

Ableist language under fire from human rights activist

While there's progress with removing sexist and racist language, ableist language remains all too prevalent.

That's the message lawyer, author and company director Graeme Innes AM will share with delegates at the 10th conference of the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) this month.

Mr Innes says common expressions, like "deaf to my concerns" and "turning a blind eye", can be hurtful to people with disabilities and reinforce negative stereotypes.

He says there are many alternatives and he'll share them with editors during his online presentation on 29 June 2021.

"Don't rely on language that's no longer appropriate. It's lazy writing," Mr Innes says. He wants editors to "call them out" when authors use ableist instead of inclusive language.

As with removing sexist and racist language, Mr Innes expects the process to be long and slow, but "we need to start that journey" and editors can play an important role.

Mr Innes's autobiography, *Finding a Way*, was published in 2016. It shares his personal memories of overcoming the discrimination so many people with disabilities face.

He was a Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission for nine years, awarded an AM for his work on developing the *Disability Discrimination Act*, and was a member of the Australian delegation that participated in negotiating the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

Mr Innes is one of an array of keynote speakers for the IPEd [conference](#), themed *Editing on the edges*. It was originally scheduled to be in Hobart, Tasmania, but moved online because of COVID-19.

The conference starts with workshops on Monday 28 June (booked separately), followed by guest speakers on Tuesday 29 June and Wednesday 30 June. Conference [registrations](#) are available until 24 June. Discounted rates are available for IPEd members and those of affiliated organisations.

[Book now](#) to enjoy a wide variety of speakers across a range of topics.

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