

family

ADVOCACY



2023 / 2024

ANNUAL REPORT

family

A D V O C A C Y

2023 / 2024

ANNUAL REPORT

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1800 620 588 / 02 9869 0866

Suite 704, 88-90 George Street, Hornsby NSW 2077

Websites: www.family-advocacy.com and www.ric.org.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/familyadvocacynsw/ and
www.facebook.com/resourcinginclusivecommunities

Family Advocacy Instagram: www.instagram.com/familyadvocacy/ and
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Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices stand, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the sorrow of the Stolen Generations and the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We also recognise the resilience, strength and pride of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

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Our Snapshot 2023-2024

122 events and presentations



We reached more than **4,500** people through our events, including Expos



416,991

across META (Facebook and Instagram), X, LinkedIn and YouTube

763 Total advocacy enquiries

479 education based enquiries

122 NDIS based enquiries

Face to Face Events Delivered 2019-2024



484 Workshops



55 Information Sessions



GREATER SYDNEY

Allambie	Dee Why
Ashfield	Epping
Bankstown	Fairfield
Blacktown	Five Dock
Baulkham Hills	Forestville
Beecroft	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	5th Hurstville
Padstow	Sutherland
Parramatta	Terry Hills
Pemulwuy	Toongabbie
Pennant Hills	Turramurra
Penrith	Werrington
Redfern	West Ryde
Richmond	

WHO WE ARE

Family Advocacy is an independent and impartial advocacy organisation based in New South Wales (NSW), and has been in operation for over 33 years.

We work with families to defend and promote the rights and interests of individuals 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 positive change.

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

Additionally, we also work towards reforming systems that create barriers to the full inclusion of people with disability.

OUR 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.

OUR 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, at times, on behalf of their family members so as to enjoy the same environments, lifestyles and living conditions afforded to most Australians.

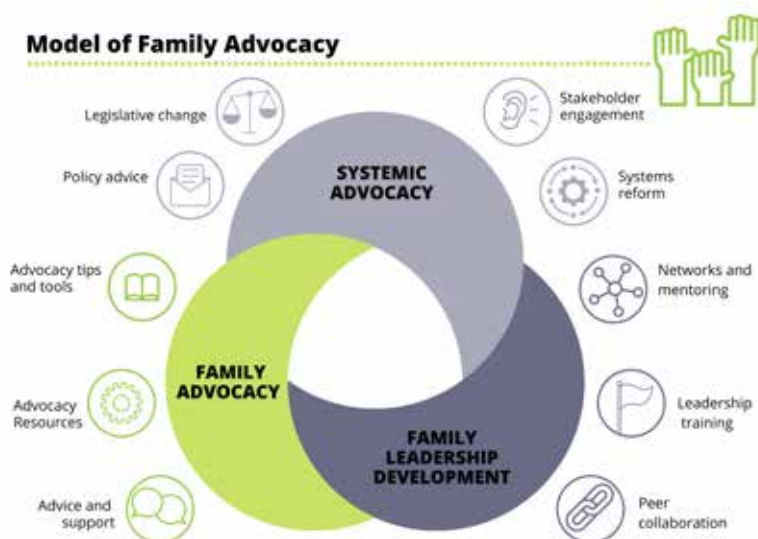
MODEL OF FAMILY ADVOCACY

Our model of Family Advocacy encompasses three areas:

Family Advocacy – including advocacy tips and tools, advocacy resources, advice and support

Systemic Advocacy – including policy advice, legislative change, stakeholder engagement, systems reform

Family Leadership Development – including networks and mentoring, leadership training and peer collaboration.



* Developmental disability occurs in the developmental period of a person's life (from conception to adulthood) and includes intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, autism and any combination of physical, intellectual or sensory disability.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The organisation's goals and objectives are determined by the Management Committee, which represents Family Advocacy's membership.

Organisational goals

Family Advocacy will:

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

Objectives

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

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2023–2025

Our Strategic Plan 2023-2025 helps shape the priorities we will undertake over the next three years. The focus areas identified in the plan are:

Valued and included early years

Children in the early years are nurtured with high expectations, are seen as valued members of their family and community and are experiencing the many typical opportunities on a pathway to a full and inclusive life.

Equitable and inclusive education for all

Children and young people with disability are experiencing full access to the formal and informal curriculum and activities of school life through an inclusive education. They are smoothly transitioning through each stage of their education and experiencing the same high expectations and rites of passage as their non-disabled peers.

Securing futures through employment

People with disability are working in valued jobs that are based on their interests and career aspirations, with equal pay in workplaces that offer accessible and equitable opportunities.

Empowered to thrive in community

People with disability are seen as contributing and valued members of their community and are experiencing the same opportunities to be included and are leading their own lives making choices and decisions important to them.

HOW WE MAKE THIS HAPPEN



GOVERNANCE

Over the past 33 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 purpose, vision, goals and objectives is carried out by the Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder.

In 2023–2024, the Committee was made up primarily of six individual family members, who worked to provide the governance and guidance of Family Advocacy. Of these, four were from Greater Sydney and two from Regional NSW.

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

MEMBERSHIP

As an incorporated association with membership across NSW, Family Advocacy welcomes individuals as members, but does not extend membership to organisations or individuals representing organisations.

The individuals who make up our membership believe in and support the vision and purpose of the organisation, and are committed to its goal 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 2023–2024 year.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

REPRESENTING THE HEART OF FAMILY ADVOCACY

Our Management Committee is comprised of individuals who embody the spirit of Family Advocacy and bring their invaluable lived experiences to the forefront. These dedicated members have tirelessly served to advance our vision and values and to champion the cause we hold dear. We honour the commitment and dedication of our Management Committee as it has played a pivotal role in shaping our journey; advocating for change, and making a difference in the lives of countless families.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 2023-2024



YOLANDE CAILLY
Chairperson



SARAH HARVEY
Secretary



LESLEY LIGHT
Treasurer



ANNETTE BUSH
Committee Member



MELISSA SMITH
Committee Member



BEC HEWITT
Committee Member

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



**YOLANDE CAILLY,
CHAIRPERSON**

I would like to start this report by reaffirming Family Advocacy's vision, as a new Strategic Plan was launched at the start of this financial year.

“Our Vision is of families being agents of positive social change so the inherent value of people with developmental disability is recognised within a just and inclusive society.”

This empowering statement is front and centre for all the work that Family Advocacy does. It is what drives and motivates us, and after 33 years, this vision has not waned.

It might seem cliché to say that once again it was a busy year for Family Advocacy, but the reality of advocacy is that the work never stops. There are always new enquiries to answer, budgets to balance, reports to write, events to run, and politicians and policymakers to pressure. As I review the accomplishments for this year, I am amazed at how much gets delivered by such a small team. But this also highlights that a just and inclusive society is still a distant goal.

It is frustrating however, to see that once again, the organisation is left fighting to secure ongoing funding. That despite the necessity for parents and families to fight for their child at every stage of their life, there is not greater acknowledgement from successive governments that the work of an organisation like Family Advocacy is a priority and should receive sustained funding. But while we eagerly wait for systemic change to come from the top, our family members' lives continue, and they cannot afford for us to put advocacy on hold. So, the ground work continues.

In September, we saw the conclusion of the Disability Royal Commission, which made 222 recommendations. This was followed in December by the NDIS Review final report, which made 26 recommendations. Both reports highlighted the need for profound and systemic change, and the team at Family Advocacy wasted no time in providing its response, in particular, around inclusive education, putting pressure on government to listen to those with lived experience and follow recommendations, by launching the Better Together, Inclusion for All campaign.

A highlight for me this year was my attendance at a workshop about Customised Employment. It emphasised the importance of keeping an open mind to the possibilities that creative thinking brings. Just when I thought there were limitations on what employment might look like for a person with a developmental disability, I was exposed to a fresh perspective. This is why the work of Family Advocacy is so close to my heart. By reaching outside of NSW, making connections with similar organisations across Australia, and reaching out to other parts of the world, the organisation uncovers innovative ways to forge inclusive lives for people with disability.

There have been some staff movements this year. A big thank you to Paul Barrett, Accounts, Administration and Events Coordinator, who after nine years of service left in October 2023. We wish him all the best. We then welcomed back Troy Hester, previously Advocacy Engagement Officer – Disability Royal Commission, who returned in the role of Administration and Events Coordinator in November 2023. Melissa Chan joined the team as Finance Officer, initially on a casual basis, October to December 2023, and then as a permanent staff member from January 2024. We also would like to extend our thank-you to Christian Sotelo, Luis Navera and Marie Kirkman who assisted with bookkeeping on a casual basis.

I wish to also extend our thanks to the following people:

Thank you to all the staff without whom progress would not be possible. Year after year, they demonstrate their commitment to social change, fostering relationships with experienced families, and looking at ways to reach out to new families to support them in bettering the lives of their loved ones with disability.

Thank you to our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, who always navigates difficult situations with grace and compassion. Her commitment to advancing the rights and interests of people with disability is evident in the strength and quality of the guidance she provides to the organisation.

Thank you to my colleagues on the Committee, who bring with them their own lived experience of supporting a person with disability. It is a pleasure to meet with them on a regular basis and watch them engage in their role with commitment and a sincere desire to change the outcome of people with disability.

Thank you to our members and allies, who tirelessly

work at the grassroots level. Their dedication to applying the knowledge gained from Family Advocacy and transforming perspectives, one individual at a time, is invaluable.

Family Advocacy is a visionary organisation. It consistently disrupts the status quo, pushing boundaries and redefining what is possible in supporting families, and as such, paves the way for transformative reforms in policies, services and societal attitudes.



Top Image: Committee Members at the Annual General Meeting
Bottom Image: Source Kids Disability Expo

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



**CECILE SULLIVAN
ELDER,
EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

The 2023-2024 financial year was seemingly another year like many others across the work of the organisation, however this could not be further from the truth. Never before has Australia seen a Disability Royal Commission final report, with this report providing some exceptional guidance to stakeholders across the country on the necessary reform needed to advance the rights and interests of people with disability.

A stop and pause moment was essential after this mammoth commission wrapped up after several years of hearing from many thousands of people with disability and families in Australia. In many respects, it was an enlightening moment to witness the action – or inaction – of many sides of government to enact the recommendations that fully support the genuine participation of people with disability in the community. Alarming, we are still faced with the question of whether people with disability ‘should’ or ‘could’ pursue education, employment, and community participation, as many decision-makers still assume this is a topic for debate. The work of Family Advocacy and many other people and organisations has continued over this year to attempt to shape the road to change in a stronger way.

It continues to be a privilege to work alongside many dedicated staff across the organisation. Without question, they are all committed to advancing the opportunities afforded to people with disability. This team of professionals have supported the potent work reflected throughout this Annual Report and worked to enact change directly alongside a person with disability and their family. They have also managed to positively influence the work of educators, service providers, employers and many more individuals and groups.

Change at the systems level has continued to be a focus, with grassroots movements supported over the course of the year, as well as directly working with and attempting to influence government around the necessary changes that we seek.

Once again, the organisation has been overseen by a competent and passionate Management Committee, who remain clear on the Vision and Purpose of the organisation and continue to be a safeguard to Family Advocacy’s work; something that is rare in the not for profit space. We know that the organisation is in good hands when times become tough, particularly when faced with non-programmatic challenges such as lack of funding, systems reforms and other external pressures. It remains a pleasure to be guided by this group of individuals who are well considered in their decision making at a governance level.



Image: Parent leaders and staff at the Social Role Valorisation Gathering in Queensland

STAFF MEET THE TEAM



CECILE SULLIVAN ELDER
Executive Officer



LEANNE VARGA
Systemic Advocacy and
Campaigns Manager



KAREN TIPPETT
Advocacy and Inclusion,
Senior Manager



JACKIE CURREY
Advocacy and
Leadership Coordinator



MANDY VANDERTOEW
Advocacy and
Leadership Coordinator



JO CROSS
Advocacy and
Leadership Coordinator



KELLY EVAGELAKOS
Marketing and
Communications Manager



CLARA MALDONADO
Communications and
Media Coordinator



MARYBELLE IGNACIO
Office Manager



PAUL BARRETT

Accounts, Administration
and Events Coordinator
(to October 2023)



TROY HESTER

Administration and Events Coordinator
(from November 2023)



MELISSA CHAN

Finance Officer
(Casual October – December 2023;
Permanent from 3 January 2024)



JANE SCOTT

Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



KATIE HODGES

Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



LAURA ABRAHAMS

Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



LINDA HUGHES

Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



TALIA ROSHAN

Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities

CASUAL STAFF

MARIE KIRKMAN

Bookkeeper
(Casual February – June 2024)

CHRISTIAN SOTELO

Bookkeeper
(Casual October – December 2023)

LUIS NAVERA

Bookkeeper
(Casual January – February 2024)

VOLUNTEERS AND FAMILY LEADERS

The individuals who freely give their time to support the objectives of Family Advocacy not only extend our human resources capacity to carry out our programs and projects, but also add an extra layer of depth through the lived experience that is constantly brought to the many aspects of the organisation's work.

We thank the many who have generously contributed their time, skills and insights through:

- governance of the organisation
- resource development
- collaboration in the development of and co-presenting at workshops
- providing stories that feed directly into submissions at local, state and federal levels in relation to early childhood, education, employment, the Disability Royal Commission, and NDIS
- attending meetings with MPs in relation to inclusive education
- sharing stories and insights of lived experience with politicians and families, through our systemic advocacy, our advocacy and leadership events, and online webinars
- supporting, engaging with, and encouraging other families in their respective journeys towards inclusion for their family member
- project guidance, influence and providing a family voice through participation in a steering committee around the work of Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project
- contribution to the development of the One of the Kids: Successful Transitions Through School project
- participation as panellists in webinars and information sessions
- attending expos alongside staff members to help spread the word about our services.

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

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

- posting reactions, comments and shares on our social media platforms, thus helping amplify our message
- sharing their stories with the media
- providing honest feedback to third-party quality assurance auditors, as this is how we are able to continue what we do well and improve on areas that need improvement
- completing our surveys, which provide the basis for our campaigns, submissions, input to roundtables, and inform meetings with various politicians, department heads and industry leaders.



This strong community has continued to show an unwavering commitment towards a more inclusive society for people with disability. Building the family leadership as a strategy to achieve this continues to be a strong conduit for the protection and progression of the rights and interests of people with disability. This potent approach builds self-efficacy, strengthens advocacy efforts, and fosters stronger communities that work to unlock opportunities for people with disability to truly experience genuine inclusion in their communities.

- John Armstrong
- Mogi Bayasgalan
- Paulina Bezzina
- Lisa Bridle
- Annette Bush
- Yolande Cailly
- Julia Carey
- Heather Cox
- Jackie Currey
- Kerri Dawson
- Jen De Souza
- Libby Ellis
- Matthew Ellis
- Mae Fan
- Jodie Gardem
- Fiona Gould
- Sarah Harvey
- Chanel Hennessey
- Jessica Hermosilla
- Bec Hewitt
- Tyler Hewitt
- Susan Hoffman
- Fiona Hutchinson
- Leighton Jay
- Janine Jenkins
- Kathleen Johnston
- Liz Kassis
- Andy Kuo
- Lesley Light
- Sophia Liu
- Elise Magrath
- Nina Magrath
- Michael Magrath
- Lisa McLaughlin
- Louise Monet
- Josephine Murphy
- Fiona Myers
- Hunaiza Naeem
- Mary-Ann Naguib
- Joe Naim
- Joanne Nunn
- Annette O'Sullivan
- Leanne Pearman
- Bree Pennie
- Alex Purvis
- Brittany Ruiz
- Di Samuels
- Julia Shumaker
- Karen Schwartz
- Vanessa Shearman
- Nicky Shortbridge
- Lara Sinclair
- Melissa Smith
- Meg Sweeney
- Peter Symonds
- Aaron Tomkins
- Susanna Wagner
- Marita Walker
- Bobo Wang
- Margaret Ward
- Melissa Ward
- Luca Weber
- Jennifer Williamson
- Alison Wilson
- Gina Wilson-Burns
- Catrina Wraight

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



ADVOCACY

Throughout 2023–2024, the Advocacy and Leadership Development team continued providing advocacy-related information and advice to people with disability, their families, friends and allies. Recognising that families are often in the strongest position to advocate for their family member with developmental disability, we support them so they can ensure that the protection, rights and interests of their family member are upheld. People can receive advocacy information and advice as often as they need to, and this varies according to the nature and level of complexity of the topic.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

As well as supporting families with their advocacy enquiries, Family Advocacy firmly believes in the importance of events that develop the strength, awareness and individual skills of families, so they can take on leadership roles and influence change within their own family, in their community and in broader arenas. They do this with, or at times, 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 becoming connected to the organisation. Importantly, this works towards creating connections between family advocates across NSW.

This year there was a continued approach to building on connections with family leaders further along in 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 continued to implement the strategic goal of mapping and expanding our connections to this sector, to influence change for a more inclusive Early Childhood sector. We provided a variety of presentations and were invited to contribute to sector events, bringing family leaders alongside to share their experiences with families of young children at the beginning of their education years.

Family Advocacy supported family members to:

- attend events through sponsorship by Family Advocacy
- enhance their skills and knowledge by undergoing specific training
- experience values-based training on Social Role Valorisation 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
- attend expos and speak with visitors about our work and the benefits
- 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, thus sharing their experiences to increase their own skills, competencies and confidence in relation to their advocacy efforts and as a family leader.



Image: One of the Kids Workshop, Gymea

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 by Family Advocacy. This served to strengthen knowledge, facilitate networking and encourage idea generation.

Events families were supported to attend included:

- Social Role Valorisation (SRV) gathering in Brisbane, Australian SRV Association (ASRVA)
- SRV Leadership course online, International SRV Association training group
- One of the Kids: Building Inclusion at School workshops, Family Advocacy
- Social Role Valorisation PASSING 2024, Foundations Forum
- Transforming Inclusive Education workshop with Dr Shelley Moore, Illume Learning
- Customised Employment workshops with Milton Tyree, Resourcing Inclusive Communities
- Annual Health and Ageing Conference: Healthy, Wealthy and Wiser(r), Down Syndrome NSW
- Safeguarding the Future conference, Imagine More
- Safeguarding the Future preconference webinars:
 - o Decision-making in everyday life with Janet Klees
 - o Medical Safeguarding: Addressing vulnerability in medical settings with Jo Massarelli and Cathy Ludlum
 - o Now is the time for vision with Darcy Elks

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 2023–2024, it comprised nearly two-thirds of the enquiries taken by Family Advocacy. Barriers families face in education continue to include:

- Unwelcoming culture of schools impeding the student from being fully included.
- 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.
- 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.

Family Advocacy continues to assist families to advocate in a positive way with schools to manage the barriers listed above, and to create a good learning environment for their family member with disability. The insights and understanding we receive from families then informs the organisation’s systemic work to effect broader change. Family Advocacy gathers this information to highlight statewide trends and enable responsive planning.

ONE OF THE KIDS: BUILDING INCLUSION IN SCHOOL – WORKSHOP

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team 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. This year the Advocacy and Leadership team was able to run seven face-to-face workshops, with three in Regional NSW and four in Greater Sydney locations.

One of the Kids is relevant for families of preschool, primary and high school students, and covers topics including: 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.

This year we ran workshops in Dee Why, Gymea, Wagga Wagga, Cowra, Dubbo, Castle Hill and Bankstown. 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 extra copies provided to share with others.

“The workshop exceeded my expectations. I feel more empowered to ask for the supports my child needs. Even hearing about the things that don’t directly apply to my child have been helpful to hear about, and provide a wider context for our schooling journey. Thank you so much for offering this service – it certainly fills a gap.”

ONE OF THE KIDS ONLINE

This online course consists of weekly self-paced modules with two live Zoom sessions over five weeks, complementing the face-to-face workshop and seeking to broaden our reach to families who live in rural and remote areas, or those who are unable to attend our location-based workshops for other reasons. We successfully ran the second and third offerings of the online course in Term 4, 2023 and in Term 2, 2024 respectively, with the numbers of registrations, completions of the course, and waitlists for the next course offerings, growing rapidly.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS –FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Shepherd Centre invited Family Advocacy to again speak at their Off to School parent group program, over five locations throughout NSW. Inclusive education, vision, transition tips and advocacy tools, including how to use the Conversations for Collaboration framework, were presented to the families in attendance.

A Carers NSW group in Coffs Harbour invited Family Advocacy to speak with their members about who Family Advocacy are and what support we can offer. As well as hearing about our organisation and ways to access support, they also heard about the importance of having a vision and aiming for the ‘good things’ in life.

FOCUS ON PRIMARY TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

Family Advocacy were invited by Lifestart to be a guest speaker to families attending their transitioning to high school course.

Another Carers NSW group in Coffs Harbour, for families with teenagers and young adults with disability, invited Family Advocacy to speak with their members about who Family Advocacy are and what support we can offer.

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS THROUGH SCHOOL PROJECT

This project was funded through the Learning and Improvement Grant from the NSW Department of Education. The project was completed over 18 months. The project aims to reduce the barriers currently impeding the successful transition of students with disability at the three key stages of their educational journey:

- **Entry to Primary School** – A great start to set up school students for a positive education
- **Primary to High School** – Building the foundation for students to be lifelong learners
- **Senior High School** – The final stretch, setting up students for life as adults.

The project was delivered, using universal design for learning principles, including face-to-face workshops, and webinars held during the day and evening. We travelled regionally as well as throughout Greater Sydney for the face-to-face offerings. A resource workbook was created to complement the workshops, and attendees were invited to join peer networks to encourage ongoing communication and connection between parents as peers. During the course of the project, over 200 families attended either the workshops or webinars, receiving the resource booklet and a follow-up email of information and further resources to assist in their child’s transition.

“This webinar has opened my eyes and has now changed the trajectory of my son’s education. I wish I’d heard about it sooner.”

“Absolutely fabulous webinar and I plan to contact Family Advocacy in the next week to discuss further options for my son. Such a great resource, very practical and will definitely tell others about this. I feel more positive about my young person’s future and that we can do something about it.”

“This was brilliant. Every parent of a child with disability must attend!”



Image: Parent Paulina Bezzina presenting at One of the Kids Workshop

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Our one-hour Online NDIS Discussion Series continued on the second Wednesday of every month, with a break over the Christmas period. This series aims to boost confidence and resilience, so families can be proactive in setting a course for a successful life journey for their family member with developmental disability. Content is developed around participants' questions or topics, and this year, we have had many fantastic questions. When answering, we focus on the alignment with our values of living an inclusive life and the importance of developing a vision to achieve this. We are seeing the questions submitted focus less on funding amounts and more on how to build good lives, including seeking joy and innovative ways to meet therapy and support needs within everyday life, and connecting and forming relationships in their community.

We are also asked how to identify services that align with the values of living an inclusive life. So, our underlying focus is strengthening the role of families and the importance of having a documented vision to underpin their family member's goals and decisions, when engaging with NDIS services and other service systems.

The importance of valued roles in achieving a Good Life now, and for future safeguarding, is a running narrative. The NDIS Discussion Series reached 214 families, providing resources and support to families not just regarding the NDIS, but also alternative formal service systems and innovative community ideas.

Advocacy and the NDIS webinar

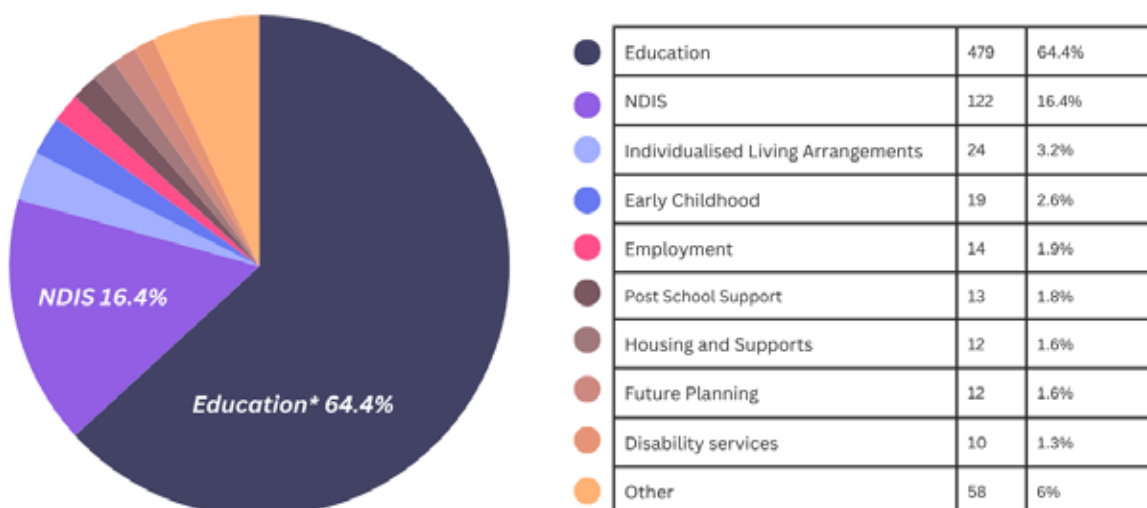
Two morning sessions and two evening sessions were delivered this year. This webinar assists families in their advocacy efforts, in particular around the NDIA, and guiding them in making the most of their plans. The November webinar recordings with Auslan interpreting and closed captions are available on the Family Advocacy YouTube channel. Five recordings covering five topics have received a total of 273 views since November 2023.

Our largest area of NDIS-related enquiries was around support in accessing and implementing plans effectively. The scheme continues to be challenging for people to navigate and to get the most benefit from. Alongside guidance on using the plan effectively and working with planners and others, we continue to provide an understanding of the responsibilities of other service systems, for example, childcare, education, health and employment. These would enable families to find other ways to meet the needs of their family member, often creatively, in typical ways that fostered inclusion with outcomes that disability services could never achieve.

There were many advocacy enquiries about how to appeal NDIS decisions. The Advocacy and Leadership team supported families to navigate both NDIS internal and external reviews at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT), as well as providing support to families to represent themselves at the AAT and understand the process.

Kindship Connect (the community arm of Kindship Plan Management) invited the team to join their live discussion on advocacy. This was in the form of a Q&A on rights and legislation, inclusive education, how can families be the best advocates, and navigating the NDIS, including which service system is responsible to meet a child's disability needs.

ISSUES RAISED DURING ADVOCACY ENQUIRIES



**Our education enquiries are mainly around: gatekeeping, lack of reasonable adjustments and suspensions.*

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY



The last financial year has seen a swathe of disability policy as we waited for the outcome of the much-anticipated Disability Royal Commission final report and the NDIS Review process. This resulted in a busy year for systemic advocacy, with 16 submissions written covering eight different topics areas, the launch of our Better Together: Inclusion for All Campaign, and a Position Statement on Inclusive Education endorsed by 12 disability organisations.

We have continued our efforts to advocate for a future where the rights and interests of people with developmental disability are included across all aspects of life. Our main focus areas in line with our Strategic Plan have been: Valued and included early years; equitable and inclusive education for all; securing futures through employment; and empowering people to thrive in the community. Yet there are many other areas of concern we are also involved with at a systemic level that affect the lives of people with disability, such as the Disability Royal Commission, NDIS, advocacy, restrictive practices, guardianship, health, housing, Australia's Disability Strategy, and the NSW Ageing and Disability Commission.

We take a targeted approach to 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. These include government roundtables, academia and the broader disability sector. As such, our sector collaboration has continued to ensure the collective rights of people with disability are served through policy, legislation and practice, including with the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE); Disability Policy Interagency Group; National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NABCO); Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA); Australian Child Rights Taskforce; NSW Ageing and Disability Commission; NSW Ombudsman; Disability Discrimination Commissioner; Department of Health Disability Community of Practice; Department of Education Disability Strategy Reference Group; and NSW Department of Education Professional Development Group.

Throughout the year we have worked solidly on building connections between individual and systemic advocacy, so the voices of people with lived experience of disability and their family members are amplified through our systemic work. Through responses to the surveys that inform our submissions, we have heard loud and clear that there continue to be many barriers to getting access to the good things in life, and there is much work to do.

SUBMISSIONS

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:

Early childhood education:

- Questionnaire feedback and Response to the Early Years Strategy (the Strategy).

Education:

- Submission to the NSW Department of Education, Student and Parent Experience Directorate, in response to the Community Engagement and Experience Policy (CEEP) Discussion Paper.
- Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Portfolio Committee No.3 – Education on children and young people with disability in NSW educational settings.

Employment:

- Submission to the Department of Social Services (DSS) in response to The Future of Supported Employment Discussion Paper.

- Disability Services and Inclusion Bill 2023, Community Affairs Committee hearing: A joint submission from Disability Representative Organisations (this submission has been prepared by the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) as part of the National Coordination Function with a wide range of disability organisations including Family Advocacy).

Disability Royal Commission:

- Submission to the NSW Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission final report.
- Submission on the Australian Government response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

NDIS:

- Submission in response to the Proposals Paper on NDIS Participant Safeguarding.
- Submission in response to the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework Issues Paper.
- DANA's National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No.1) Bill 2024 [Provisions].
- NSW Disability Advocacy Network Submission 17th May 2024 NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track) Bill 2024.
- Joint submission with the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) to the NDIS Review: Working together to deliver the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Human rights:

- Endorsed People with Disability Australia (PWDA) Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework.
- Endorsed All Means All's Submission to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights' Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework Right to Inclusive Education.

Pre-Budget submission:

- Pre-Budget Submission to NSW Treasury.



Image: Leanne Varga, Cecile Sullivan Elder and Yolande Cailly with Kate Washington, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services

EDUCATION

VALUED AND INCLUDED EARLY YEARS

In line with our Strategic Plan, we aim to influence the influencers of families, so they can provide them with good information and guidance to set up their family members on a pathway to inclusive lives. We have also strategically collaborated and built allies in early childhood, so children with disability are able to access the same pre-school opportunities and environments.

We were invited and participated in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission child care price inquiry, the Productivity Commission early childhood education and care inquiry; discussed with the sector how to progress *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* towards achieving the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan, attended UNICEF Australian Child Rights Taskforce Roundtables, and the Thrive by Five Early Learning and Disability Symposium.

These collaborations are an important opportunity to send key messages to the Australian and NSW governments regarding priorities for early education.

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR ALL

Harnessing direct feedback from families across NSW, we provide pathways for effective action to change processes within the education systems that are working against inclusive practice. Progress remains slow, but working with government and non-government sectors is critical to long-term impact. Driving the increase of good inclusive education practices, particularly for students who are not typically accepted into local schools, is a key focus.

In response to the Disability Royal Commission final report recommendations, we developed A Position Statement on Inclusive Education endorsed by systemic and representative disability organisations in NSW. It was launched together with a new campaign The Better Together, Inclusion for All Campaign, which aims to ensure people with disability have access to inclusive education, employment, housing and community so we can create a more inclusive society. We encouraged families to meet with their MP and created resources such as a briefing booklet and How to Meet and Lobby your MP.

We attended 14 meetings with MPs so they could hear about the lived experience of a person with disability and how they are being failed by the education system. Action was taken by some MPs, which included writing to the Minister for Education, asking questions at Budget Estimates or in question time in parliament, to raise our concerns and push for them to be addressed. For example, one independent MP supported our Position Statement for Inclusive Education in response to the Disability Royal Commission final report, and wrote to the Minister for Education requesting it be adopted. He also invited all other NSW Commission's crossbench members to do the same.

In response to the NSW Legislative Council inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings, we hosted an NSW Education Inquiry Briefing with presenters Dr Rhonda Galbally AC, Disability Royal Commissioner; and Abigail Boyd, Chair of the Parliamentary Education Committee. Parents were provided with an accessible questionnaire and encouraged to make a submission. We also provided a submission and were invited to give evidence at the inquiry.

Our parent-led initiative, the P & C Inclusion Subcommittee, has been supported and promoted throughout NSW schools. Parent leaders have led the way in multiple workshops, sharing their experiences and supporting parents online, and creating an online community of support via the Same Classroom Facebook group. We hosted six workshops with attendance by parents from WA, QLD, SA, VIC, TAS and NSW. For the last workshop of the year, we collaborated with NSW P & C Federation, resulting in 190 registrations.

We also attended 13 meetings with the NSW Department of Education Disability Strategy Reference Group, which discussed initiatives and reforms such as New South Wales Education Standards Authority HSC provisions, an Outcomes Framework, launch of Restrictive Practices Framework, Student Behaviour Policy, and My Say My Way – an accessible student survey. We prepared a submission in response to the Community Engagement and Experience Policy Discussion Paper.

We attended two of the Department of Education's Disability Professional Learning Consultative Group meetings. The Group discusses ways to improve the capacity of the teacher workforce towards inclusive education.

We were invited and provided direct feedback to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) on draft Guidelines for the Optimal Deployment of Teaching Assistants in Australian Classrooms. The NSW Auditor-General also sought our direct feedback for its audit of support for students with disability. We were invited and verbally participated in the National Autism Strategy online workshop on promoting an inclusive mindset rather than segregated thinking.

We issued a joint media release, *Isolated and Ignored: NSW Government's Draft Policy Leaves Students with Disabilities Suspended*, with Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA). We share our concerns surrounding the proposed draft behaviour policy by the NSW Government.

We attended monthly Disability Policy Interagency meetings, which cover broad topics affecting the advocacy sector.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Our sector collaboration in the tertiary sector focused on strengthening the voice of people with disability in higher education, as well as progressing *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* to improve pathways and accessibility to further education.

A direct outcome of this collaboration resulted in our endorsement of an important submission by the student unions regarding disability and higher education (listed under submissions).

Through these alliances, we have endorsed a joint submission by the Australian Law Students Association (ALSA) and the National Union of Students (NUS), for the new requirements to support students - Department of Education, Australian Government consultation and media release. In these, peak bodies call for a Tertiary Education Roadmap to enact systemic reforms in disability and higher education in response to the Disability Royal Commission recommendations and the Australian Universities Accord.

AUSTRALIAN COALITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

As one of the co-founders of the Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE), which is made up of 20 organisations across the country, Family Advocacy has been involved in bringing the 10-year roadmap for achieving inclusive education to life, as well as lobbying the NSW and federal governments regarding the Disability Royal Commission recommendations.

This alliance has allowed us to have a national voice and to work together with NSW organisations as well as the other states and territories, to overcome the barriers faced by children and young people with disability in schools across Australia. We attended 12 meetings with ACIE in this reporting period.

SECURING FUTURES THROUGH EMPLOYMENT

We continued our efforts to shift the current employment landscape that supports people with disability into employment, by promoting the employability of everyone, through frameworks such as the Customised Employment model; phasing out segregated settings such as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), and working towards ensuring all wages meet the award minimum across all industries.

Family Advocacy met with many decision makers throughout the year to discuss the need for broader employment reforms, and in particular, reform that supports the group of people who are often not well-supported in jobs and careers. The work undertaken across our School to Work project also assisted to elevate the experiences of many young people with disability across NSW, QLD and ACT and the systems shortfalls that are creating barriers to getting the best start to an employment journey.

As listed under submissions, we wrote to the NSW Treasury, on employment reform for people with disability as well as preparing a pre-Budget submission. All these efforts align with *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* and the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

We provided a submission around the new DES Quality Framework as well as a joint submission through the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO). This is a significant development aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of DES in Australia. The framework represents a paradigm shift in how DES provider performance is measured. By placing the views and experiences of people with disabilities at the forefront, this framework recognises the need for change.



Image: Supporting Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)'s Speak Up! Campaign



Image: Giving evidence at the Upper House Inquiry Hearing

EMPOWERED TO THRIVE IN COMMUNITY

NDIS

Family Advocacy has continued to undertake systems advocacy in relation to the NDIS, to give voice to people with disability across NSW. We hosted an NDIS Provider and Worker Registration Taskforce Information Session with the Chair of the Taskforce and a family leader in the lead-up to this submission, with over 100 registrations. Family Advocacy also worked with the taskforce to set up nominee invites to the roundtable.

We attended six NDIS Review Roundtables. As outlined above, we wrote several submissions on NDIS reform. The NDIS Bill was addressed as a sector with a joint NDAN and DANA submissions, and as such, Family Advocacy was part of providing input to these submissions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

With the conversation for a national Charter of Human Rights on the agenda, Family Advocacy has supported the disability sector in advocating for national human rights legislation that enshrines our rights under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

SUPPORTED DECISION MAKING AND GUARDIANSHIP

We supported the disability sector to reform guardianship laws and introduce a national supported decision making framework, consistent with Australia's obligations under the CRPD and other international human rights treaties.

We also provided input into the barriers people with disability face in their day-to-day banking, at a National Consumer Banking forum.

NSW AGEING AND DISABILITY COMMISSION

We attended the Ageing and Disability Commission Roundtables, which occurred twice in this reporting period. This provided another avenue for input into relevant topics, such as those in relation to complaints and oversight mechanisms, and the Official Community Visitors Report.

ADVOCACY

We attended six Disability Advocacy Network Australia meetings to keep abreast of issues of federal matters relevant to NSW, including NDIS, advocacy funding and Disability Royal Commission, a new Disability Rights Act, a briefing on the advocacy standards project with space to feed in, written feedback to the Disability Advocacy Futures Program reporting framework, and a follow-up online consultation, which generated further discussion and feedback points. Two joint submissions were written about the decision to cut Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) funding and the impact this will have on the disability advocacy sector and the community, plus the NDIS Bill, as noted under Submissions above.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES



WHO WE ARE

Resourcing Inclusive Communities provides capacity-building services to enable the genuine 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, and 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

That people with disability thrive in the heart of the community, and share 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 (CRPD). One of the eight guiding principles of the CRPD 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, their families, and communities and services.

Our Strategic Goals:

- Increase reach to families and childhood services
- Increase self-management with a clear vision
- Increase individualised living options
- Enhance employment opportunities
- Become the 'go-to' organisation for inclusive service and community development.

SCHOOL TO WORK PROJECT

The School to Work Project aims to equip students with disability, through the support of their families, to seek meaningful, paid employment in the community.

This four-year project has been funded by the Australian Government through Department of Social Services' Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants program, and is being run by three organisations: Resourcing Inclusive Communities in NSW; Social Imagine More in the ACT; and Community Resource Unit (CRU) in QLD.

In an effort to improve poor disability employment figures, this project takes a grassroots approach, working directly with families so they have the vision, knowledge and capacity to support their children to plan early, harness the use of existing pathways in the school years, and then support their children in meaningful employment.



WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS

The team continued the delivery of the School to Work workshop, in both Regional NSW and in Greater Sydney. Thanks to family leaders who joined in the delivery of the School to Work workshops in Orange, Coffs Harbour and Port Macquarie; Annette Bush and Vanessa Shearman.

In addition, two full-day workshops took place exploring the second stage of Customised Employment (Job Development), featuring international guest speaker Milton Tyree. With the lack of customised employment-related services currently available in Australia, families are paving the way by supporting their family member in using strategies from this particular approach.

The team was invited to attend Moorebank High School in western Sydney to deliver a half-day workshop to parents of students attending the school. The team presented to an engaged group of families who expressed a desire for their young person to achieve meaningful, paid employment in the future, while also acknowledging the many barriers they continue to face.

A total of 17 webinars were delivered this year, including the delivery of newly developed webinars: Employment Support: Securing the Right Match; Customised Employment Series: Developing a Concept Portfolio and Visual Resume. This period also saw the Imagining, Discovering and Finding Work: Getting Started and Next Steps webinars, and the Employment Supports webinar, available for on-demand viewing.

Two Discovery Discussion Groups were held throughout the course of the year to help support families move from theory to action, with discussions centering around the first step of Customised Employment – Discovery. Families had the opportunity to connect with other families undertaking a Customised Employment approach, unpack the Discovery process and develop strategies to support successful employment.

In addition, an Employment Feedback Discussion Group was held with identified family members to understand the ongoing barriers that young people face in relation to employment, as well as understand the circumstances and strategies that have led to success. Holding discussion groups such as these helps inform the work and ongoing content development within the project.



Image: School to Work Customised Employment Workshop with Milton Tyree

ONE-ON-ONE CONSULTATIONS

In response to the needs of the community, there has been an increase in the one-on-one support being provided to families. Common questions and concerns relate to young people not having access to typical experiences, including work experience; inability of families to locate and engage with employment services suitable for their family member; and families wanting support in using Customised Employment strategies, in light of there being very few services available in Australia to support this goal. Personalised support was also provided to families undertaking a Customised Employment approach.

RESOURCES

Resources have been developed to help address some of the aforementioned barriers and to support the strategies and tips shared throughout workshop and webinar delivery.

This includes the development of a comprehensive *Employment Guide*, which will be published in August 2024. This resource is intended to provide families and allies of people with disability with a flexible set of steps to follow while supporting a person with disability into employment. Throughout the guide, real-life examples are provided as well as activities to brainstorm and help support the practical implementation of the suggested steps.

Several resources on Customised Employment were developed, including a *Customised Employment Explainer for Employers* and a *Business/Job Seeker Compatibility Analysis*, to support Job Development efforts through the Customised Employment approach. The aim is for Job Developers to use the form to gather vital information needed to successfully support Job Seekers into a customised work role.

In addition, acknowledging that many families wanting to undertake Customised Employment will be working with service providers, a resource titled *Seeking Quality Customised Employment Supports* was developed and has been shared regularly with appropriate families. This resource was created to support families to approach services in positive and helpful ways, to help achieve better Customised Employment outcomes for their family member. Furthermore, a resource was also developed to explain how a family may use NDIS funding to facilitate a Customised Employment approach.

The team also met with two families to capture their young person's employment stories on video. The Young Entrepreneur showcases Luca Weber's micro-enterprise, and a suite of clips captures the story of Tyler Hewitt and his experience working in a mechanic business in his local community. Both stories highlight the importance of community connections, vision, and following a young person's interests and contributions. These videos have been used during content delivery, as well as forming promotional material, to demonstrate the importance of meaningful, paid employment in the community.

NETWORKING AND MEETINGS

There has also been an increased focus on professional networking. Staff have regularly attended Vocational Support Network Meetings, engaging with other attendees and disseminating information about upcoming School to Work events.

The team met with NDIA staff; professionals providing NDIS-related services, including Local Area Coordinators (LACs), plan managers and support coordinators; and staff from Disability Employment Services (DES). Further meetings took place with professionals from the NSW Department of Education.

During this period the project team was involved in conversations with a large disability service provider, assessing the potential of bringing US-based Customised Employment training modules to Australia. Project staff were asked to review sections of the training modules and provide feedback based on their knowledge and understanding of Customised Employment, informed with a Social Role Valorisation (SRV) lens.

Project staff attended multiple events, in both Greater Sydney and Regional NSW, focused on post-school transitions for people with disability. These events offer Family Advocacy the opportunity to connect with families and share our resources with the broader community.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The consortium continued to engage 99 Consulting to undertake the third-year external evaluation. The evaluation involved both families and professionals who had attended a School to Work event, through one-on-one interviews as well as an online survey.

The evaluation found that over the past three years, School to Work has been successful in supporting young people and families to take steps towards mainstream employment, by reinforcing the importance of inclusive employment, increasing confidence and providing practical tools and ideas to support young people to achieve this aspiration. The report prepared by 99 Consulting noted:

Almost all the participants report that they and the young person they support have taken action towards employment. This includes over 40% who either have a job or are looking for one, and all but eight out of 59 survey participants have taken some steps including doing work experience, starting a discovery process or talking with family and friends about employment options.

INCLUSIVE LIVES: POSSIBILITY TO REALITY PROJECT



The Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality project aims to strengthen the knowledge, skills and confidence of people with disability and their families and supporters, so that many more people with disability across NSW can experience the typical life pathways most Australians experience.

Over three and a half years, this project, funded via the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant, has engaged over 1,000 people.

Huge thanks go to the Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Steering Committee of dedicated and passionate families who have provided guidance and support to the project: Alex Purvis, Alison Wilson, Annette O'Sullivan, Elise Magrath, Jo Naim, Michael Magrath and Sarah Harvey.

During the past 12 months, this project has offered 12 workshops – some in person and some online – and eight peer networks, running a total of 29 network sessions. The third Family Leadership Development Series has concluded, with an additional 10 families now better equipped to work for inclusion in their communities.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops enable people with disability to pursue the same Good Things of Life that are enjoyed by many other Australians. They provide people with disability and their families and supporters, with information and resources based on Social Role Valorisation (SRV).

Workshops delivered this year covered a breadth of topics: 'Creating an Inclusive Life' was run with family leaders Bec Hewitt and Elise and Nina Magrath. 'Fostering Friendships and Community Connections' ran in two regional locations with Family Leaders Annette Bush in one, and Elise and Michael Magrath in

the other. 'Making the Most of Self Management' ran in a hybrid format. The 'Future Planning: Safeguarding the Good Life' continues to be very popular and was again guest-presented by family leader Catherine Hogan, and Gilbert + Tobin's Pro bono team's Anne Cregan.

Workshops offer strategies that families can begin to use immediately and develop over time.

"The workshops have been really helpful in thinking about what ingredients make up a Good Life for our daughter. It has helped us see the power of thinking about typical community settings and how valued roles can connect her to others based on common interests rather than differences. Understanding this way of looking at things helps us apply that lens to all parts of her life."

A US- based team, led by Tom Doody and Joe Osburn, also ran a Model Coherency workshop for Australian audiences, further enriching the knowledge of SRV within our communities.

International presenter Janet Klees, from Canada, ran an evening online workshop, 'Building a Context for Relationships'. In addition to being a well-attended event on the night, we expanded the audience further by making a recording available for the following month.

PEER NETWORKS

These networks continue to provide a space for families of people with disability to share their questions and experiences.

The groups are led by experienced parent-leader facilitators with lived experience relevant to the topic. They address the specific questions of group members. Jo Cross, Alison Wilson, Bec Hewitt and Annette O’Sullivan were facilitators for the peer networks on Self Management for Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Work Experience and Vision. Catherine Hogan and Linda Hughes led Discussion groups on Circles of Support, and Individualised Living, respectively.

“This has boosted my confidence and given me more ideas than I could have ever done on my own.”

“Fantastic presenter, a great role model; sharing so much useful information and advice, with kindness and humour.”

“Wonderful facilitator with a huge breadth of experience with families.”

FAMILY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES

The Family Leadership Development Series model continues to be a success in building the knowledge, confidence, connectedness and effectiveness of families to support the ongoing Good Lives of their family member with disability.

The second series wrapped up with two more online sessions with Family Leader guests, Annette Bush and Jackie Currey, followed by the concluding weekend in October 2023 with experienced Family Leader Meg Sweeney joining as guest speaker.

A third series ran from February to June 2024, to continue the importance of Family Leadership in sustaining positive social change for people with disability well into the future. Following the positive feedback from the online session, Jackie Currey was invited to hold the Family Leader Mentor role as well as past series participant Susanna Wagner, both of whom shared their experiences and learnings with the group. Ten more families participated in the third series and heard from many speakers, including John Armstrong, Michelle Browning, Gina Wilson-Burns, Janet Klees, Annette Bush and Meg Sweeney.

These series build the foundations and stepping stones for families to gather knowledge and share their own stories and perspectives, to further create the ripple effect of inclusion within their broader communities.



Top Image: Fostering Friendships and Community Connections Workshop in Coffs Harbour

Middle Image: Panel Discussion at the October Leadership Series

Bottom Image: Family Leadership Series weekend event

MY HOME, MY WAY AND MAKING HOME REAL – INDIVIDUALISED LIVING PROJECTS



Home is more than a roof over your head. An individualised living arrangement is where a person lives in their own home with a good sense of belonging, freedom, contribution, safety and privacy. The person chooses who they live with, if anyone. They are included in their community and neighbourhood with valued roles and meaningful relationships with family, friends, neighbours and community members.

Individualised living arrangements are an alternative to congregate living and enable anyone with a disability, no matter how complex their needs, to live a good life.

Both My Home, My Way and Making Home Real projects are delivered as part of NACBO and guided by the leadership of people with disability and families.

These projects are vital in sharing information with people with disability and their families, to build the knowledge, skills and confidence necessary to seek and establish individualised living.

Project leaders from each of the NACBO organisations have met regularly as a community of practice, facilitated by Marita Walker, who has a wealth of experience in the individualised living space. These meetings have been an opportunity to share insights and challenges of our on-the-ground experience of individualised living, as well as share collective experiences and knowledge to improve how we can promote and support this approach with families.

The 2023–2024 period focused on delivering workshops both online and face to face, regular webinars and one-on-one consultation with families.

Over the past 12 months these projects have delivered six My Home, My Way workshops and five Individualised Living Conversation webinars.

My Home, My Way workshops are delivered by either a full-day face-to-face session or two half-day online sessions, and use the evidence- and practice-based Individual Supported Living Framework published by Curtin University, to take workshop attendees through the steps and actions to create an individualised living arrangement.

“An excellent workshop. Thank you very much.”

“The workshop was very well done ... there was nothing required to improve it. Thank you again.”

“So much helpful knowledge. Thank you.”

“It is encouraging ... This has made me feel we can achieve individualised options.”

Individualised Living Conversation webinars have generally had a panel of family members or allies sharing their experiences. These webinars are delivered in the evening. Recordings are available on the Resourcing Inclusive Communities website.

Individualised Living Conversation’s webinar topics covered:

- Introduction to Individualised Living
- Sharing with Housemates
- Explore and Design – Person-Centred Planning
- Working Well With Providers
- Question and Answer (Q&A) session.

“The Individual Living Conversation Q&A was inspiring. I am encouraged to work for a better life for my son.”

“Very informative. Liked the format of submitting questions prior and having these discussed during the webinar. Also, a good mix of speakers presenting individual stories and facts.”

“Great to have families’ real[-life] examples.”

Many thanks to webinar panellists: Libby Ellis, Mathew Ellis, Aaron Tomkins, Jen De Souza, Lisa Bridle, Meg Sweeney, Margaret Ward, Leanne Pearman, Joanne Nunn, Leighton Jay, Marita Walker and Karen Schwartz.

Many thanks to Annette O’Sullivan for co- facilitating My Home, My Way.

One-on-one consultation with families is another important element of the project. These are deeper conversations where we talk through the strategies and steps to pursue individualised living arrangements, including person-centred planning and funding arrangements to support a person to live in their own home.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING ORGANISATIONS

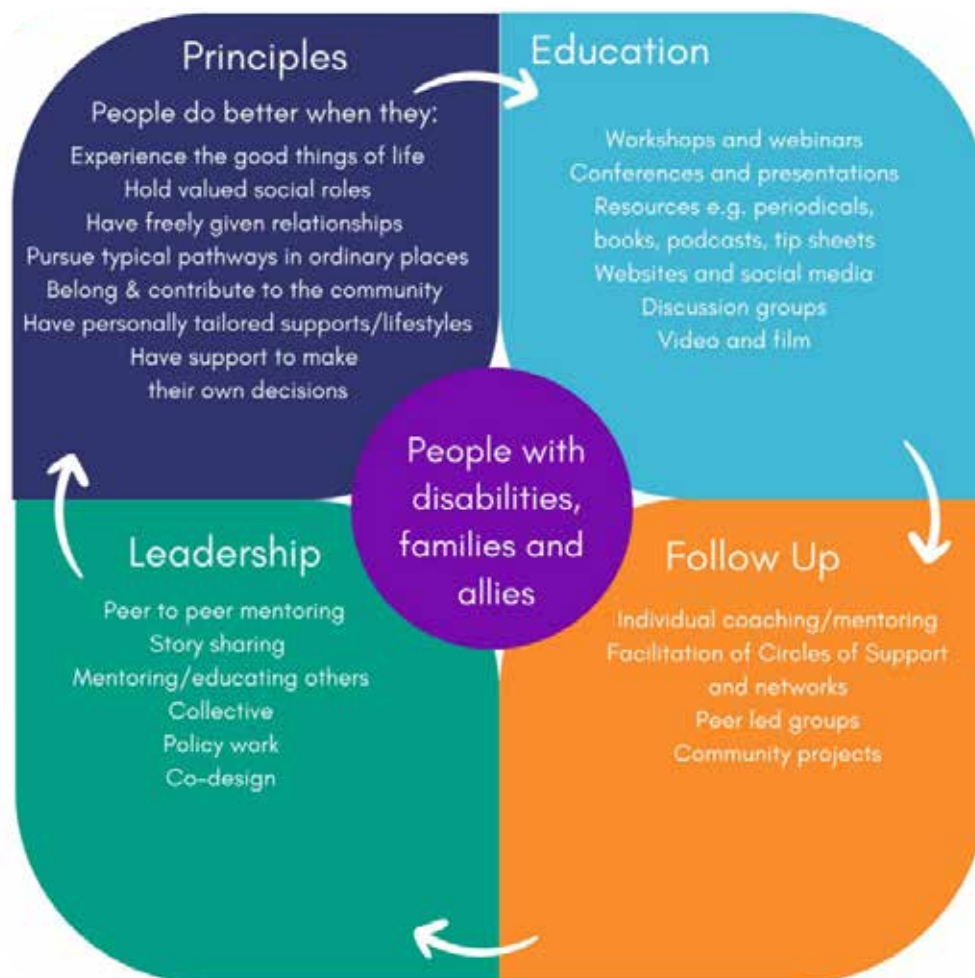


Image: NACBO'S Capacity Building Model for Social Inclusion and Change

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING ORGANISATIONS

Family Advocacy, through its Resourcing Inclusive Communities initiative, continues to be a member of the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO).

This national alliance of values-based, capacity-building organisations supports the strengthening of our capacity-building work with people with disability and their families across NSW, through coming together and learning, and sharing and building a strong community of practice. Over the course of the year, NACBO members have continued to meet around shared work or to influence positive change across areas that inhibit people's ability to be actively engaged in their communities.

In August 2023, the two-year evaluation of the NACBO Capacity Building Model (pictured on page 32) conducted by the University of NSW Social Policy Research Centre and Flinders University was finalised. The research included co-design, document analysis and fieldwork, drawing conclusions about the impact of the NACBO values-based capacity building model and activities on enabling social and economic contribution and leadership of people with disability and their families. The report noted:

NACBO capacity-building increased people's and family skills, knowledge, and confidence to make changes in life. The approach shifted their expectations and mindsets. Holding higher expectations, exploring possibilities, and creating tailored opportunities for people with disability to live a good life, were starting points to change and sustain outcomes for people with disability.... Achieving and sustaining long-term outcomes...required ongoing attention to building capacity and confidence in people and families, and people and families benefited from remaining connected to NACBO organisations to address new challenges across the life course.



Image: NACBO's national meeting, August 2023

EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

July – December 2023

12 Jul	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
18 Jul	Carers NSW Coffs Harbour Information Session	Online
24 Jul	Carers NSW Coffs Harbour Information Session	Online
16 Aug	Information Session Illawarra	Online
16 Aug	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
23 Aug	Information Session Newtown	Online
24 Aug	Information Session Canberra	Online
31 Aug	Information Session Macquarie	Online
5 Sep	One of the Kids Workshop	Dee Why
7 Sep	One of the Kids Workshop	Gymea
20 Sep	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
27 Sep	Advocacy and the NDIS	Online
28 Sep	Advocacy and the NDIS	Online
Oct – Nov	One of the Kids Self-Paced Course	Online

18 Oct	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
19 Oct	Information Session	Online
24 Oct	One of the Kids Workshop	Wagga Wagga
25 Oct	One of the Kids Workshop	Cowra
26 Oct	One of the Kids Workshop	Dubbo
8 Nov	Transition to Primary School Workshop	Wollongong
8 Nov	Transition to Senior High School Years Workshop	Wollongong
9 Nov	Transition to High School Workshop	Wollongong
15 Nov	Model Coherency Workshop	Online
21 Nov	Transition to Primary School Webinar	Online
21 Nov	Transition to Senior High School Years Webinar	Online
23 Nov	Transition to High School Webinar	Online



Image: One of the Kids Workshop Dee Why



Image: Imagine More Safeguarding Conference

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

January – June 2024

21 Feb	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
27 Feb	Transition to Primary School Workshop	Charlestown
5 Mar	Transition to Senior High School Years Workshop	Charlestown
12 Mar	Transition to High School Workshop	Charlestown
20 Mar	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
25 Mar	One of the Kids Workshop	Castle Hill
26 Mar	Advocacy and the NDIS Webinar	Online
27 Mar	One of the Kids Workshop	Bankstown
3 Apr	Transition to Primary School Workshop	Hornsby
4 Apr	Transition to High School Workshop	Hornsby
9 Apr	Transition to Senior High School Years Workshop	Hornsby
16 Apr	Transition to Primary School Webinar	Online
17 Apr	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
18 Apr	Transition to High School Webinar	Online
23 Apr	Transition to Senior High School Years Webinar	Online
2 May	Advocacy and the NDIS Webinar	Online

7 May	Transition to Primary School Webinar	Online
8 May	Transition to High School Webinar	Online
9 May	Transition to Senior High School Years Webinar	Online
15 May	NDIS Discussion Series	Online
May - June	One of the Kids Online Self-Paced Course	Online
19 Jun	NDIS Discussion Series	Online

SYSTEMIC EVENTS

2 Nov 2023	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Introductory Session	Online
13 Feb 2024	NSW Education Inquiry Webinar	Online
10 Apr 2024	NDIS Taskforce – Flexible Supports Information Session	Online
18 Jun 2024	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Introductory Session	Online

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES EVENTS AND PEER NETWORKS

July – December 2023

5 Jul	Individualised Living Conversations: Introduction – Making Home Real	Online
25 Jul	My Home, My Way Workshop	Online
July-Oct	Family Leadership Development Series 2023	F2F and online
8 Aug	Fostering Friendships and Community Connections Workshop	Coffs Harbour
9 Aug	Fostering Friendships and Community Connections Workshop	Taree
10 Aug	Fostering Friendships and Community Connections Workshop	Newcastle
10 Aug	School to Work: NDIS and Employment Supports Webinar	Online
15 Aug	School to Work Workshop	Gymea
21 Aug	School to Work Workshop	Orange
22 Aug	School to Work Workshop	Forbes
23 Aug	Future Planning Workshop	Penrith
24 Aug	My Home, My Way Workshop	Penrith
31 Aug	School to Work: Getting Started Webinar	Online
7 Sep	School to Work: The Next Steps Webinar	Online
11 Sep	School to Work Workshop	Coffs Harbour

12 Sep	School to Work Workshop	Port Macquarie
9 Oct	My Home, My Way Workshop	Online
12 Oct	Employment Support: Securing the Right Match Webinar	Online
17 Oct	Customised Employment: Power of Personalisation Webinar	Online
24 Oct	Customised Employment: Deeper Dive into Discovery Webinar	Online
25 Oct	Individualised Living Conversations: Housemates	Online
2 Nov	NDIS Plans: Making the Most of Self Management Webinar	Hornsby
3 Nov	School to Work Workshop	Wollongong
6 Nov	Future Planning Workshop	Online
9 Nov	Accessing Work Experience Through School Webinar	Online
18 Nov	School to Work Workshop	Blacktown
5 Dec	Employment Support: Securing the Right Match Webinar	Online
7 Dec	Fostering Friendships and Community Connections Workshop	Online



Left Image: School to Work Workshop Hornsby
Right Image: School to Work Workshop Coffs Harbour

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES EVENTS AND PEER NETWORKS

January – July 2024

30 Jan	Individualised Living Conversations: What is Individualised Living?	Online
31 Jan	Peer Network: NDIS Self Management for Inclusion	Online
5 Feb	Customised Employment	Online
Feb-June	Family Leadership Development Series 2024	F2F and online
14 Feb	My Home, My Way Workshop	Online
15 Feb	Employment Feedback Discussion	Online
20 Feb	Accessing Work Experience Through School	Online
27 Feb	School to Work Workshop	Liverpool
4 Mar	Future Planning Workshop	Online
11 Mar	Customised Employment: Job Development Workshop with Milton Tyree	Lane Cove
14 Mar	Individualised Living Conversations: Explore and Design Person-Centred Planning	Online
22 Mar	Employment Support: Securing the Right Match Webinar	Online
8 Apr	Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop	Online
18 Apr	Peer Network: Work Experience	Online
30 Apr	Individualised Living Conversations: Working With Providers	Online
1 May	Peer Network: NDIS Self Management: Preparing for NDIS Reassessments/ Variations	Online
2 May	Peer Network: Work Experience	Online
10 May	Peer Network: Inclusive Education: Preparing for High School	Online
13 May	Accessing Work Experience Through School	Online
14 May	My Home, My Way	Orange
16 May	Friendships Workshop	Wagga Wagga

16 May	Peer Network: Work Experience	Online
24 May	Discovery Discussion Group	Online
24 May	Peer Network: Inclusive Education: Preparing for High School	Online
27 May	NDIS Plans: Making the Most of a Young Person's Employment Supports	Online
29 May	Peer Network: NDIS Self Management: Record Keeping	Online
30 May	Peer Network: Work Experience	Online
4 Jun	Customised Employment: Concept Portfolio and Visual Resume	Online
5 Jun	Peer Network: Vision	Online
6 Jun	Discussion Series Circles of Support	Online
7 Jun	Peer Network: Inclusive Education: Preparing for High School	Online
11 Jun	Customised Employment: Concept Portfolio and Visual Resume	Online
12 Jun	Peer Network: Vision	Online
13 Jun	Discussion Series Circles of Support	Online
13 Jun	School to Work	Narrabeen
17 Jun	Building Context for Relationships	Online
17 Jun	Moorebank High School Presentation	Moorebank High School
19 Jun	Peer Network: Vision	Online
20 Jun	Discussion Series Circles of Support	Online
21 Jun	Peer Network: Inclusive Education: Preparing for High School	Online
24 Jun	Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop	Online
26 Jun	Peer Network: NDIS Self-Management: Using Funding Creatively for a Good Life	Online

EXPOS

Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities teams attended a number of expos across Greater Sydney and Central Coast region throughout the year. Expos provide a reach to people who may otherwise not come across our work and, therefore, as an organisation, we have been strategic in our planning by placing workshops and webinars in areas following the expo locations, to garner interest and a call to action. A number of parent leaders also attended the expos, engaging with families about the work we do.

30 Aug 2023	Central Coast Future Choices Transition Expo	Tumbi Umbi
17 Oct 2023	South Creek School Mini Expo Riverstone	Riverstone
16 Mar 2024	Source Kids Disability Expo 2024	ICCC Darling Harbour
8 May 2024	Northern Sydney Employment Mini Expo	Hornsby
29 May 2024	Post-School Options Expo	St Lucy's Wahroonga



Image: Source Kids Disability Expo, March 2024

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



This financial year, we implemented a range of new marketing tools designed to enhance our impact and overall reach within our online community.

Additionally, we have expanded our scope to include aspects of the operational function, ensuring that our policies, processes and planning are aligned so as to streamline Family Advocacy initiatives. This approach is intended to optimise our efforts, resulting in a stronger return on our activities and a more cohesive strategy moving forward.

TEAM CHANGES

Our communications strategy evolved significantly with the introduction of Kelly Evagelakos as Marketing and Communications Manager and Clara Maldonado as Communications Coordinator. Kelly shifted our focus from reactive support to proactive planning, incorporating new tools and strategies such as advertising, branding, and digital optimisation. Clara's project management skills have been key in driving our efforts and ensuring coordination across projects during this process. Towards the end of this financial year, Kelly's role expanded to include work on the Inclusion Collection as part of our website redevelopment, an initiative crucial to enhancing our online presence and advocacy efforts.

SUPPORT TO EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Model Coherency Workshop: We worked directly with the Executive Officer in the promotions, running and follow-up communications for this presentation on the Social Role Valorisation-related Construct of Model Coherency by Dr Wolf Wolfensberger. The event was presented in collaboration with The Southern Ontario Training Group.

Department of Social Services (DSS) – Australian Disability Enterprises submission: We assisted the Executive Officer with the submission to the DSS in response to The Future of Supported Employment Discussion Paper 2023.

Member collateral: All member documents have been consolidated into a single template so that Cecile Sullivan Elder may review and update the language for better brand and communication consistency. This template includes correspondence copy, staff templates, and information for new or renewing members, with the purpose of streamlining how we interact with members.

DEA leader's forum panel: We prerecorded a video of Cecile Sullivan Elder speaking for the Disability Employment Australia 2024 Conference on 27 March. The video was played as part of the panel discussion on the Disability Royal Commission recommendations and how these will impact on people with disability into the future.

Policy updates: We updated several key policies for Cecile's review. The Privacy Policy now includes the 12 Information Protection Principles from the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW), and our Terms of Use have been revised with an updated Inclusion Collection policy and new events process. Additionally, a new Information and Cyber Security Policy has been proposed, and an Accessibility Statement outlining our compliance status has been created.

REFRESHED BRAND AND FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

During this period, we phased out the use of the green logo and brought the deep blue to the forefront of our Family Advocacy branding. This colour contrast was chosen to ensure that our collateral is more accessible to a wider audience and conveys authority. Alongside this change, we initiated the rebranding process for both Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities.

Our rebrand project, in collaboration with Media on Mars, focuses on creating distinct brands for each entity while maintaining a cohesive connection that communicates trustworthiness. The rebrand includes a logo refresh, the introduction of new symbols for the core bodies of work within Family Advocacy, typography updates, different colour palettes aligned with the audience of each entity, new visual templates and redeveloped wireframes.

We also created a checklist as part of our new Accessibility Kit for events and digital initiatives that aligns with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1, which covers a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible. This document identifies ways to improve and maintain accessible services, communications and resources.

NEW PLATFORMS AND PROCESSES

We have implemented several strategies and tools to enhance our operational efficiency and marketing efforts. ChatGPT assists with proofreading, social media captions, and hashtag suggestions, ensuring our communications are polished and professional. WiseStamp standardises our email signatures across the organisation, incorporating marketing opportunities through links and visuals in email banners. VEED. IO streamlines the editing of interviews and Zoom recordings, adding watermarks, subtitles, translations and transitions, while Remini – AI Photo Enhancer keeps our staff profiles fresh and consistent with high-resolution updates. Transitioning to WordPress for our new websites has also provided flexibility, user-friendliness, and extensive plugin options to improve content management, SEO and the overall user experience.

We cross-check Facebook event groups with Formstack registrations, to convert social media leads into event attendees. New email reminder templates ensure consistent messaging, with automated

confirmations and reminders sent via Formstack, Outlook/Gmail, and ClickSend. We also created a new design template for our annual report, collaborating on content and design, and including staff headshots, to achieve a professional level of presentation. Digital Accessibility Training was added to our staff onboarding process to ensure inclusivity.

To strengthen community connections, we developed a quarterly events flyer to be shared in person and on social media, added staff profiles to our newsletter, and introduced monthly resource promotions from our Inclusion Collection to boost awareness and public interest in using our resources.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

We have actively supported and amplified the voices of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and Aboriginal communities by creating culturally sensitive resources and fostering inclusive dialogues. This effort was particularly evident during NAIDOC Week, where we scheduled four social media posts, including two videos with Zali Steggall, and a fact sheet on the Australian Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum, translated into 45 languages, including Easy Read. The fact sheet was our most popular post during May to June 2023. Additionally, we distributed an Easy Read version of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, through an email campaign.



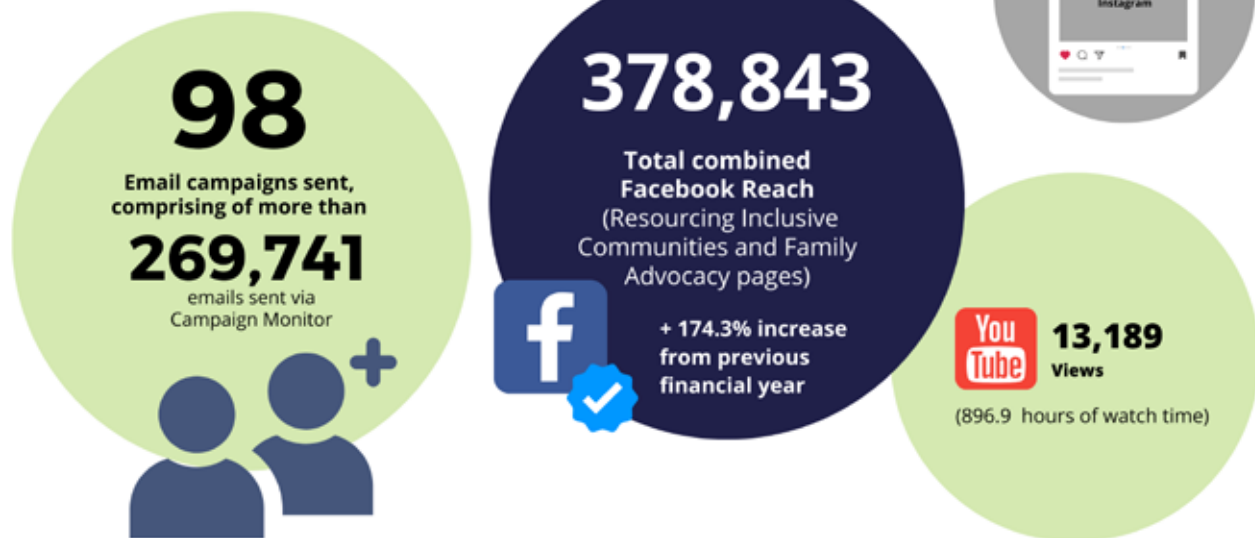
Image: P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Introductory Session Webinar

Our Marketing Snapshot

416,991

Total reach across META (Facebook and Instagram)
LinkedIn, X and YouTube

**Impressions on X from October 2023 to June 2024 are underreported due to partial-year analytics availability.*



ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

ONE OF THE KIDS

We supported the Advocacy and Leadership Development (ALD) team in promoting the One of the Kids program across various initiatives. This included successfully marketing face-to-face workshops, where improved communication strategies, such as cross-promoting events, led to higher attendance. We also played a key role in promoting regional workshops in Wagga Wagga, Cowra and Dubbo, including writing media releases and liaising with local newspapers and radio stations.

For the One of the Kids five-week online courses, we cleared previous data, adjusted module dates, created participant login details, and collaborated on an orientation video. Additionally, we supported the launch of the One of the Kids: Successful Transitions Through School workshops and webinars by creating promotional materials, conducting outreach and reformatting presentations, leading to increased registrations.

NDIS RESOURCES AND EVENTS

We supported the NDIS Online Discussion Series through promotion and facilitation, sending four targeted emails to 12,689 recipients, which led to strong engagement. We created promotional materials and managed outreach for Advocacy and NDIS webinars, aiding in registration for both evening and morning sessions. Additionally, we formatted and published a new NDIS fact sheet, *Administrative Appeal Tribunal Guide*.

We also created promotional materials and outreach for the Advocacy and NDIS webinars, which included coordinating, recording and post-producing a version of the webinar divided into five digestible sections. These recordings were uploaded as a YouTube playlist with both Auslan interpreting and closed captions.

We also developed distinct visual designs for social media and other promotional materials, ensuring a consistent and engaging presentation across all platforms.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY SUPPORT

We worked closely with the Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager to support two major campaigns: Critical Funding for Capacity Building Campaign and Better Together, Inclusion for All. This included promoting and creating dedicated landing pages for each campaign. We organised and promoted events such as the NSW Education Inquiry Briefing, P & C Inclusion Subcommittee introductory sessions, and an NDIS Taskforce Briefing. Our efforts included technical support, social media promotion and follow-up communications.

Additionally, we contributed to Disability Royal Commission responses, creating a new website subpage, email campaigns encouraging public engagement; social media posts and the formatting and dissemination of multiple media releases.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT

SCHOOL TO WORK PROJECT

We focused on driving engagement in workshops, webinars and face-to-face events by refreshing our branding, updating our registration forms and creating new content, including the 48-page *School to Work Employment Guide* and a 17-page *Business/Job Seeker Compatibility Analysis*. We developed a media kit for local media, including quick links, boosting the reach of our Customised Employment workshops with Milton Tyree. In July, we launched a four-part webinar series on Customised Employment.

We produced six short videos of Tyler Hewitt's School to Work story, and released *The Young Entrepreneur*, a video featuring Luca Weber's micro-enterprise, promoting the benefits of micro-enterprise for people with disability. We also coordinated the editing of a suite of videos featuring Customised Employment experts Milton Tyree and David Mank speaking about Customised Employment and elaborating on its first step, Discovery.

Additionally, we uploaded recordings and resources from our 'Imagining, Discovering and Finding Work' webinar series to our website.

INCLUSIVE LIVES – POSSIBILITY TO REALITY PROJECT

Throughout the year, we executed a comprehensive

marketing strategy to boost engagement and visibility for a range of workshops and events. Our approach involved creating and promoting Facebook events, enhancing website content, and leveraging social media to expand reach. These marketing efforts significantly enhanced event visibility and participant engagement, contributing to the successful execution of multiple workshops and networking opportunities.

We developed targeted promotional materials, including flyers for Peer Network events and key webinars, and coordinated the promotion of online workshops by sharing impactful videos and using various communication channels.

Key efforts included promoting the Microenterprise Peer Network and Vision Peer Network workshops, which saw strong registration numbers through targeted email and social media campaigns. Our focus on community-building workshops in Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and Taree involved extensive social media promotions and mail-outs to drive participation.

We also cross-promoted workshops, achieving notable registration figures and high engagement rates from our email campaigns. For the NDIS Self-management for Inclusion Peer Network, we used a robust email campaign to maximise outreach and registration. Additionally, we supported the Future Planning workshop with a highly effective email campaign, and promoted the Building Context for Relationships workshop, which included recording and editing for on-demand access.

INDIVIDUALISED LIVING/MY HOME, MY WAY PROJECTS

We played a key role in supporting various workshops and events around individualised living, ensuring their success through content formatting, proofreading and strategic promotion. Our efforts contributed to the full capacity registration of the Introduction to Individualised Living webinar and the successful turnout for the My Home, My Way workshops. These events were effectively marketed through targeted email campaigns, reaching thousands of recipients, and supplemented by Facebook event promotions.

In addition to event support, we developed resources, such as the housemate guidebook *How to Find a Housemate*, providing feedback on content; and creating layout, images, and a customer mind map to address common questions.

We enhanced video resources by editing and uploading webinar recordings, which are now available on our YouTube channel and the Resourcing Inclusive Communities website.

MEDIA COVERAGE

Our organisation received the following media coverage:

- Interview with Dr Shelley Moore in Sydney with our Executive Officer Cecile Sullivan Elder shared on social media.
- Interview with Cecile Sullivan Elder aired on ABC Radio Illawarra.
- Media release disseminated on 25 August 2023 in conjunction with Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA): NSW Government draft policy leaves students with disability suspended. The Facebook post about this media release received the highest reach and engagement for this reporting period.
- Cecile Sullivan Elder appeared on the Triple M Central West breakfast program to promote our Orange and Forbes School to Work workshops.
- Parent speaker Alison Wilson was interviewed by Sally Bryant on ABC Radio Riverina about her daughter Grace's inclusive education experience, to promote the One of the Kids Wagga Wagga workshop.
- Customised Employment workshop with Milton Tyree was featured in the Disability Advocacy Network Australia newsletter.
- Extensive media outreach for the Inclusive Lives/My Home, My Way trip to Orange resulted in coverage on Triple M Orange, Triple A Wagga and ABC Riverina.
- The School to Work workshops in Tamworth and Muswellbrook generated media coverage in the *New England Times* (Tamworth), *The Northern Daily Leader* (Tamworth) and *Hunter River Times* (Muswellbrook) prior to being cancelled.

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA

LINKEDIN

As at 30 June, our Family Advocacy page had 253 followers (94.6% growth compared to 30 June 2023) and Resourcing Inclusive Communities had 176 (39.7% growth compared to 30 June 2023).

FAMILY ADVOCACY – META

Family Advocacy uses social media platform Meta (Instagram and Facebook) as a vehicle to connect more widely throughout the community and broaden our reach to impact positive social and systemic change.

As at 30 June 2024, our Family Advocacy Facebook page has grown to 4,380 likes. Over the past year, our total Facebook reach was 310,648, with 284,277 being organic, and 30,748 from paid ads. Content interactions increased by 45.6%, with our most notable post on 20 February 2024 reaching 5,631 people, generating 58 interactions and 32 link clicks. This post, a media release on the NSW Government's announcement of 243 additional support classes for students with disabilities, had particular impact. The primary demographic for our Facebook page remained female (91.8%), predominantly aged 35–54.

As of 30 June 2024, we had 404 followers on Instagram. From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, our total reach was 3,450, with 2,993 from organic sources and 348 from ads, alongside 113 content interactions. Our most

successful Instagram post, shared on 27 December 2023, had a reach of 2,925, and featured an interview between Cecile Sullivan Elder and Dr Shelley Moore from 5 Moore Minutes. This post received 35 content interactions and accumulated a total watch time of three hours and 48 minutes. Our primary Instagram demographic was female (86.7%), aged 35–44.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES – META

As at 30 June 2024, our Resourcing Inclusive Communities Facebook page had 866 page likes and 1,082 followers. Over the year, we reached 68,195 accounts, with 18,803 being organic and 50,077 from paid promotions. Our content received 1,070 link clicks, and we shared 222 posts, marking a 31.4% increase in posting frequency. Our primary demographic was female, 93.6%, aged 45–54. The post with the highest reach was shared on 30 November 2023, featuring a collection of photos of Jo Cross and her daughter promoting the two-part Fostering Friendship and Community Connections Workshop. It achieved 5,752 reach, 10 interactions and 349 post clicks.

On Instagram, we had 338 followers, with a primary demographic of 83.2% female, aged 35–54. Our total reach was 334 (212 organic), and we had 83 content interactions. Additionally, 28 contacts messaged our business during this period.

X (FORMERLY TWITTER)

We maintained a strong presence on X. As at 30 June 2024, we had 946 followers, which is 29.41% growth on last financial year. Our primary demographic is 84.6% female between the ages of 35 to 44, and 88.2% are from Australia. Our tweet with the most impressions was shared 24 June 2024, with 543 impressions and four reposts.

YOUTUBE

Over the past year, our Family Advocacy YouTube channel has seen notable engagement, with a total of 13,189 views and 896.9 hours of watch time. We have also welcomed 44 new subscribers (12.82% growth from last year), bringing our total subscriber count to 308. During this period, our content generated 80,800 impressions.

The most popular video on our channel was Al Graham's story, which received 1,902 views. A significant portion of our traffic originated from external sources, accounting for 53.4% of our views. Of these, 17.2% came from Google, and 5.6% from Facebook.

Our top YouTube search terms included 'social advocacy', reflecting the ongoing interest in our content. Geographically, most of our viewers were from Australia (39.9%), followed by the US (9.7%).

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. The websites are:

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

As at February 2024, we have selected Media on Mars to develop new websites and brands for Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities.



Image: Luca Weber and mum Susanna Wagner during filming of *The Young Entrepreneur* video

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Electronic direct mail (EDM) remains one of the primary ways we connect with and inform our community. Over the past year, we sent a total of 103 campaigns comprising 285,491 emails, with an open rate of 41.2%. This marks a 0.7% increase in the open rate compared to the previous year, resulting in 115,612 opened emails.

Additionally, these campaigns generated a total of 35,337 clicks, demonstrating strong engagement with our content.

Our mail-outs continued to focus primarily on promoting our events and workshops, targeted by area and age. Additionally, they were used to advertise employment vacancies, disseminate systemic campaigns and distribute our newsletter.



/FamilyAdvocacy



/FamilyAdvocacy



/Family-Advocacy-NSW



/@FamilyAdvocacy



/FamAdvocacyNSW

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Management 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. An annual financial audit is conducted by a qualified independent auditor to ensure accounts are accurate and in compliance with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosure, and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act 2009 and the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission Act 2012.

Audited statements are available to all members. Please refer to the Treasurer's Report for specific details.

FUNDING AND ONE-OFF GRANTS	REF. ON TREASURER'S REPORT	2023-2024	2022-2023
REVENUE FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT			
Disability Advocacy	(1)	375,962	346,098
Disability Royal Commission	(1)	0	178,244
School to Work Project	(1)	607,296	509,705
Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project	(1)	638,143	586,895
My Home, My Way Project	(1)	29,760	33,360
My Home, My Way – ILO Project	(1)	111,804	44,848
REVENUE FROM NSW GOVERNMENT			
Information Advocacy	(2)	338,675	300,000
Department of Education	(3)	174,948	93,467
Total		\$2,276,588	\$2,092,617

TREASURER'S REPORT



**LESLEY LIGHT,
TREASURER**

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 the financial year 2023–2024.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

(1). The DSS continued to support the organisation through:

- funding for advocacy and leadership through the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)
- the ILC Readiness Grant for Resourcing Inclusive Communities projects.

STATE GOVERNMENT FUNDING

(2). The NSW Department of Communities and Justice provided support through:

- funding for advocacy and information work, and
- ongoing operations of Family Advocacy through the Disability Advocacy Futures Program.

NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION FUNDING

(3). The NSW Department of Education provided funding for the One of the Kids: Successful Transitions Through School project.

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation remains in a sound financial position. The Management Committee has ratified a budget for the July 2024–June 2025 financial year.

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 \$735 was received from 13 donors.

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
- 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 Bec Hewitt 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



Under its recently established hybrid work arrangement, Family Advocacy has continued to develop a strong practice model in providing crucial advocacy support to people with disability and their families.

The organisation ensures that the passionate and dedicated team is well supported through a consistent implementation of Family Advocacy's vision, through the organisation's policies, inclusive practices and supportive culture as well as logistical and technological support.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Implementing the vision of Family Advocacy effectively, relies on staff who believe in the principles of the organisation and hold a shared value system. Values of diversity, equity and inclusion are evident throughout all the processes and practices, right from the recruitment process to ensure the right people are hired, in terms of skills, experience and aligned values. The organisation has a strong focus in the investment of staff, to provide opportunities in networking, leadership and a deepening of their understanding and appreciation of Social Role Valorisation (SRV), the perspective that underpins many aspects of the work we undertake across the organisation.

Logistical and technological support both in the office and remotely, coupled with policies that provide clear expectations and work protocols, including work health and safety (WHS), ensure an effective, efficient and safe work environment.

This year, we faced a challenge in staffing with the retirement of a longstanding staff member within the Administration and Accounts team. This provided an opportunity to rethink how the functions and responsibilities within the team could be streamlined. Hence, the creation of roles dedicated to specific

functions of finance, accounts, and events support. With new staffing came welcomed improvements in processes and platforms.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

As an organisation that prides itself on producing the highest standard of work, it goes without saying that we maintain a culture of continuous improvement and constantly explore ways of undertaking our work better.

This is embedded in every area of our work and includes: regular review of our policies and practices, evaluation of workshops, having a complaints process, regular planning among teams and at staff meetings, inviting local and overseas guests to speak on topics relevant to their expertise, and inviting families to workshops to speak to other families based on their own lived experiences.

This year, a third-party auditor conducted a quality assurance audit. Based on a review of our management system and conducting interviews with families we have supported, the quality of our work was validated. As a result, we were recommended for continued certification against the National Standards for Disability Services, as required under the National Disability Advocacy Program of the DSS, which funds part of our operations.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management is an inherent priority for the Management Committee. In the day-to-day operations of the organisation, risk management is a regular fixture in Committee meeting agendas and staff meetings, and integrated into various processes from orientation of new employees to operational policies.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our Health and Safety Committee (HSC) continues to raise awareness around aspects of safety, and steps are being taken to address safety matters both at the office and in the events that we run. As a shared responsibility by all staff, there are opportunities to raise issues through reporting protocols, staff meetings and open lines of communication for urgent matters. The HSC has taken steps to communicate with other parties outside of the organisation, such as the building manager and the fire safety brigade, to inform our safety policies and practices further.

INCLUSION COLLECTION

Family Advocacy hosts The Inclusion Collection, which is a hybrid library of books, articles, research and other media from around the world, focusing on inclusive practice, progression of public policy, personal stories and accounts and much more.

There has been an increase in interest in borrowing or downloading resources from within Australia and overseas. The organisation is currently looking to improve access to this valuable collection through various means including through an upgraded website, a new structure for the collection, and has gained funding through the Department of Communities and Justice to make this happen.

ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

We strive to consider environmental sustainability in all that we do and work towards. As individual staff members and as organisation, we practise reselling, recycling, reducing and reusing. Where possible, we use equipment configurations and technology to reduce wastage, consider sustainable sources and purchase adequate amounts of office supplies to avoid excess supplies ending up in waste.

We hope these committed efforts contribute to safeguarding the environment for all of us and for the generations to come.



Image: Staff Christmas Party

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 LTD.

CYDA Children and Young People with Disability Australia

DA NSW Disability Advocacy New South Wales

DANA Disability Advocacy Network Australia

DET NSW Department of Education

DSIT Disability Strategy Implementation Team

DSS Department of Social Services

FACS Department of Family and Community Services

HSC Health and Safety Committee (Family Advocacy)

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 of NSW

PWDA People with Disability Australia

SRV Social Role Valorisation

WHS Work Health and Safety

family

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family-advocacy.com

1800 620 588

02 9869 0866

704/88-90 George Street, Hornsby NSW 2077