

All In

Co-Design and Connect

Access



**Ensuring access to the church
community and activities for people
living with disability.**



Accessible environments benefit everyone

Followers of Jesus Christ are called to work together as one body that facilitates everyone's gifts and strengths so the church can fulfil God's plan to share God's love to the world.

Children and young people living with disability are an indispensable part of that body. How they are included matters to God and to how God's church will thrive because God says they are indispensable.

As Christians we need to facilitate life-enhancing interactions for people living with disability. This means we must address attitude, communication, access and social participation barriers so that opportunities to live, be, and become are equally available to everyone.

"For the body does not consist of one member but of many... God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ... As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you." Nor can the head say to the feet, "I do not need you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable..." (1 Corinthians 12: 14-22, ESV)

Enable participation

"Just ask!"

Access starts by asking the child or young person living with disability, and/or their family what they need and want in order to have easy and meaningful access to church activities. Ask what the specific ways are your church can best provide support.

Create an accessible environment

Accessible environments benefit everyone.

The ramp you build for me will also help the person with a pram or the older person with a mobility aid.

Chill out zones

"Sometimes I need a quiet space."

Chill out zones provide places where people living with disability can go to get away from crowds and noise.

Place a chair, lounge or beanbag in the zone and have available a box of sensory toys and other soothing items. If a room isn't available, use a portable screen to create a quiet corner in a room or consider creating an outdoor zone by placing a picnic table under a tree.



Informed friends

Friends who are informed about the needs of people living with disability can support them to safely undertake various activities. These people are called ‘informed friends.’

Parents say the choice of someone to become an informed friend should be discussed with the child or young person living with disability and their family and is best guided by shared interests and passions.

Choice

Physical safety is important, but it needs to be balanced with providing the dignity of choice of whether or not to take a risk.

Where you can, adapt and accommodate processes and environments to reduce risk and give people living with a disability the choice to have a go, if they want to.

However, remember that people living with disability may want to try things that you think are ‘risky’ or may not want to try things that you think are ‘fun!’

Train your leaders

Focus training on empathy, acceptance, flexibility and patience.

Ensure leaders are aware about how their own attitude, responses, behaviours and actions set the tone of their group. All training must be age-appropriate and focus on being as holistic and participatory as possible. Information sharing must adhere to privacy laws.

Be outcome focused

Plan for success by thinking about what can be done to make something work well for everyone. Be willing to prepare, adjust, adapt and be creative. Be resourceful and engaging in your activities and processes to enable everyone’s enjoyment.



Support for leaders

It will be helpful if leaders can have a few trusted and informed adults they can speak with about any challenges they experience.

Sometimes the child or young person living with disability's parents can provide support, education and suggest ways forward.

Other times, it may be appropriate to ask an educated third party to assist you.

Always be

Prayerful, kind, thoughtful and careful.

This content was developed with young people living with disability, care givers/parents with lived experience, and professionals working with young people living with disability. **Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.**

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