****

**Media release, 1 March 2023**

**Disability inclusion blueprint released: people with disability call for real action from political parties**

People with disability have today called on all political parties to start making meaningful commitments to improving the lives of people with disability in NSW.

A crowd of people with disability, advocates and supporters today released a ‘blueprint’ for action on disability inclusion.

The blueprint, developed by disability advocacy, information and representation organisations from across NSW, outlines just some of the key areas a coordinated all-of-government response to disability inclusion should include, such as:

* signing NSW up to the National Construction Code, which will ensure new builds are accessible;
* a commitment to accessible government communications, including transport timetables;
* improving access to wheelchair accessible taxis, particularly in the regions;
* a commitment to inclusive education;
* a commitment to reaching, and exceeding, the current target of 5.6 per cent employment of people with disability in the public sector.

The blueprint says that delivering disability inclusion in NSW will take political will and action and that our political parties have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to make it a genuine priority.

See the full details in the blueprint attached.

[Click here to download the audio of the press conference.](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qsd2ytYqSKvv8IXRRM4SkH2BDZQvubsP/view)

[Click here to download footage and images from the event.](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cUpq_oHrImE_8fDNpyT6AEK73dSd2y-g?usp=sharing)

**UTS Professor and disability advocate, Simon Darcy:** “Our major political parties simply aren’t doing enough to address disability inclusion in NSW. They are failing to recognise the almost 20 per cent of people in this state with disability.

“While the NDIS provides for people with high and very high support needs that is only 10% of all people with disability. For the other 90% of people with disability too many issues of critical importance have been neglected by our state governments and political parties, including fundamental issues for community participation such as accessible transport, employment, inclusive education, accessible communication and accessible housing.”

**Susan Wood, a woman with a disability who knows first-hand how difficult finding accessible accommodation is in NSW:** “One of the key issues outlined in the ‘blueprint for disability inclusion’ is the need for NSW to sign up to the National Construction Code which requires minimum accessibility standards for all new builds.  
“Having affordable and accessible housing available for everyone, including people with disability, is a fundamental area that our government needs to address. NSW is one of just two states that hasn’t signed up the National Construction Code. It’s time that was changed.

**Ella Darling, woman with first-hand experience navigating transport accessibility issues:** “Because I have an intellectual disability it is hard for me to read transport information and timetables. I find many transport signs and announcements confusing. I want things to change. I want to see disability awareness training for all transport staff and I want to see better, easy to read transport information and timetables.”

**Declan Lee, man with a disability who has experienced a lack of accessible taxis:** “Ensuring transport is accessible to everyone in the state should be a key priority of any government. I’ve been left on the side of the road waiting for accessible taxis that never came and I’m not alone. You’d be hard pressed to find a person with a disability who hasn’t had a similar experience.”

**Traci Caines, a mother with experience in the importance of inclusive education:**

“I’m a single parent to an outgoing, funny, cheeky, compassionate and resilient 12 year old girl named Eva, who also happens to have some complex disabilities. When schooling started for Eva I wanted her to attend the local school with all the other kids in our area but I was met with what I came to know of as “gate keeping’. A fully inclusive education system benefits all kids. Eva just wants to belong, like everyone else.”

**Jonathon Hunyor, CEO of the Public interest Advocacy Centre:** “We work with too many people who experience discrimination in areas like education, public transport and access to services, and have to take on government or big business to have their rights respected.  
“But it shouldn’t fall to individuals to fix a broken system. We need government to be pro-active about disability inclusion and build a system that works for everyone: so that long and stressful legal challenges become redundant.

**Serena Ovens, Chief Executive of the Physical Disability Council of NSW:** “There is still an opportunity for our political parties to make meaningful and achievable commitments ahead of the March election.  
“Our blueprint provides political parties with a simple overview of some of the major policy areas that need to be rectified as soon as possible to ensure people with disability can live their lives they way they want to and deserve to.”

**Carolyn Hodge, Deputy CEO People with Disability Australia:** “Housing is the number one issue that people with disability contact our Individual Advocacy Services about in NSW. Along with implementing minimum accessibility standards, it is critical that the NSW Government significantly invest in producing accessible Social Housing so people with disability have secure, accessible, safe and affordable places to live.”

**Justine O'Neill, CEO Council for Intellectual Disability** “Everyday, people with intellectual disability face major barriers to being fully included in the community. This includes barriers like finding easy to understand information on government websites, getting a job in the public sector and being able to use our trains, buses and taxis easily, safely and without fear. Opening up the community for people with intellectual and other disabilities must be a top priority of the next NSW Government. 

**Cecile Sullivan Elder, Executive Officer, Family Advocacy NSW** "Education is the number one issue that people with disability contact our advocacy team about in NSW.  And the Disability Royal Commission has heard that many children and young people with a disability are being excluded, segregated, unfairly suspended, forced to attend part-time, or subjected to a heightened risk of abuse, neglect and low expectations. Sadly, this sets children and young people with disability up for a life pathway without employment and social isolation from the general community.  Children and young people with disability in NSW deserve better.  

“It is critical the NSW government adopt an Inclusive Education Roadmap that will strengthen the system's capability to supporting parents and teachers so students with disability can participate on the same basis as other students plus invest in a Work Transition Pilot Project to improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment.”

**Media contact: Alana Mew, 0419 929 722 or Tamara Kotoyan, 0430 291 890**