INCLUSION SOLUTIONS – CITY OF CANNING

Review of 'People with Disabilities – Access and Inclusion' policy

BACKGROUND

In May 2019 the City of Canning Council supported a Notice of Motion to review its 'People with Disabilities – Access and Inclusion' policy (CS408), which was last revised in 2009. As part of the review, the City expressed a desire to engage with people living within the local government area, specifically those living with a disability, through community consultations.

To ensure broad and transparent engagement with the Canning community, the City engaged Inclusion Solutions, an external third-party, to support the City in its review, by undertaking a number of strategies to encourage community engagement, and to ensure that final recommendations with regard to the policy would represent the Canning community.

Whilst the scope of the consultation for the review of the Policy continued to focus on people with disabilities, the consultation also included people with other marginalised identities. The reasons for this are as follows:

- There are a range of access and inclusion issues that residents face that may be due to factors other than disability, such as proficiency in English, and cultural factors.
- The access and inclusion barriers experienced by people with disabilities are further compounded if they have intersecting identities (that is, if a person with a disability is also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, or LGBTQIA+).
- In order to optimise access and inclusion outcomes for people with disabilities it is important that we understand the barriers that are related to other aspects of identity. Just as the range of disabilities within the community is diverse, so are the backgrounds and identities of the people living with those disabilities.
- Through taking a more holistic approach, we will have a better understanding of the breadth of access and inclusion issues experienced, which will result in better provisions for access and inclusion outside of just physical access requirements.
- This approach will also benefit other Canning residents living without disability, who will benefit from improved processes/practices that address barriers such as

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language access and these issues may be addressed through further policy initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

In choosing an appropriate methodology for community engagement, Inclusion Solutions referred to the Disability Services Commission (DSC)'s *Resource Manual for Local Government* which recommends that consultation should include people with disabilities, their families and carers, as well as disability service providers, advocacy groups, peak bodies, and local community organisations and groups. [1] The DSC also notes that consulting takes time: giving inadequate time for response reduces the chance that people will respond effectively, if, in fact, they will respond at all. There are added complications if people with disabilities are to be included, such as transport issues and ongoing health problems, which pose additional barriers. The DSC recommends that a number of aspects be addressed to ensure participation is maximised, in particular:

- barriers to participation – including locations and times available for focus groups or meetings, different modes of participation (whether online, paper, face-to-face, or by telephone);
- allowance of adequate time to provide feedback so as to ensure as many people participate as possible, and that they are not under pressure to respond;
- reimbursement (or minimising) of costs where feasible, such as travel expenses.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds also face additional barriers to participation, including English proficiency. To ensure these voices would be heard, Inclusion Solutions engaged with local community groups and representatives to deliver surveys orally or offer assistance to those who wanted to contribute.

With regard to the research method most appropriate, Inclusion Solutions recommended a mixed methods approach, encompassing quantitative research (surveys) and qualitative (interviews and focus groups). Surveys were designed to give background information regarding people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion within the City of Canning,

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[1] Disability Services Commission. (2004). *Disability Access and Inclusion plans: Resource Manual for Local Government.* Perth, Western Australia: Disability Services Commission.

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indicators of the effectiveness of the current policy. In addition, surveys provide anonymity for people, and an ability to participate when it is convenient to them.

Following the principle that a deeper insight may be gained from fewer people, rather than the more superficial view that is likely to be gained from more people,[2] qualitative research methods were also chosen, including one-on-one interviews and focus groups. These methods allow multiple realities to be explored, are emergent, and focus on contexts and meanings participants ascribe to situations.[3,4] Research that aims to understand and explain complexities of human behaviour and the influence of communities on individuals, is well-suited to a qualitative approach.[5]

Qualitative research also has specific application for situations where the researcher wants participants to be empowered through the process of story-telling.[6,7] Understanding that there is a power imbalance between researchers and participants is imperative – the very nature of interviews creates a hierarchical relationship. To some degree, this can be addressed by the researcher attempting to establish rapport and trust with participants, and also by avoiding the use of leading questions.[8] This is a critical aspect for Inclusion Solutions to attend to, as people with disabilities and people from other marginalised groups often experience disempowerment as part of research, and throughout their lives.[9]

Powerlessness that people with disabilities experience often occurs as a result of internalised beliefs that their own actions will not be effective in influencing life outcomes, stemming from experiences that render them invisible or worthless.[10] This results in apathy and subsequent reluctance for people to take part in collective action or attempt to gain more control or influence.[11] It was imperative that Inclusion Solutions consider these power dynamics when dealing with people with disabilities in particular, and that the consultations be framed appropriately. In order to provide a research experience where people with

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[2] McCracken, G. (1988). *The long interview* (Vol. 13). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

[3] Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

[4] Liamputtong, P. (2009). Qualitative data analysis: conceptual and practical considerations. *Health Promot J Austr, 20*(2), 133-139.

[5] Baum, F. (2008). *The new public health*. South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

[6] Williams, L., Labonte, R., & O'Brien, M. (2003). Empowering social action through narratives of identity and culture. *Health Promotion International, 18*(1), 33-40

[7] Chicago Beyond. (2018). *Why am I always being researched?* Chicago: Chicago Beyond.

[8] Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information, 22*(2), 63-75.

[9] Lord, J., & and Hutchison, P. (1993). The Process of Empowerment: Implications for Theory and Practice. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health.* 12(1): 5-22.

[10] Keiffer, C. (1984). Citizen empowerment: A developmental perspective. *Prevention in Human Services,* 3(16), 9-35

[11] Lerner, M. 1986. *Surplus powerlessness*. Oakland, CA: Institute for Mental Health.

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disabilities could be empowered, significant time was needed in order to build trust with people with disabilities in the community.

Considering these factors, Inclusion Solutions' methodology incorporated multiple options for people to engage, including online and printed surveys, face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, and contact points via email, online or telephone.

A database of organisational contacts was developed by Inclusion Solutions, incorporating a number of contacts provided by the City of Canning. The database covered each suburb in the City of Canning area, and included organisations representing people with disabilities, as well as local community organisations representing other groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from multicultural backgrounds. Personal contact was made with these organisations by telephone initially and then email follow-up to invite them to participate and also to share the information with their members/clients. Some organisations chose to provide feedback by survey or by telephone interview.

An online survey was developed for individuals and organisations to respond to. The survey link was emailed to individuals who were personally known to Inclusion Solutions' broad networks on 17th October and was posted on Facebook sites from 17th October (including Canning Residents, City of Canning and other community sites). Some individuals also posted information on their private social media accounts.

Recruitment of participants also occurred through personal approaches, either by telephone or by email. On initial contact, people were asked if they wanted to answer the survey, have a one-on-one interview, or take part in a focus group.

For organisations who preferred to provide printed surveys, a pdf copy of the survey was emailed. Flyers were placed on noticeboards in libraries within the City of Canning and the link and information was also placed on the 'Your Say' Canning page and included in e-newsletters.

Data collection

During the data collection process, for best results, the research design was allowed to develop[12] , rather than adhering to a pre-determined and inflexible plan, particularly once insights were gained from participants. Some of the changes related to interview questions and techniques and also interview locations.

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[12] Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE publications.

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The preferred method for Inclusion Solutions for individual interviews was face-to-face rather than by telephone, allowing the researcher to establish rapport more efficiently and to encourage the participants to share freely and display openness and honesty. Where impracticable, or if the participant expressed a preference, telephone interviews were conducted.

During interviews and focus groups, participants were encouraged to speak freely and provide their thoughts and opinions. Interviews were digitally recorded to allow the researcher to focus on conducting the interview. Interview and focus group data were transcribed, with key themes identified, and original recordings were subsequently destroyed.

Focus groups were organised in City of Canning facilities (Riverton Leisureplex), at times that were convenient to participants. Focus groups were initially planned to explore people's thoughts specifically in regard to the policy; with a mix of groups of people with disabilities and other people in the community who may be under-represented and experience social exclusion. Appendix A provides a guide that was developed for the focus groups, including questions. Questions asked were predominantly open-ended to elicit views, and so that participants were able to be descriptive, rather than provide simple yes/no responses. In addition, the researcher was mindful not to direct responses or overly influence the discussions.[13] Four focus groups were proposed but feedback from several people with disabilities was that they would prefer a one-on-one meeting or a telephone interview. Reasons for these form part of the findings.

Individual interviews were set up in locations convenient to the participants and where they felt relaxed and not inhibited by others who may be close by. Interviews were semi-structured, with some questions to initiate discussion. Questions used for focus groups (outlined in Appendix A) were used as a basis for one-on-one interviews.

With regard to forming a reference group, Inclusion Solutions collected contact information from people interested in forming part of a group to provide input into the development of a new or updated policy.

Ethics and use of data

In addressing ethical issues, community consultations were conducted in accordance with guiding principles contained in the Belmont Report, such as beneficence, non-maleficence,

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[13] Gillham, B. (2005). *Research Interviewing: The range of techniques: A practical guide*. Berkshire, England.: McGraw-Hill Education (UK)

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justice and autonomy.[14] To give an assurance of confidentiality, individual identities were protected through the use of codes in place of people's names where data is recorded. Participants involved in interviews and focus groups were provided with an information letter outlining the purpose of the research, and what they would be required to do, if they decided to participate. All participants were advised that participation was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any time during the process if they wanted to.

FINDINGS

Participation

A database of contacts was provided by the City of Canning, containing 33 contacts of organisations within the City. Initial work by Inclusion Solutions focused on developing the database to include service organisations and community groups for people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This updated database, of 102 contacts, was used to make initial contact with people in the community.

A total of 36 individuals (of whom 18 stated that they have a professionally diagnosed disability) and 10 organisations responded to the survey. All survey results were considered except for one, whose data seemed to be 'spam' due to the nature of responses which didn't address the questions that were asked. Three survey respondents also took part in a focus group.

As indicated above, focus groups proved difficult to organise. There were a number of reasons for this, including:
    a. Finding a convenient time and place to suit people meant that people chose to complete the survey or have an individual interview. This is a common issue for all focus groups, which is pronounced when trying to organise a location and time to suit people with disabilities who face additional challenges. One such issue was the weather, with some people with disabilities stating they could not venture out on hot days, and the rain precluding others from attending.

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[14] National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. (1978). *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research*. Bethesda, MD: US Government Printing Office.

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b. Ongoing medical management of conditions and the higher level of complications, illnesses, and medical appointments further compound the complex nature of organising times that suit people.

c. There was a reluctance from some people to speak in open forums or to share information in groups.

d. Some people expressed a preference for providing individual information, in the case where they may be grouped with others who talk more and potentially drown their own voice out. Despite the fact that the focus group process would be managed to hear all voices, some people felt it was "just easier" if they had their own individual space to comment.

e. Research fatigue and burn out emerged as a concern. Several respondents felt they had been over-researched with no visible difference made in their lives. In particular, numerous participants referred to a difficult situation concerning use of the Riverton Leisureplex swimming pool and held a view that their opinions will not change situations and outcomes within the City of Canning.

In total, 19 people expressed interest in taking part in focus groups, but because of a range of issues outlined above, resulting in two focus groups being cancelled and rescheduled, the final number who took part was nine people. Reasons for others not taking part were:

- Email address bounced or didn't reply to email (5)
- Chose to change to one-on-one interview, due to reluctance to be seen at City of Canning facilities taking part (2)
- Flare-up of ongoing medical condition (1)
- Sickness (1)
- Deemed unsuitable by researcher for focus group (1)

Of the nine people who attended focus groups, five were people with disabilities and two were carers of people with disabilities. In regard to cultural background, two Aboriginal people and two people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds took part.

For those who preferred to meet privately rather than take part in a group setting, one-on-one interviews were set up. Twelve individual interviews were conducted, either face-to-face or over the telephone, depending on the preference of the individual. Telephone interviews were more suitable for people who found it challenging to leave the house, but still wanted to participate. Of the individual interviews, ten were individuals and two were organisational representatives. Of the ten individuals who took part, five were people with disabilities and four were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and one was both a person with disability and from a CALD background. In addition to these

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contacts, two people contacted Inclusion Solutions by email and one person by telephone, and one meeting was held with several people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in a local community park.

All contacts were considered except for that of one person, who twice gave permission and subsequently retracted those permissions. Due to the tenuous nature of this contact, it was felt that this data should not be used.

In the findings below, individual quotes (in boxes) are provided to illustrate key points.

Key issues emerging from the data

The first point that should be noted in feedback is that the research was widely welcomed, with many participants embracing the opportunity to have conversations with an independent third party. Several respondents commented positively about the undertaking by the City of Canning to review the policy, and the engagement of Inclusion Solutions signalled to them the importance that the City placed on this process. A number of participants expressed a combination of optimism and relief, that the City wanted to hear the views and feedback of community members.

> *"Great first step, engaging an external consultant.*
> *Shows they are taking it seriously."*

Reflecting the need to build trust, other participants commented on cultural issues that may preclude people from participating.

> *"We have so many other groups now – many don't come from a*
> *background of empowerment. Some people are suspicious of giving*
> *opinions because how is that information going to be used against them?"*

Of all concerns, inclusion for almost all respondents means feeling welcomed. Physical access issues were described by several respondents as problematic, but this is outweighed by the ***feeling*** of being included. Of the 30 respondents in the survey who stated that they used the City's facilities, 23 respondents believed the facilities were physically accessible and 19 respondents felt they were easily accessible by transport, but only 12 people felt that they were welcoming. Key words and themes that emerged from the data were focused around the simple occurrence of people greeting someone with a smile and a helpful attitude, rather than being treated as an inconvenience.

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> *"Just include people. Be nice. Try to go above and beyond. We don't want to be left out."*

Data – from both people with disabilities and those without – were characterised by a real desire to see change in attitude. For a group of people who are shut out at many levels, the behaviours of people within the City can facilitate or obstruct their inclusion.

> *"Yes, you have a ramp, but what are staff doing to make some FEEL included? What are the invisible barriers? People with disabilities can face that day-in, day-out with every service they use."*

Reception desks and counters are places where several participants felt a difference could be made for people accessing facilities, being the first point of contact for many people, and one of the critical components in providing inclusive environments. Some people commented on the heights of counter tops providing a barrier, but many reflected that an inclusive attitude could overcome bad design. A belief was expressed by several participants that it was an organisational culture issue, reflected in the staff working in customer-facing roles.

Several stories were relayed by participants who had had negative experiences in libraries and leisureplexes. These ranged from issues such as building design, and the lack of a real 'front desk' at libraries, to not being able to find library staff when people needed help. In contrast, the obvious reception desk at leisureplexes was seen as key to greeting people and providing assistance. Some people with disabilities commented that they did not want to be seen as "special" or pitied, but the act of having someone ask what they could do to help, rather than assume, was important.

> *"Start with 'How can I help?' That's the best way to start conversation, because it's non-judgmental, it's not assuming. Start with 'How can I…?' and you're halfway there."*

> *"One thing that a few people do is ask 'What do you need?', and I can tell them. For example, here, I need a door handle I can reach. A door handle that's five feet in the air is no good to me, because I'm in a wheelchair. Ask people what they need for their specific disability."*

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The aesthetics of the environment was noted by several people as being unwelcoming. In particular, the Riverton library was noted as an up-to-date facility that did not feel welcoming. The positives expressed included that it was light and bright, with lots of glass, but also that it was "dominated by white walls", rendering it "stark and cold" and with "no heart", with the lack of artwork and pictures being noted. Other comments mentioned the lack of people with disabilities on promotional posters near the entry. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants questioned the lack of visible First Nations acknowledgement in City facilities. It was felt that there is some focus on people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, which was commented on as a "move in the right direction".

There are also several instances where people with disabilities mention aspects of the environment that are overlooked. For example, one participant described how the disability toilet in one of the City's facilities had covered most of the necessary components, but that the use of a pedal bin rendered it useless for people with limited or no mobility in their legs. This anecdote illustrates not only one of the many functional barriers people with disabilities face daily, but also the need for ongoing consultation with people with disabilities to test the built environment. Many participants commented on the seemingly "small things" that made participating in community activities, or using City facilities, so difficult.

> ""It takes so much mental planning to leave the house."

Providing feedback and input

Many of the issues around inclusion that respondents reported relate to providing feedback to the City of Canning, such as:
- Not knowing where to start if wanting to give feedback, raise a concern, or make a complaint;
- That feedback is disregarded and that people are 'hand-balled' from one staff member to another until the complainant tires of it;
- Staff have a lack of empathy about issues;
- There are trust issues surrounding how an individual will be treated if they give feedback that is deemed to be critical of the City.

Of the 24 respondents who stated that they had tried to provide feedback to the City, 18 stated that they had received a response and 16 people responded that they felt their feedback was not taken into consideration.

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Having staff in satellite offices around the City (eg. in libraries or at the Leisureplexes) has been seen as a positive move by participants, who feel the staff are potentially more accessible, rather than being in the Council offices on Albany Highway. Participants spoke of a clear preference for these people to be more visible around facilities.

Events and services

Regarding events and services in the City of Canning, many respondents referred to the Riverton pool. Having a purpose-built facility that caters to the needs of people with disabilities is identified by several respondents as being critical to them and having had a positive impact on their lives. Issues that render the facility unavailable to people with disabilities (such as programming of swimming classes) appears to be a significant issue and one that has had a significant negative impact.

When asked to describe a time that characterised inclusion, a number of respondents commented on the decision by the City of Canning CEO regarding access to the therapy pool for people with disabilities. The decision was seen to have given value to people with disabilities and was welcomed. However, the overwhelming feeling from participants was that there is no certainty for people with disabilities, as they feel the policy gives no guidance for decisions that must be made on a day-to-day basis within the City's administration.

The 'People with Disabilities – Access and Inclusion' policy

In reference to the policy document, there are a number of concerns raised by participants. Participants commented that it is brief and generic, with one objective that refers to physical access and strategies that address that one objective. Feedback stressed the need to address other aspects of access and inclusion, such as social inclusion, or the feeling of being included.

> *"To some degree the physical access issues aren't really the problem anymore. I think there is attitudinal exclusion and a lack of appreciation of what value people with disabilities bring to the table."*

With this limited scope, people with disabilities commented that the policy only has relevance for people with physical disabilities and that this is only one subgroup. In addition, people with disabilities may have more than one type of disability – such as a vision, hearing or cognitive disability, and the policy doesn't address any of these adequately.

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In relation to feedback regarding the brevity of the policy, participants stated that it does not provide any detail on how it should be put into practice, commenting that it is not user-friendly for either the residents or for people in administration. Guidelines that outline management practices would be welcomed by participants. In addition, the lack of detail provides no reassurance for people with disabilities that they will be protected from discrimination. Several participants mentioned the problems with access to the therapy pool at the Riverton Leisureplex, and that the policy had failed at that time – people with disabilities and their carers take no comfort from the current policy and its ability to be put into practice in guiding future decisions.

> *"In the past I have seen people in their wheelchairs with carers come to the therapy pool and prepare to go in the water, having got undressed and showered only to be informed there is a problem and they are unable to now enter the pool. This is very poor communication. I feel that communication across the whole Leisureplex area is lacking. I understand this is a difficult area to manage."*

Another concern expressed was that there is no accountability for implementing the policy. Feedback from participants indicated that the City views access and inclusion as the responsibility of all employees across the City, and no one individual's role is to consider people with disabilities as the top priority or ensure the policy is administered fairly. This is an area where participants felt there was significant threat in regard to the needs of people with disabilities being heard.

Participants expressed a desire to have a person appointed within the City's administration solely for the purposes of 'Access and Inclusion'. (NB: Most participants would not have been aware of the newly created role of Community Development officer – Disability Access and Social Inclusion, which was filled on 4th November. Most feedback was received prior to this date.) In this regard, there are mixed views as to whether that person – and the policy – should be focused on disability, or address access and inclusion more broadly.

> *"The council needs to engage a dedicated senior person to take on the role of managing the whole area of disability. It is an insult to people with disabilities that this matter does not warrant a dedicated professional person to be managing and co-ordinating the Council response."*

> *"Not sure. Hard to quantify minority groups. Could be a slippery slope."*

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> *"I don't mind as long as it actually protects people who need inclusion to be taken seriously."*

Some people with disabilities feel that the policy must continue to be a separate policy, highlighting a concern that their needs will be forgotten about in the context of a broader policy. People from other groups (but not with disabilities) are equally divided believing that inclusion is a desire to be attained for all people and therefore a policy that addresses inclusion in all its aspects would be a positive move.

> *"All people please please please. Do not treat us differently."*

> *"Inclusion means including all people of all backgrounds, denominations and capabilities. Old, young, abused, rich, poor, disabled, mentally unwell… all the things. Let our voices be heard and act accordingly so we all can be included."*

Other respondents have signalled a discomfort in attaching any other groups to a policy or to a role within the City that they feel should be given higher priority and therefore needs specific attention.

> *"This particular policy is too important to be bundled in with other groups. I feel passionately that people with disabilities must be adequately protected by a caring and committed administration… We owe the disabled and disadvantaged that much at least."*

Collating all data and feedback received, the dominant view is that the policy and the appointed individual should address access and inclusion, with people with disabilities an important sub-group, and with specific objectives relating to people with disabilities and in line with the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. Explanations given by participants for this relate to two main areas:

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a. Several people with disabilities reflected the desire to be treated 'like others', believing that a separate policy keeps them marginalised. Also, the feeling of being left out or invisible are a common thread that connects individuals from many backgrounds. The idea that one person is focused on access and inclusion for all people appears to give more hope to several people with disabilities.

b. People with disabilities do not belong to one cultural background, and there is a possibility that a broader policy could reflect the intersectionality of all backgrounds with disability, addressing the needs of all people who feel excluded.

> *"Plenty of Aboriginal people have disabilities as well and they experience exclusion on more than one level. An inclusion policy for everyone would provide the cross-over for people who don't just fit in one box."*

An additional point made by several respondents referred to the 'Access and Inclusion' position needing to be one that is of significant status within the City of Canning, giving the role the prominence it needs. (NB: As above, participants would largely have been unaware of the newly created role.) A number of participants voiced concern that if this is not to be the case, 'Access and Inclusion' will not be taken seriously or given due deference and the position and policy will be rendered impotent.

Several comments related to the fact that the policy was adopted in May 2009 and has not been updated since. A desire for more frequent updates was noted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering feedback from people with disabilities and from other backgrounds within the City of Canning who may experience exclusion, Inclusion Solutions makes the following recommendations:

1. **That an Access and Inclusion Advisory Group be established.**

   Such a group should comprise a minimum of six (6) members and include people with disabilities, carers and/or family members of people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and representatives from local community organisations or groups,

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and/or peak bodies, service providers, and advocacy groups. Inclusion Solutions can provide recommendations for individuals who may be suitable.

A schedule for meetings should be created with a recommended quarterly meeting schedule, which could be revised once the group is established.

2. **That a new policy be co-designed with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Group.**

   The new policy should address the following elements:
   a. the requirements of legislation and reference to appropriate Acts, including existing Acts listed on the current policy, Equal Opportunities Act 1984, Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and others;
   b. link to relevant City of Canning Plans, in particular, the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and the Reconciliation Plan;
   c. a reflection of contemporary values, including person-centred approaches, social models of disability and health, social role valorisation, and asset-based approaches;
   d. relevant definitions, including of disability;
   e. a statement of the City of Canning's commitment to addressing inclusion by providing fair and equitable access for people with disabilities and from other groups experiencing exclusion to the City's information, services and facilities;
   f. Include reference to addressing other barriers to access and inclusion (other than physical access)
   g. the underpinning values that define the relationship between people with disabilities, other groups experiencing exclusion, and the City of Canning – for example, that they are valued members of the community, that they have a right to be included in the community, and that they have significant contributions to make;
   h. links with other key City of Canning policies; and
   i. a timeline and process for review of the policy, with minimum review of every two years.

3. **That supportive documentation be developed for use by the City of Canning's administration.**

   Supportive documentation should include the following:

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a. *A management practices or guidelines document* which provides guidance on best practice and contains additional detail related to the policy and procedures. Documents relating to local protocols (with workflows, processes or decisions that relate only to that specific facility or location) should also be developed. All should be appropriate to the specific context and aligned with the policy and procedures.

b. *A procedures document* which provides details on operational steps to be undertaken when implementing the policy. The procedures document should be applicable across the City of Canning and should be directly linked to the policy. Procedures outlined in the document should provide clear explanation for administration regarding implementation of the policy and detail on roles and responsibilities.

4. **That the recently appointed Community Development Officer - Disability Access and Social Inclusion works across the organisation to build understanding/capacity in relation to access and inclusion, reporting to senior management, with responsibility for working with others across the organisation to implement policy objectives and guide its application throughout the City of Canning.**

The Disability Access and Social Inclusion Officer should review other City of Canning policies to ensure they are in line with the Access and Inclusion policy and drive a timeline for biennial review of the policy. The role should also support the Executive Manager Enriching Canning in the responsibility for the management of the Access and Inclusion Advisory Group, ensuring that they meet on schedule.

The Access and Inclusion role should report to the senior management team within the City of Canning. A report on progress should be communicated widely with community members and should form part of the City's Annual Report.

5. **That the City of Canning invest in inclusion training for all staff and councillors, in particular the customer-facing members of staff.**

Members of staff who are in customer-facing roles should undergo inclusion training as a priority, as they impact significantly on community members' experiences with and perceptions about the City. Training should cover topics such as unconscious bias, privilege, stereotyping, and cultural sensitivities. A plan for training should be developed for all staff across the City.

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6. **That the City of Canning address the feelings of people with disabilities by communicating all planned measures that the City intends to take.**

To amend current perceptions and attitudinal barriers, proactive communication with people with disabilities, using a range of methods, is recommended. It is also recommended that the City of Canning provide clarity around feedback and grievance procedures to ensure that the voices of people with disabilities are heard, valued, and attended to in a timely and respectful manner.

SUMMARY

A number of key themes emerged from the data, which have been incorporated into recommendations for the City to consider, focused predominantly on inclusive practice. Physical barriers in some instances are still challenging, and people with disabilities feel strongly that consultation with people with a range of disabilities is necessary to ensure that details are not overlooked in design.

Whether someone has a disability or not, however, inclusion means more than physical or functional access. Asking people what they need or how to help can make the difference, particularly to people with disabilities who described treatment from people as pitying at times.

Many participants described how important it was to feel welcomed, and that the feeling of being left is something that connects many people. In this case, the concept of having a broader view of inclusion, considering the many different types of disability, and the many different groups of people who experience exclusion, was viewed favourably.

Consultations with people from different groups was marked by a degree of fatigue and burn out, but still with the presence of optimism and hope, that experiences of people with disabilities and others who experience exclusion, will change.

> *"…any contribution we could make towards the betterment of the interests of all would be most worthwhile for having a positive impact on the future development of this policy within the City of Canning."*

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To conclude, inclusion is something that means different things to different people, but it is a connection point and a starting point for moving towards a better world for all members of the community.

> *"Inclusion to me means something where all people can be able to contribute. All people can come together regardless of their age, status, whatever. Whether they have a disability or not shouldn't matter. Inclusion is actually about being included. That's what it means to me. When I'm asked about inclusion, there's a part of me that goes 'yeah, right, are you serious?'.*
>
> ***It's something I dream about."***

Inclusion Solutions would like to thank the City of Canning for the opportunity to consult with members of the community, and in particular, to give voice to people who often feel unheard and unseen. We believe this represents a time of significant and positive development for the City of Canning and would welcome future prospects of working together to achieve a more inclusive community for all your members. It's something we dream about too.

For more information, please contact:

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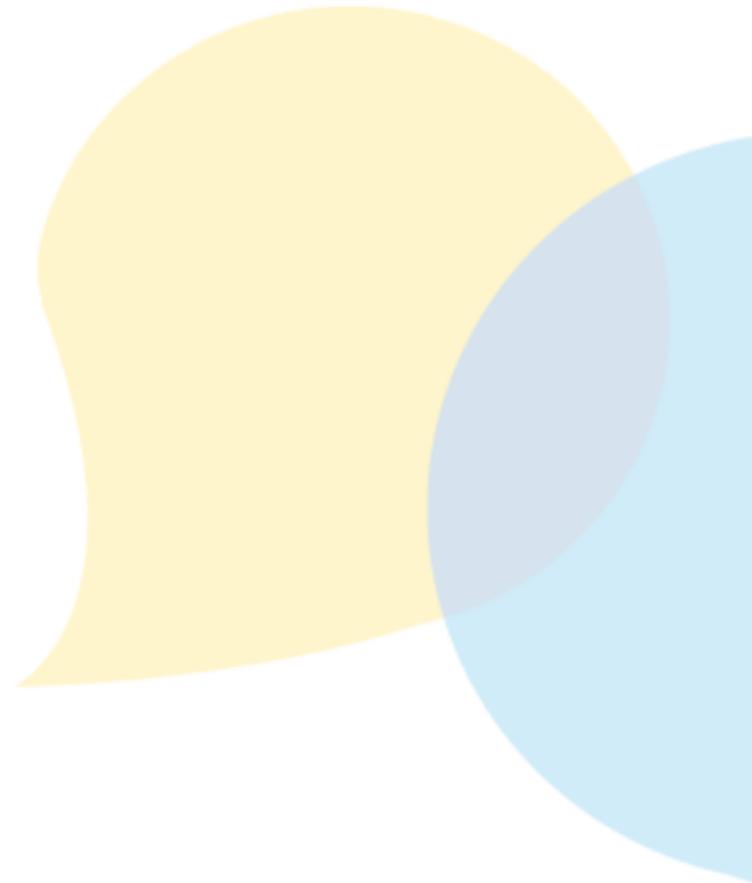Email: consultant@inclusionsolutions.org.au
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APPENDIX A
FOCUS GROUP PLAN: 'People with Disabilities – Access and Inclusion' policy review

Participants:
- Carefully recruited from community
- 4-6 people per group
- Name badges / signs in front of people

Environment / venue:
- Accessible
- Comfortable
- Circle seating preferable
- Refreshments
- Gift vouchers

Data collection:
- Tape recorded
- Written notes also to be taken
- Information forms to be given out
- Verbal consent attained
- Permissive environment established at outset / ground rules
- Overview of topic and background provided
- Policy document to be given out / available to all in appropriate format

Data analysis and usage:
- Tape recordings to be transcribed, notes taken for key themes, recordings destroyed
- Any quotes to be verified for usage with speaker and results communicated back to group by email or mail (as per preferred mode of contact)
- Potential to be included in a reference group for co-design of future policy – if wanted, can put name / contact details on list

Format:
- Provide welcome, give background (blurb on Inclusion Solutions, engaged to work with City of Canning etc.) – results will be used for… / you were selected to take part because… etc.
- Information forms given and explained / verbal consent attained
- Set out ground rules, establish permissive environment etc.

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a. No right or wrong answers, only differing points of view – we are interested in all comments, whether they are deemed positive or negative
b. We're tape recording, one person speaking at a time
c. We're on a first name basis
d. You don't need to agree with others, but please listen respectfully as others share their views.
e. We ask that your turn off your mobiles. If you have to respond to a call, please do so as quietly as possible and rejoin us as quickly as you can.
f. My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion to keep us on topic.
g. Talk to each other.

- Copy of policy document to be given out
- Take notes, observe participant behaviour, including laughter, rapid speaking, eye contact and also non-verbal cues or movement (head nods, shrugging shoulders, body language). Watch for inconsistencies or things that indicate agreement or disagreement.

Background information for participants:

The City of Canning is looking to review its current 'People with Disabilities – Access and Inclusion' policy which was last revised in 2009. As part of the review, the City wishes to engage with people living within the local government area, and importantly, people with disabilities and people with other marginalised identities.

Inclusion Solutions, on behalf of the City of Canning, will be interviewing people in the City of Canning and running focus groups to explore the current policy and get feedback in order to co-design recommendations for the future. Inclusion Solutions is a not-for-profit organisation that works with over 650 clubs, 30 State Sporting Associations, and 60 WA Local Government Authorities to help make communities inclusive and more welcoming of people with disabilities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds among other marginalised groups. We employ an asset-based community development approach which focuses on sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials (as opposed to deficits or weaknesses).

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Question ideas:

Have you read the Disability Access and Inclusion policy? Discuss any feedback.

If you could design a new City of Canning, what are the three things that would be most important to you? [List these on a board or big piece of paper.] Now that you look at these responses and everyone else's, what is the single most important thing? It can be someone else's idea.

Suppose you had one minute to present to the Council on the current policy, what would you say?

Should this policy be used primarily for people with disability or opened up to include other minority groups? Do you have any additional feedback on the City of Canning's policy?

Of all the things we've talked about, what's the most important to you?

Have we missed discussing anything?

Other general questions for discussion:

What do you like about living in the City of Canning?

How does the City of Canning make you feel included in the community?

What activities do you do in your local community that the City might not be aware of?

Thinking about events or activities you have attended within the City of Canning, what things are in place that help you attend? What barriers do you face, if any?

When you want to access information from the City of Canning, what barriers do you encounter and how could these be changed?

Do you feel you can contribute to decision-making processes at the City of Canning? Why / why not? What about providing feedback or making complaints?

Thinking about a typical day in your life, what is access like for you in the City of Canning? Describe to me the barriers that you face – physical, functional, sensory or social. What things are well-designed or work well? What things don't work so well or prohibit/restrict your access?

Now describe to me your dream day. What does the world look like to you and how are the experiences different? Again, think of it in physical, functional, sensory or social. You can use specific, known areas to you, or more of a 'dream' concept.

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