AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY NETWORK

10 TIPS for Inclusive Leaders



Leaders play an important role in making workplaces more accessible and inclusive. What leaders say, do and prioritise shapes the experience of employees with disability.

1. Lead by example

Show that disability inclusion matters across your organisation.

- Speak about accessibility and inclusion as everyday business priorities.
- Take an active role in removing barriers, rather than leaving it to HR or inclusion teams.
- Add inclusion to business plans and leadership discussions.

2. Listen to lived experience

Better decisions start with understanding people's experiences.

- Involve employees with disability when planning policies, services and workplace changes.
- Give Disability Employee Networks time, resources and a senior sponsor.
- Offer safe, accessible ways to share feedback privately.

3. Set goals and measure progress

Turn good intentions into clear action.

- Set practical inclusion goals and agree who is responsible and by when.
- Review progress using feedback, workforce information and accessibility measures.
- Share what has improved and what still needs work.

4. Plan for accessibility from the start

Building accessibility in early is easier than fixing barriers later.

- Include accessibility in purchasing, technology, property and communications.
- Budget for workplace adjustments and accessible services.
- Involve people with disability when designing and testing changes.

5. Fix barriers in your systems

Planning for accessibility from the start stops new barriers, but many may already exist in current policies and processes.

- Review policies, technology and workplace processes for barriers.
- Fix recurring problems rather than relying only on one-off solutions.
- Give teams the support and resources to make improvements.

6. Make adjustments easy

A clear, trusted process helps employees access what they need.

- Treat workplace adjustments as a normal part of inclusive employment.
- Make the request process simple, confidential and timely.
- Trust what employees say they need, and make sure managers check that adjustments continue to work.

7. Help managers build their skills

Managers need practical support to act inclusively.

- Provide training on disability inclusion and accessibility.
- Give managers clear guidance and someone to contact for advice.
- Address bias, exclusion and disrespectful behaviour when they occur.

8. Open up career opportunities

People with disability should have fair access to development and leadership opportunities.

- Check recruitment, development and promotion processes for barriers.
- Review talent and succession planning for unfair assumptions.
- Make sure employees with disability can access mentoring and visible projects.

9. Use your influence

Leadership decisions can improve inclusion beyond your own team.

- Ask about accessibility when making major business decisions.
- Set inclusion expectations for suppliers and partners.
- Encourage peers and other leaders to take practical action.

10. Keep learning and improving

Start where you are and learn as you go.

- Make your own meetings, documents and events accessible.
- Invite feedback, acknowledge mistakes and act on what you learn.
- Use Pragmatic Universal Design by taking small achievable steps now, with Universal Design as the longer goal.

Inclusive leadership is built through everyday decisions and lasting changes to workplace systems. When leaders listen, remove barriers and act on feedback, more people have the opportunity to thrive.

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