



Women with  
Disabilities ACT

STRONG WOMEN  
STRONG VOICES

# Workshop 7

## Telling others about my decision



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Self-Advocacy and Supported Decision Making Series

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# Disability Discrimination Act 1992

## What do we mean by rights?

- Disability discrimination is when you are treated unfairly because you have a disability. You have the right to equal access and to have your needs met.

## Disability Discrimination ACT

- The Disability Discrimination Act is a law that says that people and the government must treat you fairly.
- It is called the DDA for short.
- It makes it illegal for you to be treated badly because of your disability.
- It tries to make sure you have a fair go and that society treats you fairly.

## Who is the DDA for?

The DDA is for people with any type of disability.

It protects you if you:

- have a disability now
- have had a disability in the past
- may have a disability in the future because of family history.

The DDA also protects people who are treated badly because they have a family member or friend with a disability.

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## Areas of life where the DDA protects you

- Employment or jobs
- Education
- Buying things and using services
- Playing sports and joining clubs and associations
- Buying or renting a house or other buildings.

### Employment or jobs

It is against the law to discriminate against you because of your disability at work or when you are looking for a job.

If you can do most of the job then you must have the same chance, rights and opportunities as others you work with.

Your workplace must make changes so you can do your job well.

They can:

- change the way they run the interview
- make the office space easier for you to work in
- change the tasks you have to do and give you extra breaks and time
- provide you with training and support
- provide assistive technology related to work.

### Education

It is illegal for a school, TAFE or university to discriminate against you because of your disability.

If you are applying for education, you have the same rights as everyone else to study there.

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Places of education cannot:

- stop you from studying there because of your disability
- ask you to pay more
- leave you out of activities, classes, lectures or on-site training.

They must make changes so that you can study well. Some examples are:

- making rooms and lecture halls accessible for you to get into and to study and learn in
- giving you the equipment you need to learn
- giving you extra time for exams and assignments
- giving you information you can read and/or understand
- having systems in place so that you can still get all the information you need if you miss or cannot go to a class.

## Buying things and using services

It is against the law for you to be discriminated against because of your disability when buying things or using services.

Stores and services cannot:

- stop you from buying something because of your disability
- ask or make you pay extra for things, for example using wheelchair taxi
- serve you last for no good reason
- refuse you entry because of your disability.

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## Playing sports and joining clubs

It is against the law for you to be left out from playing sports or being a member of a club, group or association because you have a disability.

This includes:

- sports and social clubs
- drama, dance and music groups
- political parties and business groups
- support groups.

They cannot:

- stop you from applying to become a member
- ask you to pay extra
- leave you out of activities.

The DDA says that clubs or groups must meet in a place that is accessible.

## Access to public places

The DDA makes it against the law for public places and public transport to not be accessible. Every public space should be open and for you to enter and use when they are open to the public.

For example:

- access and entrance and inside the building
- things you use inside the building should be accessible and in reach
- all parts of a public space that can be used should be available to you to use
- information about the place should be easy to read, understand and access.

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You have the right to complain if a public space is not accessible.

## Using government services

The DDA makes it illegal for the Commonwealth Government to discriminate against you because of your disability.

You must have access to:

- government offices
- places where government programs are run, like Centrelink
- voting places and information
- courts and legal help.

## Making a complaint

If you are discriminated against or bullied because of your disability you can complain to The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

To make a complaint you can write and email or letter and send it to:

[complaints@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:complaints@humanrights.gov.au)

For information on making complaints go to the AHRC's website:

[www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

To speak with someone over the phone, call **02 9284 9600**

*Adapted from: Council for Intellectual Disability – DDA Easy English.*

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# The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

## What do we mean by rights?

- Countries will not treat people unfairly because of their disability.
- Countries need to make sure that people with disabilities get and have the same rights as others.
- Every country must have an independent organisation to make sure that to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is also known as the UNCRPD.
- In Australia, this is the Australian Human Rights Commission.

## What are your rights under the UNCRPD?

### Economic rights

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- Equal access to family benefits, loans and credit.

### Social Rights

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- Equal access to employment and education.
- Equal access to housing and transportation.
- Equal access to healthcare and family planning.
- Equal treatment for rural women\* and marginalized people.



### Cultural rights

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- Tells the government to stop cultural practices that discriminate against women\* and minorities.
- Equal participation in recreational activities such as sports.

### Civil rights

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- Equality in legal matters.
- The right to freedom of movement.
- The right to choose where they live.

### Political Rights

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- The right to vote.
- The right to hold office in politics and to participate in politics.
- The right to represent their government at an international level.

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WWDACT acknowledges that we work on the lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. We pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

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# Self-Advocacy and Supported Decision Making

## Telling others about your decisions

Throughout life and in everyday moments we are constantly making decisions, big and small. There are times we need to tell other people about the decisions we have made or are in the process of making. This can be difficult, depending on the decision and who it is we need to tell.

Knowing what you want to get out of the decision you are making, what is involved in the decision making process, as well as taking your needs, wants and goals into account, can help you prepare when it comes to telling others about a decision you have made.

Telling others about your decisions means working out the communication method or methods that work best for you, so that you can explain your decision in a way you are confident the other person will understand what it is you need and are deciding on.

Working on our self-confidence and being sure of ourselves can also help us in these moments. It's not a skill we can learn overnight, but using our lived experiences and recognising our strong points can lead to successfully telling others about our decisions.

Knowing who you need to tell your decision to, and who you don't want to tell your decision to, can help keep you safe and feeling comfortable when telling someone about a decision you have made. If we take all these things into consideration, it can help us when it comes to explaining our decision to those who are involved and may need an explanation.

## Things to consider when telling others about my decisions

When it comes to telling others about your decisions, who you decide to tell varies from person to person. There may be people in your life who need to know about a choice you are making, as well as the people in your life who you would like to know about the decision. This means that who you tell is completely up to you.

You do not have to tell anyone who you do not wish to know, except for the people already involved who need to know. For example, if it's a medical related decision, the only person you need to inform is the medical professional involved, and possibly any other medical professionals who are also involved.

It is also important to think about the people in your life who should be told about particular decisions you are making. This means taking into consideration how this may affect them as well as yourself, and if you need to let them know about it so that there is no confusion for anyone involved.

Here are some things to consider when telling someone about a decision:

What decision am I making?

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## Telling others about my decision

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Who needs to know about this decision? E.g. *Only me, medical professionals, family, friends, partner/spouse, carers etc.*

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Do I know how I am going to communicate my decision?

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Who would I want to know about this decision?

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Am I confident in the decision I am making?

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Who else could this decision affect, including myself?

*This effect could be helpful or unhelpful.*

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Who do I feel comfortable talking about my decision with?

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Is there anyone who could react negatively about this decision?

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Do I need an advocate who can help mediate when I tell this person about my decision?

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Other things I should consider are:

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## Who do I need to inform about my decision?

When thinking about who needs to know about your decision, there are a range of things to consider. For example: Who do I want to know about my decision? Who else could it affect? Do I need to tell someone so that I can get help from them to support me with this decision?

If the decision is something such as needing new shoes you might only need to tell one person, if you need their help in getting to a shop, thinking about cost, and whether you would like someone to assist you.

If it's a bigger decision, such as starting a new medical treatment or regime, you may need to tell multiple people. This might involve telling the health professionals involved, any other medical professionals who need to know about changes to your medication and treatments, as well as your pharmacist to make sure new medications don't react with your existing treatments. It is also important to inform close family members and supporters, if they assist you with things such as your medication.

If it's a decision such as moving house, you may need to tell a whole range of people from those closest to you to real estate agents, and your support systems. It all depends on how big the decision you are making is, as well as the amount of help you would like to receive from others.

At the end of the day, who you tell is always up to you, as long as the people who really need to know are kept informed. You do not have to disclose your decision to anyone you don't want to, unless you choose to do so.

Having a list of who you need to tell, depending on the situation, can help you when it comes to your decisions in the future.

The following questions can help you get a better idea of who you prefer to turn to when telling others about a decision, as well as looking at who you may like to exclude from your decision making process.

## My plan for sharing my decisions with people who need to know

Who is involved in my decisions?

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Is there anyone I trust to share my decisions with?

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Who needs to know and who could it affect now and/or in the future?

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Who am I comfortable telling my decisions to?

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Who am I uncomfortable sharing my decisions with?

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## Telling others about my decision

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Who can I turn to when it comes to telling others about my decisions?

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Who do I turn to if I need help communicating with someone I am not comfortable telling about my decisions?

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Do I need help when it comes to communicating my decisions and why I have made them?

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If yes, is this something I can work on by myself, or can someone else support me?

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## How do I communicate my decision to others?

When it comes to explaining a decision to someone, how we do so can change depending on who we are talking to, as well as how comfortable we are around that person. Clear communication is the best way to explain your decision to the person or people who need to know about it.

Communicating is different for everyone though. For some people, speaking is their preferred way of communicating, while for others, having it written down and given to the other person works best. For others, having someone do the communicating for them is more efficient.

No matter how you go about communicating why you are making a decision, you need to know why you are making this particular decision, and to be prepared to answer any questions that may arise from making it.

Having a clear idea of the reasoning behind your decision can help you become better prepared when answering these questions.

If you are feeling uncomfortable telling someone about a decision, you have the right to ask for someone to stand in for you, to explain it on your behalf. It's important to remember that not every decision needs to be justified, and if someone wants you to justify why you are making it, you do not have to disclose to them why — unless it is a medical professional or someone directly affected. If you are feeling pressured or feel the need to give some type of an explanation, it doesn't have to be in depth, and you have the right to say no. It's up to you and/or the person explaining it to decide what you wish to disclose to those around you.

## Communicating my decision to others

How do I feel comfortable communicating?

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What situations do I find myself more confident in?

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What areas do I need help in when it comes to explaining my decisions?

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Who can I turn to when I need help?

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If I don't have anyone I'm comfortable going to when I need help, what do I do next?

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Are the people who question my decisions doing it out of love and concern, or from a place where they are only thinking of themselves? Are they listening to me?

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Are my needs, wants, and decisions being respected and listened to by those I've explained past decisions to?

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How can I go about getting help in these areas? Can I contact anyone from the resources list?

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## How do I stay safe when telling others about my decision?

### Things to consider when assessing risk factors of telling others about a decision

- Do I feel safe or threatened when explaining my decisions to someone?
- Who makes me feel that way?
- What are the risks associated with interacting with this person or these people?
- Should such a person be in my life?
- Do I have a plan in place if I am feeling unsafe, and need to remove myself from the situation to get away from the person/persons making me feel unsafe?
- Do I have someone I can call in an emergency?
- Do I have someone I know who can pick me up if I'm in an unsafe situation?
- Do I know how to get out of this situation by myself?
- If it's a family member, are there other family members or friends who can be a buffer between myself and the family member who is causing issues and making me feel unsafe?
- If it's a close friend, it may be time to ask myself if they really are a friend and reflect on situations in the past. If it's a recurring situation, asking myself: Does this person need to be in my life?
- If it's a medical practitioner, is there another one I can see who will treat me with respect?

## My plan to stay safe when telling others about my decisions

There are times when, unfortunately, those who are involved in our lives may not agree with our decisions, and various people we might encounter while making these decisions might be critical. Remember that there is a difference between a person questioning our decisions because they want to be more informed to help us, and someone who constantly questions our decisions in ways that imply that we are making the wrong decisions. Thinking about this can keep us safe. It can help us make sure that the person or people involved have our best interests at heart, and are looking for the best outcomes based on our goals, wants and needs.

Thinking about the people in your life and how they react is a good personal exercise to do before explaining your decision. Ask yourself questions like: How is this person going to react? Do they treat me with respect? Am I comfortable telling this person about this decision based on how they have reacted in the past? This will help you get a better idea of who to include when involving others in our decision-making process.

If there are people in your life who are making you uncomfortable, belittling you, forcing you to change decisions that you have made, who don't meet your needs, or are dismissive — it's important to ask yourself "Does this person really need to be involved or to know about my decision?".

If you have to tell this person about choices you are making or have made, are there plans you can put in place so that you feel safe to do so? You may need to have someone with you when you tell them, or have someone else tell them for you. You could also tell them in a small group setting with other people who do support and respect you, creating a safe space.

Creating a plan means that you can be more prepared when these sorts of situations arise. Plans can help give you confidence and make you feel safer when you do find yourself in these positions.

## Telling others about my decision

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What are the risks I need to assess when telling others about my decision?

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How do I feel more comfortable telling others about my decision?

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How can I get out of an unsafe situation when telling others about my decision?

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Other things to consider:

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[illegible]