

PRESENTING THE 16TH ANNUAL

NATIONAL DISABILITY SUMMIT

18 – 19 September 2025 | Crown Promenade Hotel, Melbourne

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:



Emma Vulin MP, *State Member for Pakenham*,
Parliament of Victoria



Emma Bennison, *Principal*,
Emma Bennison and Associates



Amelia Evans, *CEO*, **Queensland Airports**



Bianca Bassett, *Senior Consultant, Get Skilled Access*,
Disability Inclusion Advocate



Dr Jill Gallagher AO, *CEO*, **VACCHO**



Catherine Walsh, *Chief of People Officer*, **Qantas**



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



Debbie Phillips, *Senior Sergeant, Disability & Elder Abuse Coordinator, Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit*, **QLD Police**



Jeswynn Yogaratnam, *Commissioner, NT Anti-Discrimination Commission, Principal Community Visitor*, **Community Visitor Program**

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:



Stu Schonell, *CEO*, **Advocacy WA**



Josie Fakira, *General Manager of Organisational Development and Steward D&I*, **Coles Group**



Claire Faulkner, *Senior Solicitor, NDIS Appeals Team Leader*,
Legal Aid WA



Sharon Xabregas, *Managing Director*, **Sign Hear**



Mary-Jane Stolp, *CEO*, **The Bridge Incorporated**



Di Geddes, *Registered Nurse, Director*,
Exceptional Care for You



Benjamin Keast, *CEO*, **ARC Disability Services**



Jethro Hepton, *Board Chairperson*, **Advocacy WA**



Danielle Corden, *General Counsel*,
The Royal Women's Melbourne



Trent Belling, *Co-Director and Founder*, **Alicia's House**



Cat Lancaster, *Executive Director, Innovation and Practice Excellence*, **Life Without Barriers**



Jo-Anne Hewitt, *CEO*, **Achieve Australia**

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National Disability Summit

Thursday 18 September 2025

DAY 1

8:00 Registration & Morning Coffee

8:45 DAY ONE OPENING

8:45 The Morning Bulletin: Opening Remarks from the Chair

Benjamin Keast, *CEO, ARC Disability Services*

8:50 OPENING ADDRESS | Redefining Inclusive Leadership and the Impact on Quality Service Provision

Emma Bennison, *Principal, Emma Bennison and Associates*

9:20 PRE-RECORDED KEYNOTE ADDRESS | The Importance of Community Inclusion: Changing Places Facility

Emma Vulin MP, *State Member for Pakenham, Parliament of Victoria*

9:30 PANEL | The Housing Reality Check: Moving Beyond the Current Conversation

Nicole Doherty, *Managing Director, Empowered Liveability*

Trent Belling, *Co-Director and Founder, Alicia's House*

Cat Lancaster, *Executive Director, Innovation and Practice Excellence, Life Without Barriers*

Jo-Anne Hewitt, *CEO, Achieve Australia*

Alecia Rathbone, *Chief Executive, Housing Hub.*

10:15 KEYNOTE ADDRESS | Navigating NDIS Changes: Practical Strategies for Providers and Participants

- Consistent, fair and transparent decisions
- Implementing Foundational Supports: What it means for you
- Adapting to new Provider and Worker Registration requirements
- Maximising NDIS plans under the new system

10:50 Networking Break & Morning Tea

11:35 PARTNER KEYNOTE From Provider-led to Participant-driven: Addressing Imbalances in SDA & Shared Support Settings



Senior Representative, *Housing Hub.*

12:00 PANEL | Beyond Placement: Supporting Employers to Increase Retention

Perrin Abbas, *Project Lead – Disability Inclusion, Multicultural Communities Council of SA*

Maddison Gray, *Communications & Media Specialist, WCMICS (c/o Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre), Lived Experience Disability Advocate*

Josie Fakira, *General Manager of Organisational Development and Steward D&I, Coles Group*

Moderated by Benjamin Keast, *CEO, ARC Disability Services*

12:50 SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Pathways to Possibilities

How can you create systemic change and economic opportunities for people with disability in workplaces? This session will explore the Pathways to Possibilities programme, exploring the tools, solutions, and support to employers. As well as our national Community of Practice which influences policy and reshapes mainstream employment for people with disability across Australia.

Ben Fioramonte, *General Manager, Children Families and Disability Supports, SSI*

Nicole Smith, *Head of Disability Support, SSI*



13:10 Networking Lunch

14:15 SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Advancing Pressure Care with Next Generation Support Surfaces

Senior Representative, *Crescent Healthcare*



14:45 KEYNOTE ADDRESS | Culturally Appropriate Care for First Nations People with Disability

— Practical strategies, pilots, programs and projects

— Building capacity within the community

— Building a disability workforce: mob supporting mob

— Dr Jill Gallagher AO, *CEO, VACCHO*

15:15 This Is Not Taboo: Reproductive and Birthing Rights for People with Disability

Cherise Smith, *Coordinator, Women's Individual Needs Clinic. Registered Nurse/Midwife., The Royal Women's Melbourne*

Danielle Corden, *General Counsel, The Royal Women's Melbourne*

15:45 Networking Break & Afternoon Tea

16:15 Partnering for Change: The Positive Impact of Community Health

People with disability in rural, regional and remote areas face growing gaps in community health. In this session, Stu and Jethro share their lived experience and offer practical ideas for rebuilding local supports through community partnerships, smarter funding, government policy, and better connections between services. A positive, solutions-focused look at how disability service providers can drive change where it's needed most. We could call this Foundational Supports!

Jethro Hepton, *Board Chairperson, Advocacy WA*

Stu Schonell, *CEO, Advocacy WA*

16:45 CLOSING PANEL | Let's Shift the Culture: Changing the Outlook of Our Workforce

— The importance of a lived experience workforce

— Developing your workforce pipeline

— Working hand-in-hand with the aged care workforce: July 1st and beyond

— Workforce planning and the future of the workforce: technology and AI

Angela Mucic, *Chief Allied Health Officer, NeuroRehab Allied Health Network*

Sharon Xabregas, *Managing Director, Sign Hear*

Mary-Jane Stolp, *CEO, The Bridge Incorporated*

Di Geddes, *Registered Nurse, Director, Exceptional Care for You*

Moderated by Benjamin Keast, *CEO, ARC Disability Services*

17:30 The Afternoon Bulletin: Closing Remarks & Key Takeaways from the Chair

17:35 Networking Drinks Reception

18:35 End of Day 1



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National Disability Summit

Friday 19 September 2025

DAY 2

8:00 Registration & Morning Coffee

8:45 **DAY ONE OPENING**

8:45 **The Morning Bulletin: Opening Remarks from the Chair**

Emma Gierschick OAM

8:55 **KEYNOTE PANEL | Justice, Safety and Rights: Responding to Violence and Criminalisation in the Disability Sector**

People with disability are at significantly higher risk of abuse, exploitation, and involvement in the criminal justice system—often without adequate support or protection. This panel brings together experts from policing, family violence services, and forensic disability advocacy to explore practical ways service providers can better recognise risk, respond to disclosures, support clients navigating police or legal systems, and uphold the rights of those in secure settings. Learn how to identify gaps in safety planning, improve engagement, and build stronger partnerships across sectors.

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

Debbie Phillips, *Senior Sergeant, Disability & Elder Abuse Coordinator, Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit, QLD Police*

Jeswynn Yogaratnam, *Commissioner, NT Anti-Discrimination Commission, Principal Community Visitor, Community Visitor Program*

9:45 **KEYNOTE ADDRESS | A Force to Be Reckoned With**

10:15 **SESSION SPOTLIGHT | Sector Sustainability Through Reform**

Claire McCullagh, *Principal, Nous Group*

Geoff Sjollem, *Principal, Nous Group*



10:35 Networking Break & Morning Tea

11:15 **Reasonable and Necessary: Understanding the Legal Changes to the NDIS 2.0**

- Disability Roadmap for Providers and Participants
- Unpicking the NDIS reforms in 2025
- What is applicable on new plans?
- The interface of Support Coordinators + Local Area Coordination + Foundational Supports

Claire Faulkner, *Senior Solicitor, NDIS Appeals Team Leader, Legal Aid WA*

11:45 **From Lived Experience to Lasting Impact: Revolutionising Disability Inclusion in Education**

The Inclusion in Schools Project is a suite of six disability awareness and inclusion programs that are delivered to 9000+ students each year across NSW primary and high schools. Designed and delivered by facilitators with lived experience of disability, these interactive programs encourage students to become the next generation of change makers by exploring difference, accessibility, the social model of disability, and how true inclusion benefits everyone. This session will examine key successes, lessons learned, and the power of lived experience to help children and young people with disability feel connected and valued in their communities.

Maree Jenner, *Schools Facilitator, Social Futures*

Prue McCarthy, *Schools Facilitator, Social Futures*

12:15 **PANEL | Health Outcomes through Collaboration and Co-Design**

- The interface between the hospital, allied health, service provision and the community
- Projects, programs and pilots. What's worked? How did it work?
- Scalability and sustainability
- Enhanced patient outcomes

Peta Fensham-Cobb, *General Manager, Multicap*

Nicole Preston, *Occupational Therapist, Cohealth*

Robyne Burridge OAM

Angela Mucic, *Chief Allied Health Officer, NeuroRehab Allied Health Network*

Moderated by Emma Gierschick OAM

13:00 Networking Lunch

14:00 **Aging with Disability: Getting it Right**

- The interface between aging and disability
- Coordinating NDIS, aged care services or DSP
- Supporting decision-making and future planning

Robyne Burridge OAM

14:30 **Scenario Based Risk Strategies and Emergency Preparedness**

- Beyond fire, floods, and COVID – workplaces and day to day plans
- Person-centred emergency plans for participants and providers
- Business continuity of supports from service providers

15:00 **CLOSING KEYNOTE PANEL | The Flight Plan: Accessible Air Travel Solutions**

- Overcoming known industry challenges
- Innovative tools, strategies and programs
- Key takeaways and actionable tips for disability service providers
- Creating greater choice, accessibility and access for people with disability

Amelia Evans, *CEO, Queensland Airports*

Bianca Bassett, *Senior Consultant, Get Skilled Access, Disability Inclusion Advocate*

Catherine Walsh, *Chief of People Officer, Qantas*

Emma Bennison, *Principal, Emma Bennison and Associates*

Moderated by Stu Schonell, *CEO, Advocacy WA*

15:45 The Afternoon Bulletin: Closing Remarks & Key Takeaways from the Chair

15:50 End of Summit

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:

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