

# CREATING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES BUSINESS TOOLKIT

1st Edition

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Ability Links NSW is a state government Family and Community Services funded initiative

The North West Alliance acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout NSW where our programs are delivered. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.



# FOREWORD:

Since 2009, I have run a small fitness business in the Kyogle area. I run a range of programs and classes including personal and small group training, fitness classes, and a circuit class I call 'Move It or Lose It'.

When Ability Links NSW approached me to develop an inclusive fitness program for some of their participants I was excited and nervous about what would be required.

They told me that a number of the people they worked with were feeling isolated but were keen to get healthy and go the gym.

Initially, an Ability Links 'Linker' supported me by coming to the gym to take a look at the equipment and provide advice on access issues around the facility. They also supported me in developing particular exercises for the participants' physical challenges.

Since our initial three month pilot, our inclusive class has continued to grow in numbers and is now a great fitness and social event for the participants.

In becoming more inclusive in my business, I have got to know a wonderful bunch of people that I would otherwise not have had the pleasure of meeting. They have altered my perception of people with a disability, and have made me aware of how vital their inclusion is, not only for the physical benefits, but for the socialisation that comes with being part of a group.

I now realise that there are many isolated people out there who want to become an active part of the community and they shouldn't be defined by the disability they have or limited by the obstacles businesses unknowingly put in their way.

I think this toolkit is a great resource for businesses to assess their inclusiveness and something that all business should be made aware of.

Sharron Webby  
Business Owner  
Kyogle



## KAREN'S STORY

For many people, going to the movies, catching a train or visiting the local council office isn't something we think twice about. However, for people with a hearing impairment, it can be a very different and sometimes challenging experience.

"I've been to training days where I've been unable to hear, I've missed a plane because the boarding gate was changed and I didn't hear it and I've gotten off a train at the wrong station and had to go all the way back to where I came from," Karen explains.

Through her role with Ability Links, Karen has worked with regional airport planning to install hearing stations and loops, a special type of sound system for use by people with hearing aids and has had other great results with the local cinema, museum and conference venues.

"When I spoke to airport management, they looked at it very favourably," Karen says.

"I explained the issues that I faced each day and the expected benefits of hearing loops for people with a hearing impairment."

"It's about changing mindsets and ways of thinking."

# INTRODUCTION

## What is an inclusive business?

Being an inclusive business simply means providing your product and services in a way that ensures people of all abilities are welcome and treated with equity and dignity.

Inclusion within your business can include everything from how people physically access your business to the attitudes of your staff.

## Why does making your business inclusive matter?

Making your business inclusive means everyone has the opportunity to enjoy your business. It doesn't just make ethical sense, it also makes great business sense.

More than one in five Australians have a disability. That's a lot of customers who could be accessing your business based on how easy it is to use and how inclusive it is.

Being an inclusive business benefits everyone, not just people with disability. This includes people with prams, temporary injuries and older people. Everyone wins!

## Who benefits from inclusive businesses?

Inclusion benefits us all, however, can be particularly beneficial for:

- people with physical disability e.g. people who use wheelchairs
- people with mental illness
- people who use mobility aids such as mobility scooters, walking frames or crutches
- people with vision impairment
- people with hearing impairment or who are deaf.
- people with a perceptual or cognitive disability.
- carers of people with disability
- people with prams and strollers
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people with a learning difficulty, intellectual disability or brain injury
- people who are frail.



# TIPS FOR IMPROVING BUSINESS INCLUSION

There are some common barriers that could hinder people accessing your business. By removing these barriers you open up your business to new opportunities.

## Physical Barriers

When you think about making your business more inclusive you might think about the cost involved. However, there are a number of things you can do to limit the physical barriers that might stop people using your business. These include:

- ensuring the floor or ground is non-slip and free from trip hazards
- signs are easy to read - use appropriate fonts and sizing (Arial 12pt). Include pictures where possible
- ensuring at least part of your customer service area counter is at a height that is suitable for people who use a wheelchair
- making a chair available for someone who may be older and frail, uses crutches or has poor balance, particularly if they need to wait long periods
- providing spaces for children to play/relax e.g. sensory tent
- ensuring accessible parking spaces are provided with adequate space to allow a wheelchair to manoeuvre around the car
- installing ramps at the entrance of your premises - these can be temporary or permanent
- fitting hand rails to walkways
- making doorways wide enough for wheel chairs to pass through
- providing accessible toilet facilities.

**ACTIVITY:** Complete our physical environment check list on p.7 to find out how well your business rates.

## Communication barriers

Communication can be a barrier to using your business. To limit communication barriers you can:

- ensure you have multiple methods for people to contact you and find out more information about your business e.g. email, SMS, phone, face-to-face
- ensure your website is built with accessibility in mind - refer to the Australian Government's web content accessibility guidelines at [www.australia.gov.au/accessibility](http://www.australia.gov.au/accessibility)
- use easy to read fonts and sizing (Arial 12pt) and use braille where possible
- use captions on videos
- understand and use the National Relay Service [www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au).

## Service barriers

Providing good customer service is always essential. Staff behaviour can have a major impact on creating a welcoming environment. Activities to reduce service barriers can include:

- training staff on how their attitudes can make the business more inclusive
- training staff on using inclusive language.

**ACTIVITY:** Complete our communication and service barriers check list on p.8 to find out how well your business rates.



# INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE:

As a general rule, when communicating with a person who has a disability, treat them the same as any other person. Some common courtesies are:

- Focus on the person, not their disability.
- Address the person directly, not the other people who may be with them or their service animal.
- Ask if the person wants help first before providing assistance. Accept the answer if your assistance is declined.
- If you have a conversation that will last more than a few moments with a guest who uses a wheelchair, pull up a chair or bend to eye level, however, do not rest on their wheelchair.

## **For people who may have a learning difficulty, intellectual disability or brain injury:**

- Address the person directly, listen carefully, speak clearly (but not loudly or slowly) and check for understanding.
- Use clear language (avoid complex words or jargon), but use your natural tone of voice.
- Give the person time to ask and answer questions - avoid overloading people who have an intellectual disability with information.
- Use symbols and pictures where possible to offer options and clarify information.
- Reassure your guest that you are there to help if they need to check the information.

## **For people who are deaf or hard of hearing:**

- Face your guest so they can read your lips - try to make sure there are no bright lights behind you that may limit their ability to see your lips use your normal tone of voice and volume - if possible, move out of the way of background noise.
- Address your comments directly to your guest rather than to the sign language interpreter.
- Have a pen and paper on hand to help you communicate with the person you are assisting.
- Use gestures to communicate.

## **For people who are blind or have low vision:**

- Identify yourself by name - if appropriate, ask for their name so you can address them directly and so that they know you are talking to them and not to someone else.
- Provide assistance if a customer asks for help to go somewhere - ask which side you should be on and offer your arm so they can hold you just above your elbow.
- Never attempt to pat or distract a guide, hearing or assistance dog while it is in a harness. Never offer food to a guide dog - it is a working animal under the control of its handler.



DO USE	AVOID USING
Person with a disability* Person with [specific disability], for example: Person with autism John has spina bifida	Disabled/the disabled/victim of/suffers from/ handicapped/special/stricken with/unfortunate Autistic person
Person with a physical disability, person with [specify disability], for example: Person with cerebral palsy	Physically challenged
Person with a sensory disability Person who is [specify disability], for example: Person who is Deaf** Person who is deaf** Person who is hard of hearing Person who is blind or has low vision	The deaf** The blind, blind people
Person with an intellectual disability Person with [specify disability], for example: Person with Down syndrome	Mentally disabled/intellectually challenged Down's kids
Person with a mental illness Person with [specify disability], for example: Person with schizophrenia or a person with bi-polar disorder	Insane/mentally disabled Schizophrenic person
Accessible toilet/accessible parking space/ accessible entry	Disabled toilet/disabled parking space/ disabled entry
Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined to a wheelchair/wheelchair bound
Person without a disability	Normal/non-disabled

When making visual representation of a person with a disability:

- Use photos that show the person with a disability in a way that is positive and respectful.
- Refer to the person's disability only if it is critical to what you are trying to show.
- Try not to include the person's carer or family unless it supports the objective.
- Try not to show the person in isolation unless this is the focus.

\* When talking about people who are 65 years or older with age-related disabilities, use the terms 'older people' or 'seniors' instead of 'the elderly'.

\*\* In written information, you may see the word 'deaf' with a lower-case, when it refers to all people who are deaf or hearing impaired. As a general rule, an upper-case or capital 'D' should be used when recognising a culturally unique and diverse group who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to communicate and who regard themselves as part of a linguistic minority.



# INCLUSION CHECKLISTS

It is important to consider the physical, communication and service barriers to identify possible areas of improvement to make your business more inclusive. There are a range of things your business can do to ensure everyone in the community has the same level of access to the things they need.

Complete the checklists in this document to assess how inclusive your business is.

## Physical Environment Checklist

- Car parking spaces are wide enough for people with wheelchairs and mobility aids to get in and out of their vehicles.
- Accessible car parking spaces are close to the business entry point and identified with appropriate signage and symbols.
- There is an accessible toilet in the premises.
- Ramps are fitted instead of stairs - these can be temporary ramps if a permanent solution is not possible.
- Hand rails are fitted for ramps or areas of uneven ground.
- Doorways and aisles/corridors are wide enough for wheelchairs, prams and door handles are at an accessible height for wheelchair users.
- Customer service area/counter is at a height that is suitable for people who use a wheelchair.
- The venue is well lit.
- High glare areas of the premises are kept to a minimum.
- Seating is available for people who need to wait long periods and space provided for people waiting in a wheelchair.
- Floor surface or ground is non-slip and free from trip hazards.
- Clear signage is visible for all facilities e.g. toilets, lifts.
- Staff understand how to provide good customer service to all guests with individual needs.
- There is a continuous accessible path of travel from the car park to the building/facility.
- Signage is easy to read.
- Staff know where to find more information to support inclusion.
- Visible and audible fire alarms.





## Inclusive Communication and Service Checklist

- Staff have read the inclusive language guide in this toolkit.
- Staff understand and use inclusive language in the day to day running of your business.
- Staff feel confident in using inclusive communication with people of different disabilities.
- Our business has multiple methods for people to contact us and find out more information about the business e.g. email, phone, face-to-face.
- Our website is built with accessibility in mind refer to the Australian government's web content accessibility guidelines at [www.australia.gov.au/accessibility](http://www.australia.gov.au/accessibility).
- Our written materials including menus, signs etc. use large, easy to read fonts and use braille and pictures where possible.
- Videos we use on social media have captions.
- Staff understand that discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated in your business.
- Access to translations for CALD customers.
- Staff feel confident in dealing with customers who express discriminatory attitudes.
- Opportunities provided for people with disability, their families, carers, relevant organisations and staff within your organisation to provide feedback on your business.
- Staff understand policies around assistance animals and assistance animals are accommodated.
- People have access to a separate, quiet area when needed.
- Loud noises such as background music is kept low.
- Staff understand that discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated in your business.
- Staff are trained and feel confident in dealing with customers who express discriminatory attitudes.

Want to undertake a more comprehensive inclusion checklist? Visit [www.actinclusion.com.au](http://www.actinclusion.com.au).



# EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Being disability aware and confident when creating employment opportunities will give you access to a wider talent pool.

Your business will be seen as an employer of choice. Having a diverse workforce can improve staff morale and potentially increase the appeal of your brand to customers and the community. Research has also shown that employees with disabilities have reduced sick leave, are more likely to be retained for longer and are more loyal to their employer.

## Recruiting people with disability

When recruiting people with disability:

- have an open mind
- treat people the way you would expect to be treated
- ask if they require any support to participate in the recruitment process
- let the applicant tell you what they may or may not need
- be open to trying other ways of assessing an individual's suitability for your roles e.g. workplace assessment
- be clear about the job description and design (what is actually required for the job – the "inherent requirements" or job essentials)
- consider whether educational qualifications or specific work experience are essential to the position
- look at achieving the result rather than the means to achieving that result.

## Interviewing people with disability

When interviewing people with disability:

- check that your application process is accessible, including the availability of application forms and other material in accessible formats (html, word doc or accessible pdf)
- make sure your website is accessible and there is a point of contact for any questions relating to reasonable adjustments and your disability employment policy

- ask the same questions that you would of a person without disability
- allow sufficient time for an applicant to respond to questions.

Find out more information at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au).

## Making Reasonable Adjustments

A 'reasonable adjustment' is a specific action or strategy developed by an employer to address the effects of a staff member's disability in the workplace.

They have been legislated to ensure employers are obligated to provide an equal opportunity environment in which someone experiencing disadvantage is offered an opportunity to excel.

Generally, there are four steps that guide the implementation of reasonable adjustments:

1. Identify the 'inherent' or 'core' requirements of the worker's job.
2. Assess the worker's skills and abilities.
3. Identify reasonable adjustments with the worker.
4. Check that the worker can meet the requirements of the job when reasonable adjustments have been identified.

Flexibility is the key to identifying reasonable adjustments that are going to work for the worker and the organisation. There is no set formula for identifying reasonable adjustments, so look at the individual needs of the person, the core requirements of the job and then think outside the box for solutions. Look for ideas that have worked well for others as adapting good ideas to match worker needs and workplace requirements has the greatest chance for success.

Evidence suggests that employees may potentially benefit from developing a support plan to assist with the implementation of reasonable adjustments in the workplace.

Find out more about reasonable adjustments at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au).

# SERVICES AVAILABLE TO YOUR BUSINESS

There are several Australian Government initiatives to help you and your business if you employ or are thinking about employing a person with disability. These services include:

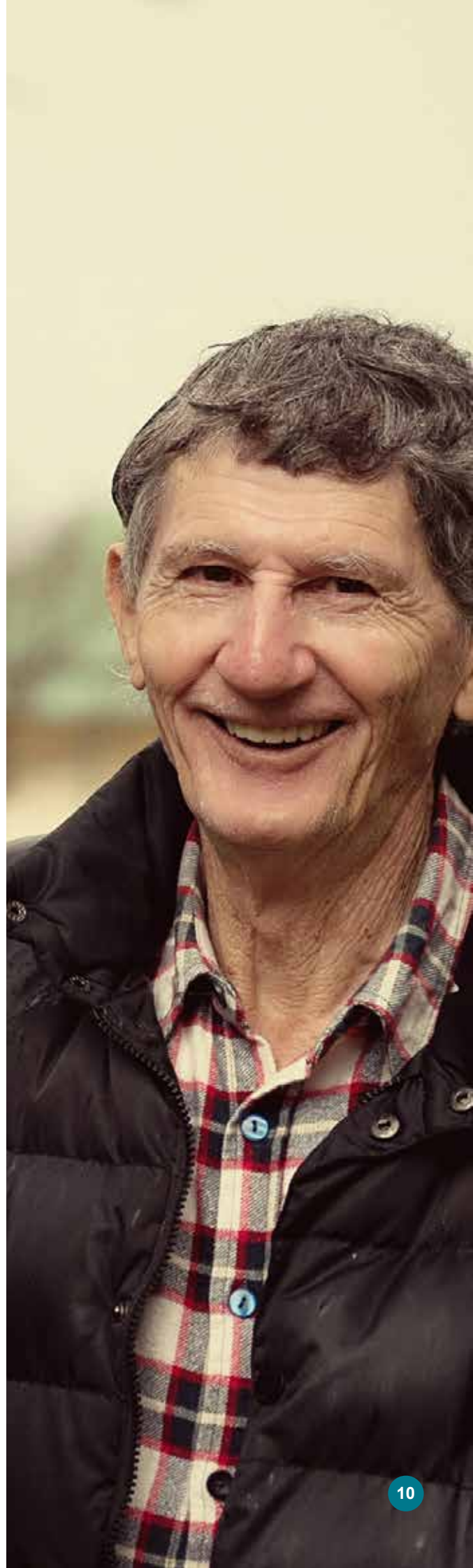
**JobAccess** is the national hub for all things disability employment. JobAccess provides information on all aspects of employing people with a disability including financial support, tools and resources, and recruiting and retaining staff. More information at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or call 1800 464 800.

The **Employment Assistance Fund** provides financial assistance for work-related modifications, equipment and services to help people with disability get employment and perform their work as independently and productively as possible. The fund is available to both new and existing employees with disability. More information at [www.jobaccess.gov.au](http://www.jobaccess.gov.au) or call 1800 464 800.

**Wage Subsidy Scheme** provides eligible employers up to \$1,500 (excluding GST) as an incentive to employ a person with disability. The subsidy requires employers to employ the person for a minimum of eight hours a week for 13 weeks, with the intent of achieving sustainable employment. More information at [www.employment.gov.au](http://www.employment.gov.au) or call 1800 464 800.

**Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support** is an Australian Government incentive payable to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice who satisfies the disability eligibility criteria in an Australian Apprenticeship. This wage support is also available to an employer who employs an Australian Apprentice who acquires a disability during their apprenticeship or traineeship. More information at [www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au](http://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au) or call 13 38 73.

**Supported Wage System** is a workplace relations mechanism that allows employers to pay a productivity based wage to eligible people whose work productivity is reduced as a result of disability. More information at [www.employment.gov.au](http://www.employment.gov.au) or call 1800 464 800.





# OBLIGATIONS UNDER AUSTRALIAN LEGISLATION

All businesses are subject to the The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (the Act). The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate, in the provision of goods, services or facilities, against people on the basis that they have, or may have, a disability. It also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis that one of her or his associates has, or may have, a disability.

The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with disability in the following areas:

- Employment
- Education
- Access to premises used by the public
- Provision of goods, services and facilities
- Accommodation
- Buying land
- Activities of clubs and associations
- Sport

Businesses have a legal obligation to ensure all public aspects of their facilities and services are accessible to everyone. The DDA does not require workplace changes to be made if this will cause major difficulties or unreasonable costs to a person or organisation. This is called 'unjustifiable hardship'.

Before claiming that workplace adjustments will create unjustifiable hardship, employers need to:

- thoroughly consider how an adjustment might be made
- estimate the cost of making the adjustment and whether any financial or other assistance is available
- consider the potential benefit of the adjustment for the employee in question, as well as the potential detriment to the organisation
- discuss this directly with the person involved
- consult relevant sources for advice.

Common workplace adjustments include:

- allowing flexibility in working hours
- moving furniture, widening a doorway or providing a ramp
- redistributing some minor duties (not inherent requirements of a job).

NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au).

NSW Inclusion plan 2015 [www.adhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au).

# OTHER RESOURCES

There are a bunch of great resources freely available to businesses online. Check out some of the great examples below:

## **Why inclusion works**

[www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)

## **Employing someone with a disability resources**

[www.and.org.au](http://www.and.org.au)

## **Disability access symbols**

[www.artsaccess.com.au/universal-access-symbols](http://www.artsaccess.com.au/universal-access-symbols)

## **Access checklists**

[www.aarts.net.au/resources](http://www.aarts.net.au/resources)

## **Captioning**

[www.artsaccess.com.au](http://www.artsaccess.com.au)

## **Universal design principles**

[www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

## **Tips for talking to a National Relay Service user**

[www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

## **Accessibility action plan**

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

## **Peer work**

[www.peerworkhub.com.au](http://www.peerworkhub.com.au)

## **The benefits of diversifying your workforce**

[www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au](http://www.nswbusinesschamber.com.au)



# NOTES:

# NOTES:

**This toolkit has been developed by the North West Alliance. If you would like to discuss how to make your business more inclusive or to run training for your staff, contact Ability Links NSW in your area:**

**Central/Far West NSW Region**

Live Better (formerly CareWest)

Phone: 1800 580 580

Email: [info@livebetter.org.au](mailto:info@livebetter.org.au)

**Mid North Coast Region**

Mid Coast Communities

Phone: 02 6650 9771

Email: [abilitylinks@midcc.org.au](mailto:abilitylinks@midcc.org.au)

**Riverina/Murray Region**

Intereach

Phone: 1300 488 226

Email: [abilitylinks@intereach.com.au](mailto:abilitylinks@intereach.com.au)

**Far North Coast Region**

Social Futures

Phone: 1300 792 940

Email: [abilitylinks@socialfutures.org.au](mailto:abilitylinks@socialfutures.org.au)

**New England/Tablelands Region**

Pathfinders

Phone: 02 6771 1527

Email: [abilitylinks@pathfinders-aus.org](mailto:abilitylinks@pathfinders-aus.org)

