



National Disability Summit

by informa •••

17 – 18 SEPTEMBER 2026

CROWN PROMENADE MELBOURNE

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:



Dr Jill Gallagher AO, *Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation*



Peter Orr, *Executive Director - Disability, Life Without Barriers*



Heidi Clarris, *Chief Customer Officer, Aruma*



Bart Walsh, *Former Head Coach, Jetts Fitness Australia*



Susan McHugh, *Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Compass House*



Christine Stow, *Councillor, City of Whittlesea*



Dr Shannon Schedlich, *Chief Executive, Siblings Australia*



Boudicea Hodgson, *Founder & Director, Richer Support*



Rie Bredow, *Operations Manager, Velan Health Disability Services*



Susi Bostock, *Chief Executive Officer, Liorn Support & Care Services*



Jessica Orford, *Clinical Psychologist & Clinical Lead, Behavioural Emergency Response Team, Metro North Health, Queensland*



Suzanne Gearing, *Chief Executive Officer, Physical Disability Australia*



Will Egan, *Chief Executive Officer, Ausmed*



Tania McInnes, *Chief Executive Officer, Integrated Disability Action Inc.*



Carly Nisner, *Founder, Support Worker Association of Australia*



Sharon Xabregas, *Managing Director, Sign Hear*



Professor Charmine Härtel, *Associate Dean Research Impact & Founding Director - Opportunity Tech Lab, Monash Business School*



Storm Menzies, *Founder, ByStorm Beauty*

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National Disability Summit

Thursday 17 September 2026

DAY 1

7:45 Registration & Morning Coffee

8:45 **DAY ONE OPENING**

8:50 Opening remarks from the Chair

8:55 **OPENING ADDRESS | The Good, the Bad, and Ugly side of both the past Disability Act, and your NDIA and NDIS**

Philip Hodges, *Former Vice President, Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria*

9:20 **MINISTERIAL KEYNOTE | NDIS 2026 & New Framework Planning**

9:50 **EXECUTIVE PANEL | Navigating NDIS: Strategic Governance Through Legislative Reform**

- How can providers structurally adapt to the new NDIS legislative rules?
- As the NDIA transitions away from clinical diagnostics to the new Support Needs Assessment (SNA) model, how can providers best upskill their frontline staff?
- How can customer wellbeing and satisfaction be maintained during NDIS Reforms?
- What does genuine co-design look like when rebuilding organisational service offerings?

Peter Orr, *Executive Director - Disability, Life Without Barriers*

Heidi Clarris, *Chief Customer Officer, Aruma*

10:35 **KEYNOTE | Beyond Standardised Assessment: Embedding Lived Experience, Kinship, and Cultural Safety**

Dr Jill Gallagher AO, *Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation*

11:05 Networking Break & Morning Tea

11:35 **SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Planes Trains, Taxis and Trams - The Inclusive Transport Challenge**

- When design lacks co-design - simple design mistakes that keep repeating
- The travel chain challenge - accessible transport needs to be a whole-of-journey process
- Using curb cut thinking to address access issues - innovation to improve accessibility benefits everyone

Suzanne Gearing, *Chief Executive Officer, Physical Disability Australia*

11:55 **The Northern Territory's Journey with Predatory Practices in the Disability Sector: Then and Now**

Tania McInnes, *Chief Executive Officer, Integrated Disability Action Inc.*

12:20 **SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Know My Rights: Upholding Participant Rights in a Shifting Landscape**

Will Egan, *Chief Executive Officer, Ausmed*

12:40 Networking Lunch

13:40 **AFTERNOON KEYNOTE | The Advantage of Adversity**

- How to reframe hardship as an opportunity for profound growth
- The Three Rules of Resilience: Own your circumstance, Seek discomfort, Love your Fate

Bart Walsh, *Former Head Coach, Jetts Fitness Australia*

14:05 **SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Disability Enter Work**

Professor Charmine Härtel, *Associate Dean Research Impact & Founding Director - Opportunity Tech Lab, Monash Business School*

14:30 **The Accessible High Street: Reimagining Physical Branches and EFTPOS Terminals for Universal Design**

14:55 **PANEL | Untangling Supported Independent Living (SIL) & Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA): Exploring Housing Solutions Within Current Frameworks**

- How can providers clearly separate SIL care from SDA housing without causing participant anxiety?
- What must smaller providers do immediately to survive mandatory SIL registration?
- What does genuine co-design look like when building a participant's long-term home?

Meg White, *Behaviour Support Practitioner, AJH Disability & Health Services*

Lee Archer, *Manager, Tenant Voice, Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance*

15:40 Networking Break & Afternoon Tea

16:10 **The Connective Tissue: How Wraparound Support Is Achieving What the System Said Couldn't Be Done — and How We're Proving It**

Susan McHugh, *Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Compass House*

16:35 **CLOSING PANEL | Closing the Circle: Designing Seamless Education and Employment Pathways**


Nikki Noack, *General Manager - Education & Training, Job Access (GenU)*

Elizabeth Christodoulou, *National Employment Project Manager, Down Syndrome Australia*

Sharon Xabregas, *Managing Director, Sign Hear*

Storm Menzies, *Founder, ByStorm Beauty*

17:20 Closing Remarks from the Chair

17:30 End of Day 1 & Networking Drinks 



National Disability Summit

Friday 18 September 2026

DAY 2

8:30 Registration & Morning Coffee

8:45 **DAY TWO OPENING**

8:50 Opening remarks from the Chair

8:55 **OPENING KEYNOTE | The Human Rights Deficit: Recalibrating the Social License of Disability Reform in Australia**

Why the current path to NDIS sustainability must not come at the cost of participant dignity, safety, and community inclusion.

9:25 **KEYNOTE | Beyond the Cost of Caring: Leadership, Lived Experience and the Future of the NDIS**

- Where the NDIS began: lived experience, advocacy and community connection
- Where we are now: increased complexity, change and a growing gap between lived experience and decision-making
- Where we're going: and bringing people with disabilities and carers into leadership and decision-making roles strengthens outcomes across the system

Christine Stow, *Councillor, City of Whittlesea*

9:50 **IN CONVERSATION | Carers & Families - Voices That Need to Be Heard**

Dr Shannon Schedlich, *Chief Executive, Siblings Australia*
Pieta Manning, *General Manager of Growth and Engagement, Care Fast*

10:20 **SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Financial Restructuring & Claim-Tech Advisory**

Starting 1 December 2026, the window to make a payment claim shrinks from two years down to just 90 days. Helping large providers overhaul back-office invoicing systems to prevent lost cash-flow.

10:40 Networking Break & Morning Tea

11:10 **Disability and Family Violence - What the Disability Community have taught us**

- The Disability and Family Violence Initiative was created as a pilot in 2023 funded by Family Safety Victoria and Safe + Equal
- The Initiative has mapped gaps and challenges across the sector in 9 LGAs across Victoria

Shannon Miller, *Disability and Family Violence Practice Leader, Centre Against Violence*

11:35 **From Compliance to Capability: What Behaviour Support Reveals About Quality in the NDIS**

Boudicea Hodgson, *Founder & Director, Richer Support*

12:00 **Protecting Those Who Care: Strengthening Bushfire Safety in the Care Sector**

Kelly Stoner, *Senior Engagement Advisor - People at Higher Risk, Country Fire Authority*

12:25 **PANEL | Workforce Development & Safety: A Two-Way Safety Net**

- How do we ensure both participants/clients and workers are safe? What does mutual respect and dignity look like in practice?
- How do we balance accessibility to the workforce with ensuring quality and safety? What support do providers need to upskill their workforce?
- How can we create work environments where both sides are physically and psychologically safe?

Susi Bostock, *Chief Executive Officer, Liorn Support & Care Services*

Steve Woollard, *Chief Executive Officer, NeuroRehab Allied Health Network*

Carly Nisner, *Founder, Support Worker Association of Australia*

Rie Bredow, *Operations Manager, Velan Health Disability Services*

13:05 Networking Lunch

14:05 **AFTERNOON KEYNOTE | I Don't Wake Up Blind**

Matt De Gruchy, *Blindness and disAbility Advocate, Matt Degruchy Vision*

14:25 **IN CONVERSATION | Transportation Access & Independence**

- Evolution of transport sector and current barriers
- Impact on social participation and quality of life

14:55 **CLOSING PANEL | The Invisible Cliff: Mental Health Reform and the Future of Psychosocial Disability Supports**

Amanda Hendren, *Director & Psychosocial Recovery Coach, My Community Collaborative*

Jessica Orford, *Clinical Psychologist & Clinical Lead, Behavioural Emergency Response Team (BERT), Metro North Health, Qld*

Keely Joan Walsh, *Specialist Social Worker & PhD student, University of Melbourne*

15:35 Closing Remarks from the Chair

15:40 End of Conference

SPONSORSHIP AND EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITIES

Don't miss this opportunity to get involved early in this year's National Disability Summit. To see what we have available please contact **Danielle Newman, Sponsorship Manager** on (+61) 2 9080 4318 or email: Danielle.Newman@informa.com



National Disability Summit

17 – 18 September 2026 | Crown Promenade Hotel, Melbourne

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- 3 Email**
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