

### Case Study: City of Parramatta Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2022 – 2026

City of Parramatta



#### Highlights at a glance

##### What's unique or innovative?

- The appreciative inquiry approach undertaken for engagement.
- A combined research and community engagement approach which yielded richer, explorative data.
- In addition to being guided by the IAP2 principles of engagement, the project also adhered to Asset Based Community Development principles.
- The creation of a week-long online community where people with lived experience of disability shared stories and ideas.

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## **Identify organisation, sector and geographical location**

- Organisation: City of Parramatta
- Sector: Public
- Geographical location: Parramatta LGA

## **State engagement objectives, purpose and scope**

- Scope: Develop a new Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for the City of Parramatta which includes informed, measurable, and sustainable actions.
- Purpose: To ensure that the new DIAP reflects relevant stakeholders and community members needs and priorities.
- Engagement objectives:
  - Ensure that the new DIAP is informed by relevant stakeholders and community members;
  - Create greater buy-in and sense of ownership both internally and externally through meaningful engagement; and
  - Develop and deliver a set of informed actions which are truly reflective of the needs of those with lived experience of disability in the City of Parramatta.

## **State spectrum level**

- Consult and collaborate

## **Three key outcomes showing impact of engagement:**

1. Development of a draft DIAP informed by people with lived experiences of disability.
2. Facilitation of greater collaboration between service providers.
3. Council endorsement of the draft DIAP.

## **Three key engagement takeaways:**

1. Partnership and collaboration with key stakeholders, including internally within Council, needed to be improved.
2. The need for Council to provide leadership and guidance on how people and groups can contribute to building a more inclusive and accessible city was highlighted.
3. CoP has made good progress in the access and inclusion space with 92% of actions in the DIAP 2017 - 2021 completed or in progress and on schedule, but there needs to be greater promotion of Council offerings in this space.

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## **Key search words:**

Public, government – local/municipal, council plan, community vision, access and inclusion, appreciative inquiry, asset-based community development, online community, workshops, surveys, inform, consult

## 1.0 Objectives

- **Identify organisation, sector and geographical location**

The City of Parramatta (CoP) has been challenged and enriched as it grappled with the complex question of **'how do we reduce and remove barriers for people with a disability and foster a more accessible and inclusive community within our local government area (LGA)?'**

From January 2021, CoP has been in the process of developing its **Disability and Inclusion Action Plan 2022 – 2026 (DIAP)**.

Access and inclusion are the cornerstones of modern society. As our community grows and develops, it is vital that we plan for all members of our community to be given equitable opportunities.

City of Parramatta is in the process of renewing its Disability Inclusion Action Plan for 2022 – 2026.

- **Outline the engagement objectives, purpose and scope – what decisions needed to be made?**

Engagement was undertaken to inform the development of an action plan with measurable, sustainable actions informed by community needs and priorities. The purpose of the consultation was to ensure that the new DIAP is informed by relevant stakeholders and community members.

Engagement objectives:

- Ensure that the new DIAP is informed by relevant stakeholders and community members;
- Create greater buy-in and sense of ownership both internally and externally through meaningful engagement; and
- Develop and deliver a set of informed actions which are truly reflective of the needs of those with lived experience of disability in the City of Parramatta.

- **Describe what role the public had in the decision-making process - including an outline of the affected stakeholders, stakeholder sentiment (engaged, disengaged, distressed, outrage), whether they provided input in designing how they would be involved and likely level of influence.**

A **broad approach** was undertaken to create a strategic document where the **vision, directions, and actions** guiding access and inclusion in the Parramatta LGA are in line with the community's needs and priorities. People with lived experiences were engaged with the intention of not only collaborating and giving them an opportunity to be heard, but also to build their confidence and capacity. They were engaged early and often, and were provided the opportunity to design how they wanted to be involved – they were the first point of contact in this project. CoP reached out to 177 people in the Participate Parramatta

Community<sup>1</sup> who identified as living with a disability, as well as service providers in the disability sector and their networks with a recruitment survey asking people to:

- Register their interest;
- Tell us more about their abilities;
- Tell us if they live, work, study or visit the Parramatta LGA; and
- Let us know their preferred mode of participation.

In addition, engagement with internal stakeholders, sector stakeholders, and the general community on access needs, priorities, and opportunities was also undertaken to facilitate the generation of appropriate, local actions. Participants were eager to engage and appreciated the opportunity to provide in-depth feedback over the lifecycle of the project.

The participants had a high degree of influence on the outcomes of this project with the draft actions being developed as a direct result of the engagement.

- **Explain the reasons for the use of the particular participation process – including whether there were any legislative requirements to engage (as applicable)**

A **positive, strengths-based approach** asking what worked well and what could be improved was utilised. This approach encouraged the exploration of creative opportunities for how Parramatta can be more inclusive and accessible for everyone who lives, works, and visits the city. A mix of traditional and innovative engagement approaches adhering to COVID-19 restrictions, including interviews, a week-long online community, sector and internal stakeholder workshops, virtual spaces, and surveys, were undertaken to draft a holistic document tailored to the needs and vision of the community.

Though the creation of a disability inclusion action plan is necessitated under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014, the engagement undertaken was well above and beyond legislative requirements. The draft DIAP document is set to be exhibited in May 2022.

- **Outline supporting communications/materials developed**

In order to support the engagement, the following communication materials were developed:

- Participate Parramatta (online engagement platform) project page
- Articles in the Participate Parramatta eNewsletter
- Articles in Community Connective eNewsletter;
- Paid and organic social media campaign across Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram;
- Promotional postcards at Day of People with Disability (IDPwD) events hosted by Council;
- ePULSE EDM; and
- Newspaper ads.

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<sup>1</sup> Council's contact list of people registered via the Participate Parramatta page who are interested in Council's research and engagement programs.

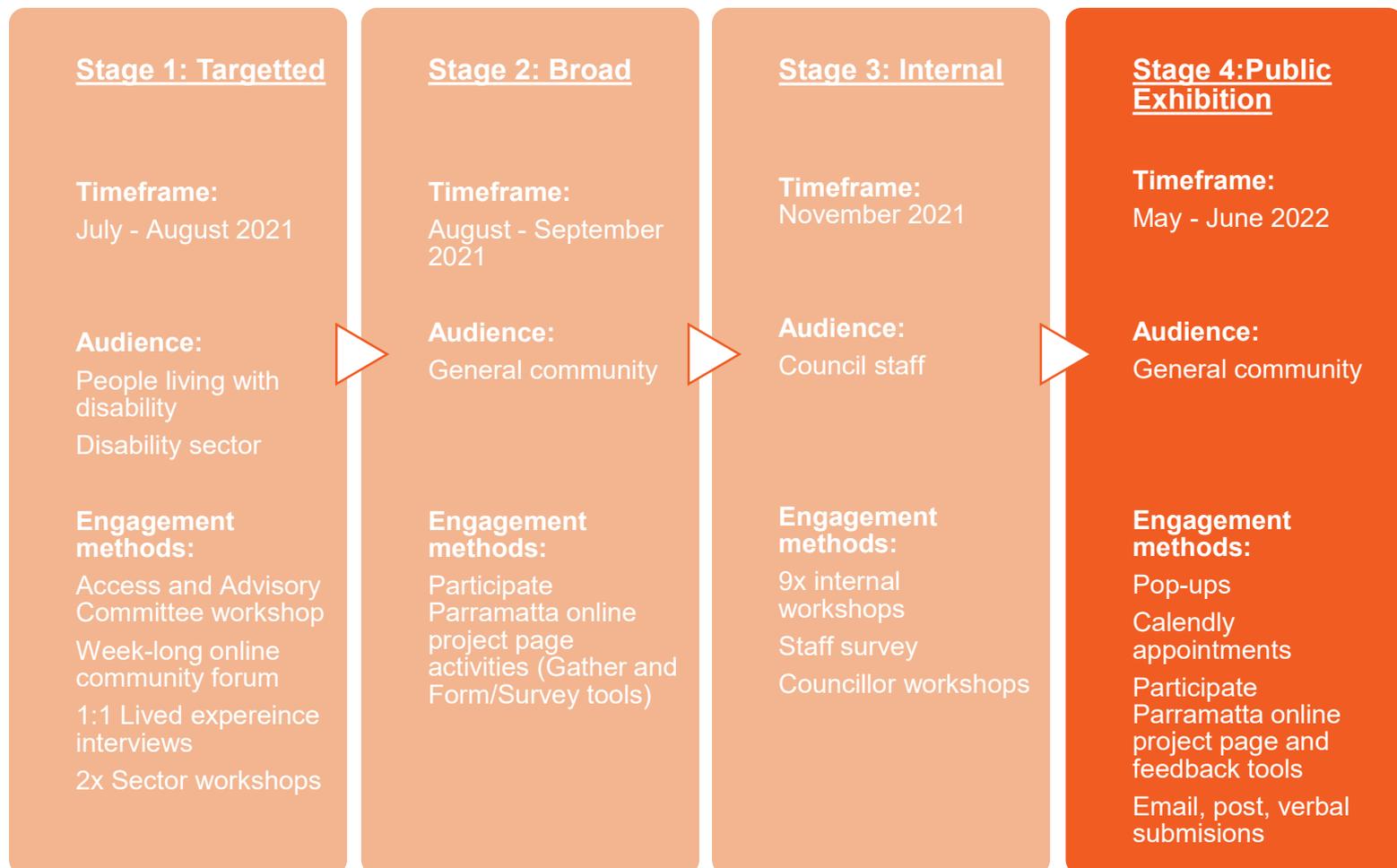
## 2.0 Methodology

- **Outline project governance model and engagement program (including input from participants as applicable)**

A project control group was established to manage the development of the DIAP. It was made up of individuals from a range of Council teams including Community Capacity Building, Research and Engagement, City Strategy, City Design, and People and Culture. One group member, Council's Universal Design and Access Project Officer also has lived experience of disability.

The group met fortnightly to manage and track the progress of the project, as well as the engagement component. Engagement was to be carried out in four stages; three have been completed and the fourth will be undertaken in May 2022. See the diagram below for a breakdown of the engagement program:

Figure 1: Diagram of engagement program



- **Describe engagement methods and delivery, sequencing and anticipated participation levels/targets (and display as applicable)**

The engagement methods over the four stages were decided by a range of factors including:

- The audience and their roles;
- The most appropriate way to reach the audience (with respect to Covid-19 and the public health orders which had Parramatta LGA listed as an LGA of concern with tight restrictions in place);
- General community sentiment; and
- Minimising engagement fatigue at a time when the community was feeling particularly anxious.

## Stage 1

People living with disabilities were centred in the engagement approach and engaged early. This stage was driven by CoP's Research Team. People living with disabilities were asked how they wanted to be engaged, with the preferred methods being an online community forum and one-on-one interviews. The online community was a week-long research and engagement activity where people with lived experience communicated in the way that they felt most comfortable i.e. video, audio or written (independently or in the company of a carer). One-on-one lived-experience interviews were conducted online. These engagement activities allowed participants to feel comfortable and provide valuable insights into what they need to live better.

Also in stage 1, two sector workshops were conducted with disability service providers and NSW state government agencies to gain input on the vision and priorities for the new DIAP.

An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) principles were used as a framework for the workshops. The application of AI and ABCD allowed the focus of the workshop to be on:

- Identifying Strengths and Assets as opposed to Weaknesses and Deficits (as pertaining to communities and services)
- Exploring possibilities and amplifying successes, as opposed to focusing on problems
- Dreams, aspirations and hopes for the City of Parramatta

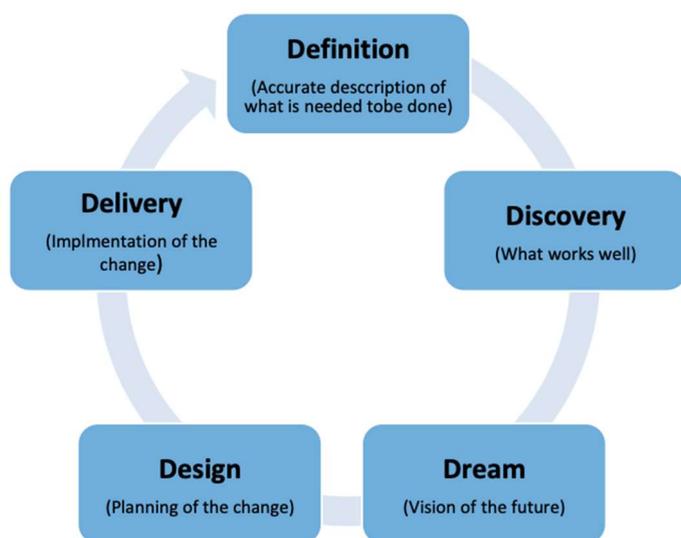


***“Creating disability and age-friendly parkland space is of the utmost importance to our local families of mixed age and mobility.”***

– online community participant

The AI tool we utilised for this workshop was the 5D AI below.

Figure 2: 5D Appreciative Inquiry model



CoP anticipated to engage with approximately 30 people living with disability and 25 sector stakeholders during this phase.

## Stage 2

The next stage involved engaging the broader community. The Participate Parramatta virtual space provided four forums for the general community to comment on each area of the DIAP via text, photos and/or videos. CoP expected to reach 50 – 60,000 people across the LGA translating to 800 – 1000 views and 40 – 50 submissions.

To mark International Day of People with Disability (IDPWD) on Friday 3 December, Council organised several activities aimed at increasing public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability. This included a panel discussion at Riverside Theatres entitled *Stages of Change: Unpacking Representation* and an art competition.

We extended our first stage of consultation in order to align with these events and to leverage the opportunity to promote the DIAP engagement. The winning entry from the art competition will also be featured in the DIAP.

## Stage 3

Following community consultation, nine workshops were held to engage Council staff. The workshops explored what worked best and what could be improved in the existing DIAP, and the scope of the next DIAP. A Council-wide survey exploring similar themes was sent out to staff that were unable to attend a workshop. CoP expected the involvement of 6 directorates in the workshops and 50 – 100 survey completions.



viewed it, and their demographics. It also hosted the online virtual spaces where people provided feedback.

The range of methods used facilitated the collection of a holistic data set aligned with the aims and objectives of engagement.

• **Outline resources such as budget, timeframe, internal delivery and contracted support**

This project operated on a tight budget (approximately \$60,000 to gain input from across the LGA and across all stages of engagement). The entirety of the project was to be carried out in 11 months to meet the deadline set by the NSW State Government.

The bulk of the work relating to engagement and its promotion was carried out internally by CoP. However, Community Minds Inc., an external not-for-profit consultancy specialising in workshop facilitation and community engagement, was brought in to facilitate the two sector workshops via Zoom along with the accompanying surveys.

**Alignment with IAP2 Core Values for the practice of public participation**

IAP2 Core Values	Example of how this was considered in the design of your project methodology
1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process	People living with a disability as well as disability sector stakeholders were the first to be consulted, and were kept involved throughout the entire process
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision	The Participate Parramatta site and the additional promotional materials communicated that the feedback provided would help shape the vision, priorities and actions within new the DIAP. This is what has transpired.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers	A communications plan was developed to ensure consistent key messaging throughout the engagement, conveying CoP's intentions as well as the scope of the project.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision	A staged approach prioritising those with lived experience was taken to ensure CoP heard from those interested in the decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate	People living with disabilities were asked <b>how they wanted to be engaged</b> prior to stage 1 of engagement commencing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 177 people from the Participate Parramatta Community identifying as living with disability</li> <li>▪ 32 service providers working in the Disability sector</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To participate themselves</li> <li>○ To pass the opportunity to their clients to participate</li> <li>▪ Community Connect newsletter</li> <li>▪ Other sector contacts of City of Parramatta staff</li> </ul> <p>This influenced the engagement methods and allowed supportive measures to be adopted (e.g. provision of Auslan interpretation).</p>
<p>6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way</p>	<p>A comprehensive communication plan was created to guide the broad promotion of the project. The information could be viewed on the Participate Parramatta page with translated calls to action and directions for those who use TIS (standard on Participate Parramatta engagements). People were also given the opportunity to contact the project team directly and given options to provide feedback in via alternative methods.</p> <p>Workshop participants were sent questions in advance to help them prepare for group activities.</p> <p>Information for the public exhibition stage will be made available in easy English.</p>
<p>7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision</p>	<p>In the interim period where the DIAP was being developed, the community were provided an update on <b>what CoP heard as well as the next steps</b> in the project. During the May/June 2022 exhibition of the draft document, the previous participants will be informed of how their input affected the decision and the shaping of the draft document.</p>

### 3.0 Manage Engagement

Maximum 500 words for this section

- **Outline the specific challenges (risks and constraints, engagement history if relevant) and describe how you responded to the challenges. Describe if modifications were required to overcome unintended outcomes**

Over the course of this project, there were a range of hurdles to overcome, the most pertinent being COVID-19 and resourcing.

**COVID-19** was the most immediate challenge and begged the question, “how do we reach people with lived experience of disability and engage meaningfully in the digital space?”. Due to government restrictions at the time, no face-to-face sessions were conducted and the usual touch points with the community such as

libraries, leisure and aquatic centres, and childcare centres were closed or operating on severely reduced hours. During Sydney's second lockdown, the community appetite to engage was also negatively impacted.

In responding to the COVID restrictions, a staged engagement approach and a range of engagement methods were utilised. CoP asked people living with disabilities how they wanted to be engaged. The most preferred COVID safe options were a week-long online community forum and in-depth interviews. Upon learning the online community was unsuitable for one of the visually impaired participants, CoP adapted with a one-on-one interview conducted in place.

The sector and internal workshops were held over Teams and Zoom and were structured over two half days (rather than the original full day which was planned face to face). Two Auslan interpreters were made available during the online workshops to respond to participant needs. Breakout rooms were used for smaller group discussions and Mentimeter was also used to imitate real-life activities. Virtual spaces were created on the Participate Parramatta page for gathering information from the general community post and interact on community board notice boards as well as make submissions directly and privately.

The project was also promoted via:

- Posters and flyers to relevant organisations
- Media release
- Paid social media campaign
- Newsletters and EDMs including
  - Participate Parramatta Community Newsletter
  - ePulse (Council's community newsletter)
  - Invest (Council's business newsletter)
  - Community Connective (Interagency newsletter)
  - Service networks and inter-agencies
- Local paper ads

In terms of **resourcing**, the project operated on a tight budget and timeline. The project control group met regularly to manage this and mitigate any risks. The project budget remained on track and was kept so due to careful financial management.

#### ▪ **Describe the approach to data collection, management, analysis and generating the findings**

Throughout the project, three groups were responsible for data collection:

- CoPs Research Team collated data from the week-long community forum and the lived experience interviews;
- The external consultants, Community Minds, collated the sector workshop data; and
- CoP's Community Engagement Team collated data from the general community engagement and internal stakeholder engagement.

The data was collated and consolidated into an Engagement Evaluation Report for each stage and activity and then combined to provide one overarching outcomes report.

The mix of qualitative and quantitative data was synthesised and themed according to the four focus areas of the DIAP. From here, the data falling under each theme was sorted under further sub-categories to evaluate the community's vision and priorities for the new DIAP.

Most of the data collated was qualitative with some quantitative. Due to the data collection methods utilised, this was expected. CoP received rich, in-depth feedback driven by those with lived experience and sector stakeholders. It was this data that drove the vision and priorities of the new draft DIAP. This was then tested with the community during stage 2.

These in-depth findings have been shared internally on Council's Research Insights Hub, making community voices available to Council teams.

## 4.0 Outcomes, impact and insights

### Reflection and evaluation of engagement

- **Comment on appropriateness and effectiveness of the engagement program including reach, outputs, outcomes, impact and actual spectrum level or influence**

The engagement program was appropriate and effective given the time and context in which the project took place.

During **stage 1**, 177 people living with disability and over 32 sector stakeholders were contacted to take part in in-depth research and engagement. This resulted in 42 people living with disability sharing their experience of access and inclusion, and participation from 36 sector stakeholders (of whom 5 identified as living with a disability) sharing further insights and expertise across two explorative workshops. This exceeded CoP targets.

**Stage 2** was geared towards the general community and involved a comprehensive promotion campaign. The project team leveraged various Council newsletters and reached out to previous participants and organisations from stage 1.

Channel	Subscribers	Date	Open rate
Participate Parramatta Newsletter November #1	10,434	09/11/2021	40.7%
Participate Parramatta Newsletter November #2	10,434	16/11/2021	33.8%
Community Connective	1,500*	16/11/2021	-
ePulse November	55,278	08/11/2021	21%
Phase 1 Participants	80	November	-

Table 1: Electronic Direct Mail promotions

A paid social campaign across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram was also undertaken.

Paid campaign	Phase 2
Impressions	67,760
Reach	29,010
Link Clicks	585
Total engagements	795
Spend	\$499.23

Table 2: Social media campaign results.

This translated into 1,202 views of the online project page by 816 unique visitors of the DIAP project page, and 22 contributions. This met the targeted reach across the community, but the active engagement was impacted by the community's shifting priorities due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Stage 3** saw 32 staff across 6 of 7 Council directorates involved in 9 workshops. Following this, a survey was sent to all staff members, receiving 63 submissions. All targets were met.

The level of influence exerted by participants was high, particularly those with lived experience of disability and sector stakeholders. The feedback received shaped the direction and the actions outlined in the new draft DIAP.

- **Outline the evaluation of the engagement undertaken, insights or lessons learned**

The engagement was evaluated continuously throughout the process, with lessons learned at every point used to improve the following steps. For example, after the first sector workshop, key themes were developed and the findings used to inform the next sector workshop. Similarly, after the week-long online community closed, the feedback provided was evaluated and used to come up with themes that fell under the four focus areas. The insights and learnings from these activities influenced the way in which the general community were engaged at stage 2.

Throughout stages 1 – 3, it was highlighted in the feedback that CoP were doing quite a few things well in the access and inclusion space. Of the actions outlined in the previous iteration of the document (DIAP 2017 – 2021), 92% had been completed or were in progress and on schedule. The remaining 8% couldn't be delivered due to a Council restructure, budget constraints and the prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 60% of the actions had been integrated into normal business practice. An area of improvement identified was promoting this more widely.

In looking at what else could be improved, people wanted to see stronger partnerships and cross-organisational collaboration. They also wanted to see people living with disability consulted at the concept stage of any new proposed facility, as well as the improvement of public transport offerings across the LGA. People living with disability in particular want more opportunities to use their voices. These insights have been incorporated into the actions which are included in the new draft DIAP.

Most participants agreed that building on assets and strengths was important, as opposed to just highlighting 'problems'. Examples of collaborative efforts locally and in other LGA's were shared, however it was identified that collaborating with key stakeholders, including Council needed to be improved. Council providing ideas of how people and groups can contribute to building a more inclusive and accessible city was also highlighted.



**Image 2: Social Media Post**

- **Outline the reporting processes to decision makers, key stakeholders and participants, identify how feedback shaped decisions made**

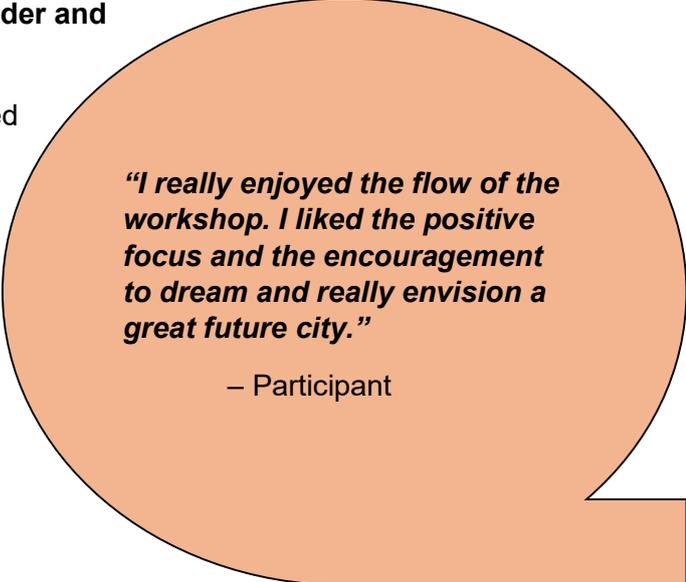
Touching base with engagement participants and keeping them informed of how their feedback shaped the decision-making process was done at regular intervals. Participants were emailed after engagement activities with an update on the feedback that they provided and details of the next steps. Following stages 1 and 2, a social media campaign, an EDM to participants, and an update via the project page on Participate Parramatta were used to report back on what was heard.

Following stages 1 – 3 of engagement, the team responsible for the drafting of the DIAP were given the Engagement Evaluation Report as well as the raw data and write-ups for each research and engagement activity.

Throughout the process, the project team also kept the Executive Team and Councillors informed.

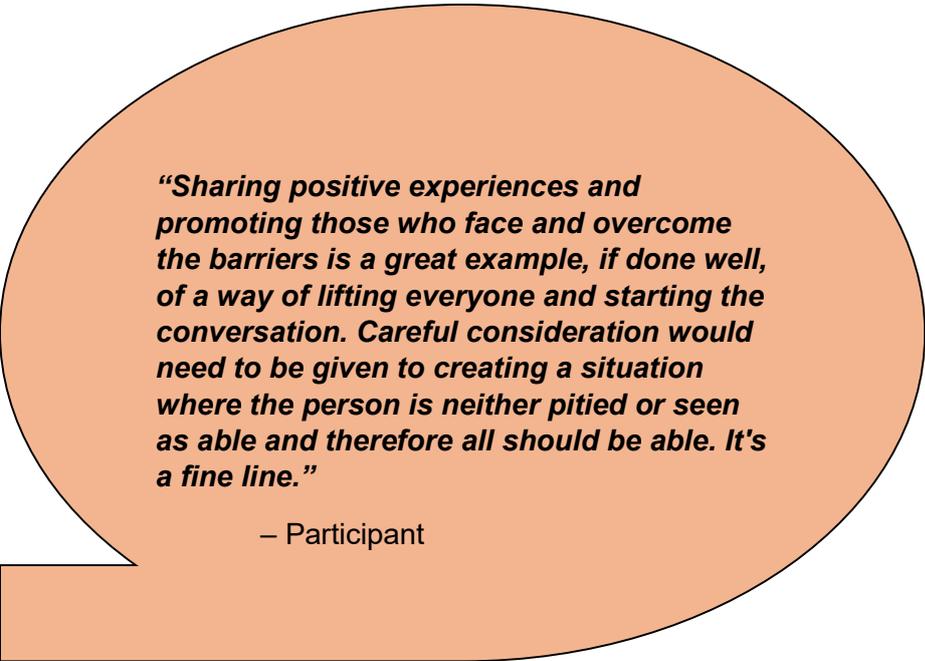
- **Provide evidence about levels of participant, stakeholder and organisation satisfaction.**

Participant, stakeholder and organisational satisfaction ranked quite high. Anecdotally, participants reported having a good experience, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. When providing post-workshop feedback, sector stakeholders ranked the session 4/5 or 5/5 resulting in a mean score of 4.86/5.



***“I really enjoyed the flow of the workshop. I liked the positive focus and the encouragement to dream and really envision a great future city.”***

– Participant

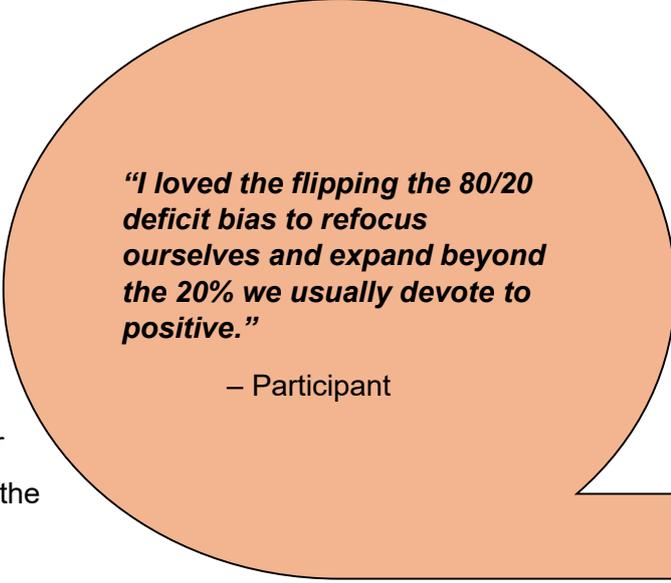


***“Sharing positive experiences and promoting those who face and overcome the barriers is a great example, if done well, of a way of lifting everyone and starting the conversation. Careful consideration would need to be given to creating a situation where the person is neither pitied or seen as able and therefore all should be able. It's a fine line.”***

– Participant

## Innovation and Uniqueness

This project advances practice in its innovative blend of research and engagement. The use of research methodologies and practices in Stage 1, particularly via the online community, facilitated the creation of a draft document that speaks directly to the experience of people living with disabilities and those working in the disability sector. It puts their experiences and priorities at the forefront and ensures the document is uniquely tailored and responds to their needs.



***“I loved the flipping the 80/20 deficit bias to refocus ourselves and expand beyond the 20% we usually devote to positive.”***

– Participant



# CITY OF PARRAMATTA

## Acknowledgements and to find out more

We would like to thank the City of Parramatta for agreeing to share this case study and insights to advance engagement practice. This case study was co-authored by the City of Parramatta.

For more information about this project see:

- <https://participate.cityofparramatta.nsw.gov.au/diap>

To connect with the authors:

- City of Parramatta

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