Disability, health and COVID-19: Policy reform has never been so critical

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Lots of people with disability have their own stories about how they have been let down by the health system.

People with disability have been asking for changes to the health system for a long time.

But we haven’t made much progress.

I blame a couple of things.

I blame the media for the negative way it talks about disability.

I blame medical schools for the way they train doctors to think negatively about disability.

Too many doctors think our lives are not worth living.

This is important all the time. But it is particularly important at the moment because of the spread of the coronavirus.

People with disability like me are more at risk from the virus. There are three reasons for that:

1. We are more likely to die if we get infected because of our disability and health conditions.
2. We have to let support workers into our houses every day to support us. We are in close contact with people who might be infected.
3. The health system is not well equipped to help us if we get sick.

That’s why people with disability and their families are so worried.

Last Friday the Australian government released a national plan called “Management and Operational Plan for COVID-19 for People with Disability” It is the plan to make sure people with disability can get the health care they need to stay safe and well during this pandemic.

It is a living document which will keep getting updated.

I was part of the advisory group that helped draft the plan. You can contact me if you want to know more.

Like all plans, everything depends on how it is put into action. We will be watching that closely.

And we know we have much more to do.