

# News from Disability Commissioner Tasmania, May 2026

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## Message from the Commissioner



*Caption: Photo of our Disability Commissioner Catherine Whittington.*

Hello everyone

Already we find ourselves almost halfway through 2026. During the last few months, we have focused on recruiting members for the inaugural Disability Inclusion Advisory Council established under the *Disability Rights, Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*.

Early in the process, we partnered with Disability Voices Tasmania to raise awareness of the role of council and to make sure support was available to everyone interested in applying. What a response we received - 79 applications from all over Tasmania – a truly diverse and vibrant group of people! Alongside my team, I have

spent the past few weeks travelling across our state to facilitate group sessions with applicants.

As I reflect on those sessions, I am struck by the dedication, skill and hopefulness I saw and heard, and was truly privileged to be a part of it. At a time where our community is experiencing some uncertainty, and perhaps even fear – the comradery and clarity I witnessed reminds me that it is within connection and community that change is made and people are safest.

I have also been pleased to contribute to work being done on the Tasmanian Disability Inclusion Plan, as well as in areas of health, youth justice, and child safety. You can learn more about this work in the newsletter and our website.

Catherine

## Establishing the Disability Inclusion Advisory Council: An update

Recruitment for the Disability Inclusion Advisory Council is well underway, with recommended applicants now provided to the Minister for Disability Services.

We are very pleased to have received 79 applications and were encouraged by the passion applicants showed for improving inclusion for Tasmanians with disability.

Throughout April, all applicants were invited to attend group sessions and take part in activities designed to help us get to know them, understand how they work with others, and identify skills they will bring to Council. There were 9 group sessions held in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and online.

Our team were supported by community panellists, who observed the sessions and provided an external perspective. We thank Richard Witbruek, Jane Wardlaw and Sarah Young for their support with the recruitment process.

Once the Minister for Disability Services has selected the council members, the first Council meeting is expected to be held in June.

We look forward to sharing more news about the Council in our next newsletter.

## Living My Best Life Art Exhibition to tour the state

We are excited to share that the Living My Best Life Art Exhibition will tour the north and north west of Tasmania/Lutruwita.

The touring exhibition is a partnership with Libraries Tasmania, and will showcase the work of 19 emerging, mid-career and established Tasmanian artists with disability.

From quiet to bold works spanning printmaking, writing, music, painting, photography, design, digital media, sculpture, and textiles, the artists explore what it means to live their best life in a way that is meaningful to them.

Tour dates are:

Devonport Library: 21 May - 16 June 2026

Burnie Library: 17 June - 14 July 2026

Queenstown Library: 16 July - 5 August 2026

Launceston Library: 7 August – 4 September 2026

“As our community comes together to develop Tasmania’s first Disability Inclusion Plan under the Disability Rights, Safeguarding and Inclusion Act, it is my hope this exhibition continues to spark curiosity about our shared human experiences, and challenges people to reflect on what inclusion, accessibility and living with disability really mean,” Commissioner Whittington said.

“Above all, I hope the exhibition moves towards true inclusion and a genuine sense of belonging.”

We are grateful to partner with Libraries Tasmania to bring the work and stories of Tasmania artists with disability to communities across the state.

More information on the touring exhibition will be available on our website and social media channels soon.

## Submissions

### Tasmanian Disability Inclusion Plan

In March we made a submission to the Department of Premier and Cabinet as part of the development of Tasmania’s first Disability Inclusion Plan.

In our submission we called for stronger rights for people with disability. Disability inclusion must be embedded from the start in policy, system design, and delivery of government services. We believe a proactive, low-effort and predictable system enables people with disability to participate fully, meaningfully and with ease, without needing to repeatedly disclose their disability or navigate unnecessary complexity. When inclusion is built in, the whole of Tasmania benefits.

[You can read our submission in full on the publications page of our website.](#)

## Other News

### Helping people with disability get ready for emergencies

Have you heard of the Disability Emergency Preparedness Project run by the State Emergency Service (SES)? The project helps people with disability and their support networks to actively prepare for emergencies and reduce their impact.

The project uses the Person-centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) approach, which recognises that people with disability can plan for emergencies in ways that fit their own lives.

[Find out more about the Disability Emergency Preparedness Project on the SES website.](#)

The SES is supporting disability service providers, community organisations, and members in Tasmania to take part in a free online P-CEP facilitation course run by the University of Sydney. The 5–6-week course helps participants apply the P-CEP approach to prepare for emergencies and to support people during and after an event. The next courses will be held from 18 May and 7 September. [Complete an online expression of interest form.](#)

### Creative Australia fellowships, grants, and awards

Calling all creatives with disability, Creative Australia currently has the following opportunities available:

- National Arts and Disability Awards – Nominations are now open to recognise the achievements of established and early career d/Deaf artists and artists with disability. [Read more on the Creative Australia website.](#)
- Applications for Arts and Disability Fellowships are now open, offering \$80,000 grants to the creative practice and professional development of outstanding, established artists and arts workers. [Find more information on their website.](#)

### Seeking survey participations: Sport and physical activity experiences of women, girls, non-binary people with disability

Griffith University researchers are seeking the input of women, girls, and non-binary people with disability aged 16+ who play sport or engage in physical activity.

The survey seeks to understand more about the enablers and benefits of participation, and how it can be improved. This research will help transform programs, policies, and practice resources across adaptive and mainstream sports.

[Read more and access the survey.](#)

## Celebrating 40 years of the Australian Human Rights Commission

This year marks 40 years of the Australian Human Rights Commission with a program of events focusing on the past, present, and future. These events will be accompanied by the release of 40 advocacy stories across disability rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, gender equality, First Peoples' rights, and more.

[Read more about 40 years of the Australian Human Rights Commission on their website.](#)

## Resources

### Creating safer workplaces for women with disabilities

Our Watch has created a new guide: *Creating safety, equality, inclusion, and respect for women with disabilities in the workplace*. You can [access the guide on their website](#). The guide will be launched online on Thursday 28 May 2026 from 1:00-2:30pm AEST. The webinar will be captioned and Auslan interpreted. [Register for the launch](#).

## Office update



*Caption: Photo of Deputy Disability Commissioner, Ross Casey.*

### Welcome Ross Casey

Ross recently joined our team as the Deputy Disability Commissioner. Ross has university degrees in justice and law and qualifications in government investigations. Ross has worked in disability advocacy and in leadership roles in government across complaints and incident management, policy, regulatory compliance, and investigations. Outside of work, Ross enjoys spending time with his family, getting outdoors, and playing tennis.

### Farewell Jessica

Earlier this month we farewelled Assessment Officer, Jessica Nichols. We thank Jess for the expertise and care she brought to assessing reports in the office. We are proud of Jess securing her new role at the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and wish her all the best.

## Strategic plan and values development

We have begun work on developing our strategic plan, which will define our long-term priorities and objectives. This work sits alongside the development of our core values and guiding principles. We will share more information in upcoming newsletters.

## Events

Disability Commissioner Tasmania will share information about events we know are happening within the Tasmanian Disability community. These events are not run by the Commissioner and are not part of her work. Contact us if you would like to have your event considered for inclusion in this newsletter.

## Strengthening Connections

2 June 2026, 10:30am – 12:30pm

The Chapel, Tailrace Centre, 1 Waterfront Drive, Riverside

Strengthening Connections offers a way for people living with dementia, families, carers and community members to come together, connect, share experiences, and build supportive local relationships. This free event is hosted by Lil Mirtl, a Dementia Advocate and Dementia Australia Advisory Committee member. [RSVP to the session.](#)

## Disability Expo 'Gearing Up for Choice & Control,' Speak Out Advocacy

Hobart: 26 August 2026, MAC Wharf 02

Launceston: 16 September 2026, Launceston Conference Centre

Devonport: 29 September 2026, paranapple arts centre

Hosted by Speak Out Advocacy, these free events connect people with disability, their families, and supporters to specialist businesses and NDIS service providers.

Disability Commissioner Tasmania will be attending, and we look forward to connecting with the local community.

[More information and to register for a trade table or booth.](#)

## Tasmanian Accessibility Community

Monthly, 5:30pm – 7:30pm AEST (alternating between hybrid in-person at Rosny Library and online via Zoom)

Modality Co runs a free monthly group meet up focusing on accessibility, disability, and inclusive design. The meet up features a short presentation or workshop, time to chat, collaborate, share information, and network.

[Visit the Modality Co website for further information and upcoming dates.](#)

## We welcome feedback on our newsletter

Thank you for reading our newsletter. If you have any suggestions or would like to provide us with feedback, please contact us.

## How to contact us

- By phone: 1800 179 249 (free call) or 03 6270 5500
- Email us at: [contact@disabilitycommissioner.tas.gov.au](mailto:contact@disabilitycommissioner.tas.gov.au)
- Visit our website: [www.disabilitycommissioner.tas.gov.au](http://www.disabilitycommissioner.tas.gov.au)
- Write us a letter: Disability Commissioner Tasmania, GPO Box 123, Hobart 7001
- Visit us: Level 5, 188 Collins Street, Hobart, 7000. Our office hours are 9:00am-5:00pm, Monday to Friday. [Find more information on how to get to our office on our website.](#)

## Make a Report

If you are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of someone with disability, [make a report to us.](#)

## Connect with us on social media

[Follow Disability Commissioner Tasmania on Facebook.](#)

[Follow Disability Commissioner Tasmania on LinkedIn.](#)

[Follow Disability Commissioner Tasmania on YouTube.](#)

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