

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting	Port Stephens Disability Inclusion and Access Advisory Group (DIAAG)		
Team Name:	Vibrant Places	Theme:	Consultation & input
Date:	Thursday 21 May 2026	Time:	4:30 pm – 6:30 pm
Venue:	Committee Room, Council Admin Building		
Chairpersons:	Cr Jason Wells and Juanita Vernon		Minutes: Holly Moltzen
Purpose of Meeting:	To provide expert advice and community perspectives to identify and address barriers to access and participation, ensuring that Council policies, programs, and infrastructure align with the principles of inclusion and universal design.		

Invitees

Cr Jason Wells Port Stephens Council	Cr Ros Armstrong Port Stephens Council	Paul Burton Port Stephens Council	Steve McAlister Port Stephens Council
Juanita Vernon Committee Member	Alex Goodwin Committee Member	Henry Flegg Committee Member	Olivia Hamilton Committee Member
Susan Hopkins Committee Member	David Sams Committee Member	Rosaria Strazzeri Committee Member	Holly Moltzen Port Stephens Council
Madeline Brennan Port Stephens Council			

Apologies

Kate Connor
Port Stephens Council

Susan Hopkins
Committee Member

Item	Topic	Time	Responsible officer	Details / Information
1.0	Welcome			
1.1	Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country	4:30pm	Chair	Record: Completed by Cr Wells
2.0	Previous Actions			
2.1	Review of actions from previous meetings	4:35pm	Chair	Record: Completed by Steve McAlister Steve confirmed only outstanding actions included in the Action table from previous minutes. See Action table below
3.0	Projects for Discussion			
3.1	Aquatic Centre Infrastructure Plan	4:40pm	Madeline Brennan	Record: Cr Wells introduced Madeline who informed the group that Council is undertaking a review of the Aquatic Centre Infrastructure Plan – see here . Madeline Brennan presented an overview of the plan which is currently out for community consultation. Plan includes: Tomaree, Tilligerry and Lakeside Leisure facilities. Seeking feedback from the group about your needs and expectations regarding Council-owned aquatic facilities in Port Stephens. • What is important to you? • What improvements can we undertake or implement? Group provided following feedback:

				- Concern over how people with disabilities are supported at Council facilities. What level of training do staff have to manage, especially those neuro- divergent people? - Do staff have adequate training? Awareness of different conditions. Visible and invisible disabilities. - People may avoid going because of past bad experiences. - Tilligerry. Overall accessible. Seats with back support are good and generally not over crowded. Wary of going to the indoor pool for sensory overload. - Programming for children with additional needs. - Infrastructure for wheelchair users. Are there the correct hoists and equipment there? Somewhere safe to store the chair when not in use. - Need Adult changing places. - Tomaree. Suggest changes to waterslide Eg: Jet drop slide, more to engage the children. Waterslide not ideally positioned. Seating needs to be improved. - Mobility Issues and vision impairment. Users of Tomaree have experienced, slippery surfaces, raised concrete gutters. How do pools overcome that challenge? - Make facilities weatherproof. - Closes in the winter affects people's programs. Pools close for 6 weeks in winter – planned maintenance happens during this time. A barrier for ppl who rely on this for consistent exercise. Stagger the shut down so not all 3 facilities are closed on the same time. - Handrails for entering the pool safely. Older people, people with vertigo would benefit from this.
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				- Seniors, carers and non-swimmers should not pay the full rate, pay a supervisory or a discounted fee. Newcastle Council may do this. Check companion card in on all the pools. Are we looking at longer term investment across the three pools? This Plan looks at what is currently in place and identifies the needs and gaps. Can look at development contributions or grants. Proactive instead of Reactive. Recommendations themed from the five-bullet points listed on the Lifecycle management slide. Steve asked if an access audit had been done on the three facilities to determine what their recommendations are. This will identify: Slip and trip barriers, tactile requirements etc. Paul Burton said: Not currently. Action: Steve to send presentation slides and QR code to the group.
3.2	International Day for People with Disability (IDPWD)	5:03pm	Steve McAlister	Record: Steve advised that International Day for People with a Disability (IDPWD) takes place in December. Disability Pride Month also occurs in July, and we can also consider ideas to recognise / support this. He asked the group how Council can recognise or support this day? what would you like to see Council do? Ideas offered by the group: • Breakfast, sausage sizzle, connect, talk about their disabilities. • Banners for the main street – (IDPWD) is on the 3 December every year – Free resources available on the website. • Stalls. Access information of different services. Awareness of changes. One was held at Tomaree High School. Could we do a similar format to this but hold it in Raymond Terrace?

				• Awareness of the challenges people face of undertaking simple tasks for people with disability. Undoing lids, Trolley Use the practical things. • Something that give people with disabilities opportunities in. People in Business to showcase what they do. Lack of access to employment. • Internal. Councils' processes, training staff. Raise awareness, accessible recruitment, Raising awareness of this committee, High Performance Behaviours. • The bus stops – many have low footpaths, creating step hazards. Impacts employability. If you can't arrive safely, can't work. • Young people – With issues, unsure of where they fit in the world. Physically capable but mentally unfit. • Council offers work experience opportunities. PSC teamed up with the police previously to show the many different jobs available, all under the one room. How do we fund this? Steve to investigate. Steve confirmed that Disability Awareness Training is on the agenda for Council staff this calendar year. Steve put the idea of creating a video showcasing the daily issues people face. Asked the group members happy to participate being interviewed? Juanita Art expo - Present and learn about art. Steve mentioned the Inclusive art expo being funded by Vibrant Spaces for project: Create/Show/Connect: Inclusive Art Workshop, Exhibition & Community Displays by Irrawang High School. They could be involved somehow? Action: Steve to ask Jenn Underwood to confirm if Youth or Community Interagency did a recent Art Expo.
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	BREAK	15 mins		
3.3	Tomaree Transport Group	5:40pm	Chair	Record: Cr Wells told the group that Council is seeking to hold a workshop with transport providers that service the Tomaree area, to discuss the issues associated with the provision of transport in the area during peak season. This is an invitation only Council led workshop, but we are seeking for the DIAAG to nominate a representative to attend this workshop on Friday 29 May, 10am to 1pm. Location – Shoal Bay Holiday Park. Juanita agreed to attend on the group's behalf.
3.4	Pathways Plan	5:43pm	Steve McAlister	Record: Cr Wells asked Steve to provide an update on the status of the Pathway Plan (which the DIAAG provided input into at the last meeting) Steve said Council are still developing the plan and there is no set month as to when it will go on public exhibition. Later this year. Heatherbrae/Tomago – currently not on the list. Tool will provide a weighting tool on which footpaths need updating sooner than others.
3.5	Sea Access Chair	5:47pm	Cr Jason Wells	Record: Cr Wells, Steve McAlister, Juanita and The Mayor attended a demonstration at Little Beach with Sea Access Australia of their chair. Those who attended will report back to the DIAAG on the demonstration: Juanita – thought it was an expensive exercise Cost: \$70k approx. And then storing costs on top. Steve – suggested a more suitable location might have been Fingal Bay but Sea Access preferred Little Beach. The gradient needs to be right for it to work so it's quite limited. Steve suggested NDIS, or

				another organisation, they could use it for all their programs and could use it where they wanted. Cr Wells feedback was: It is heavy, manoeuvring was bulky, Highlight the equipment that is already housed there – two beach wheelchairs. Promote these better to the community. Add signage at the beach. There is Accessible parking near the changing spaces building. Promote there is an Adult Change Room there. Action: Steve to follow up on signage at Little Beach.
3.6	Hunter Circles event	5:54pm	Cr Jason Wells	Record: Cr Wells presented an update on the upcoming: Hunter Circles is hosting an event ‘Connecting with Community’ which may be of interest to members - https://www.huntercircles.org/event/hunter-circles-listening-to-people-rarely-heard-2/ The Guest Speaker is important in community development and the accessible space. Discussion as to whether anyone is interested in attending the event? Council can cover the cost to attend. Tuesday 16 June 9am – 4pm Location: Newcastle Museum. Juanita – Will represent the group. Action: Steve to send email.
3.7	Newcastle Airport Visit (if there is time)	5:56pm	Steve McAlister	Record: Steve gave an update that Council is still seeking to organise for the airport to host a DIAAG meeting. He asked the group what do they want to achieve from having it there? Group replied: • What efforts they have made to make the airport accessible. Tour and showing us. Have they trained their staff? Not a great track record for supporting neurodivergent people.

				• When walking with a walking stick through the airport – no one approached them to move them to the front etc. • Disability support worker having to step in and deescalate or manages situation instead of airport staff. • Allow the group to provide lived experience from the group. • Employment opportunities for people with a disability. The whole meeting would be based on the Airport. Action: Steve to follow up on future meeting date. Advise members the details of the length of the tour to assist with pre-planning.
4.0	Future items			
4.1	Items for future discussion	6:03pm	Chair	Record: Steve gave the members the opportunity to raise items for discussion at a future DIAAG meeting. Items: • Kate Washington MP to present on what is happening in her space of 'disability and inclusion' Kate Washington has indicated that she is willing to come to a future meeting. Focus to be on what are the State plans in response to the proposed Federal cuts to the NDIS? Suggested to wait until 2027, to give the NSW Government time to look at what their response will be, and the supports they will provide Kate could also provide information on grant opportunities that are coming out with transport, footpath improvements, housing etc Could a federal member attend meeting? What representation are we getting? • Refresh of Council's webpage – people with a Disability - https://www.portstephens.nsw.gov.au/community/our-people/people-with-a-disability

				Councils' webpage – In the process of being updated. Good place to upload the future video. - Emergency Management – Council's role in this, and Person-centred Emergency Preparedness September meeting last 2025. Let Steve now if the group wants to hear about at the next meeting. - Koala Sanctuary Skywalk – hold a meeting at the Koala Sanctuary for the DIAAG to provide feedback regarding accessibility and inclusion. Koala Sanctuary are another venue that would be happy to host and receive feedback from the group. - Salamander Bay Town Centre Masterplan – presentation on the Plan and the actions within it. September meeting last 2025. Let Steve now if the group wants to hear about at the next meeting. Cr Armstrong said this item can be bumped down the list. No new future items were given.
5.0	General Business			
5.1	Future meeting schedule and time	6:14pm	Chair	Dates for 2026 meetings: - Thursday 20 August - Thursday 19 November Kayla has moved on from the group now living in Melbourne. Are there any people on a waitlist that could fill her place? Need a balance of representation. Action: Steve to check the list for a potential new group member.

MEETING CLOSED AT: 6:17pm

NEXT MEETINGS

Date: 20 August 2026

Time: 4:30pm –
6:30pm

Venue: To be confirmed

MEETING CODE OF COOPERATION

We start on time and finish on time.

We all participate and contribute – everyone is given opportunity to voice their opinions.

We use improvement tools that enhance meeting efficiency and effectiveness.

We actively listen to what others have to say, seeking first to understand then to be understood.

We follow up on the actions we are assigned responsibility for and complete them on time.

We give and receive open and honest feedback in a constructive manner.

We use data to make decisions (whenever possible).

We strive to continually improve our meeting process and build time into each agenda for reflection.

We will promote best practice, keeping open minds, combining our experiences and shared learnings to inform our deliberations.

Action List – Outstanding Actions and February 2026 Meeting Actions

Item	Topic	Action/Decision	Responsible Officer	Date to be Completed	Status
4 SEPTEMBER 2025					
3.1	Introduction to the DIAP	Action: Group suggested Council inviting Newcastle Airport, Business Port Stephens and Destination Port Stephens at future meetings	Steve		Listed for future meeting
		Action: Invite a staff member from the emergency section (Janice) to the next meeting.	Steve		Listed for future meeting
		Action: Share details of Councils Emergency committee with the group.	Steve		Listed for future meeting
3.3	Salamander Bay Masterplan	Action: Strategic Planner to present the Salamander Bay Town Centre at next meeting.	Steve		Listed for future meeting
19 FEBRUARY 2026					
3.1	Medowie Masterplan	Action: Lillian advised that feedback would be provided to the appropriate Council staff.	Lillian		Completed – information forwarded to staff
3.2	Pathways Plan methodology	Action: Remind the DIAAG about the Pathways Plan public exhibition and consultation at the May meeting	Steve		Listed for May meeting
3.3	Sports4All Inclusion Coach	Action: Billie to share the program video link and free resources with the group	Billie		Completed – link sent to members with minutes of meeting
		Action: Billie to present to the four local sports councils within the LGA	Billie		Completed – attended Sports Council meetings
3.4	Accessible Business & tourism	Action: Members are invited to provide any further comments on the draft Action Plan by Friday 6 March 2026.	All		Completed
5.1	General Business	Action: Steve to confirm Airport availability prior to next meeting	Steve		Ongoing – still seeking commitment from

					Airport
21 MAY 2026					
3.1	Aquatic Centre Infrastructure Plan	Action: Steve to send presentation slides and QR code to the group.	Steve		Outstanding
3.6	Hunter Circles event	Action: Steve to send event information to the group via email.	Steve		Outstanding
3.7	Newcastle Airport Visit	Action: Steve to advise members of the tour duration and details for planning purposes.	Steve		Outstanding
5.1	General Business	Action: Steve to review the waitlist for a potential new DIAAG member.	Steve		Outstanding