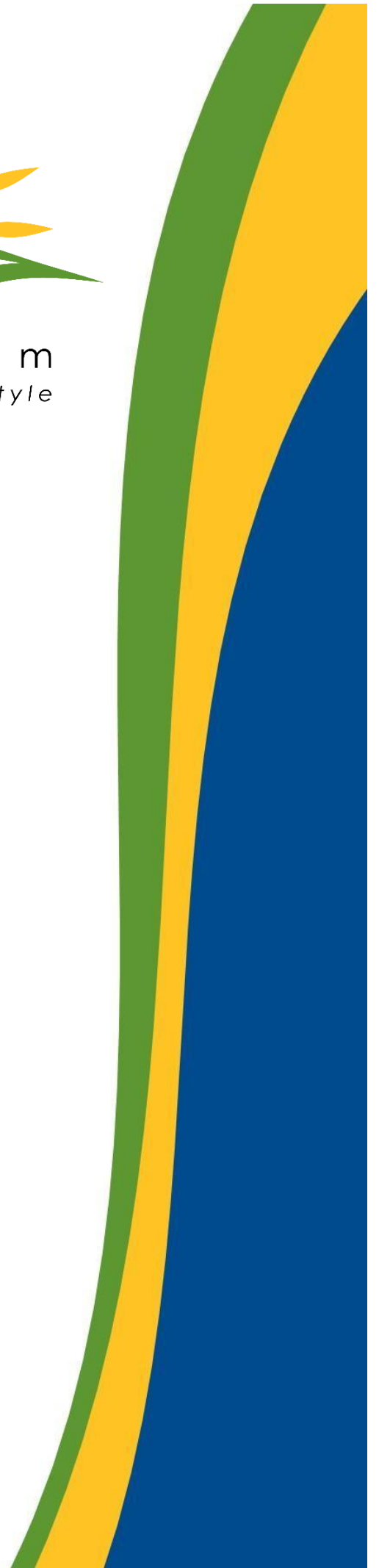




Shire of Northam  
*Heritage, Commerce and Lifestyle*

# **Access and Inclusion Plan**

## **2024 - 2028**



## Acknowledgement of Country

*The Shire of Northam acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of this country and wishes to pay respect to Ballardong and Whadjuk Elders past and present and extend this to all Aboriginal people seeing this message.*

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## Source Material

Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2022 Census of Population and Housing  
 Department of Social Service. NDIS Demand Map  
 Australian Human Rights Commission 2014

## Executive Summary

The Access and Inclusion Plan 2024/28 (the Plan) provides a framework for Shire of Northam to create an accessible and inclusive community for all people regardless of their ability, age, culture, sex, gender or sexual orientation.

The associated Action Plan sets out what actions will be implemented over the next four years to deliver on our commitments. The Shire's *Plan for the Future* (Council Plan 2022 – 2032) outlines the community's long-term vision for the Shire to be a vibrant growing community that is safe, caring and inclusive.

## Introduction

The Shire of Northam (the Shire) recognises that the needs of our community are diverse, and this Plan seeks to provide a framework to support and encourage all of our community members to achieve their aspirations.

As part of the process in creating this Plan, demographic information and data from within the Shire and externally was reviewed. It is important to note that the groups to which the Plan applies are not mutually exclusive and may be intersecting, resulting in compounding barriers to access and inclusion. For example, diversity within the target groups could include LGBTIQ+ people with a disability, or people with a mental health condition and disability. The data found shows that as a Shire, we must proactively commit to supporting diverse identities and providing opportunities for access and inclusion within the community.

The Shire undertakes a review of the Access and Inclusion Plan together with its Workforce Plan annually as part of the corporate planning process. This includes identification of our major challenges in relation to People, Planet, Place, Prosperity and Performance.

A challenge to the Shire is the capacity to meet increasing community expectations and at the same time, respond to other challenges such as legislative changes, tightened external funding opportunities, rising costs and community emergencies. Other factors influencing our capacity include our workforce demographic profile (including an ageing workforce) and intensified competition in the labour market.

## Legislative Framework

The development and implementation of this Plan demonstrates the Shire's commitment to plan for people with diverse needs.

This Plan is informed by the following legislation:

- *Disability Services Act 1993* (amended 2004) (WA);
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (WA);
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) (Cth); and
- Disability (Access to Premises Buildings) Standards 2010 (under the DDA).

As a public authority in Western Australia, the Shire is required to plan for people with disability under the *Disability Services Act 1993* (the Act).

Under the Act the Shire is required to:

- Lodge a plan that covers a period of maximum five years with the Department of Communities and maintain a current plan;
- Include actions that address the outcome areas listed in this Plan;
- Consult with internal and external stakeholders during the review of the objectives and actions within the plan; and
- Report annually to Department of Communities on progress of the Plan.

The *Disability Services Act 1993 and the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)*, legislates Western Australian local governments to develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) and an Employment Diversity and Equal Opportunity Plan. The Shire has combined the two into this “Access and Inclusion Plan”, noting that in the context of this Plan, the term “diverse people” refers to those people who may have differing needs based on their ability, age, culture, sex, gender or sexual orientation. The Plan assists the Shire to develop and implement improvements to access and inclusion across the following outcome areas:

1. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and attend any events organised by the Shire of Northam.
2. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.
3. Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. Diverse people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.
5. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.
6. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by local governance), conducted by the Shire of Northam.
7. Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.
8. The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and /or discrimination.
9. Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.
10. Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.

## Commitment

The Shire of Northam is committed to ensuring that the community is accessible for and inclusive of people with disability, their families, and carers as well as other people with diverse needs.

The Shire interprets an accessible and inclusive community as one in which all Shire services and facilities (both in-house and contracted) are open, available and accessible to people with disability, providing them with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities as other people in the community.

The Shire is committed to building an inclusive and diverse workforce that is reflective of the community we serve. We do this by incorporating Equal Employment Opportunity, diversity and inclusion principles through employment policies and practices, and delivering on the initiatives and targets in the Access and Inclusion Plan.

The actions included in this Plan focus on building a community and organisational culture that enhances our ability to attract, develop and retain an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity in our local community.

The aim is to ensure that the community and work environment is free from racial and sexual harassment and that our practices are not biased or discriminate unlawfully against community, employees or potential employees.

## Statistics

### **People with a disability or requiring assistance, their families and carers:**

**2,269** people (**18.9%** of the population) in Shire of Northam reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.

**11.3%** carers across Shire of Northam were providing unpaid assistance to a person with a disability, long-term illness or old age in 2021.

### **People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds:**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines the CaLD population mainly by country of birth, language spoken at home, English proficiency, parents' country of birth and religious affiliation.

In 2021, **23.9%** of people in Shire of Northam were born overseas. **192** people who spoke a language other than English at home reported difficulty speaking English.

Note: Language barriers can lead to an under-representation of CaLD people where English is used in surveys or is required for self-reported information.

### **People from the LGBTIQ+ community:**

It is now widely recognised that there are disparities in health and wellbeing for LGBTIQ+ communities compared to the general population. Negative experiences have contributed to barriers in accessing community services due to actual or anticipated experiences of stigma and discrimination. The Shire commits to providing inclusive opportunities for the LGBTIQ+ community.

The Australian Human Rights Commission conclude that up to **11 in 100** Australians may have a diverse sexual orientation, sex, or gender identity (2014).

In the ABS General Social Survey 2020, **4%** of Australians identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than people who described themselves as heterosexual (**30%** compared to **13%**).

**People with mental health conditions:**

Within Shire of Northam, **9.7%** have a long-term mental health condition, including depression and anxiety.

The NDIS recognises psychosocial disability, which may arise from a mental health condition, and its impacts upon social interaction, self-management, self-care, communication, learning and mobility. These factors can all impose upon a person's capacity to receive equal opportunities for access and inclusion. Therefore, the Shire is committing to plan for all people with mental health conditions within the Plan.

## Consultation

The Shire undertook public consultation and feedback was sought from our community including people living with disability and community groups, and our staff during the consultation period, which commenced 24 May 2024 and concluded 10 June 2024. All feedback assisted in the preparation of the Action Plan.

The Shire has also established a working relationship with APM Communities Northam who deliver the NDIS for our community. APM advocate for people who are experiencing access and inclusion barriers with a key focus on building a truly inclusive community. Quarterly meetings provide a great opportunity to engage, promote and celebrate the achievements of people with disability. They also conduct regular surveys to identify areas for improvement within the community, which has been used to inform the outcomes listed in the Action Plan.

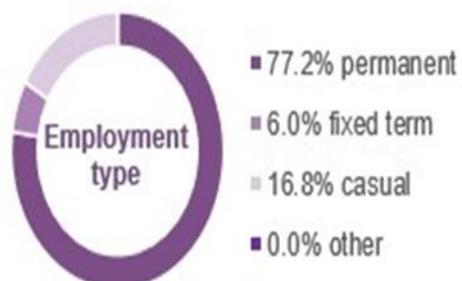
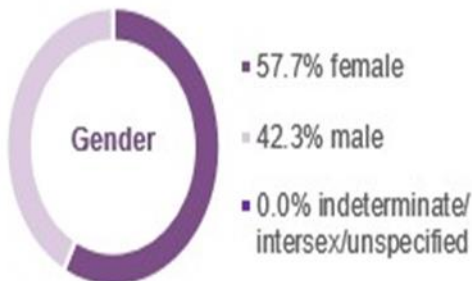
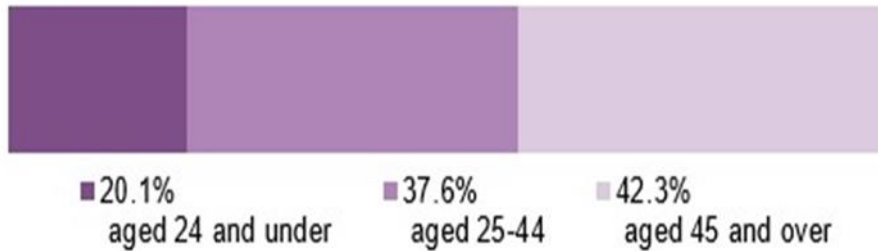
# Workforce Profile

149 employees (96 full-time equivalent)

## Diversity



## Age profile



**Work type**



## Action Plans

**Outcome 1:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Promote and celebrate significant days that acknowledge inclusion, e.g. International Day of People with Disability, Harmony Day (celebrate cultural diversity).	Activation & Communications	Ongoing
Communicate the definition of access and inclusion via the Community Grant Guidelines, employee inductions and provide examples to deliver accessible and inclusive events and programs.	Community Development	Ongoing
Deliver accessible, safe and inclusive services, events, meetings and engagement activities through the provision of the following, where possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiet areas for people with sensory requirements</li> <li>• Safe and inclusive spaces</li> <li>• Adequate accessible parking</li> <li>• Adequate accessible toilet facilities</li> <li>• Clear event/activity and directional signage</li> <li>• Monitor social media comments.</li> </ul>	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Review the Shire's Event Access Checklist and update to include actions to assist with planning events that are accessible and inclusive.	Activation & Communications	Ongoing
Provide clarity on promotional material around why and/or how a service and/or event is accessible and inclusive, e.g. access ramp available, quiet space available.	Organisational wide	Ongoing
Display significant symbols on promotional material to inform if a service and/or event is accessible and inclusive, e.g. assistance dog symbol, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.	Organisational wide	Ongoing
Investigate opportunities for funding towards the installation of a Changing Places facility in the Shire of Northam.	Community Services	2024/25

**Outcome 2:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Investigate accessible design options when planning new Shire facilities, to create roadway and pathway connectivity to Shire buildings and facilities.	Engineering Services	Ongoing
Display significant symbols on Shire buildings and facilities that promote an inclusive and safe space.	Engineering Services	Ongoing
Investigate the use of visual cues that provide information about available amenities within Shire buildings and facilities, when planning new Shire facilities and/or when upgrading existing Shire buildings and facilities	Engineering Services	Ongoing
Investigate the feasibility and best location within the Shire for a liberty swing (swing suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair).	Engineering Services	As per Capital Works Program

**Outcome 3:** Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

Actions	Who	When
Review and update the Shire’s writing style guide to include information about the use of correct terminology and inclusive language in terms of disability, gender and sexual diversity and cultural and linguistic diversity.	Activation & Communications	Ongoing

**Outcome 4:** Diverse people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.

Actions	Who	When
Provide training for customer service staff in inclusion, diversity, disability awareness and mental health first aid training using specialist providers and people with lived experience.	HR	Ongoing

**Outcome 5:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Review the Shire's Complaints Management Procedure for recording complaints to include a section on access and inclusion related complaints.	Governance	Ongoing
Support those making a complaint as required, e.g. provide information in an alternative format on request, provide an interpreter on request.	Organisational wide	Ongoing
Collate compliments, complaints and general feedback and analyse trends and patterns to inform future actions in the Shire's Access and Inclusion Plan.	Governance	Ongoing

**Outcome 6:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by governance) conducted by the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Maintain a relevant Customer Service Charter and Information Statement to promote increased participation in request, consultation and decision-making processes.	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Provide consultation material in alternative formats and/or other support on request to enable participation in community consultation.	Organisation wide	Ongoing
Promote the Shire's Access and Inclusion Plan to consultants contracted to deliver community engagement for the Shire.	Organisation wide	Ongoing

**Outcome 7:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.

Actions	Who	When
Develop strategies to achieve the Shire's commitment to increase the representation of people with disability employed by the Shire and support inclusive work environments.	HR	Ongoing
Develop strategies to increase gender diversity to increase the representation of women in leadership positions and support inclusive work environments.	HR	Ongoing
Provide training in inclusion, diversity and disability awareness and associated statutory obligations for all	HR	Ongoing

<p>personnel involved in the recruitment, selection, retention, and ongoing management of Shire employees.</p>		
<p>Incorporate gender equality, diversity and inclusion in plans, frameworks, strategies, policies, procedures and guidelines as these documents are reviewed and updated.</p>	<p>Organisational wide</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

## EEO and Diversity Plan Initiatives

**Outcome 8:** The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and/or discrimination.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
EEO and Diversity values are incorporated into the corporate values, business planning processes and workforce plans.	√		
A positive, inclusive and harassment free workplace culture is communicated and promoted within the organisation.	√		
Performance management criteria for managers includes an ability to recruit a diverse workforce and promote an inclusive work culture.	√		
There is an effective grievance resolution process where staff can raise concerns and issues.	√		
Workplace culture is monitored and assessed to determine that it is inclusive and free from harassment and unlawful discrimination	√		

**Outcome 9:** Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
Organisational structure and job design provide career paths for all diversity groups.		√	
Recruitment and selection practices provide appropriate flexibility for all diversity groups.	√		
Mechanisms are in place to identify the needs of diversity groups to operate effectively in the workplace (e.g. staff surveys, review of exit interview feedback).		√	
Retention practices are in place to identify, develop and retain staff from all diversity groups (e.g. induction processes, training and development opportunities, working hours and conditions, flexible work options and performance management).	√		

The organisation monitors and assesses employment practices to ensure they contribute positively to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce	√		
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**Outcome 10:** Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.

Initiative	Existing	For Review	Proposed
Demographic data is collected to monitor and report on progress of all diversity groups.		√	
Diversity objectives are identified to reflect the Shire's business needs.		√	
Strategies have been developed to improve employment outcomes for the following diversity groups:			
Women in Management	√		
Indigenous Australians	√		
People from Culturally Diverse Backgrounds	√		
Youth and mature workers	√		
People with Disabilities			√

## Key Successes 2023 - 2024

- Outcome 1:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by the Shire of Northam.
- Upgraded and increased number of ACROD parking bays in Northam Town Centre.
  - When planning community events, the Shire of Northam considered elements of access in the planning stages of each event including the Bilya Festival, Australia Day event.
- Outcome 2:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Northam.
- Upgrading of buildings through planned maintenance.
  - All development applications adhered to the new legislation.
  - Wheelchair access points to get onto the footpath have been installed in the Northam Town Centre.
  - Undesirable growth in footpath crevices have been eradicated via a regular maintenance program.
  - Paths and ramps continue to be upgraded.
- Outcome 3:** Diverse people will receive information from the Shire of Northam in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
- The Shire's website includes a range of documents available to the public and has the functionality which allows the user to alter the text size.
  - The Shire's marketing material is consistent with the accessibility standards for information.
  - The Shire undertook a review in October 2023 of its Information Statement that is available on our website. The Information Statement outlines our commitment to Public Participation and Community Consultation.
- Outcome 4:** Diverse people are treated equally and receive the same level and quality of service.
- Ensure that all elected members and employees are aware of access needs and can provide appropriate services.
  - Improve community awareness about disability and access issues.
- Outcome 5:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Northam.
- The Shire has a defined grievance process accessible on its website and the process can be made available in other formats on request.

- Outcome 6:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation (unless specified by governance) conducted by the Shire of Northam.
- Opportunities have been provided to people with disabilities and other diverse needs to contribute to the development of the Shire’s new Access and Inclusion Plan for 2024 to 2028.
  - The Shire has identified the need to develop a Community Engagement Charter in 2024/25 to guide an inclusive consultation and engagement approach.
- Outcome 7:** Diverse people have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Northam.
- Changes have been made to the Shire’s recruitment policies that support equal opportunity of employment, particularly supporting the employment of First Nations peoples.
  - The Shire has introduced an Aboriginal trainee Ranger position to enhance employment opportunities for First Nations peoples.
  - The Shire has undertaken training that supports positive mental health and wellbeing including Mental Health First Aid training, managing challenging behaviours and understanding psycho-social risks.
- Outcome 8:** The organisation values EEO and diversity and the work environment remain free from racial and sexual harassment and/or discrimination.
- The Shire has commenced a review and update of its Bullying and Harassment Policy.
  - An audit of the Shire’s work health and safety policies and procedures has been undertaken by Local Government Insurance Services to identify opportunities for improvement, including enhancing initiatives that support physical and mental health and wellbeing of our workforce.
- Outcome 9:** Workplaces are free from employment practices that are biased or discriminate unlawfully against employees or potential employees.
- The Shire has commenced a review and update of its Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Outcome 10:** Employment programs and practices recognise and include strategies for EEO groups to achieve workforce diversity.
- The Shire has introduced an Aboriginal trainee Ranger position to enhance employment opportunities for First Nations peoples.
  - The Shire maintains data to understand the profile of our workforce in terms of gender, age, ability, etc. to inform workforce planning and opportunities to increase diversity.