

NSW Government Disability Royal Commission First Nations Stakeholder Forum, 1 February 2024

Communiqué

March 2024

On 1 February 2024, the NSW Government, in partnership with the First Peoples Disability Network and the Disability Council NSW, held its second stakeholder forum on the Disability Royal Commission final report. The forum was an opportunity to give voice to First Nations stakeholders to inform the NSW Government response to the final report.

The Disability Royal Commission made 222 recommendations for widespread changes to laws, policy and practices including many with profound impacts for First Nations people with disability.

There are 49 Recommendations (22 per cent) that make specific mention of First Nations people with disability. However, many other recommendations will impact on First Nations peoples with a disability, and their implementation needs to consider cultural safety and the intersections of racism and ableism. Furthermore, the implementation of all recommendations must be considered in the context of commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The forum was co-chaired by Damian Griffis, CEO of the First Peoples Disability Network, Jane Spring AM, Chair of the Disability Council NSW, Anne Campbell, Deputy Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, and Shane Hamilton, Deputy Secretary, Aboriginal Affairs, Premier's Department.

Uncle Graham Davis King, from Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council welcomed to Country the more than 100 attendees who joined in person and online, sharing stories from his community.

Attendees included Aboriginal community organisations and peaks, and mainstream disability stakeholders. The Hon. Kate Washington MP, Minister for Disability



Inclusion, Hon. David Harris MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty and Liesl Tesch MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion also joined in person.

The forum started with a discussion of lived experience perspectives and reflections on the final report, followed by panel discussions on Criminal justice, and on Disability services and the interface with NDIS Review, and an open forum discussion.

The following panellists generously shared their expertise, knowledge and experience:

- Debbie Lee, Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks, NSW Policy Officer, First Peoples Disability Network
- Professor Scott Avery, School of Public Health, University of Technology Sydney
- Professor Eileen Baldry AO, Professor Emerita of Criminology, UNSW
- Dean McLaren, Aboriginal Engagement Officer, Intellectual Disability Rights Service (via pre-recorded video)
- Janene Cootes, AM, CEO, Intellectual Disability Rights Service
- Taylor Budin, Educator, Intellectual Disability Rights Service
- Joseph Archibald, Executive General Manager, Growing Potential/ Windaan Aboriginal services,
- Kelly Cox, Senior Policy Officer, First Peoples Disability Network
- Hayley Bassett, Community Engagement Manager, First Peoples Disability Network

Discussions during the forum brought up a range of issues and priorities, including:

- The importance of establishing an ongoing First Nations Disability Forum, with authority and be appropriately resourced, to support continuing consultations with communities particularly on criminal justice, the service system, and accessible communities.
- The inclusive nature of First Nations communities and the role of culture in inclusion and safety for First Nations people with disability.
- The importance of culturally appropriate disability support, particularly for NDIS services and systems like criminal justice.



- The need to focus on First Nations people with disability in key strategies, including Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy. Disability cuts across the priority reforms and socio-economic outcomes of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- Funding for First Nations disability advocacy and the need to recognise and build the First Nations disability sector.
- The importance of having accountability mechanisms to make sure this reform delivers for First Nations people with disability and their communities.
- The importance of upholding and educating people about the rights that First Nations people with disability have under United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including consideration of a Disability Rights Act.
- The importance of early identification for First Nations people with disability; for better life outcomes and to reduce the over-representation of First Nations people with disability in the criminal justice and child protection systems. It is equally crucial that this is followed by the provision of appropriate support as well as sector training, particularly in the justice system on disability, ableism and racism.
- Recommendations from previous inquiries and Royal Commissions that are yet to be implemented should be factored into future reforms.
- The opportunity from the Report's recommendations to rethink systems not designed for Aboriginal people by building in a First Nations cultural model and investing in programs to promote healing, connection and purpose.
- That all of this work should be guided by shared principles, developed by First Nations people.

In closing, Minister Washington expressed her gratitude for the stories and conversations exchanged. She acknowledged the importance of First Nations voices in disability reform work and the collective opportunity to drive change for communities. She said that consultation must happen throughout the process and there needs to be collaboration with the people who are experts. The Minister also acknowledged that there is significant work to be done in many areas where people are vulnerable including prisons and out of home care.



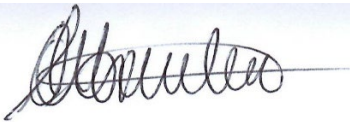
Minister Harris reflected on the need to do better in early identification and supports so that kids with disability and their families can thrive. He stressed the need to do things differently and for advocates to tell Ministers how it is, including if government is not delivering. He also raised the work under Closing the Gap, the need to address systemic racism and the commitment to the treaty process.

Ms Tesch, Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion acknowledged the efforts by Aboriginal leaders to make a difference for First Nations people with disability, expressing her commitment to supporting this work and continued conversations.

Damian Griffis, **CEO, First Peoples Disability Network**



Shane Hamilton, **Deputy Secretary, Aboriginal Affairs NSW**



Jane Spring AM, **Chair, Disability Council NSW**



Anne Campbell, **Deputy Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice**

