



Image description: QDN member speaking to staff in front of sign that reads "Nothing about us without us."

POLICY PLATFORM

2020 Queensland Local Government Election

Executive summary

QDN is seeking commitments from all candidates running in the 2020 Queensland local government elections on 28 March 2020 to:



Deliver a robust Disability Access and Inclusion Plan



Allocate funding to deliver accessibility upgrades to existing footpaths and public transport infrastructure



Establish an Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee



Introduce incentives to expand affordable, accessible and secure housing for people with disability



Establish inclusive employment strategies, including targets to employ more people with disabilities, support for small businesses to hire employees with disability and a social procurement policy.



Establish or expand paid work experience programs within council workplaces to support people with disability develop their skills and expand their professional networks



Establish dedicated grants programs to develop disability awareness campaigns and improve accessibility to local businesses



Conduct and publicly release a review into the number of on-street disability parking spots in each local government area



Develop agreements with private shopping centres to allow council inspectors to monitor disability parking spaces



Involve people with disability in all phases and decision-making processes relating to disaster planning, management and recovery

Introduction

Councils play a vital role in creating inclusive, accessible and welcoming communities.

In consultation with people with disability, councils are often best placed to identify barriers that prevent people with disability from fully participating in the community and develop practical solutions that best fit their local needs.

Councils are often a reflection of their community's unique character and have significant power to shift community attitudes. Creating an inclusive community for people with disability means acknowledging the social model of disability. This model recognises that societal attitudes, practices and structures, rather than an individual's impairment, restrict and prevent people with disability from economic participation, social inclusion and equality.

When barriers for people with disability are removed, the whole community benefits, including the local economy. Local businesses enjoy the benefits of not just people with disability as customers, but also their families, carers and friends. Research has shown that people with disability are likely to travel with two or more others, demonstrating the significant economic benefit of creating accessible communities.¹

QDN is an organisation of, for, and with people with disability with over 2000 members and supporters. QDN operates a state-wide network of members who provide information, feedback and views from the lived experience of people with disability to inform systemic policy feedback to Government and peak bodies.

QDN has developed this 2020 Local Government Election Platform in consultation with our members who are actively engaged in their local communities and understand that this election represents an important opportunity to build communities where people with disability are recognised and valued.

We are asking all mayoral candidates in all 77 councils across Queensland to respond to each of the below policy commitments to ensure Queenslanders with disability and their friends, family and supporters are more informed before casting their votes on Saturday, 28 March 2020.

¹ (CRC for Sustainable Tourism, 2008).

Disability Access and Inclusion Plans

Councils play an important role in creating environments that are inclusive of all people, particularly given their planning responsibilities and their ongoing delivery of a broad range of community activities and services.

The National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 states that councils should, at minimum, develop plans that comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*, but more importantly engage and consult with people with disability to fully understand the access and inclusion issues that need to be addressed.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will develop, enhance and deliver a robust Disability Access and Inclusion Plan that sets clear targets and strategies around how people with disability access and connect with their local communities. Disability Access and Inclusion Plans include ensuring:

- Council facilities (parks, libraries and council chambers) and services can be accessed in the same way by all members of the community, including those who have accessibility requirements
- Council information is available in formats that everyone can understand. This includes ensuring council websites are compliant with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0, enabling people using assistive technology to access information on websites. Alternate versions of documents should also be available and may include large print, Easy English, braille and Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN)
- Council staff are trained to deliver inclusive policies, programs and services for people with disability
- Council public consultations are accessible to people with disability, including allowing people who find it difficult to leave home to participate in community town halls/meeting via online platforms

Accessible infrastructure

All Queenslanders have the right to access their community on an equal basis. It is essential that public infrastructure, particularly footpaths and public transport, is designed and delivered in a way that all people with disability can use. Being able to access public transport services can be a critical part of finding a job, accessing healthcare and achieving a good quality of life.

QDN seeks a detailed commitment, including allocated funding, to deliver accessibility upgrades on existing footpaths and public transport infrastructure.

Additionally, **QDN seeks a commitment that councils will establish an Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee**, made up of people with disability, to provide insight and assistance to councils when making decisions around accessibility. An Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee gives councils access to an ongoing source of feedback that is based on lived experience and real-life stories. It also empowers residents with disability to be involved in decision-making and to give them a voice within council.

Affordable and accessible housing

Housing is a fundamental need and human right and key to enabling people with disability to be included in community and family life, and to participate fully as citizens in society.

People with disability are disproportionately affected by the lack of accessible, affordable, secure and safe housing in Australia. Demand far outstrips supply. Many people with disability on low incomes are forced to rent privately in a market where they face discrimination and a shortage of accessible properties. Affordable housing is often poorly located outside metropolitan areas, with limited accessible public transport, local services and employment opportunities.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will introduce incentives to develop and expand affordable, accessible and secure housing for people with disability.

QDN wants to see councils take a leadership role in ensuring a greater supply of accessible housing and hopes that this commitment will result in innovative policies that are designed to meet each community's local needs. For example, Universal Housing Design Incentives are one policy mechanism some councils are already implementing to encourage the development of new dwellings that are specifically designed to meet the accessibility needs of residents with disability.

Economic development

The unemployment rate for people with disability is twice that of the general population. This is often due to misconceptions about hiring people with disability and unconscious biases ingrained in recruitment processes.

Employing people with disability isn't just beneficial for the individual and employers but has significant flow on effects for the broader community – with more customers for local businesses and less pressure on unemployment services and income support.

Councils across Australia employ over 187,000 people and attracting new staff with diverse skills and experience will help ensure they provide high quality services to all local residents.² It is critical that council workforces reflect and represent the people that live in each local community, including people with disability.

Establish inclusive employment strategies, including targets to employ more people with disabilities, support for small businesses to hire employees with disability and a social procurement policy. This commitment should be backed up by transparent annual reporting to demonstrate council's efforts to meet the target. Council should also look at implementing a social procurement strategy that uses councils' significant buying power to generate economic benefits for people with disability. Specifically, the social procurement strategy should aim to purchase products or services from Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE).

ADE are Commonwealth-funded and generally not-for-profit organisations operating in a commercial context, specifically to provide supportive employment opportunities to people with disability. Some ADE also operate as social enterprises. Under this policy, QDN encourages councils to engage with Queensland QDE that offer award-based pay rates for all staff.

² (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015)

Many people with disability report that despite having tertiary or TAFE qualifications, they struggle to secure employment due to a lack of workplace experience and professional referees.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will establish or expand paid work experience programs to support people with disability develop their skills and expand their professional networks.

Councils are in a prime position to support local small businesses and community organisations deliver community development initiatives and disability awareness training through dedicated grants programs. Council grants are an important mechanism for supporting local initiatives that respond to each community's unique needs.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will establish or expand dedicated grants programs targeted at supporting local businesses and community organisations develop disability awareness campaigns and improve accessibility to local businesses.

Disability parking

The importance of accessible parking spaces for people with disability cannot be overstated. QDN members have repeatedly raised examples of when the lack of accessible parking spaces has prevented them from buying basic groceries or attending doctors' appointments. This has broader flow on effects for the entire community, including poorer health outcomes, less money being spent in local businesses and an increase in social isolation.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will conduct and publicly release a review into the number of on-street disability parking spots in each local government area to ensure there are enough spaces to meet demand. This is particularly important given proposed legislation, currently before Queensland Parliament, that would see the Disability Parking Permit Scheme expanded to include people who are blind and people with vision impairment. This is a reform that QDN strongly supports, but it is crucial that councils review the current allocation of accessible parking spaces given the potential increase in the number of permit holders.

QDN seeks a commitment that council will develop a proactive approach to establish agreements with private shopping centres to allow council inspectors to monitor disability parking spaces and issue fines for cars parked in disability spots without a permit.

Disaster preparedness

Councils play a key role in disaster risk reduction, preparedness and management activities and have a responsibility to include people with disability in the planning process to improve the safety of all residents during a disaster event.

QDN seeks a commitment that councils will:

- Involve people with disability in all phases and decision-making processes within council relating to disaster planning, management and recovery
- Include a person with disability as a representative on Local Disaster Management Groups
- Ensure all communications (e.g. early hazard warnings, website material, disaster planning material) regarding disaster planning, management and recovery are inclusive and accessible (e.g. screen reader accessible, Easy English and AUSLAN interpreted) and people with disability are included in any review or development of disaster-related communication materials or plans.