

# People With disabilities WA April Newsletter

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## Message from our CEO – Brendan Cullinan

Welcome to our latest newsletter! We are excited to bring you the latest updates and news from our organisation and the disability advocacy community.

Firstly, PWdWA has joined with independent disability advocacy organisations across Australia in calling for the government to commit to urgent action, with clear timelines, to respond to the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission. Among its recommendations, the Commission recognised the essential role that disability advocates play in helping prevent abuse and exploitation of people with disabilities and recommended an urgent increase in advocacy funding, which governments must act on today. We will keep you informed as details on the government's response become clearer. We are also proud to support the Speak up for Independent Advocacy national campaign, which urges the Federal Government to significantly increase funding in its upcoming budget for independent advocacy organisations directly supporting people with disabilities in Australia. We believe that investing in advocacy is an investment in the full inclusion of people with disabilities within our communities. Advocacy is a lifeline for the rights of people with disabilities, and with adequate funding, advocacy services can play a pivotal role in creating a society that is not just accessible physically but socially and emotionally inclusive.

On March 20, 2024, the Australian Government announced that it would reform the Transport Standards. The aim of the reform is to ensure that the standards are efficient, effective, fit for purpose, and meet the needs of Australian society. It has been found that one in six people with disability face difficulty while using public transport. Access to public transport is critical for people with disabilities to work or

study, visit family and friends, and access essential services such as healthcare. We have provided more information and links about this reform in our newsletter.

We are thrilled to announce that the Building Tenancy Skills Project, a collaboration between Shelter WA and PWdWA, has won the 2024 Consumer Protection Awards prestigious Dick Fletcher Award, which recognises the efforts of organisations that have contributed to the advancement of consumer protection. Congratulations to Donna Turner and the co-design team for all their hard work.

## **PWdWA in Action**

### **Systemic Advocacy: Reform of the Disability Standard for Accessible Public Transport**

Last year, PWdWA asked our members for their views and ideas on the federal government's review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport. The feedback from our members assisted PWdWA in creating a submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and Arts. After analysing all available evidence, the department has released its reforms. There are a total of 76 reforms, including regulatory and non-regulatory reforms, and additional research and targeted consultation will be undertaken for seven reforms. The Transport Standards will be updated once the updated legislation is tabled in the Australian Parliament.

There are some similarities between the points raised and the suggestions made between the reforms and our submission including:

1. the need for more training and awareness support for staff, and the involvement of people with disabilities in transport planning and procurement processes.
2. emphasis on the need for clear definitions and standards for accessibility, including a nationally consistent protocol for on-demand services and the provision of companion/assistance animals.
3. the need for improved accessibility features on public transport, such as wheelchair tie-down and occupant restraint systems, and the use of auditory messages to help visually and cognitively impaired passengers.

4. calling for the use of appropriate lighting and colour schemes and the provision of emergency communication plans and procedures.

However, there are some differences between the reforms and our submission. For instance, we provided suggestions calling for the need for ACROD bays to be nearer entrances and the provision of bus shelters and seating.

You can read the full summary of the decision [Reform of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002—Summary of decision—March 2024 \(infrastructure.gov.au\)](https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/infrastructure/transport/road/2024/03/2024-03-20-reform-of-the-disability-standards-for-accessible-public-transport-2002-summary-of-decision).

PWdWA will seek to be actively involved in ongoing consultation on this issue and continue to seek member's views.

## **PWdWA in Geraldton**

In March, Grace, our Empowered and Connected Project Officer, Vanessa, our Communications Officer, and Emily from ConnectGroups Support Groups Association WA Inc. visited Geraldton to meet with their members and members of the community. At a morning tea for organisations providing local support for people with disabilities, the team heard about the fantastic work being done and the areas of concern. Grace and Vanessa also conducted information sessions on PWdWA's NDIS Appeals and Reviews and the Disability Support Pension application. Thank you to everyone who attended.

## **Disability Assembly WA Summit**

PWdWA member, Dr Joe Naimo represented PWdWA at the Disability Assembly WA (DAWA) Summit, which explored 'Living with Intellectual Disability, Challenging the Gaps.' The summit aimed to provide a platform where participants could share their views, offer solutions to sector problems and identify areas of concern.

Individuals with intellectual disability were given the opportunity to share their own experiences and advocacy work.

Three structured sessions were held, each focusing on a specific topic: Thriving in Life, Thriving at Home, and Thriving in Relationships. These sessions covered concerns, areas of life that are working well, and future planning.

During the discussions, participants raised concerns about the lack of skilled workers in residential care, the absence of community activities, the use of restrictive practices, over-medication and over-reliance on the medical model. Participants also discussed issues related to extended restrictions for previous behavioural incidents, doctors lacking medical training for people with intellectual disabilities, and failure to recognise adverse medication effects. Access problems to venues and lack of sensory-sensitive environments were also identified as problematic.

DAWA will convene a second summit meeting in August 2024 with the aim of inviting ministers, local government agencies and providers to provide their feedback, plans, and initiatives on the data gathered and the report produced.

## **PWdWA in Focus**

### **AIM WA Community Training Grant 2024**

PWdWA has received a grant from the Australian Institute of Management WA (AIM WA), marking its 30th year of providing support to organisations and institutions in Western Australia. This grant is particularly significant for PWdWA as it will provide the senior leadership team with an opportunity to undergo specialised training that will broaden their knowledge and skill base.

## **Current Issues**

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme Taskforce**

The Australian government has established a task force to crack down on service providers' illegal overcharging of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants. The task force, led by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, will investigate providers charging NDIS participants more because they are on the scheme.

Participants and their carers, guardians, and nominees will receive letters explaining their rights and how to report price gouging to the task force. While overcharging participants is against federal law, the NDIS rules have been upgraded to make it clear that such practices are prohibited. Further legal changes are being made to prohibit such practices further and punish them.

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission will determine whether a provider has breached the code of conduct for NDIS providers, which obliges them not to charge a higher price for goods for a participant 'without a reasonable justification'. If a complaint is assessed and found to be valid, the task force will launch an investigation, and providers found in breach will face financial penalties, permanent bans, and criminal sanctions where fraud is suspected. If you are a NDIS participant and have experienced price gouging, you can contact the new NDIS price taskforce at [pricehelp@ndiscommission.gov.au](mailto:pricehelp@ndiscommission.gov.au) or call 1800 035 544.

## Upcoming

### PWdWA in Broome

Grace, our Empowered and Connected Project Officer, and Vanessa, our Communications Officer, will be in Broome on Monday, May 6, and Tuesday, May 7.

Vanessa would love the opportunity to have coffee and catch up with any of our members in the Broome area. If interested, please email Vanessa at [vanessa@pwdwa.org](mailto:vanessa@pwdwa.org) or call 1800 193 331.

During their visit, they will provide free information sessions on making a strong Disability Support Pension application. If you would like to register, you can do so through the [events page](#) or call Vanessa on 1800 193 331.

### PWdWA in Pinjarra and Waroona

PWdWA's Individual Advocate, Lisa, now works out of Murray House Community Centre in Pinjarra and the Waroona Community Resource Centre on alternative Thursdays. Lisa's roster for the next few weeks are as follows:

- Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April – Pinjarra
- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> April – Waroona
- Murray Community Resources Fair - 25<sup>th</sup> April 2 pm – 6 pm – Pinjarra

## **PWdWA**

**Would you like your newsletters emailed rather than posted? Just let Vanessa know at [vanessa@pwdwa.org](mailto:vanessa@pwdwa.org).**

- **Head Office:** 23/2 Delhi Street West Perth.
- **Mandurah Office:** 22 Ormsby Terrace Mandurah – By Appointment Only
- **Pilbara:** 1800 193 331. Online appointments by arrangement at Pilbara Community Legal Services Karratha, Port Hedland, Roebourne and Newman.
- **Waroona and Pinjarra:** 1800 193 331. By appointment only.

PWdWA is funded by the Western Australian Department of Communities and the Australian Department of Social Services.

PWdWA is run BY and FOR people with disabilities and aims to be the voice for all people with disabilities in Western Australia.

End of Newsletter.