



**Serena Ovens**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Welcome to everyone from a PDCN team in lockdown!

Much has happened for us all in the past three months, not the least of which the fact that Sydneysiders and large areas of NSW have once again been battling to stop COVID from overwhelming our health system – and us!

Before I talk about PDCN's activities in this past quarter, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my incredible team. They've worked tirelessly through all the challenges to ensure all of our member services and supports remain active, including a seamless transition to working from home, not an easy task when balanced with home-schooling, sharing space with others as we work, and a myriad of other competing demands.

As many of you will know, after a long and protracted fight, the disability community were successful in putting a stop to the federal government's plan to implement a frankly disastrous proposal that would have required independent assessments to access the NDIS. They have also since rescinded the contracts awarded to numerous companies who were to deliver the independent assessments. This was a significant win, and we thank the many members and supporters who attended our consultation on this issue earlier in the year, allowing us to submit an informed, lived-experience driven paper on this contentious reform.

As I write this, the NDIS have just released the Consultation Draft on further proposals to amend the NDIS Act, and some of its rules. The Policy team will once again ensure we address anything proposed should we feel there are issues for our members.

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Proactively, we're still working hard to get the NSW Government over the line on accepting the National Construction Code's mandatory requirement to build all new homes to a minimum Silver level of accessibility. Most other states and territories have agreed to implement these changes, and we know that doing so will provide far greater access to housing for people with disability and ensure people can age in place. We will continue to call for NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation Kevin Anderson to agree to these standards before the December deadline.

During the COVID restrictions we've also taken the time to call all our members and check how things are going for you all, and I have to say the feedback has been wonderful! The PDCN team greatly appreciate hearing from you, and hearing that our work has had benefit in your lives. Thanks also for answering a few of our questions and allowing us to pick your brains on the things we're doing well, could do better, and should prioritise into the future. I've put together a piece further in the newsletter that gives you a bit of a look at the results of both the member survey and these calls.

Lastly, just the other week we held our first online social event, which was a major success. To those of you who joined us, it was great to see you. To those of you who didn't, you missed an amazing event!

But enough from me; read on to catch up on the social event, and a few of the other works we have on the go! Stay safe and well and please reach out if you need a friendly face to talk to.

Serena

## Annual General Meeting: 10 November 2021



We invite you to attend the PDCN Annual General Meeting, which will be held online this year at 6pm, Wednesday 10 November.

All members will receive a formal invitation in due course. We will be using Zoom for the AGM this year, and we'll provide details on how to connect when RSVPs are received.

Please also find a PDCN Board nomination form enclosed with this newsletter.

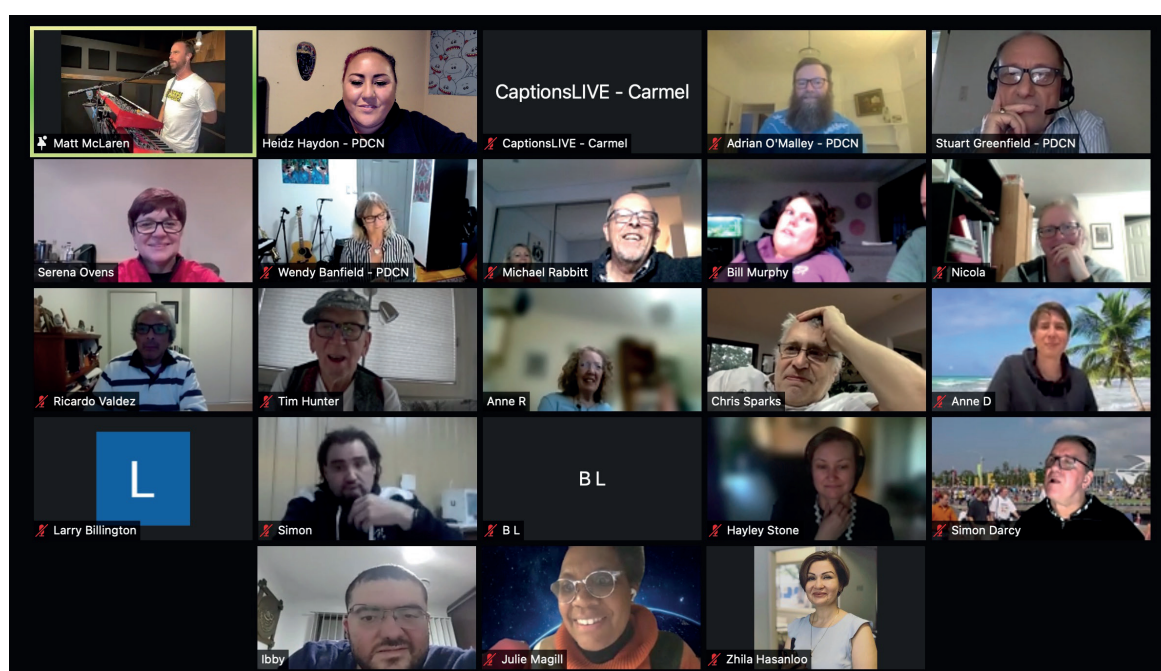
# PDCN Social Brings a Smile To All Involved

The first PDCN Social was a hit! The event came about after a question from one of our members asking when we were all going to get together again. We saw this as a wonderful opportunity to bring our members together and to help us forget any challenges we may be experiencing, particularly during COVID restrictions, and to bring some joy into our day.



As avid music lovers, we were thrilled to be able to book Matt McLaren for the event. Matt's bio states, *"Whilst Matt is easily recognisable by his signature bright red keyboard and guide dog, it is his music that has cemented him as one of Newcastle's most wanted musicians. Matt combines his skills as a music producer with an eclectic mix of new and old school technology to create a live show that will make you question your own ears."*

Well, Matt certainly didn't disappoint. He entertained us with his great voice, amazing piano and technology skills and his double decker Nord keyboards. Comments in the chat and responses and questions for those in attendance demonstrated how much everyone was enjoying listening to live music, particularly from a musician as talented as Matt. Heidi Haydon did a fabulous job as Master of Ceremonies and Stuart Greenfield made use of his grand radio voice by entertaining us with a few trivia questions.



Connection and fun were the aims of the event and the responses from all in attendance would suggest that aim was reached. The challenge now will be how we top this with our next social gathering. Stay tuned folks.

# Social Housing: Build More and Build It Better!

Recently we sent out a member survey as part of our research for the NSW Parliamentary inquiry into *Options to Improve Access to Existing and Alternate Accommodation to Address the Social Housing Shortage*. We would like to thank all our members who took the time to complete the survey – your contributions are gratefully appreciated!

41% of households in social housing include at least one person with disability. This means that social housing is an important safety net for these families, filling a vital gap in the housing market for affordable housing that is stable (usually providing 2, 5 or 10-year leases) and statutorily required to meet the accessibility needs of residents with physical disability.

The results from our survey clearly indicates that people with disabilities are experiencing many difficulties accessing social housing that meets their basic requirements. The PDCN Policy team will use the survey data to build our case for a greater investment, both in building more social housing, and in building it properly. Our position is that this can only be achieved by building to the Gold Level standard of liveable housing design.

The fact that people are turning to social housing as a way of gaining greater housing accessibility is a symptom of the lack of accessible options across the housing market.

We see this as further evidence that NSW state legislative amendments that would require all new homes to be built to Silver Level standard of liveable housing design are necessary.

If you are interested in becoming involved in our work around improving social housing, or housing accessibility more broadly, please contact our PDCN Policy Manager Hayley Stone at [admin@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:admin@pdcnsw.org.au).



## Build more & build better!

PDCN recently surveyed members about their experiences either trying to access, or living in, social housing in NSW. Here's what you told us.



You told us social housing was appealing because it was affordable, it allows you to be independent and stay within the community with your families.



Some have been waiting on housing lists for years.  
"I'm on high priority now for 12 years still nothing".



44% of you had also considered alternative forms of housing including Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) or housing for over 65's.



25% of you already living in social housing described your property as **only partially** meeting your accessibility needs.



50% of you said that your social housing property did not meet your needs **AT ALL**.



Some don't even have **basic housing amenities**.  
"It keeps the rain out, when it's not leaking; no working oven, no equipment, can't get out the front door, not showered in 7 years"

Social housing is an important safety net for many people with physical disability.

It's vital that people with physical disability can access social housing which is safe, and suitable for them and their families to live in.



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

# Access Denied!

## Tell Us Your Stories About Accessible Housing



We are looking for members with stories about the challenges of trying to find accessible homes.

We are continuing our work as part of the Building Better Homes Campaign to push for New South Wales to implement the new minimum accessibility standards for all new residential buildings in our state, as Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and the ACT have. You can find more on the efforts of the campaign to date on the Building Better Homes website.

As part of our campaign activities, we are collecting stories about the challenges people with physical disability face when trying to rent or buy a home that meets their accessibility requirements. We will use these deidentified stories in our campaigning work, including a report we will send directly to NSW Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation Kevin Anderson.

All of your stories, big or small, will make a difference. If you are interested in sharing your story, please scan this QR code or go to [www.surveymonkey.com/r/MQF9BGD](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MQF9BGD).

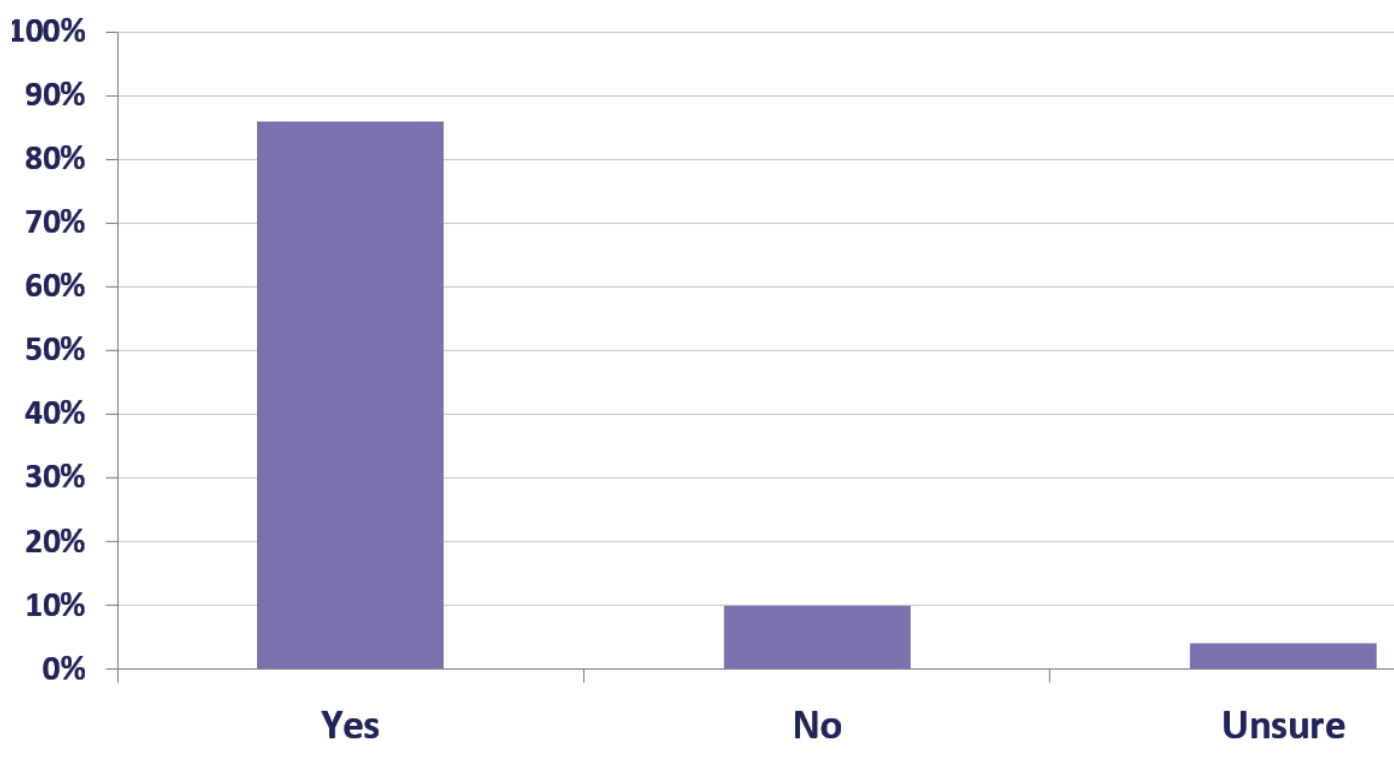


# Member Calls and Survey Feedback

Undertaking our yearly member survey to obtain your feedback is invaluable in assisting PDCN to ensure the work we prioritise is in line with what our members tell us is of importance. This year, with most of us now under COVID restrictions for several months, we also took the opportunity to call our members to see how you are faring, check if you have the relevant COVID information you need, and ask a couple of the most important survey questions as part of our conversations with you. We love being able to connect more directly with you in this way and get to know you a bit more. It's because of these direct conversations that our ILC team initiated our first online social activity.

With regard to COVID vaccinations nearly 70% of the members we spoke to are already fully vaccinated with both doses and another 26% have had their first dose. Only 4% of respondents told us that they hadn't been able to access a vaccine at this point in time. We're very happy to hear of this outcome, as we know that across the broader population the number of people with disability who are fully vaccinated is much lower than this.

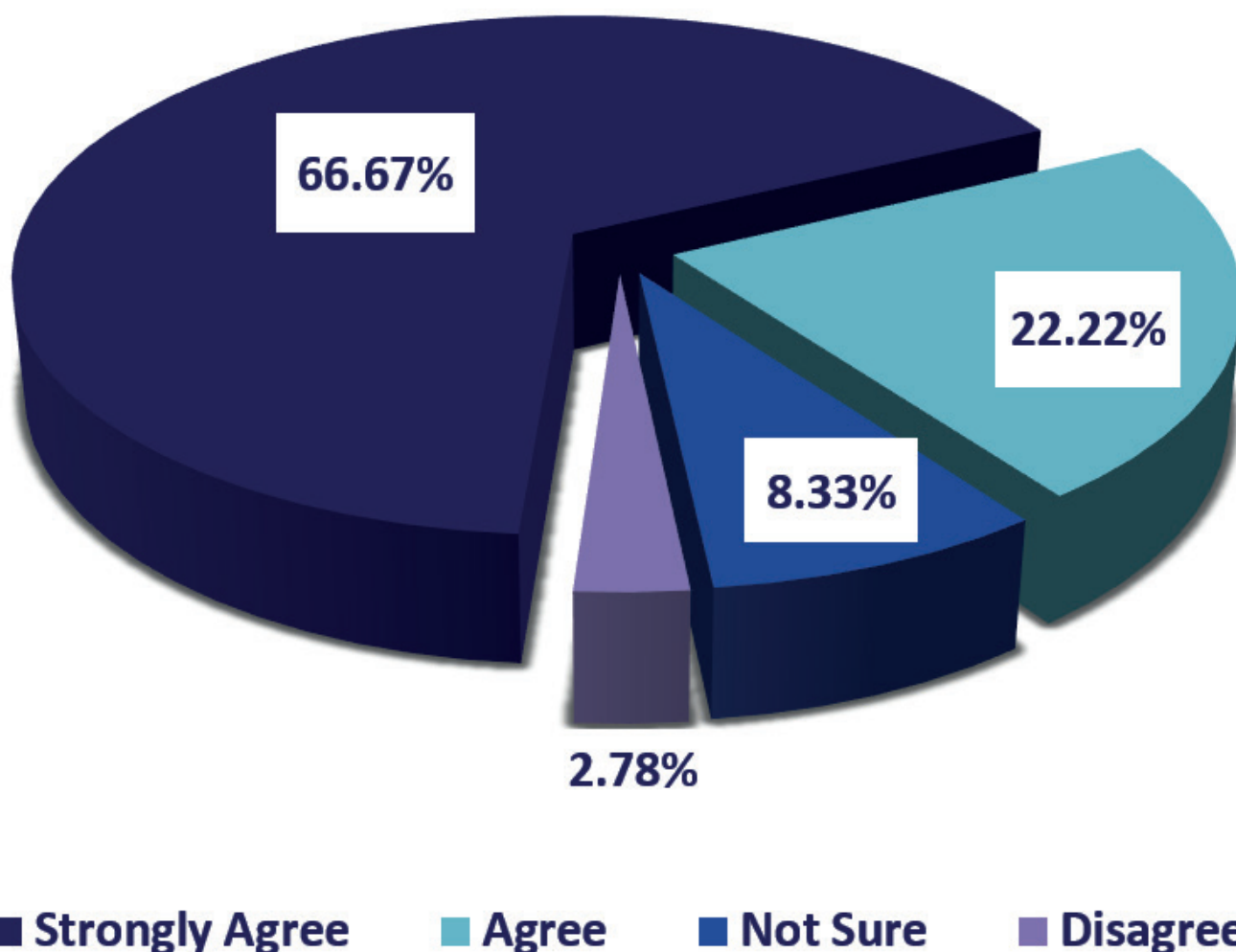
## Do you feel you have been given clear information about your options for the COVID vaccine?



We were also pleased to hear that 86% percent of respondents told us they have been able to access clear information to make informed choices about options for the COVID vaccine. Through our conversations, we understand this was mainly due to the strong relationships you have with your own GP, who guided you through your options with your specific needs in mind.

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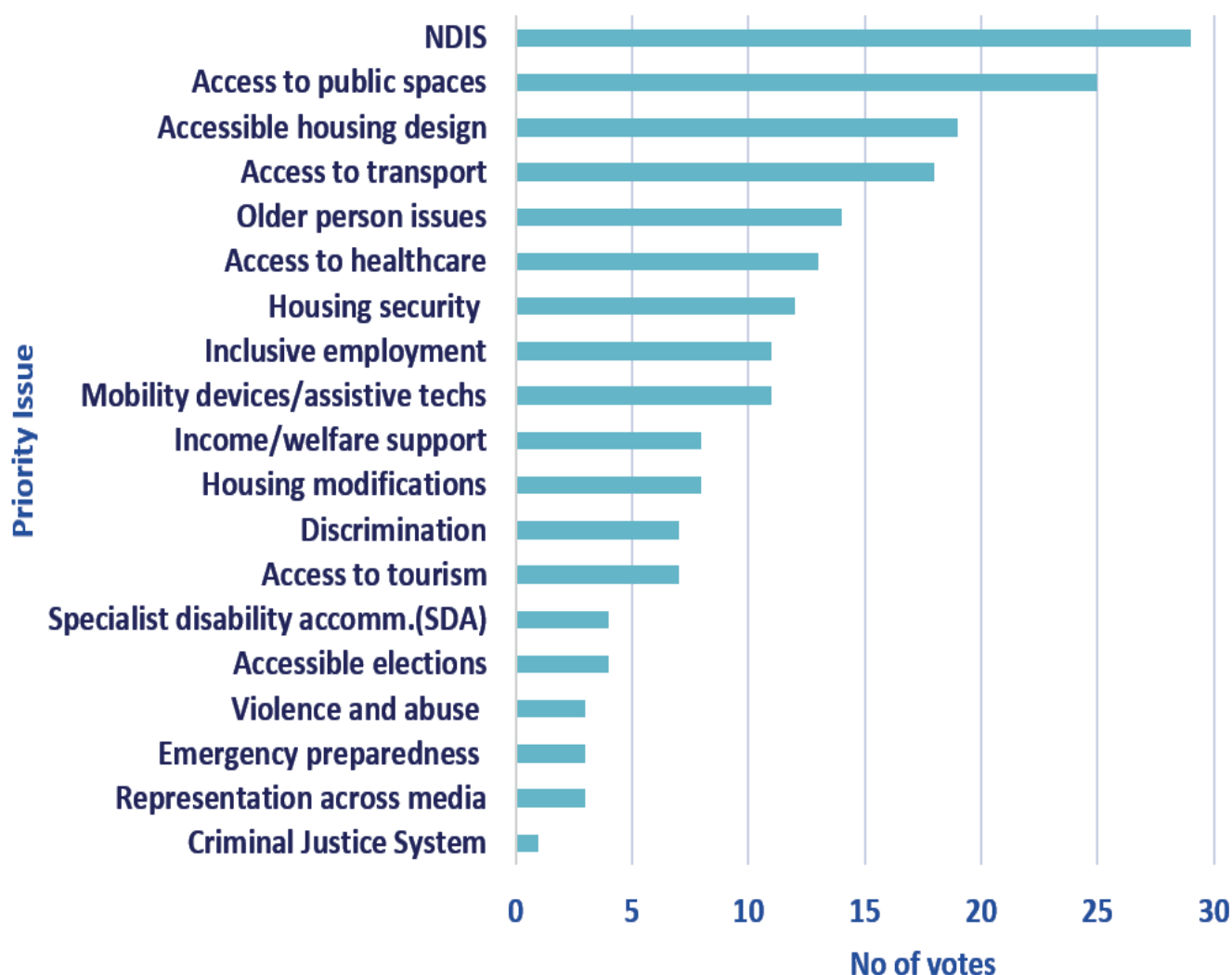
## PDCN understands the issues experienced by people with physical disability



More broadly, when asked if you felt that PDCN understood the issues faced by people with disability, more than 89% of you agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, many praising us for the ability to attend well run consultations on issues we were writing submissions on. We note that 8% of respondents weren't sure, and 3% didn't feel that we did, and so we'll work harder to advise of our position on the priority areas and bring you along on the journey as we advocate on your behalf.

Of course, it's of great concern to us is that we are addressing the issues that are relevant to our members. Going by your responses in the graph on the following page we feel we are on the right track with regard to our current proactive projects; mandating universal housing design, developing a Care Passport for hospitalisation, advising Transport for NSW's Transport Access Program, calling for a better NDIS in light of the upcoming changes to the NDIS Act, and addressing the inequities between My Aged Care and the NDIS for people with significant disability.

## Tell us the top 3 disability issues PDCN should address



Of course, change takes time and a lot of effort – so please bear with us as we continue to have conversations with relevant government departments, Ministers and MPs in order to bring about this change. We’ve also upped the ante a little and engaged a media organisation to help us make these issues known to the wider NSW community in an attempt to use more public platforms to call for equitable and inclusive change. We may also call on you, our members, to tell your individual stories, where it helps shine a light on the inequities our members face daily.

Lastly you told us that having an unbiased, well-connected organisation advocating for you, alongside the information and advice we provide, are some of the greatest benefits of being a member. We’re thrilled to know that what we do has meaning and worth to you.

Thanks again for your invaluable insights, and please don’t hesitate to reach out if ever you feel we can do things better, if you need to know more on the issues that affect you, or you just want to say hello!

# Do You Have a Story to Share About Living with Physical Disability?

We are looking for people interested in being trained and supported to respond to media requests.

PDCN is looking to expand its systemic advocacy work through greater media coverage around issues that impact people with physical disability. If you are passionate about the rights of people with physical disability and think that you might be able to assist us across relevant news pieces, we would love to hear from you!

We are planning to build up a database of people with physical disability to talk about key issues that are relevant and meaningful to them. Issues could include access to transport, public spaces in regional areas, quality of health care services, or housing.

We will provide free training and expert support to help you to gain the skills to confidently engage with media.

Interested in helping? We'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our Policy Manager Hayley Stone at [hayley.stone@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:hayley.stone@pdcnsw.org.au) or phone 1800 688 831.



# Live Online Workshops

These workshops are for people with disability or parents of children with disability. Disability Inclusion Training and Resilience & Wellbeing workshops are also available for organisations and paid supports. The types of workshop available each month will depend on demand.

## Workshops on offer

NDIS Self-Management  
Resilience and Wellbeing  
Speaking Up for Yourself  
Disability Inclusion Training

**To find out more or register your interest**

**Email us: [admin@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:admin@pdcnsw.org.au)**

**or**

**Call us: 1800 688 831**

**Further details can also be found on our website.**

**[www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops)**

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Visit [www.dss.gov.au](http://www.dss.gov.au) for more information.



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