



**Serena Ovens**  
Chief Executive Officer

As ever, another year has come and gone, and Christmas is fast approaching. It's a time that brings both highs and lows for many, and as COVID once again rears its ugly head, likely a restriction of movement and social engagement for members at risk, unfortunately.

The past year has been hectic for the PDCN team, as we worked to deliver on all our funding requirements, as well as to achieve inclusive change for people with physical disability throughout NSW. We've had some great wins, with NSW Health agreeing to fund the production of the Care Passport app. This will ensure people who need hospitalisation will have information provided to the ward that addresses their disability-specific needs. We know that this will significantly increase positive health outcomes and can't wait to work with the IT team in the new year to get this app built and ready to go!

We've also just received formal confirmation that PDCN will be funded to be the NSW advocacy sector's coordinator. This involves building the NSW Disability Advocacy Network and connecting the various advocacy organisations to each other to elevate systemic issues and collaborate wherever possible. This will enable the disability sector to make the most of limited resources and continue the fabulous work and collective spirit of the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance. We'll be recruiting for a new staff member to support this role in the new year.

The PDCN Board has also approved the use of some of the equity we've built to bring additional capacity into the team – so we'll soon be advertising for additional policy and campaign focused staff, and a grants writer too!

continued on next page

## In this issue:

- 2** AGM Wrap Up
- 4** Getting Out of the Office for Disability Inclusion
- 5** Policy Priorities: What's on the Agenda
- 7** Older Australians Need More Than Care
- 9** Farewell to Wendy Banfield
- 9** 2022 in Photos



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**

Along with this newsletter you will have also received our 2021-22 Annual Report, which details in far more depth all the amazing work undertaken over the past financial year. I recommend it as a great holiday read!

There's more to be done and some of our priorities have not yet been met, but I'll take this opportunity to thank you, our members, for the amazing input and interaction you have with the PDCN team. It makes a huge difference to be able to support our calls for inclusive change with the direct experiences of people with physical disability. So please continue to tell us what's working or not working for you by participating in our surveys and consultations – your feedback and stories are invaluable to our work.

I wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy holiday break,

Serena

## AGM Wrap Up

After a couple of years affected by COVID it was lovely to be able to hold our AGM in person once again, and even more amazing to run a hybrid meeting that allowed members from all over NSW to participate even if they couldn't join us in person (and to have the technology work without a hitch!)

The past financial year was the first where we once again had security of long-term funding, after successfully tendering through the new Disability Advocacy Futures Program. As always, the PDCN team had done an amazing job in meeting, and in most cases surpassing, all our required grant targets and successfully achieved some significant outcomes over this time. Additionally, we made a small surplus for the organisation, through shrewd investments and an increase in donations and fee-for-service offerings.

The night itself was bittersweet as we farewelled three of our board members, including longstanding President Chris Sparks OAM. Chris's leadership has been transformational, bringing in many corporate members through his contacts in the assistive technology world, and leading the organisation through the Stand By Me campaign for long-term secure disability advocacy funding – amongst many other achievements.

Also stepping down were the ever smiling and charismatic Jacob Cross, and fellow board member Rex Betar. We thank all three for their leadership, guidance and support of PDCN through these uncertain times.

We also welcome incoming board members Tahlia Blanshard, Sarah Hilt and Rochelle Porteous who bring with them a wealth of experience, both lived experience of disability and in the government relations, advocacy, campaigning and management spaces.

After formal AGM proceedings ended, we welcomed the Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, the Hon Victor Dominello MP to provide the keynote speech. The Minister provided an update on the upcoming and current accessibility improvements in government processes, along with an understanding that whilst digital technology and IT can improve the lives of people with disability, it can also potentially isolate and leave behind those who cannot use it for varied reasons.



Photo: Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government Victor Dominello, CEO Serena Ovens, with outgoing Board members Jacob Cross, Chris Sparks OAM and Rex Betar.

We finished the evening with canapes and drinks, and were very fortunate to have the lovely Summer Giddings, a young cerebral palsy athlete and singer, providing the background music whilst we caught up with members we hadn't seen for a number of years.

Thanks to the PDCN staff for all their assistance on the night (special mention to Heidz for all the tech expertise as always) and to all those who attended, both online and person. It was fabulous to catch up once again, and to meet some of you for the first time.



# Getting Out of the Office for Disability Inclusion

Recently our Peer Facilitators Heidi and Adrian presented our new inclusion workshop to staff at a local council in Sydney. Notably, this was also the first opportunity to present a workshop face to face in over two-and-a-half years.

The Inclusion course looks at how stigmas, behaviours and language can impact people with disability, also providing examples of changes that can be made in order to create a more inclusive environment. Adrian and Heidi enjoyed the experience of presenting face to face and found that discussions were more natural, interactive, and engaging when conducted in person. The feedback from participants also confirmed that it was a really worthwhile experience for them.



The ILC team has also been busy developing, or refreshing, other workshops. Adrian recently presented the first session of our new Post-Traumatic Growth workshop. Adrian was introduced to the idea of post-traumatic growth about nine years ago and, in his words, felt he 'had been given a gift'. Post-traumatic growth is a recent concept that incorporates age-old ideas. Essentially, something good can come from something bad, and we can experience growth from traumatic experiences. While the science might be new, the ideas have been around for very long time.

The workshop introduces the idea of post traumatic growth, five common areas people might experience growth, and how post traumatic growth is similar to, but also different from, resilience. The workshop isn't about 'happiness', but research shows that even knowing about post traumatic growth can improve mood.

Lastly, the ILC team have been busy refreshing our Resilience workshop, and plan to relaunch it as a condensed, two-hour workshop in the new year. All PDCN workshops are designed to work well when presented face to face, and we will look to get to regional NSW throughout 2023 to do this. Keep an eye on our social media, newsletters and website for more information.

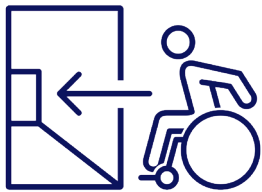
Scan the QR code to find out more about the different workshops and courses we offer or go to <https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshops/>





# Policy Priorities: What's on the Agenda

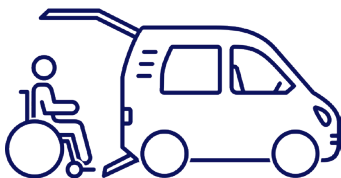
With the year drawing to a close, it's time for the policy team to assess our upcoming priorities. The new year will bring exciting new developments in our advocacy, with a focus on housing, transport, the NDIS and Ticketek - all issues close to our members' hearts.



## Housing

Throughout 2022, PDCN has been hard at work advocating for the adoption of minimum Silver Level accessibility standards for new NSW home builds, as outlined in the National Construction Code. With the policy team continuing to talk to ministers and industry, attending housing roundtables, and launching a campaign at NSW Parliament, it is disappointing that the NSW Government still refuses to adopt these changes.

As we move toward the 2023 state election, we will continue to champion accessibility standards, both as part of the Building Better Homes campaign, and with the help of broader housing policy campaigns under the Homes for People coalition. We are committed to influencing better housing outcomes for our members and the broader disability community, and to achieving accessible housing for all. We will also ask those seeking election to prioritise this need!



## Transport

Transport is an ongoing strategic priority, with a multitude of issues to be addressed. We have ongoing commitments to the Transport for NSW Accessible Transport Advisory Committee (ATAC), where we provide input on current public transport access issues for people with physical disability.

We've listened to your feedback that an increasingly problematic issue in the transport sector is taxi services. Issues with the new TTSS payment card, taxi bookings, incredibly long wait times and poorly skilled drivers are constant concerns. We are collaborating with industry and representative organisations to find solutions for what is fast becoming a declining service, particularly in terms of access to wheelchair accessible taxis, with some regional areas losing this service completely over the past year.

In addition, we've provided considerable feedback to Transport for NSW's next Disability Inclusion Action Plan, calling for tighter timelines on finalising accessible infrastructure, clear outcomes, and enforcement when outcomes or deadlines are not achieved.



## NDIS

The NDIS is a constant policy priority for PDCN. With many of our members being participants in the scheme it is paramount that we are on top of changes and issues that occur. The policy team is constantly on the lookout for systemic NDIS issues and relay these issues up to the NDIS Independent Advisory Council to be addressed by the scheme. We have our finger on the pulse when it comes to submissions to the NDIA, and with the NDIS review in progress we have already met with the review team headed by Bruce Bonyhady to begin providing input on how to ensure the scheme is fit for purpose. We look forward to hearing valuable stories from our members through future consultations and surveys, allowing us to ensure your needs are met by this lifechanging program.



## Ticketek

After a protracted effort to get Ticketek to re-establish contact with us, and with numerous PDCN members lodging human rights complaints to put pressure on ticketing platforms to ensure equity and inclusion for people with a physical disability, we're pleased to say that things are definitely looking up here! Ticketek is working to update its ticketing platform to allow for online booking of accessible seats at every event and are consulting with venues to ensure that they too provide all the information that is needed for this to occur.

PDCN are currently assisting Ticketek with a review of the language on this new site and are pushing for our members to beta test the new platform prior to launch to ensure it works effectively for everyone. We thank Ticketek for engaging with us throughout this process. Stay tuned for more as things in this area are progressing quickly!

All in all, it's been a busy year, with numerous submissions currently open, and another busy year to come. We look forward to continuing our advocacy for the physical disability community and our valued members, and we hope to see you in our future consultations!



# Older Australians Need More Than Care

In 2021, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recommended the introduction of a new, modernised aged care system, which is ‘fit for purpose, delivers proportionate regulation, and supports the provision of safe and quality care for senior Australians’.

Since this recommendation, the Department of Health and Aged Care has proposed a model for regulating aged care. As part of PDCN’s systemic advocacy efforts, our policy team put forward a submission commenting on the proposed regulation model and providing multiple recommendations that should be implemented.

A modernised aged care system should provide services and supports that accurately reflect society’s current expectations around ageing well. We recommended that the reform should recognise the importance of community engagement for older Australians. A focus on funding for prevention and early intervention will allow older Australians to access a broader range of services and supports to ensure they age well and remain connected with the community.

Additionally, a new aged care system should take a more holistic approach by funding the provision of wraparound supports and services that assist participants to connect with other people, build and maintain social connections, and participate in activities that increase wellbeing. This move away from the medicalised model of care and support was another recommendation made by PDCN.





Community expectations regarding the administration and delivery of supports for older people have shifted significantly since the implementation of the NDIS, and there is now a strong call for the two schemes to provide individuals with equal opportunities. We propose greater funding parity between aged care and the NDIS and recommend that banded funding be removed from the aged care system to instead be determined on an individual basis. In addition, the new aged care scheme should give older Australians the same right to self-manage their funding that NDIS participants currently have.

Implementing a new system will allow older people to better connect with supports and services and have opportunities equal to those provided to NDIS participants. We encourage the Department to collaborate closely with both older people with disability and the aged care community to ensure that resources for navigating the new system are accessible in accordance with best practice.

Our submission was the first of several that we will undertake while the new model takes shape, as we understand that different parts of the new scheme will be open for discussion at different times over the coming months. In readiness, the policy team is continuing their aged care advocacy efforts and have developed a survey on people's experiences to inform our views. You can scan the QR code below to complete the survey. Further research of people's lived experience will help strengthen our pursuit of an equitable system. We also encourage you to contact us and share your aged care experiences, positive or negative, at [admin@pdcnsw.org.au](mailto:admin@pdcnsw.org.au).



Scan this QR code to read our submission on aged care or go to <https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/publications/submission-and-responses/>



Scan this QR code to complete our survey on aged care or go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/AgedCare22AgedCare22>

# Farewell to Wendy Banfield

With some uncertainty on the amount of funding available for the continuation of our ILC grant and with contracts coming to an end, our ILC Manager Wendy Banfield will wrap up her work with PDCN at the end of the year and move onto new challenges.

PDCN would like to take this opportunity to thank Wendy for the work she undertook to deliver on the ILC grant, ensuring all outcomes were met over the three years of the grant, and in stewarding the ILC team to date. She leaves a strong, competent team who we know will be able to confidently deliver the grant activities from this point.

## 2022 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 Friday 23 December  
and will reopen on Tuesday 3 January 2022.



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)