

Communiqué

February 2025

On 19 February, the Disability Council Chair, Deputy Chair and secretariat welcomed five new members: Sharon Bennett, Jeramy Hope GAICD, Donna Purcell GAICD and Tracey Corbin-Matchett OAM with an induction session, where new members were given an overview of the Council's work and were encouraged to nominate themselves to work on a specific pillar (focus area). One new member (Morwenna Collett) was unable to attend. The full Council met in the afternoon to continue the Pillar discussion. Chair Jane Spring AM discussed the Disability Council 2024 Year in Review, emphasising the importance of reflecting on the year's activities.

The first full-day meeting of the Disability Council NSW for 2025 was held on 25 February. Jane Spring AM, Chair of the Council, chaired the meeting.

The Council welcomed guest speakers including:

- Minister for Disability Inclusion, and Minister for Families and Communities, the Hon Kate Washington MP
- Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion, and Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Communities, Liesl Tesch MP
- Representatives of the Department of Communities and Justice to update the Council on work occurring in response to the Disability Royal Commission and NDIS Review
- Representatives of Homes NSW and the Centre for Disability Research and Policy, University of Sydney, to update the Council on inclusive emergency planning and the development of the person-centred emergency preparedness toolkit

Minister Washington provided an update on the establishment of a working group for the review of the Guardianship Act, focusing on supported decision-making; disability employment in the public sector, and accessible communications. The Council was particularly pleased to hear about the progress of the Government's Easy Read commitment, with a new Easy Read hub now available and a style guide published in consultation with the Council for Intellectual Disability. Minister Washington also discussed the reform of the NDIS, emphasising rule-making changes and the design of foundational supports, including supported playgroups, allied health services, parenting programs, and family capacity building. Additionally, an emergency package has been announced to improve access to wheelchair accessible taxis, particularly in regional areas. The Minister also updated the Council on the Government's work on accessible housing, highlighting a significant investment in social housing.

The Department of Communities and Justice updated the Council on current projects, including the new framework for developing NDIS plans, created by

legislation passed last year. The rules are being developed in consultation with the NDIA and the Department of Social Services, with a goal to have all rules made by September 2025. An engagement strategy has been developed to involve NSW stakeholders in the rule-making process, including public consultations and targeted engagement with the disability community. A Reform Advisory Committee has been established to advise disability ministers on NDIS reform, with an expression of interest process underway to select community-based members. The initial focus for Foundational Supports is on children aged 0-8 with developmental delay or autism. The Government is working on an engagement approach with the disability community and service providers.

Work is also occurring in rolling out actions in response to Disability Royal Commission recommendations, particularly on safeguarding recommendations such as reducing the use of restrictive practices and improving community visitor schemes. Public consultation is ongoing for a legislative model for restrictive practices authorisation.

The Council has a particular interest in disaster management for people with disabilities and was enthusiastic to hear updates from guest speakers on inclusive emergency planning and the development of the person-centred emergency preparedness toolkit. The presentation highlighted the need for collaboration between government, emergency services, and the disability sector. Local governments play a key role in emergency planning and response, with pilot projects being funded to develop inclusive emergency plans. Regular training and exercises are conducted to improve the capacity of emergency services to support people with disability during disasters. Additionally, accessible transport and evacuation centres are being mapped and improved to ensure they meet the needs of people with disability.

The meeting included an in-depth discussion on priorities for 2025. This included the development of the Disability Council NSW Plan 2025-2027 and the identification of pillar leads. The Council aims to align its work with broader goals of disability inclusion and ensuring Council initiatives are impactful and relevant to the needs of the disability community. Council intends to continue to collaborate with stakeholders, including government agencies, community organisations, and individuals with lived experience of disability.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 1 May 2025.

Jane Spring AM

Chair, Disability Council NSW

Associate Professor Jill Duncan OAM

Deputy Chair, Disability Council NSW