

Woollahra
Municipal
Council

Access Policy and Action Plan

2010-2013



Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Background	6
2.1 The Previous Plan	6
2.2 The New Plan	6
2.3 Our Achievements	7
2.4 Integrated Planning and Reporting	12
2.5 Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013	13
2.6 Community Profile	14
3. The Woollahra Council Access Policy	17
4. The Woollahra Access Action Plan 2010-2013	17
4.1 Aim of the Plan	17
4.2 Focus	17
4.3 Consultation	18
4.4 Findings – What’s Important	19
5. Council’s Role	21
6. Actions	23
7. Recommendations	31
8. Conclusion.....	32

1. Executive Summary

The new Woollahra Access Policy and Action Plan expands on Council's current commitment to enhancing and improving access in the Woollahra local government area. From 2001 to 2009, Council's focus has been on integrating physical access into its works program, ensuring a 'business as usual' approach to addressing physical access issues in the Municipality where possible.

The Access Action Plan is in accordance with the Woollahra Access Policy, with this document confirming the Policy adopted by Council in 2001.

This new Access Action Plan provides a new way forward for Council. The plan embraces a broader definition of access beyond the traditional scope of only focussing on people with disabilities. This new definition includes within its scope people who are socially isolated or excluded, parents with young children, older people and carers. In adopting this definition, the plan takes on access in an ambitious and innovative manner which aims to benefit the varied and diverse communities of Woollahra. Further, when considering people with a disability, the plan contemplates people with both physical and intellectual disabilities as well as people living with chronic illness and mental health issues.

In order to locate the plan within Council's strategic framework and also in keeping with best practice, the plan considers a range of Council's current key strategic documents and approaches. Most notable of the plans is the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013. However the Access Action Plan is also informed by and speaks to Council's Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10 (DPOP). Most importantly, the plan is located within an asset based community development approach. This approach, expressed through the Social and Community Plan adopted by Council on 14 July 2008, seeks to recognise the resilience and strengths of the individuals and communities of Woollahra and engage that resilience and strength to determine responses to community issues. This approach also provides space for celebrating the positive aspects of Woollahra's communities, of which there are many. Ultimately, the approach understands that people are experts in their own lives and experiences and asks community members to work in partnership with Council to bring that expertise to bear on local issues to the benefit of the broader community.

In addition to drawing on the extensive consultation undertaken by Council in the preparation of the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013, some additional consultation in the form of focus groups was undertaken during the preparation of this plan. This information yielded some key themes. Those being:

- The need for timely and easy access to relevant information
- A strong desire to be included and welcomed into community life at street, neighbourhood and community levels
- Recognition that community connectedness and feelings of belonging assist all members of the community and make accessing informal assistance easier
- A need for a strong and well resourced service system supported by a strong volunteer base

- The need to develop and support opportunities for people with disabilities, older people, carers and parents with small children to participate fully within 'mainstream' community, social, recreational and leisure activities.

These themes form the basis of the actions recommended by this plan.

This plan provides a four year blueprint for Council to begin to engage with the community to address access in a manner that is sustainable and will make a real difference to the quality of life of people in the Woollahra municipality. Council has achieved much in terms of its responsibilities to make the Woollahra local government area physically accessible. Through this plan, it takes on the challenge of addressing access from the perspective of participation and engagement in community life. The plan defines and clarifies Council's role as that of 'enabler' or facilitator'. This means that Council takes the role of providing the point at which partnerships are established, where organisations, community groups and residents connect to develop local responses to local issues. Council will stimulate and support community driven projects and programs that are operated collaboratively by Council's partners, however ownership of those projects and programs is vested with the communities and individuals they benefit. Through this plan, Council seeks to partner with its communities to make Woollahra a place where individuals and communities are able to access a fulfilling and stimulating life in an environment that fosters wellbeing and provides support both in times of hardship and in times of celebration and success.

The plan identifies key strengths, challenges and opportunities. In doing so, the plan strives to provide realistic actions that recognise challenges and draw upon the multiple strengths of the communities of Woollahra to meet those challenges. Strengths identified included high levels of participation, connectedness and cohesion. The strengths identify Woollahra as an area where people want to be involved with their communities, either formally through activities such as volunteering or informally through social networks.

However, in identifying the challenges facing the communities of Woollahra, it appears that some of those most vulnerable in the community are still experiencing isolation and a feeling of disconnectedness from their communities. This plan seeks to improve access to community life for these people by addressing this challenge in a number of innovative ways.

Many of the challenges for Woollahra are closely related to the changing demographics of the area, in particular an ageing population. This is particularly relevant for a plan such as this. The plan also highlights many opportunities for the communities of Woollahra. These opportunities can be leveraged by Council to address issues of access across the local government area. These opportunities include: a large potential volunteer pool, an active community that seeks to engage with Council and with others within the community, high levels of wellbeing reported in the most recent census (indicating robust communities) and a desire to drive community based responses to access issues.

The plan provides a range of actions that seek to improve and enhance access on a broad scale across the communities of the Woollahra Municipality. In addition to the actions recommended by the plan, two recommendations are made to Council.

These recommendations provide for an ongoing dialogue with the community regarding access issues and service provision and also means by which to report to the community on the outcomes of the plan. The recommendations are:

1. Community Advisory Committee

That Council review its existing Community Advisory Committee structure in favour of creating project or issue based community focus groups that are connected with particular objectives, strategies, projects or programs being driven out of the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 and the Access Action Plan and listed in Council's annual operational plan.

2. Measuring Our Success

It is recommended that Council engage more directly with the community in the reporting of the outcomes of this plan. This is important as it is a demonstration of Council's commitment to access and it is reflective of the asset based community development model which expects that Council partners with its residents to celebrate achievements, address issues and share success.

Thank you

Gratitude is extended to Woollahra Pre-School, Eastern Respite and Recreation Service and Holdsworth Community Centre and Services for their assistance in organising and hosting focus groups. But most of all, to those carers, parents and

community members from those services and from Council's Access Committee who gave their time, energy and thoughts so generously in this process, our utmost appreciation is given.

2. Background

2.1 The Previous Plan

In 2001 Council adopted a Disability Action Plan and Policy. This document provided Council with a large range of actions focussing on physical access to the environment. These were grouped under the headings physical access to facilities, access to Council services, direct services for people with a disability, traffic, transport and parking and employment.

Many of the actions were focussed on hard infrastructure improvements such as ensuring that the development and refurbishment of Council buildings were accessible, that footpaths were accessible, that Council signage was clear and readable for all and that new development applications considered access in design.

Woollahra Council's Disability Action Plan and Policy had the aim of "improving Council practices in order to ensure there is no discrimination (intentional or unintentional) against people with a disability"¹ and to "ensure that we provide equitable and dignified access to premises in the Woollahra area and to services provided by Council"².

2.2 The New Plan

Whilst still focussing on the needs of people with a disability, and recognising the importance of the physical and built environment, the new plan embraces a more holistic interpretation of the concept of access. The definition of access for the new plan includes access to social infrastructure in addition to just focussing on the built environment. This includes assisting residents to access existing community and social services such as mental, recreational and social support services. The plan also contains strategies to enhance the capacity of these services and organisations as well as building on the existing strengths of the community to address access issues and to enhance participation in community life for all residents of the Woollahra local government area.

In order to do this, the plan will include broader target groups than the previous plan. Whilst still maintaining a focus on people with disabilities, the plan will also focus on people and groups that experience social isolation and for whom access to services and facilities are complicated by both physical barriers to access and also social and cultural barriers to access. Some of these groups include parents with small children, carers, older people, people with mental health issues and people who are geographically and/or socially isolated.

This process will also enable Council to clarify its role in the community in regard to facilitating community access and to define its core responsibilities in regard to access and equity within its context as a local government agency.

¹ Woollahra Council, Disability Access, An Action Plan and Policy, p. 1

² Woollahra Council, Disability Access, An Action Plan and Policy, p. 2

2.3 Our Achievements

In the seven years since the Disability Action Plan and Policy was adopted, many of its strategies have been integrated into Council's way of conducting its business. Many of these ensure that Council is managing its hard infrastructure and assets in a manner that considers access issues.

Council has achieved much success in ensuring that considerations of access are now fully integrated into development, customer service, planning, community and operational service areas. It has taken a concentrated and deliberate approach from Council to ensure that access was not an 'add on' issue but one which has been contemplated across almost all areas of Council and which informs everything from employment policy to landscaping, from strategic planning to playground development.

There are areas in which Council has been unable to meet its access targets, and in reality, there always will be areas in which Council is precluded from doing so. It is important to note that this is generally not because of a lack of will or good intention. However, as the business and service areas of Council are many and varied, so are the obligations and considerations complicated and complex. Some of these can at times hinder Council's ability to deliver on all of its goals. In regard to access, these include matters such as:

- the heritage status of various facilities and buildings
- the topography of the Woollahra municipality
- the limited ambit of Council's authority in regard to assets which impact the community but are not owned by Council
- the limited scope of influence over other government authorities and the private sector
- budget constraints and competing budget items
- conflicting priorities across communities

In situations where these types of complexities arise, Council must consider each situation on a case by case basis and make decisions based on regulations, legislation, community interest and good governance.

Despite the complexities, Council's achievements in regard to access over the past seven years should not be understated. Council's greatest achievement in this area has been making access a matter for all staff and a part of 'business as usual' at Woollahra.

The following strategies, policies and plans are part of Council's 'business as usual' approach and assist in managing access issues in a number of ways. They are listed here as testament to the progress made by Council in regard to this important matter and as evidence of Council's long term commitment to improving access in the municipality.

Plan/Strategy	Access Impacts	Status
Asset Management Strategy	This strategy encompasses footpath performance, footpath upgrade and repatriation and pedestrian scores as well as review and maintenance of community facilities. It ensures that Council has a structured monitoring system as well as directing works to areas of most need.	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program
Upgrade to Watson's Bay Baths.	The new design of the baths have many features to enhance access including widening of the boardwalks, new access gates to enable wheelchair access, and improved ramp access to the pool.	A DA has been approved and Council is now in the design phase of the redevelopment.
EEO Management Plan	This plan provides a practical commitment on Council's behalf to ensuring that the workplace is fair and equitable for all staff. It is a comprehensive plan that commencing with pre-recruitment and covering all aspects of employment.	Processes from the EEO plan are followed as part of Council's business as usual.
Playground redevelopment strategy	This program has been operating since 2002 and has involved the upgrading of most of Council's playgrounds to meet Australian standards.	This program has almost been fully implemented. There are three parks that still require upgrading.
Data Capture for all road pavement and kerb and gutter assets (due Sept 2008)	A consultant has been engaged to undertake an assessment of the condition of roads, kerbs and gutter assets across the local government area.	This project was delayed due to staff turnover but is now underway.
Playground policy and plan	Council currently has a strong policy commitment to providing safe and accessible playgrounds for the children and families of the Woollahra local government area. This commitment is evidenced through its regular maintenance schedule for playgrounds.	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program

Plan/Strategy	Access Impacts	Status
Community Facilities Plan	This study examined Council's community facilities and their condition. The plan made recommendations as to how Council could improve or enhance these facilities. These enhancements may have a positive impact on access.	Feasibility studies on the recommendations of the plan are scheduled to occur 2009/10.
Plans of Management for Parks	Each of Council's parks has a Plan Of Management which is reviewed every 5 years. The reviews include an access audit which considers footpaths, playgrounds, buildings and other park features	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program
Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan	The PAMP identifies areas to enhance or improve pedestrian access and makes suggestions for improvement of these. Council currently has a plan in place for the Paddington area.	Council is still developing Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plans for some areas.
Construction of wheelchair/pram ramps in combination with all new infrastructure projects and maintenance works	This commitment ensures that all new and renewed Council assets consider issues of access for people with a disability, people with mobility issues and parents with prams.	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program
Infrastructure Renewal Strategy for footpaths, kerbs, traffic devices, roads	Regular upgrades of footpaths, kerbs and traffic devices assists in keeping these assets in better condition for those residents that may have mobility issues.	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program
Street tree management	Council has a rolling program of works to ensure that street tree plantings are appropriate and are regularly maintained.	This is a rolling program of works that forms part of Council's annual works program
Construction of flexible and accessible library spaces.	As libraries play such an important role in community connection, engagement and access to information, it is important that Council work towards increased physical access to all library facilities.	Council is currently developing a new library at Watsons Bay which will meet current building standards in regards to access. Council is planning a refurbishment of Double Bay within the confines of a historical building to

Plan/Strategy	Access Impacts	Status
		<p>increase the accessibility of this heritage building. Further, Council is considering a new site for the Central Library in Double Bay that would be built to current building standards in regards to access and taking into account the State Library publication People and Places and Libraries for Life - your place, your time. The current Paddington Library and the Local History Centre are wheelchair accessible.</p>
<p>Provide services to persons with special needs, including enhancement of home library service, improved physical and transport access, promotion of existing special needs services, and investigation of new technologies</p>	<p>Council has a commitment to continuous improvement of its library service with a focus on enhancing access, particularly for those residents with special needs or who are geographically or socially isolated.</p>	<p>The current Home Library Service provides support to 188 individuals and 5 organisations within the Local Government Area.</p> <p>The library has completed a review of the Home Library Service to identify service enhancements. The Library has been successful in securing grants from the State Library and the Macular Degeneration Foundation to purchase additional resources for people that are legally blind or visually impaired.</p> <p>The library is finalising a technology plan which explores the use of new technologies to increase access to library services to meet the changing needs of the community.</p> <p>All Council libraries are services by State</p>

Plan/Strategy	Access Impacts	Status
		Government buses and limited parking is available at all library venues.
Increasing online presence and services	Council recognises the importance that libraries play in connecting individuals and communities both at branch locations and through on-line services. New technologies and on line services provide another avenue through which Council can connect with residents, particularly those who are geographically or socially isolated.	<p>The library service currently provides access to 19 online data bases that provide a wide range of information. These databases can be accessed at library sites or remotely.</p> <p>Council is currently in the process of developing a plan for a separate web presence.</p> <p>A review is being undertaken to examine existing online resources and their response to community need and demand.</p>

These strategies, policies and plans provide Council with clear systems for managing its infrastructure to ensure that for areas with its control, Council is enhancing access to its services and facilities and encouraging its partners to do the same.

The identification of the above projects, processes and programs identifies the breadth of programs that have become part of business under Council's management plan.

2.4 Integrated Planning and Reporting

The New South Wales Department of Local Government has recently adopted a Bill before parliament to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to require all Councils to produce a community strategic plan “that identifies the main priorities and aspirations for the future of the local community covering a period of at least 10 years”³. These amendments also include a requirement to produce a four year delivery plan and annual operational plan which will outline activities that Council will engage in to deliver the community strategic plan⁴. The community strategic plan will replace the existing management plan process that Council’s undertake.

In anticipation of these changes, Woollahra Municipal Council has already prepared its first Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10. The Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10 set goals for Council and the community and then outline strategies to achieve these goals.

Articulated within the vision for Woollahra Local Government Area in the plan is the following statement:

“We will support and promote active community participation to achieve a healthy social environment, appropriate cultural services and an efficient infrastructure”⁵.

This section of the vision speaks directly to the purpose of the Woollahra Access Action Plan. It is anticipated that by implementing the actions of this plan, Council will be a facilitator and driver of enhanced community wellbeing through increased engagement and participation of individuals and groups in community life.

The relevant goals in the Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10 that relate to the Woollahra Access Action Plan are listed under the heading of ‘Community Wellbeing’. The key themes of this section of the plan are community connectedness, participation in recreational, social and cultural activities and access to information, facilities and support⁶. The goals articulated by the plan that will achieve community wellbeing are:

- Goal 1: A connected and harmonious community,
- Goal 2: A supported community
- Goal 3: A creative and vibrant community⁷

These goals focus on enhancing and supporting the provision of services and support to marginalised and isolated people within the Woollahra Local Government Area. The strategies to achieve these goals focus on keeping pace with an ageing population, supporting those that are isolated and creating opportunities for all residents to express themselves and access support and information where and when it is needed.

³ s.402, Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009

⁴ ss. 404 and 405 Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009

⁵ Woollahra Municipal Council, Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10. p. 11

⁶ Woollahra Municipal Council, Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10. p. 12

⁷ Woollahra Municipal Council, Delivery Program 2009 to 2013 and Operational Plan 2009/10. p. 13

2.5 Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013

In 2008 Council adopted the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013. The plan combined Council's social planning and cultural planning roles and responsibilities, helping Council to monitor social trends, understand its community better, allocate resources, develop partnerships and encourage service provision where they are most needed.

The aim of this plan is to provide a blueprint for Council and its partners to achieve the following vision:

Woollahra is a connected, liveable, vibrant and creative community for all.

The Woollahra Access Action Plan is a key strategy in achieving that vision.

The Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 is a defining document for Council in regard to the sustainable and robust development of its communities. As such, this plan provides the platform from which the Woollahra Access Action Plan has been developed and will be implemented. In turn, the Woollahra Access Action Plan becomes integral to the objectives of the Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013.

Most importantly, the Woollahra Access Action Plan draws on the principles of asset based community development which was adopted by Council in 2007 and in which the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 is based. Asset-based community development operates on the principles of identifying and mobilising community strengths, skills, and resources rather than focusing on the problems or issues of the area. Through focusing on the strengths of Woollahra, which are numerous, key challenges can be met.

The Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 identified four objectives for Council to strive to achieve in partnership with the communities of the Woollahra Municipality:

Objective 1 A connected community

Woollahra is a community where people care for each other and have a sense of belonging. All people can contribute meaningfully to their neighbourhood through local partnerships and participation in community life.

Objective 2 A liveable community

Woollahra is a community with accessible, integrated, and well-maintained public places and open spaces. It is a safe place with effective public and private facilities, services and amenities.

Objective 3 A vibrant community

Woollahra is a community where people of all ages and backgrounds have opportunities to live happy, healthy, meaningful, and active lives. People of all abilities have access to lifelong learning, leisure, and community activities.

Objective 4 A creative community

Woollahra is a community where local creativity, cultural pursuits, and cultural heritage are supported. Creative talents, contributions and initiatives of the community are valued and showcased.

In order to highlight the synergies between these two documents and to integrate the actions of this plan with Council's larger commitment to its communities, these objectives will also be used throughout the Woollahra Access Action Plan.

The development of the Woollahra Access Action Plan at this time and in connection with the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 provides a unique opportunity to identify innovative, long term and sustainable actions and initiatives.

2.6 Community Profile

An integral part of the development of the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 was the development of a comprehensive community profile. Certain parts of this profile are relevant to the Access Action Plan. This information is provided below to assist in providing a framework for the plan.

The Woollahra Local Government Area (LGA) includes the suburbs of Bellevue Hill, Darling Point, Double Bay, Edgecliff, Paddington (part), Point Piper, Rose Bay (part), Vaucluse (part), Watsons Bay, and Woollahra. Woollahra LGA is a culturally, socially, and historically rich area located with significant foreshore parks and bush land reserves and located on the shores of Sydney Harbour.

The estimated resident population of Woollahra LGA has increased slightly over the past few years from 53,282 in 2001 to 53,667 in 2006⁸. Figure 1 shows the change in age groups within the LGA between 1996 and 2006. The most significant changes were:

- An increase in the number of 0 to 4 year olds.
- A decrease in the number of 18 to 24 year olds.
- A decrease in the number of 25 to 34 year olds.
- An increase in the number of residents aged 60+.

While the majority of Woollahra residents are aged between 25 and 49 years, Woollahra is increasingly becoming a community of older people and families with young children. These demographic changes become significant when considering issues of access. It means that Council's focus must expand to include parents with prams, new retirees, frail older people and community members that are less connected to the community. The challenges facing these groups in regard to access were highlighted throughout the consultation processes.

These groups also provide an excellent benchmark against which to measure access in the community. A community that is easy for a parent with a pram to navigate, that embraces the experience of its older members, that fosters the inclusion of people with disabilities and fosters social inclusion is a community that is

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Estimated Resident Population, 2006

providing the best chance for all members to participate in social, cultural and civic life.

Accessibility in the community

In 2005⁹, approximately 9% (or 4,500) of Woollahra residents identified as having some form of disability (similar to SSD figures). 7.6% (or 3,793) identified as having a physical disability, 0.9% (or 449) an intellectual disability and 0.7% (or 349 people) mental health or other type of disability.

Only 1.8% (approximately 900 people) of the total population has a disability other than physical and about 70% of all people in Woollahra with a physical disability are aged 55 years or over.

Woollahra is predominantly an inclusive community and supports people with a disability and their carers to be involved in local community activities. This presents significant opportunities to ensure that this inclusion is available for all, as there are gaps in service provision for this target group. The facilitation of networks between disability agencies across regions is also an important focus for the Woollahra area.

A spectrum of ageing

There are increasing numbers of older people in Woollahra LGA, across the spectrum of ageing. From healthy and active new retirees who are involved in local community activities, to frail aged who need access to support services. People aged 60 years or over make up 21.7% of the Woollahra population (or 10,736 people) - significantly higher than the SSD at 17%.

The main changes between 2001 and 2006 were:

- An increase in the new retiree or healthy aged group of 65 to 69,
- An increase in older people 80+, including some who may be frail aged and need additional care, and
- A decrease in the number of older people aged 70 to 79 years of age.

Figure 1 Ageing profile – 2001 to 2006



The above indicates the need to plan for the diversity of this older age group. Increasing numbers of healthy 65 to 69 year old people and new retirees offer

9 Woollahra Household Community study, Micromex Research December 2005

increased opportunities for volunteerism, community participation and for Council to facilitate access to, and participation in, healthy and active ageing initiatives.

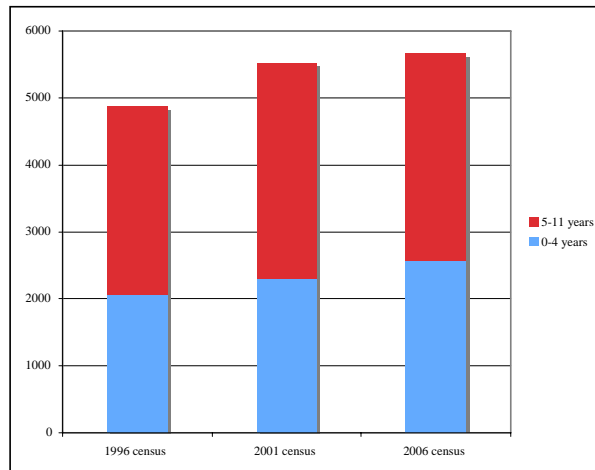
Council can work in partnership with local older residents, community groups, and social groups, to facilitate delivery of programs and activities that support the concept of “active ageing”. Active ageing involves older people having the opportunity to maintain an active involvement in various aspects of life as they age and to contribute their skills and experience to their community. This includes participating in social, physical, economic, cultural, spiritual, environmental, and civic matters.

Increasing numbers of older people 80 years and over require strategies and partnerships to support people to stay at home longer and access social support services. An increase in services, especially community transport and support for carers, is essential for this age group.

Increasing number of children and families

Over the past ten years, the number of children aged 0 to 11 years in the Woollahra LGA has increased by 16% (as shown in Figure 3) from 4,870 in 1996 to 5,657 in 2006. This increase is mostly due to increasing numbers of 0 to 4 year olds. Many parents are choosing to have children later in life, and families are deciding to stay in the area as their children get older.

Figure 2 Children aged 0 to 11 years - 1996 to 2006



The total number of families in Woollahra has remained stable (11,629 in 2001 and 11,628 in 2006). The main change was in couples with children 15 years and under which increased by 224 families.

The increasing number of young children requires the adequate provision of local children’s and family services such as childcare, family support services, and child health services. Support is needed for working families but also for activities that support ‘stay-at-home’ parents, particularly to prevent social isolation and to encourage community participation.

A full demographic profile of the Woollahra Community can be found in the Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013.

3. The Woollahra Council Access Policy

Woollahra Council is committed to achieving a local area that is fully accessible to all members of our community.

The principles underpinning this policy are:

- A person with a disability is an individual first and foremost and is not simply defined by their disability.
- People with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as any member of our community.
- Changes to the physical and social environment are essential in order to remove barriers to access.

4. The Woollahra Access Action Plan 2010-2013

4.1 Aim of the Plan

The revised plan, known as the Woollahra Access Policy and Action Plan (the Plan) is a three year plan (2010-2013) for Woollahra Council to provide guidance and direction to assist Council to enhance access for all community members.

The plan collates existing actions from a variety of Council's strategic policies and plans and also adds new projects to these that aim to create access at a base physical level but also which seek to encourage community engagement and connectedness.

The plan canvasses options for utilising community assets to increase access for a broader group of residents for whom access is limited.

This plan is a move away from the usual hard infrastructure focus that access plans in local government have traditionally had. Woollahra Council is able to do this as it has integrated physical access into its operational areas and so can now focus on holistic and sophisticated concept of access. The approach is also reflective of the asset based community development approach that Council has adopted.

4.2 Focus

The plan focuses on an interpretation of access that recognizes that access is as much about being able to easily find information and support in times of need as it is about being able to enter a building.

It says that being able to access social support, leisure and recreational programs enhances quality of life and is integral to the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

In this approach, access encompasses the ability for any citizen of the Woollahra municipality to engage in decision making processes should they so choose. It means that individuals and groups in the Woollahra local government area feel connected and as if they can access help, either formally through service providers or informally through friends and neighbours.

It embraces communities that celebrate together and streets and neighbourhoods that encourage belonging and participation.

It recognizes that there are certain groups for whom accessing services and facilities will always be that much more difficult and seeks to pose 'whole of community' responses to these issues.

Ultimately this approach is underpinned by the philosophy that when the most isolated people in a community are able to confidently and easily access assistance, feel included and can make informed choices about their lives, then a healthy and vibrant community is created.

4.3 Consultation

The planning process had been managed by Council's Community Services Division. Fortunately, Council has undertaken comprehensive community consultation on a range of issues in the development of the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013.

This plan further consulted with specific groups which included:

- Council's Access Committee
- Carers of people with disabilities
- Parents of young children.

Council also appointed an Internal Steering Committee to ensure that the plan was integrated across Council's many operational areas. The Internal Steering Committee was chaired by the Community Development Team and comprised the following internal stakeholders:

- Library and Information Services
- Open Space and Trees
- Strategic Planning
- Customer Service, and
- Civil Works and Infrastructure

This Committee met three times throughout the life of the project. They provided guidance and feedback to the project, particularly in regard to ensuring that actions for the plan were realistic and achievable.

4.4 Findings – What’s Important

The consultation process confirmed that matters of importance to the Woollahra Community detailed in other community documents are:

- Access to purpose built and accessible community facilities for the delivery of community events and activities and local networking Access to information and learning
- Facilities and services to support and engage an increasing older population
- Strong, safe and connected neighbourhoods
- Respect for social diversity

The consultation process for the Woollahra Access Plan highlighted the following as also being important to community members:

- Access to opportunities to connect with other members of the community
- A community that values compassion and that supports one another
- Opportunities to participate and be included in social and cultural life

Strengths

The Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013 identified a number of strengths that are present in the communities of Woollahra. They are:

- High levels of participation, group membership, and involvement in non-organised activities and communications.
- High perceptions of general health and strong levels of participation in individual exercise routines such as walking.
- High levels of community networks, as evidenced by high levels of close personal networks of family and friends.
- High levels of social cohesion, as measured by the ability to ask for help from neighbours when needed.
- High levels of perceptions of safety.
- High levels of community participation and high levels of volunteering.
- High levels of acceptance of diversity and inclusiveness.
- High levels of creativity and artistic and cultural businesses.

Challenges:

There are a number of challenges that are specific to the issue of access for the Woollahra area as identified in the focus groups. Many of the challenges raised by

those that participated in the focus groups had already been clearly identified and articulated in the Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013. Some additional challenges were raised in the consultation process undertaken in the preparation of this plan.

Those challenges from the Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013 that are relevant to this plan are:

- Over 50% of residents moved into the local government area between the years of 2001 and 2006, setting significant challenges in relation to effective communication and information provision.
- As a community of increasing older persons, physical constraints limit the ability of many to participate fully in community life.
- Services for older people and people with special needs in the local region are not sufficient to support them all to live independently in their community.
- The area does not provide sufficient support for the care of people with a disability, elderly people and people looking after children.
- Due to the age of the built environment, it is a challenge to provide an appropriate mix of accessible community facilities, libraries public areas and open spaces.

Additional challenges identified in the consultation process for this plan were:

- Social isolation of carers, older people and some parents provides a significant barrier to their participation and engagement with their communities.
- It is difficult to provide services and programs that cater to the requirements of all, particularly for people with multiple or complex needs.

Although the consultations for the Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013 identified the community as inclusive and connected on the whole, those consulted in the development of this plan identified feelings of being isolated or excluded from community participation and engagement. They identified many barriers to participation from basic infrastructure access (i.e. being unable to physically gain entry to a building) to economic isolation due to the high cost of providing care for an older person, child or person with a disability. Further, the additional time, effort and energy required to engage in community life for some of those consulted was prohibitive to their participation in community events and community life. As evidenced earlier in the plan, Council has an ongoing commitment to improving physical access in the Woollahra municipality. The matters raised in regard to physical access were often related to assets that Council does not have control over such as roads that are the responsibility of the state government, privately owned premises, developments and building outside of the Woollahra local government area and facilities that have heritage listings. These restrictions limit Council's ability to rectify physical access issues, however it is always valuable for Council to be made aware of issues such as these that impact upon the lives of community members.

Those consulted also indicated that help was not always readily available and the reporting of feelings of isolation and having to manage issues alone would indicate that for those groups consulted, levels of social cohesion and connectedness are lower than those experienced by the rest of the community. Similarly, those that required assistance to care for another person reported that there was not enough access to community volunteers to provide assistance, nor were there adequate opportunities for engagement in volunteering opportunities, particularly for young people with disabilities.

The consultations also highlighted the need to engage with 'mainstream' community as a priority for people with disabilities, especially children and young people with disabilities. Participants that raised this issue indicated that opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in community programs, events and generally in community life would go a long way towards increasing acceptance of difference and diversity.

Opportunities:

The development of this plan has highlighted a number of opportunities for both Council and the communities of the Woollahra Municipality.

- Identifying existing and new opportunities for increased participation in community life for all, especially those that are socially isolated
- The high level of wellbeing reported in Woollahra in the 2006 census provides a strong foundation for community involvement
- An increase in the number of well older people and young retirees provides a potential highly skilled volunteer pool
- A community that seeks to engage with Council and take an active role in civic and community life
- There is a strong commitment in the community to enhancing access and there are strong advocates of improved access that can be strong allies for Council to work with

5. Council's Role

Traditionally the role of local government in access has been one primarily focussed on hard infrastructure. In researching this plan and reviewing Council's current activities, it is obvious that Council has integrated its access responsibilities in regards to community buildings, public domain, parks, playgrounds, roads and footpaths into its rolling works programs. This ensures that considerations of access in the built environment are part of Council's 'business as usual'. In addition to this, Council's Customer Service Officers are able to lodge requests for repairs or improvements that may inhibit a resident's access to a facility or service.

Council's diligence in the area of hard infrastructure provides an opportunity for this plan to develop more sophisticated strategies aimed at the more complex issue of improving access from a perspective of a diverse range of disabilities as well as social inclusion and participation. In doing so Council can continue to develop strategies to enhance access as articulated in the Woollahra Social and Cultural

Plan 2008-2013 and can also add to these in response to the socio-demographic context of the area and the consultation data Council has obtained in recent years. Further, this enables Council to build on the asset based community development approach articulated in the Woollahra Social and Cultural Plan 2008-2013:

“Asset based community development...works on the principles of identifying and mobilising community strengths, skills, and resources rather than focusing on the problems or issues of the area. Through focussing on the on the strengths of Woollahra, which are numerous, key challenges can be met”

It is important, however, not to disregard the fact that physical access is still a key factor in the ability for many people to enjoy a satisfactory quality of life. These issues were still raised as matters of importance during the consultation phase of the development of this plan and are listed below:

- Access to affordable, reliable and accessible public and community transport
- Pedestrian mobility, especially the need for pedestrian crossings and traffic calming devices on busy roads and near parks and open spaces
- Increased numbers of accessible parking spaces for both people with a disability and parents, particularly close to town centres, shopping precincts and parks
- Footpaths that are wide, have roll curbs and are level and smooth
- Improved quality and numbers of street furniture (seating) that is easy to get into and out of and that provides ‘rest stops’ for people with mobility issues and gathering places for community members
- Improved access to premises owned/operated by private businesses, including provision of ramp access, wide shopping aisles, adequate seating and the provision of high chairs for children and ergonomic chairs for older people (where relevant)

It must be noted that Council’s ambit in regard to access in regard to hard infrastructure is limited to those assets over which Council has care and control. Whilst Council may make representations to private developers, the corporate sector and State and Federal Government agencies, it is limited in its ability to control the actions of those stakeholders. What Council is able to do is lead by example and ensure that it is adhering to principles of ‘best practice’ in regard to access.

In regard to the implementation of this plan and its associated strategies, Council is a facilitator of and a catalyst for change. However, Council cannot achieve these strategies in isolation. The strategies suggested here rely on partnership with other levels of government, a robust human services sector and an involved and motivated community. If the actions identified within this plan are to be sustainable, they must be driven and embraced by the communities of Woollahra with the support and guidance of Council, other government agencies and the not-for-profit sector. As the overarching themes of this plan are community participation, empowerment and engagement, for it to succeed, community involvement must be at the heart of this plan.

6. Actions

Woollahra Access Action Plan 2010-2013

ACTIONS

Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 – Status report

There are a number of actions from the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 that are already contributing to access in the Woollahra Local Government Area.

Objective	Strategy	Projects/Programs	Status
Objective 1 A connected community	Increase engagement in community activities	Support organisations with volunteers	Council hosts quarterly Volunteer Forums that aim to support, provide information and training where appropriate. Also Council produces a quarterly E- newsletter which provides information on community activities.
		Promote local volunteering opportunities	Council promotes volunteering opportunities on its website
	Improve access to information	Provide community information in other languages	Council will undertake a review of how it manages access to information in other languages for the current financial year as part of the development of the Community Information Strategy. Currently, appropriate information is provided on request.
Objective 2 A liveable community	Provide integrated and accessible community facilities and services	Advocate for improved and accessible public transport	Council has been involved in the State Government review of the eastern suburbs community transport. Further Council provides funding to Holdsworth Community Centre and Services for the provision of community transport. Where requested and when required, Council advocates to appropriate department regarding demand and servicing in the area.
	Manage and provide accessible and safe public spaces	Ensure accessibility in the urban environment	This is being actioned through the Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan, Plans of Management for parks, Council's Playground Redevelopment and Asset Management Strategies.
		Continue a community-inclusive approach to public domain developments	Continue a community inclusive approach to the development of public infrastructure.

ANNEXURE 1

Objective	Strategy	Projects/Programs	Status
	Encourage vibrant town centres	Continue a community-inclusive approach to revitalise town centres	Council continues an inclusive approach.
	Encourage independent living	Identify and promote accessible facilities, amenities and services	Council has a comprehensive communication strategy that incorporates the website, local paper, 'What's On', 'Out and About' publications that provide information on services.
		Encourage older people and people with a disability and services to participate in local events	Council actively promotes opportunities for older people and people with disabilities to participate in local events by targeting local newsletter networks etc.
	Improve support for carers in the community	Identify and advocate for support and respite for carers of older people and people with a disability	Council funds Holdsworth Community Centre and Services to provide support for carers.
Objective 3 A Vibrant Community	Promote healthy lifestyles	Identify and develop intergenerational social and recreational programs	Council currently operates a program of providing preschool entertainment at the Seniors Centre. This strategy is currently being further developed.
Objective 4 A creative community	Support the celebration of local people, places and cultural heritage	Support and promote community led local events, celebrations and venues	Celebration of key events saw a number of seniors attending the Woollahra Seniors and Community Centre. Council operates a Seniors and Community Christmas Concert.
	Improve resources in the LGA for the development of cultural activities	Establish a community facility subsidy program	This program has been established by Council.
	Support opportunities for appreciation and promotion of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural natural heritage	Contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educational Programs	Regular Bush Tucker walks coordinated by volunteers providing information on the traditional owners of the local area. They are well promoted and very popular. Council participates in the Eastern Region Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Forum promoting cultural innovations and inclusiveness.

Woollahra Access Action Plan 2010 to 2013

The following table indicates strategies and actions already listed in the Council's Delivery Program 2009-13 and Operational Plan 2009/10 and new projects resulting from the consultation undertaken for the review of the Access Action Plan. The implementation of these strategies will have a substantial impact on increasing access for all people living in the municipality.

Community well being Goal 1: A connected and Harmonious Community

Note Numbering refers to the listing in the DPOP
New Projects – Highlighted

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
1.1 Further foster and build community partnerships and networks	1.1.1 Build links with the local business community. Provision of information to raise awareness on access issues.	2010-2011	Develop these relationships to engage local businesses in a discussion regarding how they can improve access for people with disabilities, older people and young families.	Local Business Double Bay Partnership Chambers of Commerce Council-Planning and Development
	Skills Bank – Skilled retirees provide their services/skills and expertise to other members of the community.	Ongoing	Skill set to assist isolated people, general community	Centre for Volunteering
	Facilitation of 'e-connect' for carers	2010-11	Increase awareness of social support/access to information through use of IT applications	Access groups NGO's Residents
1.2 Increase engagement in community activities	1.2.1.2 Establish and promote Neighbourhood Development Programs to enhance community capacity. Develop a community leadership project	2010-11	Ensure that the program is promoted to people that are socially isolated, older people and people with a disability.	Neighbourhood groups

ANNEXURE 1

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
	1.2.1.2 Creation of a neighbourhood hub /Assist a Neighbour project that occurs on a neighbourhood by neighbourhood basis. eg meet for coffee days in local spaces or simple tasks such as taking out the garbage, doing the shopping or transport to a movie or social outing.	2012-13	Socially isolated people, general community, older people and young families	Council, Library and Information Services, NGO's and HCCS
	'Share a Pet' Project	2011-12	Linking residents with older, frail and isolated people to look after pets. Increasing community capacity and a sense of belonging in the community.	Local residents Centre for Volunteering
	1.2.1.3 'Good neighbour day' and 'get to know your neighbour' initiatives.	2010-11	Community connectedness initiatives aimed at getting people out of their homes and talking to their neighbours. Older people, people with a disability, general community	Rose Bay Police Local Area Command, Volunteer In Policing (VIP)
1.3 Improve access to information	Engage in a pro-active communications strategy to increase awareness of the available information databases, eg. LINCS database. The strategy would also include information on how to operate/access the databases and information services.	2009-10	Older people, people with a disability, general community Opportunities for volunteers to assist with community information provision.	Community Liaison Team, Computer Pals,

**Community well being
Goal 2: A Supported Community**

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
2.1 Increase access to services and information to support families, young people and seniors.	2.1.6 Provide support for volunteers. Promote local volunteering opportunities for socially isolated people and people with a disability. Development of a skills bank and the use of volunteers in the provision of information	Ongoing	Increase awareness of opportunities to target group. Provide education and support to organisations to engage these groups as volunteers with the effect of increasing capacity.	media
2.2 Support opportunities to participate in active and healthy recreational activities.	2.2.1 Promote healthy activities to residents – Promote healthy lifestyles by Developing partnerships with local sport and leisure providers	2010-11	Through the partnerships, encourage these providers to engage with people with disabilities, socially isolated people and older people to increase participation in sport, recreation and leisure activities.	Sporting clubs and leisure groups
2.3 Encourage independent living for older people and people with special needs.	2.3.1 Advocate for increased respite and recreation programs for people with a disability to live independently	2009-10 - ongoing	Develop resident action groups to advocate to services, funding providers and the community regarding this issue.	State Government NGO

Community well being
Goal 3: A Creative and Vibrant Community

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
3.3 Provide innovative and enhanced library services that encourage lifelong learning.	3.3.1.2 Implement the Library and Information Services Strategy 2007	2010-11	Ensure that new library facilities are accessible and encourage community participation.	Council
3.2 Support the celebration of local people, places and cultural heritage	3.2.1.3 Investigate the feasibility of increased cultural programs in Woollahra, including drama activities, open air cinema and establishing neighbourhood festivals.	2010-11	Ensure that access principles are applied to the planning of events and encourage the engagement of young families, people with disabilities, socially isolated people and older people to increase participation in local events.	State Government Cultural/Artistic groups
	3.2.2.2. Undertake a strategic review of Council coordinated cultural activities and programs.	2010-11	Ensure that access principles are applied to the planning of events and encourage the engagement of young families, people with disabilities, socially isolated people and older people to increase participation in local events.	State Government Cultural/Artistic groups
3.5 Improve the accessibility of arts to the broader community	Facilitate and encourage inclusive arts activities and programs eg Art and craft and dance and movement classes that are open to both people with a disability and the community in order to foster understanding between the groups.	2009-10 Ongoing	Link to the above action regarding the integration of people both people with a disability and the community.	Cultural/Artistic/dance groups

Places and spaces
Goal 4: Sustainable Built Form

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
4.1 Encourage and ensure high quality planning outcomes	4.1.1.1 Prepare a new principal Local Area Plan(LEP)	2009-11	Locate increases in dwelling density in close proximity to services, employment and recreation. Reduced vehicle trips Residents walking to local shops and services increasing economic viability	Council
	4.1.1.3 Redraft/rearrange Development Control Plans (DCP's) and other planning documents to allow website access to controls for individual sites.	2009-2012	Improve access to Council's development controls on the web.	Council
4.4 Encourage diversity in housing choice to suit a changing population	4.4.1.1 Carry out the Housing Strategy Review with consideration of diverse housing choices.	2010-11	Older people, people with a disability, young families	Council

Places and spaces
Goal 6: Moving around

Strategy	Projects/Programs	Timing	Impact	Partners
6.1 Facilitate a network of accessible and safe transport options	6.1.1.2 Convene a community transport forum to involve councillors and organisations in lobbying transport issues.	Ongoing	Advocate to Community transport providers about increased provision of individual and community transport to allow greater independence.	State Government NGO's

7. Recommendations

In acknowledgement of the community driven nature of this plan and in accordance with Council's asset based community development model the following recommendations are made to assist with the implementation of the plan:

1. Community Access Committee

That Council review its existing Community Access Committee structure in favour of creating project or issue based community focus groups that are connected with particular objectives, strategies, projects or programs being driven out of the Woollahra Social & Cultural Plan 2008 to 2013 and the Access Action Plan and listed in Council's annual operational plan.

These focus groups would provide a more effective and efficient consultative tool for the engagement of community members in regard to targeted objectives, strategies, projects or programs and would be convened for the duration of the specific issue or project/program. This would enable Council to engage with a broader range of residents and draw on the many and varied strengths, ideas and opportunities presented by more diverse engagement. It would also provide a manageable vehicle by which community members could become involved in developing responses to issues and strategies for projects/programs which are particularly meaningful for them within a known level of commitment and time period.

Those community members involved in these groups could be drawn from the community leaders database that is currently being developed by Council's Community Development team. Alternatively, this process may very well bring to Council's attention additional community leaders for inclusion in the database.

2. Measuring Our Success

It is recommended that Council engage more directly with the community in the reporting of the outcomes of this plan. This is important as it is a demonstration of Council's commitment to access and it is reflective of the asset based community development model which expects that Council partners with its residents to celebrate achievements, address issues and share success. With that in mind the following options are outlined as to how Council may/does report on this document:

- Quarterly reporting through the Delivery Program and Operational Plan which is a public document therefore available to the community.
- A summary of that report be circulated through Council's existing community feedback channels including the website and the e-newsletter.
- Annual Report on Access and Equity which is a community report and legislative.

8. Conclusion

The Woollahra Access Action Plan is the beginning of a new way of viewing access for the communities of the Woollahra Municipality. The unique opportunities presented through the merging of Council's existing strong commitment to accessible infrastructure, its asset based community development approach and the strength and commitment of the residents of Woollahra towards creating an inclusive community mean that this plan can foster innovative and engaging strategies aimed at increasing the participation of all residents in community life.

Through a strong model of partnership with community members, and community partners, Council's vision of creating a connected, liveable, vibrant and creative community for all will be further achieved through the implementation of this plan.

For more information about this plan and its implementation, please contact Council's Community Services Division on 9391 7166.