Building an inclusive Newcastle for all

City of Newcastle

Do you relish heading to the local library, visiting the beach or seeing a show at the Civic? There are so many things to enjoy here in Newcastle. However, for the 30,000+ people in Newcastle who live with disability, it is not always easy to take part in local activities.

But things are changing.

The City of Newcastle (CN), local organisations, businesses and community members are working to make life more accessible and inclusive. For CN, 2023-2024 saw progress in our Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) which aims to remove access barriers across the city and improve opportunities for people with disability (PwD).

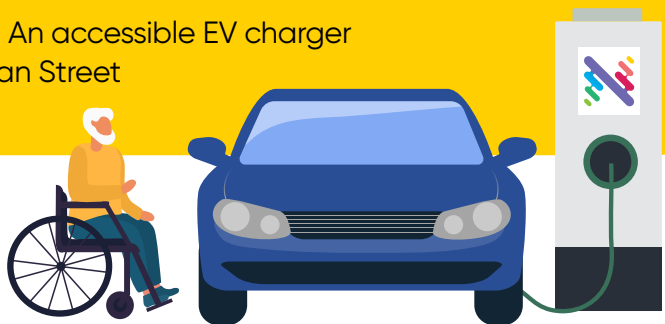Here is how CN is helping to make your city more inclusive and accessible.

Changing attitudes for the better

Developing positive attitudes toward disability involves a combination of actions, mindset shifts and supportive environments to show how inclusion can benefit everyone in the community.

During the last 12 months, CN has welcomed your input and worked with stakeholders to provide more inclusive opportunities, including:

- gaining regular input on major council projects from a disability advisory committee comprised of council, community with lived experience of disability and local organisation members (Access Inclusion & Disability Advisory Committee)
- meeting with disability advocates to inform installation of accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging stations
- holding AUSLAN story times monthly at Newcastle City and Wallsend libraries
- developing low-sensory programming for branch libraries, Newcastle Museum and Beresfield Community Childcare Centre
- partnering with Tantrum Youth Arts to establish an inclusive theatre ensemble
- delivering the Count Us In Festival - Sports in 2024 in partnership with Community Disability Alliance Hunter.

Did you know? An accessible EV charger is located on Laman Street Newcastle.

LEARN MORE: Electric vehicle parking

newcastle.nsw.gov.au/living/transport-and-parking/parking/electric-vehicles

Improving access to city facilities

Newcastle is a beautiful place to live, work, learn, play and stay and CN is working to remove accessibility barriers so all can enjoy our city's many offerings.

Specialist advice and your input have led to inclusive designs for the Newcastle Art Gallery, Foreshore Park and Kiosk and Newcastle Ocean Baths, and helped us make events like New Annual and New Year's Eve more accessible.

Other ways CN has improved community access across our local area in 2023-2024 include:
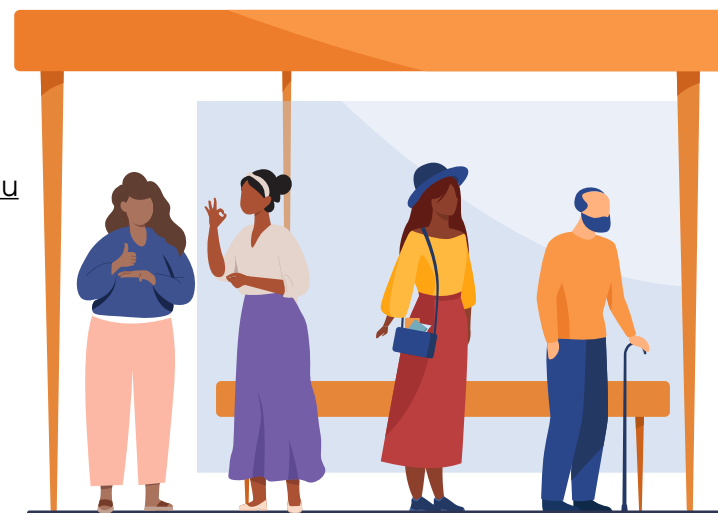
- completing a city-wide plan to improve how people walk and move around key centres of the city
- reviewing the accessibility of council facilities, such as community halls and centres, to prioritise future upgrades
- investigating adult lift and change facilities in the design of King Edward Park, Bathers Way and Newcastle Ocean Baths projects
- obtaining a grant for the update of hearing loop technology in library branches.

Did you know? Hearing loop technology is being updated across our library branches.

LEARN MORE: Newcastle Libraries

newcastlelibraries.com.au

Increasing employment opportunities

Finding and keeping a job is more difficult for PwD, and CN is proud to be a local leader in meaningful employment. A review of our workforce revealed that 8% of our workforce live with disability. We've achieved this by:

- updating job ads to include inclusive language
- encouraging PwD to apply and to tell us about needed workplace adjustments
- ensuring recruitment, onboarding and retention strategies include people with diverse lived experience
- undertaking a review (Inclusive Employer Index) to understand our workforce
- creating an internal Accessibility Network to support employees.

The 2023 Count Us In festival also focused heavily on employment. Highlights included an inclusive employment forum and a lunch for business leaders featuring Dylan Alcott, who discussed the barriers facing PwDs seeking work and how businesses can lower them.

Did you know? More than one in six residents of Newcastle have a disability, that is just over 30,000 Novocastrians.

LEARN MORE: Our people our city

newcastle.nsw.gov.au/living/our-city/who-we-are

Making it easier to access services

Complex systems and processes make it harder to access essential services, like reporting graffiti or a missed bin collection. CN is committed to making information and services more accessible by using technology and inclusive design principles to streamline requests.

We've made significant progress during 2023-2024 by:

- ensuring new website development aligns with WCAG 2.1AA accessibility guidelines
- launching 30+ new digital self-service forms to make it easier to access services for Waste & Recycling, Rates, Parks & Sportsgrounds, Animals, Community Halls, Cemeteries, Beaches, Events, Trees & Vegetation and Parking
- embedding accessibility into customer experience testing
- encouraging diverse engagement through accessible forums
- capturing for the first time in CN's formal corporate reporting system our disability action plan.

Did you know? CN has reduced 140+ customer request types to just over 30 new digital self-service forms, reducing duplication and incorporating accessibility enhancements.

LEARN MORE: How to report an issue

newcastle.nsw.gov.au/about-us/report-an-issue-or-request-assistance

What's next?

CN has made gains year after year against our disability action plan. Our ongoing commitment to access and inclusion continues in 2025 with a focus on:

- improving our communications
- delivering more inclusive events
- working on accessible vehicle charging and pedestrian mobility projects
- making our processes and systems more accessible for all in our city
- to ensure accessibility is at the forefront every day of the year, 2025 will also see our annual inclusion event, Count Us In, transform into "Inclusion 365" initiatives and activities.

While CN is proud to continue to make ground in this space, we can't improve inclusion and accessibility alone. You can make a difference by having your say on council delivered projects, learning how to make your business more accessible and supporting disability access and inclusion across the community.

With your help, we are building a more inclusive and accessible Newcastle.

newcastle.nsw.gov.au/community/our-community/disability-access-and-inclusion