

Minutes

Minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Committee Meeting held Wednesday 8 September 2021

Venue:

Virtual Conference

Time:

10am

Present:

Karen Sculley (Chairperson), Suzanne Hudson (Deputy Chairperson), Kyle Sculley, Wendy Buckingham (10.35am) (Community Representatives), Helen Carter, Giselle Benitez; Robert Noakes; Cr Warren Polglase; Alana Brooks (11am), Gabby Arthur (Minutes) (Tweed Shire Council)

Apologies:

Tarhnee Wilson, Colin Usher, Vanessa Riggs (Community Representative), Tracey Stinson (Tweed Shire Council)

Guests:

Simone Seeney (Bitzios Consulting), Chelsea Baker (Leisa Prowse Consulting)

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Kyle Sculley

Seconded: Suzi Hudson

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Equal Access Advisory Committee meeting held Wednesday 14 July 2021 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Business Arising:

Nil

Agenda Items:

Welcome, Introduction and Acknowledgement of Country

Karen welcomed the members and opened the meeting with the Acknowledgement of Country.

A1. Introduction and apologies

Giselle advised that Tarhnee Wilson is unable to join the meeting due to IT issues and Wendy Buckingham will be joining shortly. Giselle is working with Council's IT section to improve options for virtual meetings. Suzi advised that Blind Citizens are able to add the passcode into the BlueJeans link to make it easier.

A2. Administration

(a) **Agenda – Members are invited to submit additional items for discussion.**

(b) **Review of previous meeting minutes and actions.**

The EAAC Minutes of 14 July 2021 were endorsed by Council on 19 August 2021.

(c) Outstanding Matters

- **Access & Inclusion Plan** - EAAC to provide feedback to Giselle of other focus groups that should be added to the list and how they should be engaged within the next two weeks. Colin has provided some feedback.
- **Access & Inclusion Plan (Business Chamber)** - Colin has arranged for Kyle and Suzi to attend the Business Chamber's breakfast forum to raise awareness and engage with the business community. The breakfast was to be held next week however due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, it has been delayed. Cr Polglase advised that this has been rolled over to the October Business Chamber meeting and that the Chamber members are looking forward to Kyle and Suzi's attendance.
- **International Day of People with Disabilities (IDWP)** - Council accepted the recommendation and resolved not to proceed with the IDPWD event gala in 2021 but that the day be celebrated in another format.
- **Foreshores Access Study** - EAAC to provide feedback to Giselle on criteria, survey and stakeholders. Giselle advised that the face to face conversations with key stakeholders has been delayed due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions but will occur when possible. The EAAC has provided some feedback and there is still time to provide further feedback. This will be a priority over the next 2 to 3 weeks.

A3. Group check-in

Lengthy discussions regarding impacts on the EAAC members and the community with the following feedback:

- Mental health issues/support for community
- Impacts on homeless
- Impacts on displaced people who can't return home to Queensland
- Impacts on community due to border bubble not being in place
- Appreciation for what Council is doing regarding the border issues
- Impact on community with workers unable to come over the border
- Impact on businesses
- Services are unable to provide clients with essential day to day support

Cr Polglase advised there is every indication the NSW lockdown will be lifted for Northern NSW at this end of this week, however it doesn't appear the Queensland Premier will be lifting the border controls. Queensland holds a strong line regarding vaccination.

Cr Polglase and other business leaders are working with the NSW Cross Border Commissioner regarding the issues for our community. Cr Polglase suggested that a request could be sent through to the NSW Cross Border Commissioner by community members regarding any specific concerns. Suzi thanked Cr Polglase for his support.

Giselle advised that there is a limit of what Council can do at this time as it is a State decision however it is advocating and are concerned about people being left without essential services. The Local Health District has a program called the Rural Adversity Mental Health Program and Council has shared information regarding the program with the support sector along with a list of service providers including mental health supports.

Cr Polglase suggested it would be beneficial to have an article in the Tweed Link about wellbeing and support contacts for mental health in the community and the business sector. Suzi advised that she would be happy for her contact to be included for anyone with a vision impairment. Discussion that the article should include domestic and family violence and grief counselling as there are families affected by their loved ones passing away in aged care facilities during the restrictions.

Action: *Giselle to liaise with the Alex Grantham of the Local Health District and prepare a Tweed Link article around wellbeing and support contacts for mental health in the community and the business sector based on the rural adversity mental health program.*

A3. International Day of People With Disability (IDPWD) - Celebration options

Giselle advised that she has researched the United Nations' theme for 2021 however there doesn't appear to be a new theme for 2021. The United Nations theme for 2020 was *Building Back Better: towards a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 World*. This theme is still relevant for this year. Its focus was a global awareness raising campaign: 'Tell our stories, enable our rights' on its official social media channels.

Council has resolved not to proceed with the IDPWD event gala in 2021 but that the day be celebrated in another format. Along with the current COVID-19 restrictions, the other impact is that the Local Government election has been shifted to 4 December which is the day after this IPWD event. Giselle has made some enquiries with Local Government NSW and Council's Events Officer and the feedback is that any outdoor events or social gathering is risky and should be reconsidered. This is affecting all events including the Australia Day celebrations for January 2022.

Giselle suggested the idea of having a social media campaign where we are 'telling our stories and enabling our rights'. Council could put forward the social media campaign. We could engage a videographer to work with the EAAC to create video blog of short stories about what IDPWD means, and actions from the current Access & Inclusion Plan that have made a difference to their lives and the challenges of 2021. This campaign will aim to raise awareness of the day, without the risks of arranging a social gathering event. The community could also be invited to create their own videos using their smartphones and submit their own stories in the week leading up to the day. A professional videographer would be used for the committee members' stories. The EAAC agreed this was a good idea. Giselle advised she would put together some options and will be in touch with members.

Suzi advised that the EAAC did a 'My Life, My Way' (Untold Stories) series of videos with the Tweed Regional Museum.

Action: *Giselle to prepare some options for a professional videographer to record the stories of the EAAC for International Day of People with Disability and report back to the EAAC.*

A4. New Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 – 2026 Update and member feedback on draft Easy Read Survey

Giselle advised that the project plan has been adjusted according to the amended date for the Council election in December 2021. The aim is for a draft Plan to go to Council for consideration to publically exhibit, in February 2022.

A draft Easy Read survey has been prepared in partnership with the Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) and will go out to the community next month. The draft Easy Read survey aims to enable people with disability in particular and the wider community to participate in preparing the new Access and Inclusion Plan. Staff will work with disability support providers to encourage people who might need assistance to complete the survey. The draft survey will be available online, as a printable version and a soft version which will have text for the images.

Giselle asked for EAAC feedback on the survey, considering sequence of questions, layout and length. CID suggested identifying any repetition to reduce the length. Wendy advised that she didn't find the survey repetitive and found it well laid out and excellent. Robert advised that the survey is shorter than previous surveys, and while it might be long it was easy to read and move through quickly, the diagrams are clear and the formatting a good step forward.

Giselle asked that EAAC read through the survey and complete it using the tick boxes and also free text areas, and then provide feedback.

Action: EAAC members to provide feedback within the week ending 10 September.

A5. Tweed Pedestrian and Bike Plan – Alana Brooks (TSC), Simone Seeney (Bitzios Consulting) and Chelsea Baker (Leisa Prowse Consulting)

Update and mini-workshop with members

Giselle advised the consultants that Suzi and Wendy are attending today's meeting without any visual equipment.

Alana advised that they are providing an update on the Tweed Pedestrian and Bike Plan. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there have been changes to the original engagement plan including cancelling four shopping centre engagements and the in-person workshops and instead having more online workshops. There are also phone in days so the community can speak to the project team.

Simone advised that the presentation is being recorded however all information provided will remain anonymous. Simone described each of the images on each slide the presentation to the EAAC.

The Tweed Pedestrian and Bike Plan aims to provide a long term strategy and action plan for infrastructure over the next 10 years. This infrastructure includes footpaths, kerb ramps, signs, shade and seating. The Plan will focus on areas around CBD's, towns, village centres, schools, community facilities, shops and public transport. The Plan aims to improve safety and connectivity when walking. Pedestrians include people who walk, run, push a pram, use a mobility aid, mobility scooter, roller skates or skateboard.

The draft Tweed Pedestrian and Bike Plan is currently on exhibition for community consultation and is available on Council's website through *Your Say Tweed* until 30 September 2021. EAAC can also email the project team to provide further feedback. An action plan will be developed following the consultation.

Q1. What are the current issues and challenges you experience with the footpaths / shared user paths?

- Concern for wheelchair users. Footpaths around Tweed are not wheelchair friendly. Problems include uneven ground and tree roots affecting foundations etc. power poles and things that block the pathway.
- In Murwillumbah, footpaths are far too narrow. Older footpaths tend to slope away and break off on a high edge. Footpath grades are not even. Ageing of footpath - slope to either side depending on changes to landscape. Path condition.
- For people with vision impairment - obstacles in the centre or the side of path are quite challenging. People can walk into poles as the cane is moving to one side, then the person misses a large obstacle and at times may run into them (eg. poles or water bubbler).
- Signage (road signs) next to or close to paths are challenging, people can run into them.
- Design wider paths to not tip out or damage equipment.
- Wendy (a wheelchair user) advised of her saying 'Breathe in and walk sideways'.

Q2. Are there any issues regarding interaction with other path users?

- Bikes - unless the other path user makes their presence known, vision or hearing impaired pedestrians may not be aware there is another person on the path. This results in people using paths at less busy times of the day, eg. very early mornings.
- Difficult to find zebra crossings. Awareness of where the crossing is. Even if there is a tactile marker, still need to know that there is a crossing there. Need more creative ways to communicate where the crossing is and that it is a safe place to cross.
- Often pathways end abruptly and there are no connections, so users are forced to cross to the other side of the road, to stay safe eg. Cooloon Crescent, Tweed Heads South, William St Murwillumbah. No concrete footpath at time you need to cross road to Eungar Street and Megan Street is a blind corner.
- Designated Accessible Parking Spaces around Tweed Heads are often not safe eg. Bowling Alley across the road from Tweed Mall. Users need to go on to the road to get to the footpath from the accessible car parking space. No access from parking to pathways. Audit the streets with this issue - road use from carpark to pathway. Access for wheelchairs to go straight from parking to pathway is needed.
- Similar issues for taxi drop off spaces on the road may not be near a safe entry point to the footpath. The junction between road / driveway / path can be too high so wheelchairs gets stuck and cannot get onto the path. Need for kerb ramps.

Q3. Do you have any ideas about improving access for everyone on our pathways?

- More kerb ramps and markers to show where crossings are located.
- Make sure trees are pruned regularly - overhanging vegetation sticking out from boundaries (through fences etc). Maintaining surrounds so vegetation does not affect access on pathways is important
- Keeping business advertising signs off the footpath. It's difficult for vision-impaired and users of wheelchairs to be aware of and navigate these obstacles. Limiting pinch points.
- There is an accessible car parking space in front of a Kingscliff chemist which has racks of retail items out the front. It can be difficult to move around obstacles that are positioned near designated accessible car parking spaces. Need rules (and promote them) for safe distance of items from footpath - near access to kerb.

- Displays of retail items on the footpath causing obstacles. It can be tricky especially with people standing near them reducing the width of the footpath further.
- Awareness raising correspondence received from community member re people parking across footpath driveways which pushes people off paths and onto the road.
 - Community education about shared use of paths.
 - General idea - more wayfinding measures. Different surfaces or colours to distinguish the access ways. Poles - outside dining - many aspects to consider. But we need to identify where there is a higher risk. Risk analysis of areas where people are more likely to be injured or hurt. May require a lot of observations.
 - Getting businesses on board. More signage to direct people where to park and where to go. Not excessive amounts of signs but a way to help guide people in most obvious places or high need.
 - Stainless steel rails at times are hard to see - enhance with visual markers improve safety and visibility. More visual markers on physical objects will make them more visible. Contrasting colours can make existing infrastructure more visible and safe eg. bike racks and outdoor dining areas.
 - Members could not identify specific examples of good crossings. Suggested locating signs higher than head height or painted on the footpath with sufficient distance (10m+).

Q4. Are there any particular areas that the project team should take a closer look at on the ground? (Key issues and pinch points)

- Steel railings - Tweed City car park near the cinema and doctors surgery. Contrasting lines or stickers to wrap around.
- Tweed City - Centre Management is receptive to ideas. The light levels are quite low. Need collaboration between the stakeholders. People / businesses / Council re not enough illumination. Brett Rowles is the contact for Tweed City feedback.
- Pinpoint on map and call team if need support to mark specific areas.
- Bowling Alley on Wharf Street, Tweed Heads. No access from footpath to disabled carpark.

Q5. What is your vision for our pedestrian network in the future? What should it look like in 10 years?

- Level footpaths everywhere. No tripping hazards. Even if the concrete is 1cm higher or lower it is a tripping hazard. Uneven footpaths is a big issue.
- Linkages. Internet and signage easily accessible database - keeping people informed. Very clear information on each area of the Tweed so people can research prior to travelling to a location. Give people a clear snapshot of access areas, facilities and what they need to know. What information do people need to be safe and confident when going to different areas?
- Width of footpath is most important. Especially when it narrows down to cross the road. It can become very dangerous. Crossing width is okay except they tend to take up the whole space of the footpath eg. the kerb ramp needs to be wider.
- Wayfinding measures.
- Linkages - community to rely less on private transport.
- Path connections through natural places, including along waterways and local parks so residents can avoid busy and dangerous roads, to activate green spaces and link

to main business areas. Hills can be inhibiting and waterways are naturally level. Advising natural areas as key routes to walk and also commute.

- Boardwalks rather than concrete paths so environment is less damaged. Beautiful wetlands - we don't want to damage them. Wheelchair access to more diverse natural areas.
- Taxi in Murwillumbah - let out on the street and often required to move against traffic to reach the crossing. Connections to the key pick up and drop off areas.
- Specific areas with clear signage or directions to make key drop off and pick up spots safer. Also broader community is aware of access needs for improved safety.
- Kerb ramp in Heffron Street, Tweed Heads South near the traffic lights on the swimming pool side is way too steep. Could be tipped out of a wheelchair.

Simone provided an overview and advised that the next step in the project will be to undertake an audit of the key focus areas identified and to assess the key challenges. The Action Plan will then be drafted and placed on public exhibition where further feedback can be provided. Please visit the *Your Say Tweed* page or call Giselle with specific areas that can be included on the map so that it can be assessed as part of the Plan. It is important to fix the existing pathways before undertaking new infrastructure. The current draft document is on exhibition until 30 September.

The draft Tweed Pedestrian & Bike Plan will be developed and ready for exhibition at the start of 2022 and feedback will be able to be provided through *Your Say Tweed*. The Plan will be presented to EAAC again at that time along with the logic for identifying and prioritising. Giselle thanked Simone, Chelsea and Alana for the presentation.

Giselle advised that this is Alana's final EAAC meeting as she is leaving Council. The EAAC wished Alana all the best for the future and acknowledged her contribution to the Committee.

Cr Polglase noted that issues with pedestrian access in the coastal areas hasn't been highlighted and that the community needs to be engaged. Alana advised that Cabarita Beach residents were well represented at a recent workshop and came up with some great ideas for crossing points and access links. The project team would like to hear from Pottsville residents and have promoted the engagement through the Tweed Link and schools. The Pottsville Beach Neighbourhood Centre may be able to promote it or social media might be an option.

General Business:

GB1.Point Danger Headland

Suzi asked whether there is any way that Tweed residents can access Point Danger Headland by car and could Council take up this issue. Cr Polglase advised that under the COVID-19 border restrictions, a border pass is required to cross over and visiting the Headland would not be an acceptable reason. Only residents who live in the affected streets are able to obtain a border pass. It was acknowledged that some people with a disability are unable to walk up to the Headland but unfortunately there isn't any way other Tweed Shire residents can access Point Danger during the border restrictions given the requirement to cross into Coolangatta, Queensland.

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GB2.Norries Headland Masterplan

The draft Norries Head Masterplan is currently on public exhibition through *Your Say Tweed*. The Masterplan is over the park area and use of Norries Headland and includes some interesting access changes. Giselle will invite the Project Officer to the next EAAC meeting.

Action: *Giselle to invite David Burgener to attend the next EAAC meeting to engage on the draft Norries Headland Masterplan.*

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Equal Access Advisory Committee will be held 13 October 2021.

The meeting closed at 12pm.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS: