Inclusive Practice is Good Practice

A Tasmanian State Disability Liaison Officer Initiative

A co-operative project of the Tasmanian post-secondary education and training sector

Inclusive Practice is Good Practice

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Tasmania

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CONTENTS

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'Reasonable Accommodations: Strategies for teaching university students with disabilities', produced originally in 1991 by the University of NSW, the University of Sydney, Macquarie University, and the University of Technology, Sydney. Revised edition compiled in 1993 by the University of Canberra and the Australian National University.

'Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: A Resource Guide for Staff' compiled by the Flinders University of South Australia, the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia.

'Responsibility: People with Disabilities – Skilling Staff in Vocational Education, Training and Employment Sectors', produced by the National Staff Development Committee on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1994.

'AccessAbility Kit' authored by Michele Stephens, Des Power and Merv Hyde, Griffith University, 1991.

'Learning Disabilities in Higher Education' produced by Monash University and The University of Melbourne, 1995.

'Alternative Assessment' written by Martina Jordan and Nancy Rogers, 1993.

'RDLU Information Series', compiled by the Victorian Regional Disability Liaison Unit.

Acknowledgment is also made of material reproduced with the permission of Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., Westport, CT from the publication 'Accommodations or just good teaching? Strategies for Teaching College Students with Disabilities', edited by Bonnie M. Hodge & Jennie Preston-Sabin, 1997.

The author expresses gratitude to these institutions and publishers for permission to use their material.

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SECTION 1

Introduction

The introduction of anti-discrimination legislation has motivated more people to access education and training opportunities, whilst notifying institutions and organisations that practices which overtly or inadvertently discriminate are illegal. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) tells us that appropriate adjustments to the learning environment have to be made to lessen the impact of the disability. This applies not only to physical access barriers and the provision of support services, but also to teaching and learning strategies, assessment methods and administrative policies. Thanks to these changes, many students are achieving success and going on to participate in their chosen careers.

As an educator, you may accept the legislation in principle, but finding locations, resources and time to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student and trainee population is not so easy.

- Do you have problems creating physically accessible learning environments?
- Are you encountering difficulties 'including' students with disabilities within your current teaching/training and assessment practices?
- Do your methods of instruction seem inappropriate for students with disabilities?
- Have you felt daunted by the need to change your practices to accommodate the requirements of students with disabilities?
- Do you find it time consuming to have to present information in a variety of formats to cater to student needs?

Consider reworking the way you educate /deliver/administer to become more 'inclusive' and you may discover that you do not have to make major changes to the way you currently operate.

1.1 About This Resource

Inclusive Practice Is Good Practice aims to promote understanding of the needs of students with disabilities. It provides concise reference information and guidelines for staff working in different education and training settings, whether it be within TAFE Tasmania, the University of Tasmania, the Australian Maritime College or other providers of Vocational Education and Training. It will also be of assistance to administrators and general staff.

Whilst it cannot cover in detail all possible teaching and training situations, it can provide you with ideas for practical inclusive strategies which can be readily applied in your teaching environment.

This booklet encourages examination of work practices and challenges the reader to work in a more inclusive way. The focus of this publication is primarily on students with disabilities, but development of more inclusive policies and practices will benefit all students.

How do I use it?

Inclusive Practice Is Good Practice consists of

- This Introductory Booklet which provides:
  - a general overview of inclusive practices; and
  - a summary of the current legislative requirements and the rights and responsibilities of staff and students.
- Fact Sheets which provide detailed information, guidelines, examples of good inclusive practice, case studies and practical strategies relating to:
  - physical access
  - access to information/study materials
  - assistive technology
  - curriculum adjustment
  - inclusive assessment

see Appendix C for the index of Fact Sheets

The Fact Sheets can be obtained individually or as a complete set from the resource personnel listed on page 17 of this booklet or from your organisation's Library.

If you need further help, a range of support personnel are available to assist you in the process of meeting your students' requirements. (See page 17 for contact details).

A note about content and terminology…

While many of the inclusive strategies highlighted in this package are relevant to teaching practices throughout the sector, there are fundamental differences between systems in such areas as assessment and curriculum / training design and delivery. To reflect this, separate suggested guidelines have been developed for each different institution and are presented in the Fact Sheet series.

For staff seeking additional specific information, the reference listing on page 22 will direct you to a range of excellent resource guides, videos and websites.

Throughout *Inclusive Practice Is Good Practice* the following general terminology has been used for ease of reading:

- **'Teacher'**
  refers to all staff involved in the direct delivery of education and training programs including: Lecturers, Trainers, Tutors, Instructors, Assessors (both internal and external), Program Co-ordinators and Job Coaches
- **'Student'**
  includes trainees, apprentices and employees undertaking workplace training and assessment
- **'Tertiary Education and Training Provider'**
  includes, within Tasmania, the University of Tasmania, Australian Maritime College, TAFE Tasmania and other vocational education and training providers.

1.2 Attitude is everything…

Where students have succeeded it has usually been because staff have been prepared to give the student 'a fair go', treating the person as an individual and not pre-judging their abilities.

Flexibility is the best tool for inclusive practice and a closed mind is the greatest barrier. Some of the factors that can get in the way are:

- lack of experience of disability;
- fear of upsetting or offending someone;
- assuming that we can't improve our current practice; and
- myths.

A large number of students still choose not to disclose their disability. This is their right and may occur because they fear being stigmatised, are uncertain how you will respond, or they are unaware of the support services available to them. Displaying a positive approach to inclusion by extending an early invitation to students to discuss their needs with you, may alleviate the students concerns about disclosure.

Disabling Myths

Students don't want to be singled out, over protected or discriminated against. They just want a 'fair go' and access to services which will enable this.

Revising our perceptions and attitudes is the first step in including all students. It is useful to compare some common myths about the education, training and employment of people with disabilities with the reality.

Myth: *Equal opportunity means that everyone should be treated the same – so students with disabilities are not entitled to support services.*

Reality: Equal opportunity means all people should be treated in a way that enables them to achieve their potential. Provision of support services assists students with such tasks as reading and processing information, conducting library research, preparing assignments, photocopying and performing manual procedures.

Myth: Students with disabilities are more likely to drop out of courses than other students, even when given support.

Reality: Students may withdraw from study or training courses for the same range of reasons as other students, but they are no more likely to do so. Indeed, recent statistics from research conducted by the University of Tasmania, demonstrates that students who have access to required services, are less likely to withdraw than students who do not have a disability.

Myth: Students with disabilities are too time consuming and their needs are too difficult to cater for in a university, institution or training environment.

Reality: Students are highly motivated to attend tertiary education and training and overcome any barriers they may encounter during their participation. They are usually very well organised and experienced in finding solutions to problems which may initially appear daunting to staff.

Myth: Science, medical, technological, business, and applied science courses are not suitable for students with disabilities.

Reality: This statement stems from preconceived ideas about people's capabilities, accommodating their course needs and future employment options. Students have the same right as others to aim for careers consistent with their goals, interests and abilities and should not be denied opportunities because of such preconceptions.

Myth: Students with disabilities create substantial costs through the need to provide extra equipment and additional staff time.

Reality: Not all students will require assistive equipment or additional learning support staff. Site modifications, if necessary are often simple and low cost (eg. a student with paraplegia used a window-washer's belt hooked to the chemistry work bench to allow her to stand with both hands free).

Support personnel, such as tutors and note takers, can in some cases assist the student independently of teaching staff.

Myth: People with disabilities will be less attractive to employers because they will be less efficient, less reliable or unsafe employees.

Reality: A number of research studies indicate that this is untrue. People with disabilities value their work role, have fewer injuries and many are more efficient and lose fewer work days than people working with them who do not have a disability.

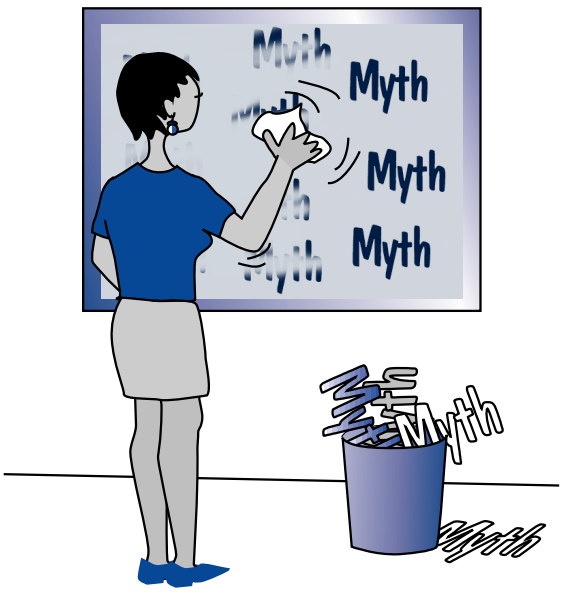
Myth: Students with disabilities are better off if they study through external courses.

Reality: Confinement to external study alone can restrict opportunities for interaction in a stimulating social, intellectual and learning climate. Many qualified students with disabilities want to study/train on-campus – they should have that option.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Stephens M., Power D. and Hyde M., *AccessAbility kit. Project AccessAbility:* Division of Education, Griffith University, Queensland, 1991.

Macquarie University, University of New South Wales, University of Sydney and University of Technology, Sydney, *Reasonable accommodations: strategies for teaching university students with disabilities.*, Sydney, 1991.



SECTION 2

Strategies for inclusive practice

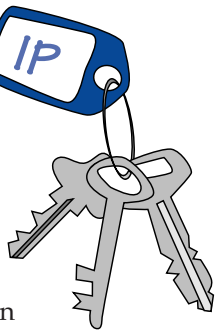
'The establishment of good communication is the foundation to student success'

(Hodge & Preston-Sabin, 1997)

You can't be all things to all students, however, by adopting inclusive practices there will in fact be less demand made on your time and resources by the individual. Some students will have individual requirements. Where this is so, the best solutions for maximising participation come about when the teacher and student work together to develop creative alternatives. Resources to assist this process are available within institutions' support services, and the broader community. (see page 17 for details).

2.1 The keys to inclusive practice are your...

- **Awareness**
  - that adjustments made to afford inclusion are a right not a favour
  - access involves more than physical access. Information needs to be made available in accessible formats
  - consultation with students facilitates appropriate provision



- **Flexibility**
- **Imagination**
- **Innovation**
- **Patience**
- **Communication**
- **Common Sense**

Good Practice

An email sent from a University Lecturer to a student who has a visual impairment:

Dear Roberta,

I will be your new theory lecturer this semester, so I just wanted to make contact with you to let you know this. Please feel free to e-mail me any time if you need help with anything in theory, or if there are things I'm not doing helpfully enough for you in class!

As well as a final exam for theory, I will give two written tests, one on Aug 14 and the next one on Sept 11. We should meet at some point so you could let me know how to administer these, and other homework assignments.

I have scheduled office hours for Tuesdays 9–11am and Fridays 10–11am, or by appointment if these times don't suit, so you can come and talk with me outside of class if necessary during the semester. My office is room 109, and I have a mailbox on the 2nd floor for messages and homework.

I look forward to meeting you next week.

Dr Maria Grenfell

2.2 Main principles

There are four main principles informing inclusive teaching practice.

1. While some students with disabilities may learn or perform in ways different from others they are still part of the student body as a whole.

2. Students with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other students.

3. Students with disabilities are not an homogeneous group: their individuality, particular strengths, aspirations and needs must be recognised.

4. It is not the disability itself, but the effect the disability has on the student's ability to access, learn and demonstrate knowledge and skills which is relevant.

Factors to consider

- Students may have needs that are not visibly obvious such as hearing, vision, learning or psychiatric disability.
- In some instances, the consequences of medical conditions, eg. diabetes or epilepsy, may have a disabling effect. Other students may have disabilities such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy or multiple sclerosis which can be associated with various impairments.
- Students with similar disabilities may require different adjustments.
- Students may not be fully aware of the consequences of their disability in the study/training arena. Students who have recently acquired a disability through illness or accident may still be learning how to adjust. During the course, their ability to function may vary and they consequently have difficulty in adjusting to their situation. Therefore the effectiveness of adjustments to the course curriculum and assessment may also vary.

2.3 How can I make my practices more inclusive?

Focus on inclusive strategies for all students, then on any individual requirements.

There are a number of practical ways in which students can be assisted, such as giving class notes and handouts ahead of time and permitting lectures to be taped. This practice, if implemented, may be of benefit to all students. Sometimes students with disabilities will need more time to complete tasks, assignments and/or examinations.

General inclusive strategies

Prior to students commencing their course:

- When collating/preparing course materials, lecture notes etc., always attempt to do so in electronic format.
- Where possible, negotiate with students directly regarding their needs and consult others, eg. disability services staff, as necessary (see page 17 for details of who can assist you).
- Make required book lists and course materials available to allow students to begin their reading and preparation early. Extra time to read material is often important.
- Provide students with chapter outlines, task analyses or study guides that cue them to key points in their reading.
- If students need existing hard copy materials in accessible formats eg on disk or tape, this needs to be organised early as the process takes some time.

  Your institution's disability support staff can assist with information, advice and resources.

- Orientation to the laboratory/workshop and equipment before classes start, can minimise students' anxiety.

During the course:

- Use a variety of teaching methods and presentation styles.

- Use plain english and minimise the complexity of communications.
- Arrange seating thoughtfully and face toward the class whilst speaking.
- Stay on the topic; demonstrate; use concrete examples.
- Rephrase information if students do not understand.
- Write key points and assignments on the board and/or on handouts.
- Ensure that there is effective communication between yourself and the students. This may mean reading aloud material that is written on the blackboard or overhead transparencies.
- In laboratory or workshop situations, the labelling of equipment, tools and materials is helpful.
- Some flexibility with assignment deadlines, assessment practices and extra reading time may be appropriate and will ensure students are not disadvantaged because of their disability.
- Ask if assistance is required, don't assume it is, but be alert to the student's needs.
- Resolve safety issues, if they exist, in a manner which respects the student and his/her rights.

Other factors to consider

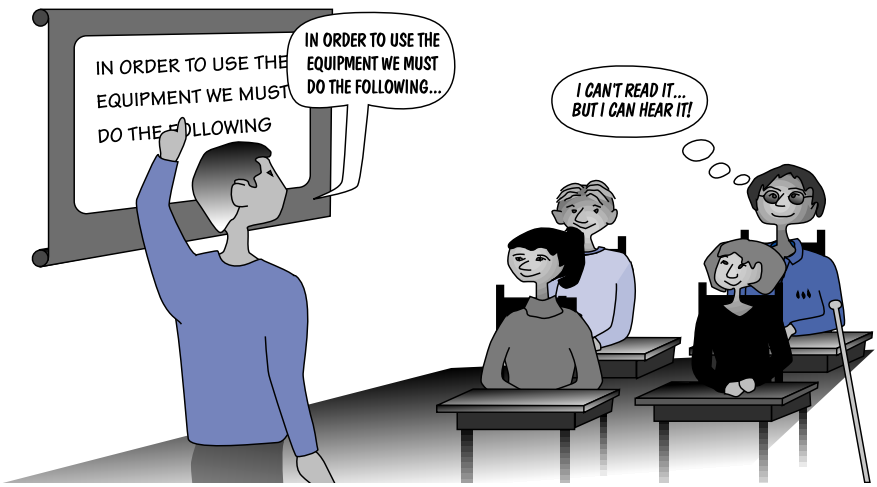
- In communicating with students, consider;
  - » the way in which the disability affects capacity to participate;
  - » is the condition permanent or temporary?
  - » are symptoms constant or do they fluctuate? – are there periods of latency?
- It is important to distinguish between the more subtle effects of conditions and apathetic behaviour. Effects of medication may cause chronic weakness, drowsiness, fatigue and memory problems. These difficulties need not preclude students from success in the long run.
- The student using a wheelchair or other equipment may have difficulty getting to sessions on time. Others may have periodic or irregular difficulties, as a result either of their disability or side effects of medication. Understanding the reasons for late or irregular attendance and being flexible in applying attendance rules would be helpful.

More specific guidelines and examples can be found in Appendix A and the series of Fact Sheets.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Flinders University of South Australia, The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, *UNIABILITY – Students With Disabilities in Higher Education: A Resource Guide For Staff* , University of South Australia, Adelaide, 1993.

Reference:
Hartmann, R. and Redden, M., *Measuring student progress in the classroom: a guide to testing and evaluating progress of students with disabilities.* Health Resource Centre, Washington DC, 1985.



2.4 What about physical access?

Education and training providers are required by law to provide physical access to their buildings and facilities. (C'Wth DDA 1992). In practical terms this means that a student or staff member with a disability could lodge a complaint if for example: they were unable to access a classroom because it is located on the second floor of a building which has no lift, or if the presence of heavy doors prevented their access to the library.

Try to think of access more broadly than ramps, lifts and toilets. Examples of some other factors requiring consideration include:

- signage, eg. for a person with a vision impairment using facilities within a building;
- facilities such as vending machines or counters within buildings;
- visual indicators of emergency situations such as evacuations;
- switches and lighting
- parking facilities for vehicles used by people with a disability; and
- hearing augmentation systems in auditoriums.

Sometimes we don't see ourselves as individually having a role to play in addressing these barriers but we all share responsibility and there are a range of strategies we can adopt to improve access in our own immediate working environment. Consider:

- how accessible your classroom/lecture theatre/laboratory/workshop is;
- physical adjustments that could be made to the facility and equipment;
- seating arrangements which maximise all students' ability to see and hear;
- what your attitude could be if you are requested to move your class to another venue that is accessible; and
- what provisions would need to be made on required field trips/work experience/work place training/practicals/workshops.

It is important to recognise that:

- students who have a sensory disability, use a wheelchair or experience other forms of mobility impairment can have ***different needs***;
- whilst some access problems are complex, steps can be taken to creatively develop solutions in partnership with students. Not all solutions will be high tech or involve a great deal of time and money; and
- improving access will benefit not just the individual but many other students and staff, both present and future.

The process of meeting access requirements can be made easier by:

- consulting with students and others well before they commence a course, as early notification allows time for preparation;
- investigating the possible use of existing expertise within your organisation (eg maintenance or engineering staff are usually adept at determining, in partnership with the student, modifications that can be applied in a cost effective and timely manner); and
- advocating, on an ongoing basis, for access issues to be addressed in the development of new facilities or modification of existing ones.

Fact Sheet 1 provides specific information regarding physical access and details personnel who can assist you with further information and advice.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Hehir, Leo (Ed.), *RDLU Information Series,* www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/infosheets.html (18 September 1997).

ResponseAbility – People With Disabilities – Skilling Staff in Vocational Education, Training and Employment Sectors. Staff Development Kit. National Training Authority, 1997.

2.5 What about access to information/study materials?

Students require access to information and study materials in a format which best meets their needs. The importance of making materials available in electronic format cannot be overstated because, with the aid of technology, this format renders information accessible to almost everyone. (eg. a student who is blind or visually impaired can, from disk material, print out a large print copy, read it on a computer screen using screen enlargement software, listen to it via a voice synthesiser or convert it into braille.)

Good Practice:

☑ ***As standard practice at the University of Tasmania's School of Education, all lecture notes and readings are accessible to students via electronic mail.***

There are a range of alternative formats and a number of strategies which can be applied in the process of successfully assisting the student to access the information they require.

Your institution's disability support staff can assist you with information, advice and resources.

a) What type of alternatives exist?

Those which provide printed materials in accessible formats include:

- **COMPUTER DISK**
- **AUDIO TAPE**
  Lecture or training sessions can be readily taped using an audio cassette recorder. Students who experience writing difficulties can also provide information on audio tape. More complex needs, eg. taping of a text book, usually require the recording to be made using high quality equipment and highly trained staff working to exacting standards.
- **BRAILLE**
  Braille can be produced directly by a typist using a braille embosser. Larger quantities of text are usually produced from computer text-file format and printed out using a braille printer. (See fact sheet 3.2)
- **LARGE PRINT**
  (text and diagrams/images)
  Usually achieved through a process of photocopying or utilisation of text enlarging computer software. (See fact sheet 3.12) For some students the use of a hand or sheet magnifier or closed circuit television (CCTV) can be a more useful option. (See fact sheet 3.3)
- **TACTUAL GRAPHICS**
  Allows the representation of visual images on braille type paper or in some cases, live using a special mat which produces a relief image.

Further alternatives include:

- **CAPTIONING**
  For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, video captions may assist their interpretation of material presented audiovisually.
- **CONVERSION TO PLAIN ENGLISH VERSIONS**
  For students who experience difficulty accessing information which has been written in complex language, material can be rewritten in 'plain English' format. This may particularly assist students who have an intellectual disability, some forms of learning disability or for Deaf students whose first language is AUSLAN.

b) Providing accessible format materials

Accessible formats can take time to prepare so planning ahead is important.

TEACHERS can greatly assist students by:

☑ wherever possible, providing materials in electronic format;

☑ inviting them at the earliest possible stage to notify you of their specific needs;

☑ providing early access to course materials, some of which may include such

items as reading lists, assignments, course notes and curriculum information. The conversion of a text book to audio tape, may take up to three months;

- ☑ varying the methods used to present information; and
- ☑ providing the library with timely access to updated course information, for example, reading lists.

Contacts for further information about arranging accessible material are listed on page 17.

LIBRARIES can assist significantly through the provision of:

- ☑ extended library loan periods or access to telephone or electronic borrowing; and
- ☑ physical assistance to students who require it eg. accessing books from shelves, accessing printed and computer based catalogues, photocopying.

c) Use of support personnel

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to engage the services of support personnel in order to assist students to gain access to, or provide information.

- **SIGN INTERPRETERS**
  provide an essential support for Deaf students who use signed English or Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) to communicate. They interpret spoken English into signed language.

- **READERS**
  assist students who are unable to read print (eg. some students who are blind or those who experience involuntary head movements). They also assist some students who access auditory information better than visual information (eg. some students with learning disability or acquired brain injury).

- **NOTETAKERS**
  assist students who experience difficulties in being able to take class notes of their own. The Notetaker can be a student who is studying the same class or a person from outside the class who has the appropriate skills and background.

- **SCRIBES** (Also called a writer or amanuensis) assist students who:
  - » are unable to write or type (eg. some students with quadriplegia or cerebral palsy);
  - » have reduced writing speed or loss of endurance for writing (eg some students with muscular dystrophy or an injury to the dominant hand or arm);
  - » experience pain when writing (eg. in the case of overuse injury or some forms of arthritis).
  - » are restricted in their ability to maintain the posture needed for writing or typing;
  - » present information better in an oral form than in a written form (eg some students with learning disability).

  The Scribe's job is to record the student's work.

- **PERSONAL ASSISTANTS**
  are people who follow the student's instructions to help them complete manual tasks (eg turning pages, inserting computer disks, removing their coat) or, in some cases, assist with personal care tasks during rest breaks.

Please refer to Fact Sheet 2 for specific strategies regarding access to information.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following source:

Rodgers, Nancy and Jordan, Martina, *Alternative Assessment for Students With Disabilities,* Griffith University, Queensland, 1993.

2.6 How can technology assist?

Assistive technology, particularly computer based, plays an important role in assisting some students to access and successfully complete education and training courses. New software packages now make it possible to speak to your computer and have it type what you say or have the computer read to you what's on the screen.

Some other examples:

- software that provides enlarged text, voice and/or Braille output and/or closed circuit televisions to magnify materials;
- voice recognition software which produces typed work on a computer;
- a personal FM system which amplifies sound;
- specialised computer software programs which assist some students with learning disability with essay writing;
- ergonomically designed chairs which support a person's posture and help alleviate pain; and
- head pointers or mouth joysticks which can be used to control computers.

Factors to consider

- Technology is an assistive aid, not a 'cure all'. Assistance from teaching staff is often more important.
- One piece of equipment may work well for one student but not for another, even if that person appears to have the same functional impairment.
- Students may be aware of and knowledgeable about technology, or they may have unrealistic expectations regarding its capabilities. They may require time to become proficient in its use.
- Access to assistive equipment may be restricted by cost.
- Students who need to use assistive technology and ergonomic equipment are not gaining any unfair advantage over others. They use such equipment in an attempt to minimise the effects their disability has on their learning.
- 'High tech' remedies are not always called for as a 'low tech' solution may be possible. Many ingenious designs and uses of low cost materials have provided students with adaptations needed to participate.

Good Inclusive Practice

☑ **Communicating early with students allows time for effective strategies to be put in place and for you to gain an understanding of how the technology works in assisting students.**

☑ **Find out about the limitations of the technology. Having realistic expectations about its capabilities will help in the process of determining teaching strategies and appropriate assessment methods to meet student requirements.**

☑ **Often students would prefer to hide the fact that they use such equipment. You can assist students by being sensitive to this and not drawing undue attention to them.**

☑ **Avoid making assumptions about what students can and can't do as, in many instances, technology is available which can assist them to achieve what may**

If you are unsure about any aspect of the technology or its use, contact someone with experience. (See page 17 for contact details)

Fact Sheets 3 – 3.14 provide details of a range of assistive technologies; who can assist you; and suggested guidelines for inclusive practice.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following source:

National Training Authority, 1997.

2.7 What makes curriculum inclusive?

The key element in curriculum planning is to forge strong links between planned educational intentions, course content, teaching and learning methods, and the assessment of student learning while taking full account of student characteristics.' (UniAblity, 1993)

As is the case with assessment practices, many teachers feel hesitant about instigating or agreeing to adjustments being made to course curriculum. Concerns appear founded in a belief that course standards may be compromised and in turn, the students' ability to attain professional registration/ industry requirements may be impeded. Curriculum adjustment is not about 'watering down' training or academic requirements and standards or making the course 'easier' for some students. Curriculum adjustments should not compromise the required skills or knowledge for a particular course.

Curriculum adjustment is about ...

- examining content and/or delivery processes to find alternative ways for students to achieve equivalent learning outcomes/ essential competencies/academic standards;
- providing ways to minimise the impact of students' disabilities upon their performance without compromising course standards; and
- challenging existing practices and procedures in order to develop more inclusive ways of designing and delivering curriculum

The Competency Based Training (CBT) system can accommodate the needs of different styles of student learning whilst examination based courses appear less flexible in this regard. However, by carefully examining course requirements to identify what is essential, teachers, in close consultation with students, have determined alternative ways for students to achieve academic requirements.

Example: a situation occurred where the course required that a student perform practical experiments. The outcomes rather than the manual skills were deemed to be the essential course requirements. A student who had insufficient manual dexterity and fine motor control to do the experiments was instead able to work with a 'buddy' to observe and record the results.

There are a number of ways in which courses can be made more inclusive. Increasingly, teachers are successfully utilising technology to build in flexibility to the courses they design and deliver. The emergence of choices in:

- mode of learning (eg external studies, 'open learning', mixed mode, 'on-line learning' or 'flexible delivery'); and
- more considered attention to course scheduling (eg. part-time attendance being made more convenient, availability of 'summer schools', mid year entry to some University courses) have proved beneficial for all students.

Good inclusive practice

When determining appropriate adjustments, it is useful to consider:

1. ***What alternative methods of instruction are possible? eg:***
   - **greater focus on the practical demonstration of skills rather than theory**
   - **making course materials available on the Internet**
   - **modification of practical components to accommodate the needs of students who have a mobility or sensory impairment**
2. ***What auxiliary aids might be useful? eg:***
   - **assistive technology**
   - **tutorial support**
   - **a 'buddy' to assist the student to complete physical tasks**
3. ***What other methods of assessment of competencies/ academic knowledge are possible?*** *(See Fact Sheet 5 for suggested assessment adjustments)*

Refer to Fact Sheet 4 for suggested guidelines for the flexible design and delivery of curriculum and specific examples of adjustments.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Monash University and University of Melbourne, *Learning Disabilities in Higher Education,* (Kit) Monash University, 1995.

National Training Authority, 1997.

Flinders University of South Australia, The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, 1993.

2.8 Inclusive assessment practices

Assessment affects students in many powerful ways as for many, obtaining a pass or achieving competencies is their primary motivation. Should the assessment method prevent students, because of their disability, from demonstrating their skills and knowledge, then the potential for discrimination and for making serious errors of judgement about an individual is evident.

It is a legislative requirement that, wherever it is necessary and reasonable to do so, teaching staff take into account a student's disability, and make appropriate adjustments to assessment procedures to reduce the impact of the disability.

Determining the reasonableness of modifications to assessment is an obvious area of concern for staff. In circumstances where the student's disability does not affect their cognitive abilities, adjustments can be readily agreed upon and implemented (eg provision of assessment materials in Braille or on tape to a student who has a visual impairment with additional time being granted to complete the assessment).

The process may appear more difficult in a situation where the student's cognitive abilities have been affected due to the effects of:

- a learning disability;
- acquired brain injury;
- psychiatric disability;
- deafness or hearing impairment (especially if the condition occurred as a child);
- a medical condition;
- side effects of medication.

The student may experience problems with understanding or processing written information, fatigue, memory, concentration, reading or writing. In such circumstances, it may be appropriate for the student and yourself to involve a disability adviser and, where necessary, a relevant specialist to assist in the process of helping you to determine suitable assessment strategies.

There is no single formula or set of rules to assist in this process, however, a range of inclusive assessment strategies have been used very successfully in universities and training institutions in Australia and overseas.

Inclusive assessment strategies should always;

- be negotiated by the student and staff
- consider the individual student's needs
- maintain the integrity of academic standards and competency requirements. The same academic and skill requirements should be applied to all students whether or not they have a disability.
- be applied flexibly
- where possible, be applied to all students, rather than singling individuals out, eg. extended reading time may not diminish the competency standard.

The purpose of inclusive assessment is to...

- minimise the impact of the student's disability upon assessment performance and so accommodate the functional differences which exist because of the disability;
- place such students on a more equal footing with non-disabled students, not to give them any additional advantage; and
- provide all students with the opportunity to perform to their potential.

Examples of possible inclusive assessment strategies

Listed are examples of the considerable range of alternative assessment which exist. Most of these strategies tend to be directed towards examination-style assessment which may not initially appear relevant to some courses. However, in the same way that assessment can be structured differently, student learning can also be measured in a variety of ways, and readers are encouraged to consider the following alternatives in light of whatever assessment practices currently exist within their courses.

Use of specific personnel

- Sign Interpreter
- Reader
- Scribe (also called a writer or amanuensis)
- Personal Assistant

Computers/specific software/ electronic aids

- personal computers
- word processors
- voice synthesisers (speech interactive)
- closed circuit televisions
- software:
  - » spelling checkers
  - » grammar checkers
  - » thesauruses
  - » print enlarging software (enlarges text on a screen)
  - » voice activated software (Text input via voice, enables the computer to respond to the users vocal commands)

Assessment materials in accessible formats

- computer disk
- materials in braille (an embossed language used by some people who are blind)
- use of audio tape
- use of video tape

Adjustments relating to time

- additional time
- breaks
- flexible time arrangements:
  - » changes to scheduled assessment times within a given day
  - » changes to scheduled examination dates and times within the assessment period
  - » assessments split into more than one session

Venue related changes

- separate room / venue
- provision of appropriate furniture – desk / chair heights and slopes
- adequate space for equipment and specific personnel

Alternative type of assessment

- additional assignments instead of examinations
- use of simulators, role plays, case studies
- selecting another method of assessment (eg, essays; short answer questions; multiple-choice tests; direct observation; oral examinations; and structured practical assessment)

Oral assessments

- oral questions
- oral answers

Further information and examples of alternative assessment strategies are contained in Fact Sheet 5.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Flinders University of South Australia, The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia. 1993

Hehir, Leo (Ed.), RDLU, 1997.

Rodger, and Jordan, 1993.

SECTION 3

What the law says...

Legislative requirements

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act (1992) provides protection against discrimination on the grounds of disability. This protection includes both direct and indirect forms of discrimination.

Direct discrimination

means treating people with a disability less favourably than people without a disability would be treated under the same circumstances.

Indirect discrimination has two aspects:

- Where there is a condition or requirement imposed (eg in the format of assessment in a subject) which may be the same for everyone but which unfairly excludes or disadvantages people with disabilities in a manner that is unreasonable.
- When a person treats another unfavourably on the basis of a characteristic that appertains generally to people who have such an impairment, or on the basis of a presumed characteristic that is generally imputed to people who have such an impairment. (eg. a lecturer refuses to allow a student with a visual disability to undertake laboratory work because of concerns that blind people are a safety risk).

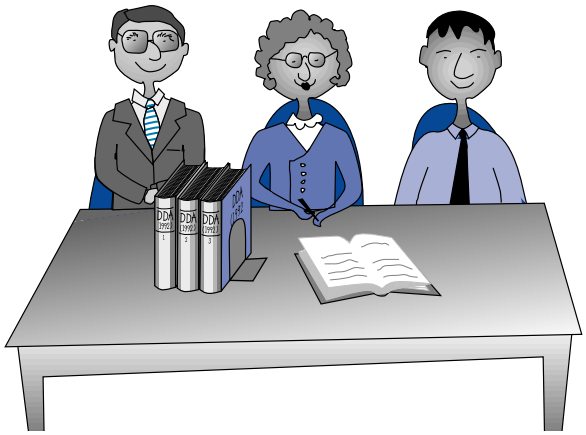
It is also unlawful for a person who is a staff member of an educational institution to:

- harass a student on the basis of disability;
- victimise (threaten or treat unfavourably) a student with a disability who has lodged a complaint under anti-discrimination legislation; and/or
- discriminate against people because of their association with a student with a disability.

The definition of disability is intentionally broad and includes physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory, neurological and learning disabilities. Physical disfigurement, and the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease (eg HIV) are also covered by the Act.

In practical terms this means that education and training providers

'must ensure that a person with a disability is not discriminated against and must make changes to any practices or procedures that deliberately or inadvertently discriminate. The principle of adjustments and accommodations also applies to teaching, learning and assessment.'
(Source: RDLU Information Series, 1998)



Examples of changes:

- physical alterations to buildings;
- provision of services eg. notetakers, readers, sign interpreters; and
- provision of information in accessible formats.

Duty of Care and Common Law Negligence

'A duty of care is owed to all students by the educational or training authority and their staff. This duty exists at all times where there is a staff/student relationship. Authorities will be responsible for the actions of staff except where a member of staff is acting in a manner completely outside his or her duties.' (UniAbility), 1993

Some staff are concerned that the involvement of students with disabilities in their class somehow increases their risk of being sued for negligence. This fear appears based on an incorrect assumption that the safety record of people with disabilities is poorer than for other people.

> ***'It is not possible to generalise that the mere presence of a disability poses an insuperable safely hazard, any more than it is valid to assume that the absence of disability means a person will employ safe procedures.'***
> ***(UniAbility), 1993***

Staff are most commonly concerned about safety issues in regard to practical and laboratory work. Barrett Swanson and Steere have suggested a series of useful guidelines to assist teachers working with students with disabilities in these settings. (Contact your relevant support service listed on page 17 to access this information).

Reference:
Barrett, Swanson A., & Steere, N., *Safety considerations for physically handicapped individuals in the chemistry l aboratory*, Journal of Chemical Education, vol 58, no 3, March 1981.

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

Flinders University of South Australia, The University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia, 1993.

Hehir, Leo (Ed.)., RDLU 1997

SECTION 4

Rights and responsibilities: we all have them...

Students with disability have the right to:

- an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs/courses offered through the University of Tasmania, the Australian Maritime College, TAFE Tasmania and other community and private providers of vocational education and training;
- be evaluated based on their ability, not their disability. If a disability disproportionately affects the outcome of an evaluation method they are entitled to an evaluation by alternative means;
- an equal opportunity to learn. If the location, delivery system, or instructional methodology limits their access, participation, or ability to benefit, they have a right to reasonable alterations in those aspects of the course to accommodate their disability;
- an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from access to all services, extracurricular activities, housing, and transportation at a level comparable to that provided to any student;
- appeal an institution's/training body's decisions concerning accommodations;

They have a responsibility to:

- identify themselves as requiring support services in a timely fashion should they choose to seek such services;
- demonstrate or document how their disability affects a particular delivery system, instructional method, or evaluation criteria when requesting accommodation;
- actively participate in identifying inclusive strategies which would be effective in meeting their need;
- meet and maintain the institution's/organisation's fundamental academic and technical standards as any student does.

Institutions and their staff have the right to:

- identify and establish the abilities, skills, and knowledge necessary for success in their programs/courses and to evaluate applicants on this basis;
- request and review documentation that supports requests for accommodation.

They have a responsibility to:

- inform applicants and students about the availability and the range of support services;
- communicate with the student regarding their accommodation requirements;
- assess students based solely on their abilities;
- ensure that all of their programs/services are accessible;
- make reasonable adjustments in the delivery, instructional method, and assessment system for a course when these have a disproportionately adverse impact on a disability
- adjust, substitute, or waive any requirement/course that has a disproportionately adverse impact on a disability and is not fundamental to the student's academic/training course

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Accommodations or just good teaching?
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SECTION 5

Students with disabilities:

Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions

Following extensive consultations with institutions and providers, a national Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions was established during 1998.

The Code of Practice:

a) **establishes principles and guidelines for planning and delivery of services to students with disabilities across the tertiary education and training sector;**

b) **recommends national minimum standards of service and support; and**

c) **identifies and documents examples of good practice in institutional responses to students with disabilities.**

Copies of the Code are available from the personnel listed on page 18 and at the following website address:

www.qut.edu.au/pubs/disabilities/national_code/code.html

Source:

O'Connor, B., Watson, R., Power, D., and Hartley, J., *Students with Disabilities: Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1998.

SECTION 6

Who can assist?

Disability Liaison Officers and Disability Advisers are specialist staff employed in this state by the University and TAFE Tasmania to coordinate support services for students with disabilities and provide a resource to staff within these institutions. They can assist you through the provision of:

- information and access to further resources;
- a 'sounding board' and source of ideas in situations where solutions may not be immediately obvious;
- a link to specialist personnel in agencies outside your organisation; and
- a third party in the communication process between yourself and your student.

TAFE Tasmania

TAFE Tasmania employ Disability Liaison Officers who can be contacted at:

Student Services Unit – Hobart
Phone (03) 6233 7843
(South)

Student Services Unit – Launceston
Phone (03) 6336 2702
(North)

Student Services Unit – Burnie
Phone (03) 6434 5804
(North West)

University of Tasmania

The University of Tasmania employ Disability Advisers who can be contacted at:

Student Services Hobart
Phone (03) 6226 2381
(South)

Student Services Launceston
Phone (03) 6324 3787
(North and North West)

Australian Maritime College

At the Australian Maritime College this role is fulfilled by staff of the Student Support Unit who can be contacted at:

Connell Building MF9
Newnham campus
Phone (03) 6335 4792

Other Agencies

Other agencies providing vocational education and training can access advice on inclusive practices from:

VET Programs Unit
Phone (03) 6233 4570

Office of Vocational Education and Training (OVET), Dept of Education, Training, Community & Cultural Development

For more detailed information about who can assist you and how, refer to fact sheet 6.

APPENDIX A

Examples of inclusive practice...

- ☑ Extra time permitted for assignment work and class notes provided on computer disk for a student who had difficulty reading because of a specific learning disability.
- ☑ Captioning of videos to ensure that a Deaf student in a Business Management class had access to the information presented via this medium.
- ☑ Notetakers in an Office Skills course utilised to support two students with different disabilities.
- ☑ Student who had difficulty writing due to a physical impairment provided with access to voice recognition software and a computer to enable her to independently complete assignments.
- ☑ Examination paper converted to Braille format for a student who is blind.
- ☑ Mechanisms developed to cover missed work/assignments for a student who has regular absences due to illness.
- ☑ Comprehensive management plan devised in conjunction with student/staff/peers for student with low tolerance to environmental irritants in a Trades related course.
- ☑ The instructor of a TAFE class verbalised the content of all visually displayed materials for a student who had difficulty reading the board and overheads because of her visual impairment.
- ☑ Tactile 3D periodic table produced for a chemistry student who is blind.
- ☑ Notetaking services provided for a deaf student studying at University. Visual aids also used to assist instruction.
- ☑ Peer support/reference person organised for student with an intellectual disability in mainstream training who occasionally displays inappropriate social skills.
- ☑ Small support network and mechanisms established to help maintain a student who experiences panic attacks due to an anxiety disorder.
- ☑ Class handouts and exercises put on computer disk for a student who is blind and uses text-to-speech software.
- ☑ Consideration towards incorrect spelling, poor grammar and essay structure given during the assessment process for a student who has a specific learning disability.
- ☑ Student with diabetes given permission to eat during her University examinations to assist her in maintaining her health.
- ☑ Teacher wore a lapel microphone and repeated or paraphrased comments made by students during lectures and tutorials in order to provide access to this information for a student in the class who had a hearing impairment and used a FM transmitter.
- ☑ Arrangements made by TAFE teacher to conduct tests at different times or days if the student needed extra time so as to not draw attention to the student whilst in a classroom situation.
- ☑ Assessment format changed to allow student who experienced extreme exam anxiety the option of completing additional assignments to fulfil the essential requirements of the course.
- ☑ Overhead transparencies provided in hard copy format to a student who experienced difficulty reading overheads due to a visual impairment.
- ☑ Separate room and supervisor arranged for a student who could not physically access the examination room in her wheelchair.
- ☑ In an Office Administration course, a student who is blind could not write up petty cash vouchers and bank reconciliations but used a computer-based bookkeeping system to achieve these tasks.

The Equal Opportunity Unit, University of South Australia's publication, *Where there's a will, there's a way,* provides a series of case studies written by teaching staff which illustrate further inclusive strategies. They can be accessed on the internet at: www.unisa.edu.au/eqo/pubs/wtawtaw/preface.htm

Acknowledgement is made of material reproduced with permission from the following sources:

The University of New South Wales, The University of Sydney, Macquarie University and the University of Technology. 1993
National Training Authority. 1997

APPENDIX B

Appropriate language and behaviour

People with disabilities prefer that the focus is on their individuality, not their disability. The preferred term, 'people with disabilities', stresses the essential humanity of individuals and avoids objectification.

Some staff may initially feel apprehensive about discussing the details of a student's disability face to face. The student will probably have had some experience with this kind of uneasiness. Using terms such as 'blind', 'see' and 'walk' need not be avoided but care should be taken not to generalise a particular limitation to other aspects of a student's functioning.

Some recommendations:

- Never use the article 'the' with an adjective to describe people with disabilities, eg. use 'people who are blind (or visually impaired)' rather than 'the blind'.
- The terms 'able-bodied', 'physically challenged', 'differently abled' and 'sufferer' are strongly discouraged.
- Be careful not to imply that people with disabilities are to be pitied, feared or ignored, or that they are somehow more heroic, courageous, patient, or 'special' than others. Never use the term 'normal' in contrast.
- A person in a wheelchair is a 'wheelchair user' or 'uses a wheelchair'. Avoid terms that define the disability as a limitation, such as 'confined to a wheelchair', or 'wheelchair-bound'. A wheelchair provides new opportunities rather than confines the user.
- Never use the terms 'victim' or 'sufferer' to refer to a person who has or has had a disease or disability. This term dehumanises the person and emphasises powerlessness, eg. use the term 'person with HIV' rather than an 'HIV sufferer'.
- Be perceptive about problems but do not make assumptions and do not take charge. Respect that students are in control of their lives, can make decisions and do not need pity.
- Speak normally and do not exaggerate lip movements, pitch and volume.
- Allow enough time for communication.

Sources:

University of NSW et al (1993) and Flinders University of South Australia et al, (1993)

Further References:

Equal Opportunity Unit, University of Melbourne, *What did I say? Using non-discriminatory language*, Author, Melb.

Queensland University of Technology, *Working with Diversity – A guide to inclusive language and presentation for staff and students*, QUT, Qld.

APPENDIX C

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Measuring student progress in the classroom: a guide to testing and evaluating progress of students with disabilities.
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Western Australian Department of Training.
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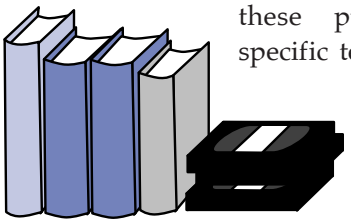
RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

There are a number of excellent publications and online resources available which detail inclusive practice information. Many of these publications present specific teaching strategies for students with different types of disability.



Books and Resource Kits

Inclusive Practices

- O'Connor, B., Watson, R., Power, D., and Hartley, J.,
  Students with Disabilities: Code of Practice for Australian Tertiary Institutions,
  Commonwealth of Australia, 1998.
  Available online at:
  www.qut.edu.au/pubs/09other/code/code_contents.html
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  Teaching Everyone – Disability and new Technology, a Guide for Teachers,
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Videos

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  Creative Teaching: Inclusive Learning,
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- Villamanta Publishing Service Inc.,
  Inclusive Practices – Optimum Outcomes, Training Package,
  Villamanta Publishing Service Inc., 1996.
  VHS 9mins
- Greater Washington Educational Telecommunications Association Inc., Lovoie, R.D., (Principal Author),
  How Difficult Can This Be, (Understanding Learning Disabilities)
  Author: USA, 1989
- Sally Ross for Mental Health Branch, Department of Human Services & Health,
  One in Five: Living with a Mental Illness
  NSW Video Production Unit, 1993, VHS 24 mins

Websites and Resources available on the Internet

- ***GATEWAYS***
  www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/gateways/gateways. htm
- ***DIRECT*** (Directory of Disability Resources for the Education Community – Tertiary)
  direct.deakin.edu.au/
- ***TIPD*** (Tertiary Initiatives for People with Disabilities)
  www.qut.edu.au/pubs/09other/tipd/tipdhome. html
- ***RDLU*** (Regional Disability Liaison Unit, Victoria)
  www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/

  RDLU Information Series
  www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/infosheets.html

  Making It Happen
  www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/MIH.pdf

  Science Laboratory Access Manual
  www.deakin.edu.au/extern/rdlu/lab.pdf
- ***Reaching More Students*** – Griffith University
  www.gu.edu.au/gwis/gihe/rms_book.html
- Canberra Institute of Technology 1994
  Resource Handbook for Teachers of Students with Disability
  macserv1.canberra.edu.au/careers/Lv2_5f/
- ***Project LABSS*** (Auburn University at Montgomery, USA)
  www.aum.edu/home/services/special/labss.htm
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  Education to Employment (Package)
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  ***Employ*ability,**
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  Plain English at Work. How it cuts costs, how it can work for you,
  www.deetya.gov.au/pubs/plain_en/
- DEETYA,
  Guidelines for inclusive and key competency – rich course/module development,
  www.deetya.gov.au/vet/guide/appendia.htm
  (1997)

TASMANIAN ORGANISATIONS

Tasmanian Tertiary Education Disability Advisory Committee Ph. 03 6273 1150

Royal Guide Dogs for the Blind Association Tasmania
Hobart: Ph. 03 6232 1222
Launceston Ph. 03 6331 8100
Ulverstone Ph. 03 6425 6322

Tasmanian Deaf Society
Hobart: Ph. 03 6249 5144
TTY 03 62491174
Launceston: Ph. 03 6344 0555
TTY 03 6344 0515

Australian Communication Exchange National Relay Service
Ph. 13 2544

Speak Out Tasmania Inc.
Hobart: Ph. 03 6231 2344
Burnie: Ph. 03 6431 9333

Richmond Fellowship Tasmania Inc. Ph. 03 6233 4056

Asthma Foundation Ph. 03 6223 7725

Cerebral Palsy Association of Tasmania Ph. 03 6272 0222

Paraplegic & Quadriplegic Association of Tasmania Ph. 03 6238 1874

Rheumatism & Arthritis Foundation of Tasmania (RAFT)
Hobart: Ph. 03 6234 6489
Launceston: Ph. 03 6344 8116
Burnie: Ph. 03 6431 1795

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Tasmania
Hobart: Ph. 03 6224 4111
Launceston: Ph. 1800 654 872

Headway Support Services
Hobart: Ph. 03 6228 8296
Launceston: Ph. 03 6331 4322

Allergy Recognition and Management
Ph. 03 6278 1054

Motor Neurone Disease Association of Tasmania Inc. Ph. 03 6227 9219

Tasmanian Amputee Society
Ph. 03 6427 9411

Tasmanians with Disabilities
Ph. 03 6278 8023

Physical Disability Council of Australia (Tas Branch) Ph. 03 6268 1654

Independent Living Centre of Tasmania Ph. 03 6334 5899

CRS Australia
Hobart: Ph. 03 6221 1523
Launceston Ph. 03 6334 3888
Burnie Ph. 03 6431 6533