



Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

**How attitudes affect people with
intellectual disability**

What we learned from our research

An Easy Read summary



How to use this summary



JFA Purple Orange and the Australian National University wrote this summary.



When you see the word 'we' in this summary, it means the Australian National University.



We wrote this summary in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold
Not bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 32.



This is an Easy Read summary of a report.

It only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the report on this website.

www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/ads



You can ask for help to read this summary.

A friend, family member or support person
may be able to help you.

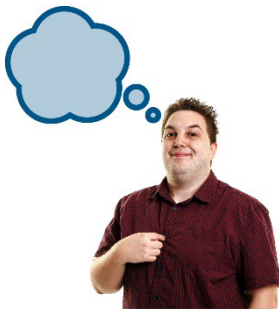
What's in this summary?

What's this summary about?	5
How did the researchers run the focus groups?	8
What did we learn from the focus groups?	14
How can we change people's attitudes?	29
Word list	32

What's this summary about?



The Australian Government asked us to do some research on the community's **attitudes**.



Attitudes are what you think, feel and believe.



Attitudes can affect how people treat people with disability.

This includes how people act in:



- organisations

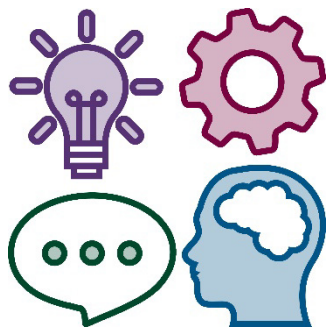


- governments.

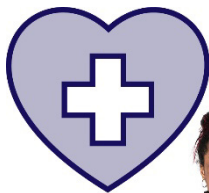


The Australian Government wanted to know how these attitudes affect people with **intellectual disability**.

An intellectual disability affects how you:



- learn new things
- solve problems
- communicate
- do things on your own.



They wanted to know how attitudes affect different parts of a person's life, including their:

- wellbeing
- experiences.

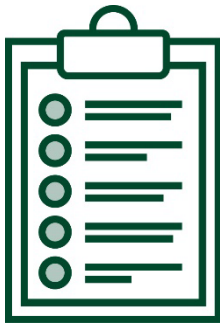


As part of this, we asked the researchers at Purple Orange to run some **focus groups** with people with intellectual disability.



A focus group is a group of people who meet to talk about their:

- experiences
- opinions.



In this summary we explain what the researchers at Purple Orange found out from the focus groups.

How did the researchers run the focus groups?

Before the focus groups



The researchers put together a **co-design** group to give advice on how to run the focus groups.



Co-design is when people work together to plan something new.

The co-design group included:



- 3 people with intellectual disability



- 3 people who know a lot about intellectual disability.

The co-design group gave advice on how to:



- find people to take part in the focus groups



- set up and run the focus groups



- make the focus groups easy for everyone to take part in.

The focus groups

6



There were 6 focus groups.

24

24 people took part in the focus groups.



18+

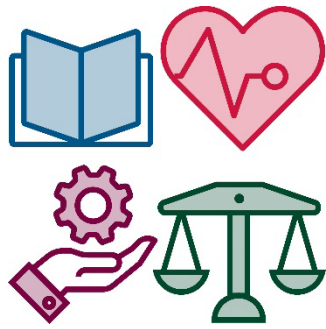
Every person who took part:

- had an intellectual disability
- was over 18 years old.



Each focus group talked about the attitudes they experience in one area of their life.

There was one focus group for each of these areas:



- education
- health
- community services
- the **justice system**.

The justice system includes:



- police
- the courts
- the law
- prisons.



2 focus groups talked about the attitudes they experience at work.

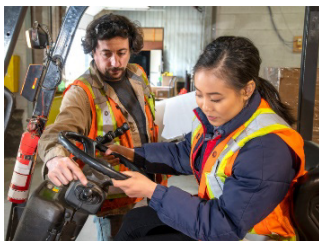


The researchers wanted to know about good and bad experiences.

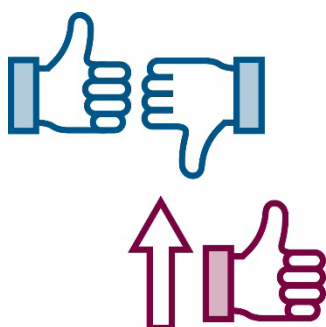
This includes:



- how people's attitudes affect them



- how people treat them.



It also includes:

- what was good or bad about their experiences
- what could have been better.

After the focus groups



The researchers offered to call everyone after the focus groups.



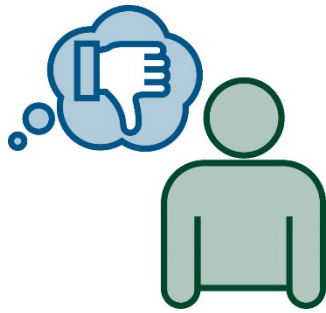
This was to check if they:

- were okay
- had anything else they wanted to say.



The researchers also gave everyone information about where to get support after the focus groups.

What did we learn from the focus groups?



The researchers found that people can experience bad attitudes in all areas of their lives.

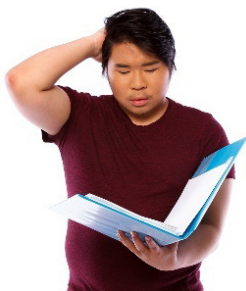
Across all the focus groups, people shared problems with people who provide services, like:



- not taking the time to get to know them



- expecting them not to understand things



- not making information easy to understand.



People also think that they need to protect people with intellectual disability.



But the focus groups shared that they want people to:

- listen to them
- support them to make their own decisions.



People also shared positive attitudes in the community.

These happen when people take the time to get to know them.



They include when people:

- treat them with respect
- listen to them
- use their ideas.



Over the following pages we explain what the researchers learned in each of the focus groups.



People talked about the good experiences they had at school.

This includes:



- primary school



- high school



They also talked about the good experiences they have at university or TAFE.

For example, when people:

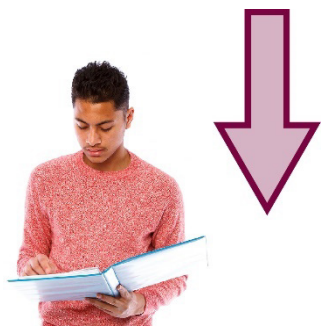


- listen to them
- treat them the same as others
- give them good support.



One of the bad experiences people had at school is low expectations.

They explained that when others don't expect much of them at school, it can:



- give them less chances to learn



- affect how they feel about themselves.



It can also make people think bad attitudes about disability are true.



Many people shared that their friends at school had good attitudes towards people with disability.



This helps them to feel:

- included
- the same as everyone else.



Everyone who took part in the focus groups shared experiences of **bullying**.

Bullying is when someone says or does something to make you feel bad over and over again.



For example, other students:

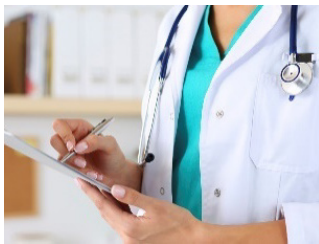
- calling them names
- saying upsetting things about their disability.



But people also talked about how their friends help protect them from bullying.



People shared good and bad experiences with health care.



They focused on going to:

- the doctor
- hospital.



Many people shared that doctors and nurses:

- listen to them
- treat them well
- answer their questions.



Everyone agreed that they have a better experience when their doctor knows them well.



This is because their doctor:

- knows their history
- understands what they need
- knows how to support them.



It also helps them feel:

- safe
- like people respect them
- like they have support.



Some people shared that they find it helpful to take a support worker with them to health appointments.



Their support worker can help them to understand difficult information.



But others shared that sometimes doctors talk to the support worker instead of them.

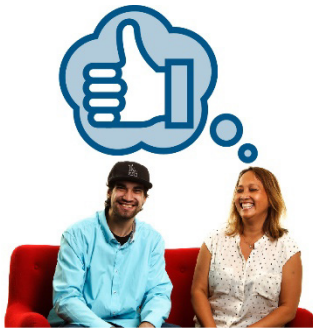
This makes them feel invisible.



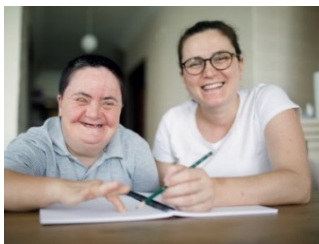
People also shared that going to a new health service can be a bad experience.

This is because the people who work there don't understand their disability.

Community services



People talked about the good attitudes their support workers have.



This includes support workers:

- taking the time to get to know them
- supporting them to do things.



Everyone agreed that it is important to respect each other.



People talked about how every person with disability has different needs.



But some people who work in community services ignore this.

And assume that everyone is the same.



People agreed that this is a bad attitude.



They also shared that some people don't understand that people with disability communicate in different ways.



People shared that many people who work in community services don't have **lived experience of disability**.

If you have lived experience of disability, you:



- have a disability
- know what life can be like for people with disability
- can tell your story to help others.

When they don't have lived experience, it often means they don't:



- understand the person with disability
- listen to them
- accept them for who they are.

Justice system



Everyone in the focus groups had very different experiences with the justice system.



But no one could think of a time where people who work in the justice system treated them:

- well
- with respect.



Most people had bad and stressful experiences.

They shared that these experiences can be worse if you have an intellectual disability.



People talked about how some people who work in the justice system assume things about them.

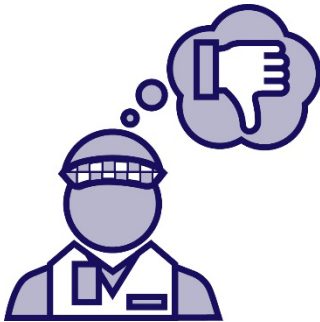
Instead of taking the time to understand them.

One person shared their story about reporting **sexual abuse** to the police.



Sexual abuse is when someone:

- does something sexual to you that you don't want them to do
- makes you do sexual things you don't want to.



The person said the police didn't believe him.

And he didn't see the police do anything about his report.

Employment



Employment means you:

- have a job
- go to work
- get paid.

Most of the people who took part in the focus groups work in **supported employment**.



In supported employment, people with disability can get extra support while they are at work.

They get support to:

- do their work
- learn new skills.



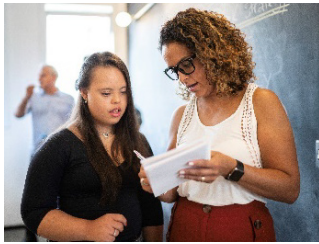
Many of the people had good things to say about the people they work for.

And they explained what makes a good workplace.

For example, a good workplace is where they:



- are learning new skills



- work with people who are friendly and happy to help



- can take a support person to meetings.



It's also a good workplace when people treat you with respect.

Everyone agreed that good attitudes in the workplace come from having someone who:



- understands disability



- lets you know when you are doing a good job



- checks in to see how you are going.



Some people talked about workplaces where people had bad attitudes towards disability.

For example:



- their manager not supporting them



- losing their job because they made a mistake



- not being allowed to bring a support person to a meeting.



The focus groups also talked about managers not knowing how to support people with disability.

How can we change people's attitudes?



The focus groups felt that many people believe people with intellectual disability are:

- **vulnerable**
- need to be protected.



If you are vulnerable, you might be in danger of:

- being hurt
- getting sick
- someone taking advantage of you.



Everyone agreed that this attitude is frustrating.

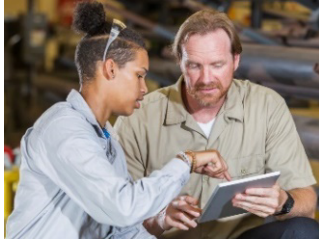
Everyone in the focus groups agreed that it's important to:



- listen to people with disability
- respect people with disability
- let people with disability make their own decisions.



It's also important to take the time to get to know and understand a person with disability.



Everyone also agreed that people should provide different ways for people with disability to learn new things.

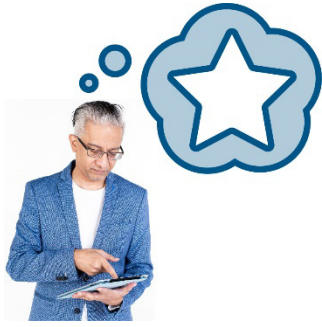


The focus groups talked about how people don't expect much of people with disability.

This happens a lot in schools and workplaces.



But when people don't expect much, it helps people believe bad attitudes about people with disability.



Schools and workplaces need to:

- expect great things from people with disability
- recognise their strengths.



Everyone agreed that training can help people change their attitudes towards people with disability.



It's important that people with intellectual disability run this training.

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Attitudes

Attitudes are what you think, feel and believe.



Bullying

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Focus group

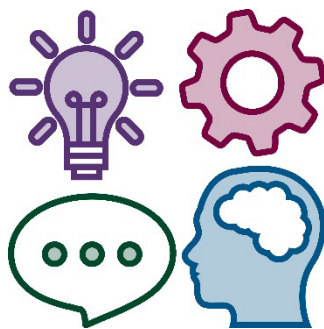
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Lived experience of disability

If you have lived experience of disability, you:



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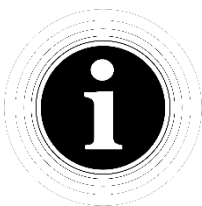
- do their work
- learn new skills.

Vulnerable



If you are vulnerable, you might be in danger of:

- being hurt
- getting sick
- someone taking advantage of you.



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