

# Australian Federation of Disability Organisations



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Annual Report 2021 – 2022



Australian Federation of  
Disability Organisations

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## 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>NGO</b> Non Governmental Organisation
<b>AFDO</b> Australian Federation of Disability Organisations	<b>DSS</b> Department of Social Services	<b>GST</b> Goods and Services Tax	<b>NITAN</b> National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network
<b>AGM</b> Annual General Meeting	<b>DPI</b> Disabled Peoples' International	<b>IDA</b> International Disability Alliance	<b>P2E</b> Passport 2 Employment
<b>ADS</b> Australia's Disability Strategy	<b>DRC</b> Disability Royal Commission	<b>LLEN</b> Local Learning and Employment Network	<b>TESS</b> Technical Experts Social Security
<b>BIDS</b> Business Inclusion & Diversity Services	<b>DPO</b> Disabled People's Organisation	<b>NDIA</b> National Disability Insurance Agency	<b>UNCRPD</b> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CoSP</b> Conference of States Parties		<b>NDIS</b> National Disability Insurance Scheme	

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 the quality of some of the photos in this year's Annual Report may vary. We always try to have good quality photos, but with a year of online meetings and forums, we have been limited to 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 2022–2025

To represent the interests and united voice of our members and people with disability at a national and international level in all relevant forums.

To build the capacity, profile, reputation and sustainability of AFDO through the strength of our member organisations.

To enhance the connection & influence of AFDO in international disability initiatives by policy, advocacy & engagement, focused on the Asia Pacific region.





## 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

[Advocacy for Inclusion](#)

[Arts Access Australia](#)

[Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia](#)

[Blind Citizens Australia](#)

[Brain Injury Australia](#)

[Deaf Australia](#)

[Deafblind Australia](#)

[Deafness Forum 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 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](#)

[Explorability Inc](#)

[Leadership Plus](#)

[Multiple Sclerosis Australia](#)

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

[Star Victoria](#)

[TASC National Limited](#)

[Youth Disability Advocacy Service](#)

## Full members of AFDO



## Associate members of AFDO



# First Peoples

## Our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) 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.

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.



Pikilyi Jukurrpa  
(Vaughan Springs Dreaming)  
Artist: Ivy Napangardi Poulson





# President & CEO Report

We wish to present our joint report on AFDO's achievements over the 2021 – 2022 financial year and highlight specific issues that remain a concern through our work.

2021 – 2022 proved to be a year which shifted from a predominantly COVID-19 focus, with the last of the lockdowns being experienced across a number of jurisdictions in the later part of 2021, to a complete easing of all restrictions over early 2022.

AFDO would like to remember and pay our respects to all those who have lost their lives in the pandemic to date, those who continue to die from COVID, and those who have had health issues exacerbated since it took hold. We acknowledge that the pandemic is far from over for many people with disability, those immuno-compromised, those still forced to maintain self-isolation, those with the effects of Long-COVID as well as those whose families and friends are also impacted and the many that carry the loss of a loved one.

The continuing health, welfare and economic impacts from COVID mean that our work must continue advocating for rights, access and assistance, ensuring that issues are raised with all governments regardless of the noticeable loss of interest, with the lifting of restrictions, from the media or wider community.

AFDO is a strong member focused organisation with thirty-two member organisations covering

disability specific communities and population groups nationally and with a foothold into every State & Territory. Collectively we have a reach of well over four million Australians being people with disability, their families, and supporters.

Our strength remains in our connection and engagement with our membership and through them to their communities which provide a unique and Australia wide understanding of the issues of significance and that matter for people with disability and their families. We ensure that these are raised, amplified and advocated for with not only the Federal, but with all levels of government.

We work collaboratively with governments to inform and ensure that best practice legislation is achieved, that legislative and policy reviews, changes or program initiatives are undertaken that will positively impact on our communities. We strongly advocate for change where this hasn't or isn't being achieved due to poor design, process, implementation, management, legislative or administrative controls or contrary to best practice, human rights, or other discriminatory practices.

AFDO continued strong advocacy and policy work with significant pieces continuing on the; Disability Royal Commission with several submissions across the hearings and program over the year; dismantling indefinite detention; implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment



(OPCAT); continuing auspice of our Technical & Expert Advisers of Social Security (TESS) meetings to discuss/highlight particular issues; Inclusive Employment submissions, applications and promotion; continuing to auspice our national Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN) and its work on the review of the National Transport Act & Regulations; participation in the next steps for the Australia's Disability Strategy and push for greater accountability and jurisdictional reporting; continued active international work with the Pacific Disability Forum, Disabled People's International, UN Council of State Parties and ECOSOC. There are many more highlights captured on our work in the remainder of this Report and on our website; [www.afdo.org.au](http://www.afdo.org.au)

As President, I'd like to thank and acknowledge the contribution of our Board, Management and Staff, who, along with all of our members, have positively contributed to our work on behalf of people with disability and their families right across Australia.

AFDO doesn't just happen and without great governance there would be no organisation, so I wish to thank my fellow Board Directors for their passion and commitment and commend our past Directors for their respective contributions. 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 we continue to advance.

From the CEO, it has been another challenging period, but I am pleased with how we have navigated through this and continued to push forward on many issues that are a priority of our members and for people with disability and their families. I thank our President Liz, and the entire Board for their ongoing commitment and support and for their professionalism. We could not have made such progress without all our members and our amazing AFDO Staff, Consultants and Expert Advisers, so to each of them I give my thanks.

We don't just rest on our achievements over the last twelve months and continue to ensure that we are ready to take further steps in protecting and ensuring the rights of people with disability and their families in any environments through our strength in advocacy by collaborating with our members and 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 in the following committees and working groups.

## International representation

Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC)  
Disabled Peoples' International (DPI)  
International Disability Alliance (IDA)  
The Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ict)  
Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)  
SustainedAbility Disability & Climate Network / Disability Caucus  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

## Australian representation

Assistive Technology for All (ATFA)  
Aviation Access Forum (AAF)  
Australian Electoral Commission Disability Advisory Committee  
NDIA CEO Forum  
Dept. of Human Services Welfare Payment Infrastructure Transformation (WPIT) Services Australia  
Disability Support IRC  
Disability Gateway Reference Group  
Not-for-profit Stewardship Group - Australian Taxation Office  
DSS National Disability Strategy Reform Steering Group  
NDIS Quality & Safeguard Commission – Disability Sector Consultative Committee  
National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN)  
Australian Public Service Commission Disability Employment Working Group

## Australian representation (continued)

Services Australia Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG)

NDIS Utilisation Project - Victoria

National Assistive Technology Alliance (NATA)

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

## National peak bodies engagement

Every Australian Counts (EAC)

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. Liz has a physical disability, Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita (AMC) and was diagnosed with Ankylosing Spondylitis in her mid-twenties.

Liz has dedicated her career to assisting others to seek equitable economic and social opportunities to participate fully in their communities and is the Executive Officer of YouthWorX NT, a not-for-profit organisation committed to supporting Territorians in their lifelong social, economic, and career success.

Liz is responsible for the management of programs that include life and career coaching, services that support employment, and serves as:

- Member – Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) Advisory Council
- President – Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
- Co-Chair – NT Disability Strategy Steering Committee
- Member – Disability Employment Services Reference Group.

Liz was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) Medal in 2020, for service to people with disability, youth, and social inclusion.

## Trevor Carroll OAM

### Vice President

### & International Coordinator

**Nominated by Disability Justice Australia**



Trevor is passionate about protecting and enhancing the human rights of people with disabilities, having acquired an incomplete spinal cord injury in the mid-1990s and a bi-lateral sensorineural hearing loss and Meniere's disease. He was recognised for his service to people with disability in the 2022 Queens Birthday Honours List with the award of the Order of Australia Medal (OAM).

He has been a member of the AFDO Board since 2012, serving as Treasurer, President, and Vice President respectively.

Trevor has been CEO at Disability Justice Australia (DJA) since 2009 and represents AFDO as:

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





## **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 Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled (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 six 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 Australia**

Christine is an Adviser to Deafness Forum Australia and is its representative on the AFDO Board. Although she has lived with hearing loss since childhood, she was able to pursue a successful and rewarding career in education until retiring in 2012.

Christine is former President and Life Member of Hearing Matters Australia and is a staunch advocate for people with hearing loss. Her advocacy activities include representations to Australian federal and state government agencies and current active participation on the Transport for NSW Accessible Transport Committee (ATAC), again as Deafness Forum's representative.

Christine collaborates with international organisations, hearing industry professionals, academics & consumer representatives with the objective of having hearing health recognised as a priority health issue and to promote equitable access for people with hearing loss. Her focus is on strengthening the quality of hearing care and promoting an international best practice hearing care model focused on the needs of the individual.

## Kerry Marshall

**Director**

**Nominated by  
Women with  
Disabilities ACT**



Born with Spina Bifida, Kerry uses a wheelchair. She has a Masters in Social Work and is employed as a student and family counsellor.

Kerry is passionate about improving the profile, status, and lives of women with disabilities in the ACT and Region and has a keen interest in mental health, mentoring, inclusion, human rights, and social justice.

## 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 Award, and a 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 and has two children with his wife, Tammy. Their daughter, Alishia, has Down Syndrome and is 25 years of age. Grant is a strong advocate for people with intellectual disability, promoting inclusion and equality in all things. Grant is also a person with disability.

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 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.

## Richard Dent OAM, FAICD

### 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 (now Aruma), 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



**Tracylee Aresitedes**

National Manager –  
Policy, Sustainability,  
Initiatives & Projects



**Kirra Jackson**

Projects Support Officer



**Natasha Thomson**

Social Security  
Consultant – TESS  
Working Group



**Helen Cameron**

**(February 2022)**

Personal & Executive  
Assistant to CEO



**Jo Muscat**

Coordinator - Board &  
Governance



**Ainslie Whitburn**

Coordinator – ILC ICB  
Projects & BIDS



**Jody Barney**

**(June 2022)**

First Nations Disability  
& Cultural Consultant



**Jim Valavanis**

Manager – Business  
Development &  
Sustainability



**Duncan Steward**

Coordinator – Business  
Sustainability



**Nick Wilson**

Projects Support Officer



**Eva Sifis**

Inclusion in the Arts  
Consultant



**Rebecca Rudd**

Coordinator – Policy  
& Submissions



**Aaron Holt (April 2022)**

Communications Officer



**Natalie Wade**

Disability Royal  
Commission Consultant



**Sandra Quinlan**

Keep Calm And Connect  
and Organisation  
Cultural Consultant



**Steve Schreck**

**(January 2022)**

Coordinator - Disability  
Projects & BIDS



**Patrick McGee**

**(July 2022)**

National Manager –  
Systemic Advocacy



**Mary Henley-Collopy**

NDIS Consultant



**Carol Lewis**

HR Principal  
Consultant



**Nunzio Giunta**

Chief Financial Officer



**Ian Scarborough**

Accountant CPA



**Geoff Trappett OAM**

Transport Consultant -  
NITAN Chairperson

# Policy, Advocacy & Projects

AFDO continues to evolve and grow based on its financial flexibility. Surprisingly, despite being a recognised Disability Representative Organisation by the Government through the Department of Social Services only ten percent (10%) of our total income is provided from, what should be, a main source. Our income is predominantly achieved through obtaining project funding in line with our Vision, Mission and Values as well as our increasing Fee for Service offerings.

We have continued to grow our staff and Expert Advisers in the policy and advocacy area despite this lack of Federal Government support. Over 2021 to 2022 with the support of the AFDO Board we engaged a National Manager – Policy, Sustainability Initiatives & Projects, a Coordinator - Submissions & Policy which took our Systemic Advocacy & Policy Team to four positions including the National Manager – Systemic Advocacy, Research & Insight and the Chief Executive Officer. We have also commenced to engage two further Expert Advisers for Inclusive Employment and for Health. These roles are set to commence in July 2022.

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

AFDO and its Member Organisations continued our support the work of the Disability Royal Commission inclusive of providing submissions and attending Hearings. We wish to commend the Commission and its staff for their continued efforts on behalf of people with disability and the difficulties that COVID has placed on all of the work over this time.

Again, this disrupted the work of the Disability Royal Commission with many still needing to be by remote virtual hearings which on the whole, and with a great deal of behind-the-scenes work, proceeded relatively smoothly. This also impacted on the ability of people with disability to participate and engage but was also held back by the lack of protections for those wanting to provide evidence or statements concerning current or former service providers or others involved in their supports until legislated in December 2021.



Over July 2021 – June 2022 the Disability Royal Commission held a number of hearings including;

- Public hearing 15: People with cognitive disability and the criminal justice system: NDIS interface – [AFDO provided a submission and evidence](#)
- Public hearing 16: First Nations children with disability in out-of-home care
- Public hearing 17: The experience of women and girls with disability with a particular focus on, domestic and sexual violence
- Public hearing 18: The human rights of people with disability and making the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities a reality in Australian law, policies and practices – [AFDO provided a submission](#)
- Public hearing 19: Measures taken by employers and regulators to respond to the systemic barriers to open employment for people with disability – [AFDO provided a submission](#)
- Public hearing 20: Preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in disability services
- Public hearing 21: The experience of people with disability engaging with Disability Employment Services – [AFDO provided a submission](#)
- Public hearing 22: The experience of people with disability working in Australian Disability Enterprises – [AFDO provided a submission](#)
- Public hearing 23: Preventing and responding to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in disability services (a case study) – [AFDO provided a submission](#)
- Public hearing 24: The experience of children and young people with disability in different education settings



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

1. The seeking of 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

Our Expert Adviser for Disability Royal Commission, Natalie Wade, continued to provide advice and facilitate several meetings with AFDO and our members on the various hearing and issues raised by the Commissions work. This included strategic advice on ensuring the participant protections were appropriately legislated and covered the areas required to ensure all those testifying or making submissions received appropriate protections from any parties(y) named in good faith.

AFDO continued work in providing submissions to the Disability Royal Commission and appropriate advice to Commission staff in dealing with communications and seeking connection to disability specific communities.

Our members, both funded for work in promoting the DRC and wider, were also active in providing their own disability specific or other communities with relevant media and other information on the work of and engaging with the Commission.

AFDO again hosted several member forums and other events, including with representatives from outside of its membership on matters of interest being examined by the Commission over the course of the financial year.

## **AFDO continued its systemic and policy advocacy on areas which have been determined by our members as a key focus for people with disability and their families:**

### **Economic Participation**

- Continue to be 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:
  - » AFDO Technical Experts on Social Security Working Group (TESS) continued its work hosting several meetings over the year with others interested and engaged in this space
  - » Continued our representation to government regarding the impact of COVID 19 on people relying on income support
  - » AFDO continued advancing its concerns as a Member of Services Australia Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAG)
  - » Continued 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

## Access to Justice

- Instigated several workshops with interested parties within and outside of the sector, to further explore the issues and potential solutions for this area
- Access to Justice issues affecting people with disability continues to be a key policy priority area for AFDO and our member organisations and we remain highly concerned about the impact of access to the NDIS for people with disability involved in the criminal justice system. This still seems to be an area considered “too hard” to resolve by the NDIS, NDIA, relevant corrective services, and responsible governments
- The Federal Government needs to step up and take a leadership role in this space

## Quarterly National Virtual Disability and Justice Workshops

- Continued undertaking quarterly national virtual meetings dealing with disability and justice issues, attended by a range of participants being disability and justice professionals
- Meetings aim to provide participants with access to emerging and ongoing issues in the access to justice space for people with disability
- Topics are advanced by those attending for the next meeting and AFDO continues its facilitation role on the discussions along with ensuring matters are followed up with relevant governments following each meeting

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

- Hosted further meeting with interested and affected parties to discuss and amplify solutions required
- Provided submission to Human Rights Commission

## Dismantling Indefinite Detention

- In collaboration with Federal Attorney-General Department hosted two national workshops on this issue with key attendees

## AFDO's Contribution to the Review of the National Disability Strategy, now called Australia's Disability Strategy

- Continued working with Department and advising on strategy
- Participated in launch and promotional activities
- Hosted meetings with AFDO members on Australia's Disability Strategy and discussed ways of ensuring monitoring of results



## **Funding and Projects undertaken in line with our Vision, Mission, Goals and supporting our membership capacity/capability:**

### **Disability Representative Organisation Funding**

As part of a Consortium with ten of our national peak members, AFDO is funded as a Disability Representative Organisation as part of the Department of Social Services program which funds systemic advocacy organisations. AFDO as lead, undertakes the distribution of funds as agreed by the Consortium along with full contractual responsibility including all consolidated reporting, financial reports/acquittals and organising Consortium meetings as required to complete all contractual obligations.

Our Consortium represents disability specific communities, population-based communities and representative organisations advocating on behalf of individuals with disability and their families across Australia. We work to inform government policy, reviews, submissions, inquiries and initiatives to ensure that the needs of our communities are met, improved and not adversely affected or diminished and address systemic issues as they occur.

### **Disability Royal Commission (DRC)**

Since the DRC commenced, AFDO was funded to undertake significant work in promoting, providing information, providing advice to DRC staff on engagement, undertaking relevant submissions and facilitating meetings, forums or other events to ensure that people with disability, their families, supporters were fully informed about the work

of the DRC and encouraged to participate and provide their statements, stories, case studies or testimony directly to the DRC or via the hearings on specific issues and matters concerning the violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability.

AFDO also has full contractual responsibility providing funds to nine of our national peak members for them to undertake promotional and other work within their own disability specific communities about the DRC, its role, its hearings and to encourage full engagement of their members and communities with the DRC.

### **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. Our nine (9)

national peak members were involved in reviewing materials and providing expertise from their own disability specific communities.

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 was successfully completed in December 2021.

### Financial Literacy – NDIS Participants

AFDO obtained funding to undertake a project to develop a range of resources and undertake workshops aimed at building the financial literacy of NDIS participants who are or may be considering undertaking self-management of their NDIS Funds.

In its first stage, resources are being developed by and with input from people with disability through focus and working groups.

The next stage will deliver a series of workshops and resources being made available on a national level to ensure that greatest uptake and distribution possible.

### ILC ICB - The A-List Project

The A-List is a National online hub for young people with autism, their families, and carers to develop their social and community participation goals. It is a three-part national program that will be accessible to all communities across Australia and focuses on young people with autism aged 7 years to 24 years.

- The first part of the program was completed, providing free training workshops/webinars that focus on capacity building for social skills
- The second part was completed with the A-List Online Hub live late last year: A national platform providing access to 'autism-friendly' activities from both mainstream and specialised organisations. It includes access to peer support groups, social groups, and community options
- The third part being undertaken at present focuses on promoting and expanding innovative grassroots organisations to deliver and support social programs in areas where they are most needed

Consortium: AFDO (Lead), My Care Space (Project Manager), Autism Aspergers, Advocacy Australia (Project Member) and Autism Community Inc. (Project Member).



### Individual Capacity Building Project

AFDO leads a consortium of ten 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.

## **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.

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

### **Geoff Trappett OAM – AFDO Transport Consultant and Chair, NITAN**

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:

- Represented 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 of the digitisation of Services Australia processes on people with cognitive impairments.

### **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

### **Mary Henley-Collopy – AFDO NDIS Consultant**

Mary is the former Chairperson of Disability Resources Centre in Victoria and a former AFDO Board Director. She has over 30 years' experience working as a Social Worker in both the public and private sectors. Mary is an NDIS Participant where she self manages her own plan engaging support staff as needed.

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.

# Policy Submissions

Over the 2021-2022 financial year, AFDO contributed to the following policy submissions:

## Submissions

- AFDO Submission on the Review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework 2022-2025, July 2022
  - » [AFDO Submission on the Review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework 2022-2025 Word Version](#)
  - » [AFDO Submission on the Review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework 2022-2025 PDF Version](#)
- AFDO Submission on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Improving Supports for At Risk Participants) Bill 2021, July 2021
  - » [AFDO Submission on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment \(Improving Supports for At Risk Participants\) Bill 2021 Word Version](#)
  - » [AFDO Submission on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment \(Improving Supports for At Risk Participants\) Bill 2021 PDF Version](#)
- Dead ends: how our social security system is failing people with partial capacity to work, September 2021
  - » [Dead ends: how our social security system is failing people with partial capacity to work Word Version](#)
  - » [Dead ends: how our social security system is failing people with partial capacity to work PDF Version](#)

- AFDO and NITAN Joint Submission on Institutional Neglect and the Disability Transport Standards, January 2022
  - » [AFDO and NITAN Joint Submission on Institutional Neglect and the Disability Transport Standards Word Version](#)
  - » [AFDO and NITAN Joint Submission on Institutional Neglect and the Disability Transport Standards PDF version](#)
- AFDO Submission on the NDIS Amendment Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures Bill, November 2021
  - » [AFDO NDIS Amendment Submission \(Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures\) Bill Word Version](#)
  - » [AFDO NDIS Amendment Submission \(Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures\) Bill PDF Version](#)
- AFDO Submission on the Proposed NDIS Legislative Amendments, October 2021
  - » [AFDO NDIS Amendments Submission Word Document Version](#)
  - » [AFDO Response to the Proposed NDIS Legislative Amendments PDF](#)
- AFDO Submission on the Disability Support Pension, September 2021
  - » [AFDO Part A: Purpose Intent and Adequacy of the Disability Support Pension Word Version](#)
  - » [AFDO Part B: Stories from People with Disability and Lived Experience of the Application and Review Process of the Disability Support Pension](#)
- AFDO Submission on National Disability Employment Strategy, June 2021
  - » [AFDO National Disability Employment Strategy](#)

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



# Inclusive Employment

**Shifting the dial on employment remains a focus area in 2021-22, with almost half of Australians with disability out of work.**

Employment participation is a complex issue. Lack of awareness by employers of how to support a person with disability and make adjustments in a workplace; limited exposure to the benefits people with disability can offer; as well as policy levers, such as the tapering rates of the Disability Support Pension, remain barriers.

The economic impact of COVID-19 has also had an impact on employment participation, with businesses finding it difficult to retain staff (with or without disability) due to operating uncertainty in some states of Australia. Some people with disability, themselves, are choosing not to engage in employment at this time.

Participation in the workforce is important for social inclusion and financial independence. The impact of COVID-19 has changed the way people work, with increased options for remote or hybrid work. This has the potential to open the door to new opportunities for people with disability who would benefit from increased flexibility.

AFDO's representation in 2021-22 has spanned three key areas:

1. Continuing to increase business confidence to employ people with disability, particularly among small business;
2. Continuing to increase workplace readiness among young people with disability;
3. Advocating for policy reform in how employment support is provided to jobseekers with disability through Disability Employment Services and the NDIS; as well as policy reform to reduce disincentives to seeking and keeping employment.

## Key Facts on Inclusive Employment

- There are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability: 51% of working age men with disability, and 45% of working age women with disability are employed, as compared to 84% and 74% without disability respectively
- The gap between the unemployment rate for people with and without disability widened from 2.4% in 2009 to 5.2% in 2018
- NDIS participants report lower employment levels. Just 17% of 15-24 year olds and 21% aged 25+ report that they were working in a paid job as at December 2020
- NDIS participants with a hearing impairment were most likely to be employed (54%), as compared to their peers with psycho-social disability (9%). Participants with a higher level of function, and higher education levels, are more likely to be interested in work
- Barriers also exist for graduates seeking work. Graduates with disability take 61.5% longer to gain full time employment than other graduates
- Access to work experience is an important predicator to successful employment in the future, particularly for people with intellectual disability.



Business Inclusion  
& Diversity Services

Building disability confidence

## AFDO's work to increase employment participation:

### Business Inclusion & Diversity Services (BIDS)

*"It was sort of a win-win. You could do it. You could get some really great tips and ideas out of it and really improve your business offering. Getting people feeling a little bit more confident about their awareness of different kinds of disability and how we can support inclusion inside our workplace." (Participating business, BIDS)*

AFDO continues to offer the Business Inclusion & Diversity Services (BIDS), formerly known as the Diversity Field Officer Service (DFOS), with Deakin University as our formal evaluation partner. This service focuses on small to medium business (20-199 employees), assisting businesses to build their "disability confidence" to become welcoming, inclusive and accessible.

The service provides information and mentoring services that support businesses to modify their operations, policies and premises (at low or no cost), and adopt ideas to become more inclusive and supportive to all employees.



## Expanding the BIDs model

The BIDS model was rolled out in Western Australia in 2019-2020 as a licensee model, with 71% of businesses who responded to the evaluation indicating that the service was 'excellent' and that recommendations provided were 'very helpful' or 'helpful' (92% of respondents). Learnings from the licensee model has helped to shape our thinking of how to deliver the model effectively in other locations.

Face to face interaction was rated by participating WA businesses as vital; consistent with our findings from our delivery of the service in Geelong, Victoria (see [Annual Report 2020-21](#)). The impact of COVID-19, particularly lockdowns, business uncertainty and intrastate/interstate travel restrictions, has impacted the expansion of BIDS, both in connecting and supporting new businesses and in partnering in new regions to further roll out the model.

AFDO are currently exploring opportunities to deliver the model in South East Queensland and New South Wales in 2022-23.



NDIS Jobs Summit Aug 2022

## Introducing the Small Business Inclusion & Diversity Leaders Program (SBID Leaders Program)

Designed with smaller businesses in mind (1-19 employees), the SBID Leaders Program is a streamlined version of BIDS to begin to explore inclusion and employment of people with disability.

The service offers simple low cost fixes to address accessibility, with businesses connected to BIDS for networking and training. The program's ultimate aim is to build confidence among time-poor smaller businesses, leading to employment of people with disability in an ongoing capacity. The program also provides a pathway to receive more intensive support via BIDS.

AFDO intends to build on this model in 2022-23 as businesses begin to emerge from the impacts of COVID-19.

## Building awareness

Awareness is a critical component to building business confidence.

In 2021-2022, AFDO continued to deliver training to businesses across an array of sectors, including local government, health (including Dietitians Australia), sport (including Football Victoria), construction (including John Holland), legal and education sectors. We also worked closely with Fire & Rescue NSW to develop a video resource designed to build senior management and staff confidence which was well received. We are working to grow the reach of this program in 2022-23.

## Passport 2 Employment

*"Throughout the day you could see that every student had gained an enormous amount from the mock interviews. I was pleased to see that students had taken on the constructive feedback provided and used it to excel in their other interviews throughout the day.*

*For a simple investment of a business's time, it sure does make a huge difference to those students. Thanks so much for allowing [us] to be part of this program". (Participating business, P2E)*

Students with disability face significant barriers to transitioning from secondary school to post school options and the workforce. Barriers are intensified for regional and rural areas, including poorer physical, social, health and education outcomes of young people with disability as compared to metropolitan centres.

To address these issues, the Passport to Employment (P2E) program was developed, bringing together AFDO, Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), South West LLEN along with a number of service providers to deliver the program in Greater Geelong and the Colac Otway Shire in Victoria. AFDO has been the auspice for P2E in the Geelong region for the last six years thanks to generous funding by the Give Where You Live Foundation.

P2E provides disability specific transition support to build the skills and confidence of young people with disability to participate fully in their regional and rural communities, as well as future work, education and adult life.

The program focuses on developing work ready skills, helping students understand workplace expectations, appropriate workplace behavior and attire, as well as important life skills related to money, healthy eating and personal hygiene.

As with 2020-21, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions led to online delivery, moving to in-person sessions for programs delivered in 2022. Program content was modified to allow for meaningful and engaging delivery to take into account the online nature of the sessions.

The final report is currently being prepared. Preliminary feedback indicates that P2E continues to play a valuable role in both Geelong and Colac in building the confidence of students to step into the early stages of employment opportunities and learning pathways. Participating businesses also continue to report high levels of engagement with the program, including increased awareness and openness to create local opportunities.





# 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 1st August 2022:

- Almost 534,655 Australians are being supported by the NDIS
- Over the last twelve months, there have been 85,657 new participants join the NDIS
- There were approximately 82,863 children receiving supports in the Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) gateway
- 38,846 Australians being supported by the NDIS are Indigenous Australians
- 49,201 Australians being supported by the NDIS are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)

As of the 30th June 2022:

- 174,741 participants (32%) have Autism as their primary disability
- 83,795 participants (15%) have Intellectual disability as their primary disability
- 54,910 participants (10%) have Psycho-social disability as their primary disability





## Every Australian Counts

The National Disability and Carer Alliance was established in 2009 by three peak organisations being: Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) – representing people with disability; Carers Australia – representing families and carers; and National Disability Services (NDS) – representing disability service providers and they later expanded its membership to include 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.

### The EAC Steering Committee:

Over 2021 and into 2022, the “Alliance” worked towards developing a strategy for EAC to become

an independent entity. This would mean that the EAC could ultimately maintain its own Board or Committee of Management and continue to independently ensure that the NDIS continues to deliver on its promise for people with disability, their families and supporters. EAC would also operate financially independently, able to raise and spend its own funds. This will not be achieved without EAC retaining its strong commitment to and input from its “grass-roots” supporters across Australia.

The “Alliance” established agreed Terms of Reference for the initial operation of an EAC Steering Committee. This will work towards the development, formation and establishment of an independent EAC entity.

The first part of the Steering Committee has been completed with the appointment of an independent Chair and representatives from members from the “Alliance” being National Disability Services and the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations remaining to oversee the work and to continue involvement once the independent entity is established over 2023/2024.

Dr George Taleporos was appointed as the Chair of the EAC Steering Committee in 2022 and operates with the CEO's of AFDO and NDS on its further work.

George is well known to the disability sector and beyond. He has over 20 years' experience advocating for disability rights and self-directed supports. Over this time, he has managed advocacy services for young people with disability across Victoria and worked as a policy manager at the Summer Foundation. George also undertakes a range of other roles and memberships.

# International Partnerships

AFDO International Working Group (IWG) comprises of Vice President & International Coordinator, Trevor Carroll OAM, Treasurer, Christine Hunter, and CEO, Ross Joyce. The first IWG meeting was held on the 29th April 2021 with the vision to achieve full participation of all persons with disabilities in the mainstream of life, through promotion and protection of their human rights focused in the Asia-Pacific region. The IWG achieves this through its ongoing participation in the below international partnerships under the Terms of Reference approved by the Board.



## UN Council of State Parties on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

AFDO holds representation rights and has sent delegates to participate at this Council every year since its commencement. AFDO joins with the Australian Delegation and contributes at events or side events. 2022 saw AFDO President Liz Reid along with our International Coordinator Trevor Carroll attend and represent at the event. The overarching theme for this session was: Building disability-inclusive and participatory societies in the COVID context and beyond.



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



## Disabled Peoples' International

AFDO is the Australian representative for DPI and holds the sole national vote. Trevor Carroll was elected in 2016 to the Board of Directors as Information Officer and as Chairperson of the Asia-Pacific region. The Board of Directors meets bi-monthly.

DPI was established in 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons. 40 years after it was formed, DPI continues to be the world's only cross-disability global Disabled Peoples' Organisation (DPO). It is in partnership with the United Nations. DPI has national disability organisational members in 139 countries, 31 in the Asia-Pacific region.

[www.disabledpeoplesinternational.org](http://www.disabledpeoplesinternational.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 22 Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) in the Pacific region. It is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (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 Peoples' 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

AFDO holds a position on the Executive.

The 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

### 2021

- 14 October ..... [Disabled Australians Harmed and Neglected by Centrelink](#)  
3 December..... [New Australian Disability Strategy Welcomed By Leading Disability Representative Organisations](#)

### 2022

- 7 February ..... [Religious Discrimination Bill To Further Discriminate People With Disability](#)  
10 February .... [Eminent Australians with Disability Rally against Religious Discrimination Bill](#)  
24 February ... [AFDO Welcomes 'Blueprint for Reform' of Disability Support Pension](#)  
19 April..... [Defending Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme](#)

## Joint Statements

- 25 January ..... [Joint Letter to National Cabinet In Response To The Handling Of COVID-19 Omicron Variant](#)  
23 February .... [Key Disability Advocacy Groups Join With ACOSS To Urge Government To Act On DSP Senate Inquiry Report](#)  
5 April ..... [Disability Sector Calls for Pre-Election Commitments to Improve Disability Emergency and Disaster Support](#)

## Interviews

- 9 February ..... ABC Radio Queensland - Ross Joyce - the implications of the Religious Discrimination Bill for people with disability

## Newsletters

You can subscribe to our newsletters here:

- [Subscribe to AFDO eNews](#)
- [Subscribe to Disability Loop eNews](#)



Twitter Followers  
**5967**



LinkedIn Followers  
**1713**



Facebook  
Likes  
**2444**  
Followers  
**3698**



Newsletters  
AFDO eNews  
**1603**  
subscribers  
Disability Loop  
**3696**  
subscribers



## Vale Janine Neu

It is with great sadness that we recognise the passing of Janine, a Director and Deputy Chair of AFDO since 2018. Whilst Janine passed away in October 2022, we wanted to acknowledge her contribution & her loss in this Annual Report.

Janine was such a special person in our lives and truly committed to AFDO, our members and as a solid representative of People with Disabilities WA (PWdWA).

She was a proud advocate who always sought to improve the lives of people with disabilities through individual or systemic advocacy.

All of the AFDO family, our Board, members, staff & consultants wish to acknowledge her life and her achievements. We are grateful for the energy and work she contributed to us, the sector and for people with disability.

We extend our deepest condolences to Janine's husband Bernard, family & friends.

Janine will be sorely missed as an advocate and a member of the disability community.

**Liz Reid**  
**AFDO President**

# Directors Report

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

The Board was made up of the following Member nominated, or Board-appointed Directors throughout the 2021 – 2022 Financial Year:

## **Liz Reid AM**

President

Nominated by Physical Disability Australia  
Person with disability

## **Trevor Carroll OAM**

Vice President & International Coordinator

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 Australia  
Person with disability

## **Kerry Marshall (Resigned 18/06/2022)**

Director

Nominated by Women With Disabilities ACT  
Person with disability

## **Nick Rushworth**

Director

Nominated by Brain Injury Australia  
Person with disability

## **Debbie Kennewell**

Director

Nominated by Deaf Australia  
Person with disability

## **Grant Lindsay**

Director

Nominated by Down Syndrome Australia  
Person with disability

## **Richard Dent OAM, FAICD**

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 four times during the 2021-22 Financial Year**

27th September 2021

19th October 2021

22nd March 2022

27th June 2022

## 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 one time between Board meetings  
by video conference during the 2021-22 financial  
year;

23rd August 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 2021-22 financial year;

17th September 2021

25th November 2021

17th February 2022

19th May 2022

22nd June 2022

### **Company Secretary**

**Ross Joyce**



# Financial Snapshot

## 2021 – 2022 Results

Total Revenue..... \$ 3,517,909

Total Expenditure ..... \$ 3,490,022

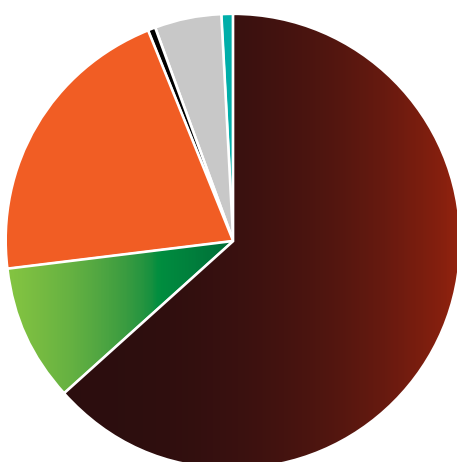
**Result - Surplus or (Deficit) ..... \$ 27,887**

**Total Members Equity – Current ..... \$ 648,274**

Previous Year ..... \$ 620,387

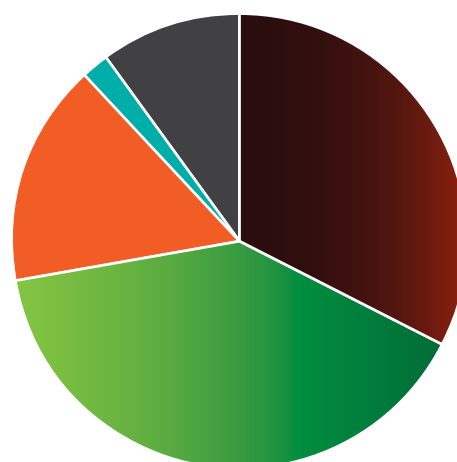
**Result – Increase or (Decrease) ..... \$ 27,887**

### Income



- Grants other sources..... > 64%
- Department of Social Services (DRO) .... > 10%
- Disability Royal Commission ..... > 21%
- Investment interest..... < .04%
- Donations/Other ..... < 5%
- Membership fees..... < .06%

### Expenditure



- Employment expenses ..... > 33%
- Consortium distribution ..... < 40%
- Consultancy ..... < 16%
- 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: \$1,377,169**

**Note 2: DeafBlind Australia** - From the 1st July 2021 DBA has undertaken 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.