

Minutes of 2024 PWDA Annual General Meeting

On Thursday 14 November 2024, 6.03pm – 8.10pm

Online via Zoom

Present:

Members and PWDA Staff:

Marayke Jonkers -Interim President and Chair, Eva Sifis – Co Vice President , Kevyn Morris – Co Vice President, Daniel Flynn – Director , Trinity Ford – Director, Stuart Mawbey – Director , Presley Chihuri – Treasurer, Arun Barramundi – Director, Sebastian Zagarella CEO of PWDA, Megan Spindler-Smith - Deputy CEO of PWDA, Adrienne Kadwell (Staff - Minute Taker), Sam Connor – Board Liaison Officer (Staff - Member), Tracie Junghans (PWDA Staff), Anastasia Symons (PWDA Staff), Kylie Rees (PWDA Staff), Stephin Hargreave (Staff - Member) Alexandra Bignell, Belinda Kochanowska, Brooke Scott, Bruce Collins, Cat Walker, Celeste Daniels, Christine Johnson, Christine Matthey, Craig Wallace, David Abello, Ellie Robertson, Josephine Boateng, Fiona Schultz, Jarad Andrew McLoughlin, Jen Hamilton, Jonathan Shar, Joyce Van Akkeren, Julie Haraksin, Kate Dufty, Kelly Cox, Kristin Gillespie, Larissa MacFarlane,, Liz Goode, Margaret, Mark Toomey, Naomi Anderson, Nidhi Shekaran, Paul Calcott (Uncle Paul Constable-Calcott), Peter Freckleton, Priscilla Brice, Rachel Makepeace, Raphael Murphy, Rosemary Kayess, Rev. Dr. Quentin James-Fook, Shirley Glance (Post Polio Victoria), Sirani McNeill, Sophie Cusworth, Steph Travers, Steven Yates, Suzanne Keene, Tanya Carroll, and Wayne Maitland.

External providers and advisers:

2 Auslan Interpreters – Susan and David, Captioner – Donna, Alex Cowell from Purpose Accounting, Travas Burns – ESV Business Advice and Accounting,

The meeting was held via Zoom. The Zoom link had been provided to members prior to the meeting.

Apologies:

Declan Lee- Director, William McKennarley, Gail Tang-Demetriou, Denise Wilson, Ailsa Rayner, Elias Palmer

The meeting started at 6.03pm

Welcome - Marayke Jonkers:

Marayke Jonkers – Interim President and Chair welcomed members and acknowledged the interpreters and support people in the room.

Uncle Paul Constable-Calcott - Member of PWDA provided Acknowledgement of Country

Rules of Engagement and Housekeeping: - Eva Sifis

Eva Sifis – Co-Vice President, explained the rules of engagement for members and ran through 'housekeeping' items prior to commencement. They made it clear that this was not a public meeting. Only members of PWDA, support people to members, those holding proxies for members, PWDA directors, its auditors, and PWDA staff and advisers were entitled to be in the meeting. They requested attendees to not post about this meeting on social media, including Facebook and Twitter, and asked that members not record the meeting.

They explained the voting would be undertaken virtually using Zoom. Members would be asked to move and second resolutions. They then explained the voting method for the motions.

Quorum

The Chair noted there were at least 30 members present in person or attending as proxies or body corporate representatives, and as such declared there was a quorum for the meeting to proceed.

1. Apologies and Proxies

The Chair presented the apologies and reported on directed and undirected proxies received. **Marayke Jonkers** advised:

The following people have sent their apologies for this AGM. They are:

- Denise Wilson
- Gail Demetriou
- Declan Lee
- Alisa Rayner
- Elias Palmer
- William McKennariey

We also received proxies from one member. This proxy was directed.

The first motion is to accept the apologies and proxies. The company has received one directed proxy for this motion. I am advised that the vote from proxies is as follows:

- 1 Members have sent in proxies. Of these:
 - 1 directed proxy
 - 0 undirected proxy
 - 0 abstained

Motion 1: Acceptance of Apologies and Proxies

Motion carried.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Suzanne Keene | **Seconded:** Jared Andrew McLoughlan

37 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

1.1 Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Chair noted that the Notice of Annual General Meeting convening this meeting was sent to all members and would take this Notice of Meeting as read.

2. Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

The Chair announced the minutes of the 2023 AGM be adopted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Motion 2.1: Confirmation of the Minutes

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Tanya Carroll | **Seconded:** Nidhi Shekaran

32 For | 0 Against | 8 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

Matters arising

There were no matters arising

3. Presentation of PWDA 2023-24 Annual Report

3.1. President's Report

Marayke Jonkers as Interim President and Chair presented the President's Report. All members should have received a link to the PWDA 2023-24 Annual Report, this was shared via post or electronically depending on each member's communication preference. A copy, including Easy Read and audio formats, is now available to view and download from our website.

The Annual Report explores our work, the results we have achieved and examples of where we have made a positive difference to the lives of people with disability during 2023-24.

Some key highlights include:

- 18% increase in membership
- 76 reports, position statements and submissions.
- 47 media releases, statements and blog articles.
- 1,895 clients supported.

This year has been significant yet challenging for the disability rights movement. The release of the Disability Royal Commission (DRC) final report and subsequent government responses, coupled with the NDIS Review and NDIS Amendment Bill, stirred deep emotions across our community. While the outcomes fell short of our hopes we supported each other through it all.

The government's response to the DRC was devastating and disappointing. Only 13 of the 222 recommendations were actioned immediately, far below the expectations of our community. The response was meant to be a transformative step forward, embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and ensuring justice and a genuine transformation at all levels of society. Instead, the result felt incomplete. Now more than ever, we must push forward to ensure the promises of our full

inclusion and our genuine choice and control are realised and that we as disabled people are at the centre of all decisions affecting our lives.

This year PWDA released its own response to the DRC—a roadmap that builds on members' voices and demands meaningful change. We will continue advocating for the full implementation of our 19 position statements so future generations of disabled people do not endure the violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation we have experienced.

Our work to ensure the NDIS is a scheme that supports the needs of people with disability and has the access and flexibility that our members rely on remained a focus. This year, PWDA conducted extensive consultations with members on the NDIS, generating more feedback than any other consultation. PWDA representatives were also front and centre at Senate Committee hearings on the NDIS Bill, I gave testimony to two inquiries ensuring the voices of our members were read out directly by myself, and your voices were part of our submissions and follow-up, putting members' voices into the hands of the politicians and decision-makers. Despite setbacks, we will not stop fighting for a NDIS that meets the diverse needs of our community, and we will continue to advocate for reforms that prioritise the rights, dignity, will, and preference of all participants.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic also continued to be a point of concern this year. Many members expressed frustration with the Government's "Living with COVID-19" strategy, which has had a disproportionate impact on our community. In response, we developed a Position Statement calling for pandemic responses that prioritise the safety and needs of people with disability. Our submissions and testimonies at the federal COVID inquiry highlighted areas for improvement and advocated for policies that better prepare for future public health crises. Our Board Directors also participated in external advisories, representing our members and community.

On the international front, PWDA represented our members at the United Nations' Conference of State Parties to the UNCRPD, UN Convention on the Status of Women and the 29th session of the Committee on the Rights of People with Disability. The goal of our

international work is to uphold, defend and progress human rights and interests of people with disability.

Media has been a powerful tool for elevating disability issues this year. We responded to topics ranging from the DRC final report on restrictive practices to the NDIS data breach and the federal and state budgets. Through these efforts, we made sure the perspectives, faces and voices of disabled people were front and centre in discussions of issues that affect our lives.

This year we were also recognised and funded by the Australian Government as a national peak body for LGBTQIA+ people with disability. With 1/3 of our membership identifying as part of these communities I look forward to seeing our representation in this space deepen.

A personal highlight for me this year was meeting members 'out loud and proud' at Mardi Gras. As the board, we are the representatives for the members, and to hear the joy in people's voices talking about travelling from all over the country to be part of this and proudly making costumes was very special.

Our members are at the heart of everything we do, and our member forums, consultations and engagement has shaped our systemic advocacy work. Members have shared their views on issues such COVID-19, the NDIS Review, and the DRC findings. As the Convenor of the Member Engagement Board Advisory Group I hope we keep increasing the opportunities for members to have their say.

I also want to acknowledge our community members who have passed this year, including John Walsh AO, Phineas Meere, Bodhi Boele and John Gordon. Their advocacy and contributions to disability rights continue to inspire us, and I know PWDA will carry forward their legacy with pride.

I want to thank our dedicated operational leadership team and staff for their work over the last year. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our CEO, Sebastian Zagarella, and Deputy CEO, Megan Spindler-Smith, and all PWDA staff members.

I especially want to thank our Treasurer, Suresh Rajan, whose years of service to PWDA and our community have been invaluable. His expertise and mentorship have left a lasting impact, and he has been instrumental in preparing future Board members through mentorship and guidance. Suresh has been on the Board for four years and steps down tonight. Thank you Suresh!

I also want to thank former PWDA President Sam Connor who took on the Board Liaison position strengthening accessibility for Board Directors and providing critical administrative support.

I also want to thank all of our Board Directors - our Co-Vice Presidents, Kevyn Morris and Eva Sifis, along with our continuing Board Directors, Dr Haidi Badawi, Arun Barramundi, Treasurer Presley Chihuri, and Secretary Suresh Rajan and our appointed Board Directors Daniel Flynn, Trinity Ford, Declan Lee, and Stuart Mawbey.

Serving as President has been a privilege and a profound experience. As my four-year term concludes, I am reminded that PWDA is more than any one leader. This organisation is led, for and defined by our members—people who bring both professional and lived expertise to everything we do.

While my term ends, I look forward to supporting the new Board and seeing PWDA continue to be a voice of our own. This organisation, born from grassroots beginnings, will only grow stronger as we nurture the next generation of leaders. I am honoured to have been part of PWDA's history and am confident that we have an extraordinary future ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve, for your support, and for your unwavering commitment to disability rights. I wish the incoming Board all the best and encourage our entire community to rally behind them. I look forward to seeing what PWDA – all of us – achieve together in the years to come.

Motion 3.1: Acceptance of President's Report

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Nidhi Shekaran | Seconded: Jarad Andrew McLoughlin

37 For | 0 Against | 3 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

3.2: Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Presley Chihuri – Treasurer

PWDA recorded a surplus of \$158,394 for the 2023-2024 year. The result reflects a responsibly managed budget, with 98.5% of income dedicated to the delivery of PWDA's work, and 1.5% set aside as a surplus. The result adds to the organisation's financial reserves, which are an important buffer to any financial risk that may arise.

PWDA's income was \$10,708,546 for the year. Over 90% of PWDA's income comes from government grants. These grants fund the programs and projects of PWDA across Australia. During the year we received funding from the Australian Government, as well as the New South Wales and Queensland state governments. We thank all these funding agencies for their ongoing support of our work.

Income grew in the 2023-2024 year. This growth included:

- An expansion of training and project services delivered on a fee for service basis
- Stronger interest earnings due to higher interest rates
- Indexation and supplementation that was provided for recurrent grants to meet higher Award wages and the impact of inflation on organisational costs.

Looking at expenses, our total expenditure for the year was \$10,550,152. Our largest area of spending continues to be staffing. Employment costs make up nearly 74% of the budget. This is consistent with other organisations in this sector.

In the 2023-2024 year a number of staff were added to allow us to undertake the expanded work of PWDA. Staffing costs also increased by the increase in the Award (via the Fair Wage Case) that underpins the salaries we pay our staff.

Travel and meetings costs returned to pre-pandemic levels, with staff able to move more freely to deliver services and come together as a team/organisation.

PWDA's financial position is sound.

Equity reserves of \$1,901,036 underpin the organisation's financial health.

An unqualified audit opinion was issued by our auditors ESV.

Motion 3.2: Acceptance of Treasurer's Report

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Tanya Carroll | Seconded: Naomi Anderson

35 For | 1 Against | 3 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

3.3: Audited Financial Statements

Our Accountant Alex Cowell from Purpose Accounting was present this evening for questions. No questions were directed to Alex Cowell this meeting.

Motion 3.3: Acceptance of Audited Financial Statements

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Stuart Mawbey | Seconded: Jarad Andrew McLoughlin

34 For | 0 Against | 4 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

4. Appointment of Auditors

The Chair reported that PWDA would like to thank our current auditors ESV Business Advice and Accounting who had been PWDA's auditors for this year and as is good practice the Board have proposed to engage the firm ESV Business Advice and Accounting as auditors for the financial year 2024/25.

Motion 4: ESV Business Advice and Accounting be appointed as auditors for the financial year 2024/25.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Suzanne Keene | Seconded: David Abello

37 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried.**

5. Report from Returning Officer

The Chair informed the meeting that PWDA had engaged the services of Go Vote to independently conduct the election for 7 vacant director positions on the PWDA Board. The returning officer at GoVote was Freyja Tasci. There were 25 candidates for 7 director roles. For any member wishing more information on preferential elections please refer to the link below.

[Proportional Representation Society of Australia Inc's PR Vote-counting Rules](#)

The Chair presented the Returning Officer's report on behalf of Returning Officer Freyja Tasci who was unable to attend this evening.

Freyja Tasci reports that there were received by the close of the polls 380 formal votes received online by post or with telephone assistance, 4 invalid votes were received by post. In relation to the position of Board directors the returning officer has reported the following 7 candidates were selected to be on the Board.

- Alexandra Bignell
- Pricilla Brice
- Presley Chihuri
- Daniel Flynn
- Trinity Ford
- Peter Freckleton
- Steph Travers

A copy of the returning officer's report was sent to all members and attached to the notice for the meeting of the AGM.

Motion 5.1: Acceptance and adoption of Returning Officer's Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Moved: Tanya Carroll | Seconded: David Abello

39 For | 1 Abstain| **Motion carried.**

Motion 5.2: Approval of the appointment of Alexandra Bignell as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Alexandra Bignell**

Moved: Jared Andrew McLoughlin | Seconded: David Abello

35 For | 0 Against | 1 Abstain| **Motion carried.**

Motion 5.3: Approval of the appointment of Priscilla Brice as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Priscilla Brice**

Moved: Suzanne Keene | **Seconded:** David Abello

38 For | 0 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried**

Motion 5.4: Approval of the appointment of Presley Chihuri as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Presley Chihuri**

Moved: David Abello | **Seconded:** Stuart Mawbey

35 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried**

Motion 5.5: Approval of the appointment of Daniel Flynn as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Daniel Flynn**

Moved: Rachel Makepeace | Seconded: Jarad Andrew McLoughlin

36 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried**

Motion 5.6: Approval of the appointment of Trinity Ford as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Trinity Ford**

Moved: Arun Barramundi | Seconded: Stuart Mawbey

37 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried**

Motion 5.7: Approval of the appointment of Peter Freckleton as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Peter Freckleton**

Moved: David Abello | Seconded: Jarad Andrew McLoughlin

32 For | 1 Against | 0 Abstain | **Motion carried**

Motion 5.8: Approval of the appointment of Steph Travers as Board Director in accordance with the 2024 Returning Officers Report.

Proxy Received

1 For | 0 Against | 0 Abstain

Director – **Steph Travers**

Moved: Suzanne Keene | **Seconded: Peter Freckleton**

34 For | 1 Against | 1 Abstain | **Motion carried**

6. Other Business

6.1 Farewell to Board Members

Sam Connor, Board Liaison Officer delivered Farewell to outgoing Directors:

- Marayke Jonkers
- Suresh Rajan
- Dr Haidi Badawi
- Arun Barramundi
- Declan Lee
- Stuart Mawbey

Marayke Jonkers thanked everyone she has served with over the last couple of years.

6.2 PWDA member panel discussion

Marayke welcomed guest speakers **Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner** Rosemary Kayess and **Head of Policy at Advocacy Inclusion** and former PWDA President Craig Wallace.

The topic for the member panel stated as : ***Where to from here: What's next for the disability rights movement after the DRC and NDIS Amendment Bill***

Marayke Jonkers invited each of our speakers to provide opening remarks and explained to the membership that due to the timings of the AGM the guest speakers would not be taking questions from members.

The first question to the panel: Looking forward, what is the vision for the disability rights movement within the next 10 years, and how can the disability community, allies and

policymakers, create a future where people with disability have a stronger voice in shaping and overseeing reforms?

The second question: What strategies can the disability rights movement use to push governments to implement more recommendations from the Disability Royal Commission?

The third and final question: With the 2025 federal election approaching, what can individuals with disabilities do to ensure disability rights remain a top priority for candidates across the political spectrum? What strategies might be most effective to counter narratives that frame essential disability services as “too costly” or “unsustainable” in Australia’s current economic context?

Marayke Jonkers thanked the guest speakers for their answers and for sharing their insights on where to from here for the disability rights movement.

Marayke Jonkers then moved onto final agenda item which was questions from the membership. As there was one question sent in advance of the meeting this was tabled first.

6.3 Questions

Q: Sirani McNeill: will you be asking any more leadership courses for those aspiring to be a Board member or those as an observer for those with disabilities. I would also love to see more job opportunities posted on here for parttime and remote work across Australia considering you are from a not-for-profit disability org?

A: PWDA CEO: Sebastian Zagarella: currently we're offering jobs across NSW and QLD for our advocates, and we are looking to expand into other states as we find opportunities in funding. PWDA has also been focused on diversifying our funds for the last 18 months as well so that's allowed us to start looking for trainers, content writers, consultants, advisors. PWDA are looking for more opportunities as we go along. With regards to the leadership program, PWDA do have a project which is Women in Leadership and have had people asking us if they could be part of that program. That's a finite group of people now, but we're hoping to use some of that content over the next 12 months to be able to expand and bring other offers to our members and to our people with disability in the community.

No other questions were raised from membership.

7. Close of meeting

No further business had been notified to the meeting Marayke Jonkers declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 8:10pm.

Signed as a true and accurate record:



Trinity Ford

President 2024/2025

People with Disability Australia Ltd

Date: 18 December 2024