

Free journalism resource to guide better reporting of people living with disabilities

BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA, February 8, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Media Diversity Australia (MDA) in partnership with disability organisation Hireup, Griffith University and Getty is excited to launch its latest newsroom must-have in the form of the [Disability Reporting Handbook](#).



Lisa Cox, disability spokesperson

Inspired by its popular Indigenous Reporting Handbook, MDA has created

a similar tool designed to help journalists better reflect Australia's true diversity. MDA pulled together a dedicated team of media professionals – all with lived experience of disability – to produce a practical guide on how to better represent people with disabilities.

Project lead, Briana Blackett, said producing the handbook was no small feat.

"From the very beginning, we were determined not to reinvent the wheel. We wanted to bring together all the existing advice and resources already created by people with disabilities and work directly with key organisations and advocates to gain as much input as possible.

"Then we set about collating all of this information in a way that could be easily, and quickly, accessed and understood," Blackett said.

"Today's journalists are task rich and time-poor. While ideally the handbook should be read from cover to cover, we know the realities of a looming deadline. So, we designed it in a way that enables people in a hurry to jump to key sections – whether it be how to report on the Royal Commission, how to interview someone who is Deaf or how to make your studio wheelchair accessible."

In short, simple segments, the Disability Reporting Handbook outlines key matters and concepts regarding disability, lays out the all-important Golden Rules for reporters, provides interview and accessibility tips and links through to organisations that can help journalists find out more information.

"Around 20 percent of Australians live with disability and yet these communities are hardly ever seen or heard in our media," said MDA co-chair and co-founder, Antoinette Lattouf.

“We think this is because there’s still such a lack of understanding about disability, its many forms and how different communities such as Indigenous and refugee communities have unique challenges. This is why MDA partnered with disability experts to create a practical guide to help media professionals know and do better.”

Project advisor and MDA Disability Affairs Officer, Lisa Cox combined her professional experience with advertising, marketing and media, with her lived experience of disability to help guide the resource.

“We wanted to push beyond pitiful stereotypes or inspiration porn. The experiences of people with disabilities are so varied. This is why we also created sections on intersectionality – which is key for so many Australians,” Lisa Cox said.

“We know a person’s experience of disability is very much impacted by other aspects of their lives, such as whether they are female or Indigenous, or whether they come from a CALD community, or identify as LGBTQI+,” Cox said.

The Disability Reporting Handbook is the culmination of consultations with peak Australian Disabled People’s Organisations, and curated feedback from prominent disability advocates including Dr Dinesh Palipana, Uncle Paul Calcott and Nas Campanella. It also has the backing of the Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Ben Gauntlet who wrote the foreword. Global media organisation Getty Images, supplied pictures and financial support came from Griffith University and national disability service provider, Hireup.

And while the Disability Reporting Handbook has been the result of a broad collaboration spanning the country, for Blackett, the project has always been very close to home.

“I have two children with disabilities – so for me, this handbook is profoundly personal. I have watched people like my kids be constantly misrepresented and stigmatised in the media. This guide is a way to change that.”

The Disability Reporting Handbook is available free to everyone. It can be downloaded from Media Diversity Australia’s website[BB1] .

Lattouf expects newsrooms, universities and those in the communications sector will jump at the chance to add the Disability Reporting Handbook to their toolkit.

“Our Indigenous Reporting Handbook has already been downloaded more than 10-thousand times. I expect the DRH will be just as well received by media professionals and others wanting to get it right when it comes to diversity.”

The handbook is available as a free download: www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/disability-reporting-handbook/

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