

family

A D V O C A C Y



2022 / 2023

ANNUAL REPORT

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An Electronic and accessible version of this report is published on the Family Advocacy website at www.family-advocacy.com

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WHO WE ARE	05
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	08
CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT	09
EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT	10
STAFF	12
VOLUNTEERS AND FAMILY LEADERS	14
ADVOCACY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	16
DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION	21
SYSTEMS ADVOCACY	22
RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	26
VISION, PURPOSE AND GOALS	26
PROJECTS	26
SCHOOL TO WORK	26
INCLUSIVE LIVES: POSSIBILITY TO REALITY	29
MY HOME MY WAY	32
EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS	34
EXPOS	37
MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS	38
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	43
TREASURER'S REPORT	44
OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES	45
ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS	47

Our Snapshot



Advocacy Workshop Delivery 2018 - 2023



WHO WE ARE

Family Advocacy is an independent and impartial advocacy organisation based in New South Wales (NSW) in operation for over 32 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.

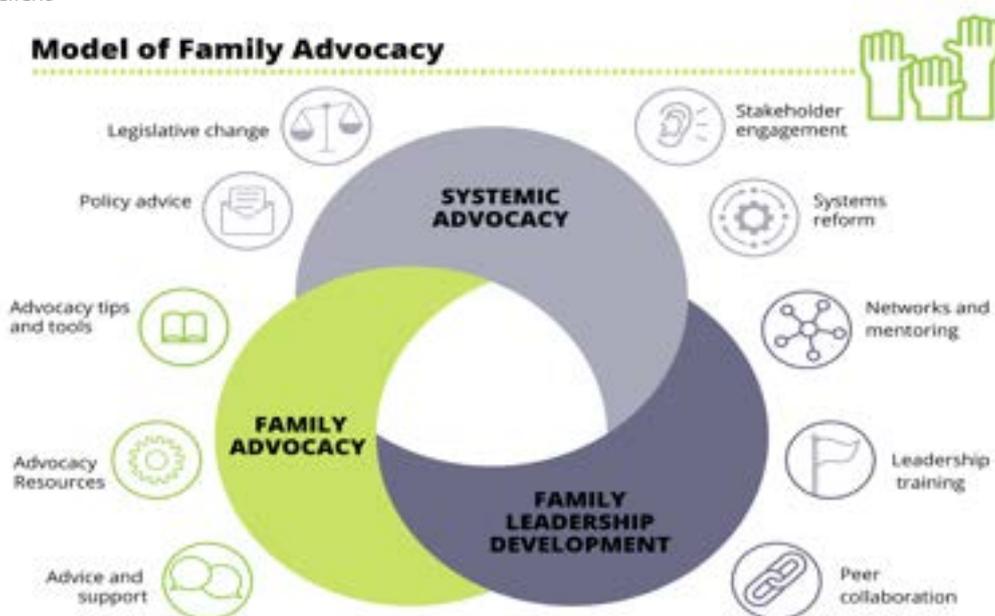
Additionally, we also work towards reforming systems that create barriers to the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

VISION

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

PURPOSE

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



* 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, who represent Family Advocacy's membership.

Family Advocacy's organisational goals

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

Objectives

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

STRATEGIC GOALS 2020–2022

Our Strategic Plan 2020–2022 helped to shape the priorities we undertook over the last three years. It outlined the longer term goals we are working towards.

Strength of families

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

Strength of communities

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

Strength of advocacy

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

HOW WE MAKE IT HAPPEN



FOCUS AREAS 2020-2022

Our focus areas, reflected throughout this Annual Report were:

- Early childhood
- Education, including higher education
- Employment
- Structure and management.

Over the past 32 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.

The Committee, consisting of the Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, and a maximum of 12 ordinary members, is elected annually during the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In 2022–2023, the Committee was made up primarily of seven individual family members, who worked to provide the governance and guidance of Family Advocacy. Three members came from Greater Sydney and the rest were 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 on the rights and interests of people with developmental disability, in achieving better lives and social roles through the organisation's vision and purpose, and through pursuing the Goals stated in its Strategic Plan.

MEMBERSHIP

As an incorporated association with membership across NSW, Family Advocacy 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 goals of creating a genuinely inclusive society.

Being purpose driven rather than membership driven has served as a powerful safeguard to the core work of the organisation; however, Family Advocacy places high value on its members and the contributions they make. Members build their leadership and advocacy skills through presenting at events, attending sponsored training, providing input into policy, involvement in systemic advocacy meetings and campaigns, strategic planning, facilitation of peer networks, and by becoming a Committee member. Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of members and thanks them for their continued support throughout the 2022–2023 year.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1 JUL 22 - 30 JUN 23

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, to champion the cause we hold dear. We honour the commitment and dedication of our Management Committee as they have played a pivotal role in shaping our journey; advocating for change, and making a difference in the lives of countless families.



ANNETTE O'SULLIVAN
Chairperson (until 25 November 2022)



YOLANDE CAILLY
Chairperson (from 25 November 2022)



MEG SWEENEY
Secretary (until 4 July 2022)



SARAH HARVEY
Secretary (from 25 November 2022)



ALEX PURVIS
Treasurer



ANNETTE BUSH
Committee Member



RANDA HABELRIH
Committee Member (until 22 November 2022)



LESLEY LIGHT
Committee Member



MELISSA SMITH
Committee Member

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



**YOLANDE CAILLY,
CHAIRPERSON**

What distinguishes Family Advocacy from other advocacy organisations is its unique emphasis on empowering families through fostering and developing their leadership skills, to effectively advocate for their family members with disabilities. So, it was a wonderful opportunity for me to serve Family Advocacy as Committee Chairperson for the first time this year. It was also a time to reflect on the position of the Management Committee, which plays a crucial role in safeguarding the interests, objectives and values of the organisation it serves. And this year, this role was strengthened through undertaking governance training. The training afforded the Committee insights into its strengths, and areas to explore in order to further consolidate its position.

It has been 32 years since Family Advocacy was established. Much has been accomplished in that time, yet there is still much work to do to achieve authentic inclusion of people with disability. This annual report is an opportunity to highlight the incredible work and dedication of the organisation, its staff and members, and the positive change it aims to create.

This year saw the development of a new Strategic Plan for 2023–2025, which focuses on

- Valued and included early years
- Equitable and inclusive education for all
- Securing futures through employment; and
- Empowered to thrive in community.

The new plan, which will be launched the financial year starting July 2023, provides a strong sense of direction for present and future work.

I wish to thank all the warm, kind and compassionate staff at Family Advocacy, who once again have demonstrated expertise, commitment and passion in their work. It was yet another busy year for them. Over these last few years, they have, with grace, embraced change and overcome many challenges, while continuing to produce work of the highest quality. And it is a testament to their work that the organisation continues to be recognised as an expert and is highly valued locally as well as at the national level.

There were a few staff changes this year. We said goodbye and thanked Mohamed Bah, Resourcing Inclusive Communities Capacity Development

Coordinator; Adrian Buckley, Communications and Media Coordinator; and Alva Lim and Anna Bazzi Backhouse, Resourcing Inclusive Communities Capacity Development Coordinators, for their invaluable work. This year, with the Disability Royal Commission approaching its conclusion, we also have had to say goodbye to the Disability Royal Commission team. Thank you to Troy Hester and Louise Kuchel, Advocacy Engagement Officers – Disability Royal Commission. They have done tremendous work by putting together valuable resources and supporting the organisation and families in making submissions to the commission.

We welcomed Kelly Evagelakos, Communications and Media Manager; Linda Hughes, Resourcing Inclusive Communities Capacity Development Coordinator; Talia Roshan, who returned to the organisation as Resourcing Inclusive Communities Capacity Development Coordinator; and Jane Scott, Resourcing Inclusive Communities Capacity Development Coordinator.

Thank you to our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, who has once again led Family Advocacy with professionalism and dedication. Her leadership maintains a consistent and steady momentum for the organisation, all the while staying focused on its core purpose and goals in a challenging sector. Thank you also to my fellow Committee members, in particular the more experienced members for their expertise and ongoing support, as well as newer members for their commitment and willingness to learn. They are a passionate bunch dedicated to improving the lives of people with disability, often taking on roles beyond their position as Committee members, assisting and representing Family Advocacy at various workshops and events.

Thank you also to all the families who have contributed to many projects, presentations and events this year. Giving up personal time to share their journeys and insights, and providing guidance and mentorship to newer families. Their generosity in sharing their experiences and wisdom plays a vital role in shaping the future of the organisation.

No doubt next year will present a new set of challenges for Family Advocacy. But I have the utmost confidence that Family Advocacy, its leadership, staff and members, will once again rise to the occasion and move the organisation forward, challenging status quos, changing perceptions, shifting attitudes, and influencing policies, with the aim of progressing the rights and improving the lives of people with disability. Successful advocacy is patient and persistent; this ensures strong foundations and long-lasting outcomes.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



**CECILE SULLIVAN ELDER,
EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

As we reflect on another year within the organisation and across the disability landscape, it has been another tremendous period of movement.

Within NSW and across Australia there have been two significant responses in attempting to understand and address the many barriers that people with disability continue to face. The first was the continuation of the Disability Royal Commission; the other was the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review.

We hope that both continue to attempt to focus on progressing the rights and interests of all people with disability. Within the organisation we have attempted to respond to these crucial opportunities and as such, we have undertaken extensive engagement with allies over the year, within NSW and across the country.

Much of this work has been about ensuring the voices of those directly impacted by any reform or recommendations are heard, and that any changes are progressive in nature and support the genuine inclusion of people within their communities.

Outside both these reform agendas, there is also well-overdue movement within the disability employment landscape. Our focus is ensuring that everyone, regardless of their disability, has an opportunity to be a contributor in Australian workplaces, with our greatest concern being to have employment supports available for everyone. No disability policy can ever be effective if subsets of this group are left behind. Much consultation has occurred over this time to ensure that groups that are often forgotten in the employment space are placed squarely on the agenda of employment reform.

Over this time, Family Advocacy welcomed the opportunity to engage the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) to undertake research on Family Advocacy's Model of Advocacy. In operation for over 32 years, the model was intentionally developed by families who wanted to create positive change so that the same opportunities were afforded to the person with disability in their lives as well as more broadly.

A clear strategy at the foundation of the model was to identify the strength of families in ensuring much-needed safeguards against harm, as well as leadership development to strengthen systems so that genuine inclusion can be experienced more readily for their family members. The research findings strongly highlight the potency of the Family Advocacy model and the difference it has made to many people with disability.

With another year passing it continues to be a pleasure to work alongside my colleagues within the Family Advocacy team, who remain committed and without reservation to the work we undertake. The contribution each person brings to the team creates a powerful means for change in all aspects of the work we do.

The Family Advocacy Management Committee has remained strong, providing my role with clear direction and a strong sounding board to the many issues we have faced. A particular focus this year has been on governance training, to support the crucial role of governance. The strength of the intergenerational leadership present on the Committee is testament to the Family Advocacy model.

Leadership development of families has continued to be a prominent aspect of our work across the organisation, with several enhancements this year. Our annual report highlights some of these enhancements.

On a final note, while reflecting on the past year, we also look forward optimistically to the year ahead and reaffirm our commitment to actively pursuing opportunities for positive change alongside people with disability and their families.



Top image: School to Work Conference, Day 2
Pictured from left to right: Cecile Sullivan Elder and Nathan Basha

Bottom image: NSW Disability Inclusion Press Conference at Town Hall.
Left to right: Chanel Hennessey, Cecile Sullivan Elder, Leanne Varga, Traci Caines and Kathie Sayeed

STAFF MEET THE TEAM



ADRIAN BUCKLEY
Communications and Media
Coordinator (to December 2022)



ALVA LIM
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities (to
November 2022)



ANNA BAZZI BACKHOUSE
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities (to
October 2022)



CECILE SULLIVAN ELDER
Executive Officer



CLARA MALDONADO
Communications and Media
Coordinator



JACKIE CURREY
Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator



JANE SCOTT
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



JO CROSS
Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator



KAREN TIPPETT
Advocacy and Inclusion, Senior
Manager



KATIE HODGES
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



KELLY EVAGELAKOS
Marketing and Communications
Manager



LAURA ABRAHAMS
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



LEANNE VARGA
Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns
Manager



LINDA HUGHES
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



LOUISE KUCHEL
Advocacy Engagement Officer,
Disability Royal Commission (to August
2022)



MANDY VANDERTOEW
Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator



MARYBELLE IGNACIO
Office Manager



MOHAMED BAH
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities (to
February 2022)



PAUL BARRETT
Accounts, Administration and Events
Coordinator



TALIA ROSHAN
Capacity Development Coordinator,
Resourcing Inclusive Communities



TROY HESTER
Advocacy Engagement Officer
– Disability Royal Commission;
Administration Project Officer (to June
2023)

VOLUNTEERS AND FAMILY LEADERS

The individuals who volunteer at Family Advocacy not only extend our human resources capacity to carry out our programs and projects, but also add an extra layer and level of depth that only they can provide in the work we do.

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

- governance of the organisation
- resource development
- collaboration in the development of and co-presenting at workshops
- providing stories that feed directly into submissions 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
- 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 promote our message to your networks and helping change the life perspective of the broader community around the inclusion of people with disability
- sharing their stories with the media
- 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.



IN MEMORIAM LOU KUCHEL

In July, we were saddened by the passing of Lou Kuchel, a cherished advocate, colleague, and friend. Lou played a vital role in our work at Family Advocacy, serving on the Management Committee and as a staff member for the Disability Royal Commission team.

She was a passionate advocate for Inclusive Education and used her Square Peg, Round Whole podcast to unite families and drive positive change nationwide, not only for her own children but for countless others. Lou's legacy will always act as a reminder of the potency of family leadership in progressing the rights and interests of people with disability.



Your unwavering commitment towards a more inclusive society for people with disability through family leadership continues to be a strong conduit for the protection and progression of your loved one's rights and interests. 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.

Mogi Bayasgalan

Paulina Bezzina

Annette Bush

Jacob Bush

Yolande Cailly

Julia Carey

Julie Charlton

Heather Cox

Anne Cregan
(Gilbert and Tobin, Pro Bono Team)

Jo Cross

Vanessa Doyle

Mae Fan

Jodie Gardem

Fiona Gould

Randa Habelrih

Sarah Harvey

Aine Healy

Chanel Hennessey

Jessica Hermosilla

Rebecca Hewitt

Susan Hofmann

Mark Hunyor

Fiona Hutchison

Janine Jenkins

Kathleen Johnston

Liz Kassis

Jack Kruger

Lesley Light

Elise Magrath

Michael Magrath

Louise Monet

Joe Naim

Hunaiza Naeem

Helen Neale

Tom Neale

Annette O'Sullivan

Bree Pennie

Alex Purvis

Marusha Rowe

Di Samuels

Rhiannon Samuels-Connell

Kathie Sayeed

Vannessa Shearman

Nicky Shortridge

Julia Shumaker

Lara Sinclair

Melissa Smith

Bobo Wang

Jennifer Williamson

Alison Wilson

Catrina Wraight

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



ADVOCACY

Throughout 2022–2023, the core work of the Advocacy and Leadership Development team continued to be the provision of 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 – through advocacy – 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 believes in the importance of advocacy 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 and in their community; assist with the work of Family Advocacy; and in broader arenas 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 sponsored by Family Advocacy
- enhance their skills and knowledge by undergoing specific training
- experience values-based training for deeper understanding and community building
- present and assist at Family Advocacy workshops and at certain invited presentations
- share their stories at events, through resources and social media platforms
- contribute experiences and testimonies to the Family Advocacy library, resources and websites
- 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: School to Work Conference
Pictured: Jo Cross and Annette Bush

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 two-day training: Towards a Better Life, Foundations Forum
- One of the Kids: inclusive education workshops
- Paula Kluth workshops in Sydney and Newcastle locations
- Australian Inclusive Schooling Conferences 2023
- Disability Royal Commission workshops
- Activating Your P & C (parents and citizens' association) events
- Involvement of family leaders in the Successful Transitions Through School project
- Involvement of family leaders in the development of One of the Kids online course.



Image: Resource table

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 school 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 school communities. This starts with being a valued member of regular classrooms. Education forms a large part of the organisation’s contact with families across NSW, and in 2022–2023 it comprised almost half of the enquiries taken by Family Advocacy.

Barriers families face in education continue to include:

- unwelcoming culture of schools impeding the student from being fully included
- suspending students without proper consideration of the impact of their disability and not putting better processes in place to support this
- limiting parental involvement to contribute to setting goals and strategies for the student
- coercing parents to consider segregated school settings
- suggesting parents consider distance education and home schooling as alternatives
- discouraging enrolments of students with disability and continuing to cite funding as being a reason not to enrol the student
- using partial enrolment as a means of addressing apparent funding shortfalls, which impacts students as they perceive it as a punishment, and further impacts on family households with parents having to take personal leave, or leave employment all together to balance carer responsibilities
- lacking consistent adjustments and modifications to meet the needs of students.

In addition, mental health issues post-pandemic era are adding to the barriers faced by students, including a reported increase in school refusal.

ONE OF THE KIDS WORKSHOPS

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team typically travels throughout NSW to present this core workshops 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 were able to run six face-to-face workshops in one Regional NSW and five 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 Kingsford, Canterbury, Baulkham Hills, West Ryde, Blacktown, Penrith and Wallsend. 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.

“This workshop gave me a totally different point of view, to consider my son’s education expectation.” – Feedback from a parent

ONE OF THE KIDS ONLINE

Following the successful user testing by five family members of the new online format of our workshop, we ran the first online workshop in Term 2. The online course will continue to be run as a complement to the face-to-face workshop, 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.

ADVOCACY TIPS AND TOOLS WEBINARS

Following the success of last year's Advocacy Tips and Tools webinars, two more were presented with positive attendances. These webinars focused on the importance of family members knowing how to advocate for their children living with disability. Following the session, participants received an email with further resources.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS – FOCUS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Shepherd Centre invited Family Advocacy to guest 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.

FOCUS ON PRIMARY TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

Presentations with Autism Community Networks' Ask and Answer series also continued, with a presentation on Advocacy Tips and Tools, and transition to high school.

Kindship invited the team to attend their online audio room with families for a 45-minute Q&A session on advocacy in the education space.

Our last presentations to the Autism camps were conducted this year. Over the time we have been presenting to the families at the camps, we have connected with approximately over 95 families.

We were invited by Parents of Deaf Children (PODC) to present our Advocacy Tips and Tools presentation. The following week, we presented a session titled 'Introduction to the Conversations for Collaboration Framework', which guided families on how to use the resources from our framework to engage and work collaboratively with their children's school. PODC arranged an Auslan interpreter for both sessions, to ensure full accessibility.

We were again invited to present at the annual Illume Learning Conference held at Sydney Olympic Park.

Together with family leader Chanel Hennessey, we presented our Conversations for Collaboration tool at the breakout session on the second day of the conference. Attendees were predominantly educators, with some families present. Chanel talked about her experience using the framework with her children's school and the benefits of this.

The Inner West Coalition for Inclusive Education, made up of parents who have formed inclusion and diversity sub-committees within their primary schools' P & C associations, invited Family Advocacy to present a session on 'Creating an Effective Individual Education Plan'. It was a lively and engaging evening, with key messages delivered in an interactive format.

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS THROUGH SCHOOL PROJECT

This project is funded through the Learning and Improvement Grant from the NSW Department of Education. The project will be completed over 18 months, with phases 1 and 2 completed by 30 June 2023. 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 foundations for students to be lifelong learners
- **Senior High School**
The final stretch, setting up students for life as adults.

The project will provide numerous pathways for delivery, using universal design-for-learning principles, including workshops/webinars, resources to complement the workshops, and reconnection points for ongoing communication between parents as peers. An important element of the project during phases 1 and 2 has been the collaboration and co-design with families and educators.

An extra-beneficial impact from this co-design process has been the confidence gained by parents involved, as indicated in the following comments:

"I feel more confident and empowered now to be able to speak and present in front of others."

"I am looking forward to continuing to work on the creation of the resources and Transition booklet. Sharing my transition experience with other families has been very powerful, and knowing I am helping others, is a wonderful feeling."

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

Our NDIS factsheets are continually undergoing updates to keep up with the ongoing changes to the NDIS. The factsheets are designed to support families in how they go about accessing and engaging with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), service providers and other service systems, with a focus on how all these collaborate with people with disability and their families to achieve good outcomes.

In August, the Advocacy and Leadership team connected with families through a social networking app for parents raising children with disability. We provided three x 45-minute Q&A sessions, one of which focused on the NDIS. We also provided information on how we support families to make the most of their family members' NDIS plans towards achieving a good life coupled with our ongoing advocacy support.

October 2022 saw the launch of our inaugural monthly Online NDIS Discussion Series. Each month families have been forwarding their questions to learn how to better understand and navigate the NDIS, as well as how other typical service systems work. One theme of questioning was about how to identify services that align with the values of living an inclusive life. So, our underlying focus was 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 an ongoing theme. Between October and June, the Online NDIS Discussion Series reached 214 families, providing over 3800 resources supporting families, not just regarding

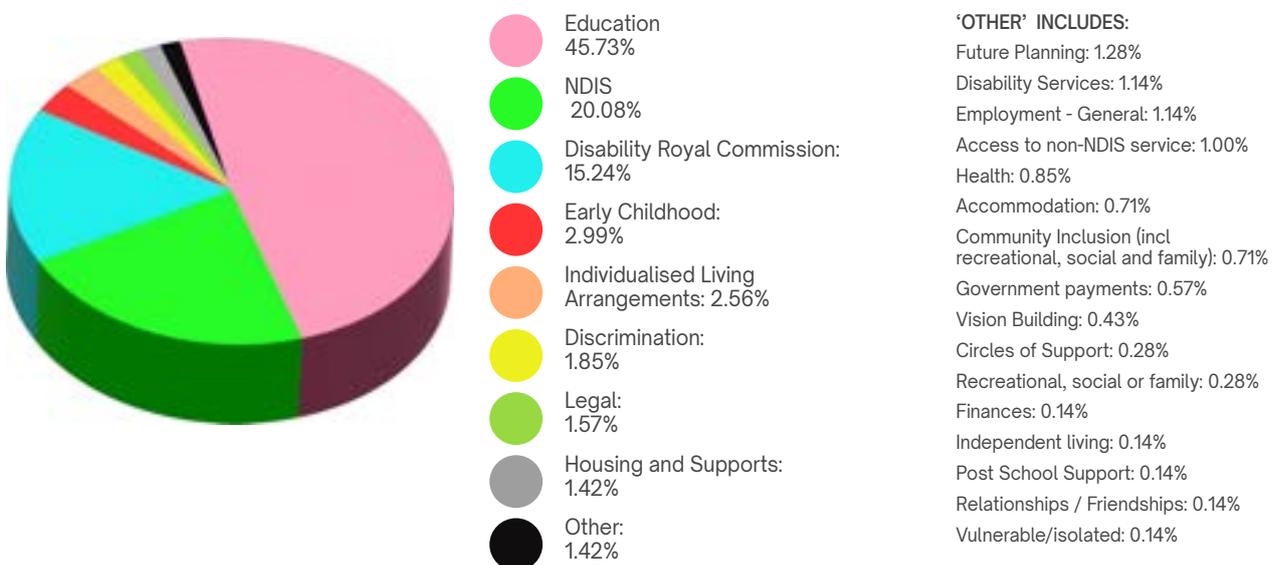
the NDIS but also alternative formal service systems and innovative community ideas.

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.

We received feedback from many families who were successful in this process and for some, we were able provide an understanding of the responsibilities of other service systems e.g. childcare, education, health and employment, which enabled these families to find more appropriate 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.

“I would like to let you know that NDIS offered the new funding, which is very close to what was needed so we had accepted it. Thank you so much for the advice you provided regarding our appeal [to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal].” – Feedback from family member

ISSUES RAISED DURING ADVOCACY ENQUIRIES



DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION



Family Advocacy received funding by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide advocacy support to people wishing to engage with the Disability Royal Commission. People had until the end of 2022 to make submissions to the commission, and as the deadline approached there was an added urgency to promote this opportunity to influence positive social change. We have worked at broadening our audience and finding new ways to engage people.

We put out a survey to all who had engaged with us in this work, to understand what it would take for people to put in a submission in the last six months of 2022. We had over 90 responses, which helped us work towards reducing the barriers people faced such as wanting a conversation to capture their story, a template to work from, and more information on how a royal commission changes society. This gave more direction to our efforts.

MAKING A SUBMISSION WORKSHOPS

We delivered these practical workshops once face-to-face, in Katoomba, and five times online. The goal was to increase people's confidence that what they shared was important to the Disability Royal Commission, and we wanted to give some practical support, including a sense of community and some dedicated time for people to get started.

The benefit of the online version was that people were able to attend wherever they were, including interstate. We also ran some sessions in the evenings, to increase reach and accessibility. Some people attended more than once, to increase their confidence or to work on another submission.

All these workshops included a guest from the Disability Royal Commission, to emphasise the commission's desire to hear from people. Guests for this year included Maurice Corcoran AM, as well as directors

and assistant directors from the commission's Intake, Counselling and Support Services team.

EXPO

In August 2022, we hosted a stall at the Sydney Disability Expo, focusing on the royal commission. This expo attracts a large attendance of people with disability, as well as families and people working in the sector, all of whom could provide their voice to this work through a submission.

We spoke with people not only about the Disability Royal Commission, but also about our broader work with families.

CONTINUING OUR WORK AFTER SUBMISSIONS CLOSED

Submissions to the Disability Royal Commission closed at the end of December 2022. We commenced working with the commission to verify the individual and systemic submissions we had submitted as advocates and as an organisation.

We submitted over 30 individual submissions from the people we supported, including a number of Zoom recorded sessions. We know of at least that many again that were submitted independently.

Through our webinars, workshops, podcast, phone calls and Zoom calls, we connected with over 600 people over the three years. One person commented that without our mailouts, they would have never heard about the Disability Royal Commission.

We sent an email to all who had connected with our Disability Royal Commission work, together with a survey to feedback on their experiences and our support. We attended two of the 'what Australia told us' workshops presented by the commission and summarised these to our database of people who have connected with this work.

We also continued to support a couple of people who had private sessions with a commissioner.

We thank everyone who raised important issues with the commission and we are hoping for effective recommendations when the final report is delivered.

STAFF

This year, the Advocacy and Leadership Development team welcomed Mandy Vandertouw. Mandy has over 20 years in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector as an educator, director and trainer/mentor.

SYSTEMS ADVOCACY



With the changes of government at state and federal levels introducing many reviews in areas such as the NDIS, Early Childhood Education and Care, and Employment, it has been a busy and productive year for systemic advocacy, with 12 submissions written covering eight different topics.

Our focus on sector collaboration has continued to ensure the collective rights of people with disability are served through policy, legislation and practice. We have collaborated with or as part of the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE); Disability Advocacy Alliance; Disability Interagency Policy Alliance; National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations; Disability Advocacy Network Australia; National Child Rights Taskforce; Department of Health Disability Community of Practice; and Department of Education Disability Strategy Reference Group.

Our main focus is in areas that relate to our Strategic Plan: Early Childhood Education, Education, and Employment. Yet there are many other issues and 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 issues, Advocacy, restrictive practices, guardianship, health, housing, Australia's Disability Strategy, and NSW Ageing and Disability Commission.

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

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:

- Submission to the Australian Government's Early Years Strategy Discussion
- Submission to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care

Education:

- Endorsement of the Joint Position Statement and Research Report from ALSA, AMSA, & NUS — 'Disability & Higher Education in Australia'

Employment:

- Submission to Treasury on the Employment White Paper Consultation
- A joint submission from Disability Representative Organisations: A new Act to replace the Disability Services Act 1986 (Cth) (Disability Services Act)

Disability Royal Commission:

- Submission No. 7 to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of

People with Disability: The important role of family and the Family Advocacy model

NDIS:

- Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS Inquiry into Culture and Capability
- Submission in response to the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework Issues PaperA joint submission from Disability Advocacy Network Australia in response to the Australian Government's Administrative Review Reform: Issues Paper

Advocacy:

- Submission to the DSS on the National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF) 2022–2025
- NSW Ageing and Disability Commission
- Submission to the Ageing and Disability Commission Act Review.



Staff and Management Committee Supporting the Same Classroom Campaign

EDUCATION

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Consistent with our strategic partnership-building approach, Family Advocacy became involved in an alliance of organisations in the Early Childhood sector to discuss ways to progress Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031 towards achieving the Early Childhood Targeted Action Plan.

This included attendance at 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.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

We continue to access various touch points to influence inclusive education from a policy and practice perspective across the NSW Department of Education, and other policy decisionmakers such as the NSW Minister for Education and the NSW Minister for Disability. A key focus continues to be driving

the increase of good inclusive education practices, particularly for students who are not typically accepted into their local schools.

For several years now, our engagement with the Disability Strategy within the NSW Department of Education continues with a number of advisory roles such as the Disability Strategy Reference Group, and the Student and Parent Experience (SPX) External Stakeholder Advisory Group.



Friends, advocates, allies, people with disability in support of the Same Classroom Same Opportunity Campaign

In collaboration with the NSW Department of Education, we have continued to facilitate focus groups of family members who support a student with disability, to provide their valuable lived experience.

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 in collaboration with government and non-government sectors is critical to the long-term impact.

We collaborated with Disability Advocacy (DA) NSW, jointly releasing *Falling behind: A need for inclusive education*, an investigative paper exposing the depths of exclusion, frustrating complaints processes and the impacts of systemic disadvantage on both students and schools within the NSW education system.

The Educator Online published our media release about the paper in the article 'Students with disability struggling to receive inclusive education', as well as a follow-up article, '12 Habits of Highly Effective Inclusion'.

Through our alliance with the Disability Policy Interagency group, we collaborated with seven disability advocacy organisations to create the NSW Disability Inclusion Blueprint. A press conference was held prior to the NSW election to raise the need for Disability Inclusion in NSW, to put disability inclusion front and centre in NSW government policy. Of particular interest to us was to ensure education and employment were included. We received media coverage across four radio stations in the mornings: ABC, 2SM, 2GM and Triple M. We were also on the ABC nightly news and published in the Blue Mountains Gazette.

Our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, was quoted saying: "It is critical the NSW government adopt an Inclusive Education Roadmap that will strengthen the system's capability to supporting parents and teachers, so students with disability can participate on the same basis as other students, plus invest in a Work Transition Pilot Project to improve the transition of young people with disability from education to employment."

Our parent-led initiative, the P & C Inclusion Subcommittee, has been supported and promoted throughout NSW schools. The aim is to provide a network of support for parents, build a school's inclusion capacity and raise school community awareness. 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. Together with the Advocacy and Leadership Development team, we put together a number of resources, which were uploaded in a dedicated area of our website.

In the lead-up to the election, Family Advocacy led the charge in systems reform with its 'Same Classroom, Same Opportunity – Securing Better Futures Through an Inclusive Education' campaign to ensure ALL students in NSW, no matter their circumstance, are welcomed and supported in the general classroom at their local school.

Through brainstorming sessions, we drew from the lived experience of families, targeting particular families for relevant posts for the campaign as well as asking them to present at our events.

We implemented many initiatives to lift the profile of inclusive education, as well as to build and mobilise those who are in support of our campaign. We ran a digital campaign with a different theme each month, making eight to 10 monthly social media posts with the view to garnering support, and asking our supporters to take action to sign our petition and email their MP, plus upload a photo onto the photo wall of supporters of inclusive education.

The campaign's monthly themes were:

- November – Inclusive Education – A pathway to friendships
- December – Inclusive Education – A pathway to employment
- January – Amplifying student voice and the role of Family Advocacy
- February – Back to School Tips for Inclusive Practice from our 'Conversations for Collaboration' website
- March – Family Advocacy's Call to Action – Lobby your MP.

To support this campaign, we created two resources: A Briefing Booklet sent out to Family Advocacy members, campaign supporters plus every Member of Parliament, seeking their endorsement of the campaign. A 'How to Meet and Lobby your MP Guide', which included a printable briefing paper for supporters to take to the meeting with their MP.

We also hosted a 'Same Classroom Campaign Explained' workshop, a 'How to lobby your MP' workshop and an Inclusive Education Forum with presentations from the Minister for Education, Sarah Mitchell MLC, and the education spokesperson for The Greens, Abigail Boyd MLC, along with parent advocate Annette Bush and her son Jacob, as well as Julie Charlton, a young woman living with disability.

One of our asks for the Same Classroom Campaign has been for a Work Transition Pilot Project. This proposal is embedded in the campaign ask but has also been forwarded to the major parties. We received a letter from the new Minister for Education, Prue Car, letting us know the Work Transition pilot has been forwarded to the Department of Education's Inclusion Unit. We have since spoken to the department's staff, who are exploring this among a suite of options to improve the employment prospects for students with disability. We are continuing to connect with the department on this topic.

In relation to a controversial NSW Student Behaviour Policy, Family Advocacy was mentioned in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald entitled 'Teachers soften opposition to new rules for fewer, shorter student suspensions', in which the Minister for Education backed our call to reduce suspensions and provide better support for students with disability.

TERTIARY EDUCATION

Our sector collaboration in the Tertiary sector was a focus on strengthening the voice of people with disability in higher education and to progress the National Disability Strategy 2021–2031's Education and Learning Outcome: People with disability achieve their full potential through education and learning, more specifically:

- Policy Priority 3: Improve pathways and accessibility to further education and training for people with disability; and
- Policy Priority 4: People with disability have increased opportunities to participate in accessible and inclusive lifelong learning.

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).

AUSTRALIAN COALITION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Family Advocacy has undertaken extensive work among decision makers such as the NSW Minister for Education, and the NSW Secretary for the Department of Education, the advocacy sector and other stakeholders, to promote ACIE's Driving Change: A Roadmap for Achieving Inclusive Education. ACIE has created a Youth Advisory Working Council, with Family Advocacy supporting and mentoring two young people with disability to give voice to the students' issues and experiences. One of these young people has secured a place on the NSW Disability Council. The ACIE has also provided collective messaging around inclusive education to the Disability Royal Commission as well as to government at national and state/territory levels.

EMPLOYMENT

With our aim to influence the disability employment landscape towards improving the employment of people with disability and phasing out segregated or congregated settings such as those run by Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), we wrote a submission to Treasury for an Employment White Paper, and provided relevant input regarding employment and education into a joint submission with the Disability Advocacy sector for the Federal Government's review of the Disability Services Act. We met with many relevant contacts with expertise, in particular, in Customised Employment in Australia and abroad. As a result, we were able to connect these experts with decision makers and influencers within the NDIA, the Disability Royal Commission and the Australian Government's DSS. We also invited them to present at our Securing Futures, Shifting Mindsets School to Work National Disability Employment Conference. All these efforts align to strengthen the National Disability Strategy and the NSW Disability Inclusion Action Plan.

As a result of our Same Classroom Campaign, the Minister for Education and the Department for Education are also exploring the viability for a Work Transition Pilot Project.

NDIS

Family Advocacy has continued to undertake systems advocacy in relation to the NDIS, to give voice to people with disability across NSW. We facilitated our own focus groups for parents of children on the NDIS aged up to eight years old, to feed into the NDIS Review (on behalf of Children and Young People with Disability Australia). Attendance at recurring NDIS-related meetings continued across a variety of platforms, including government roundtables, Virtual NDIA Community Engagement Team updates, the Quality and Safeguards Commission, and the Disability Royal Commission.

We also articulated our concerns in written submissions to the Senate Joint Standing Committee on Culture and Capability, to the DSS regarding Administrative Review Reform, and to NDIS for their Quality and Safeguarding Framework.

COVID-19

During the pandemic, it was vital for Family Advocacy to maintain communication with the disability community and the NSW Department of Health. To ensure issues and concerns continue to be heard and fed back to relevant government bodies, we have continued to stay connected with the NSW Department of Health's Disability Community of Practice taskforce, a multidisciplinary, cross-departmental group.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES



WHO ARE WE?

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, 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 (UNCRPD). One of the eight guiding principles of the UNCRPD is that all people with disability have the right to experience full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

Resourcing Inclusive Communities works with many allies in the community to support this vision.

OUR PURPOSE

To support positive change through working with people with disability, 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.
- Be 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 NDIS's Information, Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) program, and is being run by three organisations: Resourcing Inclusive Communities in NSW; Imagine More in the ACT; and Community Resource Unit (CRU) in Queensland.

In an effort to improve our 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.

As well as running two conferences over the life of the project (one in NSW and one in ACT), the project also delivers workshops, free webinars and small-group info sessions, 1:1 support and resources.



School To Work
for Secondary Students
with Disability

NATIONAL SCHOOL TO WORK CONFERENCES

A key highlight of this year included the delivery of the Securing Futures, Shifting Mindsets – School to Work National Disability Employment Conference, which was held 14–15 September 2022 in Parramatta, NSW.

The conference was attended by approximately 170 people from NSW and interstate. It featured 14 speakers, including five young people sharing their employment experiences: Rhiannon Samuels-Connel, Jack Kruger, Tom Neale, Marusha Rowe and Nathan Basha; four family members: Di Samuels, Jan Kruger, Helen Neale and Annette Bush; industry leaders Trevor Parmenter and Catherine McAlpine; and three international speakers from the United States: Therese Fimian, Milton Tyree and David Mank.

The conference received overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees:

“This was the first conference I have attended where there was a gathering of a wealth of ideas around employment. It was a wonderful mix of inspiration, practical ideas, and motivated us not to just think and plan alongside individuals, but also brought to our awareness how much better things would be if this information was accessed by the organisations responsible for getting employment for many people with intellectual impairment around Australia.”

“Thanks for a fantastic couple of days, really great speakers, excellent to hear people with disabilities share their own employment journeys. A really encouraging and energising event.”

“The quality of presenters was fantastic. They really held a lot of expertise and this was appreciated. I found it beneficial to learn of some of the forerunners in the field of inclusive employment.”

The conference provided an opportunity for people with disability, their families, educators, academics, disability sector professionals and Family Advocacy/Resourcing Inclusive Communities staff to network, share their experiences, build relationships, and hear from experts at the forefront of supporting people with disability into real, meaningful employment.

Additionally, as part of the grant deliverables, Imagine More, consortium partners on the project, hosted a Second National Disability Employment Conference in Canberra, in May 2023. The main focus of the Opening Opportunities Conference was Customised Employment, combining the theoretical and practical. The conference featured guest speaker Milton Tyree an international expert in this field, as well as numerous families who shared their stories of how they have supported their family member to access a customised role in the community.

The School to Work Project also supported two micro-enterprise owners and their families to attend this conference, while also having the opportunity to display and sell their products. In addition, we sponsored a family leader and her son to attend the conference as a result of their ongoing interest in Customised Employment.

WORKSHOPS AND WEBINARS

The team continued the delivery of the School to Work workshop, in both Regional NSW and in Greater Sydney. Specific locations included Coogee, Ryde, Penrith, Central Coast, Newcastle and Hornsby. A parent leader joined in the delivery of the School to Work workshop in Hornsby in June 2023.

Throughout the workshop, she provided her insights in how she has supported her son to start thinking about work from a young age, and in the establishment of his micro-enterprise.

In addition, the team planned and facilitated two full-day workshops on Customised Employment, featuring guest speaker Milton Tyree. This is a burgeoning field in Australia and an area in which families and professionals have expressed great interest.

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.

A total of 17 webinars were delivered this year, including re-runs of Imagining, Discovery and Finding Work: Getting Started and Next Steps; Maximising NDIS Employment Supports; and Accessing Work Experience Through School sessions. This period also saw the introduction of the Customised Employment Series, focusing on the four steps of Customised Employment. The content has been adapted from resources developed by Marc Gold & Associates, based in Virginia, USA.

ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

Responding to the needs of the community, there has been an increase in the number of 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.



Image: School to Work Workshop in Central Coast

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 newly developed Discovery Record, which is distributed to registrants as a follow-up to the Customised Employment Series and to those families who have expressed interest in supporting their family through the Discovery process.

In addition, acknowledging that many families will be working with Disability Employment Services (DES), a resource focusing on questions to ask and what to look for in a DES has been developed and shared regularly with appropriate families.

NETWORKING AND MEETINGS

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

The team has met with NDIA staff; professionals providing NDIS-related services, including Local Area Coordinators (LACs), plan managers and support coordinators; and staff from DES.

Further meetings have taken place with professionals from the NSW Department of Education and the Independent Schools Association.

Our staff also attended two Post-School Transition/ Employment expos, which took place in Chatswood and Mount Druitt. All these activities have allowed the team to share the work being undertaken through the project.

PROJECT EVALUATION

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

Each organisation provided a list of 20 individuals, 15 families and five professionals, who were contacted directly for the one-on-one interview, while the online surveys were sent to all participants who agreed to be part of the evaluation.

The evaluation found that over the past two years, School to Work has been successful in informing, inspiring and motivating families and supportive professionals about the possibilities of employment and successful models to achieve this. It has developed and put into circulation a set of tools and processes that can be helpful in supporting young people to achieve this aspiration.

The report prepared by 99 Consulting also confirmed that various institutions “still tend to limit and segregate the options available to young people. This means that parents who want better for their young adult children need to push against the tide to make it happen, and this can be difficult for many, even most, parents.

School to Work makes a valuable contribution to helping people make progress on this issue but is far from being the whole solution”.

In November 2022, the School to Work Consortium came together in Sydney to discuss the second-year evaluation results. The day-long session focused on reviewing successes and learnings from the previous year and planning considerations to strengthen the project for the next 12 months.

STAFF

During this reporting period, we farewelled Anna Bazzi Backhouse and welcomed Talia Roshan, who previously worked for Family Advocacy in the role of Advocacy Engagement Officer – Disability Royal Commission.

Talia returned to the organisation to join the School to Work Project as Capacity Development Coordinator. Bringing in a fresh pair of eyes to the project has meant ongoing improvement and redevelopment of workshop and webinar material.

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, their families and supporters, so that many more people with disability across NSW can experience the typical life pathways most Australians experience.

Now in its third year, this project, funded via the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant, has engaged close to 400 people.

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

During the past 12 months, this project has offered nine workshops – some in person and some online – and five peer networks running a total of 27 network sessions. The first Family Leadership Development Series has concluded and a second series is in progress.

WORKSHOPS

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

Workshops delivered this year included ‘Creating an Inclusive Life and Making the Most of Self-Management’, which were run with family leaders Bec Hewitt and Jo Cross; and ‘Future Planning: Safeguarding the Good Life’, guest-presented by family leader Catherine Hogan, and Gilbert +Tobin’s pro bono team’s Anne Cregan. These workshops offer strategies that families can implement in the days after the workshops as well as in the longer term.

‘Fostering Friendships and Community Connections’ was a newly developed workshop focused on fostering friendship between people with and without

disability. It includes consideration of devaluation and speaks to the role of supporters being facilitators of friendships between those they support, and community members without disability (rather than having the role of friends themselves).

The workshop also offers people practice in developing and using positive introductions.

Other workshops were run by international presenters from Canada and the United States: ‘Strengthening the Role of Support Teams’ was presented by Janet Klees and Selina Blake and ‘Freely Given Relationships: The Ask – An invitation to Engagement’ by Tom Doody, Jack Yates, Nate Johnson, Phoebe Goodman, Rosey Olbrycht, Kelley Auclair, and Becky Morissey.

“Absolutely brilliant, it has been SO helpful to have the historical context explained and to have clear, practical ways to transform thinking and action around these things.” – Creating an Inclusive Life workshop participant.

PEER NETWORKS

These networks continue to provide a space for parents to share their questions and experiences.

The groups are led by experienced parent-leader facilitators with lived experience relevant to the topic, and address the specific questions of group members. Jo Cross, Alison Wilson and Vanessa Shearman were facilitators for the peer networks on Self-Management, Inclusive Education and Microenterprise, respectively.

FAMILY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERIES

The first Family Leadership Development Series concluded in October 2022. This series had an external evaluation carried out by 99 Consulting to measure the increased knowledge and understanding, confidence, connection and effectiveness of family leaders in bringing about inclusion, and supporting their family members with disability to live good lives in the heart of their communities.

The evaluation found that “participants reported measurable improvements in their knowledge and understanding, their confidence, their connectedness to others and their effectiveness in bringing about more genuine inclusive practice and support. These improvements took place over the course of the series and persisted after it was completed ... parents were able to work towards concrete improvements in the lives of their family members, supporting them to move from more segregated activities and approaches towards more genuine inclusion within the wider community ... the series helped them to see more clearly where they were headed and what it would take to get there over time.”

Mentors Jo Cross and Annette O’Sullivan guided and supported 17 upcoming family leaders through the six-month process, while speakers John O’Brien, Janet Klees and Selina Blake presented throughout the second half of the series. The group continued as a peer network following the series, catching up with bi-monthly online sessions.

In addition to their work with their own family members, a number of participants have also engaged in wider leadership in the community for disability inclusion.

This includes broadening their advocacy in the schools beyond just the needs of their own child, striving to make their workplaces – both in disability support and in other industries – more inclusive of people with disability, and serving as co-leaders in subsequent Family Advocacy activities.

The second Family Leadership Development Series has now commenced, with another 12 upcoming family leaders currently engaged. It kicked off with an in-person weekend in May 2023 and has continued with online meetings, supplemented by a WhatsApp group. The series will continue until October 2023 and we look forward to working with the families further. Thanks to those involved with this series so far: Dianne Samuels and Bree Pennie for their roles as Family Leader Mentors, and to Jane Sherwin and John Armstrong for their guest presenter roles.

“I have already started implementing some of these strategies, and advising others to do the same, such as always beginning by talking about my kids’ strengths.” – Feedback from the opening weekend of Leadership Development Series 2

STAFF

Mohamed Bah joined the team for six months between August and February.

Jane Scott came on board in April 2023, bringing her perspective and input as a person with disability.

Laura Abrahams continues to lead the project, providing continuity as well as support and training to new staff.



Image above: School to Work Customised Employment Workshop with Milton Tyree



Image above: Leadership Weekend October 2022

MY HOME, MY WAY & MAKING HOME REAL INDIVIDUALISED LIVING PROJECTS



My Home, My Way and Making Home Real are national projects promoting, resourcing and assisting people with disability and their families to explore, design and action individualised living arrangements and innovative ways to create a home of their own, while getting the support they need.

My Home, My Way and Making Home Real are national projects promoting, resourcing and assisting people with disability and their families to explore, design and action individualised living arrangements and innovative ways to create a home of their own, while getting the support they need.

They are both National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO) projects, guided by the leadership of people with disability and families.

The projects are funded from two separate Federal Government Information Capacity and Linkages (ILC) grants (2019 and 2020). Both grants have been extended and will end in June 2024.

Individualised living arrangements involve person-centred planning to tailor a home where the person decides whom they live with, and where and how they live their lives. Anyone with a disability, no matter how complex their needs, can live in their own home. Home is designed around the person – in the typical way of making home that so many of us do.

Individualised living arrangements are an alternative to congregate living and are enabling of a good life, included in the community as a valued and active citizen. We have an important role in sharing information with people with disability and their families, to build the knowledge, skills and confidence to seek and establish individualised living arrangements and live good lives.

The 2022–2023 period focused on delivering workshops online and face-to-face, as well as the production of new information and resources.

As part of the My Home, My Way project, Resourcing

Inclusive Communities led the development of an eight-episode series of podcasts on the ways people with disability can achieve a sense of home, launched in August 2022. The My Home, My Way Guidebook, also coordinated by Resourcing Inclusive Communities, was launched in November 2022.

Resourcing Inclusive Communities also contributed to the development of the

- My Home, My Way website, launched in August 2022
- ILO Toolkit, launched in April 2023.

In July 2022, the team coordinated two national Inclusive Conversations Series webinars:

- Online Inclusive Conversation Series – Housemates offered an informal online conversational format to share information and stories with families about supportive housemates in individualised living arrangements. Guest panellists were Karen Schwartz, mother of Adam Schwartz; and Scott Thompson, long-time friend and former housemate of Tom Hancock. Sadly, Tom passed away in May 2023. We would like to pay tribute to Tom, his family, friends and housemates for leadership and sharing of Tom's unique and individualised living arrangement.
- Introduction to Individualised Living Options (ILO) – focused on NDIS funding for home and living supports. Guest speakers Chloe Grant and Magdalena Garcia-Flynn from Valued Lives both shared stories of families who have ILO, and provided extra technical insights into NDIS funding.



Image above: Inclusive Live Workshop with Janet Klees

Resourcing Inclusive Communities also delivered an introduction to My Home, My Way at the Down Syndrome NSW Annual Housing Conference, as well as two My Home, My Way workshops in Nowra and Newcastle. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive:

“Thank you! I loved the workshop and the creative thinking to support my members! Can’t wait for the next workshop, it was great.”

“This workshop has given me great tools and planning strategies to share with my family.”

“I particularly liked the awareness-raising regarding informal supports and how these could be better utilised.”

Project leaders from each of the NACBO organisations met regularly as a community of practice and had two meetings with the NDIA’s Home and Living Team, when they had the opportunity to share insights and challenges of their on-the-ground experience of individualised living, as well as share collective experiences and knowledge to improve how the team can promote and support this approach to families.

One-on-one consultation with families is another important element of the project. Resourcing Inclusive Communities, along with NACBO partners, provided a dedicated team member to assist people with disability and their families to understand the new and person-centred models of home, including new funding arrangements to support a person to live on their own.

STAFF

Alva Lim, who was coordinating both the My Home, My Way and the Making Home Real projects, left the role in November 2022. Karen Tippett took the helm until Linda Hughes commenced in the Capacity Building Coordinator role in March 2023. Linda is a former Committee member of Family Advocacy and brings a personal and professional perspective to the role. Linda’s 30-year-old son Jacob lives in his own home in an individualised living arrangement.

NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING ORGANISATIONS

Family Advocacy, through its Resourcing Inclusive Communities initiative, continues to be an alliance member of 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.

The primary focus of the Alliance is on considerations and supports that lead to the genuine inclusion of people with disability in all areas of their life. Joint national projects over this year have focused on individualised living, as well as several NACBO organisations continuing to deliver much-needed capacity building in the area of young adults and employment, both individually and as a consortium. The ‘think national and act local’ approach has meant we are able to contribute to the national conversation about the importance of capacity building.

EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

FAMILY ADVOCACY EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

2022

12 Jul	Autism Camp Australia Information Session	Online
12 Jul	Model Coherency: The Key to Human Service Quality Presentation	Online
26 Jul	One of the Kids Workshop	Kingsford
2 Aug	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Introductory Session	Online
16 Aug	Shepherd Centre Information Session	Online
17 Aug	Autism Community Networks Ask & Answer Information Session	Online
17 Aug	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Parent Networking Session	Online
17 Aug	Shepherd Centre Information Session	Online
23 Aug	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Online
31 Aug	Shepherd Centre Information Session	Online
1 Sep	Shepherd Centre Information Session	Online
8 Sep	Kindship Education Information Session	Online
13 Sep	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Online
6 Oct	Kindship Education Audio Information Session	Online
13 Oct	Kindship Education Audio Information Session	Online
18 Oct	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Online
22 & 23 Oct	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission workshop – IF Maitland Indie Festival	Maitland

26 Oct	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
15 Nov	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Online
16 Nov	One of the Kids Workshop	Canterbury
17 Nov	One of the Kids Workshop	Baulkham Hills
17 Nov	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Katoomba
18 Nov	Same Classroom Same Opportunity NSW Election 2023 Campaign Explained	Online
23 Nov	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
8 Dec	Disability Royal Commission – Making a Submission Workshop	Online



Image above: School to Work Workshop in Penrith

FAMILY ADVOCACY EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

2023

18 Jan	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
15 Feb	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
16 Feb	Inclusive Education Online Forum	Online
7 Mar	Advocacy Tips and Tools – Advocate for your Child Living with Disability Webinar	Online
8 Mar	Advocacy Tips and Tools – Advocate for your Child Living with Disability Webinar	Online
8 Mar	How to Meet with your MP workshop	Online
15 Mar	Inner West Coalition for Inclusive Education presentation	Marrickville
15 Mar	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
17 Mar	Presentation and Information session to Parents and Educators	Online
4 Apr	One of the Kids Workshop	West Ryde
5 Apr	One of the Kids Workshop	Blacktown
19 Apr	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
4 May 2023	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Introductory Session	Online
10 May	P & C Inclusion Subcommittee Parent Networking Session	Online
17 May	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
23 May	One of the Kids Workshop	Penrith
25 May	One of the Kids Workshop	Wallsend
1 Jun	One of the Kids Online Course – Term 2 (over five weeks)	Online
5 Jun	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (Senior High School)	Online

6 Jun	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (Primary School)	Online
7 Jun	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (High School)	Online
13 Jun	Parents of Deaf Children (PODC) Information Session	Online
20 Jun	PODC Information Session	Online
21 Jun	NDIS Online Discussion Series	Online
22 June	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (Senior High School)	Hornsby
23 Jun	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (Primary School)	Baulkham Hills
30 Jun	Transition Project – Parent Consultation Session (High School)	Burwood



Image above: Jack Kruger presenting at the School to Work Conference, Day 1

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES EVENTS

2022

14 Jul	Leadership Development Series 1, Session 3 – Evening Event with Janet Klees	Online
15 Jul	Inclusive Conversations – Housemates and Flatmates	Online
22 Jul	Peer Network – Inclusive Education (10 sessions)	Online
25 Jul	Inclusive Conversations – Individualised Living Options Information session	Online
4 Aug	School to Work Workshop	Coogee
17 Aug	Imagining Work – Getting Started Years 7-8 Webinar	Online
24 Aug	Imagining Work – The Next Steps Years 7-8 Webinar	Online
25 Aug	Leadership Development Series 1, Session 4 – Evening Event with John O'Brien	Online
30 Aug	Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop	Merimbula
1 Sep	My Home, My Way Workshop	Nowra
14 & 15 Sep	School to Work National Disability Employment Conference	Parramatta
19 & 20 Sep	Customised Employment Workshop with Milton Tyree	North Sydney
21 Sep	Leadership Development Series 1, Session 5 - Evening Event with Annette Bush and Alex Purvis	
14 Oct	Making the Most of Self-Management	Online
19 Oct	School to Work – NDIS and Employment Supports Webinar	Online
21-23 Oct	Leadership Development Series 1, Session 6 – Weekend Event	Olympic Park
25 Oct	Strengthening the Role of Support Teams Workshop	Hornsby
28 Oct	Discovering Work – Getting Started Years 9 and 10	Online
31 Oct	Accessing Work Experience Webinar	Online
2 Nov	Peer network – Self-Management (5 Sessions)	Online
4 Nov	Discovering Work – The Next Steps Years 9 & 10 Webinar	Online
8 Nov	School to Work Workshop	Ryde
15 & 17 Nov	Freely Given Relationships Workshop	Online
16 & 23 Nov	Customised Employment Webinars – Part 1 and 2	Online
21 Nov	Finding Work – Getting Started Years 11 and 12 Webinar School to Work Webinar	Online

24 Nov	Future Planning Workshop	Online
28 Nov	Finding Work – The Next Steps Years 11 and 12 Webinar	Online
1 Dec	School to Work Workshop	Online
1 Dec	Peer Network – Family Leadership Development Series 1 (4 sessions)	Online

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES EVENTS

2023

24 Feb	Accessing Work Experience Through School Webinar	Online
28 Feb	Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop	Gymea
2 Mar	Imagining, Discovering and Finding Work – Getting Started	Online
9 Mar	Imagining, Discovering and Finding Work – The Next Steps	Online
14 Mar	School to Work Workshop	Penrith
20 Mar	School to Work Workshop	Tumbi Umbi
4 Apr	School to Work NDIS and Employment Supports Webinar	Online
14 Apr	Fostering Friendship and Community Connections Workshop	West Ryde
27 Apr	Peer Network – Micro-Enterprise starts (5 sessions)	Online
28 Apr	My Home, My Way Workshop	Newcastle
5-7 May	Leadership Development Series 2, Session 1 – Weekend Event	Mulgoa
15 May	Customised Employment: Introduction to Essential Elements	Parramatta
16 May	Customised Employment: Deeper Dive into Discovery	Parramatta
30 May	Accessing Work Experience Webinar	Online
1 Jun	Leadership Development Series 2, Session 2 – Evening Event with John Armstrong	Online
15 Jun	School to Work Workshop	Hornsby
19 Jun	School to Work: Customised Employment Webinar Part 1 of 4	Online
26 Jun	School to Work: Customised Employment Webinar Part 2 of 4	Online
29 Jun	Creating an Inclusive Life Workshop	Online

EXPOS

Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities teams attended a number of expos across the Sydney and Newcastle regions throughout the year.

We have determined that 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 at Family Advocacy.

EXPOS		
2022		
4 Aug	Sydney Disability Expo – stall focusing on Disability Royal Commission	Sydney

2023		
25 Mar	Source Kids Expo	Sydney
31 Mar	Nepean Disability Expo	Penrith
4 May	Northern Sydney Expo for People with Disability	Sydney
12 May	Hunter Disability Expo	Newcastle
23 May	St Lucy’s Wahroonga Post-School Options Expo	Online
16 Jun	Sydney Disability Connection Expo	Sydney
21 Jun	Western Sydney Employment, Life Skills and Leisure Expo	Mt Druitt



Image: Cecile and Jacqui at the Disability Connections Expo



Image: Cecile and Katie at the Nepean Expo in March



Image: Troy and Karen at the Sydney Disability Expo in August

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS



By adding marketing into the mix we have also reviewed our operational scope, and have implemented new strategic methods to ensure the timely planning and execution of Family Advocacy initiatives for optimal results.

TEAM CHANGES

There have been several important changes in the Communications team since the last report. Adrian Buckley, who served as Communications Coordinator (three days a week), concluded his contract at the end of December 2022.

After four years as a full-time communications and media manager, Clara transitioned into the role of Communications Coordinator (four days a week) in January. Recruitment for a manager position began in November, and we are pleased to announce that Kelly Evagelakos joined Family Advocacy in late December to lead the Communications team.

Kelly brings more than 15 years of experience in marketing, communications and media. She holds a Diploma of Advertising, a Master of Media Practice and a Juris Doctor.

Kelly's experience and qualifications will greatly enhance our ability to pioneer and execute marketing strategies, cultivate relationships with key stakeholders, and implement new tools to achieve team initiatives across various channels.

Kelly is deeply committed to helping others find their voice and actively collaborates with local communities to make a positive impact on marginalised and socially disadvantaged populations.

With the introduction of marketing expertise, there was a shift in focus of the team, with communications viewed not only as a means to engage effectively with key stakeholders, but also as one of the many

platforms in our marketing toolbox.

This includes a new Operational work in progress (WIP), for more efficient project management of our events, which has streamlined our communications, channel management and optimised reach

REFRESHED BRAND AND FOCUS ON ACCESSIBILITY

We have initiated a gradual shift away from our previous 'green' colour palette as our primary brand colour, and are moving towards the use of deep blue instead. This shift not only conveys a sense of refinement and authority, but also provides better contrast for a more visually user-friendly experience.

INDIGENOUS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

We commissioned Indigenous artwork to coincide with the YES referendum launch at the Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide in February 2023. The artwork was created by Mr Adam Bishop, a Wiradjuri man with disability who resided in Western Sydney. Adam's painting, Welcoming everyone everywhere, symbolises our vision of inclusion and our support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We have introduced a new Acknowledgment of Country across our email signatures, collateral materials and presentations, which reflect that our commitment to inclusion extends to our deep respect for Indigenous Elders. Our support for the YES referendum is an expression of this respect.

Our Marketing Snapshot

470,841

Total reach across Facebook, LinkedIn, X and YouTube

+ **81.54%** increase from previous financial year

X **17,804**
Impressions

YouTube **14,223**
Views

(894.1 hours of watch time)

137,946

Total combined Facebook Reach
(Resourcing Inclusive Communities
and Family Advocacy pages)



Our Resourcing Inclusive Communities Facebook page
has reached **63,610** people

+ **108.6%** increase from previous financial year

390

Total posts shared
to Facebook*

100

Email campaigns sent,
comprising of more than

300,000

emails sent via
Campaign Monitor

NEW TECHNOLOGICAL PLATFORMS

We have introduced Bitly links to our event promotions. Bitly links offer valuable insights, tracking capabilities, and enhance our marketing strategy. They allow us to measure effectiveness, monitor click-through rates, analyse audience behaviour, and optimise campaigns. Customisable and branded, Bitly links strengthen our brand identity and provide analytics, tracking, and improved decision-making for enhanced marketing performance.

NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

We designed a new in-house Strategic Plan, encompassing the 'refreshed' Family Advocacy brand, and also developed an accessible Word document to ensure both print and accessible versions are readily available. The plan will be launched early in the 2023-2024 financial year.

SOCIAL ROLE VALORISATION EVENTS

The team assisted with promotions, resources, delivery and follow-up communications for the 'Model Coherency – The Key to Human Service Quality' presentation. This was offered to people and organisations interested in Social Role Valorisation in Australia and New Zealand. Support provided included a planning meeting with presenters Tom Doody, Joe Osburn and Pamela Seetoo.

We also supported our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, in her keynote speaker presentation to the 2023 Distance International Social Role Valorisation Conference, 'SRV in the World'. This support included creating slides and infographics, attending a rehearsal and providing feedback, and offering technical support on the day.

ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

ONE OF THE KIDS ONLINE

We continued to support the Advocacy and Leadership Development (ALD) team with the development of One of the Kids online platform. This involved attending meetings with the developer to fine-tune technical and hosting requirements, coordinating subdomain details with our developers, editing four narrated slide videos for uploading to the platform, and collaborating with student Tim Wilson (son of parent advocate Alison Wilson) to improve the audio quality of 17 short video clips used throughout the platform. The One of the Kids – Building Inclusion at School online platform is now live at <https://ootk.family-advocacy.com/> and we continue to work with the team to improve the delivery of the online course.

NDIS RESOURCES AND EVENTS

We provided assistance to the ALD team in redesigning the ‘Reasonable and Necessary’ and ‘Challenging an NDIS decision’ flow charts, both of which are now available on our website. We also offered ongoing support for the promotion of the Monthly NDIS Discussion Series, along with technical support during the January session.

VIDEO SERIES – ‘WHAT BUILDS INCLUSION?’

We worked with the Senior Manager, Inclusion, in delivering the complete series of 14 videos titled ‘What Builds Inclusion?’ These videos feature real-life scenarios where parents and educators have collaborated to ensure a positive and inclusive classroom experience for students with disability.

DISABILITY ROYAL COMMISSION SUPPORT

We assisted with the promotions for four Disability Royal Commission online workshops (September to December) and a face-to-face workshop in Katoomba (17 November). We also reached out to the Blue Mountains Gazette regarding the Katoomba workshop and successfully received significant media coverage (see media section). We supported the team with a social media campaign themed ‘Do it Today’.

This campaign included one or two posts per week emphasising the closing deadline for submissions and the importance of sending submissions ‘today’. On behalf of the Disability Royal Commission team, we contacted 18 NSW members of parliament, encouraging them to issue local media releases to raise awareness of the commission and the submission deadline among their constituencies.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY SUPPORT

We closely collaborated with the Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager on the execution of the Same Classroom, Same Opportunity election campaign. This campaign included the creation of a dedicated campaign website on the Do Gooder campaign platform: bit.ly/SCSO2030.

At the time of the NSW Election in March 2023, 115 Letters had been sent to MPs, with 221 engagements on Bitly; there were 253 signatures on our petition and 104 engagements on Bitly. Additionally, 537 images were shared to our photo wall.

The team collaborated with the Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager in organising and promoting the Inclusive Education Forum on 16 February. We created a Facebook event and related posts, which reached 381 people, making it the second-highest engaged event on Facebook. The forum had 148 registrations and the YouTube recording had 121 views.

We provided technical support, organised Auslan interpreters and live captioners, prepared social media posts for a blitz on the day, recorded and edited Jacob’s video, sent a follow-up email with the recording of the forum, and encouraged friends to sign the petition.

We also assisted with the promotion and hosting of a ‘How to lobby your MP’ workshop. This workshop had 24 registrations, and an electronic direct mail (EDM) for this workshop was sent to 4289 recipients, with 1865 of these opening our email. As part of this journey, we developed two new resources: a How to Lobby your MP booklet for families, allies and friends, and a Briefing Booklet for members of parliament.

Ongoing support was provided to the Systemic Advocacy Manager, with the formatting, proofreading, and uploading of five submissions in November and December.



Leanne, our Systemic Advocacy and Campaign Manager, in Adelaide to help support the YES Campaign.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT

SCHOOL TO WORK PROJECT

From July to September 2022, an important focus for the Communications team was the School to Work Conference.

This included liaising with a designer to create a branded look, which was then applied to various banners promoting the event in our website, mailouts, and on social media; working with a web developer on the creation of a dedicated website, which was launched on 19 August; design and production of various items of merchandise including pens, carry bags, notepads and a 16-page conference program; liaising with the audio visual company and videographer; coordinating two Auslan interpreters; sending weekly mailouts as well as targeted emails to various groups; writing and issuing a media release; and editing and captioning promotional videos sent by the three international speakers.

The team also assisted the School to Work Project with promotions and collateral materials for six face-to-face and one online School to Work workshops, two Customised Employment workshops with guest speaker and international expert Milton Tyree, and 17 webinars.

INCLUSIVE LIVES – POSSIBILITY TO REALITY PROJECT

We offered ongoing support to the team with the promotion of nine workshops (face-to-face and online) and five peer networks. We also edited and captioned a promotional video for the Second Family Leadership Series and assisted with formatting of presentation materials.

INDIVIDUALISED LIVING / MY HOME, MY WAY PROJECTS

We provided support in the promotion and delivery of two My Home, My Way workshops as well as two online 'Inclusive Conversation' sessions. In the last quarter of 2022, the Communications Manager led the design and print coordination of the My Home, My Way Guidebook, a 72-page resource that has been printed and distributed to all NACBO organisations and is also available as a PDF on the My Home, My Way website. The guidebook offers valuable information and exercises to help individuals with disability and their families, friends and allies to plan the transition to living independently.

MEDIA COVERAGE

- Karen Tippett, our Senior Manager – Advocacy and Inclusion, was interviewed about the My Home, My Way workshop by ABC Riverina. The interview aired in July.
- Karen was also quoted, speaking on behalf of Family Advocacy, in an article by the Sydney Morning Herald: 'Teachers soften opposition to new rules for fewer, shorter student suspensions'.
- An article about our School to Work Conference appeared on the Educator Online: 'How your school can get kids with disability work ready'.
- The Blue Mountains Gazette published two articles about our Disability Royal Commission workshop in Katoomba; the first promoted the workshop and the second was a follow-up quoting our Disability Royal Commission officer Troy Hester, and parent Michelle Swan, who attended the workshop.
- Leanne Varga, our Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager, collaborated with Disability Advocacy NSW (DA) to release Falling behind: A need for inclusive education, an investigative paper exposing issues within the NSW education system. Our joint media release resulted in two articles on the Educator Online; 'Students with disability struggling to receive inclusive education' and '12 Habits of Highly Effective Inclusion'.
- We placed an advertisement in the Newcastle Herald's 'Disability Expo Newspaper', published on page 29, with a focus on driving people to our booth.
- Journalist Katherine Gregory from ABC News interviewed our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder, quoting her in an article published on 1 June 2023: 'Concerns some schools are contravening disability legislation by not accepting neurodiverse children'.



The Hon Bill Shorten MP. at Imagine More's School to Work Conference "Opening Opportunities". With Jan Kruger (Imagine More - ACT), Cecile Sullivan Elder (Family Advocacy - NSW), and Margaret Rodgers (CRU - Community Resource Unit Ltd. - QLD).

SOCIAL & DIGITAL MEDIA

LINKEDIN

As at 30 June, our Family Advocacy page had 130 followers & Resourcing Inclusive Communities had 126.

META

Family Advocacy uses social media platform META (Instagram and Facebook) as a vehicle to connect more widely with people with disability and their families, as well as a mechanism to bring social change issues to the forefront of everyday Australians.

As at 30 June, we had 261 followers on Instagram. Our Facebook page accumulated a total of 4106 likes, marking a noteworthy increase of approximately 10.82% compared to the 3705 likes we had in the previous year, showcasing steady growth in our online community.

In terms of Facebook reach, we achieved a significant reach of 74,336 individuals. We also had a 100% increase in paid reach, where posts reached a remarkable 32,399 people.

Our commitment to engagement and content dissemination is evident in the number of posts we published, totalling 224. This marks a substantial 45.5% increase in our posting frequency compared to the previous year.

One notable post highlight on Facebook was published on 27 September 2022. This post attracted 8500 engagements and 240 interactions, making it our highest ever reach for a post. Impressively, this organic post reached 8529 individuals, significantly surpassing the typical post reach range of 136 to 368.

RESOURCING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES ON FACEBOOK

An increase in posting frequency and variety of content resulted in a 106.1% increase in our Facebook reach: from 57,226 to 63,610 this financial year. Paid reach across both Instagram and Facebook has increased to 32,399.

Our Resourcing Inclusive Communities Facebook page continues to grow steadily, with 767 Facebook page likes (compared to 650 last year), an 18% increase.

X (FORMERLY TWITTER)

We maintained a strong presence on Twitter. Our Twitter impressions were 21,900, and as at 30 June we had 731 followers.

YOUTUBE

The number of views on our YouTube channel remained steady at 14,223, we had 39 new subscribers and our combined watch time was 894.1 hours. Our total impressions for this financial year was 106,526. The most watched day was 28 March 2023 with 182 plays, and the most watched video during this period was 'What is Social Advocacy and why is it important?' with 2719 views.

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

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

Electronic direct mail (EDM) continues to be one of the main means to connect with and inform our community. Last year we sent a total of 100 campaigns (314,729 emails) with an open rate of 40.4%. The emails mainly promote our events and workshops, targeted by area and age.

This year, we experienced a 17.65% growth in the number of mailouts (100 campaigns sent compared to 85 last year). Mailouts were also used to advertise employment vacancies, disseminate systemic campaigns and to distribute our newsletter.



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FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

FUNDING & ONE-OFF GRANTS	REF. PAGE 44	2022-2023	2021-2022
REVENUE FROM COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT			
Disability Advocacy	(1)	346,098	315,380
Disability Royal Commission	(1)	178,244	226,515
School to Work Project	(1)	509,704	285,564
Inclusive Lives: Possibility to Reality Project	(1)	586,895	385,305
My Home, My Way Project	(1)	33,360	44,293
My Home, My Way – ILO Project	(1)	44,849	67,536
REVENUE FROM NSW GOVERNMENT			
Information Advocacy	(2)	300,000	344,448
Social Sector Transformation Fund	(2)	0	53,000
Department of Education	(3)	93,467	39,030
TOTAL		\$2,092,617	\$1,751,071

TREASURER'S REPORT



**ALEX PURVIS,
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 2022–2023.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

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

- funding for advocacy and leadership through the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)
- funding to provide advocacy support for people wishing to engage with the Disability Royal Commission
- the ILC Readiness Grant for Resourcing Inclusive Communities projects.
- State Government Funding

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

- funding for advocacy and information work
- 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 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 2023–June 2024 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 \$580 was received from Jennifer Sue Wilson, Jeongmin Park, Stanley Po, and Sharon Williams.

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

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

OPERATIONS AND HUMAN RESOURCES



In response to the unique challenges brought about by the global pandemic, Family Advocacy swiftly transitioned to remote work and now operates under a hybrid work model.

Our unwavering vision, dedicated team, commitment to employee wellbeing, and technological readiness played pivotal roles in our ability to adapt.

Aiming to improve efficiency and expand support for individuals with disabilities and their families, we also conducted a thorough review of our policies and practices.

HUMAN RESOURCES

We are firmly committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do. We believe having the right people and supporting them effectively greatly enhances our operations.

All staff, across various teams, undergo continuous training in Social Role Valorisation (SRV), which is reinforced through daily experiences and conversations. We also offer ample opportunities for professional development, networking, leadership and growth.

Family Advocacy supports its staff with logistics and technology, both in the office and remotely. We offer flexibility when needed, for balancing personal and work demands, while prioritising workplace safety through our work health and safety (WHS) policies.

We have clear work protocols and expectations, which not only enhance efficiency but also protect the safety of all staff.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Our goal is to offer impactful advocacy support to families of individuals with developmental disabilities. And while we recognise the need for continuous improvement, we also strive for the highest standards of work. Our systematic approach, involving thorough planning, diligent monitoring, and comprehensive evaluation, helps us to refine our processes. This ensures that every action and new initiative aligns with our vision and yields tangible results.

Externally, we gather feedback from families during workshops and hire external consultants for evaluation studies, to ensure our projects align with our goals and we conduct our work in the most effective ways.

In every area of our work, we strive to ensure our staff are updated in research and industry practices from around the world; endeavour to present data and make available resources that are relevant, accurate, current, fact-checked and source-verified; that our communication is clear and reliable; and, where possible, we invite those with the expertise and experience to speak directly to our stakeholders, in particular, to the families who seek assistance from us.

RISK MANAGEMENT

As a purpose-driven organisation established for 32 years, Family Advocacy wants to ensure we can carry out our advocacy efforts for the long term. We have strong and focused Management Committees; a passionate and talented workforce; policies and goals aligned to our vision and purpose, and relevant to the times and current needs of people with disability; a consistent set of processes and practices; a culture of quality and excellence; and a mindset of adaptability and innovation. With changing times, however, we have had to navigate uncertainties that have also been transformed into opportunities for growth.

In this context, Risk Management acts as a safety net, helping us to identify and overcome potential obstacles and threats to our plans and programs. Our Management Committee prioritises risk management in governance, incorporating it into all aspects of our work, including committee meetings, staff meetings, and in our policies. This covers areas such as finance, insurance, WHS, security, technology, legal matters, as well as concerns about reputation, privacy, and confidentiality.

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

At the heart of risk management, on a practical day-to-day basis and in the post-COVID landscape, the health and safety of the people we support, as well as of the Family Advocacy team, remains paramount. We have maintained sanitising measures and strict health protocols at the workplace and events.

As part of ensuring every member of our team can contribute their best without compromising their wellbeing, we provide a secure, well-ventilated office environment, ergonomic workspaces, and electrical cabling that meets regulations. We have conducted ergonomic assessments at the Hornsby office and also at home offices.

Safety is a shared responsibility that extends to every individual within our organisation. Staff have ample opportunities to raise concerns through staff meetings, through Incident and Hazard reporting processes and through the Health and Safety Committee. Since its creation in the last quarter of the previous financial year, the Committee has met a

number of times to address issues raised and shore up policies and measures that provide a safer work environment.

While advocacy work is rewarding, it can also be emotionally demanding; hence, the organisation has supported mental health wellbeing initiatives through mental health crisis training, mentoring, and confidential counselling when needed, through an Employee Assistance Program provided by the Department of Communities and Justice during the year to 30 June 2023.

INCLUSION COLLECTION

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

ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT

Family Advocacy continues to be an ally for environmental sustainability, recognising that these efforts within an office, not just in our personal spaces, contribute to creating a better world overall. Some of our regular green practices include reducing, recycling and reusing. Thought and time were spent to thoughtfully dispose of obsolete technology, equipment and furniture through reselling where possible, and technology and office product recycling through the increasing number of companies who provide this service.

Some environmental benefits brought about by workplace adaptations due to the pandemic include lowered carbon emissions through working remotely under our hybrid work arrangement. While no longer in lockdown and with people keen to connect face-to-face in workshops, we continue to offer online webinars and are exploring the use of hybrid events.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAT Administrative Appeals Tribunal

ACIE Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education

ACYP Advocate for Children and Young People

AGM Annual General Meeting

ALD Advocacy and Leadership Development

ALHR Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

ARACY Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth

CID Council for Intellectual Disability

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRU Community Resource Unit

CYDA Children and Young People with Disability Australia

DA NSW Disability Advocacy New South Wales

DANA Disability Advocacy Network Australia

DoE Department of Education

DSIT Disability Strategy Implementation Team

DSS Department of Social Services

FaCS Department of Family and Community Services

ICT Information Communication Technology

IDEAS Information on Disability Education and Awareness Services
ILC Information, Linkages and Capacity Building

ILO Individualised Living Options

MDAA Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association

MHMW My Home My Way

NACBO National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations

NDIA National Disability Insurance Agency

NDIS National Disability Insurance Scheme

NESA NSW Education Standards Authority

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PAAA Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia

PDCN Physical Disability Council NSW

PWDA People with Disability Australia

SRV Social Role Valorisation

WHS Work Health and Safety

family

A D V O C A C Y

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