



Accessible and Inclusive Surf Coast Shire

Strategic Plan 2014-24

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Alternative formats

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This document is also available on the Internet at www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au

About this plan



Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to access and inclusion for all to build healthy, well-connected communities where everyone can participate.

We recognise that access and inclusion issues can affect any of us at different times in our lives. Many people with a disability and their carers often find it hard to access buildings and community facilities but the same problems can also apply to parents with prams. Enjoying our beautiful coast, forests and other natural areas is often even more difficult.

Accessing services, transport or affordable housing can be equally challenging for people with physical or intellectual disability, language or cultural differences, mental illness, chronic disease or other reasons. All impact on many people's capacity to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for themselves and their families.

The *Accessible and Inclusive Surf Coast Shire Strategic Plan 2014-24* focuses on addressing our community's access and inclusion needs and aspirations. It sets a direction for Council to follow over the next 10 years to improve access and inclusion outcomes for our residents, employees, visitors and others.

As such, the plan provides a basis for developing and implementing three-year action plans. These describe the various initiatives Council will undertake each year to achieve the plan's stated long-term outcomes.

This approach will support Council in delivering at the local community level while continuing to advocate for universal access and inclusion at regional, state and federal levels.

Mayor's message

As Surf Coast Shire Councillors and long-running advocates for access and inclusion, we are pleased to introduce Council's Strategic Plan for 2014-2024.

Under the *Victorian Disability Act (2006)*, councils are required to have an Access and Inclusion Plan. Council welcomes people of all abilities from all backgrounds to the Surf Coast community. Council is keen to ensure this plan influences the way Council operates so that it works towards the goal of a community that is accessible and inclusive for all. This means looking at issues like providing services and infrastructure as well as social and economic opportunities for people of all abilities.

Many of us on the Surf Coast have loved ones or know people who experience accessibility challenges every day. This issue is not just a priority for people with a disability and their families - access and inclusion issues can affect everyone. Issues can arise in how we or our loved ones get around, how we use public facilities, how we communicate with others, how we work, live and play. They also impact on how organisations like Councils and other service providers work in the community. Further, everyone benefits from building a community where everyone can participate.

This strategy is intended to guide decisions Council make to ensure we are focussed on the broader goal of an accessible and inclusive community for anyone who lives, visits or works in Surf Coast Shire. It has been developed with extensive input from the community, people with a disability, Council staff and Council's All Abilities Advisory Committee including its Chair, John Olsen. We commend the efforts of everyone who has taken the time to provide their insights and expertise.

We want to be a community that is accessible and inclusive for all – local residents and visitors alike. We will continue to work towards this goal, and Council's Accessible and Inclusive Strategic Plan 2014-24 will guide this process over the next ten years.

Cr. Margot Smith (Mayor)

Cr Rose Hodge and Cr Heather Wellington Councillor representatives, All Abilities Advisory Committee.

Who is this plan for

Council will use this plan to guide the decisions we make and the actions we take to improve access and inclusion for anyone who lives, works, visits or plays in the Surf Coast Shire.

The plan is for Councillors and Council staff to assist others, including:

- people with a disability
- their family members and carers
- those affected by temporary or permanent mobility issues, eg. people who use wheelchairs or other aids to help them get around or parents with prams
- people from different language and cultural backgrounds
- people with chronic disease
- people experiencing mental illness
- public and private organisations involved in delivering services to support people with a disability
- our partners who work with Council to advocate for universal access and inclusion at the local and regional level and beyond

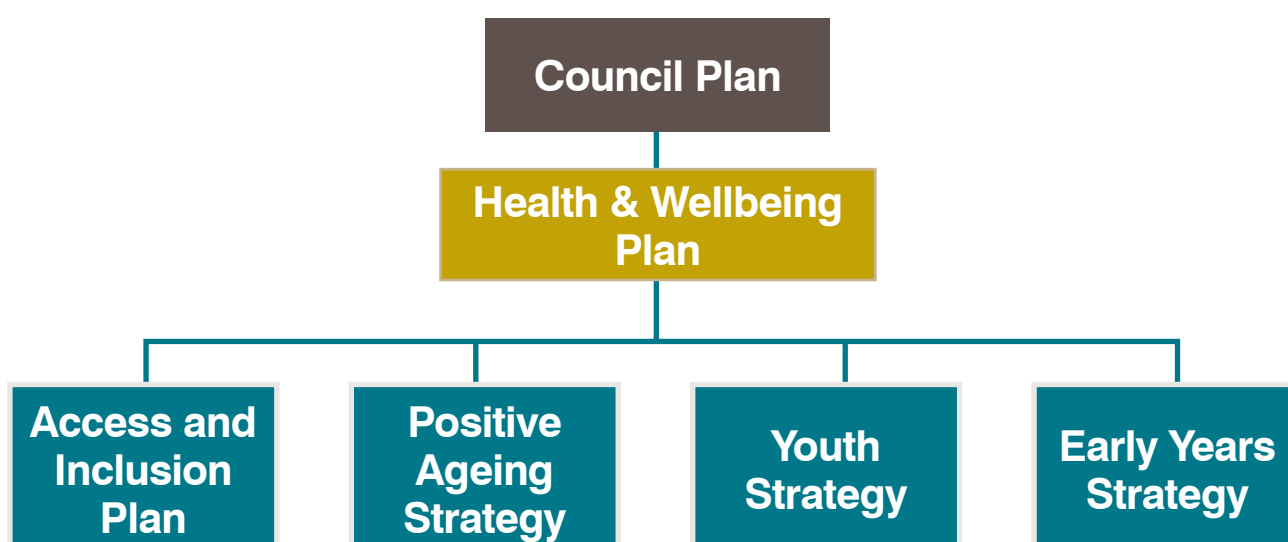
People of all abilities and backgrounds will benefit!



How this plan fits within our planning framework

The Surf Coast Shire Council Plan 2013-17 identifies the Access and Inclusion Plan as one of four key strategies contributing to our community's overall health and wellbeing.

As illustrated by the following diagram, it sits alongside our Positive Ageing, Youth and Early Years strategies to jointly support our Health and Wellbeing Plan. The plan provides a framework for implementing activities across various Council units to improve access for people with a disability to services, facilities and amenities, community activities and civic participation.



Council's Community Relations department is primarily responsible for overseeing the plan's implementation and ongoing review. Accountability for specific actions rests with designated units, as identified in the three-year action plans, to support a whole-of-Council approach to making Surf Coast Shire accessible and inclusive for all.

What this plan aims to achieve

To make Surf Coast Shire more accessible and inclusive for all by planning and working to achieve five key outcomes:

- 1. Built and natural environments are well designed and accessible** for people of all abilities, and planned to adapt to our community's future accessibility needs
- 2. Accessible, flexible, people-centric services and information**, responsive to the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers
- 3. People of all abilities actively participate, socialise and have fun** in the community and contribute to local decision making
- 4. Council actively promotes the importance of inclusion for all**, addressing discriminatory attitudes and supporting inclusive practices
- 5. A workforce that embraces diversity** and is responsive to the needs and aspirations of people with a disability



How this plan will achieve these outcomes over the next 10 years

The following goals describe the directions Council will pursue over the next 10 years to achieve the plan's five key outcomes.

These goals provide the foundation for developing three-year action plans, which describe what Council will do to progress each goal, including how we will measure our performance.

These action plans will be reviewed and updated each year as a separate document to guide our work.

OUTCOME 1

Built and natural environments are well designed and accessible for people of all abilities, and planned to adapt to our community's future accessibility needs.

Goals:

- 1.1 Ensure all new council buildings are compliant with the Building Codes Australian Standard
- 1.2 Continue to improve the accessibility of existing council buildings and infrastructure where feasible
- 1.3 Improve the accessibility of the outdoor environment including sporting facilities, open space, playgrounds, walking tracks and cycling trails
- 1.4 Increase the ability of staff to understand and apply current access standards and universal design principles to Council's infrastructure planning
- 1.5 Increase the capacity of planning applicants to incorporate universal design and improved accessibility in their design

OUTCOME 2

Accessible, flexible, people-centric services and information, responsive to the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers.

Goals:

- 2.1 Improve the ability of staff to respond to current and emerging needs of people with a disability, their families and carers as well as people with other access and inclusion needs
- 2.2 Apply best practice accessible communication and information approaches to enable easy access to information by people with a disability
- 2.3 Plan and deliver council events and activities that are inclusive and celebrate community diversity
- 2.4 Support service providers to develop and deliver services to meet local accessibility needs



OUTCOME 3

People of all abilities actively participate, socialise and have fun in the community and contribute to local decision making.

Goals:

- 3.1 Involve people of all abilities in Council's decision-making
- 3.2 Support community organisations to attract and cater for people with a disability as participants and volunteers
- 3.3 Support community arts, festivals and events to be inclusive of all abilities and reflective of community diversity

OUTCOME 4

Council actively promotes the importance of inclusion for all, addressing discriminatory attitudes, and supporting inclusive practices.

Goals:

- 4.1 Build and recognise community and business knowledge, skills and initiative around local access and inclusion needs
- 4.2 Work in partnership with government, business and the community to improve access and inclusion for people with a disability
- 4.3 Advocate to create systemic change and choice for people with a disability
- 4.4 Convene and support a committee to advise Council on the provision of accessible and inclusive services, programs and infrastructure

OUTCOME 5

A workforce that embraces diversity and is responsive to the needs and aspirations of people with a disability.

Goals:

- 5.1 Provide staff with the knowledge, support and systems to enable Council to provide equitable and accessible services, programs and activities
- 5.2 Continue to build workforce diversity regarding employment of people with a disability
- 5.3 Evaluate Council's Access and Inclusion Plan annually

“ I’d like it if there were more seats around with arms rests so that I can stop and rest. ”

Lorne resident.



Our planning, review and evaluation process

Council will undertake a thorough annual review for the purpose of achieving the strategy’s outcomes. The process of review will involve consultation with the All Abilities Advisory Committee and internal officers to evaluate annual outcomes. A review of relevant external influences that may impact on achieving the strategy’s outcomes will be undertaken annually. Council will conclude the evaluation process with a detailed final report in 2024. The annual review process is shown in the table below.

Task	When
Collect data against stated action plan measures and compile performance report	July
Review and update three-year action plan, including environmental analysis	August
Finalise and endorse three-year action plan for years ahead. Recommend and update any amendments to ten-year strategic plan	September
Include performance report from previous year in Council Annual Report	October - November

Our evaluation framework

Council will use a results based accountability framework to evaluate our performance in delivering this plan. We want to know if we are making a difference to access and inclusion in the Surf Coast Shire. The framework involves measuring activities, the quality of work and impact of activities. It focuses on three critical questions:

1. Did we do what we said we would do?	Assesses activities and quantity of activities
2. How well did we do it?	Assesses quality
3. How has this made a difference?	Assesses effectiveness

Various data collection methods will inform our responses to these questions. These include internal reporting processes, external indicators, anecdotal feedback and surveys.

Why we need this plan

There are several reasons why Council needs this plan. Responding to the access and inclusion requirements of our community as it grows and changes is the most important one.

Other key reasons include meeting our responsibilities under state, federal and international laws and policies, and contributing to local and regional initiatives relating to access and inclusion.

What we did to develop the plan

Council developed the plan by:

1. **Reviewing the Surf Coast Shire Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2009-13**
2. **Undertaking desktop research**
3. **Consulting with Council officers and the All Abilities Advisory Committee, and**
4. **Seeking community feedback.**

Building on our previous plan

Our *Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2009-13* focused on ensuring:

- All people can access, enjoy and care for our unique natural environment.
- All people can participate in community engagement processes.
- Events, services and activities are accessible and inclusive.
- Buildings and facilities are accessible and inclusive.
- Services, tourism, education, volunteering and employment can be accessed by all people.

The previous plan was evaluated, which identified the following key outcomes:

- Access audits and necessary improvements were completed on five Council-owned buildings.
- Access and inclusion is considered in the selection criteria for our annual Small Grants Program.
- Access audits were completed for accessible parking bays in key townships..

- Accessible design guidelines developed for developers and builders to use.
- Accessible events guidelines developed for community event organisers.
- Annual all-abilities days and other promotional activities and events helped to inform community perceptions of disability.
- Availability of free hearing loop systems, portable ramps, signs and other resources widely promoted and then used at community and sporting events and Council meetings.
- Access routes in and around four key townships were mapped as the basis for recommending improvements and preparing a series of township access maps.
- New access guide produced to assist residents to access the range of activities, services and resources available in their local communities.
- Purchase of the TrailRider All-Terrain wheelchair, available via free hire, has enabled residents and visitors with mobility issues to access previously inaccessible areas.
- Formation of Accessible Playground Working Group to provide advice about accessible playground design and development.
- Introduction and promotion of the state-wide Recharge Scheme, currently available at 22 public locations in Torquay, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne.

These and other achievements provided a solid base on which to build the new Accessible and Inclusive Surf Coast Shire Strategic Plan 2014-24.

Desktop research

The plan's development was informed by a comprehensive review of:

- demographic data
- international, federal, state and regional policies and laws
- local and regional access and inclusion directions and initiatives, and
- the approaches taken by other councils in their Access and Inclusion Plans.

Key findings from this research are outlined on pages 20-21.



Stakeholder consultation

Our All Abilities Advisory Committee provided input to the plan's development via a planning workshop, which helped to identify our key outcomes (or focus areas) and goals (or targets). The committee provided feedback on the draft plan.

Conversations with Council officers across the organisation refined our key priorities in relation to the action plan. The process involved reviewing actions undertaken to date in relation to access and to identify opportunities for further access improvements across all areas of Council operations.

Community feedback

Council invited people to provide input, based on their own experiences, aspirations and needs by participating in a community survey.

Advertisements in local newspapers and community newsletters sought input from the broader community. Direct mail encouraged feedback from people with a disability, family members, carers, disability support services, advocacy networks and other key groups with an interest in access and inclusion.

The survey methodology and key findings are detailed in Appendices 2 and 3. In summary:

- The majority of respondents wanted opportunities and outcomes equal to the rest of the community. Access to transport, facilities and services rated as most important.
- Respondents highlighted the difficulties involved in accessing some shops, parking, public toilets, sporting facilities, community centres and other built places and spaces.
- For many, limited public transport access represented a significant barrier to participating in community life.
- Respondents would like to have more opportunities to participate in social, recreational and community activities as important ways to connect with their local communities.

Outcomes

The feedback from the stakeholder consultation and community survey formed the basis for developing the five key outcomes as the focus for improving access and inclusion in Surf Coast Shire over the next 10 years.

Our growing community 2014-24

Over the next 10 years, access and inclusion will become increasingly relevant for more Surf Coast Shire residents as our population continues to grow.

We can expect more people to move into our community because it's a great place to live and it's so close to Geelong and Melbourne. That's why we've seen our population grow from 20,872 permanent residents in 2001 to around 29,000 in 2014. There could be 39,000 people living here by 2024.

The last census in 2011 recorded 869 local residents (3.4% of our total population) as needing assistance due to disability and 2,475 people as caring for someone with a disability, chronic illness or old age. Since many people don't identify themselves as having a disability or needing help, this figure could be much higher. Current estimates of one in five Victorians with a disability would indicate about 5,000 people with some kind of disability live here. A survey about our community houses in 2013 indicated that 13% of respondents had a disability, impairment or long-term medical condition.

Most Surf Coast residents (60%) live in Torquay-Jan Juc, Bellbrae and Bells Beach. The remainder are dispersed across the Shire, presenting a key challenge to providing accessible, inclusive services to everyone. Limited public transport between townships and along the coast is a major issue.

Many residents report a strong sense of community. This offers a solid foundation for inclusive community living where everyone feels they can participate.

Figure 1 illustrates that age is the biggest factor in disability rates. The number of Surf Coast residents aged 65 and over is forecast to grow from 4,270 in 2014 to about 6,200 in 2024. More people will require help as the baby boomer generation (ie, those born between 1945 and 1964) ages.

The graph also shows that access and inclusion is an issue for younger age groups, which impacts on access to education and employment. The unemployment rate for Surf Coast residents with a disability is 12.2% compared to 3.8% for those without a disability.

Surf Coast Shire's appeal as a holiday and tourist destination impacts on seasonal population numbers. The population triples during the peak summer holiday period due to the influx of holiday home owners, visitors, tourists and people attending events. These figures include people with access issues.



“We would like to see appropriate supported holiday programmes, and also a regular social, hobby-based group for youth with special needs within the shire.”

Aireys Inlet resident

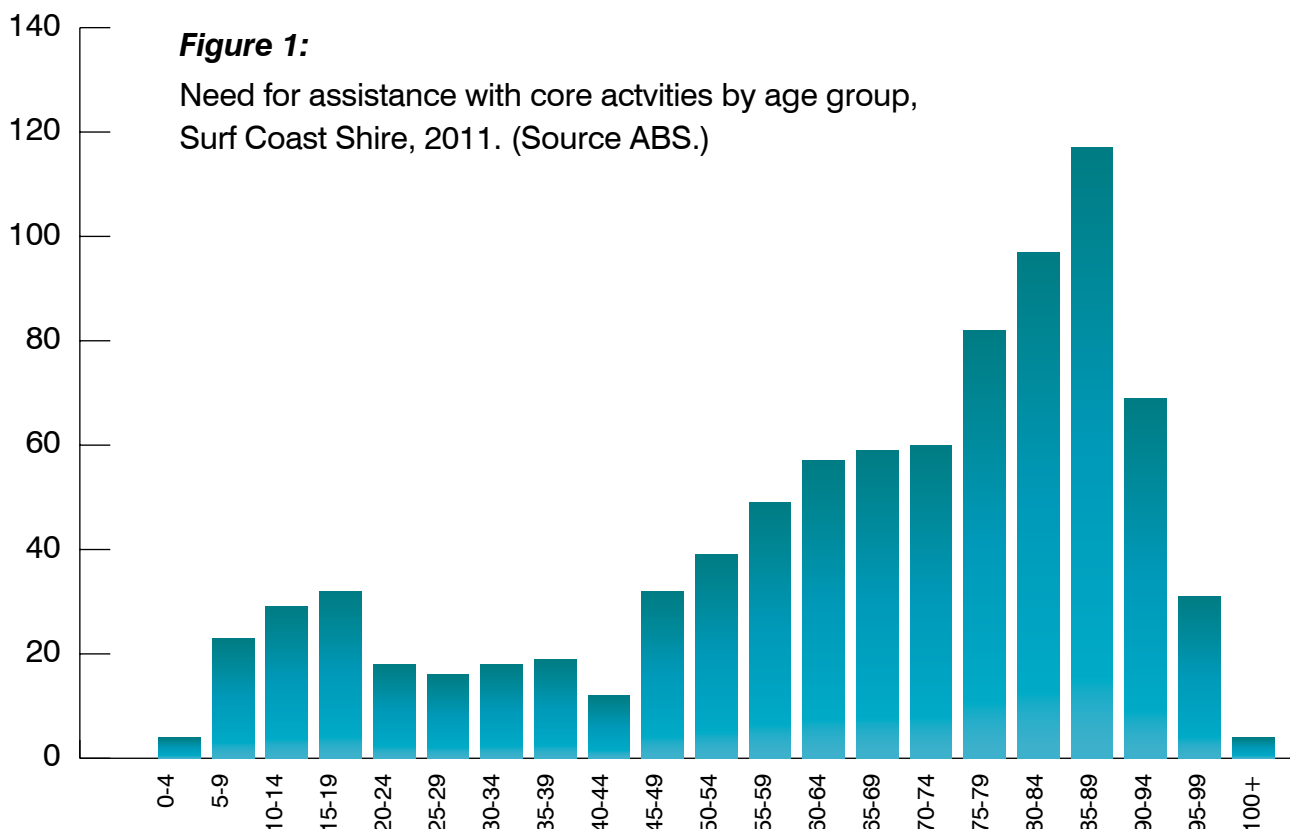


Table 1 lists the current spread of residents recorded in the 2011 census as requiring help.

Selected Surf Coast towns/areas	Population	% of area's total population
Torquay/ Jan Juc	324	2.4
Anglesea	148	6.0
Aireys Inlet/Moggs Creek/Fairhaven	33	3.1
Lorne township	37	3.6
Winchelsea township	153	9.7
Moriac and district	88	2.9
Balance of Shire	86	NA
Surf Coast Shire	869	3.4

Table 1: Need for assistance with core activities due to disability, Surf Coast Shire and selected areas, 2011. (Source ABS.)

Our state, federal and international responsibilities

The following laws and policies define our access and inclusion responsibilities, which has helped to shape the plan's overall direction towards building a more accessible, inclusive Surf Coast Shire.

International

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006

Australian Government

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Act 2002*
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013*
- Australian Standards and Building Code of Australia
- National Disability Strategy 2010-20 (Council of Australian Governments)

Victorian Government

- Victorian State Disability Plan 2013-16
- *Disability Act 2006*
- *Victorian Disability Amendment Act 2012*
- *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

Local Government

Creating a More Inclusive Community for People with a Disability: A Strategic Framework for Local Government (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2011)

Surf Coast Shire is a program partner with other G21 councils, relevant government agencies and various public and private organisations involved in delivering health and social services across the region.

Local and regional access and inclusion initiatives

The plan will support Council in responding and actively contributing to the following local and regional initiatives.

Surf Coast Shire Council All Abilities Advisory Committee

Our All Abilities Advisory Committee (previously called Advisory Committee on Disability) has been in place since 2005. Its role is critical to Council gaining a better understanding of what needs to be done to make Surf Coast Shire more accessible and inclusive for all.

The committee meets regularly and reports its meeting outcomes to Council. Membership includes a nominated Councillor, two Council officers and up to 12 community members appointed to represent the diverse views and interests of Surf Coast residents affected by access issues.

Key tasks include providing input to the development of this plan and the actions Council takes to implement it, identifying new and ongoing access issues and recommending ways to address them.

G21 Disability Inclusion Partnership

The G21 Regional Alliance established its Disability Inclusion Partnership in September 2011 to provide a regional approach to improving opportunities and experiences for local people with a disability. The program's priorities are:

- A coordinated regional partnership, between local disability service providers and G21 members, to create additional volunteer placements across the community for people with disabilities.
- Listening to the voices of young people with a disability about their dreams and aspirations, and how they want to be supported through meaningful opportunities within the community.
- Better regional data about education, volunteering and employment outcomes for people with a disability.
- Regional recognition of employers who are 'champions' (noting that Physical Access Awards already exist).
- Promoting a range of regional and national resources available to inform and support community inclusion of people with a disability.
- Develop a G21 Regional Inclusion Strategy to increase opportunities for people with disabilities to contribute to the community through meaningful volunteering opportunities.

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

In May 2013, the federal government nominated the Barwon region as the Victorian trial site for the new National Disability Insurance Scheme, to be rolled out from 1 July 2013.

As one of several local Councils in the Barwon region, Surf Coast Shire Council is involved in providing services via the new scheme according to its principles of:

- participation
- inclusion and access
- developing capacity, and
- improving opportunities.

Your feedback

We welcome your ideas and feedback about how we can improve this plan to better meet your access and inclusion needs.

You can provide feedback by contacting:
our Rural Access Officer, or the Chairperson of the All Abilities Advisory Committee.

Both can be contacted by:

Phone: 03 5261 0600 (via TTY 13 36 77 or Speak and Listen 1300 555 727
or National Relay Service www.relayservice.com.au)

Email: info@surfcoast.vic.gov.au

Post: PO Box 350, Torquay VIC 3228.



Appendix 1

Community Consultation and Key Findings

Council encouraged people to provide input, based on their experiences, aspirations and needs for an accessible and inclusive community in the Surf Coast Shire, via a community survey. The survey asked people to provide demographic information, age range and nature of disability. It also invited respondents to join a register should they like to receive council information or provide input into council directions and activities relating to access and inclusion in the Surf Coast Shire.

Key survey findings:

- The total number of completed surveys received and analysed was 45.
- Thirty five surveys were completed online via the Council website.
- Nine printed surveys were completed and returned via post to Surf Coast Council.
- One respondent completed the survey over the phone by contacting the Rural Access Officer.
- 27.5% of surveys were completed by people who identified as having a disability; with 37.5% identified as parent or carer of a person with a disability.
- 37.5% of surveys were completed by people who identified as having an interest in disability by holding a community representative role on a committee or by working in the community sector.
- The age spread of survey respondents included 2.22% in the 0-17 category, 4.44% in the 18-34 category, 71.11% were aged between 35-64 and 22.22% aged 65 and over.
- The highest proportion of ages to respond to the survey was people in the 35-64 age group.
- 40% of respondents identified as having a physical disability, 12.5% identified as having a neurological disability and 7.5% identified as having an acquired brain injury or a sensory disability. 10% of respondents identified as having a chronic medical condition and 5% identified themselves as having intellectual and/or mental health disability.
- 10.26% of respondents reside in Winchelsea, 46.3% in the Torquay area, 15.38% Anglesea/Aireys Inlet area, 17.95% in the Lorne area and 10.26% were from outside of the Surf Coast Shire.
- 10 survey respondents expressed interest in joining a register to provide input and/or receive information from Council about access and inclusion activities.

The three key questions making up the survey asked respondents to provide feedback on their experiences, needs and aspirations in relation to access and inclusion in the Surf Coast Shire.

Experiences, aspirations and needs in Surf Coast Shire

The findings below are based on open-ended questions asked in the survey.

- Footpaths were a recurring topic for community members (eg general lack of paths and lack of access to those paths have forced some residents to walk on the main roads). Uneven footpaths were recorded consistently as a concern.

‘We have to walk down the road because we have grass to the kerb and it is uneven to walk on’ - Winchelsea resident.

- Accessible parking was another common concern raised by respondents in the survey. Lack of spaces and the size of the spaces was a main issue.

‘My wife was very disappointed to note that there was no disabled parking bay provided with the new side-on bays on the esplanade by the Elephant Walk Park’ - Torquay resident.

- Frequency of public transport to and from Geelong is not adequate according to some survey respondents. In addition, taxis are not always available at the time required as an alternative.
- Access to local businesses was reported as not being wheelchair or scooter-friendly. Some participants stated that they are limited in what businesses they utilise due to access issues. Survey respondents suggested that local businesses need to be more educated about compliance against the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act*.

‘I cannot access the Post Office and would like to see the letter boxes out on the street’- Winchelsea resident.

- More public seats/benches was another topic frequently cited in the survey responses.

‘I’d like it if there were more seats around with arm rests so that I can stop and rest. One at the supermarket would be great.’

– Lorne resident.

- Respondents raised the concern that there are not enough programs available for people with disabilities within Surf Coast Shire.

‘We would like to see appropriate supported holiday programmes, and also a regular social, hobby-based group for youth with special needs within the shire.’ – Aireys Inlet resident.

Appendix 2

References

- Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres (ANHLC) “*Neighbourhood House Participant Survey*”, 2013
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Cat. No. 4430.0, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia Summary of Findings, 2012
- Australian Bureau of Statistics Cat. No. 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, 2013
- City of Greater Dandenong and VLGA, Profiles for Victoria <http://www.socialstatistics.com.au/>
- City of Greater Geelong, Annual Economic Indicators Bulletin, 2012
- .id Consulting Profile and Forecast
http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/My_Council/Population_Information
- Surf Coast Shire “*Accessible, inclusive Surf Coast Shire*”, 2013
- Surf Coast Shire, *Annual Report 2012-13*
- Surf Coast Shire, *Council Plan 2013-17*
- VicHealth “*Disability and health inequalities in Australia*”, 2012
<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/publications>



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