

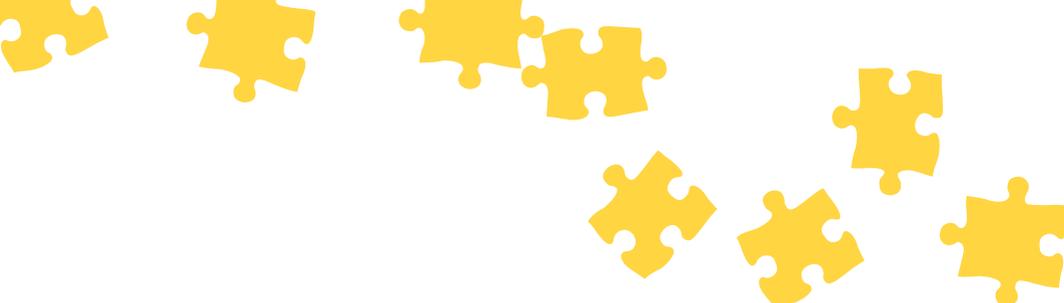
# Reflection and Response

Welcoming People  
with Disability

**GUIDELINES FOR PARISH COMMUNITIES**



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference



This booklet has been published by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference under the guidance of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life with the advice and assistance of the Australian Catholic Disability Council and its Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee.

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**For more information and resources please contact:**



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# REFLECTION AND RESPONSE: WELCOMING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

## Guidelines for Parish Communities

Dear Friends in Christ,

How do we encourage and assist the full participation of people with disability in our parish communities?

A major challenge is to ensure that all people are included in the life of the Church, especially people with disability, their families and friends who support them. To assist in ensuring and promoting full participation of people with disability, this booklet has been developed as a guideline for parishes.

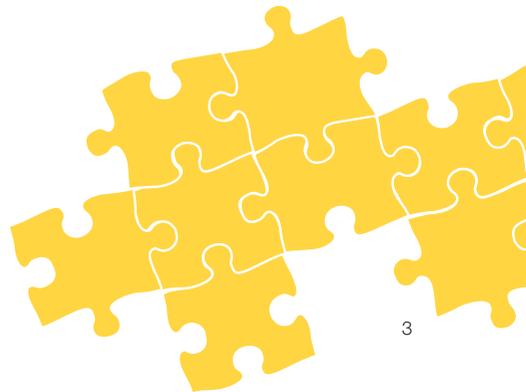
The booklet *Reflection and Response: Welcoming People with Disability; Guidelines for Parishes* may encourage and assist faith communities to discover and celebrate the beauty and strength of the Body of Christ by promoting the full participation of people with disability, their families and friends in the life of the Church. It is a call to create opportunities for participation in which everyone is valued, gifted and acknowledged.

Let us confidently strive to become inclusive communities that warmly welcome people with disability and their families; communities where the presence of Jesus Christ is recognised in everyone and where we can all fully participate in the life of our Church.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



Bishop Terence J Brady  
**Bishops' Delegate for Disability Issues**  
**Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life**  
**Australian Catholic Bishops Conference**



# INTRODUCTION



One of the many blessings of parish community life is the diversity and uniqueness of each member. Each person in our parish community has a gift to share, a story to tell, and a distinctive and unique place in the Body of Christ.

***Just as each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same function: in the same way, all of us, though there are so many of us, make up one body in Christ, and as different parts we are all joined to one another. (Romans 12; 4-6)***

Parish communities need every person to be part of the worshipping body. A Parish is not complete or whole unless it includes, nurtures and rejoices in each of its members.

*The presence of people with disability and their families in a parish brings a perspective into parish life which is invaluable. The spirit of Christian hospitality urges parishes to invite people with disability to participate as fully as they wish. It demands a willingness to change or adapt whatever is necessary to ensure that all feel welcome and that each person can live up to their own hopes and expectations.*

***Inclusive practices within a parish all depend on the support given to people with disability and their families by individuals or groups through meaningful relationships.***

***The Body of Christ presumes a place for everyone.***

***The Gospel of Jesus demands a place for everyone.***

Look at people with disability as individuals and then work out how the parish environment can be made more accommodating. It is also important when something starts that it can be continued. There is nothing worse than a start stop arrangement. This is basically an issue of ensuring sustainability.

***You are the body of Christ, and each of you is part of it. (1Corinthians 27)***





Parishes are called to be communities that gladly and authentically welcome people with disability and their families to the life of the Church. Many parishes have taken the challenge and call to be more inclusive communities. These parishes have discovered the beauty and strength of the truth of actively belonging to the Body of Christ. It is in this recognition and rejoicing in each person's gifts and weaknesses, and through the mutual giving and receiving in both good and bad times that communities realise their potential of providing 'real' liberation and freedom through the Body of Christ.

People with disability and their families have also discovered their authentic and visible place within the Body of Christ through the call and discovery of their own unique gifts. When our gifts and our weaknesses are acknowledged and freely shared, we empower each other to live out our Baptismal promises to evangelise, to love and to tell our Good News. It is in this evangelising and in the telling of our own story that we 'become the story' and truly strive to be 'One Body in Christ'.



**Access  
Attitude  
Acceptance**



# CHECK LISTS

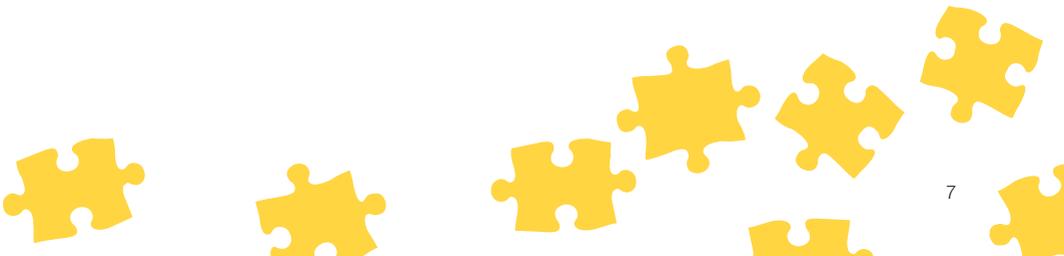
This booklet is a guide to assist parishes in creating accessible communities. It contains check lists that will give parish personnel insight into the issues associated with living with a disability, and how these issues can act as barriers to participation.

- ✓ Parts of these check lists may or may not apply to your parish, so only use the parts that are relevant.
- ✓ These check lists are a guide to creating access. It is important to remember that the more access requirements you can meet, the more welcoming your parish community can be.
- ✓ Tick “yes” or “no” on the check lists to determine accessibility.
- ✓ The ticks in the “yes” box will show you meet the access requirement.
- ✓ A tick in the “no” box indicates the aspect that does not meet access requirements and may require changes for the parish to improve access.
- ✓ Use the Response section to record what action needs to be taken. You may like to estimate a time value for action to be taken.

<b>HOSPITALITY AND RELATIONSHIP</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Do you welcome and offer hospitality to every member of your parish community?		
Do you encourage and support access for people with disability to parish liturgies, the sacraments and parish ministries?		
Do you offer learning opportunities to the parish community to develop a better understanding of disability?		
Do you invite people with disability to actively participate in leadership and service roles in the parish community?		
Do you encourage an attitude of being with people with disability, rather than doing things to or for people with disability in the parish?		
Do you support carers and support workers in your parish?		

<b>SENSORY ACCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Do you provide a good quality and working sound system?		
Do you provide an audio loop?		
Do you provide adequate lighting inside the church building?		
Are the Celebrant and readers clearly visible?		
Do you provide large print bulletins and hymn books to parishioners with low vision?		
Do you provide assistance for users of Braille?		
Do you provide clear and visible signs in all places of the church building?		

<b>RESOURCE ACCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Do you provide a resource library that includes information and resources about disability issues?		
Do you provide printed information in Easy English?		
Do you promote services and supports to people with disability?		
Do you provide and display pamphlets about services available to people with disability?		





<b>BUILDINGS AND PHYSICAL ACCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
Do you provide reserved car parking for people with disability? <i>Accessible car parking spaces need to be wide for full side and rear door opening, in the case of vans, and provide access for wheelchairs to paths.</i> <i>Accessible parking bays need international access symbol signage.</i>		
Do you provide accessible and continuous paths of travel from the car park to all other areas of the church and parish buildings?		
Do you provide ramps built to the appropriate building standards?		
Do you provide hand rails on steps and ramps?		
Do you provide non-slip surfaces on stairs?		
Do you provide doorways with wide entrances?		
Do you provide a fully accessible primary entrance to the church building?		
Do you provide easy access seating in at least one accessible part of the church building?		
Do you provide moveable kneelers?		



<b>BUILDINGS AND PHYSICAL ACCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<p>Do you provide spaces inside the church building for wheelchairs, scooters or strollers, other than in the aisle or behind pillars?</p>		
<p>Do you organise the distribution of Holy Communion so that people with mobility disability can choose to receive Holy Communion in the same manner as other members of the congregation?</p> <p><i>For example, can the aisle and system of queuing accommodate a person using a wheelchair?</i></p>		
<p>Do you provide an accessible ramp to the Sanctuary?</p>		
<p>Do you provide accessible interview and reconciliation rooms that wheelchairs can enter into and manoeuvre within the room?</p>		
<p>Do you provide an accessible toilet?</p> <p><i>Has a person who uses a wheelchair been part of the planning for this?</i></p>		
<p>Do you provide an accessible parish centre and/or venue for meetings and the serving of meals?</p>		
<p>Do you provide accessible notice boards and information tables?</p> <p><i>For example, can a person using a wheelchair reach resources on a table?</i></p>		







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