POLICY NO: SP-22	VERSION NO: 1
APPROVED BY: Committee of Management	DATE: December 2013
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Participation and Inclusion Policy

1.0 Introduction

ConnectAbility Australia recognises that all people with a disability have the right to feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in life in society as they choose. ConnectAbility Australia is committed to promoting a positive image of people with a disability, recognising that this can positively influence self-esteem and provide opportunities for enhanced citizenship through their inclusion in the community.

ConnectAbility will ensure that the concept of inclusion is culturally appropriate. ConnectAbility Australia is committed to work in collaboration and partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities/ agencies/ services to benefit the application of this policy.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline ConnectAbility Australia's commitment to ensuring people with a disability are encouraged and supported to contribute to social and civic life in their communities in ways that are important to them. The policy describes the processes to be implemented to facilitate the participation and inclusion into community and civic life for each participant accessing ConnectAbility Australia as their chosen service provider. ConnectAbility Australia will strive to build opportunities to create an inclusive culture/environment in which differences and capabilities are recognised and value based on each participants choice and level of participation.

3.0 Scope

The Participation and Inclusion policy has been developed and will be implemented to meet the requirements of the Disability Services Act (1993) and the New South Wales Disability Services Standards.

This policy applies to:

- All people who are currently provided supports and services at ConnectAbility Australia;
- All people who will use supports and services provided by ConnectAbilit yAustralia in the future;
- All service types and models of support offered by ConnectAbility Australia;
- All ConnectAbility Australia policies, practices and systems that relate to people who use our services receiving support.

4.0 Definitions

- **Participation:** taking part in and sharing activities with people with similar interest to achieve personal goals.
- **Inclusion:** a sense of belonging developed when a person is accepted by others, , seen as an individual, has interaction with others and not excluded.
- **Participant:** a person who is accessing ConnectAbility Australia to be involved in specific program activities.
- **Civic life:** participating in the life of the community of which one is a part.

5.0   Policy

ConnectAbility Australia is committed to ensuring that each person is encouraged and supported to participate in community and civic life in ways that are important and meaningful to them.

It is the intention of ConnectAbility Australia to provide people with disabilities with the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities enjoyed by other people in the community. This includes the right to access community services, resources and facilities.

To facilitate this commitment, ConnectAbility Australia will develop connections in the community to promote opportunities forparticipants to have active and meaningful participation in community and civic life.

To ensure this commitment, ConnectAbility Australia will:

- Support and encourage participants to realise their goals dreams and aspirations;
- Implement person centred planning principles and guidelines to ensure control and decision making is afforded to the person and their families/carers.
- Support and encourage participants to identify how they would like to live their life;
- Develop plans which outline ways in which participants can actively and meaningfully participate in community and civic life;
- Maintain and develop community connections;
- Facilitate linkages between the participant and the community;
- Enhance participants current community connections and informal supports;
- Record examples of community participation and inclusion;
- Review service user engagement and participation in community and civic life;
  Train staff in the importance of community participation and inclusion. This would include how they can encourage and support participants to actively and meaningfully participate in community and civic life.

6.0 Procedures

ConnectAbilty Australia will develop connections and strategies that promote and build community participation and engagement opportunities to create and develop community networks.

6.1   Planning meeting

These meetings support and encourage participants to realise their goals, dreams and aspirations. They focus on acknowledging a participants formal and informal supports as well as their community connections. Planning meetings also investigate opportunities for community participation and inclusion.

6.2   Surveys

Surveys record levels of satisfaction amongst participants, stakeholders and families. They provide indications of the levels of satisfaction participants have with their community participation and highlights areas of need for increased community inclusion. ConnectAbility Australia will obtain feedback around its performance from participants and their families/carers during planning and review functions and through annual Participant, Family and Carer, and Staff surveys.

6.3   Family Forums

These forums provide families with an informal mechanism of providing feedback to the organisation. Topics discussed include participants levels of community participation and inclusion and how to increase of enhance these.

6.4   Informal Conversations and Feedback

These conversations occur on an irregular basis and can be face to face or over the phone. They highlight specific instances of community participation and integration for individuals and often involve looking at changes in supports to accommodate individual preferences.

6.5   Brochures and Website

ConnectAbility Australia's brochures and website provide specific examples of how participants actively and meaningfully participate in community and civic life facilitated by ConnectAbility Australia. They are a mechanism of documenting participant's achievements and sharing these with the wider community.

6.6   Calendar of Events

The calendar highlights specific events throughout the year that are important to ConnectAbility Australia. It includes events that are specifically for ConnectAbility Australia but also events that allow participants to actively participate and be included in their local community.

6.7   Communication Plan

These are specific to an individual and document information about the person's journey towards achieving set goals. They are critical when it comes to documenting an individual's ability to participate in or integrate into the community. This evidence is used to identify how to move an individual from participation to inclusion in their community.

6.8   Staff Training

Training is an essential part of any organisation. Training at ConnectAbility Australia focuses on the importance of community participation and inclusion. Specific training is provided to assist staff build their skills and capacity so they can encourage participants to actively and meaningfully participate in community and civic life. This begins with the induction of staff once employed by ConnectAbility Australia.

7.0 Responsibilities

7.1   The ConnectAbility Australia Committee of Management is responsible for approving and monitoring the implementation of this policy.

7.2   The General Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- all stakeholders are aware of and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to participation and inclusion principles;
- all employees, volunteers, students, team leaders and managers have been provided with training in relation to this policy as required.
- ongoing support and guidance is provided to all employees in relation to implementing this policy.

7.3   General Manager, Operations Manager are responsible for ensuring that:

- all procedures, guidelines in accordance with this policy are implemented by staff of ConnectAbility Australia.
- Feedback in relation to participation and inclusion gathered from participants and their families/carers is analysed annually and use to inform systems improvements.
- providing access to a copy of the Policy, for example on the ConnectAbility Australia website;
- providing updates or development of the Policy to participants, families/carers and staff of ConnectAbility Australia.

7.4   Team Leaders and Senior Workers are responsible for ensuring that:

- all procedures, guidelines in accordance with this policy are implemented by staff of ConnectAbility Australia.
- Provide staff reminders of the need for compliance with the Policy
- they attempt to resolve and address any complaints or issues raised with them in line with their authority relating to this policy.

7.5   All employees are responsible for ensuring that:

- all procedures, guidelines in accordance with this policy are implemented;
- are aware of and understand this policy and procedures and seek clarification if they do not understand.

7.6   Stakeholders are responsible for:

- Using this policy to develop collaborations with ConnectAbility Australia to achieve community participation and inclusive networks.

8.0 Working with Families/Carers

ConnectAbility Australia recognises the great contributions families and carers make to the service and to their local communities in their individual carer roles. ConnectAbility has adopted key

principles to guide the way ConnectAbility staff, management and volunteers interact with families and carers of those people provided supports and services by our organisation.

ConnectAbility Australia acknowledges the importance of Aboriginal culture, disability, age, gender, cultural and religious backgrounds and beliefs of all families and carers of service participants.

ConnectAbility adopts the following principles when engaging with families and carers:

- Recognise the contributions that families and carers make and values the support they provide to the individuals they care for:
- Being mindful of the health and well-being of families and carers;
- Listening to the opinions and feedback of families and carers of participants;
- Respect and support the choices made by families and carers, their knowledge and experiences as carers;
- Work with families to identify what support and services families and carers may require and refer them to these resources and services;
- Show respect for the relationships between families, carers and participants of ConnectAbility Australia;
- Demonstrate a recognition that carers are all different, and that families and carers of our participants have needs outside of their caring role;
- All families and carers associated with ConnectAbility Australia have the same rights choices and opportunities as any other person;
- ConnectAbility acknowledges the difficulties faced by families and carers living in rural and isolated areas.

9.0   Breaches of Policy

Staff are expected to follow this policy. Failure to follow ConnectAbility Australia policies and procedures will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Serious breaches of policy resulting in gross misconduct could result in instant dismissal.

10.0   Consultation

This is a new policy introduced to increase flexibility and innovation in supports and services for ConnectAbility Australia participants, their families and carers. This policy is aligned with Standard 2 of the NSW Disability Service Standards: *Participation and Inclusion.*

As a response to changes to the disability sector ConnectAbility Australia has been proactive in its consultation mechanisms to develop and implement an effective Service Standards Policy Framework. Consultation has occurred with a number of peak bodies in the disability sector, namely National Disability Services New South Wales (NDS NSW), Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC), and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The National Standards Framework and NSW Standards in Action documents have been researched to determine alignment of this policy and framework.

It also draws on the direct experiential knowledge of staff, and research and consultation within the organisation, including participant's families and carers of ConnectAbility Australia.

11.0   Quality assurance mechanisms

Supports provided by ConnectAbility Australia must be underpinned by a quality framework that ensures consistency and a high level of quality care and support for participants, their families and carers. ConnectAbility Australia acknowledges that it will be required to undertake third party verification of their performance against the NSW Disability Service Standards (NSW DSS), prior to June 30, 2015.

ConnectAbility Australia's adopted Standards Policy framework must be informed by human rights principles, refer to nationally consistent standards, clear accreditation mechanisms, sound compliance and monitoring systems, and information readily available to participants, families and carers to inform them of minimum quality expectations.

12.0   Communication

This policy will be:

- communicated to the key internal and external stakeholders of ConnectAbility;
- communicated to ConnectAbility Australia staff through professional development opportunities;
- accessible through ConnectAbility Australia's internal intranet and website.

13.0   Related Policies

- Service Delivery (draft)
- Planning and Review (draft)
- Rights and Responsibilities
- Complaints Management
- Individualised Funding
- Code of Ethics and Practice
- Service Management (draft)
- Privacy, Dignity and Confidentiality
- Discrimination and Harassment

14.0   Related Legislation and Guidelines

- Disability Services Act (1993)
- NSW Disability Service Standards
- National Disability Insurance Scheme Act (2013)
- United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006
- Living Life My Way Framework (ADHC)

15.0   Evaluation and Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years. The move to a nationally recognised Standards Framework is a priority of the National Disability Agreement (NDA). The continued implementation of Stronger Together 2 and introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will provide evidence as to the planning and review principles, guidelines and procedural direction for

ConnectAbility Australia. This policy is not intended to be a static document and ConnectAbility Australia will make a commitment to its ongoing development.

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
1	November 2013	Scott Harvey &Peta Bradley	Policy created to reflect new DSS	**All**
1 (draft 1)	September 2013	Peta Bradley & Fran Bills	Policy created to reflect new DSS	**All**