

*family*

ADVOCACY



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



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## 2021-2022

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# Contents

2021-2022 Snapshot .....	3
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## Who We Are

Vision, Purpose, Goals and Objectives .....	4
Strategic Goals.....	5
Structure and Management .....	6
Management Committee .....	7
Chairperson’s Report.....	8
Executive Officer’s Report.....	10
Staff.....	12
Volunteers and Family Leaders .....	14

---

## Advocacy and Leadership Development

Manager’s Report.....	15
Issues Raised During Advocacy Enquiries .....	19
Disability Royal Commission.....	20
Family Advocacy Events and Presentations .....	22

---

## Systemic Advocacy

Manager’s Report.....	24
Five Year Advocacy Delivery Snapshot.....	30

---

## Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Vision, Purpose and Goals .....	31
Projects .....	31
Resourcing Inclusive Communities Events and Presentations .....	36

---

## Staying Connected

Communications Report .....	39
-----------------------------	----

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## Finances, Operations and Human Resources

Financial Management.....	42
Treasurer’s Report .....	43
Operations and Human Resources.....	44

Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	46
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## 2021-2022 Snapshot\*



**7 submissions**



**112 events and presentations**



**2,614 event registrations**



**609 enquiries**



**89,731 webpage views**



**259,326 social media reach**

*\*Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities*

# Who We Are

Family Advocacy is an independent and impartial advocacy organisation, working with families in NSW to defend and promote the rights and interests of people with developmental disability.

We are managed and staffed by families and allies of people with disability, who recognise the issues and barriers that people with disability face.

We work to overcome these barriers by developing the advocacy skills of families, so they can take on leadership roles and influence change.

Families are in the strongest position to advocate with and on behalf of their family member, but there can often be a conflict of interest between the needs of the family and the needs of the person with disability. We support the family so they can advocate for the interests of their loved one, always focusing on the needs and interests of the person with disability.

We also work towards changing systems that create barriers to the full inclusion of people with disability.

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## 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.

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## 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 they can enjoy the same environments, lifestyles and living conditions afforded to most Australians.

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## Goals and Objectives

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

### *Family Advocacy's Organisational Goals:*

- To enable families to become agents of positive social change in the lives of people with developmental disability.
- To be a credible public voice that defends, promotes and enhances the rights and interests of people with developmental disability.
- To strengthen families to develop and negotiate alternatives to current service practice consistent with building positive social roles for people with developmental disability
- To broaden and activate the constituency of people who will speak out for the rights and interests of people with developmental disability.
- To 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 so they can perform an advocacy role.
- To encourage the development and effectiveness of family-based advocacy groups.
- To provide an avenue for the development of leadership among families.
- To monitor and, where necessary, make representations about legislation, policies

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

# Who We Are

and practices that 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 to 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.

### 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, and has a large support base including secured funding.



## Quotes from Annual General Meeting, November 2021

*"I'll be forever in debt to Family Advocacy. Before Family Advocacy, I was only told about special schools. Attending the Odyssey Conference, meeting Meg Sweeney, hearing the speakers and being with like-minded people made a life-changing impact. My daughter is now 17 and attending an inclusive school."*

– Parent and Management Committee Member

*"The advocacy skills and vision I gained resulted in my son living in his own house with a friend for 24 years. Wonderful to see Family Advocacy's work continuing."*

– Parent and former staff member

# Structure and Management

Over the past 31 years, Family Advocacy's vision and purpose has remained steady and clear under the effective governance of a strong Management Committee. The general responsibility to run the organisation in accordance with its vision, goals and strategies is carried out by the Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder.

The Committee, which comprises the Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and up to a maximum of 12 ordinary members, is elected each year at the time of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In 2021-2022, the Committee was made up of ten members, who worked to provide the governance and guidance of Family Advocacy. Three members came from metro Sydney and the rest from regional NSW.

All Committee members are family members of people living with disability. The strength of the Family Advocacy Committee lies in maintaining its focus on the rights and interests of people with developmental disability, in achieving better lives and social roles through the organisation's vision and purpose, and through pursuing the goals stated in its Strategic Plan.

## 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 who 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; however Family Advocacy places high value on its members and the contributions they make. Members build 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 by becoming a Committee member. Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of members and thanks them for their continued support throughout the 2021-2022 year.

## Annual General Meeting

We held our AGM over Zoom on 30 November 2021. Chairperson, Annette O'Sullivan facilitated the proceedings. The Chairperson's report and the Treasurer's reports were presented, and the new Management Committee for 2021-2022 was elected. We thanked Karen Martin who served on the Committee until August 2021. Four members joined the Committee this financial year: Melissa Smith, Louise Kuchel, Annette Bush and Lesley Light.

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



# Management Committee 2021-2022



**Annette O'Sullivan**  
Chairperson



**Alex Purvis**  
Treasurer



**Meg Sweeney**  
Secretary



**Annette Bush**  
Committee Member



**Matthew Dimmock**  
Committee Member



**Randa Habelrih**  
Committee Member



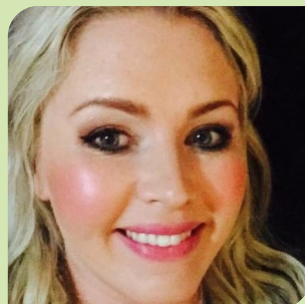
**Louise Kuchel**  
Committee Member



**Lesley Light**  
Committee Member



**Karen Martin**  
Committee Member



**Melissa Smith**  
Committee Member



# Chairperson's Report

This past year has seen valuable and effective work undertaken by our professional and dedicated staff. The important work of Family Advocacy continues to assist people with disability to live valuable and inclusive lives within their communities. Our organisation offers targeted information and resources to families across the state and, as this Annual Report illustrates, Family Advocacy has successfully continued its core advocacy and leadership work, and implemented a comprehensive program of innovative projects and initiatives.

Since our formation 31 years ago, the purpose and vision of Family Advocacy has been clear and constant: to ensure that the human rights of people with developmental disability are protected and realised, with no-one left behind or set aside.

It is the determination of Family Advocacy that every person with developmental disability will have the opportunity to live an inclusive and valuable life, participating in regular education in a mainstream school, accessing a vocation of their choice and living in a home of their own within their community.

We continue to engage with families across the state, increasing capacity for individuals and communities to advocate for systemic change. Our ability to gain ongoing funding for our core work and strategic projects has strengthened relationships and forged new ones. The voice of Family Advocacy and the skill and professionalism of our staff is well recognised and respected. We continue to be heard across NSW and nationally as our reputation for the inclusion of all people with developmental disability resonates within the Disability sector.

Our support in assisting families and people with disability to access and make submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) continues. This will strengthen the voice of those with disability and their families and provide valuable information and feedback to



**Annette O'Sullivan,  
Chairperson**

the Commission. The information gathered aims to improve and safeguard the lives of many in the future. The work of the Commission and the voices heard through submissions, validates the hardship and abuse that unfortunately many in our community have endured, and continue to endure as a result of devaluation and discrimination.

I would like to congratulate the Family Advocacy staff who have continued to drive our advocacy and capacity building programs. As you can see when reading this report, much has been achieved. Our advocacy work has targeted ongoing commitment to inclusive education, particularly early childhood, and the transition points along the education journey. It is a slow and often frustrating journey toward the systemic change that is required to provide all children with a best practice education experience, an inclusive education within the mainstream classroom. It then follows, and this is supported by research, that people with disability, having accessed regular education, will more likely participate in an inclusive life after school, gaining employment and living in a home of their choice.

We have had several staff changes over the past year. We said goodbye to Jane Curtis, Talia Roshan, and William Martin and thank them for their contributions. We welcomed Adrian Buckley to the Communications team, and Louise Kuchel to the Disability Royal Commission Advocacy team.

# Chairperson's Report

I would like to thank and congratulate our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, for leading Family Advocacy with skill and professionalism over the past year. She has diligently and competently supported all staff ensuring a professional and healthy workplace is enjoyed by all. The Committee is aware of the challenges the Disability sector can present, and Cecile has led by example, with her commitment and determination. I am sure our organisation is stronger as a result of the leadership and effort that Cecile has provided and continues to provide to the staff, allies and members of Family Advocacy.

Thank you also to my fellow Committee members who have volunteered their time to assist with the governance of Family Advocacy. Their contributions over the past 12 months have been much appreciated. It is an essential task that members undertake, ensuring the ongoing operation of our organisation. It is indicative of the passion of our members that over the existence of our organisation we have had members undertake this important function. I have much appreciated their support, skill and wisdom.

As this is my final year as Chairperson, I would like to reflect on the past four years. I am proud and impressed with the ongoing high standard of the work undertaken by Family Advocacy and the growth within our organisation. Our important Advocacy and Leadership programs have positively impacted the lives of people with disability as we continue to focus on access to, and systems reform, of education, employment and housing. There will always be a place for effective advocacy by those who know their loved one best: their family. However, it is my observation that alongside this advocacy, systemic change is necessary to reduce the segregation of people with disability. It is neither sustainable, nor indeed just, to require families themselves to fight and advocate for the changes that should be afforded to all people with disability.

Unfortunately, despite much effort, specialist and segregated facilities continue to emerge. It is hard to understand the justification for this as not only is it in contravention of the human rights of people with disability; it is also contradicted by research that supports better outcomes when inclusion is the default position.

The change required rests with government systems and policies that control and impact the life experiences of people with developmental disability.

I look forward to the days when research, human rights and best practice drives the support accessed by our sons and daughters.

Family Advocacy will continue to vigorously support the families of all those with developmental disability to advocate for their loved one, enabling them to live their best life within their community.



# Executive Officer's Report

The protection and the progression of the rights and interests of people with development disability has remained squarely in our focus over the last 12 months, as many issues and concerns continue to be present for people with disability across NSW. This remains the case when accessing typical things expected by the population such as a regular education, access to everyday services, living and participating in our communities, and employment opportunities and pathways.

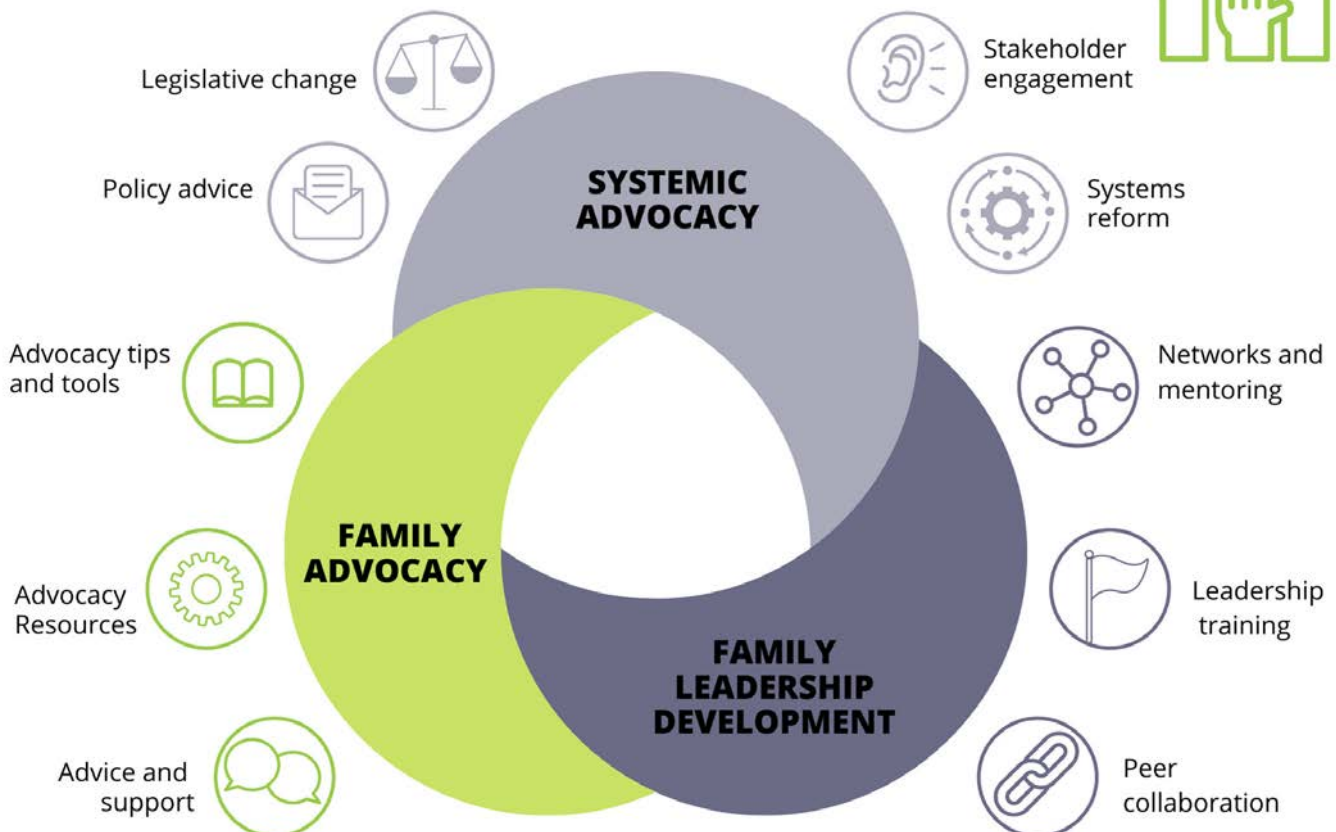
Family Advocacy continues to focus its advocacy efforts on working towards improving systems and supports that enable these typical opportunities and services to be experienced by people with developmental disability. Also, a continued focus of our work is ensuring that certain groups are not left behind in this due to their diagnosis or prognosis of life pathways and expectations.



**Cecile Sullivan Elder**  
Executive Officer

The Family Advocacy Model of Advocacy works on supporting families to undertake advocacy with, or at times on behalf of, their family members with developmental disability. This potent approach builds self-efficacy with and around the person with disability as families continue to be a strong conduit to the protection and progression of their loved one's rights and interests.

## Model of Family Advocacy



# Executive Officer's Report

This 12-month period saw the need to re-apply for both our federal and state advocacy funding, to undertake the model of advocacy we offer.

After six years of lobbying the NSW Government on the need for disability advocacy to continue in NSW, the sector saw a tender process for a reshaped advocacy sector. Considerable changes involved limitations of geographical locations for individual advocacy organisations, and limitations as to how these services could be delivered, including advocacy organisations no longer being able to assist with matters related to national systems such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The governance of organisation was faced with a decision in relation to which disability advocacy funding would best fit the purview of the organisation and the Family Advocacy Model.

It was decided to apply for the representative model as it did not inhibit our ongoing advocacy advice, support, advocacy leadership development of families and systems change endeavours. We are pleased to say there was no change to our federally funded advocacy services, as we continue to focus our advocacy advice and supports for families across the state.

Our initiative, **Resourcing Inclusive Communities** has continued to build on the potency of the projects being delivered over this period with a focus on co-design and collaboration alongside people with disability and their families.

People with disability living their lives embedded in the community, thriving and contributing, is the focus of all our Resourcing Inclusive Communities projects. It has been heartening to witness our Capacity Building Coordinators take on this ethos, led for families by families.

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).

The last 12 months has also seen the beginnings of a two-year evaluation report, which is looking at the impact of NACBO across Australia on the lives of people with disability. The Social Policy Research Centre (University of NSW) is undertaking this work with its final report due in 2023.

This 'think national, act local' approach has continued to allow much cross-organisational learning to occur. We have continued to meet monthly to inform one another of impacts seen for people with disability in our jurisdictions and to progress our shared capacity building work to assist in mitigating some of the significant barriers faced by people with disability. Thinking ordinary or typical is the key to all our capacity building work, as people with disability do not want or need to be different; they just need support to get the same.

Our work across the organisation continues to be driven by a dedicated team of staff who are all passionate regarding the importance of our work and the need for change. We all acknowledge the important contribution of the Management Committee as their governance and guidance enables the organisation and its staff to remain clear on our efforts and motivated to continue to strive for better supports and systems for people with disability.

I would personally like to acknowledge and thank Annette O'Sullivan who has chaired the Committee for the past four years. Annette is now required to step down from this role while mentoring the new Chairperson for the next 12 months. Annette has been invaluable in supporting my role as well as the work across the organisation.

# Staff 2021-2022



**Cecile Sullivan Elder**  
Executive Officer



**Karen Tippett**  
Advocacy and Leadership  
Development Manager



**Jo Cross**  
Advocacy and Leadership  
Coordinator



**Jacqueline Currey**  
Advocacy and Leadership  
Coordinator



**Troy Hester**  
Advocacy Engagement  
Officer - Disability  
Royal Commission



**Louise Kuchel**  
Advocacy Engagement  
Officer - Disability  
Royal Commission  
(from April 2022)



**Talia Roshan**  
Advocacy Engagement  
Officer - Disability  
Royal Commission  
(to April 2022)



**Leanne Varga**  
Systemic Advocacy and  
Campaigns Manager



**Marybelle Ignacio**  
Office Manager

# Staff 2021-2022



**Paul Barrett**  
Accounts, Administration  
and Events Coordinator



**Clara Maldonado**  
Media and Digital  
Communications Manager



**Adrian Buckley**  
Communications and  
Media Coordinator  
(from May 2022)



**Jane Curtis**  
Communications and  
Media Coordinator  
(to March 2022)



**Katie Hodges**  
Capacity Development  
Coordinator - Resourcing  
Inclusive Communities



**Anna Bazzi Backhouse**  
Capacity Development  
Coordinator - Resourcing  
Inclusive Communities



**Laura Abrahams**  
Capacity Development  
Coordinator - Resourcing  
Inclusive Communities



**William Martin**  
Capacity Development  
Coordinator - Resourcing  
Inclusive Communities



**Alva K. Lim**  
Capacity Development  
Coordinator - Resourcing  
Inclusive Communities

# Volunteers and Family Leaders

We gratefully acknowledge the following people for their generosity of time and effort to support our work in 2021-2022:

Kate Alexandra	Karen Martin
Paulina Bezzina	Elise McGrath
Deb Boyd	Michael McGrath
Kelly Brown	Helen Meredith
Annette Bush	Adine Moore
Sarah Casaneanu	Joe Naim
Anna Cha Cha	Annette O'Sullivan
Vanessa Cottle	Michelle Perry
Jo Cross	Bec Pfeiffer
Kim Davis	Alex Purvis
Matt Dimmock	Peter Rattas
Rose Erba	Wilma Reed
Mae Fan	Rey Rei
Megan Farebrother	Karen Schwartz
Laura Fox	Vannessa Shearman
Penny Graham	Fumie Shortman
Michael Griffiths	Nicky Shortridge
Randa Habelrih	Melissa Smith
Lucinda Halbert	Liz Stoker
Sarah Harvey	Meg Sweeney
Aine Healey	Scott Thompson
Chanel Hennessey	Alison Wilson
Bec Hewitt	
Susan Hoffman	
Sarah Humphreys	
Annabel Hunt	
Mark Hunyor	
Fiona Hutchison	
Louise Kuchel	
Lesley Light	

Their invaluable contributions take many forms, and this year included:

- 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, the Disability Royal Commission, and NDIS at local, state and federal levels
- sharing their experience of making submissions on our Talking Disability Royal Commission podcast
- providing experience to government staff who are not politicians
- sharing stories and insights of lived experience with politicians and families, through our systemic advocacy, our advocacy and leadership events and webinars
- attending parent consultations in relation to their experiences for roundtables at NSW
- supporting, engaging with, and encouraging other families in their respective journeys towards inclusion for their family member
- providing guidance, influence and a family voice through participation in a steering committee around the work of our Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project.



# Advocacy and Leadership Development



L-R: Karen Tippett, Advocacy and Leadership Development Manager; Jo Cross and Jacqueline Currey, Advocacy and Leadership Coordinators

## Advocacy

Throughout 2021-2022, the core work of the Advocacy and Leadership Development team continued to be the provision of advocacy-related information and advice to 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, rights and interests 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.

## 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; assist 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 2021-2022 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.

With changes occurring in the Early Childhood sector, Family Advocacy followed one of its Strategic Goals: map and expand our connections to this sector. We provided varied presentations and were invited to contribute to sector events, bringing family leaders alongside to share their experiences with young families at the beginning of their education years.

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 and at certain invited presentations
- share their stories at events, through resources and social media platforms
- contribute experiences and testimonies to the Family Advocacy library, resources and websites



# Advocacy and Leadership Development

- attend and participate in meetings with politicians or senior bureaucrats.

Family Advocacy also encouraged individuals to become involved in presenting material 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.

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## 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 10 online training
- Social Role Valorisation two-day training: Towards a Better Life, Foundations Forum
- One of the Kids, inclusive education workshops
- Australian Inclusive Schooling Conferences 2021 and 2022
- Disability Royal Commission workshops
- Activating Your P & C (Parents and Citizens' association) events
- family leaders being involved in films produced as ongoing resources
- family leaders being involved in development of One of the Kids online course.

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## 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 2021-2022, it comprised almost half the advocacy 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
- limiting 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
- using partial enrolment as a means of addressing apparent funding shortfalls
- lacking consistent adjustments and modifications to meet the needs of students.

Family Advocacy continues to assist families to advocate in a positive way with schools in order to manage these barriers, and to create a good learning environment for their family member with disability.

The insights and understanding we receive from families then informs the organisation's systemic work to effect broader change.

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

## **One of the Kids workshops**

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team typically travels throughout NSW to present this core workshop to families, aiming to improve their advocacy skills and providing advocacy strategies to assist them to achieve an inclusive education for their child with disability.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we were only able to run three face-to-face workshops in metro locations with interstate travel too challenging to manage in this period. Instead, we offered shorter online webinars.

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 to share with others.

## **Advocacy Tips and Tools webinars**

Advocacy Tips and Tools interactive webinars, took place in November 2021 in both a lunchtime and evening session. They focused on the importance of families knowing how to advocate for their family member living with disability. Following the session, participants received an email with further resources.

Social Futures Mid North Coast invited Family Advocacy to present to families on advocacy skill building in an online session. Resources and information were also shared on the day and in a follow-up.

## **Inclusive education presentations - focus on early childhood**

We were invited by Lifestart to present a one-hour segment on transitioning to school and how educators can work alongside families at their educator forums. Information, articles and our resources were provided on the day.

Let's Get Started: Getting Ready for School and Life is our two-hour presentation to families. We delivered this to families via Lifestart Early Intervention and Plumtree Early Intervention.

Family Advocacy was invited to present to KU Inclusion Support Agency Hub managers on inclusive education and how to support families with children transitioning to primary school.

KU invited Family Advocacy to be part of a panel with parents to discuss their experiences within early childcare and the educator's role, particularly around transition to school. Karen attended all three of these panels over zoom for two hours in the evening. This was arranged with local KU Inclusion Hub managers in three locations. Many educators expressed this was new and useful information and will be helpful in their discussions with parents.

## **Focus on primary to tertiary**

Hunter Defence Support Network invited Family Advocacy to speak with families who regularly transition into communities as families in the defence force and wanted guidance on how to transition their children into new schools smoothly as well as tips for advocating with schools. We provided information on who we are and how Family Advocacy can be an ongoing support, as well as an understanding of authentic inclusive education and ensuing benefits along with advocacy skill building.

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

Autism Camp Australia continued to include us in the education part of their program, which brings families with a student aged seven to 15 with autism together for a residential four-day camp. They invited us to conduct a one-hour workshop on advocacy in education. Seven of these were held over the year.

Autism Community Network in Blacktown invited Family Advocacy to speak with families on education-based topics on two occasions.

Illume Learning asked Family Advocacy to run a session at their Australian Inclusive Schooling 2021 Conference. This 45-minute session focused on our resource framework Conversations for Collaboration. This Conference was educator and family focused, and included recordings available to view online for one month.

Kindred (formerly Reframing Disability) asked Family Advocacy to present our Advocacy Tips and Tools to families in an online session.

Western Sydney University invited us to speak with university students about authentic inclusive lives for people with disability both within and outside of the education years.

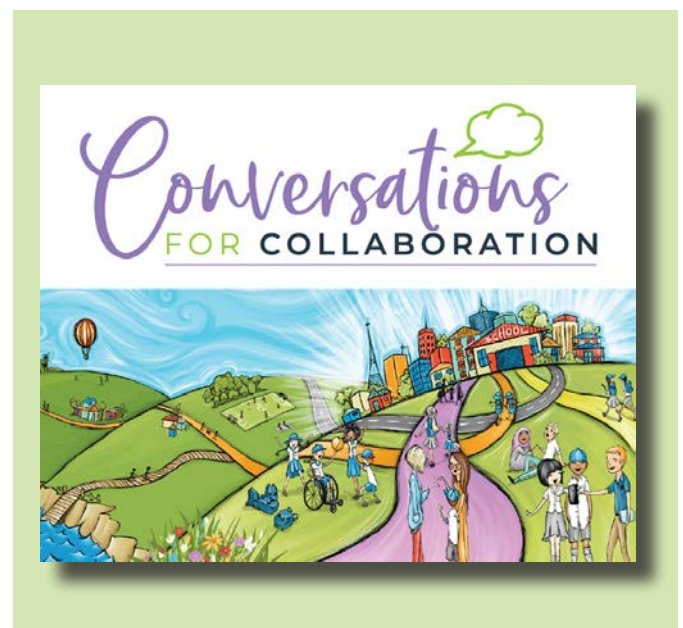
Family Advocacy had a virtual booth at the Australian Inclusive Schooling 2022 Conference, which also included live chat function. The booth was staffed during the Conference breaks and we also had a couple of live chats with educators. The booth itself was set up to highlight our work and key resources and videos showcasing experiences and impacts of inclusive education. The booth remained open for a month after the two-day online conference.

## **Collaborative Engagement Framework**

This project was funded by a grant from the NSW Department of Education and is now complete. 'Conversations for Collaboration' is 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. These 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.

To introduce this resource, we conducted two information webinars, an evening and a lunchtime session, for families to navigate and understand the layout and breadth of content within.



## **Collaborative Engagement films**

14 short films have been produced through a further successful NSW Department of Education funding grant. Two family leaders each with an educator were filmed having collaborative conversations together, unpacking a real conversation and using techniques that were re-enacted to showcase good practice. These films will form part of the material in the Conversations for Collaboration resource and provide a valuable practical element.

# Advocacy and Leadership

## One of the Kids Online

This project was funded by a grant from the NSW Department of Education and is now being user-tested for accessibility and navigation. There are six modules with three being self-directed and two being live. This will broaden our reach to families who live remotely or are not able to attend our location-based workshops for other reasons. We will continue to travel throughout NSW to deliver these and this online course will complement the face-to-face workshops.

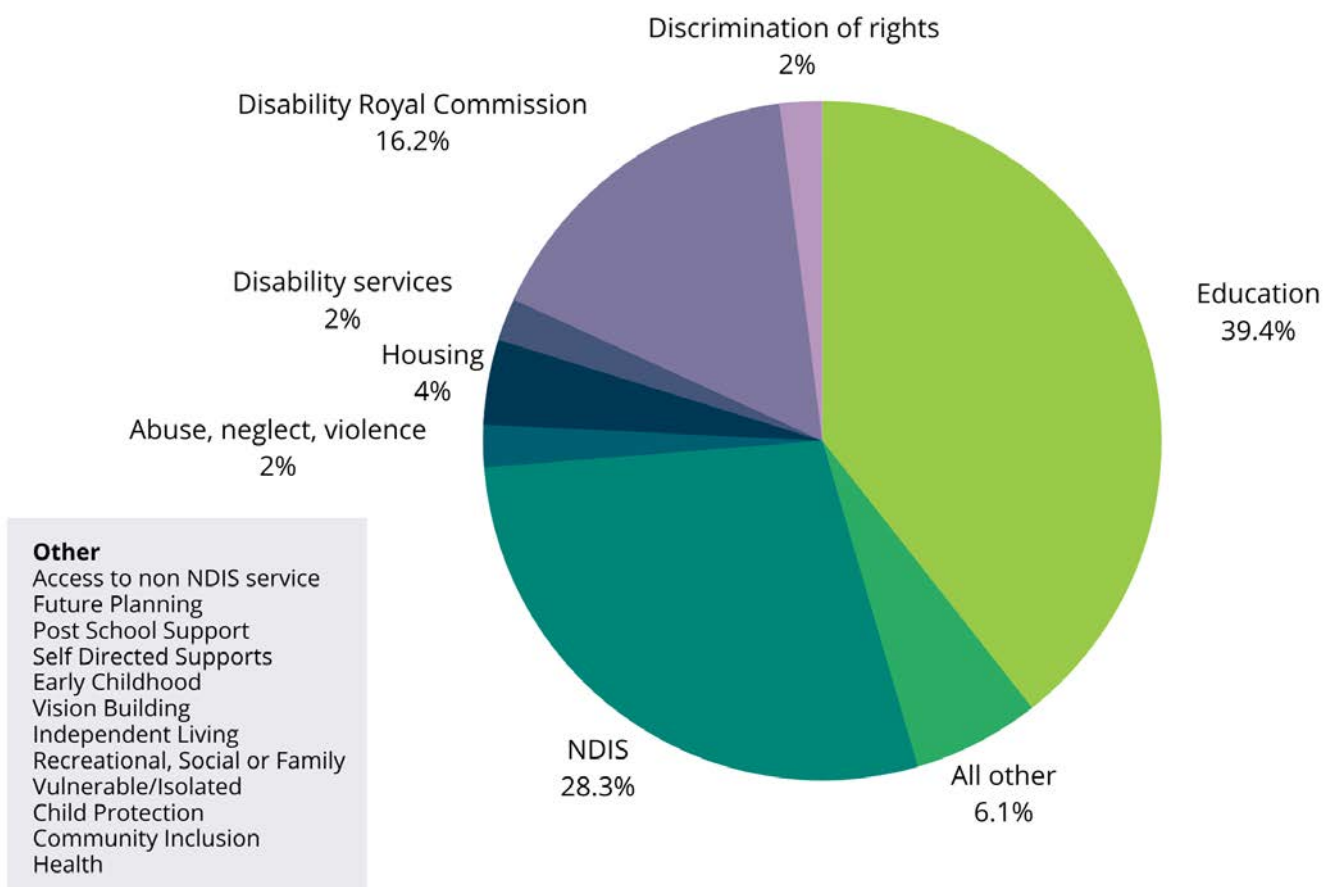
The course provides interactivity through a chat function and offers a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach, whereby attendees will decide to watch/read or listen to content interjected with stories and experiences shared by family leaders. The live modules will include both a Family Advocacy staff member and a family leader to emulate the approach of the face-to-face workshop.

## National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Our inaugural Advocacy and the NDIS webinar provided a breadth of content on how to navigate the NDIS, advocacy tips, as well as underlying messages of long-term vision and making sure goals are aligned. Consideration to right relationship with any providers and supports was also covered. This was recorded and is available on our website with Auslan interpreting and closed captions.

We were invited to speak with NDIS Local Area Coordinators through Social Futures in the Mid North Coast. Co-presented with Resourcing Inclusive Communities, we provided information on how we support families to make the most of the NDIS plans for their family member to achieve a good life coupled with our ongoing advocacy support.

## Issues Raised During Advocacy Enquiries



# Disability Royal Commission



L-R: Troy Hester, Louise Kuchel and Talia Roshan,  
Advocacy Engagement Officers - Disability Royal Commission

## Royal Commission: Advocacy Support

Family Advocacy is funded by the Department of Social Services to provide advocacy support to people wishing to engage with the Disability Royal Commission. People have until the end of 2022 to make submissions to the Commission so this year there was an added urgency to promote this opportunity to influence significant social change. We have worked at broadening our audience and finding new ways to engage people.

We have used our learnings from previous engagements, including workshops and targeted surveys, to improve our practical supports to reduce the barriers people face in capturing what they want to say to the Commission.

Partnering with other organisations as well as directly with the Royal Commission has been a feature in our work. This has not only improved our reach and our engagement but has also promoted the name, work and reputation of Family Advocacy across the country.

### Staff

Troy Hester, our long-standing Advocacy Project Officer: Royal Commission was joined this year by Talia Roshan and then by Louise Kuchel. Both Talia and Louise have brought their own unique skills and perspectives to the work. They have

not only increased our capacity to engage with people, but have also been critical in producing and launching our *Talking Disability Royal Commission* podcast.

### Webinars

In November, we added a new webinar recording to our Disability Royal Commission webpage. We engaged Oliver Moore from Your Story Disability Legal Support, who explained the changes made to the privacy of submissions in a Q&A format. These changes have resulted in reducing barriers to people sharing their story and increasing people's confidence in making submissions.

### Tell the Royal Commission workshops

Building on our previous submission work we designed a practical face-to-face workshop where people could feel supported as they worked on their submission. The goal was to increase people's confidence that what they shared was important to the Disability Royal Commission and we wanted to give some practical supports, including a sense of community and some dedicated time for people to get started. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, more of these have been delivered online. The benefit of this has been people have been able to attend wherever they are, including interstate. Some people have attended more than once, to increase their confidence or to work on another submission.

# Disability Royal Commission

All these workshops have included a guest from the Disability Royal Commission to emphasise the Commission's desire to hear from people. This has included Dr Dinesh Palipana OAM, and Maurice Corcoran AM, as well as directors and assistant directors from the Commission's Intake, Counselling and Support Services team.

We also had the opportunity to run these workshops face-to-face in Penrith, Gosford and Dee Why, and have included local and specialist organisations to maximise engagement in the safest and most relevant way. Working with Interrelate, Disability Advocacy NSW, Action for People with Disability and the Indigenous Disability Advocacy Service to deliver these workshops has extended our work and provided great opportunities to network and share.



## **Talking Disability Royal Commission** podcast

Extending our reach through new methods, we were excited to launch a specialised podcast this year. Talia and Louise were instrumental in the vision, planning and delivery of this eight-episode podcast to promote and inform people about the importance of giving input to the Commission.

It includes the voices of parents, our advocates and representatives from the Royal Commission, Your Story Disability Legal Support, and the First Nations Disability Network. We have had over 500 listens and we are continuing to promote this until the end of 2022. You can find it at [family-advocacy.com/podcast](http://family-advocacy.com/podcast).

## **Expo**

In March 2022, we shared a Disability Royal Commission support service table with Your Story Disability Legal Support at the Source Kids Disability Expo. The expo attracts an audience of families with young children and gave us an opportunity to engage with this cohort. We spoke with people not only about the Royal Commission but also about our broader work with families.

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## **Royal Commission: Systemic Advocacy**

The work of the Commission is systemic. Alongside our advocacy support for individual submissions, our Systemic Advocate has been in regular contact with the Commission, sending through submissions in the areas of Supported Decision Making, and a new Disability Employment Model. We also provided the Commission with warm introductions to our international connections with expertise in Supported Decision Making (Michael Kendrick), Disability Employment (Dr David Manks), and Customised Employment (Therese Fimian and Milton Tyree from Marc Gold & Associates).

We have also sent to the Commission copies of our other relevant submissions:

- Submission on the Department of Social Services Disability Employment Support Model Consultation.
- Submission to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) on the Consultation Paper: Supporting you to make your own decisions.

# 2021-2022 Events and Presentations

Advocacy and Leadership Development Events		
29-30 July 2021	Australian Inclusive Schooling Conference Information Session and virtual booth	Online
4 August 2021	Let's Get Started - Lifestart	Online
5 August 2021	Hunter Defence Force Families Information Session	Online
10 August 2021	Inclusive Education Practices Information Session	Online
10 November 2021	Lifestart Preschool educators Information Session	Online
10 November 2021	Advocacy Tips and Tools: How to Advocate for Your Child Living with Disability Webinar	Online
17 November 2021	Advocacy Tips and Tools: How to Advocate for Your Child Living with Disability Webinar	Online
6 December 2021	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
15 December 2021	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
8 January 2022	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
17 January 2022	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
10 February 2022	KU Inclusion Hub Managers Information Session	Online
22 February 2022	Introduction to Conversations for Collaboration Webinar - morning session	Online
23 February 2022	Introduction to Conversations for Collaboration Webinar - evening session	Online
2 March 2022	Autism Community Network Information Session	Online
17 March 2022	Kindred Families Organisation Information Session	Online
24 March 2022	One of the Kids Workshop	Hornsby
4 April 2022	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
5 April 2022	Advocacy and the NDIS Webinar	Online
28 April 2022	LAC Social Futures Information Session	Online
17 May 2022	One of the Kids Workshop	Parramatta
18 May 2022	Autism Community Network Ask & Answer Information Session	Online
18 May 2022	KU Educator Panel Information Session	Online
23 May 2022	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
24 May 2022	Let's Get Started - Plumtree	Online
25 May 2022	KU Preschool Educators Information Session	Online
1 June 2022	KU Preschool Educators Information Session	Online
9 June 2022	One of the Kids Workshop	Ryde
14 June 2022	Social Futures Mid North Coast Information Session	Online
27 June 2022	Autism Camp Information Session	Online

# 2021-2022 Events and Presentations

<b>P &amp; C Inclusion Subcommittee Events</b>		
28 July 2021	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - afternoon	Online
28 July 2021	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - evening	Online
19 October 2021	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - afternoon	Online
19 October 2021	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - evening	Online
17 February 2022	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - afternoon	Online
17 February 2022	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - evening	Online
24 February 2022	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Parent Networking Session - afternoon	Online
24 February 2022	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Parent Networking Session - evening	Online
25 May 2022	Activating your P & C Introductory Webinar - afternoon	Online
1 June 2022	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Parent Networking Session - afternoon	Online
<b>Disability Royal Commission Events</b>		
17 August 2021	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Online
30 September 2021	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Online
16 November 2021	Q & A with Your Story Disability Legal Support Webinar	Online
15 March 2022	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Penrith
12 May 2022	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Gosford
7 June 2022	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Dee Why
21 June 2022	Tell the Royal Commission Workshop	Online
<b>Expos</b>		
3 December 2021	Sydney Disability Expo	Homebush
10 December 2021	Nepean Disability Expo	Penrith
26 March 2022	Source Kids Disability Expo	Online
<b>Other Events Hosted by Family Advocacy</b>		
3-26 May	Life-Threatening Public Policy Lecture Series	Online





# Systemic Advocacy

Throughout the year, Family Advocacy has continued to focus on sector collaboration with our systemic work to ensure the collective rights of people with disability are served through policy, legislation and practice. Our main focus is in areas that relate to our Strategic Plan, such as early childhood education, education, and employment. Yet there are many other areas we are also involved with at a systemic level that affect the lives of people with disability such as the NDIS, restrictive practices, guardianship, health, housing, Australia's Disability Strategy, Disability Education Standards 2005 and NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

We take this approach with government and stakeholder engagement to create social change by ensuring the voices of people with lived experience of disability are heard across a variety of relevant platforms ranging from government roundtables, academics, disability advocacy sector, disability organisations and community groups.

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 the following submissions at state and national levels of government as well as the Disability Royal Commission:

- Advocacy: Submission to the Department of Social Services (DSS) on the National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF) 2022-25.
- Employment: Submission on the DSS Disability Employment Support Model Consultation.
- Disability Royal Commission: Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE) Report Card: the ACIE Roadmap and the Disability Royal Commission.
- NDIS: Submission to the NDIA on the Consultation Paper: Supporting you to make your own decisions.
- Submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs on the



**Leanne Varga, Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager**

Proposed NDIS Amendment (Participant Service Guarantee and Other Measures) Bill 2021.

- Submission to the DSS on the Proposed NDIS legislative changes 2021.
- Education: Submission to the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment on Quality Initial Teacher Education (QITE) Review.

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## Disability Inclusion Action Plan

We continue to monitor developments in relation to the Disability Inclusion Action Plan since our involvement in March 2020, when we participated in the review of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW) (the Act), which aims to promote the inclusion and participation of people with disability in the community.

The review has found that the Act is an important commitment by the NSW Government to the rights of people with disability and integral to establishing structures and processes for activating those rights in the planning and access to general supports and services across all NSW Government agencies and local councils. The review raised issues in relation to the implementation of the Act and will support updating guidance to agencies and councils on disability planning, to strengthen and improve future delivery of activity under the Act.

# Systemic Advocacy

After considerable delays, the amendments to the Act were finally passed in Parliament on 1 July 2022. Family Advocacy will continue to hold government agencies and local councils to account to ensure the intentions of the Act are carried out through actions.

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## NDIS

Family Advocacy has undertaken systems advocacy in relation to the NDIS to give voice to people with disability across NSW. In addition to our submissions, we have attended 32 NDIS-related meetings across a variety of platforms such as government roundtables, Virtual NDIA Community Engagement Team updates, Compliance and Enforcement at the NDIS Commission, the Quality and Safeguards Commission, Advocacy Series with the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) and the Disability Royal Commission on a wide variety of issues, consultation on NDIS and early childhood approach, and Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Individualised Living Options (ILO).

We participated in the Every Australian Counts campaign 'Defend our NDIS' by hosting a social media blitz day to raise awareness for the major issues faced such as mass plan cuts.

We also articulated our concerns in written submissions to the Senate Standing Committee and DSS on proposed legislative changes as well as the NDIA on Supported Decision Making.

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## Education - Early Childhood

We have also been part of a nationwide network to influence two projects to review and update the key approved learning frameworks for early childhood and out of school hours care in Australia. These projects are Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Framework for Australia; and My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia. Both projects are important frameworks that influence the experiences of children and families in early

childhood services and out of school hours care in NSW and across the country. The projects are also an important opportunity to send key messages to the NSW Government regarding priorities for education and families, and it is therefore important the voices of students with disability and their families be heard and considered throughout this process.

Consistent with our strategic partnership-building approach, Family Advocacy became involved in an alliance of organisations in the Early Childhood sector. It was an opportunity to share updates in the sector generally, Information, Linkages and Capacity (ILC) projects, NDIS issues and any challenges being faced at a systemic level. We also spoke to various stakeholders in the sector to discuss ways to progress Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 toward achieving the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan. More specifically, we are focusing on the Education and Learning Outcome of the Strategy: People with disability achieve their full potential through education and learning; and the Outcome's Priority 1: Children with disability can access and participate in high-quality early childhood education and care.

Organisations we met with include: NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency, KU Children's Services; Lifestart Australia; Children and Young People with Disability Australia; Kindred (previously Reframing Disability); and Re-imagine Australia (previously Early Childhood Intervention Australia).

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## Education - Primary and Secondary

We continue to access various touch points to influence from a policy and practice perspective across the NSW Department of Education and other policy decision makers such as the NSW Education Minister. A key focus continues to be driving good inclusive education practices, particularly for students who are not typically accepted into their local schools.

# Systemic Advocacy

For several years now, our strong engagement with the Disability Strategy within the NSW Department of Education continues with an advisory role on the Disability Strategy Reference Group, the SPX External Stakeholder Advisory Group, the Disability Outcomes Framework, The Learning and Home Experience, and Complaints Handling Working Group. As always, in collaboration with the Department of Education, we have facilitated focus groups of family members who support a student with disability, to provide their valuable lived experience.

We continue to harness direct feedback from families across NSW and provide pathways for effective action to change processes within the education systems that are working against inclusive practice. Progress remains slow, but working in collaboration with government and non-government sectors is critical to the long-term impact.

One example of a positive outcome is the Inclusive, Engaging and Respectful Schools Policy which consists of three instruments: the Student Behaviour Strategy, the Inclusive Education Policy for Students with Disability, and the Restrictive Practices Framework. Family Advocacy has been strongly advocating for major reforms in these areas for many years and while they do not go far enough in terms of transforming to a fully inclusive education system, they are a step in the right direction with some of the recommendations from our submissions being adopted.

The Inclusive Education Policy and Student Behaviour Strategy are officially being implemented in Term 4, 2022 and the Restrictive Practices Framework in Term 1, 2023.

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.

## ***P & C Inclusion Subcommittees***

Through a parent-led initiative, Family Advocacy supported parents to set up an Inclusion Subcommittee within their P & C (Parents and Citizens Association), with the aim to provide a network of support for parents, build a school's inclusion capacity and raise school community awareness.

Parent leaders led the way in sharing their experiences and supporting parents online. Family Advocacy hosted the events, providing administration, technical support and follow-up, and creating an online community of support via the Same Classroom Facebook group. Together with the Advocacy and Leadership team, we put together a number of resources which were uploaded in a dedicated area of our website.

Over the last year, we hosted seven introductory workshops on setting up a P & C Inclusion Subcommittee, as well as two networking sessions for parents who have already started a subcommittee.

## ***Same Classroom, Same Opportunity campaign***

The Same Classroom, Same Opportunity campaign for inclusive education has continued to be 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.

To date, more than half of the NSW Members of Parliament are aware of the critical issues occurring in education for children and young people with disability and have undertaken to follow-up action to progress this issue. Despite COVID-19 lockdowns, we attended several meetings with Members of Parliament including

# Systemic Advocacy

the Minister for Education, and Minister for Disability. 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.

## **Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE)**

This national coalition of 14 organisations across the country has provided Family Advocacy with a pathway for a national voice for students with disability and their family supporters facing barriers to inclusive education in schools across Australia. We attended 17 meetings with the coalition throughout this period.

Family Advocacy has undertaken extensive work to promote ACIE's Driving Change: a Roadmap for Achieving Inclusive Education among decision makers such as the NSW Minister for Education, and the NSW Secretary for the Department of Education, the advocacy sector and other stakeholders. ACIE has created a Youth Advisory Working Council, with Family Advocacy supporting and mentoring two young people with disability to give voice to the student's issues and experiences. One of these young people secured a place on the NSW Disability Council.

Through our connections with ACIE, we were invited by Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) to be part of a working group with the Australian Government to create the development of resources to help create a better understanding of the rights and obligations under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The result of this working group culminated in providing three resources that were uploaded to the website of the Australian Government Department of Education.

The ACIE has also provided collective messaging around inclusive education to the Disability Royal Commission as well as government at national and state/territory levels. The ACIE submitted its *Report Card: the ACIE Roadmap and the Disability Royal Commission* to the Commission.

ACIE is very aware of the strong vested interests opposed to a move to an inclusive education system, including many families who have either been very damaged by trying to maintain their child or young person at a mainstream school, or are scared of potential harm occurring if they do try, and so they support segregated education on the basis of 'parent choice'. Often the voices of families who ask for 'special' settings have been heavily influenced and shaped by those who have professionally vested interests (albeit with good intentions) in maintaining segregated settings.

As part of ACIE, Family Advocacy acknowledges the difficult challenges faced by families. However, the ACIE Roadmap shows a path forward whereby the human rights of all children can be upheld while systematically and carefully moving to an inclusive system, as is required under our international obligations and the terms of reference of the Disability Royal Commission.

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## **Education - Tertiary**

Tertiary sector collaboration has been productive given this is an area where people with disability have not received much attention in the policy space. The voice of people with disability in the Tertiary sector requires strengthening and this collaboration can provide an opportunity to explore how this may be achieved.

We will continue to collaborate and consult with the Tertiary sector with the aim to progress the National Disability Strategy 2021-2031's Education and Learning Outcome: People with disability achieve their full potential through education and learning, more specifically: Policy Priority 3: Improve pathways and accessibility to further education and training for people with disability; and Policy Priority 4: People with disability

# Systemic Advocacy

have increased opportunities to participate in accessible and inclusive lifelong learning.

Multiple meetings took place with Tertiary sector stakeholders such as the National Disability Coordination Officer Program; Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training; University of Tasmania; and Steps Group to discuss and understand the issues students with disability face at University/TAFE.

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## Employment

Family Advocacy spent the year scoping the disability employment landscape, meeting with many relevant contacts with expertise and, in particular, customised employment in Australia and abroad. As a result, we connected the NDIA and the Disability Royal Commission with three international experts: Dr David Manks, Therese Fimian and Milton Tyree.

Through various platforms, we have built strategic alliances that have assisted us to create a strong narrative concerning the employability of all Australians with disability, as well as challenge the Australian narrative concerning the current use of Disability Employment Services, Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) and Day Services as post-school options for people with disability. As part of this, we provided a submission to the DSS Disability Employment Support Model Consultation, which we also submitted to the Disability Royal Commission. Family Advocacy was also invited to present on a Panel at the Disability Employment Australia 2022 Conference in March, where we shared 'Rhiannon's Work Experience' story and video.

All these efforts align to strengthen the National Disability Strategy and the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

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## COVID-19

It has been vital for Family Advocacy to maintain communication with the disability

community and the NSW Department of Health during the pandemic. We have continued to be responsive to the pandemic's continuing impacts and have been pro-active to mitigate future effects.

We continue to receive calls in relation to the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. These calls shine a light on the already existing fragilities in many of the mainstream services in relation to how they considered and supported people with disability.

To ensure issues and concerns were heard and fed back to relevant government bodies we continued to attend the NSW Department of Health's Disability Community of Practice meetings, a multidisciplinary, cross-departmental group focused on dealing with the pandemic. We have continued to stay connected with this taskforce, providing case studies of negative experiences and requesting clear guidance where we have received enquiries for clarity. People with disability's voices are being heard and practices to protect people with disability are being adopted.

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## Stakeholder Engagement and Strategic Partnerships

We have continued to collaborate extensively with disability-specific organisations, advocacy organisations, universities, mainstream services, community groups, employers, disability employment providers, peak bodies, unions and community members. These include:

### *Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE)*

Members of the alliance include: Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA); All Means All; Starting with Julius (WA); Family Advocacy (NSW); Community Resource Unit (Qld); Queensland Collective of Inclusive Education; Queensland Advocacy Incorporated; JFA Purple Orange (SA); Imagine More (ACT); Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby

# Systemic Advocacy

(Tas); Inclusive Educators Australia; Down Syndrome Australia; Youth Disability Advocacy Services; Youth Disability Advocacy Network; Enabled Youth Disability Network.

## **Disability Advocacy Alliance**

This alliance includes organisations such as Vision Australia, Blind Citizens NSW; Disability Advocacy NSW; Physical Disability Council Network; Council for Intellectual Disability; NSW Council for Social Services; Guide Dogs Australia; Spinal Cord Institute Australia and Cerebral Palsy Alliance.

## **Disability Policy Interagency Alliance**

We attended 12 meetings with the Disability Policy Interagency Alliance this financial year. This interagency collaboration has become a reliable and accessible source of organisations representing the combined lived experience for people with disability with a deep understanding of the day-to-day as well as systemic issues. We have been a conduit to NSW Government so we can share the work being done, and have also been invited to provide input. Sector collaboration continues to form an important part of our reform agenda in many areas such as education, employment, health, housing and transport. These interagency organisations include: Physical Disability Council Network; People with Disability Australia; Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; Australian Communications Consumer Action Network; Assistive Technology Suppliers Australia; Guide Dogs Australia; Spinal Cord Institute Australia; Muscular Dystrophy NSW; Council of the Ageing NSW; Western Sydney Community Forum; and Action Advocacy.

## **Other alliances and collaborations**

We also continue to forge alliances with national peak bodies to provide and receive information, and experience as well as support campaigns and open letters to government in relation to a wide range of issues that impact people with disability in NSW such as in education, employment, housing, COVID-19, NDIA matters, and issues in

regard to reform of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. These organisations include: Children and Young People with Disability Australia; People with Disabilities Australia; First Peoples Disability Network Australia; Inclusion Australia; Women with Disabilities Australia; Australian Federation of Disability Organisations; and Down Syndrome Australia.

Mainstream services we have collaborated with include NSW Department of Education; NSW Department of Health; NSW Department of Communities and Justice; NSW Trustee and Guardian; Federal Department of Education; Catholic Schools NSW; and the Australian Independent Schools Association.

Universities include UNSW Social Impact Centre; UNSW Disability Innovation Institute; UNSW Kirby Institute; Melbourne Disability Institute; Human Rights Institute; Whitlam Institute; Western Sydney University (Department of Education); Queensland University of Technology (Centre for Inclusive Education); Australian Catholic University; Macquarie University and Sydney University (Sydney Policy Lab).

We have also liaised with NSW Local Area Coordinators; the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission; and 128 local councils regarding their Disability Inclusion Action Plans.



# Advocacy Delivery Snapshot 2017-2022

## 5 Year Advocacy delivery snapshot 2017 - 2022



**97** Advocacy Workshops and Webinars



**182** Information Sessions



### GREATER SYDNEY

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

# Resourcing Inclusive Communities



## resourcing inclusive communities

An initiative of Family Advocacy

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 innovative and creative support arrangements that lead to an inclusive life.

### **Our Vision:**

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

We share our vision of social inclusion with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). One of the eight guiding principles of the UNCRPD is 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 Purpose:**

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

### **Our Strategic Goals:**

- Increased reach to families and childhood services.
- Increased self-management with a clear vision.
- Increased individualised living options.
- Enhanced employment.
- Being the 'go to' organisation for inclusive service and community development.



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

## School to Work Project

The School to Work Project continues to deliver on its key themes and core purpose: improving the knowledge, skills and confidence of families so they can support their young family member with disability to seek meaningful, paid employment in the community. During its second year of operations, the project has continued to reach many more families across NSW through webinars and workshops.

One of the key highlights this year was the development of new topics through the webinar series. The webinar series grew in significance during this time in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to impact some families' decisions about whether to participate in face-to-face workshops. Using online platforms also meant that the project reached many more families across NSW and



# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

some registrations even came from Tasmania and New Zealand.

The consolidation of feedback from families about what areas would best assist them, led to the development of two new webinars: Getting the Most out of NDIS Employment Supports, and Accessing Work Experience Through School.

The team also continued to present the two-part introductory webinars; Imagining Work for Years 7-8, Discovering Work for Years 9-10, and Finding Work for Years 11-12.

The in-depth School to Work workshop, originally designed as a one-day face-to-face event, was adapted to an online format during the months of lockdown. It was delivered five times as a two-part event over two weeks, and once as a whole-day event.

Parent leaders and advocates Annette Bush and Vanessa Shearman took turns to present the online workshop alongside the School to Work team. Vanessa Shearman discussed JLS Mail Link – a microenterprise developed with and on behalf of her son, Joshua, in the town of Bathurst.

Annette Bush also participated in all the Accessing Work Experience Through School webinars providing real-life experiences about her son, Jacob, as well as providing insights on how to best approach employers and build collaborative strategies with schools.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased, the School to Work Project team delivered its first face-to-face workshop in the Canterbury Bankstown area, reaching new families, educators and service providers from the region and neighbouring areas such as the Inner West, Liverpool and Fairfield local government areas. It proved to be a highly successful workshop, and marked the first time the School to Work Project held a workshop in an area that is considered to have the highest number of local government residents in the Sydney region.

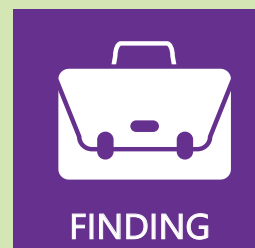
In May 2022, the team embarked on their first regional trip in 11 months, to deliver the School to Work Workshop in the Riverina Murray area (Wagga Wagga, Deniliquin and Griffith). This visit attracted local families, professionals and educators, as well as eight secondary school students. Additional time was dedicated to visiting local services, schools and local representatives. In Wagga Wagga, the team was joined by parent advocate Helen Meredith, who shared stories about her son Joshua's small business.

Initial planning of the School to Work National Disability Employment Conference commenced during this period, developing the project scope, venue management and other key considerations such as the communications plan. The team also began reaching out to presenters, including national and international advocates and experts.

The School to Work team also consistently led meetings with the other two consortium members (Imagine More in the ACT and the Community Resource Unit in Brisbane), compiling evaluations and facilitating the sharing of new content and material with them.



**School  
To Work**  
for Secondary  
Students with  
Disability



# Resourcing Inclusive Communities



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

## My Home, My Way Project

My Home, My Way is a national project that explores individualised and innovative ways that people with disability have created their own home, while getting the support they need. A home where the person decides who they live with and where, and not in a congregated setting. Anyone with disability, no matter how complex their needs, can live in their own home. Home is designed around the person, in the typical way of making a home that many of us do.

My Home, My Way is guided by the leadership of people with disability and families who have laid the foundations for many of the innovative and person-centred living arrangements we see today. The project is funded from two separate ILC grants (2019 and 2020) and is in its final year.

In 2021-2022 the team focused on delivering workshops online and face-to-face, as well as the production of new resources and the development of a national website to be launched in the second half of 2022. Workshops/webinars were rolled out nationwide in Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

The team delivered three online workshops and we were honoured to have the following parent

leaders as guest speakers: Meg Sweeney, Wilma Reed, and Karen Schwartz. Settlement Services International (SSI) approached the team to give an online introduction workshop on home and individualised living for Vietnamese family peer groups.

*"I make sure to find what's best for Graeme, otherwise you get into always accepting things. Some people think that's ok, but I don't. Because we'll get into a stage where we are accepting all things that are sub-standard. It's about choosing which life-path I want for Graeme. Wendy Stroeve talked about life-path for people with disabilities. I was there when Wendy spoke all those years ago. It was life-changing for so many of us. Most of Graeme's paid support is around finding opportunities for him to participate in the community in a real way. This is important because living in a home, alone, and surrounded by paid relationships - is not very different to a group home" - Wilma Reed.*

The National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO), in collaboration with family leaders, is producing an eight-episode series of podcasts and videos on the different ways people with disability achieve a sense of home. All will be released with the website launch in August. Family Advocacy's former Communications and Media Coordinator, Jane Curtis was the podcast series producer. Jacob Hughes and parent leader, Linda Hughes, feature in podcast episode five, *Creating a Web of Support*.

Podcast and video themes include: imagining my own home, preparing to move out, busting myths: complex support needs are no barrier to a typical home life; overcoming my fears as a parent; whose home is it anyway: being the boss of your own home; relationships and community as essential for thriving in your home; homeshare and housemates; renting; owning my own home; and creating my home with Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) homes.

The My Home, My Way website will be launched in August 2022 and brings decades worth of

# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

research, articles, videos, podcasts, and tip sheets dedicated to creating and safeguarding a successful home where a person with disability can thrive.

A guidebook, *My Home, My Way*, will be published by Resourcing Inclusive Communities in November 2022.

One-on-one mentoring and coaching for families is another important element of the project. Resourcing Inclusive Communities, along with NACBO partners provide a dedicated staff member to assist someone to understand the new and person-centred models of home, including new funding arrangements to support a person to live in their own home such as the NDIS Individualised Living Options (ILO). An associated ILO toolkit is being produced that covers what an ILO is, and how to navigate the different stages of the ILO process.



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

## Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project

Now in its second year, this project aims to strengthen the knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability and their families so that many more people with disability across NSW can experience typical pathways experienced by most Australians.

The project is funded by an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant through the Individual Capacity Building program; therefore its key deliverables include a mix of workshops, peer networks, social media strategy, individual consultations and leadership components to support families holistically.

In the past 12 months, this project has seen a large addition of new and renewed developments. With 14 workshops, five peer networks totalling 24 meetings, and the development and commencement of the six-month-long Family Leadership Development Series, the team has been very busy.

The team wrote, coordinated and delivered the Creating an Inclusive Life workshops over a number of months. Soon after, the support and co-delivery of the My Home, My Way workshops, re-development of content around self managing to present the Making the Most of Self-management workshops, and managing the delivery of Circles of Support workshops, meant that a diversification of information was available



# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

to the many people with disability and their families across NSW. We saw well over 150 people with disability and their families take part in these workshops throughout the year.

Peer Networks were a new addition to the project, providing the opportunity for families to connect, learn and build from one another and their experiences. Each network was developed around the interest in a particular topic, including Creating a Vision Statement; Individualised Living Arrangements; and Self-Management. These groups attracted more than 100 families to express their interest in participating with 75 places being offered and taken up across the course of the year.

Family leaders with lived experiences as family members of a person with disability, were sourced to lead and facilitate other families through their journeys. We would like to thank Annette O'Sullivan, Meg Sweeney and Jo Cross for taking up these roles and sharing their vision and stories to the many families across the state.

*"I found when Nathan was young, that... I just wanted him to have the same opportunity as the kids his age. I wanted him to be able to mix with family, be happy, go to school, have a job etc... He can't learn to do things unless he has the opportunity to do it. So having a vision is having a clear path, a journey, you're on a journey...to the good things of life."*

- Annette O'Sullivan, Peer Network Facilitator, on Creating a Vision Statement.

This year we saw the commencement of our Family Leadership Development Series. This entails six sessions over a six-month period, both online and face-to-face, to build the knowledge, confidence, connection and effectiveness of 17 targeted families who showed leadership potential in their involvement in Family Advocacy and/or Resourcing Inclusive Communities workshops and events.

The series brought on two family leaders, Jo Cross and Annette O'Sullivan as mentors to support the new families throughout. We have

engaged Jon Eastgate of 99 Consulting to conduct an independent evaluation to measure the impact of the series, with a Baseline Evaluation (May 2022), Post-Series Evaluation (Oct 2022) and Follow-up Evaluation (May 2023) to be conducted.

The baseline survey has shown some interesting findings already. For example:

*"In general, the longer their period of contact with Family Advocacy and the older their children, the higher they were likely to score themselves on all four measures"*

Commencing in May 2022, the opening weekend event was held at Sydney Olympic Park, laying the foundations of leadership: strengths-based language; having a vision of the good things of life; and an introduction to SRV ideas with national senior trainer and guest speaker, John Armstrong. The second session ran online in June 2022 with guest speaker, educator and parent Darcy Elks speaking to parents about Supported Decision Making alongside their family member with disability. Four more sessions will continue to run into the second half of 2022 and we look forward to the outcomes and ongoing growth of the families.

We would like to thank the Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Steering Committee made up of dedicated and passionate families who guide and advise the work that we do: Sarah Harvey, Elise and Michael McGrath, Jo Naim, Annette O'Sullivan, Alex Purvis and Alison Wilson.

We are pleased to have engaged over 250 people in the project this year. We remain clear in our vision to provide the information and resources needed, so that more people with disability across NSW, with the support of their families, can experience the typical pathways that most Australians enjoy.

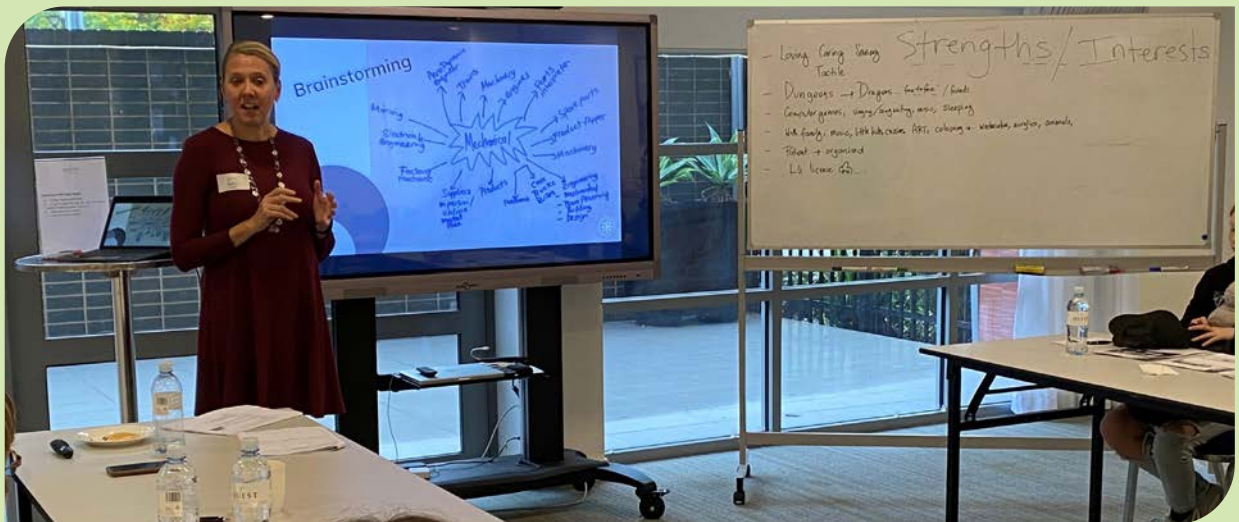
# Events and Presentations

School to Work Events		
17 Aug 2021	Finding Work: Getting Started in Years 11-12	Online
26 Aug 2021	Discovering Work: Getting Started in Years 9-10	Online
31 Aug 2021	Finding Work: The Next Steps in Years 11-12	Online
9 Sep 2021	Discovering Work: The Next Steps in Years 9-10	Online
6 Oct & 13 Oct 2021	School to Work Workshop	Online
21 Oct & 28 Oct 2021	School to Work Workshop	Online
26 Oct 2021	Imagining Work: Getting Started in Years 7-8	Online
3 Nov & 10 Nov 2021	School to Work Workshop	Online
9 Nov 2021	Imagining Work: The Next Steps in Years 7-8	Online
17 Nov & 24 Nov 2021	School to Work Workshop	Online
29 Nov & 6 Dec 2021	School to Work Workshop	Online
11 Jan 2022	Finding Work: Getting Started in Years 11-12	Online
18 Jan 2022	Finding Work: The Next Steps in Years 11-12	Online
2 Feb 2022	Accessing Work Experience through School	Online
4 Feb 2022	Imagining Work: Getting Started in Years 7-8	Online
11 Feb 2022	Imagining Work: The Next Steps in Years 7-8	Online
15 Feb 2022	Getting the Most Out of Your NDIS Employment Supports	Online
18 Feb 2022	Discovering Work: Getting Started in Years 9-10	Online
23 Feb 2022	School to Work Workshop	Online
25 Feb 2022	Discovering Work: The Next Steps in Years 9-10	Online
1 Mar 2022	Finding Work: Getting Started in Years 11-12	Online
8 Mar 2022	Finding Work: The Next Steps in Years 11-12	Online
18 Mar 2022	School to Work Face-to-Face Workshop	Canterbury
23 Mar 2022	Accessing Work Experience through School	Online
28 Apr 2022	Getting the Most Out of Your NDIS Employment Supports	Online
4 May 2022	School to Work Workshop	Online
9 May 2022	School to Work Face-to-Face Workshop	Wagga Wagga
11 May 2022	School to Work Face-to-Face Workshop	Deniliquin
12 May 2022	School to Work Face-to-Face Workshop	Griffith
22 Jun 2022	Accessing Work Experience through School	Online
29 Jun 2022	Getting the Most out of your NDIS Employment Supports	Online

# Events and Presentations

<b>My Home My Way Events</b>		
17, 14 Sep & 1 Oct 2021	My Home, My Way Workshop (3 parts)	Online
21 & 28 Feb 2022	My Home, My Way Workshop (2 parts, co-hosted with Inclusive Lives Project)	Online
4 & 11 Mar 2022	My Home, My Way Workshop (2 parts, co-hosted with Inclusive Lives Project)	Online
21 May 2022	Introduction to My Home, My Way - Closed Group (SSI Vietnamese family peer group)	Online
24 May 2022	My Home My Way Face to Face Workshop (co-hosted with Inclusive Lives Project)	Canley Heights
<b>Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Events</b>		
<b>Workshops</b>		
21 Sep & 28 Sep 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
14 Oct & 15 Oct 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
20 Oct & 27 Oct 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
6 Nov & 7 Nov 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
1 Dec & 8 Dec 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
10 Dec 2021	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
10 Feb & 17 Feb 2022	Creating an Inclusive Life	Online
14 Mar & 21 Mar 2022	Making the Most of Self-Management	Online
21 Apr 2022	Circles of Support	Online
29 Apr 2022	Circles of Support	Parramatta
24 Jun & 1 Jul 2022	Making the Most of Self-Management	Online
<b>Peer Networks</b>		
1 Oct 2021	Creating a Vision Statement (3 sessions)	Online
2 Nov 2021	Individualised Living Arrangements (4 sessions)	Online
9 Nov 2021	Individualised Living Arrangements (4 sessions)	Online
9 Feb 2022	Self Management (9 sessions)	Online
8 Apr 2022	Creating a Vision Statement (4 sessions)	Online
<b>Leadership Development Series</b>		
13-15 May 2022	Session 1 - Weekend Event	Olympic Park
9 Jun 2022	Session 2 - Evening Event with Darcy Elks	Online

# Events and Presentations



# Communications



L-R: Clara Maldonado, Digital Media and Communications Manager; Adrian Buckley and Jane Curtis, Communications and Media Coordinators

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.

Due to the increased growth experienced by the organisation, the Communications team now includes a Communications and Media Coordinator as well as the Digital Media and Communications Manager. In early March we farewelled Jane Curtis, who was in the coordinator position for just over 12 months, and we welcomed Adrian Buckley to the role in May.

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## Resources

### ***P & C (Parent and Citizens) Inclusion Subcommittee resources***

The communications team worked with the Systems and Advocacy and Leadership Development (ALD) teams in creating, formatting and distributing an 11-page guide that aims to provide parents with the what, why and how to start an inclusion subcommittee in their school's P & C Association, focusing on ensuring all children and families feel included. This was uploaded to a dedicated section in our website, created to host a collection of resources such as the above guide, sample letter, quick member information document, and slides. These resources complement the parent-led webinars that have been taking place every school term since July 2021.

### ***Conversations for Collaboration website***

This website, developed for the ALD team, was launched in December 2021. This interactive tool, helping parents and teachers collaborate towards a positive inclusive schooling experience for students with disability, has received over 2,700 page views since it went live.

### ***Parent/Teacher collaboration videos***

A second suite of videos, featuring collaborative conversations between parents and teachers was developed with the ALD team, based on filming and interviews conducted the previous financial year. The suite consists of seven short videos covering different aspects of a group project, including group dynamics, group contribution, role of the student learning support officer, high expectations, and a parent/teacher meeting scenario. The videos are in the last stages of editing.

### ***My Home, My Way podcast***

The Communications team provided NACBO with crucial assistance in the production of the My Home, My Way podcasts, a series of eight podcasts exploring new ways in which people with developmental disability, with support from their families, are bypassing the group home model and creating their own homes. The Communications and Media Coordinator attended meetings, recorded a number



# Communications

of interviews, edited all the episodes and coordinated the overall production of the series.

## **Talking Disability Royal Commission Podcast**

We provided support to the Disability Royal Commission team in the scoping and development of this podcast, which talks about why it is worth engaging with the Disability Royal Commission and also how to do it. A dedicated area was created on our website to house the eight episodes and supporting documents.

## **Family Advocacy Newsletter**

Seven issues were published between August 2021 and April 2022, each focusing on a different topic: what is home; employment; inclusive education; family-led advocacy; yearly overview; NDIS; and Disability Royal Commission.

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## **Media Releases and Coverage**

This year we reached out to media outlets – radio, newspapers and online publications on a number of occasions. Below is a summary of the coverage received:

### **Systems Advocacy and Disability Royal Commission:**

Late in 2021, an article appeared in the online and the printed versions of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, featuring two of the Parent Advocates who are driving our P & C Inclusive Subcommittee systemic initiative. The online version of the article mentioned the work Family Advocacy is conducting in this space.

The *Western Weekender* newspaper (Penrith LGA), ran an online article about our Disability Royal Commission workshop in Penrith and the importance of sharing stories with the Commission. The article was featured prominently on their home page. The paper also

posted about the workshop on their Facebook page, which has over 68,000 followers, generating 26 comments and 14 shares.

Coast FM on the Central Coast promoted our Tell the Royal Commission workshop in Gosford.

We also issued a media release entitled 'NSW Inclusive Education Policy: Good intentions are not enough', which was distributed to media outlets and published on our website.

### **Resourcing Inclusive Communities**

The School to Work Workshop in Canterbury attracted interest from two local community radios: 2MFM Muslim community radio in Bankstown and 2NBC 90.1 FM, broadcasting to Greater Sydney. Our Executive Officer was interviewed by both stations. The *Canterbury Bankstown Torch* newspaper also published an article in their printed issue.

The School to Work workshops in the Riverina Murray were widely covered, with our Executive Officer being interviewed by TripleM Griffith and ABC Riverina. Community service announcements were broadcast on TripleM Wagga Wagga and 2MIAFM Griffith, and articles appeared in the *Area News* (Griffith) and *Deniliquin Pastoral Times*.

In June 2022, the *South Coast Register* published our media release about the My Home, My Way workshop which ran in Nowra later in the year.

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## **Social Media**

### **Family Advocacy**

Family Advocacy uses social media (Facebook and Twitter) 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% from 3,269 to 3,705 likes; and the Family Advocacy Facebook page

# Communications

reached\* 196,167 people (a 93% increase on the previous year).

We also maintained a strong presence on Twitter. Our Twitter impressions\*\* were 59,336 and our followers grew by 13.6%.

The number of views on our YouTube channel remained steady at 14,800 views per year. The most watched videos were *What is social advocacy and why it is important?*, *Al's Story* and *Valued Social Roles: Pathways to full, meaningful and inclusive lives*.

## Resourcing Inclusive Communities

An increase in posting frequency and variety of content has resulted in a 54.3% increase on our Facebook reach: from 37,069 in 2020-2021, to 57,226 this financial year. Our community continues to grow steadily, with 650 likes on Facebook, 180 followers on Instagram, and 92 followers on LinkedIn.

## Websites

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

- Family Advocacy webpage: [family-advocacy.com](http://family-advocacy.com)
- Resourcing Inclusive Communities webpage: [ric.org.au](http://ric.org.au)
- Access:Symposium: [access.family-advocacy.com](http://access.family-advocacy.com)
- Conversations for Collaboration: [conversationsforcollaboration.com](http://conversationsforcollaboration.com)

The websites had a combined 89,731 webpage views.

## Email Communications

Electronic direct mail continues to be one of the main means to connect with and inform our

community. This year, we sent 85 mass emails to our database, mainly promoting our events and workshops, targeted by area. This was an increase of 26% compared to the 67 mailouts sent last year, which goes in hand with the increase in our event numbers. Mail outs were also used to advertise employment vacancies, disseminate systemic campaigns, including the Save the NDIS campaign in July 2021, and to distribute our newsletter.

## Event Promotion and Support

During the 2021-2022 financial year, the Communications team assisted with the promotion, registration management, and collateral development of the following events, often providing technical support and coordination of live captioning when required:

- Advocacy and Leadership: three face-to-face workshops and four webinars.
- Systemic Advocacy: nine Parent-led P & C Inclusion Subcommittee webinars and networking sessions.
- Disability Royal Commission: five workshops and one webinar.
- A month-long lecture series on Life-Threatening Public Policy, consisting of eight lectures and four discussion sessions, delivered online.
- School to Work Project: 19 webinars and 11 workshops.
- Inclusive Lives – Possibility to Reality Project: 14 workshops.
- My Home, My Way project: a three-part workshop delivered online.
- Family Advocacy Annual General Meeting.

\* 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.

# 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.

<b>Recurring Funding and One-off Grants</b>			
	<i>ref. on pg 43</i>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>
<b><i>Revenue from Commonwealth Government</i></b>			
Disability Advocacy	(1)	315,380	311,640
Disability Royal Commission	(1)	226,515	100,707
School to Work Project	(1)	285,564	218,545
Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project	(1)	385,305	249,966
My Home, My Way Project	(1)	44,293	19,164
My Home, My Way - Individualised Living Options (ILO) Project	(1)	67,536	12,535
<b><i>Revenue from NSW Government</i></b>			
Information Advocacy	(2)	334,448	341,517
Social Sector Transformation Fund	(2)	53,000	0
Grant in Aid from Department of Education	(3)	39,030	39,030
<b><i>Total</i></b>		<b>\$1,751,071</b>	<b>\$1,293,104</b>

# 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 2021-2022.

## **Federal Government funding**

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

- recurrent funding for advocacy and leadership
- funding to provide advocacy support for people wishing to engage with the Disability Royal Commission
- the ILC Readiness Grant for Resourcing Inclusive Communities projects.

## **State Government funding**

(2). The NSW Department of Community & Justice (formally Family and Community Services) provided support through:

- recurrent funding for advocacy and information work and ongoing operations of Family Advocacy
- a Social Sector Transformation Grant.

## **NSW Department of Education funding**

(3). The 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. The Management Committee has ratified a budget for July 2022-June 2023.

## **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 \$490 was received from: Jenny Price, Dianne Samuels, David Fitzpatrick, Kabita Kirkham, Jeannie Felton, Sarah Harvey, and Huashan Tian.



**Alex Purvis**  
Treasurer

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

- Salesforce Foundation: 10 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 of payments received by the following Committee members:

Annette Bush and Annette O'Sullivan received honoraria during the year, at the standard rate set out in the Volunteer Session Leaders Policy, for their contribution towards the work of the organisation as Volunteer Session Leaders.

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.

# Operations and Human Resources

The past two years have seen the organisation in and out of lockdown with staff working from home for nearly two-thirds of each year. This report illustrates that our work can be undertaken remotely when required, which has paved the way to a better understanding of how a hybrid work arrangement may be beneficial to both organisation and staff wellbeing - an arrangement that has now been adopted on a permanent, ongoing basis.

This is guided by the steady vision and purpose set by the Management Committee as well as the policies and practices of the organisation.

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## Quality Assurance

To ensure that Family Advocacy provides the best support to families - one that is relevant, up-to-date and timely, the organisation strives to continuously improve on what it does.

This high standard of work is also reflected in the outcome of the Quality Assurance audit conducted by third-party auditors. The auditors have recommended the continued certification of our management system under the National Standards for Disability Services, as required under the National Disability Advocacy Program of the Department of Social Services, which funds part of our operations. This is valid for three years, subject to surveillance audits within that period.

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## Risk Management

A top priority of the Management Committee of Family Advocacy is risk management, as part of its governance responsibility. Risk management is considered within our 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.

While working in the office as well as remotely, WHS is first raised at staff orientation. As new staff members come aboard, these are the



**L-R: Marybelle Ignacio, Office Manager;  
Paul Barrett, Accounts, Administration and  
Events Coordinator**

first policies they are made aware of and a workstation assessment is conducted to ensure they are correctly set up to work safely, whether in the office or at home.

Risk management in relation to COVID-19 continues to be addressed and policies adjusted against the broader government and health directives and advice.

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## Human Resources

Family Advocacy continues to grow as capacity is expanded to address new requirements for advocacy and capacity building.

Among the staff, there is passion to improve the lives of people with disability and a shared value system that is further nurtured through Social Role Valorisation (SRV) insights gained via progressive training, and that continue to be revealed and understood through day-to-day activities.

From this stems a harmonious and respectful work culture that enables staff to work well together as a team. The careful selection of staff members has been crucial as a starting point and this is achieved by an insightful recruitment process.

Support for staff continues to be an important element of the human resources management of the organisation. This can be seen through the

# Operations and Human Resources

encouragement in training and development; provision of necessary and upgraded equipment and accessories to ensure staff can work efficiently and safely; consistent work protocols and expectations; WHS policies and practices; flexibility when required; and strategies for mental wellness.

## Work Health and Safety (WHS)

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested all workplaces in the past two years. COVID-safe practices were set up to keep staff as well as event attendees safe. These new COVID-related policies and practices were reviewed periodically by staff and adjusted accordingly.

As part of the review of Family Advocacy's overall operational policies and practices that cover the day-to-day activities of the organisation, WHS underwent a thorough review, resulting in the creation of a Work Health and Safety Committee to represent the WHS concerns of our growing staff numbers.

## Inclusion Collection

Family Advocacy hosts The Inclusion Collection, which is a library of books, articles and other media from around the world, focusing on inclusion. The resources provide practical and real examples of what is being achieved not only in Australia but also internationally, and are used by people with disability, their families, allies and professionals. Resources and publications can be either downloaded, sent via email or posted.

## Environmental Footprint

Family Advocacy strives to do its part for the environment by reducing, recycling and disposing thoughtfully. For many years, our day-to-day practices, have been to recycle paper, plastic, glass, and tin containers, as well as use environmentally friendly products. Over the past decade, we have used online platforms to communicate with families, providing information via email, social media, and online, thus reducing the use of paper and postage.



# 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
MHMW	My Home My Way
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

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

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