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| Document No: IO_POL_3 | |
| Original Issue: 08/2011 | Authorised By: Executive |
| Last Review: 12/2024 | Next Review: 12/2027 |
| Controlled copy: Any photocopies or prints are uncontrolled | |
| Title: Disability Inclusion Policy | |

Disability Inclusion Policy

Background

Disability is part of human diversity and can be characterised as any physical or mental condition that interacts with a person's living or working environment to create physical, attitudinal, communication or social barriers to participation. It encompasses a diverse range of conditions that can affect vision, mobility, cognition, memory, learning, communication, hearing, and social and emotional wellbeing. It is important to acknowledge that disability can be temporary, cyclical or continuous, and its impacts are unique and individualised.

Disability inclusion refers to the systematic process of ensuring that people with disability have equitable access to opportunities, resources, and participation in all aspects of society. It is grounded in the social model of disability, which emphasizes that disability arises not solely from individual impairments but from the interaction between these impairments and environmental and societal barriers (WHO, 2022). Disability inclusion is a shared responsibility across the Institute, with all personnel playing a critical role in creating an inclusive and equitable environment.

In line with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy (2024) Guiding Principles, the aim of this policy is to foster an inclusive environment by eliminating barriers that prevent full participation, promoting accessibility, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for all individuals. Through a commitment to systemic change, this policy seeks to embed disability inclusion into institutional culture, policies, and practices.

Burnet values social justice, evidence-based research and development, and equity and inclusion, and recognises that a diverse, innovative, and high-performing workforce is crucial to achieving its goals. Burnet values Respect, Equality, Inclusiveness, and Diversity and these shape our culture, research and program work, and advocacy and communication.

Purpose

Burnet is dedicated to disability inclusion in all of its national and international activities through values such as Respect, Equality, Inclusiveness, and Diversity. This Disability Inclusion policy focuses on three areas:

- Disability Inclusion in Burnet's Workplace Culture
- Disability Inclusion in Burnet's Research and Program Work
- Disability Inclusion in Burnet's Advocacy and Communication

As our disability inclusion implementation plan, the DAP provides the framework for our endeavours

within the Institute and when engaging with our communities, and ensures we work alongside those with lived experience of disability in our development and delivery.

Scope

Burnet Institute is committed to the Disability Action Plan. This policy presents a clear vision and consistent approach to the DAP and in promoting disability inclusion. This policy establishes standards for accountability and applies to all areas of Burnet's operations, including:

- Members of the Burnet Board;
- All Burnet employees, including: managers and supervisors; full-time, part-time or casual, temporary or permanent staff; job candidates; student placements
- Burnet PhD, Masters and Hons students
- Contractors, sub-contractors; suppliers and volunteers;
- Burnet honorary staff and associates;
- Supporters, donors and other participants on field visits organised by Burnet;
- Overseas partner organisations (where Burnet personnel are placed);
- Partner organisations engaged in national or international activities within Burnet programs); and
- Any person representing the organisation at Burnet's request.

This policy applies to:

- to all persons ('Burnet workers') carrying out work in any capacity for Burnet. This includes but is not limited to members of the Burnet Board, employees, students, directors, contractors and any of their employees, sub-contractors and any of their employees, consultants and any of their employees, honorary and/or visiting researchers, honorary and/or visiting appointees, visitors, labour hire workers, outworkers, apprentices, trainees, work experience/placement students and volunteers; all aspects of employment and work arrangements, including but not limited to (as applicable): recruitment and selection; conditions and benefits; training and promotion; task allocation; hours; leave arrangements; workload; equipment;
- treatment of other workers, partner organisations, and third parties (including members of the public) and the conduct of third parties towards workers, encountered in the course of a worker carrying out work in any capacity for Burnet;

This policy applies to:

- behaviour that occurs in the workplace at Burnet's Melbourne office, Myanmar office, PNG offices or other Burnet work sites as they may change from time to time;
- behaviour that occurs in a work-related context, including for example, work-related activities and events such as conferences, off-site work, social functions, celebrations and training sessions;
- out of hours interactions where there is a connection to work carried out for Burnet.

This policy extends to remote working and the on-line environment, including email, text messaging, instant messaging, telephone, video (e.g. Zoom or Microsoft Teams), and social media platforms and material published on the internet.

Definitions

Ableism: Ableism is discrimination that favours "able-bodied" people, or people without disability,

prioritising the needs of people without disability

Disability: Disability is part of human diversity and can be characterised as any physical or mental condition that interacts with a person's living or working environment to create physical, attitudinal, communication or social barriers to participation. It encompasses a diverse range of conditions that can affect vision, mobility, cognition, memory, learning, communication, hearing, and social and emotional wellbeing. It is important to acknowledge that disability can be temporary, cyclical or continuous, and its impacts are unique and individualised.

Equity - recognises that each person has different circumstances and allocates the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Consultation: The Victorian OHS Act 2004 recognises the benefits of worker involvement in occupational health and safety (OHS) matters. Employers and employees should exchange information and ideas about risks to health and safety, and measures that can be taken to eliminate or reduce those risks. Employees are entitled, and should be encouraged, to be represented in relation to health and safety issues, including psychosocial matters. This is inclusive of workers with disabilities (refer to the Burnet OHS consultation policy on the OHS Hub site).

Barriers: Barriers affect opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in society. They may be physical, environmental, communication, policy or attitudinal barriers.

Reasonable adjustments: is the provision of support, modifications and/or adjustments that are practicable and that meet the individual needs of persons with disabilities, to ensure they enjoy and exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equitable basis to others, by removing as many barriers as possible.

'Person first' language: This is applying a person-centred approach, rather than viewing the person as their nominated disability, it views the person first before their disability (adapted from the Australian Network on Disability)

1. Disability Inclusion informing Burnet's Workplace Culture

Burnet is committed to ensuring equity and inclusion for people with disability in our workplace culture.

A. Governance:

- Burnet is committed to fostering an inclusive culture and addressing ableism to create a fair and equitable workplace for all personnel. We are committed to a "nothing about us without us" approach and that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members of the group affected by that policy. The implementation of this policy will be informed and guided by people with lived experience and Burnet's Disability Action Plan (DAP)

B. Inclusive Hiring and Onboarding Practices:

- At Burnet, we are committed to creating an inclusive culture where everyone, including people with disabilities, has the opportunity to thrive. We will strive to reduce bias in our recruitment and onboarding processes, ensuring that all candidates have the support they need to succeed from application through to integration. Guided by our Disability Action Plan (DAP) and the principle of "nothing about us without us," we strive to develop policies and processes that reflect the voices and experiences of those directly impacted, working towards a fair and equitable workplace for all.

C. Learning and Career Development:

- Burnet promotes disability inclusion in learning and career development by addressing barriers, providing equitable opportunities, and creating an inclusive and supportive environment. Burnet will also endeavour to build the disability inclusion capacity of Burnet personnel without disability to ensure they are best able to support colleagues with disability

D. Workplace Adjustments and Safety:

- Burnet is committed to developing a workplace adjustments policy, ensuring employees have easy access to the support they need. We will prioritise psychosocial safety to create a safe, inclusive, and respectful workplace, addressing risks such as discrimination, harassment, and safeguarding. By fostering psychological safety, we empower staff to feel valued, supported, and confident to speak up, enhancing engagement and collective commitment to our purpose.

E. Workplace Flexibility and Wellbeing:

- Burnet strives to support employees in achieving a better work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements that cater to diverse needs, including disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, and mental health. Through targeted training for managers, employees, and students, we aim to enhance performance, consistency, efficiency, and productivity while fostering an inclusive, accessible, and supportive work environment for all.

2. Disability Inclusion in Burnet's Research and Program Work

Burnet is committed to ensuring equity and inclusion for people with disability in our research and program work.

A. Language in Research Initiatives:

- To ensure inclusivity and prevent stereotypes, all research, programs, and interventions must use inclusive language

B. Disability Inclusive perspective in the design concept:

- A disability-inclusive perspective may be manifested in the research questions raised and the theoretical approaches and methods used.

C. Data and inclusive Intersectional Research and programs:

- Data generated as part of research or program implementation should be representative i.e. Intersectional data collected whenever possible to gain a better understanding of how intersections of social categories, such as disability, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex and gender intersect

D. Participation:

- All of Burnet's work should consider reasonable adjustments for people living with disability to support participation in activities, acknowledging any constraints or needs they may have.
- Burnet actively supports the participation and voices of people with disability in its work, using respectful and inclusive language.
- Burnet fosters a culture of effective communication on disability inclusion related information throughout the organization, continuously updating and sharing impact data to enhance its initiatives.

E. Learnings:

- Burnet is committed to enhancing its understanding of disability inclusion by leveraging both external expertise and internal cross-team learnings. We aim to share successful strategies from teams with strong progress in this area to continuously improve and strengthen our efforts.

3. Disability Inclusion in Burnet's Advocacy and Communication Work

Burnet will strive to enhance its work on disability inclusion through its advocacy and communication work.

A. Data-Driven Advocacy and Communication:

- Burnet aims to improve its use of disability-disaggregated data to enhance advocacy and communication efforts. We will work towards leveraging this data to better highlight disability-specific challenges and advocate for targeted interventions and policy changes where possible.
- Burnet is committed to continuously monitoring and evaluating our data-driven advocacy, with the goal of refining strategies to maximize effectiveness.

B. Commitment to Inclusive Participation and Advocacy

- Burnet is dedicated to identifying and addressing barriers to participation, decision-making, and resource access for individuals living with disability. Where possible, we will work to make adjustments to ensure our programs and communication channels are accessible and inclusive. Burnet values the voices and perspectives of all affected people and community members.

C. Inclusive Education and Training Levels:

- Burnet is committed to advancing accessibility by:
- Educating its own employees on best practices for accessibility and ensuring internal materials and formats are accessible wherever possible.
- Removing barriers to access education and training opportunities for all personnel and stakeholders.
- Designing education and training programs to address the specific needs of people living with disability, using evidence-based strategies developed with partners and stakeholders.
- Regularly evaluating and improving its initiatives to promote inclusion and effectively addressing accessibility challenges.
- Encouraging inclusive communication practices through resources like the Inclusive Language Guide.

Responsibility for implementation

All personnel and representatives have a responsibility to comply with this policy.

Board Members hold overall accountability for this policy and approving and monitoring the effectiveness of Burnet's risk management, including matters relating to psychosocial health.

Country Representatives/Country Program Managers are responsible for in-country disability inclusion compliance within our health research and international development programs.

Deputy Director Gender Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (Melbourne office) has institute-wide responsibility for Disability Inclusion policy compliance.

Disability Inclusion Committee an Employee Resource Group (ERG) supports the Disability Steering Group by providing valuable input and championing initiatives that align with personnel needs and the broader inclusion strategy, including implementation of the DAP.

Disability Steering Group at Burnet is responsible for implementing the DAP which is key to the

Disability Inclusion Policy. This includes executing the initiatives and actions outlined in the plan to foster disability inclusion in alignment with the Institute's goals and values.

Disability Sub Committee (ERG) serves as an advocate for disability inclusion, promoting employee voices and supporting institutional compliance with disability inclusion policies and practices.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) team which includes the Deputy Director of Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (GEDI), the Diversity and Inclusion Manager, and the Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion Advisor —oversee implementation and guide disability inclusion-related programs and initiatives across the Institute. They facilitate open consultation and ensure effective management of workplace disability inclusion matters.

Deputy Director of Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (GEDI), the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Manager and the Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Advisor provide strategic direction and advice, identifying opportunities and offering guidance to enhance disability inclusion across Burnet's work. Together, these efforts aim to integrate inclusive practices into Burnet's culture, accelerate innovation and research, and deliver sustainable health solutions.

Executive team is responsible for the application of this policy and will ensure that disability inclusion is reviewed and discussed through the Diversity and Inclusion report at least twice a year.

Head of OHS and Compliance is responsible for designing Burnet's risk management system and monitoring and evaluating this system across a wide range of compliance areas. The role provides leadership, specialist advice and technical support to the Board, Executive Management, Line Managers/Supervisors, personnel, and students. A significant aspect of the role has been to support personnel with disability adjustments as required.

Human Resources Managers (PNG & Myanmar offices) ensure that all locally based employees are informed of their responsibilities and obligations under the Disability Inclusion Policy.

Mental Health First Aid Officers in PNG, Myanmar and Melbourne offices provide confidential peer support for initial assistance and referral. They provide an informal independent means of accessing mental health support.

Safeguarding Manager provides oversight and safeguarding technical advice to ensure Burnet maintains a safe and inclusive workplace for employees and research participants with disabilities, aligning safeguarding practices with disability inclusion policies, and strengthening safeguarding measures across research and programs to promote the safety and wellbeing of individuals living with disability. The Safeguarding Manager will ensure a safe and accessible process for reporting safeguarding concerns and remove any disability-specific barriers to making a report.

Working Group Heads/Activity Leads/Research Leads are responsible for promoting awareness of this policy with people they manage and with project partners. They also are responsible for actively providing information to research and project participants and the community, on expected employee and contractor behaviours.

Relevant laws and standards

At Burnet, we recognise and commit to a legislative framework that encompasses federal and jurisdictional laws and standards addressing disability and discrimination, including:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986

- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (VIC)
- Victorian OHS Act 2004 and Regulations 2017
- Burnets Consultation policy – OHS HUB site
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010.

Related Policies/Procedures/Guidelines

Equal Opportunity, Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy

Complaints and Disputes Procedure

Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment Policy

Career and Professional Development Policy

Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure

Flexible Working Arrangement Policy and Procedure

Research Staff Promotions Policy and Procedure

Remuneration Policy

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

Safeguarding Procedures

Personal Relationships Policy

Child Protection Policy

Whistle-blower Policy