

# Empowering disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction through cross-sector leadership

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People with disabilities (PWD) are excluded from commonly used community engagement methods designed to increase individual self-reliance in disaster. This perpetuates inequity and increases vulnerability because their support needs in emergency situations are not understood. In Australia, vulnerability is further increased because it is not clear whose responsibility it is to address the unique needs of PWD in disasters.

This paper shares the process and outcomes of a five-year cross-sector collaborative partnership in NSW that combined practice wisdom and research evidence from the emergency services, community health and disability sectors. Our collaboration targeted inclusive community engagement to increase the resilience of PWD to disaster.

Disability-Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) depends on effective cross-sector collaboration between emergency managers and community services personnel to remove barriers that stop PWD engaging with DRR activities through principles of accessibility, participation, collaboration and non-discrimination. Together, we have expanded networks of connections that have enabled us to:

- co-design policy guidelines and practice tools
- develop community capacity for DIDRR.

Our work demonstrates that PWD and local community health and disability personnel that support them are ready and willing to be involved in DIRR. We will discuss both facilitators and challenges to enabling DIDRR through cross-sector leadership.

Strengths-based tools and processes contribute to the development of legitimate roles for community providers who have not traditionally been included in disaster risk management. Tools that enable PWD to self-assess their functional capabilities and support needs in emergencies empower self-reliance for disaster resilience.