



Australian Government  
National Emergency  
Management Agency



RECOVERY EXERCISING TOOLKIT  
ELECTIVE MODULE

AUSTRALIAN DISASTER RESILIENCE HANDBOOK COLLECTION

# Community Inclusive Recovery Practice: Coordinating recovery support for people with disability

Companion to *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018) and *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2017)

This document complements *Community Recovery* (AIDR 2018) and *Managing Exercises* (AIDR 2017). It is available as an online resource on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub: [knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/recovery-exercising-toolkit](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/recovery-exercising-toolkit)

## Attribution

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## Description

### Why run this module?

Coordinating Support for People with Disability is designed to give participants a common understanding of the impacts of disasters for people with disability. It emphasises both the strengths and support needs of people with disability and their capability to contribute to emergency management and recovery planning.

Emergency management and recovery planning has not traditionally included people with a disability. For too long, disability has been kept in the too hard basket because government and emergency services have not had the methods, tools, and guidance on how to include people with disability. Coordinating support for people with disability needs to be a key consideration in recovery planning.

This module will raise awareness of the issues and provide direction and strategies for the development of disability inclusive emergency planning. This module promotes the importance of including people with disability in planning so that their support needs are identified and planned for. Disability inclusive emergency planning aims to:

- increase individual preparedness by people with disability in partnership with the services that support them, including government and emergency services; and
- support more effective emergency planning, response, and recovery practices that protect the safety and well-being of people with disability by considering the extra support needs that increase disaster risks.

### Target audience

- Emergency Management Committees/ Disaster Management Groups
- Recovery Committees
- Disaster management and recovery practitioners

### How to use this module

Supporting people with disability in emergency planning and recovery can be complex. It is made easier when everyone understands the role that they can play and how they can work together. Exercise participants will bring a range of experiences, some with a lived experience of disability or as a carer, as well as professional experience in an emergency or recovery role with disaster affected communities.

It is strongly recommended that the module be conducted as a whole group activity with all exercise participants. This module will be of benefit to everyone, regardless of their level of knowledge and experience.

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**Session duration:** 60 minutes

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## Aim

The aim of this module is to increase an understanding of the capabilities of people with disability, promote participation of people with disability and learn strategies for disability inclusive emergency planning and recovery.

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## Objectives

1. Increase participants understanding of how people with disability are disproportionately impacted before, during and after disaster and what this means for recovery planning and service arrangements.
  2. Increase understanding of emergency management and recovery committees' role in disability inclusive emergency planning and recovery and the importance of working in partnership with people with disability, the services that support them and their representatives/advocacy organisations.
  3. Identify action-oriented strategies to increase access, inclusion and support of people with disability in recovery.
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## Pre-session planning for facilitators

The module overview, slide deck and video are designed to support facilitation of the session. You do not have to be an expert in working with people with disability. Access and Inclusion Officers in councils can be a good support in facilitation of the module and often have relationships with local Disability Support Organisations and Disabled People's Organisations (DPO).

If there is a strong pre-existing relationship with a local DPO or a Disability Support Organisation, a good option can be to talk with them about having a representative co-facilitate this module with you.

Be aware of who the Disability Support Organisations and the Disabled People's Organisations are in your area.

Familiarise yourself with the content of this module and watch Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve's video on [Disability Inclusive Recovery Planning and Arrangements](#). You can also read her paper: Villeneuve, M. (2021). Issues Paper: Clearing a path to full inclusion of people with disability in emergency management policy and practice in Australia. Centre for Disability Research and Policy. The University of Sydney, NSW, 2006.

Review your regional/local emergency/recovery plans for references to people with disability. Consider the ways that people with disability and their support needs have, or have not, been addressed in planning documents.

Search plans for the following terms:

- Disability/disabilities
- Chronic health
- Mental health
- Vulnerable/vulnerable groups
- Elderly/frail elderly

Where did these terms turn up in your search? (e.g., community profile; health and well-being subplans). Do these plans help you understand what people with disability can do/need support for in emergencies? Do these plans help you to take effective actions to protect the safety of people with disability in emergencies?

Use this information to introduce the module and set your local context. In your area to what degree has there been planning with people with disability and the organisations that support them?

The Readings and Resources section at the end of this module provides further information to support background context and expand your knowledge of this topic.

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## Topic Overview - facilitator presentation

*Supported by facilitator guide and slide deck*

### This module covers:

#### Disproportionate risk

A growing body of literature confirms that people with disability are among the most neglected during disaster events, with particularly restricted access to social networks and other sources of support.

#### Meet Gary

Gary Matthews woke up on the morning of February 15, 2008, to discover his flat was flooded. Emergency services came to rescue him, but they couldn't take his wheelchair.

Watch the video here: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpzKSyL1E5g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpzKSyL1E5g) (Video length 3:20)

People with disability:

- are two-to-four times more likely to die in a disaster than the general population
- experience higher risk of injury and loss of property
- have greater difficulty with evacuation and sheltering
- require more intensive health and social services during and after disaster events.

Problems for people with disability during recovery stem from the fact that they are overlooked in emergency management planning, response drills, and recovery planning/exercises. This means that emergency personnel lack information about:

- how prepared people with disability are for emergencies,
- what they can do for themselves before, during and after disaster,
- what they need support for.

## Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR)

Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) means making sure that the needs and perspectives of people with disability and the people who support them are included in all stages of emergency management: prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The strategies that we use in DIDRR to make things inclusive for people with disability will also help in planning with other groups at greater risk in emergencies, including older people, people facing homelessness and socially disconnected people.

## International and national policy frameworks

**Including people with disability and their representative organisations as legitimate stakeholders in emergency and recovery planning is now a planning requirement, not an optional extra.**

Australia, as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), has to find ways to ensure everyone is well prepared for disasters triggered by natural hazards. This includes people with disability and their support networks.

### Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31

*Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31* includes, for the first time, targeted action on disability-inclusive emergency management and disaster recovery planning. This is significant because it requires all governments, community organisations, and businesses to include people with disability in their emergency management and disaster response and recovery planning.

This means that:

- everyone must find effective ways to include the voices and perspectives of people with disability in planning and decision-making to increase the health, safety, and well-being of people with disability before, during, and after disasters.
- emergency and recovery planning should include the services that support people with disability as a local community asset for emergency planning and recovery. Planning for emergencies must extend to working with disability service providers to help them to understand their disaster risks and make effective plans for their services, staff, and the people they support.
- government and emergency services need to find ways to work in partnership with people with disability and the services that support them – **because disability-inclusive emergency planning and disaster recovery require collaborative effort.**

## Key roles of different organisations in disability inclusive planning

Some organisations are particularly well-positioned to play a key role. They are:

- Disabled People's Organisations (DPO)
- Community services and disability support organisations
- Local government
- Emergency personnel, including volunteers

## Disabled People's Organisations (DPO)

Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) are led by and for people with disability. Their purpose is to serve and represent their members with disability. DPOs and their members can play a significant role in disaster policy, planning and community-level preparedness. Through their lived experience and leadership roles as disability advocates, DPOs represent the voices and perspectives of their members with disability.

DPOs have:

- in-depth understanding of the factors that increase risk for people with disability in emergencies
- access to informal networks of support and communication.

## Community, health, and disability support organisations

Community, health, and disability support organisations are local community assets with the potential to increase safety and well-being for people with disability in emergencies. Recent research has recognised the interdependence of people with disability and their support providers in achieving safety and wellbeing before, during and after disaster.

Disability support organisations (DPO) can represent the voice of service providers in emergency planning and play a significant role in disaster policy, planning and recovery arrangements. They are in an optimal position to inform local emergency and recovery planning because they have:

- in-depth knowledge of the individual clients they serve, their functional capabilities and support needs, their family and community context
- pre-existing relationships with clients and their family/social networks
- local area knowledge of the community
- have access to informal networks of support and communication.

Community, health, and disability support organisations can increase safety and well-being for people with disability in emergencies by:

- making sure that everyone they support has a personal emergency plan; and
- having a business continuity plan for how to maintain services and supports during times of emergency. Community and disability support organisations are harnessing this potential.

Disability service organisations can represent the voices of service providers in emergency planning.

**Only DPOs can represent the voices of people with disability.**

**Remember this when you are reviewing your emergency plans. You may have consulted with services and advocacy organisations, but has your planning process included meaningful participation of DPOs? This information is needed for community level emergency management and disaster recovery planning but is not readily available to emergency personnel.**

## National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Practice Standards

In November 2021 the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission signed a legislative amendment to the NDIS Practice Standards. This amendment requires all National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) registered service providers to ensure that support plans include personal emergency preparedness and service continuity planning that supports the health, safety and well-being of the people they support. This includes ensuring continuity of supports which are critical to the safety, health, and wellbeing of NDIS participants before, during and after a disaster and working with their clients to undertake risk assessments and include preparedness strategies within their individual support plans.

This is a new responsibility for service providers, and it will take time for them to develop their capabilities and confidence in emergency and disaster management planning with the people they support. It will require strong relationships to be built between the emergency management sector and disability service providers.

**It is important that the NDIS Legislation doesn't become a tool for the emergency sector to shift responsibility over to services. This legislation is a tool to support Australia's vision and objectives for responsibility sharing.**

The emergency management sector has a responsibility to ensure that emergency and recovery planning includes the services that support people with disability as local community assets for emergency planning and recovery. It also means that planning for emergencies must extend to working with disability service providers to help them understand their disaster risks and help them to make effective plans for their services, staff, and the people they support.

## Role of local government

Councils have excellent links to community groups that are crucial to building resilience for people with disability before, during and after disaster. They can use these linkages to increase inclusion for people with disability and the services that support them in emergency and recovery planning.

## Role of Emergency Management Committees

Emergency Management Committees develop emergency plans to keep their whole community safe when disaster strikes. These plans must include people with disability and their support needs, otherwise people with disability will get left behind when council enacts their plan. Local emergency plans must take into consideration the extra supports that people with disability need and how they will be organised and delivered in emergencies.

Understanding how people with disability and the services that support them navigate care, services, and support before a disaster is a good starting point for making sure that they have continuous access to those supports after a disaster.

Recovery planning must make sure that recovery services and supports are inclusive of people with disability. This may require extra planning for how recovery services will connect up with mainstream community and disability services (formal/paid services and supports which may have been impacted by the same disaster).

Emergency Management Committees need to work in partnership with local Disability Representative and Advocacy Organisations to review their emergency management arrangements (policies, practices and activities) to ensure disability inclusion and representation in local emergency management planning practices.



### Guided question:

Re-visit your emergency and recovery plans – how is planning for people with disability and their extra support needs included in your emergency and recovery planning processes?

- What are the strengths?
- What are the areas for improvement?
- What else do you need to do?
- What DPO in your community can you reach out to for support?

### Planning for the extra support needs of people with disability in recovery

In the past, there has been some confusion about whose role and responsibility it is to include people with disability in emergency planning. It has been difficult for emergency personnel to include people with disability when they have not had effective tools, capacity, and training to do so.

The Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) Toolkit provides guidance and tools for local councils and emergency services personnel to assist in planning for the support needs of people with disability.

[collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/p-cep-resource-package](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/p-cep-resource-package)

If we can understand what people with disability can do for themselves and the extra support needs, they have following a disaster, then we can better plan for recovery supports and services that are matched to their support needs and situation. This also means understanding how they manage their support needs every day and the people/services they rely on – and whether and how those services are impacted by disaster.

**If people with disability are not included in the planning process, they will be left behind in recovery.**

**Planning for recovery services and supports (health and well-being, case management, community development, recovery support, etc) must ensure equitable access for people with disability on par with the rest of the community impacted by disaster.**

### Inclusive emergency management planning

Planning conversations to co-design approaches to inclusive emergency management and disaster recovery can start at any time, preferably before a disaster, but also as part of recovery planning after a disaster. After a disaster, the following questions are a good starting point for conversations with people with disability and the organisations who represent them to plan for recovery:

- What was the impact of the disaster on people with disability?
- What could have been done differently to improve the situation?
- Do people with disability have equitable access to disaster recovery information, services, supports?
- What is the impact of recovery services on the safety and well-being of people with disability recovering from disaster?
- How can we make sure that people with disability have the services they need?

These questions can be found in Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve's Issues Paper. The paper brings together lived experience and literature to build a picture of the roadblocks to safety and wellbeing for Australians with disability.

The paper puts forward a suite of practical actions that institutions with responsibility for emergency management and other stakeholders can undertake. The 'Questions to Ask' are included on page 25 of the Issues Paper:

**Villeneuve, M. (2021). Issues Paper: Clearing a path to full inclusion of people with disability in emergency management policy and practice in Australia.** Centre for Disability Research and Policy. The University of Sydney, NSW, 2006. [www.daru.org.au/resource/clearing-a-path-to-full-inclusion-of-people-with-disability-in-emergency-management-policy-and-practice-in-australia](http://www.daru.org.au/resource/clearing-a-path-to-full-inclusion-of-people-with-disability-in-emergency-management-policy-and-practice-in-australia)

New questions can, and should, be added to strengthen planning conversations as they develop.

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### Reflections on disability inclusive recovery planning

In this video Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve shares her wisdom on the importance of planning for emergencies with people with disability and the organisations that support them, and the things that are important to consider in planning for recovery.

Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve is Deputy Director, Centre for Disability Research and Policy at The University of Sydney. Michelle's international program of research addresses inequities that people with disability experience in everyday living and situations of natural hazard disaster, and other emergencies

Video: [Disability Inclusive Recovery Planning and Arrangements](#)

Video length 6 minutes.

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### Good practice tips for recovery committees

- Be aware of the Disabled People's Organisations and the Disability Support Organisations in your area.
- Disabled People's Organisations can play a significant role in disaster policy, planning and interventions by representing their members and allowing their voices to be heard. Connect with local community and health organisations that support for people with disability in times of disaster.
- Make sure your committee has disability representation or links to community services reference groups and that this is reflected in your plans.
- Listen and respond to the issues raised by people with disability. It builds trust and mutual learning for disaster resilience.
- Review your emergency and recovery plans – what needs to change to make sure people with disability and their extra support needs are included in your emergency and recovery planning processes?

## Case study discussion

**This case study is included on the accompanying slide deck. Use the case study as a basis for break-out group discussions.**

Robyn Clifton was stuck in her wheelchair for four days and forgotten after a cyclone.

[Meet Robyn](#)

### Breakout Group Discussion

How will you make sure that people with disability have access to recovery services and supports?

(e.g., evacuation centres/recovery hubs; community meetings; case management support; community development; mental health recovery; transportation; water/food/power; health and social well-being/recovery committees, etc.)

- What are your **experiences**?
- What are the **opportunities**?
- What are the **challenges**?
- What local organisations/assets can support you?

**Have each group report back on their key learnings and discuss as a large group plenary.**

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## Take away messages

- People with disability are among the most neglected during disaster events, with particularly restricted access to social networks and other sources of support.
- Emergency and recovery plans must take into consideration the extra supports that people with disability need and how they will be organised and delivered in emergencies.
- People with disability must be included in the development of local emergency and recovery plans, otherwise people with disability will get left behind in a disaster.
- Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) can play a significant role in disaster policy, planning and interventions by representing their members and allowing their voices to be heard.
- Including people with disability and their representative organisations as legitimate stakeholders in emergency and recovery planning is now planning requirement, not an optional extra.

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## Next steps and actions

- Invite a disability representative to speak to your emergency management/ recovery committee or Local Disaster Management Group about DIDRR.
- Review all emergency management documents for accessibility and add alternative text (alt text) to images and figures. This helps everyone to learn about and understand their disaster risks.
- Review your emergency and recovery plans – how is planning for people with disability and their extra support needs included in your emergency and recovery planning processes?

- What are the strengths?
  - What are the areas for improvement?
  - What else do you need to do?
  - What DPO in your community can you reach out to for support?
- Include people with disability in emergency planning by forming a working group or community of practice that brings together people with different talents who have a shared interest in disability inclusion.
  - Learn about Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness and host workshops to begin P-CEP conversations in your community in partnership with people with disability. Contact [michelle.villeneuve@sydney.edu.au](mailto:michelle.villeneuve@sydney.edu.au) or Queenslanders with Disability Network: [qdn.org.au/our-work/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction](http://qdn.org.au/our-work/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction)

## Module evaluation question

**Include this question in your Recovery Exercise participant feedback form.**

The recovery exercise has increased my understanding of the importance of emergency and recovery planning with people with disability and the organisations that support them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Module development

The Recovery Exercising Toolkit and accompanying Modules have been developed by the National Emergency Management Agency.

Modules are developed with the expert advice, content and support of subject matter experts. The Coordinating Support for People with Disability Module was developed in partnership with Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve.

Associate Professor Michelle Villeneuve is Deputy Director, Centre for Disability Research and Policy at The University of Sydney. Michelle’s international program of research addresses inequities that people with disability experience in everyday living and situations of natural hazard disaster, and other emergencies. Her research informs both conceptual and practical dimensions of interprofessional collaboration and resource utilisation. She brings to this research over 20 years of experience working in regions of conflict and natural hazard disaster to develop community-led programs and services, and re-build opportunities for people with disability.

## Readings and Resources

Villeneuve, M. (2021). **Issues Paper: Clearing a path to full inclusion of people with disability in emergency management policy and practice in Australia**. Centre for Disability Research and Policy. The University of Sydney, NSW, 2006. [Clearing a path to full inclusion of people with disability in emergency management policy and practice in Australia – Disability Advocacy Resource Unit \(DARU\)](#)

### **Collaborating for Inclusion, Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) Resource Package**

<https://collaborating4inclusion.org/disability-inclusive-disaster-risk-reduction/p-cep-resource-package/>

### **Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction (DIDRR) in action**

- Ipswich City Council: *Listening and learning from people with disability*, [collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy\\_7\\_FINAL.pdf](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy_7_FINAL.pdf)
- Rockhampton's *Inclusive Risk Assessment*, [collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy\\_8\\_FINAL.pdf](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy_8_FINAL.pdf)
- *Taking disability out of the too hard basket*, [collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Research\\_in\\_Brief\\_3\\_FINAL-Taking\\_Disability\\_out\\_of\\_the\\_Too\\_Hard\\_Basket.pdf](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Research_in_Brief_3_FINAL-Taking_Disability_out_of_the_Too_Hard_Basket.pdf)

### **Case studies:**

- Robyn Clifton [www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-03/robyne-clifton-stuck-in-wheelchair-for-four-days-after-cyclone/100799942](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-03/robyne-clifton-stuck-in-wheelchair-for-four-days-after-cyclone/100799942)
- Gary [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpzKSyl1E5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpzKSyl1E5g)
- Listening and learning in Ipswich [collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy\\_7\\_FINAL.pdf](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CaseStudy_7_FINAL.pdf)

### **Australia's Disability Strategy 2021 -31**

[Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31](#)

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme**

[NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Commission legislative amendment](#)

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**Other Modules that link to this topic can be found on the AIDR [Recovery Exercising Toolkit page](#)**



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