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For immediate release

## Shire of Broome and Stepping Stones launch accessible communication board at Guwarri Town Beach



L-R: Shire of Broome President Chris Mitchell, Stepping Stones Therapy Services Broome Occupational Therapist and Broome Practice Principal Ashlee Ritchie, and Speech Pathologist Lizzy Ellis.

The Shire of Broome has partnered with Stepping Stones Therapy Services to install an accessible communication board at Guwarri Town Beach, enhancing inclusion and support for community members living with disability.

The board uses symbols, pictures and key words to help individuals who are non-verbal, or experience communication difficulties, express themselves and engage more easily with others.

“Children who have communication difficulties can experience isolation and reduced social interaction due to communication breakdown or not having a functional way to communicate,” said Lizzy Ellis, Speech Pathologist at Stepping Stones Therapy Services.

“One way of supporting these children is through augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), which may look like visual supports.”

Located near the playground, the tool is designed to be especially helpful for children with autism, developmental delays, or speech and language disorders.

Shire President Chris Mitchell said the initiative was an important step toward making Broome's public spaces more inclusive and supportive for people of all abilities.

"We're proud to work with Stepping Stones to deliver a simple but powerful resource that helps people feel more confident and connected when visiting Town Beach," Cr Mitchell said.

"Communication is something many of us take for granted - this board will support families, carers and individuals to feel more included and understood in our community."

"Guwarri Town Beach is one of Broome's most popular gathering places, and it's important that everyone can enjoy it comfortably."

Stepping Stones, a Broome-based paediatric occupational therapy and speech pathology service, worked closely with the Shire to ensure the board was both practical and engaging for users of all ages and abilities.

"We understand that children should have access to the supports that they need to thrive in their natural environments – whether that be at home, school or on the playground," said Ashlee Ritchie, Occupational Therapist and Broome Practice Principal at Stepping Stones Therapy Services.

This project aligns with the Shire's ongoing commitment to improving accessibility through its Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022–2026.

For more information about the Shire's accessibility initiatives, visit [www.broome.wa.gov.au/DAIP](http://www.broome.wa.gov.au/DAIP)

**ENDS.**

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**Background**

Following an extensive public consultation period, the Shire of Broome has formulated and endorsed a Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (DAIP) for 2023–2028 at the July 2023 Ordinary Meeting of Council. The DAIP ensures that all people, including those with disability, are welcomed and included in the Shire, with access to buildings, information, public consultations, complaints processes, services, and employment opportunities. The plan is developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including people with disability, their families and supporters, and the broader community.