

Guide to Inclusive and Accessible Events and Quiet Spaces

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About Partners in the Community

NDIS Partners in the Community deliver Local Area Coordination (LAC) and Early Childhood Approach Partner services (ECA) as part of the NDIS on behalf of the National Disability Insurance Agency.

We help people with disability, NDIS participants, families, and carers to identify and access the support they need to enable participants to realise their individual goals and aspirations.

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) and Early Childhood Approach Partners (ECA) also work with community services and organisations to help them be accessible, inclusive and welcoming to all people with disability.

An inclusive and accessible event is one that makes every effort to cater for the requirements of all attendees, working with organisers, staff and volunteers to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone.

This guide is designed for event organisers and community members to support event planning and inclusive practices. The information and tips will support event planners to build capacity and wayfinding activities. While this will ensure the full inclusion of people with disability, families and carers, it will also help create enjoyable and memorable events for everyone

Thank you to NDIS Partners in the Community APM Communities and Mission Australia (WA) and Early Childhood Approach Partner Wanslea for their collaboration in creating this Guide to Inclusive and Accessible Events and Quiet Spaces.

Barriers to Participation

Participation barriers and sensory triggers are commonly experienced by people with disability, predominantly with people on the Autism Spectrum and/or people with sensory processing sensitivities.

Sensory overload may be triggered by;

- Loud noises
- High smell areas (usually associated with food or animals)
- Bright colours and lighting (such as strobe effects or flashing lights)



Here are some recommendations to help you accommodate people with sensory processing sensitivities at your next event.

Physical Environment

Designated areas to support people with sensory processing needs are appearing at public events around Australia in recent years e.g. quiet spaces created at community events run by local councils. Other examples include sensory rooms at Melbourne's Marvel Sports Stadium and the Fremantle Dockers have partnered with Autism WA to provide a quiet space during Fremantle Dockers games at Perth's Optus Stadium. These spaces provide a safe and calming environment isolated from the busy crowds and allows a person both a location and time to regulate their emotions.

Sensory Areas or Quiet Spaces can consider:

- Location: in a calmer area, preferably with low foot traffic and not close to food vendors.
- Opening Hours: available during the main hours of the event, particularly in noisy and high activity times e.g., fireworks.
- Quiet Space area - large enough to accommodate at least 4 people plus carers plus two staff (larger for large events)
- Internal layout - A variety of comfortable seating, for example beanbags, yoga mats and/or floor cushions (see Appendix iv - Example Quiet Space Floor Plan);
- Sensory tools - recommended sensory stock items to have on hand for any event organised (see Appendix i - Inclusive Events Items Checklist);



- Low lighting, lamps or fairy lights (for events targeted at younger attendees), blinds/curtains can help reduce strong daylight;
- Instructions for use of the space clearly and prominently displayed;
- Copies of schedule of events/ program;
- A user sign in sheet with terms of use and a liability release form for the attendee or families and carers (see Appendix ii and iii below)

Consultation and Event Co-Design

- Where possible, it is also important to consult with people with disability, their families and carers in planning the space around how the space should be set up to ensure it best meets their needs via surveys, face to face meetings and/or establishing a working group which meets quarterly.
- Consultation and partnering allied health professionals and organisations can assist in planning and resourcing e.g. for activities or 'sensory items' to use in a quiet space.



“Absolutely SAVED our family day. Our child had a trigger and needed this space. If this wasn’t here, we would have had to go home with a screaming child. We loved the space, and the staff SAVED OUR DAY!”
– Parent of children that used Perth Royal Show ‘Chill Out Zone’

Staffing

Event Briefing and Processes

- Quiet spaces require staff or volunteers who have understanding of sensory processing sensitivities (and have suitable police and working with children clearances). Volunteer roles are a great opportunity for university students studying allied health, education or social work seeking a volunteer position to gain more knowledge, skills and experience. Their role is to make sure visitors are welcomed and feel safe in the space, as well as to support if de-escalation is required during emotional dysregulation, sensory overload, or a meltdown.

It is recommended two staff attend the space, particularly as safety for all is of paramount importance in the event of heightened emotions and behaviour.

External Training

- Specialist training provided to staff and volunteers can assist to upskill individual capacities and develop a deeper understanding of access and inclusion such as de-escalation training, psychosocial safety or mental health first aid.

Quiet/Relaxed Sessions

An event may offer a low-sensory quiet session promoted to people with sensory processing sensitivities to enable them to plan the optimum time to attend during a less stimulating environment. It is recommended that during the quiet session, music and announcements are turned off, and lighting is reduced where possible. Some

positive examples of this include retail low-sensory hour (Woolworths, Coles, K-Mart etc.) and relaxed performance sessions at WA Ballet, the Blue Room Theatre, and the WA Royal Agricultural Show where a two hour morning period



ensured stall and activity vendors ensured loud noises and lighting was minimised.

Communication

Providing as much information as possible prior to the event can reduce anxiety for people with disability.

For successful attendance, events can provide information through online event promotion, social media, electronic messaging (email or SMS), promotion through distribution lists, and word of mouth through community channels. Some recommendations for communication:

- A Sensory Map to outline high sensory areas due to smell, noise, and lighting. This allows attendees to clearly map out their plan prior to arriving at the event. The map can be colour coded to identify the sensory zones easily as well as showing the ACROD parking bays zones.



- An event activity list indicating which activities may impact on people with sensory processing sensitivities e.g. fireworks;
- A Social Narrative developed in consultation with an allied health professional such as an Occupational Therapist or Speech Pathologist so children and adults with a disability and family members can understand and navigate the site and times based on the sensory levels of activity;
- Information about the location and use of the quiet space provided online as part of the event promotion before the event as well as at the event upon entry and at information stations.
- Easy-read principles informing graphic design for printed and online marketing materials can increase access and inclusion of marketing as well individually reaching out to disability social outing groups and programs.

“ The Social Story was so valuable. We used it with our son before attending the show. It was fantastic having the social story available on the website. ” Parent



Inclusion for all

Have you thought about...

- How people with disability will get to your event?

Include in the event promotion accessible public transport options, accessible parking, expected busy times, options for people with disability to enter before the official opening time.

- How accessible is your venue for people with physical disabilities?

This includes ticketing entry, inclusive seating for food areas, for sight impaired people, wheelchair and mobility aid users. All event staff can benefit from disability awareness training.

- What facilities will you provide with people with disability in mind?

Information stations providing event maps to indicate accessible toilets that can be used for people with disability and carers (who may be of the same or different gender), Quiet Space, medical stations, water stations.

- What people with different needs will require to participate in event activities?

Are elevated areas accessible by ramps for people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids?

Appendix i - Inclusive Events Items Checklist

Resources for Quiet Spaces	Tick Box
Equipment	
Temporary Ramps for Wheelchair users access	
Tables	
Bean Bags, cushions, soft seating	
Astroturf/Foam Flooring/playmats	
Window Curtains	
Soft play and sensory items	
Gel sensory tiles	
Children's Reading Tents	
Children's books	
Mindfulness colouring in	
Colouring pencils and crayons	
Chalk board and chalk	
Scratch art	
Etch Art Sensory Toys	
Ear muffs	
Bubbles/ Bubble machine/ DIY Bubble Mix	
Bunting/Colourful tassel bunting	
3 x Fairy lights set & Batteries	
Sensory nature play resources, sand play	
DIY Sensory Jars	
Bean Bag Fidgets	
Jenga large blocks or sandbags or outdoor activities	
Lamintated Choice board resource for nonverbal children/young people	
Information Sheets	
Hardcopy Sensory Maps	
Social Story	
Information about quiet spaces	
Signage	
Quiet space signage including opening hours	
Other items	
Water Dispensers or water bottles	
Bins	
Hand sanitiser and sanitising wipes	
First aid kits	
Working with children cards/names badge/ID	
Public Liability Insurance Certificates	

Appendix ii – Example: Terms of Use for a Quiet Space

(To be placed next to the sign in sheets)

I acknowledge and accept that use of the Quiet Space is subject to the below Terms of Use:

SUPERVISION

- Participants under 18 years of age must be supervised by a parent or registered carer at all times.

LIMITATION OF LIABILITY AND RELEASE

- All participants attending the Quiet Space do so at their own risk.
- To the extent permitted by law, XXX is not liable to the participant for any losses to property (including but not limited to personal property and belongings) or bodily injury or death arising from or in any way connected with the Quiet Space.
- The participant releases and forever discharges XXX from all claims which the participant may have for losses to property (including but not limited to personal property and belongings) or bodily injury or death howsoever causes, including negligence, arising from or in any way connected with, the Quiet Space.
- XXX is not responsible for any claim, injury, illness (including Coronavirus COVID-19), death, loss, damage, expense, delay, inconvenience, stress, cost or other sum or claim of any description which results from the acts or omissions of XXX.

INDEMNITY

- The participant indemnifies and holds harmless XXX, to the extent permitted by law, in respect of any claim by any person, including but not limited to accompanying persons or another participant, arising as a result of or in any way connected with the participant's and/or any accompanying person's attendance or actions at the Quiet Space.

PRIVACY

- By registering and attending the Quiet Space, the participant acknowledges that XXX is collecting and processing their personal information in accordance with XXX's Privacy Policy: XXXLINK

Participant means the individual who is bound by these Terms of Use with respect to their attendance at the Quiet Space.

Appendix iii - Example Sign In Form

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I understand and agree to the
Terms of Use – Quiet Space

Name:	Mobile number:	Date:	Time In:	Time Out:	Signature:	I consent xxx using photo or other media for promotional purposes related to the Quiet Space, including social media and websites, and that this consent applies to Participants under 18 years of age in my group

Appendix iv - Example Quiet Space Floor Plan

