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First Nations Advisory Council

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) have jointly established a First Nations Advisory Council.

First Nations Advisory Council members are First Nations advocates and include First Nations people with lived experience of disability.

They understand the needs and experiences of their communities and will advise us on how we can make the NDIS better for First Nations participants.

We will work with the First Nations Advisory Council to discuss and make shared decisions about the goals, strategies and initiatives that affect First Nations people with disability.

We want all decisions that affect First Nations people with disability to:

- be informed by First Nations voices and experiences
- reflect the goals and hopes of First Nations communities
- embed principles of self-determination
- be culturally safe, accessible and inclusive.

The First Nations Advisory Council will also work with us to create a new [NDIS First Nations Strategy and action plan](#). It will set out our goals to support First Nations people with disability over the next 4 years.

It will also include support for First Nations people to find and use the NDIS, and ensure services are culturally safe.

We will resource the First Nations Advisory Council so they can collaborate with us, and FPDN, now and into the future.

The First Nations Advisory Council is co-chaired by Damian Giffis, CEO of FPDN and [Rebecca Falkingham](#) PSM, CEO of NDIA.

The First Nations Advisory Council held their first meeting in 2023. Watch the video to meet some of the members and learn more about what happened during the meeting.

[Transcript for 'first nations advisory council introductory'](#)

Communiqués from past meetings are published below:

- [July 2023 meeting](#)
- [June 2023 meeting](#)

Members of the First Nations Advisory Council

Damian Griffis (co-chair)

Damian Griffis is a descendant of the Worimi people and a leading advocate for the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. As CEO of the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), Damian has been a central figure in the establishment of the Aboriginal Disability Network NSW and FPDN. In 2014, Damian won the Tony Fitzgerald (Community Individual) Memorial Award at the Australian Human Rights Awards.

Donna Murray

Donna is a proud Wiradyuri and Wonnarua nation citizen and CEO of Indigenous Allied Health Australia.

She is an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and a committed Indigenous Community Development Practitioner.

Donna is passionate about supporting and asserting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by recognising and reigniting cultural governance and leadership that embed Indigenous nation-building principles to shape the future to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

In 2021 she was the winner of the Pro Bono Australia, Impact 25 Award.

Donna is also Chair of Thirrili Ltd, Board Director of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and the Independent Chair of PwC's Indigenous Consulting.

Gi Brown

Gi is a trans, Koori person with autism, ADHD, physical and psychosocial disability.

Gi has collaborated with organisations and government departments to advise and design policies and programs, informed by their lived experience of disability.

Gi has provided a personal testimony at the Disability Royal Commission into Neglect and Abuse in Education Settings and spoken at the Senate Committee Hearing into NDIS independent assessments.

Gi is currently studying social work and specialises in universal/inclusive education, children and young First Nations persons with disability, community-led and kin care, and dignified ageing and adulthood for people with disability.

Jennifer Cullen

Jennifer is an Adjunct Associate Professor and Doctor at the James Cook University and Griffith University.

She is a community services professional with over 33 years of experience working in disability and aged care services. As CEO of Synapse, Australia's leading brain injury organisation, Jennifer has been instrumental in leading service delivery, research, advocacy, and intersectional collaboration in the field.

She is a descendant of the Bidjara and Wakka Wakka people and has extensive networks with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities across Australia. Jennifer is also a member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NDIS.

Joanna Agius

Joanna is a Deaf and proud Narungga woman with connections to Kurna, Ngarrindjeri and Wirungu nations in South Australia.

She is an advocate for First Nations people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and in 2020, was awarded the Order Medal of Australia (OAM) for service to people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and to the Indigenous community. Joanna also delivers Auslan courses to students at TAFE SA.

Jodi Cassar PSM

Jodi is a proud Kamilaroi descendant and a successful leader in the public and private sector for over 25 years.

She has overseen large scale, user-centered transformation projects and led service delivery, including the cross-government response to COVID-19 for people with disability. In 2023, Jodi became an Australia Day Honours List recipient for her outstanding leadership in the public service.

Currently, Jodi is leading the implementation of Australia's Disability Strategy, at the Department of Social Services (DSS).

June Riemer

June is a proud Gumbaynggirr Dunghutti woman.

In 2021 she was named NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year for her life's work to creating systemic change to improve the lives of First Peoples with disability.

June has worked in the disability and community services sector for over 40 years and is currently the Deputy CEO of First Peoples Disability Network.

She is an advisor to multiple boards and reference groups and has led numerous national conferences and training workshops with the goal to ensure First Nations peoples do not get left behind.

June has been a representative at the United Nations in both New York and Geneva, sharing her insights and experience working with Aboriginal communities, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Justen Thomas

Justen is a proud First Nations man and actively speaks out about issues facing First Nations people with disabilities.

In 2019, Justen was part of an Australian delegation to the United Nations congregation in Geneva.

He is passionate about supporting people in the justice system, including those with disability, to access the NDIS and culturally appropriate health care.

Justen works with the NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities in the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) group and in Aboriginal Health education.

Liz Reid AM

Liz is the CEO of YouthWorX NT in the Northern Territory. She is a member of the Independent Advisory Council to the NIDS and Australia's Disability Strategy Advisory Council.

Liz has in-depth experience working in the disability, youth and social justice sectors. She is deeply passionate about positive social and economic outcomes for people with a disability and

her work in supporting them to become active members of their community.

Munatji McKenzie

Munatji is a Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, and Arrente woman. Currently, she holds the position of Disability Royal Commission Project Officer at NPY Women's Council. She began her professional career in customer service at Power and Water, where she worked in different Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Munatji's strong work ethic and unwavering dedication have allowed her to work with several Indigenous organizations, all of which she approached with passion and commitment. Her devotion to her culture and community in central Australia and the APY lands drives her to advocate for Aboriginal people with disabilities.

Dr Scott Avery

Scott is a deaf Worimi man, scholar, advocate and researcher on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and inclusion. He is a senior lecturer at Western Sydney University and has a long-standing partnership with First Peoples Disability Network. Scott has extensive experience presenting issues for and on behalf of the First Peoples disability community, governments, and at the United Nations.

His book 'Culture is Inclusion: A narrative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability' has guided government policy on the intersection of Indigenous and disability issues in policy including Closing the Gap and the Australian Disability Strategy.

He has been appointed to several government advisory groups, including at the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the National Disability Data Asset, and the National Disability Research Partnership; and is a director on the board of Achieve Australia Ltd.

Suzy Trindall

Suzy is a proud Dharug and Cadigal woman, and a mother of two beautiful children who she raised on her own thanks to the support of her family. Sadly, Suzy's son passed away of a terminal illness in 2019, aged 22.

Suzy has lived with vision impairment for most of her life, as have her sister and brother.

Growing up together with the same disability meant they were able to support each other.

They never felt the isolation some have experienced and refused to let their disability stop them. Suzy's journey has been filled with amazing career and training opportunities, travel,

sports and family.

Suzy is a Peer Worker and Training Coordinator at Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH). She is also the founder of the Women First Peer Group; where women living with disability come together, support each other and share their experiences.

Tess Moodie

Tess is a proud non-binary, queer, neurodivergent, Palawa person with multiple forms of disability. They are also a parent of a young person with disability.

Tess is a victim-survivor of multiple forms of family and sexual violence and is passionate about empowering and raising the voice of people with lived-experience to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence, as well as to champion LGBTIQ+ and disability rights and to fight classism and systemic racism.

Tess was previously a sexual assault counsellor, and currently works as a Project Coordinator for the Advocates for Change Program at Engender Equality and Youth Engagement Lead at Laurel House Tasmania. They are also a member of several advisory groups, including the Victim-Survivor Expert Advisory Panel at Safe & Equal Victoria, Our Watch Disability Advisory Group and the Minister for Disabilities Consultative Group in Tasmania.

Catherine Liddle

An Arrernte/Luritja woman from Central Australia, Catherine has been a leading advocate in upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on a national, regional and local level.

Catherine has held senior management positions in First Nations organisations including First Nations Media and Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships, as well as within the Northern Territory Education Department, the ABC and NITV/SBS.

A journalist by trade, Catherine's motivation has always been to drive change that leads to positive outcomes and options for First Nations people.

Over the past 10 years she has led multidisciplinary teams, overseen workplace transformations, and advocated for policy reform.

Catherine is the CEO for SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that works for the fulfilment of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

Jody Broun

Jody is an Yinjibarndi woman from the Pilbara in Western Australia, who maintains strong connections to her country, community and culture.

She is also CEO of the National Indigenous Australians Agency. Over the past 30 years Jody has held various senior positions in government and not-for-profit sectors.

She has delivered community and state policies and programs, contributed to national policy reforms, and negotiated national and state government agreements.

Jody has a breadth of experience across housing, health, education, justice, land and culture.

Victor Djungadi Patrick

Karly Warner

NACCHO member

Additional Torres Strait Islander representatives are being sought to join and contribute to the First Nations Advisory Council. We will update this page once they have confirmed their membership.

This page current as of
12 September 2023