# Disability Council NSW2022 year in review

## Background

The Disability Council NSW (the ‘Council’) is a statutory body that provides the Minister for Disability Services with advice on matters that affect people with disability in NSW, as well as their families and carers.

The Council's primary responsibilities under the *Disability Inclusion Act 2014*are to:

* **Monitor** the implementation of Government policy
* **Advise** the Minister on emerging issues relating to people with disability and about the content and implementation of the State Disability Inclusion Plan and disability inclusion action plans
* **Advise** public authorities about the content and implementation of disability inclusion action plans
* **Promote** the inclusion of people with disability in the community and promote community awareness of matters concerning the interests of people with disability and their families
* **Consult** with similar councils and bodies, and people with disability, and
* **Conduct research** about matters relating to people with disability.

Council comprises at least eight and no more than 12 persons as prescribed under section 16 of the Act. Members are appointed by the Governor as individuals for up to four years and are eligible for re-appointment. The Act requires that the majority of members are people with disability.

Eight new members, including a new Chair (Jane Spring), were appointed to Council in late 2021. During 2022 there were three resignations, leaving nine Council members. Despite these challenges, considerable work was undertaken in each focus area, with Council meeting four times throughout 2022 (plus induction and planning days) as well as representing Council at a number of other forums.

## Council Plan and focus areas for 2022-2024

The Council’s [2022-2024 plan](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/dcj/dcj-website/documents/community-inclusion/advisory-councils/disability-council-nsw/about/Disability_Council_Plan_2022-2024.pdf) aligns with the [NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/disability-and-inclusion/nsw-disability-inclusion-plan.html#:~:text=The%20NSW%20Disability%20Inclusion%20Plan%202021%2D2025%20provides%20a%20whole,positive%20community%20attitudes%20and%20behaviours). Council is also cognisant of [Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031.](https://www.disabilitygateway.gov.au/ads)

The plan has five focus areas. These are:

1. Accessible communities
2. Ensuring the voice of people with disability is heard
3. Employment
4. Justice and rights
5. Housing.
6. Accessible communities

People with disability continue to face barriers accessing activities and services in everyday life. While recognising there have been substantial improvements over the years, this is still a vital issue and a key focus for Council activity. This Pillar encompasses a broad view of access, including access to transport, services, facilities, and information.

### Key activities

To promote accessibility, the Council advocated in forums, made submissions to inquiries, and met with key stakeholders.

#### Accessible and inclusive communities

Council attends the regular NSW and ACT National Disability Insurance Agency’s (NDIA) Community and Stakeholder Updates. These meetings provide an opportunity for the Council to contribute to discussions, along with other key disability stakeholders, about key NDIS policies and changes, The forum also raises awareness of other disability related updates, promotes inclusive and accessible programs, shares local events and good news stories and discusses challenges and achievements. These forums are an essential mechanism for Council to inform the NDIA of concerns raised through their ongoing communication with stakeholders.

#### Transport

Council is a member of the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee and provides expert guidance on access and inclusion to Transport for NSW.

Representatives attended the Transport Accessibility Program (TAP) workshop and provided feedback on how they could improve mobility and accessibility for those using rail and ferry networks in NSW. Council provided expert advice on how best to apply design principles and determine appropriate language when communicating about accessibility reflecting concerns raised by people with disability and parents of children with disability about the urgent need for improvement in public transport accessibility.

The Council continues to raise concerns with the implementation of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme.

#### Health

The Council was represented at the NSW Ministry of Health COVID-19 Community of Practice meetings, where the impact of the pandemic on people with disability was discussed. These discussions informed Council of relevant concerns people with disability encounter in NSW and provided a foundation for Council to continue its advisory role with Government.

#### Recreation

Council met with Accessible Beaches and Surf Life Saving NSW to better understand best practice in terms of promoting accessible beaches and to reinforce . the importance of accessibility at these locations. This information will help guide advocacy to ensure all beaches and waterways are accessible to everyone.

#### Emergency Management

Council provided feedback on emergency evacuation procedures and arrangements for evacuation centres as part of a Resilience NSW consultation. The importance of improved procedures for emergency management was highlighted during 2022 with a range of natural disasters. Ensuring people across all disabilities are considered during emergencies is a very important issue for the Council.

#### Safety

Council has been actively engaged in the Women’s Safety Charter meetings, facilitated by the Greater Cities Commission, given ongoing concerns about safety issues for women with disability.

1. Ensuring the voices of people with disability is heard

The voice of people with disability is not heard sufficiently or given appropriate weight generally, particularly concerning service design and delivery and policy and program development. The Council is interested in ensuring processes for seeking input and feedback are genuine so that the interests of people with disability are heard and acted on immediately, particularly regarding service delivery issues or complaints.

In July 2022, a Disability Council member participated on a panel sharing their experiences and challenges of advocating through sport and how to get involved with sport and fitness as a person with disability at the National Youth Disability Summit.

Council is working with the NSW Government and the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) to increase the representation of people with disability on boards. Council is also engaged with AICD to promote mentoring of people with disability on boards.

1. Employment

Employment is a critical issue for people with disability as a means for people to live full, satisfying, and independent lives. This is reflected in the Premier’s Priority, *World Class Public Service,* which includes a target that by 2025 ‘5.6% of government sector roles are held by people with a disability'.

### Key activities

The Council regularly engaged with the Public Service Commission about the Premier’s Priority for employment and to better understand how people with disability are supported in the public service. Additionally, Council sought to better understand disaggregated data by government cluster in order to advise government departments on how maximise the recruitment, retention and career progression of people with disability in the NSW public service.

Council undertook a randomised review of 10 local council Disability Inclusion Action Plans (five metropolitan, five regional) to identify best practice examples in relation to removing barriers to employment for people with disability. Findings will be shared with local councils in 2023.

The Council participated in the Disability Employee Network (DEN) Connect forum, which brings together different DENs from across NSW government. DENs are comprised of people working in the public sector who have disability or who want to champion disability awareness and support.

1. Justice and rights

People with disability face multiple barriers in accessing justice. Some barriers are practical (such as physical barriers in old buildings, or a lack of functioning hearing loops) while some relate to the quality of support provided to people with disability in the justice system. This leads to people with disability, particularly those with intellectual disability, being over-represented.

Council has been liaising with the relevant Ministers’ offices and government agencies about the availability, and ongoing maintenance, of assistive technology in courts and tribunals to ensure the inclusion of people who are hard of hearing.

1. Housing

Housing is critical to the wellbeing of everyone, and there is a chronic shortage of accessible and affordable housing. For those on statutory incomes (Centrelink benefits), rents consume an unsustainable proportion of income. Planning instruments (like Local Environment Plans made by local councils) can support change, particularly in changing the settings to support affordable housing. This is a key issue where the Council will play a role in promoting and advocating for change.

Council regularly attended the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design Committee meetings to ensure the voice of people with disability is heard in the context of accessible housing. Council continues to seek a commitment from NSW government to regulating minimum accessibility at the Silver level in the National Construction Code.

Council representatives participated in a housing policy briefing with senior representatives of the Department of Communities and Justice. They also attended a Housing Package Briefing on an NSW Government package of initiatives to address housing supply and affordability, presented by representatives from the Department of Planning and Environment.

Representatives met with Churchill Fellowship recipient Kim Samuel to discuss her research on best practice housing and communities for people with disability. This briefing will assist Council in its advice to Government.

Planning is under way to host a Housing Roundtable in 2023, which will bring together diverse stakeholders to address the challenges and opportunities for providing accessible and affordable housing for people with disability in NSW.

## Education

Despite not being a key focus area, education continues to be an active domain for the Council and a key concern for people with disability and their families.

### Key activities

The Council continues to regularly engage with the National Education Standards Authority (NESA) and raise concerns about the HSC minimum standards for students with disability and the potential negative impact on young people with disability who choose mainstream subjects. Council continues to attend the biannual NESA Disability Education Forum, where participants discuss topics relevant to the education of students with disability. The NESA Disability Forum provides the opportunity for Council to see clarification on policies that influence children and young people with disability.

The Council participates in the Department of Education’s Disability Strategy Reference group, which provides advice on the education of students with disability. Council participated in the Department of Education Anti-Bullying roundtables and has requested information from the Department regarding the use and qualifications of Auslan interpreters for deaf students requiring this reasonable adjustment.

## Engagement and advice

The Council is a key voice for the disability sector and is essential in advising Government and responding to proposals. The Council will continue to respond to strategically important issues and requests for advice.

### Key activities

Council members attended the two NSW Disability Stakeholder Forums held in 2022 convened by the Department of Communities and Justice.. Theseforums focus on key issues impacting people with disability in NSW. They also provides an opportunity to create connections to collaborate to respond to these issues.

Council met with various peak bodies and organisations, including the Council for Intellectual Disability.

#### Presentations

In April, Council presented at the National Disability Services Conference, whose theme was “Beyond the Bounds: the future of disability service provision”, on the role of Council and disability inclusion, including the legislative and policy environment, in NSW.

In October, the Chair and another council member gave opening addresses at webinars held for government departments and local councils on disability action planning. The member spoke about the importance of having a disability-inclusive approach to emergency and disaster planning. The forum provided a valuable opportunity to provide guidance about obligations under the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the role DIAPs play in promoting inclusion.

In November 2022 the Chair presented on the role of Council and disability inclusion action planning at the Department of Planning and Environment International Day of People with Disability, themed “Together we thrive”. The Chair also appeared on a panel at the Association of Corporate Counsel Conference to discuss Disability Inclusion Action Plans.

#### *Events and workshops attended*

Council members attended various workshops and events including:

* 2022 NSW Women of the year awards – Councils members Associate Professsor Jill Duncan and Julie Charlton were nominated for awards
* Carers Missing Out Report – NSW Carers Advisory Council
* 2022 NSW – ACT AgriFutures Rural Women’s Award
* Virtual Disability Conference – Raising Expectations
* NDIS NSW Act Pathways to Post School Life
* Carers NSW conference.

#### Submissions, consultations and representations

In addition to the engagement described above, the Council prepared [submissions](https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/advisory-councils/disability-council-nsw/publications/submissions.html) in response to the following consultations and inquiries:

* Resilience NSW State Emergency Plan Evacuation Management Guidelines in particular around recommendation 71 from the Final Report of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry July 2020 which states “Vulnerable people should have been better supported during evacuation”
* Australian Human Rights Commission regarding a temporary exemption application from requirements in the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2022 (Cth) in relation to a number of City of Ryde Council’s bus stops.
* Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Inquiry on the Capability and Culture of the National Disability Insurance Agency
* Greater Cities Commission regarding the Six Cities Region Discussion Paper
* Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee’s Inquiry into the Social Security Amendment (Improved Child to Adult Transfer for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance) Bill 2022
* NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service’s Draft Accessible Parks Policy
* NSW Government’s new NSW Womens Strategy
* Home and Living Supports Survey.

Council attended the following consultations:

* Australian Disability Council Act review (with Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing)
* AFDO National Round Table on Institutional Economic Neglect with the Disability Royal Commission.
* Expert Panel of the NSW Women’s Economic Opportunities Review regarding their recommendations.

The Council made the following representations:

* Secretary, Transport for NSW regarding dificulties experienced by those using interstate Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme travel dockets outside of NSW
* Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, requesting he support the immediate implementation of the National Construction Code Standard for Livable Housing Design.

## Guest speakers

As well as those mentioned above, Council has hosted the following guest speakers at their meetings:

* The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Services
* Michael Tidball, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, who shared his vision for disability inclusion in NSW
* Representatives of Regional NSW, who advised on the Regional Events Activation Fund and continuing work with local councils and NGOs to enchance accessibilty including funding for adult change facilities in regional areas
* Representatives of the Department of Customer Service, who provided an overview of the work being done under the Accessibility NSW Digital Restart Fund, which enhances digital accessibility in NSW government departments, and initiatives to promote the employment of people with disability, including the Department’s Care and Belonging Strategy
* Michael Coutts-Trotter, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, who discussed increasing the numbers and visibility of people with disability in senior leadership roles in government and on government boards
* Kathryn Greiner AO, Chair, and Margaret Kay, Member, of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, and Prue Warrilow, Chair, and Pam Webster, Deputy Chair of the NSW Carers Advisory Council, attended a Council meeting where opportunities for collaboration were discussed.
* Commissioner Kathrina Lo, Public Service Commision, spoke on activities being undertaken by government agencies to increase the number of people with disability in public sector employment, and disability awareness for managers
* Professor Bruce Bonyhady, Co-Chair, of the NDIS Review Panel who discussed the current [NDIS review](https://www.ndisreview.gov.au) which is looking at the design, operations and sustrainability of the scheme. It will also look at ways to make the market and workforce more responsive, supportive and sustainable.

To learn more about the Disability Council NSW, [visit our website](https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/advisory-councils/disability-council-nsw.html) or email us at disabilitycouncil@facs.nsw.gov.au.