

Fact Sheet 1 English

Understanding Disability in Australia

This fact sheet has been developed by AMPARO Advocacy to provide people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities with translated information about disability.

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1. What is a disability?

A person may have a disability if they find it hard to, take care of themselves, walk or move around, hear or see or to think clearly, or learn. They may have trouble in doing everyday activities.

A **Disability** can be caused by an accident, trauma, disease, or just be something that the person has been born with. A disability is usually long term and ongoing, lasting for the whole of a person's life. So a disability is not just being sick for a couple of months, or having a broken bone that heals.

A person's abilities may also be affected by the way others think about them (attitudes) and the physical environment, such as if they can move around their home, work place or community, if they can use public transport, and how they are treated by their community.

2. Disability in Australia

In Australia, people with disabilities have the same rights and are allowed to do the same things other people in the community can do. For example, they have the right to be treated fairly, to learn and work, to choose where they live, and how they live their lives.

People with a disability can have a good life, fulfil their goals and dreams, and join in and contribute to the community. People with disabilities have lots of strengths and abilities and are able to learn new skills.

People with disabilities want to be included in all parts of family and community life, and the laws of Australia help them to do this. In Australia, it is against the law to discriminate against a person with a disability.

Having a disability may mean that the person does things differently, and they may need different types of assistance (help). They may need help to:

- have a shower or bath
- get dressed
- get in and out of bed
- speak and be understood
- do shopping
- join in the community
- travel to work or medical appointments
- buy equipment like a wheelchair
- look after their home and to have a good life

3. Types of disability

Intellectual disability

People with intellectual disability can have more difficulty than others in learning new things, solving problems, concentrating and remembering. The most common causes are -

- Being born with a disability
- Problems during pregnancy (for example, not getting enough oxygen)
- Health problems
- Not having enough food, or not getting good medical care

Physical Disability

Physical disability affects a person's body functions or ability to move, for example walking or bladder control. Or it can affect part of the body, for example not having a leg or an arm. There are many causes of physical disability, a person can be born this way, have an accident or through disease. Physical disability includes spinal injury, cerebral palsy, and multiple sclerosis.

Neurological disability

A neurological disability affects the way the brain deals with information and communicates with the rest of the body, for example, speaking, thinking and moving. People can be born this way, develop the disability later in life or get the disability through an accident.

Mental illness

People with a mental illness may have difficulties in the way they think, feel or behave, which can affect their relationships, ability to work or live. For example a person may have severe depression that affects

their ability to participate in everyday life. This could affect their relationships, their work, and enjoyment of life.

Sensory Disability

This includes hearing loss, vision impairment or speech impairment.

Acquired Brain Injury

An acquired brain injury is any brain injury that occurs after birth. This can be caused by car, sporting or other accidents, a stroke, brain tumour, alcohol, drug abuse or poisoning. The effects of an acquired brain injury can be minor, and short term, or can be severe and lifelong.

Autism

People with autism may have difficulties with language or communication and learning social skills, they may be sensitive to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

4. Getting help early

If you think your child has a disability getting help as soon as possible can help the child to grow and develop, and could mean they need less help later on.

Getting early help can assist families understand their child's disability, and provide good care for their child.

5. Getting the support that you need

Some people with disabilities and their families have found it hard to get the help they need. It is important that you understand what the disability is. You can speak with your doctor about how to find out if you have a disability. There are services and supports that can help people with disability and their families.

6. Where to get help

If you live in Queensland and you or a member of your family needs help now, you can call 13 74 68 and ask to speak with someone from Disability Services about your situation.

7. New changes to support for people with disabilities

Over the next 3 years there will be major changes and improvements to how people with disability and their families can get the support they need. You can keep updated by visiting the National Disability Insurance Scheme website www.ndis.gov.au or calling them on 1800 800 110 or 131 450 if you need an interpreter.

8. Do you need an interpreter or translated information?

All services for people with disability that are funded by the Queensland State Government must provide interpreters when needed, and you can ask for an interpreter. The National Disability Insurance Scheme also provides interpreters. **Interpreters receive training and must keep your information private.** Services should also give you information in a way that you can understand, for example, you can ask them to translate information into your language.



9. Advocacy Support

If you need help to speak up about what you need, you may be able to get help from an advocacy agency to do this.

In Queensland, you can contact-

AMPARO Advocacy (<i>Brisbane</i>)	3354 4900
Capricorn Citizen Advocacy (<i>Rockhampton</i>)	4922 0299
Gold Coast Advocacy	5564 0355
Independent Advocacy Townsville	4725 2505
Ipswich Regional Advocacy Service	3281 6006
Mackay Advocacy Inc	4957 8710
Queensland Advocacy Incorporated	3844 4200
Rights In Action Incorporated (<i>Cairns</i>)	4031 7377
Speaking Up For You (<i>Brisbane/ Caboolture</i>)	3255 1244
Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy	5442 2524
The Advocacy and Support Centre (<i>Ipswich</i>)	3812 7000
The Advocacy and Support Centre (<i>Toowoomba</i>)	4616 9700
People with Disability Australia (<i>Bundaberg, Fraser Coast, Logan, Mt Isa, Sunshine Coast</i>)	1800 422 015



It is ok to complain.

Remember, if you are told to contact an organisation, but they do not help, it is okay to go back and ask for better help, or even to complain.

If you feel you are being discriminated against because of your culture or disability, you can also contact the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland on 1300 130 670.

This information has been developed by AMPARO Advocacy Inc. Whilst every care has been made to ensure that it is correct at time of publication, this material is meant to give a general overview but may not be accurate, current or complete to your situation. Further individual advice is highly recommended.

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