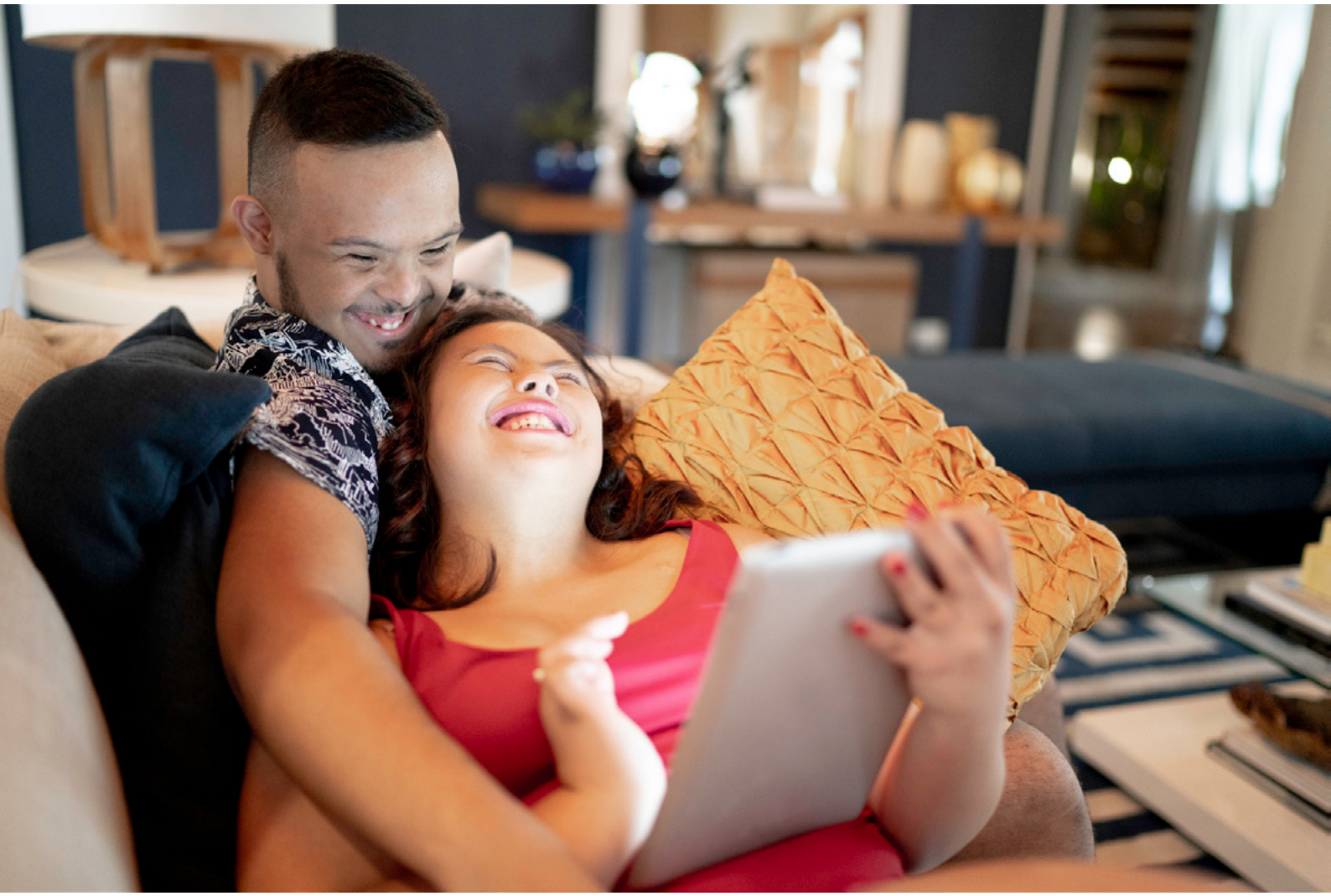


mediadiversity AUSTRALIA

Disability Reporting Handbook

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GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

INCLUSIVE FUTURES
REIMAGINING DISABILITY

Hireup

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***Luther Cora**, a proud Yugambeh man and prominent Gold Coast performer with the Yugambeh Aboriginal Dancers*

Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Chameleonseye

Acknowledgement

We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

Front cover
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Photographer: FG Trade

Contents

Introduction 5
The DRH Team 6
Foreword 9

Section 1: Introduction to disability 11

Disability 101 12
Disability in Australia: the data 19
The problem with data 21
The Golden Rules 25
The Golden Rules: Language 33
The Golden Rules: Image and audio 35

Section 2: Intersectionality and disability 39

What is intersectionality? 41
Women and disability 42
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and disability 46
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and disability 49
LGBTQIA+ communities and disability 52

Section 3: Violence and disability 55

Violence against people with disability 56
Key information 57
The data 61
Support services 63

Section 4: Interviewing people with disability: 'how to' guides 64

How to interview a person who is D/deaf, hearing impaired or hard of hearing 65
How to interview a person who is blind or vision impaired 67
How to interview a person with physical disability or reduced mobility 70
How to interview a person with cognitive disability 73
How to interview a person who is non-speaking and use Augmented Assisted Communication (AAC) 79
How to interview a person with psycho-social disability 81
How to interview a person who is neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, tourette's syndrome) 83

Section 5: Marketing and advertising 86

Marketing and advertising 87
How to incluse disability in advertising 88

Section 6: The Disability Royal Commission 92

What it is and disability in the media 93

Section 7: Useful contacts 94

Contacts database 95

Section 8: Final words 97

Messages from our collaborators and sponsors 98
Acknowledgements 103



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Introduction

How to use this handbook

The media should reflect, connect with and include all people. This handbook has been created to assist journalists to do just that, with a particular focus on various communities with disability.

More than two years (and multiple lockdowns) in the making, it has been produced by a team of media professionals with lived experience of disability, in collaboration with peak Disabled People's Organisations and diversity advocates. In designing and writing this handbook, we made sure we lived by the golden rule – *nothing about us without us.*

While we encourage you to read the entire handbook, it has been designed to enable time-poor, task-rich media professionals to skip to key areas to get the practical knowledge they need to better report on and with people with disability.

We realise that language, culture, statistics and understanding changes, which is why we have reviewed the original version of this handbook and made slight alterations. We aim to continue reviewing and updating this handbook in the future. We hope this guide leads to a more inclusive media, and with it, a more inclusive world – one which recognises and welcomes the true spectrum of human diversity.

The DRH Team

The DRH team

Media Diversity Australia

Media Diversity Australia is a nation-wide organisation working towards a news media that is reflective of all Australians. We seek to promote balanced representation in news and current media that reflects the community it serves. This includes cultural and linguistic diversity and disability.



Briana Blackett is an award-winning communicator and a seasoned journalist with extensive global news experience. She was a founding member of Al Jazeera English in Qatar, which followed a successful career working for Associated Press Television, based at its headquarters in London. She has also worked for Greenpeace International in Europe, along with federal politics and broadcast news in Australia. Over a 20 year period, she has covered some of the world's biggest events and gained insights she still draws upon today from her home in suburban Sydney. Briana is the mother of two children with disability. She works to advocate for greater diversity across the media, government and corporate spaces. Her articles have been published in a variety of disability-specific and mainstream media, including the Sydney Morning Herald, the ABC and Mamamia. Briana is Disability Affairs Officer for Media Diversity Australia, and a Carer's Representative with Carer's NSW. She has advised on national projects regarding autism in the communications and health sectors, along with issues impacting unpaid carers.



Lisa Cox is a TEDx speaker, author and internationally award-winning inclusive communications consultant. She is also Media Diversity Australia's inaugural Disability Affairs Officer. Lisa has combined her years of industry expertise with a lived-experience in disability and now helps national to international brands and business navigate the nuances of disability representation, particularly in advertising. She sits on the Diversity and Inclusion Taskforces at both the Journalism, Education and Research Association of Australia (JERAA) and Advertising Council of Australia. Lisa's work has been published globally and you can read more at www.lisacox.co.



Jessica Johnson is the Impact Engagement and Communication Lead at Hireup. Hireup is a profit for purpose organisation committed to supporting people with disability to live the lives they choose via quality support services designed to facilitate true choice and control. In just under three years, Jessica has played an integral role as Talent Lead, helping to scale the business from 30 head office employees to over 240. More recently she has moved into the Impact and Innovation team, delivering impact projects such as the Hireup Board Observership Program - an initiative focused on increasing representation of people with disability at board level. A challenge Jessica is particularly passionate about shifting the dial on. In her spare time, Jessica works as a support worker - in many ways, her favourite part of the job.



Jo Kek-Pamenter is a senior graphic designer and Microsoft Master Instructor, with over 30 years' experience in visual communication, inclusive education, and instructional design. Drawing on her lived experience as a person with disability (hearing impaired), she has developed a reputation as an innovator and leader in accessible design, communications and events. She is currently the Graphic Design and Communications Lead for Griffith University's Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability (IFRD) research alliance. In addition to designing the Disability Reporting Handbook, she co-authored and designed the award-winning ADCET Guideline "Supporting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students Online". She was an Australian Access Awards Finalist in 2021 and returned as a judge in 2023.



Antoinette Lattouf is a multi-award-winning journalist, media commentator and diversity advocate. She is also the co-founder of Media Diversity Australia, and served on the Judith Neilson Institute For Journalism and Ideas' International Advisory Council. In 2019, Antoinette was named among AFR's 100 Women of Influence. In 2021, she was awarded a Women's Agenda Leadership Award and B&T Women in Media Champion of Change. Her first book, 'How to Lose Friends and Influence White People' was published in 2022, the same year she delivered her first Tedx talk. Throughout her career, Lattouf has worked at Network Ten, ABC, SBS, Southern Cross Austereo, and Triple J. As a social commentator, her articles have been published in a wide variety of publications and online platforms. Lattouf has been a permanent co-host of the daily LiSTNR podcast The Briefing. She is also known for her work as a columnist for the Sydney Morning Herald.



Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester has combined her media experience, degrees in Arts, Law and Business, and her PhD in inclusive university-led work-integrated learning to help students gain experience and work toward social impact. Her work focuses on social justice and actively demonstrates inclusion and equity. Her work includes projects addressing media reporting of disability projectopendoors.org (2017) and projectallabilities.com.au (2020), and domestic violence projectsafespace.com.au (2015). She strives to move education beyond the typical classroom practice divide and the advantages stretch much further than students simply gaining practical experience; their work creates real-life impacts and can address disadvantage within the community. Faith specialises in designing and delivering innovative WIL projects, creating a fourth space where students, academics and industry can come together to create change.



Professor Elizabeth Kendall is a rehabilitation psychologist who earned her PhD in 1987, focusing on coping and adjustment after traumatic brain and spinal injuries. She has extensive experience in supporting individuals with brain injuries to live independently and has developed rehabilitation services for those with serious disabilities and chronic conditions.

Elizabeth has published over 200 papers on disability and has led a collaborative research program for nearly 30 years, partnering with organisations like Queensland Health and Spinal Life Australia. In 2017, she helped form The Hopkins Centre at Griffith University, uniting over 150 experts to tackle rehabilitation challenges.

As Director of Griffith University's Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability research alliance (2021-2025), Elizabeth aims to enhance rehabilitation, education, and disability services through collaboration and innovation.



Pip Miller assisted with the production of the DRH as part of her Bachelor of Communications post graduate Honours degree. From her home town of Cairns in Far North Queensland, Pip operates a busy public relations consultancy, Pip Miller PR which since it was established in 1994, has serviced the marketing and communications needs of a diverse clientele from government organisations and construction to creative industries and the region's many events and festivals.



Rachel Worsley is the founder and CEO at Neurodiveristy Media, a media company producing accessible information resources for neurodiversity in the workplace. She is an autistic journalist with ADHD who has more than 5 years of experience in trade media. She was previously shortlisted as Young Writer of the Year at the Mumbrella Publish Awards in 2017 for her reporting on doctors' mental health.

Foreword

A message from Dr Ben Gauntlett
Former Disability Discrimination Commissioner, 2019-2023

The portrayal of people with disability in the media is critical to ensuring people with disability are included in society now and in the future.

People with disability are diverse and the nature of disability is diverse too. However, in a time poor society where there is variable knowledge about people with disability, it can be easy to overlook the importance of language, imagery and storytelling. Journalists can change lives by asking questions that enable issues of concern to be brought to the foreground of public debate. They can also change lives by carefully reporting on issues in an inclusive manner. How a person is referred to in a story or dealt with in collating and researching a story matters.

Similarly, the willingness of members of the media to actively look for stories concerning people with disability is important. Investigative journalism based on rigorous research has led to many changes in disability policy. At a time of great policy upheaval and potential change, it is imperative that journalists engage with issues of concern for people with disability and their friends and family. Interviewing people with disability can give great insights in a story and needs to be encouraged. The Disability Reporting Handbook will hopefully make reporting on disability related issues more prevalent.



Approximately 20% of Australians live with disability. However, a significant amount of disability is invisible in nature. Therefore, when reporting on matters you might be reporting on a matter concerning a person with disability and not realise it. Careful attention to detail on how facts, ideas and opinions are expressed can reduce stigma and encourage respectful conversation about difficult issues.

Congratulations to Media Diversity Australia for creating a fantastic resource. The Disability Reporting Handbook will hopefully change lives. Well done also to Griffith University, the Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Hireup and Getty Images for sponsoring the publication.

I look forward to hearing about journalists using the Disability Reporting Handbook throughout Australia.

Image credit: Dr Ben Gauntlett



Image credit:
Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM
with his mum, Chithrani.
Photographer:
Lana Noir

*"**Disability** is an interesting word that has attracted a great deal of discourse. The community has a range of **different viewpoints**. All of these are valid. I think that it's a matter of **preference**.*

I have done far more in my life after a spinal cord injury compared to before it. In that context, do I feel disabled? No. I don't feel limited in a broad sense.

Other community members feel that the word 'disability' should not have any negative connotations. It should be celebrated even.

*In an ideal world, we wouldn't need any **labels**. We would just be people existing together, thriving in our **diversity.***

*Until that day comes, however, we can have **respectful discourse** about what these labels mean for each other."*

– Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM



Madison de Rozario
Paralympian
Image credit:
Griffith University

Section 1:
Introduction to disability



Teenager, Max, using his AAC device to communicate with a friend
Image credit: MDA

Disability 101

Disability is part of the human condition. The term 'disability' is multilayered and means different things to different people. There are many ways language can be used to acknowledge it – 'with disability', 'disabled', 'atypical' are some of the terms used. In this handbook, we use the term 'with disability' but acknowledge it is the person with disability's right to choose the language that describes them.

Here are key concepts, terms and definitions that are important to be aware of when reporting on or with people with disability.

Disability

"Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, ***in interaction with various barriers,*** *may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."*

– UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

What is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability?

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an international human rights convention created at the United Nations setting out the fundamental human rights of people with disability.

It is made up of two documents;

1. the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains the main human rights provisions expressed as a series of Articles,
2. the Optional Protocol to the CRPD is a more limited document that sets up an individual complaints procedure.

Australia has signed both the Convention and ratified the Optional Protocol.[1]

The CRPD is one of nine international human rights instruments developed by the UN. It was;

- Developed by people with disability, to achieve a greater level of equality for people with disability around the world.
- Explains the steps that governments worldwide must take to uphold, promote and protect the rights of people with disability.

The Australian Government signed and ratified the CRPD in 2008. In doing so, it has made a legal commitment to uphold the principles the Convention establishes.

The Australian Government signed the CRPD in 2007, ratifying it in 2008. In doing so, it has made a legal commitment to uphold the principles the Convention establishes. However, disability advocates say Australia has not fully incorporated the CRPD. You can find a fact sheet on the issues here.

What is Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS)

Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) 2021-2031 – formerly called the National Disability Strategy (NDS), is Australia's response as a signatory to the CRPD.

Each 10-year plan aims to support people with disability to "maximise their potential and participate as equal citizens in Australian society." The current ADS runs from 2021-2031.

– Department of Social Services

1 *Credit: Australian Human Rights Commission*



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Maskot

What is the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)?

Run by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), the NDIS is a government scheme to support people with disability. Not everyone with a disability can receive NDIS assistance. It's estimated only around a fifth of people with disability are eligible for the scheme. People over the age of 65 with disability are typically directed to access support through a separate Aged Care scheme. This age-limit, along with other parts of the Scheme are currently under review.

What is the Disability Support Pension (DSP)?

The Disability Support Pension is a payment for people with a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that stops them from working. Not everyone with a disability or a medical condition can receive the DSP. To be eligible, an applicant must meet both "non-medical rules" and "medical rules".

For more specific information on the DSP, visit Services Australia, Disability Support Pension.



Image credit: Graeme Innes

*"The **biggest barrier** to full participation in the community for people with disability is **attitude**. Most Australian's with disability experience the soft bigotry of **low expectations**."*

– Graeme Innes AM, Former Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner

What is the Disability Discrimination Act?

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) makes it unlawful to treat people unfairly because they have a disability. This covers various areas of public life, including employment, education, accommodation, and accessing services or public places. People with disability experiencing discrimination can contact the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) for information about human rights and discrimination issues, including how to make a complaint.

What does the Disability Discrimination Commissioner do?

The Disability Discrimination Commissioner is one of seven Commissioner roles within the Human Rights Commission. Their mission is to work *"in partnership with others to help all Australians understand their rights and meet their legal responsibilities by conducting public inquiries and negotiating disability standards and guidelines."*

What is the Disability Royal Commission (DRC)?

The *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability,* was established in 2019, to investigate violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disability. The DRC was set up in response to community concern about widespread neglect and abuse of people with disability. (See DRH Chapters: *Violence against people with disability: Definitions* and *Violence: The Data*). Through a series of public hearings, private sessions, submissions and independent research, the Disability Royal Commission gathered evidence to inform its final report, which it delivered to the Australian Government in September 2023. The report, which you can read here, makes 222 recommendations "on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society". (See Chapter 6: Disability Royal Commission, disability and the media).

How do I know which organisation to reach out to for information?

National peak organisations can be either Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs), or Disability Representative Organisations (DROs). These organisations are experts in many aspects of disability, and represent particular groups of people with disability, such as First People with disability or people with intellectual disability. There are very clear differences between DPOs/DROs and service providers that are important to be aware of.

When reporting on matters relating to disability, ensure you seek comment from the relevant DPO or DRO. You can find many of them in the Contacts Database in the DRH and by clicking on the links throughout the handbook.



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Bobbi Lockyer, Refinery29 Australia

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are organisations led by, and consist of, people with disability.

Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) advocate for and support people with disability and often families. They can be, but are not necessarily, led by a mix of people with disability and non-disabled people.

Disability Advocacy Organisations can do systemic or individual advocacy or both. They are funded to directly assist people with disability and are independent of disability service providers and government.

For example;
***Blind Citizens Australia** is a DPO. Its membership and leadership are people who are blind or vision-impaired. **Vision Australia** is a not-for-profit organisation that advocates for and provides services to the blind community.*

Disability Service Providers are organisations that provide services and supports to people with disability. They can be charities, not-for-profit organisations or commercial businesses. Supports they provide can range from legal advice, housing, in-home or in-the-community support, and assistive technology, to name a few. People with disability are their customers and clients. Disability service providers are not advocacy organisations, nor are they representative organisations for people with disability.

What the the different models of disability?
There are several different models of disability but understanding them and choosing to use one method over another has considerable implications for how your audience perceives people with disability.

Disability was traditionally viewed through the lens of a **charity model**. However, this is now considered outdated because it frames people with disabilities as victims who are always in need of help and are unable to do anything for themselves.

The **medical model** typically defines people by what they can't do instead of what they can. It's often referred to as a 'deficit model'. Certain aspects within this model view disability as a medical impairment that needs to be fixed or cured. People with disability may find this approach patronising, limiting and harmful.

In response to these damaging models, the **social model** acknowledges disability as a natural part of human diversity and believes that people who move, perceive, think and communicate differently deserve the same respect and opportunities as everyone else in society.

The social model views a person's disability as **the impact of a person's interaction with their surroundings.** For example, a person using a wheelchair can enter a room with ramps but can't enter a room with stairs. It is the stairs, therefore, that are impacting a person's ability to enter the room.

The UN has adopted this model, as has Australia, by being a signatory to the UN's CRPD.



More tips on language

Disability Gateway assists people with disability, their families and carers.

IDEAS provides information on disability awareness services, and supports people with disability and their carers.

***Julia Robertson**, Image credit: Griffith University Photographer: Sandra Chin, 2018*

People With Disability Australia (PWDA) further explains the social model:
"A social model perspective does not deny the reality of impairment nor its impact on the individual. However, it does challenge the physical, attitudinal, communication and social environment to accommodate impairment as an expected incident of human diversity. The social model seeks to change society to accommodate people living with impairment; it does not seek to change persons with impairment to accommodate society. It supports the view that people with disability have a right to be fully participating citizens on an equal basis with others."

More recently, the **human rights model** has also been used, and is considered by many disability advocates to be a more meaningful approach. This model recognises that all people with disability have human rights – Including rights to physical access, medical treatment, social participation, education and employment.

You can find other models of disability here.



Disability in Australia: the data

18%

of Australians – around

4.4 million

people **have a disability**

The Australian Human Rights Commission consistently receives more **complaints related to disability discrimination**

than any other kind (sex, race, and age-based discrimination etc)

Of the approximately

4.4 million

Australians with disability, only around

630,000

are accessing the NDIS. This means the majority of Australians with disability do not receive NDIS funding

48%

of people with disability are **employed** compared to 80% without disability

64%

Almost two-thirds (64%) of people with disability are **home owners**

18%

Almost 1 in 5 people with disability who need help with **healthcare** have their needs only partially met

9 in 10

school-aged children with disability go to a **mainstream school**

47%

1 in 2 **adults** (aged 15+ years) with disability have experienced **physical violence**

People with disability (15-64) are more than **twice as likely** to be **living in financial stress**





Around half of people aged

65

and over have, or will acquire, **disability**

1 in 3

people with disability need **help with healthcare**

42%

of adults with disability **rate their health as poor**

An estimated

700,000

Australian children have at least **one parent with disability**

Around

1 million

non-dependant people with disability **live with a spouse or partner**

Almost two-thirds

2.7 million

people with disability **own their home**

17%

of adults with disability have a **bachelor's degree or higher**

Almost a quarter of people

23%

with disability aged 15-64 **have difficulty getting to places needed**

Technology, aids & equipment

1 in **10**

PwD accessing **assistive devices**

29%

Communication aids

18%

Hearing aids

17%

Aids for **mobility**

Most of these statistics have been sourced from the AIHW People with Disability in Australia 2022 Web Report, which collates data from all the major sources, including the ABS, SDAC and other related studies, roughly up to date between 2018-2019 depending on the data source. Please note: much of this data has not been disaggregated. View the full report AIHW at this link.

Additional resources:

https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/education/face-facts-disability-rights





The problem with data
(and what to do about it)

Data is commonly collected through three main avenues;

- specific surveys such as the Australian *census, academic or other independent studies,
- government departments, and
- reporting figures such as police reports, school enrolment figures etc.

Historically, these have often failed to capture the accurate and complete picture of disability through process or culture. Here's why; →

The problem with data from surveys

- Lack of regular surveying.
- Lack of consistent terminology, definitions and processes between different but similarly focused surveys.
- Key groups of people with disability are commonly left out of part or all of the process. For example, for the ABS Personal Safety Survey (seeking to quantify violence against people with disability), does not seek the input of non-speaking people and people living in care facilities. Also, those who required personal assistance to participate were not asked 'sensitive' questions, such as whether they had been victims of sexual assault or abuse. New migrants also face risk of deportation if they disclose having a disability.
- Governments have historically not collected comprehensive data disaggregated by disability.

The problem with data from reporting tools

The social model identifies several barriers to the collection of data from reporting tools; for example, people with disability may communicate differently, have barriers to accessing mainstream emergency services (such as the police), and face discrimination when giving evidence or telling their story.

Some of the obstacles people with disability can face trying to report their experiences may include:

- Have trouble communicating, or not being given access to devices or translators to help them communicate.
- Having trouble physically accessing external help (for example, police).
- Having difficulty being believed or taken seriously.
- Having trouble being seen as *credible* witnesses.
- Being coerced into not reporting their experiences or reporting false information.
- Not being legally allowed to testify due to their disability.
- Being afraid for their safety upon reporting a crime.
- Not being aware that what is happening to them is a crime, or
- Not knowing how to get help.

Journalists should bear these issues in mind when seeking and reporting on data regarding people with disability. They should also understand that disabled people are often not captured in regular data capture, which is not disaggregated.

Why journalists need to understand disaggregated data

Disaggregated data has been broken down by detailed sub-categories, for example, by marginalised group, gender, race, or level of education, income, etc. Disaggregated data can reveal inequalities that may not be fully reflected in aggregated data.

Why is data disaggregation important?

Fully disaggregating data helps to expose hidden trends. It can enable the identification of vulnerable populations, for instance, or help establish the scope of the problem and make vulnerable groups more visible to policymakers.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has compiled a useful explainer on the different sources of information regarding disability data, and which source is best for different subject matters. It can be found at this link.

*A word about the census

The five-yearly Australian Census is the usual go-to for a snapshot of the nation. However, it doesn't directly ask about disability as per the standard definitions. Instead, it typically asks four questions based on a person's 'Need for Assistance', such as mobility or communication. Crucially, it doesn't ask if this need is due to a long-term disability or a short-term illness.

The 2021 census added a question about chronic illness but didn't ask additional questions about disability.

Journalists looking for more specific data on disability might be best to check the Survey on Ageing, Disability and Carers (SADC) conducted by the ABS every three years. This study uses more familiar definitions of disability; however, unlike the Census, it does not survey the entire population. Instead, it conducts a sample survey and extrapolates from those results. This makes the SADC less reliable than the Census in terms of margin of error.

What is disability prevalence – and prevalence data?

Disability prevalence is the number or proportion of the population living with disability at one time. Understanding prevalence data is important for journalists because it will help create fair, objective reporting on practices and policies that affect the provision of products and services to people with disability.

Prevalence data can be obtained in the following sources:

- ABS summaries of the SDAC.
- Australian Institute on Health and Welfare Reports (AIHW) reports for health-specific information on people with disability.
- Navigating the NDIS dataset if reporting on NDIS participants.

Mindframe Media has drafted a guideline titled **Helpful Ways to Present Information** to assist journalists in reporting data on suicide and mental health conditions that often affect people with disability.

Data and the Disability Royal Commission

Even before issuing its final report, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability (or the Disability Royal Commission, DRC for short) repeatedly highlighted the very significant problem with the lack of data about people with disability across multiple jurisdictions and settings. The DRC is producing significant research reports that talk about this need for better data. In its Interim Report, it said:

> Without high-quality data, it is difficult for governments and organisations to plan policies and programs to prevent violence against and abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability. Data is needed to set goals and measure success against these goals and to allow others to hold governments and organisations accountable for delivering on these goals.

The Australian Government has set up the National Disability Data Asset project to start looking at the issues the DRC and many others have raised.

Tips for reporting on data

1. Before using statistics, take a look at how they were gathered. Consider who conducted the survey, who participated, and, crucially, who didn't. Ask why.
2. Balance data with lived experience by contacting the relevant DPOs/ DROs for their view of the data and position on some issues. Ask if the experiences of their members supports the data. Some DPOs/ DROs may have research of their own to add to the story. Academic journals and research centres at universities specialising in disability issues, may also be able to provide relevant information.

The Golden Rules

Six top tips to getting it right

1. Include
Remember this mantra: **'Nothing about us without us'.**

> If you're producing a story on disability, ensure you include the voice of a relevant person with disability. If you're unsure where to start, refer to the contacts list in this handbook for DPOs.

If you don't have the relevant voice, don't do the story unless the issue/event is too crucial NOT to report on. If that is the case, explain why the key voice is missing.

> Actively seek to include people with disability, and minorities in the disability community, in your everyday content, not just on issues regarding disability.

People with disability are parents, spouses, homeowners, business leaders, employees, students, consumers, voters, artists, athletes, influencers, scientists, academics, so draw from this community when seeking comment on any newsworthy issue. For example;

- Interview people with disability when gathering vox pops.
- Source experts for general news who also have a disability.
- Include people with disability in your discussion panel.

2. Ask

> If you are unsure about something, simply ask.

It's ok to say, "I'm not very familiar with autism. Can you please tell me how you like to be called?" Or, "What's the best way to prepare the studio ahead of our interview?" Or, "Do you have any access needs that I can help with?"

3. Avoid

> 'Inspiration porn'.

Don't portray a person with disability as being inspirational, courageous or brave just for doing ordinary things. Ask yourself, would this still be an inspirational story if the person wasn't disabled? That being said, people with disability face numerous barriers - so there will be occasions when highlighting a person's efforts in breaking those barriers is important to share, mainly to demonstrate that society is still not equitable for people with disability.
Check out Stella Young's TED Talk: "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much" to learn more about inspiration porn.

> Making assumptions or comparisons:

Don't assume someone can or can't do something because of their disability.
Don't use language that suggests that one disability is better or worse than another.

4. Prepare

- Ask if there's anything the person would like to know or do to prepare for the interview. Bear in mind though, that many people may not know what support or preparation they may need, so offer suggestions. For example, "would it help to have the questions in advance?", or "are there any access requirements we should consider for the studio?"
- Be prepared to submit questions ahead of time.
- Be prepared to do mock interviews – some people like to know what the interview process is.
- Someone may not be able to hold a microphone, so ensure you have lapel or boom options.
- Allow extra time for an interview – including recording b-roll. At times, there can be significant delays due to things beyond a person's control, including transport and care requirements.
- When interviewing a person with disability about violence or a traumatic event, ask if there are any specific triggers (words, topics) you should be aware of. Allow plenty of time so that the interviewee to have 'space' between questions. Ask if the person has support to draw on during or after the interview. Provide a list of support services they can access. For more information, see the following chapters; Violence and Disability: Key information, and Violence and Disability: The data.

5. Respect

- Direct your questions and attention to the person with disability, not their translator, communication device or support person.
- Avoid patronising or condescending tones or language. It should go without saying, but....
- Respect the interviewee's personal space. For example, a person's wheelchair is part of their personal space. Don't lean on it, or touch it without permission. The same goes for a person's communication device or interacting with a person's dog guide.

6. Review

Ask for feedback at the end of the interview, "What worked well, what didn't?"

- Share your experience and the feedback you received with your peers so they can learn from your experiences.
- Where appropriate, share the final product/content with the interviewee.

For more specific tips on interviewing people with Disability, see the following 'How To' Interview chapters.

- D/deaf or hearing impaired
- Blind or vision impaired
- Physical disability or reduced mobility
- Cognitive disability
- Non-speaking and use Augmented Assisted Communication (AAC)
- Psycho-social disability
- Neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia and tourette's syndrome)

A word about words

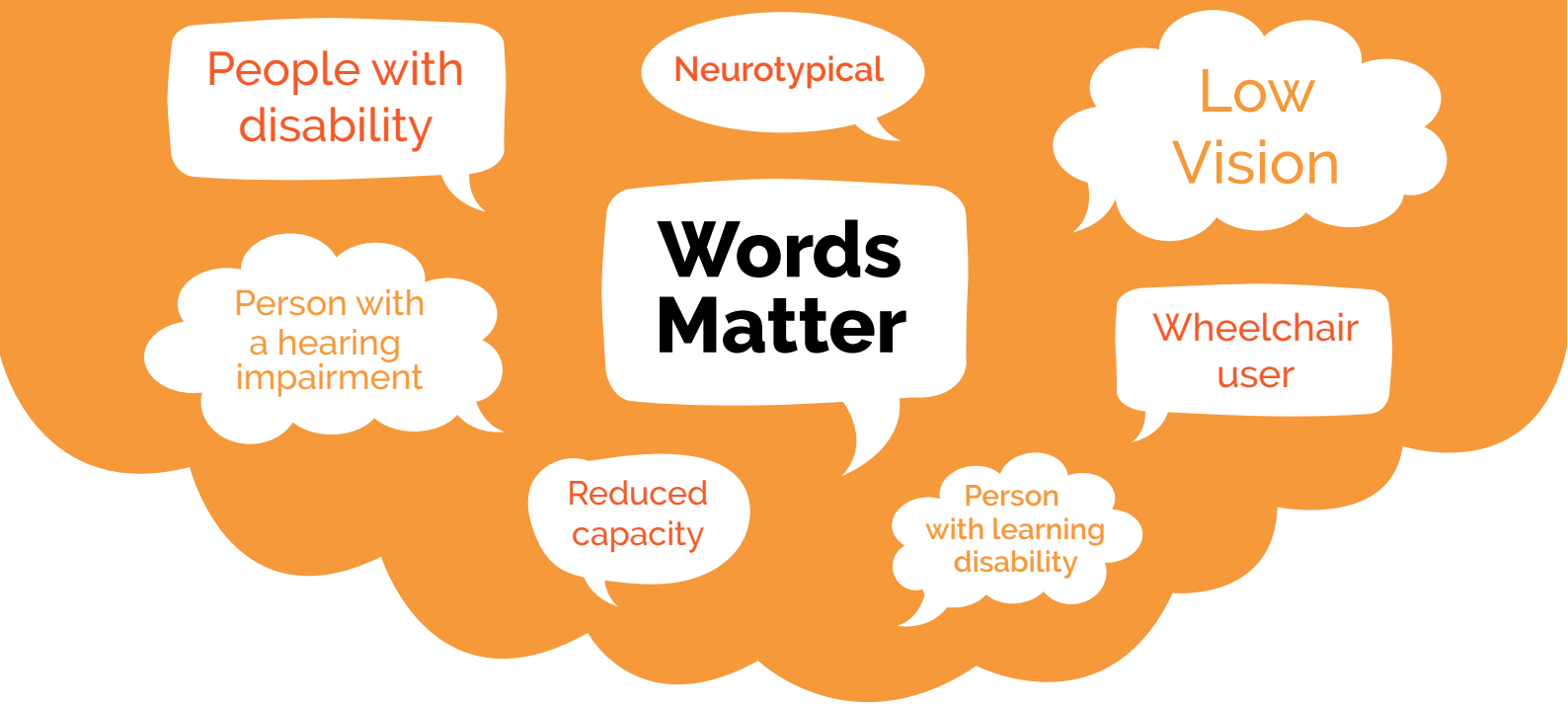
What's the best way to describe someone with a disability?
There are typically two ways people with disability prefer to be addressed. Always ask people you interview which method they prefer.

Person first	Identity first
…acknowledges the person before the disability. E.G.: "people with disability" or "person with autism". *"Person first language is viewed as emphasising the value and worth of the individual by recognising them as a person instead of reducing them to their disability."* ~ Disabled People's Organisation Australia (DPO Australia)	…acknowledges the disability is an inseparable part of a person's identity. E.G.: "disabled people" or "autistic person". Identity first language *"acknowledges disability as an important aspect of a person's identity. [It] is viewed as recognising that disability is a part of a person's identity, not an added extra. Disability cannot be separated from who you are as a person."* ~ Disabled People's Organisation Australia (DPO Australia)

If in doubt
As a general rule, always ask each person you interview how they prefer to be identified. If that's not possible, for example, the person has already left or can't be contacted, err on the person first approach.

> A person with more than one disability may refer to themselves as having *dual (or multiple) disability/ies.* They may also identify one of their disabilities as being a *primary disability.*

For more on person first or identity first language, click here to read a comprehensive guide, including a Do and Don't list, by People With Disability Australia. We have included excerpts from the guide on the pages following.



When referring to:	Terms to avoid:	Recommended:
People with disability in general	• afflicted by • crippled by • diffability • differently-abled • handicap(ped) • handicapable • specially-abled • special needs • suffers from • the disabled • victim of • with different abilities	• people with disability, women with disability children with disability, etc. • has disability • lives with disability • has a chronic health condition • lives with a chronic health condition
Someone who uses a wheelchair	• confined to a wheelchair • wheelchair-bound	• wheelchair user • person who uses a wheelchair
Someone whose legs and/or lower body are paralysed	• paraplegic (unless they identify that way)	• person with paraplegia

When referring to:	Terms to avoid:	Recommended:
A person of short stature	• dwarf • midget	• person of short stature
A person with intellectual disability	• intellectually challenged • mental defective • mentally retarded • mentally disabled • simple • special • moron • retard/retarded • imbecile • cretin	• person with cognitive disability • person with intellectual disability
A person who has Down syndrome	• downy / downsy • mongol(oid)	• person with Down syndrome
Someone who has a learning disability	• slow • slow learner • retarded • special needs	• person with learning disability
A person with diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	• hyper • hyperactive (if used as a derogatory reference)	• person with ADHD
A person with a brain injury	• brain-damaged (if used as a derogatory reference) • brain-impaired	• person with a brain injury

When referring to:	Terms to avoid:	Recommended:
Someone who has autism	• aspy/aspie • 'an autistic' *(unless they identify this way) • High-functioning or low-functioning • Profoundly or severely autistic	• person with autism, people with autism • an autistic person, autistic people (if they choose 'identity first lanaguge') • neurodivergent • person on the autism spectrum • neuroatypical or atypical
Someone with psychosocial disability	• crazy • insane/insanity • mad • maniac • mental • mental case • mental defective • mentally unstable • psycho(tic) • psychopath(ic)	• person with psychosocial disability • person with a mental health condition • person with (insert the name of their condition if you know it and have their consent to disclose it. e.g. person with depression, person with bipolar disorder, etc.)
Someone with sensory disability	• blind as a bat • deaf and dumb • mute	• Blind (if they identify that way) • d/Deaf and/or hard of hearing (sometimes stylised as HoH) • Hearing impaired (if they identify that way) • person with a visual impairment (if they identify that way) • person with vision impairment/low vision • non-speaking person/ person who is non-speaking



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Tempura

When referring to:	Terms to avoid:	Recommended:
Someone who does not have disability	• able-bodied** • abled** • normal • of sound body/mind	• person without disability • non-disabled person
Someone who does not have intellectual, psychosocial or cognitive disability, nor is neurodivergent	• normal • of sound mind	• non-disabled • neurotypical

* People in the autism community are increasingly choosing to identify as being an autistic person (as opposed to being a person 'with autism'). Please see our chapter: Reporting on/with people with autism for more details.

** Some people with disability who use identity-first language will use 'abled' to describe non-disabled people and 'able-bodied' to describe people without physical or mobility-related disability.

Navigating nuances

The disability community is so diverse and differences in word preference will always arise. Journalists may use words for basic diagnostic or explanatory reasons, and not intend to offend. For example, "the deaf girl and her hearing friend". However, there are some words that are never ok.

Language to avoid

The following are derogatory terms for people disability, no matter the context in which they are said. Usage should always be avoided. The terms are listed here to educate what words must be avoided, and PWDA does not condone their use.

It is important to note that some people with disability have reclaimed some of these derogatory terms, but that does not mean those terms are appropriate for non-disabled people to use. For some people with disability, proudly identifying as 'a crip' or 'mad' is a way of surviving in a world that is still slinging those slurs at us. It may feel empowering for some people with disability to take back a violent word, but others will find the word still unbearably painful. Avoid or approach these words with caution because they have a violent history (and present).

SOURCE: PWDA, Language Guide, 'Words to describe people with disability.'

Note: There may be differences in preferred language for journalists reading this (or producing stories for) outside Australia. As always, ask the individual being interviewed or check in with your local DPO/DRO or disability advocacy organisation.

Intellectual or cognitive disability

- brainless
- cretin
- derp(y)
- dim(-witted)
- dumb
- idiot(ic)
- imbecile/imbecilic
- feeble-minded
- few _____ short of a _____
- mental(ly) defective
- mongol(oid)
- moron(ic)
- mong
- nong
- retard(ed)
- simple-minded
- simpleton
- slow-witted (also fuckwit, witless)
- stupid

Psychosocial disability

- crazy
- daft
- insane/insanity
- loony
- lunatic
- mad(ness)
- madhouse/madman
- maniac
- mental case
- nuts
- psycho(tic)
- psychopath(ic)
- sped (from 'special education')
- whacko

Physical or mobility-related disability

- cripple
- crip
- crippled by _____
- handicapped
- gimp(y)
- invalid
- lame
- spastic/spaz

Golden Rules: Language

1. Each person with disability will have their **language preference**, and it's essential journalists **respect** that. If you're unsure of the language a person with disability uses to describe themselves, remember the **Golden Rule: if in doubt, ask.**
2. Avoid language that assumes a **negative** relationship between a person and their disability. For example, "she's confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair-bound" can be replaced with "she uses a wheelchair". (*NB: Many wheelchair users see their wheelchairs as tools of independence.)
3. Similarly, avoid referencing disability with **suffering**: e.g.: "he suffers from Downs Syndrome." Phrases such as: suffering from, stricken/afflicted with imply life with a disability is of lower quality when many people with disability do not feel this way.
4. Avoid portraying disability as something that needs to be **"fixed"** or **"cured".** While certain illnesses can be cured, be careful of using this word around disability.
5. Avoid putting **"the"** in front of a disability. For example, you would never say "the females", so don't say "the blind".
6. Do not refer to people with disability as **'patients'** unless they are explicitly receiving treatment for an illness.
7. While there are **'grey areas'**, some words and phrases are always unacceptable, offensive and derogatory. People with Disability Australia (PWDA) has created a list of words to avoid and suitable alternatives. **WARNING: This list contains ableist language that may offend some readers.

Please also note: There may be differences in preferred language for journalists reading this (or producing stories for) outside Australia. As always, ask the individual being interviewed or check in with your local DPO/DRO or disability advocacy organisation.

A word about grading disability

Historically, under the medical model, disability has been assigned levels of severity. These typically include: profound, severe, moderate, and mild. Other terms you might hear are low-functioning or high-functioning. Some organisations and medical institutions may still use these terms. However, they are increasingly challenged by the disability community, which sees them as inappropriate, unnecessary, and ignorant of a person's actual capacity and potential. When reporting, avoid grading a person's disability unless they identify themselves that way.

Examples: Instead of saying "John is severely disabled", say, "John lives with intellectual disability and needs help with daily tasks." Instead of writing "Jenny has low-functioning autism", write "Jenny has autism. She is non-speaking and uses a device to communicate".

Case study challenge

Stephen Hawking had motor neurone disease for most of his adult life. He was unable to move and communicate without assistive technology and other supports. At the same time, he was one of the world's most celebrated scientists, a cultural icon and a best-selling author. How would you describe him?

* Always remember the Golden Rule: avoid making assumptions about a person's capabilities.

** Many people with disability have had no, or negative, experiences with the media so they may feel afraid to get involved. Additionally, some people with disability are constantly questioned about their lives by the NDIS, health professionals, education departments etc. These discussions often focus on a person's deficits and, as such, can take an emotional toll. For these reasons, be mindful that it may take time to build trust with people with disability. Be conscious to direct your questions in a way that conveys an authentic desire to understand and include, not assess and categorise.

Other ways to make the media more inclusive for people with disability

- Employ people with disability in your newsroom.
- Ensure media events are accessible to people with disability.
- Ensure the studio, newsroom, or other venue is accessible (including accessible toilets and parking). Are there lifts or stairs?
- Make your story more accessible by offering closed captioning and high contrast options and adding image descriptions to pictures.
- We recommend newsrooms and media platforms undertake an accessibility audit of their websites, content and venues.
- Develop a Disability Action Plan to support improvements over time.

Additional resources

People with Disability Australia Language Guide

International Paralympic Committee Media Guide



Photographer: Adamkaz

Golden Rules: Images and audio

This section is published in collaboration and with kind permission of Getty Images.

Although almost a fifth of the population in Australia lives with some form of disability, they aren't well-represented or visible within the media. When they are visually portrayed, it is often in ways that focus on their disability rather than them as a person.

At Getty Images, of the visuals downloaded by Australian businesses and media from 2020 to 2021, less than 1% included people with disability. Of these;

- more than 70% of those visuals focused on physical disability,
- less than 30% focused on cognitive and long-term mental illnesses,
- 93% were white, while the rest represented Chinese, East and Southeast Asian ethnicities,
- none represented Black, Indian or First Nations people, even though such images are available in the Getty Images library.

For people living with disability, inclusivity means shifting away from stereotypes and good intentions and focusing on the richness of real life. It is not about being tokenistic; it's about an honest reflection on people's different lifestyles and cultures across all different identities.

It is important to always check back in with yourself and ask whether you are unconsciously choosing stereotypical representations of people with disability in all circumstances. Choose imagery that highlights the individual rather than showing the difference and more accurately reflects the millions of people who live active, dynamic lives with their disability.

Disability to consider when using inclusive imagery

- Vision
- Hearing
- Speech
- Mobility
- Cognitive
- Physical



Image credit: **gettyimages** *Photographer: JGalione*

Tips for photographers, videographers, photo editors and television producers:

- Are you focusing on a person's disability rather than on their whole identity?
- Are you showing people with disability as active members of society?
- Are you only showing people with disability being helped, cared for, or trying to overcome their challenges?
- Are you only featuring people in wheelchairs or with other easily identifiable differences? What about people with cognitive challenges or an invisible disability?
- Are you conveying positive messages, such as love, friendship, or achievement?
- Have you considered the camera angle? Is the viewer looking down at the person with a disability?
- Are you showing the whole range of life experiences that a person with disability may have? Are you showing them at work? At play? Different ranges of emotions?
- Are you representing people with disability alongside other intersections of their identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity or expression, age, etc.)?
- Look for the opportunities to seamlessly include disabled talent where possible. For example, in a crowd scene with several non-disabled strangers. Request that at least one person be disabled.

Getty Images, in partnership with US organisations, has produced an inclusive stock database called The Disability Collection, which you can find here.

The Attitude Foundation in Australia is primarily focused on producing screen and audio content that challenges stereotyped and problematic portrayal of people with disability in the media. It works with broadcasters and content creators who are looking for advice and support around inclusive practice in front of and behind the camera.

Don't forget to include images of people with disability in all of your content, including stories that aren't about disability. For example, on economic issues, fashion, science, pop culture, foreign affairs, sport, education etc.



Image credit: **getty**images *Photographer: FG Trade*



Image credit: **getty**images *Photographer: Agrobacter*

Audio

Inappropriate sound-editing that reinforces stereotypes or offends people with disability has the potential to 'undo' great journalism. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Don't

1. Don't use of sad or depressing audio (such as music or the tone of a voiceover) when a person with disability comes on screen unless the story itself warrants it. While some stories are heartbreaking, overuse of disability stories only reinforces stereotypes that evoke pity.
2. Similarly, don't use rousing, inspirational music if it's not warranted. Beware of inspiration porn in music form.



Section 2:
Intersectionality and disability

Artist's statement

***'Celebrate'* – Cheree Stokes**

Acrylic on canvas board

Cheree was born during the era of the "Stolen Generation" and is the child and grandchild of a "Stolen One", born to a father who was removed from his family and who himself was born to a mother removed from her ancestral land.

Being that she could also be removed from her birth parents, her father made the heart-wrenching decision to keep her separated from her Aboriginal roots and bring her up in "White Society" in order to give her the best chance at life. This left Cheree, and many others like her, with a deep sense of loss, because they no longer knew where they came from, or more importantly, where they belonged.

Cheree has painted all her life, with her early works expressing a delicate European style, and it wasn't until 2016 that she felt inexplicably drawn to her deep ancestral heritage and started painting in the traditional Aboriginal style. As if channelling her ancestors, she soon realised that her works were becoming part of a cathartic healing process, with each painting reconnecting her with her long-forgotten past.

Today Cheree's Original Artworks are called "Healing Works" which incorporate her unique style of bold bright colours and gold crosshatching on black, and 3-dimensional "healing dots®" with each dot created singularly and with painstaking detail. Unlike most original artworks, Cheree's works are meant to be touched and it is said that when one rubs their hands over her paintings they create a calming and healing effect.

Cheree also credits her art journey as the reason for her family now reconnecting with the Gabi Gabi people where her grandmother was taken from. She currently resides between her gallery at the small village of Trundle, NSW and Larras Lee, NSW with her rescue dog Harry, a one-eyed Norwich Terrier, and her miniature pony Lily.

Original Art by Cheree

cheree@originalartbycheree.com

What is intersectionality?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, intersectionality is "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and independent systems of discrimination or disadvantage".

In short, intersectionality refers to the overlapping aspects of a person's life. With regard to disability, it considers how a person's race, gender or culture etc., impacts how a person is affected by their disability.

The term **'double disadvantage'** is often used when considering intersectionality and disability. It refers to the discrimination someone may experience by being part of two or more traditionally marginalised or disadvantaged groups.

Journalists and the media need to understand intersectionality when covering matters regarding disability and when interviewing people with disability.

Women, Indigenous people, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people,and lesbian, gay, bisexual,trans-gender and intersex and queer (LGBTQIA+) communities will have varying and often different experiences of living with disability.

Alternative media sources: Women, and people from CALD, Indigenous or LGBTQI+ communities often have their own media outlets outside of mainstream ones. For example, there may be community radio stations, podcasts, Youtube channels, newspapers and newsletters, broadcasting and publishing in different languages. It would be worth familiarising yourself with these alternative media sources to better understand and communicate with people from these communities.

Women with disability

"Women with disabilities face multiple discriminations and are often more disadvantaged than men with disabilities in similar circumstances. Women with disabilities are often denied equal enjoyment of their human rights, particularly by virtue of the lesser status ascribed to them by tradition and custom or as a result of overt or covert discrimination. Women with disabilities face particular disadvantages in the areas of education, work and employment, family and reproductive rights, health, violence and abuse."

– Women With Disabilities Australia

The information on the following page is from DPO, Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), an organisation that stands for women, girls, feminine identifying and non-binary people with disability.

Note: The language used in this handbook is person-first unless using the preferred language of the organisation.

Women with disability: key issues

MORE WOMAN than men are **CLASSIFIED AS HAVING A DISABILITY**

particularly within **AGING POPULATIONS**

Women with disability from **ETHNIC OR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

are more likely to have to contend with forces that **EXCLUDE** them as well as disability, culture & heritage



MEDIA IMAGES CONTRIBUTE to the **PRESUMPTIONS** that the bodies of women with disability are unattractive, asexual & outside the societal **ASCRIBED NORMS OF 'BEAUTY'**

COMPARED TO MEN WITH DISABILITY, WOMEN WITH DISABILITY:

- Are likely to **BE POORER**
- Have a higher **RISK OF DIVORCE**
- Have less **FINANCIAL RESOURCES** at their disposal
- Experience difficulty with **CUSTODY DISPUTES**
- Are vulnerable to **INADEQUATE HOUSING**
- Are more likely to be **SOLE PARENTS**
- More likely to **LIVE ALONE** or with their parental family
- Are more likely to face medical interventions to control their **FERTILITY**

Sources: *Women With Disabilities Australia, WWDA Position Statement 1: The Right to Freedom from All Forms of Violence, Employment of People with Disability, WWDA Position Statement Sexual and Reproductive Rights*

1 in 6

women with disability seek specialist **HOMELESSNESS** services because of **DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE**



54% of employed working-age women with disability **WORK PART-TIME**



COMPARED WITH ONLY 28% of working-age men with disability

Other things to consider about women with disability

- [Like many women, women with disability] are likely to have caring responsibilities, e.g., kids and other family members with disability, that you may need to account for when trying to schedule an interview.
- When interviewing women with disability about violence, ask if they have support they can reach out to after the interview. If they don't, endeavour to link them up with appropriate supports, e.g. 1800RESPECT *(see: support services)*.
- Consider that it may not always be safe for women with disability to use their name publicly – offer alternatives, whether it is going on record under an alias, anonymously etc.
- Be mindful that most women with disability may have experienced many overlapping forms of violence, and questions that may not seem invasive can be triggering. This approach is sometimes called "trauma-informed".
- If doing an interview on violence, respect that some [women with disability] may not feel safe talking to male journalists about their experiences.
- When discussing chronic illness, try to include perspectives from women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and other minority communities who may have had different experiences with the health system to people from non-CALD communities.
- Understand that [women with disability] do not have the same access to financial and other resources as [men with disability], which may limit what spare money they have to travel to an interview etc.

For more information

Women With Disabilities Australia – peak body and DPO.
Our Watch – an organisation that lobbies for the prevention of violence against women and their children.
Disability Royal Commission

Image credit: Trish Jackson





Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Kalig

A note on children with disability

For people born with disability, or acquiring it in their youth, their experience of childhood can be vastly different from children without disability. The role of schools, and other education settings, is incredibly important in shaping the long-term, life outcomes for children with disability. Issues regarding accessing education, and the treatment of students with disability within school settings, have been highlighted multiple times at the Disability Royal Commission.

These can be found in the DRC's Issues Paper on Education and Learning, which outlines some the barriers students with disability face, such as 'gate keeping' (when schools seek to stop a child with disability from enrolling), to partial enrolment, exclusion from activities, suspensions and expulsions.

"Children with disabilities are often more likely to be victims of bullying. More than half—62%—of students with autism, for example, report being bullied once a week or more. This is significantly higher than the 1 in 5 to 1 in 7 Australian students who report being bullied once a week or more". (Source: Queensland government: Bullying, Disability and Mental Health)

Tips for journalists

When reporting on matters to do with children, especially childcare and education, ensure you seek to include the voices and images of children with disability and/or their families. Please refer to The Golden Rules for how to best include people with disability and what to avoid.

For more information

Children and Young People with Disability Australia – the national peak body that represents children and young people (aged 0-25) with disability.
The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on Australia's Children



***Dr Andrew Gall**, whose spiritual name is kurina – is a pakana (Aboriginal man) from lutruwita (Tasmania) who completed his Doctorate in Visual Arts (PhD) with Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.*
Image credit: Griffith University

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability

"Our journey has been long and difficult. Because of the intersection of race and disability. We have had to confront and overcome apathy, neglect and prejudice, both in the general community and in our own communities. That struggle continues."

– First Peoples Disability Network

Do they really understand the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in regional and remote Australia?

Do they know, for example, that some of our people with disability live in unsafe housing, don't have access to clean and consistent water supply, have no means of moving around their communities and don't speak English as a first language? Do they have that understanding?

Do they know that there is often—as many committee members would know—a deep distrust between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when people engage? That's based on historical realities.

You have to understand the lived experience. You have to understand that, in regional and remote parts of Australia ... a lot of our people face challenges that are non-existent in other parts of the Country.

– FPDN CEO, Damian Griffis

The double disadvantage

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability and their families experience some of the worst levels of disadvantage within the Australian community. They bear the impact of double disadvantage, that is, of being in two typically marginalised communities.

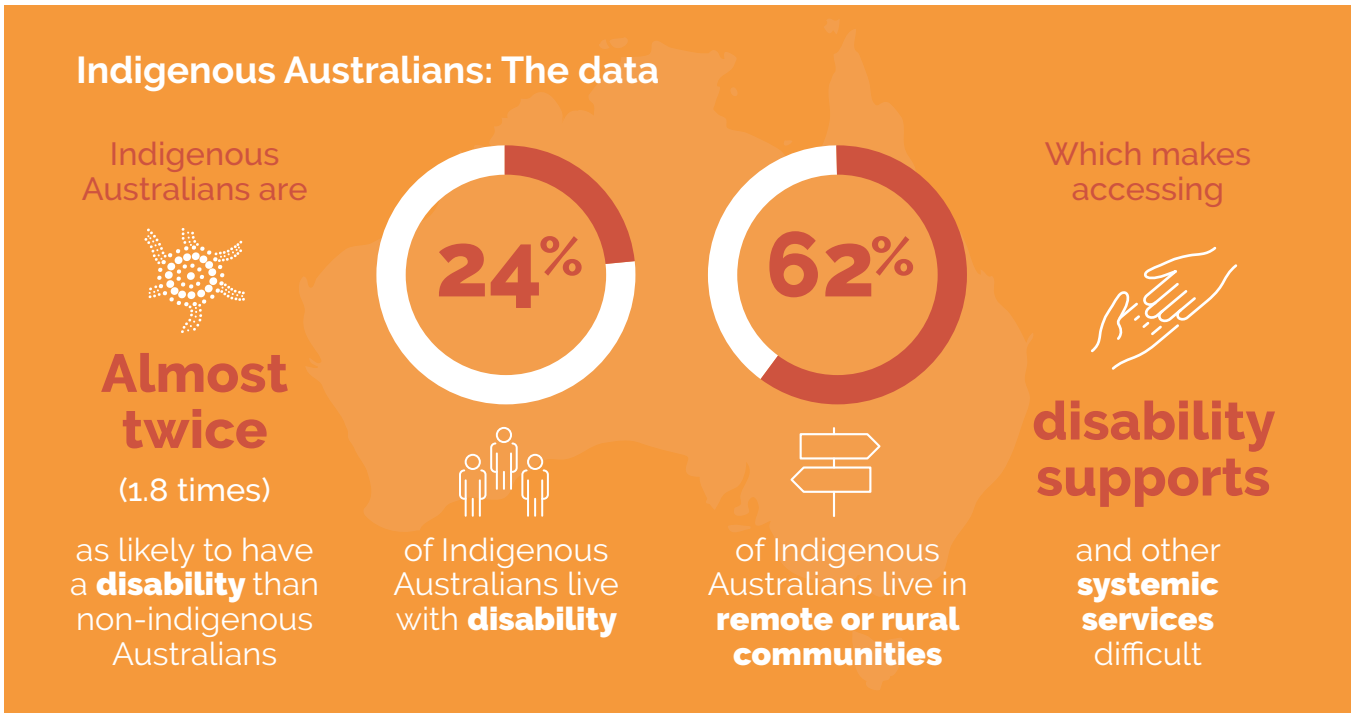
Indigenous people face hurdles other people with disability do not. Some of these are outlined by First Peoples Disability Network CEO Damian Griffis in his response (see insert, left) to an effort by the NDIS to have external contractors assess people with disability before supporting them (a process known as 'independent assessment').

Traditionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have practised the social model of disability, with language reflecting a person's need rather than their diagnosis. For example, there may be words describing a person's walking stick, but not a word describing the medical reason they use one.

In many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups, there is no equivalent word for 'disability' or for specific disabilities, and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disabilities do not self-identify as having a disability. Culturally, disability may be seen as an integrated part of the human experience, or unique to the individual living with the disability.

Source: Understanding Disability Through the Lens of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; Melbourne University, Centre for Health Policy.

In Indigenous communities, people with disability have traditionally been seen as a natural part of human diversity. This has changed somewhat since colonisation and the introduction of the medical model of disability, not to mention the ongoing forces of colonial violence, which have themselves been disabling. In some communities, stigma is now attached to disability, although this varies between different communities.



Source: AIHW

Journalists need to know

- When addressing disability, remember that Indigenous Australians may use different terminology, and therefore may not be familiar with the terms you are using. Seek to ensure you are describing disability correctly in connection to that person's/community's culture. Ask, if in doubt.
- Ask how a person would like to be identified both in terms of Indigenous identity and disability.
- See beyond the disability and into the person's connection to community and Country. Is this person an Elder? Do they live on Country? Do they hold knowledge of women's business and men's business?
- Be aware of other intersectionality issues. Is the person a woman? Do they identify as LGBTQIA+? How do these issues intersect with their Indigenous culture and their disability?

Imagery

Because imagery and visual storytelling are central to Indigenous communities, there may be symbols representing disability or types of disability even when there are no words. However, certain images and artworks can't be used in the media or outside their purpose or community. Ensure you ask for permission before using these images.

Contacts and resources

First Peoples Disability Network
The FPDN is the national Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability. It is a Disabled People's Organisation. Check your state directory for more localised disability networks.

Media Diversity Australia's Indigenous Reporting Handbook for general reporting tips.

Note: The language used in this handbook is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or Indigenous Australians, unless using the preferred language of the organisation or person interviewed/quoted.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and disability

There is a noticeable lack of data and information about people from CALD communities with disability. This is due to many reasons, including issues around collecting the data, cultural issues with regard to speaking out, and the stigma attached to disability in some communities.

Some CALD communities are more hidden than others, with people with disability hidden again within them. These communities already experience racism which can be amplified for people with disability. This is often referred to as 'double disadvantage'. Similarly, healthcare and legal gaps can exacerbate the impact of living with a disability for people from CALD backgrounds.

Women and LGBTQIA+ communities **experience amplified gaps within the CALD space**. Also, the family dynamics of some communities may make certain members, like women or youth, less likely to speak openly to the media.

For people with disability on temporary visas, there is a lack of access to crucial health, disability and income supports. But, **due to discrimination built into our immigration legislation (see Migration Act 1958),** they are unlikely to speak publicly about these issues (or seek the support they may need).

Please be conscious of these issues and tailor your questions and coverage accordingly.

Key issues:

Stigma and disability
Many interviewees often opt to stay anonymous because of the social repercussions of having a disability, caring for someone with disability or having a family member with a disability – disability is still taboo in many cultures. Because of this, many people from CALD communities chose to "hide" their disability. People from CALD backgrounds with "invisible disability" can be especially reluctant to share their stories due to the twin stigmas attached to disability and the general lack of understanding regarding invisible disability.

Trust issues
For some people with disability from CALD backgrounds, there can be a lack of trust in institutions – including the media. Also, speaking out can have detrimental ramifications for immigrants with disability hoping to attain permanent residency or citizenship (see *Disability and Systemic Discrimination below*).

Challenges when talking to the media
Some people from CALD communities might not have the confidence to talk to the media due to cultural, social or economic limitations. Media training or "preparation" might be required for organisations facilitating the interviews and/or for people doing the interviews.
**Tip: Outline to the interviewee precisely what the interview entails. Explain;

- where it will be conducted,
- who will be there and what their roles are,
- how long it will take,
- provide questions in advance, if possible,
- suggest the interviewee bring a support person if they'd prefer,
- explain what happens after the interview, i.e., how their interview will be placed within the story, how long it will be before the story is published/aired etc.

Translators (spoken word), interpreters (written word)
When interviewing people with disability from CALD communities, there may be standard cultural considerations like preferences for women of the Islamic faith. Endeavour to confirm the translator is culturally appropriate.

You should also note that translators may not always translate the material accurately or may include their own interpretations. This is especially important if the translator is a friend, family member or carer, or when interviewing people about family violence, abuse or neglect.

Disability and systemic discrimination
Australia's migration laws discriminate against people with disability, which can have a significant impact on immigrants. The Act allows for people to be deported if they, or a family member, has or acquires a disability. This applies to non-residents and non-citizens. Even if the family member is a child born in Australia, the entire family can be ordered to leave under the Act. You can read more about this – and the story of a family affected by it – on ABC News.

This means that new immigrants who have yet to attain permanent residency or citizenship are unlikely to discuss or declare if they or a family member have a disability, as they risk deportation by doing so. It may also mean that people with disability from CALD communities might be under-represented in statistics regarding disability.



Image credit: Griffith University

Did you know?

The ***Migration Act 1958*** replaced the ***Immigration Restriction Act of 1901***, which laid the foundations for Australia's White Australia Policy. Much of the discriminatory legislation in that policy has been repealed, however, the rules regarding health and disability remain in the Migration Act.

For more information

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
The peak Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO) for CALD communities.

NEDA factsheets to:
Explain the discrimination people with disability experience when navigating the complex Australian migration system.
Break down the different processes a person with disability must go through when applying for a visa in Australia.
Provide information to people with disability on where to find professional migration assistance and support.

Welcoming Disability – for more information about the discrimination migrants and refugees face applying for a visa.
NEDA has developed resources – factsheets and videos – on the Disability Royal Commission.

LGBTQIA+ communities and disability

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and people of another other sexuality are all part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The plus (+) symbol in the acronym holds space for new and expanding parts of the diverse gender community.

LGBTQIA+ people with a disability can also experience multi-layered discrimination due to their diverse sexual orientations, gender identity, and intersex status, particularly when also identifying with other minority groups.

People from LGBTQIA+ communities with disability can experience;

Higher rates of **discrimination & reduced service access** compared to people without disability

Greater restrictions on **freedom of sexual expression**

Reduced social support & connection from both LGBTQIA+ and disability communities

Lack of professional training, resources and support for disability and **allied health care** workers for LGBTQIA+ people with disability

Disability services and workers unwilling to address **sexual & gender identity right and freedoms**

Poor mental health outcomes and higher risk of suicidal behaviour directly related to experiences of **stimga, prejudice, discrimination & abuse**

Source: La Trobe University 2018 report: Key Findings

Applying an intersectional lens when interviewing LGBTQIA+ people with a disability is fundamental to respectful and effective communication – as is using the right words (see below).

Language guide

The following information is from LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.

What does 'Lesbian' mean?
A lesbian is a person who self-describes as a woman and experiences romantic, sexual, and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as women. Some women use different language to describe their relationships and attractions.

What does 'Gay' mean?
A gay person is someone who self-describes as a man and has experiences of romantic, sexual and/or affectional attraction solely or primarily to other people who self-describe as men. Some men use other language to describe their relationships and attractions.

What does 'Bisexual' mean?
A bisexual person is a person of any gender who has romantic and/or sexual relationships with and/or is attracted to people from more than one gender. Some people who fit this description prefer the term 'queer' or 'pansexual' to recognise more than two genders. Although 'bi-' technically refers to two, it is often used by people who have relationships with and / or attractions for people of more genders than just women or men.

What does 'Trans' mean?
Trans and Transgender are umbrella terms often used to describe people assigned a sex at birth that they do not feel reflects how they understand their gender identity, expression, or behaviour. Most people of trans experience live and identify simply as women or men; most do not have a 'trans identity'.

In addition to women and men of trans experience, some people identify their gender as trans or as a gender other than woman or man. People from Aboriginal/ Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander communities often use the words sistergirl or brotherboy. People from societies around the world with more than two traditional genders often use culturally specific language.

What does 'Intersex' mean?
A person with an intersex characteristic is born with physical characteristics that differ from modern medical norms about strictly 'female' and strictly 'male' bodies. Intersex is not about gender but innate physical variations. Most people with intersex characteristics describe their gender as simply woman or man, not as a 'third gender'.

For more information
LGBTIQ+ Health Australia - An organisation that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans/ transgender, intersex, queer and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse people and communities throughout Australia.

Inclusive Practice Fact Sheet



Image credit: ***Felix****, pictured on a day out in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, experiences a genetic disorder, which causes him chronic pain, particularly when walking. Photographer: Nayana Kiernan*



Timothy Lachlan, Neurodivergent Occupational Therapist, disability advocate and founder of WCMX & Adaptive Skate Australia.

Image credit:
Griffith University
Photographer:
Luke Marsden



Image credit: Pixabay

Section 3:
Violence and disability

Violence against people with disability

People with disability are more likely to experience violence than people without. In 2019, a Royal Commission was established to shed light on Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of people with disability.

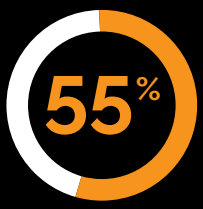
It's commonly called the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) and, after more than four years of inquiry, it handed down its findings in September 2023.

In short, the DRC found;

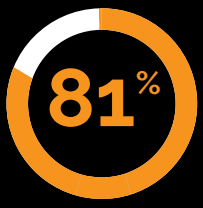
- People with disability experience much higher rates of violence than people without disability.
- They also experience violence more frequently.
- These rates of violence are particularly high for women with psychological or intellectual disability, First Nations women with disability and young women with disability (DRC, final report).

We recommend, media professionals familiarise themselves with the Royal Commission's findings, especially when reporting on matters of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation concerning people with disability. The executive summary can be found at this link. It's crucial to understand the wide and varied forms of abuse disabled people experience, along with the places and systems (public and private) this abuse is occuring. It is also critical journalists be cognisant to not inadvertently blame or dehumanise the victim, as has historically happened in some reporting.

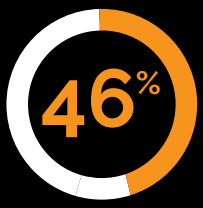
Violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation



55% of people with disability (over the age of 18) **have been physically or sexually abused**.



81% of **people with disability who have experienced violence knew their perpetrator** (compared with 60% for people without disability).



46% of people with disability **have been subject to violence by a stranger.**

Source: Disability Royal Commission final report

Key information

Definitions - violence

Violence and abuse
*Violence and abuse include assault, sexual assault, constraints, *restrictive practices (see next page), forced treatments, forced interventions, humiliation and harassment, financial and economic abuse and significant violations of privacy and dignity on a systemic or individual basis.*

Sexual and reproductive violence
Sexual and reproductive violence, including forced sterilisation, forced abortion and menstruation suppression. More information on this can be found in the "Dehumanised - The Forced Sterilisation of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia" paper by Women with Disabilities Australia.

Neglect
Neglect includes physical and emotional neglect, passive neglect and wilful deprivation. Neglect can be a single significant incident or a systemic issue that involves depriving a person with disability of the necessities of life such as food, drink, shelter, access, mobility, clothing, education, medical care and treatment.

Exploitation
The improper use of another person, or the improper use of or withholding of another person's assets, labour, employment or resources, including taking physical, sexual, financial or economic advantage.

These are just some examples. **The Disability Royal Commission** has comprehensive definitions which can be found here, in its final report.

Image credit: Pixabay



Restrictive practices

What are restrictive practices?

According to the DRC, 'restrictive practice' refers "to any action, approach or intervention that has the effect of limiting the rights or freedom of movement of a person.

Restrictive practices can be used….as a last resort, to prevent or protect people from harm. This includes a perceived risk of harm. This may include preventing or protecting an individual or others from behaviours referred to as 'challenging behaviours' or 'behaviours of concern' (see below).

Restrictive practices include:

- ***seclusion**, where a person is confined to a physical space and prevented from leaving. An example is locking a person in a room for a set period of time.*
- *the use of restraints, which may be;*
  - ***physical**, for example, holding a person down on the ground so they cannot move in a hospital,*
  - ***chemical**, for example, using medication to sedate a person,*
  - ***mechanical**, for example, tying a person to a chair in a classroom, disconnecting the power of an electric wheelchair or taking a person's communication device away from them,*
  - ***environmental**, for example, locking a garden area or fridge in a group home to stop people accessing it,*
  - ***psychosocial**, for example, constantly telling a person that doing an everyday activity is too dangerous, without reasonable justification.*

The problem with restrictive practices

According to the DRC:

"Some consider restrictive practices to be a 'disability-specific' form of violence. That's because they can cause serious physical injury, psychological harm (trauma, fear, shame, anxiety, depression and loss of dignity) and can cause death.

Also,
"Australia is required under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability to protect the human rights of people with disability. This includes the right to be free from violence and abuse, and torture or cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. People with disability also have rights to physical and mental integrity, liberty and autonomy. The use of restrictive practices may conflict with these human rights."

"Many people with disability, and representative and advocacy organisations and others argue that restrictive practices are not needed and should be eliminated. Others consider that sometimes they are needed, as a last resort, to protect people from harm or from harming others. Research is showing that restrictive practices can be prevented or avoided. It focuses on addressing what causes or leads to behaviours of concern and reducing these risk factors."

Source: Disability Royal Commission Issues Paper on Restrictive Practices



Image credit: Pixabay

'Behaviours of concern' or 'challenging behaviours'

All behaviour is a form of communication. People with disability who have trouble expressing themselves through traditional means, or regulating their physical and emotional states, may communicate in ways that can be deemed inappropriate or unsafe.

A Disability Royal Commission report referred to 'behaviours of concern' as when people: "through their behaviour, seek to communicate emotions such as pain, frustration, anxiety, distress or fear. When behaviour is dangerous or falls outside generally accepted social norms it can cause, or be perceived as likely to cause, harm to the person themselves, or to others".

Source (and for more information): Disability Royal Commission Report: Psychotropic medications, Behaviour Support and Behaviours of Concern

Journalists should be conscious of providing context when reporting on "Challenging Behaviours" or "Behaviours of Concern". Where possible, include – or investigate – the reason for the behaviour (pain, fear, confusion, frustration, over-stimulation etc). This is especially important when it is being used as a reason to use a restrictive practice on, or commit an act of violence against, a person with disability.

A word about vulnerability and 'dignity of risk'

The evidence – both lived and gathered – suggests people with disability are more vulnerable to violence. This is mainly due to systemic obstacles to education, housing, safety and justice – not the disability itself. When constructing a story, place focus on the system and/or violence rather than the person with disability – as the person is not inherently vulnerable.

Do not generalise people with disability as being inherently helpless or vulnerable. Doing so is just another way of infantilising people and blaming them for their disability, rather than addressing the violence itself and the barriers to safety.

Be conscious also not to report from a protectionist viewpoint. People with disability have the same right to the 'dignity of risk' and privacy as everyone else.

Violence and intersectionality

There can be significant disparities in violence experienced by women or minority groups of people with disability.

Women (with disability or without) typically experience violence on a greater scale than men, but men with disability are more likely to experience violence than men without. In CALD and Indigenous communities, people with disability are more likely to experience violence.

There is also the issue of double disadvantage to consider, which expose women and minority groups with disability to greater risk of violence, and reduces their capacity to escape from it.

For example, the Disability Royal Commission heard evidence that First People's women in violent relationships were hesitant to seek support because they risked losing their children.

> ***Indigenous women who have a disability face intersecting forms of discrimination because of their gender, disability, and ethnicity that leave them at even greater risk of experiencing violence—and of being involved in violence and imprisoned.***
>
> – Kriti Sharma (2017) SBS
>
> *Source: Human Rights Watch*

LGBTQIA+ people with disability also face higher rates of crime, risk of violence, and difficulties in managing multiple identities and accessing support services.

Please read our Intersectionality section for more understanding of how gender and cultural issues impact people with disability.

Tips for interviewing people with disability who have experienced violence or trauma

- Ask if there are any specific triggers (words, topics) you should be aware of.
- Allow plenty of time so that the interviewee has 'space' to recover between questions.
- Ask if the person has support to draw on during or after the interview.
- Provide a list of support services they can access.

The data

- People with disability or a long-term health condition are more likely to experience physical violence – ABS, 2016
- women and girls with intellectual disability are at significantly increased risk of being sexually assaulted in their lives;
- children with disability are three times more likely to experience abuse than other children;
- in many cases, people with disability experience violence in places where they are meant to be receiving support;
- people with disability can't always rely on the police for protection against violence and, in many cases, routinely experience police brutality;
- people with disability [have less access to justice as they] are often treated as 'unreliable witnesses' or are not even permitted by law to provide testimony at all.
  – Disabled People's Organisation – Australia

The Disability Royal Commission found that, compared with people without disability, people with disability in Australia;

- experience higher rates of interpersonal violence and abuse (that is, violence and abuse perpetrated by another individual) and are more likely to experience multiple incidents
- experience more than twice the rate of violence by a domestic partner
- experience twice the rate of sexual assault
- are more likely to know the perpetrator of violence
- are more likely to experience abuse at a young age.

Source: Disability Royal Commission

Image credit: Shutterstock



Violence against women with disability

Women with disability are at increased risk of violence, particularly sexual violence against women with intellectual disability, and within institutions such as group homes.

"'Women with disability experience the same kinds of violence experienced by other women (including domestic or family violence), but also experience violence that results from their position as a person with a disability in a society that fails to ensure that they have equal access to resources and opportunities.

Source: Our Watch: Reporting on Domestic Violence



Image credit: **getty**images *Photographer: Image Source*

For more information

Women With Disabilities Australia, peak DPO for women with disability in Australia.
Our Watch, organisation that seeks to end violence against women and children.

What the statistics tell us

- Women with disability experience violence, particularly family violence and violence in institutions, more often than men with disability.
- Gender-based violence, including domestic/family violence, sexual assault/rape, can be a cause of disability in women.
- Women and girls with disability are often at greater risk than men with disability, both within and outside the home, of violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation.
- Various factors contribute to why women with disability may be put in more vulnerable situations, regularly becoming victims of crime from both strangers and people known to them. Some factors may include social isolation, the need for assistance with health and care needs, coupled with gender and disability-based discrimination.
- Some women with disability have their children forcibly removed because they have a disability.
- Crimes against women with disability are often not reported to law enforcement agencies. This leaves victims without the support they need to stop further acts of violence and/or abuse or receive the appropriate physical and emotional support after the fact.
- Women with disability are more exposed to practices that qualify as torture, inhuman or degrading treatment (such as sterilisation, forced abortion, violence, forced medication, chemical restraint).

Source: Women with Disabilities Australia: An Overview

Support services

Translating and interpreting service

Call 13 14 50 and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

National Relay Service
For callers who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. Visit the website and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

TTY/Voice Calls
Call 133 677 and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

Speak and Listen *(Speech-to-speech relay)*
Call 1300 555 727 and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

24/7 Crisis services

beyondblue
Ph: 1300 22 46 36

Lifeline
Ph: 13 11 14

Sexual Assault Helpline
Ph: 1800 010 120

Suicide Call Back Service
Ph: 1300 659 467

Womensline
Ph: 1800 811 811
Crisis phone helpline for those wanting to escape domestic violence.

Support services

1800RESPECT
Ph: 1800 737 732
The national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling service for anyone in Australia who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence or sexual assault. 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Australian Childhood Foundation
Counselling for children and young people affected by abuse. 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Blue Knot Foundation
Ph: 1800 421 468
Free, specialist counselling support and a referral service for people with disability, their families and carers, who have been affected by violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of extreme trauma.

Kids Helpline
Ph: 1800 55 1800
Telephone, email and web counselling for children and young people. 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Mensline Australia
Ph: 1300 789 978
Supports men who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. 24 hours, 7 days a week.

Relationships Australia
Ph: 1300 364 277
Support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners.



Image credit: gettyimages Photographer: ProfessionalStudioImages

Section 4:
Interviewing people with disability: 'how to' guides

How to interview a person who is d/Deaf, hearing-impaired, or hard of hearing

Before you begin

Do you know the difference between Deaf and deaf?
Big D – refers to the Deaf community as a culture that shares a common language. In Australia, that language is Auslan (Australian Sign Language), which has regional variations.

Little D – refers to hearing loss or impairment in general and may include people who don't necessarily identify with Deaf culture or use sign language to communicate.

You might see the word *D/deaf* used to encompass both of these groups.

People also use different terminology, and you should check with the individual about what terms they use.

Sign language is not the universal language of all deaf and hard of hearing people. Like spoken languages, sign languages may only be used by a particular country or community. So, when preparing for an interview with a Deaf person, make sure you book an interpreter fluent in their specific sign language. It is also important to note that amongst Indigenous communities, there are many different sign languages. More information on that on the ABC website - Australian Indigenous Sign Languages.

Not everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing uses sign language. Some people may communicate verbally and lip read or use assistive technology such as hearing loops or aids to hear.

Preparing for an interview

- Ask how the talent wishes to be interviewed and what terms they prefer to use.
- Ask if they have a preferred interpreter they would like to use (N.B. the cost is usually covered by the journalist).
- If they prefer to communicate using sign language, book an interpreter. Factor in time to do this.
- Ensure you book interpreters through reputable organisations (e.g. The Deaf Society, Sweeney).
- Discuss the best place to conduct an interview. Generally, quiet, well-lit areas are best (as opposed to a busy café with lots of background noise).



Jo Kek-Pamenter *– Graphic Designer with Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability, acquired a hearing impairment at 16.*

Image credit: JUSJO Creative

During the interview

- Speak clearly (there is no need to speak slowly or loudly).
- Face the person, talk directly to them.
- If you believe you have not been heard, repeat the question, do not rephase it.
- Encourage the interviewee to let you know if your communication is unclear.
- Have pen and paper or pre-written questions available. Some people may not be able to lip-read well, or there may be too many distractions.
- There is also a variety of software available to assist with speech to text e.g. Dragon by Nuance or Google Docs Voice Typing. Each interviewee will have their personal preference, so ask in advance which programme they prefer to use. Alternatively, use live captioning.

If you are using an interpreter

- Seat the interpreter next to the interviewer, with both directly facing the talent (so the talent can have a clear view of both.)
- Determine whether the talent wants to speak for themselves, whether the interpreter will voice what the talent signs, whether a third person will do this in post-production, or whether subtitles will be used.
- Address the talent, not the interpreter.

Post interview

- If using an interpreter, ensure what the interpreter is saying aligns correctly with what the talent is saying and what is being seen on screen.
- Ask the Deaf person and/or interpreter to review the edit and confirm accuracy.
- Ensure captioning accurately reflects what is being said.

For more information

Deaf Australia – is the national peak body for Deaf, Deafblind and hard of hearing people in Australia.
Deafness Forum Australia – represents Australian's who live with hearing loss, ear/balance disorders, people who communicate with Auslan, and their families and supporters.

Additional information

The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) has developed a comprehensive guideline on supporting Deaf and hard of hearing people in online environments



Image credit: **gettyimages** *Photographer: agrobacter*

How to interview a person who is blind or vision impaired

Each blind or vision impaired person is different, and the level of 'vision' will vary widely from low vision and the ability to read printed text to total blindness.

Blind and vision-impaired people will often rely on their own personally developed strategies to communicate and get around. These may involve various communication and mobility aids such as using Braille to read and write, magnifying glasses, dog guides, a cane, or any combination.

Did you know?
'Dog guides' is the generic name for guide dogs and seeing-eye dogs.

Preparing for the interview

- Ask how the interviewee wishes to be interviewed.
- If they prefer to communicate using email or their own technology (e.g., screen readers, magnification, or Braille display).
- Ask what is the preferred format for attachments (a pdf is a scanned document that screen readers cannot use). Word documents are usually preferred.
- If meeting up face to face, ask if there are any arrangements the interviewee would like to make. E.g., "Can I take a number to notify you when I have arrived?"
- If you need the interviewee to come to you, consider all accessibility aspects of the location. You may need to provide verbal guidance to the location. At a practical level, when meeting a blind or vision impaired person, consider that they may require detailed descriptions and guidance of the place you are meeting.

Extra things to consider when preparing for a studio interview

- The interviewee may need to bring a support person.
- If attending alone, offer to guide the interviewee by asking if they would like your assistance. E.g., "Would you like to take my arm?"
- Always identify yourself first when greeting a blind or vision impaired person. E.g., "Hi Samantha, it is Mary" when passing a blind or vision impaired person in the corridor.
- Identify yourself whenever you speak in a group interview setting. For instance, when it is your turn to talk, start with, "Jack here, my question is…" Another strategy is to begin the interview with a roll call to clarify who is in the room.



Image credit: ***Julia Robertson*** *– an Accessibility Consultant at the Summer Foundation, acquired a hearing and vision impairment after a brain tumour.*

During the interview

- If you customarily greet interviewee with a handshake, be first to reach out and touch the talent's hand or verbalise it, "May I shake/take your hand?"
- Speak clearly (there is certainly no need to speak slowly or loudly).
- If discussing a visual aspect, give very clear descriptions.
- When it comes to locations or items, don't point, instead give very detailed descriptions. For instance, avoid, "..over there!".

Did you know?

- Not all people who are blind read Braille. How people read comes down to personal choice and convenience.
- Yes, people who are blind or vision impaired can use stairs and can use them safely.
- Contrary to the opinions of some, dog guides cannot read signage.
- Dog guides working in a harness are permitted in all public areas, with few exceptions, such as commercial kitchens and surgical theatres.
- Absolutely no patting of a dog guide in harness unless you have the express permission of the owner.
- It is ok to use the word 'see' and 'look'. For instance, 'see you later' and 'do you mind taking a look at this?'.
- Refrain from using the words 'courageous', 'brave' or 'inspirational' when referring to a blind or vision impaired person. A blind person can be courageous, brave or inspirational, but not for just doing daily things. For example, saving a child from the surf is brave, whether or not someone is blind, but going to work is not inspirational, just because someone is blind.
- Just because a person is blind or vision impaired doesn't mean they are also deaf.
- People who are blind have mainstream interests too – reading books, playing sport, music, politics, dining and more. Aim to include blind people in your reporting on these matters.
- Not everyone looks blind – some visual conditions are not automatically apparent, and sight loss can be very different.
- Not everyone will want to speak about their vision impairment or blindness.

Source: Blind Citizens Australia

Additional information

Sighted Guide – How to Safely Guide a Person who is Vision Impaired



Erin Condrin
Image credit: Griffith University

How to interview a person with physical disability or reduced mobility

This guidance is not limited to people in wheelchairs but may also include amputees and people who cannot walk long distances for various reasons (such as fatigue or another chronic illness). Remember that what seems like a short walk to you, may be exhausting or painful for some people with disability.

Each person with a disability is different and what's easy for one wheelchair user could be impossible for another.

Depending on your deadline and the distance, it may be better for you to travel to the talent to conduct an interview. If possible, a video call, phone, or email interview may be easier for the interviewee.

Preparing for the interview

- If you can be flexible, ask where the interviewee prefers to meet.
- If you need the interviewee to come to you, consider all accessibility aspects of the location you would like them to meet you. (see below for more)
- Consider providing transport for the interviewee if they do not have their own. Public transport is not always fully accessible.
- Allow extra time for an interview. There can, occasionally, be significant delays due to things beyond a person's control, including transport and care.
- If you are interviewing via email or text and the physical disability impacts their typing speed, set realistic deadlines. What takes you minutes could take a person with disability hours or longer.
- Some people may find it hard to stand or sit for long periods of time (even a few minutes), so ensure you give them a realistic time in advance as to how long the interview will go for.
- There may be environmental factors to consider, like temperature. The ability to control body temperature, for example, is lost in some conditions such as spinal cord injury. Other considerations might include lights and sounds. Ask the interviewee if you need to accommodate any of these factors.
- Where necessary, allow for accessibility equipment, including support animals. Ask in advance if you need to make particular accommodations for these.
- Equipment like ventilators may cause additional sound in audio recordings, so alert your camera operator, sound engineer or editor to the possibility.
- Ask if there are any additional infection control measures that are necessary - especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. People with disability may be more susceptible to infection.



Image credit: ***Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM***
Photographer: Lana Noir

Extra things to consider when preparing for a studio interview

- Is there accessible parking at the studio?
- Is there an accessible bathroom at the studio?
- Are there any steps at the studio (even one)? If so, is there a lift or ramp?
- Approximately how far will they have to travel from A to B (for example, from the carpark to the front door)?
- Are there any inclines the talent should know about? If so, the talent may need to bring a support person or arrive earlier. Remember that what seems like a short walk, small incline or little bump to you may be a considerable problem for some people with mobility issues.
- Is there comfortable, supportive seating? E.g. Many people opt to do interviews at cafes, but often seats are small stools etc. which may not be comfortable for people with a disability.

During the interview

- Respect the interviewee's personal space. For example, a person's wheelchair is part of their personal space.
- Where possible, place yourself at eye level with the talent and take a seat if they are seated.
- Speak to and make eye contact with the talent rather than the carer/support person (if one is present), unless the question directly relates to the carer/SP.
- Always have a lapel microphone ready to go in case the talent cannot hold a standard microphone.
- Some people may have restricted movement which means you will have manoeuvre cameras, microphones or yourself around the person, rather than getting the talent to pivot and turn.
- Be conscious of room temperature. Some people with disability can get hot or cold easily and require that you set the room temperature higher or lower. You may also want to avoid interviews outside in summer or winter if this is a problem.

Extra things to consider for studio interviews

- Some people can easily transfer from a wheelchair to a studio chair, but some may need to stay in their wheelchair. Ask which option the talent prefers and be prepared to set up the interview space accordingly (for example, high seats behind a news desk may not be an option for everyone).
- Be prepared to assist if the individual requires help transferring. Sometimes they may just need to hold your hand briefly for balance. Always ask before helping.
- If in doubt, always ask. You could say something like, "I don't know much about your disability so what can I do to make this easier for you?"

For more information

Physical Disability Australia – national peak DPO for people with physical disability.
Spinal Life Australia – a peak body in spinal injury, offering critical support services and advocacy at an individual and national level.



Rowan Crothers
Australian freestyle swimmer and paralympian
Image credit: Griffith University

How to interview a person with cognitive disability

In an issues paper, the Disability Royal Commission outlines 'cognitive disability' as "umbrella term used to describe a disability that results in an actual or perceived difference in cognition. These include differences in concentration, processing, remembering or communicating information, as well as differences in learning, awareness and decision-making. [While cognitive disability can include] people with intellectual disability and people with autism [it] also includes other groups, such as people with acquired brain injury and people living with dementia."

Source: Disability Royal Commission Report: Psychotropic medications, Behaviour Support and Behaviours of Concern

Intellectual disability

Intellectual disability can affect a way a person learns, processes information and communicates. This does not mean that they cannot learn or communicate, but they may do it differently and require support. With regard to interviewing people with intellectual disability, these supports may include;

- visual supports – such as pictures and photos,
- pre-written questions supplied in 'easy English' (see right), and
- the provision of 'social stories' (see right), which are sometimes called social scripts.

Sometimes, intellectual disability is referred to as learning disability.

Key words

Developmental delay: Developmental delay is a term used when a child's development is not at the level expected for their age. This term is not used for adults.

Easy English: Easy English is a way of writing that uses everyday words, simple sentences and images to support the messages. It is useful for anyone who has difficulty reading English. This includes people with low literacy levels, a learning disability, an acquired disability (such as a brain injury) or people whose main language is not English. You can find an outline on how to write in Easy English here.

Source: Tasmanian Dept of Health.

Plain English: Plain English is clear, uncomplicated language. It typically avoids jargon and unnecessarily abstract or technical terms.

Social stories (scripts): Social stories are scripts that explain in easy English what to expect at an event or situation. They use short sentences which are supported by visuals. Here is an example of a social story on health care as written by Council on Intellectual Disability (CID).


Image credit: Bus Stop Films

Preparing for an interview

- In Plain or Easy English, explain the reason for the interview and how it will be used.
- Ensure you have the appropriate consent from the person to do the interview. Make sure they understand what they are consenting to. You may need to provide this in Plain or Easy English and ask them to explain to you their understanding of what they are consenting to. Depending on personal circumstances, some people will require consent to be provided on their behalf by a guardian.
- Outline the steps of conducting the interview – where possible, provide a social story.
- Discuss the best place to conduct an interview. Ask if the person prefers a particular environment in which to be interviewed (e.g., quiet room, at home, in a cafe).
- Discuss the best time to conduct an interview. If the interview is taking place in a studio, or a place the interviewee is unfamiliar with, provide a social story about the place (for example, how to get there, how to check in etc).
- Ask how the interviewee prefers to communicate (images, written text, etc.)
- Offer to provide the questions ahead of the interview.
- Offer to do a mock interview. Doing a rehearsal will help the interviewee know what to expect and put them at ease.
- Ask if there are certain triggers (sights, sounds, smells) that might distract or upset the person.
- Ask if they would like a support person/ people to accompany them.
- Ask if there are any other supports that will make the interviewee feel more relaxed and comfortable. For example, are there 'fidget tools' they would like to bring with them to use during the interview.
- Allow extra time for the interview.

During the interview

- Speak clearly (there is no need to speak slowly or loudly unless asked to do so).
- Face the person, talk directly to them.
- Ask questions using short sentences and simple words. Don't overcomplicate. Where necessary, use plain or Easy English.
- Try to frame questions in a way that asks the interviewee to directly draw on their personal experience. For example instead of saying: "Describe what happened?" Say: "What did you see?". Or "Tell me about a time when you…?"
- Use pictures where necessary.
- Use written questions (in Easy English) where necessary.
- If you believe you have not been understood, rephrase the question (don't simply repeat it).
- Encourage the interviewee to let you know if your communication is unclear.



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: FatCamera

Other considerations

Living with an intellectual disability (ID) is different for everyone and coexists with strengths. (This approach fits with the social model of disability). People with ID are especially hampered by stigma and the "soft bigotry of low expectations" which robs them of opportunities to meaningfully engage in the wider community and its systems, such as the education, health and justice systems.

For more information

Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) – is a disability rights organisation led by people with intellectual disability.

Inclusion Australia – the national peak body for people with intellectual disability.

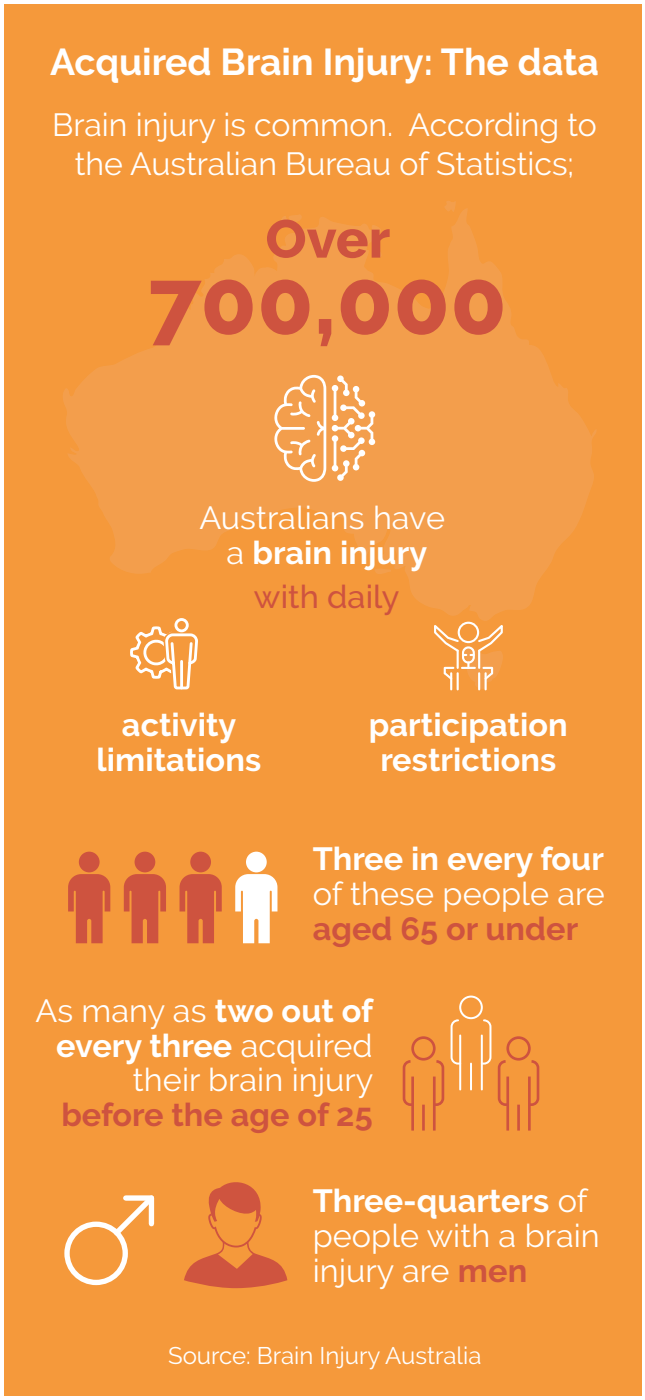
WWILD – is an organisation that supports people with intellectual disability who are victims of crime.

Australian Network on Disability (AND) – Click here for information and tips for interviewing a person with intellectual disability.

What is Acquired Brain Injury?

The disability called brain injury – sometimes called acquired brain injury, or "ABI" – refers to any damage to the brain that occurs after birth. That damage can be caused by an accident or trauma, by a stroke, tumour, cancer, brain infection, by alcohol or other drug abuse or by diseases of the brain like Parkinson's disease.

– Brain Injury Australia



People with an ABI can be affected by it in a wide variety of ways. For example, it can impact the way someone hears, sees, or moves. It can also affect a person's processing and memory skills, and other cognitive functions.

Tips for journalists

People with an ABI can be assisted by a variety of tools outlined in this handbook such as those relevant to interviewing people with physical disability or mobility issues, hearing or vision impairment, or intellectual disability. Ahead of an interview, journalists should ask people with an ABI what, if any, supports they may need and refer to the chapters in this handbook for ideas and extra guidance.

For more information

Brain Injury Australia – a Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO).

Synapse – a peak body in brain injury.



Shane Pivac *– An award-winning photographer who has a traumatic brain injury.*
Image credit: Mediluxe

How to interview a person who is non-speaking and use AAC

What is AAC?
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to ways of communicating that replace or supplement speech. The term usually refers to people who use technology or other supports to communicate.

Who uses AAC?
Remember Stephen Hawking? He's just one of a wide variety and number of AAC users. People with neurological, physical, cognitive or intellectual disability may use AAC and people with Acquired Brain Inquiry. It is increasingly common for non-speaking (or partially speaking) people with autism to use AAC too.

Types of AAC
AAC systems are diverse, as are the way they are used. Some are high-tech (using specialised devices and programmes), and others are low-tech (printed resources). People may navigate the AAC with their hands or eyes (using eye-tracking technology) or use pointers, a computer mouse, or 'switch' buttons and clickers.

Preparing for the interview
- Ask how the talent would prefer to be interviewed, e.g.: directly or via online (text-only)/email exchange.
- If meeting up directly, ask where the talent would best prefer to meet. The best option is usually somewhere quiet and private.
- Ask how the talent would prefer to have their answers voiced, e.g.: the 'voice' of the device, by a support person, voiced-over post-production, or subtitled.
- Where possible, provide questions in advance.
- Be prepared to conduct the interview in stages.
- Be flexible. AAC users may have other disability issues that derail plans. Where possible, accommodate surprises and reschedule if need be.

During the interview
- Allow extra time, at least twice the amount you would allow for a spoken interview.
- Give the talent time to both process your question and produce an answer.
- Don't read or touch the talent's device without their permission.
- If you find the interview location is too noisy or chaotic, be prepared to move to another location.
- If the talent has a support person, direct your questions to the talent, not the support person.

Other considerations
If you're unfamiliar with AAC users, a non-speaking advocate includes:

Ido Kedar: Author and communications advocate with autism.

For more information
AGOSCI – a disability organisation supporting people with complex communication needs.
ISAAC Australia - International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication – Australia.
Communication Rights Australia – human rights advocacy group for people with communication support needs.
"Ask Me, I'm an AAC user" (on Facebook) – AAC users answer your questions.



Budding chef and non-speaking autistic teen, Max, sifting flour in a restaurant kitchen.
Image credit: NSW Parliament



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: SolStock

How to interview a person with psycho-social disability

"Psychosocial disability is a term used to describe a disability that may arise from a mental health issue." (NDIS)

Psychosocial disability is not about a diagnosis. It is more about the functional impact and barriers faced by someone living with a mental health condition.

While not everyone with a mental health issue will have a psychosocial disability, those that do can experience severe effects and social disadvantage.

A psychosocial disability may restrict a person's ability to be in certain environments, concentrate, complete tasks, cope with time pressures and the ability to multitask, interact with others, understand constructive feedback, and manage stress.

As a result, it may help to make your questions clear and short.

Past experiences of trauma are common for people with a psychosocial disability. It is therefore important when interviewing to be sensitive to the possible impacts of trauma. These impacts may be lifelong.

Preparing for the interview

- Seek expert advice about mental illnesses, symptoms, and treatments from Mindframe.
- Ask if there are certain triggers (words, images, sounds etc) that might upset the person.
- Ask if there are any supports that will make the interviewee feel more relaxed and comfortable, such as having a support person with them or being interviewed in a particular environment.

During the interview

- Choose your language carefully; certain words and phrases can stigmatise people living with mental illness and present inaccuracies.

Do say	Don't say
A person is 'living with' or 'has a diagnosis of' a mental illness.	A person is a 'mental patient', 'nutter' and 'lunatic'. Language such as this is offensive, sensationalises mental illness and reinforces stigma.
A person is 'being treated for', or is 'someone with', a mental illness.	A person is 'a schizophrenic' or 'an anorexic'. Avoid language which defines a person by their mental illness.
Use accurate terminology for treatments, e.g., antidepressants, psychologists.	Use terms like 'happy pills' or 'shrinks' which may undermine people's willingness to seek help.
Reword any sentence using psychiatric or medical terminology out of context.	Don't use psychiatric or medical terminology out of context, e.g.: 'schizophrenic economy'.

- Apply specific cultural considerations. Different cultural groups may prefer different language around mental ill-health. For instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities prefer the term 'social and emotional wellbeing'. Further information can be sourced from Mindframe.
- Although health promotion is not the media's primary responsibility, it is helpful to add information about seeking immediate support and information, for instance, linking directly to support service options.

After the interview

- Has the person confirmed they have a mental illness or psychosocial disability? If not, don't say they have. Don't speculate.
- Media guidelines and codes of ethics emphasise the right to privacy. Consider the consequences for the person's health and wellbeing if you disclose their mental illness.
- Don't mention a person's mental illness if it is not relevant to the story. For example, don't say: "A mentally ill person crashed their car", say: "A person crashed their car."

For more information

Everymind – an organisation dedicated to the prevention of mental ill-health and suicide.
Mindframe – an initiative that "supports safe media reporting, portrayal and communication about suicide, mental ill-health, alcohol and other drugs". (**refer to Reporting suicide and mental ill-health: A Mindframe resource for media professionals)
SANE Australia – a national charity supporting people affected by complex mental health issues.



Image Credit: Autistic photographer James Nyland

How to interview a person who is neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, tourette's syndrome)

Neurodivergent and neurodiverse – there is a difference.

Neurodiversity is a term used to describe the diversity of the human brain. It is used in much the same way one would use to describe culturally diverse communities.

Neurodivergent identifies people or groups of people whose brain is 'wired' differently to the majority. It is a term generally inclusive of autism, ADHD, epilepsy, tourette's syndrome, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia or any condition that influences the way the brain works. It is not an illness or disease, but a lifelong disability.

Neurodivergence may be present with other conditions. For instance, a person with autism may also be diagnosed with intellectual disability or ADHD. In practical terms, this means each neurodivergent person has differing needs for support in different areas of daily life.

It is important to note that the neurodivergent community is incredibly diverse. This is especially true for autistic people who can each be quite differently impacted by their autism, which is why it is classified as a spectrum. As a result, journalists need to ensure they capture a variety of different autistic voices when seeking to report on autism, as no one autistic experience can encapsulate them all.

Journalists should also ensure they ask neurodivergent people how they like to be identified, as there are a variety of different ways people within this community might identify.

What is autism?

Autism is the most commonly-known example of neurodivergence. It is characterised by differences in social interaction, communication and behaviour, and sensory sensitivities.

According to Reframing Autism, an autistic led advocacy group;

Autistic people develop differently to non-autistic people. Autistic individuals think, move, interact, sense and process differently to what people might expect and have qualities that make us like other Autistic people. These qualities include differences in the way we;

- *communicate. Many of us communicate with others in ways that aren't typical or usual,*
- *experience and display our feelings,*
- *interact with others,*
- *form and understand our friendships and relationships,*
- *engage in the things we are passionate about or experts in,*
- *imagine, and play,*
- *see patterns and connections, and*
- *perceive or sense the world around us.*

Autism is typically said to be four times more common in boys than girls, however this is being increasingly challenged based on new understanding of how autism impacts girls differently.

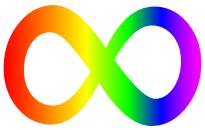
Preparing for the interview

Ask how the person prefers to communicate. Some neurodivergent people, especially those people with autism, may prefer to communicate in written form (via email or text), or using an AAC (*See:* Interviewing people who are non-speaking and who use AAC).

- Ask if they would like a social story about the process of the interview.
- Ask if they would prefer written questions in advance, (and consider writing them in Plain English, or supplying visual supports - such as pictures and photos).
- Ask if the interviewee has any sensitivities to be aware of. These could be sights, smells, sounds etc. Noisy and busy settings can be distracting and uncomfortable for those with sensory processing issues. Where possible, choose a quiet location without harsh lighting or strong odours.
- Similarly, when arranging for an interview on set, ask if there are any particular background colours or patterns the interviewee would prefer to avoid as they might be visually distracting or overstimulating.
- Some people with autism find group settings difficult, so if you are planning to host a panel discussion, ensure you ask the interviewee if they are comfortable with being interviewed in a group setting, or if there are any supports they need to do so.

During the interview

- Ask the individual how they would like to be identified and described. There are typically two preferred ways for people on the spectrum; "autistic person" or "person with autism". Some people choose to identify as "neurodivergent" or "atypical".
- Be direct. Ask short, clear questions.
- Pose a question as a question, not as a statement. Open-ended questions can be misinterpreted and confusing.
- Limit hypothetical or abstract questions. A person with autism may interpret words and phrases literally. It is therefore best to avoid using idioms, metaphors, or hyperbole.
- Some people with autism may respond better to questions associated with their own personal experiences, so ask the interviewee to draw on a lived-experience rather than imagine a particular situation. For example, "describe a time when…" etc
- Don't interrupt. Due to differences in the way people with autism may process information and communicate, they may take longer to respond, so be careful not to interrupt if it's simply to prompt or clarify.
- Avoid imagery that reinforces stereotypes of neurodivergence as mysterious or negative. For people, the **rainbow infinity symbol** may be a preferred symbol. Do not use the puzzle piece.



(Source: Talking about autism media resource, Amaze)

Other considerations

People who are not neurodivergent are often referred to as being "neurotypical", "non-autistic", or "allistic" (which refers to neurotypical or non-autistic neurodivergent people).

For more information on autism

Reframing Autism – Autistic-led advocacy and awareness organisation.

Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia – DPO and advocacy group.

The I CAN network – Offers Autistic-led mentoring programme.

Amaze – The peak body for autistic people and their supporters in Victoria.

Neurodiversity Media – Organisation led by neurodivergent people with a particular focus on supporting neurodiversity in the media and the workplace.

Austism Connect – Australia's first national autism infoline for autistic people, supporters and professionals.

Autism Awareness Australia – Organisation that supports people with autism and their families with quality information and resources.

Autism Community Network – Organisation that supports people with autism and their families through social and peer support activities.

Autism Spectrum Australia – Organisation that provides resources and services (including schools) for people with autism.

For more information on ADHD

ADHD Australia
ADHD Foundation
Raising Children
ADHD Support Australia

For more information on Tourrette Syndrome

Tourette Syndrome Association of Australia

For more information on dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia

The Brain Foundation
Australian Dyslexia Association
DSF – Dyslexia – SPELD Foundation
SPELD NSW
Speld QLD

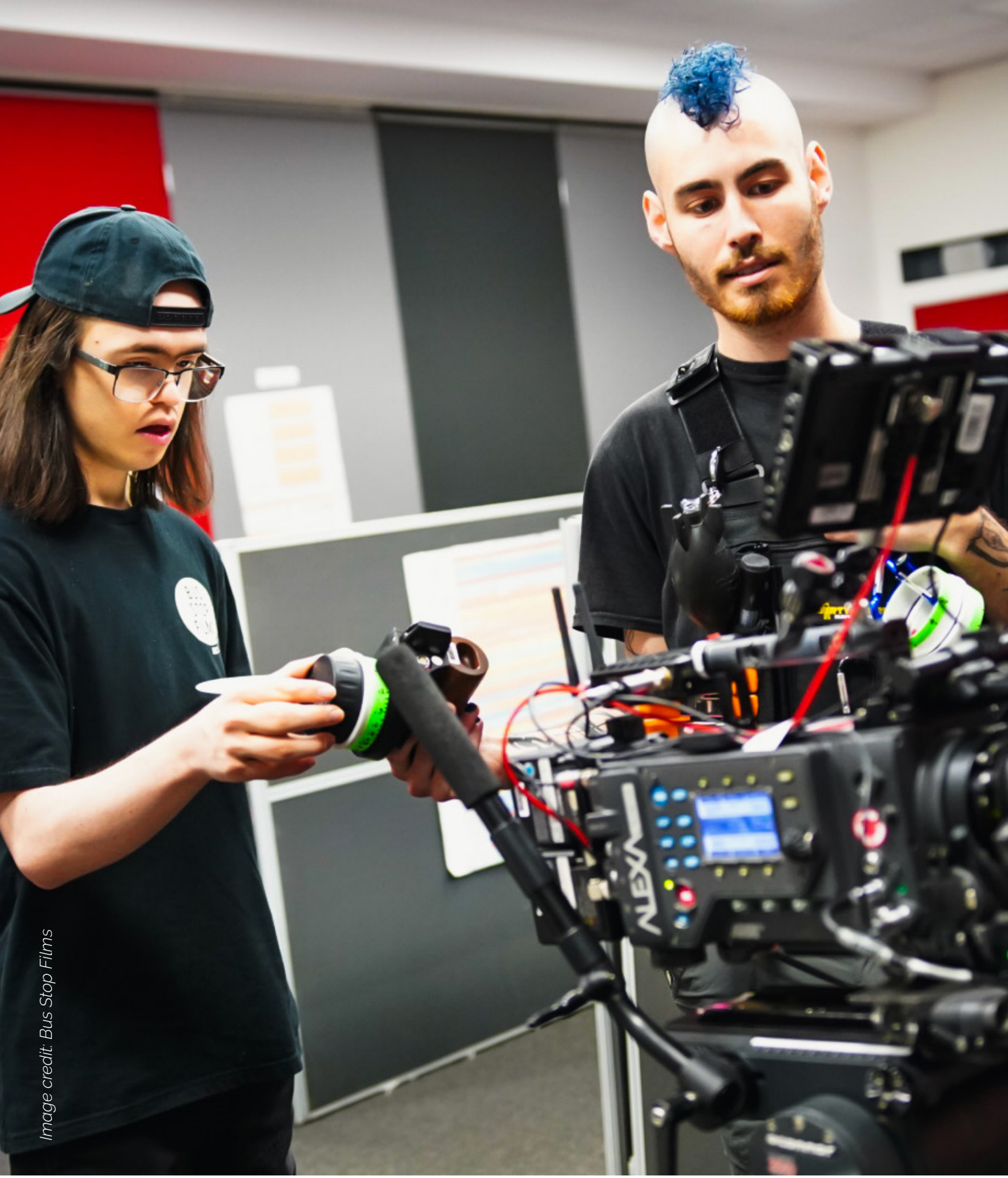


Image credit: Bus Stop Films

Section 5:
Marketing and advertising

Marketing and advertising

Whilst initially written with journalists in mind, the guidance in this handbook is equally relevant, and easily transferable, to professionals working in the wider media landscape.

This includes marketing and advertising professionals (and their clients), and those in film, television and radio production. It's also beneficial to people working in podcasting, social media or other forms of content creation.

For example:

- How to make a newsroom more accessible is also relevant to film sets or stages at launch and PR events etc.
- The guides on language and imagery are just as important to all content creators as they are to journalists.
- Camera angles to avoid in a news story (page 37) are the same camera angles to avoid when shooting an advertisement.
- The all important Golden Rules are essential reading to all professionals working in communications, advertising or marketing roles.

Results of a **Nielsen survey*** indicate advertising that includes people with disability is being shown at a rate of just

1%

during prime time

This is despite the fact that, globally, **people with disability** have a **disposable income** of approximately



US$1.9 trillion

Approx. **AU$2.8 trillion**

This figure jumps to

US$13 trillion

Roughly **AU$19.6 trillion**



when we include **family, friends & others** who want to support disability inclusive **brands & businesses**

Recently, more organisations have been trying to include disability in their advertising and marketing content. While there may be a financial incentive (as outlined above), a desire to be more socially responsible is another factor driving businesses and not-for-profits to create more inclusive material.

However, misrepresentation of people with a disability can be harmful, as outlined throughout this handbook. The following guidance will help avoid the pitfalls and make it easy to create inclusive content that reaches a diverse audience.

* View the Nielsen survey on this link.



Image credit: The Shift 20 Initiative was a campaign showing content creators that including disability in advertising could be done. It 'edited in' talent with disability, replacing talent without.

Agency: Special Group; Production: Bus Stop Films; Client: Dylan Alcott Foundation

How to include disability in advertising

It's no secret that to reach an audience, you need to serve them content with which they resonate. Therefore, it makes sense to include disabled talent to capture the attention of the 1 in 6 Australians with disability.

But specifically how do you do that without appearing tokenistic or offensive?

Along with the other tips in this handbook about language and imagery, here are seven practical suggestions about how to include disability in advertising, marketing and similar content without making those mistakes.

1. **Make inclusion consistent**
   The hallmark sign of a brand or business simply 'ticking the diversity box' is when only one piece of content or a single campaign features disability while others do not. Campaign strategies and creative executions should include disabled talent with the same consistency as other talent.

2. **Make inclusion natural**
   Inclusion of disability should always be as seamless and incidental as possible, otherwise it can look like virtue signalling. Consider how the camera is panned across talent – with equal time being given to disabled and non-disabled talent.

   Bonus tip – If your advertisement features a small crowd, why not make sure some of the talent has disability?

3. **Make it work for your brand**
   There's no one-size-fits-all for inclusive content and it can look very different for each business or brand. As such, using talent with a particular disability may not be suitable for every product or service being advertised.

   The key is to ask yourself, would a person with X disability use this in real life? If in doubt, remember the Golden Rule from this Handbook and ask the person with the disability.

   Bonus tip – Running a focus group with consumers who have disability can be a great way to give you more insight. This is particularly useful if nobody working on the final execution actually has a disability.

4. **Character development for talent with disability**
   Where it's a 15" TVC or a longer production, the character/s with disability shouldn't be restricted to only saying and doing things related to disability.

5. **Be Proactive**
   Don't wait for your competition to be the first to include disability in their content. Similarly, don't wait for your brand or business to be publicly shamed on social media (for a lack of inclusivity) until you decide to be inclusive. Be proactive and show leadership in your industry. These sorts of positive efforts are noticed and will quickly be shared and celebrated by people with and without disability.



Image credit: Alexandra Piercy, National Marketing Manager for Coles Group, speaking at the Meta and Bus Stop Films Unstereotype Alliance Anniversary Event, 2022

6. **Consider inclusion on both sides of the camera**
   While on-screen talent with disability is great, inclusive advertising can also include those working off-camera. Consider also the art directors, copywriters, production crew and others in the creative process. As an added advantage, these staff may be able to offer insights and feedback about the disabled experience which can make the project more informed and authentic.

7. **Hire a disability consultant**
   Depending on the requirements of the script and the real-life input from others, investing in a disability consultant can be extremely beneficial. Particularly if there are no staff with disability working on the project. As the Golden Rules say (on page 25), 'Nothing about us without us'.

   Consultants may see things that would otherwise have gone unnoticed such as offensive script wording or a stereotypical scenario.



Image credit: Coles Group

Creating content that is inclusive of disability isn't as difficult as some may think. Research, including that by The Valuable 500, has shown that it's not just good for society, but if done authentically, the benefits to a business or brand's bottom line can be substantial.

For more information

The following links that may be relevant, specifically for those in advertising, marketing or related fields.

- For inclusive film production (staff and methods of best practice) - Bus Stop Films.
- For talent with disability and consultants - Zebedee Talent.
- Disability Action Plan - GroupM (a case study in creating disability inclusive agencies).
- Advertising Council Australia - Create Space D&I Taskforce: Read about what the ACA is doing to address disability inclusion within the advertising industry.
- For inclusive design recommendations (including online) - Centre for Accessibility Australia, Centre for Inclusive Design, Vision Australia, and the Australian Government - Style Manual.
- To make your next industry event more inclusive, speak to the team at Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability Griffith University, for practical advice and an inclusive events checklist.
- The Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training is Australia's leading resource on disability in tertiary education for disability practitioners, educators, and students. Many of the resources and suggestions are transferable to a workplace setting or material that needs to be more accessible.
- For support from national and international brands who are leading the way with inclusion, visit Unstereotype Alliance - An industry-led initiative convened by UN Women that recognises the power of partnerships to accelerate progress. It unites advertising industry leaders, decision-makers and creatives to end harmful stereotypes in advertising.



Image credit: Bus Stop Films



Kathleen O'Kelly-Kennedy, a First Australian paralympic wheelchair basketballer. Image credit: Griffith University Photographer: Luke Marsden

Section 6: **The Disability Royal Commission**



Image credit: **getty**images
Photographer: Caboclin

What it is and disability in the media

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) was established in April, 2019 to investigate violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disability.

The DRC was set up in response to community concern about widespread neglect and abuse of people with disability. *(See DRH Chapters: Violence against people with disability: Definitions and Violence: The Data).* Through a series of public hearings, private sessions, submissions and independent research, the DRC gathered evidence to inform its final report which it delivered to the Australian Government in September 2023.

The report, which you can read at this link, makes 222 recommendations "on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society". In its executive summary, it highlights the role the media can play in combating ableism.

It specifically states that "encouraging the participation and positive portrayal of people with disability in the media" is one of five key facilitators of social change. This, in turn, can improve attitudes toward people with disability and build a more inclusive, safer world.

> ***Seeing people with disability in day-to-day environments can challenge expectations of where people with disability belong. This can 'debunk' prejudices, prompting reflection and challenging the underlying feelings and beliefs. Over time, non-disabled people change their expectations of people with disability, reducing their negative attitudes and behaviours.***
>
> *– Pages 20, 21 of the Executive Summary of the DRC*



Image credit: gettyimages Photographer: SolStock

Section 7:
Useful contacts

Contacts database

These contacts are a great place to start when seeking comment on matters of disability or seeking 'issues experts' from within the disability community.

Many of these organisations are Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), some are not but may have specialist expertise in their area – such as the Australian Centre on Disability Law.

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), AHRC Media Contacts
Disability Discrimination Commissioner

Disabled People's Organisations

Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia
Autism Self-Advocacy Network AUNZ
Blind Citizens Australia
Brain Injury Australia
Deafblind Australia
Diversity and Disability Alliance
Enhanced Lifestyles – a disability service provider managed by people with disability.
First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN)
Ideas – a national organisation that provides independent information to with disability.
Inclusion Australia – is the peak body for people with intellectual disability and their families and has representative groups in all states and territories such as the NSW Council on Intellectual Disability and VALID
National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
People with Disabilities ACT
People with Disabilities WA
People With Disability Australia (PWDA)
Physical Disability Australia
Short Statured People of Australia
The Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand
Women with Disabilities ACT
Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)
Women with Disabilities Victoria

All individual and State and Territory advocacy organisations are listed on the DSS website and can be found via Ask Izzy and the Disability Gateway.

National peak organisations

The following organisations are disability representative organisations.

Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
Children and Young People with Disability Australia
Deaf Australia
Deafness Forum of Australia
Disability Advocacy Network of Australia – is the peak body for individual advocacy organisations.
Down Syndrome Australia
National LGBTI Health Alliance
Rare Voices Australia has a comprehensive database of rare diseases and their support organisations.
Spinal Life Australia – is a peak body in spinal injury.
Synapse – is a peak body in brain injury.
The National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum

AAC communities

AGOSCI
Communication Rights Australia
ISAAC Australia – International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication – Australia.

Carers Australia – is the peak body for carers and families.



Image credit: **getty**images *Photographer: Sladic*

Other disability-related organisations or resources

Australian Centre for Disability Law
Disability Justice Australia
Disability Resources Centre
Intellectual Disability Rights Service
Leadership Plus
Mental Health Australia
National Disability Services – is the peak body for disability service providers
The Human Rights Council of Australia – (not to be confused with the Human Rights Commission)

Translating and interpreting services for people with disability

Call 13 14 50 and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

National Relay Service
For callers who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment. Visit the website and ask them to contact the support service of your choice.

TTY/Voice Calls
Call 133 677 and ask them to contact the support service or number of your choice.

Speak and Listen *(Speech-to-speech relay)*
Call 1300 555 727 and ask them to contact the support service or phone number of your choice.



Logan Campus
Image credit:
Griffith University

Section 8:
Final words

Messages from our collaborators and sponsors

Hireup is delighted to sponsor the Disability Reporting Handbook

Respectful treatment of people means engaging in respectful ways. That starts with the way we communicate with and about each other, especially in the media.

Getting it wrong can cause hurt and division. Getting it right can bring people together and be a catalyst for understanding and positive change.

But journalists – like all of us – don't know what they don't know. Offence and disrespect are rarely deliberate; people stumble into them.

That's where this handbook comes in: to help journalists get it right when it comes to reporting on and with people with disability.

Hireup is delighted to sponsor the Disability Reporting Handbook. While our core business is as a modern disability support provider, our broader mission is to enable the pursuit of a good life for everyone. That means building a world in which everyone is respected, valued and included.

At Hireup, we're committed to telling the stories that do just that. If you're looking for talent, feel free to contact us and we'll connect you with the right people.

The words and pictures we use speak volumes and go a long way to promoting true inclusion and diversity. We hope all media professionals keep this guide as a reference. Better reporting starts with better understanding. Hireup is immensely proud to be a part of that.





Image credit: Griffith University Photographer: Luke Marsden

The Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability team, Morris Misel, Dr Maretta Mann, Professor Elizabeth Kendall (Director), Joe-Anne Kek-Pamenter, Kelsey Chapman and Rebekah Barker.

Griffith University is extremely proud to sponsor this important handbook about representing diversity in the media. Griffith was established as a university for the citizens, one where all people would be welcome and where complex challenges faced by the community could be tackled in innovative ways. Disability, diversity and equity underpin our teaching, research and engagement. We have maintained these strong values for nearly 50 years and remain firmly embedded in the communities we serve.

We have invested heavily in important initiatives, including the Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability research alliance, that will enhance our approach to disability, the accessibility of our campuses, the quality and impact of the research we are conducting and the contribution we make to an inclusive future. We are committed to building pathways that accommodate and support people with disability, both in society and within our own organisation. As a university, we take seriously our responsibility to produce high quality graduates who can address the complexity of contemporary society and respond with empathy.

Part of our role as a public institution is to support important initiatives such as this impressive handbook, which will go a long way towards achieving equality. It will drive an appreciation of the importance of language and images in promoting respect and tolerance. Our most influential structures in society, such as the media, education and our political systems, should be well versed in how to engender respect for diversity and this handbook will be critical to achieving the positive representations that can make a difference. We commend the hard work of the team and the quality and richness of the content. We know this comes from a deep experience of disability and meaningful reflection on the way in which we can create a better future for all Australians.

Carolyn Evans

Professor Carolyn Evans
Vice Chancellor and President
Griffith University

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY | INCLUSIVE FUTURES: REIMAGINING DISABILITY



Image (left to right): Timothy Lachlan, Will Vickery, Geoff Trappet (looking to the side), Dr Maretta Mann, Ella Sabljak, Dwayne Fernandes and Dr Vanesa Bochkezanian at the Griffith University Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability 'Inclusivity in Play' Conference, November 2022.

Image credit: Griffith University; Photographer: Luke Marsden

*Visit the **Inclusive Futures: Reimagining Disability Hub** for more information on our 'Inclusive Voices' Initiative.*


Image credit: **getty**images *Photographer: Mixetto*

At **Getty Images** we believe our imagery moves hearts, minds, and fuels opinions—powering ideas and commerce for organisations worldwide and enabling them to drive impact and shift perceptions at the same time.

We believe that visual representation across the globe matters. We've spent over a decade working to break down stereotypes and create a more authentic visual view of concepts such as gender identity, sexual identity, religion, race, mental illness, and disability for organisations worldwide to use in their communications.

Diversity behind the lens matters as much to us as diversity in front of the lens, which is why we're conscious of who assigns, captures, and edits content and are actively working to improve representation on both ends of the camera—specifically for communities who have been historically marginalised. In this way, we believe we can further our vision toward improving visual representation across the globe.

In 2018 we partnered with Verizon Media and the National Disability Leadership Alliance, a cross-disability coalition led by 17 national organisations headed by people with disability, to create The Disability Collection, a growing collection of stock images and video that break stereotypes and authentically portray people with disability in everyday life.

We're empowering our industry to get real about disability representation with stock photos that can be licensed and used by anyone in the world.

For more information visit https://www.gettyimages.com/collections/thedisabilitycollection

gettyimages



Image credit: Trish Jackson

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) is proud to partner with MDA to deliver the Disability Reporting Handbook. Every day in our work we see how powerful the impact of storytelling can be for women, girls and non-binary people with disabilities. Ensuring journalists are equipped to support women with disabilities to tell their stories in a sensitive and trauma-informed way is one way the media can help amplify the voices of our community.

People With Disability Australia
Language shapes the way people think. While careless labels reinforce negative stereotypes, well-chosen words can be empowering. By drawing attention to the expressions people use when talking to, or about, people with disability, we change the conversation. PWDA is delighted to partner with MDA on the Disability Reporting Handbook, which embraces disability as part of human diversity, not something to be sensationalised or sentimentalised.

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is privileged to partner with Media Diversity Australia in launching the Disability Reporting Handbook. People with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are so often marginalised and misunderstood: their voices are not being heard due to cultural and language barriers, access to interpreters and social stigma associated with disability.

We hope the Disability Reporting Handbook will empower journalists in seeking and sharing stories about people with disability from multicultural backgrounds in a culturally and socially safe way."

[Need a short description of First Peoples Disability network to fit in this small space]

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AUSTRALIA

First Peoples Disability Network Australia

NEDA
NATIONAL ETHNIC DISABILITY ALLIANCE

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