



2019-2021

**DISABILITY**  
**INCLUSION**  
**ACTION**  
**PLAN**

Western NSW  
Community  
Legal Centre Inc.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### OUR PURPOSE

Western NSW Community Legal Centre Inc. is an independent, not-for-profit, government-funded organisation offering free legal help, including the services of a specialist domestic violence unit.

Our team is committed to equal access to justice for everyone in the region, particularly those experiencing disadvantage.

We aim to provide appropriately modified services and resources which are easily accessed by people with physical, sensory, mental health and cognitive disabilities. This includes accessible legal advice, referrals, community legal education, representation and practical supports.

The Centre uses research to identify social justice issues affecting people in the region and where appropriate aims to lobby for improved policies and laws that impact negatively on people with disabilities.

"We are  
committed  
to providing  
equal access  
to justice  
for all..."



## VISION

Western NSW Community Legal Centre has a vision for a fair society which:

- Values people's full participation in the community;
- Promotes the individual's right to make informed decisions about their own lives and their community;
- Involves all people as equals regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual preference, age or religious beliefs; Supports quality of life; and
- Ensures that every person has access to, and a fair share of the economic, social and cultural resources of the community.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Why this Plan?

This document is about much more than saying the right things. Throughout its development the focus has been on actions that nurture and sustain a culture of access and equality.

In this way, our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) assists us to foster more inclusive workplaces and services by identifying and removing barriers to access. We understand that embracing diversity demonstrates respect for the dignity and value of all people and their lived experiences.

Our goal is to open the Centre to new opportunities, expand our recruitment parameters and discover new and exciting ways of "doing things," in order to multiply both the reach and impact for a more just society. Along the way we have thought deeply

"We believe  
in a fair  
society that  
values all  
people as  
equals..."



about terms such as dignity, choice, diversity and respect.

This DIAP covers five main areas (detailed in Section 5):

- What we do and how we do it (services);
- Where we work (physical environment);
- How we communicate and inform (connecting and resourcing);
- What we think and the impact on others (attitudes & values); and
- How we recruit (employment).

For the purposes of this DIAP, disability is defined as:

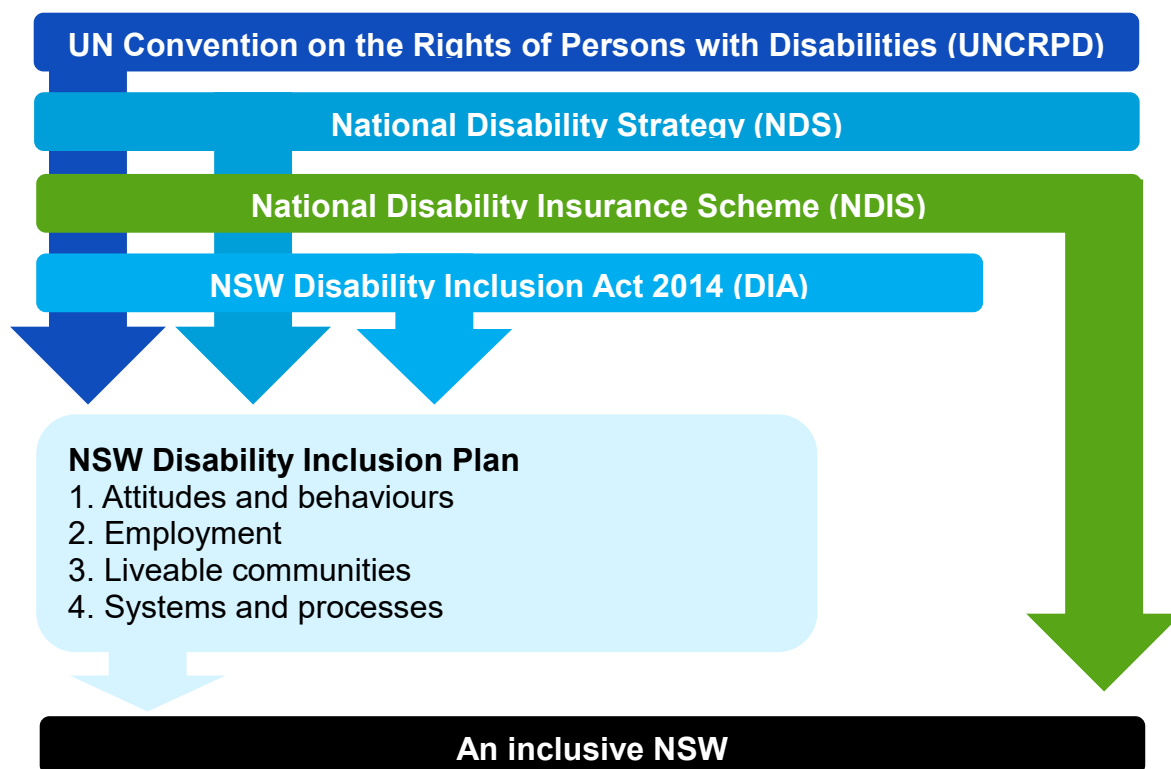
“...long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder... full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”  
(*Disability Inclusion Act 2014*)

This plan was endorsed at the May 19, 2020 meeting of the Western NSW Community Legal Centre Management Committee.

Categories of Disability Explained	
<p><b>INTELLECTUAL</b></p> <p>Affects a person's ability to learn e.g. down syndrome, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder</p>	<p><b>NEUROLOGICAL</b></p> <p>Affects the person's brain and central nervous system e.g. acquired brain injury, epilepsy, dementia, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease</p>
<p><b>PHYSICAL</b></p> <p>Affects a person's mobility or dexterity e.g. quadriplegia, amputee, cerebral palsy</p>	<p><b>MENTAL ILLNESS</b></p> <p>Affects a person's thinking processes e.g. anxiety, depression, post- traumatic stress disorder</p>
<p><b>DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING DISABILITY</b></p> <p>Affects a person's ability to complete a task or use certain skills e.g. autism, dyslexia</p>	<p><b>SENSORY</b></p> <p>Affects a person's ability to hear or see e.g. someone who is hearing or vision impaired</p>

### 3. LEGISLATION and POLICY

At an international, national and local level, changes are taking place to eliminate barriers that prevent people with disability full participation in every aspect of life.



The above diagram (Local Government NSW 2015) depicts recent developments of disability inclusion legislation and policy, and how WNSWCLC fits into the bigger picture.

#### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL

In 2008, Australia became one of the first nations to sign the ***United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***. The Convention acknowledges that people with a disability have the same rights as everyone else. Participating governments have made a commitment to ensure that any obstacles to exercising these rights are removed.

The Convention also provides a useful touchstone for legal service providers such as WNSWCLC. Article 12 acknowledges that people with disabilities should have **equal recognition before the law** and Article 13 affirms their right to **effective access to justice**.

### 3.2 NATIONAL

The ***National Disability Strategy 2010-2020*** - developed in partnership between Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local Governments - sets out an Australia-wide plan for improving the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers. This strategy is in line with the ethos set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Of the six policy areas set out in the 10-year strategy, one focuses on ***Rights Protection, Justice and Legislation***.

The ***National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)*** is a major reform delivering a national system of disability support focused on the individual needs and choices of people with a disability. The NDIS aims to give participants more choice and control over how, when and where supports are provided.

### 3.3 STATE - NSW

***The Disability Inclusion Act 2014*** commits the NSW Government to making inclusive and accessible communities, regulating disability specialist supports and services and ensuring effective safeguards. Key aspects of the Act focus on choice and control for people with disability (Communities & Justice 2019).

## 4. DISABILITY SNAPSHOTS

### 4.1 AUSTRALIA and NSW

Almost one in five people living in NSW (18.34%) have a disability. This figure closely aligns with the national statistics (18.3%). In addition, about 45% of Australians report

"Almost one  
in five  
people in  
NSW have a  
disability..."





experiencing a mental health problem at some point in their life. This incidence is highest among people aged 16-24.

NSW is placed in the middle of the disability prevalence rates for all states and territories, with Tasmania and South Australia recording higher rates (at 25.2% and 22% respectively) and Northern Territory, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory recording lower rates (11.3%, 14% and 15.8% respectively).

Among NSW residents, 5.93% (or 32.4% of all people with disabilities) have limitations that restrict everyday activities such as “self-care, mobility, communication, schooling and/or employment”.

Of those with a disability:

- 78.1% of people have a physical condition (including acquired brain injury, arthritis, asthma, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury and stroke);
- 20.3% of people have mental health or behavioural disorders;
- 5.89% have an intellectual disability; and
- 7.38% have psychoses and mood affective disorders including dementia, depression (Judicial Commission of NSW 2017).

#### **4.2 WESTERN REGION, NSW**

WNSWCLC’s client catchment covers about 25% of NSW, stretching from Mudgee in the east to Bourke in the west and Lightning Ridge in the north. The region encompasses all or part of 12 Local Government Areas (LGA): Bogan (Nyngan), Bourke, Brewarrina, Cobar, Coonamble, Dubbo Regional, Gilgandra, Mid-

“People with disabilities make up a significant proportion of the WNSWCLC client base.”



Western (incl. Mudgee and Gulgong),  
Narromine, Walgett (incl. Lightning Ridge),  
Warren and Warrumbungle (Coonabarabran).

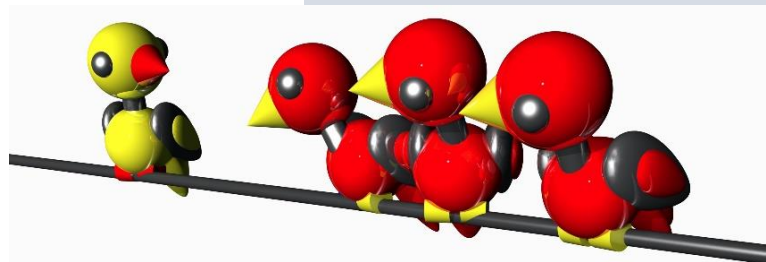
In order to develop their DIAPs, these local councils have employed various methods to identify the number and needs of people with disability in their area. Most figures are derived from the ABS Census (2011), and further insights are derived from the number of residents receiving disability pensions, the quantity of mobility parking permits issued, and the presence of paid and unpaid carers in the community. Following is a snapshot of people with disability in the western region (Disability Inclusion Action Plans 2017):

- 14.8% of Bogan Shire residents identify as having a disability, which is lower than the State average.
- 20% of Coonabarabran residents have a disability, which is slightly higher than the State figures.
- Almost one-quarter (24.4%) of Walgett Shire's population are living with a disability in a private dwelling.

#### **Residents requiring assistance:**

- On average 4.5% of residents in the region require assistance with core activities due to profound or severe disability.
- Of those people with severe or profound limitations, Cobar (3.1%), Bourke (3.38%), Bogan (3.5%), Brewarrina (4.3%), Warren (4.3%) and Dubbo (5.2%) are lower than

"...dignity,  
choice,  
diversity  
and  
respect..."



NSW overall.

- Mid-Western Region (6%) and Gilgandra (6.04%) are roughly on par with the State average while Coonamble (6.4%) and Coonabarabran (6.6%) are slightly higher.

## 4.2 WNSWCLC CLIENTS

People with disabilities make up a significant proportion of the WNSWCLC client base. Data collected from CLASS shows that about 23.5% of total clients using the centre and 20.6% accessing the DVU unit identify as having a disability. It is worth remembering that people with disability may choose not to share this information.

Of those clients (across both services) who identify as having a disability:

- 32% come from postcode area 2830 (Dubbo), 27.5% from 2820 (Wellington), and 4% from 2850 (Mudgee). Others are drawn from the wider service region.
- The gender breakdown is about 50/50 between men and women.
- About 38.5% identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Of those clients who nominate a disability type:

- 23% have a physical and/or sensory impairment (e.g. hearing loss), 19.4% psychological and 13.4% cognitive which includes neurological conditions, learning difficulties, brain injuries and intellectual disability.

"About 4.5% of people in the region require help with core activities..."

## 5. COMMUNITY & STAFF CONSULTATION

### Consultation methods

Methods for engagement included:

- Peak bodies – written invitation with remote contact options for engagement.
- Government – face to face meetings with local government representatives.
- Non-government organisations – face to face meetings, focus groups and attendance at a community event.
- People with disability / carers – telephone survey, face to face meetings, focus groups and attendance at a community event focused on this target group.
- Staff – survey and focus groups.
- Outreach partners – conversations with organisations hosting our outreach visits focussed on their clients' experience of accessing our service.

### Stakeholder engagement

Data was collected through surveys, focus groups and individual face to face and telephone meetings. We invited peak organisations and local community organisations and groups to speak with us about the experiences of their staff and clients in accessing services. We also spoke with people with disability about their experience in seeking professional services assistance.

We spoke with 148 people over the period October 2019 to March 2020. A broad list of

"Take extra  
time to  
listen...have  
a flexible  
approach..."



stakeholders was invited to participate in consultation activities.

### **Summary of consultation outcomes**

The following outlines a summary of responses, which are grouped under our areas of commitment, together with common themes.

#### **5.1 Services, system and processes (what we do and how we do it)**

People with disability can find systems and processes hard to navigate when seeking support and services. Some of the challenges stem from the frontline employees' lack of awareness about the needs of people with disability; systems and processes that do not support accessibility and inclusion; and the lack of accessible options for people to choose from when communicating, accessing information, or providing input or feedback.

Common themes:

- Take extra time to listen if required.
- Provide information in different formats.
- Structure appointments in response to individual need.
- Encourage attendance of an advocate/ support person.

#### **5.2 Environment (where we do our work including outreach and events)**

Creating a welcoming environment involves more than ensuring physical access. It includes ensuring that our premises and extended services (outreach, events and community engagement) are appropriate in terms of

"Ensure  
easy access  
to premises,  
offices and  
amenities"



lighting, noise and furnishings.

Common themes:

- Ensure easy access to premises.
- Pay attention to over/under stimulation through light levels, noise and wall decorations.

### **5.3 Communication (how we interact with people)**

It is important to have staff that is able to encourage clients with disability to fully participate. This will require us to identify barriers and propose solutions.

It is equally important to continue to engage and consult with people with disability so that we are able to focus our actions on the needs of our employees and clients.

Common themes:

- Informing of steps taken during process can be reassuring as it shows the client action is occurring.
- Respect people with disability in relation to their lived experience.
- Take time to understand communication needs and adjust appointments to meet these needs.
- Provide the space and time for people to tell their story (their way).

### **5.4 Attitudes and values (what we think and how it impacts people)**

Attitudes and behaviour towards people with disability is a barrier to full access and inclusion. Attitudes and behaviour infuse all

Take a  
"person  
first,  
disability  
second"  
approach...

aspects of life. Our community and staff consultations told us that factors such as ignorance, fear and lack of opportunity to interact with people with disability contribute to people's attitudes and behaviour.

Common themes:

- Take a person first, disability second approach.
- Awareness of various disability categories can assist to break myths about disability.
- Promote positive images of people with disability.

### **5.5 Employment (how we recruit, support and treat staff with a disability)**

People with disability have a significantly lower employment rate with barriers experienced at all stages of the employment process. Venue inaccessibility, rigid role descriptions and user-unfriendly information formats are experienced by applicants with disability.

Common themes:

- Ensure job description criteria reflect the job and make reasonable adjustments if possible.
- Provide a simple recruitment process.
- Broaden recruitment net.
- Look at splitting roles to provide opportunities for people with disability.

"Broaden  
the Centre's  
recruitment  
net..."



## 6 ACTION PLAN

1. SERVICES					
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>We provide inclusive legal and non-legal service delivery.</i>				
Strategy	Action	Timeframe YR		Responsibility	Measurement
		1	2		
<b>1.1 Ensure the views of people with disability are heard</b>	Develop a disability reference group comprising of people with disability and/or their supporters.	✓		DIAP Working Group	Disability Reference Group has input on services, resources, policies/procedures relevant to people with disability.
	Review the current community consultation procedure to include a checklist on inclusive consultation.	✓		DIAP Working Group	Community consultation is inclusive of people with disability.
	Develop a fact sheet to assist staff respond to queries regarding services for people with disability.	✓		DIAP Working Group/Admin Assistant	Fact sheet developed, distributed/ utilised by staff.
<b>1.2 Ensure policy and procedures are inclusive</b>	Review and amend policies and procedures identified during the consultation phase.	✓		Executive Officer/ Management Committee	Identified policies are amended and endorsed by Management Committee.
	Conduct review of remainder of policies/procedures.	✓		Executive Officer/ Management Committee	All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where required.
	Include invitation for support person to attend appointment when disability is identified at intake.	✓		Reception	Reception routinely invite support person to attend where disability identified.



2. ENVIRONMENT					
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>We provide a user friendly environment for clients, employees and visitors with a disability.</i>				
Strategy	Action	Timeframe YR		Responsibility	Measurement
		1	2		
<b>2.1 Ensure people with disability have easy access to our premises</b>	Continue to conduct a check of accessibility of all current premises including an uncluttered and relaxing environment.	✓	✓	DIAP Working Group	All premises are easily accessible
	Investigate Portable Counter Hearing Loops (especially for WWLS).	✓		Admin Assistant	Hearing Loops investigated and installed if appropriate
	Inform/train staff of accessibility services and adaptive technology for visitors/clients.	✓	✓	Executive Officer	Staff are aware of accessibility & adaptive technology & engage these where required
	Ensure CLC disability access front gate open in business hours.	✓		CLC Reception	Gate remains open 9am – 4.30pm Monday – Friday
	Investigate ramp for the CLC bathroom	✓		Executive Officer	CLC bathroom is fully accessible
	Amend Work Health and Safety procedure to include clear access to CLC carpark paths	✓		Executive Officer	CLC carpark path is unobstructed
<b>2.2 Ensure asy access to outreach venues</b>	Review outreach venues to ensure access and environment is user friendly.	✓	✓	CLC Reception	Outreach venues are fully accessible
<b>2.3 Events are accessible</b>	Design/implement inclusive access checklist for events planning &/or participation.	✓		Admin Assistant	Inclusive access checklist utilised before events

3. COMMUNICATION					
<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Our communication is inclusive and accessible for people with disability</i>				
Strategy	Action	Timeframe YR		Responsibility	Measurement
		1	2		
<b>3.1 Ensure technology is accessible</b>	Include information relating to digital accessibility on our website.	✓		Admin Assistant	Website includes digital accessibility information
	Review our website on an annual basis	✓	✓	Executive Officer/ Admin Assistant	Website accessibility is maintained or improved
	Investigate captioning and audio description for content on our website.	✓		Admin Assistant	Website includes captioning/audio description
<b>3.2 Ensure information is provided in a variety of user-friendly formats</b>	Investigate feasibility of providing information to local community radio for promotion.	✓		Admin Assistant	Community radio promotes our service
	Review key documents to develop Easy English versions.	✓		DIAP Working Group/ Admin Assistant	Easy English versions of key documents are available for circulation
	Develop website-connected YouTube Channel for non-reading community members.		✓	Admin Assistant/ DIAP Working Group	YouTube Channel operational
	Develop a library of alternate format resources.	✓	✓	DIAP Working Group	Alternate format resources available for clients and stakeholders

#### 4. ATTITUDES & VALUES

<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Our staff is committed to building an accessible and inclusive work environment that celebrates diversity, values each person's contribution and nurtures abilities.</i>				
Strategy	Action	Timeframe YR		Responsibility	Measurement
		1	2		
<b>4.1 Ensure staff are well equipped to support people with disability</b>	Provide annual training for staff in order to increase their knowledge, confidence and skill (including assistance animal awareness).	✓	✓	Executive Officer	All staff undertake disability awareness training annually
	Develop practice guidance cards that provide tips to assist staff when working with people with disability.	✓		DIAP Working Group/ Admin Assistant	Staff refer to practice guidance cards when working with people with disability
	Include DIAP in staff induction process.	✓		Executive Officer	New staff are introduced to the DIAP through the induction process
<b>4.2 Promote disability inclusion</b>	Display material/art that promotes positive attitudes, values and inclusion of people with disability.	✓	✓	Executive Officer/ All Staff	Visual material at all venues includes positive inclusion of people with disability

## 5. EMPLOYMENT

<b>Objective:</b>	<i>Our workplace is accessible and inclusive for people with disability.</i>				
Strategy	Action	Timeframe YR		Responsibility	Measurement
		1	2		
<b>5.1 Enhance employment and continuing development of staff with disability</b>	Review recruitment practices to remove any unintended barriers for applicants with disability.	✓		Executive Officer/ Management Committee	People with disability do not experience barriers to employment with our service
	Review Employee Induction material for simplified content and presentation.	✓		Executive Officer/ Admin Assistant	New employees are provided with Plain English induction material
	Continue to conduct and respond to staff disability inclusion survey.	✓	✓	Executive Officer	Annual survey conducted and reported to Management Committee. Information used to shape DIAP actions
	Review Supervision, Training and Study Leave policy and procedures to ensure any unintended barriers are removed.	✓		Executive Officer/ Management Committee	Staff do not experience barriers to supervision, training or study based their disability

## 7. MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

### Monitoring

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) includes timelines to guide the completion of the actions. The Executive Officer is responsible for implementation and will monitor progress on a monthly basis. The DIAP working group will meet on a quarterly basis to monitor implementation progress.

The Management Committee has overall responsibility for ensuring the plan is implemented and will monitor progress via monthly Executive Officer reports.

### Reporting

Outcomes and achievements will be reported in the organisation's Annual Report. This report is available on the Centre's website and also provided in accessible format for people with disabilities. A report will also be provided to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

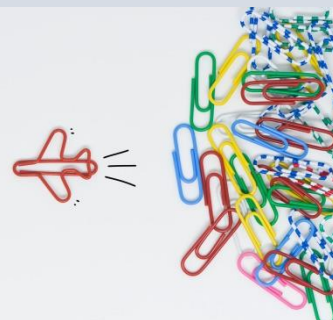
### Evaluation

Results Based Accountability evaluation methodology will be used to measure impact (Freidman 2005). The outcome based measurements contained in the action plan will be monitored on a monthly basis and evaluated annually by the DIAP working group.

## 8. ONGOING ENGAGEMENT AND RESOURCING

The Centre will engage people with a disability on an ongoing basis about the progress of the Plan. A reference group of people with

"Our team  
is building a  
workplace  
that  
celebrates  
diversity..."



intellectual disabilities will be drawn from our region to provide a touchstone for Centre services, projects and resources. The action plan will be resourced from the work health and safety budget during 2019/20 and through a dedicated DIAP budget allocation in the 2020-21 and subsequent financial years.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Western NSW Community Legal Centre would like to thank the many individuals, service providers and agencies who shared their expertise, experience, personal stories and enthusiasm in the development of this plan. Our special thanks to those mentioned in Section 5 of this document who provided valuable insights that will help us develop an even more inclusive legal service for the people of Western NSW.

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### **Legislation/Conventions**

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