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Title: Disability Inclusion Policy	

Disability Inclusion Policy

Background

In working towards our purpose to create and translate knowledge into better health, so that no-one is left behind, Burnet is committed to promoting meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities both within our organisation and through our development and research work.

Disability is part of human diversity. A disability may affect mobility, ability to learn things, or ability to communicate easily, and some people may have more than one. A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary and may have minimal or substantial impact on a person’s abilities. People with a disability may come up against significant physical, environmental, organisational, social and attitudinal barriers while trying to do the things that many without a disability take for granted (adapted from the Australian Network on Disability).

Burnet uses social model terminology, including ‘person with disability’ or ‘people with disability’. This is also called ‘person first’ language – it acknowledges the person first, before it acknowledges the disability. We note a growing movement of people with disability in Australia and internationally that prefer ‘identity first’ language. We respect, acknowledge and use the term ‘disabled people’ when this is an individual or group preference (adapted from Disabled People’s Organisations Australia).

Resolution EB148.R6 “The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities” was adopted by the 74th World Health Assembly. The resolution aims to make the health sector more inclusive by tackling the significant barriers many persons with disabilities face when they try to access health services including:

- Access to effective health services: persons with disabilities often experience barriers including physical barriers that prevent access to health facilities; informational barriers that prevent access to health information; and attitudinal barriers leading to discrimination which severely affects the rights of persons with disabilities.
 - Protection during health emergencies: persons with disabilities are disproportionately affected by public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic because they have not been considered and consulted in national health emergency preparedness and response plans.
 - Access to public health interventions across different sectors: public health interventions do not reach persons with disabilities because the information has not been provided in an accessible way and the
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specific needs and situation of persons with disabilities have not been reflected in the interventions.

- The Resolution also aims to improve collection and disaggregation of reliable data on disability to inform health policies and programmes.

The Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability. Disability discrimination happens when people with a disability are treated less fairly than people without a disability. Disability discrimination also occurs when people are treated less fairly because they are relatives, friends, carers, co-workers or associates of a person with a disability.

The Victorian Disability Act 2006 protects people in Victoria against disability-based discrimination and additionally mandates employers with a 'positive duty', which means taking proactive steps to ensure discrimination does not occur. Organisations must also put measures in place to ensure that complaints are responded to swiftly and appropriately when they do arise.

As outlined in the Health and Wellbeing policy, Burnet 'aims to be a public exemplar for a proactive workplace' and is committed to reducing the barriers to obtaining and maintaining employment opportunities within Burnet in support of the Victorian Disability Act 2006- SECT 38 (http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/da2006121/s38.html) Burnet is committed to inclusive service delivery.

Outside of Australia, the Burnet's operations comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at a minimum, and additionally with national government policies relating to persons with disabilities in the country of work.

Purpose

This policy outlines Burnet Institute's commitment to disability inclusion across all our activities and within our own organisation. It provides a clear vision and consistent messages regarding Burnet's approach to disability in our development programs and health research. It sets standards against which Burnet will hold itself accountable.

Scope

The policy covers all Burnet employees in the course of their work and persons representing Burnet, which includes:

- 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
- 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 staff are placed);
- Partner organisations (engaged in overseas activities with Burnet programs); and
- Any person representing the organisation at Burnet's request.

This Policy applies to:

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- On-site, off-site or after-hours work; work-related social functions; conferences – wherever and whenever employees may be as a result of their Burnet related duties; and
- Employee treatment of community members encountered in the course of their Burnet related duties.

Definitions

Ableism: the systemic exclusion and oppression of people with disability by people without disability.

Disability: is part of human diversity. A disability may affect mobility, ability to learn things, or ability to communicate easily, and some people may have more than one. A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary and may have minimal or substantial impact on a person's abilities. Disability can be exacerbated by an environment that creates barriers (adapted from the Australian Network on Disability).

Disability inclusive development: sets out to achieve equality of human rights for people with a disability as well as full participation in, and access to, all aspects of society. (CBM)

Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs): An organisation managed by people with disabilities for people with disabilities.

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

Disability-specific initiatives: are targeted to meet specific needs of people with a disability.

Disability-inclusive initiatives: seek to mainstream disability into development programs, to include a disability perspective so that all aid interventions and programs are made accessible to people w disabilities)

Reasonable accommodation: Reasonable accommodation is the provision of support, modifications and/or adjustments that is 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 equal basis to others.

'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)

Policy statement/overview

- a. We are committed to fostering an **inclusive culture** and addressing **ableism** to create a fair and equitable workplace for all staff.
 - b. We are committed to a **"nothing about us without us"** approach. The implementation of this policy will be informed and guided by people with disabilities.
 - c. We are committed to redressing disadvantage, stigma, stereotyping and prejudice, and to welcoming people with disabilities. The Institute will provide a **workplace environment free from discrimination and harassment** and will take necessary action to eliminate any form of disability-based and intersectional discrimination.
 - d. We are committed to **accessible and inclusive recruitment**, proactively connecting with candidates with disability and **making reasonable accommodations** as required.
 - e. **We are committed to removing barriers to career advancement**, by ensuring learning and development opportunities are available and accessible to all staff and ensuring that promotion processes
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proactively engage with people with di We support employees with disabilities to access formal and informal **advocacy** to support their employment and professional development goals.

- f. Burnet ensures that **internal and external communication** is accessible, including meetings, events, digital and hard copy communication.
- g. We are committed to **raising the profile of people with a disability** in external and internal communications. We are committed to fostering a positive and inclusive culture through the promotion of awareness days and events.
- h. We are committed to providing **accessible grounds and buildings** for staff with disabilities and **making reasonable accommodations** to facilitate this.
- i. Burnet ensures people with disabilities can **participate in governance** structures at national and international activities including our Board, committees and decision-making bodies. We commit to improving the representation of people with disabilities in leadership and management roles through appropriate interventions.
- j. Burnet promotes the rights of people with disability to **health and healthcare** through our development and research work, in line with the UNCRPD, through both disability-specific and disability-inclusive initiatives.
- k. Burnet is committed to supporting the **empowerment** of people with disabilities in our development and health work. We are committed to designing and delivering projects which are disability-inclusive, with equal and meaningful participation by people with disability in consultation and decision-making.
- l. Burnet aims to foster and **increase awareness** of disability inclusion amongst staff, students and partner organisations.
- m. **Process to raise concerns / complaints** Staff can raise concerns or complaints relating to disability inclusion issues with any member of Human Resources or via the institute's Grievance and Disputes Procedure or Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Sexual Harassment & Bullying How to Get Help guidance.
- n. Burnet ensures that this **policy is easily accessible** to all members of the organisation employees/students are empowered to actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy; and employees/students are notified of all changes to this policy.

Reporting

Staff can raise concerns or complaints relating to disability inclusion issues with Human Resources or via the institute's Grievance and Disputes Procedure or Equal Opportunity, Discrimination, Sexual Harassment & Bullying How to Get Help guidance.

Confidentiality

Burnet ensures that any disability-inclusion concerns raised are handled with procedural fairness, timeliness and impartiality. All concerns and the names of people involved are handled confidentially. Details will only be disclosed if required as part of an investigation.

Consequences

Any breach of the institute's Disability Inclusion Policy may lead to disciplinary action that may include termination of employment for staff or termination of association and/or contract with Burnet for other Burnet representatives.

There will be no action taken against those who report, in good faith, concerns involving a breach of the Disability Inclusion Policy. If a person knowingly and wilfully reports false or malicious information regarding other Burnet employees or representatives relating to Disability Inclusion, Burnet may take disciplinary action.

Responsibility for implementation

- a. **All Burnet employees & representatives** have a responsibility to comply with this policy.
- b. **Members of the Board:** add value to, approve and monitor disability inclusion strategies, initiatives and budgets developed by Management, to achieve the vision. They ensure that risks are identified and managed.
- c. The **Executive:** is responsible for the application of this policy and will ensure that disability inclusion is regularly considered in Executive
- d. The **Head of Human Resources (Melbourne Office)** has institute-wide responsibility for Disability Inclusion policy implementation and compliance.
- e. **Human Resources Managers (for PNG & Myanmar offices)** ensure that all locally based employees are informed of their responsibilities and obligations under the Disability Inclusion Policy.
- f. The **Head of OHS and Compliance** is responsible for ensuring risk management and safe work procedures are prioritised to minimise the risk of harm to all staff and students, including those with disabilities. They consult with staff and employees on joining the Burnet regarding their individual situation and capacity to follow health and safety procedures. They identify any specific adjustments people may require to ensure a safe work environment, and any assistance that an employee with disability may require in an emergency situation.
- g. The **Disability Inclusion Subcommittee** will provide open consultation regarding issues relating to disability inclusion and will identify and plan disability inclusion initiatives across the Institute.
- h. **The GEDI Committee Chair** promotes and contributes to Institutional compliance in relation to Disability Inclusion.
- i. **The Safeguarding, Diversity and Inclusion Manager** works with the HR team to review Burnet's compliance with the Disability Policy and with the Disability Inclusion Subcommittee to ensure that disability inclusion initiatives are funded and implemented.
- j. **Mental Health First Aid Officers** provide confidential peer support for initial assistance and referral. They provide and informal means of accessing mental health support, outside of a Human Resources or a line manager.
- k. **Country Representatives/Country Program Managers** are responsible for in-country disability inclusion compliance within our health research and international development programs.
- l. **Working Group Heads/Activity 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 beneficiaries and the community on expected employee and contractor behaviours.

Related legislation

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(<http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=12&pid=150>) (UNCRPD)

Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00125>)

Victorian Disability Act 2006 (<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/disability-act-2006/044>)

Related Policies/ Procedures/Guidance

Available on the HUB (intranet) (/policies/), or on request from the Human Resources Manager

- Equal Opportunity, Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy (/policies/workplace-conduct-and-responsibility/equal-opportunity-anti-discrimination-harassment-policy/)
- Health and Wellbeing Policy (/policies/health-and-safety/health-and-wellbeing-policy/)
- Promotion (/policies/workplace-conduct-and-responsibility/research-staff-promotions-policy-and-procedure/)
- Remuneration (/policies/workplace-conduct-and-responsibility/remuneration-policy/)
- Whistle-blower Policy (/policies/risk-management-and-governance/whistleblower-policy/)
- External Complaints Handling Policy (/policies/risk-management-and-governance/external-stakeholders-complaints-handling-policy/)