



**Serena Ovens**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Welcome to the first PDCN Live for 2021.

After a year of change, it's nice to see things settling a little for the PDCN team and many of our members as we progress into the year.

Our team are now rotating days in the office, and it's been lovely to be face to face and build back the camaraderie that Zoom just can't replace. I hope the easing of restrictions and reduction in COVID-19 spread has meant that you too feel like you can safely move about within the community a little more.

As we see the roll-out of the vaccination program take place over the next few months, I hope this means that everyone can comfortably engage with others, or at the very least resume all the normal services and supports we undertook prior to COVID-19 coming into our lives. If you're not sure where you fit in the roll-out timetable the best place to start is to speak to your GP, or check the information on the NSW Health website.

2021 looks like being yet another big year for disability reform, as we address the changes to the National Disability Strategy, the NSW Disability Inclusion Act, associated Disability Inclusion Plan and disability inclusion action plans. We're also currently working with the Department of Communities and Justice as we implement the NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner's Disability Advocacy Futures Program – the program that will fund disability advocacy services into the future.

As you may also have seen, we've been working hard to call

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for mandatory levels of universal housing design (to at least gold standard) in the upcoming changes to the National Construction Code. This is a must if we are to have accessible, liveable homes for people with disability, and the ability to age in place – for us all! I'm pleased to say that we've finally gained the opportunity to meet with NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation Kevin Anderson to discuss this vital legislative change and ensure that we have his support when this is discussed at a federal level.

There's a lot more, but we'll keep you updated on all our work and progress in our future newsletters and emails, so stay tuned to hear more!

Serena

## Walter & Eliza Hall Equipment for Our Members



In late 2020, PDCN successfully applied for a grant from the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust in order to purchase much needed mobility equipment for some of our members, along with some items for general loan.

The Walter and Eliza Hall Trust was established in 1912 and focusses its work on providing assistance to people with physical disability who may be disadvantaged, in this instance in the form of equipment to build independence.

It also works to provide funding to promote the prevention and control of diseases that cause physical disability such as polio, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, and others.

For those people with disability who cannot access the NDIS, or who find themselves dependent upon a pension or My Aged Care, gaining access to vital yet expensive equipment can be a huge challenge, both financially and in terms of the avenues they must take to demonstrate need.

Being able to apply for the Hall Trust grant to purchase this equipment on our members' behalf, and see the independence gained through the use of the mobility scooters, scripted wheelchairs, hoists and ramps the Trust supplied is an immeasurable thrill for the PDCN team and Board. This is evidenced by some of the comments from recipients themselves.





*"I am a bit overwhelmed by the effort everyone made to help make my new chair a reality."*

- Ron Finneran (on left).



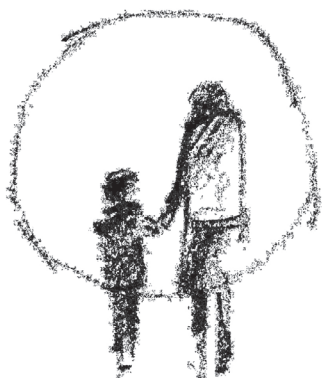
*"You can't imagine the joy this is bringing me just at the thought of being able to access the community again."*

- Cheryl Sagar

To our lucky members, we know these items will make a huge difference and wish you well as you familiarise yourselves with their use.

- Mr. Ron Finneran OAM (provided with new caliper and wheelchair)
- Ms. Cheryl Sagar (mobility scooter)
- Ms. Tiffany Middleton (mobility scooter)
- Mrs. Megan Hancock (car hoist) and
- Mr. Simon Kirkham (specialised wheelchair basketball chair)

Finally, a huge thank you to the Walter and Eliza Hall Trust for this amazing opportunity!



**THE WALTER AND ELIZA HALL TRUST**

*Helping Australians in need since 1912*

**THE WALTER AND ELIZA HALL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

*Supporting medical research and those with health related problems*

What can we really do with \$3.70 a day? A new Coalition bill plans to permanently increase JobSeeker and Youth Disability Support Pension, continue to waive income support waiting periods and allow people self-isolating to keep their JobSeeker payments until July 2021. The Federal Government has released a draft bill with plans to permanently increase the working age payments, including JobSeeker and the Youth Disability Support Pension by \$50 a fortnight – or \$3.70 a day.

The Bill will also continue the waiver on ordinary waiting periods to access Parenting Payment, JobSeeker payment and Youth Allowance and extend the current provisions which allow for someone who is self-isolating or in quarantine, or caring for someone who is, to still be eligible for the JobSeeker or Youth Allowance payments until July this year.

While PDCN welcomes these commitments as a whole, we are disappointed that the Coalition Government has not responded to calls for a more substantial increase to JobSeeker and Youth Allowance. The Raise the Rate Campaign, a coalition of over a hundred representative organisations is lobbying for an increase of \$25 a day – an increase that will bring these payments above the poverty line.

The Raise the Rate Campaign argues that JobSeeker (formerly Newstart) has not seen a real time increase in 25 years, despite the increased cost of living. 43% of people with disability nationally rely on government income support as their primary source of income, including JobSeeker and Youth Allowance – so this issue is of particular interest to PDCN and something that we raised in our Federal Pre-Budget submission in February.

At the same time, we are concerned by as yet unconfirmed murmurings that the Coalition may increase the base rate of JobSeeker and the Youth Disability Support Pension, but that this would be offset by a reduction in additional supplements people can ordinarily receive on top of these payments, including the Mobility Allowance. We know how important these supplementary payments are for people with physical disability in assisting with the cost of transport. We have stressed in our submission that we will not endorse any increases to base payments that come at the cost of these vital supports.

The bill comes at a time when we have seen the positive impacts of the Coronavirus Payment on the lives of many with physical disability who cannot access the Disability Support Pension. We know that people have used the additional income that they have received to pay for car repairs, pay off debts, to buy new clothes to replace those that have worn out. What is extremely worrying for us is the fact that a number of people have stated that this money has allowed them to buy basics they could not otherwise afford like fresh vegetables and meat, or to eat regular meals or buy medications.

Australia's obligations under both articles 9 and 11 of the International Covenant on



Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide all people with the right to social security, an adequate standard of living and continuous improvement across living standards. At the same time, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes the right to an adequate standard of living and social protection, including government assistance, for people with disability experiencing poverty to meet disability related costs.

The information that we have received indicates to us that a number of people on JobSeeker and the Youth Disability Support Pension are unable to realise an adequate standard of living (which we argue should be based on Australian societal standards) on \$40 a day.

We support the Raise the Rate Campaign and will continue to lobby both for an additional \$25 increase per day across these payments and the establishment of a Social Security Commission to investigate the adequacy of all income support payments. To find out more about the Raise the Rate Campaign, and to sign the online petition, please go to [www.raisetherate.org.au](http://www.raisetherate.org.au).

It is with great sadness that we inform all PDCN members of the recent passing of PDCN's oldest member and centenarian, Frederick Peter Christian Kaad.

Many of you will have read the article in last September's PDCN Live as Fred joined a select group of people who achieved the amazing milestone of turning 100 years old – no mean feat given his incredibly eventful life!

Fred was a founding member of PDCN and a Board member for numerous years, helping to shape PDCN into the organisation it is today. Outside of this, his life-long dedication to Papua New Guinea and its people earned him the title of Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and other notable awards.



Our thoughts go out to his three daughters, particularly his full-time carer Gaynor, their partners and his grandchildren – for an amazing man, and a life well lived.



### **What attracted you to the role at PDCN?**

After a number of years in the non-profit sector as the State Education Manager for another charity, I was excited when this job came up. I saw it as a fabulous opportunity to use the disability knowledge I had built up over more than 20 years both volunteering my time and working in sporting roles with people with physical disability.

I was also keen to make a difference to the inequities I saw daily for my close friends with disability as we navigated the community to do things as simple as going for a meal, booking events and travelling, both around the state and internationally.

### **Where do you feel you can add the most value to PDCN in your role?**

As CEO I sit in a unique position, working with the PDCN team and our fabulous board, and also getting to engage with members, and those in government and the broader community sector. I hope to use my voice to ensure that our members' needs are met, but also to grow PDCN's profile, so that we are widely known and respected in the broader NSW community and remain a key organisation that government look to for inclusive advice and guidance.

### **What do you see as the most important issues for PDCN or the disability sector currently?**

As many of PDCN's members are aware, the lack of guarantee of funding in the longer term has been a huge issue for the NSW disability advocacy sector. I'm glad to say that after nearly four years, we have finally had a commitment by the NSW Government to fund disability advocacy. However, there's still much to be done to ensure the new advocacy program provides an even better service for all people with disability, covers the whole of NSW, and remains independent – providing unbiased, timely advice and support for all those who need it, when they need it.

### **Tell us about other things that interest you outside of the disability sector**

I'm a crazy sportswoman at heart. I love riding my bike and playing golf, and I generally walk the eight kilometres to work. This is probably a good thing, as my other love is good food and cocktails (as my Instagram followers would know) – so the walking is much needed after overindulging! My other hobby is photography, which is how I got involved in the disability sector in the first place.



# Farewell To Alice

Alice Dixon-Wilmshurst, our Policy Officer, will say farewell to the PDCN office in early April to welcome a new addition to her family! Many of you may have met or spoken to Alice over the years, both in her role as Project Officer, and more recently in her role as Policy Officer.

During her time at PDCN Alice has worked tirelessly to promote the rights of people with physical disability, representing our members' interests across numerous consultation groups and written submissions. In particular, Alice has worked across our transport portfolio, ensuring that the NSW Government responds to the accessibility needs of our members, and our assistive technology work, ensuring that people who use assistive technology have a voice in determining the rules and regulations that govern their use.



More recently Alice has been instrumental in designing and leading our proactive Care Passport Project, a project which aims to consolidate the specific disability related care needs of patients into a single resource that can be provided to hospitals at admission. This is an exciting project that will greatly improve patient care experiences across NSW. We recently provided a brief on the project to NSW Health and are hopeful that they will be involved in the co-design of the project.

Alice is the quintessential quiet achiever who has clocked up an impressive list of achievements and publications over her years at PDCN. Although we know she would be embarrassed to have us say it, she has been a great advocate for our members, and her quiet and thoughtful presence in the office will be greatly missed. We wish you all the best in your new adventure Alice, and hope you'll keep in touch and engaged with PDCN!

## Tell a friend about your membership in PDCN!

Membership is free for people with disability,  
and representatives of people under 16 with disability.  
Head to [www.pdcnsw.org.au/membership](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/membership).

Our free online workshops are for people with disability or parents of children with disability, run by skilled Peer Facilitators with lived experience of disability, in a safe and inclusive environment. Find out more at [www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops).

### **NDIS Self-Management**

Thursday 1 April, 10am - 12.15pm

Tuesday 11 May, 10am - 12.15pm

Tuesday 1 June, 10am - 12.15pm

### **Speaking Up for Yourself**

Tuesday 20 April, 10am - 12.15pm

Tuesday 4 May, 10am - 12.15pm

Wednesday 23 June, 10am- 12.15pm

### **Resilience**

Friday 21 May, 10am - 11.30am *followed by*

Part 2 on Friday 28 May, 10am - 11.30am

Monday 14 June, 10am - 11.30am *followed by*

Part 2 on Monday 21 June, 10am - 11.30am



Website - [www.pdcnsw.org.au](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au)



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