**Communiqué**

**16 October 2020**

The fifth meeting of the Disability Council NSW (the Council) for 2020 was held virtually.

The meeting took place during National Carers Week. The Council Chair commenced the meeting by recognising and thanking every carer in NSW for making outstanding contributions to the lives of people with disability, including his own life. Later in the day Council member Dr Rachael Sowden, who is also a member of NSW Carers Advisory Council, briefed the Council on the NSW Carers Strategy – 2020-2030.

The Chair and Deputy Chair provided feedback and key actions from their recent meeting with the Hon. Gareth Ward, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services.

The Chair welcomed Mr Jim Betts, Secretary, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and Ms Deborah Brill A/CEO of the Landing and Housing Corporation to brief the Council about the NSW Housing Strategy and the discussion paper. Ms Brill informed the Council that this is the first time NSW has had a Housing Strategy and reported that the draft strategy is being prepared by analysing the feedback received from the Housing Strategy Discussion Paper and input from NSW Government agencies.

Ms Brill also shared key feedback received from the consultation and roundtables. She advised that the draft strategy and action plan continue to be refined, and DPIE welcomed further feedback from the Council. The DPIE executives answered various queries from the Council that included affordable housing, need of housing for aboriginal people and accessible housing. The idea of a stronger association between the Council and DPIE as a resource to provide expertise to DPIE on housing and broader questions including design were also discussed.

The Chair invited Mr Matthew McFarlane, Director, Disaster Welfare from Resilience NSW to brief the Council about its emergency policy and procedures, particularly regarding supporting people with disability during a bush fire evacuation process. Mr McFarlane informed the Council that Resilience NSW is a new entity which is currently in the process of finalising its structure and that the agency is currently relying on the policies and procedures of the Department of Communities & Justice (DCJ) including the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP).

Mr McFarlane explained that besides running evacuation centres during bush fires, the agency also rebuild homes for people who aren’t insured and that NSW is the only state within Australia that does that.

Mr McFarlane explained the agencies’ Evacuation Management Guidelines and the audit tool that has accessibility as a key component. The agency is also working with relevant agencies to correct the guidelines to ensure appropriate support is provided for people with disability during evacuations. Ideas about seeking the Council’s feedback on the guidelines was also discussed. Mr McFarlane also informed the Council about the Community Resilience Innovation Program that has funded several initiatives designed to improve support for people with disability in the context of a disaster.

The Council emphasised the importance of the dialogue with grassroots groups on policies and procedures and suggested Resilience NSW have a committee that represents the community to include people with disability and ageing, and regularly feedback on strategies and design.

Lastly, the Council invited Mr Brian Woods, Director, Disability Policy, DCJ who provided an update regarding the review following the establishment of the National Cabinet. Mr Woods took some time to brief the Council about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Independent Assessment process and the Commonwealth government’s response to the Tune review. Mr Woods also briefed the Council about the role of Justice Liaison Officers around the interaction between those incarcerated and the NDIS.

The Council will next meet on 20 November 2020.

**Mark Tonga**

**Chair**

**The Disability Council NSW**