



# Urban form as a policy lever for optimal child disability outcomes

## Do Australian disability policies support accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods for children with disability?

Children with disabilities often face health and wellbeing challenges that are less favourable compared with their non-disabled peers. These adverse outcomes are frequently linked not to the impairment itself, but to ongoing experiences of social exclusion and material hardship. There is an increasing awareness of the need to investigate the broader social determinants that impact health, especially the neighbourhood environment for children with disabilities. By analysing disability policy documents, we can identify ways to create more inclusive urban environments for these children and their families.

### What did we do?

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- We reviewed Australian national, state, and territory disability policy documents to investigate how well they considered the domains of a 'liveable' neighbourhood for children.
- The coding structure was informed by a pre-determined set of eight neighbourhood-built environment 'domains' that identified features of a liveable neighbourhood for children.
- Thirteen disability policy documents were examined against the eight domains of a liveable neighbourhood for children.

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### What did we find?

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- Seven of eight domains defining a liveable neighbourhood for children were considered by at least one, and often multiple, disability policy documents, with education and housing receiving the most attention.
- While most of the domains that support good child health and wellbeing were considered in Australian disability policy, strategies were largely simplistic and did not capture the multi-sectoral and multi-portfolio approaches required to create neighbourhoods that holistically support children with disability.
- Within Australian disability policy, urban planning is presently not considered a major lever for shaping outcomes for children with disability and their families.

## What do these findings mean?

- This policy review moves away from the individualistic approaches typically seen with disability interventions to identify urban levers that can impact the broader social determinants of health and provide long-term benefits to children with disability and their families.
- More focus is needed for delivering place-based interventions for children with disability, aligning with major international agendas, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF's Child-friendly Cities Initiatives, and the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

## Where can I find out more?

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We have used person-first language. Person-first language puts the person before their disability – for example, ‘children with disability’. We recognise that identity-first language is important to the many people with disability who have advocated for the use of this language.

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