



SHIRE OF
MERREDIN
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

2020 - 2025



- This DAIP furthers the principles and objectives of the Western Australian Disability Services Act 1993 and is a document that explains the Shire’s commitment to addressing the issues that prevent access to services, facilities, and events;
- With this document the shire has provided a framework to address the issues which are then reported annually to the Department of Communities;
- This DAIP meets the seven Standards in Schedule 2 of the Disability Services Regulations 2004;
- Adopted by the Shire of Merredin on 16 June 2020;
- This is also available in electronic format on Council’s website;
www.merredin.wa.gov.au
- This plan is also available upon request in alternative formats such as in standard or large print, on the Shires website, electronically by email and in audio format on CD.

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1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The Shire of Merredin

The Shire of Merredin is located in the Central East Region of Western Australia, 260km from Perth. The Shire covers 3372km.

The Shire has a population of 3,350, of which a town population of approximately 2,900. The remaining population resides in the rural area and from the townsites of Muntadgin, Burracoppin, Nangeenan, and Hines Hill.

There are 1,635 dwellings within the Shire of Merredin.

Major Industries include steel fabrication, machinery manufacturing, wheat, sheep, pigs, Collgar Wind Farm, Risen Energy Solar Farm and China Southern Western Australian Flying College. Because of its position, roughly halfway between Perth and Kalgoorlie and having major marshalling yards to handle both narrow gauge and standard gauge, Merredin appears to have a solid future associated with the transport industry. It is important that Merredin continues to promote its reputation as a town offering low cost housing in a rural location with a high quality standard of living.

1.2 Functions, facilities, and services (both in-house and contracted) provided by the Shire of Merredin

The Shire of Merredin provides:

Services to property: Construction and maintenance of Shire-owned buildings, roads, footpaths, cycle facilities and walk trails; land drainage and development; waste collection and disposal; litter control and street cleaning; planting and caring for street trees; street lighting and bushfire control.

Services to the community including: Provision and maintenance of playing areas and reserves and management of Recreation Centre; library and information services; environmental health services; senior citizen care and health education.

Regulatory services including: Planning of roads and subdivisions of in accordance with Local Planning Scheme; building approvals for construction, additions and alterations, environmental health, and ranger services, including enforcement of local laws, dog, litter, and parking control.

General Administration: The provision of general information to the public and lodging of complaints and payments of rates.

Processes of government including: Ordinary and Special Council and committee meetings, electors' meetings, and election of Council members.

1.3 People with disability in the Shire of Merredin

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability Ageing and Carers estimated that 18.3% of Australians identify themselves as having some form of disability. It is estimated therefore that there are around 600 persons with disability living within the Shire. The influx of retirees will increase this number and seasonal arrival of tourists, including tourists with a disability, must be considered.

1.4 Planning for better access

The Western Australian Disability Services Act requires all Local Governments to develop and implement a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) to ensure that people with disability have equal access to facilities and services.

Other legislation underpinning access and inclusion includes the Western Australia Equal Opportunity Act (1984) and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA), both of which make discrimination on the basis of a person's disability unlawful.

1.5 Progress since 1995

The Shire of Merredin is committed to facilitating the inclusion of people with disability through the improvement of access to its information and facilities and services. Towards this goal, the Shire has adopted its first Disability Access & Inclusion Plan in 1995 to address the access barriers within the community. The plan was again reviewed in 2001, 2007 and 2014.

In compiling the Disability Access & Inclusion Plan in 2020, a number of facilities were recognised as already having been put in place by the Shire to assist people with disability who either reside in or visit the Shire. These facilities include upgrading of existing footpaths to provide low contour gradient disabled access, new ablution facilities, provision of a new Recreation Centre and the provision of additional concrete footpath surfaces. The Shire of Merredin access inclusion plan 2020 – 2025 builds on existing work and is aimed at improving access for people with disability and making the Shire of Merredin a more inclusive community.

Since the adoption of the initial Disability Services Plan, the Shire has implemented a number of works improvements and programs to improve disability access within the Shire of Merredin. The following achievements were made during the 2015-2020 DAIP and are as follows:

Improvement of existing functions, facilities, and services to meet the needs of people with disability

Building & Planning approval conditions continue to assist in increasing disability access awareness of developers, and the introduction of disabled access to all newly constructed or altered public buildings.

- Provision of training to front counter staff on service delivery for people with a disability as well as provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Consideration of the needs of people with a disability as part of event planning processes to ensure that people with a disability are catered for and can attend and be involved in events and functions in comfort and dignity.
- Encouraged local businesses to improve disabled access to shops.

Improved access to community buildings and facilities

- Provision of a replacement lift chair to the heated therapy spa pool at the MRCLC.
- Provision of a dedicated access ramp at the Merredin regional swimming pool.
- Construction of a disabled ablution facility at the cemetery.
- Provision of CEACA aged accommodation and associated access facilities for the elderly to the adjacent shopping precinct and Doctors Surgery.
- Redevelopment of the North Merredin Primary School for use as a multipurpose facility that is accessible by people with a disability.
- Provision of dedicated ACROD parking bays in Bates Street, Barrack Street, and the adjacent public car park areas.
- Provision of additional dual use footpaths within the townsite areas.

Opportunities provided for people with disability to participate in public consultations, grievance mechanisms and decision-making processes are provided

- Council services, functions and facilities are available on request in large print, audio cassette and computer disc alternative formats.
- Council ensured that voting for municipal elections takes place in accessible buildings and that alternative voting arrangement is available where required.
- Council engages with the community by holding regular community forums to allow feedback and provide for input into the preparation of Council policy and implementation of Council services.

2.0 ACCESS AND INCLUSION POLICY STATEMENT

The Shire of Merredin is committed to ensuring that the community is accessible for people with disability, their families, and carers, via Council's;

1. Progressive modification of all existing Public Building Facilities and Services under its control, to cater for the needs of people with a disability, It should be noted that the public buildings under Council direct control have been addressed and this aspect is now a care and maintenance process;

2. Ensuring that all future Public Buildings, Facilities and Services, constructed or provided within the Shire are designed to cater for the needs of people with a disability;
3. Regular review of the provision of services to ensure that all services are provided in a manner that meets the expectations of persons with a disability.

The Shire of Merredin believes that people with disability, their families and carers who live in country areas, should be supported to remain in the community of their choice; recognising that people with disability are valued members of the community and contribute socially, economically, and culturally, making for a more diverse and richer community.

The Shire is committed to consulting with people with disability, their families and carers and, where required, disability organisations, to ensure that barriers to access are addressed appropriately.

The Shire of Merredin is committed to achieving the seven standards of its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, which are as follows:

- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability have the same opportunities as others to access the services of, and any event organised by, the Shire of Merredin.
- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability have the same opportunities as others to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Merredin.
- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability receive information from the Shire in a format that will enable them to access information as readily as others are able to.
- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability receive the same level and quality of service from the staff of the Shire of Merredin.
- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability have the same opportunities as others to make complaints to the Shire of Merredin.
- Provide a means of ensuring that people with disability have the same opportunities as others to participate in any public consultation with the Shire of Merredin.
- A disability access and inclusion plan must provide a means of reducing barriers to people with disability obtaining and maintaining employment.

3.0 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND INCLUSION

The Shire of Merredin is committed to achieving the following outcomes.

Outcome 1: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, a public authority.

- Council will endeavour to be adaptable in responding to the barriers experienced by people with various disability, including people with physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychiatric disability.
- Council will ensure that all policies and practices that govern the operation of Council facilities, functions and services are consistent with Council Policy regarding access.

Outcome 2: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of a public authority.

- Council will undertake to incorporate the priorities regarding access for people with disability, identified during the consultations, into its submission for its capital works improvement program. Modifications will commence as funds are made available.
- Council will undertake to liaise with developers to increase their awareness of the access requirements of people with disability.

Outcome 3: People with disability receive information from a public authority in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

- Council will produce all of its information on Council facilities, functions and services using clear and concise language.
- Council will advise the community that, upon request, information about Council functions, facilities and services can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print and audio cassettes.

Outcome 4: People with disability receive the same level of service from the employees of a public authority as other people receive from the employees of that public authority.

- Council will undertake to ensure that staff are aware of the key access needs of residents with disability and people with disability who visit the local government area in relation to the provisions of all services.
- Council will provide disability awareness training for staff.
- Where required, Council will seek expert advice from the disability field on how to meet the access needs of people with disability.

Outcome 5: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to a public authority.

- Council will ensure that all grievance mechanisms are accessible for people with disability and are acted upon.

Outcome 6: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by a public authority.

- Council will ensure that information is available in a clear and concise language on how residents can participate in decision-making processes, public consultation, and grievance mechanisms.
- Council will undertake to support people with disability to attend Council Meetings.

Outcome 7: People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Merredin

- Council will continue to review recruitment practices to ensure all processes are inclusive.
- Council will undertake to improve methods of attracting, recruiting, and retaining people with disability.
- Include disability friendly considerations in all workplace projects.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN

4.1 Community consultation process

The Shire of Merredin reviewed its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan in 2019/20. The process included:

- Examination of the previous DAIP and subsequent review of annual reports to determine what has been achieved and any outstanding works.
- Examination of other Shire documents and strategies.
- Investigation of contemporary trends and good practice in access and inclusion.
- Consultation with staff.
- Consultation with the public.
- Consultation with the Merredin Community Resource Centre Management.

The Disability Services Act Regulations (2004) set out minimum consultation requirements for public authorities in relation to DAIP. Local governments must call for submissions (either general or specific) by notice in newspapers circulating in the Local Government area and on any website maintained by, or on behalf of, the Local Government. Other mechanisms may also be used. The following consultation methods were used:

- On the 22nd of November 2019, the community was informed through the local newspaper and Shire website, that the Shire was developing a DAIP to address access barriers for people with disability and their families. The community was invited to provide input into the review of the current initiatives and the development of a new plan. Submissions via Survey

Monkey were sought with 18 submissions being received by the Shire of Merredin.

- On the 12th of December 2019, a stakeholder group meeting was held at the Shire library involving people with a disability, their carer's, service providers, state, and local government representatives. The stakeholder group provided input into the review of the current initiatives and the development of a new plan.

4.2 Findings of the consultation

The review and consultation found that most of the initial objectives in the DAIP had been achieved and that a new plan was required to address ongoing access barriers, ensuring currency and relevance. The new plan should also reflect the legislative and regulatory changes, accommodating contemporary values and practices, whilst striving for inclusion and access beyond the minimum compliance of standards.

Many of the areas identified in the consultation process are ongoing and are constantly reviewed and updated. Existing Shire buildings are for all practical purposes compliant for access and inclusion and the review role is becoming one of "care and maintenance" as construction resources are finite.

The review process specifically identified the need for;

1. Advocacy by the Shire of Merredin with its sister agencies in the State Government sector such as the Public Transport Authority and the Main Roads Department, for better access by people with a disability to the train services as well as an improved ability to safely cross the Great Eastern Highway;
2. Improvements relating to the Shire of Merredin Website to make it more intuitive;
3. Improving staff awareness of disability related issues and associated considerations;
4. Improving and increasing footpath construction and ensuring better access to and by existing footpaths;
5. Improving existing ACROD bay parking facilities;
6. Improving access to existing shops in Merredin.

4.3 Responsibility for implementing the DAIP

Implementation of the DAIP is the responsibility of all areas of the Shire of Merredin. The Disability Services Act (1993) requires all public authorities to take all practical measures to ensure that the DAIP is implemented by its officers, employees, agents and contractors.

4.4 Communication of plan to staff and people with disability

- On the 22nd of November 2019, the community was informed through the local newspaper and Shire website, that the Shire was developing a DAIP to address access barriers for people with disability and their families. The community was invited to provide input into the review of the current

initiatives and the development of a new plan. Submissions via Survey Monkey were sought with 18 submissions being received by the Shire of Merredin.

- On the 12th of December 2019, a focus group meeting was held at the Shire library involving key stakeholders including people with a disability, their carer's, service providers, state, and local government representatives. The focus group provided into the review of the current initiatives and the development of a new plan.

Formal endorsement by Council is anticipated for June 2020.

Following endorsement of the plan by Council the community will be advised through the local media (newspaper, electronic media, and radio) that copies of the plan are available to the community upon request and in alternative formats if required.

4.4 Review and evaluation mechanisms

The Disability Service Act requires that DAIPs be reviewed at least every five years. The DAIP Implementation Plan can be amended more frequently to reflect advancements of access and inclusion issues. Whenever the DAIP is amended, a copy of the amended plan must be lodged with the Department of Communities.

Monitoring and reviewing: The DAIP will be reviewed annually for progress and implementation with all progress and recommended changes reported to Council.

Evaluation: An evaluation will occur as part of a five-yearly review of the DAIP. Community, staff, and elected members will be consulted as part of the evaluation and Implementation Plans will be amended based on the feedback received. Copies of the amended Implementation Plan, once endorsed by Council, will be available to the community in alternative formats.

4.5 Reporting of DAIP

The Disability Services Act requires the Shire to report on the implementation of its DAIP in its Annual Report outlining:

- Progress towards the desired outcomes of its DAIP.
- Progress of its agents and contractors towards meeting the seven desired outcomes.
- The strategies used to inform agents and contractors of its DAIP through providing a link to DAIP on the website.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Implementation Plan details the task, timelines, and responsibilities for each strategy to be implemented in 2017-2021 to progress the strategies of the DAIP. It is intended that the Implementation Plan will be updated annually to progress the achievements of all the strategies over the duration of the five-year plan.

Outcome 1:

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by, the Shire of Merredin.

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that people with disability are consulted on their need for services and the accessibility of current services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a feedback mechanism for use of all disabled services by the Shire. Organize an annual stakeholder group meeting aimed at identifying measures for possible inclusion into the Councils annual budget. 	2021 & Ongoing	Senior Management Group Media Officer
Monitor Shire services to ensure equitable access and inclusion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct systematic review of accessibility of services Rectify identified barriers. 	Ongoing Ongoing	All Managers All Managers
Ensure that events, whether provided or funded, are accessible to people with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all events are planned using the Accessible Events Checklist. 	Ongoing	Community Liaison Officer & Environmental Health Officer

Outcome 2:

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to access buildings and other facilities of the Shire of Merredin

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
<p>Ensure that buildings and facilities meet the Australian Standards for access and any demonstrated additional needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that new buildings include accessibility considerations in compliance with relevant statutory requirements. • Where required investigate public concerns regarding access to buildings – private sector included for compliance and required upgrades. • Liaise with the PTA and Main Roads Department regarding access to train services and provision of safe crossing of the Great Eastern Highway. • Prioritise provision of additional dual use footpaths in the Shire as part of the annual budget process, 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Manager Development Services</p> <p>Executive Manager Development Services</p> <p>Executive Manager Engineering Services / Executive Manager Development Services</p> <p>Executive Manager Engineering Services</p>
<p>Ensure that all redevelopment works provide access to people with disability, where practicable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that upgrades of publicly accessed buildings provide for access and mobility requirements for persons with a disability. • Ensure no building application is signed off without meeting the legal requirements for disabled access. 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Manager Development Services</p> <p>Executive Manager Development Services</p>

<p>Ensure that ACROD parking meets the needs of people with disability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit existing Shire disabled parking bays and upgrade as necessary. • Install additional disabled parking bays if needed 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Manager Engineering Services</p>
<p>Ensure disabled facilities and services are clearly indicated and accessible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgraded signage to disabled facilities and services, including toilets and parking. • Ongoing upgrade of footpaths and ramps leading to disabled facilities and services. 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Manager Engineering Services</p>
<p>Encourage local business and venues of the requirements and benefits of providing disabled access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide readily available information on the legal requirements and needs of people with disability. • Promote the benefits of providing access to people with disability. 	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Executive Manager Development Services & Environmental Health Officer</p>

Outcome 3:

People with disability receive information from the Shire of Merredin in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that the community is aware that information is available in alternative formats on request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise the availability of alternative formats in the local paper and radio. • Ensure all documents that require community consultation carry a notation that the document is available in alternative formats. • Maintain and regularly update the Shire Webpage for continuity of documents and information 	Ongoing	<p>Media Officer</p> <p>Media Officer</p> <p>Media Officer</p>
Improve employee awareness of information available in alternative formats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train employees in providing accessible information and notation requirements. 	Ongoing	Senior Management Group

Outcome 4:

People with disability receive the same level of service from the employees of a public authority as other people receive from the employees of the Shire of Merredin

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that Council Members and employees are aware of access needs and can provide appropriate services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council staff to have disability awareness training. The Department of Communities and relevant disability organisations to be contacted for assistance in the development of training. • Staff induction process to incorporate component on disability access requirements. 	Ongoing	Senior Management Group Executive Manager Development Services

Outcome 5:

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to the Shire of Merredin

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that grievance mechanisms are accessible for people with disability and are acted upon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide alternative methods of making complaints, for example web-based forms. 	Ongoing	Media Officer

Outcome 6:

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation by the Shire of Merredin

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Ensure that people with disability are actively consulted about the DAIP and any other relevant planning processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with people with disability using a range of different mediums, for example, survey, interview, focus group. 	Ongoing	Senior Management Group & Media Officer
Ensure that people with disability are aware of, and can access, other established consultative processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all documents that require community consultation are available in alternative formats. Develop a feedback mechanism for use of all disabled services by the Shire. Organize an annual focus group meeting aimed at identifying measures for possible inclusion into the Councils annual budget 	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	All Managers & Media Officer All Managers & Media Officer Media Officer

Outcome 7:

People with disability have the same opportunities as other people to obtain and maintain employment with the Shire of Merredin

Strategy	Task	Timeline	Responsibility
Use inclusive recruitment practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure job advertisements are in an acceptable format. 	Ongoing	Chief Executive Officer & Media Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Equal Employment Opportunity statement in the advert. 	Ongoing	Media Officer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the interview is held in an accessible venue. 	Ongoing	All Executive Managers
Improve methods of attracting, recruiting, and retaining people with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine current methods of recruitment. 	Ongoing	Executive Manager Corporate Services
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current percentage of employees with disability 	Ongoing	Executive Manager Corporate Services
Remove barriers to employ people with disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include disability friendly considerations in all workplace projects. 	Ongoing	All Executive Managers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where feasible undertake projects to remove identified barriers to employing people with a disability. 	Ongoing	All Executive Managers