



Serena Owens
Chief Executive Officer

It's been a very busy few months for the PDCN team!

As the state headed towards what looked to be a very close election, we've been working hard to meet with all sides of politics to ensure the needs of people with physical disability

are front and centre of all election platforms – you can read below the main asks that we've been addressing on your behalf.

We also joined with a group of likeminded disability organisations to call for disability inclusion more broadly – and together built a Blueprint for Disability Inclusion, running a press conference in early March to publicise this important framework.

We're also back on the road – taking our capacity building workshops and community consultations to the regions. March saw us in Armidale, and April we'll be heading to the Blue Mountains – we'd love any local members to join us at these face-to-face sessions and give us your valued feedback about what is/isn't working for you in your local region.

Of course, this is on top of all our 'business as usual', as we continue to work on systemic issues facing people with physical disability around housing, transport, accessible ticketing and the NDIS. I'm pleased to say we're making headway and hope to have some good news to share in the next few months on some of these. Housing however remains dire for our members, but we've recently had the chance to work with some of the online real estate platforms – and later in the newsletter you'll find a link to

continued on next page

In this issue:

- 2** Our Pre-Election Policy Platform
- 5** A Blueprint for Disability Inclusion in NSW
- 8** The ILC and Policy Teams are Coming to the Blue Mountains
- 10** Your Say: Finding Accessible Real Estate
Sarah Hilt | Board Member Profile
- 11** Farewell to Heidz Haydon
- 12** We need your feedback on our paper publication!



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a survey that we'd greatly love your feedback on, so that we can provide the proof these platforms need to begin to truly provide accessible information in real estate sales and rental listings.

Enough from me – enjoy reading in more detail across the pages that follow!

Our Pre-Election Policy Platform

As you may well be aware, NSW is coming up to our next state election! This is an exciting time for the team at PDCN as we get to re-evaluate our policy platform. Through careful consideration, we have put together six key asks in the lead up to the election. These asks cover a wide variety of issues faced by people with physical disability and align with PDCN's member driven strategic priority areas.



Introduce a Human Rights Act for NSW

As it currently stands in NSW, people with disability are unable to access the adequate protections of their basic human rights. Despite being a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Australia is the only Western democracy that does not have a Bill of Rights to ensure basic human rights are enforced by law.

With Victoria, the ACT and Queensland all having their own state based Human Rights Acts, it is time NSW catches up and protects the rights of its citizens. Having a NSW Human Rights act would give people a legal avenue to pursue their rights as citizens and members of the community. In states and territories that have adopted human rights acts, people with disability have been able to assert their rights to inclusive education and the right to housing.

Transfer the Disability Portfolio into the Jurisdiction of Premier and Cabinet

Through our advocacy efforts we have found a consistent lack of inclusion and cohesion when it comes to the disability portfolio across government departments. Currently, the disability portfolio sits within the jurisdiction of the Department of Communities and Justice. Disability inclusion is relevant across all state government portfolios, including transport, health, and education, and often requires alignment and synergy both with the federal government and other states and territories.

PDCN has joined voices with many other NSW disability organisations to call for a move of the Disability state government portfolio to the jurisdiction of Premier and Cabinet. We believe that Premier and Cabinet are better positioned to navigate and elevate the complexities of the disability portfolio that can overlap into multiple jurisdictions and achieve better cohesion across both state and federal issues.

Commit to National Construction Code (NCC) Minimum Accessibility Standards by October 2023

The refusal of the NSW government to implement the NCC minimum accessibility standards is an issue PDCN has been grappling with for years and remains close to our hearts. The lack of accessible housing in NSW is a huge barrier for people with physical disability, with people having to make compromises in where they live and the functional accessibility of their homes.

We want to see Silver Level Livable design implemented in NSW in line with the NCC mandate coming into place later this year across the majority of Australian state and territories. Implementing Silver Level Livable design across all new home builds post October this year, in line with other states and territories will vastly increase the supply of accessible housing and provide many more living options for people with disability, the elderly and families throughout the NSW community.



Unlock Capacity of Tenants with Disabilities to Access NDIS and CHSP Funded Home Modifications via Reform of the Residential Tenancies Act 2010

Housing and the capacity for people to modify their homes to meet essential accessibility needs is a major issue for our members and the broader community. It is often difficult for people with disabilities to get home modifications on private rental properties, and our research has shown that most NSW rental properties either don't meet accessibility requirements, or only partially meet them. This is an appalling finding, as close to one third of people with disability across Australia are renters.

We are calling for changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010 to allow tenants to access modifications to their homes, such as the installation of ramps or a ceiling hoist, without unfair refusal from landlords. Modifications funded by NDIS and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) are essential and should not be met with unnecessary pushback.

Provide Additional Incentives for Private Investment in Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Services (WATs)

Issues with taxi services have been constantly on PDCN's radar, with Wheelchair Accessible Taxi services increasingly not showing up, having incredibly long wait times and poor levels of customer service. The lack of reliability in this essential service has often led people to miss vital appointments and limiting the ability of many to attend social events. We know this is a particular issue for regional and rural areas, where oftentimes point-to-point transport is limited and there is a greater reliance on these taxi services.

PDCN are pushing for additional incentives for private investment in Wheelchair Accessible Taxis. There is a concern that drivers have ceased operating WATs and have moved back to standard taxis as a more lucrative business option, and this has left the fleet of available WATs getting smaller and smaller. With more incentives that encourage WAT use, we hope to see a larger uptake of WATs as this becomes an attractive option for drivers, ensuring this essential service is readily available again for those who need it.



Increase Funding for the Ageing and Disability Commission in Line with Current and Projected Demand for the ADC's Services

The Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) was established in 2019 and has been a significant factor in achieving equitable rights for older persons and people living with disability across the state. The ADC also works to investigate and prevent acts of violence, abuse and neglect of older people and people with disability both in institutional settings and the broader community.

Unfortunately, the ADC has been underfunded and thus unable to reach its potential. We urge the NSW government to increase funding for this important safeguard for people with disability and ensure continued adequate funding in line with the increasing demand for its services.

The PDCN policy team has provided copies of our pre-election platform to the existing government, the shadow ministry, the Greens, all minor parties, as well as the Independents. We are in the process of meeting with key stakeholders to push for commitments on these issues irrespective of the election outcome. We are planning a concerted push to get these issues across the line during the mid-year.

A Blueprint for Disability Inclusion in NSW

Following on from our election asks, PDCN recently joined with six other advocacy organisations to spark change for people with disability in NSW. Together we propose a Disability Inclusion Blueprint for change, outlining the need for greater movement on the rights of people with disability by the NSW Government.

On the 1st of March PDCN, alongside Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia, Council for Intellectual Disability, Family Advocacy, People with Disability Australia, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and Stroke Recovery Association, we held a media conference at Sydney Town Hall to raise awareness of the importance of disability issues as a priority in the upcoming election.

Together we called for a commitment to our Disability Inclusion Blueprint, asking that disability inclusion becomes a top priority for the incoming government. We believe this can be achieved by the coordination of the disability portfolio through a single, powerful coordinating entity, ideally within the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The press conference aired the experiences of people with lived experience of disability, supporting the need for greater disability inclusion. Our very own Lived Experience Advisory Panel members Susan Wood and Declan Lee spoke about their experience, with Susan speaking on housing and Declan on transport and taxis.

“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 to the National Construction Code. It’s time that was changed.” – Susan Wood

“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.” – Declan Lee

Disability inclusion encompasses a wide range of areas of life. Our blueprint focuses on five key areas: education, employment, housing, transport, and accessible communications. **You can read the full details of our Inclusion Blueprint by scanning this QR code.**



With the upcoming election and a potential new set of faces in the state government, it is important our voices are heard. Disability Inclusion is a human right and the rights of people with disability need to be a key priority for government now and into the future.





The ILC and Policy Teams are Coming to the Blue Mountains

PDCN are visiting the Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub in Springwood on Tuesday 4 April 2023. We'll be holding a special Community Consultation to hear your thoughts on disability issues, and also one of our 'Speaking Up For Yourself' workshops. All live and face-to-face!

Community Consultation

Tell PDCN what matters to you!

We invite all people with physical disability in the Springwood region to an informal discussion with PDCN to share your thoughts on the issues that matter to you.

When: Tuesday 4 April, 1.30pm - 3pm

Where: Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub,
106-108 Macquarie Road, Springwood, NSW 2777



Our aim is to create an inclusive community where people with physical disability can fully participate in all aspects of public life. We want to achieve equity for people with disability in health, education, public transport and housing. We also work to make systems like the NDIS and My Aged Care fairer and easier to access.

We're developing our advocacy strategy for the next ten years and are keen to hear your ideas on where we should focus our efforts. We also want to understand any barriers to

inclusion you experience living in regional NSW. This will help our policy team to develop an advocacy strategy focused on the issues that matter to you. We will also take local issues to Council and use our influence to push for these issues to be addressed.

We welcome you to come and have an informal chat with our team to share your thoughts on these important issues. Light refreshments will be provided and registration is essential as numbers are limited.

Please scan the QR code or enter this URL into your web browser to register for our Community Consultation.

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/tell-pdcn-what-matters-to-you-in-springwood-tickets-573299733937>



Speaking Up For Yourself Workshop

Do you need some strategies, tips, and effective methods to help you know how and when to speak up for yourself? This workshop will assist you to develop your interpersonal and negotiation skills in order to effectively get your message across. We will also look at how to plan for success and consider different options and approaches.

PDCN Facilitator and Mentor Adrian O'Malley has lived experience of disability and has worked tirelessly as an advocate for people with physical disability for many years. This workshop covers the benefits of speaking up, the skills required including effective communication, developing a plan, reviewing the outcomes, and considering alternate approaches.



When: Tuesday 4 April, 10am - 12.30pm
Where: Blue Mountains Theatre and Community Hub,
106-108 Macquarie Road, Springwood, NSW 2777

Please scan the QR code or enter this URL into your web browser to register for the Speaking Up For Yourself workshop.

<https://www.pdcnsw.org.au/workshop-registration>



Your Say: Finding Accessible Real Estate

Looking online for a place to rent or buy is convenient and easy, right? Well, we know this isn't really true for many people with various mobility needs. Real estate websites often don't provide reliable accessibility information, and agents often don't know how to support people with mobility needs to find a suitable home to rent or buy.

But we have an opportunity to improve things by working with the Real Estate Institute of NSW, Realestate.com.au and individual agents. We can let them know the challenges people with disability often go through when looking for property - you can help us in our advocacy efforts by completing our survey.

Please scan the QR code or enter this URL into your web browser to complete the survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RealEstateExp>



Sarah Hilt | Board Member Profile

What attracted you to the position on the PDCN board?

PDCN is an organisation that makes a real difference in members' lives – it's the passion and commitment of the team in achieving systemic change that attracted me to join the board. PDCN being an advocacy organisation is also really exciting as we are making changes to the system to improve members' lives and reduce barriers.

Where do you feel you can add the most value to PDCN in your role as a Board member?

I have a background in insurance, health services and experience in the policy and regulatory environment and feel I can add value in shaping our advocacy approach. I am passionate about reducing barriers to employment for those living with a disability and can support advocacy through my role on the PDCN board.



What do you see as the most important issues for PDCN/or the disability sector currently?

There are so many important issues facing our members it's difficult to name just a few but challenges in transport and building code changes are areas that stand out to me as key issues for our members now and into the future.

Tell us about other things that interest you outside of the disability sector.

I am a keen snowboarder and make regular use of adaptive programs for snow sports, hoping to get back to it this year after a long break due to COVID restrictions.

Farewell to Heidz Haydon

After three fabulous years delivering amazing peer support and training to PDCN members and people with disability, Peer Facilitator Heidz Haydon is moving back to her first love, supporting those with newly diagnosed spinal cord injuries to discover a great life living with SCI.

PDCN can't thank Heidz enough for her work over her time here, especially her technical genius, and in setting up a fantastic eLearning platform and inclusion training course for anyone who wants to include people living with a disability in the workplace or community!

We wish her well, and know we will link again as she begins her role with our member organisation Spinal Cord Injuries Australia.



We need your feedback on our paper publication!

We're considering sending this quarterly PDCN Live newsletter by email, in order to conserve paper and significantly lower production costs. This will assist us to focus our limited resources on the systemic advocacy and information work for which we receive funding.

But first we'd like to know...

Do you require a paper version of this newsletter, as opposed to email?

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