

PWdWA
People With Disabilities Western Australia
Annual Report
2022 – 2023

List of Acronyms:

Acronym	Full Name
AAT	Administrative Appeals Tribunal
ACLC	Albany Community Legal Centre
ACROD	Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled
AFDO	Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
AWA	Advocacy Western Australia
CDA	Community Disability Advocate
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Corona Virus 2019
DANA	Disability Advocacy Netw
DoC	Department of Communities
DRC	Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DSS	Department of Social Services
IER	Independent Expert Review
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
PWdWA	People With disabilities (Western Australia)
SAT	State Administrative Tribunal
SAWA	Self-Advocacy Western Australia
SSCLS	Sussex Street Community Law Services
UN	United Nations
WA	Western Australia
YDAN	Youth Disability Advocacy Network

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Acknowledgement of Country

People With disabilities WA acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present.

About Our Organisation

Our Vision

People with disabilities are empowered in an inclusive society that values human rights.

Our Mission

Individual and systemic advocacy led by people with disabilities in Western Australia.

Our Values

Inclusive

We recognise the right to equal access and opportunity with dignity and empathy.

Integrity

We do what is right.

Courage

We are unafraid to show strength and unity in advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, creativity, and perseverance in pursuing our goals.

Chair Report

Over the past year People With disabilities WA (PWdWA) has encountered a range of organisational and sectoral challenges, each of which it handled with astounding skill and tenacity. In this report I'd like to describe the parts of the journey that I have been privileged to share in and highlight the efforts of those who have helped to navigate the road as well as tune up performance.

I was handed the reins of the Board in late 2022, with large shoes to fill – and I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to my predecessor, Tom Monks, whose leadership and friendship helped prepare me for the role.

The Board took the New Year and new Chair as an opportunity to review and refresh, starting with director skills assessments and a discussion of the organisation's current strategic plan. I would like to thank Brendan Cullinan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for his support with this process, as well as with planning for continued director development.

I feel that taking the time to recognise our strengths and identify areas for improvement was a crucial step for us as a Board, and it drove us to find a way to overcome gaps. I'm pleased to report we had great success in this regard, and the inaugural PWdWA Advisory Board was formed in April 2023.

Indeed, quite a large group of members were appointed, due to the large number of exceptionally talented and passionate individuals who share in PWdWA's vision. Regrettably, it has been difficult to find the time to explore every new opportunity unlocked through this process, however, the support provided by Advisory Board members to date has been absolutely invaluable.

I truly cannot overstate my gratitude for members of this group, and in particular would like to thank Advisory Board Chair Jim Preketes for both his leadership of the group as well as the support he has provided me. I hope that we will continue to see further successes and collaborations as we realise the potential of the Advisory Board.

I would also like to highlight the incredible work of Andrea Surman during the year, commencing as Operations Manager in late 2022 and stepping up as Acting CEO from the start of May. PWdWA has gone from strength-to-strength since Andrea

joined, and I could not imagine a better person to have led the organisation these past months.

We have also farewelled longstanding team members and welcomed new ones during the year, and, on behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all current and past staff. You have all played important roles in improving the lives of people with disabilities in Western Australia (WA).

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow board members, including those who stepped down prior to the Annual General Meeting – Tom Monks, Frank Smith, and Georgie Hook. Thank you for your trust and support, and for your contributions over the past year. I look forward to an even busier and more satisfying 2023-24.

Yhana Lucas

Chair

Advisory Board Chair Report

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude for the privilege of serving as the Advisory Board Chair at PWdWA and offer my response to the Chair's Annual General Meeting report.

Over the past year, PWdWA has encountered a multitude of challenges, both within our organisation and in the broader sector. The response of the PWdWA team to these challenges has been truly remarkable, characterised by their unwavering determination, resilience, and exceptional skills. In this report, it is a privilege to highlight significant milestones from our journey and pay tribute to those individuals who have played pivotal roles in navigating these challenges while consistently elevating our performance.

A crucial part of our journey involved a reflective process where we identified our strengths and areas requiring improvement. This step acted as a catalyst for addressing these gaps, and I am delighted to report that our collective efforts have yielded positive results.

In April 2023, we reached a significant milestone with the establishment of the inaugural PWdWA Advisory Board, which welcomed a substantial number of members. This achievement stands as a testament to the wealth of talent and passionate individuals who share in PWdWA's vision. While time constraints have limited our exploration of every opportunity unlocked by this process, the support provided by Advisory Board members has proven invaluable.

I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to every member of this dedicated group, with a special mention of our Advisory Deputy Chair, Lenka Psar-McCabe, for her exceptional leadership and unwavering commitment to PWdWA.

I hold an optimistic outlook for our continued collaboration, expecting further achievements and the development of valuable partnerships as we continue to harness the full potential of the Advisory Board.

In addition, I must take this moment to acknowledge the remarkable contributions of Andrea Surman. Joining us as Operations Manager in late 2022 and subsequently stepping into the role of Acting CEO in May, Andrea's tenure has witnessed PWdWA

not only enduring but flourishing under her capable leadership. Her guidance has been instrumental in steering the organisation toward success.

Furthermore, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Brendan Cullinan for his invaluable contributions to PWdWA.

Lastly, I want to express my appreciation to my fellow Board members and Advisory Board members. As we look ahead, I am eagerly anticipating a year that promises even greater rewards and a wealth of meaningful experiences in 2023-24.

Jim Preketes

Advisory Board Chair.

Chief Executive Officer Report

Another year of challenges and opportunities has highlighted the strength and resilience of our organisation. The leadership by the Board under guidance from the Chair, Yhana Lucas, in embracing a continual improvement philosophy has strengthened the governance of the organisation and set a strong foundation to continue to collaborate and continue to be a leading organisation in the disability sector.

The formation of the Advisory Board has added capability and strategic depth to the organisation, and I would like to acknowledge Advisory Board Chair Jim Preketes and other members for their commitment and support.

Our individual advocacy work remains in high demand, and I acknowledge our wonderful advocates who continue to provide professional and friendly advocacy on a broad range of issues.

Our work in supporting people to provide submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (DRC) concluded and we will now collaborate with the disability sector across Australia to hold all levels of government responsible for responding positively to the recommendations from the formal report.

We continued to play a lead role on a range of systemic issues and in particular responding to the consultation around the review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). While there are many positive aspects of the NDIS, our individual advocacy work and consultation with our members highlighted a range of concerns with the NDIS and we await a constructive response from the Minister for the NDIS, the Hon. Bill Shorten, to the Independent Review Panels' report and recommendations.

Building community capacity and capability is a key strategic pillar of our organisation and our project work over the past 12 months has continued to deliver positive outcomes in the areas of self-advocacy, place-based community action, reducing barriers to youth employment, membership growth, and a state conference that was led by and for people with disability.

Collaboration and partnerships are key points of the strategic philosophy of our organisation. I acknowledge and thank our key funding partners, the Department of Communities (DoC), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and Lotterywest, and our advocacy and project consortium delivery partners, Advocacy WA (AWA), Albany Community Legal Centre (ACLC), Sussex Street Community Law Service (SSCLS), and Youth Disability Network (YDAN).

The achievements of our organisation and the support we provide to many people with disability, family and carers would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of our wonderful staff. I express my deep appreciation to all staff members and thank them for the role they have all played over the past 12 months in contributing to improve all areas of our organisation. I particularly acknowledge and thank Andrea Surman who has provided exceptional leadership particularly under difficult circumstances during my absence.

It was with sadness that we recently bid farewell to Lisa Hook who has been an incredible advocate for over 17 years with our organisation. On behalf of our members and the many hundreds of people that Lisa has supported, I thank Lisa for her work and best wishes for the next exciting chapter in her life.

The Board and directors have also provided great support and leadership and I acknowledge and thank them for their individual commitment and dedication. Leadership via the Chair is vital for all organisations, and I thank Tom Monks for his guidance prior to his departure, and Yhana Lucas who was appointed Chair and contributes many hours of work to help guide the organisation and support to myself and Andrea.

Looking forward, opportunities for future project funding, and ensuring we contribute to and where required lead responses to the Royal Commission and NDIS Review reports will be significant challenges for our organisation over the next 12 months while ensuring that we continue to deliver quality advocacy. I look forward to working with our Board, staff, partners and members as we embrace these challenges.

Brendan Cullinan

Chief Executive Officer

Our Board

Person	Position
Yhana Lucas	Chair
Nihal Iscel	Deputy Chair
Kat Johns	Board Member
Danielle Loizou-Lake	Board Member
Shazzy Tharby	Board Member
Tom Oliver	Board Member
Eric Casey	Board Member
Grace Barnes	Board Member

In Memoriam Janine Neu

In October of 2022 PWDWA board member Janine Neu, a valued member of PWDWA since 2016 passed away. Janine was a dedicated member of our Board, serving as Deputy Chair for three years. She was passionate about advocating for people with disabilities and promoting opportunities for them. Janine's commitment to the disability community extended beyond PWDWA, as she was an active member of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), serving as Deputy Chair since 2018. Additionally, she served as a committee member of the Australian Council for Rehabilitation of Disabled (ACROD) and the Companion Card External Appeals in WA and was a member of Physical Disability Australia since 2020. Janine's contributions and steadfast dedication to the disability community will be deeply missed.

Our Advisory Board

Person	Position
Jim Preketes	Advisory Board Chair
Lenka Psar-McCabe	Advisory Board Deputy Chair
Alexei Domerov	Advisory Board Member
Andrea McCallum	Advisory Board Member
Charlie Stephenson	Advisory Board Member
Chris Kent	Advisory Board Member
Dale Wilcox	Advisory Board Member
Dave Harwood	Advisory Board Member
Emily Edgar	Advisory Board Member
Eva O'Malley	Advisory Board Member
Kushagra Rathore	Advisory Board Member
Linda Pham	Advisory Board Member
Melleah Stautins	Advisory Board Member
Samantha Neylon	Advisory Board Member
Steve Humpfrey	Advisory Board Member

Our Team

Person	Position
Brendan Cullinan	Chief Executive Officer
Andrea Surman	Operations Manager
Brianna Lee	Systemic Advocacy Manager (currently on parental leave)
Karen Kobier	Advocacy Services Manager
Glenda Bye	Individual Advocate
Grace Rosales	Project Officer – Empowered and Connected project
Idil Sudi	Individual Advocate
Julie Bloomfield	Individual Advocate
Mark Hutson	Individual Advocate
Matthew Gee	Intake and Assessment Officer
Natasha Laden	Senior Project Officer
Nicola Brown	A/Community Disability Advocacy Project Officer
Renata Krollig	Administration Officer
Sandika Aponso	Management Accountant
Sharon Stanton	Self-Advocacy WA Coordinator
Shaun Warnock	Project Assistant
Vanessa Jessett	Organisational Development and Communications Officer
Vicki Bailey	Individual Advocate

Our Achievements

- Provided submissions on a range of issues including NDIS Review, WA Disability Standards for accessible public transport, WA Disability legislation, United Nations (UN) Conference of State parties (16) - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.
- Provided individual advocacy to over 800 people across WA covering 1,000 issues.
- Continued to support people make submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.
- Winners of the Tenant Initiative Award by the Australasian Housing Institute for the Building Tenancy Skills project (with our partners Shelter WA).
- Opened a new Mandurah office to service the Peel region.
- Self-Advocacy workshop attendees reported:
 - 80 per cent gained higher confidence to self-advocate.
 - 80 per cent gained an increase in confidence to advocate for their child.
- Membership increased by 13 per cent.
- Social Media:

Facebook followers increased by 68 per cent.

LinkedIn followers increased by 25 per cent.
- Trained five Community Building Facilitators all with lived experience of disability to deliver workshops on a range of disability specific issues.

Individual Advocacy

PWdWA provides individual advocacy services to the Perth metropolitan area, Peel and Pilbara regions. Over the past year Individual Advocates have worked in partnership with 828 individuals to ensure their voices were heard and rights upheld. Over 47 per cent of all issues related to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and a further 21 per cent involved government payments.

PWdWA averages around 50 calls per week from people seeking advocacy support. In May 2023, a new Intake and Assessment Officer was employed to triage these calls. The Intake Officer was able to provide callers with information and assistance over the phone, resulting in 46 per cent of all enquiries not requiring further assistance. Improvements to bookings processes also resulted in a significant reduction to the waiting list from 120 to 6 people. These new processes have resulted in faster response times for clients and has enabled Advocates to focus their attention on more complex cases.

PWdWA continues to work collaboratively with consortium partners AWA, ACLC and SSCLS to provide individual advocacy throughout WA.

With the opening of the new Mandurah office in March 2023, clients in the Peel region no longer have to make the one-and-a-half-hour journey to our head office. The City of Mandurah and other stakeholders in the area have been very supportive and generously advertised our services through their networks. PWdWA aims to launch a monthly outreach into Waroona and Pinjarra in late 2023.

In June 2023 a team consisting of the acting CEO, Advocacy Services Manager, Communications Officer, and a Project Officer travelled to Karratha and Port Hedland to promote advocacy services including our country caller phone service. Consultation sessions were also held with community members to identify current and future needs.

After 17 years with PWdWA, Individual Advocacy Services Manager Lisa Hook resigned to pursue her love of travel and fresh opportunities. We would like to

acknowledge Lisa's contribution to the organisation and wish her well in this new chapter. We were very fortunate to engage Karen Kobier as the new Advocacy Services Manager. Karen is highly experienced and worked in a similar role in her previous position at People with Disabilities Australia in NSW. Karen is intending to relocate to Perth in 2024.

Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

PWdWA continued to assist individuals access private sessions with the DRC to share their stories before submissions closed in December 2022.

Over the entire submission period, 136 people with disability were assisted to understand the scope of the DRC and ways to engage with the Commission.

Since December 2022, PWdWA has continued to offer support to those who have been affected by the hearings and it is anticipated there will be an increase in demand for services upon the release of the final report on 29 September 2023.

Issue Type

Topic	Information or Referral	Advocacy
Government payments	78	77
NDIS – Access/Planning	38	49
Other (including NDIS Appeals)	61	119
Discrimination/rights	25	51
NDIS – Support implementing plan/Accessing services	20	24
Abuse/neglect/violence	10	13
NDIS – Internal review	11	25
Legal/Access to justice	35	7
Housing/Homelessness	28	15
Health/Mental health	21	8
Disability services	7	6
Access to non-NDIS services	16	7
Finances	6	6
Community inclusion – social/family	14	5
Education	11	2
Employment	11	5
Child protection	2	1
Equipment/aids	6	0
Transport	3	1
Vulnerable/isolated	2	1
Physical access	1	0

Disability Type

Disability Type - Primary	Number	Per cent
Acquired Brain Injury	42	5
Autism	120	14.5
Developmental/Learning	20	2.4
Intellectual Disability	67	8.1
Neurological Disability	107	13
Physical Disability	219	26.5
Psychosocial Disability	157	19
Sensory Disability	28	3.4
Not Stated	67	8.1
Total	827	

Individual Advocacy in Action

Client Stories

Harry *

Harry contacted PWdWA citing concerns over insufficient therapy funding in his NDIS plan. Harry has a physical disability and utilises a wheelchair. The Advocate assisted Harry to create an action plan outlining what steps needed to be taken and provided resources and template letters to enable him to gain the necessary evidence to support his case. The Advocate assisted the client to advocate for himself at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). The result was Harry was able to secure the required funding for additional therapy support.

Graham*

Graham is living with a degenerative neurological condition and contacted PWdWA to enquire about the Disability Support Pension (DSP). His condition had progressed to the point where he was unable to stand for more than 10 minutes and was losing movement in his hands, resulting in his inability to remain gainfully employed. The Advocate provided easy-read information on how to apply for the DSP. Graham gained a better understanding of the application process and was supported to complete and submit the application to Services Australia. The application was successful, removing the need to remain on JobSeeker payments. This alleviated the stress Graham had been feeling in respect to his ongoing finances, resulting in an overall improvement to his mental health.

Sarah *

Sarah submitted an NDIS Access request form and was advised she did not meet the disability requirements under Section 24 of the NDIS Act or the early intervention requirements under Section 25.

After an unsuccessful NDIS internal review, Sarah sought advocacy from PWdWA to undertake an appeal at the AAT. The Advocate assisted Sarah to access Legal

Aid and to receive ongoing support to understand the process and engage with all stakeholders effectively.

The lawyers representing the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) argued Sarah had medical conditions which impacted her functional capacity and were not related to her disabilities. They also argued Sarah would be better funded through aged care services and not the NDIA.

Sarah's medical practitioners were able to give evidence to support the claim she had a disability and provided the tribunal with the necessary evidence to prove significant impairment. As a result, Sarah was granted access to the NDIS.

Justin*

Justin contacted PWdWA after his live-in support worker retired. The support worker had provided 24/7 support and due to the nature of their relationship had not created an environment where Justin could build his skills and capacity. Justin has a vision impairment, is unable to walk unassisted and has not learnt to use Braille. As a result in Justin's change in circumstances, he sought a review of his NDIS plan funding. His support hours were reduced to 8 hours per day which put him at significant risk. The decision was appealed and funding was extended for a further six months to allow Justin continuity of supports while obtaining the necessary evidence to support his case.

Rather than returning to the AAT, the NDIA offered the option of an Independent Expert Review (IER). While this was welcomed it became a drawn-out process and took more time than expected. Ultimately, the IER deemed the funding Justin was requesting as justified. They found Justin had the right to enjoy life and recognised he should not be penalised if he had not undergone capacity building in the past. His evidence was accepted and Justin was able to receive the support hours he required to live safely and independently.

Agnes *

Agnes is an elderly woman diagnosed with developmental delays, low literacy, and mental health issues. Her daughter in law had sought a guardianship and administration order on her behalf due to family disputes.

At the time PWdWA was contacted, Agnes had been under the care of the Office of Public Administration for five years. At the client's request, our objective was to demonstrate to the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT) that Agnes was capable of managing her own affairs and finances, despite her disability.

During the initial hearing, we successfully had her Guardianship Order revoked by showcasing the ample support system surrounding Agnes. For instance, Agnes shares a strong relationship with her support coordinator and effectively communicates her needs. Her spouse also provides invaluable support, which was substantiated with evidence presented to the SAT, along with input from healthcare professionals.

We then contested the Administration Order in place and Agnes was granted the opportunity to manage her own disability pension for a twelve-month trial period to demonstrate her financial literacy. At the end of this period, we could clearly demonstrate Agnes had managed her finances well, and on 19 September 2023, her administration order was successfully revoked.

"Thank you so much for listening to me. Can you also thank Matt he has a wonderful phone manner and also listened." Amy*

***Names have been changed**

Membership and Engagement

Engaging with our members remains a major focal point and this year PWdWA focused on three engagement strategies:

- Promoting our services to a broader audience.
- Reconnecting with people and communities in person.
- Greater membership engagement and consultation.

With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions many people with disability identified as feeling lonely or isolated. Staff hit the road travelling from the Pilbara to Peel regions promoting advocacy services, delivering workshops in person, and consulting with the community on current and future needs. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many people feeding back they felt heard and not forgotten.

Here are just a few of the events our Communications Officer was involved in: Disability Expo, Linkwest Conference, Abilities Expo, Carers' Day, WA Government Digital Blueprint, City of Mandurah Access and Inclusion forum, John Tonkin College Education Support Centre Expo, City of Karratha Disability and Inclusion plan, Autism Camp Australia camps.

As a result of these engagement strategies membership grew by 13 per cent.

Systemic Advocacy

During 2022-2023 PWdWA's systemic advocacy involved action in the following areas:

- NDIS
- Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation
- Access and Inclusion
- Government payments
- Justice
- Transport
- Housing
- Environment
- WA Disability Legislation
- Disability Service Act

PWdWA continues to uphold the voices of people with disability in WA through its systemic advocacy work. During the absence of our Systemic Advocate on parental leave, Dr Siyat Abdi was engaged to prepare three submissions on the NDIS Review, WA Disability Standards for accessible public transport and reforms to the WA Disability legislation. Dr Siyat is a highly regarded Systemic Advocate who undertook extensive community and member consultation to ensure as many people as possible were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the issues at hand and potential solutions. You can read these submissions on our website.

PWdWA also facilitated several round table discussions for members to speak directly to policy officers at the Office of Disability on the proposed changes to the WA Disability legislation.

Our Board was also busy with Chair Yhana Lucas strongly advocating for alternative travel provisions to be considered as part of the Metronet scheduled works.

Board member Danielle Loizou-Lake had the opportunity to attend the UN Conference of State parties (16) - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability, and you can read her report on our website.

PWdWA receives limited funding for systemic advocacy therefore we often partner with other organisations to write submissions. We wish to particularly acknowledge the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) and AFDO with whom we have collaborated on several submissions over the last 12 months. All our submissions can to be viewed on our website.

Projects

PWdWA delivers a range of community-based projects that supports one of our strategic priorities to *Empower people with disabilities and communities*. The projects range from informing and empowering people with disabilities through workshops and information sessions to working with businesses to improve accessibility and employment for young people with disability, and mobilising communities to identify and remove barriers experienced by people with disabilities in their communities. The projects are funded by the Department of Communities (DoC) and the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Community Disability Advocacy Project

Funder: DoC

Partners: AWA

PWdWA is the lead in a partnership with AWA in appointing Community Disability Advocates (CDA) to work *in and with* communities to increase the awareness and confidence of people with disability and the community to implement place-based solutions to promote self-determination, choice and control for people with disability. To date, the two appointed CDAs have worked with 15 communities and have developed, or are in the process of developing, 12 Community Disability Advocacy Networks with supported action plans. Below are examples of three of the networks;

PWdWA have helped to establish three Community Disability Advocacy Networks in Perth including a High School Alumni. The primary focus of this network is to create an inclusive community for former students and their families. The aim is to enable the alumni to maintain connections with one another and feel a sense of belonging in the community.

The Queer Disability Allies Network is a network formed between PWdWA, Rainbow Community House and Living Proud which aims to support people from the queer community to access services that are safe and inclusive for them. By working together, these organisations aim to create a stronger support system and ensure that individuals from the queer community can easily access the resources they need.

The Pride Disability Advocacy Network was established with a strong emphasis on inclusivity and representation of individuals who identify as both queer and with a disability. The intersection of these identities often exacerbates stigma, causing individuals to feel compelled to hide their true selves and leading to vulnerability and a sense of unsafety within the community. Reducing isolation and building connections are fundamental goals of the Pride Disability Advocacy Network. The network aims to create a supportive and inclusive community where individuals who identify as queer and with a disability can connect with others who share similar experiences, challenges, and identities.

Economic Participation Project

Funder: DSS

Partners: AWA and YDAN

PWdWA and AWA continue to focus on building the capacity of small to medium-sized businesses to be more welcoming, confident, and accessible for people with a disability. The project, renamed the Business Accessibility Empowerment Program by the co-design group is currently focussed on the Southwest, Peel and Perth Metro areas and will include the completion of 100 on-site audits and optional business accessibility training, which can be tailored specifically to the needs of each business.

Young people (Youth Consultants) between the ages of 15 to 25 have been recruited with the assistance of YDAN, Disability Employment Agencies, social media and advertising and directly approaching the education sector. The training is focussed on teaching the Youth Consultants skills to self-advocate, the impact of unconscious

bias and intersectionality, and the need to improve accessibility in the community. The Youth Consultants are involved with every aspect of the project delivery and apply their lived experience and self-advocacy skills to conduct the audits and facilitate business accessibility training. Through their involvement the Youth Consultants have developed the confidence to apply for employment, co-facilitate workshops and nominate for boards and focus groups addressing disability youth advocacy.

Businesses have been recruited using several strategies which include directly approaching businesses, referrals, and building on relationships formed with Business Associations, Chambers of Commerce, as well as local governments and targeted Disability Employment Services. Several networking meetings have also been successful in marketing the program and attracting interested businesses, including the Accessible Tourism Forum, Bizfest Mandurah and other events and expos.

Feedback from businesses report the Business Accessibility Empowerment Program has been integral in identifying areas for improvement to become more inclusive and disability friendly. The Youth Consultants have also provided very positive feedback on the benefits of the program with one young person commenting, “the program has allowed me to harness abilities I already have to contribute to the community, while also providing me with new skills. Having this experience has given me more confidence to independently enter the workforce”.

The Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia has been engaged to evaluate the Business Accessibility Empowerment Program and will report on their findings next year.

Empowered and Connected

Funder:DoC

The Empowered and Connected Project is a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of individuals with disabilities. The project's primary objective is to equip these individuals with the necessary tools to lead fulfilling lives by providing them with resources, workshops, and support. With a

focus on self-advocacy, information dissemination, and peer support, the project aims to create an inclusive and empowered community.

1. Advocacy-Related Workshops: A pivotal aspect of the project involves organising workshops that center around self-advocacy. These workshops delve into relevant topics such as NDIS Appeals and Access, Self-Advocacy, and government payments. By offering these workshops, PWdWA aims to equip individuals with disabilities with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate government services confidently.

A noteworthy feature of these workshops is the involvement of individuals with lived experience. The project has successfully enlisted five individuals who have firsthand experience of disability. These individuals have not only undergone training to become proficient facilitators but also play a vital role in extending the reach of the workshops. This multi-faceted approach not only empowers those attending the workshops but also strengthens the skills of the facilitators themselves.

The scope of the workshops is not limited to a specific location. They are designed to cater to both the metropolitan area and regional areas of WA, thereby ensuring a wide cross-section of the community benefits from the project's efforts.

2. Providing Information: Central to the project's mission is the creation and dissemination of informative resources. Fact sheets addressing advocacy-related subjects are developed and made accessible through the PWdWA website. These resources allow the community to access crucial information that can aid them in navigating various challenges. Additionally, through a dedicated Facebook page catered to peer support group leaders, relevant information will be shared to strengthen the groups.

3. Peer Support Groups: The project recognises the significance of peer support in fostering a sense of community and empowerment. Through collaborations with key peer support organisations like Valued Lives and ConnectGroups these partnerships ensure peer support groups across the state receive effective and sustainable assistance. By leveraging the expertise and resources of these organisations, the project can provide comprehensive support that extends beyond workshops and information dissemination.

By creating workshops and platforms for learning, sharing, and support, the project contributes significantly to building an inclusive society where everyone can thrive, regardless of their abilities. Moving forward, the project's multifaceted approach is poised to bring about enduring positive change in the lives of countless individuals.

Self-Advocacy WA (SAWA)

Funder: DSS

SAWA is a peer support group run by and for people with disability in Western Australia that PWdWA assists through the provision of a mentor.

The Chairperson of SAWA, Georgie, would like to share the significant achievements of the group this year. These include successfully securing more funding, providing a wide range of networking opportunities, holding SAWA meetings every two months, and enjoying an increase in SAWA membership.

SAWA was also the recipient of the Tenant Initiative Award by the Australasian Housing Institute for the Building Tenancy Skills project (with partners Shelter WA).

On behalf of all members of SAWA, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to PWdWA for their unwavering support over the last year. Thank you!

Georgie George

SAWA Chairperson

State Conference

Funders: DoC, Lotterywest, Town of Cambridge

Partner: Evolve WA

The 2022 PWdWA State Conference was the second time this two-day event had been held. It was a consumer-led, disability-sector event held at the Bendat Centre in Wembley on 7-8 December 2022.

Unlike typical sector conferences, which are aimed at disability professionals, this event was led exclusively by people with lived experience of disability, mental health

issues and neurological differences. Although workers and the wider community were invited to attend, the program was unique in its focus on the perspectives, voices and input of people with disabilities.

Exploring the theme “*Inclusive Communities*”, the two-day conference program was designed around the following streams:

- Collaboration: Working together and sharing.
- Choice: Empowerment and self-determination.
- Celebrations: Showcasing innovation and best practice.

The four keynote speakers Drisana Levitzke-Gray, Dr. Scott Hollier, Julia Hales and Wayne Herbert provided diverse viewpoints, expertise, lived experience and interests while over 80 per cent of sessions were disability-led.

Delegates heard that despite progress, obstacles to inclusion remain for those with disabilities, including discrimination and limited resources, with a need for accessible housing and inclusive design strategies. Automation and digitisation have made accessing services harder, and more accessible processes for support workers are needed. Wider awareness of abuse and neglect and distinct skills for aged care and disability workers were also identified as a priority focus area.

Key Relationships

- Aboriginal Legal Service
- Ability First Australia
- Advanced Personal Management (APM) Communities
- Advocacy WA
- Albany Community Legal Centre
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Australian Network for Universal Housing Design
- Blue Knot Foundation
- Carers WA
- City of Cambridge
- City of Kwinana
- City of Mandurah
- City of Rockingham
- City of Vincent
- Climate Justice Union
- Community Employers WA
- ConnectGroups
- Consumers of Mental Health Western Australia
- Department of Communities
- Department of Social Services
- Developmental Disability Western Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia
- Disability Leadership Institute
- Disability Resource Centre
- Evolve WA
- Explorability
- Health Consumers' Council WA
- Kiind
- Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation

- Kin Disability Advocacy Inc
- Leadership WA
- Leeming Senior High School
- Legal Aid WA
- Linkwest
- Living Proud
- Lotterywest
- McCusker Centre for Citizenship
- Mental Health Commission
- Midlas
- National Centre for Disability Advocacy
- National Disability Insurance Agency
- National Disability Services
- Office of the Minister for Disability Services, Hon. Don Punch MLA
- People with Disability Australia
- Perth Inner City Youth Service (PICYS)
- Rainbow Community House
- Relationships Australia
- Self-Advocacy WA
- Senator Jordan Steele-John, Greens Senator for WA
- Sexual Education Counselling and Consultancy Agency
- Shelter WA
- Summer Foundation
- Sussex Street Community Legal Service
- University of Western Australia
- Valued Lives
- Visit Mandurah
- Western Australian Council of Social Service
- Western Australia's Individualised Services
- Western Australian Association for Mental Health
- Women with Disabilities WA Inc
- Yorgum Healing Services

- Your Say Uniting Care West
- Youth Disability Advocacy Network

Financial Summary 2022-2023

Income

Total: 2,525,194.64

Department of Communities (DoC)	53%
Department of Social Services (DSS)	41%
Non-Operating/Other	6%

Expenses

Total: 2,445,313.80

Salary and Wages	54%
Consortium Expense	23%
Administration and Operational Costs	23%

Individual and systemic advocacy led by people with disabilities in Western Australia.

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