

October 2020

Contents

COVID-19 Information

Carers Week 2020
and NSW Carers
Strategy 2020-2030

Disability Royal
Commission Update

Cardholder Q&A

Local Government

A message to all
Companion Card
holders

*To receive Catch Up
by email call us on
1800 893 044 or email
info.companioncard
@facss.nsw.gov.au*

Flashback Sydney 2000 Paralympics



Kerrie-Ann King representing Australia in Goalball, Sydney 2000.
Photo Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported Aust Paralympic Committee

In what should have been an Olympic year, we are instead remembering and celebrating the athletes that competed in Sydney 2000. On the Companion Card team we are lucky to have our very own Paralympian Kerrie-Ann, pictured.

Kerrie-Ann has fond memories of competing not only in the Sydney Paralympics but also in the Barcelona 1992 Paralympics for Australia.

COVID-19 Information

#DontWaitMate

The #DontWaitMate campaign is to help people, patients and carers in Australia feel safe to continue to go and see their doctor, nurse, pharmacist, allied health professional and dentist, and to also not put off tests such as blood tests, cancer screening or x-rays and scans. It's important to continue with your health management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://continuityofcare.org/>

DJC COVID-19 (coronavirus) response

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), formerly the departments of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Justice, has a dedicated website covering all aspects of the department's COVID-19 response. DCJ recognises that the Coronavirus can impact on many aspects of your life not just your health. There is information on legal advice, food aid, housing, domestic and family violence and more. <https://www.coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/>

Public health orders

The NSW Government COVID-19 website contains up to date information and links to resources to assist you with every aspect of your life. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19>

People with Disability Australia have created a COVID-19 Hub with disability-focused information including national and international resources.

<https://pwd.org.au/covid-19-hub/>

The Council for Intellectual Disability (CID) has prepared some Easy Read resources on how people can stay safe, healthy and happy during COVID19.

<https://cid.org.au/covid-19/>

IDEAS is run by people with disability for people with disability. Their Coronavirus pandemic page contains clear information about COVID-19 and what it means for you.

<https://www.ideas.org.au/blogs/covid19-information-for-people-with-a-disability-start-here.html>

Every Australian Counts has created web pages specifically around the NDIS and the Coronavirus. It is community focused with simple easy to read guides.

<https://everyaustraliancounts.com.au/ndis-coronavirus-resources/>

Feeling unwell?

If you develop a fever, cough, sore or scratchy throat, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, seek medical attention. **Call the National Coronavirus Helpline [1800 020 080](tel:1800020080)** (24-hour help line).

Together against COVID-19



Stay home as
much as possible



Don't go out
if you are sick



Wash your
hands regularly



Connect with
loved ones online

It's Caring

COVID-19 Information Carers Week 2020 and NSW Carers Strategy 2020-2030

**National Carers Week runs from
11 – 17 October 2020.**



In Carers Week we say thank you to the more than 850,000 carers across NSW. And we have some new resources to support carers and to make it easier for them to find out what financial and other supports might be available to them.

The **Carer Gateway** is a national service for carers that offers help and advice, financial support, respite and more.

You can access the Carer Gateway for more information on these supports by calling 1800 422 737 or online <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

The new **NSW Carers Strategy: Caring in NSW 2020-2030** will be launched during Carers Week by the Hon. Minister Gareth Ward. This 10-year plan is a commitment to better recognising and supporting people who have a caring role.

The strategy was co-designed with carers to ensure it addresses their central concerns. Their key priorities of the strategy are as follows:

1. Carers have better access to information, services and supports
2. Carers will be recognised, respected and empowered
3. Carers have improved financial wellbeing and economic opportunities
4. Carers have better health and wellbeing

Under the strategy's first Action Plan, a landing page has been created on the Service NSW website bringing together information for carers to about supports, financial help, rebates and concession, services and programs available to them in NSW.

We all visit Service NSW regularly for car licensing/registration, birth certificates, rebates, concessions and more. Now, carers will be able to find valuable information specifically for them on this site.

If you are a carer and want to know more about what is available to you, please visit the Carer Gateway or the Service NSW website <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/guide/carers>

And you can find the new NSW Carers Strategy online here <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/inclusion/carers/nsw-carers-strategy>.



Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

Upcoming Hearings

The Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about the widespread report of violence against and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of people with disability.

The Commission gathers information through research, public hearings, personal experiences of people with disability and their families, submissions from individuals and organisations, private sessions, and other forums. They will then produce reports with recommendations to for governments and organisations to prevent and better protect people with disability, to achieve best practice, and to promote a more inclusive society.

The interim report will be delivered on 30 October 2020.

The following is a list of upcoming hearings. The hearings are live streamed on the Commission's website. <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/>

Date	City	Topic
23 - 27 November 2020	Brisbane	The experiences of First Nations people with disability and their families in contact with child protection systems
December TBA	Sydney	Training and education of health care professionals in relation to people with cognitive disability
December TBA	Sydney	Systemic barriers in the pathways to employment for people with disability
15 February 2021	Brisbane	Long term, including indefinite, detention and interactions with the criminal justice system experienced by people with disability

The website also contains policy and research papers, news and events, and a range of ways that people with disability, their families, carers and advocates can share their story with the Commission.

The Commission publishes a fortnightly eNewsletter and provides information about their activities via social media channels and media announcements.

Second Progress Report

The Second Progress Report, summarising the work carried out between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2020 has now been published and is available for download

<https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/second-progress-report>

The report also details plans to engage with people with disability in closed institutions, such as prisons, forensic mental health and disability facilities, youth detention centres and other closed environments.

Share your experiences of violence, neglect, abuse or exploitation with the Royal Commission.

This helps the Royal Commission learn more about the problem and how to help prevent it in the future. You can share your experiences by making a submission or applying for a private session with a Commissioner.

Hearing from people with disability, families, support people, organisations and the broader community helps the Royal Commission understand the extent and the impact of violence, neglect, abuse and exploitation against people with disability. And help form recommendations to prevent it from happening again.

The Royal Commission acknowledges that coming forward to share your experience is a big step and want to make it as easy as possible. Counselling and support is available to help you.

Ways to contact the Royal Commission

Email: DRcenquiries@royalcommission.gov.au

Phone: 1800 517 199 or 07 3734 1900 9:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday

Mail: GPO Box 1422, Brisbane Qld 4001



Respectful Listening by Wiradjuri artist and lifelong disability advocate, Uncle Paul Constable Calcott.

Cardholder Q&A

Greg visits Circular Quay



Q1. How often do you use your Companion Card?

Prior to the Covid 19 I would use the Companion Card at least once a month to attend the movies and if I was using public transport to enable my support worker to travel free of charge with me.

Q2. Where do you use your card most frequently?

I used the Companion Card mostly to attend movies, live theatre/musicals as well as for the Sydney Festival which runs for approximately 3-4 weeks every January during which I would see between 8-18 shows.

Q.3 Please tell us your favourite venue or activity you use your card at?

The Sydney Festival during which there are many shows at different venues, but I like Sydney Opera House, Carriageworks, the Seymour Centre and Lyric Theatre.

Q4. Is there somewhere you now go that you could not go before having the card? And what venue or activity is it?

No, there isn't a new venue that I am going to that I can contribute to the Companion Card, however, it does certainly make it more affordable as I now do not have to pay for the ticket or entry fee for the companion.

Q5. How has having the card changed your experience in the community?

As the Companion Card has reduced my costs of attending events it has enabled me to get out of about more often providing greater opportunities to see different events.

Q6. Would you recommend others that don't have a card to apply for one? Why?

Definitely yes. Because of the financial savings and increased opportunities the Companion Card provides which is great for increasing social participation, especially since the NDIS has provided an increase in funding for social participation. The NDIS and the Companion Card are a great match!

Q7. Tell us something about yourself you would like to share with other Companion Card holders and service providers.

I have quadriplegia as a result of acquired spinal cord injury many years ago and use a power wheelchair for mobility. I have been very successful in advocating for improved access to theatres in the performing arts venues, services and facilities including ticket pricing. It is great to be able to use the Companion Card at many of the venues of which I have been able to contribute to the improved access for.

Q8. In general is there anything that affiliates, businesses who accept the card, can do to assist you?

The movie cinemas can ensure that the Companion Card can be used for new release movies and not subject Companion Card holders to being told they can only go to other movies when they have arrived to see a new release movie. It can be very confronting and disappointing if the movie cinema staff do not relent. It would be appreciated if the venues enabled tickets to be purchased online using the Companion Card. Some venues enable online purchases using gift vouchers which just requires the gift voucher code to be entered when making the purchase so I'm unsure why this can't be done for the Companion Card.

Local Government

Need to know how to access your local area?

All local governments have a Disability Inclusion Action Plan that includes measures enabling people with a disability to access general support and services and fully participate in the community.

The 2014 Disability Inclusion Act committed NSW Government departments, local councils and other public authorities to work to make communities more inclusive and accessible for people with disability.

Councils are a good source of local information, for example Fairfield City Council now has a City Centre Mobility Map and Kyogle Council has its Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan.

You can find out more about what's happening in the Local Government space or search for your local council website here. <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/>

A message to all Companion Card holders

We wish to acknowledge the increased difficulties faced by people with disabilities, their families and carers during the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on services throughout the community.

Here at the NSW Department of Communities and Justice we continue to operate the NSW Companion Card program and continue to be in contact with many of the businesses affiliated with the program throughout the State.

Unfortunately, some of these businesses have been adversely affected by the pandemic or have temporarily closed their doors. For this reason we encourage you to contact venues beforehand to save any unnecessary travel and disappointment.

During this time the NSW Companion Card program is implementing a number of administrative upgrades to increase the program's functionality and increased offering to both current and future card holders. These changes are being undertaken in accordance with the program's Terms and Conditions and recently updated Privacy Statement.

<https://www.companioncard.nsw.gov.au/cardholders/cardholder-terms-and-conditions>

<https://www.companioncard.nsw.gov.au/cardholders/cardholders-privacy-statement>

It is important to note these upgrades will not affect the way you use your card. Please continue to use your card when attending activities and venues, as usual.

As part of the administrative upgrades to the program, the Department of Communities and Justice will disclose the personal information of NSW Companion Card participants to the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages for the purpose of verifying participant details and ensuring that cards are appropriately issued.

If you have any concerns about the disclosure of your personal information to the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages or have any other questions in relation to the NSW Companion Card program please call us on 1800 893 044 or email info.companioncard@facfs.nsw.gov.au

Do you know of business that doesn't accept the Companion Card but you feel they should?

Let us know and we will contact them to discuss.

We are always looking for new businesses to add to the Companion Card Affiliate list.

Just email us with the details to affiliates.companioncard@fac.s.nsw.gov.au



Contact NSW Companion Card

Phone: 1800 893 044 Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm

Email:

For Application enquiries:
applications.companioncard@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

For Affiliates:

affiliates.companioncard@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

For all other enquiries:

info.companioncard@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

Post: Companion Card, Locked Bag 4028, Ashfield NSW 1800

This newsletter was sent by NSW Companion Card Department of Communities and Justice.

Need to replace your Companion Card?

If your card has expired, is lost or damaged, there is no need to fill out a form. Simply call us on 1800 893 044 or email info.companioncard@fac.s.nsw.gov.au

No more expiry dates on NSW Companion Card.

Adult Companion Cards are issued for life, and since July 2018 they have been printed without an expiry date.

New Companion Cards never expire.