



**Midlas**

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**Building Resilient Communities**

**DISABILITY ACCESS AND INCLUSION PLAN**  
**2015 – 2020**

Upon request, this document can be provided in alternative formats.

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## **Introduction**

Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service Inc (Midlas) is a Community Legal Centre based in Midland providing services to people throughout the north east region of Perth. Having supported people in our community for over three decades, Midlas has a long-standing strong commitment to improving lives.

### **Vision**

Building resilient communities

### **Mission**

We partner with individuals and organisations to promote independence, strength and wellbeing in our community through support, advocacy and education.

### **Values**

Caring for people  
Developing partnerships  
Supporting our community

## **Functions, facilities and services provided by Midlas**

Midlas currently offers free services in six key areas: financial counselling; emergency relief; family and domestic violence legal services; tenancy advocacy; disability advocacy; and community education. These services are funded by the State and Commonwealth Government; LotteryWest; and Public Purposes Trust. All Midlas services operate through raising awareness in the community, outreach, and preventative strategies, in addition to one-to-one and family support.

### **Financial Counselling**

Financial Counsellors offer assistance, advocacy and education. The Financial Counsellors help with issues ranging from personal budgeting skills through to debt management and bankruptcy support. They also negotiate with creditors when required and seek to provide options to enhance regulation of finances.

### **Emergency Relief**

As part of the wider financial services, Midlas provides some emergency relief to people in immediate need, including food vouchers and assistance with rent arrears.

### **Legal Service**

Midlas provides a family law service and provides legal advice and assistance for victims of domestic violence and assistance in applications for criminal injuries compensation.

### **Disability Advocacy**

Midlas provides individual advocacy and support to people with disabilities; people with mental illness; their families and carers. Advocacy is provided on matters including access to services; discrimination; alleged abuse; and neglect. Midlas supports people to navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme, supporting self-advocacy, and promoting their rights.

### **Tenancy Advocacy**

Midlas provides individual and family advocacy for tenants ranging from private and public renters to those experiencing homelessness. Tenant Advocates negotiate with property managers to sustain existing tenancies; help to obtain new properties; and assist in securing

emergency and crisis accommodation for people who are, or who are at risk of becoming homeless.

### **Community Education**

Midlas provides community education on financial literacy; domestic violence; family law; the rights of people with disabilities; navigating the support system; tenants' rights and responsibilities. Community education is provided in schools; community hubs; forums; and through local authorities.

### **People with Disabilities within Service**

Midlas' staff work with a wide scope of people who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. These can include:

- People with disabilities/health conditions including intellectual, physical, sensory and speech, mental health and neurological disabilities.
- Parents and guardians of people with disabilities.

Over the period of 1 July 2014 – 30 June 2015, Disability Advocates opened 111 case files for clients with a disability or for parents/guardians of a person with a disability. On average, most clients lived independently or with a partner and/or children, predominantly in government housing. Most clients received some sort of Centrelink income, usually Disability Support Pension or New Start Allowance.

For this period, the presenting issues that arose most frequently were:

- Discrimination/Rights;
- Finances;
- Health/Mental Health;
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS);
- Services;
- Employment;
- Accommodation ;

### **Planning for better access**

According to the 2011 Census (ABS 2011) the following statistics are true of Midlas Disability Advocate service areas:

<b><u>Local Government Area</u></b>	<b><u>Total Population</u></b>	<b><u>People with Disability</u></b>	<b><u>% of Population</u></b>
Town of Bassendean	14, 404	652	4.53%
City of Swan	108, 460	3, 772	3.48%

Shire of Kalamunda	53, 568	1, 708	3.19%
Shire of Mundaring	36, 532	1, 165	3.19%
<b><u>Total Populations</u></b>	<b>212,964</b>	<b>7,297</b>	<b>3.43%</b>

## **Policy Statement for Access and Inclusion**

Midlas are committed to providing an inclusive and accessible service for people with disabilities, their families and carers. We recognise that in order for Midlas to maximise its effectiveness we must employ strategies to allow potential clients with barriers to access our services. Midlas interprets an accessible service as one that is open and available to all people with disabilities, allowing them the same opportunities as anyone within the general community to access Midlas' services.

Midlas are committed to the 6 outcomes set out within its DAIP. These are:

1. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by Midlas.
2. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of Midlas.
3. People with disabilities receive information from Midlas in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.
4. People with disabilities received the same level and quality of service from the staff as any other client who engages with Midlas.
5. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to Midlas.
6. People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation run by Midlas.

## **Development of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP)**

### **Responsibility for the planning process**

The General Manager will oversee the development, implementation, review and evaluation of the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan. This Plan has been approved by the Midlas board.

The General Manager will hold responsibility for implementation of the DAIP. Staff are responsible for ensuring that actions are being implemented, relevant to their service.

### **Consultation process**

Process included:

- Examination of the current DAIP and reports gathered on what has been achieved and what objectives remain to be completed or altered;

- Consultation with staff;
- Survey\* completed by clients engaged with Disability Advocates;
- Survey\* available through the Midlas web site;
- Survey\* completed by Midlas partnership organisations;
- Public notice displayed in local community newspapers.

\*See Appendix A for copy of 'DAIP Review Survey'

### **Findings of the consultation**

The review and consultation found that a number of initial strategies in the previous DAIP still needed to be addressed and a revised plan was required to address access and inclusion barriers for people with disabilities.

An updated Midlas Policy Manual has been completed to comply with the National Standards for Disability Services and does achieve some of the strategies set out in the previous DAIP. This policy manual contains an 'Accessible Service Policy' which is in line with National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) Standard 5 for Service Access and the NACLC accreditation scheme as well as relevant legislation. Staff were involved in the development of the Policy Manual and are aware of the policies related to access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

Barriers to access that were identified in the consultation were:

- Lack of privacy in interview rooms and issues around confidentiality;
- Suitability of rooms for people with disabilities;
- Difficulty in accessing the service - in particular booking appointments;
- Access to building e.g. parking;
- Limited information about Midlas services' publicly available and in accessible easy-to-read formats.

### **Responsibility for implementing the DAIP**

It is a requirement under state government funding that Midlas must implement a DAIP to promote an accessible and inclusive service for people with disabilities. The Disability Access Inclusion Plan Strategies 2015 – 2020 highlight what strategies are required to improve access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

### **Communicating the plan to staff and people with disabilities**

On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2015 the Plan was approved by the Midlas board. The DAIP is available on Midlas' website and copies are available to the community on request and in alternative formats if required.

The completed DAIP was discussed at Midlas staff meeting to ensure that all staff were aware of the DAIP and the strategies that needed to be achieved.

### **Review and evaluation mechanisms**

The DAIP will be reviewed every 5 years. It will be amended on a regular basis if required to reflect the progress of implementation and in line with any legislative changes.

The General Manager will conduct an annual audit of the DAIP and incorporate information from client complaints, feedback received from agencies and any other input. Timeframes will be developed for each strategy within the DAIP. These will be reviewed by the General Manager.

## **Disability Access Inclusion Plan 2015 – 2020 Strategies**

### **Outcome 1**

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the services of, and any events organised by Midlas.

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Clients who cannot call to book appointments to be encouraged to contact Midlas electronically or use of alternative methods like the National Relay Service	Ongoing
Ensure events that are organised are advertised in a way that is easy to understand. Events should be wheelchair accessible with clear entry/exit points and clients encouraged to bring carers or family members if required.	Ongoing
Use of Disability Services Commission “Accessible Events Checklist”.	Ongoing
Staff to use an interpreting service when required during meetings with clients.	Ongoing
Referrals accepted through organisations over the phone or electronically.	Ongoing

### **Outcome 2**

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to access the buildings and other facilities of Midlas.

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
In conjunction with building management Midlas aims to meet prescribed standards for access requirements for people with disabilities under “The Disability (Access to Premises-Buildings) Standards 2010.”	Ongoing
New or current developments to the Midlas building continue to provide access to people with disabilities.	Ongoing
Ongoing commitment to providing information to building management in relation to identified barriers to access for people with disabilities.	Ongoing
To improve access to reception, receptionist to ascertain if personal safety would not be compromised and then assist client from waiting room.	Ongoing
Home visits to be arranged for clients who have difficulty in accessing the building due to their disability or unable to use public transport. Taxi vouchers made available to clients who can only access Midlas office via taxi transport	Ongoing.
If available, client interviews can be held in a vacant office to ensure privacy is maintained.	Ongoing
Ensure Midlas staff and volunteers are aware of facilities available to people with disabilities including toilets, access ramps and lamps.	Ongoing
Completion of “Monthly Building Checklist” to highlight areas of concern relating to access for people with disabilities.	Monthly

**Outcome 3**

People with disabilities receive information from Midlas in a format that will enable them to access the information as readily as other people are able to access it.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Easy English forms are available for clients during appointments.	Ongoing
Information presented at front desk reception to be presented in an Easy English format and at eye level.	Ongoing
Midlas staff are aware of where to access forms in alternative formats	Ongoing
Ensure website is user friendly and strives to meet the W3C Web Content Accessibility guidelines.	Ongoing
Ensure website is updated regularly with accurate and current information.	Ongoing

**Outcome 4**

People with disabilities received the same level and quality of service from the staff as any other client who engages with Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Determine training needs of staff and develop Professional Development Plans.	Reviewed during staff annual appraisal
Ensure continuous improvement of staff knowledge and skills in order to provide quality services for people with disabilities.	Ongoing
All staff review and adhere to the Disability Access and Inclusion Plan as stated in Job Description Framework and policy manual.	Ongoing

**Outcome 5**

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to make complaints to Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
'Midlas Complaints and Client Feedback Policy' is accessible for all clients and reviewed by General Manager.	Ongoing Reviewed every 12 months
Continue to educate staff on current policies on making complaints, particularly for new staff.	Ongoing
For clients to be able to easily provide feedback and make complaints – e.g. Suggestion Box accessible and easy to use Feedback can be given verbally.	Ongoing
All clients invited to participate in Client Feedback Survey. Staff to assist client when appropriate and if needed provide in an alternative format.	Ongoing

**Outcome 6**

People with disabilities have the same opportunities as other people to participate in any public consultation run by Midlas.

STRATEGY	TIMEFRAME
Involve people with disabilities in consultation for policy and procedures and relevant submissions	Ongoing
Staff to use a variety of methods for involving people with disabilities including online, telephone and post.	Ongoing

**Acknowledgements**

Midlas acknowledges the input received from the individuals and group within the community that have assisted with the preparation for this Disability Access and Inclusion Plan.

## **REFERENCES**

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, *Census Population and Housing – Basic Community Profile Bassendean, 2011*, Excel spreadsheet, cat. No2001.0, viewed 30 September 2015 <[http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/CensusOutput/copsub.NSF/All%20docs%20by%20catNo/2011~Community%20Profile~LGA50350/\\$File/BCP\\_LGA50350.zip?OpenElement](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/CensusOutput/copsub.NSF/All%20docs%20by%20catNo/2011~Community%20Profile~LGA50350/$File/BCP_LGA50350.zip?OpenElement)>

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**Appendix A**

**Disability Access Inclusion Plan Review  
Survey**



Midlas are updating their Disability Action Inclusion Plan (DAIP) and would appreciate your feedback on accessing our services and areas for improvement.

1. Are you aware that Midlas had a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan? Yes / No

2. Are you: (tick that all apply to you)

A person with a disability

A family member, carer or friend

A support worker (paid)

A member of the public

Other (please specify)

3. Are you aware of any BARRIERS experienced by people with disabilities engaging with Midlas?  
Yes / No / Unsure

Comments:

4. How would you rate the physical access to Midlas' buildings and facilities for people with a disability?  
Please include suggestions to increase access.

                                                                                      

Excellent                      Good                      Average                      Poor                      Very Poor

Comments:

5. How would you rate the information that is available about Midlas? (This can include written materials, signage and website)

                                                                                      

Excellent                      Good                      Average                      Poor                      Very Poor

Comments:

6. How would you rate the overall level of access and inclusion for people with disabilities by Midlas?

                                                                                      

Excellent                      Good                      Average                      Poor                      Very Poor

Comments:

7. What do you think Midlas could do to help build a more inclusive and welcoming environment for people with disabilities?

Comments:

8. Would you like to be consulted in the future about access and inclusion issues for Midlas? If so, please provide your contact details below. Yes / No