Annual Report

2025-26



Disability Rights and Culture

Acknowledgement of Country

Disability Rights and Culture works on stolen and unceded land. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants and the traditional custodians of the lands and join their calls for justice, truth, and Treaty.

In particular we acknowledge the Bangarang, the Yorta Yorta, the Ladji Ladji, the Gunditjmara, the Kerrupjmara, the Gunai Kurnai, the Watha Wurrung, the Widjubaluk, the Wemba Wemba, the Daung Wurrung, the Dja Dja Wurrung, the Wurundjeri, and the Boonwurrung 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.

Treaty

In a first for so-called Australia, after a decade of work, the First People's Assembly of Victoria have established a Treaty with Aboriginal people and the Victorian Government. The DRC is proud and supportive of the decades long journey to Treaty for Victoria. The Treaty recognises that Aboriginal people are the experts when it comes to Country, culture, and communities, and will ensure their local knowledge will be used to deliver practical solutions to improve health, education, and housing outcomes for First Nation's communities.





Disability Rights and Culture

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.

Created by and for disabled people

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

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 members of the LGBTIQA+ community.

Disability Pride and Culture

We are proud of our disability identity.
Our disability is an integral part of who we are.
Disability Pride is a celebration of human diversity;
it is a way to honour every body and every mind.
We celebrate disability culture, and acknowledge
our elders and forbears in the disability movement.

DRC Team

BOARD

Co-Chairs	Daniel Munter and Alison Brown de Moreno
Vice Chair	Larissa MacFarlane
Treasurers	Victor Nieto and Justin Li
Secretary	Kiz Blanca-Jackson
Directors	Martin Leckey, Pradeep Hewavitharana, Julie Philips, Laura Pettenuzzo, Sarah Curtis

STAFF

Executive Officer	Ally Scott
Advocates	Neysha Machnig, Kendall Foster, Jarrod Sandell-Hay, Aoife Ryall
Marketing & Communications Lead	Robyn Reynolds
Facilitation Coordinator	Roan
Engagement & Communications Co ordinator	Finnley Greet
Admin & Communications Coordinator	Emma Robinson
Blog Editor	Zoe Simmonds

From the Board Chair



As Chair of Disability Rights and Culture, I am pleased to present this Annual Report, and reflect on a year that brought both significant challenges and meaningful opportunities for our community.

This year has been marked by substantial changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). For many people with disability, their families and carers, these reforms have created uncertainty, frustration, and concerns around access to supports. The economic positioning of disabled people as financial burdens to the Australian public, and the corresponding impacts to mental health, physical safety, and disability pride have all been devastating.

Throughout this period, DRC has remained committed to standing alongside our community, ensuring that their voices and experiences of people with disability are heard. Through individual advocacy, systemic advocacy and information-sharing, we have worked to help people understand the changing landscape, navigate complex systems and uphold their rights. While much work remains to be done, I am proud of the role our organisation has played in supporting people through these transitions and the unknown.

At the same time, we have continued to focus on what matters most: creating opportunities for people to connect, participate and belong. The Belong community has grown as a powerful expression of that commitment. Through the network, members have built new relationships, shared experiences, developed confidence and created connections that extend beyond individual programs and activities.

In a world where social isolation remains a significant challenge for many people with disability, the Belong community demonstrates the importance of community-led approaches that foster inclusion, friendship and mutual support. The stories we have heard from participants this year remind us that belonging is not simply about being present; it is about valued, respected and connected.





None of this would be possible without the extraordinary people who make up Disability Rights and Culture. On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our staff, volunteers and members. Your dedication, professionalism and compassion have sustained our organisation through a complex and demanding year. Time and again, you have shown kindness, resilience and a deep commitment to supporting one another and the broader community.

I would also like to thank our partners, supporters and stakeholders who continue to believe in our vision of a more inclusive and equitable society. Your contribution strengthens our ability to advocate for change and create opportunities for people with disability to thrive.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to advancing rights, strengthening communities and ensuring that people with disability are at the centre of decisions that affect their lives. Together, we will continue to build a future where everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute and flourish.

Daniel Munter
Chairperson

From the Executive Officer



The passing of the NDIS Review Bill cast a long shadow over the months that came before.

Throughout the year, the disability community experienced intense anxiety and widespread frustration at the proposed cuts. Many community members took action and spoke up, some for the first time, but witnessing the government's positioning and the media commentary, so much of it ill-informed, was devastating.

These changes reinforced the importance of independent, community based advocacy. Advocacy can assist people to challenge decisions, understand their options and communicate their preferences. However, it cannot address systemic shortages in housing, healthcare, legal assistance or disability supports. There is a clear and demonstrated need for sustained investment in independent disability advocacy alongside accessible, coordinated and adequately resourced community services.

DRC's campaigns and systemic advocacy work had many focuses this year. We worked extensively to oppose the closure of the disability specific regulators, particularly the Victorian Disability Workers Commission. We challenged Thriving Kids, spoke about the inaccessibility of the Metro Tunnel, and pressed for a State Disability Plan that sets out specific, measurable targets.

Perhaps most importantly, we have worked to bring together disability-led organisations under the open collective umbrella of Disabled People's Organisations Victoria. Together with member organisations, and guided by the disability community, we are working to build a unified disability movement. As enshrined in the UNCRPD, people with disability must be actively involved in shaping the systems and services that are designed to support them, a fundamental principle that we continually strive to realise.

The start of this FY also saw the launch of our new website. As a disability-led organisation for all disabled people, our new Disability Rights and Culture identity reflects our renewed focus on building Disability Culture, celebrating Disability Pride and upholding Disability Justice.

The Belong Community has grown and evolved through the second year of our Peer Support and Capacity Building Grant. I want to acknowledge and thank all the members and facilitators who have given their precious time, energy and thought to making this a meaningful place to be. It's not always easy work, but it matters deeply to the people who join us, to the connections we build, and to the possibility of doing things differently.

It is always a great loss when our team members move on. This year we said goodbye to Neysha Machnig who spent almost five years with DRC as an individual advocate, bringing invaluable creativity and resourcefulness to her work. We also farewelled advocate Kendall Foster whose warmth and gentleness shaped the support she offered to community members. We wish them both all the very best.

There has been some turnover on the board during the year, and I want to thank Victor Nieto and Sarah Curtis for their significant contributions to DRC as board members. It was a pleasure to have them with us. A sincere thank you also to our ongoing directors: Daniel Munter, Justin Li, Larissa MacFarlane, Laura Pettenuzzo, Martin Lecky, Pradeep Hewavitharana, Julie Philips and Kiz Blanca Jackson. Their guidance across governance, finances and campaigns has been exceptional.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our incredible team who carry rage in their pockets and still manage to bring armfuls of joy and humour to work. Together, anything is possible.

Ally Scott
Executive Officer

Individual Advocacy

We are a disability-led, rights-based organisation. DRC is committed to supporting disabled people to understand and exercise their rights, navigate complex systems, and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives.

Funded through the Victorian Disability Advocacy Program, our individual advocacy service provides short-term, issue-specific support. Advocates work alongside community members to identify barriers, understand their options, communicate their preferences and pursue outcomes that reflect their goals.

Beyond resolving immediate issues, advocacy strengthens people's confidence and capacity to advocate for themselves. DRC recognises disabled people as experts in their own lives, with the right to direct their own supports and services.

NDIS

Changes to the NDIS continued to significantly affect community members throughout 2025–26. People seeking advocacy described increased stress, anxiety and uncertainty as they navigated changes to eligibility, funding and supports. For those experiencing homelessness, financial hardship or barriers to healthcare, these changes compounded existing disadvantage.

DRC experienced an increase in enquiries about NDIS access and eligibility, particularly from existing participants seeking recognition of additional disabilities or impairments following funding reductions or concerns that their plans did not reflect their needs. From February 2026, enquiries also emerged from participants undergoing eligibility reassessments, creating further uncertainty about their continued access to the Scheme.

These trends highlight the importance of accessible information, transparent decision-making and independent advocacy as NDIS reforms continue.

Underfunding, Unmet Need and Increasing Complexity

Throughout 2025–26, demand for individual advocacy grew, alongside an increase in people seeking assistance with multiple, interconnected issues. Several trends emerged.

Increasingly interconnected barriers. Community members frequently experienced difficulties across disability services, housing, healthcare, income support and legal systems. Issues relating to disability supports were often accompanied by housing instability, financial hardship or declining health. These circumstances can affect a person's ability to exercise their rights and are difficult to address when service systems operate independently.

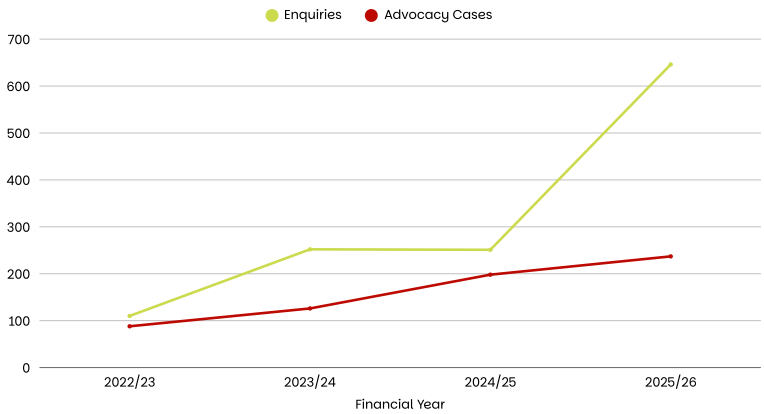
Compounding disadvantage. People experiencing homelessness, financial hardship or social isolation faced additional difficulties obtaining information, attending appointments, gathering evidence and meeting administrative requirements. Delays and increasing administrative demands further restricted access to essential services and participation in decision-making.

Growing demand and limited advocacy capacity. Increasing demand exceeded DRC's advocacy capacity, limiting the proportion of enquiries that could progress to individual support. DRC also received enquiries outside the scope of our service, including crisis accommodation, family violence, healthcare navigation and legal assistance. While advocates provided information and referrals where appropriate, these enquiries highlighted broader unmet community need.

Barriers to accessing other services. Referrals became increasingly challenging as pressure on housing, homelessness, healthcare and community legal services limited available options. Some community members had already exhausted referral pathways, while others encountered restrictive eligibility requirements, lengthy waiting periods or services operating at capacity.

Growing Demand, Widening Gap

DRC enquiries va advocacy cases, 2022-2026



Advocacy cases as a percentage of enquiries:

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
80%	50%	79%	37%

Increase in recorded enquiries between the first and second halves of 2025/26



Case Study: Maria's Journey to Independent Living

Maria, 34, lives with psychosocial disability and complex health conditions. When she approached DRC, she was experiencing coercive control in an isolating shared housing arrangement while her physical health was deteriorating.

Maria wanted greater independence and control over her living arrangements, but navigating the NDIS and exploring alternative housing options presented significant challenges.

DRC advocates supported Maria to access the NDIS and participate remotely in planning discussions as her health deteriorated. Her initial plan provided access to occupational therapy and other allied health supports, establishing a foundation for further assessment and planning.
Advocates also supported Maria to explore Supported Independent Living (SIL) and alternative housing pathways, connecting her with specialist housing professionals and support coordinators. Together, they developed a staged approach that addressed her immediate circumstances while keeping her longer-term goals central.

Throughout the process, Maria became increasingly confident in communicating her needs, directing her supports and making decisions about her future. While accessing services and exploring housing options were important, a significant outcome was Maria's growing capacity to exercise choice and control.

Her experience demonstrates how individual advocacy can remove barriers to participation and support disabled people to exercise their rights on their own terms.

Belong:
Bringing our Community Together

Throughout this financial year Belong has grown steadily and continues to adapt to meet the changing needs of our community.

We have always been driven by the need to bring people together from across the disability experience; to build a unified community in which people with disability stand together as a powerful voting bloc. Meeting the diverse and sometimes competing access needs of our community requires flexibility, creativity and ongoing dialogue.

While no single approach can meet everyone's needs, our commitment remains to make participation as accessible and equitable as possible. Equity and inclusion does not mean erasing our differences or pretending they don't matter. It means making room for complexity and refusing to let difference become division. Through it all we remain steadfast in our knowledge that what unites us is far greater than what sets us apart. Our collective strength lies in our capacity to stand together through difference.

Across 192 events this year, including drop-in sessions, Zoom meetings, events and induction workshops; Belong continued to bring people together. These are spaces shaped by shared experiences and mutual support. Coming together provides a foundation for building relationships, sharing knowledge and strengthening connections across the disability community.







A particular highlight this year, as every year, was our annual Disability Pride Celebration, held this time in Kensington Town Hall. It included open mic performances, art, board games and a sensory corner in memory of Kirsty Timberlake, one of Belong's founding members, who died in May 2025.

Several areas of work were initiated or strengthened this year and hold particular promise. We look forward to building on this work and seeing them flourish in the year ahead:

- Our mutual aid models, Medical Mates and Support Circles, provide opportunities to debrief and share knowledge in small groups.

- Safety in Numbers is an invitation to come together to do absolutely anything out and about - from picnics to comedy to circus shows.

- We also developed two exploratory workshops, one on Disability Culture and Pride and another Disability Frameworks and the Disability Rights Movement. Both will be expanded and further developed in collaboration with Belong members.

- Towards the very end of this FY the team also worked together to develop our Belong Crip Pride T-shirt, which we hope will be the start of a new merchandise array.

Belong is supported by our wonderful team: Robyn, Roan, Finn and Zoe, and is only possible through the extraordinary generosity of our volunteer members and facilitators.

We are deeply grateful to the many people who have given so freely of their time, thought, care and energy to make Belong what it is. Their contribution is a genuine gift - of the knowledge they have shared, the connections they have nurtured and the welcome they have extended to make sure people feel seen, valued and understood. This work is built not just on what we do together, but on the generosity with which we show up for one another. This is the spirit of collective care that brings Belong to life.

We were supported this year by the NDIS Peer Support and Capacity Building Grant, as well as State Trustees, City of Melbourne and DFFH Self Help Grants. We thank them sincerely for their encouragement and support.

From the Treasurer



I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30 June 2026. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge Victor Nieto, our Treasurer until December 2025. The whole financial year's outcomes were a shared achievement of which the Board and I are truly proud.

Despite a challenging economic environment, the past financial year has demonstrated DRC's effectiveness in securing grants and managing costs. We recorded a surplus of $57,424. This follows a surplus of $87,685 for the year ended 30 June 2025.

Total income for the past financial year was $667,319, consisting of grants ($577,677 or 86.5%), donations ($79,170 or 12%) and interest ($10,472 or 1.5%).

Total expenditure was $609,895. The vast majority is attributable to staffing, with salaries and wages, superannuation and annual leave expenses amounting to $510,202 or 84%.

Overall, our strong performance in the past financial year offers flexibility in how we balance the demands and costs of our future service delivery. I am grateful to the Board and our staff for their efforts that placed us in this fortunate position.

Justin Li
Treasurer

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	2026 $	2025 $
INCOME		
Grant - Department of Fairness, Family and Housing	391,378	359,110
NDIS - ILC Capacity Building	7,000	12,157
NDIS - Peer Support and Capacity Building	159,790	53,549
General Grants Received	19,509	63,179
Interest Income	10,472	10,496
Donations	79,170	1,000
Gain on Dispoal of Assets	-	900
TOTAL INCOME	**667,319**	**500,391**
EXPENDITURE		
Access	510	-
Advertising	426	590
AGM Expenses	-	1,299
Annual Leave Expense	7,597	-
Audit	1,750	1,700
Belong Expenses	-	1,698
Catering Expenses	1,488	-
Conferences & Memberships	136	244
Consultancy Fees	14,250	3,900
Equipment	59	-
Financial Services	14,085	9,479
Forums & Workshops	249	195
Frank Hall Bentick Award	1,105	1,105
IT and Network Expenses	1,959	1,996
IT - Website	7,577	195
Meeting Expenses	-	524
Memberships	483	927
Minor Equipment	1,976	1,241
Office Administration Costs	76	54
Portable Long Service Benefits Scheme Levies	7,099	6,592
Pride Event	6,016	5,396
Printing Postage & Stationery	-	574
Project Expenses	-	596
Rent, Rates & Occupancy Costs	19,461	19,282
Room Hire	700	1,705
Salaries & Wages	449,850	303,638
Software	5,980	3,241
Staff Amenities	116	41
Staff Expenses	1,106	772
Staff Training	3,874	-
Superannuation	52,755	34,418
Telephone	1,655	1,390
Travel & Accommodation	468	708
Workcover	7,089	9,206
	609,895	**412,706**
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**609,895**	**412,706**
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	**57,424**	**87,685**

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	2026 $	2025 $
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR	**57,424**	**87,685**
Total Comprehensive Income for the Year	-	-
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE ASSOCIATION	**57,424**	**87,685**

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	Note	2026 $	2025 $
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from grants		508,739	615,212
Receipts from customers and other sources		31,060	12,814
Payments to suppliers and employees		(583,782)	(408,704)
Interest received		10,472	10,496
Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities	(i)	**(33,511)**	**229,818**
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		-	-
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment		-	900
Net cash (used in)/provided by investing activities		**-**	**900**
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		(33,511)	230,718
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year		512,528	281,810
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	(ii)	**479,017**	**512,528**

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
NOTES TO THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	2026 $	2025 $
Note (i). Net cash generated from/(used in) operating activities		
Net deficit for the year	57,424	87,685
Non-cash flow Item: gain on dispoal of assets	-	(900)
(Increase)/decrease in accounts and other receivables	(48,110)	11,814
Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables	18,516	2,253
Increase/(decrease) in grants received in advance	(68,938)	127,217
Increase/(decrease) in provisions	7,597	1,749
	(33,511)	**229,818**
Note (ii). Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year		
Cash at bank	284,873	326,307
Cash on term deposits	193,711	185,528
Petty cash	433	693
	479,017	**512,528**

DISABILITY RESOURCES CENTRE INC
ABN 78 577 549 329
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

	Accumulated funds $	Total $
Balance as at 1 July 2024	**207,565**	**207,565**
Surplus/ (Deficit) attributable to the Association	87,685	87,685
Balance as at 30 June 2025	**295,250**	**295,250**
Surplus/ (Deficit) attributable to the Association	57,424	57,424
Balance as at 30 June 2026	**352,674**	**352,674**

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This publication is available in accessible formats on request.