**Communiqué**

**23 April 2021**

The third meeting of the Disability Council NSW (the Council) for 2021 was held virtually on Friday, 23 April 2021. In the absence of Council Chair Ms Donna Purcell, the meeting was convened by the Deputy Chair, Dr Jill Duncan.

Members reviewed the Council's Strategic Plan 2021. The Plan will soon be made available on the Council’s webpage.

The Council welcomed Ms Emilie Priday, Director, Workforce Inclusion and Experience, Public Service Commission (PSC) to its meeting. Ms Priday presented the findings of the People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) Report and the various disability employment initiatives that are undertaken by the PSC to improve the workplace experience of people with disability in the public sector.

Key insights shared by Ms Priday include:

* The Workforce Profile Collection reports an estimated 2.4% of public sector employees identified as having disability in 2020; however, in the 2020 PMES Survey Report, the disability representation was at 4.3%.
* The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers in 2018 reported that 7.5% of people with a disability in NSW work for Government (ie, local, State and Federal).
* Ms Priday spoke about the need for the NSW public sector to become a place where people with disability feel safe to disclose their disability and experience positive and inclusive working environments.
* Key PSC initiatives shared include - Accessible Office Framework policy, Managers e-learning training, learning bite videos to build knowledge of disability-inclusive practices, enhance the accessibility of iWorkforNSW website etc.

The Council has requested Ms Priday to share data on disability types of employees with disability working in the NSW Public Sector.

The Council also expressed interest in reviewing the PSC Accessible Office Framework policy for feedback.

Bullying in the workplace was another important and concerning area that was discussed at the meeting. A Council member has volunteered to work with Ms Priday on this matter.

The Council next welcomed the Hon. Gareth Ward, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services to its meeting. Minister Ward briefed the Council about the $17 million ‘More Jobs More Care’ initiative which aims to boost the quality and quantity of workers in the rapidly growing care sector.

The Minister also briefed the Council about his meeting with the newly appointed Federal Minister for the NDIS, Hon. Linda Reynold and the sector round table that is scheduled on 30 April 2021 with both Ministers to discuss various aspects of the NDIS, including Independent assessments. The Deputy Chair will be participating in this roundtable.

While discussing disability employment in the public sector, Minister Ward suggested the Council have ‘Disability Employment’ as a standing agenda item for all its meetings.

Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission joined the meeting to brief the Council about the effect of COVID-19 and priorities for the Human Rights Commission in 2021. Dr Gauntlett discussed how COVID-19 was a stress test for policy framework for people with disability in Australia and how it exposed challenges in the system.

Dr Gauntlett expressed critical concern on the state of disability employment. While the world has moved to a remote economy, it is important to understand that people with disability are part of it and that a new remote economy must be accessible.

The Commissioner’s office is currently working on two important projects concerning people with disability, they are:

* A project with Monash University on adaptable housing
* A project on disability employment with larger employers in Australia to employ more people with disability

Ms Linda Scott, President of Local Government NSW joined the meeting and shared key initiatives undertaken by NSW local councils to ensure the delivery and implementation of community inclusion obligations stated under the Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP). Key information shared by Ms Scott included:

* Community inclusion outcomes have increased since a legislative requirement to have a DIAP in place in 2017.
* Resourcing and funding are major barriers to fully implementing identified actions.
* The timeframe to complete actions identified in the councils first DIAP has been extended to June 2021 due to COVID, floods, prolonged drought and severe bushfires.
* Development of the second four-year action plan to commence in July 2022.
* Local government elections will be held in September 2021.
* The importance of having people with disability in elected leadership positions.

The Disability Council and Local Government NSW are committed to working collaboratively in the future.

The Council will next meet on 25 June 2021.

**Dr Jill Duncan**

**Deputy Chair - The Disability Council NSW**