



## Care for people living with disability

Disability can take a variety of forms and affect any one or a combination of the person's physical, mental, sensory, psychological and social ability. Disabilities may be congenital, acquired, visible, invisible, transient, permanent, stable, or change over time. Persons living with disability have the right to complete integration and inclusion within the community, family, school and workplace and assistance should be provided for this to take place.<sup>1</sup> The UN Disability Inclusion Strategy identifies that persons living with disability have the right to "full and complete realisation of the human rights of all persons and fundamental freedoms".<sup>2</sup>

### **It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:**

1. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights treaty of the United Nations intended to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disability, be upheld.<sup>3</sup>
2. Providing care for people living with disability is an important aspect of nursing and midwifery.
3. It is the responsibility of all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing\* to work towards an inclusive culture that does not discriminate against or devalue any person's worth or contribution.
4. Nursing and midwifery education programs should prepare all nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing both to assist with care rehabilitation and maintenance of optimal health for the person living with disability. These education programs should also provide the nurse, midwife and assistant in nursing with a greater understanding of the problems faced by people living with disability and their families or primary carer/s. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing having undertaken this education use their skills and attributes that enhance the quality of life for persons living with disability and facilitate the desired degree of independence sought by the person and their families or carer/s.
5. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are important members of the health care team assisting people living with disability. They work in collaboration with the person and their carer/s, as well as with other health professionals and the community to maintain optimal health and independence of the person living with disability.
6. The role of nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing includes assisting people living with disability and their carer/s as needed, in all facets of their lives irrespective of their residential or care setting.
7. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing participate actively and constructively in the development of programs and research that promote integration, acceptance and inclusion of persons living with disability and ensure person-centred, evidence-based care is delivered.
8. From 2017, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) was implemented across Australia to provide long term, high quality support to people living with permanent disability that significantly affects their communication, mobility, self-care or self-management. The Scheme should:
  - a) focus on intensive early intervention, particularly for people where there is good evidence that it will substantially improve functioning, or delay or lessen a decline in functioning.

\*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)



- b) include a comprehensive information and referral service, to assist people living with a disability who need access to mainstream, disability, specialist and community supports and health services.
  - c) ensure that people living with disability who have informal supports (carers and family) in place, are supported by the NDIS to maintain these informal supports. NDIS planning needs to consider factors such as carer's illness and ageing to ensure the full burden of support is not left to the informal carer/s.
  - d) give all Australians assurance that they will receive timely and appropriate support if they have or acquire a disability that leaves them needing daily assistance with everyday life, or if they care for someone living with disability.
9. A transparent monitoring program of the NDIS should be put in place to ensure the main focus of this Scheme is to benefit people living with disability, carers and families.
10. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing support the provision of the most appropriate living options for people living with disability through the delivery of support models that are person-centred, flexible; allow age related lifestyle choices and social integration opportunities, while promoting an holistic approach to the individual's health care needs.
11. Health services, aged care and disability services should coordinate and provide information on the range of local resources available to people living with disabilities.
12. There is a need for specialist disability accommodation to ensure young people with disability are not placed in aged care services but receive the specialist care they require in an appropriate setting.<sup>4</sup>

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Reviewed and re-endorsed November 2012  
Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2015  
Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2018  
Reviewed and re-endorsed May 2021*

#### References

1. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cwth) Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>
2. United Nations (2019). *Disability inclusion strategy*. Available at [https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN\\_Disability\\_Inclusion\\_Strategy\\_english.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/assets/documentation/UN_Disability_Inclusion_Strategy_english.pdf)
3. United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol*. Available at: <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>
4. Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality (2021). *Final report: Care, dignity and respect*. Available at <https://agedcare.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>