



RICI Feedback presentation, Wed 9th August 2023

WHO WE ARE: Rodney Inclusive Communities Inc. (RICI) is a relatively new charitable community group, formed in 2020 just prior to the pandemic. It was established by a group of concerned parents, supporters, and staff from AIM (Adults in Motion), based in Warkworth - due to the lack of disability services, inclusive social opportunities, and accessibility features that affect all disabled people and their whanau, living in the Rodney District.

“Social inclusion is the act of enabling all groups of people within a society to have a sense of belonging, and to be able to participate in community life. It is based on fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights, as well as on the principles of acceptance and embracing diversity.”

RODNEY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES INC. 

Rodney Inclusive Communities Inc. is a registered charity (CC59224) based in Warkworth, New Zealand / Ko RICI he umanga aroha rehiatia kei Warkworth, kei Aotearoa

Our Vision
To create inclusive communities in the Rodney District that embrace Diversity, Equality and Accessibility.

Our Actions

- 1 Support**
By responding to the needs of disabled people and their families; respecting the Treaty; embracing Diversity.
- 2 Educate**
By initiating local awareness events and workshops on all matters related to inclusion, disability and accessibility.
- 3 Advocate**
By building a database of local supporters and advocating for more inclusive opportunities, local disability services, and general accessibility.
- 4 Network**
We aim to achieve our vision by networking and collaborating with existing groups and entities based in the Rodney District, as well as national/international groups.

Together we can create positive change.

www.ricin2.com

Feedback on Draft Plan:

The NZ Government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRDPD) at the United Nations on 30 March 2007, and ratified it on 26 September 2008.

We all acknowledge that inclusion is a basic human right that is well imbedded in government legislation. Yet most of the vulnerable and marginalised people in our local communities lead very challenging lives and remain isolated and excluded from public activities and amenities. Many also cannot access the consultation process, or are unable to speak for themselves.

We are therefore pleased to see the words *inclusion*, *accessibility*, and *social cohesion*, mentioned throughout the draft RLB Plan 2023.

A few statistics from the Office for disability Issues (ODI) to consider:

- **1 in 4 New Zealanders have a physical, sensory, learning, mental health or other disability, ie. a ¼ of the general population.**
- **26% of the Māori population were identified as disabled, compared to 24% of the total New Zealand population**
- **35% of disabled people are over 65 years old**
- **Disabled people are more likely to have lower incomes than non-disabled people**
- **For children, a learning difficulty is the most common type of impairment**
- **Disabled children are less likely to participate in the usual social activities, such as playing in a sports team**

1. Rodney Inclusive Communities Inc (RICI) is present today as the voice for the disability sector in Rodney; the 'unheard' voices – a sector that crosses all ages, genders, cultures, and ethnicities - yet one that is consistently under-represented in political leadership and decision-making. We want to point out that RICI is *not a social, recreational or sports club*.

The RICI committee consists primarily of concerned parents who have a child with a disability; our lives are already challenging. We volunteer our time to manage this organisation, network, and to speak on behalf of those with disabilities in the Rodney District. Until now, we have experienced very little evidence of inclusive action in Rodney, despite the legal obligations for Human Rights evident in all government policies and processes.

All public planning processes should already incorporate Universal Design and best-practice social inclusion principles from the get-go, yet we are aware that this is still not the case in Rodney. Inclusive action seem to occur retrospectively, if at all - either as an afterthought to tick a box, or in response to a public outcry. This is a *more expensive approach* and usually results in

compromised, short-term solutions, as we witnessed with the new children's playground at the Shoemith Reserve, Warkworth. Consultation with RICl at the design stage could have avoided having this local playground's inaccessible features highlighted by a local family on Fair Go, earlier this year.

Fair go: <https://www.1news.co.nz/2023/06/21/parents-of-disabled-kids-ask-to-help-with-playground-design/>

Calls For Universal Accessibility Design:

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/459810/calls-for-universal-accessibility-design-for-auckland-public-playgrounds>

2. We want to understand **how** the RLB plans to '*provide accessible and inclusive facilities and services that cater to the changing needs of our communities*' – especially as the local population expands.

Inclusion Hub Proposal

In July 2022, RICl, in partnership with AIM (Adults in Motion), presented a Deputation to the RLB. We proposed the establishment of an Inclusion Hub in Warkworth at the under-utilized Shoemith Hall.

This concept is not new. It was directly inspired by an existing North Shore example in Takapuna, where a disability organisation (PHAB) has sole tenancy at a previous bowling club site, also owned by Auckland Council. The building has been renovated to be fully accessible and is well utilized by various inclusive groups for a range of inclusive community purposes. No similar spaces exist in Rodney/Warkworth region.

Our proposed Inclusion Hub aligns with all the main points listed in the draft RLB plan: (RLB words in red)

Our People

We are committed to supporting this social cohesion by providing more opportunities, and inclusive and accessible spaces, for people to connect.

Our Community

We want to ensure that our prioritised community facilities and services are well-used and inclusive. We will therefore support community centres and halls to provide accessible, multi-use spaces. Support community centres, halls and marae to provide accessible, multiuse spaces with programmes that meet a wide range of community needs and strengthen community connections.

Our Places

We will explore ways to reduce costs and assist with council processes for community-led projects. We also plan to make council assets and facilities available to support social and community enterprise

Māori Outcomes

*The Kia Ora Tāmaki Makaurau framework o.
Kia ora te whānau – Whānau and tamariki wellbeing*

Local Community Services

*Utilising the **Empowered Communities Approach**, we support Aucklanders to create thriving, connected and inclusive communities*

Climate Action

Proposed climate adaptation initiatives: Support community access to skills and knowledge that will help households to be more resilient and self-reliant • Support communities to develop local community emergency leadership groups and emergency action plans

NB: Despite being the most vulnerable and having the highest needs, local disabled residents were not well supported during the recent extreme weather events. *We have therefore revised our proposal to include utilizing the Shoemith Hall as a **RICI Emergency Centre** as required – by collating a database for use in an emergency, in order to provide essential specialist products, services and support, for those residents with urgent, specific disability needs.*

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3. RICI and AIM are seeking an accessible home-base in the community; with an office, storage, workshop space, and accessible toilet facilities. AIM has funding available and RICI has access to large grants. But with no certainty from the RLB as to whether we can access permanent premises at Shoemith Hall, we are unable to proceed with any grant applications.

We would appreciate it if the Board could provide clear directions regarding our proposal to use the Shoemith Hall. And if that venue is not available, could an alternative space in the community be utilised as a multi-purpose accessible base – as per your commitments to inclusion, utilising the *Empowered Communities Approach*?

We would like to add a few general points on how we have been and will be, contributing to our local community:

- RICI does not charge a fee for our expertise and community input. We do this because it is the right thing to do.
- RICI was closely involved with *CommunityThink* and the community engagement process for the Warkworth Town Centre Plan and has been formally acknowledged in the **Puhinui Warkworth Community Voices** document, *‘as a part of the ongoing community guidance group, who brought the voices of their community into every part of this project.’*
- RICI will be providing feedback on the Warkworth Centre draft plan.
- RICI has been working with the **Warkworth & District Museum** to provide ideas and give advice for their Accessibility Plan. Accessible Tourism is something that all local destination spots/businesses could be tapping in to.

- RICI's vision is for Rodney to become the most inclusive district in NZ and we are willing to contribute our expertise and resources to any future planning process. Several NZ towns are leading by example, eg. Whangarei and Hamilton, have excellent accessible public facilities, features and maps - to provide better inclusion for residents, as well as to benefit from Accessible Tourism. See Whangarei Accessibility Map: <https://www.wdc.govt.nz/files/assets/public/documents/community/disability-services/accessibility-map.pdf>
- Including a **Changing Places** facility into the new Warkworth Town Centre plan would be a huge drawcard to make Warkworth a more accessible visitor destination. See: <https://www.changingplaces.org.nz/>
- **Accessible Tourism – national and international**
See, The business case for accessible tourism: <https://www.belab.co.nz/items/the-business-case-for-accessible-tourism>

RLB: We are committed to ensuring that with this growth, our local business communities can thrive. To support this, we will plan and deliver functioning and attractive business districts with great accessibility and public amenities, such as with the recent Warkworth Town Centre Plan. Not only do we have a growing population but there is opportunity to leverage off Rodney being a popular visitor destination for both Aucklanders and internationally.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for RICI to give feedback on the draft plan.

Many disabled residents simply cannot access the current consultation forum or online feedback forms (for a range of accessibility reasons). Although this ¼ of the Rodney population may not be actively involved in the feedback process, or represented on the Rodney Local Board, it does not mean they don't exist.

It is the role of government bodies and the wider community, to ensure that basic human rights principles are always upheld.

As a volunteer community group, RICI is available to work alongside the local board in an advisory capacity, as needed.

Ngā mihi,

Gareth Pring: Chairperson

Ursula Christel: Secretary

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