

PWdWA
People With Disabilities Western Australia
Annual Report
2023 – 2024

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
AWA	Advocacy Western Australia
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DANA	Disability Advocacy Network Australia
DoC	Department of Communities
DRC	Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DSS	Department of Social Services
EPP	Economic Participation Project
GSCLS	Great Southern Community Legal Services
NCDA	National Centre for Disability Advocacy
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
PACE	Provider and Participant Communication Environment
PwDN	Pride with Disability Network
PWdWA	People With disabilities (Western Australia)
RAW	Regional Alliance West
SAWA	Self-Advocacy Western Australia
SDA	Specialist Disability Accommodation
SSCLS	Sussex Street Community Law Service
WA	Western Australia

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Acknowledgement of Country

People With disabilities WA acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters, and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Elders past and present.

About Our Organisation

Our Vision

People with disabilities are empowered in an inclusive society that values human rights.

Our Mission

Individual and systemic advocacy led by people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Our Values

Inclusive

We recognise the right to equal access and opportunity with dignity and empathy.

Integrity

We do what is right.

Courage

We are unafraid to show strength and unity in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, creativity, and perseverance in pursuing our goals.

Chair Report

While facing some challenges during 2023-2024, People With disabilities WA (PWdWA) has gone from strength to strength with our advocacy work in the community and work is underway to merge advocacy services with Explorability Inc. PWdWA's advocacy services with our consortium partners will extend further beyond the Perth metropolitan area to the Peel, South West, Great Southern, Goldfields, Midwest, Pilbara, and the Wheatbelt regions.

Our lease at City West Lotteries House in West Perth came to an end in June 2024, and we will continue to use our office in Mandurah. Of course, the move has caused some challenges to our staff and clients, but our highly skilled staff members have been very resourceful in finding alternative ways to support our clients while we explore alternative office arrangements within the Perth metropolitan area.

Some of our advocacy challenges this year included the following issues:

In September 2023, the Disability Royal Commission's (DRC) final report was published, where they made 222 recommendations to the Australian government to improve the lives of people with disability and to better protect them from reported incidents of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitations. The Federal government has established a DRC Taskforce to consult with people with disability, carers, service providers and all stakeholders to review the 222 recommendations and coordinate the government's response.

The Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) report was published in December 2023. As a result, the Federal government has proposed to put a Bill through to the parliament to streamline the NDIS. The Bill proposes a range of changes, including access and eligibility; how NDIS supports will be delivered to people with profound disability where they will be sharing the supports rather than having supports that are tailored to their own specific individual needs and the risk of reducing the NDIS supports for participants to obtain and keep employment.

In Western Australia (WA), we are also facing a significant shortage in the housing market. It has been extremely difficult for people with disability to find homes to rent or purchase that are accessible and affordable.

The WA government needs to provide greater focus and attention in supporting people with disability in meeting their needs for accessibility and inclusion in schools; in accessible and affordable housing; and meeting the needs of people living on the Armadale/Thornlie trainline during its reconstruction work.

PWdWA's Advocates have been very busy supporting our clients with their NDIS appeals, housing issues, issues with public transport, guardianship, education, and health services as priority areas. It looks like they will be so much busier in the year ahead if both the State and Federal governments delay implementing the DRC recommendations.


I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Brendan Cullinan, for his leadership and guidance through the year during these challenging times. I would also like to thank our past and current staff members, Board Directors and the Advisory Committee for your ongoing commitment, trust and support of PWdWA's work. Your contributions have been much appreciated and very valuable for PWdWA's ongoing success. I'd also like to thank Hon. Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering, for his ongoing support, and the Department of Communities (DoC) and the Department of Social Services (DSS) for our funding.

Chair

Nihal Iscel



Chief Executive Officer Report

The disability sector endured another challenging year with the focus on the outcomes from major government reforms. 

The 'NDIS Review – Working together to deliver the NDIS' proposed significant reforms aimed at improving the efficiency, inclusivity and sustainability of the scheme. The main areas of the reforms are aimed at building a better-connected system that assist people in and outside of the NDIS. A range of controversial recommendations have been proposed that, while having the intentions of improving support, access and planning, have created anxiety with the lack of detail.

The Federal and State governments' responses to the 'Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Report' are pending at the time of writing this report. The report provides 222 recommendations aimed at all levels of government in response to the nearly 10,000 stories shared by people with disability, their families, carers and advocates.

It is vital that both Federal and State governments fulfil their commitment to co-design action in response to both reports' recommendations with people with disability to ensure that the views of individuals, families and carers impacted by the changes are fully understood and acknowledged. PWdWA will continue to work with our members and the advocacy sector nationwide to ensure this commitment is achieved.

The uncertainty around the impact of major reforms, combined with an ever-increasing demand for advocacy and future funding uncertainty, continues to burden the sector. PWdWA has been an active member of the 'Speak Up! for Independent Advocacy' campaign that lobbied the Federal government for additional funding to the sector in the 2024 Federal Budget. Unfortunately, only limited additional advocacy funding was provided by the Federal government with the campaign ongoing.

Support from PWdWA's individual advocacy service continued to increase, with NDIS access and appeals, Disability Support Pension (DSP) issues, and housing as the major areas of support. PWdWA continued to participate in a range of systemic issues with ongoing involvement in a range of networks, including the Metronet

Access and Inclusion Reference Group and Perth Airport Access and Inclusion Group, along with a number of submissions that are referenced later in this report.

PWdWA completed its work on a number of successful community capacity building projects that included working with young people with a disability to support small businesses to improve their accessibility and readiness to employ people with disability, along with building community networks to develop place-based solutions to support community access for people with disability and their families.

Collaboration and partnerships remain a strategic philosophy of our organisation. I acknowledge and thank our key funding partners, the DoC and the DSS, and our advocacy and project consortium delivery partners, Advocacy WA (AWA), Great Southern Community Legal Services (GSCLS), Sussex Street Community Law Service (SSCLS), and Regional Alliance West (RAW).

The ongoing successful work of PWdWA would not be possible without the incredible commitment and professionalism of the staff whom I gratefully acknowledge and thank. The Board and directors continued to strategically guide the organisation, and I thank all for their support. The Board received expert guidance from the Advisory Board and sub-committees, and I acknowledge their commitment and support. I especially wish to thank our Chair, Nihal Iscel, for her commitment to this challenging role and for the many times during the year she represented PWdWA at forums and events.

The immediate future will continue to be challenging in the sector as all levels of government determine their responses to the major reforms. PWdWA will remain vigilant and determined to ensure that the voice of our members is heard and achieve our vision where people with disabilities are empowered in an inclusive society.

Brendan Cullinan

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Our Board

Person	Position
Nihal Iscel	Chair
Mark Blowers	Co-Deputy Chair
Shazzy Tharby	Co-Deputy Chair
Kat Johns	Board Member
Tom Oliver	Board Member
Eric Casey	Board Member
Grace Barnes	Board Member
Emma-Jane Beck	Board Member

Our Advisory Board

Person	Position
Jim Preketes	Advisory Board Chair
Lenka Psar-McCabe	Advisory Board Deputy Chair
Alexei Domerov	Advisory Board Member
Andrea McCallum	Advisory Board Member
Charlie Stephenson	Advisory Board Member
Chris Kent	Advisory Board Member
Dale Wilcox	Advisory Board Member
Dave Harwood	Advisory Board Member
Eva O'Malley	Advisory Board Member
Kushagra Rathore	Advisory Board Member
Linda Pham	Advisory Board Member
Melleah Stautins	Advisory Board Member
Samantha Neylon	Advisory Board Member

Finance and Audit Committee

Person	Position
Mark Blowers	Chair
Jim Preketes	Committee Member
Eva O'Malley	Committee Member
Dale Wilcox	Committee Member
Brendan Cullinan	Executive Support
Sandika Aponso	Management Accountant

Governance and Risk Committee



Person	Position
Kat Johns	Chair
Emma-Jane Beck	Committee Member
Charlie Stephenson	Committee Member
Shazzy Tharby	Committee Member
Brendan Cullinan	Executive Support

Our Team

Person	Position
Brendan Cullinan	Chief Executive Officer
Andrea Surman	General Manager
Karen Kobier	Advocacy Services Manager
Glenda Bye	Individual Advocate
Grace Rosales	Project Officer – Empowered and Connected Project
Idil Sudi	Individual Advocate
Julie Bloomfield	Individual Advocate
Lisa Thomas	Individual Advocate

Mark Hutson	Individual Advocate
Matthew Gee	Intake and Assessment Officer
Nicola Brown	Project Officer - Community Disability Advocacy Project/ Economic Participation Project
Renata Krollig	Administration Officer
Sandika Aponso	Management Accountant
Sharon Stanton	Self-Advocacy WA Coordinator
Vanessa Jessett	Organisational Development and Communications Officer

Our Achievements *(Use icons as per previous AR)*

- Systemic advocacy including submissions on a range of issues, including the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS inquiry into the NDIS Participant Experience in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia; Aviation Green Paper – Toward 2025, Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, and Communications; and the Review of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1990.
- Provided Individual Advocacy including advice and referrals to over 1,000 people across WA.
- Co-Winners of the Dick Fletcher Consumer Protection Award 2024 for the Building Tenancy Skills project with our project delivery partner, Shelter WA.



- Individual Advocacy in Peel extended beyond Mandurah to regular outreach services in surrounding towns.
- Self-Advocacy workshop attendees reported 100 percent gained higher confidence to self-advocate.
- Membership increased by 20 per cent.
- Social Media:

Facebook visits increased by 98 per cent.

LinkedIn visits increased by 15.4 per cent.

Individual Advocacy



Over the past year, our dedicated Individual Advocates have continued to partner effectively with people with disabilities, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are upheld. Our Intake and Assessment Officer, alongside the Individual Advocates, has played a crucial role in providing vital information and advice and empowering individuals to self-advocate. Additionally, they have facilitated referrals to other essential services, including legal assistance. In total, our team has managed 567 advocacy cases and has also provided information, advice, and referrals to 478 individuals.

A significant focus of our advocacy efforts has been on issues related to the NDIS, which accounted for 40% of all issues addressed. Furthermore, 16% of the issues involved government payments.

PWdWA's continued collaboration with consortium partners AWA, GSCLS, SSCLS, RAW and the Pilbara Community Legal Service has delivered comprehensive individual advocacy services throughout the state.

Our outreach initiatives have been highly successful, which have included monthly visits to Waroona and Pinjarra since January 2024. These visits not only support individuals but also enhance the capacity of local services to better understand the NDIS and other disability-related issues. Our advocate in this region actively participates in the Access and Inclusion Advisory Group for the local council, contributing to local policy and service improvements.

As the government progresses with the recommendations from the DRC and the NDIS review, our Advocacy Services Manager and Advocates have engaged in workshops hosted by the National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA). These workshops aim to offer practical advice to the government on implementing the recommendations effectively.

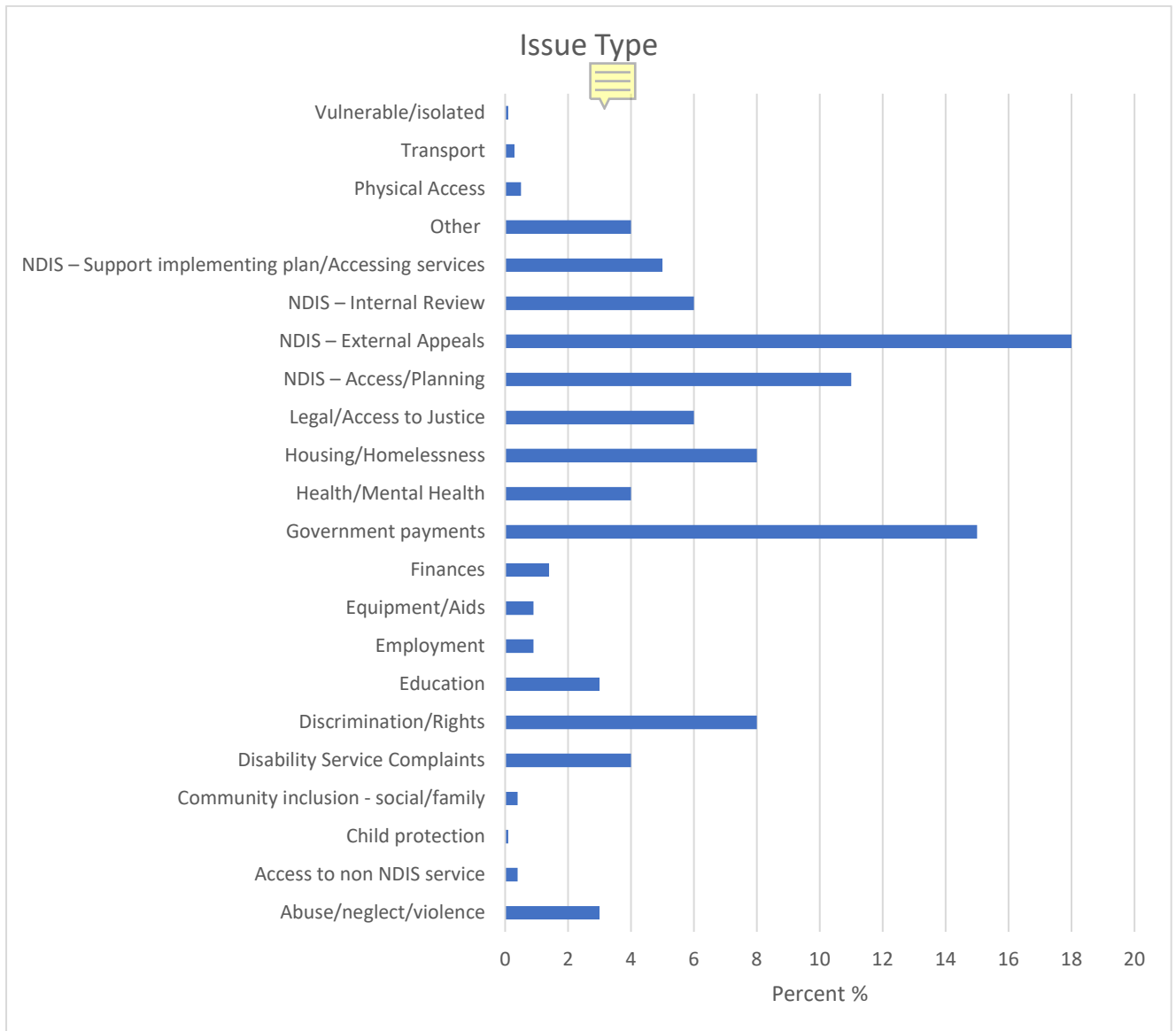
The advocacy team has greatly benefited from participating in the NCDA's peer sessions and workshops, which provide invaluable information and practical guidance on a wide range of topics. These opportunities have fostered greater professionalism and consistency across the sector, supporting our team's ongoing professional development, ensuring we continue to deliver the highest quality service to our clients.

Issue Type

Issue Type	Percentage
NDIS – external appeals	18.00%
Government payments	15.00%
NDIS – access/planning	10.00%
Discrimination/rights	8.00%
Housing/homelessness	8.00%
Legal/access to justice	6.00%
Other	5.50%
NDIS – internal review	5.00%
NDIS – support implementing plan/accessing services	5.00%
Disability service complaints	4.00%
Health/mental health	4.00%
Abuse/neglect/violence	3.00%
Education	3.00%
Finances	2.00%
Employment	1.00%
Equipment/aids	1.00%
Physical access	0.80%
Access to non-NDIS service	0.60%
Community inclusion - social/family	0.50%
Transport	0.50%

Child protection	0.20%
Vulnerable/isolated	0.20%

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Individual Advocacy in Action

Client Stories

Joanne's Story *


Joanne is a 59-year-old living with multiple disabilities and health conditions and faces significant challenges affecting both her mobility and cognition. Using a powered wheelchair for indoor mobility and an attendant-propelled manual wheelchair for outdoor use, Joanne experiences rapid fatigue and struggles with decision-making. Her conditions have made her highly dependent on support services for her daily needs.

Joanne was subjected to severe financial and emotional abuse by a person providing her with informal support. This situation forced her to flee her home and the abusive caregiver, placing her in a vulnerable position. Joanne sought additional funding from the NDIS to replace the informal support with professional support workers and to ensure her safety while rebuilding her life.

Unfortunately, NDIS processing delays left Joanne in a precarious situation without adequate funding. She faced difficulties finding new accommodation, as providers hesitated to accept her without confirmed support funding. After a period of time moving around to different emergency accommodations, Joanne found a place in Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) but was threatened with eviction due to the uncertainty around her funding. This could have resulted in hospitalisation for Joanne until her funding issues were resolved—a far from ideal solution compared to stable, safe housing.

Upon seeking our assistance, Joanne's advocate immediately intervened to address her urgent needs. We assisted her in navigating the complex NDIS system, urgently advocating for her situation. When the NDIS unexpectedly reduced her funding, our office contacted a senior political figure to request intervention on Joanne's behalf.

Thanks to our advocacy efforts, Joanne's situation took a positive turn. Overnight, she was offered a new NDIS plan with increased core funding. This adjustment provided Joanne with the necessary support to remain in her accommodation and

id eviction. Joanne now has the funding she needs to ensure her safety and independence.

Simon's Story*

Simon, a 66-year-old with multiple disabilities and health conditions, faced a significant challenge when a failed medical procedure intensified his support needs. Living in a regional area with limited service providers, Simon and his family were deeply concerned about his future care.

Initially, Simon's NDIS plan was set to end in six months, and due to his age and palliative care status he was informed that he would no longer be eligible for the NDIS and should apply for aged care, which would have resulted in reduced funding and support. Determined to secure the necessary care, Simon and his family lodged an appeal with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to ensure his NDIS support continued.

An advocate provided essential assistance to Simon and his family. With the support of Legal Aid, they gathered crucial information and evidence for the appeal process. The advocate secured a 12-month funding extension, including increased support for complex assistive technology items.

At the same time, the advocate and legal aid representative facilitated a home modification assessment to enhance Simon's well-being. Despite a change in the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) legal team causing delays, the advocate attended numerous case conferences for over a year, helping Simon and his family navigate the complexities of the appeal process. When progress stalled, the advocate assisted Simon and his family to secure legal representation from Legal Aid's NDIS division.

Thanks to these dedicated efforts, Simon's NDIS support was not only maintained but enhanced. He received vital complex assistive technology enabling him to live independently at home with his family in their local rural community. The ongoing advocacy representation also addressed additional therapy hours and home modifications, ensuring Simon's continued comfort and care.

Simon's story exemplifies the impact of advocacy and support, highlighting the importance of perseverance and collaboration in securing the necessary resources for those in need.

Andrew's Story *

Andrew, a 45-year-old NDIS participant living with psychosocial disability and a wheelchair user, faced a life-altering crisis when a trusted family member abused their power of attorney and guardianship. This betrayal led to Andrew's eviction from his specially modified home and the loss of all his possessions, forcing him into an untenable situation living in his car, which was particularly challenging given his mobility needs.

Desperate for a resolution, Andrew reached out to our advocacy service. Our team quickly mobilised to address his urgent need for appropriate housing. With the assistance of an advocate, Andrew was connected with a SDA provider. Within a short period, suitable accommodation was secured, offering Andrew a safe and accessible living environment.

However, resolving the abuse of the enduring powers was a more complex issue. Despite Andrew's declaration against his family member, the abusive actions continued, leaving Andrew in a vulnerable position. Recognising the need for specialised legal support, our advocate facilitated a connection with Legal Aid's Civil Division. This partnership provided Andrew with expert assistance, enabling him to navigate the legal complexities and regain control of his situation.

With renewed confidence and support, Andrew engaged in self-advocacy, empowered by the legal assistance he received. This collaborative effort not only resolved the immediate housing crisis but also addressed the abuse of power, allowing Andrew to rebuild his life with dignity.

Andrew's story highlights the critical role of collaboration between advocates and legal support in overcoming severe personal and systemic challenges. Through perseverance and the combined efforts of dedicated advocates and legal professionals, Andrew found a new beginning, securing the stability and safety he deserved.

Matthew's Story*

Matthew, a twenty-year-old single man and NDIS recipient living with psychosocial disability, faced a severe crisis when a support worker misappropriated a significant portion of his NDIS funds. The misuse of these funds left Matthew financially vulnerable and without the essential support he relied on. While the NDIS promptly terminated the support worker's services, they did not involve the Quality and Safeguards Commission, leaving Matthew without recourse.



The sudden loss of support triggered a distressing downward spiral for Matthew, culminating in an attempt at self-harm. In a challenging turn of events, authorities swiftly moved to pursue guardianship and administration over Matthew's affairs rather than providing the immediate support he needed.

Determined to assist Matthew in regaining control of his life, an advocate provided crucial support. The advocate worked tirelessly through a State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) hearing, representing Matthew's interests and fighting against the imposition of a guardianship order. They highlighted the critical oversight of not involving the Quality and Safeguards Commission, arguing that their involvement was essential in addressing the financial abuse and ensuring Matthew's protection.

Thanks to the advocate's dedicated efforts, the guardianship and administration orders were not granted. Matthew was empowered to maintain his autonomy and control over his own affairs. The advocate also played a pivotal role in connecting Matthew with a new, reliable support worker who could provide the assistance he needed.

Matthew's story is a testament to the power of advocacy in navigating complex systems and addressing serious issues of abuse. With the support of his advocate, Matthew was able to reclaim his independence and stability, setting a positive course for his future.

Anna's Story*

Navigating property transactions can be challenging, especially when facing unexpected issues and feeling overwhelmed. For Anna, a 48-year-old woman living with a disability, this was her reality when she encountered an unexpected and unfair cleaning charge during her property purchase.

Anna had been excited about her new home, but her enthusiasm quickly turned to frustration when she received an invoice with a cleaning charge that she felt was unjust. Unsure of how to proceed and concerned about being taken advantage of, Anna reached out to PWdWA for support.

An advocate was assigned to assist Anna, and they took immediate action. They listened carefully to Anna's concerns and began researching the situation thoroughly. It became clear that the cleaning charge was indeed questionable, and our advocate provided Anna with information about her rights in the matter. Armed with this knowledge, the advocate assisted Anna in crafting a clear and assertive email to the property manager.

Upon receiving Anna's email, the property manager promptly reviewed the situation and agreed to remove the cleaning charge from the invoice. This swift resolution not only alleviated Anna's immediate concerns but also reaffirmed her confidence in the fairness of the transaction.

Anna's story is an excellent example of how some timely information provided by an advocate can allow a person to successfully self-advocate and receive a positive outcome.

***Names and some details have been changed**

Membership and Engagement

PWdWA is the lead member-based disability advocacy organisation in WA.

Prioritising engagement with our members, our focus this year was set on three key strategies:

1. Promoting our services to a broader audience: We worked on expanding our reach and visibility to attract new members and increase awareness of our services.
2. Reconnecting with people and communities in person: We prioritised face-to-face interactions to strengthen our connections with current and potential members.
3. Increasing membership engagement and seeking feedback: We aimed to enhance our members' involvement and actively sought their input and suggestions.

Our dedicated staff members travelled to the Midwest, Kimberly, and Great Southern regions. We promoted advocacy services, organised in-person workshops, and consulted with the community on their present and future needs. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many individuals expressing appreciation for feeling heard and valued.

In addition, our Communications Officer participated in several events, such as the Perth Disability Expo, the Financial Counsellors' Association of WA Conference, the Scitech Bionic Me Exhibition, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services Higher Risk Strategy, and the Autism Camp Australia camps. Presentations on disability accessibility, language and etiquette, and the benefits of including people with disabilities in volunteering were also delivered to organisations.

As a direct result of these efforts, we saw an increase of 20% in our membership.

Systemic Advocacy

During 2023-2024, PWdWA's systemic advocacy involved action in the following areas:



- NDIS
- Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
- Access and Inclusion
- Government Payments
- Justice
- Transport
- Housing
- Environment
- WA Disability Legislation

Systemic advocacy remains a key strategic pillar of our organisation. A challenge for PWdWA is our capacity to be proactive and respond to an expanding range of systemic issues as we receive no WA Government systemic funding, and our federal funding is being cut by 80%.

Throughout the year, PWdWA provided submissions on:

- **NDIS participant experience in rural, regional and remote Australia**
Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- **Aviation Green Paper – Toward 2050**
Australian Government - Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
- **Review of the Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 (Project 114)**
Law Reform Commission of Western Australia

PWdWA participated in many consultations and ongoing reference groups including:

- METRONET Access and Inclusion Reference Group
- WA Network of Disability Advocacy
- Perth Airport Access and Inclusion Advisory Group
- Western Australian Advocacy for Consumers of Energy
- National Advocacy Standards Consultation

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)
- Western Australian Council of Social Services

Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

The Disability Royal Commission (DRC) began in April 2019 in response to community concerns about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability. It was conducted over four and a half years, holding 32 public hearings and two ceremonial sittings, and received 17,824 phone enquiries and 7,944 submissions.

The Final Report was released on 29 September 2023 and makes 222 recommendations for change across 12 volumes, with 132 of the 222 recommendations applicable to WA. At the time of this report, the formal responses from the Federal and WA Governments were pending.

PWdWA welcomes the WA Government's commitment to consulting on the implementation of the recommendations of the DRC with people with disability, their families and carers, all levels of government, the disability sector, and the broader community to deliver better outcomes for people with disability in WA.

NDIS Review – Working together to deliver the NDIS

The report on the Independent Review of the NDIS was delivered by the NDIS Review Panel in December 2023. Throughout the review, the Panel heard from 10,000 people, received just under 4,000 submissions, averaged 26 engagements every month, and spoke with more than 1000 people with disability. The report proposes 26 recommendations, which will have a significant impact on support in and outside of the NDIS. The recommendations include a connected support system with the introduction of foundational supports, changes to access and budgeting, adoption of navigators, changes to early childhood support, changes to housing and living arrangements, new early intervention, specialist navigation and support outside of the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability, and quality and safeguarding

improvements. At the time of producing this report, consultation had commenced on the NDIS Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024. PWdWA will continue to work with the advocacy sector nationally to ensure the views of our members on this important issue are acknowledged.

SPEAK UP! for Independent Advocacy

PWdWA has been an active member of the 'SPEAK UP! for Independent Advocacy' national campaign. The campaign was based on the limited capacity and resourcing within the independent disability advocacy sector, with an estimated two million Australians with disability unable to access independent advocacy support if the sector remains chronically underfunded. Coordinated by DANA, a submission was provided to the Federal Government prior to its Federal Budget to immediately invest in the independent disability advocacy sector with a top-up of at least \$91.225 million to ensure people with disability can get the support they need, and to navigate the coming changes across the disability sector. Unfortunately, the sector did not receive a favourable response in the Federal Budget. The DRC Report specifically notes the importance of access to independent disability advocacy, and PWdWA, along with the disability sector nationally, anxiously awaits the federal government's response to the DRC recommendations in this area.

Building Better Homes WA

The Building Better Homes WA campaign is based around gaining support from the WA Government to commit to a timeline for the adoption of national accessibility standards in the National Construction Code in WA. Lack of accessible housing, particularly in the current tight market, is leaving millions of Australians without appropriate housing. This affects their quality of life, health and well-being, and ability to participate economically. At the time of this report, WA and NSW are the only state governments yet to commit to a timeline for adoption of the accessibility standards. PWdWA, in collaboration with the Summer Foundation, Council on The Ageing WA, Shelter WA, and with support from the Australian Building Codes Board, attended meetings with building sector representatives to identify the barriers to the adoption of the standards and discuss solutions to overcome these barriers. The initial roundtable discussions have identified some possible solutions which require

further engagement and discussion. The intention will be to meet with the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Finance and Commerce to specifically raise our concerns and seek their support for lobbying within the WA Government to work with the building and disability/ageing sectors to commit to a timeline to adopt the accessible standards.

Projects

PWdWA implements various community-based initiatives aimed at fulfilling our strategic priority of empowering individuals with disabilities and their communities. These projects include providing workshops and information sessions to educate and empower people with disabilities, collaborating with businesses to enhance accessibility and employment opportunities for young people with disabilities, and engaging communities to identify and address barriers faced by people with disabilities.

Funding for these initiatives is provided by the DoC and the DSS.

Community Disability Advocacy Project

Funder: DoC

Partners: AWA

November 2023: Project Completed

In 2021, a consortium comprising PWdWA and AWA successfully secured grant funding from the DoC aimed at developing a local advocacy disability network framework. This initiative facilitated the establishment of twelve **disability advocacy** networks across Perth, Peel and the South West.

Community Disability Advocates from each organisation collaborated with fifteen communities to enhance awareness and empower individuals with disabilities, along with the broader community, to implement localised solutions that promote self-determination, choice, and control for people with disabilities.

Despite facing challenges, particularly the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on community engagement, the project achieved remarkable success, resulting in the thriving presence of twelve advocacy networks today.

To further support the establishment of future networks, a dedicated website was created: www.cdaproject.org.au.

The Centre for Social Impact at the University of WA completed an evaluation report that noted the following achievements:

- substantial majority (88%) of network participants noted an improvement in their connection to their community
- network participants improvements in self-advocacy skills (94%), knowledge of support services and information (94%), problem-solving skills (82%), and leadership skills (77%).
- nearly all (97%) survey participants indicating that being part of the Project was 'very worthwhile' or 'worthwhile'.



The six metropolitan networks established include:

Leeming High School Alumni with a purpose to create an inclusive community for former students and their families. Their aim is to maintain connections with one another and to feel a sense of belonging in their community.

The Queer Disability Allies Collective is a network which aims to support people from the queer community to access services that are safe and inclusive for them. The network members aim to create a stronger support system and ensure that individuals from the queer community can easily access the resources they need.

The Pride Disability Advocacy Network (PwDN) was established with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and representation of individuals who identify as both queer and with a disability. The intersection of these identities often exacerbates stigma, causing individuals to feel compelled to hide their true selves and leading to vulnerability and a sense of unsafety within the community. The network's main purpose is twofold, one is to reduce isolation through social connection and the second is to provide constructive feedback and recommendations to services and businesses on their accessibility for queer people with a disability. The group have an active Facebook page "Pride with Disability Network"

Mandurah and Rockingham Teen Empowering Events Network is a youth disability community network aimed at empowering and giving a voice to young individuals living in the Rockingham and Mandurah areas, aged between 12 and 17 years old. This initiative stemmed from their desire for more choice in activities and events and their perception of a lack of community acceptance, inclusion, and opportunities available to them. For more information, contact the Community Development Officer at the City of Mandurah.

Kids Helping Kids Network is a youth-led organisation dedicated to fostering inclusivity and companionship among young individuals with disabilities. Its primary objective is to provide a sense of worth, understanding, and support to those living with disabilities, ensuring that they never feel isolated or incapable. This network actively organises monthly events and social gatherings to facilitate meaningful connections within its community. See their Facebook page “Kids Helping Kids” for more information.

The Kwinana All Abilities Network is a group created by residents with the shared goal of raising awareness of disability within the community. They aim to enhance the visibility of disability, organise inclusive events and social activities, and promote acceptance throughout the community. Their mission is to showcase the skills and talents of individuals with disabilities, with the aim of promoting inclusivity and celebrating diversity.

Economic Participation Project

Funder: DSS

Partners: AWA

PWdWA is pleased to announce that the Economic Participation Project (EPP) funding has been extended for an additional 12 months.


The project's primary goal is to build the capacity and confidence of small to medium-sized businesses, making them more welcoming and accessible to people with disabilities. This initiative also connects these businesses with young people with disabilities who are seeking employment within those sectors. By participating in the EPP, young individuals will gain a deeper understanding of how to pursue a career in their chosen fields, along with insights into the tools and support available to assist them in securing employment. Additionally, they will develop essential soft skills and confidence, establishing important connections within their desired employment sectors.

Over the first two years of the project, PWdWA and AWA employed 100 young people, aged 15 to 25, as youth consultants to conduct accessibility assessments for 100 businesses across the metro, Peel, and Southwest regions.

A diverse range of industries participated in this initiative, including hospitality, tourism, retail, and recreation.

Improving accessibility and inclusivity not only benefits individuals with disabilities but also enhances the businesses themselves. By creating an inclusive environment, these companies can tap into a broader customer base, foster employee satisfaction, and boost their reputation as socially responsible organisations. Ultimately, by embracing accessibility, businesses position themselves to thrive in an increasingly diverse marketplace.

The Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia completed an evaluation report that noted the following achievements:

- **91%** of participants overall agree that they are **more motivated to seek and/or maintain employment**.
- **84%** of participants overall agree that they **have increased skills and knowledge that can help them get a job**.
- **81%** of participants overall agree that they **feel more confident about getting a job as a result of the project** 
- **96%** of businesses overall agree that they have **greater clarity about the needs of people with disability**.
- **96%** of businesses overall agree that they have a **better understanding of the physical accessibility needs of people with disability** who are engaging with their business.
- **93%** of businesses overall agree that they have a **better understanding about the importance of ensuring information is accessible** to people with disability.

Here's what some of the participating businesses have said about their involvement:

“It was a fantastic opportunity to be involved in the PWdWA Business Accessibility Assessment program. Our assessment was so thorough and has provided us with some great feedback and a tailored roadmap to help us become a more inclusive and accessible workplace. I would definitely recommend this program to any businesses wanting to improve their accessibility” (Sarah Patterson, CEO, Gosnells Community Legal Centre)

A big thank you to the team @ 'People With disabilities WA' for conducting an Accessibility Assessment Report. We found all the information and feedback from the report extremely insightful and ultimately gives us an opportunity for people with

disabilities to have a better experience at our venue. Well, done to all involved with the Business Accessibility Empowerment Program” (Daniel Brady, General Manager of Commercial Operations, Peel Thunder)

Empowered and Connected

Funder: DoC

The Empowered and Connected Project aimed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of individuals with disabilities. The project focused on advocacy, information dissemination, and peer support, to create an inclusive and empowered community. It was funded for three years, and it came to completion on 30 June 2024

Below are some of the milestones achieved throughout the lifespan of the project:

Advocacy-Related Workshops:

Successfully presented over eighty workshops to more than 500 people on topics such as NDIS Appeals, Self-Advocacy, and DSP.

Engaged, in total, seven individuals with lived experience who were trained as proficient facilitators to deliver some of the above-mentioned workshops.

Conducted presentations across both metropolitan and regional areas of WA, reaching a wide cross-section of the community and helping organisations and people with disability to connect and receive the peer support necessary.

Providing Information:

Developed and shared advocacy-related factsheets on topics such as NDIS, DSP, Disability Access and Inclusion Plans.

Developed a dedicated Facebook page for peer support group leaders where we would like to continue sharing relevant information with group facilitators or future group facilitators.

Regional Stakeholder Engagement

Visited regional towns and cities, including Albany, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome, Waroona, and Mandurah, to engage with key stakeholders,

gain insight into the challenges their communities face, and foster partnerships to address these issues.

Peer Support Groups:

Collaborated with Valued Lives and ConnectGroups to build the capability of peer support groups statewide. During regional visits with ConnectGroups, we also assisted communities in establishing new peer support groups where none previously existed.

Through workshops, resources, and peer support, the Empowered and Connected Project successfully contributed to empowering people with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives.

We hope the project has also helped foster a stronger, more connected community.

Self-Advocacy WA (SAWA)

Funder: DSS


Self-Advocacy WA (SAWA) is a group run by and for people with intellectual disability. SAWA's mission is to provide peer support and promote self-advocacy for people with intellectual disability in WA. SAWA was one of the first self-advocacy groups to be established in the 1980s during the self-advocacy movement and closure of large institutions across Australia.

SAWA's activities include:

- Running regular peer support and self-advocacy meetings
- Learning about speaking up, human rights, services and supports
- Attending local, state and national forums to speak about self-advocacy
- Giving feedback and advice to organisations and the community as consumer advocates.
- Networking with other disability and self-advocacy groups to promote self-advocacy
- Running social / team building activities.

Events and activities held in the past twelve months include:



- A presentation by the NDIA on eligibility, access, and their new customer relationship management software Provider and Participant Communication Environment (PACE). In particular, learning about PACE was very helpful.
 - The Transperth education team gave a presentation on access to public transport for people with disabilities. Learning about a wide range of Transperth information was also very helpful. The team also linked SAWA members with a range of resources.
 - ConnectGroups gave a presentation on links to community networks and information, assisting SAWA with group development and management and linking SAWA to community resources and services.
- 
- The Chairperson attending a South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability (SACID) Our Voice self-advocacy conference in South Australia.

SAWA's funding from the DSS ended on June 30, 2024. To prepare for this change, SAWA has been integrated as a peer support group under ConnectGroups. This new affiliation will support the group's continued success and sustainability into the future.

On behalf of all members of SAWA, as always, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to PWdWA for their unwavering support over the last year. Thank you!

Georgie George

SAWA Chairperson

Key Relationships

- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Ability First Australia
- Advanced Personal Management (APM) Communities
- Advocacy WA
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Australian Institute of Management
- Australian Network for Universal Housing Design
- Blue Knot Foundation
- Carers WA
- Centre for Accessibility Australia
- City of Cambridge
- City of Kwinana
- City of Mandurah
- City of Rockingham
- ConnectGroups
- Council On the Ageing Western Australia
- Consumers of Mental Health Western Australia
- Department of Communities
- Department of Social Services
- Developmental Disability Western Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Disability Assembly Western Australia
- Disability Leadership Institute
- Disability Resource Centre
- Empowering People in Communities Inc.
- Explorability
- Great Southern Community Legal Services
- Health Consumers' Council of WA
- Kiind
- Kin Disability Advocacy Inc
- Leadership WA

- Leeming Senior High School
- Legal Aid Western Australia
- Linkwest
- Living Proud
- Lotterywest
- McCusker Centre for Citizenship
- Mental Health Commission
- Midlas
- Murray House Pinjarra Community Centre
- National Centre for Disability Advocacy
- National Disability Insurance Agency
- National Disability Services
- Office of the Minister for Disability Services, Hon. Don Punch MLA
- People with Disability Australia
- Pilbara Community Legal Service
- Rainbow Community House
- Regional Alliance West
- Relationships Australia
- Rocket Launcher
- Self-Advocacy WA
- Senator Jordan Steele-John, Greens Senator for WA
- Sexual Education Counselling and Consultancy Agency (SECCA)
- Shelter WA
- Sprout Space
- Summer Foundation
- Sussex Street Community Legal Service
- University of Western Australia, Centre for Social Impact
- Valued Lives
- Visit Mandurah
- Waroona Community Resource Centre
- Western Australian Council of Social Service
- Western Australian Association for Mental Health

- West Coast Secondary High School ESC
- Women with Disabilities WA Inc
- Your Say Uniting Care West
- Youth Disability Advocacy Network

Financial Summary 2023-2024

(please represent data as pie charts, as per last year's report)

Income

Total: \$2,841,993

Grant Funding Income	98%
Other Income	2 %

Expenses

Total: \$2,628,639

Salaries and Related Expenses	61%
Consortium Expenses	15%
Administration and Operational Expenses	24%

Individual and systemic advocacy led by people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Contact Us

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Call 1800 193 331

Pilbara Region: Karratha, Newman, Port Hedland and Roebourne

Online and phone service

Call 1800 193 331

Wheatbelt: Merredin, Moora, Narrogin, Northam, Toodyay and York

Call 1800 193 331