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First Nations Advisory Council

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) have jointly established a First Nations Advisory Council.

First Nations Advisory Council members are First Nations advocates and include First Nations people with lived experience of disability.

They understand the needs and experiences of their communities and will advise us on how we can make the NDIS better for First Nations participants.

We will work with the First Nations Advisory Council to discuss and make shared decisions about the goals, strategies and initiatives that affect First Nations people with disability.

We want all decisions that affect First Nations people with disability to:

- be informed by First Nations voices and experiences
- reflect the goals and hopes of First Nations communities
- embed principles of self-determination
- be culturally safe, accessible and inclusive.

The First Nations Advisory Council will also work with us to create a new [NDIS First Nations Strategy and action plan](#). It will set out our goals to support First Nations people with disability over the next 4 years.

It will also include support for First Nations people to find and use the NDIS, and ensure services are culturally safe.

We will resource the First Nations Advisory Council so they can collaborate with us, and FPDN, now and into the future.

The First Nations Advisory Council is co-chaired by Damian Giffis, CEO of FPDN and [Rebecca Falkingham](#) PSM, CEO of NDIA.

The First Nations Advisory Council held their first meeting in 2023. Watch the video to meet some of the members and learn more about what happened during the meeting.

[Transcript for 'first nations advisory council introductory'](#)

Communiqués from past meetings are published below:

- [July 2023 meeting](#)
- [June 2023 meeting](#)

Members of the First Nations Advisory Council

Damian Griffis

Damian Griffis is a descendant of the Worimi people and a leading advocate for the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

As CEO of the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), Damian has been a central figure in the establishment of the Aboriginal Disability Network NSW and FPDN. In 2014, Damian won the Tony Fitzgerald (Community Individual) Memorial Award at the Australian Human Rights Awards.

Donna Murray

Donna is a proud Wiradyuri and Wonnarua nation citizen and CEO of Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

She is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and a committed Indigenous Community Development Practitioner.

Donna is passionate about supporting and asserting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by recognising and reigniting cultural governance and leadership that embed Indigenous nation-building principles to shape the future to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

In 2021 she was the winner of the Pro Bono Australia, Impact 25 Award.

Donna is also Chair of Thirrili Ltd, Board Director of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and the Independent Chair of PwC's Indigenous Consulting.

Gi Brown

Gi is a trans, Koori person with autism, ADHD, physical and psychosocial disability.

Gi has collaborated with organisations and government departments to advise and design policies and programs, informed by their lived experience of disability.

Gi has provided a personal testimony at the Disability Royal Commission into Neglect and Abuse in Education Settings and spoken at the Senate Committee Hearing into NDIS independent assessments.

Gi is currently studying social work and specialises in universal/inclusive education, children and young First Nations persons with disability, community-led and kin care, and dignified ageing and adulthood for people with disability.

Jennifer Cullen

Jennifer is an Adjunct Associate Professor and Doctor at the James Cook University and Griffith University.

She is a community services professional with over 33 years of experience working in disability and aged care services. As CEO of Synapse, Australia's leading brain injury organisation, Jennifer has been instrumental in leading service delivery, research, advocacy, and intersectional collaboration in the field.

She is a descendant of the Bidjara and Wakka Wakka people and has extensive networks with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia. Jennifer is also a member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS.

Joanna Agius

Joanna is a Deaf and proud Narungga woman with connections to Kurna, Ngarrindjeri and Wirungu nations in South Australia.

She is an advocate for First Nations people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and in 2020, was awarded the Order Medal of Australia (OAM) for service to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and to the Indigenous community. Joanna also delivers Auslan courses to students at TAFE SA.

Justen Thomas

Justen is a proud First Nations man and actively speaks out about issues facing First Nations people with disabilities.

In 2019, Justen was part of an Australian delegation to the United Nations congregation in Geneva.

He is passionate about supporting people in the justice system, including those with disability, to access the NDIS and culturally appropriate health care.

Justen works with the NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities in the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) group and in Aboriginal Health education.

Munatji McKenzie

Munatji is a Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, and Arrente woman. Currently, she holds the position of Disability Royal Commission Project Officer at NPY Women's Council.

She began her professional career in customer service at Power and Water, where she worked in different Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Munatji's strong work ethic and unwavering dedication have allowed her to work with several Indigenous organizations, all of which she approached with passion and commitment.

Her devotion to her culture and community in central Australia and the APY lands drives her to advocate for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

Dr Scott Avery

Scott is a deaf Worimi man, scholar, advocate, and researcher on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and inclusion. He is a senior lecturer at Western Sydney University and has a long-standing partnership with First Peoples Disability Network. Scott has extensive experience presenting issues for and on behalf of the First Peoples disability community, governments, and at the United Nations.

His book 'Culture is Inclusion: A narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability' has guided government policy on the intersection of Indigenous and disability issues in policy including Closing the Gap and the Australian Disability Strategy.

He has been appointed to several government advisory groups, including at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the National Disability Data Asset, and the National Disability Research Partnership; and is a director on the board of Achieve Australia Ltd.

Suzy Trindall

Suzy is a proud Dharug and Cadigal woman, and a mother of two beautiful children who she raised on her own thanks to the support of her family. Sadly, Suzy's son passed away of a terminal illness in 2019, aged 22.

Suzy has lived with vision impairment for most of her life, as have her sister and brother.

Growing up together with the same disability meant they were able to support each other.

They never felt the isolation some have experienced and refused to let their disability stop them. Suzy's journey has been filled with amazing career and training opportunities, travel, sports and family.

Suzy is a Peer Worker and Training Coordinator at Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH). She is also the founder of the Women First Peer Group; where women living with disability come together, support each other and share their experiences.

Tess Moodie

Tess is a proud non-binary, queer, neurodivergent, Palawa person with multiple forms of disability. They are also a parent of a young person with disability.

Tess is a victim-survivor of multiple forms of family and sexual violence and is passionate about empowering and raising the voice of people with lived-experience to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence, as well as to champion LGBTIQA+ and disability rights and to fight classism and systemic racism.

Tess was previously a sexual assault counsellor, and currently works as a Project Coordinator for the Advocates for Change Program at Engender Equality and Youth Engagement Lead at Laurel House Tasmania.

They are also a member of several advisory groups, including the Victim-Survivor Expert Advisory Panel at Safe & Equal Victoria, Our Watch Disability Advisory Group and the Minister for Disabilities Consultative Group in Tasmania.

Victor Djungadi Patrick

Victor is a Bunaba man born in the Martuwarra (Fitzroy River) in Fitzroy Crossing.

Originally, he wanted to become a registered nurse, but people constantly told him about his disability (cerebral palsy) and how he would never be able to work as a nurse.

It wasn't until 1987 when Victor met Rita, an Aboriginal nurse working at the Quad Centre in Shenton Park, Perth, that he was encouraged to consider a career as an Aboriginal Health Worker.

Victor completed his Aboriginal Health Worker training in 1990 and worked as an Aboriginal

Health Worker for many years.

In 1992 his life took an activist bent when he attended the world congress on disability in Canada.

Now, Victor agitates for change, especially in remote and Indigenous regions where he says access to services and facilities for disabled people remain poor compared to the cities.

He says, “My career has given me the ability to speak up, to talk about the difficulties faced by Aboriginal people with a disability, to include people with a disability and their families in the conversation to create something with them and for them.”

Louisa Uta

Louisa is a Torres Strait Islander woman, from Thursday Island. English is her second language. Louisa is a proud mother of a son, who she has raised on her own.

Louisa’s son is now an adult, who has lived with a disability from birth. Louisa and her son live in Cairns, where she continues to be his advocate and informal support.

Sereako Treloggen - Member

Sarah Hayton - NACCHO, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, representative

Gretchen Young - SNAICC, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care, representative

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31 May 2024