."

"There is more visible communication on hidden and physical disability."

"Hearing people's stories and celebrating wins in this space is powerful."

"We can't assume we know all the answers – an internal reference group would help."

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Establish an internal reference group of Council staff with lived experience of disability.
- Promote storytelling about real experiences, including through Council communications, events, and social media.
- Provide disability awareness education across Council, and run by council in other places such as schools, community groups, and aged care.
- Celebrate achievements in accessibility and inclusion publicly to build trust and awareness.
- Include even more visible representation of people with disabilities in Council publications even though there was acknowledgement that this is being done already.

Liveable communities

Staff spoke positively about recent improvements to galleries, pools, parks, play spaces, and libraries. They noted that while buildings are improving, access to these buildings remains difficult. Key access challenges include inadequate footpaths, poor parking design and a lack of transport. They also noted the clash of needs across different disability types and the challenge of designing for all.

We heard a key challenge is a lack of communication around available accessible features at events, making them underused. Staff suggested there was a need to embed inclusion in early project planning rather than afterthought.

Select quotes from Council staff:

"We are good at buildings and retrofitting—but not at how people get to them."

"Open space often caters to one disability but misses others."

"Events aren't promoting what's accessible—if we do it, tell people."

"It's not just about attending a venue but being able to stay comfortably."

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Expand accessibility mapping, especially for footpaths and parking.
- Use universal design principles from project inception.

- Create a ‘safe spaces’ register and accreditation program for local businesses.
- Ensure event promotion includes accessibility features like Auslan, quiet rooms, and toilets.
- Prioritise requests for accessible infrastructure such as footpaths based on safety and lived need – i.e. make footpaths accessible where needed and requested by a resident with a disability in that area.
- Run universal design workshops for staff.
- Include storytelling as part of project planning and promotion.
- Provide grants and funding to support making more spaces and places accessible and inclusive.
- Engage with the AIRG around accessibility and liveability.
- Explore opportunities for NSW government funding for accessibility upgrades.

Meaningful employment

There are a number of barriers to meaningful employment in the Central Coast. This includes a lack of public transport, accessible commuting and parking options, psychological safety and feeling unsafe or hesitant to disclose disability in job applications and job descriptions that unnecessarily exclude people with disability. A key theme across discussions was that meaningful change requires going beyond compliance. At Council there are barriers around the stairs on level 1, a lack of natural lighting and parking availability.

> **Select quotes from Council staff:**
>
> "I’d never disclose my neurodivergence on a job application."
>
> "Just because there’s a standard doesn’t mean that’s all we should do—we should exceed it."
>
> "Sometimes we make the adjustment only after someone is on board."

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Allow applicants to bring support people to interviews and provide questions in advance for Council jobs.
- Include real stories in recruitment materials to build confidence and trust.
- Create identified roles or targets for hiring people with disability for Council.
- Provide inclusive recruitment training for hiring managers.
- Establish a working group of staff with disability (an internal reference group) to guide Council employment practices.
- Invest in modern, flexible, and adaptive workplaces in Council.
- Upgrade Council offices to include more accessible features such as internal ramps.

- Work with the Chamber of Commerce to educate external employees in the Central Coast

Systems and processes

We heard that while Council offers multiple contact modes, many staff feel the systems aren't user-friendly. Some of the challenges are abiding by Council's brand and signage guidelines, knowing what information is accessible, teams working in isolation and large volume of enquiries, technical language and internal silos that reduce clarity and access. Staff want more visibility of what's being done well and how to replicate it.

Select quotes from Council staff:

"The website is too hard to navigate—too much text, too many clicks."

"We don't advertise the Accessibility Inclusion Reference Group enough."

"It seems to happen in isolation—only looking at your own asset."

"It needs to be the way we do things."

Ideas under this focus area include:

- Add Auslan interpretations, videos, accessible widgets and visual icons across all communications.
- Ensure every process has multiple modes of access (phone, web, in-person, visual).
- Create a disability navigator role or central contact point for enquiries.
- Advertise achievements and services in more visible and engaging ways.
- Build integrated processes across departments to plan for inclusive infrastructure as a whole.
- Run regular inclusion training and annual internal workshops.
- Have an action in the DIAP around social procurement from disability organisations. Education of staff to make things better in the organisation around inclusion.
- We need to share our successes and learnings as the new DIAP unfolds.
- Explore opportunities to use technology that is more assistive such as AI.
- Provide shorter versions of key Council documents.
- Host scheduled drop-in days for people with disability to talk to Council staff and access information.

Implementation, resourcing and accountability for the next DIAP.

- A recurring theme was the importance of realistic actions with designated owners and funding.
- Staff want the DIAP to be communicated regularly with visibility of impact.

- Sharing success stories and failures helps embed a culture of learning.
- Strong support for co-design with people with lived experience.

Select quotes from Council staff:

"We often write strategies but don't have the resources to fund them."

"There's no use writing a strategy and not funding it."

"It needs to be 'the way we do things."

"Sharing failures as well as successes—that's how we learn."

Ideas

- Develop a communications plan to promote DIAP actions and outcomes annually.
- Build performance indicators into the DIAP and assess them annually.
- Secure budget and staff capacity when assigning DIAP actions.
- Share DIAP progress internally across all directorates.
- Include DIAP priorities in team workplans.
- Require DIAP contributions to be noted in all projects (e.g. a mandatory field).
- Rerun universal design workshops for staff and run training on hidden disabilities for customer service staff (sunflower lanyards).

Other feedback

About the other feedback

Community members provided additional feedback from email submissions and hard copy surveys. This section provides a summary of this feedback. Nine responses have been included in this section.

What we heard

- Design all buildings to be accessible from the start, including wide doorways.
- Integrate accessible features such as ramps and lifts into public spaces to be designed nicely to also be inclusive of families with prams and older people.
- Address safety hazards at road crossing such as refugee islands.
- Improve access to public spaces such as beaches by increasing accessible parking and ensure they are located close enough with well-maintained footpaths.
- Prioritise the needs of older people.
- There is a lack of accessible parking in locations such as McMasters Beach Surf Club, Terrigal Medical Centre, Beaches, and public spaces.
- Provide off-leash dog areas for trained and support dogs.
- Improve Council's website and make it clear who to contact for support.
- Provide more opportunities for sports and recreation programs for children with special needs, including swimming lessons, nippers, surfing, basketball and cricket.
- Improve footpaths across the Central Coast and make sure they are well-maintained, safe and continuous.
- Promote that Council has an Access and Inclusion Officer.
- Include more autism-friendly, sensory spaces at community facilities and spaces e.g. a one-hour time slot at Terrigal BMX Park.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey

1. Please select which of the following options apply to you. You can pick more than one.

   ☐ Person with disability

   ☐ Family member or friend of a person with disability

   ☐ Unpaid carer of a person with disability

   ☐ Disability support worker

   ☐ Provider of services to people with disability (including paid carers and community workers)

   ☐ Community member interested in access and inclusion

   ☐ Other (please specify) _____

2. What suburb do you live in? [Dropdown list of LGA suburbs + I live outside of the Central Coast]

Part 1: Questions about access and inclusion in Central Coast

3. On the scale from extremely well to not well at all tell us how well you think Council is doing in the following aspects of accessibility and inclusion:

	Extremely well	Very well	Somewhat well	Not very well	Not at all well	I'm not sure
Raising awareness about inclusion						
Making more areas accessible						
Improving the accessibility of our community and recreation facilities						
Making Council events more inclusive						
Creating more employment for people with disability						
Making it easier and more accessible to interact with and get more information from Council						

We want to understand community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability on the Central Coast.

4. How strongly do you agree that the Central Coast community has positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability?

   ○ Strongly agree

   ○ Agree

   ○ Neither agree or disagree / Neutral

   ○ Disagree

   ○ Strongly disagree

5. What types of things would you like to see on the Central Coast to encourage more positive attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability? Please select up to four.

   ☐ Better understanding in the community about how to communicate with people with disability

   ☐ Better understanding in the community of different types of disabilities

   ☐ More accessible and inclusive community activities and events

   ☐ More recognition of the achievements of people with disability

   ☐ Involving people with disability in raising awareness in the community

   ☐ More images and story telling of people with disability in Council documents and local media

   ☐ More friendly and accessible local businesses

   ☐ Other _____

We want to understand how liveable our places are on the Central Coast.

6. How easy is it for you to visit and use the following places on the Central Coast:

	Extremely easy	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy	I don't visit this place/event
Swimming pools (leisure centres)						
Sports facilities (e.g. fields, courts, indoor centres)						
Libraries						
Community centres and halls						
Childcare facilities						
Schools and other education						

Parks and playgrounds						
Shopping centres and shops						
Markets, festivals and events						
Public toilets						
Places of worship						
Beaches and natural open spaces						
Entertainment venues						

7. Can you identify any of the following type of specific places and things to do on the Central Coast that are not accessible? Why are they not accessible?

What	Where	Why
Buildings and built environment		
Natural open spaces		
Programs, events and activities		

8. Which of the following things are most important to make places and events accessible? Please select up to four.

- ☐ There is information about the accessibility and what I can do there
- ☐ TGSI, signage or braille
- ☐ Auslan translations, live captions and hearing augmentation options
- ☐ There are accessible toilets
- ☐ There is accessible parking
- ☐ There are ramps or lifts
- ☐ It is easy to move around inside (e.g. wide corridors and ramps)
- ☐ I can use public transport to get there
- ☐ It does not cost a lot of money
- ☐ They are welcoming and I can ask staff for help
- ☐ Someone can support me to go there
- ☐ It does not overwhelm my senses

☐ I can stay longer there as my disability related needs are met

☐ Other (please specify)_____

9. How easy is it for you to get around on the Central Coast by:

	Extremely easy	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy	I do not use this
Footpaths						
Road crossings						
Bus						
Car						
Bicycle						
Train station						
Taxi						

10. What could be improved to help you get around the Central Coast? Please select up to four.

☐ Better footpaths and road crossings (e.g. wider and more even footpaths)

☐ More bus stops close to me

☐ More physically accessible bus stops

☐ Someone to support me on public transport

☐ More disability parking spaces

☐ More affordable and accessible community transport options (e.g., subsidised taxi service or Council-run community bus)

☐ Mobility maps for town centres (e.g. Gosford, Wyong)

☐ More wheelchair equipped taxis

☐ Other (please specify) _____

11. How easy is it for you to access and use the following services on the Central Coast?:

	Extremely easy	Very easy	Somewhat easy	Not very easy	Not at all easy	I do not use this service
Social groups and activities						
Financial counselling						
Food support (e.g. home delivery groceries or companion shopping)						
Mental health support						

Medical services (e.g. hospital, doctor)						
Help with education and training						
Help finding employment						
Housing support						
Accessing the NDIS						

12. What makes it difficult to access and use these services? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ I can't afford it
- ☐ I don't have the time
- ☐ I need help to travel there
- ☐ I don't feel welcome or safe
- ☐ There is often a waitlist
- ☐ I don't know or have enough information about the services available to me
- ☐ I don't know where to start
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

We want to understand how to better support access to meaningful and appropriate employment for people living with disability on the Central Coast

13. What could be improved to make it easier for people with disability to access meaningful employment? Please select up to four.

- ☐ Training opportunities for job seekers with disability
- ☐ Training and education for employers on benefits of employing people with disability
- ☐ Advertising of job opportunities
- ☐ Support for job applications
- ☐ More accessible and inclusive recruitment processes
- ☐ Physical environment of workplaces is accessible and inclusive
- ☐ More welcoming and inclusive workplace cultures
- ☐ More transport options to travel to and from work

We want to understand how to better communicate and engage with people living with disability on the Central Coast

14. How can Council better communicate with people living with disability and their networks on the Central Coast? Please select up to four.

- ☐ Listen to people with disability about what they need
- ☐ Make information accessible for my assistive technology to translate
- ☐ Update Council's website to be more accessible
- ☐ Share resources and events (e.g. in a newsletter or webpage)
- ☐ Include more images of people with disability in Council forms and documents
- ☐ Provide information, Council forms and documents in different formats such as Auslan, easy read, large print and audio captioning
- ☐ Provide training for customer service to ensure a welcoming and friendly service
- ☐ Provide information on the accessibility features of events, programs and activities
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

15. Are there any other priorities or needs that you would like Council to consider in preparing the Disability Inclusion Action Plan?

Part 2: About you

16. What is your gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Prefer not to say
- ○ Other (please specify)

17. How old are you?

- ○ 5 to 11
- ○ 12 to 17
- ○ 18 to 24
- ○ 25 to 34
- ○ 35 to 49
- ○ 50 to 59

- ○ 60 to 69
- ○ 70 to 84
- ○ 85 and over

18. Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to say

19. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

20. If yes, what language(s) do you speak?

- ☐ Cantonese
- ☐ Filipino/Tagalog
- ☐ German
- ☐ Greek
- ☐ Italian
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Malayalam
- ☐ Mandarin
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Thai
- ☐ Other (please specify: _____)

21. Which country were you born in?

- ○ Australia
- ○ China
- ○ Germany
- ○ India

- ○ Ireland
- ○ Netherlands
- ○ New Zealand
- ○ Philippines
- ○ South Africa
- ○ United Kingdom
- ○ United States of America
- ○ Other (please specify: _____)

22. Do you belong to the LGBQTI+ community?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to say

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Tell us about your connection to the Central Coast

What is good about living on the Central Coast for people with a disability?

What makes life harder on the Central Coast for people with disability?

Our last DIAP outlined what we were going to do to between 2021 and 2025.How did Council go?

If we could do 3 things to improve the attitudes and behaviours of people on the Central Coast to people with disabilities, what would they be and how would we do it?

What can Council do to improve the Central Coast's accessibility and overall liveability for people living with disability?

What can Council do to support more meaningful and appropriate employment opportunities for people with disability?

How can Council improve access to our information, services and systems?

What do you think are the top three priority needs that the Central Coast Council DIAP should address?