



**Serena Ovens**  
Chief Executive Officer

This past quarter has been one of highs and lows for the PDCN team. Over the past three months we've lost two of our PDCN family – founding member and staunch advocate John Moxon, and long-time employee Jordana Goodman. Both individuals were formidable in their fight for the rights of people with physical disability and will be sorely missed.

On a positive note, we've also had some significant wins. Having worked on the concept of a Care Passport software application that will assist hospital staff to understand and be prepared for disability-specific needs for more than a year now, NSW Health advised us earlier this month that they will fund the development of this app. This funding will allow us to bring the Care Passport project to life, develop and test it with our members, and eventually allow you to see it in action if you are ever hospitalised in NSW.

In addition, the ILC team, through the amazing work of our tech wizard Heidz Haydon, has launched our first eLearning course on disability inclusion. This course is a self-paced, three-hour online program that allows anyone in an industry or community role to understand disability inclusion, and to incorporate people with disability into any environment, be it an event, tourism opportunity, workplace or community group! We're now also into the first full year of our new Disability Advocacy Futures Program funding, and as part of this we're establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Panel of people with physical disability to support a greater dialogue in the work we undertake on your behalf. You can read more about both of these new opportunities further on in this issue.

continued on next page

## In this issue:

- 3 Inclusion Course**  
Online learning for organisations and individuals
- 4 Access Denied**  
The sorry state of accessible housing in NSW
- 5 Northern Rivers Peer Group**  
Join us if you live in the Lismore area!
- 6 Peer Mentoring**  
One participant's story of change
- 7 Lived Experience Advisory Panel**  
Enhancing our work in the community



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**

It's also financial reporting time, and this year we will hold our Annual General Meeting both in person at the Fullerton Hotel (previously the Westin) and also live online via Zoom, meaning that anyone can be a part of the evening in a way that suits their individual circumstance. Remember to put 6pm on Monday 31 October in your diary and come along or join us virtually. Sadly, our President Chris Sparks will be retiring from the PDCN Board on this night, so please come and share a drink and a story or two with him once the formalities are complete!

Read on for more on our activities and achievements.

Regards,  
Serena

## VALE John Moxon

PDCN, along with the wider Australian disability advocacy community, was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of PDCN's past president and lifelong member John Moxon yesterday, after a determined battle with COVID-19 and associated complications.

John, along with a small group of like-minded people with physical disability - Kevin Byrne, Fred Kaad and Rosemary Kayess among them - founded the Physical Disability Council of NSW in 1994. Serving more than 13 years in executive and non-executive roles on PDCN's Board and always being available to this day to provide guidance advice and support, John was a huge part of the many successes PDCN has had in making NSW a fairer, more equitable and accessible place for those with physical disability.



A fierce advocate and a devoted husband and father, he'll be sorely missed. Our heartfelt condolences to Margaret, John's family and friends.



# Inclusion Course



The education team at PDCN are excited to have developed an online self-paced eLearning course for organisations, businesses, local councils, disability service providers or individuals with or without disability, who want to enhance their understanding of disability inclusion.

By taking part in this course, participants will understand how stigmas, behaviours, language and environments can impact people with disability, all while providing examples of changes people can make to be more inclusive.

The course is designed to educate people about being more inclusive of people with disability in a manner that avoids long discussion about legislation or statistics, therefore making the workshop more engaging and interesting for all. Instead, the legislative and statical information is referenced and can be viewed on completion of the course.

COVID restrictions impacted on the development of the course but despite this the team were able to manage some on location filming and share the voiceover roles. PDCN would like to thank the education team for all their work on this course which will generate income for the organisation.



A special thanks also goes to Heidi Haydon who worked extended hours during lockdown, taking on the full load of on-screen presentations and completing all audio and video edits, saving PDCN a considerable amount of money.

We hope that you can help us spread the word. To find out more please scan the QR code on the left, visit our website at [www.pdcnsw.org.au/inclusion](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/inclusion) or contact us on 1800 688 831 or [training@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:training@pdcnsw.org.au).

Over the past few months, the PDCN policy team has been collecting data and putting together a report on the housing experiences of our members. It's safe to say what we found was dire, with very clear indicators that people with physical disability are struggling to access safe, secure and affordable housing, regardless of whether they rent or buy. Renters are a particularly disadvantaged demographic with many unable to implement the home modifications they need. At the same time, the NDIS does not appear to be able to support people to receive the home modifications they require.



It is apparent that the housing situation for people with physical disability needs to change across the board. The poor state of accessibility was apparent in all aspects of housing, from the rental market to buying a property, and in social housing and retirement villages. A massive 47% of respondents reported having to move homes at least once due to accessibility issues.

While accessibility is often talked about in the context of people's own homes, we can also see that the lack of accessibility in homes has significant flow-on effects to friends and family members too. About 90% of homes will be visited by someone with accessibility needs at some point, and we heard many accounts of people declining to attend social occasions because other people's houses are not accessible, or staying in the backyard during social gatherings because they could not physically go inside. To add to our first-hand member experiences, we found statistics from the ABS showed that visiting friends and family was the most avoided situation for people with disability.

The research we conducted makes it clear that there is a desperate need for mandated accessible housing standards in NSW. Silver Level Livable Housing design has already been mandated into the National Construction Code, incorporating key design features such as including a step-free level entrance, a bathroom on the entry level, hobless showers, reinforced walls for future grab rail installations, and wider hallways and doorframes. However, the NSW Government has decided to opt out of mandating these requirements for new homes in this state. This has left people continuing to be forced into compromises around where they live, how much they pay for housing and how they live in their own homes.

It isn't good enough for people with disability to have to figure out themselves how to make their own homes accessible, to fork out vast amounts of money for retrofitting

modifications, or to wait for years for suitable living standards, as was found to be the case for many of our respondents.

Our Housing Report is a sobering read, but it is also an important insight into the experiences of housing within our community. With accessible and affordable housing becoming an increasingly mainstream issue, we are optimistic that a change is on the way, and that next time a report on the housing experiences of people with physical disability is written, it will be a positive one.

You can find the PDCN Housing Report on our website at [www.pdcnsw.org.au/publications/research-and-reports](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/publications/research-and-reports).

## Join Our Northern Rivers Peer Group

PDCN, in partnership with Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA), have created a Lismore Peer Group. Anyone with physical disability is invited to come along to this regular monthly meet up, to share stories and connect with others.

The Lismore Peer Group is facilitated by Darrin Whyms who lives with incomplete quadriplegia. Darrin had a motorcycle accident in 1986 and originally walked out of the hospital, spending the next 12 months working on his spinal rehabilitation. It led to starting an apprenticeship as a baker then 33 years in the baking industry. In 2019 after more tests, doctors discovered a syrinx in his spinal cord, and following an operation to remove it, he was unable to walk and started his life as a wheelchair user, learning to adapt all over again.

This group offers an encouraging environment to share stories, make new friends and learn from others in a similar situation. It creates a place that is safe, free from judgement and an opportunity to work together to build independence and capacity.

Topics of interest that may be discussed either within the group or via a guest speaker could include:

- Self-Advocacy/speaking up for yourself
- Resilience
- Enhancing independence
- Relationships
- Adapting to change
- Practical living skills
- Travel accessibility
- Accessing your community and activities
- Overcoming barriers







PDCN have three workshops we have developed for people with disability and their support network. A participant recently joined us for all three workshops and some follow up peer mentoring, and he provided some great feedback about the benefits and growth he had experienced through his participation. Matt (name has been changed to protect privacy) lives in a regional area and reported that attending our Reframing Resilience, Speaking Up, and NDIS Self-Management workshops assisted him in several ways.

Matt gained skills in assertive communication from our Speaking Up workshop, which assisted him to advocate for himself when talking to the NDIS and service providers.

Matt also required assistive technology (AT) and had previously been unsuccessful in obtaining this via his plan manager or the NDIS. Matt told his PDCN peer mentor Adrian that he now felt confident in asking for what he needed because he had done his research and he felt he was getting his message across well. As a result, Matt has been successful in obtaining the AT he requires and the services he needs. This taste of success has left Matt wanting more.

Matt was also considering moving from plan management to self-managing his NDIS plan, so he attended one of our NDIS Self-Management workshops. With all the information we provided, Matt felt confident to take control and with the help of follow-up peer mentoring, he decided he would like to self-manage part of his plan. Matt will also consider eventually moving to self-managing his entire plan which will mean the option of using registered and unregistered NDIS providers, therefore increasing his choices which is important in regional NSW where service provider options are limited.

Matt really enjoyed our Resilience workshop, saying that he felt heard and that it helped him reframe his thinking, understand his emotions, and have a greater sense of agency. This has had flow-on effects and Matt says he now feels like he wants to give back by volunteering

The ILC team feel genuinely satisfied that we were able to provide Matt with information and to assist him in making some meaningful decisions and changes that will not only assist him but may also be beneficial to others. If you would like to participate in peer mentoring or any of our workshops, visit [www.pdcnsw.org.au/peer-connections](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/peer-connections), or scan the QR code on the right. You can also contact us at [admin@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:admin@pdcnsw.org.au) or 1800 688 831.



We are now advertising positions for our new Lived Experience Advisory Panel. This is a project we've been developing for some time and it's exciting to finally be at a point where we can share it with the PDCN community!

The panel will provide us with valuable experience, expertise, understanding and information that enhances the impact of our systemic advocacy work and assists us in engaging and connecting with people with physical disability.

Panel members will also support us as we engage with stakeholders, including representatives at all levels of government, on issues of relevance for people with physical disability in NSW.

Panel members will be paid for their time and expertise and expected to commit to 4-6 meetings across a one-year term. We are looking to appoint eight people, including one parent/guardian of a person with disability under the age of 16. Representatives from the PDCN board and policy staff will also form part of the panel. Meetings will be predominately done over Zoom, although we hope to have at least one face-to-face catch up in Sydney.

We hope to attract applicants with a diverse range of lived experiences and disabilities. We're particularly keen for people from regional areas and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds to apply. So, if you live in NSW, have lived experience of physical disability, and a passion for social justice and equity, we encourage you to apply! Scan the QR code or go to [www.ethicaljobs.com.au/members/PDCN/lived-experience-advisory-panel-member](http://www.ethicaljobs.com.au/members/PDCN/lived-experience-advisory-panel-member).



# Annual General Meeting

6pm, Monday 31 October

@ The Fullerton Hotel and Online

1 Martin Place, Sydney

You can attend this year's AGM at the Fullerton Hotel or online.

Formal invitations and Board nomination forms will be posted soon.

## NDIS Self-Management

- Tuesday 27 September, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)
  - Tuesday 4 October, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)
- Thursday 20 October, 10am - 12.15pm (Online)
- Tuesday 8 November, 10am - 12.15pm (Online)
- Monday 14 November, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)
- Thursday 8 December, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)

## Speaking Up For Yourself

- Monday 10 October, 10am - 12.15pm (Online)
- Wednesday 2 November, 10am - 12.15pm (Online)
- Thursday 17 November, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)
- Tuesday 6 December, 6pm - 8.15pm (Online)

Go to [www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops](http://www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops) for more information and to register.



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



I'm Okay - [www.imokay.org.au](http://www.imokay.org.au)



Facebook - [facebook.com/PDCNSW](https://facebook.com/PDCNSW)



Twitter - [@PDCNSW](https://twitter.com/PDCNSW)