

Terms of Reference

Equal Access Advisory Committee

Version 2.0

Adopted by Council on 21 November 2024

Division: Sustainable Communities & Environment
Section: Inclusive and Creative Communities
File Reference: Terms of Reference

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Equal Access Advisory Committee

1 Objective

The purpose of the Committee is to provide advice and recommendations to elected Council on community and organisational perspectives relating to access and inclusion across a range of Council projects.

2 Strategic Links

2.1 Community Strategic Plan 2022 – 2032

The [Community Strategic Plan 2022-2032](#) is Council's key strategic planning document and guides the future direction of the Tweed for the next 10 years and describes the community's vision and aspirations for the Tweed. It also describes our priorities and the approach we will take to achieve the community's long-term vision for the Tweed.

[Stream 3. Thriving: We want the Tweed's people and places to thrive.](#)

Goal 3.1 Support our community to be inclusive and care for each other to create stronger community bonds and support for those in need.

2.2 Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan 2023 – 2026

The Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan is Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). A DIAP identifies and removes access barriers so that communities are more inclusive of inclusion for people with diverse abilities. A DIAP provides direction to Council to address issues, engage, plan and co-design solutions with community over 4 years.

Under the [Disability Inclusion Act 2014](#), all Councils and public sector organisations need to have a DIAP. The Tweed Access and Inclusion Plan 2023-2026 was adopted by Council on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

3 Role and Responsibilities

3.1 Committee's Role

The Committee's role is to:

- a. provide Council with advice and recommendations on access and inclusion matters with a focus on the preparation and implementation of Council's DIAP.
- b. Consider broad public access issues raised by the Tweed community and provide advice and recommendations to Council that seek to improve Council policy.
- c. Support Council and others to promote access and inclusion achievements and advocate for opportunities for improvement in the Tweed Shire.

Exclusions:

- a. Road infrastructure, traffic management, parking compliance, maintenance of footpaths, lighting, tree lopping or other operational access issues for which Tweed Shire Council is responsible should be raised with Council Customer Service staff.
- b. Individual/personal complaints against private organisations which are not the responsibility of Council should be referred to the appropriate peak advocacy body.
- c. As an advisory committee, the Equal Access Advisory Committee does not have authority to make or enact decisions on behalf of Council. Advisory committees carry no budgetary decision-making capabilities and have no authority over expenditures or executive powers.

3.2 Member responsibilities

Members shall:

- Serve in a voluntary capacity.
- Attend scheduled meetings, review documents prior to meetings, provide advice in the best interests of the Tweed community, maintain confidentiality and handle sensitive matters in accordance with the Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and relevant policies.
- Foster respectful, constructive relationships with Council and individuals with diverse abilities, ages, genders and ethnicities in the Tweed community.
- Support Council and others to promote access and inclusion achievements and advocate for opportunities for improvement in the Tweed Shire.
- Advocate and promote greater civic participation from individuals with diverse abilities in the Tweed community, including:
 - Equal Access Advisory Committee and other sub-committees of Council
 - Tweed Disability Network
 - Public Exhibitions
 - Your Say Tweed
 - Project Reference Groups
 - Management Committees
 - Residents and Rate Payers Groups.

4 Composition and Tenure

4.1 Membership composition

The Committee will consist of up to 13 members with suitable expertise and/or experience in access and inclusion issues and capacity and capability to perform member responsibilities.

Committee membership includes:

- Up to 11 independent members including at least one representative from each of the following categories:
 - Person living with a disability.
 - Aged 65 years or older.
 - A carer for a person living with a disability or aged 65 years or older.
 - Person from a culturally or linguistically diverse background.
 - Representative of a local service provider or professional organisation supporting individuals with disabilities, the elderly, or culturally and linguistically diverse community.
- Up to two Councillors.

Council staff may appoint an appropriate temporary alternate person if a member is unavailable for a scheduled meeting.

4.2 Membership Tenure

- Members are appointed for the term of Council.
- Any changes to the Committee composition and tenure must be approved by Council.

4.3 Member Selection and Appointment

- Council will open a formal Expression of Interest process prior to the start of a new Council term. At a minimum, this will be advertised in Tweed Link and Your Say Tweed.
- A Selection Panel of Council officers will evaluate applicants based on an assessment of their suitability against selection criteria. The selection of preferred applicants and alternates will be based on achieving a diverse and representative Committee. A Wait List will be established for alternate members if suitable applicants are available.
- The Selection Panel will make recommendations to Council who will appoint members for a term that aligns with the Council term.
- At the completion of the Council term, members are eligible for extension or re-appointment following a review of their performance.

4.4 Selection Criteria

All members must:

- Reside or actively provide services in the Tweed Shire.

- Be proficient in reading and understanding reports, strategies, and planning documents (this may include the use of assistive technologies).
- Have email access and the ability to receive and review documents electronically.
- Have a good knowledge, understanding and experience in access and inclusion issues related to diverse abilities, ages, and genders.
- Skills, knowledge and experience of disability in at least one of the following categories:
 - Lived experience of diverse ability.
 - Carer or work experience in disability services or working with people with diverse ability, age or cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
 - Advocacy for universal access and/or social inclusion.
 - Laws or policies in NSW, Australia or internationally that protect the rights of people with diverse abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and/or seniors.

4.5 Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

The Chairperson is responsible for maintaining orderly meetings and collaborating with Council Officers on agenda content. Both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson must demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills and effective leadership. Their roles are vital in fostering a constructive and productive committee environment.

- The Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson will be independent members elected by a majority vote of committee members.
- The term of office concludes at the mid-term performance review. A new member vote will occur following the review.
- If the Chairperson is not available, the Deputy Chairperson will perform those duties.

4.6 Induction of new members

New members will receive induction to help them fulfill their committee responsibilities effectively. Induction will cover:

- Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and other relevant policies.
- Committee meeting schedule and priority projects.
- Committee roles and responsibilities.
- Communication methods and practices.

Experienced members are requested to contribute to the induction process for new members.

4.7 Cost reimbursement

Independent members not representing organisations, will be reimbursed for meeting-related expenses, including transportation and necessary supports to participate.

5 Meetings

5.1 Meeting Schedule and Location

- The Committee will meet at least 4 times per year. Additional meetings may be recommended by the Committee as necessary.
- Meetings will be scheduled to accommodate committee members, Council officers and key projects identified in the DIAP.
- Meetings will be held in-person in accessible venues. All meetings will be conducted using accessible modes of communication to meet the needs of members. Virtual meeting options may be available.
- Committee members may be consulted via email where an agenda item requires Committee input outside the scheduled meeting cycle.

5.2 Meeting Attendance and Quorums

- A quorum will consist of the majority of Committee members, including at least one independent member and one Councillor member.
- Members may request assistance and/or support to attend and engage fully in Committee meetings.
- A member should advise the Secretariat if they are unavailable to attend a scheduled meeting. The Secretariat may request an alternate independent or Councillor member to attend.
- Membership will be reviewed if absence is recorded at 3 consecutive meetings.
- The responsible officer providing Secretariat support can invite Council officers or others with special expertise to attend Committee meetings to provide technical advice and/or support on request.
- Meeting attendees and invitees can provide advice, information and administration assistance to the Committee and do not have voting rights.

5.3 Meeting Minutes

- Minutes will be taken at meetings capturing advice, recommendations and committee action items.
- An Actions Register will be maintained to provide an accurate account of the status of open and closed items.
- Meeting minutes and the Actions Register will be circulated to members within 10 working days of the meeting (or as soon as practicable) for review.
- Members must review and provide feedback within 10 working days via email.
- Following endorsement from Council's Executive Leadership Team, the final approved Committee meeting minutes will be reported to Council.
- Council endorsed minutes will be accessible to the public on Council's website at tweed.nsw.gov.au.

5.4 Secretariat

Council will provide Secretariat support to ensure the smooth operation and effective functioning of the Committee. This includes:

- Preparing and distributing meeting agendas, materials and documents at least 7 days prior to meetings.
- Taking detailed minutes during meetings, capturing advice, recommendations and committee action items.
- Maintaining records of all committee documents, ensuring they are organised and accessible for future reference.
- Serving as the primary point of contact between the Committee and relevant stakeholders.
- Ensure the Committee's activities comply with relevant regulations and governance standards.
- Overseeing and conducting Committee performance reviews.
- Aiding members to attend and/or fully participate and engage in Committee meetings, if requested.

5.5 Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct

Committee members (including alternates if they are in attendance), invitees and attendees must declare any conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting or before discussion of a relevant agenda item or topic. Details of any conflicts of interest should be appropriately minuted.

Where members, invitees or attendees at Committee meetings are deemed to have a real or perceived conflict of interest, it may be appropriate they be excused from Committee deliberations on the issue where the conflict of interest may exist.

The final arbiter of such a decision is the Chair of the Committee.

Committee members must observe the Code of Conduct and other policies relating to:

- Maintaining confidentiality and non-disclosure of private or confidential information.
- Communicating with media or members of the public on behalf of Council or the Committee, with Council's written permission.

Conduct inconsistent with the Terms of Reference, Council's Code of Conduct or relevant policies may result in termination.

5.6 Committee Performance

The Secretariat will conduct performance reviews of the Committee twice during its tenure: once midway through and once at the end.

These reviews will involve member self-assessment, with input from management and other relevant stakeholders.