



Serena Owens
Chief Executive Officer

Welcome to our last PDCN Live for 2021!

After five long years of campaigning, I'm so pleased to be able to advise that PDCN have just been notified that our tender for long-term advocacy funding was successful! Our thanks to the Disability Policy team at the Department of Communities

and Justice, and the Minister for Disability Services Alister Henskens for their confidence in us taking on the systemic advocacy role for people with physical disabilities. Now we can finally just get on with the job of making NSW inclusive and accessible for our members!

As I write this, sitting high in the air flying to Broken Hill for a short break, I'm reminded that we live in a very different world to that of a year or so ago. Our temperatures taken pre-flight, additional paperwork to complete, vaccination certificate approved and the obligatory masks to be worn throughout the journey. Yet the good news is we can now start to travel, a fact the team are very thankful for as they enthusiastically plan trips around the state to reconnect face-to-face with our members in the new year.

I couldn't be prouder of PDCN's achievements this year, despite COVID disruptions. Pivoting back to working from home and online during heavy restrictions for a second time was easier having been through it all before, but at the same time significantly harder on everyone's mental health this time. From our member calls, it was evident that you too were beginning to weary of the isolation this caused.

We were still able to surpass our targets for all programs and

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St Helens Community Centre
3/184 Glebe Point Road,
Glebe NSW 2037
Freecall 1800 688 831
Sydney Metro 02 9552 1606
admin@pdcnsw.org.au

projects, with some fabulous outcomes for members, from the long-awaited acceptance of Austroads rules removing all weight limits on motorised mobility devices, to helping forestall the appalling NDIS proposal for independent assessments.

Our Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) team has delivered a range of workshops, assisting participants to self-manage NDIS plans, build resilience (much needed at the moment!) and improve their self-advocacy skills. Additionally, we've individually supported hundreds of people to work through a skill or issue they required a bit more guidance on.

The peer project has pivoted so many times this year it's a wonder that group members don't all have whiplash! Huge thanks to peer leaders in going the extra mile to run groups by phone, Facebook and Zoom, ensuring everyone was still connected.

On the day I write this we are marking the International Day of People with Disability, a day where we celebrate all that disability brings. It is my sincere wish that a day such as this wasn't actually needed, that disability wasn't singled out, that there wasn't a need to bring our needs or achievement to the attention of the rest of community. We want to live in a world where the community automatically considers, caters for, and accepts disabled people for who we are - ordinary people, living ordinary lives.

Until that day, the team at PDCN, with our members guidance, will continue to advocate for a society where inclusion is a given, not an afterthought or something to fight for. We welcome the new Minister for Disability's increased collaboration and will work with his team and the broader NSW government departments to embed equity and inclusion in all legislation, policy, procedures and programs going forward.

I look forward to the day when we ultimately do ourselves out of a job!

For now, there's still much to be done, and we will continue to progress our strategic objectives. We always look forward to hearing from our members about areas of identified need – and also to hear cases where inclusive change is making a positive difference!

I'll close by wishing you all a safe, happy and healthy Christmas, hopefully shared with those you love. We look forward to a short break, closing our doors from 23 December and then back from 4 January, fresh and ready to take on more inclusive challenges in 2022.

Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Serena



Annual General Meeting Report



Thanks to all those that joined us for the 2021 PDCN Annual General Meeting, which once again was an online event. This year's event was short and sweet, with no major decisions to be addressed.

We welcomed back our current Board with no changes, and the Board Executive was decided soon after, also remaining unchanged. The charismatic (some may say debonair) Chris Sparks remains on as President, ably assisted by the quietly spoken but driven Michael Rabbitt as Vice President. Simone Stanford continues to guide our financial interests as Treasurer, a role she undertakes with aplomb and considerable achievement, having grown our equity to the more than \$1.2 million which has been invested to provide a fabulous buffer for any bumps in the road in the future.

Matthew Kayrooz and Mary Flanagan will share the Secretariat duties, as Mary prepares to welcome the arrival of her first child in the new year. Jacob Cross, Diana Palmer and Rex Betar round out a fabulous team.

Members were provided with an overview of the year's achievements at the AGM, but for those who missed the event, along with this newsletter you will have received a hard copy of our 2021 Annual Report which will give you a full picture of our work and achievements over the year. It can also be found online on the PDCN website, as can a full account of the Audited Financial Report.

We sincerely hope to be able to hold the 2022 AGM as a face-to-face event once more, allowing us the opportunity to get together, catch up and celebrate our achievements in person, noting we will also continue to ensure live coverage online so that those who may not be able to travel can also attend.

PDCN Celebrates International Day of People With Disability 2021



Dougie Herd



Stellar



Matt McLaren



Tommy Quick

We celebrated the International Day of People with Disability on Friday 3 December with a webinar hosted by our own Peer Facilitator and Mentor, Heidz Haydon. We invited guest speakers who are contributing to the leadership and inclusion of people with disability.

PDCN President Chris Sparks OAM, who has been a wheelchair user from the age of three, first shared some insight into what IDPwD is all about, aspiring to a time where disability is seen as just another human attribute rather than a person-defining disadvantage. Our Peer Facilitator and Mentor Adrian O'Malley also spoke about the history and importance of IDPwD, highlighting the fact that for inclusion to work in society, people with disability must be front and centre, and that we should live in a world of co-design.

Hayley Stone, our hard-working Policy Manager, reflected on the systemic policy work we've been involved with and the key achievements championing the rights of people with physical disabilities. Despite the challenges of the last 18 months, key advocacy highlights include the confirmation of disability advocacy funding in NSW, the scrapping of NDIS Independent Assessments, and minimum accessibility standards in the National Construction Code.

Ryan from Stellar Experiences joined us to talk about their inclusive programs aimed at 16–35-year-old people with disability, sharing the Stellar team's passion to promote social inclusion by working with mainstream organisations to involve people with disability throughout their planning processes.

Dougie Herd from Community Connections, one of the fiercest advocates for people with disability, joined us next for a chat. When asked what an inclusive society looks like to him, Dougie summed it up beautifully: 'It is a society where I can be who I want to be, I can be who I am, which is not always the same thing. Whatever happens, a society that lets me be who I am with all my good points and all my foibles, and all my bad points... lets me come and go on the same terms as everybody else. Nobody judging me, nobody saying "Isn't he

remarkable!” because he got up out of bed this morning and went to the office! Nobody said that when I was 31 and went to the bank! And a society that recognises that I might have something to contribute.’

Due to a road injury, our next speaker Tommy Quick joined us from his hospital bed for a pre-recorded Zoom interview. Tommy talked about his idea to ride his recumbent trike around to the four farthest points in Australia promoting social inclusion and youth stroke research. He has done 3500kms of this epic journey so far and will continue his ride once he has recovered from his injuries. We can’t wait to see his regular social media updates again!

To finish off the event we welcomed Matt McLaren, a classically trained pianist and music producer who uses new and old school technology to create fantastic live sessions for all types of events around Australia. He also happens to be blind. Matt entertained the crowd, and Heidz had the opportunity to ask him for advice on how to ensure people with disability are included in the live music scene. He said, ‘I don’t rely on venue owners to do anything for me... for me it’s always been about trying to work on an equal or as much of an equal footing as I possibly can... just to be really upfront if there are needs.” Matt played us out with his last mash-up of Walkin’ in Memphis and Castle on the Hill showcasing his absolute talent. What an event! We hope that everyone who attended was motivated to speak up and continue to advocate for change.

Need Accessible Seating for an Event This Summer? Be Prepared to Book Days in Advance

Many PDCN members will be aware that Ticketek has been on PDCN’s radar for some time for failing to provide equitable booking options for customers requiring accessible seating. As we ramp up to the festive season, and summer events start being advertised, it’s time again to pressure Ticketek to step up and provide people with disability with the same ease and flexibility to book seating as any other customer.

Currently, if you or someone you are booking tickets for needs accessible seating, Ticketek directs you to complete an online *Accessible Seating Booking Form* and then wait to be contacted or call the Accessible Seating Booking Line direct. We know that this usually means our members play phone tag with Ticketek staff when they need to liaise with venues and promoters, a process that can take days. Other times, members receive no call back at all. Whatever the case, it’s a convoluted and highly frustrating process.

Ticketek’s justification for the existing process is that they have no control over the actual allocation of the tickets. Their website specifically states that ‘*As an agent for venues and promoters, Ticketek facilitates the sale of accessible seating for where Ticketek is the authorised*

ticketing provider. Ticketek acts under instruction from venues and promoters who allocate the number and types of accessible seats by event and venue.'

We understand that in 2019-20, Ticketek had plans to trial a new accessible seating online booking service, but there has been no news of whether the trials were in fact done, and if so, whether there were any useful findings. Meanwhile, people with disabilities continue to have to book well in advance for events, removing any form of spontaneity or the ability to access last minute ticket deals.



The reality is that Ticketek's current business model operates on a two-tiered system where people without disability can easily purchase tickets more quickly and even potentially cheaper than those with disabilities. We believe that Ticketek has an obligation to either remedy this from their end, or to push for venues and promoters to improve their booking practices.

Our policy team is very interested to understand the experiences of people who have used Ticketek's Accessible Seating Booking Form or called the accessible booking hotline. We are also interested to hear about simpler online booking systems that people may have used, both in Australia and overseas. If you would like to share your experiences or assist us in other ways to push Ticketek to improve its services, please get in touch with our Policy Manager Hayley Stone by emailing hayley.stone@pdcnsw.org.au.

Park'nPay Scheme Promises Real-Time Info on Accessible Parking



PDCN has recently been working with the NSW Department of Customer Service on a new initiative that could greatly enhance the capacity for people with disability to locate accessible parking. The Park'nPay scheme would allow anyone with a smart phone to locate both on-street and off-street parking in real time, including accessible parking.

Under the scheme, parking spaces would be fitted with sensors to indicate whether the spaces are occupied at any point in time. An app would then allow anyone with a smart phone to locate on or off-street parking in real time, including accessible parking spaces. There would also be an option to pay for parking through the app, removing the need to use pay stations and parking meters, which are often poorly positioned and difficult for people with physical disability to use.

PDCN has reviewed both the overall scheme and the Park'nPay app prototype to make sure that the needs of people who use accessible parking spaces are factored in across the design. This includes the capacity to transfer a mobility parking permit across different vehicles and for the app to recognise increased time limits for parking and free parking where appropriate.

We're excited about the potential that Park'nPay has to make it easier for people with physical disability to be active within the community. It's great that the Department of Customer Service took the initiative to reach out and seek PDCN's advice and feedback, and we look forward to continuing our involvement in this important project.


Research as part of the Park'nPay scheme has also once again highlighted the need for greater investment in accessible parking spaces, especially on-street parking. Currently 18%, or one in six of all Australians, have disability. That's 1,346,000 people in NSW alone, and yet so far there doesn't appear to be a uniform approach to accessible on-street parking across LGAs. We are an ageing population and it's important for LGAs think about future need. We are pushing for a ratio of 1 accessible parking space for every 10 available spaces as a minimum, and up to 1 to 5 in high demand areas across both on-street and off-street parking.

The Park'nPay app is still in its infancy, with a small number of councils using the app. However, the NSW Government is aiming to mandate its use for all NSW local councils, providing one simple source for all public parking. We will keep members posted around the progress of the scheme, so watch this space.

2021 The Year In Photos







The Staff and Board
of PDCN wish you all a
Merry Christmas and a very
safe, happy and healthy
New Year!

Our office will be closed from Thursday 23 December
and will reopen on Tuesday 4 January 2022.



Website - www.pdcnsw.org.au



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