

What is a Disability?

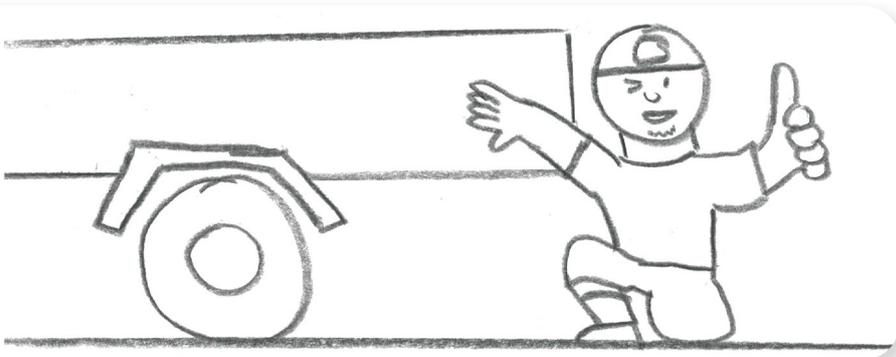
A disability is an impairment that may be cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical, sensory, or some combination of these. It substantially affects a person's life activities and may be present from birth or occur during a person's lifetime.

Disabilities is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) defines disability as:

- total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions
- total or partial loss of a part of the body
- the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness
- the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body
- a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction
- a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment, or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes disability that:
 - presently exists
 - previously existed but no longer exists
 - may exist in the future
 - is imputed to a person (meaning it is thought or implied that the person has disability but does not)





There are many different kinds of disability and they can result from accidents, illness or genetic disorders. A disability may affect mobility, ability to learn things, or ability to communicate easily, and some people may have more than one.

A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary and may have minimal or substantial impact on a person's abilities.

Although some people are born with disability, many people acquire disability. For example, a person may acquire a disability through a workplace incident or car accident, or may develop a disability as they age.

Types of Disability

The extent of impairments and medical conditions covered by the DDA are set out below:

Physical: affects a person's mobility or dexterity

Intellectual: affects a person's abilities to learn

Mental illness: affects a person's thinking processes

Sensory: affects a person's ability to hear or see

Neurological: affects the person's brain and central nervous system

Learning disability

Physical disfigurement

Immunological: the presence of organisms causing disease in the body

Who are People with Disability?

Disability is part of human diversity, the only difference is that often people with disability come up against significant barriers while trying to do the things that many of us take for granted.

People with disability are part of every section of our community: men, women and children; employers and employees; students and teachers; indigenous and non-indigenous; customers; and citizens. No two people with the same disability experience their disability in the same way.

The only thing that distinguishes a person with disability is they may require some form of adaptation/adjustment to enable them to do certain things in the same way as people without disability.

