

# Disability Access & Inclusion Plan

2020-2024



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## Statement from the Chief Executive Officer

The District Council of Karoonda East Murray (“the Council”) is committed to ensuring that all of its residents, ratepayers, volunteers, employees and visitors can participate in the Council’s community.

As a regional council, it is of fundamental importance that members of the community are able to access public facilities and services, and can participate in social events. Indeed, it is this participation which fosters inclusion and contributes to the creation of a close local community.

Accordingly, through various initiatives, the Council is progressively upgrading, replacing or providing new infrastructure and services to promote inclusivity and accessibility for all people and to ensure equal access to all facilities and services provided by the Council. Where practicable.

This Plan aims to ensure that the region becomes more accessible for, and inclusive of, people living with a disability. It will help people within the community that are living with a disability to contribute and feel welcome, have access to services, and to participate in everyday activities.

Matthew Morgan  
Chief Executive Officer

## 1. Introduction

Access for people with a disability is a legislative requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability.

Council is required to develop a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, there are significant benefits of having an action plan in place. Such a plan will support Council's strategic directions as well as ensuring community participation by an increasing number of people living with disability or with mental illness, their families and carers.

The Council recognises it has a key role in providing supportive and accessible environments to its community, and the Plan aims to ensure the Council is accessible to, and inclusive of, people living with a disability.

## 2. The role of Local Government in Disability Access and Inclusion

Local Government plays an important role in creating an environment which is inclusive of all people, through its planning role and also through its involvement in community activities and provision of a range of services.

### National Disability Strategy (NDS)

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 is bringing together all levels of government in a unified, national approach to improving the lives of people with disability. Communities are required to fully include people with disability in all aspects of life. Councils are often at the forefront of change and communities look to local government to provide innovative solutions to respond to local issues and needs.

The NDS encourages councils to put a disability lens over all planning, services and activities provided, and to be mindful that small changes can have a big impact on people with disability in the community.

### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is one of the largest and most influential shifts to occur in the delivery of social services in Australia. The NDIS moves away from a service-focused model to a person-centred model whereby people with disability are provided with individualised support to manage the support and services they receive to meet their goals and needs.

The specific impact of the NDIS on councils will differ, however it is influencing the way the community looks at inclusion and expectations of councils as service providers and advocates within the community.

## 3. About the District Council of Karoonda East Murray

Located only 150km from Adelaide and 110km from Loxton, Karoonda is referred to "the Heart of the Mallee"

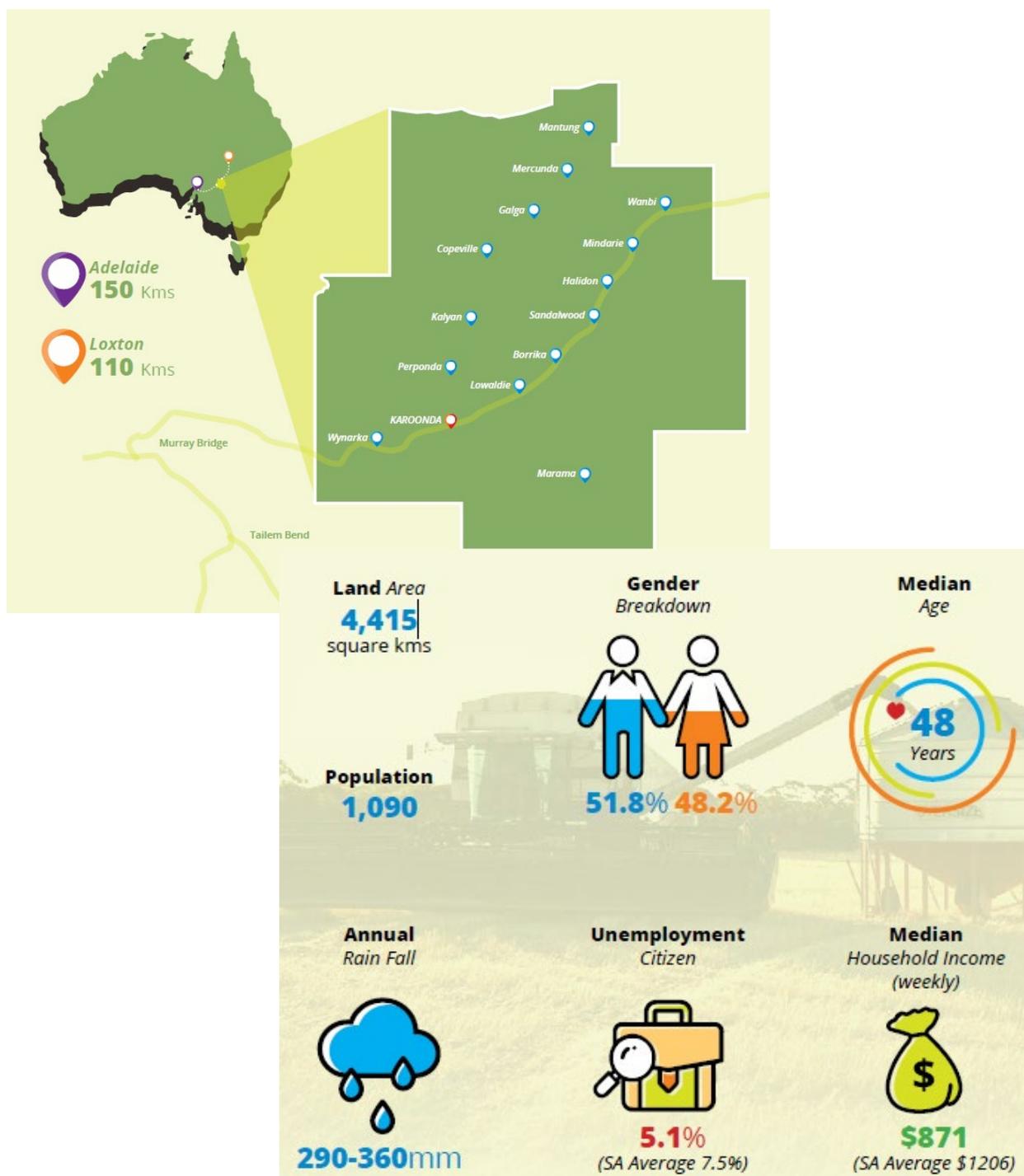
The district was established in 1911 and its economic base is predominantly dry land agriculture, largely based on traditional broad acre grain and wool. The district was unique in that the railways were established before close settlement began. Karoonda became a very important rail town, a hub serving sidings and towns in four directions at approximately 8km

intervals. There were coaling and watering facilities and workshops and a barn for railcars stationed here.

With the introduction of the railways, settlers began taking up selections, clearing the dense scrub with horse drawn rollers. By 1930 about half the arable land was cleared. Today's farming practices have seen significant change from the traditional practices of generations past. More sustainable practices have resulted in increased land productivity whilst protecting and enhancing our fragile natural environment.

Karoonda is the major town in the area with a population of 350. The town offers a range of services including access to aged care services, a school, pre-school, café, hospital, ambulance, CFS, grocery store, news agency, hotel, chemist and banking via agency and eftpos. Along with a range of businesses servicing the local and rural sector.

#### 4. Demographic Profile



## 5. Objects and Principles of the Disability Inclusion Act 2018

In preparing this Plan, the Council must have regard to the Objects and Principles of the Act, as set out in Part 2.

The Objects of the Act include:

- a) acknowledging that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the State and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights; and
- b) promoting the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability; and
- c) providing safeguards in relation to the delivery of all supports and services for people with disability; and
- d) providing a framework to support a whole of Government approach to improving the inclusion of all South Australians with disability in all areas of life in this State; and
- e) articulating and facilitating the roles of the State during and following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The Council is also required to observe the following principles in the operation, administration and enforcement of the Act:

- a) people with disability have the same fundamental human rights and responsibilities, and the same right to autonomy, as other members of the community;
- b) people with disability have an inherent right to respect for their worth and dignity as individuals;
- c) people with disability have the right to participate in and contribute to social and economic life and should be supported to develop and enhance their ability to do so;
- d) people with disability have the right to realise their physical, social, sexual, reproductive, emotional and intellectual capacities;
- e) people with disability have the right to make decisions that affect their lives including decisions involving risk to the full extent of their capacity to do so;
- f) in cases where a person with disability wants or requires assistance in making a decision, supported decision-making is to be preferred over substituted decision-making;
- g) people with disability have the right to access information in a way that is appropriate for their disability and cultural background, to enable them to make informed choices;
- h) people with disability have the right to respect for their cultural or linguistic diversity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religious beliefs;
- i) people with disability have the same rights to privacy and confidentiality as other members of the community;
- j) people with disability have the right to live free from neglect, abuse and exploitation;
- k) people with disability have the same rights as other members of the community to pursue complaints and access justice;
- l) the crucial role of families, carers and other significant persons in the lives of people with disability, and the importance of preserving relationships with families, carers and other significant persons, is to be acknowledged and respected;

- m) people with disability are free to associate with families, carers and other persons as they see fit, and should be supported where necessary to engage in family, social and friendship activities;
- n) the needs of children with disability as they develop, and their rights as equal members of the community, are to be acknowledged and respected; and
- o) the changing abilities, strengths, goals and needs of people with disability as they age are to be acknowledged and respected.

In addition to the above, Part 2 of the Act sets out specific objectives pertaining to:

- women with a disability;
- children with a disability;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability; and
- people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Council intends to give effect to the Objects and Principles identified in Part 2 of the Act through the application of this Plan, as well as adopting a continuing commitment to promote and provide an accessible and inclusive community.

The Council does, and will continue to, ensure that equality, inclusion and accessibility for all are at the forefront of its decision making.

## **6. Aims and Objectives of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan**

The Council recognises that ensuring the rights of people living with disability are upheld is the responsibility of the whole community, and requires a State-wide response. People with disability should be able to access and participate in all aspects of community life. Social inclusion is fundamental to one's quality of life, and critical to achieving positive life outcomes.

This Plan seeks to recognise the importance of ensuring that the Council area is inclusive and accessible to everyone, has a welcoming attitude, and employs well informed staff who are aware of the needs of people with disability.

The aim of this Plan is to assist the Council to meet the needs of people with disability who live, work, volunteer and visit the area.

To achieve that objective, the Council will seek to:

- promote and improve access for people with disability to Council services and facilities, through focusing on practical and achievable initiatives that enhance access to services, infrastructure and public places;
- promote and increase awareness in Council staff of the rights and needs of people with disability through internal training and information sessions, and, where appropriate, through the engagement of external training providers;
- encourage participation by people, regardless of ability, in Council activities, strengthening the relationship between the Council and its community;

- continue to ensure that all persons within its community are afforded equal opportunity to access services, resources and facilities provided by the Council in its role as a representative, responsible and informed decision maker; and
- will identify how the Council will give effect to the State Disability Inclusion Plan, once this has been developed.

## 7. Strategies to promote disability access and inclusion

In accordance with section 16(3)(d) of the Act, the Council is required to prepare strategies for supporting people with disability in the following areas:

### 7.1. Access to built environs, events and facilities

The Council is aware of the need to make community spaces more accessible for people with disability, and takes this into account when considering the provision of new, upgraded or replacement infrastructure in its area.

This is demonstrated by projects undertaken by the Council including:

- The proposed construction of an all-abilities playground in 2020 to ensure that children with disability have access to safe and enjoyable play spaces in the Council's area; and
- the proposed review and upgrade of footpaths within the Council area to ensure they are wheelchair friendly, assisting those persons within the community that are either living with a disability or are providing assistance as a carer to a person with a disability.

The Council will continue to consider the needs of those living with a disability in its community when making decisions which have the potential to impact accessibility to built environs, events and facilities in its community.

### 7.2. Access to information and communications

The Council is committed to ensuring that all of its public information and documentation is accessible to all residents, ratepayers and the community.

Accordingly, all public information prepared by the Council is available both online, as well as at the Council offices.

In addition, to ensure that Council information is accessible to all, Council staff are also able and willing to assist residents and ratepayers in reading, and explaining, documents as required.

In circumstances where the Council engages with stakeholders who identify as deaf or suffering from hearing loss, the Council will take the appropriate steps to ensure that effective, constructive communication can be undertaken. This may include, but is not limited to, the engagement of an Auslan translator.

### 7.3. Addressing the specific needs of people with disability in its programs and services

The Council understands the need to ensure the specific needs of people with a disability are addressed in its programs and services, and takes this into account when providing, or reviewing, the provision of the same.

The Council will continue to consider the specific needs of those living with disability in its community, when making decisions which have the potential to impact accessibility to programs and services in its community.

### 7.4. Employment

The Council is an equal opportunity employer, and does not discriminate against any person on any grounds, pursuant to its statutory obligations relevant legislation and the Council's Fair Treatment Policy.

The Council is wholly committed to supporting and assisting people with disability to find employment, and provides a 'job search' facility on its website.

Council employees are available to assist in using this website function.

### 7.5. Children with disability

The Council is aware of the need to ensure that children with disability are able to live full lives in conditions that ensure the child's dignity, self-reliance and active and full participation in family, cultural and social life.

The inclusion and accessibility of facilities and services to children with disability are considered by the Council when making decisions that have the potential to impact the same.

The Council seeks to ensure that it promotes the inclusion of all children in its community through:

- the proposed construction of an all-abilities playground in 2020 to ensure that children with disability have access to safe and enjoyable play spaces in the Council area; and
- the provision of services at Mallee Kids Child Care including school holiday activity programs and the Karoonda Area School Community Library programs.

These facilities are available to all persons in the community and are able to assist in the promotion of the inclusion of children with disabilities in realising their full potential, and participation in, family, cultural and social life.

### 7.6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

The Council understands that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability face multiple disadvantage.

As such, the Council recognises the need to provide support and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, which recognise and seek to address such disadvantage.

In circumstances where the Council engages with stakeholders who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, the Council will take the appropriate steps to ensure that effective, constructive communication can be undertaken in a culturally-appropriate manner. This may include, but is not limited to, the engagement of a First Nations languages translator.

### 7.7. People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

The Council is aware of the fact that cultural, language and other associated factors can create barriers to providing support and services to people with disability, who also identify with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Council recognises the need to provide supports and services to people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, seeking to address those barriers.

In circumstances where the Council engages with stakeholders who identify as being disabled and from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, the Council will take the appropriate steps to ensure that effective, constructive communication can be undertaken in a culturally-appropriate manner. This may include, but is not limited to, the engagement of a translator or appropriate support person.

## 8. Public Consultation

In accordance with section 16(4) of the Act, the Council is required to undertake public consultation on this draft Plan.

The Council must publish this draft Plan on its website and must cause public notice of that fact to be circulated in a form that is accessible to people with a disability.

The Council proposes to achieve this by working with community groups and organisations to identify stakeholders who identify as having a disability and, where appropriate, create fit-for-purpose communication on an ad hoc basis.

The Council will conduct its public consultation in accordance with its Public Consultation Policy, prepared for the purposes of section 50 of the Local Government Act 1999.

## 9. Definitions

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* defines "disability" as meaning:

- f) total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or
- g) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- h) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- i) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- j) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or

- k) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- l) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;

and includes a disability that:

- m) presently exists; or
- n) previously existed, but no longer exists; or
- o) may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability);  
or
- p) is imputed to a person.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (“the UNCRPD”) defines persons with disabilities as including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which interact with various barriers to hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

This broader understanding recognises that disability may also be a product of the environment in which a person lives. Social, attitudinal, economic and cultural barriers can limit participation, as can a person’s individual circumstances (i.e. the nature and degree of impairment, capacities and skills).

The UNCRPD defines “*discrimination*” on the basis of disability to mean:

*‘... any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.’*

The Policy acknowledges, amongst other things, the application of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) to its employment practices, and to all aspects of the work undertaken by the Council for the benefit of its community.

The Council is an equal opportunity employer.

## **10. Contact Details**

The Council office is located at 11 Railway Terrace, Karoonda SA 5307

The Council's contact details are:

Phone: 08 8578 1004

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