



Barossa
Bushgardens

Place Plants People



*The***Barossa***Council*

Sensory Garden Access Action Plan 2025-2029

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Ngadjuri as traditional owners of this special meeting place. We also pay our respects to the Peramangk and Kurna peoples, and their ongoing and deep connection to the landscape, environment and all living creatures.

The ancestors of all three nations have walked this land for thousands of years and built a deep understanding on how to care for it. We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging and look forward to continuing to building bridges and relationships for a sustainable common future.

The Barossa Bushgardens S41 Committee, Friends of Barossa Bushgardens and staff would like to thank the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Group for their valued input into this plan. We would like to especially acknowledge the members of the sub-committee, Isabelle Osuna-Getty, Kylie Hannah and Natalie Mudge.

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Foreword

The Sensory Garden at the Barossa Bushgardens was developed in 2007, in collaboration with the Disability Access Review Committee and a donation of \$5,000 from The Barossa Council. The design of the garden incorporated plants with aromatic foliage and flowers, appealing to the sense of smell as well as plants with interesting bark or foliage which are pleasurable to touch. In addition, the garden has plants which attract bird life and produce pleasant sounds due to the action of the wind. Currently the Sensory Garden comprises a range of native plants, some of which are not local to the area but do provide a sensory experience for our visitors.

Whilst the paths are fine gravel and, in some areas, have compacted well, most of the site is not suitable for wheelchair access. The rocks lining the paths were originally used as a guide for people using canes for orientation, however they are now considered a tripping hazard. Some of the plants have started to overgrow the paths and pose a risk.

This plan was developed as a guide to re-develop the Sensory Garden (Photo 1) to an appropriate standard of access for people living with a wide variety of abilities. It offers ideas around pathway upgrades, planting suggestions, visual guides and signage. This Access Action Plan is not limited to the Sensory Garden but can also be used as a guide for further developments throughout the rest of the Bushgardens.



Photo 1: Aerial view of the Sensory Garden

1.0 How to get a copy of this Access Action Plan

Hard copies, including in large print, are available during opening hours at
Barossa Bushgardens Volunteer Centre
653 Research Road
Nuriootpa, SA, 5355
Phone 8563 8330
Email: bushgardens@barossa.sa.gov.au
Online: www.barossabushgardens.com.au

The Volunteer Centre and Community Nursery are open on
Tuesday and Thursday: 9am – 4.30pm
Wednesday: 9am -12.30pm
Other times available by appointment.

Copies can be downloaded from www.barossabushgardens.com.au in both PDF and MS Word formats.

Copies are available in electronic format (email), large print and Braille upon request from BBG.

2.0 Legislation

Legislation, also known as Statutes or Acts of Parliament, is the written law created by Parliament. The South Australian Disability Inclusion Act 2018 outline the law that needs to be adhered to if making decisions around disability inclusion. The Barossa Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan identifies ways to achieve disability inclusion and access.

2.1 South Australia Disability Inclusion Act 2018

In 2018 the SA Disability Inclusion Act 2018 was passed with a requirement that all State authorities develop a disability access and inclusion plan (DAIP).

The objects of this Act include:

- acknowledging that people with disability have the same human rights as other members of the community and that the State and the community have a responsibility to facilitate the exercise of those rights
- promoting the independence and social and economic inclusion of people with disability
- providing safeguards in relation to the delivery of all supports and services for people with disability
- providing a framework to support a whole of Government approach to improving the inclusion of all South Australians with disability in all areas of life in this State
- articulating and facilitating the roles of the State during and following the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

2.2 The Barossa Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Plan

The purpose of the Action Plan is to develop an integrated whole-of-Council approach to achieving equitable access and inclusion for everyone. This plan guides us in making mainstream facilities and services universally accessible to all residents and visitors with disability. Council also recognises that better access and inclusion will benefit all Barossa residents and visitors.

3.0 What is an Action Access Plan?

An Action Access Plan (AAP) aims to address and respond to all forms of discrimination against people with a disability. The team at the Barossa Bushgardens is committed to removing barriers that may unfairly exclude or disadvantage people with a disability and responds to issues relating to providing safe access and inclusion to people with disability in a garden, originally developed as a space that is open for anyone with reduced vision or mobility.

In this plan, barriers are identified and where possible, remedies put in place to allow for better access. The plan has been developed with the help of The Barossa Council's Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Group (DAIAG), which consists of members with lived experience. Their input is the most valuable contribution towards creating this document and highlights how important it is to start with the people this plan is meant to support.

3.1 How we developed this AAP

Staff and volunteers at the Barossa Bushgardens are invited to attend Disability Awareness Training opportunities, to learn about different disabilities and how to create a better place, with increased awareness, inclusion and access for different abilities, cultures and backgrounds.

Our team recognises that understanding about accessibility has changed since developing the Sensory Garden in 2007 and have therefore approached the Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Group to help with the re-development of the garden.

DAIAG members have been invited to the Barossa Bushgardens, with the aim of getting the group's input into any areas they have noticed as well as some ideas around the removal and improvement of barriers that exist in the gardens.

A Sub-Committee was set up which met several times during the development of the plan and everyone's ideas were discussed and incorporated.

4.0 Objectives

A Sensory Garden that is accessible for as many people as possible, irrespective of their abilities.

An interactive place for people to connect to nature through their senses.

A safe space to learn, experience and relax.

5.0 Timelines

As the Barossa Bushgardens is a community-led, not-for-profit organisation, implementation of this plan depends on the ability to attract funding for each item. Core funding will cover cost of many of the activities, but larger developments require external funding through grants, donations or sponsorships.

6.0 What is the Barossa Bushgardens currently doing to promote good access and inclusion

The Barossa Bushgardens has grown over the years and its focus has broadened from environment to include arts, education, health and wellbeing. Visitors to the gardens are welcome to use our wheelchair or walker for free. These items are available every day and located within one of the two accessible bathrooms.

In 2022, two disability car parks were installed close to the Volunteer Centre, Community Nursery and entrance to the gardens with funding from The Barossa Council (Photo 2). The paths throughout the gardens have been developed with accessibility considered during construction and are suitable for wheelchairs, although care must be taken in wet weather.



Photo 2: Disability Car Park at the Community Nursery

In 2008 the Dementia Friendly Garden was developed in collaboration with Carers and Disability Link and The Dementia Friendly Communities Group (Photo 3). The garden provides a safe space for clients, carers and support workers that want to get out in nature. The garden is set up as a cottage style garden and includes rural fencing and farming artefacts that may help people recall memories.



Photo 3: Dementia Friendly Community Garden

Each week, The Barossa Council facilitate a programme (Nature and Natter) for people living with Dementia (Photo 4). Clients, carers and support workers take part in a two-hour session, enjoying morning tea in the Dementia Friendly Garden and participating in some work in the nursery. The group takes part in activities ranging from emptying pots, potting up, sowing seeds and planting vegies in the Food for the Soul Community Garden.



Photo 4: Participants of our Nature and Natter Group

The Food for the Soul Community Garden was developed in 2020 with input from five local Disability and Mental Health Support groups (Photo 5). The garden is accessible and provides a space for community members to plant and harvest vegetables and flowers.



Photo 5: Planting in the Food for the Soul Community Garden

Most workshops, presented at the Barossa Bushgardens, are accessible and range from information sessions to hands-on workshops, for example making nature mandalas and planting vegies in the community garden.

Staff held the first Inclusive and Accessible Nature Play Day in 2021 (Photo 6). The event was targeted to children and young adults and included sensory and craft activities and a book and relaxation area. Each activity was marked using a traffic light system with green being a calm and clean activity, orange somewhere in the middle to red, being a messy and possibly noisy activity.

Chat boards were adapted to the occasion with the help of a School Services Officer working in the Disability Units at Tanunda Primary School. We received great feedback from children and parents that attended and are proud to have been able to provide fun activities.



Photo 6: One of the activities provided at the Inclusive and Accessible Nature Play Day in 2021

7.0 Identifying Access and Inclusion Issues in the Sensory Garden

Staff at the Barossa Bushgardens invited the DAIAG to visit the gardens and take notes of any issues they note during a walk through the Sensory Garden.

Some problems that have been noted:

- Overhanging branches
- Missing plant signage
- Gravel unsuitable for wheelchairs and people with balance issues - slip hazard
- Not enough seating available
- Rock ledges pose a tripping hazard for people with impaired vision.

There were more issues noted, not in connection to the Sensory Garden, including:

- the entrance to the Barossa Bushgardens is not clearly visible from Research Road which can cause anxiety
- the opening hours of Community Nursery and Natural Resource Centre are not clearly visible (small on existing sign shortly after driving in on right side of driveway)
- it is not clearly visible that the gardens are always open, not only during opening hours of the nursery and centre.

Following the first visit of the group, a sub-committee was established to address these issues and ensure a collaborative development of the gardens.

8.0 Actions

During subsequent sub-committee meetings, the following actions were identified. If implemented, these actions ensure the Sensory Garden is as accessible as possible for most abilities.

Table 1: Actions

8.1 Garden Beds/Plants	
Interspersing colours (plants)	A selection of native plants that flower at different times of the year.
Tiered angles – looking up, not over plants	Over time, straggly and dying plants will be replaced, during this process, garden beds can be raised to accommodate a tiered angled look.
Scented plants can help with orientation and can be a good sensory experience	Examples are: - <i>Prostanthera incisa</i> - Native Thyme - <i>Prostanthera rotundifolia</i> - Native Oregano - <i>Boronia megastigma</i> - Brown Boronia - <i>Mentha australis</i> - Native Mint - <i>Leptospermum petersonii</i> – Lemon-scented Tea Tree - <i>Philotheca myoporoides</i> – ‘Profusion’ Wax Flower
Potential to use overhanging branches to create a draping leaf arch to allow walking through	Existing Acacia tree. Existing Eucalyptus tree. Can be added to the garden: <i>Acacia cognata</i> – Bower Wattle (soft drooping leaves, medium live expectancy.)

8.2 Paths	
Large flat rocks set level with asphalt or concrete. Example: see image To consider: Will surface be slippery during wet weather. Use of Safe Grip – Maintenance requirements. Photo 7: Flagstone path, Source: www.sspacers.com	
As above just different shapes of 'stepping stones'. Example: see image To consider: Will surface be slippery during wet weather. Use of Safe Grip – Maintenance requirements. Note: Can be done as community workshops. Photo 8: Leaf pavers, Source: www.homesthetics.net	
Garden edging on ground level to help define walking path.	Different color and shapes of rocks, possibly incorporate timber edging. Incorporate bright (yellow) coloured rocks into garden edging or colourful paintings on rocks approximately every metre. Note: Community workshops - Involve disability and art students from local schools to paint and decorate some of the edging pieces.
Guiding vision impaired visitors to signage.	Add a different textured break line across path to guide towards signage.

8.3 Signage off pathways	
Inclusive Access	Ideal height for wheelchair access and standing access
Inclusive Information	Information text also displayed in braille. Note: Braille or tactile communication not widely used in mature age group. Add Sensory Picture Add a QR code leading online to different activities/information. A loudspeaker and button that, when pushed, describes the garden, offers a mindfulness activity engaging the senses suitable to that part of the garden and gives information about where to go to the next sign. Note: Solar may be an option to power the sound effects on the signs throughout the garden. Battery powered may be another option but is considered less sustainable.
Contents of signage.	Aroma/Herb Garden - see "Scented plants can help with orientation and can be a good sensory experience" on Page 8. Information to include smell , taste, touch and sound Signs are directional/descriptive Signage with text describing part of the garden, e.g. the senses engaged in a specific part of the garden and what to do with the plant, e.g. rubbing leaves to encourage release of aroma. Bee-ware Sensory/Relaxing Sensory Garden Overview Highlight Points – flowering plants all year around – colours

8.4 Website	
Accessibility at the Barossa Bushgardens	Develop and provide Access Key to Sensory Garden for download. An Access Key/Guide has been developed and can be found on the Bushgardens website at www.barossabushgardens.com.au/accessibility
Using Technology for Inclusion	Develop and provide audio files e.g. self-guided tour to download from the Bushgardens website pre-visit or on arrival. Provide audio devices for hire during opening hours for self-guided tours.

8.5 Other
Provide folders with Communication Board/s outside of building.
Adding a raised garden bed with herbs for sensory experience – wheelchair access and accessible for people that cannot bend down, e.g. wheelchair height one side, standing height other side.
Intersperse colours (decoration) for times when plants are not flowering, e.g. artworks. Community/Arts project
Sounds of trickling water is soothing – installation of solar water feature in frog pond.
Sounds of wind chimes can help with orientation. Community/Arts project Different chimes for different garden sections - Wood - Metal - Chrystal Making sure not too many are added to avoid sensory overload.
Having a separate calm area (perhaps behind Reconciliation Circle) – low bee attracting plants

One recommendation included the installation of drawers with samples of what to expect in the gardens, e.g. plants, flowers, seed pods. However, the responsibility to maintain this display would lie with volunteers who have to replace plant parts, especially fresh ones, on a regular basis and must make sure the drawers don't have visitors like spiders or snakes.

9.0 How we will monitor, evaluate and update this AAP

This AAP will be monitored, reviewed and updated as follows:

- Update report from NRC Coordinator to line Manager every six month in relation to progress of actions.
- Annual report to Barossa Bushgardens S41 Committee and Disability Access and Inclusion Advisory Group (DAIAG), regarding the status of all actions identified within the AAP.
- Inviting members of DAIAG to help BBG staff undertake an audit and review the AAP during 2027-28 and to develop an updated AAP.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) notes that an AAP is not a static document, but changes according to practices, review and evaluation. The AHRC describes 'reviewing' as the process of assessing and revising the AAP.