CENTRE FOR DISABILITY RESEARCH AND POLICY
Maximising economic and social participation of people with disabilities
The Centre for Disability Research and Policy will make a significant contribution to national and regional efforts to redress the profound disadvantages faced by people with disabilities.

Our aim is to enable people with disabilities to have an equal opportunity to realise their potential and participate productively in society.

Our emphasis is on research and real-world analysis of the problems faced by people with disabilities, and on providing practical policy solutions to governments, service providers and policymakers.

### The Problem

In 2011 the first-ever World Report on Disability suggested that more than a billion people worldwide experience disability. This figure is expected to rise due to population ageing, growth in chronic health conditions and in response to trends in environmental factors.

People with disabilities experience more disadvantages than those without disabilities. These include poorer health; lower education levels; less employment and lower earnings when they are employed; lower levels of social contact; and higher rates of poverty.

Globally, disability is more common among older people, the poor and women. A large proportion of the world’s disabled, 650 million, live in our region, the Asia Pacific.

For more information, visit [www.who.int/disabilities/world_report](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report)
THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

About 15 percent of Australians experience disability lasting five years or longer. How can we ensure they have the opportunity to fully participate in society?

Many Australians are living with long-term physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disability or a chronic health condition. Not all of these disabilities are obvious; mental illness, intellectual disability, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease and chronic pain are often not evident to the casual observer.

People with disabilities experience significant economic and social disadvantages. Young disabled Australians are particularly vulnerable. They are five times more likely to experience long-term unemployment than other young people, and are less likely to be able to obtain Year 12 or post-school qualifications and more likely to live in a jobless household than non-disabled youth.

Between 2001 and 2011 the gap between young disabled and non-disabled Australians actually widened. The lack of opportunity for people with disabilities to participate fully in employment and society results in a huge loss to individuals, families, communities and the economy.

Governments need better knowledge and evidence to develop legislation and build programs to enable people with disabilities to participate more fully. We need effective monitoring systems to assess the scale of the problem and to measure the impact of policies and programs.
OUR CENTRE

The Centre for Disability Research and Policy will bring together leading academics in disability to explore new frontiers of knowledge and effect change.

We will focus on research, policy development and teaching across five streams:
- disability and disadvantage
- disability services
- disability inclusive development
- disability and mental health
- the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

The streams are all led by professors from the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Health Sciences.

A FOCUS ON COLLABORATION

We will work closely with other bodies within the University of Sydney, including the Sydney Medical School, Sydney Law School, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Menzies Centre for Health Policy Research, and the Centre for Disability Studies, to address the real-world problems faced by people with disabilities.

To deepen Australia’s understanding and knowledge about disability, we will also partner with academic institutions both in Australia and overseas and form linkages with disabled people’s organisations, service providers, governments, non-government organisations and international agencies. We will work closely with people with disabilities, and their organisations.

OUR MISSION


The Convention aims to “promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity”.

We will work to achieve the goals of the Convention, which include redressing the profound social disadvantage of people with disabilities and promoting their participation in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres with equal opportunities.

In addition to its research and policy focus, the centre has a teaching function and a strong commitment to communicating its knowledge to benefit people with disabilities and the wider community.
QUESTIONS WE WANT TO ANSWER

A number of key questions will inform our work.

DISADVANTAGE

What is the nature of the disadvantage and discrimination that people with disabilities in our region face?

What are the personal, social and economic costs?

Are certain groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women and older people, at more risk of disability and disadvantage?

How well is disadvantage and discrimination being combated?

What helps some people with disabilities be more resilient in the face of disadvantage and discrimination?

THE REGION: ASIA PACIFIC

How do we prevent and respond to the disabling consequences of diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, road accidents, natural disasters, diet and substance abuse?

What models can we develop to support and empower people with disabilities in both community and specialist services?

How can we make these models accessible to policymakers in those countries?

What is the experience of people with disabilities of institutional and community-based rehabilitation? What are the respective benefits?

MONITORING AND OUTCOMES

How can we better record and report on disadvantage and discrimination?

Australia lacks a national system of measuring outcomes. What would one look like?

What are the outcomes for people who use disability services?

How can mainstream interventions be adapted to meet the needs of specific groups?

What are the barriers to policy implementation, and to the take-up of successful practices?

How can we improve the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to disability services?

MENTAL HEALTH-RELATED DISABILITY

What are the determinants of mental health-related disability?

How do we measure mental health-related disability?

How will the National Disability Insurance Scheme help people with this disability?

What are the mental health issues for people with other disabilities?

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, how should resources best be allocated to individuals?

How should the scheme link with other support systems, such as health, housing, compensation, income security and workforce development?

How can access to services – including mainstream services – be improved?

What is the best way to develop data about the scheme and link that to other disability data?

What impact will the scheme have on disadvantaged groups?
One of the aims of the centre is to disseminate its research findings, which means that teaching across disciplines is fundamentally important.

We will strive to attract the most promising students, including people with disabilities. The centre will offer community engagement meetings and forums with government and business groups, service providers, aid agencies and disabled people’s organisations to ignite debate, share ideas and encourage new thinking.

Our researchers’ expertise is enhanced and broadened by strong collaboration with other faculties of the University, as well as other academic institutions. The centre’s director, Professor Gwynnyth Llewellyn, Professor of Family and Disability Studies, guides the centre’s strategic thinking and key partnerships and outputs. Her research is committed to finding health and social policy and practice solutions to enable people with disabilities and their families to fully participate in society.

Our other lead researchers are:
- Professor Stewart Einfeld, Professor of Mental Health
- Professor Eric Emerson, Professor of Disability Population Health
- Professor Richard Madden, Professor of Health Statistics
- Ms Ros Madden, Director, Australian ICF Disability and Rehabilitation Research Program
- Professor Luis Salvador-Carulla, Professor of Disability and Mental Health
- Professor Roger Stancliffe, Professor of Intellectual Disability

The core of our research team is the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Health Sciences.
The Centre for Disability Research and Policy has joined the campaign for a modern, person-centred support system, helping hundreds of thousands of Australians with disabilities, and their families, to have the opportunity to participate actively in their communities by providing targeted support aligned to need.

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