

Access Inclusion Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Date: 17 August 2023	Time: 10am – 12pm	Venue: Level 1, City Administration Centre
Meeting Objective: To provide advice and guidance in the application of planning instruments that prioritise access, social inclusion and overcoming discriminatory impediments to promote a highly accessible, inclusive and welcoming community that respects independence and human dignity.		

1. Welcome

Committee Members

Present

Cr Margaret Wood	Councillor, City of Newcastle (Co-Chair)
Cr Dr Elizabeth Adamczyk	Councillor, City of Newcastle
Cr Katrina Wark	Councillor, City of Newcastle
Patrick Bellamy	Clear Sky
Chad Ramage	Accessibility in the City
Sandra Irons	Community Representative
Lindsay Gardner	Community Representative
Stewart MacLennan	Community Representative
Lynn Duffy	Executive Manager Community & Recreation (Facilitator)
Petria Jukes	Community Planning & Development Manager, CN
Tanya Marmara	Community & Recreation Operations Officer, CN (Committee Secretary)
Kirsty Russell	Former AIAC Committee Member

Apologies

Cr Nuatali Nelmes	Lord Mayor, City of Newcastle
Andrew Vodic	CDAH (Co-Chair)
Ben Moxey	Community Representative
Stephen Warham	Community Development Facilitator, CN (Committee Advisor)

Guests:

Nick Kaiser
Georgia Lazzari
Deborah Moldrich
Lisa Brock

1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

An acknowledgement of Country was delivered by Lynn Duffy.

1.2 Apologies

Cr Nuatali Nelmes
Andrew Vodic
Ben Moxey
Stephen Warham

1.3 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts declared.

2. Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the AIAC meeting held on 15 June 2023 were confirmed as true and accurate recording of the meeting with minor edits to be made. Committee members accepted the minutes.

3. Accessible Tourism Workshop

Presented by Nick Kaiser and Georgia Lazzari. Destination Management Plan (DMP), 5 year plan that encompasses 45 initiatives. DMP themes:

1. Identity, Awareness & placemaking.
2. Connectivity & Capacity
3. Events, Festivals & Conferencing
4. Nature, Coastal & Wellness
5. Creative, Culture & Heritage
6. Nightlife Food, Wine and Ferments
7. Product Development & Industry Collaboration

Pre- Covid the economic output was \$945million, 5000 jobs and 5.1 million visitors. Many of the 45 initiatives are underway however, since the adoption of the plan, the City of Newcastle's (CN) focus has really been on themes 1,3 and 7.

Newcastle has had a robust visitation mix, and not seasonal (on and off season) as much as other places. This is mainly due to corporate travel. CN's other high-level visitation is from conferencing. CN is active in the leisure events sector which attracts partnerships with Events NSW.

Another growth market is 'visiting friends and relatives', people who visit the city for relational reasons.

Newcastle does not have a specific territory for visitation unlike, for example, Hunter Valley which is known for food and wine.

'Seek Off Beat', the City's current tourism campaign is experiencing fabulous success and proving to increase awareness of Newcastle as a leisure destination. Since launching, Seek Off Beat has resulted in 19 million social media impressions (since August), as well as native advertising, media visits etc. The hero video has been viewed 2.9 million times, with 51 thousand leads to the website and social platforms including; Facebook 13 million and Instagram 2.5 million respectively.

There are five key experience pillars which underpin Seek Off Beat are:

- 1 Aquatic & Coastal
- 2 Active & Outdoors
- 3 Arts, Culture & Heritage
- 4 Culinary
- 5 After Dark

Opportunities for accessible tourism would be most aptly pursued under Destination Management Plan - Theme 1 - Identity, Awareness & Placemaking. There is a responsibility for all businesses to make their tourism product accessible and inclusive. CN's end goal is to have a central resource about accessible tourism on CN website as this is the main consumer point of contact and CN can have an influence on content.

How do we achieve our end goal? Audit, Education, and Product Development are the fundamental pieces that we need research and development and likely pursued through the development of a framework.

Nick asked for comments from the committee re their expertise, advice, and guidance on these topics.

Kirsty raised that low vision and sensory / neuro-diverse considerations will need to be considered and there is great diversity to be mindful of.

Cr Wood raised concerns with the mobility perspective, as just one aspect of accessible considerations for destination planning. Some third-party websites allow visitors to sift through accommodation options however, they could do more with other aspects of what makes an accessible experience. Looking at different user experiences is needed. Not just 'we have an accessible room – tick'. Is there a way to make the framework flexible so we can have enough information to know what is suitable to each person's individual needs?

Comments were also made about the general customer service environment. Tapping into the accessible market is a good business decision and improves the city. It was acknowledged that education and culture change is hard, however, staff are looking at how best to approach this.

Lindsay raised that he would like to see accessible tourism not just confined to east Newcastle but to see it LGA-wide. It was further reiterated that what's accessible to one person may not be accessible to others. Noted need to have mapping of where accessible carparks are (*Editor's note here is the link to this resource*) [Newcastle Accessible Parking \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com).

Cr Adamczyk suggested that language and how we define 'accessible' tourism is going to be very important in 'accessibility' in meaning different things to different people (e.g social, physical, cultural dimensions), and connections to Seek Off Beat brand.

Lynn raised another suggestion for the definition and requested to keep it much broader. Nick advised CN to look at the scope and see the highest priority to capture the biggest gap, uplift the industry, and tackle this before moving into the next stage of project development.

Cr Wark requested CN do a framework and outline what we're looking at first. Nick and Georgia agreed the development of a framework is the optimum way forward for this project.

Kirsty raised an idea for 'Seek Off Beat' campaign, "embracing difference", going beyond the surface and looking more deeply and in unique ways to move us forward, using that label as a tangent to go beyond. To experience Newcastle in different ways is what most people with disabilities have to do. Georgia advised this can form part of the framework.

Cr Wark raised the importance for all Wards to be included in this framework. Not everyone stays in Newcastle CBD/ East and would like to ensure that all of CN is covered in the framework.

Stuart commented on the realities of promoting Newcastle's accessibility. Broadly, different accommodation providers say they are accessible however not accessible for him and his needs. Which is likely the case for other people. A suggestion would be a centralised online space to make this better moving forward. Appropriate accommodation will be critical for people to be able to visit Newcastle.

Cr Wood talked about central online space, mentioned there are many blogs and apps- e.g. Accessibility in the City, perhaps opportunities to share similar. There was a discussion about the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) as a data source for the committee to note. Visit Newcastle uses this information where it is aligned.

Cr Wood spoke about how people with disabilities often undertake scouting visits, and the importance of education piece, and need for cultural change.

Georgia spoke about marketing spend to educate and drive people to the apps to ensure reach, support and connection to the strategy.

Patrick spoke about sensory, physical needs, e.g. do hospitality, hotel, staff understand how to meet needs, e.g. sign language, cost, affordability. Audit will be critical to apply what accessibility means, to assessing what places locally are accessible.

Cr Adamczyk raised idea of creating a function to 'search' based on identifying the specific accessibility 'need', and how a person can use the city in that way. We could have a list of spaces and places that accommodate for that.

Cr Adamczyk suggested that through the audit we could identify lived experiences, for different individuals with specific accessibility needs, who could contribute their story of the accessible city to establish trust for visitors with similar specific accessibility needs to come and visit as well. The experience of the individual who writes about their visit is like a local champion. Cr Wood confirmed blogs of experience can be a powerful and reliable tool.

Nick advised CN, through undertaking the audit, will investigate working with people with lived experience and the possibility of 'What is our local champion's way of experiencing Newcastle'.

Cr Wood advised this is just the beginning and looking forward to discussing this further in October.

4. CN Customer Experience Program Introduction

Deborah and Lisa discussed implementing the framework for the CX (Customer Experience) Strategy.

First phase is looking at the cultural piece for the organisation - do we have a customer-centric culture? Recently CN trained over 1100 employees (85%) across three levels of customer experience – front-line staff, enabling staff, and leaders. Through education of the TRUST principles, we build the trust that our customers have with the CN. Trust principles have been a framework that anyone within CN can apply.

CN is in the early phases of the CX program and the service designers are now working on CX improvement processes. A recent example has been with the CN rates notices, pension, and direct debit process. The redesigned form went out recently with improved colours in order to improve readability and accessibility. CN currently uses Sight Improve (digital software) as a tool to support human-centered design approaches.

CN continues to improve the accessibility rating of our website – ensuring images and YouTube videos have all the correct labels in place. Screen reader being able to work on the website. The approach now is to focus on high-volume pages and key services. Focusing on reading age and design to meet accessibility standards.

Cr Wood questioned if feedback is being sought from the community who are blind or low vision if readability is the main focus. Lisa responded that this has not occurred to date, however is being considered and investigated on how to best incorporate.

Petria provided some background on digital/web auditing and user experience testing which has occurred in recent years. Whilst users were not local or CN customers, a series of user experience testing by people with lived experience has occurred.

Lindsay queried what the principal drivers of the program were. Deborah advised drivers are around customer expectations. Our staff want to do a great job and there are improvements that can be made to the resources available to service our customers.

Sandra pointed out there is a big gap between information available on the website and the app when trying to search for information. Deborah advised the website is the main component for CN information, this is where most traffic comes from. The app is more targeted. Moving forward, we would need to look into the discrepancies between the app and the website.

Stuart would like to provide feedback for Deborah and her team, He has called many times, and every time he's been treated very courteously, also, the rate payer section online is very easy to use.

5. Count Us In update

The Count Us In Festival was launched last week with the announcement that CN is welcoming Dylan Alcott to the festival. Petria handed out the 'teaser' program to committee members and discussed the program and great offerings from community partner CDAH.

Lunch with Dylan Alcott on 15 September and all Committee members are welcome to attend and also the Count Us In Vibes if available.

6. General Business

- 6.1 Inquiry into recognition of unpaid carers
Submitted a submission – Petria to send to interested parties.
- 6.2 NOM Liveable Housing Design: Adaptable and Accessible Housing

7. Forward Agenda

- 7.1 CN IDE Strategy Simon Mitchell
- 7.2 DIAP Reporting CP&D

Meeting closed: 12:10pm

Access Inclusion Advisory Committee



15 September 2022	Co-design principles – Terms of Reference	Workshopping the AIAC objective. The committee to develop a clearer understanding of the Terms of Reference. To understand where the committee sits to better enable to committee to support change of processes or providing advice and guidance.	Terms of Reference have been finalised and published on CN's website at link	Completed
15 September 2022	Andrew Vodic	Andrew indicated share with the committee the 'ladder of community engagement' he uses in his work.		