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"NOTHING ABOUT US—WITHOUT US!"
AT THIS YEAR’S Annual General Meeting, when we approve the Minutes of the Special General Meeting held earlier this year, we will complete the process of adoption of PDCN’s new Constitution. The new Constitution has brought with it the need to activate a new Strategic Plan for the activities of PDCN for the next three to five years.

The Management Committee, along with our facilitator, Colin Slattery, from Semann & Slattery, has given a great deal of time and consideration to the development of the Purpose, Vision, Mission, Values and Key Performance Areas for PDCN. The results of the Management Committee’s efforts will be presented at the Annual General Meeting in the form of a consultation with our members, to inform further development of these vital areas of interest and concern for people with physical disabilities.

During the past year, we have lost one of our most valuable human resources with the retirement of John Moxon from the Management Committee. John has given a great deal of time and energy over a period of many years, always focussed toward the goal of improving the circumstances of people with physical disability. Today, PDCN stands as a monument to John’s knowledge and his social conscience. We thank John for his years of service to people with disability and we wish John and Margaret great happiness in their future travels.

Our mission continues. Equity is our focus and our goal. People with disability deserve to be accepted and respected as valuable members of society and PDCN continues to work to achieve equity, acceptance and respect for people with disability.
About PDCN

The Physical Disability Council of New South Wales Incorporated (PDCN) is the peak body representing people with physical disability across the state. Our members live in all parts of New South Wales. They are the foundation of our organization. It is their interests that we exist to forward and promote.

This Annual Report provides a summary of the work and activities of PDCN during the 12 months to 30 June 2007.

PDCN’s overall purpose is to advance the notions of equality of citizenship and equality of opportunity through effective community development approaches including but not limited to: providing education and advice, education, consultation and systemic advocacy

• Campaigning effectively to challenge injustice against people with physical disability and in support of equality of opportunity for all;
• Representing the interests of people with physical disability to government, non-government and private sector organisations, including research bodies;
• Developing policies which promote equality of opportunity, based on the experience and aspirations of people with disability;
• Preparing written submissions which promote the interests of people with physical disability;
• Presenting the interests of people with physical disability through media interviews, articles and features in newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the Internet, thereby facilitating social change;
• Supporting people with physical disabilities to develop their skills in advocating for themselves.

In this Annual Report we have drawn attention to the key activities of PDCN during the last year. There is much, however, that goes on but which one does not find in place in the pages that follow.

For example:

• The advice of PDCN was sought by many throughout the year, reflecting the status of PDCN as an influential peak body.

• We continued to work-on, develop and maintain links between the disability sector and other community organisations sectors, seeking to create and sustain mutually supportive networks with the potential to enhance the lives of all disadvantaged citizens.

• We gave information to anyone who asked for it: from school students preparing for the HSC to Ministerial Advisors and Senior Public Servants. People with physical disability, in particular, value the knowledge, information and insight acquired since PDCN was established. Our direct experience and knowledge of the realities of the lives of people with physical disability makes it possible for us to act as a pivotal referral service in the lives of many.

PDCN People & Resources

PDCN relies heavily on the commitment of committee members, volunteers and supporters. Those voluntary contributions combine with and supplement the work of our staff team to promote the interests of people with physical disability in NSW. We are enormously grateful for every contribution we have received during the period of this Annual Report.

Committee of Management

During 2006-2007, the Management Committee has had nine members who met every two months. The committee sets the overall policy for PDCN, oversees the
About PDCN cont’

financial, administrative and organisational resources of PDCN.

In 2006 - 2007 as in previous years, the contributions of individual members of our committees and working groups have been invaluable.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is elected by and from the members of the Committee of Management.

In the year to 30 June 2007 the members of the PDCN Executive Committee were:
- President— Ann-Mason Furmage
- Vice-Pres— John Moxon (until June 2007)
- Secretary— Jo Ragen
- Treasurers— Derek Morrison (resigned January 2007) and Ann-Mason Furmage

The Executive Committee meets regularly. It is responsible for implementing policies agreed by the management committee.

PDCN Staff

PDCN has had a stable year with regards to staffing, but we have had extended periods of reduced capacity, due to sick leave.

The Staff team are:
- Robyn Chapman—Executive Officer
- Jordana Goodman—Project Officer
- Lachlan Hazelton—Media Officer
- Craig Andrews—Publications Officer

In February 2007, PDCN engaged a Bookkeeper, welcoming Robyn Farrow to the team. Robyn works one day each fortnight and is a great asset to the organisation. She is a highly organised and experienced Bookkeeper, who also supports the office with general administrative duties on her day in the office.

PDCN Volunteers

In addition to members of our committees and working parties, PDCN receives very welcome and much valued support from a team of regular volunteers, without whom we would not be as effective as we are.

The value we place on the contribution of volunteers, whether as committee members, activists, supporters or participants in our activities, cannot be over-stated. The people who give their time willingly and enthusiastically to PDCN make possible and worthwhile much of what we strive to achieve.

We are especially grateful to our ‘regulars’. They are:
- John Moxon who has always served PDCN with energy and thought. As mentioned in the President’s message, John will be sorely missed.

During 2006-2007, John has done a wonderful job of reorganising the Education and Information Network, including developing a training package in assisting people to advocate for themselves. This package, “Supporting People to Self Advocate”, was trialled successfully in four regional locations: Dubbo; Coffs Harbour; Goulburn and the Illawarra in combination with consultations.

We look forward to the ongoing development of this key program, that in turn is developing a new group of PDCN volunteers.

Bronwyn Moye

Bronwyn continued coordinating the ongoing parliamentary presence activity, designed to ensure that each sitting Tuesday politicians from all sides of politics “see” people with physical disabilities in Parliament House.

Bronwyn’s commitment to such a subtle and important activity is, once again, much appreciated.
WITH THE INTEGRATION of the ‘Stronger Together’ and ‘Better Together’ documents into the 2006 NSW State Plan, it is possible to imagine a better future, but are people with physical disabilities able to participate in all activities of their choice without discrimination? Until this is achieved PDCN will continue to advance the interests of people with physical disabilities on relevant issues including the following areas:

**Access to Public Transport**

PDCN submitted a response to the review of compliance to the National Accessible Public Transport Standards.

In preparing for the response, PDCN attended a public forum held by the Allen’s Consulting group and then conducted a discussion forum with interested parties.

The resultant response paper included comment and twenty-six recommendations on the following modes of public transport:

- Buses
- Trains — CityRail and CountryLink
- Ferries
- Wheelchair Accessible Taxis (WATS)

Information collated from the Ministry website, indicated that all modes of public transport complied with at least 25% accessibility, with exception to private bus operators and the quantity of wheelchair accessible taxis, even after the inclusion of approximately sixty new Lime Taxis.

A selection of key recommendations are listed below:

**SYDNEY BUSES** — Continued replacement of public buses with priority given to replacing buses in the Sydney Buses Eastern Region, to ensure a greater selection and availability of accessible bus routes.

**PRIVATE BUS OPERATORS** — Dedicate accessible buses to regular scheduled bus routes with relevant information promoted on timetables.

**TRAINS** — Priority to be given to train stations for EasyAccess improvements on the following train lines:

- Inner City;
- Bankstown; and
- Central Coast/ Newcastle.

**TRAINS** — Improved design to the train and platform so that assistance is not required when boarding and disembarking a train.

**FERRIES** — Funds to be made available for access improvements at wharves previously managed by Local Councils, which are now under the responsibility of NSW Maritime.

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS (WATS)** — For all taxi networks in Sydney and rural NSW to start replacing old stock with a universally accessible taxi fleet, similarly to that recommended in the NSW Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Taskforce report (2005) which still has not been finalised.

**Access to the Built Environment**

**DRAFT DDA ACCESS TO PREMISES STANDARDS**

With no decision as yet on the Draft DDA Access to Premises Standards, PDCN responded to the draft HREOC Access to Buildings and Services - Information and Guidelines, to ensure that the objectives of the draft Standard were retained in the draft guidelines.

PDCN was concerned that the more recent draft document lacked clarity, continued to put the onus on the person with a disability to lodge a complaint rather than the builder/developer of the facility being compelled to comply with recognised access and mobility standards.
PDCN will continue to lobby for a more complete set of access standards, which recognise the limitations of the unjustifiable defence, and that a resolution is met as soon as possible regarding differences between the needs of the building industry and people with disabilities for the construction of the following:

- One or two storey buildings;
- Bed and breakfast facilities; and
- Public swimming pools.

SEPP 5 - Housing for Seniors and Payphones

Comment was provided on the most appropriate location of SEPP 5 - Housing for Seniors developments.

Payphones

PDCN also submitted a response on the design of payphones particularly when sited in private facilities such as shopping centres, hotels/motels and bars.

Australian Network for Universal Housing Design (ANUHD)

PDCN continues to support the work of ANUHD. In November 2006, ANUHD held its first conference. The conference was well attended and provided a public exchange of information on the development of Universal Design in Australia. It was pleasing to hear support for universal design from both the state and commonwealth governments, although no real commitments as yet.

Equal Access to Democracy Plan

PDCN represented people with disabilities at a Stakeholder Forum in early 2006 to discuss content included in the SEO “Equal Access to Democracy Plan”. A subsequent response included an audit of polling places in the week prior to the NSW State elections revealed that only 14% of polling places provided access PDCN, with four electorates having no accessible polling places at all.

Following this a new Reference Group is to be established with stakeholder representatives, with the possibility of electronic voting for the 2008 Local Government elections.

Local Councils

PDCN continues its representation on the City of Sydney Access Forums providing feedback on the draft “Inclusion, Equity and Access Plan” and the ‘Let’s Get Sydney Ready’ emergency plan.

Personal Assistance

Physical Disability Expert Advisory Group

PDCN is concerned about a number of issues regarding the delivery of personal assistance and remains committed to providing DADHC with feedback via the Physical Disability Expert Advisory Group. This group throughout 2006-2007 has continued to have as its focus, the Home care Service of NSW (including the High Need Pool) and the Attendant Care Program.

Shortly before the announcement by DADHC of ‘Stronger Together’ last year, it was cited in the NSW Government Hansard that 366 people were awaiting placement on the Attendant Care Package and a further 455 people on the High Need Pool wait-list.

The announcement of 320 new Attendant Care Packages to be allocated over the five years of the “Stronger Together” plan, whilst welcome, will not even clear the current waiting list.

It is pleasing to note however that the much-awaited direct funding pilot within the Attendant Care Program commenced in January 2007. All reports indicate that this pilot is successful for the 13 people within it. We await the interim evaluation.

Motor Accident Authority

In response to legislative changes, the Motor Accident Authority has been reviewing the Guidelines for levels of Attendant Care for people receiving compensation who have had
a Spinal Cord Injury’. PDCN provides representation on the Advisory Committee for this review. This excellent resource for Doctors, allied health staff, insurance officers and lawyers is near completion.

ATTENDANT CARE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

The Attendant Care Industry Association invited PDCN to participate in the development of service guidelines for service providers aspiring to membership. Advocacy in this group is important as it focuses on the absolute fundamental right for individual control over service delivery.

Aids and Equipment

A variety of different Government funded programs provide aids and equipment to people with physical disabilities. Eligibility, product availability and the availability of funding differs depending on the program.

PADP—NSW HEALTH

The NSW Program of Appliances for Disabled People (PADP) provides the greatest selection of products with a wider selection criteria, PDCN will continue to advocate for increased funding to the PADP budget with increased accountability. An increase of 28%, from 26.8 to 37.5 million per annum, with a 3.1 % CPI increase would be required to meet ongoing need. Recent publicity on this issue highlighted the medical and psycho-social impact for children awaiting essential equipment.

PDCN continues its strong presence on the NSW PADP Advisory Committee.

PDCN awaits the findings of the PriceWaterhouseCoopers report, initiated in late 2005 to review management practices. Although the report has not yet been released, some change has occurred, with the back-audit of all lodgement centres and the movement of the management component of “health head office” moving to support Health NSW.

JOINT EQUIPMENT WORKING PARTY

During 2006-2007 the Department of Health and the Lifetime Care and Support Authority developed a working group, the Joint Equipment Working Party.

This group, of which PDCN is a member, is developing prescriber guidelines across the range of equipment programs within the NSW. The aim is to have the same process, regardless of the equipment program being applied to.

Supported Accommodation

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

Supported accommodation is not just about meeting an individuals basic support needs. It is about enabling the individual to “live a life”, to engage with their community and to achieve equality of citizenship and equality of opportunity.

People with physical disabilities should be able to choose the same patterns of living that are available and common to the rest of the community, including those changes that occur with the changes in life stage.

Supported Accommodation models as we currently know have grown from an understanding, that in the current financial and funding climate, the more ideal forms of individualised funding models are not sustainable.

During the 1980s the development and activity of the disability rights movement, the right of the individual with a disability to be a valued member of their communities was identified and supported by the development of protective and progressive legislation.

The NSW Disability Services Act was enacted in the mid-80s. This Act guides disability service provision and upholds the rights of people with disabilities to live and have access to services in the same way as anyone else in NSW.
During these years the Richmond Report was also published which lead to the devolvement of large residential facilities into small community based living arrangements, known as group homes. Some facilities still exist and remain a part of the devolution plan.

In the 80s, ideology very much drove the need for change, as there was only a relatively small evidence base on which to rely. In 2007, however there is now a large body of evidence, testing a range of models of support.

Based on this evidence, PDCN advocates for on the NSW State government

- to develop small, dispersed accommodation facilities, within communities of an individual's choosing which blend in to the urban character of the area;
- that are well funded to facilitate “living a life”, not just to meet basic needs;
- are close to community facilities and activities;
- enable and facilitate individual choice; and
- maintain informal support networks and contact with families.

Representation on Committees and Forums

- NCOSS Transport Policy Advisory Group
- Accessible Public Transport Standards Steering Committee
- City of Sydney Access Forums
- State Emergency Services 'Let's get Sydney ready'
- Willoughby City Council Cultural/Arts Plan
- PADP Advisory Committee
- NSW Joint Equipment Advisory Committee
- Physical Disability Expert Advisory Committee
- Australian Network for Universal Housing Design
- NSW Therapy Taskforce
- Attendant Care Industry Association Guideline Steering Committee
- NSW Department of Health NGO Advisory Committee
- Supported Accommodation Reference Group
- Home Modification Information Clearinghouse Steering Committee
Media Report

Media Training for PDCN

IN APRIL 2007, PDCN staff, together with Ann-Mason Furmage underwent Media Training. We were fortunate that respected leading journalist and broadcaster, John Lombard lead us through a range of skills from “Understanding the Media” to “How to Write a Media Release”.

John Lombard conducted and evaluated mock interviews, providing valuable insights and feedback. This training will bear fruit during the next financial year as we take up his suggestions and improve our media presence and position.

Many thanks to John Lombard for volunteering his valuable time and expertise. It will not be wasted.

Words Matter – A Guide for Journalists

In March 2007, PDCN published Words Matter: A Guide for Journalists. PDCN believes that the power of words and images reflect and shape community perceptions of people with a disability. This moulding of perceptions and attitudes through language and images is an ongoing and dynamic process.

Appropriate descriptive language and the avoidance of stereotypes in the media will foster positive social change. This represents an important responsibility and a significant challenge to all involved, particularly those who engage in developing public communications: our journalists, reporters, photographers and camera operators.

The publication of ‘Words Matter’ this year generated healthy interest and a positive response across the community, including government and non-government sectors, and community groups.

The response from the media industry was particularly positive and proactive. Words Matter was picked up as a resource by Fairfax, the ABC and 2GB among others.

PDCN looks forward to a change in the way people with disabilities are presented in the media.

PDCN continued to make its presence felt through print radio and television stories around key issues. PDCN also used Local Media to promote the Youth and Disability Consultations plus the Advocacy workshops with coverage through Local Radio, Print and Television interest increasing exposure and awareness of PDCN in both metropolitan and regional areas.

Press Releases included

- Opera for All — August PDCN Release
- Covert Blitz — Abusers Beware response to ‘Disability Parking Cheats Exposed’ — September PDCN Release
- Where’s the decency? — problems with the Mobility Parking Scheme continue. — January 2007 PDCN Release
- Words Matter published March 2007
- More to do, but heading in the right direction or Let’s fix NSW — March 2007 PDCN Release
- Equal Access to Democracy: As long as you can get there — March 2007 PDCN Release

Media releases are available to read at http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/press/
Consultations

CONSULTING WITH PEOPLE with physical disabilities forms the foundation of our work. Through consultation, the views of PDCN are reinforced or altered and new and emerging trends are identified for action.

General consultations
John Moxon conducted general consultations in Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Goulburn and Wollongong.

Issues raised include:

AIDS AND EQUIPMENT
- Continued PADP difficulties;

PUBLIC TRANSPORT
- The imposing of a 15% charge CountryLink for the four, previously free, journeys available to Centrelink card holders; and
- The lack of wheelchair spaces in the body of rail carriages which means wheelchair users are forced to sit in the lobby.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT
- Some kerb ramps have lips which make it hazardous for some wheelchair users;
- The crossfall on some footpaths is hazardous for wheelchair users;
- Many footpaths are not sealed; and
- Federal government introducing welfare-to-work reforms without requiring access to all buildings so work is possible.

PARKING
- Use of disability parking bays when it is not necessary – including by people with authorities who don’t need the extra width to unload a wheelchair; and
- Cost of a Mobility Parking Authority particularly as it needs to be renewed every three years.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS
- Shortage of accessible taxis when they are being used to transport children to school; and
- Accessible taxi prevented from operating outside one designated area – which resulted in no accessible taxi allowed for use in Mackswell, Nambucca and Bowraville.

EDUCATION - SCHOOLS
- Schools continue to vary in their attitudes to students with disability;
- No access to buses used for school excursions which means the child with disability misses out on the social aspects of group travel; and
- School-to-work programs do not provide for children with physical disability only.

GENERAL
- Lack of education of the public about the benefits of inclusion of people with disabilities in society.

Targeted Consultations
In addition, PDCN trialled a targeted consultation approach.

For this trial PDCN sought feedback and information from young people (aged 18-30 years), using a three pronged approach: direct consultation, web-based survey and paper based survey.

The consultation was conducted over a three month period (April – June 2007).

Jenny Kapp joined the PDCN team and undertook consultations in Bathurst, Armidale, Wagga Wagga and Sydney. The survey was developed and placed in hard copy format and on the web via SurveyMonkey <www.surveymonkey.com>
Key themes to emerge from the Youth Consultation are the:

- need for more sophisticated and flexible personal, respite and attendant care services, particularly in rural and regional NSW;
- need for more accessible public transport (taxis were a particular concern at all consultations and individual service provider visits);
- experience of PADP in all regions is similar i.e. either be prepared to pay or wait; and
- impact the lack of access to services or technology can have on young peoples' development of social networks and life skills.

These methods of consultation was quite effective and PDCN will be expanding it in the new financial year.

**Education and Information Network**

JOHN MOXON COMMENCED training interested volunteers in “Supporting People who Self-advocate”.

The idea behind this training is people with physical disability are capable of advocating for themselves, but might need some support and guidance. The training is focussed on developing a peer network of people with physical disabilities who have good self-advocacy skills and would like to assist others in their self-advocacy.

The training was conducted in Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Goulburn and Wollongong for a total of 20 enthusiastic volunteers.

PDCN appreciates the hard consistent work of John Moxon in developing this training package. We will miss his dedication and we look forward to the continued development of his initiative.
Publications Report

PDCN’s WEBSITE has been overhauled during 2006-2007 with steady updates to make the whole site more accessible overall.

Our website has been consistently accessed over this financial year. Monthly unique visits ranged between 4700 to 12600.

As the statistics show (see table on page 17), over the nine months between October 06 and Jun 07, there was a total average of 10,023 hits to the website. Monthly total visits varied between 4,707 to 12,607. The PDCN website is well used.

Due to our new ClustrMap PDCN is now able to track who is accessing the site from anywhere in the world. It appears people all over the world are finding PDCN – from interstate Tasmania and Perth to Mongolia, Iceland and Chile! (see world map below)

During 2007 when PDCN focused on youth with a disability, we found the use of survey-monkey.com very useful for collating and reporting the survey results. In this way, we reached many more youth than we otherwise would have been able to.

Discussion email group

The PDCN Discussion email group has 65 members on it. It seeks to be a primary tool in the process of sharing ideas, to debate issues and formulate new strategic directions for disability policy about and in New South Wales.

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Messages posted by month
July ’06 to June ’07
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pdcndiscussion/

From 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007, members of the PDCN Discussion group garnered information about access issues in the city of Sydney and sought feedback for a number of PDCN submissions.

PDCN used the discussion group to seek input on papers such as the NSW State Plan, Access to air travel in regional NSW, IPART Taxi Fare Review and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. Our email group was also used to advertise the Genetic Disorders Awareness Week, meeting/s for the City of Sydney’s Access Forum, JobAccess and the PDCN Young Adults with a Disability consultation.
The following organisations also sought the opinion of our members through the discussion forum:

- Women with a Disability Association;
- Monash University’s Faculty of Education;
- NCOSS, the NSW Council of Social Services;
- Disability Council of NSW;
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW; and the
- Physical Disability Council of Australia.

**NGO Website projects**

During 2006/07, PDCN agreed to provide the Supported Living forum with webhosting and maintenance at [www.supportedliving.org.au](http://www.supportedliving.org.au) which is a site containing information for people interested in the evidence base on supported accommodation.

PDCN continues its support of small organisations websites in the disability sector such as:

- Osteogenesis Imperfecta Society of Australia—[www.oiaustralia.org](http://www.oiaustralia.org)

At the end of last year, PDCN also offered to provide up free maintenance of the Australasian Network of Students with Disabilities network [www.answd.org](http://www.answd.org) website.

If your organisation would be interested in having your website regularly maintained and updated on a weekly or daily basis - please contact Robyn Chapman, Executive Officer of PDCN Telephone (02) 9552-1606 or email admin@pdcnsw.org.au

**PDCN website statistics Oct 06-Jun ‘07**

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“NOTHING ABOUT US—WITHOUT US!”
Management Committee Meetings

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Executive Meetings

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