



**Edward  
River**  
COUNCIL

***Edward River Council  
Disability Inclusion  
Action Plan 2023-2026***



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# **Edward River Council**

## **Disability Inclusion Action Plan**

### **2023-2026**

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Edward River Council acknowledges and embraces the Traditional Owners of the Lands within the Edward River Council area - the Wamba Wamba/Perrepa Perrepa Peoples – and pay our respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. Edward River Council also recognises the diversity of different cultures within our community and their contribution.

## **Contributors**

Edward River Council would like to acknowledge the contribution made by staff, council members, people with disability, service providers, members of the wider community and Accessible Arts. Their willingness to participate in the consultation sessions and respond to the survey has enhanced the value of the information incorporated into the Disability Inclusion Action Plan and has helped inform the actions to be implemented by Council in coming years.

# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

I take great pleasure in presenting Edward River Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2023-2026. This Plan outlines Council's work over the next four years to make the Edward River region more inclusive of people with a disability.

Most of us will be impacted by disability at some point in our lives, through our own experience or through caring for others.

This plan encourages positive change to the lives of people with disability and supports the full participation of all community members in all aspects of the Edward River community.

Through this plan, Council will proactively work to develop positive community attitudes and behaviours towards people with disability, create more liveable communities, support meaningful access to employment, and improve access to services.

This is Edward River Council's first Action Plan and builds both on the commendable work undertaken by the former Deniliquin Council and the work we are already doing to remove access barriers and increase participation of people with disability in our community.

Thank you to everyone who helped to develop this Plan, especially those local people with disability, families and carers who have shared their lived experience and the local disabilities service sector, whose everyday work supports inclusion and participation in our community.

Engaging the community is vital to this Plan's success. With your continued support we can make a positive difference. An inclusive Edward River region will benefit everyone and strengthen our community.

**Phil Stone,  
Chief Executive Officer**

# Terminology

**Language** can be a personal and political choice. We recognize that there are varying views on language and terminology around disability in Australia and internationally. Edward River Council's DIAP 2023-26 will use the person first language of 'person with disability' to recognize that disability is just one aspect of a person's life and does not determine who they are. Council again acknowledges that others may prefer to label themselves according to the identity-first model (disabled persons) and/or persons with a psychosocial disability. However, for the purposes of uniformity in this Policy, and the reasons outlined above, Council has chosen to use the identity first model as an all-encompassing term.

Council acknowledges that the notion of disability is ever evolving and will carry out due diligence to stay updated on the language surrounding disability, and when changes occur, amend the DIAP accordingly.

**The Social Model of Disability** makes a distinction between conditions - the condition, illness, or loss/lack of function - and disability - barriers and discrimination. The term 'disability' refers to barriers, rather than medical conditions. The Social Model looks at the environment instead of individual conditions.

**Inclusion** is about creating an environment that celebrates diversity and is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. This environment recognises, utilises, and values the knowledge, abilities, skills and ideas of people, irrespective of race, ethnicity or religion, gender or sexual orientation, education level, socio-economic background, age, disability or family responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> University of Western Australian Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.  
<[ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/daip/Disability-Access-and-Inclusion-Plan-2020-2025.pdf](https://ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Documents/daip/Disability-Access-and-Inclusion-Plan-2020-2025.pdf)>.

**Access** is about creating the necessary conditions for all individuals and organisations to utilise services, facilities, programs, and employment opportunities. Access is about making space for the unique characteristics that each person brings. Barriers to equitable access fall into the categories of physical, communication, economic, social, and attitudinal.

**Universal Access** is about the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used by all people regardless of their age, size or ability. An environment should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. It is a fundamental condition of good design. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits.<sup>2</sup>

## Disability in Australia

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines people with disability as those ‘who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’<sup>3</sup>

Edward River Council subscribes to the social model of disability which recognises the difference between a person’s individual condition or impairment and the barriers they experience which are created by the environment and society around them. Rather than focusing on the individual and medical diagnosis, the social model focuses on the barriers that create disadvantage by limiting opportunity, participation, autonomy and self-expression.

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<sup>2</sup> National Disability Authority. What is Universal Design. <[universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/](https://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/)>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). <[social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd](https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd)>.

Disability can be both permanent or temporary, invisible or visible. We include mental health within our definition of disability, as well as members of the Deaf community (who may not choose to identify as people with disability, but instead as part of a cultural and linguistic minority, with their first language being Auslan).

Edward River Council recognises not everyone who experiences these barriers chooses to identify as a person with disability. We understand that identity and disclosure in the context of disability is complex and very personal. We also understand the principles of universal design, that one size does not fit all and the complexities of intersectionality within disability.

Disability impacts us all. It is a very broad diversity group and is commonly experienced amongst our community – with people either directly identifying themselves, being a carer for someone else or having a family member or close friend with disability. The statistics shared below demonstrate how widespread disability is:

- One in five Australians are people with disability (17.7% or 4.4 million people).<sup>4</sup>
- Out of the 7.80 million residents of NSW, 1.37 million or 18.34% have a disability.<sup>5</sup>
- 600,800 or 43.7% of all people with a disability in NSW are people over 65 years with a disability.<sup>6</sup>
- More than 11 million Australians or 47% have one or more chronic conditions.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), “Disability, ageing and carers, Australia: summary of findings” (Latest release, 24 October 2019) <[abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/2018)>.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey, Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2015 (ABS Cat No 4430.0) 2015, at [abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0](https://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4430.0), which includes the data cubes for tables in NSW (released 12 January 2017), accessed 20 September 2017.

<sup>6</sup> The Judicial Commission of New South Wales Equality before the Law Bench Book - Section 5 - People with Disabilities. <[judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/equality/section05.html#ftn.d5e8316](https://judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/equality/section05.html#ftn.d5e8316)>.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, “Chronic conditions and multimorbidity” (Topic summary, 7 July 2022) <[aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/chronic-conditions-and-multimorbidity](https://aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/chronic-conditions-and-multimorbidity)>.

- 45% of the population will experience a mental health issue at some time in their lifetime.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.4 million or 15% of Australians have a physical condition.<sup>9</sup>
- 357,000 people in Australia are blind or partially sighted.<sup>10</sup>
- One in six Australians are impacted by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 Deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.<sup>11</sup>
- 45.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over experience disability.<sup>12</sup>
- People with disability are twice as likely to be in the bottom 20% of gross household incomes.<sup>13</sup>
- 45% of those with disability in Australia are living either near or below the poverty line, more than double the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 22%.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020-21). National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing. ABS. <[abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release](https://abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release)>.

<sup>9</sup> The Judicial Commission of New South Wales Equality before the Law Bench Book - Section 5 - People with Disabilities. <[judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/equality/section05.html#ftn.d5e8316](https://judcom.nsw.gov.au/publications/benchbks/equality/section05.html#ftn.d5e8316)>.

<sup>10</sup> Vision 2020 Australia, "A snapshot of blindness and low vision services in Australia" (Resource article no date) <[vision2020australia.org.au/resources/a-snapshot-of-blindness-and-low-vision-services-in-australia/](https://vision2020australia.org.au/resources/a-snapshot-of-blindness-and-low-vision-services-in-australia/)>.

<sup>11</sup> Access Economics, Listen Hear! The Economic Impact and Cost of Hearing Loss in Australia (Access Economics report, February 2006) <[hearnet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ListenHearFinal.pdf](https://hearnet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ListenHearFinal.pdf)>.

<sup>12</sup> ABS 4714.0 – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15 <[abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0](https://abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/4714.0)>.

<sup>13</sup> ABS 4430.0 - Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings, 2015. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <[abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0main+features202015](https://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4430.0main+features202015)>.

<sup>14</sup> Price Waterhouse Coopers. Disability expectations - Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia 2011. <[pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf](https://pwc.com.au/industry/government/assets/disability-in-australia.pdf)>.

# Disability in Edward River

- 606 people or 7.2% of the population in Edward River Council reported needing help in their day-to-day lives due to disability.<sup>15</sup>
- 842 people, or 10.0%, of people in Edward River Council have a mental health condition, which is higher than both the NSW average of 646,412 people or 8.0%, and the National average of 2,231,543 people or 8.8%.<sup>16</sup>
- 94 people, or 1.1% of the population in Edward River Council have dementia which is higher than both the NSW average of 62,706 people or 0.8% and the National average of 189,162 people or 0.7%.<sup>17</sup>
- 659 people or 7.8% of the population in Edward River council are living with long-term health conditions (not including arthritis, asthma, cancer, dementia, diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, lung disease, mental health conditions or stroke) in ERC is 659 people or 7.8% which is on par with both the NSW average of 626,827 people or 7.8% and the National average of 2,041,929 people or 8.0%.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Edward River Council Need for assistance. <[profile.id.com.au/edward-river/assistance](https://profile.id.com.au/edward-river/assistance)>.

<sup>16</sup> Edward River: 2021 Census All persons Quick Stats. Australian Bureau of Statistics. <[abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA12730](https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA12730)>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

# Our Commitment to Accessibility

To support the implementation of our Disability Inclusion Action Plan, we will:

1. Deliver the services needed by our community within our responsibility and ensure that Council resources are responsibly managed
2. Lead by example and act as a role model for others through our own actions, strategic organisational responses, and our way of doing things
3. Advocate to other levels of government and key agencies to continue to improve services, facilities, and opportunities for our community
4. Facilitate and promote interaction between key stakeholders who can help us implement this DIAP

## Methodology and Consultation

This Plan was developed in partnership with Accessible Arts, the peak arts and disability organisation in New South Wales.

During 2023, an extensive program of consultation was undertaken to inform this DIAP.

This included:

- Focus Group discussions with people with disability, their carers, service providers, volunteers, sporting and leisure clubs and interested community members
- A series of targeted interviews with council staff
- Focus Group discussion with councillors
- Two surveys: one for community members and another for council staff and councillors
- A Web Content Accessibility Guideline website compliance audit
- A desktop accessibility compliance audit of key council documents

# Governance, Monitoring and Review

Reporting on progress of the actions in the DIAP will be in accordance with the Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

Annual actions of the DIAP will be considered and prioritised for resourcing and inclusion in Council's annual Operational Plan and budget each year.

We may also engage other experts, partners and stakeholders with lived experience of disability to assist us with the DIAP's implementation on an as needs basis.

We will provide an external report on the Plan's progress annually as part of our Annual Report. The Annual Report is published on our website.

# Legislation and Policy

This Plan aligns with international and national social policy and legislative frameworks including:

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 (UNCRPD)
- National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (NDS)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)
- Disability Services Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010
- National Arts and Disability Strategy 2009
- Disability Services Act 1991 (Australian Capital Territory)
- Disability Justice Strategy 2019 - 2029 (Australian Capital Territory)

# Our Disability Inclusion Action Plan

## Key Focus Areas

We are committed to ensuring that Edward River Council is an accessible and inclusive place to visit and work. This means increasing disability confidence and competence within our organisation and creating an environment where we can provide opportunities for everyone on an equal basis.

### KEY FOCUS AREAS – WHAT YOU TOLD US

1. **Attitudes and behaviours** - You told us that the single greatest barrier for people with disability has been attitudes and behaviours of the general community, and that breaking down the barriers of attitudes and behaviours plays a key role in access and inclusion. You also told us that you believe that developing positive attitudes and increasing awareness will help change people's perceptions.
2. **Accessible and liveable communities** - You told us that the benefits of creating a liveable community went beyond modifying the physical environment. You told us that a more accessible Council had wide spread impacts, from parents with prams to the elderly with mobility issues. You told us that access to transport, community recreation and cultural opportunities and facilities, and social engagement were just as important.
3. **Employment** - You told us that people with disability have many skills and assets that Council can benefit from, yet statistics show that people with disability still have high rates of unemployment. You told us that people with disability have access issues when attending interviews, that there is a general lack of understanding of disability, and that employers fear that people with disability will cost too much to provide adequate support.
4. **Systems and processes** - You told us that while technology has advanced and that there are now many varied ways to communicate and interact, providing information effectively to people with disability still needs improvement.

## Objectives and Actions

### Key Focus Area 1:

#### Attitudes and Behaviours

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
Council staff and councillors are aware of the social and economic benefits of inclusiveness.	Deliver Disability Awareness Training to staff, volunteers and Councillors as part of the induction and onboarding process.	2025-26	People & Culture	100% of new staff receive training at induction  100% of councillors receive training at commencement of new term
	Deliver Disability Awareness refresher to all staff every two years	2025-26	People & Culture	80% of Councillors and staff undertake refresher training

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
Build a culture of positive community attitudes towards people with disability fostered through greater awareness, exposure, understanding and respect	Include a review of progress with DIAP progress as a key part of the Annual Reporting process	2024-25	Office of the CEO	DIAP progress reviewed by Council annually
	Identify existing community Disability Awareness organisations and partner with them as key stakeholder groups for engagement in development of council strategies	2024-25	Communications & Engagement  Corporate Strategy	Disability Awareness stakeholder group identified
	Provide for Council's participation and promote support of relevant days including International Day for People with Disability, R U OK Day, Mental Health Month and Carers Week	2025-26	Communications & Engagement  People & Culture	Council support and promotion of relevant days are posted on social media  # staff participation events of relevant

## Edward River Council – Disability Inclusion Action Plan

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
				day conducted per annum
	Ensure representation of people with disability in Council's marketing collateral.	2025-26	Communications & Engagement	5% of marketing material reflective of people with disability through appropriate images

## Key Focus Area 2: Accessible & Liveable Communities

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
Ensure public domain infrastructure is accessible and inclusive, meeting standards and promoting independence and dignity	Audit Council facilities, buildings and open spaces to confirm accessibility service gap	2024-25 2025-26	Open Spaces and Facilities	1 access audit completed annually

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Apply access and inclusion service standards and best practice guidelines in the development of Masterplans, Strategies and Asset upgrades	From 2024-25 and ongoing	Asset Management Strategic Asset Management	% of Strategies, plans and Asset upgrades that consider access and inclusion
	Review and support the provision of dedicated signage that improves access and inclusion	2024-25 Ongoing	Transport Strategic Asset Management	Review completed by June 2025  # signage upgraded to enhance access and inclusion
	Scope the provision of accessible lifts for the outdoor and hydro pool	2025-26	Strategic Asset Management	Scoped and considered for funding by 2026

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Review inclusivity within playgrounds and provide recommendations for further all-inclusive play spaces for everyone	2025-26	Open Spaces and Facilities	1 playground reviewed annually
	Review the provision of mobility car parking spaces in key locations in town, near medical facilities and at key community facilities and develop strategies to maximise access and inclusion	2025-26  Ongoing	Transport  Strategic Asset Management	Review complete by 2026  # of additional accessible parking spaces provided
Ensure community facilities, spaces and places provide for a range of inclusive participation opportunities for people of all abilities	Explore opportunities to increase diverse representation in services and community programs such as the Library and council-delivered events	2024-25	Library  Community & Economy	5% increase in people identifying as a person with disability participating in programs

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Continue to provide a range of inclusive programs at community and creative facilities	2025-26	Community & Economy	5% of people identifying as a person with disability participating in programs
Local businesses and organisations are accessible and inclusive	Identify ways to support local businesses and organisations to be inclusive and accessible	2026-27	Community & Economy	50% of local businesses consulted on inclusivity and accessibility by June 2027
Provide accessible and inclusive events and exhibitions aimed at celebrating and connecting the community	Use the Smithsonian guidelines for accessible exhibition design as a basis to develop specific guidelines for all types of access requirements for Council cultural spaces.	2024-25	Project Management Office  Community & Economy	Requirement for consideration of Smithsonian guidelines is incorporated into tender for PHC

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Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
				Gallery SCCF R5 funded project
	Scope the potential for the inclusion of Auslan, audio descriptions tours, self-guided audio descriptions tours, hearing loops, Relaxed programs, dedicated Quiet spaces, Tactile and Interactive programs/exhibits	2024-25	Project Management Office  Community & Economy	Requirement to scope is incorporated into tender for PHC Gallery SCCF R5 funded project
	<p>Ensure Council-led events in council cultural facilities consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Priority/Early Seating program with designated wheelchair spaces to manage queuing and assist those who cannot stand in queues</li> <li>- booking and ticketing processes for people with a range of access requirements and affordability</li> </ul>	2025-26	Community & Economy	Actions are embedded into community events project planning by June 2025

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	- the provision of comprehensive information about accessibility prior to arrival via clear online communications.			
	Review and ensure sound and lighting levels are safe and accessible for everyone.	2025-26	Community & Economy	Requirement to consider sound and lighting level accessibility embedded into DTH hire agreement by June 2026
	Survey and plan to improve wayfinding and signage in venues and exhibits across the Edward River Council area using Universal Design Principles. Scope a variety of maps of buildings and the central town, in both hardcopy and digital formats.	2026-27	Community & Economy	Survey of wayfinding and signage conducted and plan developed by June 2027

## Edward River Council – Disability Inclusion Action Plan

### Key Focus Area 3: Employment

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
People with disability can access meaningful employment opportunities to enter and progress through the organisation	Include an inclusion and diversity statement in job advertisements to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply.	2024-25	People & Culture	100% of job advertisements include inclusion & diversity statement
	Ensure job advertisements are published in accessible formats and that various accessible formats of application are accepted.	2025-26	People & Culture Communications & Engagement	100% of job advertisements are published in accessible formats
	Scope opportunities for internships, traineeships and work experience programs for people with disability.	2026-27	People & Culture	1 internship / traineeship / work experience program is identified by June 2027

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Conduct an Access Audit of staff areas and staff software and devices to identify barriers and solutions.	2025-26	Customer Experience	Access audit of staff areas and software is undertaken by June 2026
	Review HR policies and documents as they come up for renewal to align with the Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy 2020-2025 and ensure access and inclusion is referenced where appropriate.	2025-26	People & Culture	100% of HR policies and documents due for renewal are updated to reference access and inclusion by June 2026
People with disability can access meaningful volunteering opportunities to enter and progress through the organisation	Clearly communicate that volunteer access requirements will be supported on all marketing/communication around volunteering opportunities	2025-26	Communications and Engagement People & Culture	100% of marketing materials for volunteer opportunities communicate this

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
			Community & Economy	
	Ensure volunteers have the same procedures as staff for disclosing access requirements and then ensure these are supported.	2025-26	People & Culture  Community & Economy	100% of volunteer procedures reviewed accordingly

#### Key Focus Area 4: Systems & Processes

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
Council information is accessible to all	Develop a plan to implement the priority recommendations of the Website Audit Report to ensure the website is accessible for people with a range of access requirements	2024-25	Communications & Engagement	Website Audit Report implementation plan is developed

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Working towards achieving Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1AA to continually improve access to information.	2024-25	Customer Experience  Communications & Engagement	100% of new website content developed aligns
	Training provided to staff on creating accessible PDF and Word documents and web authoring meeting WCAG 2.0 Level AA standard	2024-25	Customer Experience  Communications & Engagement	1 training session scheduled, attended by 100% of staff responsible for updating web content
Customer services are accessible for people of all abilities	Ensure various options are available for customers to communicate with Council (e.g. National Relay Service, Translating and Interpreting Services, Easy Read resources, website, email, phone, in-person)	2024-25  Ongoing	Customer Experience	1 new accessible options is identified and implemented by June 25

Outcome/Objective	Action	Timeframe	Responsibility	Measure/Target
	Ensure people with disability can easily report access and inclusion issues	2024-25  Ongoing	Customer Experience	CRM system updated to include category for reporting access and inclusion issues by June 2025
Community engagement informs ongoing planning for services, programs and facilities with an aim to improve access, inclusion and liveability	Continue to engage people with disability in decision-making processes and in the development and implementation of DIAP's	2025-26  Ongoing	Communications & Engagement	# communications planning includes consideration of stakeholders' disabilities

Policy Version Control

Council Policy Corporate Services

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