

## Physical Disability Council of NSW - Policy Platform 2019

PDCN is the peak body representing people with physical disabilities across New South Wales. This includes people with a range of physical disability issues, from young children and their representatives to aged people, who are from a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and live in metropolitan, rural and regional areas of NSW.

PDCN's core function is systemic advocacy and our work aims to influence change in legislation, policy and community attitudes to ensure the rights and interests of people with disability are upheld and promoted.

PDCN seeks to ensure barriers present in the community that prevent people with disability from achieving full access and inclusion are addressed and removed. We work tirelessly to ensure the needs of our members - people with physical disability - are considered in the development of government policy and continual improvements are made in all areas of life, including access to the built environment, education, employment, transport, justice and health.

### Key Commitments Sought:

PDCN ask that all members of NSW Parliament commit to the following actions:



Ensure accessible transport services are available across NSW



Deliver 5,000 additional social housing and 9,000 affordable housing homes each year for the next 10 years, at least 20% of which are accessible



\$20 million per annum ongoing funding for disability advocacy, representation and information services



Establish a Minister for Disability Inclusion and create a permanent Disability Inclusion Unit within government.

## Transport

**Problem:** Without access to affordable, accessible transport with good connectivity there are significant barriers preventing people with disability from accessing employment, education, medical appointments, social opportunities, community resources or from visiting friends and family.

People with disability need urgent improvements in transport infrastructure, conveyances and the built environment - including footpaths and curbs, to guarantee accessibility. PDCN believes greater collaboration between state and local government and a commitment to ensuring whole of journey accessibility is essential to eliminate the current barriers to accessing the community.

The NSW train network continues to be upgraded through infrastructure programs such as the Transport Access Program (TAP). The current publicly available timetable for the TAP demonstrates little accountability and transparency for meeting the compliance deadlines of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2004 (DSAPT). The NSW Government must work to ensure 100% of train stations are accessible in line with the 2022 compliance deadline of the DSAPT.

### **Commitment sought:**

**Ensure accessible transport services are available across NSW to facilitate greater access, inclusion and participation of people with disability.**

**Commit to 100% accessible train stations by the 2022 DSAPT deadline.**

**Provide a plan and timetable for increased transport accessibility throughout regional and rural NSW.**

## Housing

**Problem:** People with disability experience housing stress at higher rates than the general community. Common issues for people with disability who are more likely to be renters, include being unable to secure accessible housing or long-term tenancy and difficulty organising home modifications or repairs for rental properties.

Access to affordable housing is a critical issue for people with disability. There is a strong correlation between disability and the incidence of poverty due to the limited earnings of people in receipt of government benefits and people on part-time wages; and the additional expenses often associated with having a disability. The weekly median income of people with disability is \$465, which is less than half of those with no

reported disability<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, 53% of people with disability participate in the workforce compared with 83% of people with no reported disability<sup>2</sup>.

Rental insecurity experienced by Australians with disability has been highlighted by a recent report released by Choice, National Shelter and the National Association of Tenant Organisations. Australians with a disability who rent are presented with additional challenges and barriers in the private rental market<sup>3</sup>. Alongside increasing protections for people in rental accommodation, the NSW government must prioritise accessibility in all new public and social housing developments and create incentives to make existing housing stock more accessible.

### **Commitment sought:**

**Increasing access to accessible and affordable housing for people with disability.**

**Deliver at least 5,000 additional social housing and 9,000 affordable housing homes each year for the next 10 years, with at least 20% of these being accessible, backed by a Social and Affordable Housing Capital Fund to support delivery.**

### **Funding for disability advocacy in NSW**

**Problem:** The 1.37 million people with disability living in NSW face considerable institutional and social barriers to their equal participation in the community<sup>4</sup>.

Advocates play a vital role in supporting people with disability through a variety of issues outside the remit of the NDIS including involvement with the health, education or criminal justice systems. Advocacy services are essential to ensure all people with disability have access to free independent expert advice and support to protect their rights and provide them with a voice.

Systemic advocacy organisations also play an essential role in informing both government and the wider NSW community of more inclusive practices that will allow people with disability to be fully included members of NSW society.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

<sup>3</sup> Choice, National Shelter, National Association of Tenant Organisations. (2018) Disrupted- The Consumer Experience of Renting in Australia.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers

Investing in independent advocacy is a highly effective use of resources and has a range of benefits including improved educational and employment outcomes for people with disability, freeing up resources in the justice system, health and accommodation services and relieving pressure on both carers and service providers. This has also been explicitly stated in both the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the NDIS<sup>5</sup> and the numerous Productivity Commission reports, including the Report on NDIS Costs<sup>6</sup>.

Further, a recent (2018) independent Cost Benefit Analysis carried out by economists Barrett and Williams from the University of Canberra found that independent advocacy delivers substantial economic benefits far exceeding its costs, with every \$1 spent on advocacy providing a \$3.50 return on investment<sup>7</sup>.

Currently NSW disability advocacy organisations struggle to meet the demand on their services. This is expected to further increase due to gaps caused by the removal of further state disability services, and PDCN recommends increasing funding to meet this need.

### **Commitment sought:**

**Provide at least \$20 million per annum ongoing funding for disability advocacy services.**

### **Putting people with disability at the centre of Government<sup>8</sup>**

**The problem:** With NDIS implementation and the withdrawal of the NSW Government from disability service provision, there remain many issues to be addressed in relation to continuity of support for people with disability and the interfaces in responsibility between the NDIS and State Government agencies.

More fundamentally, the NSW Government has ongoing responsibility for a fully inclusive life for people with disability and fully inclusive mainstream services in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, the COAG National Disability Strategy and the Disability Inclusion Act NSW.

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<sup>5</sup> New South Wales Parliament, Legislative Council, Portfolio Committee No.2- Health and Community Services (2018) Implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the provision of disability services in NSW

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Productivity Commission (2017) National Disability Insurance Scheme Costs, study report

<sup>7</sup> Daly, A, Barrett, G and Williams, R (2017) 'A Cost Benefit Analysis of Australian independent disability advocacy agencies'

<sup>8</sup> NSW Council for Intellectual Disability (2019) Commitments sought from NSW Political Parties Election March 2019

To date, the comparatively junior Department of Family and Community Services has had responsibility for leading cross government action on disability inclusion. However, with NDIS implementation, we have seen an elevated profile of disability issues across Government with the creation of the NDIS Reform Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. PDCN would seek to formalise this arrangement and ensure that people with disability remain at the forefront of government policy into the future.

### **Commitment sought:**

**Establish a Minister for Disability Inclusion (Premier or other senior minister) and a permanent Disability Inclusion Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet with responsibilities for –**

- **Inclusion of people with disability in the NSW community**
- **NSW implementation of the National Disability Strategy**
- **Disability Inclusion plans under the Disability Inclusion Act**
- **Issues arising from NDIS implementation including interface issues with mainstream services**
- **The Disability Council of NSW**
- **Funding of disability advocacy**

### **Contact:**

For further information or to arrange a meeting with PDCN please call

**Serena Ovens**

Executive Officer

[serena.ovens@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:serena.ovens@pdcnsw.org.au)

02 9552 1606

0411 327 877

**Ellen Small**

Policy Officer

[ellen.small@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:ellen.small@pdcnsw.org.au)

02 9552 1606