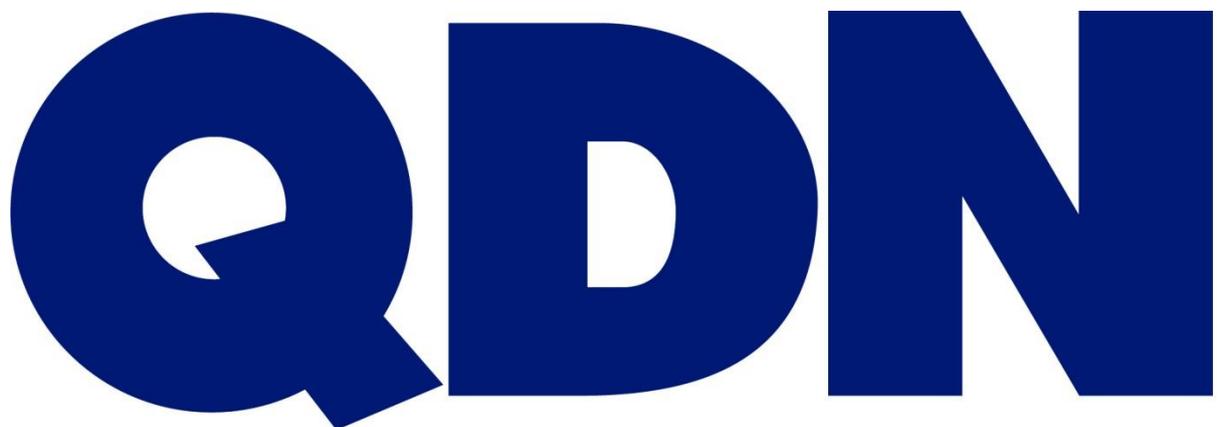


**Written Submission on A City for Everyone:  
Draft Inclusive Brisbane Plan 2019-2029**

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**QUEENSLANDERS WITH DISABILITY NETWORK**  
*NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US*

Submitted To:  
Brisbane City Council, February 2018

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## About Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN)

QDN is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability and the organisation's motto is "nothing about us without us." QDN operates a state-wide network of members who provide information, feedback and views from a consumer perspective to inform systemic policy feedback to Government and peak bodies. QDN also provides information and referral support to people with disability.

QDN has over 1500 members and supporters across Queensland who provide QDN with the perspectives of people with disability.

## Introduction

QDN welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to A City for Everyone: Draft Inclusive Brisbane Plan 2019-2029. Overall QDN believes the Draft Plan sets out practical actions to ensure people of all abilities in Brisbane can live the life they choose.

QDN's vision is a Queensland where people with disability are active and valued citizens, fully included in the social and economic life of their local communities. QDN believes the Draft Plan brings an opportunity to work together to bring about improved relationships, opportunities to work, learn, play, and live in communities that are inclusive and welcoming of people with disability. It also brings an opportunity to deliver improved mainstream services which understand the needs of people with disability and can give people quality, effective, accessible, affordable and safe services.

QDN believes good policy and good decision making happens when the people who use the services or products are part of their planning, design, delivery and evaluation from the beginning. It is also critical that decision makers invest in their capacity to listen to, hear and respond to the input from people with disability to deliver good governance and implement a plan that will achieve an all abilities Queensland. QDN commends Brisbane City Council for providing an accessible consultation process about the Draft Plan.

QDN also acknowledges that the work Council is doing will lay foundations for Local Government responsibilities within the proposed recommendations of the Productivity Commission Report "A Review of the National Disability Agreement" released on 1 February 2019. At a Commonwealth level, the National Disability Agreement (NDA) and National Disability Strategy (NDS) have provided the blueprint for the national disability policy landscape and architecture. The recently released report provides clear recommendations for a cohesive policy architecture that will provide roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and overarching performance reporting frameworks for all levels of government, Commonwealth, State and Local government. This implementation of the recommendations of this report and its timeframes for developing and entering into a new NDA by the beginning of 2020 will be predicated on outcomes of the Federal 2019 election and the incoming Government's response to the Commissions' findings and recommendations.

The *Productivity Commission Report, Review of the National Disability Agreement* report states, “The new NDA should acknowledge that all governments — Australian, State, Territory and Local — share responsibility for improving services and ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to their mainstream services so that they are accessible, inclusive and culturally responsive in meeting the needs of all people with disability, particularly those with complex needs who may need differentiated support. This can include Indigenous people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and people with multiple and complex disabilities (including psychosocial disabilities).p23” The report also identifies that “The NDA’s performance reporting and evaluation framework can also play a role. Indicators relating to the use of, and experiences with, mainstream services by people with disability could help to identify accessibility issues, and facilitate the assignment of responsibilities to improve these services.”

These issues reinforce the need for local/state/territory governments to plan for mechanisms going forward that deliver ways of engaging with people with disability to inform performance reporting, evaluation, as well as a function to identify issues as they emerge and provide advice and information to Government to inform strong public policy formation and evaluation, and good decision making.

As stated in the productivity commission report, the shared responsibility across all levels of government to deliver improved services and responses to people with disability “should be stated in the NDA, which would highlight the importance of the endeavour, and serve as a reminder that improving outcomes for people with disability requires a collaborative response from all governments. P109”

QDN’s response will focus on specific feedback concerning the five themes of Draft Plan: Connect, Work, Live, Enjoy, and Engage. QDN members living in the Council limits inform our feedback.

## **Theme 1: Connect**

Safe, accessible and affordable public and private transport options are essential for people with disability to be part of community and participate socially and economically. People with disability need access to a range of transport options, subsidies and programs which have the underlying intent of providing access to the same level of transport options the rest of the community experiences.

QDN notes with interest Council’s suggestion that new technology could assist people to navigate routes. QDN members have given mixed feedback on the use of technology and apps as a reliable and accessible source of information in terms of public transport. In general, while advances in mobile phone technology mean that people are accessing

information quicker, some people face real barriers to their digital inclusion<sup>1</sup>. Not all people with disability have or can operate smartphones. Ultimately, smartphone apps, even when provided free online, place a cost on the user rather than the service provider. QDN recommends that information derived from apps must be available in several other formats and that app reliability and usability needs to be improved. The expertise of people with disability should be sought and remunerated in the designing and testing of apps and other digital technology.

QDN commends Council on the suggestion of exploring accessible electric three-wheel bikes as a means for providing access to people who previously have been unable to cycle. This is a great step in inclusion and supporting the health and wellbeing of people with disability.

### **Deliver exemplary accessible public transport**

QDN gives in principle support to all the ideas put forward in the discussion paper in relation to accessible public transport. QDN supports the development of standards around safety and securing wheelchairs and other mobility devices in buses, however, is concerned about what this means for people using mobility scooters. Several years ago the Department of Transport made a ruling that people in mobility scooters had to disembark the scooter when it was travelling in a maxi taxi. This caused a lot of upheaval for people choosing this mobility device as many people had great difficulty transferring in such a restricted space or just couldn't transfer, posing a risk to their safety and putting for some, their only form of transport in jeopardy. QDN recommends that Council consult widely with people who use mobility scooters about their needs and preferences before any decisions or regulations are made regarding securing mobility scooters. QDN also recommends that Council explore technology used in Logan and Gold Coast City Council buses which use technology to audibly announce upcoming stops and implement similar technology in Council buses.

### **Make the whole journey easier**

Noting our earlier comments on digital technology, QDN gives in principle support to all the ideas put forward in the discussion paper in relation to making the whole journey easier and more streamlined. Additionally, QDN recommends that Council develop information (both in print and online) in Easy English format for people with intellectual or learning disability.

### **Make Brisbane one of the world's great walking and wheeling cities**

QDN supports all the proposals listed in making Brisbane one of the world's great walking and wheeling cities, particularly walking and wheeling tours for people with different sensory needs. QDN recommends consultation with people with disability on all of these initiatives to ensure the best results, particularly enhancement to pedestrian crossings so they are more accessible to everyone as this is a major safety issue for people with disability.

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<sup>1</sup> Social inclusion in the 21st century that ensures individuals and disadvantaged groups have access to, and skills to use, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and are therefore able to participate in and benefit from today's growing knowledge and information society. See more:

<https://digitalinclusion.nz/about/digital-inclusion-definition/>

### **Support safe road travel**

QDN supports the development of safe set down areas for rideshare services for people with disability who are able to use them, however, on the whole rideshare services remain inaccessible for many people with disability who use wheelchair and mobility scooters. QDN fully supports the extension of Council Cabs to Council locations. Affordable, accessible transport is a critical issue for people with disability, particularly given the uncertainty of the continuation of the Taxi Subsidy Scheme for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants post full roll out from 1 July, 2019. People with disability may become a major user of Council Cabs post 1 July, 2019 and therefore enhancing the accessible fleet may be necessary.

## **Theme 2: Work**

QDN strongly commends and supports all proposals made under this theme. Employment is a major issue for QDN members. The majority of people with disability want to work but lack the opportunity to gain meaningful employment and face additional barriers to their success in employment, such as, discrimination, inaccessibility of workplaces and businesses, lack of access to appropriate support (both to get to work and in the workplace), and lack of accessible, affordable transport options.

### **Support local businesses to become accessible and inclusive**

QDN supports all proposals made in this area and would be interested in collaborating with Council around some of this work through our consultancy arm, QDeNgage. QDN engages people with disability as consultants in this work. QDN is well resourced to provide advice and assistance in terms of many of the proposals listed, including:

- Providing training to businesses to help make their services more inclusive of people of all abilities.
- Facilitating opportunities for businesses to make their services more accessible.

QDN also has a network of 22 Local Support Groups around the State, including four in the Council boundaries. These groups led by people with disability for people with disability as members. Some groups have been successful in making connections to local businesses as part of a mutual exchange of information and support around making businesses accessible and in-kind contributions from businesses to assist with ongoing sustainability of the groups. This has been a successful community development strategy at the local level of increasing disability awareness in local communities.

QDN applauds Council's strategies of:

- Partnering with local businesses to explore recharge stations for mobility devices including electric scooters.
- Partnering with local business precincts to advertise inclusive elements of the streets and businesses so that customers feel confident in shopping locally.

- Facilitating an inclusive business award that recognises and celebrates inclusive practices (such as inclusive employment or accessible service delivery).
- Facilitating tender and procurement processes so that businesses that Council purchases from businesses and vendors who define how they will contribute to Brisbane communities (i.e. purchasing from social enterprises, providing employment opportunities for marginalised groups, providing pro-bono services for non-profit community groups etc.) and use this information as part of assessing Council contracts.

### **Promote Brisbane as an inclusive tourism destination**

QDN supports all strategies listed in the draft plan on accessible tourism. Many people with disability face disadvantage and additional costs when going on holidays, often needing to book accommodation at more expensive venues to be assured of accessibility and even then facing disappointment and challenge. QDN also recognises people with disability as a legitimate stakeholder in the tourism industry and notes there may be increased opportunities for people with disability to travel through the supports provided under their NDIS Plans.

### **Grow the city's workforce diversity**

QDN applauds all of Council's strategies around workforce diversity, particularly providing additional employment programs within Council and subsidies and other incentives for social enterprises employing people with disability. QDN is aware that without intervention from all levels of government, the employment situation for people with disability is unlikely to improve.

## **Theme 3: Live**

QDN strongly supports all the strategies listed in this theme. QDN particularly supports strategies around increasing accessible housing and making Brisbane's parks and facilities more accessible.

### **Broaden Brisbane's Housing Options**

Housing is a fundamental need and a human right. Secure, affordable, accessible and well-located housing is an essential building block for people with disability being able to participate socially and economically in their communities. Having access to housing is critical to enabling people to have choice, control, and being able to form strong relationships with others in their communities.

QDN members continue to raise housing as the highest priority for them. People living with disability in Queensland have additional barriers to finding a home: namely lack of private and public housing with accessibility, failure of the building industry to take up universal housing design, inability to afford modified housing, assumptions about the need for institutional and congregate care and difficulty negotiating and advocating within the housing system, particularly for those with intellectual and cognitive disabilities.

Key issues raised by QDN members on housing include secure tenancy arrangements, home ownership, accessible buildings and homes, accessible neighbourhoods, appropriately designed housing, affordable housing, and locations with accessible transport and other infrastructure. Location of housing is also important as long travel times to visit family and friends or attend medical appointments, do shopping, bill paying also is a major barrier for people with disability.

QDN supports the Council proposed strategies of:

- Providing a dedicated Council employee to support development applications for housing that meets the needs of people participating in the NDIS.
- Providing a Brisbane Housing Strategy that advocates for diverse housing models.
- Partnering with the Queensland Government to identify sites within global precincts (eight areas that play a critical economic function in Brisbane) suitable for encouraging accessible housing close to new job opportunities.

These align with QDN's recommendations in our Position Paper, *Going for Gold: Accessible, Affordable Housing Now*. QDN would be interested in providing further feedback on the Brisbane Housing Strategy, and continuing QDN's position on the Lord Mayor's working group. The new changes to the Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) within the NDIS will contribute to strategies that aim to increase the stimulation of the market and it will be critical for Council to take a proactive role to deliver innovative housing responses to achieve increased accessible housing.

Local Councils and State Government departments need to work together to ensure builders and planners have inclusive design principles in place undertaking development, and that people with disability are part of the planning and design from the perspective of the end user.

### **Make Brisbane a more accessible and welcoming place to live and visit**

QDN supports all the strategies in this section of the Draft Plan. Additionally, QDN members regularly raise the importance of accessible neighbourhoods and environments in enabling community connection and friendships. This includes but is not limited to:

- Wide footpaths and accessible kerb sides
- Unobstructed tactile surfacing – community education campaigns are needed to educate the public about leaving tactile surfacing clear for people who use them
- Accessible public transport options and stations
- Accessible local shops and public meeting spaces, including libraries, cafes, community centres and other public spaces
- Unlocked accessible Changing Places public toilets with unisex options for people who may have someone of another gender assisting them

- Education of the retail sector by people with disability regarding what constitutes accessibility
- Safe and accessible pick-up and drop-off points in car parks and in public places
- Increased monitoring/ regulation of disability permit car parking spaces
- suitable footpaths and other pedestrian wayfinding technology which includes textured ground covers for vision impaired people at stations and on footpaths, traffic signals that make noise to assist in crossing the road for people navigate around their neighbourhood.

## Theme 4: Enjoy

People with disability want to be included in the same recreational activities as everyone else. An inclusive community accepting of all abilities is one where people, no matter who they are, can choose and participate in activities they enjoy, including sport, cultural activities and events. Providing information to business owners and operators on the access needs of people with disability is essential to people being able to enjoy recreational pursuits.

### **Make Council events and activities more accessible and welcoming for everyone**

QDN supports the all of the strategies in this section of the Draft Plan, particularly those around updating accessibility guidelines, the provision of hearing loops at Council events and the provision of supportive equipment for people with disability to trial new activities.

The current reality of the experience of people with disability, particularly those with mobility issues and sensory needs is the logistics of accessing recreation and sporting activities is fraught with difficulty. Many venues that claim to be accessible when specifically queried, turn out not to be fully accessible to people with mobility and sensory needs. One reason for this includes limited understanding by venue staff concerning the definition of accessible being confined to the existence of disability toilets or ramps. However, usually this does not extend to consideration of whether the disability toilet is located in a non-accessible location or whether a venue with 'only a couple small steps' will prove completely inaccessible to some people.

QDN members want to see accessibility of recreation and sporting events and venues as standard. A barrier to people with disability enjoying recreation is the lack of information, particularly for people either not engaged in services, or not wanting to participate in disability-specific sporting or recreational activities. People with disability want information on how to locate accessible recreation options. This information needs to include physical accessibility aspects as well as other aspects such as staff training in attitudes or equipment. They want this information to be provided in an accessible way in a variety of formats. This could include online information as well as a central point like a community hub or neighbourhood centre that has information on activities in the local area.

### **Develop linking programs to transition more people to mainstream events and activities**

QDN appreciates Council's efforts to link people with disability to mainstream events and activities, particularly around their health and wellbeing. Traditionally, this has been a particular overlooked area for many people with disability. QDN particularly supports:

- Providing virtual and/or augmented reality experiences of active and healthy programs to encourage participation by people who haven't been involved before.
- Partnering with community organisations to promote and deliver active and healthy programs that combine exercise with daily routines such as shopping centre walks, particularly for people with limited mobility.
- Partnering with community organisations and fitness providers to deliver training in using park equipment for seniors, culturally diverse communities and people with disability

## **Theme 5: Engage**

An inclusive community is one where all people feel safe, welcome and connected. Furthermore, QDN holds a vision of people with disability being actively engaged as leaders, taking part in and helping to make decisions about things that are important to them and the whole community. QDN believes it is important for local Councils to have regular robust engagement processes with people with disability on key issues at the local level. This investment in leadership is an important step to ensuring accessible, welcoming and inclusive local communities.

### **Help people feel safe, welcome and connected to their community**

QDN supports all strategies in this section of the Draft Plan, particularly design alert and evacuation procedures to ensure safety in disasters and support programs that bring together young people with diverse backgrounds and abilities to build new friendships.

### **Harness technology to make it easier to enjoy Brisbane and interact with Council**

QDN supports all strategies concerning the development of inclusive technology that will assist people to navigate Brisbane and engage with Council. QDN supports strategies that minimise the barriers around people's digital inclusion and improve the way people communicate with Council. QDN recommends that people with disability need to be thoroughly engaged on proposed technology before procurement.

### **Enable everyone to have their say**

QDN supports the strategies around providing an Auslan explanatory video about how to engage with Council and exploring new technologies that enable greater engagement.

Furthermore, QDN suggests the following:

- Council could develop reference groups of people with disability, including people with intellectual disability, focused on providing high-level advice to Council on local policy and development projects Council is considering.

- Council could develop co-designed projects of planning for local Council initiatives to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.
- Through QDeNgage there is capacity for Council to develop consultancy opportunities for people with disability to be engaged as experts in key areas to inform accessibility and Council decision making.
- Council could have a role in funding place base community projects where people with disability could contribute their expertise and develop skills in engaging with local government.
- Council could develop champions with expertise in areas identified in the draft plan, for example: housing, work, transport, accessible communities.
- QDN supports the concept of citizen activation through a street march followed by a community celebration of inclusion through a festival event. Council could have a role in supporting and promoting such an event.