

Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group

Date	15 December 2020	Time	10:00am – 11:00
Venue	Large Committee Room, Forster	Note-taker	Lyndie Hepple
Present	Anna Burley, Felicity Carter, Hannah Earley, Lyndie Hepple, Karen Fuller, David Isbel, Paul Martin, Mark Norris, John Price, Adrian Pryke, Cr Katheryn Smith		
Apologies	Kylie Atkinson, Paul De Szell, Elizabeth Green, Judy Hollingsworth		
Not present	Cr Dave Keegan		

Meeting items

1. Acknowledgement of Country

Cr Smith

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

None

3. Action Items Update

- Aboriginal representation – agreed to issue standing invitation to CEOs of Tobwabba and Biripi Medical Centres to alternate meetings.
- Bushfire Health and Wellbeing Committee supporting partnership – delete from action list.
- Walk around community for disability – now that Covid restrictions are relaxing, recommence planning for February 2021. Consider Forster and Taree locations. Major issues in Taree re restaurants, wanting to walk safely down the footpaths.
- Invite new CEO of Community Transport to next meeting – Lyndie Hepple has sent email invitation and followed up, Cr Smith has phoned and left messages – no response yet.
- Invitation to Head of Community Housing and Department of Housing – Paul De Szell, Felicity Carter and Hannah Early met with Amanda Murray (State Manager for Community Housing). A follow-up meeting was held with community/ stakeholders. Suggestion for a Housing forum to determine priority groups. Agreed to organise a forum in early 2021.
- Invite Council HR to provide information on inclusion and employment – meeting attended by Paul Martin and Adrian Pryke. Delete from action list.

4. Community Housing

Amanda Murray, State Manager for Community Housing Limited (CHL) in NSW, met with Paul De Szell, Felicity Carter and Hannah Early.

CHL's Annual Report provides information on what they do and what they advocate for, covering a huge spectrum of knowledge and interest. CHL is responsible in 3,000 properties in NSW. 410 are in this area which is about a third of what we need.

A follow-up, informal meeting was held with Chris Spencer at Tobwabba Medical Centre and other service providers. The full spectrum has needs, including emergency, rental, affordable, youth, etc. There appears to be a focus on homelessness and transitional housing. Evidence that kids and young parents are finding it difficult.

Amanda agrees that housing is a huge issue in this area and advised that we need to define this area's priorities and suggested a forum including all stakeholders be convened and offered to help with that. The aim of the workshop is to decide on key target groups within housing and use that to lobby for additional services.

Lack of housing stock, the transition to TEI by Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), Department of Housing reform are all contributing to people in need floundering. Anna Burley advised there are no wrap-around services in Gloucester. She suggested Hillcrest may be a suitable housing option for Gloucester as the former residents have relocated to the new aged care facility.

Paul de Szell mentioned at the meeting with Amanda that we need access to the data. Clarity on the facts would assist us to be in a better position.

Action: LH/FC set up a date for the forum and identify stakeholders. We will need a strong mediator/MC. Make sure the existing bimonthly housing meeting group is involved. Include State and Federal politicians, Police, DV providers, etc.

5. HR update

Paul Martin (Manager, HR) and Adrian Pryke (Coordinator) provided the following update:

Council is required to have an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Management Plan in Place (Local Government Act). Strategies and initiatives relating to EEO are captured in a few documents across Council – Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP), Operational Plan, EEO Management Plan and the Workforce Management Plan which is part of the Resourcing Strategy attached to 4-year planning (Operational Plan and Delivery Program - DPOP).

Council currently does not have any recruitment targets for any demographic.

Action: PM – consider a statement regarding EEO/Inclusiveness in recruitment advertisements. Ask a question on this as part of the application where the answer needs to be evaluated by the assessment panel.

Early in 2019 HR implemented the Employment-Based Training Strategy which provides opportunities for young people - apprenticeships, trainees and graduates, especially in areas where there are skill gaps. We have an ageing workforce and this strategy will facilitate knowledge transfer.

Twenty-seven trainee and apprentice positions commenced this year and we are advertising another 21 positions to commence in 2021. We advertise broadly in the community on merit. There is some more work to be done to attract people with disabilities.

We recently kicked off the Carers of the Future School to Work pilot program – partnering with local high schools, Training Services NSW and the State Government to give students an opportunity to experience work in the ageing and disability sector (through MidCoast Assist) to give them some experience to assist in making career decisions.

Action: PM – consider extending that pilot to Valley Industries.

Action: PM to provide information on which schools are participating in this partnership.

Council takes advantage of Elsa Dixon-funded Aboriginal traineeships (school-based traineeships) through community services, libraries and construction (engineering). We currently have one position in MidCoast Assist (Disability) and one in civil construction. The positions can be challenging with significant resources required to supervise and get students through the program, so 2 or 3 per year is the most Council can deal with. Council will continue to access and consider greater numbers in the future. Positions are advertised broadly, and partnerships established with relevant schools. Need good mentors in the workplace to make it work.

Action: PM – consider promoting within the Aboriginal Community due to lack of relationships between schools and community.

Smart & Skills is a NSW initiative, and there are a number of Federal initiatives (skills checkpoints for over 45s for example), Australian Apprentice wage subsidies that Council takes advantage of as appropriate. We are just starting to look at Disability Employment Funding for people with disability and/or mental health conditions.

Council recently kicked off a Women in Leadership project. Council does not currently have great gender balance at management level. The project involves a survey for employees in supervisory positions and female employees in other areas of the business. Analysis of results will lead to initiatives and actions.

HR systems - currently reviewing processes for capturing new starter information. Historically we haven't captured demographic information. We are in the final stages of planning a census of current staff asking people to identify ethnic group, language spoken at home, Aboriginality, disability, carer responsibilities etc, and recording that data. We recognise that some people will prefer not to disclose this information, but some information is better than none at all. Wording in the census is carefully chosen to advise participants for the reason we want the data, to remove any fear of repercussions to answering the questions. We have explained that we would like to convene internal advisory/support groups for those groups and give them an opportunity help us shape strategy and be a more inclusive employer.

HR is currently developing a People Strategy which will incorporate the next EEO Management plan. We need to make sure we have the people we need in order to deliver the Delivery Program. People are our most critical resource. Our aim is for employees to have a positive experience and for Council and to be the employer of choice in the community. Our move to Yalawanyi Ganya will promote a collaborative approach. At a high level we will set key pillars for the strategy and drive down annual actions to support the employment of a diverse workforce, including Aboriginal and people with disability. Plans are in progress for an annual People Pulse Survey for staff including questions on inclusion, bullying, etc. The current People Strategy expires in June 2021 and is tied to the 4-year delivery plan, so a new iteration is required. That process will start with discussions with senior executive and the Consultative Committee and roll down through the organisation.

Council has just done a staff culture survey with all staff. Results will be available in January/February and will detail results on staff perceptions on culture and areas for inclusion.

Action: PM to enquire whether the Recruitment Team has relationships with specialist disability employment services (Wesley, OCTEC, etc), and consider progressing those if not.

Questions

- There are MidCoast Assist (MCA) clients who could be employed at Council. Because MCA is part of Council, we can't be seen to be giving those participants an advantage over participants of other service providers. Opportunities need to be broadly advertised in order to give the community equal opportunity to apply.
- CIWRG would like to review the new People Strategy to cast a minority group lens over it. PM will consider this.
- Volunteering opportunities for people with disability to get experience – this is already being considered in the development of the Volunteering Framework.
- Comment regarding probity involving staff with disability – it's a situation of insurance companies, unions, Fair Work Commission versus employers/NDIS providers. There's a disconnect and it's not working.

6. Delivery Program and Operational Plan (DPOP)

Members were sent a copy of the DPOP but had not reviewed the information.

Action: LH will resend the DPOP committee members' review.

7. Disability Inclusion Action Plan Annual Progress Report

Michelle Jobson emailed the Progress Report to the Committee on 27 August 2020. Most members of the Committee had not reviewed the document.

Action: LH to provide hard copies and resend the electronic version.

Group would like opportunity to have input to next iteration of the DIAP. LH advised legislation requires consultation with people with disability and carers to inform the DIAP. Feedback can be made available to the Group once consultation is complete but actions that are not identified by people with disability cannot be included.

Action: LH to include on agenda once consultation is complete.

8. International Day of People with Disability

MidCoast Council partnered with Dundaloo Services and Valley Industries to present a live-streamed event through Pluto Entertainment on 5 December, with Auslan interpreters providing translation for hearing impaired participants and spectators. The event was well received, and participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Planning is in progress for a similar event in November 2021.

Buckets Way Neighbourhood Group coordinated a feature in the local paper on Valley Industries and support for Ella. They would like to do another art exhibition as has been done before to celebrate IDPWD in future years, however the Art Gallery is booked out for at least a year in advance.

9. General business

- The North Tuncurry development was mentioned during the meeting. The Group would like the opportunity to have input.

Action: LH to investigate whether the Social Impact Statement can be distributed to the Group when the DA is lodged.

- MidCoast Council's Bike Plan was mentioned. While consultation has now closed, it was considered to be a poor document.

Action: Group to be advised as early as possible when documents go on public exhibition for comment to be made.

- Road resurfacing outside Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Centre has been topped with loose gravel. The gravel is getting caught in wheelchair tyres and causing problems. Queen Street works could cause similar problems.

Action: LH to talk to the Engineers about alternate options.

- Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Centre reports on a very successful Access and Inclusion project with support from a Donation from Council through the annual Community Donations funding round. At the start of the pandemic, isolation was becoming an issue, particularly among older people. Anna Burley applied for funding to purchase yarn, knitting needles and crochet hooks and coordinated isolated community members to produce knitted or crocheted squares, which were pulled together to make several unique Christmas trees. The trees are now on display at numerous locations around Gloucester including Council and Bucketts Way Offices. The project has received widespread attention in print and social media.
- Council recently partnered with Guide Dogs Australia to mark White Cane Day – chambers of commerce. Walk for this group. Covid no longer an issue. Can set the day now. For this group and a couple of invitees. Small groups half in Taree and half in Forster. Set the date for February. Need parents with prams, wheelchair, walking frame.
- Not all vision impaired people have access to computers (especially older people). Distribution of information in different ways needs to be considered. There is a Vision Impaired group at the Forster Neighbourhood Centre.
- Vision impaired people have been significantly impacted by recent changes in Community Transport (CT) and can no longer access CT for assistance in getting to medical appointments. Anna Burley is a member of the Primary Health Network in Gloucester and advised access to health services is on the agenda for next year.
- What is the policy on dogs in Council buildings? Dogs that are not 'working dogs' are being permitted in places like Taree Library. One instance of a dog that isn't vaccinated being allowed.
- **Action:** LH discuss with Chris Jones. Allowed in Taree library.
- Disabled parking – there are 4 disabled spots in Memorial drive. Most of the time, 2 can't be used (next to Kellies café) because business rubbish bins are in those spots for extended periods.

Action: LH follow up with rangers

There is no covered parking anywhere in Forster, which makes it difficult to unload people in wheelchairs, babies/prams when it's raining.

- Accessible toilet facilities – some people with disability need lift and change facilities. There are none in Forster or Tuncurry. It limits the amount time people can be out and about – and is particularly difficult for those from areas like Coomba Park. Visitors might also need this. The MLAK key register lists facilities but no public lift and change.
Suggestion to investigate whether there are personal care rooms people can borrow when they come to town. Valley Industry has one in and one in Forster, but in individual houses. Arrangements could be made to make them available, but not over weekends. Other options may be available.

Action: All – keen an ear to the ground, ask questions. See what's available that can be promoted.

- No access to toilets at current Council offices in Forster, which were closed due to pandemic. However, restrictions are being lifted now. It's unreasonable to expect visitors who come to the office for meetings to have to access toilets across the road at Stockland Shopping Centre especially if they are people with disability.

Action: LH to talk to appropriate staff to get the toilets opened.

8. Meeting review and Close

Agreed to hold meetings in 2021 on the last Thursday of every second month. Meeting invites will be distributed.

Dates for 2021 are therefore as follows:

28 January
25 March
27 May
29 July
30 September
25 November

Lyndie Hepple advised that resignations have been received from Mave Richardson, Bree Katsamangos and Jane Stevenson. Kylie Atkinson's voicemail advises she has been seconded to another role until June 2021.

Next meeting





Date	Thursday 28 January 2021	Time	10am
Venue	Yalawanyi Ganya – 2 Biripi Way, Taree		

Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Reference Group

Action items update

Item No	Description	Date Raised	Action for	Due Date/ Timeframe	Status Update as at 27/09/19
1	Consult Aboriginal community on Aboriginal representation on the reference group.	29/3/19	LH	30/1/2021	Invite CEOs of Tobwabba and Biripi Medical Centres to meetings
2	Walk around community for disability	28/02/20	LH	28/2/2021	Plan to hold walk in February 2021 – consider 2 locations Taree and Forster
3	Invite new CEO of community transport to attend next meeting	28/02/20	LH		Lyndie sent an invite to Kate Gilmour, CEO of Manning & Area Transport 25/11/20, f/up 27/11. Cr Smith has rung and left messages.
4	Invite Head of Community Housing and Department of Housing to future meeting to talk about broader strategies of housing.	26/06/20	FC & HE		Meeting held with PDS, Felicity and Hannah. Follow up meeting held with broader community/stakeholders. Suggestion for Workshop in 2021 to identify priorities. LH and FC to set date for workshop and identify stakeholders.
5.	Road surfacing	15/2/20	LH		Talk to engineers about alternate options
6.	North Tuncurry Development	15/2/20	LH		Group would like input to response to Social Impact Statement (SIA)
7.	Disability Inclusion Action Plan and Progress Report	15/2/20	LH		Resend DIAP annual progress report to the group Include feedback on agenda once consultation for next DIAP is complete

Key:

	Not yet scheduled for commencement		Commenced and on schedule		Commenced and not on schedule or overdue		Complete	→	Deferred	W	Withdrawn
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