

family

A D V O C A C Y

ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021





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Published by Family Advocacy, November, 2021

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2020/2021 Snapshot*



13 submissions



70 events and presentations



2,335 event registrations



627 enquiries



80,139 webpage views



273,740 social media reach

**Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities*

Vision, Purpose, Goals and Objectives

Vision

Family Advocacy's vision is of families being agents of positive social change so that the inherent value of people with developmental disability* is recognised within a just and inclusive society.

Purpose

Our purpose is to attain positive social roles for people with developmental disability. This is accomplished through the development and support of advocacy by families and by strengthening the knowledge, role and influence of families. Family Advocacy's focus is to encourage and support families to speak up and seek opportunities with and on behalf of their family members so as to enjoy the same environments, lifestyles and living conditions afforded to most Australians.

Goals and Objectives

The organisation's goals and objectives are determined by the Management Committee who represent Family Advocacy's membership.

Organisational goals

Family Advocacy will:

- Enable families to become agents of positive social change in the lives of people with developmental disability
- Be a credible public voice that defends, promotes and enhances the rights and interests of people with developmental disability
- Strengthen families to develop and negotiate alternatives to current service practice consistent with building positive social roles for people with developmental disability
- Broaden and activate the constituency of people who will speak out for the rights

and interests of people with developmental disability

- Strive to enhance the capacity and operation of the organisation to ensure its renewal, viability and effectiveness.

Objectives

- To provide families in which there is a person with developmental disability with information, resources, skills and support in order to perform an advocacy role
- To encourage the development and effectiveness of family-based advocacy groups
- To provide an avenue for the development of leadership amongst families
- To monitor and, where necessary, make representations about legislation, policies and practices which affect people with developmental disability and their families
- To disseminate information about legislation, policies and practices to families
- To encourage the involvement of people who have disability, families and friends, in the work of the organisation.

Strategic Goals 2020-2022

Our Strategic Plan 2020-2022 helps shape the priorities we undertake over the three years of the plan. These are the longer term goals that we are working towards:

Strength of Families

People with disability and their families/allies have the skills, knowledge and confidence to be active and valued members of community.

Strength of Communities

The narrative within Australian society has changed; enabling people with disability to lead ordinary lives rather than segregated and programmed lives.

* Developmental disability includes but is not limited to: autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, spina bifida and multiple disability.

Guiding Principles

Strength of Advocacy

Working together, we challenge restrictive and discriminatory laws, policies and practices that keep people with disability segregated and limited. The requirement of advocacy is clearly understood, has a large support base including secured funding.

Guiding Principles

Family Advocacy is an independent, statewide, community-based advocacy organisation which promotes and protects the rights, needs and interests of children and adults with developmental disability. In carrying out its purpose, Family Advocacy recognises that families can find it difficult to affect the way in which they or their family member with disability can be supported within the context of family and community. This is because of:

- Lack of information about alternatives and options to what is on offer
- Isolation, vulnerability, extra pressures and financial costs
- Lack of opportunities for community members to get to know and value individuals with disability
- Diminished expectations by the family about its role and influence in the life of the person with disability
- Lack of flexible, family-focused supports
- Segregated service systems which lessen opportunities for people with disability to be included in the ordinary life of the community
- Lowered confidence to tap into ordinary community resources
- Underdeveloped skills and expertise to perform an advocacy role
- Lack of independent, organised formal advocacy which supports their individual or local advocacy efforts on behalf of people with disability.

Family Advocacy works within the framework of the rights and principles established in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in particular Principle 3 which recognises that people with disability have the right to full and effective participation and inclusion in society. In this context, Family Advocacy bases its work on the belief that:

- All people with disability are full members of the community
- Good communities are made up of a diverse range of people
- People who have disability have contributions and skills to bring to society.

The organisation recognises that society has, as a matter of public policy, segregated people with disability from the mainstream of society. It recognises the extreme harm caused to people with disability and their families by segregationist policies, and supports the policies embodied in the Objectives and Principles of the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986 and the Objectives, Principles and Applications of Principles of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014. Regulatory processes designed to ensure that direct services adhere to these principles are also critical.

Principles about People

- All people, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexuality or religion, have the same human, social and legal rights
- People who have disability are contributing members of the whole community
- All people regardless of the nature and degree of disability have the capacity to learn and develop throughout their lives
- People with disability are vulnerable to oppression, exploitation, discrimination, segregation and rejection by society.

Guiding Principles

Principles about Families

- Except for advocacy by individuals who themselves have disability, advocacy by families constitutes the single most important safeguard to protecting and promoting the rights and interests of people with disability
- The family is likely to be the most enduring and constant form of relationship in a person's life and, as such, is the first line of defence in the interests of people with disability
- The family provides the most natural and powerful environment for growth and development
- The family is the focus for the development of a range of relationships which lead to inclusion in the life of the community
- While the nature of family relationships evolves as a person grows, for all adults, the family continues to function as an important emotional and strategic link into the community
- Positive growth and development is most likely to occur within a family in which each member is valued.

Principles about Community

- Strengthening individual, natural and informal relationships is the most powerful way to maintain, develop or enhance the inclusion of people with disability in the community.

Principles about Human Services

- Families in which there is a person who has a disability require a range of support mechanisms which sustain rather than replace them, and which value the person who has a disability
- Formal support or services for families and people who have a disability should be available from agencies and systems which provide services to the rest of the community with adaptation and modification as necessary

- If specialist services are required, these should be designed and implemented in ways which do not diminish the development and maintenance of personal relationships and friendships with individuals in the community
- As no human service or system will ever be perfect there will always be a need for a range of safeguards, including advocacy by families
- Formal human services should be designed and implemented so as not to act as barriers to community participation.

Advocacy

Advocacy is speaking, acting and/or writing with minimum conflict of interest on behalf of the sincerely perceived interest of a person or persons with disability in order to promote, protect and defend their interests, rights and needs.*

Advocacy strives to be emphatic and vigorous and is, or is very likely to be, costly to the advocate.

** Adapted from W. Wolfensberger to align to social advocacy for people with disability.*



Governance, Management, Volunteers and Family Leaders

Structure and Management

Family Advocacy turned 30 this year, having been incorporated in 19 June, 1991 under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984. Over the past three decades, Family Advocacy's vision and purpose has remained steady and clear under the effective governance of a strong Management Committee, safeguarded by policies and practices. The general responsibility to run the organisation in accordance with its vision, goals and strategies is carried by the Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder.

The Committee, which comprises the Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and up to a maximum of 15 ordinary members, is elected each year at the time of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In 2020/2021, there were six committee members. The majority are residents of regional NSW, and all have family members living with disability. This ensures that the focus remains on the rights and interests of people with developmental disability, and in achieving better lives and social roles for them through the organisation's vision and purpose, and through pursuing the goals stated in its Strategic Plan.

The Committee met seven times in the financial year 2020/2021 over Zoom. The use of this facility has enabled Committee members, particularly those from Regional New South Wales with a greater opportunity to participate in the Committee's work.

At these meetings the Committee considers:

- The Treasurer's Report, which details income, expenditure and financial position
- Membership matters
- Staff and administrative matters
- Systemic and general advocacy matters

- Correspondence
- Compliments and Complaints
- Development and Training
- Risk and Compliance
- Outcomes of program delivery to families and people with disability in NSW.

Discussions and decisions are included in the minutes and kept as a permanent record of the business conducted by the Committee. These records are now kept digitally in a secure area.

Membership

As an incorporated association with membership across NSW, Family Advocacy membership is open to individuals only and not organisations or individuals representing organisations.

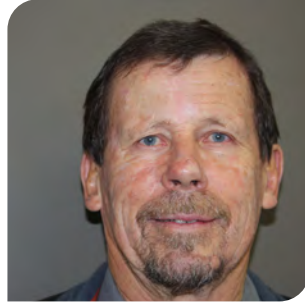
The individuals that make up that membership believe in and support the vision and purpose of the organisation and are committed to its goals of creating a genuinely inclusive society.

Being purpose driven rather than membership driven has served as a powerful safeguard to the core work of the organisation. Family Advocacy nevertheless places high value on its members and the contributions they make to the organisation. Members build up their leadership and advocacy skills through presenting at events, attending sponsored training, providing input into policy, involvement in systemic advocacy meetings and campaigns, strategic planning, facilitation of peer networks, and becoming a Committee member. Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of members and thanks them for their continued support throughout the 2020/2021 year.

Management Committee 2020/2021



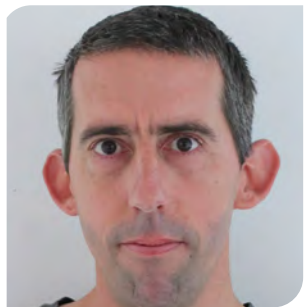
Annette O'Sullivan
Chairperson



Alex Purvis
Treasurer



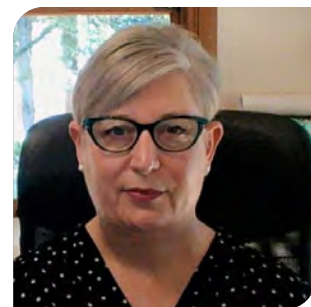
Meg Sweeney
Secretary



Matthew Dimmock
Committee Member



Randa Habelrih
Committee Member



Karen Martin
Committee Member

Annual General Meeting

In the interest of keeping stakeholders safe during the pandemic, we held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) virtually for the first time in our 30-year history. Management, staff, members and guests attended the AGM on 4 December, 2020. The Chairperson, Annette O'Sullivan welcomed all attendees, and proceeded with the business at hand according to the AGM agenda. The Chairperson's report and the Treasurer's reports were presented, and the new Management Committee for 2020/2021 were elected. We thank retiring

committee members Jane Gilkes, Yolande Cailly, Annette Bush and Di Samuels for their invaluable contribution. Annette and Di completed a four-year term, with Di having undertaken the responsibilities of Treasurer for three years.

We also thank Peter Symonds, General Manager for Operations at Possability in Tasmania, who was guest speaker at the AGM.

Andrew Brak was reappointed as Public Officer, and G. C. C. Business & Assurance Pty Ltd, represented by Graeme Green were appointed as auditors.

Chairperson's Report

This past year has again brought many challenges for us all. The ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown has resulted in us revisiting the work from home strategies that our organisation so diligently set up last year. Family Advocacy staff have managed to again pivot both our daily core business as well as our workshops to a virtual platform. To their credit, as you will see when reading this annual report, much excellent work has been achieved.

The organisation has managed to deliver several advocacy events as face-to-face presentations this year when restrictions allowed. When required these were offered as online events ensuring they continued to be held successfully. It is very rewarding to receive positive feedback from participants who attend our many advocacy presentations, and we are confident that our attendees receive relevant information that increases their advocacy knowledge.

Our advocacy work continues to expand and assist families to access valuable resources and information that aims to address differing stages in the life journey of their loved one. We are aware that accessing education, gaining employment and living in a home of your own choosing, for people with disability remains challenging and Family Advocacy will continue to work alongside families across NSW to create ongoing and valuable change.

As a result of the professional and targeted work undertaken by our staff, Family Advocacy has continued to remain a highly regarded organisation within NSW and nationally. Our ongoing ability to attract funding for innovative projects has resulted in exciting new opportunities that will assist to enhance advocacy opportunities for families and people with disability.

The organisation remains committed to the inclusion of all and continues to provide leadership, advocacy and development which aims to assist all people with disability to have the same access and opportunities as other community members.



*Annette O'Sullivan,
Chairperson*

Further to this positive and collaborative work, it is imperative to note the success of our systems advocacy this past year. In conjunction with other advocacy organisations Family Advocacy was instrumental in lobbying relevant ministers to intervene in the proposed changes for Independent Assessments within the NDIS scheme. The reversal of this negative and unpopular policy change can be attributed to the successful systemic work and representations to members of parliament by like-minded advocacy organisations, families and allies. This was a well-earned tangible relief to many.

As part of our advocacy projects, Family Advocacy has increased our capacity to assist families and people with disability to engage with the important ongoing work of the Disability Royal Commission. This team will continue to ensure that all who feel the need to connect with the Commission have the assistance they need to navigate what can be a difficult and intimidating experience.

With funding received as a result of successful submissions, new projects have commenced this year. As a result, we welcome several new staff to the organisation. Within the Resourcing Inclusive Communities team we welcome Katie Hodges and Anna Bazzi Backhouse who are implementing the "School to Work" project, Alva Lim who is directing the "My Home My Way" project and William Martin and Laura Abrahams

Chairperson's Report

who join us to drive the “Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality” project. Jo Cross joins the Advocacy and Leadership Team, and Jane Curtis is welcomed onto the Communications team. On behalf of the committee, I thank our existing staff for their welcoming attitude and mentoring of new staff.

I thank and congratulate all our staff for the professional and committed work that they have undertaken over the past twelve months. As you read this report, you will see that the volume of advocacy related work completed, despite the ongoing COVID-19 disruptions is impressive. The committee cannot stress enough how much we value the ability and dedication of all Family Advocacy staff as they prove once again how they can remain dynamic and effective within the ever-changing health and advocacy space.

I also thank our Executive Officer Cecile Sullivan Elder for her impressive, competent and professional leadership. She continues to ensure that our staff are well supported and that the culture within our organisation remains positive and healthy, enabling Family Advocacy to produce meaningful successful outcomes. Her calm and steady presence within the organisation is appreciated by all committee members as we recognise the challenges that the advocacy sector can present. Cecile has worked tirelessly this past year to assist the seamless integration of many new staff onto our team while at the same time continuing to manage a forever increasing workload and agenda.

Thank you also to my fellow committee members who have taken time out of their busy lives to commit to the governance of Family Advocacy. Their support and contributions over the past twelve months have been much appreciated. Without the ongoing willingness of our members to participate in our committee, the organisation is unable to operate, and it is indicative of the passion of our families and people with disability that we have been able to attract members for this important work.

When reflecting on the many changes that have affected us over the past two years, the barriers that people with disability find in accessing a regular life remain. Family Advocacy will continue to stand beside those who find themselves requiring support in order to live the lives that they envision and deserve. This year we celebrate thirty years since the founding of our organisation and our Purpose and Vision remain clear and deliberate. When considering the longevity of Family Advocacy, I would like to recognise the fantastic work by all our members and staff who have preceded us. Those forward-thinking families who instigated the organisation all those years ago can feel proud and vindicated that the vision and dreams they had, and have, for their loved one with disability, remains as critically important now as it was then.

We look forward to many more years of continuing this important and exciting work.

Annette O'Sullivan, Chairperson



Executive Officer's Report

Our Management Committee, members, staff and the many people connected to the work of Family Advocacy have put in another dedicated year to progress the rights and interests of people with disability across NSW.

As with other years, the focus on the leadership of families has remained strong throughout the 2020/2021 financial year. We have seen many families contribute to the work of social change through submissions, roundtables, steering committees both internally and externally, peer to peer learning through workshops, webinars and information sessions and many other platforms that have brought families together to support positive change with or on behalf of their loved ones. With the organisation acknowledging its 30th anniversary this year, this is a true testament to the insights of the founding families, who regarded family leadership as an important aspect if 'good lives' are to be experienced by people with disability.

There continues much to be done across the many systems, services and communities to ensure that people with disability have the same opportunities that most Australians enjoy. Although for example there are advances with some aspects of the work within the NSW Department of Education, there continues to be a blind reluctance to embrace the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability, with many students continuing to be subjected to harmful segregated education. The many service models although now funded through individualised packages continue to offer outdated services models limiting the life opportunities for people with disability. The employment rate for people with disability also remains very low, with many people with disability assumed as not able to work and this group of people often finding themselves in sheltered workshops or day programs.

Whether it be education, employment, home or more broadly the community and its offerings, many people with disability remain on the fringe of actual access to the ordinary and



Ceciile Sullivan Elder
Executive Officer

typical things most of us take for granted. The assumption that a special or a different option for people is needed instead of supporting them to access what's already in communities will continue to be one of the biggest barriers for people with disability.

Since its inception, Family Advocacy has recognised that for many people the best safeguard against these barriers is their family. The focus of this continues across all areas of our work because the key to success for many people with disability in achieving the good things in life usually starts with the families having high expectations, often against the odds of what professionals have told them. This past year we are pleased to report that our reach to people with disability and families has increased by 12%, with many families connecting with us for the first time.

To work at an organisation like Family Advocacy you have to hold a strong social justice perspective and be driven and committed to positive social change alongside people with disability. We have welcomed many new staff to the fold this year and the commitment to the work we undertake has grown from strength to strength with our experienced staff embracing newer staff all with the one objective in mind: better life outcomes for people with disability. It is important that all staff, new and long-term are acknowledged for their contribution and

Executive Officer's Report

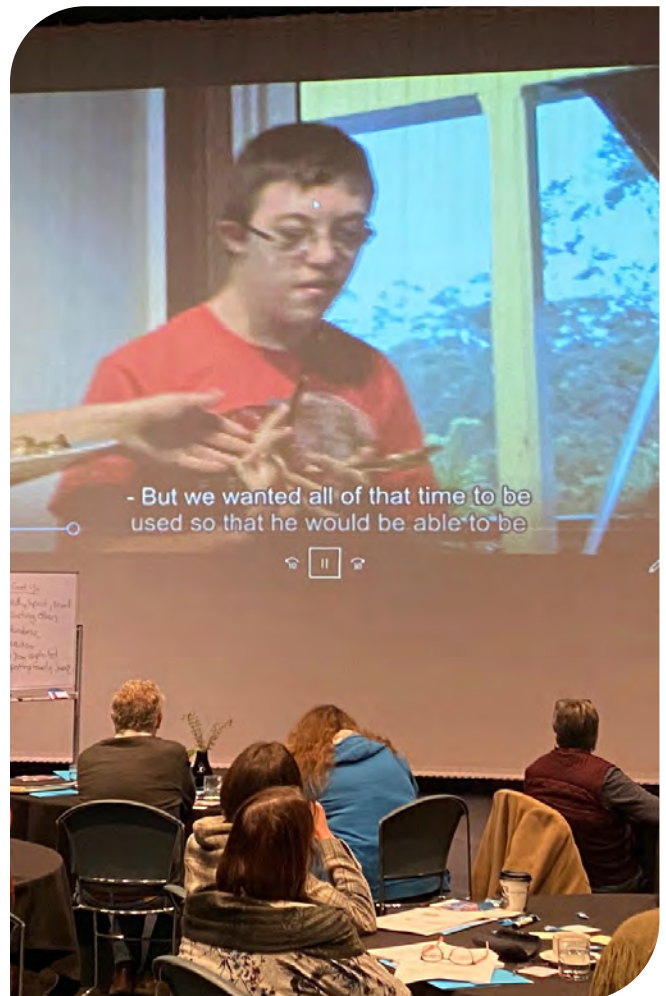
their belief in the importance of the work we undertake.

The management committee continue to be the backbone of the organisation with this strong leadership group overseeing the work of the organisation with a strong ethical and values base. Constant consideration to the intergenerational importance of these governance roles is met with a welcoming willingness for more experienced families on the committee to mentor and support newer families. I would like to thank our Chairperson

Annette O'Sullivan for her support of me in the Executive Officer role over this period, as it has been invaluable.

Looking ahead, we have obstacles to navigate with our state advocacy funding as this core funding plays a critical component of the advocacy work we undertake with people with disability and families. However, the organisation is in good stead for dealing with the challenges to come.

**Cecile Sullivan Elder,
Executive Officer**



Volunteers and Family Leaders

The individuals who volunteer at Family Advocacy not only extend our human resources capacity to carry out our programs and projects, but provide a layer and level of depth that only they can in the work we do. We thank the many who have generously contributed their time, skills and insights through:

- Governance of the organisation
- Resource development
- Collaboration in the development of and co-presenting at workshops
- Providing stories that feed directly into submissions in relation to early childhood, education, employment, NDIS at local, state and federal levels
- Contributing towards Family Advocacy's submissions for the Disability Royal Commission
- Attending meetings with MPs in relation to inclusive education
- Sharing stories and insights of lived experience with politicians and families, through our systemic advocacy, our advocacy and leadership events and online webinars
- Attending parent consultations in relation to your experiences for roundtables at NSW. For example, 2020 Disability education standards review, National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 review, NSW Disability Inclusion Act review, NDIS Roundtable with Shadow Minister Penny Sharpe MLC, and various consultations with the Department of Education in relation to access request process, school culture and belonging, and professional development
- Supporting, engaging with, and encouraging other families in their respective journeys towards inclusion for their family member
- Project guidance, influence and providing a family voice through participation in a steering committee around the work of Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project.

We gratefully acknowledge your generosity of time and effort to support the organisation in its work.

Thank you to the following for their generous efforts in 2020/2021:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Briana Blackett | Louse Kuchel |
| Annette Bush | Lesley Light |
| Yolande Cailly | Elise Magrath |
| Julie Charlton | Michael Magrath |
| Jeanette Cox | Karen Martin |
| Jo Cross | Sam Martin |
| Jacqueline Currey | Joseph Naim |
| Matthew Dimmock | Annette O'Sullivan |
| Helen Fisher | Alex Purvis |
| Rimelle Freedman | Carolyn Quinn |
| Randa Habelrih | Sean Rapley |
| Sarah Harvey | Marusha Rowe |
| Chanel Hennessey | Di Samuels |
| Aine Healy | Rhiannon Samuels-Connell |
| Catherine Hogan | Vannessa Shearman |
| Linda Hughes | Meg Sweeney |
| Sarah Humphreys | Alison Wilson |
| Mark Hunyor | Gina Wilson-Burns |
| Janine Jenkins | Sunshine Wood |

We also acknowledge those who have supported us in other ways through:

- Reactions, comments and shares on our social media platforms, thus helping promote our message to your networks and helping change the life perspective of the broader community around the inclusion of people with disability
- Sharing their stories with the media
- Completing our surveys, which provide the basis for our campaigns, submissions, input to roundtables and meetings with various politicians, department heads and industry leaders.

Advocacy and Leadership Development

Advocacy and Leadership Development



L-R: Karen Tippett, Advocacy and Leadership Development Manager; Jo Cross and Jacqueline Currey, Advocacy and Leadership Development Coordinators; Troy Hester, Advocacy Engagement Officer - Disability Royal Commission

Advocacy

Throughout 2020/2021, a crucial part of the work of Family Advocacy continued to be the provision of advocacy related information and advice to the families, friends and allies of people with disability. Recognising that families are in the strongest position to advocate for their family member with developmental disability, we support them so they can ensure – through advocacy – that the protection and rights of their family member are upheld. People can receive information and advice as often as they need to and this varies according to the nature and the level of complexity of the topic.

We also continued to provide advocacy support and advice to families experiencing unfair treatment or disadvantage as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership Development and Training

As well as supporting families with their advocacy enquiries, Family Advocacy believes in the importance of events that develop the connections, awareness and individual skills of families so they can take on leadership roles and influence change within their own family; in their community; assisting with the work of Family Advocacy; and in broader arenas on behalf of people with disability. This robust and targeted

strategy—in line with the vision and purpose of Family Advocacy—has resulted in many confident and active family leaders connected to the organisation.

In 2020/2021 there was a continued approach to build on connections to family leaders further along their inclusive education journeys as well as those moving beyond the school years. Family leaders shared their knowledge on a broader level, within workshops, webinars and information sessions, as guest speakers and as part of workshop audiences.

Family Advocacy supported family members to:

- Attend events sponsored by Family Advocacy
- Enhance their skills and knowledge by undergoing specific training
- Experience values-based training for deeper understanding and community building
- Present and assist at Family Advocacy workshops
- Share their stories at events, through resources and social media platforms
- Contribute experiences and testimonies to the Family Advocacy library, resources and websites
- Attend and participate in meetings with politicians or senior bureaucrats.

Family Advocacy also encouraged individuals to become involved in presenting material

Advocacy and Leadership Development

and facilitating group work at key events, workshops and information sessions, sharing their experiences to increase their own skills, competencies and confidence in relation to their advocacy efforts and as a family leader.

Event Attendance

As part of the leadership development program, Family Advocacy provided sponsorship to members to attend events run by other organisations as well as Family Advocacy. This served to strengthen knowledge, facilitate networking and encourage idea generation.

Events families were supported to attend included:

- Social Role Valorisation (SRV) two-day training: Towards a Better Life, Foundations Forum, Sydney
- One of the Kids, inclusive education workshops
- Carers Moving Forward, parent workshops
- Understanding people with an intellectual disability–John Armstrong series online
- Family leaders have been involved in films produced as ongoing resources.

Webinar series – Advocacy Tools and Latest News

We continued the webinar series that commenced last year titled ‘Advocacy Tools and Latest News’. Each webinar was an hour in length with a 30-45 minute presentation and then time for questions. In 2020/2021, the series focused on the Disability Royal Commission. Details about each event are on page 21.

Education

Getting off to a good start in life is vital for all children, particularly children with developmental disability. A good start means commencing a path that keeps the child

embedded in their family and community. A ‘special’ or ‘separate’ path can lead to children and families feeling isolated, vulnerable and disconnected from the typical and ordinary environments other children and families enjoy.

Family Advocacy’s aim is that all children are supported in age appropriate ways to be active members of their families and communities. This starts with being a valued member of regular classrooms. Education increasingly forms a large part of the organisation’s contact with families and in 2020/2021 comprised almost half of the enquiries taken by Family Advocacy. Barriers families face in education continue to include:

- Unwelcoming culture of schools impeding the student from being fully included
- Suspending students without proper consideration of the impact of their disability and not putting better processes in place to counter this
- Limited parental involvement to contribute to setting goals and strategies for the student
- Coercing parents to consider segregated school settings
- Suggesting parents consider distance education and home schooling as alternatives
- Discouraging enrolments of students with disability and continuing to cite funding as being a reason not to enrol the student
- Use of partial enrolment as a means of addressing apparent funding shortfalls
- Lack of consistent adjustments and modifications to meet the needs of students - as it became apparent through the learning from home period during the lockdowns.

Family Advocacy continues to assist families to advocate in a positive way with schools in order to manage the barriers listed above, and to create a good learning environment for their family member with disability. The insights and understanding we receive from families then

Advocacy and Leadership Development

informs the organisation's systemic work to effect broader change. Family Advocacy gathers this information to highlight statewide trends and enable responsive planning.

During 2020/2021, the disruptions to regular school procedures caused by the pandemic, including the shift to home based learning, highlighted inadequacies in the modifications and adjustments required to support students with disability with their learning. A lack of consistency was evident across schools to understand, reflect and then action appropriate measures to ensure students with disability were well supported during this time as well as when transitioning back to the school environment. Resources and encouragement to access the work that others are doing in this space, all contributed to Family Advocacy being able to assist families at this time.

One of the Kids workshops

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team typically travel throughout NSW to present this core workshop to families, which aims at improving their advocacy skills and providing advocacy strategies to assist them to achieve an inclusive education for their child with disability. This year we were able to run 11 face-to-face workshops in five metro and six regional locations. "One of the Kids" is relevant for families of preschool, primary and high school students and covers topics such as: How the school years can lead to a meaningful life; a brief history of disability education; what an inclusive education looks like; evidence and support for inclusive education; how inclusion can look in the classroom; building good school relations; education policies and supports that exist within schools; and necessary advocacy tools and strategies for families.

These workshops provided opportunities for robust and at times challenging discussions. Families made the most of networking and asking questions about their own specific issues. Many resources were provided at the workshops,

which were followed up with an email to continue the 'thought process' and encourage families to further develop their understanding of the subject. The education booklet, All Students Learning Together - Taking Action on Education, was distributed to all participants with extras provided for sharing with others.

"My son is thriving at his mainstream school. This great experience started with your much needed and evidence-based workshop, without which we would not have had the courage to 'give it a go'."

- Feedback from a parent

Let's Get Ready for Big School and Advocacy Tips and Tools webinars

In lieu of the face to face workshops, we held two additional webinars on inclusive education. The first one, "Let's Get Ready for Big School" took place in December 2020, and was aimed at families of children with disability transitioning into Kindergarten in 2021 or preparing to transition in 2022, who wanted to learn more about educating their children in the regular class. The one-hour session was held at lunchtime and evening time slots.

The second webinar, Advocacy Tips and Tools, took place in February 2021 and focused on the importance of family members knowing how to advocate for their children living with disability. Following the session, participants received an email with further resources.

Inclusive education presentations

We were invited by Carers NSW to present a one-hour segment on inclusive education at their Moving Forward forums for families where information, articles and our resources were provided on the day. These presentations took place in two metro locations.

My Time, invited Family Advocacy to be a guest speaker at an online forum with families. Over the 90 minute presentation and discussion, we provided information on who we are and how

Advocacy and Leadership Development

Family Advocacy can be an ongoing support, as well as an understanding of authentic inclusive education and ensuing benefits.

Each year we are invited to speak with university students around authentic inclusive lives for people with disability both within and outside of education years. This year we spoke with students at both Australian Catholic University as well as Western Sydney University.

Autism Camp Australia is a newly funded programme bringing families with a student aged 7-15 with autism together for a residential four-day camp. They invited us to conduct a one-hour workshop on advocacy in education. Eight of these were held over the year.

Autism Community Network in Blacktown invited Family Advocacy to speak with families on our work and how we can support them going forward.

“Let’s Get Started: Getting Ready for School and Life” is our two-hour presentation to families. We delivered this to families via Plumtree Early Intervention and First Chance Early Intervention.

Collaborative Engagement Framework project

This project was funded by a grant from the NSW Department of Education and is now in phase three, which is in the form of “Conversations for Collaboration”, a living, practical and accessible online resource designed to provide a student-centred framework for parent/educator collaborative engagement, promoting the inclusive K-12 educational journey of students with disability. The framework is a standalone website with nine modules for parents, teachers and students to work through together. All three perspectives are considered and recorded in the documents filled out within each module. They are then brought together into a conversation guide that ensures the learnings are embedded within school processes and practices, which is fundamental to ensuring positive and concrete outcomes.

Collaborative Engagement films

A further successful funding grant through NSW Department of Education is being used to film collaborative conversations with parents and teachers, unpacking a real conversation and utilising techniques that were reenacted to showcase good practice. These films will form part of the material in the Collaborative Engagement Framework and provide a valuable practical element.

Employment and NDIS

Guest presentations

We were also invited to speak with NDIS Local Area Coordinators keen to hear about our work and how we can be an ongoing support to families they are working with. This provided an opportunity to showcase some of our films and the strength of valuing authentic inclusive lives in community for people with disability.

Within the Carers NSW Moving Forward workshops there was also a section of the day on the NDIS experiences for families. This provided an opportunity to discuss the improved benefits of plan and self-managing and the ways we can assist people to make the most of this funding scheme.

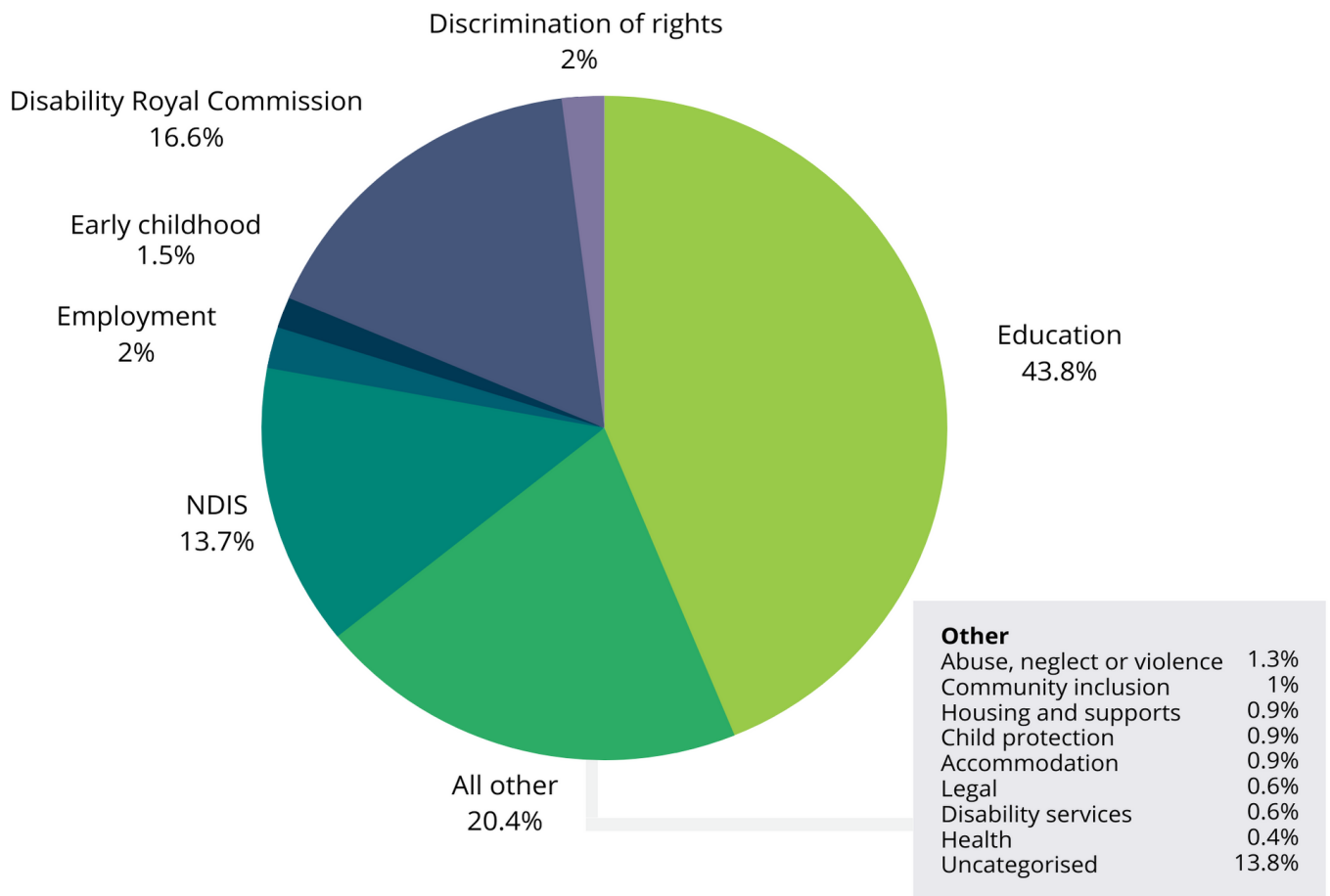
The Mental Health Coordinating Council invited Family Advocacy to be on a panel over two webinars to discuss families’ role in accessing and getting the most from their family members NDIS plan.

Staff

This year, we were thrilled to welcome Jo Cross to the team, as Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator. Jo has had a long association with Family Advocacy as parent advocate and leader.

Karen Tippett, Advocacy and Leadership Development Manager

Issues raised during enquiries



Disability Royal Commission

Royal Commission: Advocacy Support

Family Advocacy received funding from the Department of Social Services to provide advocacy support to people wishing to engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Troy Hester, our Advocacy Project Officer: Royal Commission provides advocacy support mainly over the phone but also via Zoom and face-to-face. Troy has run a number of webinars to provide information, encouragement and additional supports. We also have a dedicated website page containing factsheets, resources and webinar recordings.

We engage directly with staff at the Commission as well as network with other organisations who host similar advocacy supports, including specialised Indigenous services. We have had extensive engagement with Your Story Disability Legal Support and Blue Knot (who provide counselling referral and support around the Disability Royal Commission). We are receiving referrals for advocacy support from both of the above, and are pleased to report that we are well recognised by other services and the Commission itself for our work in this area.

The greatest tool for reaching people about the Royal Commission this year has been through webinars. A range of different formats have been used, engaging representatives from the Commission and other support services to show the human face of this Commission. Family members have also shared their own experiences in talking to the Royal Commission, again to encourage and support those who have something to share. Here is a summary of those webinars:

Q and A with Commissioner Galbally

We were pleased to have Commissioner Rhonda Galbally present at this webinar. This was a great opportunity for people to actually meet one of the Commissioners. Also presenting

were the Commission's Senior Counsel, Dr Kerri Mellifont QC as well as Sue Charnley and Peter Birch from the Engagement team. One of our goals was to present the Royal Commission as both accessible and approachable to encourage people to raise their voice. Over 80 people attended the event and 95% indicated they were more likely to engage with the Commission as a result of this webinar.

'Hearing from the commissioners, seeing they are real people with no grand standing, really got the message across that every submission is very important.'

'I now realise I have more to share.'

Talking to the Commission

The spotlight here was again real people. This time we heard from four family members who had experience making a submission to the Royal Commission concerning significant impacts experienced by their family member with disability. Each volunteered to speak after an invitation went out to those who had attended previous webinars.

'Most important was personal stories and hints.'

'[The best thing about the webinar was] Hearing people articulate their doubts about whether their story was valid and overcoming that.'

Disability Royal Commission update: Issues Papers

This webinar covered two of the Issues Papers published by the Commission that were still waiting for a response: "Safeguards and Quality" and "Violence and Abuse of People with Disability at Home". The papers were explained and guidance and encouragement was given on making a response.

Promoting Inclusion Issues Paper

This webinar focused on one Issues Paper – "Promoting Inclusion". We wanted to ensure we spent enough time and provide an opportunity to not only unpack what inclusion is but also get

Disability Royal Commission

attendees making notes and actually starting to write a submission.

'Information included thought provoking questions and pathways to provide information to the Royal Commission.'

Positive stories of inclusion – a solutions focused webinar

This webinar's focus was on providing positive solution-based experiences and ideas to the Royal Commission. It was built on preparation work encouraging people with disability and their family members to reflect on experiences of when inclusion brought about positive impacts on the person's life. Time was provided during the webinar for these insights to be worked into submissions to the Royal Commission.

Royal Commission: Systemic Advocacy

To ensure the important and life impacting issues experienced by people with disability across NSW are being raised, we had 16 meetings with

the Disability Royal Commission's staff, their Commissioners, legal team and policy team.

We also prepared the following submissions as well as presented expert evidence at one of the public hearings:

- Submission No. 3: Response to Rights and Attitudes Issues Paper
- Submission No. 4: An 80-page witness statement providing expert evidence for Public Hearing 7: "Barriers to accessing a safe, quality and inclusive school education and life course impacts."
- Our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, was part of an expert panel (pictured) on day one of the above hearing (12 October 2020), together with Mary Sayers from Children and Young People with Disability Australia, and Michelle O'Flynn and Nikki Parker from Queensland Advocacy Incorporated
- Submission No. 5: Response to Restrictive Practices Issues Paper
- Submission No. 6: Response to Promoting Inclusion Issues Paper.



2020/2021 Events and Presentations

| Date | Event | Location |
|------------------|---|-----------------|
| 3 September 2020 | Disability Royal Commission: Q&A with Commissioner Galbally webinar | Online |
| 15 October 2020 | Information session: Australian Catholic University | Online |
| 15 October 2020 | Information session: University of Western Sydney | Online |
| 9 November 2020 | Information session: My Time My Place | Online |
| 2 December 2020 | One of the Kids workshop | West Ryde |
| 3 December 2020 | Disability Royal Commission: Talking to the Commission webinar | Online |
| 8 December 2020 | Getting Ready for Big School webinar | Online |
| 8 December 2020 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |
| 9 December 2020 | Getting Ready for Big School webinar | Online |
| 14 December 2020 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |
| 18 January 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |
| 19 January 2021 | Disability Royal Commission: Issues Papers Update webinar | Online |
| 22 January 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |
| 24 February 2021 | Advocacy Tips and Tools: How to advocate for your child living with disability webinar | Online |
| 3 March 2021 | Autism Community Network Presentation | Blacktown |
| 4 March 2021 | Disability Royal Commission: Promoting Inclusion webinar | Online |
| 9 March 2021 | Information session: Mental Health Council | Online |
| 10 March 2021 | Women's Week Luncheon Presentation | Charlestown |
| 16 March 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Mona Vale |
| 30 March 2021 | Information session: Mental Health Council | Online |
| 30 March 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Raymond Terrace |
| 8 April 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Gymea |
| 15 April 2021 | Carers Moving Forward | Online |
| 16 April 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |
| 13 May 2021 | Let's Get Started - Firstchance | Mayfield |
| 18 May 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Taree |
| 19 May 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Coffs Harbour |
| 20 May 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Byron Bay |
| 21 May 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Byron Bay |
| 25 May 2021 | Carers Moving Forward | Campbelltown |
| 16 May 2021 | Let's Get Started - Plumtree | Online |
| 8 June 2021 | Disability Royal Commission: Positive Stories of Inclusion webinar | Online |
| 10 June 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Ashfield |
| 17 June 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Batemans Bay |
| 18 June 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Goulburn |
| 22 June 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Liverpool |
| 23 June 2021 | One of the Kids workshop | Sutherland |
| 30 June 2021 | Information session: Autism Camp Australia | Online |

Advocacy Reach: Five Year Snapshot

Advocacy delivery 2016 - 2021



61 Advocacy Workshops



139 Information Sessions



GREATER SYDNEY

- Allambie
- Ashfield
- Bankstown
- Blacktown
- Baulkham Hills
- Beecroft
- Bondi
- Burwood
- Cabramatta
- Camden
- Campbelltown
- Castle Hill
- Chatswood
- Concord West
- Dee Why
- Epping
- Fairfield
- Five Dock
- Forestville
- Glenmore Park
- Gymea
- Haberfield
- Hornsby
- Hurstville
- Ingleburn
- Kingsford
- Kings Langley
- Lidcombe
- Liverpool
- Marrickville
- Manly
- Maroubra
- Marsfield
- Miranda
- Mona Vale
- Padstow
- Parramatta
- Pemulwuy
- Pennant Hills
- Penrith
- Redfern
- Richmond
- Rosebery
- Roseville
- Ryde
- Strathfield
- Smithfield
- Sydney city
- Sth Hurstville
- Sutherland
- Terry Hills
- Toongabbie
- Turrumurra
- Werrington
- West Ryde



Systemic Advocacy

Systemic Advocacy

Throughout the year, Family Advocacy has continued to “broaden the tent” with our systemic work such as the Same Classroom Same Opportunity campaign, as well as engaging in extensive collaboration with the sector in regards to systemic issues and barriers experienced by people with disability. We continued with government and stakeholder engagement to protect and progress the rights and interests of people with disability. We do this to create social change by ensuring that the voices of people with lived experience of disability are heard across a variety of relevant platforms ranging from government roundtable, academics, disability advocacy sector, disability organisations and community groups. Over this reporting period 36 meetings were attended pertaining to specific issues experienced by people with disability across NSW.

Family Advocacy have assisted to drive and participate in the policy and legislative changes needed in the sector in a broad range of areas such as Early Childhood Education, Education, Employment, Restrictive Practices, the National Disability Strategy and the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

Some examples of the stakeholders we have engaged with are:

- Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE), of which we are a co-founder
- NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance, of which we are a member. This includes attending regular steering committee meetings
- Mainstream Services, NSW Department of Education, NSW Department of Health, Universities (Sydney University, Australian Catholic University, UNSW Centre for Social Impact, Western Sydney University, Griffith University), NDIA/NDIS partners (such as local area coordinators across NSW), ability linkers and local councils
- NSW Schools and educators have made contact throughout this period wanting to



Leanne Varga, Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager

progress their supports for students with disability

- We also formed an interagency collaboration of policy and systemic advocates which is made up of approximately 15 organisations within NSW.

Important and life impacting issues experienced by people with disability across NSW are being raised with relevant bodies and through relevant calls for submissions and inquiries. This includes 13 submissions last year at state and national levels of government as well as the Disability Royal Commission.

National Disability Strategy

The systemic team attended the Australian Government’s review of the National Disability Strategy - Beyond 2020, engaged with families via a survey and face to face interviews and as a result, provided a comprehensive submission on the National Disability Strategy 2020-2030.

We also sent a submission to the Department of Social Services (DSS) in response to the National Disability Strategy (NDS) Position Paper.

National Employment Strategy

The Australian Government recognises that people with disability can face many and sometimes overlapping barriers to employment

Systemic Advocacy

which prevent their full social and economic participation in society. Australia has a poor track record with a ranking of 23 out of 29 in the OECD countries for disability employment. The Department of Social Security (DSS) put out a public consultation to inform the development of the National Disability Employment Strategy, a 10-year commitment to improve employment outcomes for people with disability. We provided a submission in response to the National Disability Employment Strategy Consultation. As a result of this submission, we are in the process of creating an Employment Position Statement.

NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan

As part of a five yearly statutory requirement, the NSW Disability Inclusion Act 2014 is under review. The Act promotes the inclusion and participation of people with disability in the community. We provided a submission in response to the Disability Inclusion Plan Consultation Paper, through NSW Department of Communities and Justice. The submission asked if it had achieved what it had set out to achieve and looked at what changes are needed to bring it up to date.

Restrictive Practices

We provided comprehensive feedback to the NSW government in relation to the regulation of Restrictive Practices in all settings, as part of a statewide consultation. As a result, the NSW government proposed a Bill which it opened up for comment. In response, we prepared a Submission to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice on Persons with Disability (Regulation of Restrictive Practices) Bill 2021, with a strong focus towards the reduction and elimination of restrictive practices towards a zero-tolerance policy.

As mentioned on page 22, we also provided a submission in response to the Restrictive Practices Issues Paper for the Disability Royal

Commission (Disability Royal Commission Submission No. 5).

NDIS

Family Advocacy has undertaken extensive systems advocacy in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to remove barriers and inequities for people with disability across NSW. This includes the following submissions:

- Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in response to an inquiry on Independent Assessments (IA) under the NDIS
- Submission to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in response to Consultation Paper: Access and Eligibility Policy with Independent Assessments (IA)
- Submission to the NDIS Joint Standing Committee into the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

We have attended 34 NDIS and NDIA Quality and Safeguards Commission (QASC) related meetings. These have included Disability Roundtable with Penny Sharpe MLC Shadow Minister for Disability, Virtual NDIA Community Engagement Team updates, Compliance and Enforcement at the NDIS QASC, meeting with the QASC NSW Director, Solutions focused workshop with DANA and the Disability Royal Commission on how to improve the QASC, Consultation on NDIS and early childhood approach, and Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Independent Living Options (ILO).

A very controversial matter during this reporting period was the proposed introduction of the NDIA's Independent Assessments process. We suggested to people with disability and their family members that they report their concerns to the NDIA complaints line, let their local and federal Member of Parliament know, and assured them that we would feed these concerns to the NDIA directly through the NDIA community

Systemic Advocacy

engagement team. We also articulated their concerns in written submissions to the Joint Standing Committee to the NDIA on the NDIA Access and eligibility policy for Independent Assessments and a written submission directly to the NDIA in response to the consultation paper: Access and eligibility policy with Independent Assessments.

We also fed these concerns to our various alliances at state and federal levels and were part of a campaign to stop the Independent Assessments process. We are pleased to say that the federal Minister for the NDIS announced scrapping the Independent Assessments as they have been proposed and going back to the drawing board to include people with lived experience in the co-design process.

Social media and email were used to keep our members updated on NDIS announcements and changes as they were released by the NDIA.

Education

The following submissions were made in relation to education at national and state level:

- Submission to the NSW Department of Education on the Draft Student Behaviour Strategy
- Submission to the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment on the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education.

Extensive work was undertaken with the NSW Department of Education throughout this reporting period. One of our systems change objectives was the development and adoption of an inclusive education policy guiding department staff on process and practice as evidenced by the many hundreds of calls where this remained a significant issue. At first instance, the Department of Education was very reluctant to do this. The Department has acknowledged the need for a Disability Strategy and Policy across the 2200 schools in NSW. We

have been part of the reference groups creating the Strategy which has been released and is a working document. The Inclusive Education Policy is yet to be released. We continue to explore ways to influence this policy, particularly advocating that the definition of inclusion must be in alignment with General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 Right to an Inclusive Education under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

In 2020/2021, we have continued to work closely with the Department. We have attended 12 meetings with three reference groups for Disability Strategy, Disability Professional Development and Improving the Learning and Support Journey, which provide input and advice to the Department of Education on current and future projects. We also held several meetings throughout the year to alert the Department to specific issues as they have arisen; in particular COVID-19 related issues.

It is important to mention that our advocacy efforts contributed to the fact that all education leaders are now mandated to undertake online learning about their legal obligations as part of a department-wide commitment to improve outcomes for students with disability.

There is also the development of professional learning about evidence-based strategies for inclusive practice such as Universal Design for Learning, collaborative planning and cooperative learning. There is an intent to provide inclusion coaching to support schools and their learning support teams to develop and improve whole school inclusive culture. An online Inclusion Hub is underway.

Systemic work has also continued in the non-government sectors raising the issues people with disability face in the Independent schools and Catholic school's sectors.

More State Members of Parliament are aware of the critical issues occurring in education for children and young people with disability and undertake follow up action to progress

Systemic Advocacy

this issue. Due to COVID-19, we did not host a Parliamentary forum. The intention is for this to occur in the following year in order that our parliamentarians and the community gain a stronger sense of awareness on the many issues and barriers experienced by children and young people with disability.

Nonetheless, we attended 14 meetings with State Members of Parliament including the NSW Minister for Education so they could hear about the lived experience of a student with disability, particularly where the gaps exist between policy and practice. We also met with all of the major political parties, the NSW Minister for Education and the NSW Shadow Minister for Education, plus the smaller parties such as the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, Animal Justice Party and the three Independents to push for an Inclusive Education Policy Statement in NSW. We are also advocating at the federal level, to formulate a National Inclusive Education Policy.

These meetings form an important part of working with our elected members and attempting to ensure that they have an understanding of the barriers faced by students with disability. Our role in this is also to educate and work towards more progressive change; particularly the considerations needed for a “whole of system” reform in order to build an inclusive education system.

Action was taken by some Members of Parliament asking questions at Budget Estimates or in Question Time in Parliament which raised our concerns. A controversial topic is the review of the Student Behaviour Strategy. Family Advocacy has been strongly advocating for major reforms to this strategy. We are pleased to report that this Strategy was released with some of the recommendations we have made in our submission.

Our systems team attended many webinars such as the Australian Higher Education Summit 2020, the NSW Annual Schools Summit 2021 and the National launch: Educators webinar – 2020

Review of the Disability Education Standards 2005. As a result, in conjunction with input from families, we provided a submission on the Review of the Disability Education Standards 2005.

Same Classroom Same Opportunity Campaign

The Same Classroom Same Opportunity campaign for inclusive education has continued to be used as an instrument for education reform. The campaign is grounded on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), particularly noting General Comment No.4 (GC4) under Article 24 (The Right to an Inclusive Education), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to explicitly recognise that children with disability have a fundamental human right to an inclusive education.

Also to support our Same Classroom Same Opportunity campaign, we engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders in the disability and education sectors such as Council for Intellectual Disability (CID), People with Disability Australia (PWDA), Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN), Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR), Disability Advocacy (DA), Information on Disability Education and Awareness Services (IDEAS), Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education: All Means All, Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia (PAAA), Tasmanian Disability Reform Lobby, Queensland Collective for Inclusive Education, JFA Purple Orange, Blind Citizens Australia, and Vision Australia.

We also attended meetings to build relationships with relevant academics and researchers in Australia and internationally including the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP), Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), Public Schools Foundation, University of Technology Sydney’s Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, The University of Sydney Policy Lab, NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and numerous universities.

Systemic Advocacy

The systems team also fostered parent leadership with a systemic focus. One of our parent advocates set up an inclusive education subcommittee in the Parent and Citizens (P & C) association within his own school as well as the Northern Sydney Region (262 schools). We have had further discussions with this and other parent advocates who started similar subcommittees and we will create a “How to” resource, and then invite any interested parents to join us in a capacity building webinar.

In the early childhood area, we met with:

- Reimagine Australia – formerly Early Childhood Intervention Australia. We are attending a monthly meeting where organisations from all over Australia in the early childhood space provide updates about their ILC projects, any challenges they are facing and generally share information about the sector
- Advocacy organisations Every Child and CYDA - this also included the Thrive by Five initiative, campaigning to make the early learning childcare system to be of high quality and universally accessible.

Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education

As one of the co-founders of the Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE), which is made up of 14 organisations across all states and one territory, Family Advocacy has been involved in bringing the 10-year Roadmap for progressively realising Inclusive Education to life. For example, ACIE hosted three National Inclusive Education Roundtables which were attended by every Department of Education across the country. We have also undertaken extensive work to promote this strategy with decision makers such as the NSW Minister for Education, and the Secretary for the NSW Department of Education, the advocacy sector and other stakeholders. ACIE has created a Youth Advisory Working Council, with Family

Advocacy supporting two members from NSW to participate.

This national formation of advocacy organisations has allowed us to have a national voice and work together with the states and territories to overcome the barriers faced by children and young people with disability in schools across Australia. We attended 19 meetings with the ACIE in 2020/2021.

The ACIE has also provided collective messaging around inclusive education to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability as well as government at national and state/territory level. The main message was that the inequities that were present before the COVID-19 pandemic have been amplified during the COVID-19 period. Major concerns were lack of social connection, lack of reasonable adjustments to provide access to curriculum, the digital divide, and lack of communication. We continue to raise these issues at the state and national levels.

COVID-19

Similar to last year, it has been vital for Family Advocacy to maintain communication with our community during these continuing uncertain times and being responsive to the impact on the lives of people with developmental disability. We have been able to feedback their input via various channels in relation to any issues, barriers to access and/or disadvantage they might be experiencing due to the pandemic, so that this may be passed on directly to the government. People with disability's voices are being heard and practices to protect people with disability are being adopted.

We fielded many calls relating to the sudden impact of COVID-19, shining a light on the fragilities in many of the mainstream services in relation to how they considered and supported people with disability. To ensure that issues and concerns were heard and fed back to relevant Government bodies we:

Systemic Advocacy

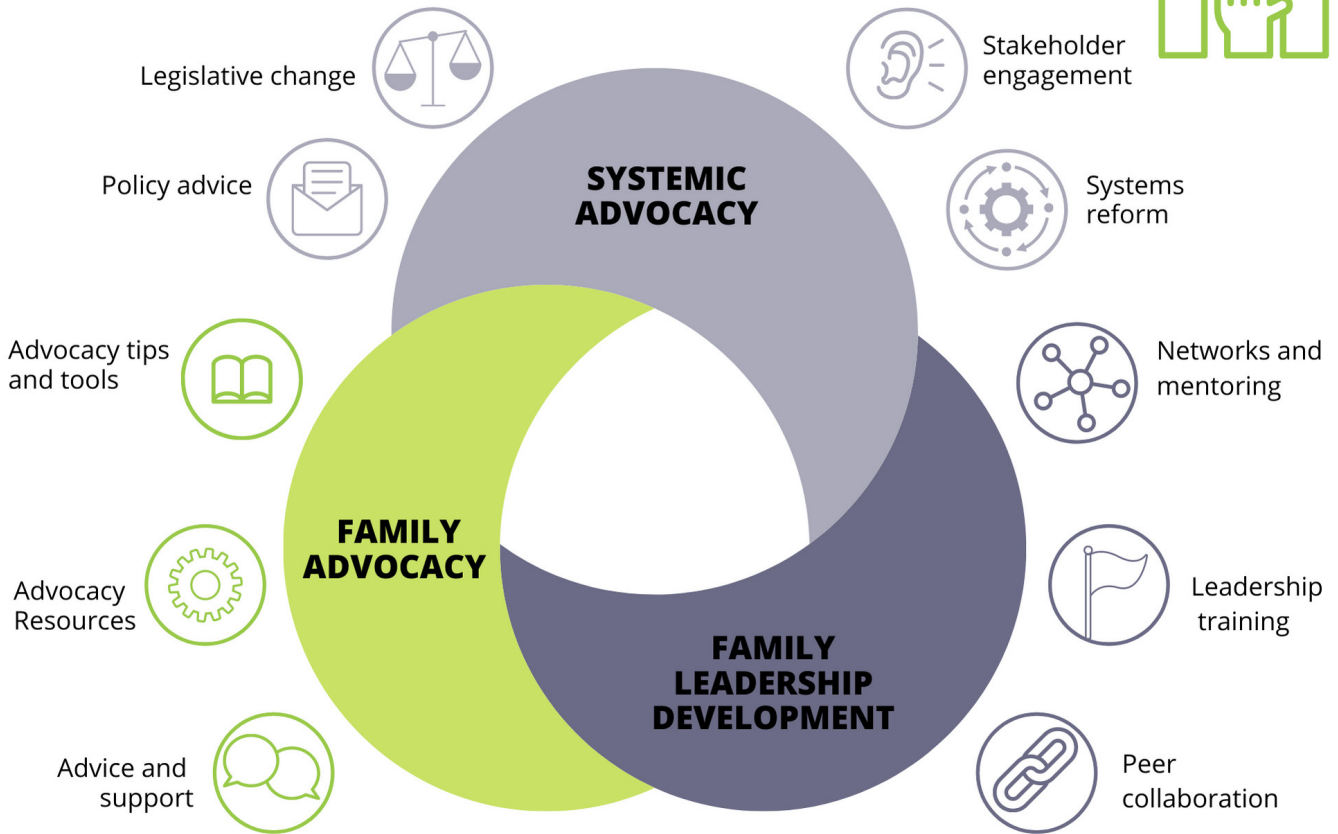
- Attended several national roundtables led by Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) and Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth (ARACY), called “Research regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Children and Young People with Disability”. The purpose of this roundtable was to identify research on service delivery and other impacts on children and young people with disability and their families during this time
- Conducted six online events providing advocacy advice and updates on impacts and solutions relating to COVID-19
- Attended 19 meetings at national level, in conjunction with Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)
- Attended 14 meetings with the Disability Community of Practice as part of the NSW Department of Health (a multidisciplinary, cross-departmental group focused on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic). These meetings occurred every fortnight from June to December 2020 and then monthly from January to June 2021. There have been presenters on various topics to keep stakeholders abreast of the latest changes and programs such as Outbreak Planning, Public Health Advice, The Vaccination Rollout, Commonwealth Program Update, Clinical Council Update, the Disability Gateway, the National COVID-19 vaccine and latest advice from the NDIS. These updates were shared with our community through our various social channels and we used this forum to raise any COVID-19 issues which could be fed to the Commonwealth Departments of Health where relevant
- Attended 5 meetings with the Australian Child Rights Taskforce.

Leanne Varga, Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager



Our Model of Advocacy

Model of Family Advocacy



Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Resourcing Inclusive Communities provides capacity building to enable the full inclusion of people with disability, so they can live meaningful lives as valued members of their communities. We support positive change through working with people with disability, their family members, service providers, mainstream services, businesses and the broader community.

We deliver this through webinars, workshops, conferences and online resources around a range of areas including pursuing employment, self-managing and creating individualised living options. We also offer individual consultations and mentoring to support our community to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they may need to create innovating and creative support arrangements that lead to an inclusive live.

Vision, Purpose and Strategic Goals

Our vision is:

- People with disability thrive in the heart of the community, sharing the same everyday experiences as their fellow Australians.

Our purpose is:

- To support positive change through working with people with disability, families, communities and services.

We share our vision of social inclusion with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). One of the eight guiding principles of the CRPD outlines that all people with disability have the right to experience full and effective participation and inclusion in society. Resourcing Inclusive Communities works with many allies in the community to support this vision.

Our Strategic Goals are:

- Increased reach to families and childhood services

- Increased self-management with a clear vision
- Increased individualised living options
- Enhanced employment
- The “go to” organisation for inclusive service and community development.

National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations

Resourcing Inclusive Communities has continued its ongoing involvement with the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO). The Alliance is a national network of not-for-profit, values based organisations, with the shared vision and belief that all people with disability are valued citizens and have the right to contribute to society through social and economic participation. NACBO members are: Belonging Matters (VIC), Community Resource Unit (QLD), Family Advocacy (NSW), Imagine More (ACT), JFA Purple Orange (SA) and Valued Lives Foundation (WA).

Building a Good Life Through Self-Management webinars

These webinars, presented by Linda Hughes, took place in July 2020 and were funded through the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Readiness Grant. The webinars formed the last component of the project and followed workshops that ran around the state in early 2020. The series focused on obtaining deeper clarity of the benefits of self-management, and how vision, intentional planning and having the right people around you have the potential to build a sense of contribution and connection to community.

Webinar 1: Self-Managing, having a Positive Vision and Living Your Best Life

In this webinar Linda talked about how self-managing and having a positive vision for her son makes a big difference in his life. She engaged bigger picture thinking in relation

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

to possibilities, unpacked the importance of developing a positive vision and how this translates to setting meaningful goals.

Webinar 2: Self-Managing and Managing your Support Team

Linda Hughes and guest speaker Catherine Mahony shared ideas on how to find your own supports as well as managing your support team effectively.

Webinar 3: Self-Managing, Building Community Connections and Relationships

This webinar looked at how people with disability can use their supports to connect with their community, and increase freely given relationships and friendships.



L-R: Anna Bazzi Backhouse and Katie Hodges, Capacity Development Coordinators - School to Work Project



School To Work
for Secondary Students
with Disability

School to Work Project

Resourcing Inclusive Communities received an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant through the Economic and Community Participation program to deliver this three-year project together with Imagine More in ACT and Community Resource Unit in Queensland. The project, School to Work aims to inspire and equip students with disability,

through the support of families, to seek meaningful, paid employment in the community.

In September 2020, we welcomed Katie Hodges as Capacity Development Coordinator for the School to Work project. In May 2021, Anna Bazzi Backhouse joined the team.

The initial priorities for the School to Work Project staff included the coordination of the co-design process with fellow consortium members. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, planning sessions and follow up conversations initially took place via telephone and Zoom. The consortium convened for a day-long planning session in February 2021, when restrictions were eased. The result was the development of a rich source of information and consensus around promotional aims. Delivery structure, timelines, key topic areas and general approaches to building capacity within families and the secondary students they support were also agreed upon.

What followed was the development of a one-day, face to face “School to Work Workshop: Imagining, Discovering and Finding” and a series of three, two-part webinars for the following cohorts:

- Imagining Work for Years 7-8
- Discovering Work for Years 9-10
- Finding Work for Years 11-12.

A total of 22 of the above webinars were run between October 2020 and June 2021, and were accessed by 582 people.

The face to face workshops started in May 2021 in Sydney’s Northern Beaches, and travelled to Western Sydney (Campbelltown), the NSW South Coast (Nowra and Batemans Bay) and Central West (Bathurst and Dubbo) regions. The events received a total of 93 registrations, with 89 of the registrants attending.

The workshops provided an exciting opportunity to build capacity in the regions, meeting new audiences that included families, young

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

people with disability, educators and disability professionals. In the regional town of Orange, the team also met with local high schools and key services in the area.

The involvement of family leaders has been critical to the successful delivery of the School to Work Project in its first year. The input of parent leaders brings a level of credibility to the process and encourages other parents to play an active role in the development of their child or young person's future.

Annette Bush participated in two rounds of webinars, sharing her insights in supporting her son Jacob into real, meaningful employment in their local community on the Mid North Coast.

Vanessa Shearman joined the School to Work team in Bathurst in June. Vanessa shared her son Josh's experience in volunteer and paid work, including his microenterprise JLS Mail Link.

Di Samuels participated in the creation of 'Rhiannon's Work Experience' video. This short film powerfully documents her daughter Rhiannon's successful access to work experience at a local café and bakery in their community of Pambula, NSW. The video has been used in the delivery of both workshops and webinars.

In the first year of its journey, School to Work has produced and delivered valuable opportunities to engage with parents, teachers and students, building capacity whilst continuously highlighting the commitment of families to their children and young people.

The project regularly attracts a large number of educators, particularly Student Teacher Transition and Learning Support Coordinators that work across both government and non-government schools. Although this group is not the main audience, they remain an important contact due to their direct link with families and young people as well as the ability to disseminate information about the project. To make the webinars and workshops a safe place for families, educators are informed that the primary audience are parents and families of students with disability.



*Alva K. Lim
Capacity Development Coordinator
My Home My Way Project*



My Home My Way Project

My Home My Way is a new project that aims to explore individualised and innovative ways that people with disability have created their own home, while getting the support they need. The project is funded from two separate ILC grants (2019 and 2020). In May 2020, we welcomed Alva K. Lim to the Resourcing Inclusive Communities team as Capacity Development Coordinator for this project.

Before the introduction of NDIS, Family Advocacy has had a long history of resourcing people and families to enable them to move into a home of their own, including lengthy campaigns with allies to establish the state-funded Supported Living Fund. The work by families back then laid the foundations for many of the innovative living arrangements we see today.

My Home My Way builds on the leadership of people and families who have successfully created a home of their own. Together with the National

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO), we are working on building a national portal that reviews and draws together resources, stories and learnings of people with disabilities on individualised home and living arrangements. A range of new resources including videos, podcasts, booklets, tip sheets and guides are collectively being created by the organisations and will be uploaded to a website which is expected to be ready by early 2022.

Resourcing Inclusive Communities is producing a visual booklet on My Home My Way, as well as overseeing the production of eight podcasts.

Each organisation is contributing a podcast each on the theme of: Getting started, myth busting, overcoming fears, who's home is it?, creating a range of supports to thrive in their own home, renting or owning a home, and safeguards. Each episode shares real stories of people with disability, told by people with disability and/or their family members.

Online workshops for families and people with disability are planned for September 2021, with more for later in the year.

Another important element of the My Home My Way initiative is to facilitate families to learn from each other, through mentoring. Moving away from the family home into one's own home is a major turning point in anyone's life. Learning from the lived experience of others is a valuable way for families to mentor each other. Resourcing Inclusive Communities, along with NACBO partners, will provide technical and practical support to pursue new and innovative models of home and living support, including the Individualised Living Options (ILO).

With the introduction of NDIS, new funding models have been developed to support a person in their home. This has posed challenges for many people and yet also opportunities.

NACBO is developing a how-to guide and train-the-trainer program on what is an ILO and how to support a person to determine whether it suits them to thrive in their own home.



L-R: Laura Abrahams and William Martin, Capacity Development Coordinators - Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project

Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project

In 2020, Resourcing Inclusive Communities received an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant through the Individual Capacity Building program to deliver a two-year project named Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality. The project commenced in the last quarter of 2020, with the appointments of William Martin and Laura Abrahams in November and December respectively.

The key deliverables include: 24 Workshops, 12 Peer Networks, Social Media Strategy, Individual Consultations and a Leadership Masterclass over the two-year period.

Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project is guided by the experience of Family Leaders which form the make-up of its Steering Committee. Steering Committee members include Alex Purvis, Alison Wilson, Annette O'Sullivan, Elise and Michael Magrath, Sarah Harvey, Joseph Naim and Sunshine Wood, who all have family members with disability. This supports the development of the project and ensures the lived experience is captured throughout. The group meets quarterly and feeds back on the progress and planning of all deliverables with the first two having been hosted in March and June 2021.

The Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop was developed with content focusing on identifying

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

and planning for an authentic inclusive life for people with disability. The workshop discusses topics such as inclusion, devaluation, thinking typical, socially valued roles, vision, and self-management all through the lens of Social Role Valorisation to achieve and reach the good life for a person with disability.

The first of these workshops was delivered on 17 June 2021 in Hornsby, with 20 attendees.

The Framework of the Family-Led Peer Networks was created following discussion and research of the Peer Network Learnings of NACBO Alliance members Imagine More, Community Resource Unit, Valued Lives, Belonging Matters and JFA Purple Orange. Peer Networks will be run by family leaders in a paid facilitation role.

Peer Networks will start to roll out in the second half of 2021, based on the needs of the people in the network. Various topics and support will be gauged from the workshops and can include those such as vision, self-management, role based

recruitment, employment, socially valued roles, social inclusion and more. The flexibility to run these Networks both online and/or face to face will be dependent on the group and their needs.

Another important component of the project, the Leadership Masterclass, will be delivered in 2022.

The Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project also brought funding for the broader Resourcing Inclusive Communities' Social Media Strategy. From this, new channels on LinkedIn and Instagram were created as well as setting the recommended number and type of posts for each platform. More details in the communications report on page 43.

Overall, throughout the 2020/2021 year, much of the focus of this project has been in the early stages of development through to the early stages of delivery. Building strong foundations have been key to ensure the success of the project leading to a promising start.

Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality - Project Deliverables

Capacity Building Workshops

Individual Consultations

Supporting Resources

Peer Support Networks

Social Media and Online Strategy

Family Leadership Masterclass

Events and Presentations

| Date | Event | Location |
|------------------|--|--------------|
| 20 July 2020 | Self-Management webinar - Vision | Online |
| 24 July 2020 | Self-Management webinar - Supports | Online |
| 30 July 2020 | Self-Management webinar - Community | Online |
| 17 November 2020 | Imagining Work - Getting Started in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 18 November 2020 | Discovering Work - Getting Started in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 24 November 2020 | Finding Work - Getting Started in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 2 December 2020 | Discovering Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 8 December 2020 | Finding Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 20 January 2021 | Discovering Work - Getting Started in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 21 January 2021 | Finding Work - Getting Started in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 22 January 2021 | Imagining Work - Getting Started in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 27 January 2021 | Discovering Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 28 January 2021 | Finding Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 29 January 2021 | Imagining Work- The Next Steps in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 10 February 2021 | Imagining Work - Getting Started in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 23 February 2021 | Discovering Work- Getting Started in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 24 February 2021 | Imagining Work- The Next Steps in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 2 March 2021 | Finding Work - Getting Started in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 9 March 2021 | Discovering Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 16 March 2021 | Finding Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 27 April 2021 | Imagining Work - Getting Started in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 9 May 2021 | Discovering Work - Getting Started in Yrs 9 & 10 webinar | Online |
| 11 May 2021 | Imagining Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 7 & 8 webinar | Online |
| 13 May 2021 | School to Work workshop | Dee Why |
| 26 May 2021 | Finding Work - Getting Started in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 1 June 2021 | School to Work workshop | Campbelltown |
| 2 June 2021 | School to Work workshop | Nowra |
| 3 June 2021 | School to Work workshop | Batemans Bay |
| 9 June 2021 | Finding Work - The Next Steps in Yrs 11 & 12 webinar | Online |
| 17 June 2021 | Creating an Inclusive Life workshop | Hornsby |
| 22 June 2021 | School to Work workshop | Bathurst |
| 23 June 2021 | School to Work workshop | Dubbo |

Events and Presentations



Staying Connected

Communications

Our communications aim to amplify the strength of families, community and advocacy, as well as connecting us with our stakeholders through resources, useful information and real-life stories. With the growth experienced by the organisation in the past year, which included three new projects run by our initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities, the Communications team also expanded. In February we welcomed Jane Curtis, who joined Family Advocacy as Communications and Media Coordinator on a part-time basis.

Resources

A variety of resources including video content, webinars, articles, web-links, workshop booklets and learning tools continued to be developed and made available through our events, websites and social media channels.

This year we produced a number of video resources, including:

“Rhiannon’s Work experience”, featuring Di Samuels and her daughter Rhiannon Samuels-Connell. The story highlights the importance of planning ahead, focusing on the student’s strengths and interests, and also maximising existing community connections, all of which contribute to a successful work experience. The video was developed for the School to Work project and was shown at their events.

A suite of clips for the Advocacy and Development team, featuring collaborative conversations between parents and teachers. The suite consists of seven short videos covering the topics: adjusting assessment, classroom check ins, communication, high expectations, and how to use SLSOs (student learning support officers) plus two parent/teacher meeting scenarios.

Two short videos produced internally for the Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Team, featuring parent Jan Kruger, speaking about the importance of vision and using NDIS funding to achieve it. The clips were used in the Creating an Inclusive Life workshop.



L-R: Clara Maldonado, Digital Media and Communications Manager; Jane Curtis, Communications and Media Coordinator

Media Releases and Coverage

Family Advocacy

In the lead up to the Disability Royal Commission’s hearing on “Barriers to accessing a safe, quality and inclusive school education and life course impacts” where our Executive Officer presented evidence as a member of an expert panel, Family Advocacy issued a Media Statement with the other members of the panel (Children and Young People with Disability Australia and Queensland Advocacy Incorporated). This resulted on the publication of an article in The Educator, entitled “Australia failing kids with disability” (14 October 2020). As part of the coverage of the hearing, our Executive Officer was also mentioned in the Brisbane Times on 12 October 2020.

On International Day of People with Disability, an opinion piece by our Executive Officer and Systemic Advocate entitled “No matter how much you tinker with the Titanic, it’s still heading for the iceberg” appeared in The Educator Online. The piece was written in response to the Progress Report: Improving outcomes for students with disability 2020 released by the NSW Department of Education.

On Tuesday 25 May 2021, our Executive Officer was interviewed for a story aired on ABC’s 7pm news. The story revealed the NSW government’s intention to invest 90 million dollars to build more Schools for Specific Purposes.

Communications

We also issued a number of media releases promoting the One of the Kids workshops in regional areas, and two blog articles which were published on our website and distributed via social media:

- NSW Inclusive Education Statement welcomed, but still raises red flags
- Driving change: A roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia.

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

The School to Work project generated media coverage for our initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities. This included articles in the Batemans Bay post and Narooma News, featuring our upcoming School to Work Workshops in those areas.

Our Executive Officer was interviewed by 2MCE radio in Bathurst and DCFM in Dubbo in the lead up to the workshops in the Central West. An advertisement also appeared in three Central West newspapers: Bathurst Western Advocate, Dubbo Daily Liberal and Parkes Champion Post.

Social Media

Family Advocacy

Family Advocacy uses social media as a vehicle to connect more widely with families as well as a mechanism to bring social change issues to the forefront of everyday Australians. This financial year, our Facebook community grew by 13.5% from 2,880 to 3,269 likes; and the Family Advocacy Facebook page reached 101,250 people*.

We also maintained a strong presence on Twitter. Our Twitter impressions were 135,421**, a 25% increase from last year (107,014) and our followers grew by 26% from 659 to 785. Significant Twitter activity took place in October, when our Executive Officer was part of the

expert panel that presented evidence at the Disability Royal Commission's public hearing on education. During that month, our Twitter impressions went up by 59%, our profile visits by 239% and our profile mentions by 509% (107 mentions in October compared to 9 in September).

The number of views on our YouTube channel increased by 11%, from 14,700 to 16,357. The most watched videos were "What is social advocacy and why it is important?", "Al's Story" and "Clarity of Vision: a Compass for the Journey".

Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Following the development of a strategy to enhance our digital communications, which is one of the deliverables of the Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project, Resourcing Inclusive Communities now has Instagram and LinkedIn accounts as well as a Facebook page. We have been posting 3-4 times a week on Facebook (previous average was 1-2 posts). This has resulted in an exponential increase on our reach: from 3,837 for the six months from July to December 2020, to 33,232 in the six months from January to June 2021, when we began implementing the strategy. Our community continues to grow steadily, with 440 likes on Facebook and 142 Instagram followers.

Websites

Family Advocacy aims to ensure that we provide easy access to information that meets the needs of the families we support. Our organisation has three websites, all of which are managed internally.

- Family Advocacy: family-advocacy.com
- Resourcing Inclusive Communities: ric.org.au
- Access:Symposium: access.family-advocacy.com

* Reach: the total number of unique users who had any content from our page or about our page enter their screens.

** Impressions: the total tally of all the times the Tweet has been seen.

Communications

We are currently building a fourth website, “Conversations for Collaboration”, a collaborative engagement framework co-designed and co-authored by NSW educators and parents of students with disability, who have experienced quality student-centred collaborations.

We are also in the process of redesigning the Resourcing Inclusive Communities website, as this was a critical aspect of our 2020 digital marketing strategy.

Email Communications and Surveys

Electronic direct mail continues to be one of the main means to connect with and inform our community. This year, we sent 67 mass emails to our database, mainly promoting our events and workshops, targeted by area. Mail outs were also used to advertise employment vacancies and disseminate systemic campaigns, including our “End segregation for students with disability in NSW” campaign launched on 2 December 2020.

We also used email to distribute a number of surveys, including a survey created on behalf of the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance, which was distributed to 23 advocacy organisations to be sent out to their members. The survey received nearly 500 responses statewide and collected data and case studies to ensure that the NSW Government has a clear understanding of the importance of Advocacy for people with disability in NSW. We also sent out a Family Advocacy communications survey (112 responses), a survey about the proposed NDIS Independent Assessments (142 responses) and a survey to collect data for a submission regarding the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education (33 responses).

Event promotion and support

Online events

The communications team has been crucial in supporting our Zoom video conferencing technology, which we use to deliver our webinars and virtual workshops. In July 2020, we upgraded our platform to the Zoom Webinar software, to allow us to deliver our events to up to 500 participants.

During the 2020/2021 financial year, we provided support in the promotion, registration management, material development and delivery of the following online events:

- 3 “Good life through Self-Management” webinar series with presenter Linda Hughes (Resourcing Inclusive Communities)
- 23 School to Work webinars (School to Work Project)
- 5 Disability Royal Commission webinars (Advocacy and Leadership)
- Family Advocacy Annual General Meeting.

Workshops

We supported the promotion of the following events, including media releases, uploading Facebook events, contacting schools and Facebook groups, and submitting to directories:

- 11 One of The Kids workshops (Advocacy and Leadership)
- 6 School to Work workshops (School to Work project)
- 1 Creating an Inclusive Life workshop, (Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project).

Clara Maldonado, Media and Digital Communications Manager

Finances, Operations and People

Financial Management

The Committee takes its fiscal responsibilities seriously and ensures the organisation is in a sound financial position at all times.

Internal financial training is included in the orientation of all new committee members and an annual financial audit is conducted by a qualified independent auditor, to ensure accounts are accurate and in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards.

Audited statements are available to all members, see the Treasurer's Report for more specific details.

| Recurring funding and one-off grants | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | <i>ref. on pg 47</i> | <i>2020/2021</i> | <i>2019/2020</i> |
| <i>Revenue from Commonwealth Government</i> | | | |
| Disability Advocacy | (1) | 311,640 | 308,865 |
| Disability Royal Commission | (1) | 100,707 | 100,707 |
| NDIS ILC Readiness Grant | (1) | 0 | 134,091 |
| School to Work Project | (1) | 218,545 | 0 |
| Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project | (1) | 249,966 | 0 |
| My Home My Way Project | | 19,164 | 0 |
| My Home My Way - Individualised Living Options (ILO) Project | (1) | 12,535 | 0 |
| <i>Revenue from NSW Government</i> | | | |
| Information Advocacy | (2) | 341,517 | 328,571 |
| Grant in Aid from Department of Education | (3) | 39,030 | 39,030 |
| <i>Total</i> | | \$1,293,104 | \$911,264 |

Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report on behalf of Family Advocacy's Management Committee.

Family Advocacy acknowledges the funding provided by Government, both at federal and state levels for this financial year 2020/2021.

Federal Government Funding

(1). The Department of Social Services (DSS) continued to support the organisation through:

- recurrent funding for advocacy and leadership
- Disability Royal Commission
- ILC Readiness programme for Resourcing Inclusive Communities projects.

State Government Funding

(2). NSW Department of Family and Community Services provided support through recurrent funding for advocacy and information work and ongoing operations of Family Advocacy.

NSW Department of Education Funding

(3). NSW Department of Education provided a Grant in Aid.

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for July 2021 - June 2022 has been ratified by the Management Committee.

Donations and Disclosure of Interests

Donations

Family Advocacy would like to thank those who have provided financial support throughout the year through their donations to the organisation. A total of \$455 was received from: Philippa FitzPatrick, Wendy Stroeve, Sally Stewart, Susan Hoffmann, Dianne Samuels, Kabita Kirkham, Selinah Cheng, Daisy Ng, Wilma Reibel, L & J Scott and one anonymous donor.



*Alex Purvis
Treasurer*

Family Advocacy also acknowledges the following enterprises that have donated in kind:

- Salesforce Foundation: ten free licences of Salesforce Non-profit Success Pack, available for not-for-profit (NFP) organisations
- Connecting Up: discounted software and training for NFP organisations
- Microsoft: discounted software
- Formstack: discounted software
- Survey Monkey: discounted subscription
- Canva: free Canva Pro subscription.

Disclosure of Interests

I advise members that I, Committee Member Alex Purvis received honoraria during the year, at the standard rate set out in the Volunteer Session Leaders Policy, for my contribution towards the work of the organisation as a Volunteer Session Leader.

In accordance with the requirements of the Rules of the Association, I advise members that no other payments have been made to any committee member other than for reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of carrying out their function as committee members.

Alex Purvis, Treasurer

Operations and People

Family Advocacy operates under set policies and operational procedures, which are reviewed regularly by the membership and staff, respectively. The Policy and Practices Manual carries the underlying principles that guide the actions of the organisation while the Operational Practices Manual provides the guidelines for the day to day operations of the staff.

Due to a high level of responsiveness, and the set up of appropriate policies at the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, staff have been able to continue working safely from home over the past year. Staff moved to a hybrid working arrangement in October 2020, when restrictions eased up, working on a rostered basis in the office and the rest of the time at home. Right before the end of June 2021, when the Delta variant of COVID-19 forced Sydney to go into another lockdown, staff once again moved to working fully from home. The transitions between the various working arrangements experienced over the past eighteen months were conducted smoothly with a few technical hiccups that were addressed promptly. Our work continued largely uninterrupted, with some face to face events then moved into a digital environment.

Quality Assurance

Providing support to families that is relevant, up-to-date and timely is the top priority of Family Advocacy. We hold our work to the highest standard that we can provide. We know we achieve this through feedback received from families as well as third party Quality Assurance auditors, who certified our management system in mid-2019 (valid until June 2022). This was verified during a surveillance audit conducted by the same auditors in December 2020.

Risk Management

As part of the governance responsibilities of the Management Committee of Family Advocacy, risk management is an area that is kept within



the Committee's purview. Policies and measures are in place to minimise and/or address potential risk in the areas of finance, Work Health and Safety (WHS), security, and legal as well as reputation, privacy and confidentiality. Risk management is part of the regular agenda at the Committee level. At staff meetings, the specific area of WHS is also part of the regular agenda and is addressed across layers of the organisation, whilst risk-management is considered as well as embedded within our processes. WHS is part of staff orientation and is a stringent awareness exercise, particularly as staff commenced working from home.

Risk management continues to remain significant in the face of the global pandemic and the impacts of state declared lockdowns affect not only our personal lifestyle but also work protocols. For over a year, the global pandemic has forced employers to rethink how we work, and to consider new arrangements that work for both employer and employee. For Family Advocacy, it became about implementing the organisation's objectives and goals in a different environment, exploring other ways we could reach and support families and balancing this out with ensuring that staff were working safely and keeping well. As the world changes, we will continue to improve our processes to safeguard the organisation from various existing and new risks.

Operations and People

Internal Resources

Family Advocacy uses various resources to carry out its activities including human resources, information and communications technology (ICT), its database, and the Inclusion Collection library.

Human Resources

The Family Advocacy “family” is growing, having almost doubled its size in the 2020/2021 financial year.

The competent and experienced staff were complemented by new equally talented and passionate people. Five of the new staff were hired as Capacity Development Coordinators to carry out three new projects for our Resourcing Inclusive Communities Initiative. The Advocacy and Leadership Development team welcomed a new Advocacy and Leadership Development Coordinator and a Communications and Media Coordinator joined the Communications team. Families continued to be supported through advocacy and leadership development, systemic advocacy and information provision, as well as supported to engage with the Disability Royal Commission.

The team was developed by a careful selection of candidates through an insightful, internally run recruitment process. There is a wide range of skills, background and experience among the staff, yet all have a keen drive to be a part of the work that would better the lives of others. They also have strong soft skills, which may explain the harmonious culture within the organisation. A thorough orientation process enables staff to enter the organisation and develop a good foundational understanding of what Family Advocacy is about, the underlying principles that govern our work and the context of how they fit in with the rest of the team.

Over the past year, under the blanket of the COVID-19 risk, the organisation sought to support the staff in their roles and in these

challenging times through a combination of the provision of appropriate equipment, consistent work protocols and expectations, flexibility when reasonable and called for, training and development, and various strategies for mental wellness.

Flexible work arrangements became a give and take arrangement with staff showing commitment with their work responsibilities as the organisation showed support for their improved lifestyle and wellbeing. There was the need to provide extra flexibility, particularly for staff supporting the home learning of their school children. Training and professional development became easier and more convenient to access through virtual platforms. The organisation has always deemed it important to equip staff with additional skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out their roles even more effectively. All staff undergo the Social Role Valorisation (SRV) training at various levels in order to support and enhance the knowledge and insights around developing positive and valued roles for people with disability. Towards the end of the financial year, a full day staff workshop was conducted by an external facilitator and it was great to have everyone together for some personal connection. The day covered strengths based activities for individual and team awareness; the various DISC (dominant, influential, steady and compliant) profiles of staff; and communication and body language - particularly when presenting.

Information Communication Technology

Working remotely, staff had appropriate equipment although they had to quickly develop basic IT troubleshooting skills. Facilities that were set up in pre-COVID-19 times, such as Zoom, meant that staff already had experience and competence with this technology, with the Zoom chat becoming a conduit for both a professional and personal connection between one another. Staff were ably supported to

Operations and People

conduct their events over the Zoom meeting and Zoom webinar facilities by our competent Communications team.

Various server accessories were upgraded. An external IT company continued to support the issues that were raised, often having to do with remote access to the server. This has now been solved with a few occasional technology hiccups. Our phone and internet provider has also provided support for our work phone set ups at home. Regardless of our work arrangement, the operation of incoming and outgoing calls, as well as transferring calls to our respective work extensions has proven to be largely normal. We have had to set up 'hot desks', enabling staff to share desks on a roster, yet still being able to use their own extension.

We have generally had a smooth transition in our new work arrangements, whether working fully from home or in a hybrid arrangement because of the availability of appropriate equipment at both home and the Hornsby offices, as well as the technical support provided.

Database and Data Collection

In our bid to continuously improve the way we work, changes to the database were implemented to update it and ensure that it remained relevant to its users as well as to comply with the requirement of our funders. A Salesforce specialist was contracted and has supported us through these changes which include adjusting templates to address the changes in the reporting requirements of the Department of Social Services, and addressing internal data requirements of other areas of the organisation.

There was also work carried out to enable the integration of our online workshop registrations with our database.

Inclusion Collection

The Inclusion Collection is a unique library

designed to inform, support and motivate.

The resources provide practical and inspiring examples of what is being achieved not only in Australia but throughout the world.

Books, articles, online videos and selected writings by both families and professionals are made available through a file or link download, online viewing, or if it is a book, sent by post. A catalogue of available resources sits in the Family Advocacy website under Resources.

WHS and Environmental Footprint

Work Health and Safety (WHS)

With the human resources being the most highly valued resource of the organisation, it then follows that the organisation places a high priority on the work health and safety of its employees. There are policies and practices in place, which new staff members are made aware of through their orientation. There is a first aid kit in the office and is part of the WHS check in our work from home environment. Ensuring that ergonomic equipment and working posture are used is also an important consideration for the work from home arrangement.

There is a WHS Representative to whom WHS issues and incidents may be raised. WHS is part of the agenda at staff meetings, providing another opportunity for staff to raise any WHS concerns. There is a process in place for the reporting of incidents so that they may be addressed and monitored. WHS is a responsibility of the organisation as well as each individual employee.

COVID safe practices include the signing in and out of office, use of sanitisers, wiping down commonly used office equipment and furniture, and regular disinfection of facilities.

More than ever before, the health and safety of staff have become a greater focus for the organisation as the impact of COVID-19, the

Operations and People

resulting restrictions and prolonged lockdowns have become more felt by all. There is a greater awareness of the importance of maintaining the physical and emotional wellbeing through varied strategies. The daily check-in and consistent communication between staff, the staff workshop that allowed personal connection outside work-related conversation, and developing strategies instigated by staff are all contributing to hopefully better outcomes for staff and the organisation as a whole.

Family Advocacy also received support for staff through an Employee Assistance Program provided by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) for their funded programs, which was accessed by some staff.

WHS will continue to be a significant consideration in our future work arrangements, across the various layers of activity and

processes.

Environmental Footprint

Where and whenever possible, the organisation continues to find ways to be environmentally responsible through work practice and choice of products, as a whole organisation, as well as by individual staff.

Family Advocacy has used online platforms for many years now to reach families, reducing the use of paper and postage. We continue to recycle paper, plastic, glass, and tin containers, as well as use environmentally friendly products. We also utilise recycling bags for any office incidental purchases.

Marybelle Ignacio, Office Manager

Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities staff with trainer Catherine Molloy at the Staff Development Day, June 2021



Staff 2020/2021



Cecile Sullivan Elder
Executive Officer



Karen Tippett
Advocacy and Leadership
Development Manager



Jo Cross
Advocacy and Leadership
Development Coordinator



Jacqueline Currey
Advocacy and Leadership
Development Coordinator



Troy Hester
Advocacy Engagement
Officer - Disability
Royal Commission



Leanne Varga
Systemic Advocacy and
Campaigns Manager



Marybelle Ignacio
Office Manager



Paul Barrett
Accounts, Administration
and Events Coordinator



Clara Maldonado
Media and Digital
Communications Manager

Staff 2020/2021



Jane Curtis
Communications and Media
Coordinator



Michael Starr
Manager, Resourcing
Inclusive Communities
(Sept - Dec 2020)



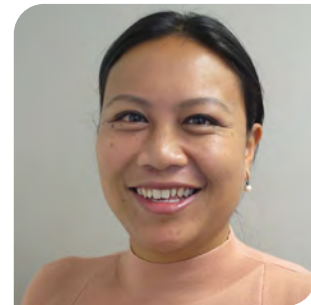
Laura Abrahams
Capacity Development
Coordinator - Resourcing
Inclusive Communities



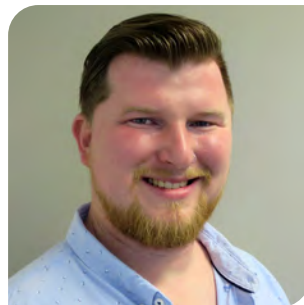
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| AAT | Administrative Appeals Tribunal |
| ACIE | Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education |
| ACYP | Advocate for Children and Young People |
| AGM | Annual General Meeting |
| ALD | Advocacy and Leadership Development |
| ALHR | Australian Lawyers for Human Rights |
| ARACY | Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth |
| CID | Council for Intellectual Disability |
| CRPD | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRU | Community Resource Unit |
| CYDA | Children and Young People with Disability Australia |
| DA NSW | Disability Advocacy New South Wales |
| DANA | Disability Advocacy Network Australia |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| DSIT | Disability Strategy Implementation Team |
| DSS | Department of Social Services |
| FaCS | Department of Family and Community Services |
| ICT | Information Communication Technology |
| IDEAS | Information on Disability Education and Awareness Services |
| ILC | Information, Linkages and Capacity Building |
| ILO | Individualised Living Options |
| MDAA | Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association |
| NACBO | National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations |
| NDIA | National Disability Insurance Agency |
| NDIS | National Disability Insurance Scheme |
| NESA | NSW Education Standards Authority |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PAAA | Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia |
| PDCN | Physical Disability Council NSW |
| PWDA | People with Disability Australia |
| SRV | Social Role Valorisation |
| WHS | Work Health and Safety |



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