

Port Macquarie Museum

Access and Inclusion Plan 2024-2027

1 Introduction and Context

1.1 The Port Macquarie Museum is an independent community museum on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. The Museum collects, preserves and shares local cultural collections and their stories about Port Macquarie's identity with the local community and tourism visitors from across Australia and around the world.

1.2 The Museum is a valued community organisation with a workforce of some 55 volunteers, who give generously of their experiences, skills and time to operate all aspects of the museum. The Museum's collections are being made available to the public online through its progressive digitisation projects.

1.3 The Museum has outgrown its current premises which are no longer fit for the purpose of caring for and exhibiting the Museum's collection of cultural materials. The current premises do not meet the expectations of cultural visitors or staff and are restricting the Museum's capacity to extend its reach, engage the community, introduce innovative programming and to thrive long into the future.

1.4 In 2019 the Museum completed a Master Plan project with the support of the Create NSW Regional Cultural Fund. The resulting Master Plan, Schematic Design and Business Case support the transformation of the Museum into a world class regional museum, cultural destination and community meeting place to meet community and audience expectations and needs into the next century. Due to funding constraints, the Museum's transformation plans are currently on pause.

1.5 This plan sets out the steps we are taking to become a more widely accessible and inclusive museum. It is our first Access and Inclusion Plan and recognises the need to consult with disabled people, carers and advocacy groups to achieve our access and inclusion goals.

2 Goals

This plan confirms our commitment to seek improvements to access by reducing or eliminating access barriers, to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment leading to a greater and more diverse visitation.

The plan sets out the principles and strategies to achieve the following goals.

1. The Museum is physically accessible
2. The Museum's exhibitions are accessible
3. The Museum's public and education programs are accessible
4. The Museum's collections are accessible
5. The Museum will actively listen and engage with stakeholders to improve access

Goal 1- The Museum is physically accessible

Principles:

- The Museum will work towards providing a built environment that meets Australian building codes, standards and guidelines for accessibility.
- The Museum will, during capital works and general maintenance projects, work to comply with Australian building codes, standards and guidelines for accessibility, subject to funding constraints.
- The Museum will seek to provide multiple and accessible wayfinding tools for visitors that may include accessible signage (essential information, high contrasting colouring, enhanced pictograms, etc.), QR tags, tactile numbering and indicators.
- The Museum will provide defined paths of access, internally and externally, ideally free from glare and deep shadow, with solid contrasting colours between floors, walls, doors and furnishings.

Strategy	Who	Time Frame
1.1 Conduct an accessibility audit	Facilities Sub Comm	By 2025
1.2 Consider improved access options as part of the Store building Conservation Management Strategy project.	Facilities Sub Comm, PMM, Design 5, Other key consultants	By April 2025
1.3 Review museum wayfinding tools, including signage.	Facilities Sub Comm	By 2026

Goal 2: The Museum’s exhibitions are accessible

Principles:

- Where possible and within funding constraints, the Museum will develop exhibitions that enable access for congenital, acquired and age onset physical, sensory, learning, cognitive and neurological impairments.
- The Museum will incorporate multiple interpretive tools in its exhibitions, such as digital labels and interactives, alternative formats such as large print and braille labels, audio tours, and where applicable assistive hearing software.
- Where practicable and subject to funding and space constraints, the Museum will include, in the development of exhibitions and programs, experiences that enable visitors to touch and explore objects and their history, including but not limited to digital interactives or virtual and augmented reality.
- Subject to funding constraints, the Museum will provide exhibition text in a variety of forms including electronic formats for use with smart devices.
- Ensure all applicable codes, standards, best practice national and international guidelines for accessible design, and this plan, are included in exhibition and graphic design briefs.
- Subject to space constraints, provide accessible and inclusive seating in exhibition areas, compliant with Australian standards and including sufficient spacing for wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

Strategy	Who	Time Frame
2.1 Review accessible seating options in exhibition spaces.	Facilities S/C	By 2026
2.2 Consider offering quiet access times for visitors with cognitive and neurological impairments.	Museum Programs S/C	By 2025
2.3 Continue to design and install text panels and labels in large fonts and plain language.	Curator/ Museum Programs S/C	Ongoing
2.4 Identify more interactive exhibition opportunities and develop a props collection for tactile experiences and touchable displays.	Curator/ Museum Programs S/C/ Collections S/C	2024 onwards
2.5 Seek advice from local accessibility advocacy groups regarding exhibitions development.	Curator/Museum Programs S/C	2025 onwards
2.6 Regularly review exhibition content and interpretation for cultural sensitivities.	Curator/ Museum Programs S/C	2024 ongoing
2.7 Continue to offer free entry days to support visitation from disadvantaged individuals/groups.	Museum Programs S/C	Ongoing

Goal 3: The Museum’s public and education programs are accessible

Principles:

- The Museum will work with local disability groups, access advocacy groups and schools to develop programs specifically for groups requiring alternative access to the Museum.
- Digital programs utilising smart devices will be considered for outreach and education programs to enable inclusion and communication with students and visitors.
- The Museum will provide a range of options to book and pay for public and education programs.
- The Museum will explore alternatives to audio and visual presentations, such as large print, braille and audio descriptions when developing new exhibits.

Strategy	Who	Time Frame
3.1 Continue to offer free teacher support materials including PAST PORT and the AWM Memorial Loan Boxes.	Museums Programs S/C	Ongoing
3.2 Develop object loan/memory kits for use by schools, home schoolers, and other specific groups and organisations.	Museum Programs S/C	By 2026
3.3 Further develop networks with local disability groups.	Museum Programs S/C	2024 ongoing
3.4 Conduct audience needs research & analysis (subject to funding)	Museum Programs S/C	2024-2026
3.5 Develop specific engagement programs & events for seniors and youth (subject to funding)	Museum Programs S/C	2024-2027
3.6 Continue to seek grants to support free public programming initiatives.	Museum Programs S/C	Ongoing

Goal 4: The Museum’s collections are accessible

Principles:

- Visitors and the public more widely are able to search the Museum’s collections electronically
- The Museum will maintain a handling collection of suitable objects for experiential learning and access.
- On request the Museum will endeavour to facilitate family and small group visits to view specific objects.
- On request the Museum will endeavour to provide disability groups and providers with supported after-hours access and exclusive access to the Museum

Strategy	Who	Time Frame
4.1 Continue to digitise the collection and make the collection catalogue accessible online through eHive and Trove	Collections S/C	2024 ongoing
4.2 Continue to support supervised access to specific objects for individuals and community groups.	Curator/ Archivist	2024 ongoing
4.3 Discuss access requirements with disability groups and providers to develop a sustainable exclusive access program.	Museum Programs S/C	From 2025

Goal 5: The Museum will actively listen and engage with stakeholders to improve access

Principles:

- The Museum will seek to engage and work cooperatively with a variety of disability stakeholders when developing new programs and facilities.
- As part of the Client Service Charter, visitors will be encouraged to inform the Museum of feedback regarding accessibility matters and the Museum will provide a timely response.
- The Museum is committed to implementing best practice and this will be reflected in its policies and procedures within resourcing constraints.
- Subject to resources, the Museum will build disability awareness among staff through programs and training.

Strategy	Who	Time Frame
5.1 Develop contacts with key local disability and aged groups.	Museum Programs S/C	2024 ongoing
5.2 Appoint a committee member responsible for addressing accessibility feedback from the public.	Management Committee	2024
5.3 Explore opportunities to form an access and inclusion advisory group, noting that Port Macquarie Hastings Council disbanded its Community Inclusion Committee in 2022.	Museum Programs S/C	By 2026