



SHELLHARBOUR INCLUSIVE BEACHES CASE STUDY

In 2016, Shellharbour City Council commenced access improvements to Shellharbour North Beach to make another one of the beaches more inclusive. While this project has not been completed, some access improvements are now available to the community, enabling the beach to be enjoyed by all.

The staged project involves:

- Modification to the access pathway
- Simplified signage and procedures for the use of the beach wheelchair
- Improved access and signage at the accessible toilet.

This project was in response to a resident's initiative and subsequent collaboration across council.

A resident approached council with a vision – 'a local inclusive beach that provides easy access for all through the provision of beach matting'. She was confident of the ability to secure external funding for the matting and additional beach wheelchairs.

Residents, council lifeguards and council's Assets and Projects Team collaborated and the Disability Access Committee oversaw the project. Although external funding is still being sourced for the beach matting and additional beach wheelchairs, the other aspects of the project have been completed or are on track for completion prior to the commencement of the beach patrol season in 2017.



Existing access path with beach wheelchair



Fabricated pathway linking to existing concrete path



Inclusive and accessible features

Shellharbour North Beach

Shellharbour North Beach (NSW) is a 1 km long, slightly curving, east-facing beach, extending south from the rocks of Barrack Point to a small rocky protrusion. The southern end of the north beach is patrolled and provides the best location for swimming. Ample parking is available including an accessible car parking space. There is a toilet block nearby that includes an accessible toilet.

Modification to access pathway

The access pathway to the beach was an uneven sandy strip leading from the car park to the beach.

Improvements to the access pathways is a two staged project:

- Stage 1 - involves improvements to the path from the car park to the beach. This stage has been completed with building a concrete and fabricated path to the beach, with funding from Section 94.
- Stage 2 - is the provision of the beach matting. This stage is incomplete as funding for the beach matting is still being sourced. Council's lifeguards will be placing the beach matting down daily once it becomes available.

Feedback from the community has been very positive:

"Fantastic I can get on the sand"

"I've got access"

Simplified signage and procedures for the use of the beach wheelchair

A beach wheelchair is allocated to the site. The beach wheelchair has been largely under-utilised due to restrictive administrative and booking procedures governing its use.

Council's lifeguards reviewed procedures; the beach wheelchair is now available on site each day that the lifeguards are on duty. Anyone requiring the beach wheelchair is able to access the beach wheelchair through



The wheelchair is available as below:

September School Holidays to December School Holidays	Weekdays 9.45am - 4.30pm
December/Jan School Holidays	7 days a week 9.15am - 4.30pm
End of January School Holidays to ANZAC day	7 days a week 9.45am - 4.30pm
ANZAC day to September School Holidays	Wheelchair available by booking only, please contact customer service



a combination lock. The code is available from the lifeguards on duty or from council's customer services office.

Council's lifeguards are responsible for ensuring that the beach wheelchair is kept in good condition.

New signage outlines procedures for the use of the beach wheelchair.

Feedback from the community has been very positive:

"I was at the beach and a lifeguard came up to me to ask if I wanted to use the beach wheelchair. It is great to see the lifeguards being proactive"

"How wonderful is it to be able to get up in the morning, notice the sun is shining and be able to head to the beach knowing that the beach wheelchair will be there for me to use"



Improved access and signage at the accessible toilet.

New signage promoting the Master Locksmith Access Key (MLAK) at the accessible toilet was also reinstalled.



Key learnings

Challenges

One person can make a difference

One person with an idea can make a difference to many people's lives.

Collaboration is important

Commitment from the key stakeholders early in the project's development is important. Council's lifeguards supported the project from its inception and their support was crucial to its success.

Small changes can make a big difference to people's lives

Although the project is not complete and a completion date is unknown, the already made small changes are making this beach more inclusive.

Outcomes

The beach is more inclusive.

People with disability and their families are able to enjoy the spontaneity of a day at the beach. The sun, sand and water are an important part of Shellharbour's culture.

The beach wheelchair is available each day that council's lifeguards are on duty and is being used on a regular basis.

The accessible toilet is available after hours for use by people with a MLAK key.

The learnings are transferrable, e.g. the improvements at Shellharbour North Beach have resulted in the purchase of an additional beach wheelchair and signage for a neighbouring beach at Warilla. The beach wheelchair and signage will also be in place prior to the commencement of the beach patrol season in September 2017.

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