

Annual report 2015-2016



First Peoples Disability Network Australia

About First Peoples Disability Network Australia

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) is the peak organisation representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. We are a national organisation of and for Australia's First Peoples with disability, their families and communities.

FPDN's vision is of a just and inclusive society, in which First Peoples with disability are respected and valued for their culture, history and contribution to contemporary life, and in which their human rights are recognised, respected, protected and fulfilled.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience of disability govern FPDN.

We can trace our origins to a national gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability held in Alice Springs in 1999. We were informally established in 2010 and registered in 2014 as a public company limited by guarantee.

We launched our strategic directions for 2015 to 2020 in 2015. Our objectives are:

- 1. Attitudinal change through education
- 2. Community participation through capacity development
- 3. Leadership
- 4. Systemic change
- 5. A responsive service system
- 6. Knowledge built through community-driven research
- 7. Effective communication of our message
- 8. Effective governance and operations.

We proactively engage with communities around Australia and advocate for the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in Australia and internationally. We follow the human rights framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Australia is a signatory, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We work within a social model of disability, in which we understand 'disability' to be the result of barriers to our equal participation in the social and physical environment. These barriers can and must be dismantled. The social model stands in contrast to a medical model of disability, which has diagnosis as its focus.

First Peoples Disability Network (Australia) Limited ABN 58 169 154 330

402/161 Redfern St, Redfern NSW 2016 phone 02 8399 0882 enquiries@fpdn.org.au www.fpdn.org.au In 2015-16 FPDN continued to develop its national network, continued to share knowledge and information with communities around the country, made representations at a number of United Nations forums and international conferences, and extended its research and policy agenda.

In a few short years we have grown significantly. We now have a presence in most states and territories and we are committed to reaching out to more communities in order to ensure our work is informed by our diverse communities.

In this report, you will read an overview of our projects to date. I am very pleased about what has been achieved and about the opportunities that lie ahead. As is always the case for organisations like ours, we work with limited resources. However, FPDN has achieved a great deal and I welcome the opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved and provide a glimpse of what the future holds.

In the past, in both the Indigenous and disability sectors, there has been a lack of information about the needs and circumstances of Australia's First Peoples with disability. FPDN is working to increase this understanding and we are very committed to this being led by First People with disability.

In some respects our impact is difficult to measure, but there are many clear indications that we are having an impact, in line with our strategic directions:

- FPDN is one of four organisations to make up the governmentappointed Disabled People's Organisations Australia (formerly called the Australian Cross Disability Alliance).
- Australian governments frequently call on FPDN for advice.
- FPDN is proud to stand with other First Nations organisations on issues of national importance and proud to be part of the Closing the Gap coalition, the Redfern Statement Group and the Change the Record Campaign.
- Our CEO, Damian Griffis, and I were invited to deliver the annual Kevin Cook lecture at the Yabun Festival on 26 January 2016.
- FPDN has made a submission to, and been called to give evidence at, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.
- I was honoured to be appointed to the Australian Government's new National Disability and Carers Advisory Council.
- FPDN and La Trobe University led a consortium of community organisations, and disability and legal scholars from six universities to publish a book presenting the latest research on First Peoples disability justice: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the recurrent and indefinite detention of people with cognitive and psychiatric impairment. This book has become an important

Chairperson's report



Chairperson Gayle Rankine and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull

resource for a Senate Inquiry and the Royal Commission into the protection and detention of young people in the Northern Territory.

- We commenced a two-year research grant funded under the National Disability Research and Development Agenda to collect narratives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability - the first research grant of its type to be led by a First Peoples disability community organisation.
- FPDN was represented, in 2015, at United Nations Universal Periodic Review of Australia's Human Rights in Geneva, and in 2016, at the Conference of State Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York, and the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Geneva.
- We have been leading participants in the establishment of a Global Network of Indigenous People with Disability.
- Our Ten-point plan for the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (launched in 2013 at Parliament House, Canberra at the invitation of the Indigenous Affairs Minister) continues to be an important reference document for governments and across the Indigenous and disability sectors.
- This year, FPDN has been quoted in more than 50 print and broadcast news and current affairs pieces nationally, including interviews with some of Australia's most respected journalists. This reinforces effective communication of our messages.

In order to continue to ensure effective governance and operations, the boards of Aboriginal Disability Network NSW (ADN) and FPDN made the decision to merge the organisations. This decision was taken because of the complementary work the organisations do. The opportunity to increase efficiency from a governance and financial perspective provided a compelling reason to merge. ADN merged with FPDN in July 2016.

Our organisation is continuing to grow and we plan to increase our activities in all states and territories in coming years to ensure that we continue to be a representative voice for First People with disability across the country.

We are tracking well against our strategic objectives, in particular (1) Attitudinal change through education, (2) Community participation through capacity development, (3) Leadership, (6) Knowledge built though community-driven research and (7) Effective communication of our message.

We are making progress against strategic objectives (4) Systemic change and (5) A responsive service system, and anticipate the flow-on effect of successful capacity building, research, leadership and communication will assist in delivering results in coming years in systemic change and service systems nationally.

We are meeting our governance and compliance obligations and continue to prioritise a healthy and safe work environment for our staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our directors for their ongoing contributions to the organisation and for sharing their wisdom with us. I would also like to thank our staff, and in particular, our CEO Damian Griffis, and Deputy CEO June Riemer.

I look forward to another productive year.

Gayle Rankine Chairperson

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

OBJECTIVES 3, 4

We contributed to policy and program development at the state/ territory and national levels, shared knowledge and information with governments, and advocated for community control and community leadership. Politicians and bureaucrats frequently called on us for advice - there is immense knowledge, understanding, expertise and experience in our communities. We also advise government as one of the four members of Disabled People's Organisations Australia (see page 5).

We ensured that our systemic advocacy work was genuinely informed by the lived experiences of First Peoples with disability.

WEBSITE

OBJECTIVE 7

We launched a new website in 2016 - www.fpdn.org.au.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

OBJECTIVES 2, 5

From a small office in Adelaide, our SA team ran a local area coordination program to ensure that Aboriginal people can access information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and that they are supported to complete NDIS plans. This work was with children eligible for the scheme and their families.

NORTHERN TERRITORY OBJECTIVES 2, 5

Building on our work in the Nothern Territory starting in 2014, we held workshops or community yarning session across the Barkly Region - in Tennant Creek, Ali Curung, Elliot, Utopia (this community alone has 21 skin/family groups) - and in Alice Springs. Our focus was on raising the understanding of disability in Aboriginal communities and building awareness of the NDIS and its underpinning principles.

QUEENSLAND

OBJECTIVES 1, 2, 7

The Murri Disability Advisory Network (Murri DAN), a consortium between FPDN, Synapse and Suncare Community Services, is a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in Queensland. Through art and the traditional practice of yarning, the Murri DAN helped to build resilience (keeping strong) among its members by providing opportunities for them to connect to community and culture.

NEW SOUTH WALES

OBJECTIVES 1, 2, 5, 7

Through our *Living My Way: Getting Prepared* project, we informed Aboriginal communities around the state about changes to the disability service system. We shared information about disability sector reforms and how to plan for the NDIS at over 300 workshops.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

OBJECTIVES 1, 3

We continued to build our network in Western Australia with the assistance of a staff member working one day per week.

Overview of our work in 2015-2016



Deputy CEO June Riemer,
Community Connector Donna
Fraser, Local Area Coordinator
Warwick Wallace and (front)
Community Connector John Baxter

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY OBJECTIVE 2

We partnered with another organisation and applied our expertise to preparing Aboriginal people and organisations for the NDIS through a series of workshops.

TASMANIA

OBJECTIVE 2

We have been working towards extending our capacity-building projects in Tasmania.

ELDERS COUNCIL

OBJECTIVES 3, 6

We established a council of Elders with lived experience of disability to provide spiritual and cultural guidance to the development of our movement.

RESEARCH AND POLICY

OBJECTIVES 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

We established an academic advisory panel to provide the highest standard of academic oversight. We also established relationships with key government agencies to ensure that the research can be translated in a way that drives positive systemic and policy changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

We gained a two-year grant through the National Disability Research Development Scheme.

About our research and policy agenda

Our research and policy agenda is based on an analysis of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. Despite the high prevalence of disability among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not enough is known about the true extent and nature of disability.

The absence of quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific disability research is a major risk in the implementation of key national policy priorities, including the NDIS and Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.

We are conducting a two-year research program on the unique understanding of disability that draws on the wisdom and experiences of First Peoples with disability, their families, carers and communities. This research will also lead to a better understanding of the unmet needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

We use a community-driven, grounded approach to capture narratives of our people's lived experience of disability. By ensuring that we collect qualitative data, our research reflects what matters most in disability policy and services from the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The research methods are designed to be inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and to reveal important data that has not been exposed when traditional Western research approaches are applied. Our approach respectfully shares the stories of First Peoples with disability 'living our ways' through the telling of oral histories and art.



Research & Policy Director Scott
Avery and CEO Damian Griffis

The outcomes of our research will be used to formulate priorities for further research and policies affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

We also represent Australia regularly on the global stage at international conferences, and at the United Nations in Geneva and New York, sharing insights and information relating to disability, social justice, human rights and Indigenous affairs.

Disabled People's Organisations Australia (DPO Australia) is a coalition of disabled peoples organisations (DPOs). Each member organisation is run by and for people with disability. DPO Australia promotes, protects and seeks to advance the human rights and freedoms of all people with disability in Australia.

Its work is grounded in a normative human rights framework that recognises the United Nations human rights conventions and related mechanisms as fundamental tools for advancing the rights of people with disability in Australia and internationally.

DPO Australia is the recognised nexus between government, people with disability and other stakeholders. By collaborating on areas of shared interests, purpose and strategic opportunity DPO Australia seeks to:

- advance the rights of all people with disability from all walks of Australian life, in relevant national policy frameworks, strategies, partnership agreements and other initiatives
- promote and engender a collaborative, co-operative and respectful relationship with all levels of government in its collective efforts to advance the human rights of people with disability
- build on and further develop strategic alliances and partnerships at the state/territory, national and international levels in order to advance the human rights of people with disability
- promote the alliance at the international level as the coordinating point for international engagement with the Australian DPO sector
- build respect for, appreciation of, and faith in, the DPO sector in Australia.

DPO Australia's other members are:

- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- People with Disability Australia
- Women With Disabilities Australia.

Credits

Front cover artwork Many Tribes, One Community (detail) by Wiradjuri artist Paul Constable-Calcott. Page 1 photo by Mike Bowers / The Guardian used with permission. Back cover photos from top down 1, 2, 3, 6 by Belinda Mason; 4 by Jon Coghill / ABC. Other photos FPDN

Disabled People's Organisations Australia: an alliance

OBJECTIVES 1, 4, 7

Directors





(from top) Gayle Rankine, Len Clarke, Lester Bostock, Suzy Kemp, Jane Rosengrave, Kay Sadler

Gayle Rankine (Chairperson) is a Ngarrindjeri woman born in Raukkan (Point McLeay Mission) on Lake Alexandrina in South Australia. Gayle has represented Australia and FPDN at the United Nations in Geneva and New York. She has extensive knowledge of the needs of people with disability in urban, rural and remote communities. She has lived experience as a person with physical disability and as a carer of relatives with physical and neurological disability, including autism.

Len Clarke (Deputy Chairperson) lives at Framlingham Aboriginal Community in southwestern Victoria near Warrnambool. Len has a strong background in legal and social development and advancement via the justice system. He is a dedicated advocate for people with disability to be included in mainstream Australian communities and to lead productive and fulfilling lives. He has sat on many national and state social advancement committees.

Lester Bostock is a Bundjalung man with disability who has been at the forefront of promoting and protecting the human rights of Aboriginal people with disability for decades. Lester publicly introduced the concept of 'double disadvantage' relating to Aboriginal people with disability in his 1991 Meares Oration 'Access and equity for people with a double disadvantage'. He is widely recognised as a pioneer of Aboriginal media and has received numerous awards for community service including a Centenary Medal, the NSW Law and Justice Foundation Award for Aboriginal Justice, and 2010 NAIDOC Male Elder of the Year.

Suzy Kemp is a proud Wiradjuri woman living on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. Suzy is an accomplished artist. Since age 14, she has been paiting with her mother, Indigenous artist Eve Kitchener (a member of the Stolen Generation). Suzy's use of vibrant colours and positive stories reflect her optimism and positive take on life. She has lived experience as a person with disability and as a carer. Her painting keeps her strong in spirit and culture, and plays a huge part in building her resiliance and recovery. She was a member of the Disabled People's Organisations Australia delegation to the Ninth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held in New York in 2016.

Jane Rosengrave is a proud Aboriginal woman with intellectual disability and a widely respected advocate against violence against people with disability. Jane has given evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and has supported others to give evidence. From the age of six months until adulthood, she lived in institutions in conditions "like a jail". From age six to 21, she was sexually and emotionally abused by multiple perpetrators. As an adult, she lived in an abusive relationship for 16 years. Today, she has a home of her own and is "free as a bird" from those who impacted her earlier life. Jane is a sought-after public speaker and often appears in the media.

Kay Sadler is a Worimi woman of the Biripi nation, born on the Pacific Highway ten kilometres south of Taree. Kay is a delegate to the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and a member of the Biripi Land Council. She holds a Diploma of Business (Governance) from Tranby Aboriginal College.