Get the Facts: Talking About Disability

The language of disability is always evolving and different terms are used within and outside of Australia. It can be political, it can be personal, and it can be quite confusing. Here are a few tips to help you on your way.

# Talking about Disability

Important things to remember:

* Avoid stereotypical or stigmatising depiction of Deaf and Disabled people
* Avoid phrases and words that demean Deaf and Disabled people
* Deaf and Disabled people are not ‘suffering from’, ‘victims of’ or ‘afflicted by’ their disability
* Deaf and Disabled people are not overcoming their disability, but the barriers that the rest of society puts in front of them
* Deaf and Disabled people should not be portrayed as courageous or tortured, but rather as individuals who find alternative means to accomplish everyday activities

# Language

AAV’s supports self-determination and respects how Deaf and Disabled people choose to label and define disability in their own way.

AAV uses the term ‘Deaf and Disabled people’, in line with the Social Model of Disability.

We use this definition as an act of pride and solidarity, and as a link to disability cultural identity, experience and community.

We use it to include anyone with a lived experience of disability, whether that’s visible or invisible, sensory or physical, neurodiverse, cognitive, intellectual or developmental, or of mental health or illness. We respect the right of the Deaf community to label their experience as one of cultural and linguistic difference.

# Words we do and don’t recommend.

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| Words we recommend | Words we don’t recommend |
| * Deaf and Disabled people/person
 | * The disabled
* People/person with a disability
* People/person with disabilities
* Differently abled / diffabilty
* Handicapped
* Invalid
* Physically challenged
* Special needs
 |
| * Non-disabled people/person
 | * People/person without disability
* Able-bodied
* Normal
 |
| * Wheelchair user
 | * Wheelchair bound
* Bound/confined to a wheelchair
 |
| * Blind
* Vision impaired
* Low vision
 | * The Blind
* Visually impaired
* Person without sight
 |
| * Deaf people/person
* Auslan user
* Hard of hearing
 | * The Deaf
* Deaf and dumb
* Deaf and mute
* Hearing impaired
 |
| * Learning disabled
* Learning disability
* Intellectual disability
 | * Retard/ed
* Slow learner
 |
| * Person of short stature
 | * Midget
* Dwarf
 |
| * Mental health issues
 | * Mental health problems
* Mental
* Mental illness
* Mentally-ill
 |
| * Accessible toilet
 | * Disabled toilet
 |
| * Accessible parking
 | * Disabled parking
 |
| * Has
* With a lived experience of
 | * Suffers from
* Afflicted with
* Victim of
 |
| * Do you have any access requirements?
 | * Do you have a disability?
 |
| * Inclusive (except where ‘inclusive’ is used to mean ‘disability-only’)
 | * All-abilities
* Integrated
 |
| * Support worker
* Personal Assistant
 | * Carer
* Companion
 |
| * First Peoples
 | * Aboriginal
* Indigenous
 |
| * They/them
* He/she (where someone has told us their pronouns)
* Non-gender specific terms (waiter, actor, etc)
 | * He/she (where someone hasn’t told us their pronouns)
* Gender specific terms (waitress, actress, etc)
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