



First Peoples
Disability Network
Australia

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Wisdom of Our Elders	3
A message from Our Chairperson	1
A message from our CEO	2
About Us	1
Our Footprint	3
Communicating The Footprint	6
Our Impact	8
Thanks to our Supporters	14
Our Financial Report	17
Our Terminology Guide	17
End Notes	20

WISDOM OF OUR ELDERS

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owner's past, present and emerging of the lands on which we journey. We pay our respects to our Elders, the knowledge holders of our stories, in continuing our traditions and their ongoing connection to and caring for our lands, waters and community. FPDN values the wisdom and knowledge shared by our Elders in guiding our work. We pay our deepest respects to our founding Elders Uncle Lester Bostock and Aunty Gayle Rankine, the warriors who built the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Rights movement here in Australia and internationally.

As Aboriginal people with lived experience of disability, we continue their legacy for current and future generations and acknowledge the important responsibility of giving voice to the most vulnerable members of our communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People with Disability.

The following provides the foundation which was led by Our Elders:

- 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.

Cultural Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this report contains video, images and names of people who have passed.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

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

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

This year has been both an emotional and rewarding year for the Board; emotional in that we are coming to a close on the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) in which a lot of us have shared our personal stories and/or assisting family members to share their stories; but rewarding in the notion that we can see we are having a positive impact on the lives of the community we serve. Our CEO and staff are truly committed to making a difference through advocacy and lobbying for policy changes, delivery of human rights training and building meaningful collaboration and partnerships across the sector.

With both the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) review and the DRC report due later this year we will continue to play a part of the wider disability advocacy sector work to urge the DRC to address the systemic reasons behind the violence and abuse so many of us experience in our lives.

The work we do would not be possible without the funding and support of the DSS and NIAA and we are so very grateful not only the funding provided but also this unique opportunity to build a solid foundation for FPDN to grow and work towards the vision our Foundational Elders, Uncle Lester Bostock and Auntie Gayle Rankine had over 20 years ago.

In closing as the Chairperson, I think about our humble beginnings starting out in a little office in Redfern and to where we are today with offices in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne and a team of 35 passionate staff who are located all around the country, and it just goes to show that 'from little things big things grow'.

Thank you so much to our Friends of FPDN for the love and support you have shown FPDN over the years and keeping the flame burning.



**Auntie Kay Sadler,
Chairperson**

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



**Damian Griffis,
CEO**

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

This year our organisation has seen substantial growth, and this growth has brought a lot of challenges for our organisation both structurally and culturally and I'm grateful to our amazing Board and leadership team who have worked tirelessly to ensure FPDN is structurally and culturally ready for the next phase of FPDN's journey ahead.

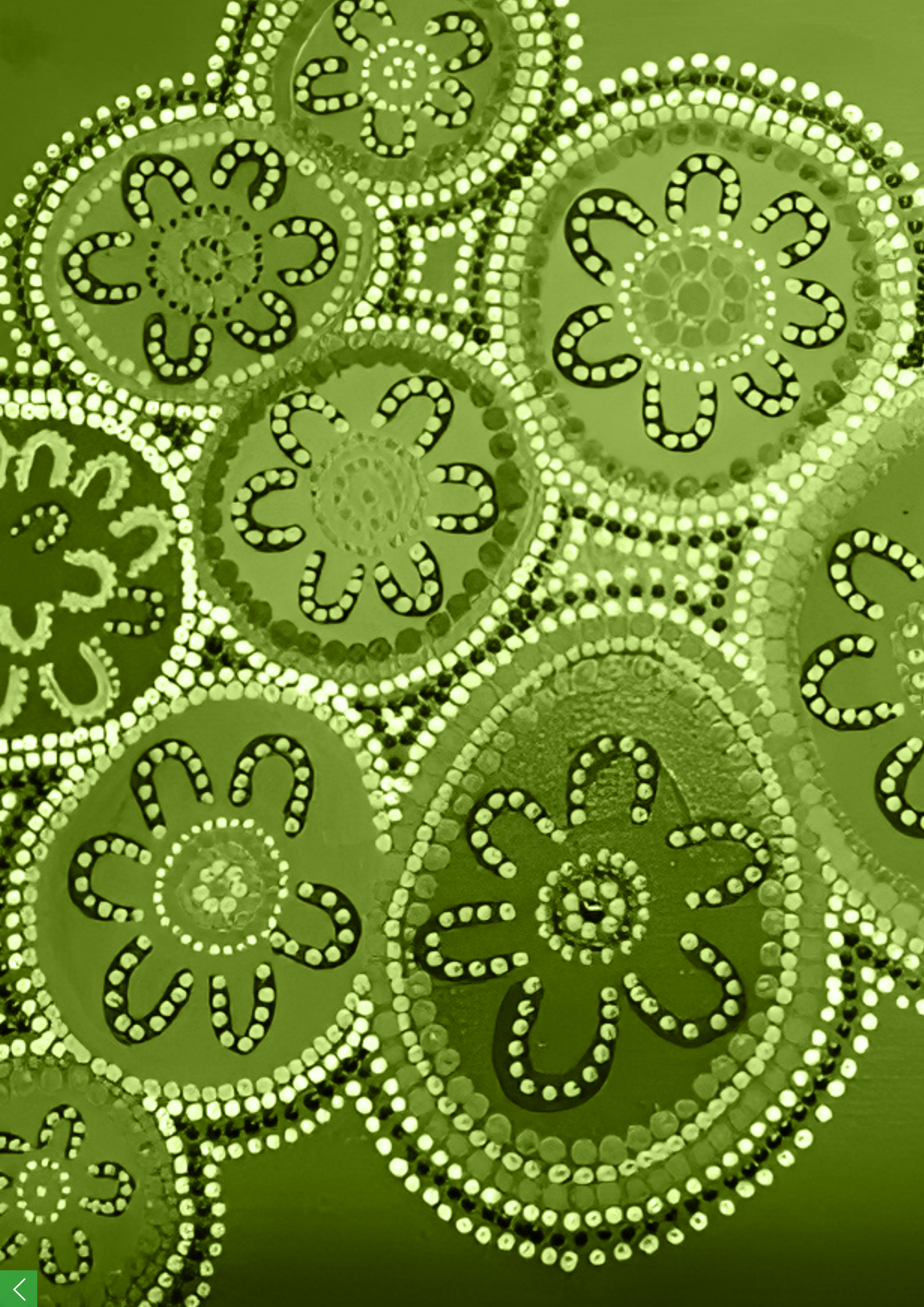
Whilst this year provided an opportunity to focus on establishing important foundational structures, I acknowledge the role my leadership team played this year in developing the high-level strategies, projects and programs which now provides us with an action roadmap for the ongoing work of the Footprint project funded through NIAA.

FPDN is committed to sharing community stories and this year our Training and Engagement team launched another season of Yarning Disability podcast which provided more important and impactful stories from First Peoples with lived experience of disability.

This year we also continued to play a part of the wider disability advocacy sector who are urging the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) to address the systemic reasons behind the violence and abuse so many of us experience in our lives. With the DRC report expected to be launched later in 2023 our policy and communications have been working together with the broader disability sector to ensure our community are informed every step of the way on the DRC.

FPDN is humbled and grateful to be entrusted to deliver an increasing number of projects, including training, resource production and sharing expertise, about the needs of First People with disability.

In closing, I thank all our supporters, funders and most importantly our Board and staff for the passion, commitment to make FPDN to what it is today.



ABOUT US

Our Mission

FPDN 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

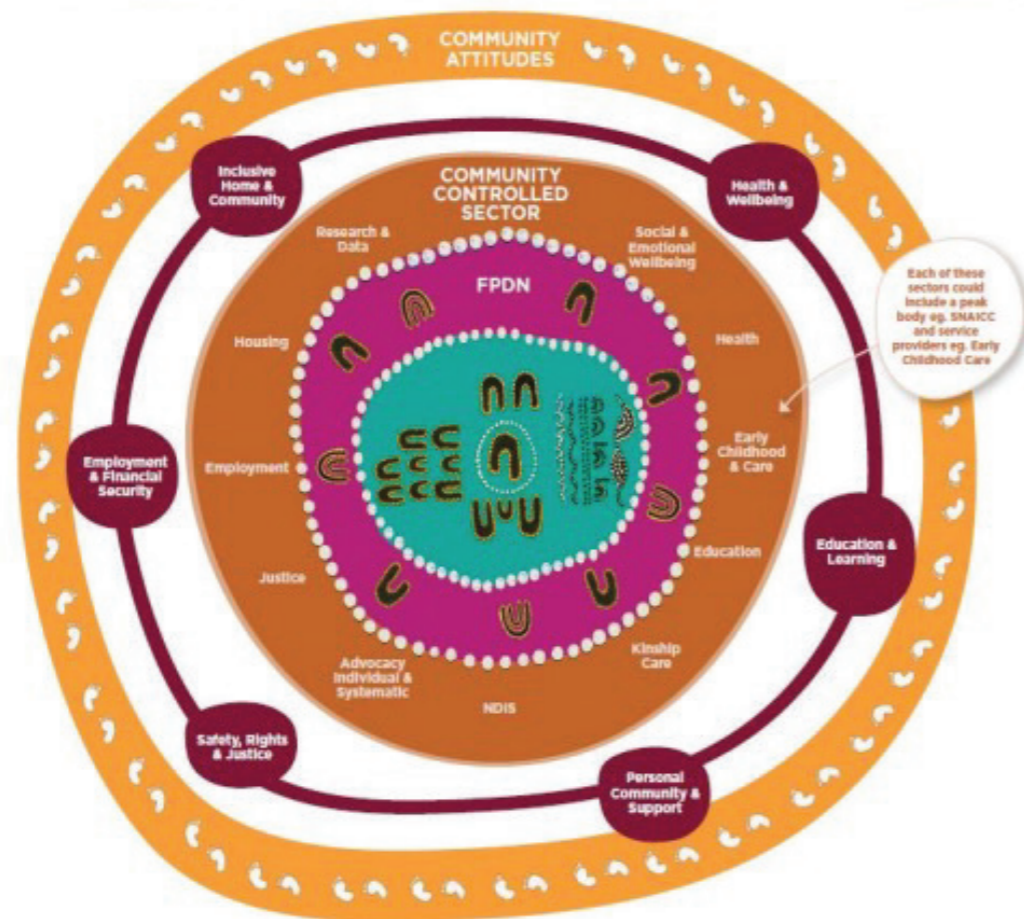
THE DISABILITY SECTOR STRENGTHENING PLAN

In 2023 The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan (Disability SSP) was developed through comprehensive national consultation, as well as input from all levels of government and the community-controlled sector. The Disability SSP recognises the extensive national consultation efforts carried out throughout development by the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN). The Disability SSP also recognises FPDN's decades of experience in delivering community consultation and engagement efforts with First Nations people with disability. This expertise has informed the Disability SSP.

The Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, and all Australian Governments, including: The Commonwealth of Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory

The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group (DSSPWG) is also recognised as a key contributor to the development of the Disability SSP.

Figure 1: Community Controlled Model



OUR FOOTPRINT

The National Disability Footprint has been designed by First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) to strengthen the representation of First Peoples with disability across all policy areas to ensure their needs, expectations and priorities are responded to. It has been specifically developed to align with Investment Priority Reform Two under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – Building strong formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service sectors. It has seven elements as listed below. The structure of the National Disability Footprint will ensure visibility, representation and meaningful engagement, training and systemic advocacy, nationally and in each state and territory.

THE SEVEN ELEMENTS

The National Disability Footprint will be implemented through its seven Elements, each with its own objectives, outcomes, activities, and timelines. The Elements provide the foundational pieces of the Footprint and guide FPDN's work on the project. The seven Elements of the National Disability Footprint are:

Element One

Strengthening FPDN's National Disability Footprint (Governance)

To build the capacity of FPDN as the national disability Peak Body to influence policy and build the sector at national and jurisdictional levels.

Activity Update

- Over the last 12 months Managers have been building their individual elements including strategies and staffing and we will be focussing on implementation ensuring alignment across all elements of the footprint.
- The Footprint Managers have been working together to develop the final implementation plan for Phase 2 incorporating element strategies which have been finalised.
- We developed a short- and medium-term footprint Framework.
- We finalised the reporting and risk management framework, which is currently accessible to all Footprint Managers within the Asana project management tool. We currently have a risk management policy in place and will be finalising the risk management framework as a leadership team in August.

Element Two

Data and Research

To enable access to data improving investment decisions in disability programs and policies and supporting First Peoples Community-Controlled Organisations in developing quality disability programs and services.

Activity Update

- A policy network has been established, with an initial policy group meeting in November 2022. This mapped known government data initiatives against the scope of this project. Contacts within the policy network are being maintained by ad hoc meets and participation on project advisory groups indirectly related to this project.
- An ethics submission has been lodged with AIATSIS in June 2023. This is required before the commencement of fieldwork (community consultation). A response is forthcoming.
- Research planning and conversations are occurring within FPDN, although there has been limited traction in cultivating interest outside the First Nations disability community.

Element Three

Strengthening the Policy Representation Footprint

To influence change across policy and program settings to enable greater inclusion and access to services and systems for First Peoples with

disabilities. Further, to provide FPDN with greater capacity to inform legislation, policies, programs, and systems across the key sectors that impact the lives of First Peoples with disabilities, and to address disproportionate outcomes.

Activity Update

- Recruited the policy and systemic advocacy team.
- Developed the national policy and advocacy strategy and developed a team policy portfolio charter.
- Recruited the National Sector Strengthening Manager.

Element Four

Strengthening a Cultural and Disability Inclusive Workforce and Training Footprint

To support sectoral capacity building and attitudinal change. This will be done by identifying the capabilities required in the community-controlled disability sector, developing a national training strategy that will lead to First Peoples with disabilities receiving more inclusive, accessible, and appropriate support. Accreditation of training and partnerships with universities and other institutions to collaborate on educational pathways and content.

Activity Update

- National Training and Engagement team Manager, first two recruited training Officers to present the National Training and Engagement strategy to FPDN CEO and leadership team
- The team developed an FPDN community engagement guide.

Element Five

Strengthening Community Disability Rights Footprints

To deliver training and community engagement to enhance First Peoples' understanding of their rights and foster the skills required to seek out and access the services they require.

Activity Update

- FPDN Footprint Artwork 'Safe Journey' was created by Brenton Bowen through an art competition.
- Recruitment of National Training Manager and National Training and Engagement officer roles
- Workshopping National and Engagement team resource projects, team and stakeholder research in Brisbane QLD

Element Six

Evaluation

To evaluate the implementation of the National Disability Footprint throughout the initial funding term to monitor progress and measure the impact of all Elements.

Activity Update

- Inside Policy has been engaged by FPDN to assist in delivering on Element 6 - Evaluation of the National Disability Footprint Agreement.
- A co-design of an Evaluation Framework was drafted which can assist with evaluating the National Footprint while also assisting FPDN with its ongoing internal continuous improvement and learning efforts.

Element Seven

Communications Strategy

To contribute to creating attitudinal change including repositioning service delivery from a medical to a social and cultural model of disability. The communications that will be delivered will support the implementation of the Elements by reinforcing the messaging being delivered through other Elements.

Activity Update

- Recruited the National Communications Manager and the Communications Officer.
- Developed a comprehensive three-year Communications Strategy that aligns to the work of the Footprint.
- Developed a comprehensive Accessible Communications and Engagement Guidelines for FPDN to develop best workplace practices within the org. Further work will be done to create an external guideline for ACCOs.
- Developed a communications plan for FPDN focused on maintaining the brand and sustainability of the organisation.

THE DISABILITY SECTOR STRENGTHENING PLAN

Communicating The Footprint
We have developed a Strategic Communications Plan to support the delivery of the Footprint project as work towards creating attitudinal change including repositioning service delivery from a medical to a social and cultural model.

This Strategy Communications Plan aims to **Support the Delivery of The Footprint** with the vision to work towards creating attitudinal change including repositioning service delivery from a medical to a social and cultural model of disability.

The National Disability Footprint has been designed by First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) to strengthen the representation of First Peoples with disability across all policy areas to ensure their needs, expectations and priorities are responded to. It has been specifically developed to align with Investment Priority Reform Two under the **National Agreement on Closing the Gap - Building strong formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service sectors**. It has seven elements as listed below. The structure of the National Disability Footprint will ensure visibility, representation and meaningful engagement, training and systemic advocacy, nationally and in each state and territory.

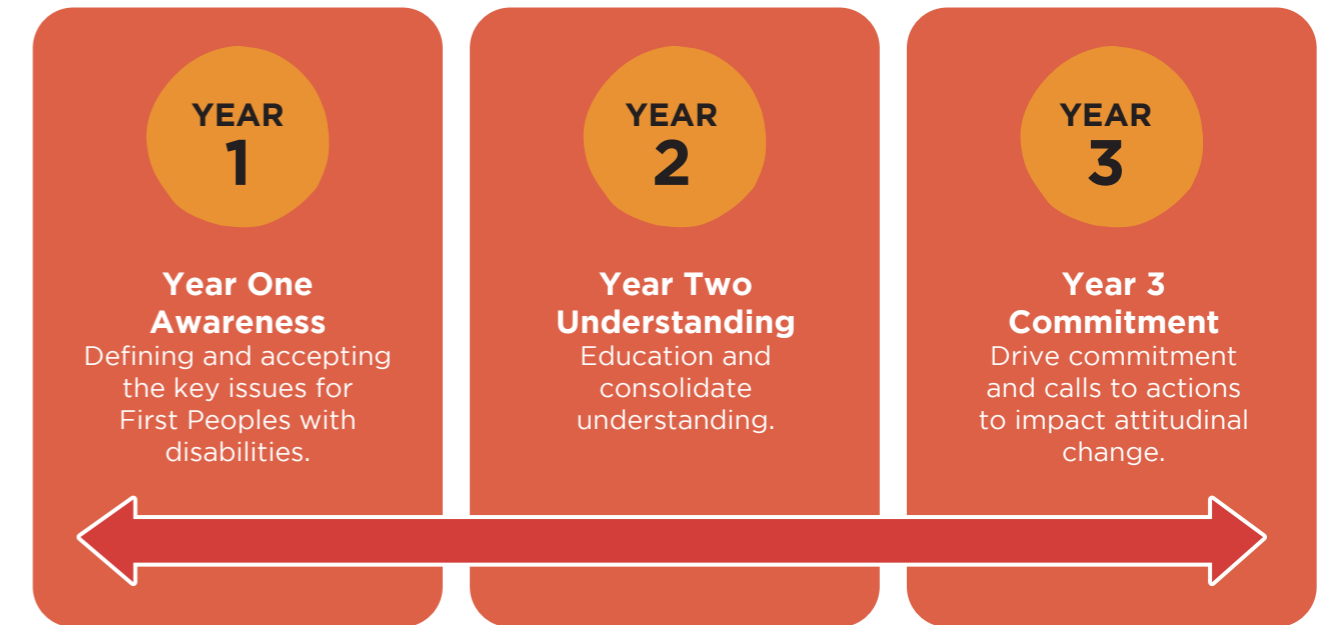
Communication pillars

- **ELEVATE** FPDN voice as the peak body within the disability sector through thought leadership.
- **CREATE** strategic and impactful media and communication materials to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations.
- **PROMOTE** the strengths, opportunities and benefits of culturally inclusive and culturally safe work environments for First Peoples with disabilities.
- **ADVOCATE** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations through unified policy messaging across the disability sector.

Communications objectives

- Create targeted campaigns to coincide with policies and programs within The Footprint.
- Strategy development: Develop a strategic communications plan to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of The Footprint.
- Research: conduct a stock take, mapping exercise and strategic assessment of existing FPDN and funded communications, products and resources, channels, audience and messages - Together with key First Nations disability sector initiatives - and identify gaps, needs and opportunities

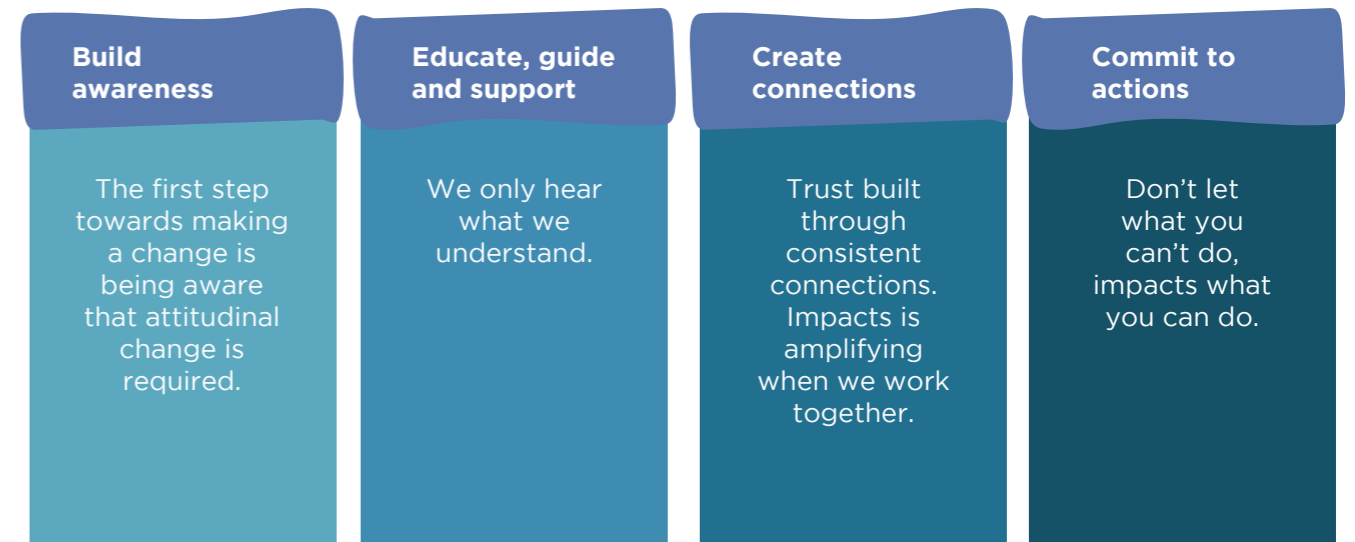
CAMPAIGN PHASES



Communications approach

The overarching purpose of the communications strategy is to support the Element 1-6 to change the medical and clinical model of delivery services to a community delivery model.

Through the communications we seek to:



OUR IMPACT

FPDN Policy Footprint Map

We are working with the government, the disability sector and communities to develop better culturally informed policies and practices and ways of communicating that are both human rights centred and represent the views of First People with disability. Our national policy footprint is focused on:

1. Justice
2. Housing
3. Early Childhood
4. Foreign Affairs
5. Culture
6. Education
7. Disability Royal Commission (DRC)
8. National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
9. Emerging Issues
10. Health

The FPDN Policy Footprint priorities are underpinned by international standards and frameworks, including the United Nations Human Rights Declaration, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with disability and The United Nations Declaration and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Our team is culturally and geographically diverse – through applying lived experience, embedding human rights practice and centring culture in all that we do - we are creating the change from within our organisation and a best practice workplace model.

Figure 2:
FPDN Policy Footprint model



OUR JUSTICE WORK

Policy context

The justice system fails First Peoples with disability and although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults make up around 2% of the national population, they constitute 27% of the national prison population and The Australian Centre for Disability Law estimated that 95 per cent of First Nations people charged with criminal offences who appear in court have an intellectual disability, a cognitive impairment or a mental illness.¹

What are we doing?

This year we continued our calls for a dedicated hearing into the over-representation of First People with disability in the criminal justice system. This is often the direct result of the criminalisation of disability and distress. A variety of systems, such as education and the disability system, can increase the likelihood that First Peoples with disability encounter the criminal justice system. The NDIS has made these issues worse and means more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in the criminal justice system.

OUR WORK IN HOUSING

Policy Context

This country is in a housing crisis and with high inflation and the cost of living is at an all-time high, homeless rates for First Nations people are 8.8 times the rate for non-First Nations which is 306.8 compared with

34.9 per 10,000 population² and homelessness amongst our youth (18 and younger) is estimated to be about 4 in 10 First Nations.

The housing crisis isn't an emerging issue for First Peoples, as there is a long history of displacement from traditional homelands due to racist laws and policies enacted by previous governments which has had a devastating impact on the First Peoples since

What are we doing?

FPDN has an 1800 number which we provide advocacy support for people looking to get on the housing program. We are working to become a NDAP provider in which we can continue the advocacy work but in a much larger and impactful way.

Our policy and advocacy team have consulted extensively on the development of this social housing framework, because of the numbers of First People with disability who live in social housing. This project developed a wellbeing framework that reflects the values, priorities and experiences of Aboriginal people in social housing in NSW. The framework was co-designed with Aboriginal people, groups and representative bodies and will help to achieve the best wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people in NSW, including people with disability.

¹DRC Royal Commission Criminal Justice system Issues Paper, 2020, Online Media Release: Report into First Nations Over-Representation in the Criminal Justice System, Website accessed Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/y9e368k6>

²The Australia Institute health and Welfare, 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report Summary into First Nations Homelessness, Website accessed Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/2rzafsey>

OUR EARLY CHILDHOOD WORK

Policy context

It is estimated that over 139,700 First Peoples live with a disability in the country which is around 24% of the First Nations population³, so early child programs including out of home care and supports are fundamental to ensuring an equitable future for our young First Nations kids with disability.

Understand Early Intervention (ECEI) pathways is vital to ensuring children with disability have the right supports the child and education for the carers but our communities are sceptical of government programs and rightful so when you consider the history of how First Peoples were treated by the government and used as test subjects but through The Hub we have been able to build meaningful and long lasting relationships in Tennant Creek and the surrounding region that provide a safe space for share and learning. Our Tennant Creek Hub provides a safe place for children, share stories, run community focused events and provide education on the NDIS.

Embedding First Nations culture within the disability sector is vitally important to ensuring our young ones have access to the same supports as every other child but in a culturally safe and respectful way and we have continued to work closely with SNAICC to support their work in 17 Culturally Safe and Integrated Child Care and Learning centres.

These unique centres are integrated models that offer services to families beyond childcare. They are the safe, culturally safe centres for families in many of our communities.

What do we plan to do?

We are developing a cultural training program to be delivered to educators, policy makers, and teachers in line with the existing work of the Culture Tool developed with the support of our Resident Academic, Dr Scott Avery.

OUR FOREIGN AFFAIRS WORK

Policy context

It is estimated that approximately 71 million 476 Indigenous Peoples globally live with a disability⁴ and with many and other social, economic, cultural and environmental issues facing Indigenous Peoples globally international interventions are crucial to address the many issues facing First Peoples with disability.

What are we doing?

Our Leadership represents at the highest levels of government and works with the policy team to produce international interventions focused on human rights, policy submissions and have set up

³The Australia Institute health and Welfare, 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report Summary into Disability Health Outcomes, Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/r3thbd5v>

⁴Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network (IPWDGN), 2013, The Indigenous World 2021: Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network (IPWDGN) Article Report on Indigenous disability data, Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/4jem4tj4>

governance structures for engaging with the government for First Peoples with disability.

We represent at a national and internal level on foreign policies that impact First Peoples with disability and provide submissions and intervention to address any foreign policies that impact First Peoples with disability.

We deliver human rights training and provide opportunities for First Peoples with disability to engage with our international policy work.

OUR CULTURE WORK

Policy context

Culture is vitally important for First Peoples with disability as it provides a sense of identity and helps maintain a strong connection to country and community. It is not consistent that First People with disability participate in cultural activities at the same rate as First People without disability as our First Nations cultures are inclusive and built on the respect for our communities, countries and cultures.

What are we doing?

Cultural barriers and racism still provide barriers for our First Peoples with disability when engaging in the health system and FPDN are working with our Resident Academic, Dr Scott Avery to design, develop and deploy a culture assessment tool that assesses the cultural capability of an organisation and provides insight into cultural changes needed to become a culturally capable organisation.

OUR EDUCATION WORK

Policy context

Having access to quality education provides opportunities to have good jobs, housing and other social determinacies, however, the education system is failing our youth as 43% (103,300) of First Nations people aged 15 and over with disability and 46% (20,400) of First Nations people aged 15 and over with severe or profound disability had Year 10 or below as their highest level of education, compared with 36% (or 100,200) of First Nations people aged 15 years.

There are many barriers facing our youth from having quality education but one barrier and most important to our work we have identified is the lack of culture capability within education system and our policy team are working with government and key education stakeholders to address this issue and work to create a culturally capable education system based on the needs of Individuals and communities rather than focusing on economic gaps.

What are we doing?

FPDN along with the broader disability sector continue to campaign and lobby the government to put a stop to segregation in schools for children and youth with disability and have partnered in various joint statements and campaigns addressing the lack of human rights alignments with the current model of education.

We are working on a cultural capability gaps analysis tool which will provide insight into the cultural capability for the education sector and will work across all policy areas of government to ensure our holistic human rights centred approach to policy development starts with embedding culture first to enact change for a more inclusive education system.

OUR WORK WITH THE DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION

Policy context

We have heard harrowing evidence from First Peoples with disability and their family members about the routine violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation occurring within government funded facilities and institutions.

What is still alarming is the segregation that still exists within government funded employment, education and even social housing with people with disability set to controversial group homes.

What are we doing?

This year we continue to support First Nations people with disability to tell their stories about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to the Disability Royal Commission, provide training and resources to the disability advocacy sector, participate in public hearings, make submissions and be in community.

FDPN participated in several public hearings this year, including giving evidence about issues for First People with disability.

We have also provided ongoing briefings to Disability Royal Commission staff before hearings and assisted in finding and supporting people with disability to give evidence.

Our DRC Indigenous Community Advocates (ICA) are continuing to connect with communities and engage and support First Peoples with disability in submissions and navigating the NDIS.

OUR NDIS WORK

Policy context

The NDIS program reaches on average over forty thousand First Peoples living with a disability across the country and we understand the best way to get the work out about the NDIS program is to invest in program and services which are embedded in the community and then we will find we can reach a lot more people who need the NDIS.

What are we doing?

Partnerships and impact go side by side and the partnerships that have positive impacts are those based on mutual respectful, meaningful, truthful and always about community first and its through our government partnerships we are reaching those twenty thousand First Peoples with disability within our region and remote programs across Australia.

Through our Paterson Street Hub in Tennant Creek, we run community focused programs that ensure First Peoples with disability have access to information about the NDIS and the Hub also allows us to provide our advocacy and support to people in need. The success of The Hub gives us insight into important community structures which need to be in place to have work towards a community focused model of health which can be applied to the NDIS.

OUR WORK WITH EMERGING ISSUES

Policy context

Emerging issues such as FASD and Climate Change are directly impacting the lives of our communities we serve.

A high proportion of young people and adults with FASD come into contact with the criminal justice system and we are working with policy makers and the to address this concerning human rights issues, we are part of a disability collective movement that are campaigning to allow human rights organisations to access these venerable people forces into the prison system allow them to be assessed.

What are we doing?

We work with the community to ensure FASD education reaches the people in need and provide advocacy support for communities who need help navigating the system to assess children. Our advocacy service and hubs provide a safe space for community members with disability

who have been caught up in the justice system to share their stories and give deep insight into the treatment and abuse that people with disability face day to day in prisons and watchhouses across the country.

Climate Change is forcing our communities off their lands. We are working with government and disaster management planners to provide grassroots solutions to further impacts of climate change but also ensuring appropriate and respectful ways of engaging with our communities when dealing with emergency crises.

OUR HEALTH WORK

Policy context

The Australia health care system has a long way to go to achieving an equitable system for First Peoples with disability and with 45% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability and/or long-term health conditions there is a lot of work both at the policy level and advocacy level to shift the dial on these alarming statistics.⁵

⁵Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/552ecm5s>

What are we doing?

We approach policy review and develop through a human rights-based policy approach to ensure government public policy is aligned to international frameworks.

As a member of the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) we discuss issues for First People with disability with other Aboriginal organisations and address them through a joint approach through policy and joint campaigns.

Our policy team review and provide regular submission outlines human rights violations and discrimination that occurs as a result of direct engagement with First Peoples with disability who still even today experience racism, abuse and discrimination in the health system.

As a member of the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO) we discuss issues for First People with disability with other Aboriginal organisations and address them through a joint approach through policy and joint campaigns.

THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

FPDN is funded through a wide range of programs to represent the voices of First Peoples with disabilities, their families, and communities and for specific projects and initiatives.

We thank all the following organisations for their support of our work.

Australian Government - Department of Social Services, Canberra

Sector Development
- Disability Representative
Organisations

NDIS Review Project

Disability Royal Commission
Advocacy Support

National Disability Advocacy Program Australian Government - National Indigenous Australians Agency

National Closing the Gap - Developing
the Community Controlled Sector -
Disability

NSW Government Funding

**Department of Communities and
Justice - NSW Disability Advocacy
Futures Program**

**Aboriginal Affairs NSW - NSW CAPO
- Closing the Gap**

NSW Sector Strengthening

**Department of Health and Human
Services (DHHS), Victoria**

Outreach Project

Perpetual Foundation

Community Hub and Community
Engagement, Tennant Creek

NT Department of Health

Community Hub, Tennant Creek

Project Partnerships with:

Australian Centre for Disability Law
(ACDL)

NSW Aboriginal Land Council

OUR POLICY TEAM SUBMISSIONS

We represent the voices and 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.

We continue 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.

Committee Secretary Joint Select Committee on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum, April 2023

FPDN welcomes the opportunity to support the provisions of the Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023 (Bill). Additionally, we would welcome

the opportunity to appear at an upcoming Hearing with the Joint Select Committee.

DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION

Developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children, 2022-2032 First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) is pleased to see Commonwealth, state and territory governments commit to developing and implementing Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026 under Australia's National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (National Plan).

DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION

A New Act to Replace the Disability Services Act 1986 - A joint submission from Disability Representative Organisations, February 2023

The proposal to repeal and replace the Disability Services Act 1986 (the Act) represents a significant opportunity to provide the vision and direction for the rights of people with disability in Australia for years to come. The Act was progressive for its time, based on the views of people with disability and their families following a substantial period of consultation and development. We highlight that the Act's positioning of supported employment at the time was a topic of debate.¹ The Act is now outdated, pre-dating key legislative and policy reforms like the passing of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, inception of the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), and the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Repeal of the Act provides the opportunity to modernise the conceptual understandings in the new legislative framework. This should make sure that there is a strong drive towards people with disability living their lives as equal citizens, engaging in education, employment, social, political, spiritual and cultural pursuits alongside their peers. Disability Representative Organisations (DROs) and other individuals and organisations supporting this submission welcome the opportunity to provide input into the Department of Social Services (DSS) consultation on a New Act to Replace the Disability Services Act 1986.

DOWNLOAD SUBMISSION

National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy, January 2023

First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) is submitting a response to the briefing on the draft National Stigma and Discrimination Reduction Strategy. In relation to the Strategy, FPDN acknowledges the impact of stigma surrounding disability and specifically psychosocial disability. Additionally, FPDN recognises the intersectionality around disability and First Nations people where there is further potential for discrimination, stigma and disadvantage.

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NGO Submission on Australia's 7th Periodic Report, November 2022

The First Peoples Disability Network wishes to thank the Committee for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Committee Against Torture regarding Australia's 7th Periodic Report at the 75th Session in November 2022.

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Independent Assessments Inquiry into the NDIS - Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Scheme, May 2021

First Peoples Disability Network opposes the introduction of independent assessments as outlined by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). These proposals are causing a great deal of distress in our communities. We believe the current reforms need to stop immediately, and that the NDIA needs to urgently work to repair trust with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

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OUR FINANCIAL REPORT

CLICK HERE to download The FPDN 2023 Financial Report.

OUR TERMINOLOGY GUIDE

Term	Definition
Ableism	The belief system that underlies the negative attitudes, stereotypes and stigma that devalue persons with disabilities on the basis of their actual or perceived impairments.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Community	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their families, and their communities that live with any form of disability.
Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO)	An Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation “delivers services, including land and resource management, that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is: a) incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit b) controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people c) connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services d) governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.”
Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO)	Refers to a “primary health care service initiated and operated by the local Aboriginal community to deliver holistic, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate health care to the community which controls it, through a locally elected Board of Management.”
Board Footprint Report	A quarterly set of recurring questions developed to track progress towards achieving the outcomes of the Footprint for FPDN’s Board Members.
Coalition of Peaks	A representative body of over 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations and members.
Co-Design	Co-design can be described as collaboration with a range of people in the design of policies, services or programs that affect them. This requires establishing a reciprocal and equal relationship between funders, providers, users and other stakeholders to identify, respond and evaluate any response to people’s needs.
Country	Country is defined here as “the term often used by Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] peoples to describe the lands, waterways, and seas to which they are connected. The term contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family, and identity.”

Cultural Model of Inclusion	A model that aims to enhance wellbeing by fostering social inclusion, through the active participation in community and cultural activities.
Cultural Safety	In the Australian context, this refers to the ethical practice and principle of fostering an environment that is safe (in a broad holistic sense) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This means freedom from racism as well as any ‘assault, challenge or denial of their identity and experience’. ⁵ It also means “ensuring self-determination for Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] people”. ⁶
Data and Measurement Matrix	A matrix that allows for data to be collected and analysed to answer each of the Key Evaluation Questions to achieve an outcome evaluation, but also builds upon the existing organisational learning processes in place.
Disability	Throughout this report, ‘disability’ is used and “understood to include, but is not restricted to, individuals with long-term physical, mental, cognitive, intellectual or sensory impairments.” As noted by the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan, Inside Policy recognises that “an individual’s experience of disability intersects with other aspects of their identity, including gender, age, sexuality, race and cultural background.”
Double Disadvantage	An occurrence experienced by Aboriginal people who live with disability due to the existing prevalence of racism and ableism. Element Leads KPI Report A reporting system that captures information and data on how the seven Elements are progressing against Key Performance Indicators will be developed.
Elder	An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has gained recognition as a custodian of knowledge, lore and who has community permission to disclose knowledge and beliefs. Can also mean an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person above a certain age.
Evaluation Objectives	Statements of what the evaluation will seek to achieve in order to meet the overall aim.
First Nations/ First Peoples	Australia is made up of many different and distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, each with their own culture, language, beliefs and practices. First Nations and First People refers to “a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives.” First Nations and First People are used throughout the Evaluation and Learning Framework and refers to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Learning and Evaluation Framework	A guiding document that supports organisations to monitor and evaluate their projects to ensure continuous improvement.
Learning Processes	Actions and processes that are frequent and aim to understand outputs to increase accountability and oversight.
Apprehended Discrimination	The act of avoiding social situations as a rational response to avoiding being discriminated against.
Inquiry Framework	Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) and sub questions that need to be answered throughout the evaluation.
Management Team Report	An overarching set of recurring questions developed to track progress towards achieving the outcomes of the Footprint.
Model of Care	Refers to the particular modality (and often associated setting) by which health services are delivered, outlining “best practice care and services for a person, population group or patient cohort as they progress through the stages of a condition, injury or event”. This report includes various models of care for people with disability including social, cultural, and medical models.
The National Disability Footprint 2022-2024 (Footprint)	The development and implementation of the National Disability Footprint (Footprint) project aims to further strengthen FPDN’s policy and national presence, engagement with government, and support to community-controlled organisations, and First Nations people with disability as the national peak for the First Peoples disability community.
Theory of Change	Inside Policy and FPDN co-designed a Theory of Change to address the overarching goals of the peak, and those of the Footprint. At its core, a theory of change is a comprehensive depiction of how and why a desired change can be expected in a given context.
Trauma-informed	Trauma-informed services do no harm i.e., they do not re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions, and they embrace a message of hope and optimism that recovery is possible.

END NOTES

¹DRC Royal Commission Criminal Justice system Issues Paper, 2020, Online Media Release: Report into First Nations Over-Representation in the Criminal Justice System, Website accessed Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/y9e368k6>

²The Australia Institute health and Welfare, 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report Summary into First Nations Homelessness, Website accessed Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/2rzafsey>

³The Australia Institute health and Welfare, 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report Summary into Disability Health Outcomes, Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/r3thbd5v>

⁴Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network (IPWDGN), 2013, The Indigenous World 2021: Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network (IPWDGN) Article Report on Indigenous disability data, Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/4jem4tj4>

⁵Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, Site accessed on Friday, 3 August 2024: <https://tinyurl.com/552ecm5s>

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