

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



First Peoples
Disability Network
Australia



OUR WORK IS GUIDED BY THE WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to our founding Elders Uncle Lester Bostock and Auntie Gayle Rankine, and extend this respect to all traditional owners of this land on which we journey.

Uncle Lester and Auntie Gayle were the warriors behind the Aboriginal Disability Rights movement here in Australia and Internationally. Their wisdom, knowledge and guidance as Aboriginal people with lived experience of disability paved the way for future generations to continue their story, giving voice to the most vulnerable members of our communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disability.

FPDN values the wisdom and knowledge shared by our Elders in guiding our work. We would like to acknowledge our National Elder's advisory, Elders Living with Disability Australia (ELDA) and Chairpersons Uncle Brian Tennyson and Auntie Louisa Uta for their commitment and leadership on issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people living with disability in communities across Australia.

The Legacy of our Founding Elders

In recognition of FPDN's founding Elder Uncle Lester Bostock's lifelong contribution to human rights advocacy, Marrickville Council dedicated a meeting space to him in their newly built library. Uncle Lester was not only a founding Elder of FPDN but was also a pioneer of Indigenous media in Australia. Amongst many other achievements, he was an integral part of the campaign for voting rights for First Peoples during the 1967 referendum campaign.

Tribute to Auntie Gayle Rankine

Excerpt from the Eulogy of Auntie Leila Gayle Rankine by Damian Griffiths

Leila Gayle Rankine, known as Auntie Gayle to those who were fortunate to know her, was a proud Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna woman and the matriarch of FPDN. Auntie Gayle was present in Alice Springs in 1999 at the first national gathering of Aboriginal people with disability. She was Chairperson since we formally constituted the First Peoples Disability Network in 2014. Advocacy for her people with disability goes back to the very beginning of our social movement. She is a true hero of the social movement of Aboriginal people with disability and was widely known and respected as a leading voice for all Australians with disability.

Amongst Aunt's many achievements was her powerful advocacy at the United Nations in both New York and Geneva where she spoke proudly and passionately about the rights of her people with disability – the first time the voice of an Indigenous person with disability had ever been heard so directly and powerfully.

When Aunt spoke she held the room, speaking with pride and deep conviction. The image of her, microphone in hand, before a vast room at the United Nations in New York is a powerful one. It was humbling to be there.

Aunt enjoyed her younger life. Some of the stories she would tell had me convinced that she was the coolest woman I've ever met. And I was left in no doubt when I think back to being in Geneva in 2012 with Aunt to open Belinda Mason's photographic exhibition at the main

building of the United Nations in Geneva. The exhibition included that stunning photo of Aunt that has been circulating widely in recent days. It was a really big deal, being in Geneva at the United Nations. The exhibition opening was being compared by high ranking UN officials. I vividly remember the last thing she said to me before we headed in the building – that her Mum would have been very proud. Before this big moment in front of lots of important people and yet her perspective was always there. In that moment I knew that she was not only thinking of her Mum but she was readying herself to be the strong voice for the mob with disabilities back home. It was always a privilege to be in her presence.

Aunt achieved many extraordinary things in her role as a leading voice for Aboriginal people with disability. She was elected the inaugural Chairperson of the Global Network of Indigenous People with Disability. She promptly asserted herself in this forum also, not compromising her values when it came to the Global Network being truly representative of Indigenous people with disability around the world.

Back at home Aunt always spoke truth to power, like the time as Chairperson she accepted a disability rights award in the Great Hall in Parliament House and she promptly used the opportunity to remind all those in attendance of the need for significantly greater funding and resourcing of the social movement of First Peoples with disability. She never missed an opportunity to remind all of us what still remains to be done.

Despite a very significant disability which caused her great pain often, she was always one to ask how you were, to shift the focus from herself onto your welfare and the welfare of others. The mark surely of a truly remarkable, caring and generous human being.

She was direct, she was a generous leader of our movement, proud and unflinching. She was warm and compassionate with the heartiest laugh.

At FPDN we all benefited from her strategic thinking. She was deeply concerned for the welfare of our people with disability and I know she would be anxious to ensure that we continue her legacy.





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WE ARE FIRST PEOPLES DISABILITY NETWORK AUSTRALIA (FPDN)

Our Mission

First Peoples Disability Network Australia is a national organisation of and for Australia's First Peoples with disability, their families and communities. Its purpose is to promote respect for human rights, secure social justice, and empower First Peoples with disability to participate in Australian society on an equal basis with others. We are the custodians of the narratives of First Peoples with disability, their families and communities and we recognise this important responsibility.

Because ours is an oral history, we continue this by recognising the value of our peoples' narratives and collecting this as data, which informs our work and the work of others.



Our Core Values

Recognition and respect for human rights, and in particular for the human rights of First Peoples and First Peoples with disability.

Equality of outcomes for First Peoples with disability with other members of Australian society through equal opportunity, non-discrimination and affirmative action.

Empowerment of First Peoples with disability and their families to direct their own lives and to secure the resources that they need to participate on an equal basis with others in Australian life.

Access to justice for First Peoples with disability.

Inclusion of First Peoples with disability in all aspects of Australian life.

Respect for the Elders of First Peoples nations across Australia and for their efforts over time to secure justice for their peoples and communities. In particular, we honour those Elders who have worked to secure justice for First Peoples with disability and their families.

Respect for the culture and history of Australian First Peoples and recognition of the ongoing importance of that culture in our contemporary lives.

Recognition and respect for the lived experience of First Peoples with disability and their families as the central driver of our work.

Recognition of the richness and diversity of Australian First Peoples communities across Australia.

Our Core Principles

We work with all First Peoples communities to create and maintain a safe and secure place for the exchange of ideas, the building of alliances, and the formulation of priorities, between and across community divides.

We are passionate, determined, and committed to our work

We lead change, not react to it.

We are innovative, creative, and solution-focused.

We are accountable in all aspects of our work to First Peoples with disability and their families, our communities, and to the community generally.



I would like to particularly highlight the emergency food relief initiative that was coordinated by our team at FPDN in partnership with the Al-Ihsan foundation.



OUR LEADERS

Chairpersons Report

Guudjii yiigu (Hello to all), Nyiirun wakulda maraliyn (we are all coming together as one).

Firstly, I would like to pay my respect to our Elders past, present and to our future leaders, our young people.

2019-2020 and the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic has been the most exacerbating year, to say the least, for FPDN staff, Board and our communities around Australia. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our sense of being and wellbeing is centered around human contact with each other. The heart of FPDN's work is connecting with community, yarning, sharing stories and knowledge and finding ourselves isolated from what is ingrained in our spirit put new meaning into being alone. For a good part of this year our staff and Board, like most of us around the country, were isolated working from their homes which prevented us from being able to continue our work in the usual way of connecting to our mob on the ground in our communities. But we rose to the challenge proving once again that FPDN is the most outstanding organisation going above and beyond to ensure we remained connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability because of the care and dedication of our staff.

Zoom has become our new friend. I am proud of our Board and staff for embracing this 'new normal', in adapting to a different way of communicating and developing new ways to build on our work and stay connected with each other and our community. Without Zoom we would have been up the creek without a paddle.

FPDN has gone from strength to strength this year under the leadership of our CEO Damian Griffis, and Deputy CEO June Riemer. They have both demonstrated true and uncompromising leadership on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Islander people living with disability in the face of the COVID-19 emergency, alongside growing our organisation and solidifying a viable future for FPDN. I am greatly appreciative of their strong leadership, their committed team and the role they have both played in building FPDN into the organisation that it is today.

I would like to particularly highlight the emergency food relief initiative that was coordinated by our team at FPDN in partnership with the Al-Ihsan foundation. The delivery of these care packages was a way for us to still be in contact with vulnerable members of our community. Without this connection how do we know how people were living and surviving with no contact? Without the care of FPDN and our team they would have been completely and utterly left alone and forgotten.

Thank you to our Board for their contribution and support of FPDN this year, we continue to remain committed to our work guiding the initiatives and direction of our organisation, even if it is not in the way that I would have liked to, in person. We also welcomed a new board member Michael Evans, who brings to our Board a wealth of experience and knowledge and we are fortunate to benefit from his expertise.

I am so proud of the hard work our CEO, Deputy CEO and all of our staff have put in over the last 12 months.

Marrunggangbu, Gapu

(Thank you very very much, goodbye)

Aunty Kay Sadler
Gathang language



As a result of FPDN's participation in the Black Lives Matter campaign, our profile grew significantly amongst people who would not have been previously aware of our work.



A Message from our CEO

Financial year 2019-2020 was another year of great achievement by FPDN. We also grieved the loss of another of our founding elders. Aunty Gayle Rankine was a fearless advocate for the rights of our people with disability. She was always forthright and passionate. Her advocating at the United Nations and at Parliament House was something to behold. She always spoke truth to power. Aunt is always in our thoughts, and we've included an extract from my eulogy in this report. We miss her.

The second half of the financial year was dominated by COVID-19. Similar to all Australians, we had to adapt quickly. Staff had to quickly respond to a changing work environment. We immediately saw a need to play a role in not only providing information to community members but also to provide community members with food and supplies. Both efforts required significant coordination and it is a great credit to all staff involved that they were able to pivot so quickly. We distributed more than 1500 care packs throughout NSW and we were represented on several high level government committees focused upon an effective response to COVID-19 and people with disability.

Representation/Systemic Advocacy

FPDN not only played a leading role in the advocacy that resulted in the creation of the Disability Royal Commission but it has been a leading participant in the hearings of the Commission during the financial year. FPDN has appeared before the Commission at hearings related to Health and COVID-19 during the financial year. FPDN is also represented on the Commission's First Nations Strategic Advisory Group.

A major event for the financial year was FPDN's leadership of the Australian civil society delegation to the UN Committee on Rights of People with Disability deliberations on Australia in Geneva in September 2019. I was honoured to co-lead the Australian delegation. FPDN was able to advocate effectively on a range of issues, in particular the indefinite detention of First

Peoples with disability in Australian prisons as well as highlighting to the UNCPRD Committee the situation for First Peoples with disability across a range of issues. A further key highlight was the Culture is Inclusion exhibition. The exhibition, coordinated by Paul Calcott, saw the exhibiting of 12 paintings by First Peoples artists with disability.

The exhibition was an extraordinary achievement and a source of great pride for FPDN and all involved. The exhibition was opened by a senior UN official.

This financial year saw significant progress in terms of disability and Closing the Gap. Closing the Gap has been a source of considerable frustration for FPDN over a number of years. However because of sustained advocacy, disability has now been identified as a priority area under Closing the Gap. This is a major step forward and should result in further resourcing of FPDN in coming years.

During the financial year, FPDN was actively involved in the Black Lives Matter campaign. FPDN was represented at a major online event that saw more than 16,000 viewers. As a result of FPDN's participation our profile grew significantly amongst people who would not have been previously aware of FPDN's work. We also saw an increase in donations as a result of the online webinar.

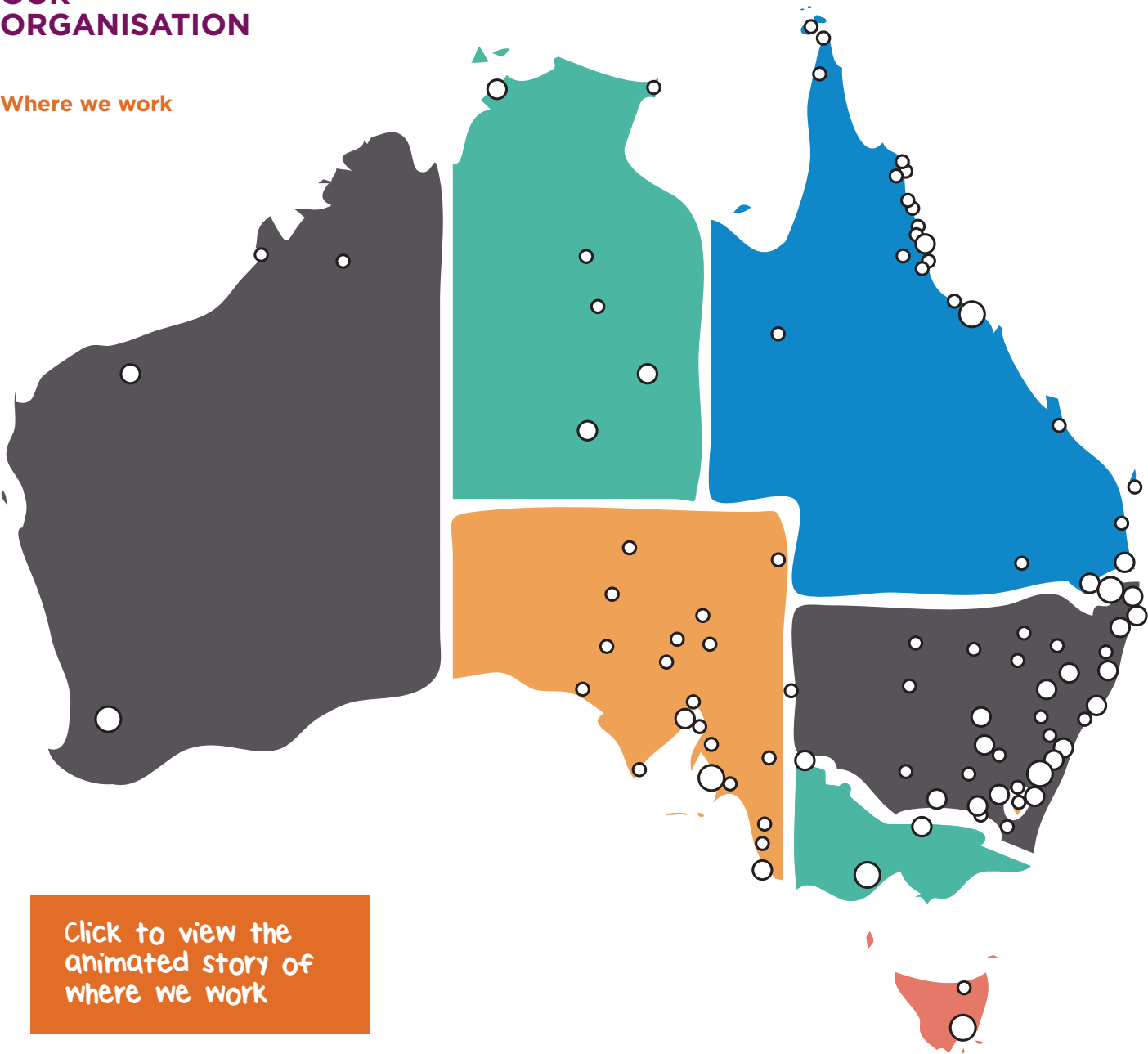
I am very confident that FPDN will continue to grow in the coming years. I hope that we will soon be in the position to open offices interstate and to continue to realise our dream of growing into a truly national organisation representing our people with disability.

Finally I would like to thank each and every FPDN staff member – together we have continued to achieve great things for our people with disability by being fierce and committed.

Damian Griffiths

OUR ORGANISATION

Where we work



Click to view the animated story of where we work

PRIORITY PROGRAMS 2019/20

FPDN is funded through a wide range of programs and to do specific training and projects. We thank all the following organisations for supporting our work.

Australian Government
Department of Social Services, Canberra

- Sector Development – Disability Representative Organisations (DPOA)
- Disability Royal Commission Advocacy Support
- Disability Royal Commission Artwork – Respectful Listening
- NDIS Participant Service Guarantee
- Partnership with EY – Boosting the Local Care Workforce

Australian Government
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

- Stronger Communities Program – Upgrade of Community Hub NT

NSW Government Funding
Department of Communities and Justice

- Transitional Advocacy Funding Supplement

NSW Premier and Cabinet

- Restrictive Practices Authorisation in NSW Public Consultation

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Victoria

- Consultancy Agreement – Disability Services

Northern Territory Government
Department of Health

- Suicide Prevention Community Grants – Co-creating the Tennant Creek Archive of Hope, Strength and Resilience: Women’s Stories 2019/2020

Perpetual Foundation

- Community Hub and Community Engagement, Tennant Creek

Cages Foundation

- Advocacy Services around NDIS and culturally appropriate and accessible disability services, especially in the early childhood space

Partnerships with:

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Legal Services (NATSILS) and Victoria Legal Service (VALS) – Consultancy services in relation to DRS
- Australian Centre for Disability Law (ACDL) – Disability Services

University of NSW

- Lowitja Research Project

Ernst & Young

- Evaluation of Justice Advocacy Service

Motor Accident Insurance Commission, Queensland (MAIC)

- Development of Cultural Resource for the promotion and education of road safety
- Donation to NuunaRon Artists for UN Convention Exhibition

National Injury Insurance Agency, Queensland (NIISQ)

- Development of cultural resource and workshop training

Centre for Australian Progress

- Rapid Advocacy Fund to support strategic advocacy for the COVID-19 Pandemic



NuunaRon, an art group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and emerging artists living with disability, were invited to display their Culture is Inclusion Exhibition at the Palais De Nations, United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, supported by FPDN.

A REPRESENTATIVE VOICE FOR FIRST PEOPLES WITH DISABILITY

FPDN continues to lead change for First Peoples with disability through systemic advocacy and representation. We work to ensure that the First Peoples disability conversation is always on the agenda.

We regularly chair national consultative forums at the invitation of Australian Government Ministers to lend our expertise as the peak national body of and for First Peoples with Disability.

We have and continue to prepare submissions to appear before numerous Commonwealth and State government enquiries and represent on multiple committees and advisory groups to advance the rights and entitlements of First Peoples with disability in Australia and Internationally.

FPDN has represented Australia and First Peoples with disability at the United Nations in Geneva and New York at high level reviews, forums and meetings; including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Universal Periodic Review on Human Rights and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

International representation

Co-lead the Australian Civil Society for Delegation to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UN CRPD Review 2019

Commonwealth Disabled Persons Forum

Pacific Disability Forum Finance Committee

Kapo Maori, New Zealand – Pasika Disabled Peoples Organisations Summit



National representation

National Co-Design Group to the Indigenous Voice to Parliament

National Closing the Gap Steering Committee

National Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks

Commonwealth Disability Response Committee - Management and Operational plan for COVID-19 for people with disability

Advisory to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID response

Joint Committee into COVID-19 response

Select Committee on NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

National Disability Data Asset Advisory Committee

National Disability Strategy Committee

First Nations Strategic Advisory to the Disability Royal Commission

Disability Representative Organisations Disability Royal Commission Committee

Disability Gateway Committee

Disability Advocacy Reform Committee

Positive Partnerships Advisory Group, Autism Australia

Reimagine Mental Health Advisory, Mental Health Australia

Your Story Disability Royal Commission Advisory

State representation


Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations NSW (CAPO)

NSW Disability Community of Practice COVID-19 Committee

Victorian Government Taskforce Meeting of Aboriginal people with disability and their representatives responding to COVID-19

Murri Court, Sunshine Coast

Arts Advisory Council, Sunshine Coast



Our training and resources, created using the traditional method of art and storytelling, provides participants with the tools to engage in a culturally safe, respectful and meaningful way

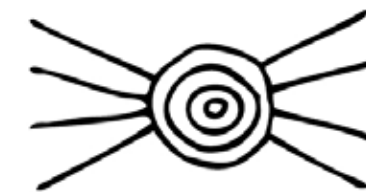
DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability was established in April 2019 to address growing reports of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation experienced by people with disability.

FPDN was active in providing high-level advice to the Federal Government in the establishment of the Disability Royal Commission, continuing to highlight the serious human rights violations against, and unique experiences of, First Peoples with Disability. We worked to ensure that First Peoples voices had representation within the Royal Commission and that a culturally safe and inclusive pathway was available to First Peoples with disability to engage with the Royal Commission. Ms. Andrea Mason, OAM, a Ngaanyatjarra and Karonie woman from Western Australia, was appointed First Nations Commissioner to the Disability Royal Commission.

FPDN lends their expertise as leaders in First Peoples disability business in continuing to provide high-level advice as members of the First Nations Strategic Advisory Group to the Disability Royal Commission and Disability Representative Organisations Disability Royal Commission Committee. In response to specific issues highlighted by the Disability Royal Commission, FPDN has prepared policy advice and submissions around key issues impacting on First Peoples with disability to shape the trajectory of the Royal Commission and, more broadly, influence the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability policy response.

FPDN's Disability Royal Commission Training and Advocacy team have worked to support First Peoples engagement with the Disability Royal Commission. FPDN have developed 'Disability Business Training', an education and training platform, along with a suite of resources, to build the capacity of National Disability Advocacy Providers across Australia working with First Peoples with disability. Our training and resources, created using the traditional method of art and storytelling, provides participants with the tools to engage in a culturally safe, respectful and meaningful way when supporting First Peoples with disability to better



understand the work of the Disability Royal Commission, know their rights, keep safe and be supported to share their story with the Disability Royal Commission.

FPDN Advocates lead and facilitate the building of networks and alliances, sharing our expertise and culturally appropriate support to National Disability Advocacy Providers, counselling and legal services who provide advocacy and support to First Peoples with disability.

Respectful Listening

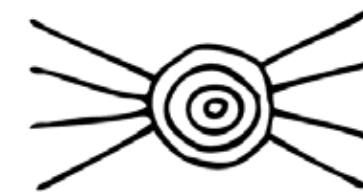
The artwork 'Respectful Listening', (featured on the front and back cover) commissioned by the Disability Royal Commission, was developed by Wiradjuri Artist and FPDN Training and Resource Development Manager Uncle Paul Constable Calcott.

The artwork depicts the story of The Disability Royal Commission's work from a First Peoples perspective, translated into a traditional style of art and symbols used by many of Australia's First Peoples to share information and stories for thousands of years. The Respectful Listening story is made up of seven people who are respected and knowledgeable members of their own communities. These seven people, known as the Commissioners, come from different community groups including Australia's First People, people living with disability and the LGBTIQ+ community. They are represented in the story using the symbol for Elder to show they are respected members of their own community. These commissioners will travel through many regions and communities over the next three years collecting stories and sharing information, shown as a message stick, from people who may have experienced violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

'Respectful Listening' was created to support First Peoples engagement with the Disability Royal Commission. FPDN developed an animated story bringing the artwork to life, which was broadcast nationally across television networks Imparja, NITV, 9Go and 9GEM.



FPDN CEO Damian Griffis co-led an Australian Civil Society Delegation of Organisations to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva to appear before the UN Committee on the CRPD (The Committee).



UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (UNCRPD)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Australia review

The 22nd session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) was held in Geneva in September 2019. Article 1 of the CRPD states that 'The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity'.

FPDN CEO Damian Griffis co-led an Australian Civil Society Delegation of Organisations to the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva to appear before the UN Committee on the CRPD (The Committee). The purpose of the review is to monitor and evaluate the progress of member states, such as Australia, against the protection and fulfilment of the rights of persons with disabilities outlined in the CRPD.

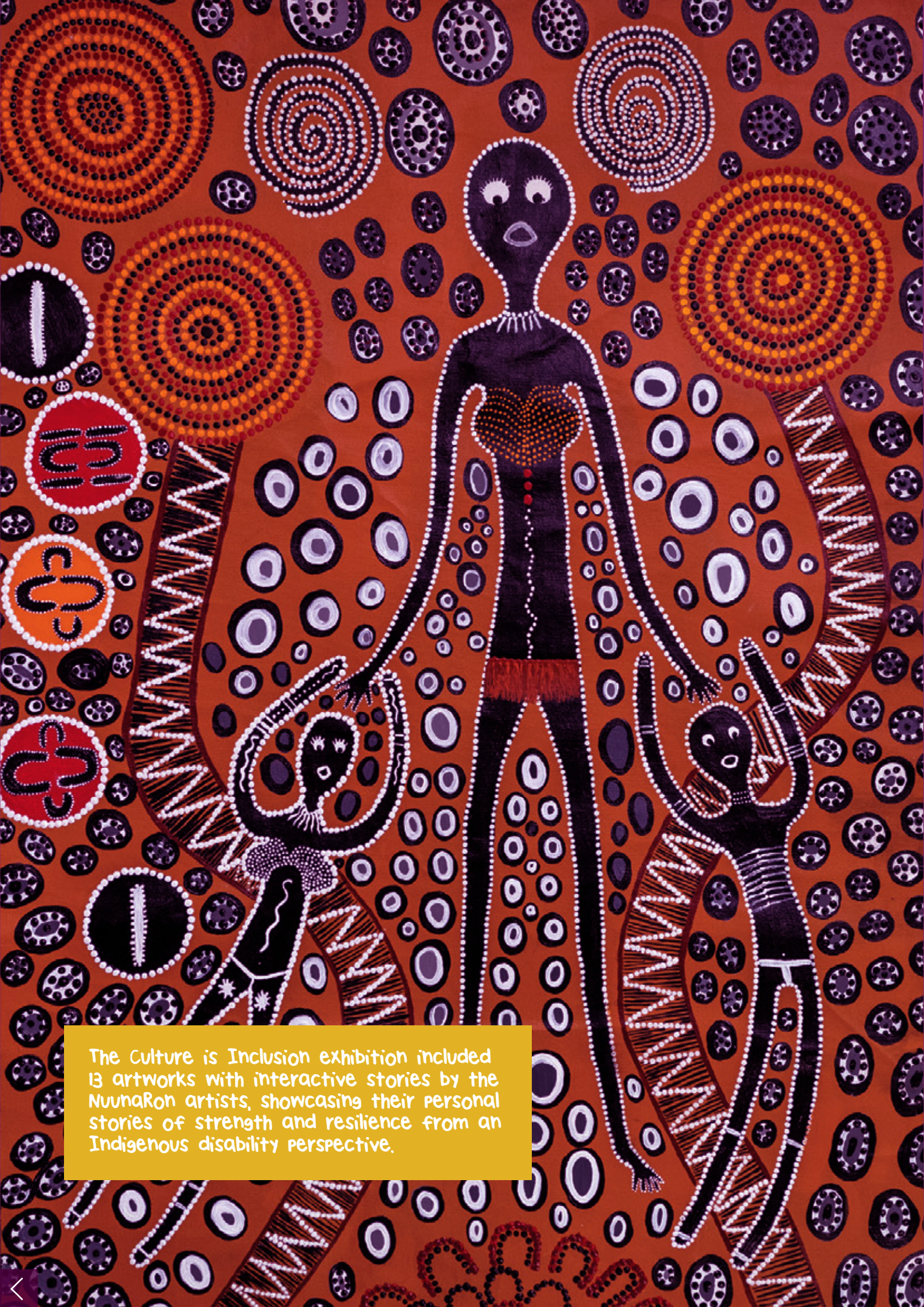
A Coalition of Disabled People's Organisations, disability representatives and advocacy organisations across Australia consulted almost 900 people with disability, including First Peoples with disability, through an online survey to prepare a comprehensive report reviewing Australia's progress in implementing the CRPD entitled '[Disability Rights Now 2019: Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#)'. The report highlighted the serious and egregious human rights abuses against people with disability in Australia and was submitted by the delegation to the CRPD Committee in Geneva. Key findings of the report include people with disability experiencing high levels of violence, disadvantage, discrimination based on disability, race and gender, lack of access to basic supports and services, widespread poverty, lack of accessible information with reference to the NDIS and isolation from the community.

The report also informed the committee that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are 14 times more likely to be imprisoned with one third reporting a disability, 50% reporting a history of psychosocial disability, and 25-30% of prisoners having an intellectual disability.

FPDN CEO Damian Griffis presented to the committee in session on the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in the criminal justice system addressing the soaring rates of indefinite detention without conviction, calling attention to the fact that the fundamental human rights of First Peoples with disability within the criminal justice system are largely ignored.



UNCRPD Flash cards developed for FPDN's Know Your Human Rights training.



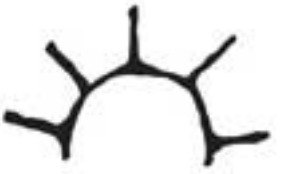
The Culture is Inclusion exhibition included 13 artworks with interactive stories by the NuunaRon artists, showcasing their personal stories of strength and resilience from an Indigenous disability perspective.

Culture Is Inclusion Exhibition – Sharing stories of Strength and Resilience

NuunaRon, an art group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and emerging artists living with disability, were invited to display their 'Culture is Inclusion' Exhibition at the Palais De Nations, United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, supported by FPDN. The exhibition was held from 2 September to 19 September 2019 coinciding with the UN Committee to the CRPD and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for the review of Australia, marking an opportune time for these First Peoples artists with lived experience of disability to share their culture and stories with other First Peoples, delegates and dignitaries from around the world.

The 'Culture is Inclusion' exhibition included 13 artworks with interactive stories by the NuunaRon artists, showcasing their personal stories of strength and resilience from an Indigenous disability perspective. The exhibition highlighted that a culture of inclusion for people with disability has been a way of life in all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for tens of thousands of years and the importance of connection to culture in promoting health and healing. The message shared by the NuunaRon artists is one of being supported to connect with peers and share stories through the traditional method of art and storytelling as a means of building individual resilience, having a positive impact on the experiences of mental health and social isolation.

The Culture is Inclusion Exhibition was officially launched by the Australian Consulate on 13 September with an event at the Palais De Nations. The event was attended by Australian Consulate staff, International dignitaries, UN representatives and Australian delegation members. FPDN presented an artwork by Uncle Paul Constable Calcott titled 'Mgu-mg-gi-ya-la-rra' (meaning to come together, to agree together and to give say to each other) to the Australian delegation as a thank you gift for hosting the exhibition.



Sponsorship provided by The Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC) Queensland, along with a fundraising drive supported NuunaRon artists Tharawal woman Aunty Paula Wootton, Kuku Yalanji and Djabuhay man Jahrim Riley and Yugamdeh woman Alison Clarey to travel to with the exhibition and present their artworks in Geneva.

Following on from the success of the exhibition in Geneva, the Queensland Government invited the NuunaRon artists to display the 'Culture is Inclusion' exhibition at Parliament House in Brisbane, hosting an event for International day of People with Disability and in celebration of their artworks, stories and achievements.

The NuunaRon Art Group is an initiative of FPDN.



Sharing Stories Far From Home

Jahrim Riley, Kuku Yalanji & Djabugay

Jahrim's painting depicts him as a young man keeping the stories handed down by his grandparents and respectfully sharing these stories and dance to educate others.



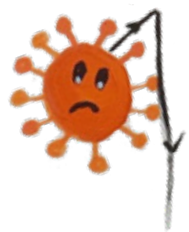
Hear Jahrim's story – Watch the video.

www.fpdn.org.au/stories



© All artworks are subject to copyright

Exhibition
artwork story cards



COVID-19 RESPONSE

This year we found ourselves in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 Pandemic was something that we, as a nation, from Federal Government, State Governments to our communities, were frighteningly unprepared to respond to.

For FPDN, the health and safety of First Peoples with disability, our communities and the disability community were our top priority. 45% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with some form of disability or long-term health condition and from the sudden onset of this pandemic it was all too clear that if COVID-19 was to reach into our communities, it would have a catastrophic impact on the health and well-being of First Peoples.

In March 2020, it was evident that this was a rapidly unfolding emergency. FPDN demonstrated our true strength in leadership positioning ourselves at the forefront of the COVID-19 response for First Peoples with disability and taking immediate action across five key areas:

1. Systemic Advocacy

We worked with Governments both Federal and State as advisors to multiple COVID-19 committees and task forces to provide our expertise to inform their COVID-19 response strategies for First Peoples with disability. As a member of Disabled Peoples Organisations Australia (DPOA), we worked together with sector NGOs and community organisations to collectively deliver an ongoing advocacy response to ensure that rights of people with disability to access support, information, medical and disability services and essential supplies were upheld.

COVID-19 Representation

- Commonwealth advisory committee management and operational plan for covid-19 for people with disability (disability response committee (March onward)
- COVID-19 and particular risks for people with disability committee
- NSW Disability Community of practice COVID-19 committee

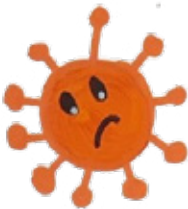
- Advisory to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 response
- Victorian Taskforce meeting of Aboriginal people with disability to and their representatives responding to COVID-19
- Joint committee into COVID-19 response
- Appeared before senate committee on COVID-19, 1 July 2020

2. COVID-19: Ethical Decision Making for First Peoples with Disabilities

Our fear in Australia was that First Peoples with disability, who already experience higher levels of disadvantage and are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, would be triaged out of the health system or be provided with inadequate support. We saw scenarios play out overseas where a point system had been the tool used to determine who is worthy of treatment and prioritising an individual's level of care. People who are disadvantaged often scored lower on those point ranking systems, and it is those same people who missed out on receiving appropriate medical attention and support.

FPDN in partnership with Professor Cameron Stewart, Sydney Health Law, University of Sydney, and Professor Jackie Leach Scully, Disability Innovation Institute UNSW, outlined necessary principles and recommendations regarding the ethical decision-making for First Peoples Living with Disability.

These guidelines are specifically for individuals presenting to an Intensive Care Unit and how their treatment is prioritised and managed. Discussions of easing restrictions, nation-wide, potentially present a higher risk of increasing numbers of outbreaks across the country. These ethical considerations must be adapted and implemented in every jurisdiction.

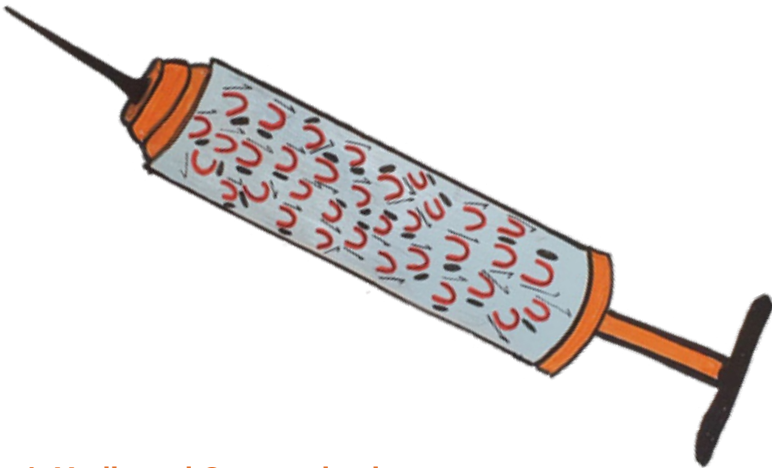


1. All Federal, State and Territory government agencies must remove disability from consideration of resource allocation when it is used as a broad criterion for exclusion from critical care.
2. State and Federal health authorities must commit to including First Peoples with a disability in planning for decision-making regarding healthcare during the pandemic.
3. State and Federal health authorities must commit to identifying areas of strain and work to re-establish strong relationships of trust and confidence with the First Peoples affected. In cases where that cannot be implemented, arrangements should be made to give access to alternative healthcare resources.
4. State and Territory policies on pandemic healthcare must expressly refer to the need to be culturally competent when providing services to First Peoples with a disability.
5. The State and Territory governments must look at how more students can be transitioned into the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healthcare workforce.
6. State and Territory governments must understand this existential threat and take whatever action is necessary to protect Elders as the guardians of First Peoples' cultures.

FPDN CEO Damian Griffis briefed Commonwealth and State Governments on Ethical Decision Making for First Peoples Living with Disability.

3. Individual Advocacy and Support

Our team mobilised on the ground, where it was safe to do so, regularly checking in on our mob with disability making phone calls to offer our support. Our day to day operations shifted, we didn't follow the Western concept of a 9:00am to 5:00pm work day, we were all available to provide support and have a yarn with community when and where they needed us.



4. Media and Communications

We worked with and for our communities regularly producing and sharing culturally safe accessible communications across all digital channels, providing current COVID-19 information as it became available. FPDN CEO Damian Griffis launched our widely attended 'Taking Care of Disability Business Webinar' series speaking directly to the COVID-19 Pandemic and FPDN's response which was attended by National Disability Advocacy Providers and the disability community. FPDN were active in promoting the rights and interests of First Peoples with Disability in the face of COVID-19 leading through our expertise in interviews across First Peoples and mainstream media and as keynote speakers and guest panelists.

5. Remote Communities & Emergency Care Packages for Community

FPDN, in partnership with the Ali-Ihsan foundation coordinated the distribution of over 2000 Emergency food relief packages to support vulnerable First Peoples with disabilities impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic across NSW.

The food relief initiative was targeted to isolated Aboriginal communities in NSW where First Peoples with disability were unable to access essential supplies and services due to increase in price and/or restrictions on essential services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The emergency food relief packages, generously donated by the Ali-Ihsan foundation, were distributed by FPDN staff with the support of local Aboriginal organisations across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Sydney, ACT, Far South Coast and Central Far West regions of NSW.





DISABILITY BUSINESS TRAINING

Utilising the traditional method of art and storytelling and in a conversational yarning style, FPDN have developed a range of Indigenous Disability Perspective (Disability Business) training programs and educational resources. Our training is designed to support organisations to build their disability-related competence and capacity to provide culturally safe and appropriate disability services and supports for First Peoples with disability and their families and to ensure that First Peoples with disability are connected to the services and supports they need in the general community and receive equitable access to the supports and services available under a human rights framework.

FPDN continued to roll out our culturally safe human rights literacy training 'Know Your Human rights' created to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to know their human rights, understand how to use this knowledge and be confident to speak up for their rights.

FPDN training is designed to be delivered as a face to face conversational style workshop. Restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic this year meant that the majority of our training was delivered online.



FPDN was engaged to develop training and resources specifically for:

- National Disability Advocacy Providers (NDAPs) who are providing support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, their families, carers and communities to engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission).
- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Community Connectors

We also focused on building our training consultancy, delivering the following workshops:

- 'Disability Business Training' - Your Story Disability Legal Supports
- 'Drive Safe, Drive Deadly' - Motor Accident Insurance Commission (MAIC) Queensland
- 'Getting Strong Again' National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland (NIISQ)
- 'Our Way Planning' – MHCA Alice Springs

POLICY AND RESEARCH

FPDN represents the interests of First Peoples with disability and their families to all levels of government – within disability policy frameworks and the disability service system, within the First Peoples rights sector, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy frameworks and the Aboriginal community-controlled service system.

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 National Disability Insurance Scheme and Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

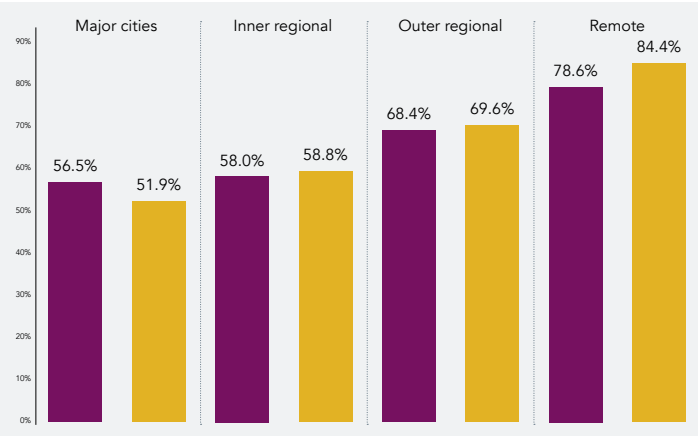
We have established relationships with key government agencies to ensure that the research can be translated in a way that drives systemic and policy change that benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

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

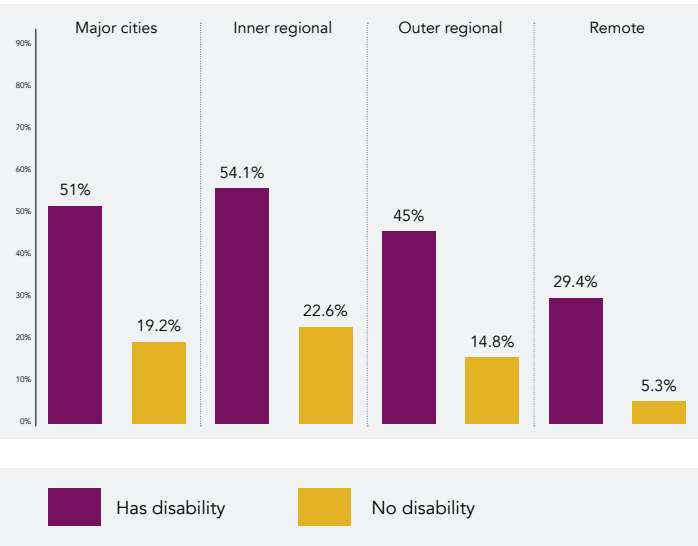
Wellness Through Cultural and Community Participation Research Project

In 2019, FPDN published the outcome of the 'Wellness through Cultural and Community Participation Research Project', in partnership with researchers at the University of New South Wales and the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics at the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The project looked into the ways that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability participated in community and cultural activities across a range of participation, health and wellbeing indicators and geographical identifiers (metropolitan, regional and remote). The research identified that First Peoples with disability participated in cultural activities at the same rate as First Peoples without disability and the positive effect that inclusion has upon their health and wellbeing.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in cultural activities



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have a mental health condition



This project was funded by the Lowitja Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

FPDN expanded our Media and Communications footprint in 2019/2020 with our grass roots truths, solidifying our position as a national representative voice for First Peoples living with disability and ensuring that the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability were at the forefront of our COVID-19 response, and in reinforcing the work of the Disability Royal Commission.

FPDN were highly visible across First Peoples and mainstream media, with our CEO Damian Griffis and Deputy CEO June Riemer regularly sought out to lend their insights and expertise to print and television media interviews, webinar panels and as virtual keynote conference speakers.

The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on our usual way of sharing information and exchanging stories through face to face engagement in our communities. We led by diversifying digitally, expanding our reach through the creation of digital media content focused on a shared narrative around key issues impacting First Peoples with disability. We were proactive in driving our messaging and increasing engagement across our social media, website, online forums and webinar platforms. Through these channels, we delivered culturally appropriate and accessible information leading the conversation around rights,

entitlements, and support available to First Peoples with disability over the course of the

COVID-19 Pandemic. We continued to engage with community about the work of the Disability Royal Commission providing up to date information on hearings and issues alongside responsive channels of engagement and support.

Taking Care of Disability Business Webinar Series

In April 2020, FPDN introduced our 'Taking Care of Disability Business Webinar Series' designed as a virtual community engagement platform to share critical information, lead relevant topical conversations and support staying connected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

FPDN's first webinar 'COVID-19' was launched by our CEO Damian Griffis addressing the five key areas of FPDN's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside registered Nurse Rochelle Pitt who spoke on infection control for our communities and Craig and Libby Brown from Aboriginal Counselling services who presented on self-care when working in community.

Our webinars were hosted by FPDN's Community Connector Tory Paasi and included a variety of expert speakers and panelists exploring topics such as the Disability Royal Commission with Commissioner Andrea Mason, Remote Communities with Jeff McMullen, Justice with National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal Service (NATSILS) Executive Officer Roxeanne Moore and Something Stronger with Dr Scott Avery. FPDN produced a total of 16 Webinars over the course of the year, with each discussion focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability across thematic areas related to the work of the Disability Royal Commission.

Our webinars were well received by Disability Service Providers, National Disability Advocacy Providers and the disability community, providing participants with the opportunity to interact with our speakers and presenters via Q&A sessions at the conclusion of each webinar. FPDN would like to thank our guest speakers, panelists and our attendees for their support of our Disability Business webinar series.



CLOSING THE GAP

FPDN have been advocating for many years with Federal and State Governments alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Peak organisations for disability to be included as a Closing the Gap target.

This year, FPDN joined the Coalition of Peaks, a National representative body made up of around fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and members who have signed a National Agreement with Governments to work together in shared decision making on improving the life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through Closing the Gap.

FPDN represents the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to ensure that disability business for our communities is on the agenda at all levels and that disability is recognised as a cross cutting target across all closing the gap priority reforms.

Disability is not just a health issue, it is prevalent under all existing target areas: families, children and youth, housing, justice, including youth justice, health, economic development, culture and language, education, healing and eliminating racism and systemic discrimination.

FPDN are also members of the Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks (CAPO) NSW.





COMMUNITY-LED DECISION MAKING

FPDN facilitates opportunities for First Peoples living with disability to have a voice on matters that affect their lives. FPDN projects are developed in consultation with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

OUR PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES



NDIS Truth Telling

FPDN were engaged by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability to seek their views and contribute to the 2019 Review of the NDIS Act and NDIS Participant Service Guarantee.

Our 'NDIS Truth Telling workshops' were held across the country in Broome WA, Cairns Far North QLD, Bamaga QLD, Launceston TAS and Tennant Creek NT. The workshops were centered around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability sharing their experiences and stories about what was working and what was not working for them with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. These consultations will help the government find solutions and inform the development of the Participant Service Guarantee which will support positive experiences for participants of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and set standards for service for the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Restrictive Practice Community Forums

A restrictive practice is an authorised intervention that controls the freedom of people with disability who have behaviors of concern to help keep them safe.

As a consultant for the NSW government, FPDN held community workshops across NSW for community to have their say on how the NSW government can best manage restrictive practice authorisation without violating the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with Disability.

FPDN reported their findings to the NSW Government to inform how they could better manage restrictive practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in a safe and culturally supported way.

Evaluation of the Justice Advocacy Service

FPDN were part of a consortium engaged by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to undertake an evaluation of the Justice Advocacy Service in NSW. The consortium, led by Ernst and Young, included FPDN, The University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre and Youth Law Australia.

The Justice Advocacy Service (JAS) NSW supports victims, witnesses and defendants with cognitive impairment in the criminal justice system. The JAS supports clients to exercise their rights and access to legal advice via phone in police custody, ensure that victims and witnesses can effectively report crime to police and that victims, witnesses and defendants attending court are able to understand and participate in their criminal matter.

NDIS Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Disability Justice Project

First Peoples Disability Network Australia, Australian Centre for Disability Law (ACDL) and People with Disability Australia (PWDA) are working in partnership to deliver the ILC 'Talk Up for your Legal Rights' project for First Peoples with disability across NSW. The purpose of this project is to provide information and education about legal rights and to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with lived experience of disability to lead their own conversation and create opportunities for change within their own communities. Led by an advisory group of Elders with lived experience of disability justice, 'Talk up for your legal rights' is designed for community to come together to identify legal issues that are impacting on their lives and their communities

and use this knowledge to design and deliver legal rights education resources targeted to their local community.

Scheduled face to face 'Talk up for your legal rights' meetings across NSW were prevented from progressing due to COVID-19 restrictions and we have been working to build connections, develop resources and online content to support the project initiatives. The 'Talk Up for your Legal Rights' community project will continue into 2021.



Paterson Street Hub, Tennant Creek

Mappu, Mappirri Akarrirreyel. Welcome to Paterson Street Hub, a place where people come together.

Paterson Street Hub, an initiative of FPDN, is a space for community on the main street in Tennant Creek to meet, share ideas and stories, connect with each other and seek assistance. The aim of the Hub is to strengthen and support the social fabric of the Barkly community by celebrating the connections between people.

This year, as part of the Stronger Communities Program, Paterson Street Hub worked on upgrading the facilities of the Paterson Street Hub to make it more accessible and inclusive.

The Hub also received a Suicide Prevention Community Grant delivering the women's stories project focused on co-creating the Tennant Creek Archive of Hope, Strength and Resilience which was led by Aboriginal women in the community.

Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program

The Boosting the Local Care Workforce Program (BLCW Program) is a national program focused on developing the capacity of the Disability and Aged Care providers to strengthen business operations and build their workforce. FPDN has joined forces with Ernest and Young (EY) and Community Service Industry Alliance (CSIA) to deliver the BLCW project.

The BLCW program supports the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) creating employment and business opportunities across the community service sector.

FPDN has regional coordinators located in WA, SA, NSW, QLD and the NT who are working to build capacity services providers to provide culturally competent services and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. Our regional coordinators are providing information, support to reduce the barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander providers in the disability and aged care sectors. They assist to grow their businesses through connecting to programs and initiatives to transition to the NDIS market and create job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Staff.

FPDN Regional Coordinators are working with community to achieve outcomes for Culturally competent services and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability creating opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses in the aged care and disability sector to access information and support to grow their business

Creating and promoting job opportunities for our community in the aged care and disability sector

The BLCW project has developed resources to support all service providers to grow their business, transition into the NDIS market and create new employment opportunities. Regional Coordinators provide localised support, gather intelligence on local issues, assist providers to complete a Readiness Assessment and connect stakeholders with complementary programs and initiatives in the disability and aged care sectors.



ALLIANCES & PARTNERSHIPS

	Coalition of Peaks (National)
	Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks NSW
	Disabled Peoples Organisations Australia
	Kapo Maori, New Zealand
	NATSILS (Your story and Victorian Aboriginal Legal service)
	Al-Ihsan
	QAI
	Australian Bureau of Statistics
	Australian Centre for Disability Law
	University of New South Wales
	Self-Advocacy Resource Unit
	Positive Partnerships
	Western Sydney University

PATRON

Jeff McMullan

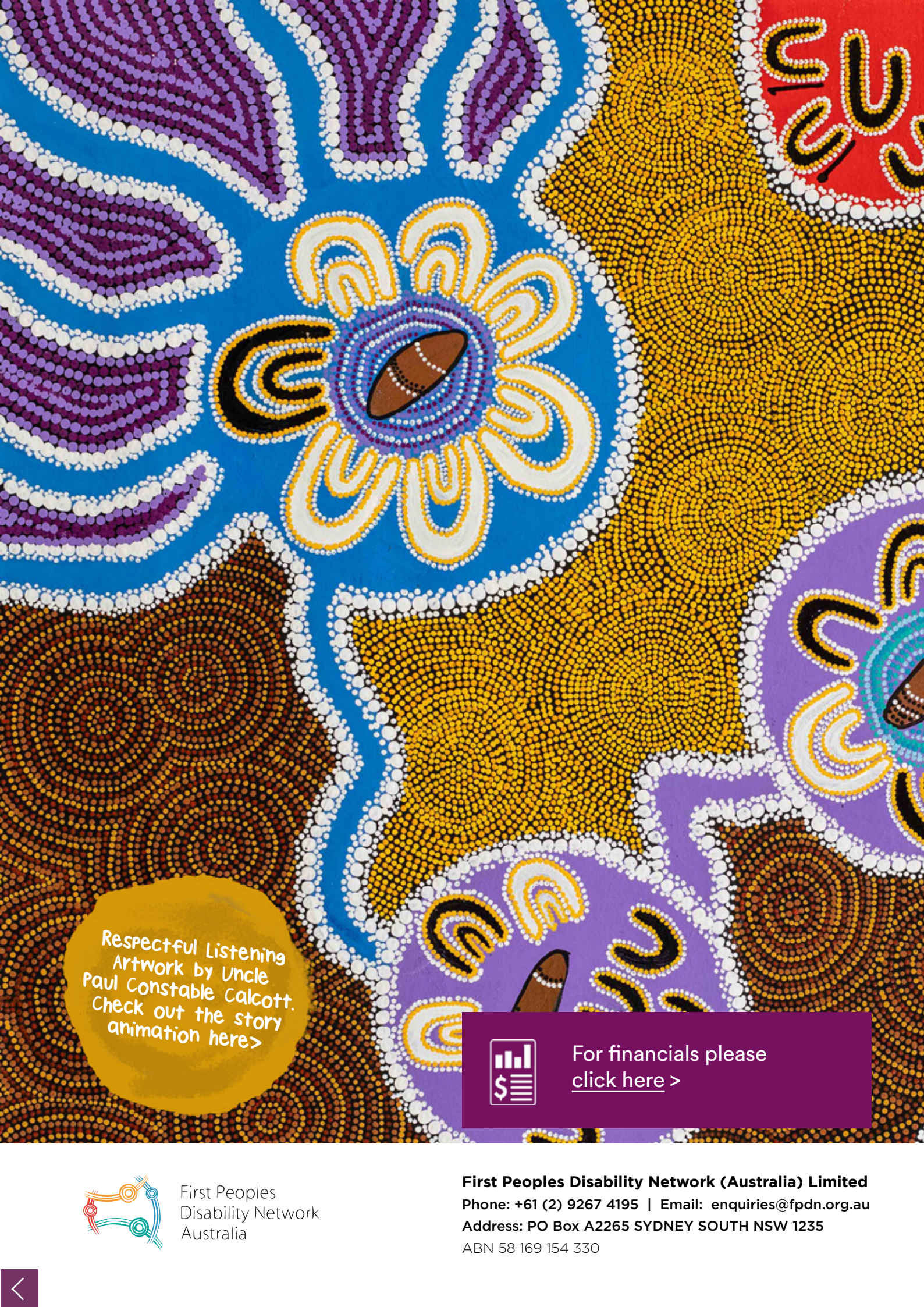


FPDN RECEIVES FUNDING FROM:

- Australian Government – Department of Social Services, Canberra
- Australian Government – Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- NSW Government – Department of Family and Community Services
- NSW Premier and Cabinet
- Northern Territory Government Department of Health
- Perpetual Foundation
- Cages Foundation
- University of NSW
- Ernst & Young
- Motor Accident Insurance Commission, Queensland
- National Injury Insurance Agency, Queensland
- Centre for Australian Progress

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) values the wisdom and knowledge shared by our Elders and communities in advising our work. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our funding bodies, donors and supporters for their generous contribution and support as we work toward our common goal of a just and equitable society for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and our communities.



Respectful Listening
Artwork by Uncle
Paul Constable Calcott.
Check out the story
animation [here](#)>



For financials please
[click here](#) >



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