



# Welcome to the summer edition of *Voices*,

*Kerri Cassify Photo: Ally Scott*

2020 was a year like no other and whilst we know that the impacts of COVID-19 are still being felt worldwide, it certainly feels good to have had a break over the Christmas and New Year period, been able to (hopefully!) catch up with friends and family again and to have a rest.

We kick off 2021 with renewed vigour as DRC's Committee of Management welcomes new Members Karleen Plunkett, Liz Wright and Amy Marks (see below). We also celebrate DRC's 40 year anniversary this year and have refreshed our Strategic Plan to launch into the next 40 years. This strategy will form the basis for our staff workplan over the next 4 years. We are also very pleased to introduce new staff member Sharon Granek who joins our Individual Advocacy Program as Team Leader, and we warmly welcome Sharon to our team. Sharon comes to DRC with 30 years' experience in a broad range of government and non-government organisations including human services, health, housing, education, employment, income support and transport. She is a passionate advocate for addressing inequity and promoting diversity.

In 2020 DRC undertook a review of our Individual Advocacy Program and renewal of all Policies and Procedures which will implemented this year. I'd like to thank staff for their contribution to this review and commitment to the continued development and improvement of our Advocacy service.

Our Transport for All Campaign is ramping up again with a focus on trams (below). If you haven't already joined the campaign I encourage you to do so as together we can make the voices of people with disabilities louder.

Lastly, you will find a short piece below about our new partnership with Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS). As an organisation we recognise that younger people with disabilities who have aged out of youth services find themselves wondering "Where to next?". Through an internship program we are striving to bridge that gap and learn more about the issues that impact the younger members of our community.

As always, I want to thank you for your support of DRC. We couldn't do our work without you.

*Kerri*

# GET ON TRACK CAMPAIGN FOR ACCESSIBLE TRAMS



Over the next few weeks the Transport for All campaign will be working hard to highlight the need for a Melbourne tram network that works for everyone.

The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport require every tram stop to be accessible by 2022, a deadline that now cannot be met. Last year's [VAGO report concluded that the system was only 15% accessible](#), and the stop upgrade work has finally slowed to a halt. For 40 years disability campaigners have been lobbying for equal access to independent travel. But for our government, this just hasn't been a priority. Together we can change that.

This issue doesn't just impact wheelchair users, it impacts people with mobility impairments, energy management conditions, temporary disabilities, those with situational impairments (such as families travelling with prams), and many of our elders. Together these constitute over 3 million people in Victoria.

If you haven't already please visit our [Take Action page](#), [sign the petition](#) and share it widely with as many people as you can. The sooner we spread the word the louder our voices will be heard.

We will be holding a fun, COVID-safe action in the CBD on **Thursday 25th February** and we would love to see you there. If you support the aims of the campaign but are unable to be there in person you can join the action virtually via a live link. We can also print a poster of you to be carried by another campaigner to demonstrate that you are there in spirit.

We deserve a public transport system that works for everyone, because independent travel is essential to enable equal participation in everything life has to offer.

# DRC ADVOCACY STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24

DRC's Committee of Management has outlined a new vision for our future in ratifying our 2021-24 Strategic Plan. This plan will be the cornerstone of our work in the coming years, and inform what choose to prioritise and how we work.

## VISION

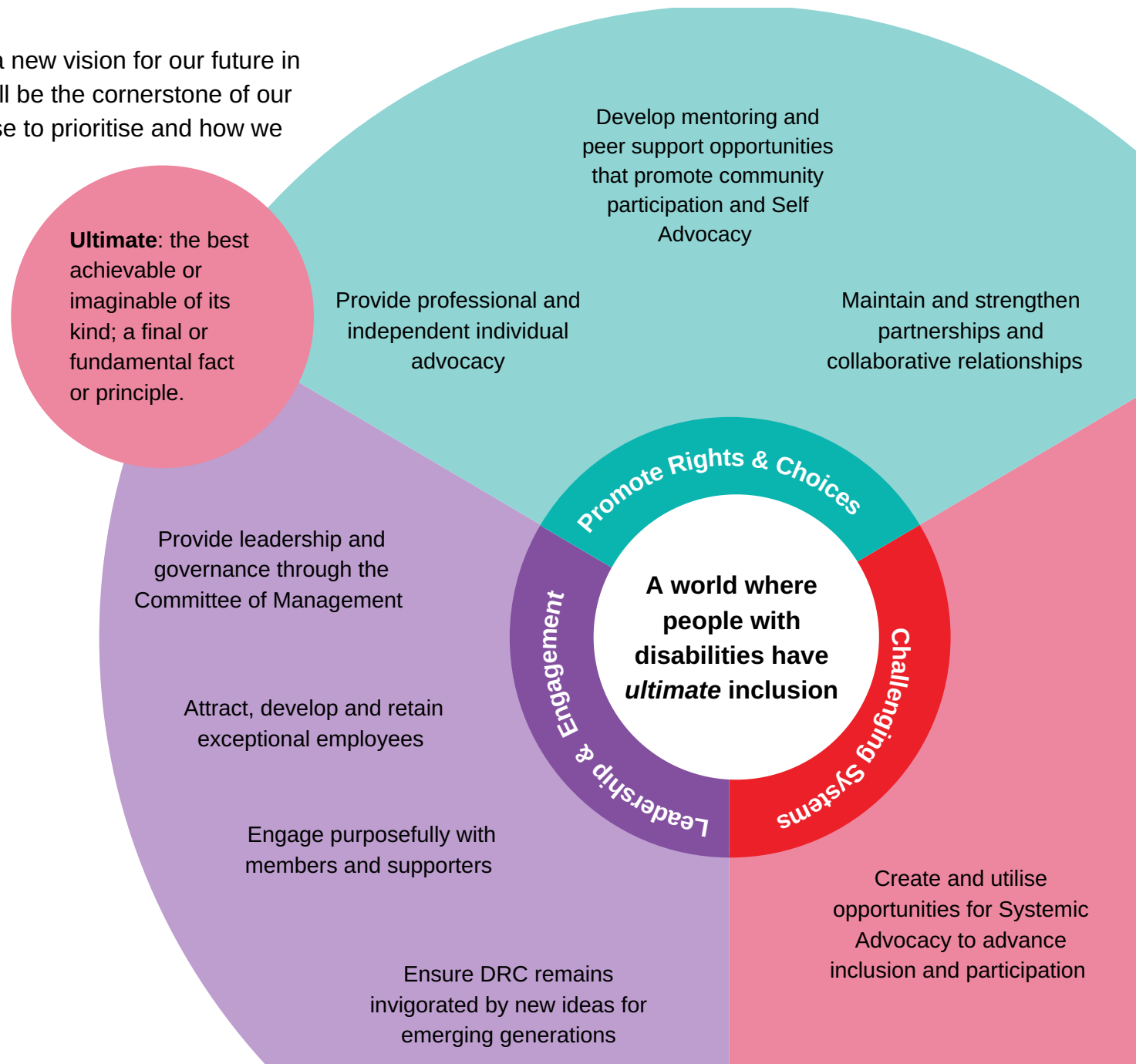
A world where people with disabilities have *ultimate* inclusion.

## MISSION

With our strength of experience living with disabilities, we work together to promote our rights and choices, and challenge systems to achieve social and economic inclusion.

## OBJECTIVES

- Challenge systems to achieve social and economic inclusion.
- Promote our rights and choices.
- Foster leadership and engagement in the disabled community.



# INTRODUCING NEW COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT MEMBERS

We are thrilled to welcome three new members to our Committee of Management 2021: Amy Marks, Karleen Plunkett and Liz Wright. We're also introducing you to Andrew Turner, who joined the Committee in 2020 and is now acting as treasurer. Each brings their unique lived experience of disability and impressive professional achievements to DRC's governance team. Read below to get to know a bit more about them.



## **Amy Marks**

Amy Marks is a digital media creative and youth disability activist. Amy works with a specialised focus on making media and spaces accessible for young people with disability. She has previously worked for the Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS) and currently works at Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA). Amy's passion lies in media creation and production, and she uses her skill set to amplify the voices of disabled people in the media. Amy is passionate about making sure disability activism is intersectional and representative.



## **Karleen Plunkett**

Karleen is a systemic advocate who has spent many years working as a community development worker in organisations such as Women's Health West, Yooralla, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Deakin University and Latrobe City Council. Currently, Karleen is a volunteer for VALID's Peer Action Group program, is on the V/Line ARG and is a casual employee for Experience Group's Women with Disabilities Experts. Karleen is passionate about preventing violence against girls and women with disabilities. She lives in Rural Victoria with her Partner, a dog and four chooks.



## **Andrew Turner**

Andrew is a qualified CPA, who holds a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) from Monash University and a Certificate in Governance for Not for Profits. He has over 20 years experience in finance roles in the retail, legal, property and funds management industries. Andrew is a Director and Treasurer of Disabled Motorists Australia and a Life Member of St Kilda Football Club. Andrew has a special interest in the health and well-being of others which was fulfilled by undertaking specialist studies in the trifocal model of dementia care at Deakin University. He is an active member of the Australian Shareholder's Association and is currently in training for a season of snow sit skiing this winter.



## **Liz Wright**

Liz is the Local Leadership Hubs Coordinator at Women with Disabilities Victoria. She helps organise hubs of women with disability to challenge systemic issues and support each other in leadership and advocacy. Liz spent nearly 30 years working in public housing for local government, working with children and their families and for the last 12 years in the Building Inclusive Communities Program. Liz is a broadcaster who loves the storytelling of people with disability. Mentoring and succession planning is a big motivator for Liz.



# INTERSHIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We want to make sure DRC remains invigorated with new ideas for emerging generations, So, we've commenced an internship program in partnership with Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS). We will be offering graduates of YDAS's Young Leaders Program opportunity to put their learnings into action, identifying areas that they wish to develop and receiving mentoring by some of DRC's 'elders'. Above all DRC will receive the intern's perspective on the key issues for young people with disabilities. This will ultimately contribute to the development of a Youth Engagement Strategy to ensure DRC broadens its connections with the disability community and stays in tune with new and evolving issues. Applications for the internship should open in the coming weeks, and we hope to introduce you to an intern in our next newsletter. If you know a young person with a disability (14-19) who might be interested in the program visit [Youth Affairs Council Victoria | Young Leaders Program](#) to learn more.