



First Peoples  
Disability Network

# Continuing our Songlines

Our responsibility to future  
generations.

**“We had a beginning, our ancestors the creators. Our songlines were created by our ancestors, this is our beginning. Now that everything is created there is no end. We keep moving with our country, season in season out. We have our line to follow now, our path, our journey has been created.”**

With our ancestors in the stars, they are still alive now, they are very much a part of the now. In our world nothing is overlooked we know every little bit of life, in our world we know every tree, we know their seasons, we know every animal we know their tracks we know where to find them. We know every star as all our ancestors are there so when we teach the next generations where it begun. Sometimes we have their tracks on the ground still, now they are living in the stars. They still live today. Knowing this blueprint and that every single person must have the right knowledge to do the job at hand, then we all become a unit, we all become a tribe and together we maintain our country and we all live better.

To know that the past connects into the present into the future we understand how it all works. To know your past history of creation of how we came to be and where we will be it is all the same this knowledge is so important and why everything is maintained. Because those ancestors before us they were the creators, they are the reason that we are here. So, we will always maintain their stories. When we look up in the stars we can see them.

*Cover artwork ‘Songlines’ by Wiradjuri Artist Uncle Paul Constable Calcott*

## Executive Summary

**We are the First Peoples Disability Network.** A national organisation of and for Australia's First Peoples with disability, their families and communities. Our 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 Sustainability Plan is the Cultural Model of Inclusion

Central to our sustainability as an organisation, is the Cultural Model of Inclusion. *Our sustainability is rooted in our Culture.*

The Cultural Model of Inclusion provides a guiding framework for how FPDN can embed cultural and inclusive practices at all levels of the organisation – from our leadership and culture, governance, workforce, and programs and services.

The following eight aspects of the Culture of Inclusion Model will guide our work at each of these levels:

1. **Culture and Country:** We honour the diversity of First Nations people world views, including cultures of inclusion, responsibility, reciprocity and Country, and are led by cultural determinants of living well and keeping strong
2. **'Power up' First peoples with disability:** We foster the strengths of First Nations people with disability in how we act and how we speak
3. **Welcoming and safe space:** *We are trauma-informed and healing centred.* We create an inclusive and safe environment in which people can be proud of their First Nations and disability identities
4. **Community:** We know who the communities are we need to speak with and how to have respectful discussions with them
5. **Voice:** We uplift the voices and presence of First Nations people with disability
6. **Doing the rights work:** We are accountable to the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability and United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other Human Rights Frameworks and Instruments
7. **Walking Gently:** We accept with grace the gift of First Nations knowledges and cultures, seeking to support what matters to them beyond our interests
8. **Accessibility:** We ensure accessibility in all its forms by embedding cultural, physical, digital, and systemic inclusivity into our practices.

Our Sustainable Business Model is framed by the Cultural Model of Inclusion. The below document outlines how the Cultural Model of Inclusion is guiding FPDN at all levels, now and into the future.

The implementation of the Cultural model of inclusion within our organisation supports FPDN to monitor and evaluate our progress against all indicators and allow for continuous improvement.

### Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property

FPDN owns the Intellectual Property of the Cultural Model of Inclusion. FPDN and Dr Scott Avery have and share co-rights under Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) for the Cultural Model of Inclusion. The Cultural Model of Inclusion has been implemented within this Sustainability Plan to demonstrate its application as a best-practice tool to support First Nations organisations. To embed culture and inclusion within other First Nations organisations to better engage, support and enable First Nations people with disability to access the appropriate supports they need to be able to participate equally in community. The Cultural Model of Inclusion has been tailored into a Cultural Tool for use with Community Controlled organisations and partners as part of the National Disability Footprint project. *See Appendix A for complete Cultural Model of Inclusion.*

## Contents

### *Our Sustainable Business Model*

This section showcases our sustainable business model against the four levels identified in the Cultural Model of Inclusion:

1. leadership and culture,
2. governance,
3. workforce, and
4. programs and services.

### *Continuing our songlines*

This section includes a brief overview of where we have been as an organisation, where we are, and where we are headed. This section explores a federated structure for FPDN, including expansion to states and territories.

**“It is the role of our leaders to look after country. It is their time now. Like our ancestors before us, they all have had their time sharing our knowledge allowing our culture to live on. You hold the stories, you hold the songs, now you are holding everything.”**

## Leadership and Culture

*This section includes how we are embedding the Cultural Model of Inclusion in our Leadership and Culture through our vision, purpose and values; and our priorities to ensure our sustainability into the future.*

### *Alignment of the Cultural Model of Inclusion (Leadership and Culture) with FPDN*

The below table details each of the Cultural Model of Inclusion criteria for Leadership and Culture against the eight guiding aspects of the framework, including alignment with how we will embed these criteria within our organisation. Please see the section below the table for more details around how each of these criteria will be embed.

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE		How we embed this
<b>Country and Culture</b>	Our organisation values different worldviews including First Nations and disability worldviews	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values
	Our organisation acknowledges the First Nations cultural knowledges of inclusion and connection to Country	1.2 Our Values
<b>'Power up' First peoples with disability</b>	Our organisation is owned and operated by First Nations people with disabilities. Our organisation actively fosters the strengths and contributions of First Nations people with disability in its values, vision statements and leadership qualities.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability
	Our organisation is trauma informed and healing centred in its values, mission statements and leadership qualities.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
	Our organisational culture understands the implications of systemic discrimination and therefore values active listening and the lived experience of the First Nations peoples with disability.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
	Our organisation challenges assumptions about negative attitudes about the capabilities and strengths towards First Nations people and people with disability, and First Nations people with disability	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
	Our organisation prioritises the recruitment of First Nations people with disability into leadership roles	1.4 Leadership and Accountability

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE		How we embed this
<b>Welcoming and safe place</b>	Our organisation promotes values of deep listening, understanding and diverse lived experience of First Nations people with disability	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
	Communities can see themselves in the organisation in the way it looks, feels and sounds (e.g. we have local artwork; the imagery is of the communities we serve; our leadership team reflect the community we serve). We seek to provide a safe and accessible environment at all times that recognises the diversity of disability in our communities.	1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
<b>Community</b>	Our organisation knows the First Nations and disability communities we work with, as defined by the First nations disability communities	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values, 1.5 Accessibility
	Our organisation reflects the diverse communities in its values, purpose and leadership. We recognise the multiple identities that First Nations people with disabilities have including gender, LGBTIQ+	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2. Our Values, 1.3 FPDN Principles, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility
<b>Voice</b>	Our organisation acknowledges in our values, vision statements and leadership qualities that First Nations Peoples are powerful and diverse, and their knowledge determines the survival of their culture.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values, 1.6 Cultural Protocols
	Our organisation challenges assumptions about capacity and provides space for the diverse First Nations peoples' voices to be heard	1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.6 Cultural Protocols
<b>Doing the rights work</b>	Our organisation explicitly mentions and applies a rights-based approach within its values, vision statements and leadership qualities.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability
	Our organisation actively monitors and raises awareness of human rights violations of First Nations people with disability in the sector and beyond.	1.1 Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values, 1.4 Leadership and Accountability
<b>Walking gently</b>	Our organisation applies / adopts First Nation cultural protocols of inclusion to guide who we are and what we do.	1.6 Cultural Protocols

LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE		How we embed this
	Our organisation practices respect and cultural humility by acknowledging the contribution from the First Nations disability community in setting the vision and direction of the organisation	1.1. Our Purpose, 1.2 Our Values, 1.5 Accessibility,
<b>Accessibility</b>	Our values, beliefs, and vision statement are delivered in accessible ways.	1.1 Purpose; 1.2 Our Values; 1.5 Accessibility.
	Our leadership and culture promote accessibility requirements or reasonable adjustments in a way that is about equity of participation. We are available when community members need us.	1.4 Leadership and Accountability, 1.5 Accessibility

The above elements of the Cultural Model of Inclusion are embedded within the following aspects of FPDN.

### 1.1 Purpose

Aligning with the Cultural Model of Inclusion, FPDN’s purpose is to:

*FPDN 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.*

### 1.2 Our Values

Aligning with the Cultural Model of Inclusion, FPDN’s values are:

- 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.

- 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, including First Nations and disability worldviews
- Acknowledge the First Nations cultural knowledges of inclusion and connection to Country

### 1.3 FPDN Principles

To support us to embed our values and purpose, FPDN use our principles to inform how we do our work:

- 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 work within a social model of disability, which recognises that disability is produced by barriers to equality and participation for people with impairments that must be dismantled.
- We work with First Peoples with disability, their families and communities across Australia, to ensure that our work reflects their diversity and priorities.

### 1.4 Leadership and Accountability

FPDN sets an example for the disability sector on how to work with First Nations peoples living with disability, their families and carers, and communities. We continue this into our internal approaches, and strive to set an example for each other, and the communities we represent every day based on our value system.

We take setting an example seriously and are guided by the following principles:

- **We are led by First Nations people with disability.** We are guided and led by First Nations people with disability in formal ways including in our executive leadership and Board structures. We prioritise the recruitment of First Nations people with disability in leadership roles. We also create opportunities for the communities we serve to be heard and to guide our work and organisation. At the time of writing at least

70% of staff at FPDN are First Nations people with disability which makes us the largest single employer of First Nations people with disability in the country.

- **FPDN's leaders model behaviour for us all.** Leadership is important across and within FPDN. Every staff member has an individual responsibility to demonstrate leadership, and our Board, CEO and Executive model the FPDN way for us.
- **We set an example for all disability organisations and for those who seek to work with them.** We have a human rights-based approach that is centred on First Peoples' experiences of disability, their strengths and determination. This starts from within our own organisation. The training and advice we provide for the broader disability sector is first modelled by us and how we conduct our own business.
- **We are all accountable to each other and the communities we serve.** We are accountable in all aspects of our work to First Peoples with disability and their families, our communities, and to the community generally. FPDN has an accountability framework (see 2.3.2 below) within which every member of staff and our board operate to ensure we always act to meet the highest standards of integrity and ethical behaviour.
- **We support each other to engage equitably.** FPDN supports our staff and our communities to engage equitably in our work – this includes promoting accessibility requirements and reasonable adjustments.
- **We all accept responsibility for our actions.** Mistakes are part of life and should be accepted and used as a way to learn and progress.
- **We learn from our mistakes.** Trust and respect are the basis for our working relationships. We acknowledge that making mistakes is part of being human and is how we learn and progress. We do not make excuses or blame others.
- **We work together to find innovative solutions.** Collaboration is core to First Nations ways of working together. We work together to identify gaps and problems and find innovative ways to solve or address them.
- **We listen to each other deeply.** We use traditional deep listening techniques to stop and genuinely hear each other in our workplace and the communities we serve. We honour each other's commitment to our collective work by this deep listening and by recognising each other's commitment to what we do and why.

### 1.5 Accessibility

We ensure accessibility in all its forms by embedding cultural, physical, digital, and systemic inclusivity into our practices.

- **Culturally Safe Access:** Recognising and valuing First Nations knowledge, we design access pathways that are respectful, reciprocal, and grounded in cultural determinants of health and wellbeing.
- **Trauma-Informed Accessibility:** Guided by a healing-centered approach, we create spaces and interactions where First Nations people with disability feel safe, welcomed, and empowered.

- **Community-Led Solutions:** We collaborate with First Nations communities to understand and respond to their unique accessibility needs and preferences, ensuring our efforts reflect their voices and priorities.
- **Upholding Rights:** We are guided by the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to ensure equitable and dignified access for all. FPDN is seen globally as a leader on the intersection of disability rights and Indigenous rights.
- **Walking Gently in Accessibility:** We acknowledge the wisdom and knowledge of First Nations peoples in defining what accessibility means for them and commit to walking alongside them to support and implement their priorities.

This protocol ensures that accessibility is a shared journey shaped by respect, cultural understanding, and a commitment to inclusion for First Nations people with disabilities.

While accessibility is a shared responsibility at FPDN, the accessibility of the organisation will be spearheaded and championed by the Access and Inclusion team.

### 1.6 FPDN Cultural Protocols

FPDN exists to be the message stick for passing Our Dreaming to present and future generations, as well as our friends and allies.

*First Peoples Disability Network is strong in our culture. Our ancestors and our communities have been successfully living and surviving on country for over 65,000 years. We work with country, we flow with it, we understand that it keeps us alive. We know our role; we are the keepers of our disability business stories and we are responsible for continuing the songlines created by our founding Elders.*

- We respect our Elders, our culture, country and know our place. When country speaks, we listen.
- The heart is for speaking, the voice is for singing.
- We celebrate the differences and diversities within our communities and embed this in our work, recognising the rights of First Nations women with disability and First Nations people with disability from the LGBTIQ+ communities.
- We show strength of character that will always be read right way by community.
- We look forward and we look back. We draw on our old ways to succeed in the new world, it is in our blood, we have always understood.
- We know our country, we know our culture, we know when it's the right time.
- When we bring our ways into other communities, we are aware and respect the ways of others and their country.
- We know that the most powerful warriors stand side by side as equals in reaching a common goal.

- We act well toward each other. We understand if there is an imbalance in community it affects everybody in camp.
- Everyone has their symbol and their story. We take responsibility for and focus on our roles without distraction.
- The stories we leave in community will be the same as the stars, the sun, the moon and the air they are a part of everyone's community the same way that disability is part of everyone's community.
- We listen and contribute to our disability community and hand our stories down to the next generation to continue on, as they were handed down to us.

## Our Next Priorities for Values and Leadership

FPDN has deeply embedded the Cultural Model of Inclusion within our values and leadership. However, ongoing effort, vigilance, and focus is key to our sustainability into the future. Our goal is that the values and leadership are clear and are communicated to create an environment for organisational change.

To ensure that values and leadership are front of mind within FPDN, we will implement the following actions:

- Modelling of these values and leadership cultures by the executive of FPDN
- Embedding our Values and Leadership within staff induction processes.
- Providing all staff with a copy of our values and leadership.
- Having our values and leadership information available on our website.
- Staff to receive yearly refresher sessions on our values and leadership.
- Delivery of formal training about specific aspects of our values and leadership, such as on human rights approaches, trauma and healing informed approaches etc.

## Governance

This section includes how we are embedding the Cultural Model of Inclusion in our Governance and our priorities to ensure our sustainability into the future.

### Alignment of the Cultural Model of Inclusion (Governance) with FPDN

The below table details each of the Cultural Model of Inclusion criteria for Governance against the eight guiding aspects of the framework, including alignment with how we will embed these criteria within our organisation. Please see the section below the table for more details around how each of these criteria will be embed.

GOVERNANCE		How we embed this
<b>Country and Culture</b>	We take a holistic approach to our decision-making practices by incorporating Country and culture to guide review and implementation	2.1 Decision Making
<b>'Power up' First peoples with disability</b>	We have strategies and policies that require our organisation to be trauma informed and healing- centred. We practice this by holding monthly internal learning sessions about disability, often led by staff with their disability type, in sharing with each other the nature of support each staff person needs in this workplace. This we know to be a unique approach and one that demonstrates our commitment to continue to be the thought leaders on inclusion in Australia.	2.3. Policies and Strategies
	There are anti ableism and anti- racism policies and procedures within the organisation	2.3. Policies and Strategies
	Our decision-making practices are informed by and respond to addressing the legacy of systemic discrimination and incorporate active listening and lived experience of First Nations Peoples with disability	2.1 Decision Making
<b>Welcoming and safe place</b>	Our organisation values the statements of experience of First Nations board members with disability and provide opportunities to debrief and or caucus before meetings.	2.2 Leadership and Governance
<b>Community</b>	Our organisations have First Nations people with disability representation in governance that enable us to co-define what community is by two-way walking together with the individual.	2.2 Leadership and Governance

GOVERNANCE		How we embed this
	Our organisation has diverse Indigenous representation in governance that enable us to co- define what community	2.2 Leadership and Governance
<b>Voice</b>	Our organisation has a formal decision-making process such as a Board or an external advisory group that requires, they be informed by the perspectives of First Nations people with disability	2.2 Leadership and Governance, 2.1 Decision Making
	Our policies acknowledge the diversity of First Nations people with disability and demonstrate commitment to ensure this occurs through accountable actions	2.3. Policies and Strategies
<b>Doing the rights work</b>	Our organisation has a formal decision-making process such as a Board or an external advisory group that requires process informed by the UNCRPD and UNDRIP	2.2 Leadership and Governance, 2.1 Decision Making
	Our organisational decision- making bodies develop policies to monitor and provide resources to prevent human rights violations.	2.1 Decision Making, 2.3. Policies and Strategies
<b>Walking gently</b>	Our organisation incorporates First Nations disability knowledges into the decision- making practices of the organisation	2.1 Decision Making
	Our organisation has processes and procedures to protect the cultural intellectual property of the First Nations people with disability	2.3. Policies and Strategies
<b>Accessibility</b>	We have individual and organisational reviews to ensure our policies, processes and procedures meet accessibility standards and needs of our staff	2.3. Policies and Strategies
	We continually adapt our policies and procedures in response to the diverse accessible needs in relation to our organisation	2.3. Policies and Strategies

The above elements of the Cultural Model of Inclusion are embedded within the following aspects of FPDN.

### 2.1 Decision Making

Our decision-making processes are informed by the following principles:

- We are led by the knowledge of First Nations people with disability,
- We are informed by the perspectives of First Nations people with disability,
- We ensure that First Nations people with disability can equally contribute to our decision-making processes, and
- We take a holistic approach to our decision-making practices by incorporating Country and culture to guide review and implementation.

These principles are to be embedded within the operations of the Board, Executive Leadership, and Community Voice initiatives.

## *2.2 Leadership and Governance*

Our leadership and governance seek to be inclusive of all perspectives, worldviews and experiences reflected in the communities we serve, drawing on the voices of First Nations people with disability, their families, and communities. As shown in Our Governance Model below, First Nations people with disability walk in three worlds: cultural way, mainstream way, and disability way.

## Our Governance Model



Within our governance, at all levels, we seek to draw upon this perspective and model. Our governance and decision making at all levels acknowledges and responds to the legacy of systemic and double discrimination faced by First Nations people with disability.

FPDN has three levels of governance:

1. Our Board
2. Our Executive structure, and
3. Community voice.

### 2.2.1 Our Board

Our Board comprises First Nations people with disability who each bring cultural wisdom and diverse disability experiences to their leadership.

The First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) Board has control over its statutory obligations and key strategic decisions, and monitors issues that significantly impact FPDN. These specific matters, as well as those issues which fall outside the scope of the Chief Executive Officer's delegated authority, are reserved to the Board for decision making purposes.

Our Board has formal decision-making processes that are informed by Human Rights frameworks (including UNCRPD and UNDRIP), and perspectives of First Nations people with disability.

Our Board meetings are culturally safe spaces which follows cultural protocols. This includes providing opportunities to yarn, caucus, and debrief before and after meetings.

To ensure our Board is representative of varied perspectives of First Nations people with disability, future recruitment will seek representatives from different states and territories.

### 2.2.2 Our Executive Structure

FPDN is currently revising its executive leadership structure and functions, to be agreed and finalised in early 2025.

The refreshed structure aims to centre the Cultural Model of Inclusion, through embedding culture and accessibility within the executive leadership. This includes having male and female representation at the highest levels of the organisation to ensure appropriate care and responsibility of men's and women's business and having varied and different cultural perspectives including representation from saltwater, freshwater, and desert peoples.

The revised executive leadership structure includes:

- **Chief Executive Officer.** This role is responsible for the functioning and operation of FPDN, with an external and strategic focus. This includes representation of FPDN at key events and meetings, provision of strategic and cultural guidance and direction, and overseeing the work of the organisation.
- **Deputy Chief Executive Officer.** This role supports the internal functioning and operation of FPDN, in particular supporting the role of the CEO and supporting the functioning of FPDN teams.

- **Chief Financial Officer.** This role plays a vital role in the strategic and operational leadership of the organization, ensuring financial stability and sustainability. As a member of the senior leadership team, the CFO is responsible for overseeing all financial and accounting functions, developing budgets, ensuring compliance with funding requirements, and providing strategic advice to support the organization’s mission and goals

These executive roles will be supported by a team of directors (and their managers and team members).

- **Director of Policy.** This role is responsible for the development, implementation and oversight of FPDN’s systemic advocacy and policy strategy and sector development strategy. The Director of Sector Strengthening will ensure alignment and advancement of all critical policy instruments including Closing the Gap, Australia’s Disability Strategy and DRO and DRCO obligations, FPDN’s National Disability Footprint and the organisation’s strategic directions. The Director also has responsibility for ensuring the collaboration of all relevant FPDN staff and that the policy team receive appropriate training and development.
- **Director of Engagement.** This role leads FPDN’s NSW jurisdictional strategic engagement and systemic Advocacy work, driving initiatives that influence positive change for First Nations people with disability. This role is responsible for developing and maintaining strong relationships with key stakeholders, overseeing the collection and analysis of data to inform policy and practice, and supporting the implementation of jurisdictional Disability Sector Strengthening and Closing the Gap initiatives.
- **Director of Operations.** This role will oversee the business strategy, grounded in culture, to build on the effectiveness of FPDN’s operations and reinforce FPDN’s position as leaders and experts in First Nations Disability Business.
- **Director of People and Culture.** This role will work closely with the executive and the board to shape and implement a People and Culture strategy aligned with the organisation’s strategic goals. This role will have end-to-end responsibility for the employee lifecycle, including talent acquisition, learning and development, and employee relations. They will champion a high-performance, values-driven workforce, fostering a culture of accountability, development, and cultural safety.
- **Director of Access and Inclusion-** This is a pivotal leadership role within the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), working to ensure that accessibility—in all its forms—is embedded into the fabric of the organisation. This includes cultural, physical, digital, and systemic inclusivity, both within FPDN and across the broader First Nations community-controlled sector.

### 2.2.3 Community voice

FPDN uses and is seeking to further develop the following mechanisms to hear, capture and elevate community voice:

- **Elders’ Council.** FPDN is seeking to reestablish an Elders council to advise the work of FPDN. This group will seek to have diverse representatives which mirror the communities we are seeking to serve.

- **First Nations Disability Forum.** From the Disability Royal Commission, a recommendation was to create a First Nations disability forum. FPDN is leading the development of the Forum in partnership with DSS and NIAA.
- **Listening tours.** The policy team is currently in the process of visiting states and territories to hear from First Nations people with disability and community-controlled organisations to understand people’s experiences and disability supports which can be fed back into systemic advocacy and policy work.
- **Community Reference Groups.** The Policy team is seeking to establish reference groups with First Nations people with disability and community representatives about specific policy areas to inform their policy work.
- **Community of Practice.** With the redesign of the website, the communications team is developing an online community of practice to bridge the gap between the community and policy development and advocacy for First Peoples with disabilities.
- **Individual advocacy.** The advocacy team directly hear from First Nations people with disability, their family and their community as part of their day-to-day advocacy work. FPDN is establishing processes internally to ensure that the work of the advocacy team is elevated internally to share key stories and insights to the rest of the organisation.
- **Sector strengthening.** FPDN engage with First Nations community-controlled organisations and First Nations people with disabilities nationally and within NSW to develop an enhanced view of the First Nations disability sector and its needs. This will inform FPDN’s future sector development strategy and strengthen current activities across all areas.
- **Training and engagement.** Through the work of the training team in delivery of training of community-controlled organisations and First Nations community members, FPDN is gathering insight and stories which will feed into FPDN’s broader activities and work.

Further avenues to listen, capture, and elevate community voice will be explored into the future.

### *2.3 Policies and Strategies*

To ensure that our policies and strategies are fit for purpose, we will be guided by the following principles from the Cultural Model of Inclusion:

- We have individual and organisational reviews to ensure our policies, processes and procedures meet accessibility standards and needs of our staff. This will be conducted by the Head of People and Culture in collaboration with the Access and Inclusion team.
- We continually adapt our policies and procedures in response to the diverse accessible needs in relation to our organisation. This will be conducted by the Head of People and Culture in collaboration with the Access and Inclusion team.
- Our policies acknowledge the diversity of First Nations people with disability and demonstrate commitment to ensure this occurs through accountable actions. This will be overseen by the Head of People and Culture.
- There are anti ableism and anti-racism policies and procedures within the organisation. This will be overseen by the Head of People and Culture in collaboration with the Access and Inclusion team.

- We have strategies and policies that require our organisation to be trauma informed and healing- centred. This will be overseen by the Director of People and Culture in collaboration with the Access and Inclusion team.

### 2.3.1 Sustainability Plan

The Sustainability Plan (this document) has been developed from FPDN's key guiding policies and materials to create a comprehensive and cohesive understanding of FPDN's model from its values and leadership to its programs and services. This document is intended to be FPDN's key strategic document to lead FPDN's work into the future.

### 2.3.2 Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan includes the organisation's cultural direction and values, as set out in the Leadership and Culture section (see above) of this document.

The draft strategic framework has been developed and endorsed by FPDN Board and Executive. Consultations for further development with staff will continue in early 2025.

### 2.3.3 Accountability Framework

An Accountability Framework has been developed and finalised for implementation in 2025. The FPDN Accountability Framework is the basis of how we work individually and together as an organisation, and how we present ourselves professionally outside FPDN. The Accountability Framework has four key components:

#### 1. **Setting an example:**

We all accept responsibility for our actions. We do not rely on excuses or blame. We learn from our mistakes and work together to find innovative solutions. FPDN's leaders model behaviour for us all. We set an example for all disability organisations and for those who seek to work with them.

#### 2. **Having clear expectations and goals:**

We understand the roles and responsibilities assigned to each of us and where the boundaries of what is acceptable or not are. We know what is expected of us and of our leadership and colleagues, and what our individual, team and organisational goals are and work towards them collectively and collaboratively.

#### 3. **Support, tools and resources:**

We understand, use and abide by FPDN's systems, processes and policies so we can work effectively, efficiently and collaboratively to succeed.

#### 4. Open environment conducive to continuous learning, improvement and innovation:

FPDN has an open environment that supports learning from our mistakes, continually striving to learn new ways and skills, always seeking to improve ourselves and our work, and collaboratively finding innovative solutions to the issues that arise for us as a team and for our communities.

Our Accountability Framework includes the tools, systems and processes we need to do our business. These are:

- An Organisational Chart with Reporting Lines
- Delegation of Authority
- Our internal policies and procedures
- Filing system protocols
- Travel approvals process
- Dispute resolution
- Language and Style Guidelines
- Media And Communications Authorities
- Financial Authorities

#### 2.3.4 Cultural Intellectual Property

In 2025, FPDN will look to develop an Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property policy which will include processes and procedures to protect ICIP.

#### 2.3.5 Human Rights Framework

Since its creation FPDN has embedded a human rights approach to our work. FPDN is recognised globally as a leading organisation on disability in Indigenous communities. FPDN has deep knowledge and understanding of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2025, FPDN will continue to consolidate our work on our Human Rights Framework to guide policy and practice relating to First Nations people with disabilities across sectors and governments. This will continue to break new ground. This work will include mapping and understanding how international human rights frameworks and instruments interact, particularly in the intersections of Indigenous peoples rights and the rights of people with disabilities. This work will position FPDN as a human rights leader in Australia and internationally, working to fill gaps in knowledge and practice but we must go further to demonstrate to the country and the UN system our culture of inclusion.

## Our Next Priorities for Governance

Establishing governance processes and structures has been a key focus of FPDN over the last two years. We aim to see that decisions making structures are inclusive of Community's voices, with oversight mechanisms as a change and balance over the organisational culture and change practices, and that organisational Strategies and policies are aligned to give effect to values and ethics.

Further work is needed to deeply listen to community and embed voices First Nations people with disability in our governance processes. As flagged in the above section, to ensure our governance is sustainable into the future, FPDN will focus on:

1. Building on community voice and governance structures (as per 2.2.3 Community Voice)
2. Further develop and embed policies and strategies to support governance processes, including:
  - Embedding the Sustainability Plan within BAU practices
  - Finalising the Strategic Plan and Accountability Frameworks
  - Developing ICIP and Human Rights frameworks

## Workforce

This section includes how we are embedding the Cultural Model of Inclusion in our Workforce and our priorities to ensure our sustainability into the future.

### Alignment of the Cultural Model of Inclusion (Workforce) with FPDN

The below table details each of the Cultural Model of Inclusion criteria for Workforce against the eight guiding aspects of the framework, including alignment with how we will embed these criteria within our organisation. Please see the section below the table for more details around how each of these criteria will be embed.

WORKFORCE		How we embed this
<b>Country and Culture</b>	Our workforce policies, recruitment, retention and career pathways are informed by the Country and cultural knowledge of inclusion, including opportunities to work from Country	3.1 Recruitment, 3.2 Training, 3.4 Career Pathways, 3.5 Workforce Policies
	Our workforce training and capability framework adopts a holistic approach informed by Country and cultural knowledge of inclusion	3.2 Training
<b>'Power up' First peoples with disability</b>	We have specifically designed capability development activities led by, and about First Nations Disability for all staff	3.2 Training
	Our learning and development policies and capability development processes are strength based, challenge deficit positioning and are trauma informed and healing centred.	3.2 Training, 3.5 Workforce Policies
	We have specific training on trauma informed and healing centred approaches	3.2 Training
	Our organisation uses a place-based approach in providing compulsory, ongoing training to the whole workforce and training programs incorporate the historical context of colonisation and its impact on First Nations people and people with disability and acknowledges the strengths and diversity of First Nations People with disability.	3.2 Training
	Our organisation recruit, value, respect, and remunerate First Nations Peoples with disability across various roles in the organisation based on their experiential knowledge and	3.1 Recruit, 3.3. Remuneration, 3.4 Career Pathways

WORKFORCE		How we embed this
	provide further career development and leadership advancement opportunities	
<b>Welcoming and safe place</b>	People feel safe to identify as first nations or be open/disclose with their disability to their colleagues	3.5 Workforce Policies, 3.6 Workplace Culture
	People can safely raise discrimination within evidence informed anti racism and anti- ableism led strategies within the organisation. We must be best practice in terms of inclusion.	3.5 Workforce Policies, 3.6 Workplace Culture
<b>Community</b>	Our organisation prioritises the recruitment and career for First Nations people with disability	3.1 Recruitment, 3.4 Career Pathways
	Our organisation supports the leadership pathways of first nations people with disability to pursue their ambitions beyond their lived experience	3.4 Career Pathways
<b>Voice</b>	Our organisation is strengthened because we value the knowledge and experiences of first nations people with disability and what they bring to all parts of our organisation	3.6 Workplace Culture
	Our workforce training and capability framework are designed to ensure First Nations Peoples with different disability needs and we demonstrate commitment through accountable actions	3.2 Training, 3.5 Workplace Policies
<b>Doing the rights work</b>	Our organisation's learning and development policies and capability development processes include the learning and application of rights-based models.	3.5 Workplace Policies
	Our organisation's recruitment and retention policies are evidence-informed to address discrimination.	3.1 Recruitment, 3.2 Training, 3.3 Remuneration, 3.4 Career Pathways, 3.5 Workplace Policies
<b>Walking gently</b>	Our organisation used First Nations disability knowledges in our Human Resources and workforce policies for all staff.	3.5 Workplace Policies, 3.6 Workplace Culture, 3.7 Roles and Responsibilities (Access and Inclusion)
	Our workforce training and capability framework is informed by cultural humility, respect and active listening practices to	3.2 Training, 3.5 Workplace Policies

WORKFORCE		How we embed this
	value the perspectives of lived experiences of First Nations Peoples with disability.	
<b>Accessibility</b>	Our organisation understands and proactively addresses staff's diverse accessible needs in a non-stigmatising way that doesn't add burden to staff to raise their accessibility requirements	3.5 Workplace Policies, 3.6 Workplace Culture, 3.7 Roles and Responsibilities (Access and Inclusion)
	Our workforce delivers training on accessibility to all staff, especially all managers	3.2 Training, 3.5 Workplace Policies, 3.6 Workplace Culture

The above elements of the Cultural Model of Inclusion are embedded within the following aspects of FPDN.

### 3.1 Recruitment

The Access and Inclusion team will be responsible for ensuring accessible recruitment within FPDN. This will include:

- Adapting hiring processes to reduce barriers for mob with disabilities, such as offering interviews in Auslan or plain English.
- Advertising job opportunities in culturally safe and accessible formats.
- Internal policies that are aligned with disability accessibility and inclusion.

Further, FPDN prioritises the recruitment of First Nations people with disability. FPDN has policies in place which allow and support people to work remotely and on Country.

### 3.2 Training

Our training program is currently being delivered, with first sessions occurring in 2024. Our training program is strength based, challenge deficit positioning, and trauma informed and healing centred. Our training sessions are very well received and positively evaluated by participants.

Our training program will include:

- **Inclusion training (Learning Sessions).** This training began in 2024 and included FPDN-wide attendance in monthly Learning Sessions. The Access and Inclusion team will be responsible for providing ongoing training for staff on cultural and disability inclusion. These sessions seek to enhance understanding and implementation of disabilities and inclusive practices, using outside experts and where possible experts/colleagues with lived experience within FPDN.

- **Organisational training.** Training will be provided to FPDN staff to ensure a thorough understanding of policies, systems, procedures, and other organisational aspects of FPDN. This training will be overseen by the Head of People and Culture.
- **Trauma-informed approaches training.** All staff will be provided with training on trauma-informed and healing-centred approaches. This training is set to be developed in 2025.
- **Rights-based approaches training.** This training is set to be developed in 2025. This training will focus on learning and application of rights-based models.
- **Induction and onboarding.** The induction and onboarding process is set to be reviewed by the Access and Inclusion team. As part of this process, training will be provided to incoming staff which will incorporate the historical context of colonisation and its impact on First Nations people and people with disability and acknowledges the strengths and diversity of First Nations People with disability.
- **Other training.** Using feedback results from Learning Sessions we determine areas of need/interest to upskill, inform and educate staff in line with FPDN values and objectives.

### *3.2.1 Workforce Training and Capability Framework*

A FPDN Learning and Development Framework will be designed and implemented with accompanying budget allocation in 2025, aimed at rolling out L&D over a 12-month period at the individual, team and whole of staff levels to strengthen skills and knowledge, and FPDN as an organisation.

This document will:

- Support the diverse needs of First Nations people with disability
- Ensure FPDN is accountable to the training and development needs of our staff
- Be informed by cultural humility, respect and active listening practices to value the perspectives of lived experiences of First Nations Peoples with disability
- Adopt a holistic approach informed by Country and cultural knowledge of inclusion

### *3.3 Remuneration*

FPDN seeks to remunerate our staff based on their experiential knowledge. As a priority in 2025, FPDN will review our remuneration processes to further align with this objective. The review will include developing a salary benchmark to ensure fair and equitable remuneration of staff across roles and levels. Recruitment and retention of First Nations staff remains an ongoing challenge in terms of being salary competitive with the public service. The review will also consider CPI and cost-of-living increases.

### *3.4 Career Pathways*

The Access and Inclusion team will be responsible for overseeing accessible career pathways within FPDN. This will include:

- Establishing culturally safe mentoring programs led by knowledgeable FPDN staff with/without disabilities.

- Supporting leadership opportunities through tailored programs for First Nations staff in a disability accessible and culturally inclusive way.

### 3.5 Workforce Policies

The Access and Inclusion Team will be responsible for co-designing policies with mob with disabilities to ensure accessibility and cultural safety. The Access and Inclusion Team will work closely with the Director of People and Culture to ensure that all internal and external policies are culturally and disability inclusive.

From 2025, all employment-related policies will be reviewed annually to ensure fit for purpose. This process will be led by the Director of People and Culture and will include a consultation with the Access and Inclusion team. In line with the Cultural Model of Inclusion, review of policies and strategies will consider:

- Country and cultural knowledge of inclusion, including opportunities to work from Country
- First Nations disability knowledges and value the lived experience and perspectives of First Nations people with disability
- Strength-based, healing and trauma-informed approaches and challenge deficit positioning
- Evidence based anti-racism and anti-ableism strategies
- Rights-based approaches and models
- Evidence based anti-discrimination approaches

Currently, the following People and Culture policies are in place but will require review in 2025:

- Alcohol And Drugs Policy
- Bullying Policy
- Code Of Conduct
- Conflicts Of Interest
- Family And Domestic Violence Policy
- Discipline And Termination Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Grievance Handling Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Remote Working Policy
- Whistleblower Policy

The following policies are currently under review and are on track to be re-launched in January 2025 (however some version of these already exist within the business)

- Annual Leave Policy
- Personal Leave Policy

Further, a Cultural Leave Policy is to be developed in 2025.

### 3.6 Workplace culture

Our value and principles are backed up by a set of internal core values that guide how we interact with each other as FPDN staff, and outside FPDN as representatives of our organisation. This is a core component of *The FPDN Way*, an internal document to guide our culture and operation.

In the 2023 staff survey, FPDN staff were asked whether the organisation should have a set of internal values for staff. The majority of staff agreed. A set of examples of core values were provided in the survey and the Stage One Assessment Report of the Change Management and Workplace Culture project conducted over 2023 – 2024 recommended that a set of internal core values be developed with staff to help guide internal acceptable, professional behaviour within FPDN. Taken from the staff survey, these are as follows:

Core Value	Description
<b>We act with integrity and show respect</b>	<p>All FPDN staff individually and collectively act with integrity at all times. We showcase our integrity for each other and with our external stakeholders.</p> <p>We show respect at all times to each other and to our communities, clients, stakeholders, partners and funders.</p> <p>Our integrity and respectfulness is based in First Nations ways of being and interacting with each other.</p>
<b>Together we create a safe and secure place for the exchange of ideas</b>	<p>We strive to work collectively and collaboratively within our teams and across FPDN.</p> <p>We use our integrity, our knowledge and expertise, and our respect for our colleagues to always create a safe place for the secure exchanges of ideas among us, to drive and develop our ways of thinking and drive innovation that will ultimately benefit First Nations people, families and communities living with disability.</p>
<b>We are all accountable to each other and the communities we serve</b>	<p>In everything we do as individual staff and as collective team members, we are accountable to each other. This guides the way in which we operate as a collective and how we collaborate respectfully and transparently.</p> <p>First Nations people living with disability, their carers, families and communities are at the heart of everything we do as FPDN.</p> <p>As the national peak body for First Nations people living with disability, we are always ultimately accountable to the communities we serve and advocate on behalf of – as individuals and as an organisation.</p> <p>FPDN has an accountability framework within which every member of staff and our board operate to ensure we always act to meet the highest standards of integrity and ethical behaviour.</p>

<p><b>We are passionate, determined and committed to our work</b></p>	<p>The FPDN team are deeply passionate, highly determined and strongly committed to the work we do, as individual staff, within our teams, across the organisation and as the national peak body representing First Nations peoples living with disability.</p> <p>We are committed to working collectively to achieve the best outcomes for First Nations peoples living with disability. We collaborate to find the best innovations, pathways and solutions.</p> <p>Even when things get tough, we remain a strong, cohesive collective supporting one another to achieve at the highest possible levels.</p>
<p><b>We are innovative, creative and solutions focused</b></p>	<p>Our collective passion and commitment drive our combined focus on finding innovations and creative methods and solutions to benefit First Nations peoples living with disability.</p> <p>Our drive is to advocate as strongly and effectively as we can on their behalf to government, the NGO and other decision makers who impact on the lives of First Nations peoples living with disability.</p> <p>We go that next step together using our unique mix of minds, hearts, resilience and commitment to push ourselves and support each other to strive for those better outcomes.</p>
<p><b>We practice reflection</b></p>	<p>We honour the traditional customs and approaches of First Nations communities and purposefully practice deep reflection as individuals, teams and as part of FPDN as a whole.</p> <p>We review our work, our methods and approaches and our outcomes to consider what more could be done to benefit First Nations peoples living with disability.</p> <p>Our reflective practice means we take the time to take stock of our own actions and work, our team and whole of organisation work and outcomes to drive innovation and continued successes for the communities we serve.</p>
<p><b>We lead change, not react to it</b></p>	<p>FPDN is a recognised change-maker. We use all our practices and approaches to create change in policy, legislation, practice and approaches to, about and with First Nations peoples living with disability.</p> <p>We use our national platform to elevate the voices of First Nations peoples living with disability to advocate for their experiences to be part of future solutions in policy and program development.</p>
<p><b>We listen to each other deeply</b></p>	<p>We use traditional deep listening techniques to stop and genuinely hear each other in our workplace. We use respect as the basis of our collegiate relationships and always listen to one another courteously and purposefully. We honour each other's commitment to our collective work by this deep listening and by recognising each other's commitment to what we do and why.</p>
<p><b>We show gratitude</b></p>	<p>We remember always to show our gratitude to our Elders and those who have gone before us building FPDN into the organisation it is today and guiding our work now and into the future.</p> <p>We practice showing gratitude to each other, for each other's strength, commitment, knowledge, expertise and drive to create better life outcomes for First Nations peoples.</p>
<p><b>We aim to consistently improve</b></p>	<p>Just as FPDN has grown over the years, we continue to strive to consistently improve how we do what we do.</p> <p>This means we work together collaboratively to identify ways we can improve as individuals, teams and as a peak body.</p> <p>We support each other by offering a helping hand, deep listening, by adhering to our internal systems and processes and by respecting the views of others to seek to improve our ways, our work and our outcomes.</p>

	<p>We strive together to consistently improve on what we do and how we do it.</p> <p>We use technology to successfully work together as a virtual workplace.</p> <p>We monitor, access and evaluate our work to find improvements.</p>
<b>Together we strive for the highest quality outcomes</b>	<p>At the end of each day, we all strive together as FPDN to achieve the highest possible quality outcomes for First Peoples living with disability.</p> <p>We go the extra mile ourselves and together to ensure everything we produce is of the highest quality, to honour our history, our cultures, our work and our communities.</p>
<b>We are safe and accessible for First Nations people with disability</b>	<p>We promote policies and practices which help people to feel safe and comfortable to identify as First Nations and to disclose their disability with FPDN and colleagues</p> <p>We understand the diverse accessibility needs of staff and proactively address these needs in a non-stigmatising way that doesn't add burden to staff to raise their accessibility requirements</p> <p>We value the knowledge and experiences of First Nations people with disability and what they bring to all parts of our organization</p>

To support this, the Access and Inclusion team will be responsible for:

- Having a culturally safe mechanism for FPDN staff to provide constructive feedback about issues experienced in the workplace.
- Using community feedback loops to refine and improve practices continually.
- Offering flexible hours to support cultural and disability needs (e.g., Sorry Business, disability-related appointments).

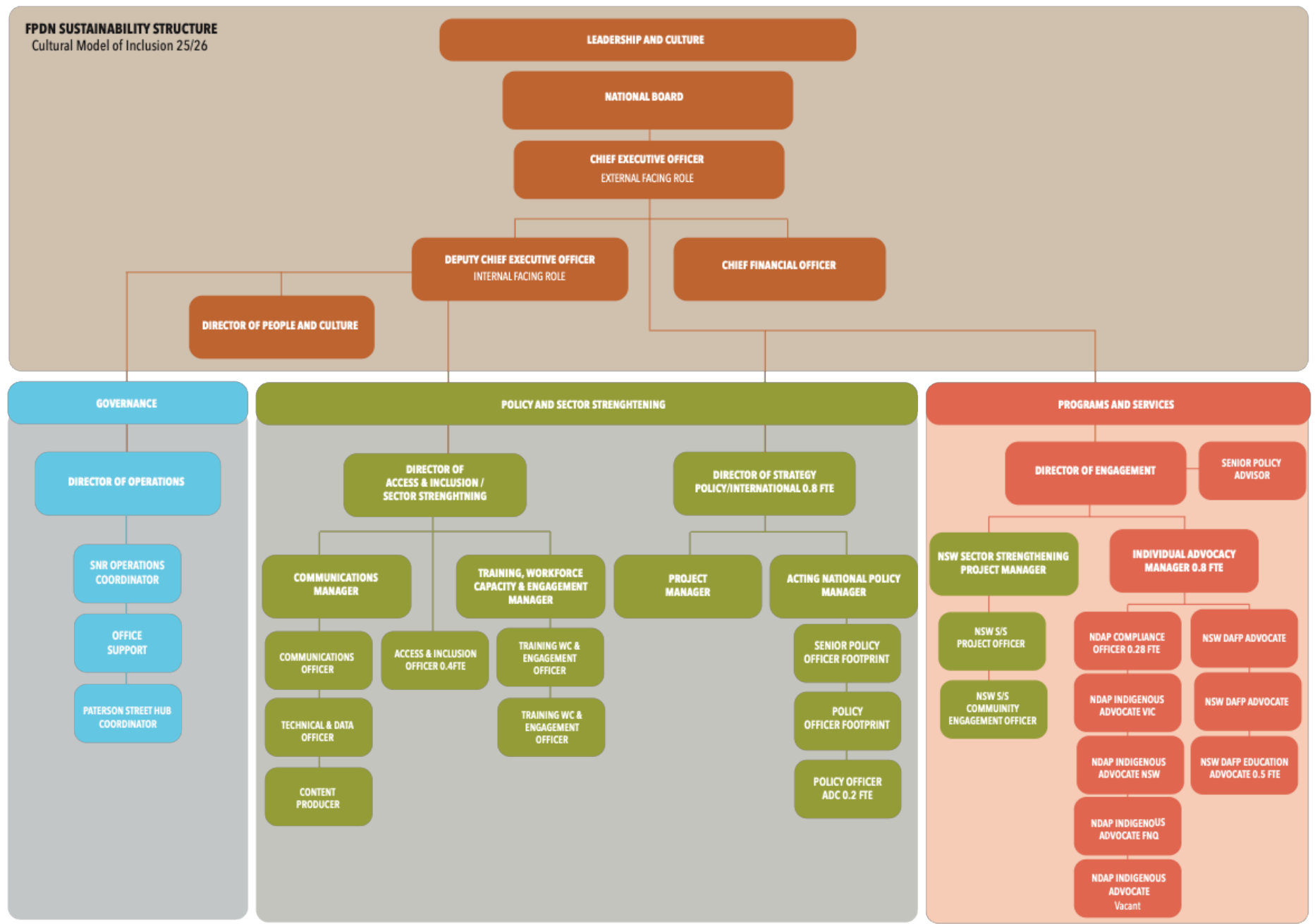
### 3.7 Roles and Responsibilities

An organisational restructure has allowed for greater clarity of roles and responsibilities within the organization. However, further changes have been identified to further support the organization's operations and work into the future to ensure greater collaboration, functioning across and within teams, and accountability.

All roles have Position Descriptions (PDs) to support clarity of functions and roles, including details on reporting lines.

The below diagram provides an overview of FPDN's proposed structure into 2025/26.

**FPDN SUSTAINABILITY STRUCTURE**  
Cultural Model of Inclusion 25/26



Further, this restructure will be supported by internal processes to increase accountability, function, and accountability. These include:

- Implementation of The FPDN Way and Accountability Framework
- Having Directors responsible for increasing and fostering collaboration and communication across and within teams.
- Embedding IT systems and processes to support workflow and planning (i.e. SharePoint, Teams, Asana etc.).
- Commitment to sharing knowledge and reflecting on practices as part of an overarching commitment to improving inclusion and quality.

## Out Next Priorities for Workforce

Into 2025, we will focus on:

- Implementation of The FPDN Way
- Implementation of processes which support organizational collaboration, building of interpersonal relationships, and healing
- Close collaboration between the Director of People and Culture and the Access and Inclusion team to ensure the following workforce components are accessible, fit-for-purpose, and support First Nations staff with disability:
  - Induction and onboarding processes
  - Training
  - Leadership and mentoring programs
  - Other development and capability building activities
  - Internal communications and information sharing
- Further embedding of IT systems to support collaboration, communication, and workflow (i.e. Teams, SharePoint, Asana)

## Programs and Services

This section includes how we are embedding the Cultural Model of Inclusion in our Programs and Services, and our priorities to ensure our sustainability into the future.

### Alignment of the Cultural Model of Inclusion (Programs and Services) with FPDN

The below table details each of the Cultural Model of Inclusion criteria for Programs and Services against the eight guiding aspects of the framework, including alignment with how we will embed these criteria within our organisation. Please see the section below the table for more details around how each of these criteria will be embed.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES		How we embed this
<b>Country and Culture</b>	Our programs and services are designed through cultural determinants of what keeps First Nations people with disability strong	1.2. Design
	Our programs and services centre Country of our participants, which includes the delivery of services and programs on Country and in community	4.2 Delivery
<b>‘Power up’ First peoples with disability</b>	Our organisation actively incorporates the strengths and contributions of First Nations people with disability in the design of programs and services	4.1 Design
	Our programs and services are trauma informed and healing centred.	4.2 Delivery
<b>Welcoming and safe place</b>	Our organisations go beyond its program protocols to secure the safety and wellbeing of First Nations People with disability who access our services	4.2 Delivery
<b>Community</b>	Our organisation engages with the local community to provide feedback on the service services and programs and provides that data to the community to keep the organisation accountable to the community	4.4 Evaluation and Feedback
	Our organisation enables opportunities for community to co-design our services and programs	4.1 Design
	Our organisation uses a flexible approach in program and service delivery that considers the diversity of the First Nations People with disability and their differential needs	4.2 Delivery
	Our organisation collects and provides localised data, including case study narratives to demonstrate accountability to community.	4.4 Evaluation and Feedback

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES		How we embed this
	Our organisation creates a culturally safe space, including trauma informed and healing led, that facilitate genuine community partnerships to deliver services.	4.2 Delivery
<b>Voice</b>	Our organisation provides structured opportunities for First Nations people with disability to come together in ways they want to identify what's working and not working well in: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) accessing the NDI (N/A as an option)</li> <li>2) the broader range of services to support first nations people with disability beyond NDIS e.g. Legal, education, housing, health, etc.</li> </ol>	4.4 Evaluation and Feedback
<b>Doing the rights work</b>	Our organisation understands and applies Indigenous disability data sovereignty to its services and program data collection.	4.4 Data Sovereignty
	We design standalone programs and services with and for First Nations peoples with disability in line with CRPD and UNDRIP, and the principles of ADS and CtG.	4.1 Design
	We operate within a human rights framework – incorporating UNDRIP and other relevant human rights instruments	4.2 Delivery
<b>Walking gently</b>	Our organisation incorporates First Nations disability knowledges into the programs and services	4.1 Design, 4.2 Delivery
<b>Accessibility</b>	Information about Our programs and services are provided in a range of accessible ways in a style and tone that is compatible with communications with First Nations People with disability.	4.3.2 Access and Inclusion
	Our programs and services are delivered in a range of accessible ways to ensure equitable participation for participants / clients	4.3.2 Access and Inclusion

The above elements of the Cultural Model of Inclusion are embedded within the following aspects of FPDN.

### 4.1 Design

We aim to design our programs and services in line with the following principles, as outlined in the Cultural Model of Inclusion:

- Our programs and services are designed through cultural determinants of what keeps First Nations people with disability strong
- Our organisation actively incorporates the strengths and contributions of First Nations people with disability in the design of programs and services

- Our organisation enables opportunities for community to co-design our services and programs
- We design standalone programs and services with and for First Nations peoples with disability in line with CRPD and UNDRIP, and the principles of ADS and CtG.
- Our organisation incorporates First Nations disability knowledges into the programs and services.

As outlined in these principles, we prioritise co-design of our programs and services, seeking to elevate and incorporate voices of First Nations people with disability within the design stages. See, Community Voice in the Governance section for more information.

## 4.2 Delivery

We aim to deliver our programs and services in line with the following principles, as outlined in the Cultural Model of Inclusion:

- Our programs and services centre Country of our participants, which includes the delivery of services and programs on Country and in community
- Our programs and services are trauma informed and healing centred
- Our organisations go beyond its program protocols to secure the safety and wellbeing of First Nations People with disability who access our services
- Our organisation uses a flexible approach in program and service delivery that considers the diversity of the First Nations People with disability and their differential needs
- Our organisation creates a culturally safe space, including trauma informed and healing led, that facilitate genuine community partnerships to deliver services.
- We operate within a human rights framework – incorporating UNDRIP and other relevant human rights instruments
- Our organisation incorporates First Nations disability knowledges into the programs and services

Responsibility for ensuring that these principles are embedded within our projects and services sits with our Executive Leadership and Access and Inclusion team.

## 4.3 Our services and programs

The following sections outline the key programs and services that FPDN operates.

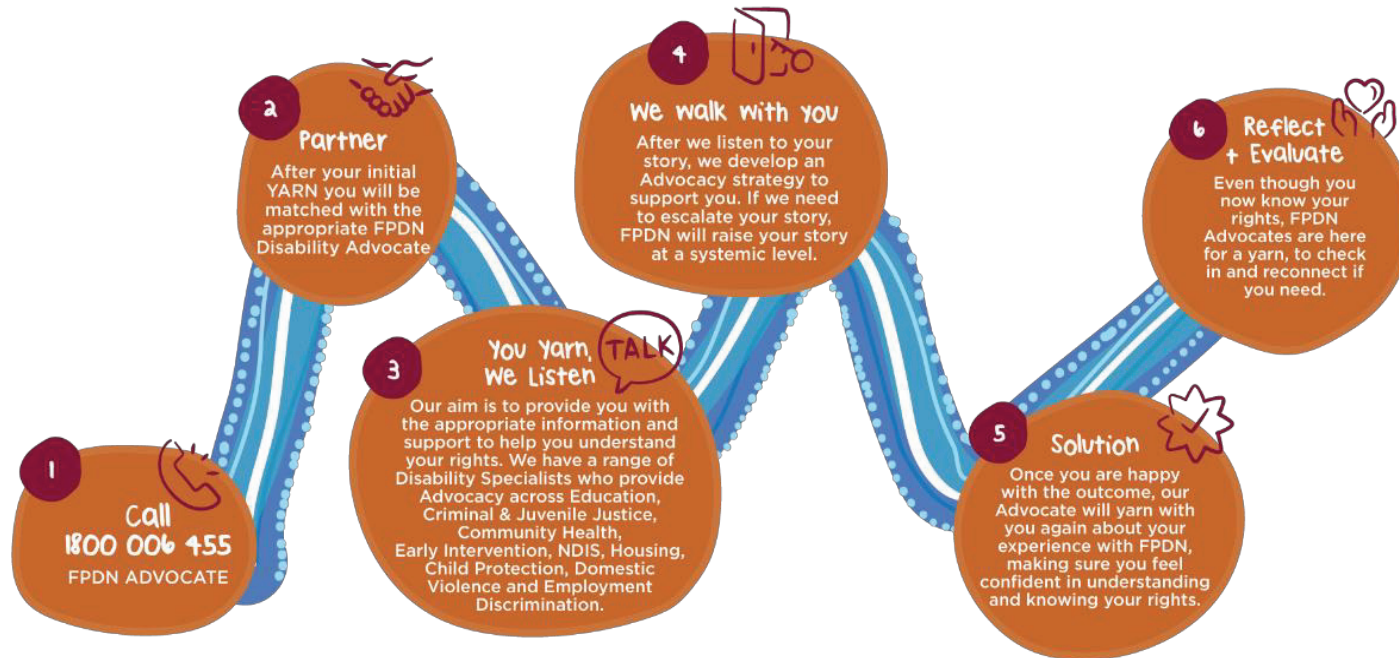
### 4.3.1 Advocacy Team

Our advocacy work is across the following areas:

- Individual advocacy
- Legal advocacy

- Self-advocacy, and
- Systemic advocacy.

The Advocacy Team is funded by the Australian Government, Department of Social Services through the National Disability Advocacy Provider (NDAP) program and the New South Wales Government, Department of Communities and Justice, through the Disability Futures Advocacy program (DFAP). The Advocacy team also receives philanthropic funding to deliver an advocacy hub in the Barkly Region Tennant Creek, NT. The below diagram provides an overview of a client’s journey with the Advocacy Team.



Through the work of the Advocacy Team, action F3.3. of the DSSP is furthered:

*Actions will include continuing to advocate for and on behalf of First Nations people with disability to government and all relevant stakeholders to promote and protect the human rights of First Nations people with disability.*

#### 4.3.2 Access and Inclusion

The Access and Inclusion Team will oversee accessibility of FPDN internally and externally. This will include ensuring:

- Physical accessibility
  - Ensuring venues, resources, and workspaces are inclusive for all physical and sensory needs.
  - Incorporating cultural spaces and meeting areas to reflect cultural values.

- Offering mobility aids and visual/auditory enhancements at all events.
- Supporting delivery of services in a range of accessible ways to ensure equitable participation for participants / clients
- Cultural accessibility
  - Respecting traditional knowledge, languages, and cultural practices in all communications and service delivery.
  - As mentioned above, including First Nations Elders, FPDN Board members and leaders in co-design processes to ensure cultural safety.
- Digital accessibility
  - Creating accessible online platforms with culturally relevant design and language options (e.g., Auslan, plain English, easy reads, First Nations languages).
  - Developing QR-code-friendly resources that allow easy access to digital services.
- Accessible communications
  - Our programs and services are provided in a range of accessible ways in a style and tone that is compatible with communications with First Nations People with disability.

Into 2025, the Access and Inclusion team will seek to offer the Cultural Model of Inclusion as a model for other organisations to follow to increase their inclusion and accessibility. This will include accessibility audits, cultural inclusion training, and resource sharing.

#### 4.3.3 Communications

FPDN's communications team is underpinned by the following 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.

The Communications Team will be working closely with the Access and Inclusion team to ensure communications are accessible and fit-for-purpose for the sector, including accessible communications tools.

#### 4.3.4 Community Engagement

FPDN is in the process of building the foundations with Aboriginal Affairs NSW (AANSW) for a NSW-based project to strengthen the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.

The partnership with AANSW helps to contribute to F4.2 and F5.2 of the DSSP:

*F4.2 Jurisdictions to engage in options for expanding this footprint, including resourcing appropriately in partnership and shared decision-making processes.*

*F5.2 Jurisdictions to engage in options for expanding this footprint.*

#### **4.3.5 Data and Research**

FPDN in partnership with Dr Scott Avery and University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is undertaking research to expand FPDN’s “Culture is Inclusion” findings, including determinants impacting outcomes, and the identified potential for community and cultural participation in affirming the health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples with disability.

#### **4.3.6 Governance**

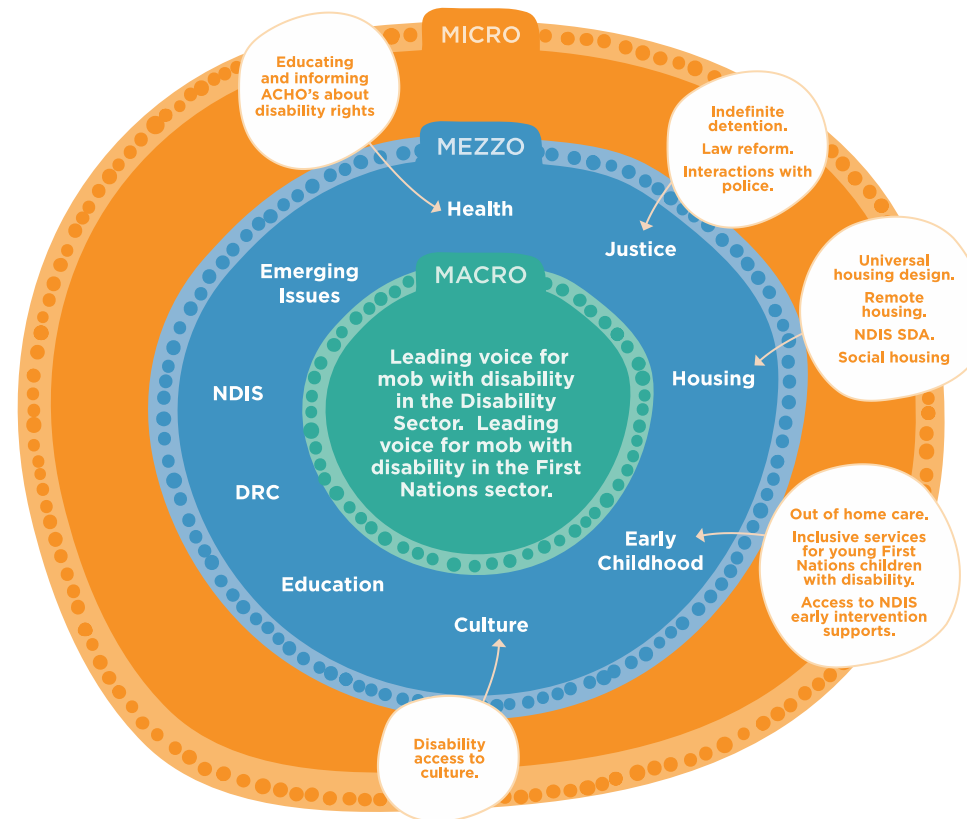
See Governance section of this document.

#### **4.3.7 Policy**

The Policy team has a focus on:

- advocating for and influencing systemic and cross-cutting policy and program changes across all sectors and jurisdictions to achieve greater inclusion and access to services and systems for First Nations People with disability, and
- developing FPDNs capacity to inform legislation, policies, programs and systems across the key sectors that impact the lives of First Nations People with disability, and to address disproportionate outcomes.

The policy team’s work operates on the micro, mezzo and macro levels, as illustrated in the below diagram.



The Policy team are responsible for the ‘strengthening the policy representative’ footprint. This includes changing policy and program settings to enable greater inclusion and access to services and systems for First Peoples with disabilities, and 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.

#### 4.3.8 Sector Development

The Sector Development team will drive FPDNs role in the developing and unifying the First Nations disability sector, ensuring the design and implementation of activities adhere to the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan, the Closing the Gap Agreement, FPDNs Disability Footprint and other relevant policy instruments. FPDN partners with federal, state and local government, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the business sector to drive projects and services that will have long lasting, positive impacts on the lives of First Nations people living with disabilities.

#### 4.3.5.1 DRO responsibilities and systemic advocacy

As a Disability Representative Organisation, FPDN is responsible for systemic disability advocacy for First Nations people with disability. The DRO funding supports FPDN to:

- promote an understanding of the lives of First People with disability
- promote and protect the rights and dignity of First People with disability
- foster support for the participation of First People with disability in all aspects of community life.<sup>1</sup>

Through this role, FPDN is further supporting action F4.1 of the DSSP:

*FPDN to Identify opportunities to increase policy and systemic advocacy footprint, and role as a conduit to community, government and the community-controlled sector across all Closing the Gap processes.*

#### 4.3.5.2 Disability Representative and Carer Organisations

FPDN is a Disability Representative and Carer Organisation (DRCO). DRCO's work closely with the NDIA on reforms, changes and improvements to the NDIS.<sup>2</sup> The DRCO Forum meets quarterly to discuss Scheme improvements and experiences of participants across Australia. Members of the DRCO take part in co-design with the NDIA, working with NDIA staff, NDIS participants and members of the Independent Advisory Council (IAC).<sup>3</sup>

Through this role, FPDN is further supporting action F4.1 of the DSSP:

*FPDN to identify opportunities to increase policy and systemic advocacy footprint, and role as a conduit to community, government and the community-controlled sector across all Closing the Gap processes.*

#### 4.3.9 Training and Engagement

We are expanding sectoral capacity by developing a national training strategy for the First Nations disability community to access culturally safe, inclusive and rights-informed services. We assist organisations to build their disability-related competence and capacity to provide culturally safe and appropriate disability services and supports to First Peoples.

We are also delivering training and community engagement to enhance First Nations People's understanding of their rights and foster the skills required to seek out and access the services they require.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Department of Social Services (2024) Disability Representative Organisations. Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/consultation-and-advocacy/national-disability-peak-bodies>

<sup>2</sup> NDIS (2024). Disability Representative and Carer Organisations. Available at: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/reference-group-updates/disability-representative-and-carer-organisations>

<sup>3</sup> NDIS (2024). Disability Representative and Carer Organisations. Available at: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/reference-group-updates/disability-representative-and-carer-organisations>

## 4.4 Data and Feedback

Data, evaluation, and learning are key areas for growth and development for FPDN which will support our ongoing sustainability as an organisation, and the ability to act and advocate on behalf of the First Nations Disability sector and First Nations people with disabilities. Ongoing monitoring and learning will ensure that we are consistent with the Cultural Model of Inclusion, the aspirations and needs of our communities, and on track to meet the outcomes that we seek to achieve through our work.

### 4.4.1 Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation framework was developed by Inside Policy during 2023-24 for FPDN's process evaluation of the National Disability Footprint. The current 2024-25 outcomes evaluation of the National Disability Footprint will seek to build upon this framework to develop a structure to understand the work of the Footprint to date. The current evaluation is seeking to provide an evaluation report which will provide meaningful insight into the Footprint to inform FPDN's future work and operations, and to provide tools and recommendations to support future monitoring and learning processes.

Future tools for collecting insight and data may include streamlining internal available data (i.e. number of meetings) as well as seeking external feedback and input from partners and communities (such as surveys, yarning circles, and other feedback mechanisms outlined in Community Voice, see Governance above).

### 4.4.2 Databases

Further, FPDN is exploring with First Nations IT company, Yirigaa, building of a database to support the work across the organisation to streamline data collection across teams within one platform. Tools to support data collection are to be built in 2025.

### 4.4.3 Monitoring Accessibility

Another aspect of monitoring and learning is understanding FPDN's ongoing implementation of the Cultural Model of Inclusion. FPDN intends to create an annual report card against our progress toward the various aspects of the model.

Conducting regular accessibility audits of services, resources, and engagement practices.

Using community feedback loops to refine and improve practices continually.

Having a culturally safe mechanism for FPDN staff to provide constructive feedback about issues experienced in the workplace.

## 4.5 Data Sovereignty

Our organisation seeks to apply Indigenous disability data sovereignty to its services and program data collection. However, further work is needed to develop a formal data sovereignty policy to oversee this work.

As FPDN is a custodian of stories of First Nations people with Disability and our communities, we have a responsibility to hold these stories and data with care and respect. To do so, we will:

- Share stories and data back with community. This may be through our communications team, development of listening reports by the policy team,
- Obtain appropriate permissions from our communities around how their collect, use, hold and share their data.

- Respect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, including obtaining the correct permissions to collect, use, hold, or share this data as appropriate.
- Recognise that stories may be held by individuals and/ or collective groups and the appropriate permissions must be sought to engage with these stories or data
- Understand whether stories or data are shared confidentially, and understand our requirements to protect people who share their information with us
- Have representative governance processes to oversee that data is treated with respect and care

## Our Next Priorities for Programs and Services

To ensure that our services and programs can continue to support First Nations people disability, our key priority is to secure of funding to support ongoing provision of services. Without ongoing funding, FPDN cannot to advocate, support, and elevate First Nations people with disability on the individual, mezzo and macro levels.

With secure funding, FPDN can look to strengthen our programs and services through:

- Embedding codesign processes into all future programs and services
- Embedding delivery principles into all of our current programs and services, as led by our Executive Leadership and Access and Inclusion teams
- Further refining our programs and services, including seeking opportunities to further build and develop the Community Controlled Sector
- Develop and embed a culture of learning and reflection, including understanding the importance of data collection practices and embedding this within our day-to-day work
- Ensuring teams have access to data collection tools and frameworks (such as Salesforce)
- Develop a Data Sovereignty policy and mechanisms to oversee its implementation

**“Our Culture cannot be altered. Country is already laid out. We have our country we have our stories, we have our songs it never changes that is why we are still here singing the same song”.**

## Continuing Our Songlines - Our Responsibility to Future generations

This section outlines our future direction for FPDN, including consideration of a federated model.

### Where we have been

First Peoples Disability Network Australia (FPDN) was established out of the efforts of advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disability from the early 1980s on who sought to bring attention to the specific needs of First Peoples living with disability and their families.

FPDN was formerly established in 2010 and in 2014 was formerly registered as a public company limited by guarantee. FPDN is a national organisation governed by First Peoples with lived experience of disability. Our organisation was founded Uncle Lester Bostock who remained a long-standing member of our Board.

### Where we are now

FPDN has grown exponentially over the last 3 years, facilitated in large part by the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and the National Disability Footprint. This period has seen FPDN grow its organisational and governance capabilities, increase its workforce from 18 employees, and increase our services and programs.

This sustainability plan is a testament to our progress as an organization. This document showcases our current progress towards embedding the Cultural Model of Inclusion into our organization and highlights the operational components which have underpinned and supported our expansion as an organization. The below section documents how we may continue to expand into the future.

### Where we are going

FPDN has a responsibility to all First Nations people with disability, their families and communities to remain a strong community -controlled disability peak organisation and that we continue our songlines and hand our stories down to future generations.

To continue to build our strength as a peak body, FPDN Australia will implement the Next Steps and Actions detailed in the sections above.

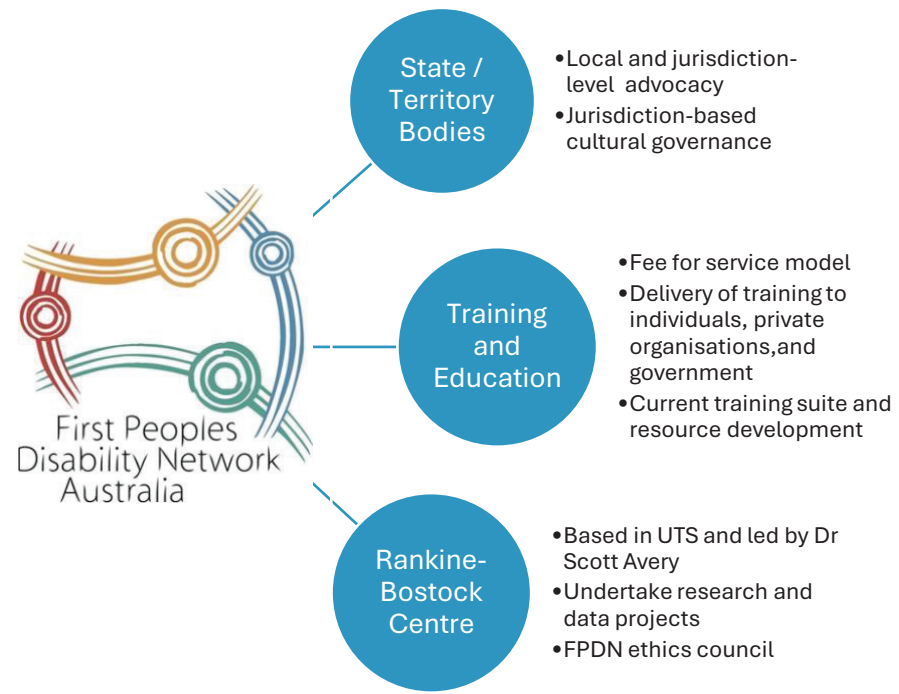
Further, FPDN Australia is considering expansion through a federated structure.

### Federated FPDN Structure

FPDN sees our future as a federated structure which includes building a presence in every state and territory, as well as delivery of training services and building the evidence base. The below diagram shows the proposed federated structure of FPDN.

FPDN Australia's key roles within this model would include:

- Overarching cultural leadership and governance
- Secretariat and operational functions
- Policy and systemic advocacy
- Sector strengthening
- Access and inclusion



**Expansion into States and Territories**

FPDN is currently exploring expansion opportunities into states and territories.

In Queensland, FPDN has a positive relationship with the state-level peak body, Mob4Mob. To date, this has included collaboration such as producing joint statements on issues important to First Nations people with disability. Next steps will include developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Mob4Mob and FPDN, including providing Mob4Mob a seat on FPDN’s board to formalise the partnership.

In NSW, FPDN is considering revitalising the Aboriginal Disability Network which was operational prior to the establishment of FPDN. FPDN has a large presence within NSW, including NSW-based advocacy and sector strengthening activities, which could be devolved to a state-based peak, such as the Aboriginal Disability Network.

Once these two states are established, FPDN will explore further possibilities for expansion on the state and territory level in other locations. This work will be overseen by the Director of Government Relations to scope out interest in different states and territories.

**Assumptions and Requirements**

- To ensure FPDN and our subsidiaries can support, advocate for, and enable First Nations people with disability, their families and communities, we must be adequately funded and resourced nationally and within each jurisdiction.

- The federated structure requires time to get it right, including taking a phased approach to roll out. This may mean piloting the federated model in Queensland and NSW, then rolling out to other states and territories over time. A minimum of 5 years would be required to undertake the phased roll out.