



**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY
AUSTRALIA**

People with Disability Australia Ltd Board Election 2021

Election of Board Directors CANDIDATE PROFILES 5 candidates for 4 positions

Samantha CONNOR

Tell us about yourself. Who are you, what communities do you belong to and what are you passionate about?

My name is Samantha and as I write this, I am the current President of PWDA. I am a disabled woman who is passionate about human rights of people. I have committed my life to ensuring disabled people are safe from harm and have their rights upheld under the CRPD.

I spent the majority of my life in regional Western Australia but have spent time in most other States and Territories. I grew up poor, which is how I learned to fight.

I belong to a number of communities. I'm autistic, have ADHD and am a wheelchair user with a degenerative condition, limb girdle muscular dystrophy.

I'm also part of the carer community and have lived experience of being an NDIS participant, being part of complex and often failing disability and mental health systems for both myself and my family and have worked to improve those systems for many years.



Why are you interested in being a Director on the PWDA Board?

I am renominating for the Board because I am committed to fighting as hard as I can to uphold the rights of our people during one of the hardest times ever experienced by our community.

This year has been incredibly challenging, but it has also been the greatest of privileges to be nominated as a community leader and to hold the role of President. I am grateful to have been of service to our community.

During this time, the workload has been significant – at least ten hours a day of unpaid work – but there is still a lot to be done. This is why I am renominating, with the support and encouragement of the Board and membership

I think the Board we have now is rock solid, our staff are talented, passionate and committed and I know what needs to be done to make PWDA the best it can be.

What do you want to achieve as a Director of PWDA?

I want to make sure that disabled people do not have to fight every single day of their lives just to have their human rights upheld.

I want to make sure that the voices of people with disability are amplified and our members are able to use their peak body to have their rights upheld and their voices heard.

I want to make sure that I finish the job Kelly and I came in to do, which is to continue to make People with Disability Australia a strong, resilient organisation who are never afraid to speak up on the issues that matter.

I want things that others say are unachievable, but I believe they are all achievable. We ask for no less than people without disability have. We already have rights, we just need them upheld.

I want to continue serving our community to make sure that happens.

Tell us about your experience and about any professional skills, experience and/or expertise you can offer the PWDA Board.

My experience within the disability and community sector is fairly extensive, including:

- National and international human rights work advocating on behalf of people with disability
- A thorough understanding of complicated policy and legislation, including NDIS and policy areas
- Highly developed networks with agencies, government, the not for profit sector, discrete diagnostic communities (for example, for three years I worked to develop and support 25 diagnostic and cross disability groups through the Peer Connect project for PWDA)
- Peer support work, including building and facilitating online and offline spaces for disabled people to support each other (for example, Kelly and I both facilitate NDIS Grassroots Discussion, which has 55,000 members – I facilitate twenty two other groups, including diagnostic groups)
- Working within a number of roles in education (access and equity) as well as health (Wheatbelt Health Network) and community development, which have involved a vast range of experiences.

My roles have included extensive experience as a person with a disability who has held leadership roles within the sector.

I am currently the President of People with Disability Australia and have held this role for a year. In 2015, I was Vice President of PWDA (with Craig Wallace as President). I have held and hold board roles at the Autistic Self Advocacy Network of Australia and New Zealand, People with Disabilities WA and the Ministerial Council on Disability in WA. I also belong to a number of peer support groups and hold leadership roles within those groups.

My professional experience included work within the WA public service managing an access and equity department at TAFE, past and current work as a university lecturer (in human rights, disability and activism, as well as discrimination law).

I have significant experience in writing and policy development, networking and governance.

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities for people with disability in Australia?

Challenges include, of course, COVID. But also the NDIS – we are just as likely to experience disadvantage or to die as a result of lack of support. And the ongoing climate of austerity and economic rationalisation that will follow an international emergency – we will need to fight for everything we have, in my view.

There are however opportunities that lie within these challenges. We are the most resilient people on earth. We know how to fight for our rights – we have a strong, if disparate community and COVID has brought together many of our representative organisations in ways they haven't come together before.

An example of one of the opportunities for people with disability is being able to work from home. There are potentially increased opportunities for people to overcome barriers (financial, transport) by using technology – we are creative people and we are great at overcoming challenges.

Additional Information:

I have a particular interest in the prevention of violence against disabled people and am considered a subject matter expert in this area and the area of safeguarding.

I have been a disability activist for a number of decades and am a founding member of the Bolshy Divas, as well as the Convenor of the Disability Clothesline AU. I am a current board member with the Autistic Self Advocacy Network and I have twenty years' experience as a youth leader, although I no longer volunteer within any organisation other than PWDA and ASAN.

I have an interest in visual art and writing, as well as cybersecurity.

I am never going to be a popular woman. That is okay. I am old, autistic and difficult. This is why I have been a good activist and advocate – I have a strong sense of social justice and my passion for the disability rights movement has overcome my hatred of public speaking and the public eye.

But I am happy to stand on the merits of what I do and what I have done, rather than what I say or who I am. If you want a person who will spend their term fighting for your rights, then that is me. I fiercely believe in democracy and will support any elected leaders in our movement if they are fighting for our rights.

I would also like to say thank you to our fabulous Board and staff and our CEO, Seb and to encourage all our members to have hope. Solidarity!

Kelly COX

Tell us about yourself. Who are you, what communities do you belong to and what are you passionate about?

I am a disabled woman living on Bundjalung country in Ballina, but grew up in Taree. I have a disability and am a power chair user. As someone who grew up with disadvantage and who is passionate about the rights of disabled people and Aboriginal people, I am focused on improving conditions for people who are multiply disadvantaged and have a particular interest in intersectionality.



I'm also part of the local dog community! My 12-month-old kelpie cross Bull Terrier, Lovebug, is very much part of my life and is still in training.

I have a teenaged child and am married to another disabled person who acquired his SCI and ABI through an accident. As someone who lives, works and volunteers in the sector, I have a good understanding of all types of disability.

Why are you interested in being a Director on the PWDA Board?

My first term as a Director of PWDA was under difficult circumstances and I feel like I am half way through the job. In the past year, our Board achieved far more than was achieved in the preceding year, even under very challenging circumstances. I would like to make sure I am able to continue with this work and make sure the incoming Board are able to inherit an environment which is much improved on the one which we initially entered.

I am passionate and dedicated to disability and human rights and have been engaged in various things over the years to contribute toward the work to realise these for more people. I find being a Director is an effective way to represent my community in ensuring Government and relevant parties are aware of, and working towards what is needed, particularly during difficult periods, such as the pandemic.

What do you want to achieve as a Director of PWDA?

I want to make sure we have a socially just society which is fair and equitable for people with disability. I also want to make sure that people's voices are heard and that we have real power in our lives, especially when it comes to issues around the NDIS and policy that affects our lives.

I also want to ensure that PWDA is sustainable and around to represent and advocate for disabled Australians for many years to come. It is an honour to follow in the footsteps of the people that both founded, and contributed to PWDA in substantial and positive ways over the decades.

Tell us about your experience and about any professional skills, experience and/or expertise you can offer the PWDA Board.

I have been involved in the disability rights movement for several years now. I have a good understanding of CRPD and have represented my communities at the UN in Geneva in 2019. My paid work roles have resulted in a developed understanding of the NDIS, the good and the bad, this knowledge assists me to identify issues that may be emerging and as they arise.

Across my life I have spent time and lived in multiple communities as a result I have a good understanding of what life looks like for Aboriginal people, disabled people and regional communities. I grew up in Taree and have lived in Western Sydney, Brisbane and various other regional areas over the years.

I have previous board experience, if successful in this election it will be my second term on the PWDA board. During my term I have sat on the Finance and Risk Committee for PWDA which has assisted in building my knowledge of large complex budgets such as PWDAs. I was also previously on the board for a local small individual advocacy organisation.

In my former work role at a Local Aboriginal Land Council I assisted in preparation for board meetings so also have an understanding from a staff perspective.

I am dedicated to community-controlled organisations and think they are an essential part of self-determination.

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities for people with disability in Australia?

One of the most significant risks at the moment is Covid19, it is essential that Government include disabled people in all levels of policy development and ensure all available safeguards are in place. This can only be done via genuine consultation and codesign with affected communities, I am hopeful I am able to continue to be a part of that via my role as Director at PWDA.

The NDIS is large challenge for many disabled people and is regularly at risk of change that would negatively alter the intent of the scheme, it is important that we continue to ensure our voice is heard in relation to issues that arise, however, there are many disabled people who are not eligible for support under the NDIS, it is critical that the voices and needs of those people are highlighted and represented.

There are also the ongoing issues that we all continue to battle eg access, ableism, the right to education, employment, housing and to be valued and contributing members of our communities in which ever way we aspire.

Additional information:

I would like the members to know that it has been an honour and a privilege to serve and represent them over the past 2 years. I wish to thank them for electing me and trusting that I am able to contribute in the ways needed to ensure our voices are heard in the necessary places. I am committed to continuing the work to ensure the resources, time and energy of PWDA is focused where it should be which is on the members and disabled people more broadly.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the current board for their dedication and work in bringing the organisation back to where it is now and ensuring we are on a path of sustainability and true representation of and by disabled people for many years to come.

Clare GIBELLINI

Tell us about yourself. Who are you, what communities do you belong to and what are you passionate about?

My name is Clare, and I am a Mum to three amazing kids, one dog and 11 chickens. I have a wonderful husband of 11 years and I am autistic. I love to craft and bake in my spare time, and I'm currently learning to crochet. I work for an organisation that has a Peer Support project and I volunteer for the South West Autism Network, Outback Academy Australia and the Red Dust Healers. I am most passionate about protecting the rights of disabled people in all areas and helping to grow opportunities for disabled leadership so that we are part of the decision-making process.



Why are you interested in being a Director on the PWDA Board?

I strongly believe PWDA has the ability to influence change and make a difference to disabled people in Australia. Now more than ever we need to work together as a community to ensure an NDIS that works for everyone and ensure that adequate support exists for disabled people not eligible for the scheme. I also want to support PWDA to ensure that our community has access to vaccines and quality healthcare. PWDA includes disabled people from all communities, and I am interested in further supporting this hugely important work.

What do you want to achieve as a Director of PWDA?

As director of PWDA I would like to achieve more representation of disabled voices at the key decision-making levels within government, both state and federally. I also want to support PWDA to achieve its goals of a socially just, inclusive, and accessible society. In the immediate future I want to achieve equitable access to vaccinations and healthcare for our community in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tell us about your experience and about any professional skills, experience and/or expertise you can offer the PWDA Board.

I have experience advocating for my rights, and in supporting others to advocate for themselves. I am experienced in the area of disability rights, policy campaigns and have worked in the disability sector for the past 16 years. I am an experienced trainer in person first practices and developing resources for people with disability. I am experienced in the intersection of employment and disability, and have developed programs to support people to become self-employed, or run their own small business. I am the carer for two members of my family who have disability and mental health conditions, one of whom is connected to a DES provider.

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities for people with disability in Australia?

I think access to everyday necessities continues to be a significant challenge for people with disabilities. Secure housing, meaningful employment and income inequality are all still very prevalent within our communities. We are still at greater risk of abuse, and neglect that our peers, and have not been considered by our government in the management of the pandemic.

With the recent Paralympics, and the rise in representation of disabled people in the media, I see real opportunity to harness the awareness of the skills and capabilities that people with a disability have, that can lead to more opportunities for our community.

Dan GRAHAM

Tell us about yourself. Who are you, what communities do you belong to and what are you passionate about?

I am a trained theatre director and disability art advocate who identifies as being neuro diverse as well as having mild cerebral palsy.

I am also proud to acknowledge that I am a member of the LGBTQIA+ and CALD community.

In my directing and access work I have investigated access for professional artists with a disability both nationally and internationally.

This has included an NSW fellowship in October in 2019 which took me to the UK where I made professional theatre companies, performing arts venues, and drama schools, investigate the access support which is available for performing artists with a disability.

This work has been incorporated in my work as the core chair or MEAA (Media Entertainment Arts alliance) on the artist with a disability committee.

I have a particular interest in performing artists with a disability.

Why are you interested in being a Director on the PWDA Board?

As someone who identifies as having a disability, I feel it's very important that the authentic voices of those with a disability are heard.

As someone who has been selected as an Australian fellow ISPA, New York, (International Society of Performing Arts) I would like to address my passion and interest in this area on a national scale.

In recent times I have become a mentor to young and emerging artist with a disability and I wish to pay this forward.



What do you want to achieve as a Director of PWDA?

As a young person I felt that I did not have a voice, and this was in relation to my disability. I wish to project with passion and determination that anything is possible, and that disability does not need to be a barrier. As previously discussed, being part of different groups of diversity, I feel I can represent a true image of modern Australians with a disability who encompass all those diversities to create an image of what it is to be an individual with disability in this present time and beyond.

Tell us about your experience and about any professional skills, experience and/or expertise you can offer the PWDA Board.

As previously mentioned, as well as being a person with a disability, I am also part of the LGBTQIA + and CALD communities. This work has often overlapped. For example, as a member of the LGBTQIA + community I am also a committee member of the of the ACON disability committee. I have also attended the National LGBTI conference where I provided a presentation on access for individuals who identify as LGBTQIA + and those with disability.

I also act as a conjugate for both the disabled arts community and non-disabled arts community for example on the VIVID event I was asked to partake on a conversation panel, and I was due to be the performing arts representative. This will now be presented on an online format.

As a theatre director I am exposed to a diverse group of people as a result of the work that I conduct and in particular, I engage those from diverse communities.

As previously mentioned, I am often a bridge between both communities. At present I have a play development with Bell Shakespeare of which I am the creator and director which deals with neuro diversity and Shakespeare, where I have employed six professional actors who identify as neuro diverse individuals.

I have been in constant consultation with Bell Shakespeare's artist director Peter Evans (not the TV chef) and Executive Director Gill Perkins.

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities for people with disability in Australia?

I have always been brought up to be seen as Dan Graham first and foremost. I am not defined by my disability and always see other people for who they are first rather than their disability.

Additional information:

To quote the final line in the play the elephant man which deals with disability "I'm just a man" and as a result I feel it's very important that people are seen as people first and that supports are put in place to achieve their full potential.

Richard OUVRIER

Tell us about yourself. Who are you, what communities do you belong to and what are you passionate about?

I am in psychosocial community of disability; University of Notre Dame Australia; ALP; Ouvrier nuclear family.

Why are you interested in being a Director on the PWDA Board?

I have received a scholarship for leadership recently and a certificate of appreciation from NDIS EnableIn Project.

I studied disability studies during my arts degree.

I have experience of treasury executive functions and duties as Treasurer ALP Mosman Branch.

Was Captain of Usyd Men's Tennis Team 1997.

Wrongfully incarcerated in Royal NShore Hospital mental health unit about a year ago and falsely charged by police and ejected from UNDA for slow academic progress discriminatory.

I have debated, advocated and am keen as moutarde temeraire.

What do you want to achieve as a Director of PWDA?

To effectuate rationally the findings of the Disability RC (pending) to which I have made three submissions in reference to aforementioned discriminations.

I know what executives do from ALP.

Tell us about your experience and about any professional skills, experience and/or expertise you can offer the PWDA Board.

I have advocated for hard to access NDIS communities in EnableIn Project.

I have made RC submissions.

I have strong academic skills in sociology and philosophy.

I am fluent in French, English; competent in Japanese having worked as a High-school teacher in Japan advocating for Australia under rubric Of Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

What do you think are the most significant challenges and opportunities for people with disability in Australia?

- challenges:
 - panopolistic, structures of discrimination.
 - hatred, literally, of mentally ill.
 - Police State. Facial recognition technology.
- Opportunities:
 - Good evolution in Australian Education, Law and Health Institutions.
 - DDA.

