



Disability Leadership in Advocacy

What does Disability Leadership mean

Disability leadership is where people with lived experience of disability are guiding and influencing in positions of authority and have the power to enact real meaningful change within organisations, government, and society.

It is deeply embedded in the principle of “*nothing about us, without us*”.

Rather than looking at disability as a barrier, it reframes it as an asset that presents a unique viewpoint on true accessibility, creativity and inclusive decision making.

Why is Disability Leadership Important

Disability Leadership is important because it ensures that decisions are made by and with people with disabilities in matters that affect them. Their innovative, creative thinking and approaches create a more accessible and equitable world.

Leaders with disabilities champion the principle of “*nothing about us, without us*” and given that disability is an asset part of human variation and an aspect of diversity, they can drive true innovation and dismantle systemic barriers.

For Disability Advocates

Elevating Disability Leaders in Advocacy

Elevating the voice of people with disability is critical in disability advocacy. This requires centring their voices, ensuring they have access to decision making spaces and assisting them to dismantle any systemic barriers in their way.

- Ensure that you are shifting the narrative from “speaking for” to “speaking with” – are you presenting the person with disability with opportunities to support them to participate in spaces where they have the opportunity to have their voices heard at leadership level i.e. on government boards
- Consider investing in formal and informal training that builds policy and advocacy knowledge – things like training in policy, public speaking and self-advocacy skills for emerging leaders is really useful
- Consider opportunities for systemic advocacy that you could support emerging leaders with disability to be involved in – i.e.: bringing them along to meetings with Ministers or other officials to talk about barriers to housing, transport, justice etc.



For People with Disabilities

As a person with disability, you are likely an interventive thinker and a change maker already. You have had to adapt and become innovative in a world which often doesn't meet your access needs. This has provided you with the ingenuity and resourcefulness to lead, challenge norms, and create change. Lean into your lived experience – your adaptability, problem solving and empathy are fantastic professional assets.

Elevating your Disability Leadership

- Build your capacity to become build your leadership by leveraging your individual and unique experiences, focusing on your strengths and embracing authenticity
- Find mentors in your sector to provide support and guidance
- Seek our specific training in leadership, policy, public speaking and self-advocacy
- Connect with organisations within your networks like the Disability Leadership Institute to connect with other disability leaders.

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Resources

The Disability Leadership Institute <https://disabilityleaders.com.au/>

Leadership Plus <https://afdo.org.au/leadership-plus/>

Women with Disabilities Victoria <https://wdv.org.au/leadership-programs/>

Australian Disability Network <https://australiandisabilitynetwork.org.au/how-we-can-help-you/increasing-board-and-executive-representation/>

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