

# PhD SCHOLAR – DISABILITY AND INEQUALITY

## POSITION DESCRIPTION



### Disability and Health Unit

Centre for Health Equity, Melbourne School of Population & Global Health  
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Melbourne Disability Institute  
Melbourne School of Population & Global Health  
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

## PhD Scholar

<b>POSITION NO</b>	0056556
<b>CLASSIFICATION</b>	PhD Stipend
<b>SALARY</b>	\$31,200 pa (Subject to change by the Australian Government)
<b>SUPERANNUATION</b>	N/A
<b>WORKING HOURS</b>	Full-time
<b>BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT</b>	Fixed-term for up to 3.5 years
<b>OTHER BENEFITS</b>	<a href="https://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers/staff-benefits">https://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers/staff-benefits</a>
<b>HOW TO APPLY</b>	Online applications are preferred. Go to <a href="http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers">http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers</a> , select the relevant option ('Current Opportunities' or 'Jobs available to current staff'), then find the position by title or number.
<b>CONTACT FOR ENQUIRIES ONLY</b>	George Disney Email <a href="mailto:george.disney@unimelb.edu.au">george.disney@unimelb.edu.au</a> <i>Please do not send your application to this contact</i>

For information about working for the University of Melbourne, visit our website:  
[about.unimelb.edu.au/careers](http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers)

## ***Position Summary***

### **1.1 CLOSING INEQUALITIES AMONG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a groundbreaking, transformational public policy reform designed to provide eligible people with disability with the support they need to meet their needs and achieve their goals.

While the NDIS has unquestionably changed the lives of many Australians with disability, it is also true that its benefits have not been equally realised among its participants. There are ongoing concerns that many groups of participants – First Nations participants, people from a Culturally or Linguistically Diverse background, people who have difficulty navigating complex government systems to name but a few – have not benefited from the scheme's introduction in the same way as others.

At the same time, the health and wellbeing of all people with disability (not simply those who are participants in the NDIS) has become a key focus of state and federal governments. For example, late last year the Commonwealth released the Australian Disability Strategy which outlines a vision for a more inclusive and assessable Australian community. Its purpose is to:

- provide national leadership towards greater inclusion of people with disability
- guide activity across all areas of public policy to be inclusive and responsive to people with disability
- drive mainstream services and systems to improve outcomes for people with disability
- engage, inform and involve the whole community in achieving a more inclusive society.

Health and Wellbeing is one of the seven areas addressed by the strategy. It is well established that people with disability have poorer overall health than people without disability; however, evidence is emerging that this gap is largely avoidable. While it is often assumed that poorer health is related to a person's disability or condition, the truth is that much of the difference in health is caused by the disadvantaged circumstances in which people with disability often live.

At the same time there is little good baseline evidence about the health of people with disability, including NDIS participants. There is also little clear evidence on how best to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

One key reason for this was, up until now, the data required to conduct this research was not available to researchers. However, this is starting to change, with new linked data resources becoming available that allow us to establish the health outcomes of people with disability and evidence that can be used to inform policy and practice change.

The Melbourne Disability Institute already has a program of work examining the experiences, of participants in the NDIS and looking at the health outcomes of all people with disability, including NDIS participants.

We are now looking for a PhD student to join our team of researchers. The student will help generate a body of evidence that can be used to inform policy and practice change to reduce inequalities in the NDIS as well as improve health outcomes for people with disability. You will be joining a team that works intensively with government partners and community organisations and other stakeholders.

We are looking for a quantitative researcher who is passionate about research with real work impact. Your project will be supervised by Dr George Disney, Disability and Health Unit, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health.

## 1.2 PHD PROJECT

There is new and emerging evidence that much of the poorer health experienced by people with disability is avoidable. However, very little is known about the health inequalities people with disability in Australia face and how they can be closed. Given the historic lack of data and research in the area, there is also much work to do to develop research methodology that captures how much of the health inequalities faced by people with disability can be closed.

With these gaps in knowledge, this PhD project represents an exciting opportunity to contribute to both the academic literature and applied evidence base.

The successful candidate will make use of newly linked administrative and health datasets to quantify specific health inequalities for people with disability, and design analyses that help us understand how these inequalities could be closed.

The project would suit someone with a quantitative research background (such as epidemiology, biostatistics or public health) who is keen to learn and apply advanced quantitative methods. Within the scope of the project details outlined above, the PhD project will be designed to match the interests of the preferred candidate.

This PhD scholarship is provided by the Melbourne Disability Institute. The scholarship is an Australian Research Training Program (RTP) scholarship. Funding provided is \$31,200 per annum for full time students (2020 pro-rata rate), and is available for 3.5 years. There is some flexibility regarding the PhD commencement, but the student must commence before December 2022.

In addition to the stipend, MDI also provides:

- Additional funding of \$2,000 for research support
- Support and mentoring from a wide range of leading researchers
- Collaboration opportunities for future research projects
- Training opportunities, access to a range of seminars, workshops and other events
- Opportunity to be involved with knowledge translation and education activities
- Networking opportunities with national and international researchers and visiting fellows.

People with disability are strongly encouraged to apply.

## ***2. Melbourne Disability Institute***

An interdisciplinary research institute based at the University of Melbourne, the work of Melbourne Disability Institute (MDI) is focused on providing the much-needed evidence, data and research to address the complex problems faced by people with disability and their families in this country and beyond.

The Institute has an ambitious agenda to position the University of Melbourne as a national and international leader in disability research that improves outcomes for people with disability and their families. MDI looks to facilitate and support research that is driven by the priorities of people with disability, includes people with disability in all aspects of the research process and produces results that will make a real difference in their lives.

MDI is hosted by the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at the University of Melbourne (MSPGH). MDI is one of six interdisciplinary research institutes at the University of Melbourne (<https://research.unimelb.edu.au/melbourne-research-institutes>) that foster interdisciplinary research across the University on areas of community concern.

## ***3. Melbourne School of Population and Global Health***

The MSPGH was established in 2001 as the first school of its kind in Australia with a vision to make a difference in the population and public health sphere - building on the substantial assets of our University to advance public health in communities nationally and internationally - with a strong focus on Indigenous peoples. Since its inception, the School has grown rapidly in size, scope and reputation and has consistently attracted leading academics and researchers who bring considerable skills, insights, and expertise. We continue to attract increasing levels of competitive funding from governments and from a range of renowned philanthropic organisations and individuals.

The quality of MSPGH research is confirmed by the Academic Ranking of World Universities within which the University of Melbourne maintains its place as the top-ranked Australian university. The ARWU Global Ranking of Academic Subjects 2021 placed the University 16th in the world for Public Health and first in Australia. Our researchers regularly have work published in prestigious titles including *The Lancet*, *Nature*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, and *the Journal of the American Medical Association*. The School is strongly engaged internationally with key collaborations including the World Health Organisation, Grand Challenges Canada, the Pasteur Institute and Department of Health in Vietnam, the Public Health Foundation of India and the International Association for Suicide Prevention.

The flagship Master of Public Health degree, with over 650 enrolments, forms the core of a strong teaching program alongside undergraduate teaching and a suite of specialist postgraduate coursework degrees across Biostatistics, Epidemiology, Gerontology, Health Economics, Health Informatics and Sexual Health. These programs and the School's extensive cohort of more than 120 graduate research students make a substantial contribution to training the next generations of public health specialists and researchers nationally and internationally.

The School comprises four Centres and two Institutes that focus on key areas of population and global health that are relevant now and will have tangible impacts on the health of national and international communities into the future. These comprise the:

- Centre for Epidemiology & Biostatistics;
- Centre for Health Equity;
- Centre for Health Policy;
- Centre for Mental Health;

- Melbourne Disability Institute; and
- Nossal Institute for Global Health

Throughout its history, MSPGH has included a strong focus on Indigenous issues across the School's teaching, engagement and research programs, including current dedicated units focused on:

- Indigenous Health Equity
- Indigenous Eye Health
- Indigenous Studies
- Indigenous Epidemiology and Health

## ***4. Selection Criteria***

In order to be considered for interview, applicants must address the following criteria in their application. Please visit the University website for more information on how to address [Essential Selection Criteria](#).

Applicants must meet the entry requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy – Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, including meeting English language requirement. They must demonstrate strong capacity and potential for research.

Further information on entry requirements is available here:

<https://study.unimelb.edu.au/find/courses/graduate/doctor-of-philosophy-medicine-dentistry-and-health-sciences/entry-requirements/>

Interested applicants are encouraged to check eligibility prior to applying by contacting Ms Myra Malcolm (Graduate Research Officer, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health: [myra.malcolm@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:myra.malcolm@unimelb.edu.au)).

### **4.1 ESSENTIAL**

- ▶ Meet the entry requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy – Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
- ▶ An Honours or Masters degree in epidemiology, biostatistics, public health, or related discipline
- ▶ A strong commitment to reducing health inequalities
- ▶ Well-developed quantitative analysis skills
- ▶ Ability to use statistical software packages (e.g., Stata, R) for data management and analysis
- ▶ Ability to work effectively with team members and other students within a diverse working environment.
- ▶ Highly developed oral and written communication skills
- ▶ Highly motivated, self-disciplined, and able to work independently, with clear goals that lead to highly quality outcomes
- ▶

### **4.2 DESIRABLE**

- ▶ Lived experience of disability

- ▶ Experience working in the disability sector to advance the rights of people with disability

#### 4.3 SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE ROLE

- ▶ The successful candidate will need to also go through the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences PhD application process  
<https://study.unimelb.edu.au/find/courses/graduate/doctor-of-philosophy-medicine-dentistry-and-health-sciences/how-to-apply/>
- ▶ This position requires the incumbent to hold a current and valid Working with Children Check

### 5. *Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion*

The University is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to providing a workplace free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. The University makes decisions on employment, promotion, and reward on the basis of merit.

The University is committed to all aspects of equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace and to providing all staff, students, contractors, honorary appointees, volunteers and visitors with a safe, respectful and rewarding environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification and victimisation. This commitment is set out in the Advancing Melbourne strategy that addresses diversity and inclusion, equal employment opportunity, discrimination, sexual harassment, bullying and appropriate workplace behaviour. All staff are required to comply with all University policies.

The University values diversity because we recognise that the differences in our people's age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, physical ability and background bring richness to our work environment. Consequently, the People Strategy sets out the strategic aim to drive diversity and inclusion across the University to create an environment where the compounding benefits of a diverse workforce are recognised as vital in our continuous desire to strive for excellence and reach the targets of Advancing Melbourne.

### 6. *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)*

All staff are required to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other personnel who may be affected by their conduct.

OHS responsibilities applicable to positions are published at:

<https://safety.unimelb.edu.au/people/community/responsibilities-of-personnel>

These include general staff responsibilities and those additional responsibilities that apply for Managers and Supervisors and other Personnel.

### 7. *Other Information*

#### 7.1 THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

Established in 1853, the University of Melbourne is a leading international university with a tradition of excellence in teaching and research. The main campus in Parkville is recognised as the hub of Australia's premier knowledge precinct comprising eight hospitals, many leading research institutes and a wide-range of knowledge-based industries. With outstanding performance in international rankings, the University is at the forefront of higher education in the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

The University employs people of outstanding calibre and offers a unique environment where staff are valued and rewarded.

Further information about working at The University of Melbourne is available at <http://about.unimelb.edu.au/careers>

## 7.2 ADVANCING MELBOURNE

The University's strategic direction is grounded in its purpose. While its expression may change, our purpose is enduring: to benefit society through the transformative impact of education and research. Together, the vision and purpose inform the focus and scale of our aspirations for the coming decade.

Advancing Melbourne reflects the University's commitment to its people, its place, and its partners. Our aspiration for 2030 is to be known as a world-leading and globally connected Australian university, with our students at the heart of everything we do.

- ▶ We will offer students a distinctive and outstanding education and experience, preparing them for success as leaders, change agents and global citizens.
- ▶ We will be recognised locally and globally for our leadership on matters of national and global importance, through outstanding research and scholarship and a commitment to collaboration.
- ▶ We will be empowered by our sense of place and connections with communities. We will take opportunities to advance both the University and the City of Melbourne in close collaboration and synergy.
- ▶ We will deliver this through building a brilliant, diverse and vibrant University community, with strong connections to those we serve.

The means for achieving these goals include the development of the University of Melbourne's academic and professional staff and the capabilities needed to support a modern, world-class university. Those means require a commitment to ongoing financial sustainability and an ambitious infrastructure program which will reshape the campus and our contribution to the communities we engage with. This strategy, and the priorities proposed, is centred around five intersecting themes; place, community, education, discovery and global.

## 7.3 GOVERNANCE

The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer of the University and responsible to Council for the good management of the University.

Comprehensive information about the University of Melbourne and its governance structure is available at <https://about.unimelb.edu.au/strategy/governance>