



G W Y D I R
S H I R E C O U N C I L

Access and Equity Activity Statement 2009



In accordance with the Local Government Regulation, a statement is required setting forth council's access and equity activities to be undertaken to meet the needs of our residents as identified by our Social Plan 2007 to 2011. All organisations and businesses, including local Governments are obliged to develop strategies which enable them to comply with a number of laws, and policies while addressing four main areas, which are:

- **responsiveness** – government programs and services should be accessible, fair and responsive to the needs of their clients
- **communication** – communication with clients should be open, effective and use appropriate channels
- **accountability** – reporting and review mechanisms should be accessible, transparent and effective
- **leadership** – government agencies should work together, emphasise responsibilities to partners, and encourage participation in our society by all.

Objectives of the Access and Equity Statement

Access and Equity activities are those activities that benefit the broad community, as well as specific groups within the community, and help us to promote fairness in the distribution of resources, recognise other people's rights, give people opportunities to participate in consultations and ensure community members have fair access to services and resources essential to meet their basic needs.

Social Planning is the process of investigating and responding to the needs and aspirations of the people who live and work in our community. Social planning is underpinned by the principles of Social Justice:

- **Equity** – fairness in resource distribution
- **Access** – fairer access for everyone to the resources and services essential to meet basic needs and improve their quality of life.
- **Rights** – recognition and promotion of civil rights
- **Participation** – better opportunities for everyone to participate in decisions. The 2007 - 2011 Social Plan considers and plans how to improve the need and demand for community facilities and human services, community interactions and identity and inspire a sense of community.

Through community consultation, the Social Plan provides:

- A profile of the local community
- Identification of needs and service gaps
- Social Planning initiatives

Council provides funding in conjunction with other Government agencies to community groups to fund cultural and community development projects that meet identified community needs, and provide a cultural experience that may not ordinarily be delivered to the community without the provision of a grant. Council also facilitates interaction and sharing of resources between agencies and frequently works with agencies to research community issues and statistics for the purposes of preparing grant submissions and promoting community services within the community

Child & Family Services

Council continues to provide Preschools, Toy Libraries, Play groups, Early Intervention Family Services and Vacation Care programs for the community. All these services are accredited and continue to be involved in the Quality Assurance Process.

Youth Services

Council operates the Youth Centre in Bingara five afternoons a week from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm. The Youth Centre is extremely popular in attracting many young people. A number of services provide an outreach service within the Shire and space is provided at the Neighbourhood Centre in Bingara and at the Council offices in Warialda, so young people can access information in a youth friendly environment.

Council staff coordinate a number of youth programs within the community. School holiday programs are conducted at the Youth Centre in Bingara and the CWA Hall in Warialda as well as at the Sports ground in Gravesend. This program will look to expand as funding becomes available. Council encourages the participation of young people and they are instrumental in overseeing the operations of Youth Week and other Youth related programs run in the Shire.

Community Safety

Council facilitates and supports the Community Drug Action Team, the Gwydir CDAT has successfully sought funding from NSW Health and the Red Cross to deliver education and resources regarding community safety. CDAT members are proactive in implementing strategies and educational programmes that promote community safety. These strategies have included: "Save A Mate" – a drug and alcohol education and first aid program run by Red Cross and school presentations that provide students with information on acceptable behaviour when visiting licensed premises.

During Drug Action Week, Council and CDAT present information to all schools in our Shire around harm minimisation and community safety. Information kits will be sent to Bingara Central School and Warialda High School and will contain information on hepatitis C and preventative tools for students as well as helpful information regarding available services.

Council hold community meetings each year and this is an ideal way for Council to connect with the community and appreciate the issues raised by the community and for the community to get to know Councillors and Staff.

People with Disabilities and older People

There are over 350 people in Gwydir Shire receiving a Disability Support Pension. This is approximately 6% of the Shire's population and does not include those people over 65 years of age who would be receiving an Age based Pension. There is a higher proportion of the local population requiring disability services than in the state. This would chiefly be related to the higher proportion of older persons living in the Shire.

Gwydir Shire Council facilitates a Disability Access Committee and supports the regional access group. A Draft Disability Access Plan has been developed and is in the final stages of approval. Council encourages business owners and operators to be inclusive and will distribute the resource "Missed Business" to all business houses in the Shire. No new buildings are constructed without passing the legislated requirements for disabled access.

During Seniors Week Council intends to provide a fabulous experience for our Seniors in Bingara by putting on a "Seniors Ball" with old time dancing and live music. Warialda will host a BBQ lunch at Naroo hostel with visitors from all over the Shire and will include excursions and outing throughout the Week.

Council also supports the Gwydir Shire Carer Support Program Which develops practical resources that meet the needs of carers in this Shire, eg, information kits, flowcharts, facilitating regular carer support meetings in a range of sites in the Shire, formalising a local carer group to advocate for carer needs in rural areas, developing social activities for specific carer groups, developing education session for carers, including stress management, medication management, and other issues as they are identified by carers, delivering a media campaign targeting existing and 'non-identified' carers and the wider community to engage carers and promote awareness of carer value.

Gwydir Shire Council provides support for People with Disabilities and older People through our HACC services in both Bingara and Warialda which provide community transport and meals on wheels services. The Shire also encourages services to operate from within our Shire by providing facilities for service delivery.

People from Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds

The proportion of Australian born and English speaking people is extremely high (90.7% and 94.3% respectively) in Gwydir Shire. Germany and The Philippines are the two major non-English speaking nations of residents living in the Shire (16 and 15 people respectively). The UK and New Zealand were the two major English speaking nations of residents who now reside in the Gwydir Shire (105 and 33 people respectively).

The Neighbourhood Centre in Bingara and the CTC in Warialda provide an information and referral service to all groups and will provide interpreter services if required.

Access and Equity Activities to be undertaken over the period 2009-2011 include:

- Community safety and security
- Actively encourage the implementation of initiatives in the Social Plan
- Increased liaison with community individuals, businesses and organizations
- Increase access to education and employment for disadvantaged groups
- Support a range of Community Health programs and services that promote community well-being
- Provide an accredited Medical Practice for the community
- Support the "Men's Shed" program
- Support for aged and disabled
- Maintain services for improving children's education and development
- Improve access to public transport and lobby for increased transportation for disadvantaged groups
- Actively promote and foster a positive climate for youth development
- Support Youth Week
- Support the Youth Centre.
- Encourage and support the establishment and/or continuation of programs for women
- Provide facilities for visiting services to support our community needs
- Attend interagency meetings with health professionals to advance this strategy
- Assistance with promotion of women's activities in the Shire
- Develop a comprehensive cultural plan for the entire Shire