



PWdWA Newsletter April 2023

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Message from our CEO Brendan Cullinan

Senate Community Affairs Committee – poverty in Australia inquiry

PWdWA was recently invited to present to the Senate Community Affairs Committee – poverty in Australia inquiry.

In our presentation, we noted the following key points:

- 38% of people with disability live below the poverty line compared to 13.4% of the general population.
- Generally, people with disability have higher living costs due to a range of support needs. The impact a disability has on the cost of living for a household where one person has a profound or severe disability is around \$173 per week above a household without disabilities.
- With employment, 48% of people with disability of working age are employed, compared to 80% of people without a disability. This percentage of people employed with disability has not changed in nearly 30 years.
- People with disability who are unable to work may seek financial support via the Disability Support Pension (DSP). To be eligible for DSP, a person must

have an impairment which is fully diagnosed, treated and stabilised, among other requirements and income tests.

- 18% of people who access DSP live in poverty.
- Accessing DSP can be difficult. This can be due to:
 - Complexity and inaccessibility of the application process and forms required.
 - Being able to access and provide appropriate medical evidence.
 - Meeting requirements of the impairment tables.
- If ineligible for DSP or awaiting a decision on an application for DSP, people with disability who are unable to find work may seek support via JobSeeker.
- JobSeeker can be almost \$340 less than what DSP recipients are paid a fortnight, with the gap likely to increase over time.
- In order to maintain JobSeeker support, people must enter into mutual obligation agreements which, for some people with disability, can be extremely onerous and, for some, difficult to achieve, leading to possible suspension or loss of their JobSeeker payments.
- Housing is another area where people with disabilities fall behind the general population. Rent assistance is a maximum of \$78.60 per week for singles, and data from 2022 indicates that more than 40% of rent assistance claimants who receive the Jobseeker payment are still spending more than 30% of their income on rent.

PWdWA noted the following recommendations:

1. To address the concerns around DSP, implementation of the recommendations from the Community Affairs References Committee report, **Purpose, intent and adequacy of the Disability Support Pension**
2. Increase accountability in achieving meaningful employment for people with disability by Disability Employment Services.
3. Increase in Jobseeker and DSP funding.
4. Increase support for rental assistance and other protections, including caps on annual increases and elimination of “no grounds evictions.”

PWdWA In Action

Community Disability Advocates Project

Community Disability Advocates from PWdWA and Advocacy WA are continuing to work alongside 12 different community groups, establishing Networks aimed at addressing issues facing people with disabilities in WA.

Some of the issues these groups are working to address include:

- Inappropriate use of footpaths.
- Maintaining connections and supports for young people with disability graduating high school.
- Reducing the experience of social isolation among queer people with disability.
- Local employment and business accessibility.
- Generating employment pathways for young people with disability.
- Accessing regional services and support.
- Driving the development of a universally accessible playground.

Currently, PWdWA is supporting groups across Perth and in Waroona to build skills, knowledge, and capacity to advocate for positive change in their community.

One example includes working with Living Proud and Rainbow House. Together we ran a workshop to begin a conversation about how the three organisations can work together with the community to create places and spaces that are accessible to queer people with disability. We discussed what is currently working in the community, what needs to improve, and what can be created to support the community to reduce the experience of social isolation in the community.

For more information about the project, please contact Chris Chambers at chris@pwdwa.org or phone 9420 7279 extension 706.

Current Issues

Submissions

PWdWA is working on three submissions, and we want to ensure your voice is heard.

Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

PWdWA is preparing a submission regarding the ability of people with disability to access public transport. This survey is long, but participants can answer only questions that apply to them.

You can access the survey at [Survey Monkey](#) at or a [Word version on our submissions page](#).

NDIS Review:

The Australian Government is currently undertaking an NDIS Review; To have your say, and be a part of PWdWA's submission, go to [Survey Monkey](#) or visit our [website submission page](#) to access a Word Document of the survey you can send to <mailto:vanessa@pwdwa.org>.

WA Disability Legislation Review:

We are also producing a submission on the Western Australian Disability Legislation; if you want to have a say about what changes should be made to the legislation, you can complete a survey through [Survey Monkey](#) or visit our [website for a Word version](#) of the survey, which you can email to vanessa@pwdwa.org

Membership Survey

PWdWA would like to thank all of our members who took the time to complete our membership survey. Your feedback is important to us.

Congratulations to Kim, the winner of our \$250.00 gift voucher.

PWdWA In Focus

Natasha Laden – Senior Project Officer

PWdWA welcomes our new team member Natasha Laden; Natasha is joining us as our Senior Project Officer.

Natasha has worked across government and the not-for-profit sector for over 20 years, with the majority of her career working with the Department of Justice at the Perth Children’s Court, advocating on behalf of young people involved with the criminal justice system. Natasha has also worked for the Wirrpanda Foundation, WA Country Health Service and the Perth Children’s Hospital, focussing on contract and project management to implement innovative and inclusive programs and services for the vulnerable people of WA.

Natasha has two beautiful daughters and loves long walks down the South Perth foreshore.

PWdWA

PWdWA is funded by the Western Australian Department of Communities and the Australian Department of Social Services.

PWdWA is run BY and FOR people with disabilities and aims to be the voice for all people with disabilities in Western Australia.