



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

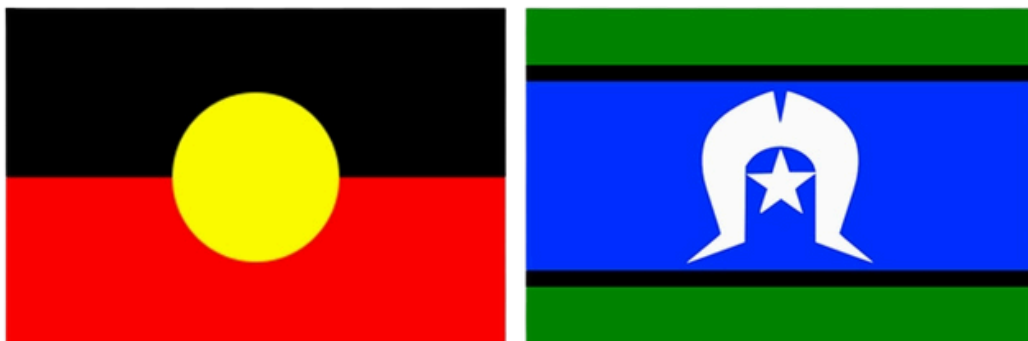
DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE
NOVEMBER 2024

PHOTO: DISABLED AND HERE

Acknowledgement of Country

Disability Resources Centre acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants and the traditional custodians of the lands on which we live and work. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past, present and emerging.

In particular we acknowledge the Bangarang, the Yorta Yorta, the Ladji Ladji, the Gunditjmarra, the Kerrupjmarra, the Gunai Kurnai, the Watha Wurrung, the Widjbaluk, the Wemba Wemba, the Daung Wurrung, the Dja Dja Wurrung, the Wurundjeri and the Bunurong people. Our community is committed to honouring the unique cultural and spiritual relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with the land and waters, and their rich contribution to society.





Our vision:

A world where Disability Justice and Disability Pride are embraced and celebrated by all.

Our purpose:

Together we strive to eliminate all forms of disability oppression and realise our human rights.

“We do this ‘til we free us.”

(Mariame Kaba, 2021)

Our values:

Radical Inclusion:

As a cross-disability organisation, we embrace diversity in all its forms. All people with disability are respected, valued and included regardless of our disability experience, Aboriginality, race, culture, class, age sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, or where we live.

Disability Justice:

We are committed to the principles of Disability Justice which centres intersectionality and recognises the ways that different systems of oppression overlap and reinforce one another. Disability Justice prioritises the needs of those most historically excluded groups, such as First Nations people, women and gender diverse people, people of colour, incarcerated peoples, refugees and migrants, children and young people, older people, and people who are LGBTIQ+.

Disability Pride and Culture:

We are proud of our disability identity and celebrate disability as an integral part of who we are. Disability Pride is a celebration of human diversity, of every body and every mind. We celebrate disability culture, and acknowledge our elders and forbears.

DRC Team

BOARD

Chairperson	Larissa MacFarlane
Vice Chairperson	Kiz Fitzpatrick
Treasurer	Pradeep Hewavitharana
Secretary	Alison Brown De Moreno / Shae Bennett
Directors	Martin Leckey, Andrew Bretherton, Sarah Curtis

STAFF

Executive Officer	Ally Scott
Advocates	Neysha Machnig & Jackie Breasley
Administration Officer	Sinead Mooney

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Chairperson's Report

Larissa McFarlane

This year's cost of living and funding crises have placed DRC, and the advocacy sector at large, under enormous pressure. Most organisations have been struggling to maintain high standards of service with smaller budgets. DRC has not been as hard hit as others, but we have sustained some reduction in staff hours.

Recognising the considerable work ahead, DRC brought in consultant Matthew Bowden to assist in the development of a five-year Strategic Plan. Through this engaging and fulfilling process DRC redefined its purpose and values to align with the evolving times. Our values are headlined by a commitment to radical inclusion, disability justice and disability pride. For us this means embracing diversity in all its forms. As a cross-disability organisation DRC welcomes every person with disability, including physical and sensory disability, intellectual and cognitive disability, psychosocial disability, neurodivergence, and chronic health. We are committed to the principles of disability justice, which centres the interconnectedness of diverse systems of oppression which overlap and amplify one another. Together we celebrate disability pride and pay tribute to the elders and forbears of the disability movement. Early in 2024, DRC also formalised its transition from a member-based to a values-led organisation. This shift enables us to prioritise DRC's core values in all aspects of operations, decision-making and culture. It is also key to promoting an atmosphere of trust, transparency and accountability.

The **Transport for All campaign** continues to be a core focus for DRC. We are proud to support the Sydney Road Accessible Trams Campaign and I was pleased to speak at the one-year anniversary rally in June.

Our projects continue to grow and evolve. Belong is a network connecting people with disability across Victoria. It is so good to see people with diverse disabilities and cultural backgrounds gather to support one another and work towards a better future. I was particularly pleased to see the launch of Alongsiding and Medical Mates, two new channels of support within the network. Both are examples of the kind of innovation that can emerge when disabled people come together.

The DRC board enormously enjoyed hearing from the dynamic members of the UpNext Youth Council, and we very much hope they will continue to be involved with the organisation long into the future.

We are grateful for the continued support of DFFH and the Office for Disability. Our thanks also to State Trustees and City of Melbourne, who have supported the Belong network, while our face-to-face hub, Belong in West, has been supported by Maribyrnong City Council.

The Executive Officer role saw a transition in November 2023. My sincerest thanks goes to Greg Ferrington for all his work with both the Board and DRC's team. We welcomed Ally Scott to the EO role and we are excited to be developing new pathways to growth with her at the helm. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the DRC team for staying the course in these uncertain and sometimes stressful times. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have outstanding advocates Jackie Breasley and Neysha Machnig, and Administration and Grants Officer Sinead Mooney, working with us.

I would also like to thank outgoing Chair Martin Leckey, Vice Chair Kiz Jackson and treasurer Pradeep Hewavitharana, as well as our two Secretaries this year, Shae Bennett and Alison Brown de Moreno. To board members Jess Kapuschinski-Evans and Shae Bennett who left this year, thank you for the time you spent with us, your insights and perspectives were deeply valued.

Larissa McFarlane, Chairperson



Executive Officer's Report

Ally Scott

It's been a challenging year for the disability community. The Disability Royal Commission's report into the abuse and neglect of people with disability was published after a staggering 7,900 submissions. Meanwhile, the NDIS review process has been characterised by fast-paced change and poor communication. Advocacy has become more crucial than ever, not only to support individuals in times of struggle, but to continue to highlight the need for systemic changes that can shape a safer, more equitable and inclusive future for everyone.

A primary goal arising from our new five-year strategic plan envisions DRC becoming the leading cross-disability Disabled People's Organisation in Victoria. As part of this we are working on creating new organisational branding and assets that accurately represent DRC's current purpose and vision. We have been working with The Edison Agency through their Design for Good program and we look forward to sharing the outcomes very soon.

There have been a few systemic advocacy focuses this year. We worked with the Sydney Road Accessible Trams campaign (SATS) to deliver a petition on the steps of Parliament and we have since established an auspicing agreement with SATS to provide ongoing support. Early in 2024 DRC joined many disability advocacy organisations in Victoria to contest the government's intention to close all disability specific regulators. The government heard our objections and has shelved this proposal until further consultation can be held. We very much hope there are alternative solutions. We distributed press releases and submissions in relation to the NDIS Review and the Getting the NDIS Back on Track Bill No. 1, and we continue to support members to raise their concerns through this turbulent time.

In mid 2024 we were very pleased to help establish DPO Victoria, a diverse collective of Victorian disability-led organisations. As the state government has expressed their intention to collaborate more closely with the Victorian disability community, it is important that there is a clear point of contact. We very much look forward to working together.

A heartfelt thank you to outgoing Executive Officer Greg Ferrington, who retired in November. With his inimitable energy and humour Greg opened new avenues for collaboration and partnerships and did much to streamline our financial and HR operations. We also said farewell for now to Nimo Hersey who brought warmth, vision and invaluable lived experience to her work with the Belong network. We also experienced enormous loss in April 2024 when Gillian Meldrum retired after nearly 25 years of involvement with DRC.

Finally, a huge thank you to our Board who continue to serve DRC through the oversight of our governance, finances and campaigns, and to our members for all their sharing, support and solidarity.

Ally Scott, Executive Officer

Individual Advocacy

2023-2024 was a busy year for DRCs Individual Advocates with high demand for advocacy services. Our outreach work enabled us to run Disability Support Pension (DSP) workshops allowing us to reach people more efficiently. Workshops will continue to be a focus in 2024-2025 to enable us to meet increasing demand for our services.

Our individual advocacy work is increasingly informing systemic advocacy issues. Significant bottlenecks were experienced throughout the year at various stages of the DSP and NDIS application processes. In addition, medical professionals are charging for reports required as part of these application processes which clients can't afford. We have experienced requests for up to \$1,650 for reports. GPs are charging between \$100-\$800.

Individual advocacy is, at times, difficult and frustrating work. It is also satisfying when we achieve the outcomes our clients deserve. It is also gratifying to be acknowledged for our hard work:

“Thank you so much for your support, you have been very important to me to get me where I am today from where I was and where I want to be in the future”

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Ally Scott, the DRC Board, supporters and departing external supervisor Gillian Meldrum. A warm welcome to Matthew Bowden our new external supervisor. Below is a statistical representation of our year and achievements



1097.57 hours
of advocacy
support



129 cases



121 clients



198 short term
issues
addressed



Ninty Two percent of advocacy
cases reached the objectives set
by the client.

Advocacy issues we have assisted with this year include

- Abuse and neglect
- Housing/homelessness
- Built environment
- Centrelink
- Disability Services
- Disability Support Pension
- Family
- Finances
- NDIS
- Education Access

Jackie Breasley & Neysha Machnig, Advocates

Case Study

Individual Advocacy

Eric* has a long-standing history of challenges related to his psychosocial disability and has experienced periods of incarceration, both of which have impacted his well-being and stability.

Throughout this time, Eric* faced considerable difficulty accessing the Disability Support Pension (DSP) and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), which he was eligible for but found challenging to navigate alone.

During this period, Eric* also briefly became homeless as a result of family violence, which further compounded his need for immediate support. Recognizing these complex circumstances, DRC Advocates, who had engaged with Eric previously through outreach efforts and research, were able to provide the necessary assistance. They linked him to appropriate housing resources and support services to address his immediate needs.

Thanks to these efforts, Eric now has stable accommodation and consistent access to the DSP and NDIS. With this support network in place, he is better equipped to manage his psychosocial disability and navigate his daily life with increased stability and security.

*Name changed to protect client privacy.

Jackie Breasley & Neysha Machnig, Advocates

Projects:

Belong: Bringing our Community Together

Belong is a dynamic disability-led network aimed at building community, connection and pride. Launched in 2022 as the Buddy Network, it was rebranded and refined in 2023. Today it continues to grow steadily, with new members joining the network every week. Belong is cross-disability and radically inclusive. Regardless of disability experience, age, culture, location, gender identity or expression, everyone is welcome here. The network celebrates diversity and disability culture, and together we practice deep listening, respect and kindness.

In July Belong hosted our first Disability Pride Celebration in Kensington Town Hall, attended by over 100 members. There was a great deal of joy and positivity in the room, boosted by speakers, music, food, art and disability pride badgemaking.

Belong now distributes schedules of meetings every two months, and there are two to four drop-in sessions every week. These include Campaigns meetings, the Rainbow Collective, and the Neurodivergent group among many others. There are now also social drop-ins, online game nights and monthly art and making afternoons held both online and in person at Ross House. In addition the network hosts guest speakers and this year we were delighted to spend time with Dan Stubbs, Claire Gibellini, Julie Philips and Patrick McGee.

Supported by a grant from Maribyrnong City Council, Belong launched its first face to face hub early in 2024. *Belong In the West* has been a truly valuable program because it has given members an opportunity to unpack the barriers to connecting in person and reconfigure their own requirements for safe and inclusive meetings. Our thanks to Mamma Chen's in Footscray for making us so welcome.

Most recently the network has launched two new models of support: Alongsiding and Medical Mates. These are ways of providing one to one or small group peer support to members who are going through difficult times. These models have already been put to good use, and they are aspects of Belong we are keen to develop in the coming year.

We are indebted to Nimo Hersey who was a fabulous Program Officer throughout 2023. Deepest thanks and appreciation goes to the Belong members who have rolled up their sleeves and given their precious time to build this community together. We are honoured to work alongside you.

Ally Scott, Projects Manager

UpNext: Youth Advisory Council

The UpNext Advisory Council completed its work at the end of this financial year.

UpNext is a committee of young disabled advocates working together to ensure that DRC is well appraised of the needs and issues facing our emerging generation, and to enable these objectives to inform the strategic goals of the organisation.

Aoife Ryall and Tegan Hartly joined DRC in 2022 to lead the project and have done some outstanding work here. Their initial tasks were to define the scope of UpNext and recruit a diverse group of 9 council members. Aoife and Tegan also evolved the values of the group and devised three online training sessions before continuing to develop meeting agendas and co-facilitate the UpNext council meetings. Meeting every 8 weeks, the council explored systemic barriers and made recommendations that would enable DRC to improve its reach and representation. After each meeting one team member would then report back to the DRC Board.

Over the course of this year the council has met to discuss campaign focuses, digital inclusivity, engagement pathways, connections and community building. Members also attended a focus group convened by Matthew Bowden who produced our strategic plan to ensure they had meaningful input into the strategic direction of DRC long into the future.

We are delighted to see that the UpNext members have grown from strength to strength over the period of the project, increasing in visibility and even adopting key roles within the disability sector. For DRC it has been a considerable gift to be informed by the perspectives, values, ethos and approaches of these young gender diverse disabled people. Their engagement has enriched the organisation, informing how we work together as well as our strategic goals.

We would like to extend our deepest thanks to all the wonderful members of UpNext, each and every one of you is truly valued. We do hope to be working with you again in the future.

Aoife Ryall
Amber Jepsen
Bailey Harvie
Jessi Hooper

Tegan Hartley
Sarah Curtis
Husna Amani
Julie Dickson

Sophie Cusworth
Zawi Hoodbhoy
Zoe Simmons

Ally Scott, Executive Officer



Treasurer's Report

On behalf of the Committee of Management it is my pleasure to present to you the Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2024.

The past financial year has seen the DRC Board conscientiously lead the organisation through a challenging financial period for DRC and the wider advocacy sector. I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the Executive Officer, the DRC team, and our bookkeeper for their efforts during the year.

In the previous fiscal year ended 30 June 2023, we recorded a deficit of \$28,632 (a significant improvement on the deficit of \$71,249 in 2022). Through continued prudent financial management, cost-saving measures, utilisation of resources and with a reduction in income (funding), I am pleased to report that we have successfully reduced the deficit to \$452 for the year ended 30 June 2024. This achievement reflects our commitment to fiscal responsibility and our dedication to maintaining a sustainable financial position.

The total sum of income that DRC received for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2024 was \$486,720 (2023 - \$572,797). During this fiscal year, the main items of income received by DRC were:

- Grant from the Department of Families Fairness and House of \$389,384 (2023 - \$423,052)) which accounts for 80% of the income and allows DRC to maintain services to its clients
- ILC Grant from the NDIS of \$36,471 (2023 - \$69,720) being 7% of total income received.
- General Grants: \$46,601 (2023 - \$83,968) being 9% of income as per the following table

Belong: City of Melbourne	12,611
Belong: Maribyrnong Community Inclusion Grant	12,500
Belong: State Trustees	20,000
Grants Other	990
Total General Grants	46,601

-
- Interest Received \$9,764

DRC's total expenditure for the fiscal year ended 30 June 2024 is \$487,172 (2023 - \$601,429).

This is highlighted by:

- Salary & Superannuation at \$419,180 (2023 - \$447,169) being 86% of total expenditure
- Rent, Rates & Occupancy at \$16,836 (2023 - \$15,006) being 3% of total expenditure
- Financial Services at \$8,608 (2023 – \$11,125) being 2% of total expenditure)
- Consultancy reduced to \$1,816 (2023 – \$49,619) and
- IT And Network Costs reduced to \$4,121 (2023 - \$24,030).

While we face challenges with unpredictable income, our organisation is in an excellent position to pay our bills and we have less liabilities than previous financial years. We're working on improving our financial stability while continuing to provide invaluable services to our community.

Pradeep Hewavitharana, Treasurer

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
INCOME		
Grant - Department of Fairness, Family and Housing	389,384	423,052
NDIS - ILC Capacity Building	36,471	69,270
General Grants Received	46,101	83,968
Other Income	-	-
Interest Income	9,764	426
Donations	5,000	(3,919)
TOTAL INCOME	486,720	572,797
EXPENDITURE		
Advertising	18	7,295
AGM Expenses	1,983	207
Audit	1,650	6,100
Board Expenses	68	356
Conferences & Memberships	785	564
Consultancy	1,816	49,619
Financial Services	8,608	11,125
Forums & Workshops	708	68
IT and Network Expenses	4,121	24,030
IT - Website	279	357
Meeting Expenses	253	544
Minor Equipment	666	247
Office Administration Costs	319	1,582
Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme Levies - 01.07.19 to 30.06.2023	2,351	21,861
Printing Postage & Stationery	546	1,060
Project Expenses	6,316	1,036
Rent, Rates & Occupancy Costs	16,836	15,006
Repair & Maintenance	-	98
Salaries & Wages	377,672	406,569
Software	3,604	3,263
Staff Amenities	218	-
Staff Training	2,125	2,801
Strategic Planning	6,000	-
Superannuation	41,508	40,600
Telephone	1,169	1,159
Travel & Accommodation	473	270
Workcover	7,080	5,612
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	487,172	601,429
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(452)	(28,632)

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	(452)	(28,632)
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year	-	-
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	(452)	(28,632)

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from grants		463,071	511,860
Receipts from customers and other sources		(8,437)	(5,487)
Payments to suppliers and employees		(503,475)	(618,592)
Interest received		9,764	426
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	(i)	<u>(39,077)</u>	<u>(111,793)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		-	-
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		(39,077)	(111,793)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		320,887	432,680
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	(ii)	<u>281,810</u>	<u>320,887</u>

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Note (i). Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities		
Net deficit for the year	(452)	(28,632)
Non-cash flow item: depreciation	-	-
(Increase)/decrease in accounts and other receivables	(13,437)	(1,568)
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	(12,405)	(16,889)
Increase/(decrease) in grants received in advance	(8,885)	(64,430)
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	(3,898)	(274)
	<u>(39,077)</u>	<u>(111,793)</u>
Note (ii). Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		
Cash at bank	104,338	319,621
Cash on term deposits	176,823	-
Petty cash	649	1,266
	<u>281,810</u>	<u>320,887</u>

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Accumulated funds \$	Total \$
Balance as at 1 July 2022	236,649	236,649
Surplus/ (Deficit) attributable to the Association	(28,632)	(28,632)
Balance as at 30 June 2023	208,017	208,017
Surplus/ (Deficit) attributable to the Association	(452)	(452)
Balance as at 30 June 2024	207,565	207,565

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This publication is available in accessible formats on request.