
**DISABILITY INCLUSION & ACCESS COMMITTEE
HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, GRIFFITH ON
WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2024 COMMENCING AT 1:04 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Shari Blumer (Chair), Laurie Testoni (Councillor - Alternate), Colin Beaton (Community Representative), Marilyn Hams (Community Representative), Mike Neville (Community Representative, Via Zoom), Val Woodland (Community Representative)

Quorum = 3

STAFF

Director Sustainable Development, Bruce Gibbs, Urban Strategic Design & Major Projects Manager, Peter Badenhorst, Project Planner, Melanie Vella, Community Development Coordinator, Melissa Canzian, Director Economic and Organisational Development, Shireen Donaldson and Minute Secretary, Hannah Hall

BY INVITATION

Suzanne & Lewis Biondo, Kira Boswell & Craig White (Personnel Group)

The Committee was made aware that this meeting, and future meetings may be recorded for administrative purposes only.

1 APOLOGIES

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Colin Beaton and Val Woodland that apologies be received from Simone Murphy, Pat Cox, Erin Fletcher & Jaimi Damini.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Colin Beaton and Val Woodland that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 December 2023, having first been circulated amongst all members, be confirmed.

3 BUSINESS ARISING

Nil

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pecuniary Interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared.

Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

Less Than Significant Non-Pecuniary Interests

There were no significant non-pecuniary interests declared.

5 PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Presentation by Mrs Suzanne Biondo

Mrs Suzanne Biondo thanked the Committee for the opportunity to share Lewis' story and advocate on behalf of those with a disability who are seeking employment opportunities.

Mrs Biondo discussed experiences that she and Lewis have had on his search for ongoing employment which has shed light on a broader issue within our Local Government Area and its approach to employment opportunities for people with disabilities, and the reluctance of employers to participate in funded programs aimed at enabling the employment of individuals with disabilities. It has highlighted the need for employers to incorporate special considerations, or create positions making employment opportunities more accessible for people with disabilities.

Mrs Biondo concluded by saying that Lewis' experience highlights the need for a shift in perspective and policy. She would like to see Council, as they are at the centre of our community, make moves towards creating accessible employment for all individuals regardless of ability.

Kiara Boswell from Personnel Group introduced herself and colleague Craig White to the Committee. Kiara explained that the Personnel Group strive to create equal opportunity through employment, and have recently expanded into NDIS offerings as well. She mentioned that Lewis has recently become a participant of the Personnel Group employment program, and is confident they will be able to assist in securing employment for him in his area of interest.

Craig presented an overview of the Disability Employment Services (DES) and NDIS employment supports which participants have access to. Craig explained that to be eligible for DES, participants will need to be receiving income support from Centrelink, not working 8 hours or more per week and have a disability, injury or mental health condition. Participants are able to register directly with the Personnel Group, or are referred to them by Centrelink if they meet the above criteria or they have an NDIS plan. The team of employment consultants will then assist them in finding a job. They will help with job searching, making sure resumes and cover letters are up to date and are of a good quality. Their team of Employer Relation Coordinators liaise with local employers in hopes of creating opportunities for participants to obtain meaningful work.

Craig advised that Personnel Group provide workplace support for a minimum of 12 months once a participant has secured a position to help them integrate into the workplace and set them up for success.

Personnel Group can offer suitable employers wage subsidies when hiring people with a disability. However, there are limitations when it comes to government funded organisations.

Personnel Group's NDIS Employment Support is similar to the DES, however, they are able to assist a wider range of people, regardless of their Centrelink payment eligibility. They just have to have access to NDIS. The wage subsidy, however, is not available for NDIS employment support.

Councillor Blumer recognised that a lot of organisations have online recruitment portals, and potentially there is no opportunity for people to “tick a box” to say that they have a disability or they need special consideration, or assistance. She asked Craig if he was aware of a service where someone could do a desktop review of our recruitment processes and identify any gaps that Council may have in this area. Craig was not aware of any; however said he would do some research and report back.

Kiara extended the opportunity to meet with anyone from any organisation who may be interested in their support in creating opportunities to ensure that the process is as accessible as possible for both businesses and participants.

Craig White left the meeting, the time being 1:34 pm.

Councillor Blumer thanked Mrs Biondo and Lewis for sharing their experiences and invited them to attend the next Disability Inclusion and Access Committee meeting to share with them the recommendations that come out of this discussion.

Kiara Boswell & Suzanne and Lewis Biondo left the meeting, the time being 1:40 pm.

6 ITEMS OF BUSINESS

CL01 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY

Mrs Donaldson acknowledged Mrs Biondo’s presentation. She went on to inform the Committee of steps that Council have taken in recent time to ensure that Council is providing equal opportunity employment. She advised that Council did an assessment of their employment base, and found that Council do support a number of employees with a disability.

She acknowledged that an online employment process may be difficult for some to use, however, with Council receiving a large number of applications, the most effective way to manage the influx and communicate with applicants is with a software based system. Council have messaging on all job advertisements stating Equal Opportunity process, and recently added a message encouraging people of any ability to contact Council’s Workforce Planning team if they require assistance with the recruitment process. Mrs Donaldson highlighted the decision to advise Council of a disability during the application process is up to the applicant themselves.

Mrs Donaldson asked the Committee to bear in mind that Council is on an award system and that Local Government is a heavily regulated industry. It is also budget driven and an organisational structure is adopted each financial year. Council doesn’t have as much flexibility as the private sector might have in regards to creating new positions.

Mr Neville drew on past experiences working in the employment industry for many years. He said that he knows of multiple people with disabilities that have secured employment with Griffith City Council through work experience placements, with the help of Commonwealth Funded programs. He suggested Councillors review the Equal Opportunity Employment (EEO) Policy and make recommendations to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Mrs Donaldson advised the Committee that SMT have discussed the topic at length, and their recommendations were to bring it to the attention of the Disability Inclusion and Access Committee and also to put a budget submission in to include a 0.6 supported position for consideration in the 2024/25 budget.

Ms Owen suggested a program not unlike the Traineeship scheme to create pathways to ongoing employment for people with a disability.

Marilyn Hams left the meeting, the time being 2:15 pm.

Councillor Testoni agreed that Council should review the EEO policy.

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Colin Beaton and Mike Neville that the Equal Opportunity Employment Policy be reviewed by Council outside of the regular Policy Review Schedule.

Councillor Laurie Testoni left the meeting, the time being 2:18 pm.

CL02 NEW APPLICATION FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

RECOMMENDED on the motion of Val Woodland and Colin Beaton that Mr Soheil Derakhshan be granted membership to Disability Inclusion and Access Committee.

7 OUTSTANDING ACTION REPORT

Due to time restraints, the outstanding action report will be reviewed at the next Committee meeting.

8 GENERAL BUSINESS

Melissa Canzian advised the Committee that the review of the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) has been submitted. She thanked the Committee for their input via Committee meetings.

9 NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Disability Inclusion & Access Committee is to be held on Wednesday, 6 March 2024 at 1:00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting terminated at 2:22 pm.

Confirmed:

CHAIRPERSON