



ALGA
Australian Local
Government Association



Disability Inclusion Safety, Justice, Gender Equality and Emergency Management

9 April 2026 - Webinar





Items shared:

Presentations

- Clare Gibellini
- Alex Bignell
- Narelle Williams
- Kelly Armstrong
- Leonie Endacott

Links shared via chat function

Amanda Charles, Dept of Health, Disability & Ageing

- [2024 update: Building a more inclusive Australia. Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#)
- [Safety, Rights and Justice Targeted Action Plan 2025-2027](#)
- [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 Outcomes Framework: 3rd annual report](#)
- [National plan to end violence against women and children](#)
- [Disability inclusive emergency management – NEMA](#)
- [Review of the Disability Discrimination Act – Attorney General's Department](#)
- [Disability data – Australian Institute of Health and welfare](#)

Clare Gibellini

- [Being prepared for an evacuation](#)

Belinda Franklin – SES NSW (Belinda.franklin@ses.nsw.gov)

- [Arriving at an evacuation centre](#)



Representation:

State / Territory	Responses received
Australian Capital Territory	6%
New South Wales	19%
Northern Territory	3%
Queensland	8%
South Australia	11%
Tasmania	6%
Victoria	36%
Western Australia	11%

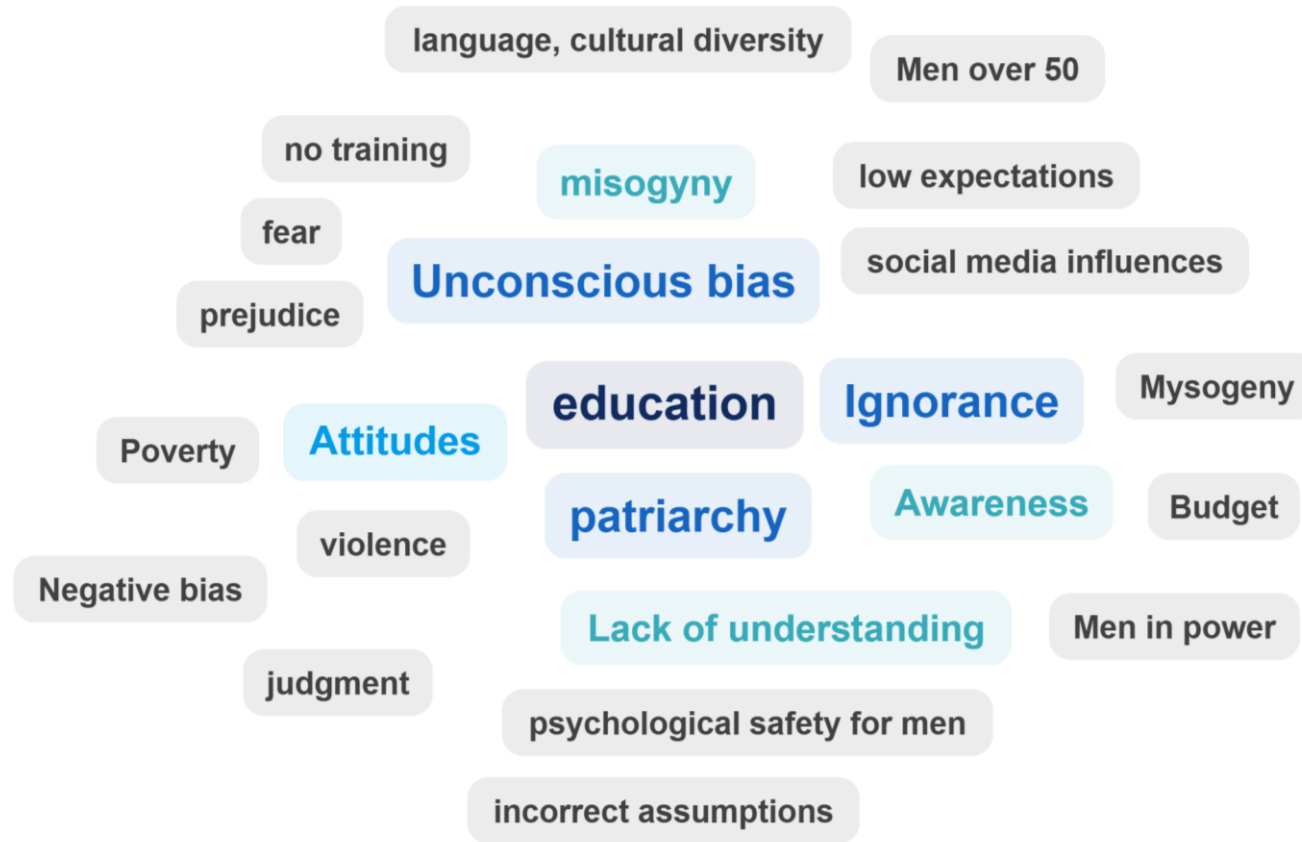
Disability access and inclusion level:

Well established program	28%
Well established programs	28%
Some initiatives underway	72%
Not started / just getting started	0%
Unsure	0%

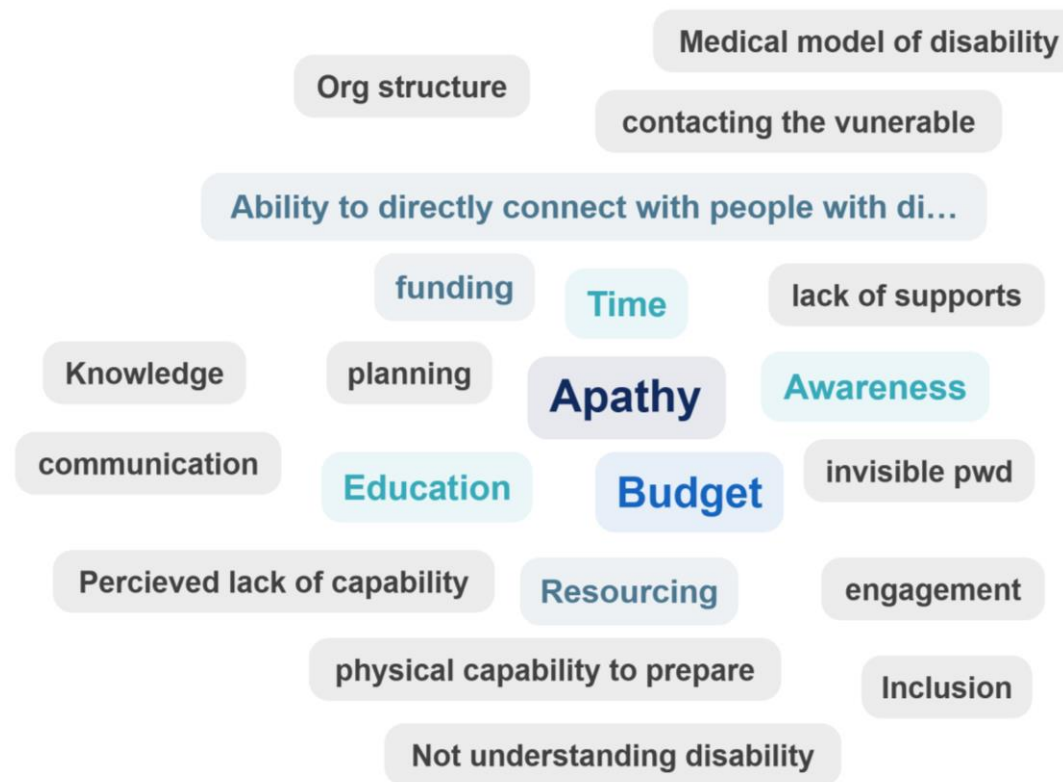
Attendees' response: What is the biggest barrier in your community to safety and justice?



Attendees' response: What is the biggest barrier in your community to gender equality?



Attendees' response: What is the biggest barrier in your community to emergency management?





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Thank you!



We value your feedback – please complete our feedback form available via the QR Code

ALGA.COM.AU
disabilityinclusion@alga.asn.au

Inclusive by Design: Harnessing the Skills of People with Disability in Emergency Management

Expertise by lived experience · Diversity of capability · Whole-community resilience

1



Acknowledgement of Country

I wish to acknowledge the Whadjuk people of the Nyoongar nation – traditional custodians of this land. I acknowledge the strength of their continuing culture and offer my respects to Elders past and present. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

2

A little about me



- Independent disability advocate working in DIDRR, climate and peace and security with a focus on intersectionality.
- Focal point for IDA Climate Change group in Asia Pacific, advisory member for Gender and Disaster Australia and NEMA.
- Volunteer with DFES in WA for two brigades including Incident Management support.
- Community preparedness educator.

3

Why This Conversation Matters

1

1. People with disability represent approximately 1 in 5 Australians yet remain significantly underrepresented in emergency services workforces.
2. People with disability are 2–4 times more likely to be injured or killed in a disaster than the general population, in part because emergency systems are not designed with them in mind.
3. Australia's Disability Inclusive Emergency Management (DIEM) Toolkit (2024) identifies lack of disability representation in planning as a core systemic gap.
4. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability highlighted significant safety gaps during emergencies.
5. Inclusion is not just a rights issue. It is a capability and effectiveness issue for the whole emergency management system.

1 in 5

Australians live with disability

2-4×

more likely to be harmed or killed in a disaster

Source: [NEMA DIEM Toolkit 2024](#) - [WID Emergency Preparedness Report 2025](#)

4

Lived Experience IS Expertise

2

Navigating inaccessible systems every day builds transferable expertise

People with disability develop deep practical knowledge of where systems fail which is invaluable in designing emergency responses that actually work for everyone.

"Nothing About Us, Without Us" - a principle, not a slogan

When people with disability are absent from planning tables, emergency responses default to assumptions that exclude up to 20% of the population.

Disability expertise improves planning for all Australians

Accessibility solutions, from communication redundancy to accessible evacuation design, are universal benefits. The curb-cut effect applies directly to emergency management.

Lived experience informs what training alone cannot teach

Personal knowledge of assistive technology, support networks, and access barriers cannot be replicated through professional development courses.

Halts declining volunteerism and boosts social cohesion

Personal knowledge of assistive technology, support networks, and access barriers cannot be replicated through professional development courses.

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Organisational and Team Benefits

3

Better problem solving

Cognitive diversity drives faster, more creative solutions. People with disability routinely develop unconventional approaches to navigating barriers, directly applicable in dynamic emergency environments.

Higher resilience

Research identifies strong skills in emotion regulation, adaptability, and sustained performance under pressure among people with disability, qualities critical in emergency personnel.

Reduced turnover, stronger morale

Organisations with authentic inclusion practices experience lower staff turnover and stronger team cohesion. Emergency services benefit from the stability and experience retention this creates.

Broader talent pipeline

People with disability are an under-utilised skilled talent pool. Emergency services facing recruitment challenges gain access to capable, motivated candidates currently overlooked by traditional hiring.

Source: [Columbia Ability Alliance](#) · [KnE Open resilience study](#)

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Better Community Outcomes

4

Disability-inclusive responders reach more people

1. Personnel with disability are better equipped to communicate with, and gain the trust of, community members with disability during emergencies.
2. Effective communication during crisis is undermined when responders lack disability competency. 24.7% of people with disability reported responders did not know how to assist them.
3. Insider knowledge of assistive technology, communication access needs, and support service networks enables faster, more accurate needs assessment in the field.

Representative workforces produce better plans

1. Emergency plans developed without disability representation consistently fail to account for evacuation access, communication formats, and medication or support needs.
2. Australia's DIEM Toolkit (NEMA, 2024) explicitly identifies disability co-design as the mechanism for closing dangerous planning gaps.
3. Organisations with established disability-inclusive practices are more likely to deliver accessible services to the community during emergencies.

Source: [NACCHO Disability Emergency Planning 2024](#) · [NEMA DIEM Toolkit 2024](#) · [ScienceDirect disability inclusion in EMAs 2025](#)

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Legal, Policy and Strategic Alignment

5

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

Commits all governments to ensuring disaster preparedness and risk management plans explicitly address the wellbeing of people with disability, including workforce representation.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Establishes legal obligations for equal employment opportunity across all sectors (including emergency services) supported by reasonable workplace adjustments.

DFES Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2026-2030 (WA)

Commits DFES to removing recruitment barriers and fostering an inclusive culture. The strategic framework already exists, now it must be implemented.

NEMA Disability Inclusive Emergency Management Toolkit 2024

Establishes national standards for disability-inclusive emergency management, with co-design and workforce representation as foundational principles, not optional extras.

Source: [DFES DAIP 2026-2030](#) · [Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031](#) · [NEMA DIEM Toolkit 2024](#)

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Where People with Disability Contribute

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Operational and frontline roles

1. Communications, dispatch and coordination - disability competency actively improves performance in these roles.
2. Emergency planning and preparedness -scenario design, risk assessment, community engagement.
3. Community liaison and disability coordination - direct interface with vulnerable community members during response and recovery.
4. Technology and systems - development and testing of accessible alert systems and assistive emergency tools.

Strategic and advisory roles

1. Policy development - embedding lived experience into frameworks before implementation, not retrofitting after failures.
2. Training design and delivery - building genuine disability competency into emergency services education.
3. Accessibility auditing - identifying barriers in shelters, evacuation routes, communication systems, and recovery services.
4. Peer support programs - supporting community members with disability during recovery using trusted, shared experience.

Source: [WID Emergency Preparedness Report 2025](#) - [NACCHO Disability Emergency Planning 2024](#)

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AI and Data Ghosts

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AI is an increasingly useful tool when it comes to planning, response and recovery, however we can't ignore the huge gaps in its capabilities.

- AI models can't plan for populations that lack digital footprints or other forms of data (such as smartphones or fixed addresses)
- AI optimises for highest return on investment, in emergency response settings that is the most lives saved, naturally deprioritizing those at most risk
- We don't yet have an established framework for accountability (or liability if the model fails)

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The Path Forward: Inclusion That Leaves No One Behind

Building emergency services that reflect the communities they serve is not aspirational, it is operationally essential. People with disability bring capability, insight, and community trust that no other workforce can replicate.

Recommended actions:

- Remove recruitment barriers and implement reasonable workplace adjustments
- Embed disability co-design in all phases of emergency planning
- Create clearly defined pathways into emergency services roles for people with disability
- Partner with disability-led organisations to build workforce pipelines
- Measure and report on disability representation as a workforce KPI

Sources: NEMA DIEM Toolkit 2024 · DFES DAIP 2026–2030 · Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 · WID Report 2025 · NACCHO 2024

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Thanks for Listening!

If you found today's session useful, or would like more information please get in touch!

Where to find me:

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- Phone - +61 400 204 943
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/clare-gibellini>

Sources: NEMA DIEM Toolkit 2024 · DFES DAIP 2026–2030 · Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 · WID Report 2025 · NACCHO 2024

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Disability Inclusion: Safety, Justice, Gender Equality & Emergency Management

9 April 2026

Presented by
Alexandra Bignell
City of Casey



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Why Local Government Matters

- Local government is closest to the community
- Councils influence everyday life: public spaces, buildings, employment, community programs, information, civic participation
- Barriers are first experienced at local level
- Barriers can be most effectively addressed at local level



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Disability Inclusion Community of Practice



- Established 2025 by ALGA with support from Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DHDA)
- National network for disability inclusion in local government
- 35 council officers from across Australia
- Disability inclusion, access, community development officers
- Metropolitan, regional and remote councils



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Our Purpose



- Strengthen disability inclusion across local government
- Create national space for knowledge sharing
- Enable councils to learn from each other
- Work collectively on improving inclusive practice
- Strengthen relationship between local government and Commonwealth
- Supports implementation of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031



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Key initiatives



- **Disability Inclusion guide for local Government**
- **Working groups aligned to Australia's Disability Strategy**
- **National showcase of council-led initiatives (case-studies)**
- **Series of webinars and workshops**

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Safety, Justice, Gender Equality and Emergency Management

Overview

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Introduction



Interconnected Policy Domains

Safety, justice, gender equality, and emergency management are deeply interconnected for people with disability, shaping their experiences and risks.

Systemic Barriers for Disability

People with disability face systemic barriers in accessing justice, protection, and emergency services, increasing vulnerability.

Human Rights Frameworks

International and national frameworks mandate inclusive systems ensuring safety, justice, and emergency protection for people with disability.

Role of Local Government

Local governments must embed inclusion, partner with services, and engage people with disability to build safe, equitable, and resilient communities.

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Snapshot – safety, justice and risk



5.5 million (21%)

Australians live with disability

40% vs 26%

Women with disability experience physical violence

2x higher

Rate of sexual violence

Over 50%

Experience physical or sexual abuse in their lifetime

Over-represented

Across all stages of the justice system

2x more likely

To be injured or isolated in emergencies

Barriers to reporting mean many incidents go unreported

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International framework (CRPD)

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

- Article 6 - Women with disabilities
- Article 9 - Accessibility
- Article 11 - Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies
- Article 13 - Access to justice
- Article 16 - Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

These obligations mean that safety from violence, equal justice and emergency protection are non-negotiable rights - not optional policy areas.

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National framework

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

The national policy vision identifies “Safety, rights and justice” and “Inclusive communities” as key outcome areas.

Key findings:

- Widespread violence and abuse – over half of people with a disability have been abused
- Barriers in justice – significant over-representation in the criminal system
- Lack of accessible reporting and support mechanisms
- Emergency gaps – disability needs are often overlooked

Disability Royal Commission (2023)

The final report highlighted pervasive system failures across justice, safety and emergency systems.

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Safety

People with disability experience high rates of violence, abuse and neglect in homes and communities.

- Prevalence – 40% of women with a disability are reported to have been physically assaulted
- Barriers to safety – dependency on carers/family
- System failures – 46% discrimination complaints to Human Rights Commission involve disability

Council's can:

- Integrate violence prevention into community planning.
- Support grassroots education campaigns
- Collaborate on accessible reporting pilots (e.g. in libraries or community centres) and
- Ensure community services (e.g. family violence support) are accessible and inclusive.



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Justice

- Access to justice
- Over representation
- System barriers
- Victims' rights
- Consequences

Council's can:

- advocate with police and courts to improve accessibility (e.g. availability of Auslan interpreters, plain-language information).
- partner on local "justice of the peace" services or community policing programs aimed at vulnerable groups.
- Provide information via Local libraries or neighbourhood houses
- Respect reasonable adjustments for people with disability during enforcement and by-law activities



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Gender equality

- Gender and disability creates compound disadvantage
- Barriers include poverty, lower labour force participation and dependency on care / support
- Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020

Council's can:

- Prepare Gender Equality Action Plans.
- Gather data on women and girls with disability in their community, and analyse how policies affect this group.
- Ensure gender-based violence prevention work is fully inclusive (e.g. accessible shelters, targeted outreach).
- Provide training on intersectional issues to help council staff recognise when disability compounds other vulnerabilities.



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Emergency management

Natural hazards and emergencies exacerbate existing vulnerabilities for people with a disability. Issues include:

- Disproportionate impact
- Communication gaps
- Evacuation and Shelter
- Planning

Council's can:

- Include representatives of people with disability in Local EM Committees.
- Audit and improve accessibility of evacuation centres and information lines.
- Conduct community preparedness programs that engage people with disability and carers.
- Plan for alternate support networks (e.g. volunteer "welfare buddies") when usual services are disrupted.
- Use council communications to disseminate disability-accessible warnings and safety information



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Conclusion and recommended actions for Councils



By treating inclusion as a lens on all council work – not an add-on – councils can build safer, fairer communities for everyone.

- ✓ Consult broadly – involve people with disability
- ✓ Train staff – ensure all council staff understand disability issues
- ✓ Review services – community venue audits
- ✓ Policy checks – Gender impact assessments and accessibility checklists
- ✓ Public information – Maintain local registers



Safety and Justice

Shellharbour City Council



Presented by
Narelle Williams
Community Planner

1

What does safety and justice mean?



Safety and justice for people with disabilities include:

- Feeling safe in public spaces and Council facilities
- Being treated fairly and respectfully by Council services
- Having access to accessible information and clear ways to seek help
- Being listened to and supported when concerns are raised
- Reduced risk of harm before crisis or justice involvement

2

Why safety and justice matters for people with disabilities



- People with disabilities experience higher risk of harm, abuse, neglect, and exclusion
- Safety and justice are **human rights**
- Councils upholds these rights by shaping inclusive communities and reducing risk before harm occurs.

Barriers include:



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How Councils Contribute



Councils support safety and justice through



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What is Shellharbour City Council doing to embed Safety and Justice in Practice?





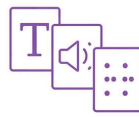
Embedding access and CPTED in projects and planning



Creating public spaces that support safety, participation and independence



Implementing Child Safe requirements



Providing information in accessible formats



Delivering programs in partnership with people with disabilities and community organisations to plan, design and service delivery



- Celebration of Ability Activities (IDPWD)
- Cofacilitate Prevention of abuse networks
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- Healthy End of Life Cafes

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Thank you!

www.shellharbour.nsw.gov.au



Presented by
Narelle Williams
 Community Planning Officer

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Gender Equity and Intersectionality

Disability Inclusion Webinar
9 April 2026



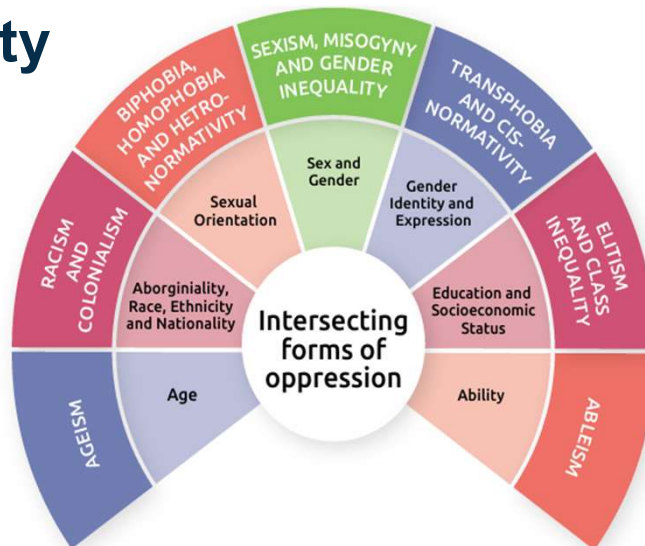
Presented by
Kelly Armstrong
Access and Inclusion officer

1

Intersectionality

Gender and disability

Compound disadvantage



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Responsibility

Policy environment

Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020

- Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP)
- Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)
- Report to Commission



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How to approach

Engage people with lived experiences

Process, Barriers and Opportunities

- Capability
- Integrate
- Leverage
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Data



Frameworks, templates



Apps



Equity impact assessments



Peer review



Drop-in sessions
Watch and learn



Community of Practice
Champions
Partnerships

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Case Study Disability Advisory Committee



Evidence identified barriers:

- reduced economic capacity and transport
- caring responsibilities
- cultural expectations

Outcomes:

1. Targeted recruitment to ensure diversity of experience is represented
2. Resources made available to ensure reasonable adjustments
3. Remuneration for lived experience expertise



Case Study Leisure Centre contract



Evidence identified barriers:

- Perceived safety, greater sensitivity to intimidating and unfamiliar environments
- Limited availability due to caring responsibilities and health care related activities
- Transport and financial limitations

Outcomes (embedded in contract):

- Safety and amenity improvements
- Expansion of existing online accessibility related information (visual stories, sensory guides, and information mapping)
- Scheduling considerations – caring responsibilities, variety of options, co-design
- Partnership with local organisations for outreach programming and to create subsidised membership pathways.
- Review of direct debit fees and proactive alerts before payments (reducing financial penalties).
- Promotion of Companion and Carer Card programs access.
- Evidence based contract evaluation and data collection



What you can do

Intersectionality

Consult – co-design
Training to understand
Data sources

Review your organisation

Understand what is already
offered and where opportunities
are

Engage with courage

Existing tools
Equity Assessment (appetite)

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Noon godjin Thank you

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Presented by
Kelly Armstrong
Access and Inclusion Officer

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Local Government & Disaster Management

Local government plays a critical role in ensuring emergency management systems work for everyone.



Presented by

Leonie Endacott
Community Development Officer
Ku-ring-gai Council

1

Why this Matters

Disasters don't impact everyone equally

People with disability are **up to twice as likely** to be injured or isolated

Barriers include:

- Inaccessible warnings
- Evacuation challenges
- Disrupted supports

These are **system design issues—not individual vulnerabilities**



2

Types of Emergencies



Natural Hazards

Bushfire	Cyclone	Landslide
Flood	Storms	Heatwave

Infrastructure/built environment failures

- Power outages and infrastructure failures
- Public health emergencies
- Water source failures
- Supply chain disruptions



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Emergency Communication



Why communication matters

- Enables informed decision-making *before* and *during* emergencies
- Increases awareness of supports and facilities
- Improves safety and risk mitigation

Communication gaps

- Not accessible (formats, language, delivery)
- Over-reliance on digital channels
- Limited awareness of local supports
- Greater challenges in regional and remote areas

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What Council's can do



1. Partner with disability organisations and carers
2. Use multiple, accessible communication channels
3. Promote awareness of facilities and supports
4. Deliver preparedness programs (e.g. P-CEP)
5. Include Emergency Management in DIAP's

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Examples of Accessible Emergency Communication



Preparedness
Townsville City Council

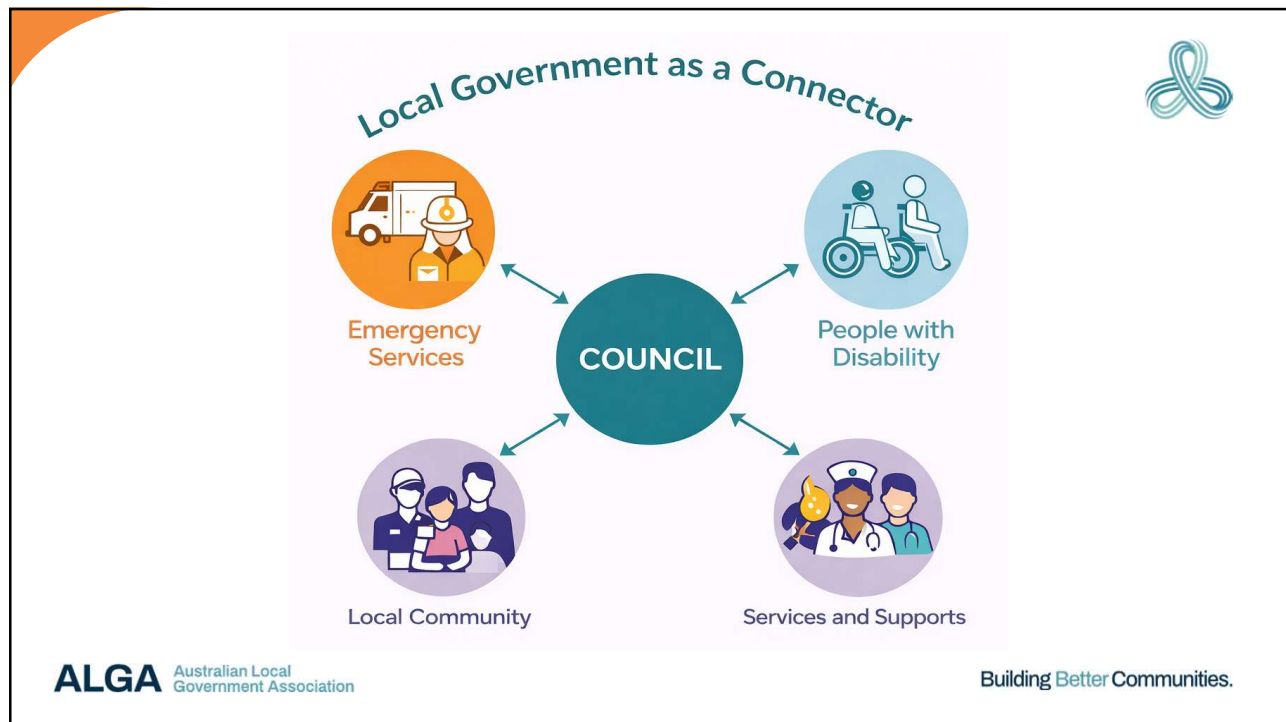


Evacuation Support
City of Greater Bendigo



Accessible Warnings
NSW SES

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This slide features the ALGA logo and the slogan "Building Better Communities." in the top left and right corners, respectively. The main title, "Local Government & Disaster Management", is prominently displayed in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the title, the contact information for Leonie Endacott is provided:

Leonie Endacott
 Ku-ring-gai Council
lendacott@krg.nsw.gov.au

The slide has a dark blue background with an orange and white curved graphic element in the bottom right corner.

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