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Report for Cooloola Human Services Network Annual General Meeting

April 2023

Access Advisory Committee – Gympie Region

It is with heavy hearts that we present this annual report for 2022, with the immeasurable loss of our chair person, Roxanne MacGregor in late 2022. Roxanne was an inaugural member of the Committee when it commenced in 2001 and the heart and soul of our group.

It seems only fitting we use this opportunity to talk about Roxanne's legacy.

The group began with a community meeting at The Pavilion Conference Centre, Gympie Showgrounds in early 2001. The community was clear in wanting a group that would advocate for improving disability access throughout the Cooloola Region. Cooloola Shire Mayor Mick Venardos and council planner Kerry Rolfe were key supporters. A group of like-minded volunteers, passionate about improving accessibility of our community, formed the first Cooloola Access Advisory Committee in mid 2001.

Over the next 22 years the group has persevered, with the Committee changing its name to Access Advisory Committee – Gympie Region, when the council changed to Gympie Regional Council in 2008. Many members have come and gone but the commitment to the vision has never wavered:

'A community that is universally accessible and accepting of all its members.'

Roxanne championed this cause throughout her life. She pushed us to think outside the box, to see life from the point of view of a wheelchair user. But she could always see the point of view of others with disabilities as well. She insisted we work constructively with Council, business and community, knowing that collaboration would achieve much better results than confrontation.

Roxanne grew in confidence through the Access Advisory Committee experience to realise she could take on more prominent roles until she finally agreed to take on the Chairperson role in 2008.

As a group led by Roxanne, we developed close and enduring working relationships with key Council staff including Stuart Macleod, Glenn Alexander, Ed French, Richard Prout, Tania Stenholm, Andree Stark, Ross Huntington and others.

Gympie Regional Council mayors Glen Hartwig, Mick Curran and Ron Dyne all supported the Committee as it grew in stature. Councillor representatives Warren Polley, Dan Stewart and Rae Gate all strongly supported the Committee's role over the years.

Roxanne's lived experience and the Committee's expertise in providing advice to Council has helped create and sustain an inclusive, accessible community we now enjoy.

After her confidence grew, Roxanne never looked back, taking on roles on several Council groups, as well as board roles at CHSN, Avenues, Weeroona and Bravo. She also commenced and sustained the Community Futures Project after the art classes at TAFE were shut down, and commenced Just Cruising with her dear friend Barb Berwick when she saw a need.

Never enjoying public speaking, Roxanne pushed herself. She was generous with her time, had a dry wit, and a great bullshit detector. She made a difference in her community. A massive difference.

We were thrilled when Mayor Glen Hartwig made the decision to name the Australia Day Resilience Award in Roxanne's name in 2023.

Our hearts are broken but we must continue her legacy.

She would want us to thank all our volunteer members who made great personal contributions to the work of the Committee throughout the year. Without their tireless contributions, none of our important work would be possible.

Roxanne would also want us to reiterate the importance of strengthening our working relationships with key staff within Gympie Regional Council, as well as Councillor representative Warren Polley and Mayor Glen Hartwig. These relationships greatly assist the Committee's work within our community and are a key strength of the approach we take.

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On behalf of
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Access for everyone across the Gympie Region