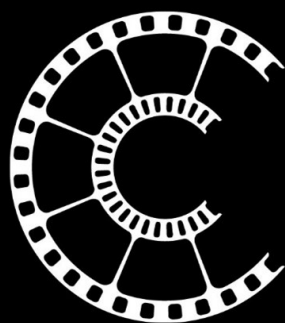




Resource Manual for Industry



Screen Access
& Inclusion

MASTERCLASS

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Introduction

Why is inclusion important? In Australia, 1 in 5 people have a disability. That 20% of our population and over 4.5 million people. According to Screen Australia's 2016 'Seeing Ourselves' report, 'The percentage of Australians with disability is more than four times the percentage of characters with disability on television. Only 10% of dramas had at least one character with disability and only 4% of main/recurring characters on Australian TV dramas have disability.' The world shown on our screens is not reflective of our reality.

The 2016 'Seeing Ourselves' report notes the statistics of character representation in TV programs; however, it does not show statistics on how many of the actors, and those working behind the camera, personally identify as having a disability. A new report of 'Seeing Ourselves' is due to be released in April of 2023 and will hopefully reflect the improvements we have seen since 2016.

This report proves that change needs to be made within our industry. In order for our screens to reflect the rich diversity of our reality, we must ensure that people with disability are included both in the stories we tell and how we create them.

This training will provide information and skills to current industry so they can hire and best support practitioners with disability. This training does not intend to tell you what to make, or what stories to tell. The aim of this training is to influence how you make your work. To meet standards of best practice, if you are making content that incorporates the experience of disability, you must have people with disability as part of the process.

Bringing people with disability into the creative process is so vital. You wouldn't have a story about an indigenous character without having indigenous people as a part of the team. The reality is, if you are going to make work that has a story about disability and you do not have creatives with disability involved, it will be very difficult to get your work publicly funded.

Ensuring people with disability are a part of the process isn't hard. There are so many incredible disabled writers, directors and performers who are ready and willing to work. The goal of this training is to share with you how to work with people with disability and tips for identifying and eliminating barriers for people with disability on a film or tv set. By doing so, you will ensure that your work is inclusive for all people, including people with disability.

This training will use the terms people with disability, practitioners with disability or disabled people. These terms are used to reference members of the disability community, including but not limited to:

- People who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing
- People who are blind or have low vision
- People with sensory conditions or who are neurodivergent
- People with mobility disability
- People who have mental health conditions
- People who have non-visible disability
- People with chronic illness

Individuals with these conditions may not identify as having disability, but many will. Some will have visible disability, some will have non-visible disability, and some will have a combination of both.

1. The Models of Disability

What is disability? Disability can be physical, non-physical, and non-visible. According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, ‘People with disability include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory conditions, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’ (*Sixty-first session of the General Assembly by resolution A/RES/61/106, 2006*)

Medical Model of Disability

Historically, disability has been viewed through the medical model of disability. The medical model asserts that the person is the problem. The individual needs to fix, change, or cure their disability in order to be a contributing member of society. It focuses on what people can’t do rather than what they can, and it is up to the individual to bridge the gaps and minimise barriers that they face every day.

Most people with disability have experienced the effects of the medical model of disability. Bridie explains:

“I know that I internalised the medical model and thought that I had to minimise my support needs and never ask for reasonable adjustments. I thought it was my job to somehow overcome barriers on my own and keep working hard so that employers would see me as a great asset and employee.

This, of course, did not work. I experienced daily burn out, high levels of pain and fatigue, and was never able to do my best work because I was never feeling my best.”

Social Model of Disability

The modern way of viewing disability is through the social model of disability because it ensures that all people with disability have their access requirements met. That way, people with disability can flourish within their daily lives and in their workplaces. The social model of disability recognises that disability lies in the interaction of taking part. It does not deny the individual’s condition, but rather recognises that the physical environment, social environment, and attitudinal barriers are the most inhibiting factors for people with disability. These barriers limit people with disability to be able to have the same opportunities and participation within the community and workplace as people without disability.

For example, if a person who is autistic is applying for a job and is directly told that they would not be suitable for the role because of their autism, those attitudes and assumptions that are barriers, not the fact that the person has autism. Or if a wheelchair user can’t enter a building because there are only stairs and no accessible access, it is the building design that is the problem, not the person’s wheelchair.

The environment is the problem, and everyone is responsible for it – not just people with disability. By removing these barriers, everyone has choice and control, and equal opportunities.

2. The Rights of People with Disability

According to the Australian Human Rights Commission,

‘A person with disability has a right to the same employment opportunities as a person without disability. If a person with disability can do the main activities or ‘inherent requirements’ of a job, then they should have an equal opportunity to do that job.’

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person, in many areas of public life - including employment.

3. Language

One of the biggest barriers for people with disability is others not wanting to engage with them. Often, people without disability will avoid discussing disability or even talking to people with disability because of a fear of getting it wrong or somehow accidentally saying something offensive. We know that it is hard to keep up with what is the right and wrong thing to say. Language is always changing and evolving. However, there are easy ways to ensure that you are using the correct discourse when it comes to talking to people with disability.

Be aware of Unconscious Bias

- Unconscious bias are thoughts or feelings we’re not directly aware of, that influence our judgement. The brain processes millions of pieces of information per second and therefore relies on mental shortcuts we’ve unconsciously created from our own background and experiences. We all have so many thoughts throughout each day and constantly make decisions quickly without thought. These decisions can be clouded by what we see on tv or our own experience interacting with people with disability.
- According to Monash University, ‘Unconscious’ or ‘hidden’ bias refers to attitudes and patterns of perceptions that are held subconsciously and can be very ingrained. Not dissimilar to stereotyping, these automatic associations can lead to assumptions that are not always accurate and can have a detrimental impact in decision-making.’
- The important thing is to be aware of our own unconscious bias and make sure we not letting unconscious bias affect how we interact with people with disability.

Inclusion in the Workplace

Inclusive Workplaces are:

- 10 times more likely to be highly effective
- 9 times more likely to innovate
- 61% improvement in workplace morale

Workers with Disability:

- 98% have average or superior safety records
- 86% have average or superior attendance

For the Employer

- The cost of employing people with disability is as much as 13% lower than other employees

Communication Hacks

1. Talk to people with disability as you would anyone else

- Talk to people with disability the same way as you would talk to people without disability. Be open, respectful, and relaxed. The only thing that may be different is how you communicate
- For example, you may have to communicate through assistive technology for people who are non-verbal, use simple English for people who are autistic or communicate via an Auslan interpreter with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

2. Communicate directly to people with disability

- People with disability know themselves best, so always communicate with the person directly and not to their assistant or support worker
- Never assume that a person with disability can't communicate for themselves, if they can't communicate independently a support worker or assistant will let you know.

3. Use person first language

- Person first language (such as person with low vision, person who is a wheelchair user or people with disability) is the most universally accepted in the disability community. This language puts the individual's personhood in front of their disability. If you use this language, you really can't go wrong
- Some people prefer identity first language such as autistic person, blind person, or disabled person. This is where individuals place their disabled identify at the forefront of the language they use. Be aware that some people preferer identify first language because they believe their personhood is inherent.

4. Ask, don't assume

- Like any community, the disability community is diverse, and every individual has different politics. It is best to ask the person with disability what language they prefer using
- It is important to never assume and always take the lead of the person with disability.

5. Be kind to yourself and others

- People with disability just want the same respect as everyone else. You probably will mess up and say the wrong thing. However, as long as you are coming from a genuine and respectful place you really can't go wrong.

Disability Slurs

When creating work that depicts stories about disability, you may have language in the script that is ableist (language that stems from ableism). Ableism is discrimination or prejudice towards people with disability. It can be described as the systemic and interpersonal exclusion and oppression of people with disability (*People With Disability Australia (PWDA), 2021*). Of course, you want to produce work that reflects the reality of the experience of people with disability. Some characters may use slurs because they are ableist, other characters may use slurs because they have internalised ableism.

If such language is used in the script, it will be vital to have a conversation with all members of the cast and crew, to set a precedent that ableist language can only be used when filming. You must ensure that your set has a standard where ableist slurs are not acceptable, even though they are used in the script.

Furthermore, some people with disability use certain slurs by way of re-appropriation, similar to the re-appropriation of language we see in the LGBTQIA+ community. A clear example of this is Netflix's documentary, *Crip Camp*. It's important to remember that it is not appropriate for people without disability to use language that is now seen as outdated. It is always best practice to use person first language.

4. Reasonable Adjustments

Most people with disability have access requirements they need to equitably participate in the community and within the workplace. When access requirements are supported and accommodated by the workplace then they become reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments are changes to work, processes, procedures, or environment that allow people with disability to do their work safely, productively and to the best of their ability. They enable people with disability to bridge the gap and minimise the barriers that they face in the workplace.

'Reasonable adjustments are any form of assistance or adjustment that is necessary, possible and reasonable to reduce or eliminate barriers at work.'

(Australian Government - Comcare, 2013)

'Most adjustments are simple and easy to arrange, while others may require more time to put into place. Workplaces need to consider every possible option for adjustments for staff with disability to perform their role.'

(Public Service Commission, 2023)

The concept of reasonable adjustments might seem intimidating but, in reality, you would have already provided or received reasonable adjustments yourself.

People without disability often ask for reasonable adjustments, such as:

- Parents having flexibility in their schedule to care for their children
- Older employees having scripts or information printed in large font
- Different food served to people with dietary requirements
- Modifying a schedule if people have conflicting work.

Reasonable adjustments, once implemented properly, are a seamless part of any workplace.

According to the NSW Government Public Service Commission, reasonable adjustments for people with disability can be implemented in many ways:

- Workplace **practice** adjustments
 - Provide flexible working arrangements e.g. working from home, working in different locations
 - Change how information is communicated in the workplace
 - Provide a support person or mentor
 - Ensure workplace documents and web content are accessible
 - Provide information in requested formats.
- Workplace **environment** adjustments
 - Built-in accessibility features on devices (phones, computers, laptops, iPads, tablets)
 - Software e.g. text to speech, speech recognition, screen reading, screen magnification
 - Adjustable equipment, including monitors, tables, chairs, mouse and keyboard.
- **Accessible technology** and **equipment** adjustments
 - Work at a designated workstation
 - Provide a parking space close to the work location for an employee who uses a wheelchair or has mobility issues
 - Modify an inaccessible building to enable access to a building or bathroom facilities.

In filmmaking, what does this look like? This could be:

- Printing the script in larger font for a person with low vision
- Moving a production meeting to a wheelchair accessible location
- Equipment adaptation to allow a camera to be supported on a wheelchair or frame
- Ensuring the script, sides and call sheets are available in electronic formats that can be read by screen reader technology (for people who are blind or have low vision)
- Having a seat available for a cast or crew member to sit on.

Discussing Reasonable Adjustments

Many screen practitioners with non-visible disability do not request reasonable adjustments in order to get ahead in the industry, and this can be at great personal cost. Some people feel that they don't need to ask for reasonable adjustments in the workplace as they don't need or want them.

Every person with disability is different. Some people may only want to discuss their reasonable adjustments with the producer, heads of department or their colleagues that they work closest with. It is a right of all people with disability not to disclose and that must be respected.

Below is an example of how Bridie discusses her reasonable adjustments. Bridie is comfortable disclosing that she has cerebral palsy and communicating how it affects her body to help contextualise her adjustments. Remember, people with disability do not need to need to discuss their specific disability if they are not comfortable:

"I have cerebral palsy spastic diplegia. That means the muscles in my legs are really tight. This affects my balance, energy levels and often means that I experience a degree of pain throughout the day, depending on how fatigued I am. To minimise the pain I experience and to allow me to access every part of the set, I have two reasonable adjustments that I require to do my best work.

1. I need any stairs that I use to have some sort of railing or structure which I can hold on to in order to balance (this includes if I have to stand on a raised platform)
2. I need to always have access to a chair so that I can sit down wherever possible to conserve my energy

I may have further requests or modifications down the track depending on how my body holds up during the shoot. I will be sure to come to you if that occurs.

I am happy to have this conversation with other producers or Heads of Department if required. However, can this information please be relayed to every person working on set, so I do not need to constantly discuss my reasonable adjustments."

It can often be intimidating for people to request reasonable adjustments. The majority of people with disability have faced some sort of discrimination because of their disability. Therefore, it is vital that you respond in an open and respectful way. Reasonable adjustments aren't a luxury or a form of special treatment, they are the basic right of people with disability so that they can perform the job they were hired to do.

The best role you can play is to create an inclusive environment so that people with disability are comfortable to request reasonable adjustments on your production.

Bridie explains how she prefers to navigate disclosing that she has disability and requires reasonable adjustments:

"Once I have shared that I have disability and require reasonable adjustments, I always request that that information be shared to every single person on set on behalf of myself, so I don't have to constantly disclose while I am working. As you can imagine, it is quite exhausting having to have a conversation about your disability with every single cast and crew member. I feel the most comfortable when I know that before I walk on set, all cast, and crew know about my disability and what my reasonable adjustments are and can be respectful and supportive."

Implementing Reasonable Adjustments

Some practitioners with disability may request reasonable adjustments through a conversation with production or they may ask their representation to have that conversation on their behalf. Others may submit an access rider, which is a document that outlines what reasonable adjustments the individual requires to do their job safely and to the best of their ability.

Every person with disability is different. The individual may only want to discuss their reasonable adjustments with the producer, heads of department or the colleagues that they work closest with. Some people may want the information shared with every person on set so that everyone is aware of their circumstances. Remember that it is a right of all people with disability not to disclose if they are not comfortable doing so and that must be respected.

Once someone has requested reasonable adjustments, it is now the responsibility of production to certify that their needs are met. Ensure the individual has full choice and control over who knows about their reasonable adjustments and how their adjustments are implemented. No decisions should be made by production in regard to a person's reasonable adjustments without their consent and consultation.

It's the head of department and producer's role to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place prior to working on set. It's important to remember that it's not the role of people with disability to constantly advocate on set for their own and others reasonable adjustments. It is impossible for them to do so, as it withdraws from their ability to do the job they were hired to do. You can't employ people with disability to do one job and expect them to do two.

As an employer of people with disability, it is best practice to constantly check in with your employees. Their needs will continuously change and evolve, and the biggest sign and symbol of inclusion is for employers to be open and on the front foot of communication.



Bridie's Personal Example

"I once did a job where I disclosed that I have disability and asked for my reasonable adjustments up front. The production's budget was big enough that they could have easily afforded to put railings on the set and provide a chair for me.

However, the first time I walked on set, there was no railing on the stairs that I was required to shoot on. The first thing the director wanted to film was a shot where I walked down the. I completely panicked. I had done and said all the right things and still my reasonable adjustments were not met. Clearly there was a drop in communication between production and the crew working on set.

I had to have a very quick conversation with the actors around me saying that without a railing, they would have to physically help me balance up and down the stairs. Luckily, they were very open and supportive, so they were willing to bridge the accessibility gap. I was able to go up and down the stairs holding their hand.

As the job went on, it was clear that a chair was not going to be provided for me between takes. Luckily, the DOP (Director of Photography) noticed my discomfort and offered an apple box (wooden box) to sit down on. Another example of an individual being open and supportive when the production had let me down.

In hindsight, I should have been more assertive and asked on the spot for my accessibility needs to be met. However, I was feeling so insecure, and the environment and culture did not feel inclusive. I was worried if I made "too much of a fuss" I would be met with hostility and an attitude that "I was not being a team player".

That job was one of the hardest I've done. I remember that I was in so much pain because I couldn't sit down as much as I needed to, and it was so fatiguing going up and down stairs without a railing. I look back on my performance and know that I did not do my best work, which is so frustrating.

I will admit, I should have had further conversations on set with the ADs (Assistant Directors), producers, and director as soon as I realised that my reasonable adjustments were not there. However, as I outlined before, it was the responsibility of those individuals to provide adjustments. The moment I requested reasonable adjustments, the baton should have been passed to them.

In contrast, I have done a job where there was an exemplary standard of inclusivity. Railings were on all the stairs I used, and a chair was always available. The AD (Assistant Director) and producers constantly checked in with me to ensure my accessibility needs were being met and to see if I required anything to be modified as the shoot went on. None of that affected the schedule or the production's bottom line.

I look back on that job with fondness and pride, knowing that I was given the opportunity to do my best work. Accessibility and inclusion can be utterly seamless when everyone takes responsibility for it, and we all work together as a team."

5. Inclusion for Everyone

To be as inclusive as possible, it is recommended that you ask all cast and crew, if they have access requirements, whether they have apparent disability or not. You can ask employers to submit an access rider if they wish or invite them to have a conversation directly with production. You will be surprised how many people may have access requirements.

The reality is that 90% of people with disability have non-visible disability. Asking everyone about their access requirements creates a space where people with non-visible disability feel safe to request reasonable adjustments. Even people who don't identify as being part of the disability community have access requirements, such as people who are older. We need older creatives on set because they have so much institutional knowledge.

Furthermore, it is common practice for every workplace to be mindful of the wellness, mental health, and psychological safety of its workers. Allowing every individual to communicate their access requirements is a sure-fire way to ensure that your set is a safe place for everyone to work in.

Remember, accessibility and inclusion benefits everyone. By making accessibility and inclusion a part of the culture of your set, you will experience the benefits of inclusion. By encouraging everyone to discuss their access requirements, and setting reasonable adjustments in place, you will ensure that every person can do their best work.

6. True or False

It costs too much money to hire people with disability – False

Everyone needs to protect their bottom line. A lot of people without disability avoid hiring people with disability because they are fearful that it will cost too much money. However, reasonable adjustments aren't always as expensive as you think.

The reality is that most reasonable adjustments in the workplace cost less than \$500 and in the scheme of a wider budget, that is not a lot of money. People who may have higher support needs often already have supports in place that they bring to each job, such as their own equipment or a support worker.

However, reasonable adjustments can sometimes be expensive. Luckily, there are many ways that reasonable adjustments can be covered, including:

- Government schemes, such as Job Access, which completely cover the cost of reasonable adjustments – producers can contact the EAF (Employment Assistance Fund) to get this funding
- Some people with disability may be able to use their NDIS funding
- The production's budget.

When discussing how to implement access requirements, it is important to communicate directly with the person with disability or their point of contact.

Insurers won't insure you to hire people with disability – False

A film set can be dangerous for everyone, not just people with disability. People without disability aren't fast enough to avoid a falling light, so it is interesting when conversations like these only apply to people with disability.

If the topic of liability comes up, it is always important to clarify and ask what the specific concern is. By getting to the root of these conversations, it will be clear to all parties that having people with disability on set isn't any more dangerous or difficult than having people without disability.

7. Creating an Inclusive Workplace

Best Practice: TV Access Project - The 5 A's

To learn best practice when it comes to creating an inclusive workplace, it's important to look towards the leaders of disability inclusion in the film and TV industry – the UK.

Leading UK based broadcasters have created the TV Access Project (TAP). TAP has been created by the BBC, Channel 4, Britbox International, Disney+ U.K., ITV, Paramount, Prime Video, Sky and UKTV with support from the UK industry body CDN (the Creative Diversity Network).

Jack Thorne, a leading UK playwright, screenwriter and producer shared in the 2021 McTaggart lecture that, "These standards reflect a collective responsibility to radically change the culture and practices of the industry so that we do not continue to "utterly and totally fail" disabled people." (*iTV, 2022*)

The 5 As have been drawn up by, and in close consultation with professionals from across the industry with lived experience and specialist expertise of disability. They are open to being adopted by any broadcaster, streamer, production company or industry body who wishes to do so.

To ensure the full and equal inclusion of Deaf, disabled and/or neurodivergent talent, both behind and in front of the camera, the organisations will adopt the guidelines of 'The 5 As'.

1. **Anticipate**
2. **Ask**
3. **Assess**
4. **Adjust**
5. **Advocate**

1. Anticipate

Fully expect to work and continue to work with people with disability on a regular basis.

- Keep ahead of the game and ensure structures, processes and environments are - and remain - inclusive
- Engender confidence among talent, by actively communicating and demonstrating how you are inclusive
- Use inclusive language
- Be proactively inclusive and accessible, rather than reactively so
- Deliberately seek out ways to consistently meet, hire, include and progress people with disability, including those you have never worked with before
- Always seek expert advice and stay up to date with best practice.

2. Ask

Avoid assuming anything, of anybody.

- Approach every team member- whether they have a condition that is immediately apparent or not - to invite them to discuss any adjustment needs or access requirements they have in order to fulfil their role
- Focus on access and adjustments, not conditions and let people with disability own those conversations.
- Ensure accessible recruitment and casting processes, consistently offering adjustments and support in order for people with disability to fully and equally access the process
- Seek to understand the needs, requirements and preferences of all people with disability on an individual basis, remembering that conditions often fluctuate and evolve, as do a person's feelings about and understanding of their condition
- Regularly check-in with people with disability, to ensure that any adjustments and access support discussed and provided are still fit for purpose.

3. Assess

Value self-reflection.

- Be clear and transparent about how accessible you are
- Consistently sense-check that you have created a working culture where everyone feels open, confident, and safe to communicate their access needs
- Regularly evaluate and improve inclusion policies and practices
- Ask for feedback from people with disability regarding their experience, to identify any potential barriers and areas of improvement for the welfare and inclusion of people with disability
- Consider ways to adjust schedules and spaces to allow people with disability (and everyone else) to perform at their best.

4. Adjust

Deliver what is needed.

- Consistently and well ahead of time, put in place any reasonable adjustments to ensure the full inclusion as well as the physical and emotional wellbeing of people with disability. This includes during casting, recruitment, and the onboarding process
- Get funding secured in advance (whether from the Job Access Scheme, from within your budgets or from a third-party fund)
- Be open to doing things differently, providing the option for talent with disability to carry out their role in more than one way, according to what best suits them, and with an emphasis on outcomes rather than processes
- Value flexibility as a tool which not only supports the inclusion of talent with disability, including through remote working, flexible hours and job shares, but also fuels the creative process.

5. Advocate

Set high standards for everyone.

- Celebrate what people with disability bring and actively champion them.
- Do not tolerate any inappropriate behaviour, language or attitudes
- Regularly make your expectations clear for everybody in the team. When it comes to disability inclusion always challenge assumptions, ignorance and ableism
- Work with people with disability because they have disability, not in spite of it. Recognise that they bring distinctive skills, experiences and perspectives
- Think long-term to consistently support the progression of people with disability into senior roles.

It's clear that the future will be accessible for all people. Major companies such as BBC, Channel 4, Disney+ U.K., ITV, Paramount, and Prime Video have made it evident that investing in inclusion is an absolute must. You can now be at the forefront of change within Australia. It is only a matter of time until inclusion is embedded as standard practice in our industry. Why not take the lead?

Definitions

Word/Term/ Name	Meaning
<p>Unconscious Bias</p>	<p>According to Monash University, unconscious or ‘hidden’ bias refers to attitudes and patterns of perceptions that are held subconsciously and can be very ingrained. We all have them. Not dissimilar to stereotyping, these automatic associations can lead to assumptions that are not always accurate and can have a detrimental impact in decision-making.</p> <p>Unconscious bias influences thoughts and actions that can result in the creation of unfair advantages or disadvantages without the decision-maker’s awareness.</p> <p>Unconscious bias can be about someone’s ethnicity, gender, age, accent, sexual orientation, parental status, just to name a few. It unwittingly permeates workplaces, affecting decision-making processes, including recruitment, promotion, development, and access to other opportunities.</p> <p>Ultimately, when judgements and decisions are influenced by implicit biases, they can result in unfair and negative consequences for those who are subjects of this bias, and potentially result in discrimination. <i>(Monash University, 2023)</i></p>
<p>Screen NSW</p>	<p>Screen NSW was established to assist, promote, and strengthen the screen industry in NSW so as to promote Australia’s cultural identity, encourage employment in all aspects of screen production, encourage investment in the industry, enhance the industry’s export potential, encourage innovation and enhance quality in the industry.</p> <p>Through its funding programs and skilled staff Screen NSW:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supports the screen production sector to make quality projects that create jobs and grow stable businesses in the State; • provides advice and information to improve capability in the sector and enable industry practitioners to participate in the global industry; • funds and promotes new forms of screen content and use of technology; • collaborates with industry to create opportunities; and • facilitates all aspects of filming in NSW to make it the most attractive State for screen production.

Word/Term/ Name	Meaning
NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme)	<p>The NDIS provides funding to eligible people with disability to gain more time with family and friends, greater independence, access to new skills, jobs, or volunteering in their community, and an improved quality of life.</p> <p>The NDIS also connects anyone with disability to services in their community.</p>
Ableism/ Ableist	<p>Ableism is discrimination or prejudice towards people with disability. It can be described as the systemic and interpersonal exclusion and oppression of people with disability (<i>People With Disability Australia (PWDA), 2021</i>)</p>



Further Resources



Language Guide for Disability

Source: *PWDA Language Guide: A guide to language about disability*

Words we recommend...	Words we don't recommend...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people / person with disability • disabled person/people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person with a disability • person with disabilities • differently abled / disability • 'the' Disabled • handicapped • physically challenged • someone who can't [hear, speak, walk, etc. • victim • special needs / impaired • unfortunate / less fortunate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people / person without disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-disabled person • able bodied person • normal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wheelchair user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wheelchair bound • bound / confined to a wheelchair
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • blind person / people • person with low vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Blind • person without sight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deaf person / people • Auslan user • hard of hearing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Deaf • deaf and dumb • hearing impaired
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intellectual condition / disability • learning disability • learning difficulty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retarded / retard /backward • special needs • slow learner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • person of short stature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • midget • dwarf
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health condition • mental health service user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental health problems • mental / nuts / loonie • mentally ill

Words we recommend...	Words we don't recommend...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal assistant / PA • support worker • access assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carer (unless a person with disability uses the term themselves)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible toilet • adapted toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handicapped toilet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible parking • blue badge parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handicapped parking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has • experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suffers from • afflicted with
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how can we help? • what can we do to [...]? • do you have any access requirements? • is there anything we may have forgotten? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what's your problem? • what's wrong with you? • do you have a disability? • why didn't you bring it up earlier?



Etiquette: The basics

Ask before you help

Just because someone has disability, doesn't mean they need help. If the setting is accessible, people with disability can usually get around fine. Adults with disability want to be treated as independent people.

Be sensitive about physical contact

Some people with disability depend on their arms for balance. It's generally best to avoid touching someone without asking. Even if your intention is to assist, it could knock them off balance.

Avoid touching a person's wheelchair, scooter or cane. People with disability consider their equipment part of their personal space.

Think before you speak

Always speak directly to the person with disability, not to the person's companion, support worker or Auslan interpreter. Making small talk with a person who has a disability is great; just talk as you would with anyone else. Respect people's privacy. If you ask about a person's disability, they may feel like you are not being treated as a person as the focus is on their disability.

Respond graciously to requests

People with disability ask for reasonable adjustments within the workplace so they can do the work they are hired to do. These requests are a right, not a luxury. Implementing these adjustments allow people with disability, and their colleagues to do the best job they can.

Don't make assumptions

People with disability are the best judge of what they can or cannot do. Respect people's decisions or right to decide for themselves.

Considerations for Working with People with Disability

People with physical disability

- Physical disability may be visible or non-visible. It may be due to chronic illness, a genetic factor, injury or other factors.
- They may require the use of mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or canes.
- They may need to avoid repetitive activity.
- They may require ergonomic desks and computer set ups beyond standard ergonomics.
- They may require altered transport.
- They may only be able to stand for short periods or need to be moving regularly.
- They may need to reduce time spent walking and need car parking close to their destination.
- Some people may not be able to drive, or have a disabled licence with special conditions.

People who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices

- Around 17.1% of people with disability use mobility aids
- People who use wheelchairs have varying abilities. Some can use their arms and hands. Some can get out of their wheelchairs and even walk for short distances.

Etiquette

- People who use wheelchairs are individuals. Avoid leaning over someone who uses a wheelchair to shake another person's hand.
- Mobility aids are part of a person's personal space. Avoid handling aids. Refer to the person, not their chair. "Look out for the person", **not** "Look out for the wheelchair".
- People who use canes or crutches need their arms to balance themselves, so never touch them.
- People who have limited mobility may lean on a door for support as they open it. Pushing the door open from behind or unexpectedly opening the door may cause them to fall. Even pulling out or pushing a chair with no warning or without asking can present a problem.
- Always ask before offering help.

Environment

- Keep ramps and wheelchair-accessible doors to your building unlocked and unblocked.
- Be aware of a person's reach limits. Place as many items as possible within their grasp. And make sure there is a clear path of travel to shelves and display racks.
- If your building has different routes through it, be sure that signs direct people to the accessible routes around the facility. People who use canes or

crutches also need to know the easiest way to get around a place, but stairs may be easier for them than a ramp. Ensure that security guards and receptionists can answer questions about the most accessible way around the building and grounds, including the location of elevators.

- If you offer a seat to a person who has limited mobility, keep in mind that chairs with arms or with higher seats and backrests are easier for some people to use.
- People who do not have a visible disability may have needs related to their mobility. For example, a person with a respiratory or heart condition may have trouble walking long distances or walking quickly. Be sure that your set or workplace has ample benches for people to sit and rest on.

People with cognitive conditions or learning disability

- People with cognitive conditions may have a hard time using what they have learned and applying it from one setting or situation to another.
- Speak slowly and clearly, but not in a condescending or childlike way. Showing examples might be more effective than talking in some cases.
- Speak to the person in clear sentences, using simple words and concrete – rather than abstract – concepts. Help understanding by taking a complex idea and breaking it down into smaller parts. Avoid colloquialisms.
- Maintain non-threatening voice and facial expressions to help the person feel comfortable.
- It can be difficult for people with cognitive conditions to make quick decisions. Be patient and allow the person to take their time.
- Ask people with cognitive conditions what the best way is for you to communicate with them. Some people may prefer written communication where possible.

People who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing

Communication

- Many people who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing use Auslan. Auslan is short for Australian sign language, a language developed by, and for, Australians who are deaf or hearing impaired. It's a visual form of communication that uses hand, arm and body movements to convey meaning. Auslan is an entirely different language from English, with a syntax all its own. It is only used in Australia.
- The majority of people who have hearing loss as adults do not communicate with sign language, and do use English. Many use assistive technology for writing and listening, such as closed or open captions.
- To attract the person's attention, face them and wave a greeting with your hand to gain eye contact.
- Don't start speaking if the person is looking away.
- Make sure your face is clearly seen, without glare or shadows; don't cover your mouth, turn away or look down when speaking. If you are in front of the light source (e.g., a

window) with your back to it, the glare may obscure your face and make it difficult for the person who is hard of hearing to speech read.

- When using a sign language interpreter, look directly at the person who is d/Deaf, and maintain eye contact to be polite. Talk directly to the person ('What would you like?'), rather than to the interpreter ('Ask them what they'd like.').
- Speak clearly and distinctly using your normal tone and pace, do not exaggerate mouth movements, this makes it harder to lip read.
- Ensure the d/Deaf person knows the topic before you continue speaking.
- Check that the d/Deaf person is following the conversation.
- Feel free to ask the person to repeat themselves if you did not understand.
- Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person does not understand.
- Speak one person at a time.
- Use visual cues and pen and paper.

Other considerations

- Consider the workplace environment and any sound based cues that may communicate information that the person will need to be aware of. Such as fire alarms, announcements over a speaker system etc.
- Consider alternative approaches to communicating this information to the person who is d/Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Emergency plans must consider how to communicate hazards effectively without sound.

People who are blind or have low vision

Communication

- Address the person directly so that they know who you are speaking to.
- Never channel conversations through a third person.
- Name the person when introducing yourself or when directing conversation to them in a group situation.
- Introduce yourself and any others who may be with you – don't assume the person will recognize you by your voice.
- Speak naturally and clearly. Loss of eyesight does not mean loss of hearing.
- Continue to use your body language. This will affect the tone of your voice and give a lot of extra information to the person who is vision impaired.
- Use everyday language. Don't avoid words like "see" or "look" or talking about everyday activities such as watching TV or videos.
- Use accurate and specific language when giving directions. For example, "the door is on your left", rather than "the door is over there".
- Do not walk away from the person without letting them know you are leaving them.
- Many people who are blind and low vision use assistive technology for communication, such as screen readers.

Environment

- Be aware that a noisy environment may make it more difficult for a person who is blind/ has low vision, as they rely predominantly on their hearing.
- Good lighting is important, but it shouldn't be too bright. In fact, very shiny paper or walls can produce a glare that disturbs people's eyes.
- Keep walkways clear of obstructions. If people who are blind or have low vision inform them about any physical changes, such as rearranged furniture, equipment or other items that have been moved.

Navigation

- People who are blind may need their arms for balance, so offer your arm — don't take theirs — if the person needs to be guided.
- If the person has a guide dog, walk on the side opposite the dog. As you are walking, describe the setting, noting any obstacles, such as stairs ('up' or 'down') or a big crack in the sidewalk.
- Do not pet, make eye contact with, or distract a service animal. Give the handler and service animal space.

People who are Autistic

Cognitive

People with Autism may have difficulty changing from task to task, multi-tasking, difficulty with learning new tasks and transferring skills from one situation to another. Things we assume a person learns from exposure and experience may have to be specifically taught and constantly reinforced to reduce the stress, confusion and frustration which may lead to behavioural difficulties, or withdrawal and depression.

- Keep instructions brief and precise. Use simple, concrete language.
- Give the person time to process the instruction. Be sure you have their attention and that you allow them enough time to absorb each instruction.
- If practical, make use of visual cues and procedures. A written schedule or task sheet is preferable to verbal instructions.
- Break work into smaller steps.

Sensory

- People with autism and other sensory disabilities/conditions, are affected by their environment, which can cause sensory overload. This results in causing distress.
- The environment should be set up to be calm and to avoid over-loading the senses with intense experiences.
- All senses should be considered where possible/relevant; sight, sound, smell, touch, taste.
- Also consider the effects of movement and balance if the person is expected to move around in a way that may impact this.

- The environment should avoid startling experiences, loud noise, crowded spaces, and consider appropriate lighting. Avoid strobe effects, flashing lights and high lighting contrast between spaces.
- Consider how noise can be reduced, for example, padding the edge of clap boards to dull the sound.

Provide social stories

For some individuals with autism, it is difficult to deviate from their normal routine. Social stories can help ease some of the anxiety of such a disruption by providing the individual with information about what they can expect in the workplace. Social stories may take the form of an information booklet made available prior. The booklet should contain images and written descriptions in an accessible format. It should describe the experience they can expect when attending the workplace. The text should be written in the 1st person.

It may include:

- Images of the workplace/set providing a view of all areas that they may encounter.
- Written information describing what to expect when working in plain language, any workplace protocols, and who they will be working with.

People with Cerebral Palsy

- As a result of injury to the central nervous system, people with cerebral palsy have difficulty controlling their muscles.
- Many people with CP have slurred speech and involuntary body movements. Your impulse may be to discount what they have to say, based on their appearance. Monitor your responses and interact with the person as you would with anyone else.
- A person who may appear to be drunk, sick or have a medical emergency might in fact have CP or another disability - often neurological in nature. Get the facts before acting on your first impression.
- People with CP have varying physical abilities. Some may be able to walk, while others may require mobility aids.

Persons of short stature

- Be aware of having necessary items within the person's reach to the maximum extent possible.
- Be aware that persons of short stature count on being able to use equipment that is at their height. Consider the height of railings and ensure they can be used by people of varying heights.
- Ensure seating is appropriate for people of short stature.
- Communication can be easier when people are at the same level. Persons of short stature have different preferences. Follow the person's cues.

People with Tourette Syndrome

- People with Tourette Syndrome may make vocalizations or gestures such as tics that they cannot control. A small percentage of people with Tourette syndrome involuntarily say ethnic slurs or obscene words.
- If a person with Tourette makes vocalizations during a conversation, simply wait, and then calmly continue.
- The more the person tries to contain these urges, the more the urges build up. It may be helpful for a person with Tourette to have the option to leave the meeting or conversation temporarily to release the build-up in a private place.

People with epilepsy

- Epilepsy is a neurological condition characterized by seizures that happen when the electrical system of the brain malfunctions. The seizures may be convulsive, or the person may appear to be in a trance. During complex partial seizures, the person may walk or make other movements while they are, in effect, unconscious.
- Always record the start time of a seizure.
- If a person has a seizure, you cannot do anything to stop it. If they have fallen, be sure their head is protected and wait for the seizure to end.
- When a seizure has ended, the person may feel disoriented and embarrassed. Try to ensure that the person has privacy to collect themselves.
- Be aware that strobe lights can trigger seizures in some people. Put a warning before the start of anything with strobe/flashing lights that gives people enough time to prepare or leave if needed.

People with mental health conditions

- People with mental health conditions may at times have difficulty coping with the tasks and interactions of daily life.
- Their condition may interfere with their ability to feel, think or relate to others.
- One of the main obstacles they face is the attitudes that people have about them. Because it is a hidden condition, chances are you will not even realize that the person has a mental health condition.
- People who have mental health conditions have varying personalities and different ways of coping. Some may have difficulty picking up on social cues; others may seem sensitive. One person may be very high energy, while someone else may appear sluggish. Treat each person as an individual.
- Not everyone with a mental health condition identifies as a person with disability, however some people do.

Communication

- Avoid speaking differently to people with mental health conditions, unless they make a request on how they wish to be communicated with. Most people with mental health can communicate like other people.

- Avoid pretending to know how someone else feels.
- Avoid using terms that show pity e.g. that they are suffering from depression.
- Avoid inappropriate words that are condescending or stigmatising, like psycho, crazy.
- Avoid being judgmental or argumentative or showing any form of anger or hostility. Find ways to have difficult conversations or provide critical feedback that is respectful and mindful of the person's perspective. Allow the individual to have a support person present if required.

Chronic Illness

A chronic illness is a condition with symptoms that last at least a year and requires regular medical attention, and/or limits one's daily activities. Some common examples are cancer, diabetes and arthritis. This may affect people's ability to fully function to varying degrees, that varies from day to day, hour to hour. People with chronic illness may need to carefully manage their energy levels. They may experience chronic pain, experience physical disability and mobility barriers, and/or have a mental health condition or other health conditions.

Energy Management

- The Spoon Theory describes how people with chronic illness need to ration the limited energy they have. **It is** a metaphor describing the amount of physical and/or mental energy that a person has available for daily activities and tasks, and how it can become limited.
- For example a person with chronic illness may have 4 spoons today worth of energy, whereas a healthy person may have 10. Each person can use their spoons to perform everyday actions, however the person with chronic illness can do less than the healthy person, as they have less spoons. This represents how people with **chronic illness** need to plan out days and actions in advance to not run out of energy.
- Each day the number of spoons someone has may vary, and can be impacted by how many spoons they have recently used. People may need to adjust their daily activities to suit.
- Providing information to people with chronic illness as to what is expected of them in the workplace, and letting them plan in advance how they will conduct their work will enable them to effectively manage their energy levels.
- Consider flexible and hybrid work arrangements where possible, such as work from home, and limiting some travel can assist.
- Some people may be able to work 3 hours a day 3 days a week, some people may be able to work full time hours with careful management.
- Consider providing places where people can rest, such as chairs available at all times. Some people may require having extended breaks and somewhere to have a lie down where possible.

Physical Disability

- Some people with Chronic illness may have physical disabilities.
- They may require the use of mobility aids, such as wheelchairs or canes.
- They may need to avoid repetitive activity.
- They may require ergonomic desks and computer set ups beyond standard ergonomics.
- They may only be able to stand for short periods or need to be moving regularly.
- They may need to reduce time spent walking and need car parking close to their destination.

Other considerations

Consider fragrance and smells

Some people with sensory issues and auto-immune disease are acutely aware of, or physically/cognitively impaired by the inhalation of smells/fragrance such as shampoo, deodorant, laundry detergent, air fresheners and fabric softener in the environment around them.

- Turn off or remove air fresheners from bathrooms and other workspaces.
- Consider requesting that staff refrain from wearing perfume or cologne. Some workplaces have a 'fragrance free workplace policy' that may be included in employee contracts. Provide education to staff on the effects of fragrance on some individuals, and that it can be considered a health and safety hazard for some people.
- Consider the type of soaps and hand sanitiser available and choose fragrance free products.
- Consider what other substances may be in use that create odours and impacts the air quality, such as smoke (cigarette, wood smoke, theatre smoke), cleaning agents, glues, new housepaint etc.

Food

Some individuals follow specific diets to manage their health, and some people with autism are averse to different tastes and textures of food. If food will be provided, be sure to provide a variety of options. Actively request staff to provide information about dietary requirements and the opportunity to discuss their requirements directly with caterers if required.

Not all conditions are visible

Not all conditions are apparent. Even though these are not obviously visible, they are real. Please respect the person's needs and requests.

Multiple disabilities:

Some people have multiple disabilities/conditions. For example someone may have a physical disability that is visible, such as a person who uses a cane, and also have a non-visible illness, such as a mental health condition.

It is important to not assume that someone is only a wheelchair user, because that is all you can see. Always ask people what their access requirements are, do not assume.

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