

# Australian Federation of Disability Organisations



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Annual Report 2020–2021



Australian Federation of  
Disability Organisations

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			NSW 2150	

## Acronyms used in this report

<b>ADDC</b> Australian Disability Development Consortium	<b>DES</b> Disability Employment Service	<b>DRO</b> Disability Representative Organisation	<b>NDIS</b> National Disability Insurance Scheme
<b>AFDO</b> Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	<b>DSS</b> Department of Social Services	<b>GST</b> Goods and Services Tax	<b>NGO</b> Non Government Organisation
<b>AGM</b> Annual General Meeting	<b>DPI</b> Disabled Persons International	<b>IDA</b> International Disability Alliance	<b>P2E</b> Passport 2 Employment
<b>BIDS</b> Business Inclusion & Diversity Services	<b>DPO</b> Disabled Peoples Organisation	<b>LLEN</b> Local Learning and Employment Network	<b>UNCRPD</b> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CoSP</b> Conference of States Parties		<b>NDIA</b> National Disability Insurance Agency	

AFDO acknowledges people with disability living in institutional settings and in the community across Australia, who have suffered or are suffering from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

AFDO also proudly acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and their rich culture and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and water on which we rely.



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this report may contain images of people who have passed away.**

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## Picture quality

Please note that we apologise for the quality of some of the photos in this years Annual Report. We always try to have good quality photos but with a year of zoom meetings and forums, it was hard to get many except the odd screen shot!

# About Us and Our Members

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) is a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) and the national voice representing people with disability in Australia.

To achieve our mission and vision, we provide policy advice and representation to government and organisations on matters that impact the lives of people with disability. We also inform and educate the general community about disability and we work to develop a community where people with disability can participate in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life. This includes genuine participation in mainstream community life, the development of respectful and valued relationships, social and economic participation, and the opportunity to contribute as valued citizens.

## Our vision

That all people with disabilities must be involved equally in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.

## Our mission

Using the strength of our membership-based organisations to harness the collective power of uniting people with disability to change society into a community where everyone is equal.



## Our strategic objectives from 2018-2021

To represent the united voice of our members and people with disability in national initiatives and policy debate.

To enhance the profile, respect and reputation for AFDO through our members.

To build the capacity and sustainability of AFDO and our members.

To foster strong collaboration and engagement between our members and stakeholders.

To enhance AFDO's connection and influence in international disability initiatives, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, through policy, advocacy and engagement.





## Our members

AFDO is made up of [member organisations](#) who work together to contribute to the national policy agenda and address issues that impact the lives of people with disability in Australia. We understand that disability specific organisations play a key role in the provision of information and peer support to people with disability and their families. This role keeps them closely connected to their grass roots communities.

Each community has its peak or other representative organisations that uses its voice to advocate on issues.

AFDO is the forum where these views are collected and co-ordinated to ensure Government is across issues impacting all people with disability in Australia.

We are proud to be the organisation that has brought together both cross-disability organisations (representing the interests of people with all kinds of disability), and disability-specific organisations/peaks. We understand that cross-disability groups are only successful when they have access to the specific expertise of disability-specific organisations, as these disability-specific groups are connected to their communities.

We understand that it is imperative that neither the voice of cross-disability groups or disability-specific groups is silenced in favour of the other.

If you want to check out our members, click on the links below:

### Full members of AFDO

[Arts Access Australia](#)

[Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia](#)

[Blind Citizens Australia](#)

[Brain Injury Australia](#)

[Deaf Australia](#)

[Deafblind Australia](#)

[Deafness Forum of Australia](#)

[Disability Advocacy Network Australia](#)

[Disability Justice Australia](#)

[Disability Resources Centre](#)

[Down Syndrome Australia](#)

[Enhanced Lifestyles](#)

[National Mental Health](#)

[Consumer & Carer Forum](#)

[People with Disabilities ACT](#)

[People with Disabilities WA](#)

[Physical Disability Australia](#)

[Polio Australia](#)

[Women with Disabilities ACT](#)

[Women with Disabilities Victoria](#)

### Associate members of AFDO

[All Means All](#)

[AED Legal Centre](#)

[Amaze](#)

[Aspergers Victoria](#)

[Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia](#)

[Disability Law Queensland](#)

[Leadership Plus](#)

[National Organisation for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#)

[Star Victoria](#)

[TASC National Limited](#)

[Youth Disability Advocacy Service](#)

## Full members of AFDO



## Associate members of AFDO



# Inclusion Statement

## Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this continent and the islands of the Torres Strait. In doing so, we acknowledge the importance of connection to and access to country for Australia's First Peoples and recognise our shared history that has had a devastating impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

We acknowledge and respect the distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural differences, beliefs, values and languages.

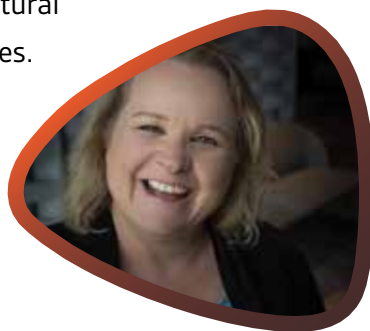
### Jody Barney – AFDO First Nations Disability & Cultural Consultant

Jody Barney is a Birri Gubba / Urangan woman from Queensland who lives on Yorta Yorta Country since 1999. Jody works as a Deaf Indigenous Community Consultant and has been working with AFDO since 2007 and has supported the AFDO Policy Team to undertake work on connecting AFDO with Indigenous Australians with disability and their communities across Australia.

Read more about Jody's work in the Policy, Advocacy, Research & Projects section of this report.



Through working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, AFDO will develop respectful and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and partnership development that is respectful and sustainable with long-term vision will be critical in meeting our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



The Nugget  
Artist: Robert Croft



### About the Artist

Nugget is a noun and can mean either a small lump of gold or other precious metal found ready-formed in the earth or a valuable idea or fact - "a nugget of wisdom."

Robert Croft is a non-verbal and vision-impaired Aboriginal man, and through his art and acting, he has found a way to communicate and be a valuable, contributing member of the community.



# President & CEO Report

After another challenging year for all across Australia with continuing COVID-19 issues across health, welfare, economic impacts with continuing significant concerns for people with disability and their families, we present our joint report of AFDO's achievements over the 2020 – 2021 financial year.

AFDO continued to ensure that the voice of our members, people with disability and their families are heard not only concerning the pandemic but also for;

- Hearings being addressed by and participation in submissions and statements to the Disability Royal Commission
- Changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including the proposed introduction of NDIA Independent Assessments
- The finalising of a new Australian Disability Strategy from 2021 onwards, and
- Substantial policy and systemic advocacy work

It has been another productive year for the Board with continued positive results for our organisation and members. Priority is given to maintaining a supportive and collaborative organisational culture, with strong and respectful partnerships in delivering services for and with our members and community.

The more significant highlights over this year we have outlined below;

- Continuing our collective, solid advocacy in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic impacts and ensuring inclusion, accountability and upholding of the rights of people with disability in all policy contexts and considerations by Federal, State, Territory with all governments and support services/ systems.
- Continuing engagement with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, with AFDO and our members continue to make solid submissions and representation at the hearings and in other forums. We have been undertaking information provision and assistance to ensure that people with disability understand the value and purpose of the DRC, including the importance of making personal statements, submissions or presenting as a witness.
- Continuing strong Federal Government interaction with the Minister for Families and Social Services, Senator the Hon. Anne Ruston and the Minister for NDIS, Senator the Hon. Linda Reynolds and previously the Hon Stuart Robert, the Minister for Health Senator the Hon. Greg Hunt covering the Disability



Sector over proposed changes to the NDIS and introduction of the NDIA Independent Assessments, operation of the Disability Royal Commission, employment of people with disability, Disability Support Pension issues, Transport issues, the slow vaccine roll out for PWD in supported accommodation settings or aged care, and more.

- Our collaboration with a broader sector representative group of organisations, making several joint statements and running a campaign against the introduction of NDIA Independent Assessments and proposed changes to the NDIS Act. This was a fundamental attack on the underlying vision and purpose of the Scheme and not what people with disability and the wider community had agreed. We achieved a significant win with the backdown by the Federal Government and the NDIA with IA's being dumped and legislation to only look at minor issues.
- Federal Budget delayed until October 2020, due to COVID-19 impacts, AFDO reframed its Federal Budget Submission and responded to the May 2021 Federal Budget dealing with consequences from a range of announced measures.



- Continuing participation in the review of the National Disability Strategy to ensure that the reviewed plan delivers outcomes as funded to implement actions at all levels of government with progress and results regularly reported by all groups. We will continue working with our members to ensure a robust strategy is delivered and outcomes progressively reported and monitored.
- Increased membership both full and associate resulting in a current total of thirty member organisations providing a total reach of over 3.8 million Australians with disability, their families and supporters
- Increased our team workforce and capacity across all areas being staff and expert advisers, on particular issues and importantly engaging people with disability in these roles.

We continued our Member Forums via remote video conference allowing all members around Australia an opportunity to participate and engage, develop a mutual understanding of shared interests or issues as well showcasing a range of member organisations over each Forum. We also continued the training and guest speaker program, which covered;

- Influencing Government Legislation- the How, What & When – Workshop by 89 Degrees East
- NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission – Christine Regan Principal Engagement Advisor
- Disability Discrimination Act – Where are we at? – Graeme Innes AM
- Emerging & Revisioning with a Plan – Not for Profit Training
- Kilfinan Australia – Building For-Purpose Leadership - Beth Weatherly – CEO & Lesley Podesta – Mentoring Relationship Manager
- Social Media – Tips & Tricks – Aaron Holt – AFDO Communications Officer

Our staff and expert advisers produced significant results across systemic advocacy, projects, governance support and operations for the organisation and ensured member identified issues were advanced at every available opportunity with governments and stakeholders.

Our International Coordinator, Director Trevor Carroll, continued representation and engagement with Disabled Peoples International and the Pacific Disability Forum. Owing to the pandemic, the Council of State Parties (CoSP) at the United Nations had to be an online event with sessions based around the New York time zone, meaning many late nights well after midnight for Trevor and Australian delegates. We want to acknowledge Trevor's continuing international work and also with our newly formed International Working Group.

It's been another significant and trying year for us all. As President, I'd like to acknowledge everyone's contribution and thank my fellow Board members, past and present, our CEO, Ross, and all the AFDO Team and volunteers for their professionalism and dedication to further the impact of AFDO and our members. In particular, I have again appreciated the support of my AFDO Executive members being; Trevor, Janine and Christine, who have met regularly between the Board meetings to ensure the organisation continues to advance.

As CEO, we have been through another challenging year. Still, it continues to be my pleasure to work with all for the benefit of people with disability, their families, supporters and our communities. I am delighted by the support of our President Liz, and the entire Board, a very professional, committed and passionate group of incredible volunteers. Of course, it's not possible to achieve what we have without all of our members and our AFDO Team, including a growing number of new team members. We have also had significant engagement with our key stakeholders and the wider community.

The coming year will prove to be another challenging and still somewhat unknown for all of us. Despite the uncertainty, we both look forward to continuing AFDO's vision providing respectful engagement, systemic advocacy, capacity building and support by collaborating with our members and all of our sector colleagues.



Liz Reid AM  
**President**



Ross Joyce  
**CEO**

# Our Sector Voice

AFDO continues to be proactive in furthering the voice of people with disability over the past twelve months through our engagement with the Australian Government, National Disability Insurance Agency, national peak bodies, and by participating on committees and working groups.

## International representation

Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC)

Disabled People's International (DPI)

International Disability Alliance (IDA)

The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICT's (G3ict)

Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

## Australian representation

Assistive Technology for All (ATFA)

Aviation Access Forum

Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Committee

NDIA CEO Forum

Disability Support IRC

Disability Gateway Reference Group

Not for profit Stewardship Group Australian Taxation Office

DSS National Disability Strategy Reform Steering Group

NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission - Disability Sector Consultative Committee

National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN)

Australian Public Service Commission Disability Employment Working Group

Services Australia Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG)

## Australian representation (continued)

National Assistive Technology Alliance

VicRoads Disability Parking Permit Eligibility Reference Group

Civil Society UNCRPD Shadow Working Group

Services Australia Disability Peaks DSP Working Group

Technical Experts Social Security (TESS) Working Group

Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) Working Group

Advisory Group for National Disability Research Agenda (NDRA)

Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkages Project

Disability Act Review Advisory Group

Western Sydney University Autonomy, Diversity & Disability: Everyday Practices of Technology Project Advisory Committee

NDIS Utilisation Project - Victoria

## National peak bodies engagement

National Disability and Carer Alliance

Mental Health Australia

Carers Australia

National Disability Services (NDS)

Inclusion Australia

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)

People with Disability Australia (PWDA)

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN)

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA)

National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)



# Our Board

## Liz Reid AM

### President

**Nominated by Physical  
Disability Australia**



Liz has over 30 years' experience in the community, disability, and social justice sectors. She has dedicated her career to assisting others seek equitable economic and social opportunities to participate fully in their communities.

Liz has a physical disability, Arthrogryposis multiplex congenita (AMC) and has had extensive surgery since birth to achieve improved positioning and increase the range of motion in her lower limbs/ joints for better mobility. In her mid-twenties Liz was diagnosed with Ankylosing spondylitis, a type of arthritis and a chronic inflammatory disease requiring her to use a wheelchair to conserve energy to do the fun things in life!

Currently, Liz is the Executive Officer of YouthWorX NT, a not for profit organisation committed to supporting Territorians in their lifelong social, economic and career success. She is responsible for the management of programs that include life and career coaching, and services that support employment.

Liz is the current President of Physical Disability Australia (PDA); the PDA representative on the AFDO Board and a member of the National Disability Insurance Agency Independent Advisory Council representing the Northern Territory.

## Trevor Carroll

### Vice President

### & International Coordinator

**Nominated by Disability Justice Australia**



Trevor is passionate about protecting and enhancing the human rights of people with disabilities. He has been a member of the AFDO Board since 2012 serving as Treasurer, President and Vice President respectively. He has been the CEO at Disability Justice Australia (DJA) since 2009 and represents AFDO as:

- an elected Director and Information Officer on the Board of Disabled Peoples International (DPI)
- as the Chair of the DPI Asia-Pacific Region
- member of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)
- member of the Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Committee
- on the Executive of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC).

Trevor acquired an incomplete spinal cord injury in the mid 1990's and has since acquired bi-lateral sensorineural hearing loss and Meniere's disease.

He wears many other hats including:

- Secretary and a founding member of the Friends of South Morang.
- Director on the Board of Social Security Rights Victoria
- Australia Day Ambassador
- Trustee of an ASIC regulated superannuation fund
- Co-chair of the Victoria Police Disability Portfolio Reference Group
- Member of the National NDIS Appeals Network
- Volunteer mentor with the Australian Quadriplegics Association; and is a
- Regular member of the judging panel for the annual Victorian Disability Awards and the Office of the Public Advocate Victoria Police Awards.



## **Janine Neu**

### **Vice President**

#### **Nominated by People with Disabilities WA**

Janine is passionate about maximising opportunities for people with disabilities as well as supporting individual and systemic advocacy.

She is Vice Chairperson of People with Disabilities WA and is a committee member of ACROD and Companion Card External Appeals in WA.

Janine was 35 weeks pregnant when she experienced sudden onset of Acute Transverse Myelitis in 1996, rendering her quadriplegic. Following the birth of her son and 6 months of hospital rehabilitation, she returned home to her family to challenge the WA Government for essential funding to enable her family to stay together.

Following receipt of permanent funding, Janine could continue to lead her life in her community.

Janine has personally focused on health and physical rehabilitation since hospital discharge whilst navigating an opaque, complex and compartmentalised system of services for people with disabilities. Staying healthy and active has resulted in Janine continuing to achieve functional improvement.



## **Christine Hunter**

### **Treasurer**

#### **Nominated by Deafness Forum of Australia**

Christine is President of Hearing Matters Australia (HMA), a volunteer-based hearing support organisation for people with hearing loss, and she represents Deafness Forum on the AFDO Board. Christine has lived with hearing loss since early childhood but following intervention was able to pursue a career in education spanning 22 years, before retiring in 2012.

In her role as HMA President, Christine actively promotes the twin missions of Hearing Matters Australia & Deafness Forum through advocacy, advice and support for people with hearing loss. Her advocacy activities have included representations to Australian federal & state government agencies and active participation on the Transport NSW Accessible Transport Committee (ATAC). Her objectives in these forums is to have hearing health recognised as a priority health issue and to promote equitable access for people with hearing loss.

Christine works in partnership with international organisations, hearing industry professionals, academics & consumer representatives towards strengthening the quality of hearing care and promoting an international hearing care model focused on the needs of the individual.



## **Belinda O'Connor**

### **Director**

#### **Nominated by Women with Disabilities ACT**

For the past 17 years Belinda has worked in various portfolios across the Australian Government, currently in public policy.

She is passionate about improving disability workforce participation and inclusive practices, including through universal design and assistive technology. During this time, Belinda has been actively involved in disability networks.

Born with vision impairment, Belinda has forged a life of ongoing growth in personal self-advocacy as a person with disability and for people with disability.

In 2017 Belinda founded Bioptic Drivers Australia and is working with a multi-disciplinary team to formalise bioptic driving in Australia. Belinda is a Representative for Women With Disabilities ACT (WWDACT) in disability transport matters. Belinda has a growing interest in the intersectional challenges facing women with disability.

Belinda is keen to work with other strong women to advance human rights and inclusion for women with disability.



## **Nick Rushworth**

### **Director**

#### **Nominated by Brain Injury Australia**

Nick has been Executive Officer of Brain Injury Australia since 2008. He was also President of the Brain Injury Association of New South Wales between 2004 and 2008.

In 1996, Nick sustained a severe traumatic brain injury as a result of a bicycle accident. Before joining Brain Injury Australia, Nick worked for the Northern Territory Government setting up their new Office of Disability.

Nick has a journalist background and has won a number of awards, including a Silver World Medal at the New York Festival, a National Press Club and TV Week Logie Award.

He was formerly a producer with the Nine Television Network's "Sunday" program and ABC Radio National.

## Debbie Kennewell



### Director

#### Nominated by Deaf Australia

Debbie is an Auslan user and is a current board member at Deaf Australia. She was born Deaf into a Deaf family which includes both parents being deaf. She primarily uses Auslan (Australian Sign Language), the language of the Deaf community in Australia.

Debbie resides in Darwin and works for Deaf Services/the Deaf Society in connecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals to needed supports across the Northern Territory.

Debbie currently represents AFDO on the Aviation Access Forum (AAF) and has worked on multiple national projects developing guidelines, resources, and training for stakeholders of the Deaf community.

With an interest in raising disability issues, Debbie ensures that the needs of the Australian Deaf community is promoted and included in conversations elsewhere.

## Grant Lindsay



### Director

#### Nominated by Down Syndrome Australia

Grant is married (Tammy) and they have two children. Their daughter Alishia has Down syndrome and is 24 years of age. He is a strong advocate for people with intellectual disability – promoting inclusion in all things.

Grant has been a Director of Down Syndrome Australia since 2011 and is currently the Deputy Chair of Down Syndrome Australia. He was President of Down Syndrome Australia (NT) for thirteen years.

Grant has been on the Board of Carpentaria Disability Services since 2005, and is currently the Acting President of Carpentaria Disability Services. He is also the Past President of the Rotary Club of Darwin, and is currently the International Service, National Projects and Rotary Foundation Director. Grant is a Director and Senior Consultant of Creative TEAMS, as well as a Director of Living Edge Enterprise P/L.



## John Simpson AM

### Director

#### Nominated by Blind Citizens Australia

On Australia Day 2020 John was honoured with the Award of Member (AM) in the Order of Australia "for significant service to people who are blind or have low vision".

John's career has included appointments as Executive Officer with Blind Citizens Australia and later RPH Australia; National Program Manager for the Lions Eye Health Program; and five years as National Manager within Vision Australia's Accessible Information Solutions Division where he managed the Audio Description Service, Vision Australia Radio and the Division's broader operations at various times.

Alongside these appointments and his ongoing Directorship with Information Alternatives, John has undertaken many research and project management assignments to address the information needs of people with a print disability.

John is currently the:

- President, Blind Citizens Australia
- Chair, Independence and Participation Policy Committee, Vision 2020 Australia
- Director, Information Alternatives



## Mary Henley-Collopy

### Director

#### Nominated by Disability Resources Centre

Mary is currently the Chairperson of Disability Resources Centre in Victoria and joined the Board of AFDO in late 2019.

She has over 30 years' experience working as a Social Worker in both the public and private sectors.

Mary has a Bachelor of Social Work; Bereavement Counselling qualifications; Certificate in Critical Incidents and Stress Management and, a Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training.

Mary was born with a permanent disability stemming from Thalidomide damage - resulting in four limb foreshortening.



## Richard Dent

### Director

#### Independent Director



Richard was appointed by the Board for his governance and leadership expertise.

He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and has been active in the disability field for more than 25 years.

He contributed to the leadership of the NDIS campaign, and he has held CEO, Executive and Board member roles within UnitingCare, the E W Tipping Foundation, National Disability Services, and multiple other organisations.

Richard has been active in Australia's civic life for almost three decades, including as Leadership Victoria's Chief Executive Officer, where he implemented multiple programs and initiatives for equity in disability, gender, multiculturalism and LGBTIQ+. He is a specialist international consultant in leadership, strategy and NFP governance and has advised governments and contributed to public policy through VCOSS, NDS and other peak bodies.

Richard's contributions have included making progress on economic wellbeing, fostering social fairness, maintaining a sustainable environment and upholding human rights, with a particular focus on rights of people with disability.

# Our Team



**Ross Joyce**

Chief Executive Officer



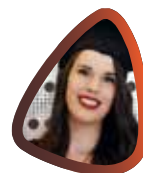
**Duncan Steward**

Coordinator – Business  
Sustainability



**Kirra Jackson**

Coordinator –  
Volunteers, Students &  
Interns



**Natasha Thomson**

AFDO Social Security  
Consultant – Technical  
Experts Social Security  
(TESS) Working Group



**Helen Cameron**

Personal & Executive  
Assistant to CEO



**Ainslie Whitburn**

Coordinator – ILC ICB  
Projects & BIDS



**Nick Wilson**

Projects Support  
Officer



**Eva Sifis**

AFDO Inclusion in the  
Arts Consultant



**Patrick McGee**

National Manager –  
Systemic Advocacy,  
Insight & Research



**Steve Schreck**

Coordinator - Disability  
Projects & BIDS



**Natalie Wade**

AFDO Disability  
Royal Commission  
Consultant



**Sandra Quinlan**

Remote Working  
& COVID-19  
Organisational Support  
Consultant



**Tracylee Aresitedes**

National Manager –  
Policy, Sustainability,  
Initiatives & Projects



**Rebecca Rudd**

Coordinator – Policy &  
Submissions



**Jody Barney**

AFDO First Nations  
Disability & Cultural  
Consultant



**Nunzio Giunta**

Chief Financial Officer



**Jim Valavanis**

Manager – Business  
Development &  
Sustainability



**Leah Penny (Until  
February 2021)**

Coordinator – ILC ICB  
Projects & BIDS



**Geoff Trappett OAM**

AFDO Transport  
Consultant - National  
Inclusive Transport  
Advocacy Network  
(NITAN) Chairperson



**Ian Scarborough**

Accountant CPA



**Aaron Holt**

Communications  
Officer

# Policy, Advocacy, Research & Projects

In 2020 AFDO identified the need to expand its workforce to properly address the systemic needs of people with disability. Consequently the CEO, Ross Joyce worked with the AFDO Board and staffing group and funded seven new positions. The National Manager - Systemic Policy, Insight & Research was complemented by the appointment of the National Manager - Policy, Sustainability, Initiatives & Projects. Both positions report directly to the CEO and represent AFDO and its Members to government and other organisations.

The focus of the renamed National Manager - Systemic Advocacy, Insight & Research remains AFDO's systemic advocacy interactions with the disability community, the disability advocacy sector and with all levels of government.

The new National Manager's position focuses on managing the new AFDO staff across the work areas, policy, sustainability and projects. As well, this position has oversight of all AFDO projects and contributes to shaping the organisation's internal and external policy focus.

The Executive Team now consists of the CEO, the two National Managers and the Chief Financial Manager. This team is responsible for implementing the AFDO Strategic Plan as set out by the AFDO Board.

## AFDO's Contribution to the Disability Royal Commission on Violence Abuse and Neglect of People with Disability

AFDO and its Member Organisations continue to support the work of the Disability Royal Commission and commend the Commission and its staff for their tireless efforts on behalf of people with disability.

The impact of COVID-19 was felt in the move by the Disability Royal Commission to remote virtual hearings which on the whole, and with a great deal of behind the scenes work, proceeded smoothly. In 2020 – 2021 the Disability Royal Commission held a number of hearings including;

- the experiences of people with disability during the pandemic
- issues relating to psychotropic medication, behaviour support and behaviours of concern
- barriers to accessing a safe, quality and inclusive school education and life course impacts
- pathways and barriers to open employment
- education and training of health care professionals
- the education and training of health professionals in relation to people with cognitive disability



- the experiences of people with cognitive disability in the criminal justice system
- the experiences of people with disability in the context of the Australian Government's approach to the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out
- preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in disability services.

In August 2020, AFDO participated in the Royal Commission's Disability Strategic Engagement Group (DSEG). The DSEG aimed to ensure good communication between the Commission and the disability advocacy sector. DSEG consisted of Commissioners, staff, senior advisors and three external members.

Key systemic activities supported by AFDO involving the Disability Royal Commission included:

1. The seeking an extension for the delivery of the final report and recommendations till September 2023
2. The introduction by the Government of legislation to protect the confidentiality of information provided to the Royal Commission beyond the life of our inquiry.

In August 2020, AFDO provided a Submission to the Disability Commission regarding the experiences of people with disability during the pandemic and the CEO Ross Joyce, the National

Manager - Systemic Advocacy, Insight & Research Patrick McGee and the AFDO Disability Royal Commission Consultant, Natalie Wade, all gave evidence at the hearings.

Natalie Wade led AFDO 's responses to the following issues papers;

- » Promoting Inclusion
- » Safeguards and Quality
- » Rights and Attitudes
- » Criminal Justice System

AFDO also began work in 2020 - 2021 on providing Submissions to the Disability Royal Commission covering:

1. Good Practice in Disability and Justice and How Much It Costs (in partnership with Justice Reform Initiative)
2. Institutional Neglect in the Provision of Accessible Public Transport for People with Disability

In a private capacity, Patrick McGee, AFDO's National Manager - Systemic Advocacy, Insight & Research, also gave evidence to the February Hearings regarding the experiences of people with cognitive disability in the criminal justice system.

## Economic participation

Australia is a party to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD). Under articles 9 and 28 of these instruments respectively, the Australian Government is obliged to ensure that all persons with disabilities have access to social security, social protection and an adequate standard of living.

Australia's social security system is crucial to the realisation of this right, particularly through the payment of Disability Support Pension to people who cannot realize economic security through paid work participation.

Access to this form of income support is especially crucial due to the inaccessibility of meaningful, secure and appropriately remunerated employment for many persons with disabilities in Australia.

More fundamentally, the provision of adequate, accessible and disability-specific social security is necessary for the reduction and alleviation of poverty and promotion of the social inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) is concerned that changes to the Disability Support Pension, and the wider social security system, in recent decades have led to the exclusion of many persons with disabilities from access to essential social security.

AFDO Members have repeatedly endorsed systemic advocacy around social security and specifically the Disability Support Pension.

Key Outcomes in the Social Security space include

- The establishment of the AFDO Technical Experts on Social Security Working Group (TESS)
- Representation to government regarding the impact of COVID 19 on people relying on income support
- Member of Services Australia Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAG)
- Advocacy to establish a senate inquiry into the DSP
- Authoring a report on the impact on people with disability of institutional economic neglect for the Disability Royal Commission
- Authoring a Submission for the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into the Purpose, Intent, and Adequacy of the Disability Support Pension
- Advocacy with the Department of Social Services to include people with disability as a 4th stream of consultation for the Review of the Impairment Tables

<sup>1</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *General Comment No 19 (2008): The Right to Social Security*, 39th sess, UN Doc E/C.12/GC/19 (4 February 2008) para 3; United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities*, 70th sess, UN Doc A/70/297 (7 August 2015) para 7.



- Facilitating three online workshops with welfare rights and disability right agencies on the DSP covering:
  - » The Future of Social Security for People with Disability
  - » The Review of the Impairment Tables
  - » Access to Social Security for First Nations People with Disability on Remote Communities / Reviewing the Program of Support.

## Access to Justice

Access to Justice issues affecting people with disability continues to be a key policy priority area for AFDO and its Members Organisations as it has been since the release of the report by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2014 “Equal Before the Law”. AFDO remains highly concerned about the impact of access to the NDIS for people with disability involved in the criminal justice system.

## Quarterly National Virtual Disability and Justice Workshops

Concerned about the absence of a national conversation about disability and justice, in November 2020 AFDO facilitated the first of its quarterly national virtual meetings. Attended by approximately 50 disability and justice professionals, the quarterly meetings aim to provide participants with access to emerging and ongoing issues in the access to justice space for people with disability.

- November 2020 – Discussed the Disability Royal Commission Hearings into the Use of Psychotropic Medication on people with disability in disability facilities

- March 2021 – Discussed developing disability justice standards for use in the criminal justice
- June 2021 discussed the interaction of people with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder and their interaction with the Criminal Justice System

## Access to Human Rights Protections for NDIS Participants Detained Under Forensic Orders for the Purposes of Treatment

In October 2020 AFDO facilitated a National Workshop focused on ‘Taking the Temperature: Concerns Regarding Human Rights Protections for NDIS Participants Detained Under Forensic Orders for the Purposes of Treatment in the context of the Review of the Quality and Safeguards Commission by the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS.

Attended by representatives from all states and territories the workshop concluded that there was universal concerns regarding access to the national rights protection held by representatives of all states and territories that people with disability. The concern centered on the fact that because forensic detention and treatment processes were funded by states and territories, that NDIS participants detained under that regime were not eligible to access rights protections mechanisms such as those provided by the federally Quality and Safeguards Commission.

AFDO provided evidence on this issue to a number of different mechanisms:

1. The NDIS Joint Standing Committee Hearing on the Review of the Quality and Safeguards Commission in October 2020
2. The Special Hearing convened specially by the NDIS Joint Standing Committee on this issue in May 2020
3. To the Department of Social Services at a meeting of DSS and Quality and Safeguards Representatives in June 2020 where a commitment was made to host a national meeting on the issue in the future.

AFDO's systemic advocacy regarding this issue is ongoing;

## Dismantling Indefinite Detention

The 2014 and 2019 Concluding Observations by the Committee for the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability asked Australia to dismantle its Indefinite Detention Regime.

In partnership with the Federal Attorneys-General Department, AFDO has been working towards hosting a national workshop on how to develop a process lead by the Commonwealth, and operationalised by the states and territories, to dismantle indefinite detention.

The National Workshop is expected to be held in the second half of 2021.

## AFDO's Contribution to the Review of the National Disability Strategy

The *National Disability Strategy 2010-2020* has been a guiding document for national disability policy and legislation for almost 10 years. Over the course of 2020 the Strategy has undergone a review in preparation for the launch of a new National Disability Strategy 2020 – 2030. The National Disability Strategy is the main way that Australia shapes and implements its obligations set out in the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability

The current National Disability Strategy aims *'to guide government activity across mainstream and disability-specific areas of public policy, drive improved performance of mainstream services in delivering outcomes for people with disability, and provide leadership towards greater inclusion of people with disability.'*<sup>2</sup>

In 2020 AFDO advocated that the Department of Social Services host a series of workshops with Disability Representative Organisations and Disability Advocacy Organisations to facilitate advocacy sector specific advice on the framework, content, implementation and review of the new Strategy. A series of three workshops were held in late 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Social Services "The Right to Opportunity – Consultation Report to Help Shape the Next National Disability Strategy" December 2019

## National Advocacy Campaign to Oppose Changes to the NDIS Legislation Including Implementing Independent Assessments

In late 2020, the National Disability Insurance Agency announced that it would be implementing a range of NDIA “Independent Assessments” for new entrants & existing participants in the Scheme.

The way the NDIA went about its unsubstantiated and unproven push for these changes created distress and significant concern for people with disability, their families, carers, supporters, sector representative organisations, along with other stakeholders within and external to the sector.

AFDO and our members rallied with sector-wide representative organisations against these changes as they were a fundamental assault on the principles under which the Australian community had agreed to the implementation of the Scheme. The then Minister for the NDIS, the NDIA & DSS, also had some mooted changes to the NDIS Act, Regulations & Rules, undermining the Scheme.

We entered 2021 with a new Minister for NDIS, Senator, the Hon. Linda Reynolds, who set about discussing changes with representative organisations & PwD. The NDIA driven approach to their Independent Assessments and mooted legislative changes continued. In a dramatic display of the power of people with disability, their families, carers, supporters and sector representative organisations, the State/Territory Disability Ministers said no to the Federal NDIS Minister and IA's along with significant legislative changes were stopped!

We won this battle, but the vigilance to protect the integrity of our NDIS continues.

## Getting The Most out of Your NDIS Plan – The ILC Jobs & Market Fund

As the NDIS matured people with disability, their families and community grew more familiar with the funding and planning mechanisms of having an NDIS Plan. In this context AFDO recognised the need to skill up people with disability to increase their choice and control in how they managed their Plans and increase their personal agency.

In 2019, AFDO was successful in receiving a grant from the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program (ILC) to provide information and resources to NDIS participants to maximize the potential outcomes and benefits of their NDIS Plan.

This project commenced in 2020 and was originally designed as 47 face to face workshops to be delivered in metropolitan, regional and remote areas nationally, and a smaller series of online workshops. AFDO recruited 14 facilitators with disability, from across each state and territory to present the workshops.

However, the advent of COVID-19, combined with lockdowns and other restrictions affecting large parts of the country, meant face to face delivery of workshops was scaled back. Where face to face workshops could still be held a concurrent Zoom workshop was offered as well.

The ‘Getting The Most out of Your NDIS Plan’ project will be completed in December 2021.

## Individual Capacity Building Project

AFDO leads a consortium of its Member Organisations, funded under the Information Linkages and Capacity Building Program (ILC) in the delivery of a two part project aimed at providing people with disability the skills and confidence to participate and contribute to the community and protect their rights.

Part A is the selection and customising of a fully accessible Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for each consortium partner. The discovery and needs analysis phase of this process has been completed. A Steering Committee of consortium Members has been assembled to oversee implementation of the CRM. This will be followed by training and support to each organisation.

Part B is a national program, developed and co-designed by and for people with disability, or their families, in-line with each participating consortium organisations membership identified requirements. The program provides training, mentoring, peer-support and information, resources and tools on a range of topics connecting with a minimum of 4,960 individuals at over 155 events. Delivery of the program is via a mix of face to face and online events and resources.

The two parts of the project are being delivered concurrently across the entire funding period which began in February 2020 and will conclude in February 2023.

The Members of the Individual Capacity Building consortium are;

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (Lead)

- Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4)
- Blind Citizens Australia (BCA)
- Brain Injury Australia (BIA)
- Deaf Australia (DA)
- Deafblind Australia (DBA)
- Disability Justice Australia (DJA)
- Enhanced Lifestyles
- Physical Disability Australia (PDA)
- People with Disabilities ACT (PWD ACT)
- People with Disabilities WA (PWD WA)

## National Disability Research Agenda Project: Consultation Phase 2

National Disability Research Partnership (NDRP) is looking to set the national agenda for disability research over the next decade. This project, the National Disability Research Agenda Project (NDRA) has three phases; research mapping; consultation and prioritisation for the final research agenda.

The Centre for Disability Studies (CDS) at the University of Sydney led Phase 2 of the Project, a collaboration between universities, Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs), disability advocacy groups, including AFDO, and disability service providers.

In May and June this year AFDO extended an invitation to all its Member Organisations to participate in Phase 2 via a national consultation process. This process sought input from people with disability and their representatives to better understand the perspectives of people with

disability about research priorities and perceived gaps in existing research. Members were offered options to attend small focus groups, have a one on one discussion or contribute a written response.

The resulting feedback was collated and delivered to the NDRA and will contribute to shaping Australia's disability research agenda into the future.

## AFDO's Expert Consultants

### Natalie Wade – AFDO Disability Royal Commission Consultant

Natalie Wade is a long term disability advocate and the Founder and Principal Lawyer of Equality Lawyers, a law firm which provides everyday legal services to people with disability, their families and supporters. Prior to founding Equality Lawyers, Natalie was a solicitor within the South Australian Government. In 2015, Natalie was appointed as a solicitor to the South Australian Child Protection Systems Royal Commission. During her time with the Royal Commission, Natalie worked a range of children protection systems issues including those faced by children with disability. In 2016, Natalie was awarded Australian Young Lawyer of the Year for her work on the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission.

In partnership with Patrick McGee, National Manager - Systemic Advocacy, Insight & Research, Natalie led AFDO's systemic advocacy activities that promoted the work of the Disability Royal Commission. This work is funded via a grant from the Disability Royal Commission into Violence Abuse and Neglect.

Key outcomes included;

- On behalf of AFDO provided evidence to the Disability Royal Commission Hearing the experiences of people with disability during the pandemic
- Providing regular advice to AFDO Members to enable a deeper understanding of the Disability Royal Commission including how to write a Submission to the Disability Royal Commission and a series of articles
- Chairing the National Online Justice Workshop involving the Disability Royal Commission and disability justice advocates
- Authoring articles for AFDO and its members on the following subjects
  - » Keeping people safe in the community (the role of the Community Visitor Scheme and other oversight bodies) - What systems are needed to keep people safe?
  - » The Abuse of Deaf Jurors in Australia - Why can't Deaf people be jurors and how can it be changed?
  - » Treatment of students with disabilities in schools - When does this treatment become violence, abuse and neglect and who is responsible for responding?

### Geoff Trappett OAM – AFDO Transport Consultant and Chair, National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network

Over the last twelve months, Geoff further built the AFDO initiated National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN) and developed its profile as a thought leader in inclusive transport.



This work is well respected by transport providers as well as state, territory and federal jurisdictions and continues with a view to building an inclusive transport system throughout Australia.

Key outcomes for NITAN included:

- Representing NITAN and AFDO in the Modernisation of Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport (DSAPT) through the National Accessible Transport Task Force led by the Department of Infrastructure, Regional Development and Transport
- Worked with AFDO and its partner, LaTrobe University, investigating the merits of autonomous vehicle technology to enable the disabled community
- Led the development and submission of NITAN submissions to multiple policy and regulatory investigations including:
  - » First Regulatory Impact Statement investigating the proposed modernisation of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport
  - » DSAPT exemption application by the Australasian Railways Association to the Australian Human Rights Commission
  - » Austroad Fitness to Drive regulations ensuring the disabled voice is present in this regulatory instrument
  - » Evidence to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee investigating the capability of the Australian Public Service with respect to inclusive transport policy.

## Natasha Thomson – AFDO Social Security Consultant - Tess working Group

Natasha Thomson is a person with lived experience of the Disability Support Pension (DSP). She represents the DSP Lived Experience on the AFDO Technical Experts on Social Security Working Group as well as representing AFDO on the DSP Help Project with Social Security Rights Victoria and at the Services Australia Disability Peaks Meeting.

Natasha has successfully brought to the systemic advocacy conversation involving social security the ability to talk directly and personally regarding applying for, and having decisions reviewed about, the Disability Support Pension. Systemically articulating a personal account of the DSP allows for a different quality of conversation, framing the issues facing people with disability interacting with the social security space in the context of lived experience.

Most notably, Natasha has lead the coordination and collection of stories from people with disability and lived experience of the DSP for the AFDO Submission to Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs Inquiry into the Purpose, Adequacy and Intent of the DSP. This invaluable collection of stories from people with disability about their DSP experience is the backbone of the current AFDO Submission on the DSP.

## **Eva Sifis – AFDO Inclusion in the Arts Consultant**

Eva's main focus has been as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Autonomy, Diversity & Disability: Everyday Practices of Technology (ADDEPT Project) at Western Sydney University in partnership with Associate Professor Karen Soldatic who leads the Project. The ADDEPT Project looks to understand how diverse communities use technology in their everyday life. It examines how and when bias and other technology issues impede, frustrate or disadvantage two distinct groups: people with disability, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds. In this context Eva has facilitated consultation with self-advocates about their use of technology.

Eva has also represented AFDO in the Finance and Public Administration References Committee Senate Inquiry into the Current Capability of the Australian Public Service (APS) where Eva addressed the impact on people with cognitive impairments of the process of digitisation of Services Australia process.

## **Jody Barney – AFDO First Nations Disability & Cultural Consultant**

Jody Barney is a Birri-Gubba / Urangan woman from Queensland who lives on Yorta Yorta Country in Shepparton. Jody is Deaf and works as a Deaf Indigenous Community Consultant and has been involved with AFDO since 2007.

Jody's role as First Nations Disability & Cultural Consultant with AFDO is threefold:

1. To advise AFDO on emerging First Nations systemic disability issues

2. Provide First Nations Disability advice guidance to AFDO on developing responses to First Nations systemic disability issues
3. Along with the CEO to represent First Nations People with Disability when AFDO speaks publicly about First Nations systemic disability issues

Jody has undertaken the following activities:

- At AFDO public events Jody Barney provides acknowledgement of country
- Provided First Nations perspectives to the Civil Society Advisory Group facilitated conversation with the remote services team about improving access to social security for First Nations Australians with disability
- Participated in the development of the Submission responding to the Review of the Quality and Safeguards Commission
- Represented First Nations Disability and Justice perspectives at the AFDO Disability and Justice Quarterly Meetings
- Facilitated discussion with the Audit and Risk Committee with Victorian Disability Workers Commission regarding representation of First Nations People with Disability
- Discussed First Nations Over-representation in the criminal justice system with Justice Reform Initiative
- Facilitated a focus group of First Nations Perspectives regarding premises standards
- Represented AFDO in the external review of the draft of the resource regarding prevention of violence against women with disability

# Policy Submissions

Over the 2020-2021 financial year, AFDO contributed to the following policy submissions:

## Submissions

- National Disability Employment Strategy
- Nothing About Us Without Us - Submission to the NDIS Joint Standing Committee on Independent Assessments
- Review of NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission
- Consumer Safeguards Review: Release of the Part C (Choice and fairness Discussion Paper) AFDO contributed and supported ACCAN
- Joint Statement to the Disability Royal Commission on the experiences of people with disability during the pandemic
- In partnership with My Voice AFDO supported the Titjikala Community of the Northern Territory to provide a Submission to the Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into Food Pricing and Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities

For further details please visit [www.afdo.org.au/our-work/policy-work/](http://www.afdo.org.au/our-work/policy-work/)



# Improving Employment Opportunities for People with Disability

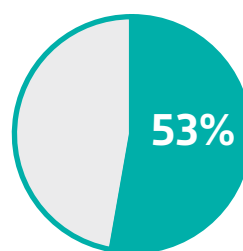
Access to sustainable employment remains out of reach for almost half of Australians with disability. Participating in the workforce is important for social inclusion and financial independence and both physical & mental health. Having a disability can impact on a person's ability and opportunities to participate in paid work due to employers' misconceptions, lack of awareness of disability and of the benefits that people with disability can bring to every team and organisation.

## The facts

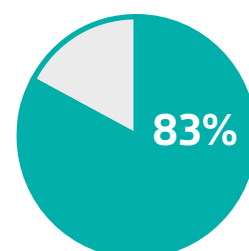
### Participation in the workforce

- **53% working-age people with disability participate in the labour force, compared to 83% working-age people without a disability**

***“participate in the workforce” means employed or actively looking for work, despite attempts by many governments this hasn’t improved in over 30 years!***



Working-age people with disability



Working-age people without a disability

- Australia ranks way down the list being 21 out of the 29 OECD countries for labour force participation of people with a disability
- 48% working-age people with disability are employed, compared with 79% without disability
- 51% of working-age men with disability are employed, compared with 84% without disability
- 23% of working-age men with severe or profound disability are employed
- 45% of working-age women with disability are employed, compared with 74% without disability
- 20% of working-age women with severe or profound disability are employed

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2018

## Advantages of employing people with disability

There are significant business benefits when employing someone with disability— benefits beyond just filling a job. These advantages have been confirmed in both Australian and international studies highlighting:

- **Reliable** - people with disability take fewer days off, take less sick leave and have a higher retention rate than other workers. The costs to business of absenteeism and sick leave for employees with disability can be as low as 34% of the cost incurred by their colleagues.
- **Productive** - once in the right job, people with disability perform equally as well as other employees.
- **Affordable** - recruitment, insurance cover and compensation costs are lower. People with disability have fewer compensation incidents and accidents at work in comparison to other employees.
- **Good for business** - people with disability build strong relationships with customers and boost staff morale and loyalty by helping to create a diverse workforce. Teamwork is further enhanced. Real cost savings are realised through reduced turnover, recruitment and retraining costs. Hiring people with disability also enhances the company's image among its staff, community and customers with positive benefits to the employer's brand.



# Barriers to People with Disability and Employment

Participation in employment for people with disability is central to achieving social inclusion, as well as contributing to good mental and physical health, personal well-being and self-worth. This is the same for people without disability and is a feature of our society.

## Barriers to employment

For people with disability, there are many barriers to finding employment. The barriers to employment for people with disability are linked to prejudice, stigma, stereotypes and discrimination.

Some of these barriers can include:

- Misinformed attitudes towards disability (i.e. people with disability are costly to employ and are less productive than people without disability)
- Employers' lack of understanding, awareness and confidence to talk about disability and its impact on those who are already working in their business or for those who could work for their organisation.
- Inaccessible workplaces and a belief that it will be an expensive process to achieve due to a lack of understanding that simple solutions can also be low or no cost to make a business more accessible for staff as well as potential customers
- Lack of visibility, with people with disability not well-represented in public roles, making it difficult to recognise their potential. Due to opportunities not being made available and a lot of attention on people with disability in sporting achievements but little profile on the many in organisations and industry achieving and thriving in their roles.

- Lack of career development opportunities, including limited professional development and skills training, being passed over for promotion and higher duties, lack of job rotation etc. The "invisibility" of people with disability in considerations in an organisation due to lack of awareness, understanding or other attitudes.

Some of these barriers are real and some are perceived, but what matters is that they remain entrenched. Despite a grim current picture, people with disability have significant potential that can be brought to the workforce in a wide range of industries and positions, from entry level, to management, CEO and Board.





## Lack of employment opportunities for partial capacity to work

There are significant challenges for people with disability to obtain any employment who have a partial capacity to work assessed at less than eight hours as they aren't eligible to participate in the Job Access or Disability Employment Services programs, yet there are many organisations who would have roles that could be suitable by either looking at their current resource requirements or by "job carving".

This involves reviewing a current position and taking off tasks that have been taken up over time by a particular role that are not aimed at the principle focus of that position and creating a new role covering these tasks. It ensures that the existing role focuses on its primary responsibilities and provides an opportunity for a person with disability to be engaged to undertake the newly formed role. It adds to the organisations productivity, efficiency, staff satisfaction and bottom line.



## Discrimination in employment

A person with disability has a right to the same employment opportunities as a person without disability. If a person with disability can do the main activities or 'inherent requirements' of a job, then they should have an equal opportunity to do that job.

However, research shows that there is widespread discrimination against people with disability in employment, with 20% of complaints received by the Australian Human Rights Commission over 2019/2020 related to this aspect.

- Labour force status of working-age people with disability, by whether have experienced discrimination
- 54.9% of people with disability who were employed, unemployed or not in the labour force (voluntary, domestic work, etc) experienced discrimination
- 45% (or 39,000) who experienced disability discrimination from an employer or work colleague, avoided work
- 21% (or 43,000) who experienced disability discrimination from another source, avoided work

*Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019*

## BIDS, the “missing Piece” for employment participation of people with disability

AFDO runs the Business Inclusion & Diversity Services (BIDS), formerly known as the Diversity Field Officer Service (DFOS), which includes Deakin University as our evaluation partner. This service focuses on understanding small to medium business and assisting them to build their “disability confidence” to become welcoming, inclusive and accessible.

The service supports employers to make the most of the talents that people with disability can bring to a workplace, who then play an important role in changing attitudes for the better in Australia. In addition, the service provides information and mentoring services that enables many businesses to modify their premises (at low or no cost), operations and policies, as well as being more inclusive and supportive to all employees.

To date, we have worked closely with 112 businesses in the Greater Geelong region and as their “disability confidence” has grown, it has resulted in 127 employment pathways being generated, ranging from open employment, internships and traineeships, through to job carving and work experience opportunities.

We have developed a greater awareness of disability and shone a light on the barriers faced by people with disability, with 842 businesses receiving tailored information or attending training sessions on various topics. Whilst, it has been done from a disability lens, it also encourages greater diversity in the workforce and opens the door for these discussions across the community.



**Business Inclusion  
& Diversity Services**  
Building disability confidence

In addition to generating employment pathways, participating businesses have also made accessibility and customer-focused improvements. This goes to improving their organisation for all staff and customers as well as their bottom line.

Employment of people with disability increased from a starting base of 25% to an end result of 63% of participating businesses employing staff with disability.

75% of participating businesses planned to implement or had implemented at least one of the BIDS suggested interventions for the employment of people with disabilities. The most commonly reported included:

- Use of welcoming wording in all job applications (31%)
- Introducing work experience as part of their employment offerings (31%)
- Changing discussion on mental health in the work place (63%)

93% of businesses reported being more confident to support a staff member who disclosed a disability.

By showcasing local businesses who have embraced accessibility and employment of people with disability, it has opened up the idea to others and shown the potential effects this can have on both their business and the community as a whole.



## Passport 2 Employment

A strong collaboration between Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), South West LLEN and AFDO along with multiple service providers, has seen the successful delivery of three meaningful and engaging Passport 2 Employment (P2E) programs over the past 12 months in Greater Geelong and the Colac Otway Shire.

AFDO has been the auspice for P2E in the Geelong region for the last 5 years thanks to generous funding by a Give Where You Live Foundation community grant.

Students with disabilities face significant barriers to transitioning from secondary education to tertiary education and then into the workforce. Outcomes for people with disability are generally poorer in regional and rural areas. This includes poorer physical, social, health and education outcomes of young people with disability as compared to metropolitan centres.

To address these issues, the P2E program was developed to provide disability specific transition support to build the skills and confidence of young people with disability to participate fully in their regional and rural communities and in future work, education and adult life. The key focus of the P2E program is Education with a strong link to Employment and primarily develop work ready skills for the participating students.

COVID-19 restrictions meant that modifications were necessary, but the program was still well received with the concerted effort of 45 students with disability, teachers, support staff, guest speakers and hosts being flexible and maintaining their focus on achieving their specific goals within P2E.

Feedback from students and schools suggest that Passport 2 Employment has once again been successful and continues to be a worthwhile program, relevant to students stepping into the early stages of employment opportunities and future pathways.

# National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)



The NDIS has now been in existence for seven years and is supporting over 449,998 participants to access the supports they need to live the life they choose. AFDO continues to work with its members, government and community to ensure that the NDIS meets the needs of people with disability.

## The facts

As of the 31st March 2021:

- Almost 449,998 Australians are being supported by the NDIS
- Over the last twelve months, there have been 229,151 new participants join the NDIS
- There were approximately 10,840 children receiving supports in the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) gateway
- 30,763 Australians being supported by the NDIS are Indigenous Australians
- 42,265 Australians being supported by the NDIS are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

As of the 30th June 2021:

- 151,431 participants (34%) have Autism as their primary disability
- 91,309 participants (21%) have Intellectual disability as their primary disability
- 48,458 participants (10%) have Psychosocial disability as their primary disability

DRO meeting with Senator  
the Hon. Linda Reynolds



## National Disability and Carer Alliance and the Every Australia Counts Campaign

The National Disability and Carer Alliance was established in 2009 by three peak organisations in the disability sector. These organisations included AFDO – representing people with disability; Carers Australia – representing families and carers; and National Disability Services (NDS) – representing disability service providers and they expanded its membership including Mental Health Australia for their expertise in this area. The focus of the Alliance is public advocacy on behalf of the disability sector.

In its early years, this alliance of organisations created the Every Australian Counts (EAC) campaign. This was one of the driving forces behind the increase in public and political support for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Once the Federal and State governments committed to the NDIS, the Alliance began providing advice on how to put the scheme into place. It now works to maintain this bipartisan support for the NDIS and continues to actively ensure that the scheme delivers on its promise for people with Disability of “choice and control”.

EAC, whilst created by the Alliance, operates and directs all campaign directions based solely on the views provided from its significant national “grassroots” supporter base. Many supporters have been engaged with the campaign since the first push for a national scheme and remain firmly committed to delivering on the promise of the NDIS for people with disability.

Recent EAC campaign activities were directed at ensuring the voice of people with disability and the supporters were heard loud and clear by all governments on the proposed introduction of NDIA Independent Assessments and mooted changes to the NDIS Act and legislation. EAC along with the wider sector and individuals work resulted in the Federal Government abandoning NDIA Independent Assessments and revising down any proposed Act or legislative changes.



# International Partnerships

AFDO International Working group comprises of Trevor Carroll, Christine Hunter, Mary Henley-Collopy & Ross Joyce, CEO. This had its first meeting on the 29th April 2021 with the aim of coordinating all of the below International partnerships by the development of a Terms of Reference for consideration and approval by the board.

## Disabled People's International



AFDO is the Australian representative for DPI. Trevor Carroll was elected in 2016 to the Board of Directors as International Officer and as Chairperson of the Asia-Pacific region. He was due for re-election by DPI members to both positions in 2020, but due to Covid his term has been extended until 2023. The Board of Directors meets approximately eight times per year at 9 AM New York time.

DPI was established in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons. 39 years after it was formed, DPI continues to be the world's only cross-disability global Disabled People's Organisation (DPO). It is in partnership with the United Nations. DPI has national disability organisational members in over 130 countries, 31 in the Asia Pacific

[www.disabledpeoplesinternational.org](http://www.disabledpeoplesinternational.org)

## United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)



On the 23rd July 2019 the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Committee granted Special Consultative Status to AFDO in recognition of our:

- Specialized competence and knowledge,
- Hands-on experience,
- Flexibility; and
- Capacity to influence the work of ECOSOC

ECOSOC, established under the United Nations Charter, is the principal organisation that coordinates economic, social, and related work of the 14 UN specialised agencies. It serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system.

[www.un.org/ecosoc](http://www.un.org/ecosoc)



## International Disability Alliance



International Disability Alliance (IDA) is an alliance of networks which brings together over 1,100 peak organisations of persons with disabilities and their families from across eight global and six regional networks including the Pacific Disability Forum of which AFDO is a full member.

Two of our AFDO member organisations have held the Chair role for IDA. Maryanne Diamond (Blind Citizens Australia), and Colin Allen (Deaf Australia). [www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org)

## Pacific Disability Forum



AFDO is a full member of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF). The PDF is a regional peak body that works in partnership with Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) in the Pacific region. It is funded by DFAT. Trevor Carroll is AFDO's representative on the Executive.

As part of its mission to improve the situation of persons with disabilities, it runs programs for women and youth with disabilities, research, advocacy, capacity building and development. [www.pacificdisability.org](http://www.pacificdisability.org)

## The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICT's (G3ict)



AFDO is a partner member of G3ict through Disabled People's International. The G3ict Research Committee collects data via a survey completed every 18 months by Trevor Carroll on behalf of Australia and AFDO in relation to article 9 of the UNCRPD. This is then collated into the Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation (DARE) index on which Australia ranks second in the world. [www.g3ict.org](http://www.g3ict.org)

## Australian Disability Development Consortium



Trevor Carroll represents AFDO on the Executive which meets monthly to advocate to DFAT for disability to be fully integrated into all Australian International development programs and policies.

Australian Disability Development Consortium (ADDc) is an Australian based, international network focusing attention, expertise and action on disability issues in developing countries; building on a human rights platform for disability advocacy.

Its mission is to promote the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in development activities, advocating that disability be fully integrated into all Australian development programs and policies. [www.addc.org.au](http://www.addc.org.au)

# Media & Communications

A big part of our work is raising awareness of issues impacting people with disability. We do this through media interviews and media releases, as well as through our newsletters and social media channels.

## Media releases

- [42 disability rights and advocacy organisations call for an end to the segregation of disabled people in Australia](#)
- [Open letter to the Attorney-General, The Hon. Christian Porter MP](#)
- [The NDIA and Victorian Government must prioritise people with disability so they do not suffer in Stage 4 lockdowns](#)
- [Disability Sector calls for greater accountability re NDIA settlement outcomes](#)

## Newsletters

AFDO releases two eNewsletters – [AFDO eNews](#) and [Disability Loop eNews](#) (NDIS news).

You can subscribe to our newsletters here:

- AFDO eNews at [www.afdo.org.au](http://www.afdo.org.au)
- Disability Loop eNews at [www.disabilityloop.org.au](http://www.disabilityloop.org.au)



eNewsletters  
subscribers

New 164  
**Total 5,324**  
subscribers



Twitter  
followers

New 1,266  
**Total 11,147**  
followers



Facebook  
followers

New 2,549  
**Total 6,724**  
followers



Linked In  
followers

New 606  
**Total 2,211**  
followers

# Directors Report

The Board is responsible for the governance of AFDO in accordance with the Corporations Act, the Australian Charities & Not For Profit Commission Regulations and the AFDO Constitution.

The Board was made up of the following Member nominated, or Board-appointed Directors throughout the 2020 – 2021 Financial Year:

## **Liz Reid**

**President**

Nominated by Physical Disability Australia  
Person with disability

## **Trevor Carroll**

**Vice President**

Nominated by Disability Justice Australia  
Person with disability

## **Janine Neu**

**Vice President**

Nominated by People with Disabilities WA  
Person with disability

## **Christine Hunter**

**Treasurer**

Nominated by Deafness Forum of Australia  
Person with disability

## **John Simpson (Resigned 21/06/21)**

**Director**

Nominated by Blind Citizens Australia  
Person with disability

## **Nick Rushworth**

**Director**

Nominated by Brain Injury Australia  
Person with disability

## **Debbie Kennewell**

**Director**

Nominated by Deaf Australia  
Person with disability

## **Belinda O'Connor**

**Director**

Nominated by Women with Disabilities ACT  
Person with disability

## **Mary Henley-Collopy (Resigned 30/05/21)**

**Director**

Nominated by Disability Resources Centre  
Person with disability

## **Grant Lindsay (appointed 19/10/20)**

**Director**

Nominated by Down Syndrome Australia  
Person with lived experience of disability

## **Richard Dent**

**Director**

Board Appointed for  
Leadership and Governance expertise  
Person with lived experience of disability

## Business registrations

ACN: 105 510 898

ABN: 25 105 510 898

### **National Office:**

Level 1, The Realm, 18 National Circuit,  
Barton, ACT 2600

### **Melbourne & Registered Business Office:**

552 Victoria Street,  
North Melbourne VIC 3051

### **Brisbane Office:**

Suite 902/ Level 9 Toowong Tower,  
9 Sherwood Road,  
Toowong QLD 4066

### **Sydney Office:**

Level 14, 3 Parramatta Square,  
153 Macquarie Street,  
Parramatta NSW 2150

AFDO is a Public Benevolent Institution and  
a Registered Charity with the Australian Charities  
and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC)

## Board meetings

### **The Board met seven times during the 2020-21 Financial Year**

10th September 2020

21st September 2020

20th October 2020

23rd March 2021

6th May 2021

8th June 2021

28th June 2021

## Executive Committee composition and meetings

The Executive is elected by the Board and comprised of the President, Vice Presidents and Treasurer.

The Executive Committee meet in between Board meetings, to ensure governance matters are addressed and continuity of AFDO operations. The Executive met two times between Board meetings by video conference during the 2020-21 financial year;

17th August 2020

29th April 2021

## Finance Committee composition and meetings

The Finance Committee is comprised of the President and Treasurer, resourced by the CEO & CFO, and all Directors are able to attend any meetings. It met five times by videoconference during the 2020-21 financial year;

17th September 2020

19th November 2020

25th February 2021

27th May 2021

24th June 2021

### **Company Secretary**

**Ross Joyce**

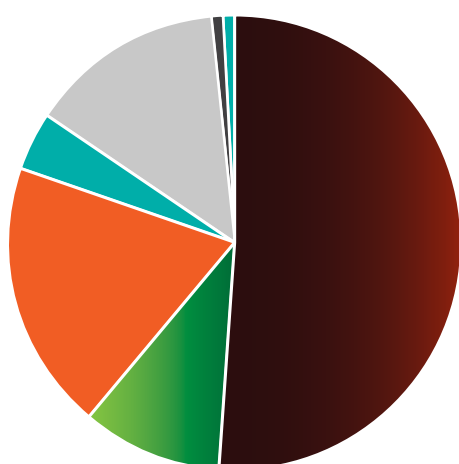


# Financial Snapshot

## 2020 - 2021 Results

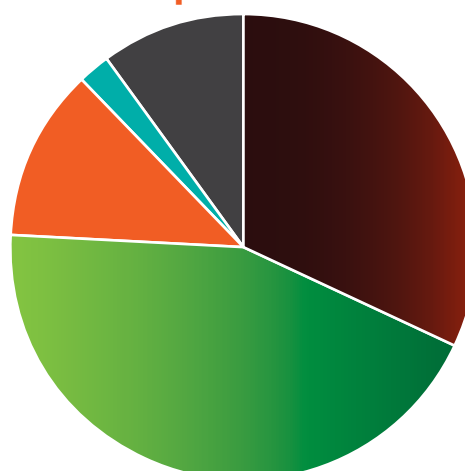
Total Revenue.....	\$3,358,216
Total Expenditure.....	\$3,202,994
<b>Result - Surplus or (Deficit).....</b>	<b>\$155,222</b>
Total Members Equity – Current.....	\$620,387
Previous Year.....	\$465,135
<b>Result – Increase or (Decrease).....</b>	<b>\$155,222</b>

### Income



- Grants other sources.....> 51%
- Department of Social Services (DRO).....> 10%
- Disability Royal Commission .....< 19%
- Job Keeper – COVID-19.....< 4%
- Donations/Other.....< 14%
- Investment interest.....< 30%
- Membership fees.....< 06%

### Expenditure



- Employment expenses.....< 32%
- Consortium distribution.....< 44%
- Consultancy.....> 12%
- Participation / Accessibility.....< 2%
- Operating / Other.....> 10%

**Note 1: Consortium Distribution** - Refers to funding obtained by AFDO for projects or other funded activities and distributed to AFDO national Full members or other AFDO members as part of undertaking these activities. **Total Distribution: \$1,436,334**

**Note 2: DeafBlind Australia** - AFDO continued its auspice of the operations, undertaking employment of staff and full financial management. From the 1st July 2021 DBA will undertake its own employment and financial management ending the auspice arrangement after 4 years.

**Note 3: Every Australian Counts by National Disability & Carer Alliance** - AFDO auspices the operations, undertaking employment of staff and full financial management.



**Australian Federation of  
Disability Organisations**

Our vision is that all people with disabilities must be involved  
equally in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life.