

Climate Change and People with Disabilities

Vulnerability, Awareness, and Adaptation



Our Vision

A society where people with disabilities have the capacity and support to effectively deal with the impact of climate change.

Project Rationale

People with disabilities are among the most socially disadvantaged and vulnerable populations in society. It is known that climate change affects socially disadvantaged groups disproportionately as it exacerbates their vulnerabilities. People with disabilities are thus likely to be among those most affected by the impact of climate change. Despite this, government responses tended to overlook the specific needs that disabled population groups and subgroups (e.g. culturally/linguistically diverse) are likely to face in relation to climate change. This project will address this gap in the research and policy effort and thereby contribute to Australia meeting its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability articles 11, 27, and 32.

Project Approach and Study Design

The researchers will employ a multi-method (qualitative, quantitative, and action research) research design consisting of three stand-alone Research Stages (RS).

RS 1 consists of a systematic literature review. The literature review will focus on establishing a research evidence base for: (a) the impact of climate change on people with disabilities and

their carers, adaptation strategies currently proposed by the social care sector, and transferable strategies devised for people with disabilities in relation to pandemics and disaster planning; (b) processes enabling the effective involvement of people with intellectual disabilities and spectrum disorders in collaborative research. The literature review will provide a solid foundation for the development of local strategies and programs.

RS 2 involves the exploration of knowledge and attitudes as well as adaptive behaviour and capacity by people with disabilities, their support networks, and the wider social care sector. This information will be used to develop an inventory of required, disability-specific knowledge and expertise. Particular attention will be paid to equity issues. The research functions will include the following:

- Audit of adaptive strategies currently devised and implemented by agencies involved in the provision of social care.
- Qualitative information gathered with adults with disabilities and their carers. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 10-15 representatives of each disability segment in Australia (stratified quota sampling). The sampling frame for adults with



disability (and their families) will be based on data provided by the Victorian Department of Human Services.

- Qualitative information gathered with social care professionals, public servants evidencing disability-specific needs and adaptive strategies
- Quantitative online survey to be completed by all stakeholders regarding key enablers and barriers to adaptive capacity development.

Stage 2 will provide an overview of disability-specific needs and adaptive capacity enhancement regarding climate change. Furthermore, research outcomes will include the identification of systemic enablers and barriers to adaptation strategies.

RS 3 consists of developing, in collaboration with all stakeholders, adaptive strategies and a robust model of client engagement to address the issues identified during RS1 and RS2. A 'Co-Production' approach will be used to develop in collaboration with people with disabilities a suit of clearly defined interventions and strategies aimed at fostering adaptive capacities in people with disabilities, their support networks, and the social care sector. The aim of stage 3 is to build a sector-wide consensus around what types of adaptive capacity building strategies can and should be implemented and evaluated preparing the ground for collective, systematic climate change response.

Potential Funding Sources

National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (SEID and ARGP Schemes).

Research Team

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Contact Information

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