

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

# ANNUAL REPORT



2019-2020

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**2019-2020**

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# Cover Story

## Josh's journey from inclusive education to meaningful employment

Inclusive, equitable and productive lives in the heart of the community start with an inclusive education. This is what Vanessa Shearman and her husband Chris wanted for their son Joshua, who was diagnosed with non-verbal autism and developmental delay at the age of two.

When Josh was four years old and it was time to look into school, his parents, who were living in Muswellbrook at the time, attended a workshop run by Family Advocacy NSW. "One of the guest speakers shared the story of her son and the possibilities that were given to him through mainstream education in a regular classroom," said Mrs Shearman. "That weekend was a turning point for us."

The couple went around their local primary schools, until they found one that was on board with their vision of inclusion for Josh.

"He went to all the birthday parties, all the excursions, he did everything the other kids did, and he had a beautiful, positive experience from Kindergarten right through to Year 5, when we moved to Bathurst," said Mrs Shearman.

"We actually enrolled Josh in a special school when we first moved here, but it was just not in our vision of Josh's future. So we then enrolled him in our local high school the next year."

Josh did all his secondary schooling at Kelso High, in the regular class. This meant he accessed the mainstream curriculum, with the necessary supports in place to reach his full potential. Like the other students in his class, he completed his work experience program at two local businesses.

Josh has now finished school and runs his own business, JLS Mail Link which currently has 14 local businesses as customers. He loves to drive around his town and greet people, which can be the perfect way to help businesses save time whilst enabling Josh to be a valued and contributing member of his community. He has also stayed connected to the businesses he undertook his work experience with, and offers them his time through volunteering.

In 2019, Josh was featured in Resourcing Inclusive Communities' video, "Josh's Story". Josh's story

highlights how far reaching the beneficial impacts of an inclusive education can be and how instrumental it is for families to have a strong vision of the possibilities of the future for their family member with disability.

Family Advocacy works with families like the Shearman's to help them develop the advocacy and leadership skills they need to speak up for the rights and interests of their family member with disability, so they can thrive, work and fully participate in society. Family Advocacy's capacity building initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities, provides information and resources to assist people with disability to live meaningful lives in the community.

*Cover image of Josh Shearman, Adam Lawson and Bec Jonas from Bathurst Real Estate taken by Tom Greenwood during the filming of Josh's Story*

*Below image of Josh supplied by the Shearman family*



# Vision, Purpose, Goals and Objectives

## Vision

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

## Purpose

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

## Goals and Objectives

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

## Organisational goals

Family Advocacy will:

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

## Objectives

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

## Strategic Goals 2020-2022

Our Strategic Plan 2020-2022 helps shape the priorities we undertake over the three years of the plan. It describes our goals - the longer term outcomes that we are working towards in all the work that we do. These goals are:

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

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

# Guiding Principles

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

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

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

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

The organisation recognises that society has, as a matter of public policy, segregated people with

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

## Principles about People

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

## Principles about Families

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

# Guiding Principles

## Principles about Community

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

## Principles about Human Services

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

not diminish the development and maintenance of personal relationships and friendships with individuals in the community

- As no human service or system will ever be perfect there will always be a need for a range of safeguards, including advocacy by families
- Formal human services should be designed and implemented so as not to act as barriers to community participation.

## Advocacy

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

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

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

***Governance,  
Volunteers and  
Family Leaders***

# Structure and Management

Family Advocacy's vision and purpose has remained steady for 29 years since the organisation was incorporated in 19 June, 1991 under the Associations Incorporation Act 1984. Under its Constitution, Family Advocacy is governed by its Management Committee and the general responsibility to run the organisation in accordance with its vision, goals and strategies is carried by the Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder.

The Committee, which comprises the Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and up to a maximum of 15 ordinary members, is elected each year at the time of the Annual General Meeting (AGM). In 2019/2020 there were nine committee members. The majority are residents of regional NSW, and all have family members living with disability. This ensures that the focus remains on the rights and interests of people with developmental disability, and in achieving better lives and social roles for them through the organisation's vision and purpose, and through pursuing the goals stated in its **Strategic Plan 2020-2022**.

The Committee met seven times in the financial year 2019/2020 primarily using Zoom video conferencing. This software has facilitated greater ease of communication, enabling Committee members from regional areas to remain involved and active in the Committee's work.

At these meetings the Committee considers:

- The Treasurer's Report, which details income, expenditure and financial position
- Membership matters
- Staff and administrative matters
- Systemic and general advocacy matters
- Correspondence
- Complaints
- Risk and compliance
- Outcomes of program delivery to families and people with disability in NSW.

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

## Membership

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

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

Being purpose driven rather than membership driven has served as a powerful safeguard to the core work of the organisation. Family Advocacy nevertheless places high value on its members and the contributions they make to the organisation. Members build up their leadership and advocacy skills through presenting at events, attending sponsored training, providing input into policy, involvement in systemic advocacy meetings and campaigns, strategic planning and becoming a Committee member. Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of members and thanks them for their continued support throughout the 2019/2020 year.

## Annual General Meeting

We held our Annual General Meeting in NSW Parliament House on October 23, 2019. The Chairperson, Annette O'Sullivan welcomed family members and guests, as well as guest speaker Bob Jackson. The new Management Committee took up the reins of the organisation for the year 2019/2020.

Special Resolutions were presented and passed unanimously. As a result, the word Mission was replaced with Purpose in all of the organisation's documents and communication channels, due to the negative connotations associated with the word "mission", particularly from the perspective of indigenous people. We also provided for the use of digital technology as a means of officially communicating to the membership (including the Notice of AGM) as well as within the Management Committee. Andrew Brak was reappointed as Public Officer and Harley, Russel and Day Chartered Accountants were reappointed as the Auditor for 2019/2020.

# Management Committee 2019/2020



**Annette O'Sullivan**  
Chairperson



**Alex Purvis**  
Treasurer



**Meg Sweeney**  
Secretary



**Annette Bush**  
Committee Member



**Yolande Cailly**  
Committee Member



**Matthew Dimmock**  
Committee Member



**Jane Gilkes**  
Committee Member



**Randa Habelrih**  
Committee Member



**Di Samuels**  
Committee Member

## Chairperson's Report

This past year has certainly been a challenge for all of us given first the bushfires and then the COVID-19 pandemic. As it has happened in many other organisations, our work practices have had to quickly adapt to the current circumstances in order to continue to work safely while at the same time continuing the important work of Family Advocacy.

I am very proud to be able to report that despite these challenges, Family Advocacy has successfully continued to deliver our leadership development and state wide advocacy work. Our very innovative and hardworking staff have moved from face-to-face presentations to webinars and zoom meetings while working remotely for many months. As you can see from this Annual Report, excellent work continues to be delivered by our staff and volunteers.

On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank them all for their commitment and patience in a very different and at times challenging work environment; as even though our technology has served us well, I am sure that the personal interaction in the office is missed by all.

Once again, this year the organisation has continued to promote the inclusion of all people with developmental disability and has maintained its place as a respected voice within NSW and nationally. Our total commitment to this purpose serves us well as others observe our clear vision: that every citizen is entitled to access and enjoy all that Australian society has to offer.

Unfortunately people with disability are still having to fight to be included, and Family Advocacy continues to stand beside them and their families as we lobby relevant ministers, politicians, government departments and other organisations to create systemic change.

Ongoing sustainable funding from the State Government is yet to be secured. Our staff members and allies will persevere in their efforts to increase the awareness of decision makers regarding the absolute necessity of advocacy funding into the future.

Due to a successful three-year grant from the NDIA we will be able to further enhance the work of our initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities with an exciting project that will target the opportunity for young people with disability to move into employment



**Annette O'Sullivan**

of their choice and interest within their community. Two new staff members will be appointed in the new financial year, who will deliver this project that is being funded as a consortium model with two other organisations: Imagine More (ACT) and Community Resource Unit – CRU (QLD) with Family Advocacy as the lead organisation.

In December 2019 we welcomed Troy Hester to the office. Troy is assisting with the Disability Royal Commission work that comes to us via those who wish to gather information on the process, liaise with the Commission and make submissions. The Disability Royal Commission is an important opportunity to shine a light on the injustices and neglect that many people with disability and their families have endured and continue to endure.

Our workshops addressing the Self-Management of NDIS funding and plans were very well received and attended. Family Advocacy continues to assist families to best use this funding stream to gain an independent, inclusive and valuable life for their family member with as much control over the process as possible. With ongoing announcements from the NDIA that may reduce this control, Family Advocacy will continue to lobby in the best interests of those who may be impacted.

I would like to thank our Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder for her excellent leadership and commitment over a rather turbulent year. The

## *Chairperson's Report*

changes that were necessary following the pandemic have created extra work and challenges for all staff and Cecile's support and consideration has greatly assisted in the ongoing work of the organisation. All staff members have managed this challenge with professionalism and competence and on behalf of the committee, I would like to congratulate them all. Thank you also to our Office Manager Marybelle Ignacio who has assisted with the working from home setups and making the office COVID safe. This has been a large task and handled efficiently in a short period of time. This ensured the operation of the office could continue in a timely manner.

Our Communications and Digital Media Manager, Clara Maldonado has also had a challenging workload as our office and our events moved into a virtual environment. Again this has been an impressive transition and our online and social media presence remains highly visible, with many seeing our content and making positive comments.

Thank you also to my fellow committee members for another year of their time and commitment to the organisation. It is a pleasure to be able to work with such committed and experienced colleagues. Special mention this year to both Di Samuels and Annette Bush who step off the committee after their maximum allowed tenure. They have contributed much to the governance of Family Advocacy and they will be missed.

Family Advocacy will continue to move into the coming year as a strong and professional organisation with many exciting projects to deliver, which will create positive social change for people with disability. I appreciate our excellent staff and our committee, members and allies. The future will have its challenges but the organisation will face them with professionalism and integrity.

***Annette O'Sullivan | Chairperson***

*NDIS Self-management workshop at West Ryde, February 2020*



## Executive Officer's Report

This past year has seen many changes which have tested all our abilities to be adaptable and responsive, so we can ensure we maintain the potency in the work we undertake to support inclusive lives of people with disability across NSW.

Over the course of this year, we have seen some significant shifts that give promise to reforming systems that impact negatively on people with disability. The introduction of the Disability Royal Commission was an important announcement, with much lobbying from people with disability, families and advocacy organisations undertaken to finally see this come to fruition. Since the commencement of the Commission's work, we have seen a strong focus on drawing out the lack of authentic inclusion of people with disability with alarming evidence given at hearings of the abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability. Family Advocacy received federal funding to support the engagement of people with disability and families with the work of the Commission, with a strong focus on attempting to mobilise people to speak up and tell their story. Our systems advocacy work with the Commission has taken on a multilayered approach in attempting to influence the direction of the recommendations so they are as strong as they can be to ensure people with disability are seen and valued as everyday citizens, and that the recommendations are clear in desegregating many of the systems that continue this outdated and harmful practice.

This year we have had a strong focus on continuing to expand our allies both within NSW and across the country. We view the formation of consortiums and alliances that support the full inclusion of people with disability as being instrumental for social change to be realised and it will take many individuals and groups to give voice to the necessity of this change. Groups such as the Australian Coalition of Inclusive Education (ACIE), formed to progress the jurisdictional and national reform needed to ensure an inclusive education is afforded to every child; the NSW Disability Advocacy Alliance, which continues its ongoing collective work to ensure advocacy funding security for many people with disability across NSW; and the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO), which supports and expands the good work undertaken across Australia



*Cecile Sullivan Elder*

by these values based capacity building organisations in supporting the development of valued roles for people with disability, are just some of the alliances that we have formed or continue to sustain strong relationships with going forward. The 'broadening of the tent' is a common phrase within the Family Advocacy office and a necessary focus in progressing the changes sought.

We have also seen this year the appointment of an Ageing and Disability Commissioner, Robert Fitzgerald; with the commission set up to take on some of the functions of the Ombudsman Department as well as other mechanisms to protect and promote the rights of adults with disability. The Commissioner's first task was to make a review to better understand the purpose, functions and future funding needs of disability advocacy across NSW, with the final report handed to NSW Parliament on December 19, 2019. We had several meetings with the Commissioner to communicate the Family Advocacy model of advocacy and to ensure that this model is well understood and remains strong within the landscape of NSW disability advocacy, with family leaders adding their vital experience to these meetings.

We have seen expansion in the work undertaken by our initiative, Resourcing Inclusive Communities with a strong focus on increasing the uptake of self-managers across NSW in line with our vision

# Executive Officer's Report

of increasing the self determination of people with disability; and on improving the employment opportunities of people with disability. We look forward to progressing this work over the coming years.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created much flux in the way we operate and the necessity of being adaptive and responsive to the most urgent needs of people with disability has been essential. Many people with disability have experienced systems failure and shortfalls, shining a light on system considerations needed in an attempt to improve equity for all.

Family Advocacy continues to be staffed by people who hold a strong social justice perspective and are very passionate about the work they undertake, and

it continues to be a privilege to work alongside each of them. Each one of their roles contributes in some way to enhancing the opportunities of people with disability.

The Management Committee has remained strong over this period, with very well-informed family members continuing to take the lead in the governance and direction of Family Advocacy. This is a vital component of the strength of the organisation, and each committee member is recognised as a knowledge leader in the progression of the rights and interests of people with disability more broadly.

**Cecile Sullivan Elder**  
*Executive Officer*

*Representing Resourcing Inclusive Communities at the Festival of Inclusion, November 2019*



# Volunteers and Family Leaders

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

- Governance of the organisation
- Resource development
- Collaboration in the development of and co-presenting at workshops
- Administrative support prior to and during the workshops
- Providing stories that feed directly into submissions in relation to early childhood, education, employment, NDIS at local, state and federal levels
- Contributing towards submissions for the Disability Royal Commission
- Attending meetings with MPs in relation to inclusive education
- Sharing stories and insights of lived experience with politicians and families, through our systemic advocacy, our advocacy and leadership events and online webinars
- Attending parent consultations in relation to your education experiences for roundtables at NSW. For example, 2020 Disability education standards review, National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 review, NSW Disability Inclusion Act review, NDIS Roundtable with Shadow Minister Penny Sharpe MLC, and various consultations with the Department of Education in relation to access request process, school culture and belonging
- Supporting, engaging with, and encouraging other families in their respective journeys towards inclusion for their family member.

We acknowledge your generous efforts in giving your time and traveling substantial distances for this.

Thank you to the following for their generous efforts in 2019/2020:

- Rhiannon Brodie
- Annette Bush, in addition to role as a Committee Member

- Yolande Cailly, in addition to role as a Committee Member
- Kathy Cologon
- Jo Cross
- Jarrod Currey
- Matthew Dimmock
- Judith Ellis
- Laura Fox
- Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner
- Jane Gilkes
- Penny and Al Graham
- Randa Habelrih
- Catherine Hogan
- Linda Hughes
- Danielle Lawless
- Elise and Michael Magrath
- Catia Malaquias
- Damien Moran from Ashfield Primary School
- Cathy Naing
- Annette O'Sullivan, in addition to role as a Committee Member
- Alex Purvis
- Carolyn Quinn
- Georgina Roussac
- Di Samuels, in addition to role as a Committee Member
- Kathie Sayeed
- Vanessa and Josh Shearman
- Meg Sweeney, in addition to role as a Committee Member
- Neale Waddy
- Alison and Andrew Wilson
- Gina Wilson-Burns.

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

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

# *Advocacy and Leadership Development*

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

## Advocacy

Throughout 2019/2020, a crucial part of the work of Family Advocacy continued to be the provision of advocacy related information and advice to the families, friends and allies of people with disability. Recognising that families are in the strongest position to advocate for their family member with developmental disability, we support them so they can ensure – through advocacy – that the protection and rights of their family member are upheld. People can receive information and advice as often as they need to and this varies according to the nature and the level of complexity of the topic. A breakdown of the issues raised during advocacy enquiries is on page 20.

## Leadership Development and Training

As well as supporting families with their advocacy enquiries, Family Advocacy believes in the importance of events that develop the connections, awareness and individual skills of families so they can take on leadership roles and influence change within their own family; in their community; assisting with the work of Family Advocacy; and in broader arenas on behalf of people with disability. This robust and targeted strategy—in line with the vision and purpose of Family Advocacy—has resulted in many confident and active family leaders connected to the organisation.

In 2019/2020 there was a continued approach to build on connections to family leaders further along their inclusive education journeys as well as those moving beyond the school years. Family leaders shared their knowledge on a broader level, within workshops and information sessions, as guest speakers and as part of workshop audiences. The second half of the year focused around sharing experiences and insights as we developed our webinar series “Advocacy Tools and Latest News” across a number of topic areas.

Family Advocacy supported family members to:

- Attend events sponsored by Family Advocacy
- Enhance their skills and knowledge by undergoing specific training
- Experience values-based training for deeper understanding and community building
- Present and assist at Family Advocacy workshops



- Share their stories at events, through resources and social media platforms
- Contribute experiences and testimonies to the Family Advocacy library, resources and websites
- Attend and participate in meetings with politicians or senior bureaucrats.

Family Advocacy also encouraged individuals to become involved in presenting material and facilitating group work at key events, workshops and information sessions, sharing their experiences to increase their own skills, competencies and confidence in relation to their advocacy efforts and as a family leader.

## Event Attendance

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

Events families were supported to attend included:

- Social Role Valorisation (SRV) two-day training: Towards a Better Life, Foundations Forum, Sydney
- One of the Kids, inclusive education workshops
- Carers Moving Forward, parent workshops
- Josh’s Story film launch

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

- Navigating the School Years weekend event, Sydney
- What Does Inclusion Look Like?, presentation to community groups, Mayfield.

## Webinar series – Advocacy Tools and Latest News

With the inability to complete our face to face workshops for the rest of the year due to COVID-19, we established a webinar series titled 'Advocacy Tools and Latest News'. The series covers many topics we want to be able to support people through, particularly around the many and fast changes happening across sectors due to the pandemic. Each webinar was an hour in length with a 30-45 minute presentation and then time for questions.

Webinars delivered in the series from May 4 to June 29 were:

- Back to School: Learning at home but not alone
- Disability Royal Commission update
- NDIS in the times of COVID-19
- Disability Royal Commission: Q&A with Your Story Disability Legal Support
- Health update and medical safeguarding.

## Education

Getting off to a good start in life is vital for all children, particularly children with developmental disability. A good start means commencing a path that keeps the child embedded in their family and community. A 'special' or 'separate' path can lead to children and families feeling isolated, vulnerable and disconnected from the typical and ordinary environments other children and families enjoy.

Family Advocacy's aim is that all children are supported in age appropriate ways to be active members of their families and communities. This starts with being a valued member of regular classrooms. Education increasingly forms a large part of the organisation's contact with families and in 2019/2020 comprised more than half of the enquiries taken by Family Advocacy. Barriers families face in education continue to include:

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

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

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

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

## ***Navigating the School Years live-in event***

A successful community grant in aid submission from the NSW Department of Education in 2019 resulted in a weekend live-in event for 34 people representing 23 families. The families joined us through an expression of interest process to expand their knowledge and understanding of how to bring about authentic inclusive education for their child with disability. All families had already attended previous presentations on inclusive education with Family Advocacy and this weekend served to deepen this.

The event was co-designed by Family Advocacy together with four family leaders to bring about a robust and practical two-day program that included a number of guest speakers as well. Principles of Universal Design for Learning were practically applied throughout the weekend and the concept of SRV thinking through roles in education was also introduced.

Feedback included:

‘Great content and many ideas to be thought and considered for my daughter.’

‘Understanding what segregation REALLY is and how to look out for it.’

‘Loved hearing what is possible when we focus on a person’s capabilities rather than their limitations.’

‘Social Role Valorisation was inspiring. Working through adjustments tasks was helpful.’

‘I really enjoyed the sessions and the thought-provoking content. Thank you.’

## ***One of the Kids: Inclusive education workshops***

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team typically travel throughout NSW to present this core workshop to families, which aims at improving their advocacy skills and providing advocacy strategies to assist them to achieve an inclusive education for their child with disability. This year we were able to run three face-to-face workshops in two metro and one regional locations. We also ran another workshop online. ‘One of the Kids’ is relevant for families of preschool, primary and high school students and covers topics such as: How the school years can lead to a meaningful life; a brief history of disability education; what an inclusive education looks like;

evidence and support for inclusive education; how inclusion can look in the classroom; building good school relations; education policies and supports that exist within schools; and necessary advocacy tools and strategies for families.

These workshops provided opportunities for robust and at times challenging discussions. Families made the most of networking and asking questions about their own specific issues. Evaluations indicated expectations were either met or exceeded.

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

Feedback from participants included:

‘I loved yesterday. You do not know how privileged I felt to have so much time spent with you and Jo. I got so much out of it. In fact, I feel like my whole approach to parenting [my son] needs to change, which is very confronting but also great news for both of us. I also feel a lot more confident about his transition to school.’

‘Hearing about having a vision was most helpful and reassuring. Feel very empowered since attending the workshop with a better understanding of inclusion.’

## ***Learning from home but not alone webinar***

Our first webinar in the Advocacy Tools and Latest News series was education based, providing tips for parents supervising children with disability who were studying at home due to the pandemic. We also discussed ways in which we can ensure, through advocacy, that we keep the continuum of inclusive education rights and expectations going in COVID-19 times and beyond. Some of the topics covered were: communication with school; available resources; disability standards of education and practical tips to keep up social engagement and peer connections.

## ***Inclusive education presentations***

We were invited by Carers NSW to present a one-hour segment on inclusive education at their Moving

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

Forward forums for families where information, articles and our resources were provided on the day. These presentations took place in three regional and two metro locations and reached over 60 families.

My Time, in conjunction with Learning Links and the Parenting Research Centre invited Family Advocacy to be a guest speaker at an online forum with families. Over the 90 minute presentation and discussion, we provided information on who we are and how Family Advocacy can be an ongoing support as well as an understanding of authentic inclusive education and ensuing benefits.

Communities for Children Hunter group invited Family Advocacy and Resourcing Inclusive Communities to present to their group about our work and focus on what inclusion really means from both an education and community perspective. This was a great opportunity to share our resources and family stories and encourage participation and discussion with the organisations present.

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

Sydney based education consulting group, Authentic Parent Voice, invited Family Advocacy to present sessions at their online conference and covered two topics: Why a long-term vision for your child is essential and Making inclusion positive – keeping a vision.

## ***School and Community Expo***

Family Advocacy had the opportunity to hold a stall at the School and Community Expo in South West Sydney, which had a focus on school leadership and provided an opportunity to strengthen the inclusive education messages to many school Principals, Deputies and other key staff who attended the event. A number of these contacts requested booklets and/or further resources.

## ***Collaborative Engagement Framework project***

This project which is nearing completion for end of year 2020 was funded by a grant from the NSW Department of Education. The first two phases of the

project were spent undertaking a landscape audit through surveys with families and educators across NSW to draw out the most common challenges and successful practices in student-centred collaborative engagement. From here we conducted intensive focus groups with parents and educators throughout NSW.

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

## **NDIS**

### ***Guest presentations and community expos***

A Vietnamese parent group invited Family Advocacy to speak about how we can support them, and they had a particular area of concern around the NDIS and housing. This offered an opportunity to show our recent films Rachael’s Story and Jac’s Place, which generated robust conversation around finding unique and thoughtful solutions.

Family Advocacy also participated in a community networking expo with Vietnamese families in Bankstown, which focused around our advocacy support within the NDIS funding model and how to use this to develop more ordinary experiences and community life for their family members.

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

# Advocacy and Leadership Development

## NDIS in the times of COVID-19 webinar

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the NDIA continues to monitor and react to the requirements of NDIS participants. As a result, a number of changes to the NDIS have taken place, and this webinar aimed to outline these changes and provide tools and resources so participants can best advocate for their family member in the times of COVID-19 and beyond.

Feedback included:

'[What I found most helpful about the webinar was] its informal approach, ability to ask questions, confirmation of info I'd read on the NDIA website and heard from other sources, additional useful info and a reminder that Family Advocacy is there to help, and a good source of information, and has some connections within other organisations eg. education.'

## Health

### Health sector update and medical safeguarding webinar

This webinar outlined the systemic changes occurring in the healthcare sector due to the pandemic and how people could be involved, as well as offering practical tips and information that provided families with ways to safeguard their family member both now and beyond the pandemic.

Feedback included:

'Good to hear about the work that Family Advocacy has been and is still doing through this time of COVID-19 on our family members' behalf.'

**Karen Tippett**

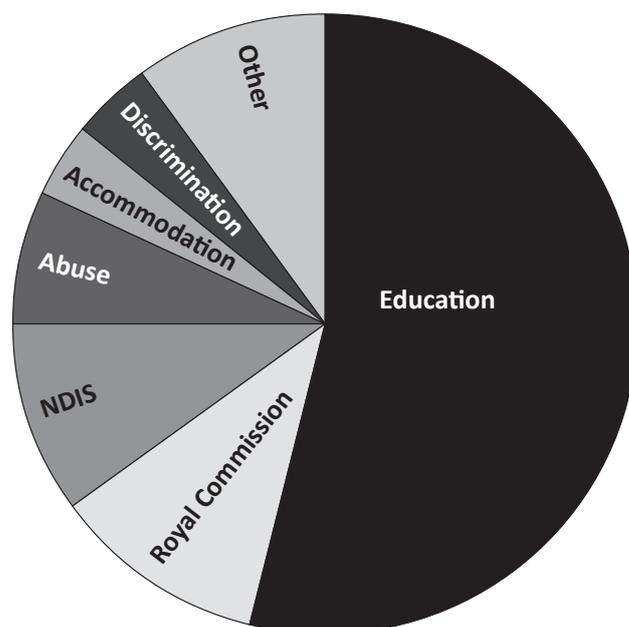
Advocacy and Leadership Development Manager

## Breakdown of issues raised during enquiries

Education	54.3%
Disability Royal Commission	11.6%
NDIS	9.7%
Abuse	6.7%
Accommodation	3.8%
Discrimination	3.8%
Other	10.1%

### Other (10.1%):

Uncategorised	4.1%
Health	1.4%
Employment	1.1%
Future planning	1.1%
Services	1.1%
Community inclusion	0.6%
Isolation	0.5%
Individualised funding	0.2%



# Disability Royal Commission

## Royal Commission: Advocacy Support

Family Advocacy received funding from the Department of Social Services to provide advocacy support to people wishing to engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. There has been significant development in this area, including the creation of a designated website page to house factsheets, resources and webinar recordings, as well as a video introducing Troy Hester, our Advocacy Project Officer: Royal Commission. In the video, Troy talks about the Royal Commission and outlines the ways in which Family Advocacy can support families to engage with its work.

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

### **Disability Royal Commission update webinar**

This webinar aimed to provide general information and develop a level of comfort enabling people to want to directly engage with the Commission. An update on what's been happening at the Commission, a quick overview of the recent issues papers, resources and support available was outlined.

Feedback on what was the most helpful part of the webinar included:

'To learn what royal commissions are for and to gain the confidence to make a submission.'

'Insights that are not obvious in the Royal Commission's public communications.'

'How to respond to the Royal Commission through issues papers.'

### **Q and A with Your Story Disability Legal Support- Do I need legal advice? webinar**

This webinar saw us collaborate with the Your Story Disability Legal Support team around the Disability

Royal Commission. A solicitor from Your Story answered some preset questions and then the session was opened to participant live questions as well.

Feedback included:

'Liked the question and answer session as these are common things that come up.'

'[I now] have a greater understanding of what this commission is actually about and how it may relate to my family.'

## Royal Commission: Systems Advocacy

Prior to any hearings or the release of any Issues Papers, Family Advocacy was invited by the Disability Royal Commission to attend briefings.

The first briefing was on inclusive education, to further inform the Education Issues Paper and clarify the Commission's understanding of Inclusive Education. Family Advocacy, QLD Advocacy Incorporated, All Means All, Children and Young People with Disability Australia were some of the organisations present, as well as all the Commissioners and a number of academics.

Another briefing was held with advocacy organisations funded to work on the Disability Royal Commission to inform us around the counselling and legal support that will be provided and the current position on privacy issues. It was important to also be informed that the Commission have a dedicated research project analysing previous inquiries over the last 10-20 years.

In 2019/2020, Family Advocacy made the following submissions to the Disability Royal Commission:

- Inclusive Education
- Response to Education Issues Paper

We are pleased to have been invited by the Royal Commission to give evidence at their next Education hearing in Brisbane as a result of our submissions, which were made all the more powerful by the stories shared by families who have reached out to Family Advocacy for support. The Commission supplied us with a matrix of questions which formed the foundation of our 75-page Witness Statement. Originally, the hearing was set for March, 2020 but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was rescheduled for October, 2020.

# Family Advocacy Events and Presentations

Date	Event	Location
July 31, 2019	What Does Inclusion Look Like?	Mayfield
September 3, 2019	Presented at Carers Moving Forward event	Merimbula
September 5, 2019	Presented at Carers Moving Forward event	Batemans Bay
September 9, 2019	Fairfield and Liverpool School and Community Expo	Liverpool
September 30, 2019	My Time information session	Webinar
October 9, 2019	Mapping session with Community Services and EACH	Fairfield
October 17, 2019	Catholic University information session	Strathfield
October 22, 2019	Presented at Carers Moving Forward event	Pennant Hills
October 23, 2019	Inclusive Education: Front and Centre Parliamentary Forum	Sydney CBD
October 25, 2019	Navigating the School Years weekend event	Brighton
October 29, 2019	My Time information session	Caves Beach
November 14, 2019	Presentation to Vietnamese Community Network	Bankstown
November 18, 2019	Presentation at Authentic Parent Voice Conference	Webinar
November 18, 2019	One of the Kids	Mayfield
November 21, 2019	One of the Kids	Castle Hill
December 18, 2019	Information session	Burwood
February 4, 2020	Presented at Carers Moving Forward event	Bondi
February 20, 2020	Presented at Carers Moving Forward event	Raymond Terrace
February 24, 2020	Vietnamese parents support group information session	Bonnyrigg
March 12, 2020	One of the Kids	Maroubra
March 17, 2020	One of the Kids	Singleton
May 4, 2020	Back to School: Learning at Home But Not Alone	Webinar
May 8, 2020	Inclusive Education Practices information session	Webinar
May 27, 2020	Disability Royal Commission Update	Webinar
June 1, 2020	NDIS in the Times of COVID-19	Webinar
June 17, 2020	Disability Royal Commission: Q&A with Your Story	Webinar
June 29, 2020	Health Sector and Medical Safeguarding Update	Webinar

*Navigating the School Years weekend event, October 2019*



# *Systems Advocacy*

# Systems Advocacy

## NDIS

Family Advocacy has undertaken extensive systems advocacy in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). These include:

- Submission to the Joint Standing Committee for the NDIS on NDIS Planning
- Submission to the Joint Standing Committee for the NDIS on NDIS Supported Independent Living
- Attended a Specialist Disability Accommodation information session with Libby Ellis from Summer Foundation
- Attended a Supported Independent Living information session with Linda Hughes, Support Co-ordinator and family member
- Attended an Independent Living Options information session with Marita Walker from NDIA
- Attended Every Australian Counts virtual webinars such as “Getting answers to the big questions – our Zoom forum with the NDIA” and provided direct input to the Minister for the NDIS, Stuart Robert, the General Manager of National Delivery at the NDIA, Scott McNaughton and the NDIS Actuary, Sarah Johnson
- Updated seven NDIS factsheets for families
- Held multiple meetings with the NDIA concerning the Self-Management policy and practice and Individualised Living Options. Families contributed their insights and experience to this process
- Utilised social media and email to keep our members updated on NDIS announcements and changes as they were released by the NDIA
- Attended three NDIS webinars hosted by Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) with NDIA CEO, Martin Hoffman. Mr Hoffman provided an overview of the NDIS response to COVID-19 and answered key questions raised by young people with disability and families
- Presented an online webinar: “NDIS in the times of COVID-19” where we provided an update of the latest news and changes to NDIS at a systems/ sector level and advocacy tips on how to harness the current changes



*Leanne Varga*

- Attended NDIS Roundtable “How can we make the NDIS the best it can be” along with family member Linda Hughes. The event was hosted by Penny Sharpe MLC, Shadow Minister for Disability.

## Education

Families continue to experience significant issues with their child obtaining an equitable quality education in regular classrooms at local schools. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the stark gap between policy and practice has widened and much improvement is needed in setting a clear direction of inclusive practice within the NSW education system.

The Systems Advocacy team continues to place pressure on the NSW government and the NSW Department of Education to ensure accountability in relation to implementing the recommendations from the 2017 Parliamentary Inquiry into Students with a Disability or Special Needs in NSW.

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

# Systems Advocacy

As part of our campaign, clear objectives were developed to instigate change and build momentum, with the actions below:

We engaged our community of parents who want their child to attend the regular class at their local school through various platforms, including a webpage, a Facebook group for Same Classroom advocates and champions, regular Twitter feeds, and an Instagram page.

Family Advocacy hosted a parliamentary forum on October 23, 2019 in NSW Parliament House called Inclusive Education: Front and Centre. This event highlighted our campaign and was co-hosted by the three major parties; Minister for Education, Shadow Minister for Education, and The Greens education representative. We launched Al's Story, a film documenting Al Graham's inclusive education experience from Kindergarten to Year 12. 130 people attended the forum, including people with disability, families, colleagues, supporters and 15 Members of Parliament. The livestream recording of the event received 4,400 views on Facebook. We were congratulated by the Minister for Education, Sarah Mitchell MLC, and the Shadow Minister for Disability, Penny Sharpe MLC, in Parliament. Shortly after the event, the Minister for Education attended the two schools that we showcased at the forum as implementing good inclusive practices (Ashfield Public School and Turrumurra High School), and she mentioned these visits in Parliament.

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

We also attended meetings to build relationships with relevant academics and researchers in Australia and internationally including the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP), Australian Research Alliance

for Children and Youth (ARACY), Public Schools Foundation, University of Technology Sydney's Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion, Sydney University Policy Lab, NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), Department of Education at Macquarie University, Sydney University and University of NSW, Wayne Sailor and Elizabeth Kozleski from the University of Kansas.

We continue to meet with Members of Parliament to highlight the significant gap between policy and practice. To date, 40 meetings with State Members of Parliament have been held (this includes meetings instigated by family members), and three Federal Members of Parliament.

We met with all of the major political parties, NSW Minister for Education and the NSW Shadow Minister for Education, plus the smaller parties such as the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, Animal Justice Party and the three Independents to push for an Inclusive Education Policy Statement in NSW. We are also advocating at the federal level, to formulate a National Inclusive Education Policy.

One of the asks in our Same Classroom Same Opportunity Campaign was for the NSW Department of Education to establish a steering committee made up of stakeholders to guide their future policy decisions. We are pleased that the NSW Department of Education's Disability Strategy Implementation Team (DSIT) established three Reference Groups: General, Professional Development and Access Request Reference groups. Family Advocacy is part of all three groups and attended meetings throughout the year. When attending a General reference group meeting, we welcomed the announcement that the NSW Department of Education would be issuing an Inclusive Education Statement in August 2020 and an Inclusive Education Policy by December 2020.

Both are the result of pressure applied by Family Advocacy and other disability advocacy organisations for an Inclusive Education Policy in alignment with the UNCRPD and General Comment No.4 (GC4). GC4 provides clarity for the meaning of inclusion (which has been misinterpreted by our States and Territories to include special schools and support units in mainstream schools) and also clarifies what does not constitute inclusion (exclusion, segregation, integration). In doing so, it makes it clear that the

# Systems Advocacy

segregation of students with disabilities is a form of discrimination against them.

We also:

- Received the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) NSW Curriculum Review final report, which acknowledged and considered a number of the recommendations and comments made in our submission
- Attended meetings with the Disability Discrimination Commissioner
- Participated in five workshops for the Department of Education's Delivery Unit project "Improving the Outcomes for Children and Young People with Disability" as part of a stakeholder group
- Attended meetings on inclusive education with the NSW Shadow Minister for Education
- Had our questions asked to the Minister for Education in Budget Estimates for us by various Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislature, holding the Minister to account on the promised recommendations from the Parliamentary Inquiry on Students with a disability or special needs in NSW schools
- Attended and participated in The Melbourne Declaration Review National Forum hosted by Federal Minister for Education, Dan Tehan
- Regularly tweeted and posted in our social media channels specifically addressing the issue of inclusive education
- Attended education-related virtual webinars, workshops and conferences post COVID-19 with Evidence for Learning, Inclusive Schools Australia, and Disability Innovation Institute UNSW
- Presented at the International Inclusive Education Summit 2019 in Auckland on the topic of "Converting academic research into policy: A networking approach".

Family Advocacy also met with the head of the Discipline Policy Review on several occasions. Our main message to impress upon the Department of Education is the importance of "joining the dots" when it comes to behaviour and disability, particularly in light of the myriad of reviews that are occurring in this space such as the Restrictive Practices

Authorisation Review and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Disability needs to be brought front and centre and the connection expressly made in order that teachers take this into account when learning how to view/approach a child with behavioural issues.

## ***Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education***

In October, 2019, Family Advocacy was part of steering committee that formed the Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education (ACIE).

Core organisations are: Family Advocacy (NSW), JFA Purple Orange (SA), Tasmanian Education Reform Group (TAS), Community Resource Unit (QLD), Queensland Advocacy Inc (QLD), Queensland Collective for Inclusive Education (QLD), Imagine More (ACT), Youth Disability Advocacy Service (VIC), Children and Young People with Disability Australia (national), and All Means All (national). The ACIE was formed to attempt to bring collective messaging around inclusive education to the Royal Commission on Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability as well as government at national and state/territory level. We have been meeting fortnightly.

The Coalition has published the following:

- Learning at home in a time of crisis: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) resource
- Providing inclusive education for children and young people with disability in a 'time of crisis': Principles and Recommendations
- Driving change: A roadmap for achieving inclusive education in Australia. The 10-year roadmap has now been endorsed by at least 25 disability advocacy organisations such as People with Disability Australia, Women with Disabilities Australia, Down Syndrome Australia, and Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.

The ACIE hosted a National Inclusive Education Roundtable in May 2020 to hold a national conversation about inclusive education in times of COVID-19. Among the many attendees were representatives from Departments of Education from each state and territory around the country, disability youth organisations, the NDIS, Disability

# Systems Advocacy

Royal Commission, Department of Social Services, and the Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Family Advocacy arranged for a parent and a university student to participate so they could share their experiences, barriers to access and suggestions for improvement moving forward. The main message was that the inequities that were present before the pandemic have been amplified during the COVID-19 period. Major concerns were lack of social connection, lack of reasonable adjustments to provide access to curriculum, the digital divide, and lack of communication.

## Disability advocacy funding

As a founding member of the Disability Advocacy Alliance (DAA), Family Advocacy has continued to engage in significant lobbying through the Alliance's "Stand By Me" campaign, to ensure we don't lose vital funding from the NSW Government. This included attending meetings with many Members of Parliament including the NSW Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services, Gareth Ward; The Premier, Gladys Berejiklian and the Treasurer, Dominic Perrottet, both as an organisation and as part of the Alliance.

On July 1, 2019, the Government appointed the Ageing and Disability Commissioner, to better protect adults with disability and older people from abuse, neglect and exploitation in home and community settings. One of the Commissioner's first tasks was to provide a report to Parliament in relation to the funding arrangements for independent specialist advocacy, information and representative organisations for people with disability in NSW.

The Commissioner's review focused on understanding the purpose, functions and future funding needs of disability advocacy across NSW. Family Advocacy contributed to the review by preparing a submission in response to the NSW Disability Advocacy Review Issues Paper. We also met with Mr Robert Fitzgerald, the Ageing and Disability Commissioner on several occasions, as an individual organisation and as part of the Disability Advocacy Alliance Steering Committee. Some of the meetings were formal stakeholder forums, some were one on one with our Executive Officer, and another with our Executive Officer, Systems Advocate and family member Lesley

Light, who shared the importance of advocacy in the disability space with specific examples of support from Family Advocacy, the role of State funding, and the future of the sector.

The Commissioner's Report, released on December 19, 2019, proposed the NSW Disability Advocacy Futures Program, and recommended the government provide a budget allocation of \$13 million for 2020/21, \$14 million for 2021/22, and \$15 million for 2022/23. At the time of publication, the government has not formally responded to the report other than to extend the current funding to December 2020. As a result, the loss of funding is imminent and there is no stability or opportunity to plan for the future.

The Alliance held extensive discussions in relation to how best to work collectively to safeguard advocacy funding and it was decided to officially respond to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner's Report via a Position Statement. The Alliance continues to negotiate with the NSW government to obtain a commitment to fund disability advocacy in perpetuity, so we can continue to promote and uphold the rights of people with disability.

## COVID-19

It has been vital for Family Advocacy to maintain communication with our community at these uncertain times, and we invited their input via various channels in relation to any issues, barriers to access and/or disadvantage they might be experiencing due to the pandemic, so that we may pass this on directly to the government.

We attended national meetings led by CYDA, called "COVID-19 impacts on Children and Young People with Disability", every week during the first wave of the pandemic. Several initiatives meant we were successful in raising awareness to the public and to the Federal and State governments about the needs of people with disability. This led to the National Disability Plan, priority for online shopping deliveries from major supermarkets, NDIS changes to allow for flexibility, and the "More than isolated" report by CYDA which was sent to all Premiers.

When the first wave hit and schools shut down in NSW, we attended the NSW Department of Health's Disability Community of Practice (COP) which is a

# Systems Advocacy

multidisciplinary, cross-departmental group. Every week, there were presenters on different topics such as Making Decisions in a COVID-19 world, Respiratory Pandemic Preparedness, Consumers, Communication and COVID-19, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We utilised this forum to raise any COVID-19 issues with the Department of Health including PPE access and use, education, and ensuring a loved one can accompany a person with intellectual disability if hospitalised.

The NSW Department of Education formed a COVID-19 taskforce. We regularly kept in contact with this taskforce, providing case studies of negative experiences and requesting clear guidance in relation to PPE.

## Other Systems Work

We attended and participated in the End Violence against Children and Young People Summit 2019,

hosted by the Advocate for Children and Young People. A report will be compiled as a result of our input which was providing a local context to the evidence based resource “Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children”.

Family Advocacy and a number of family members from our community also attended the official consultations run by the NSW Department of Families, Communities and Disability Services around the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 Review. One of the main issues we pushed for was that inclusive education be expressly codified in the legislation specifically in alignment with the UNCRPD.

Family Advocacy also prepared a submission to the New South Wales Government on Restrictive Practices Authorisation in NSW.

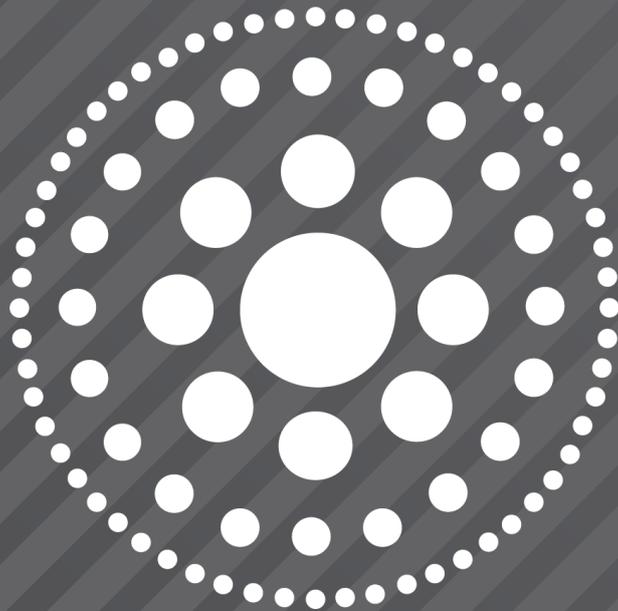
**Leanne Varga**

*Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager*

*Inclusive Education: Front and Centre Parliamentary Forum, October 2019*



# *Resourcing Inclusive Communities*



# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

Resourcing Inclusive Communities is an initiative of Family Advocacy focusing on capacity building. We provide information through our online platforms, through events such as webinars, workshops and conferences, we design tailored training, mentoring and supports for external services and develop extensive resources. We support positive change through working with people with disability, their family members, service providers, mainstream services, businesses and the broader community.

In August 2019 Resourcing Inclusive Communities held a Strategic Planning session to consolidate the strategic direction of the initiative. As a result, the following Vision, Purpose and Goals were articulated:

## Vision

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

## Purpose

- We provide resources, information, mentoring and training to enable people with disability to live as active and valued members of the community
- We support positive change through working with people with disability, families, communities and services.

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

## Strategic Goals

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

## Presentations, expos and workshops

### *What Does Inclusion Look Like?*

On July 31, 2019, Emma Baxter from Resourcing Inclusive Communities, Karen Tippett from Family Advocacy and parent Jo Cross were invited to present at a Community Partners Forum in Mayfield in the Hunter region. The Forum was interested to understand more about the lives of people with disability and what inclusion looks like. The presentation was well received and many commented that it opened their minds to barriers and possibilities needing to be addressed.

Resourcing Inclusive Communities was then invited by Showstoppers Ability Services in Scone to present two information sessions in August. One to the families linked to Showstoppers, and another to the Scone Council Access and Inclusion meeting. Jo Cross shared how an inclusive life was built for her daughter through vision and commitment to be fully involved in mainstream education and community. People in both sessions were particularly engaged with Jo’s sharing about the parallel life paths that can be forced on people with disability and how this increasingly widens the gap between their life and experiences and those typical of community. Some family members realised that their children were on the separate path and they needed to do something about it. A Scone Councillor also recognised that they were investing in separate path provisions for people in their community.

### *Festival of Inclusion*

On November 21 2019, Resourcing Inclusive Communities was represented at the Festival of Inclusion in Sydney Olympic Park. Cecile Sullivan Elder manned a stall and held many conversations regarding what it takes for people with disability to be authentically included in their communities. It was evident that there is much work to be done in this space, with many attendees still receiving very traditional support arrangements from the disability service sector.

### *NDIS Self-management Workshops*

Five workshops on NDIS self-management were held between February 17 and February 27 2020, in Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Merimbula, West Ryde and Springwood. These workshops were funded through

# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

the NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Readiness Grant. The project also comprised a series of three webinars which will be delivered early in the 2020/2021 financial year.

The workshops were shaped with the input of members of our community who responded to a survey asking about their experiences of self-managing supports. Content focused on illustrating how this truly individualised approach enables the person with disability to be at the centre of planning and designing their supports, and can lead to much better outcomes for the participant.

The peer-to-peer style workshops were developed and facilitated by Catherine Hogan and co-presented with Meg Sweeney. The workshops were well received and attended by both people with disability and families who wanted authentic choice and control, and current self-managers who needed more information on the “nuts and bolts” of self-management.

## Resources

### *Josh's Story*

This six-minute film brings to life the journey of Josh Shearman through his mainstream education, work experience conducted whilst at school, and how this has led to a full and meaningful work life post school. Josh now runs his own business, JLS Mail Link which currently has 14 local businesses as customers. Josh has also stayed connected to the businesses he undertook his work experience with, and offers them his time through volunteering.

Josh's story illustrates how far reaching the beneficial impacts of an inclusive education can be in achieving this, and how instrumental it is for families to have a strong vision of the possibilities of the future for their family member with disability.

About 40 people attended a community launch of the film held on November 22, 2019 at the Bathurst Golf Club. The event was attended by family, friends and many local businesses, highlighting the strong community support for Josh and his business.

### *Publications*

In 2019 we produced a handbook titled “Employing Your Own Staff”, a step by step introductory guide to

designing staff roles and recruiting, hiring and training staff.

We also updated and printed “Harness the Possibilities”, a booklet intended to help families develop a positive vision for their child with disability. Both are available on our website.

## Projects

### *From School to Work - Creating meaningful employment pathways for students with disability*

In 2020, Resourcing Inclusive Communities received an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant through their Economic and Community Participation program to deliver a three-year project titled From School to Work, together with Imagine More in ACT and Community Resource Unit in Queensland.

The project, starting the second half of 2020, aims to inspire, increase confidence and motivate students with disability and their families to action so the outcome of obtaining meaningful employment can be realised. To achieve this, we will be holding introductory webinars followed by in-depth workshops - with input from educators and potential employers - for the following cohorts:

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

We will also hold two conferences over the course of the three-year project; one in NSW and one in ACT.

## National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations

Resourcing Inclusive Communities is part of the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations (NACBO). The Alliance is a national network of not-for-profit, values based organisations, with the shared vision and belief that all people with disability are valued citizens and have the right to contribute to society through social and economic participation. Our ongoing involvement over the course of this financial year has continued with many benefits gained from being a part of this national alliance.

# Resourcing Inclusive Communities

## Events and Presentations

Date	Event	Location
July 31, 2019	What Does Inclusion Look Like?	Mayfield
August 13, 2019	What Does Inclusion Look Like?	Scone
November 21, 2019	Festival of Inclusion	Homebush
November 22, 2019	Josh's Story film launch	Bathurst
February 17, 2020	NDIS Self-Management workshop	Tamworth
February 18, 2020	NDIS Self-Management workshop	Wagga Wagga
February 20, 2020	NDIS Self-Management workshop	Merimbula
February 26, 2020	NDIS Self-Management workshop	West Ryde
February 27, 2020	NDIS Self-Management workshop	Springwood

*NDIS Self-Management workshop, Tamworth, February 2020*



# *Staying Connected*

# Communications

Our communications aim to amplify the strength of families, community and advocacy, as well as connecting us with our stakeholders through resources, useful information and real-life stories. With the arrival of the pandemic, the communications role also became crucial in supporting our Zoom video conferencing technology, which is now one of the main methods that we use to communicate internally and externally; and the platform in which we deliver our virtual events following the temporary cancellation of our face-to-face workshops.

## Resources and Publications

Providing information and resources to families and professionals is a fundamental role of Family Advocacy. The communications role assisted with the creation of a number of video, printed and digital resources and publications this year, including:

- Strategic Plan 2020-2022, available digitally in our website
- A revamped 'Harness the Possibilities' booklet (Resourcing Inclusive Communities)
- Employing Your Own Staff (Resourcing Inclusive Communities), available in digital format
- Various assets produced for the 'Navigating The School Years' family leadership weekend. This included the editing of short films and coordinating the production of the DVD set 'Engaging all students in the inclusive classroom'
- Recordings of all our webinars which are available for viewing in YouTube.

The purchase of a tripod bracket and a lapel microphone for a mobile phone has enabled us to create more video content inhouse, such as:

- A video introducing Troy Hester, our Project Officer – Disability Royal Commission
- A clip promoting the self-management workshops, featuring presenter Catherine Hogan
- A Q&A with Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, who was guest speaker at our Inclusive Education Parliamentary forum but couldn't attend in person.



*Clara Maldonado*

Other video resources launched this year were:

"Al's story", a film documenting Al Graham's inclusive education journey from Kindergarten to Year 12 at Turrumurra High School in NSW, crafted by Citrine Pictures. The film was launched at the Inclusive Education Parliamentary forum on October 23 2019, and has become our most watched YouTube video with 3,619 views.

"Josh's Story", a short film illustrating the link between an inclusive education and employment opportunities. Since its launch in November, the film has received nearly 2,000 views in YouTube and a further 1,200 views in Facebook.

## Media Releases and Coverage

This year we reached out to media outlets – radio, newspapers and online publications on a number of occasions.

In the lead up to International Day of People with Disability, we sent a media release to the Western Advocate newspaper in Bathurst, featuring Josh Shearman's story. The release was picked up by the paper and Vanessa Shearman, Josh's mother was interviewed. The story made the front page of the paper and also appeared in their website on December 7 2019, with the online article linking to our film "Josh's story".

# Communications

The media promotion of the One of The Kids workshops resulted in two radio interviews (Radio 2RE in Taree and Radio 2NURFM in Newcastle) and one newspaper article in the Manning River Times. Even though both workshops were cancelled, the media coverage increased our public profile as well as increasing awareness of the benefits of inclusive education.

A press/radio release was also distributed to promote Resourcing Inclusive Communities' NDIS self-management workshops. As a result, we received coverage in the Northern Daily Leader (Tamworth), Radio 2TM in Tamworth, WOW FM in Penrith and the Blue Mountains Gazette.

We also issued a number of media releases which were published on our website and distributed via social media, including:

- Disappointing focus for Teachers Federation 'Time to Act' campaign
- Response to Progress Report: Improving outcomes for students with disability 2019
- Disability Royal Commission highlights the urgent need for an Inclusive Education Policy in NSW
- Podcast "Every Student" sends clear message about how the Department of Education views and treats students with complex needs.

## Social Media

Family Advocacy uses social media as a vehicle to connect more widely with families as well as a mechanism to bring social change issues to the forefront of everyday Australians. This financial year, our Facebook community grew by 37% from 2100 to 2880 likes; and the Family Advocacy Facebook page reached 350,784 people\*. This is a 75% increase on the previous year (199,978). Worth noting is a post we did in August 2019, outlining the benefits of moving from traditional teaching methods to more inclusive ones, featuring an 'inclusion checklist'. This post alone reached over 70,000 people. It received over 1,000 likes and was shared widely in Australia and North America, becoming the widest reaching post in the history of our page.

We also maintained a strong presence in Twitter. Our Twitter impressions were 107,014\*\* and our followers grew by 26% from 523 to 659.

The number of views in our YouTube channel more than doubled this year, from 6,800 to 14,700. The most watched videos were "Al's Story", "Valued Social Roles: Pathways to Full, Meaningful, and Inclusive Lives" and "Inclusive High School Education – Jacob's Story".

## Websites

Our organisation has three websites, all of which are managed internally.

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

Family Advocacy aims to ensure that we provide easy access to information that meets the needs of the families we support. This year we added two pages to our Family Advocacy website: A COVID-19 update with information and resources related to the pandemic and a page dedicated to the Disability Royal Commission.

We are currently building a fourth website, "Conversations for Collaboration", a collaborative engagement framework co-designed and co-authored by NSW educators and parents of students with disability, who have experienced quality student centred collaborations. The website will be launched in the next financial year.

## Email Communications and Surveys

Electronic direct mail continues to be one of the main means to connect with and inform our community. This year, we sent over 50 mass emails to our database, mainly promoting our events and workshops, targeted by area. We also sent out four 'Latest News', various messages promoting the Access:Symposium website, and communications related to our work with the Disability Royal Commission. We also used email to distribute a number of surveys: one collecting information to help

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

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

# Communications

us develop a workshop and a series of webinars on NDIS self-management (90 responses); two surveys giving our members the chance to have a say on NDIS Planning (225 responses) and Supported Independent Living (56 responses); and one survey sent as part of the National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations seeking feedback on the impact of our capacity building and values led work over the years (229 responses).

## Event Promotion and Delivery

### *Inclusive Education Parliamentary Forum*

On October 23, 2019 Family Advocacy held the Inclusive Education: Front and Centre parliamentary forum, which was widely promoted through email, media and social media. The event was a great success with 130 people registered, including 15 Members of Parliament. The video recording of the event, which

was livestreamed and then uploaded to Facebook in its entirety, reached over 9,000 people and was viewed 4,400 times.

### *Workshops*

Early in 2020, our communications focused on the promotion of Resourcing Inclusive Communities' NDIS self-management workshops, One of the Kids workshops and the Advancing Inclusive Education workshop.

### *Webinars*

On May 4, 2020 Family Advocacy launched the "Advocacy Tools and Latest News" zoom events, which required end-to-end communications support. From May to the end of June 2020, we presented five webinars in the series, which are listed in the Advocacy and Leadership Development section.

### *Clara Maldonado*

*Media and Digital Communications Manager*

*Karen Tippett, Cecile Sullivan Elder and the Shearman family at the launch of Josh's Story*



***Finances,  
Operations and  
People***

# Financial Management

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

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

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

<b>Recurring funding and One-off Grants</b>			
	<i>ref. on pg 39</i>	<b>2019/2020</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>
<b><i>Revenue from Commonwealth Government</i></b>			
Disability Advocacy	(1)	308,865	306,068
Disability Royal Commission	(1)	100,707	0
NDIS ILC Readiness Grant	(1)	134,091	0
<b><i>Revenue from NSW Government</i></b>			
Information Advocacy	(2)	328,571	316,116
Resourcing Inclusive Communities - Capacity Building		0	500,000
Grant in Aid from Department of Education	(3)	39,030	38,650
<b><i>Total</i></b>		<b>\$911,264</b>	<b>\$1,160,834</b>

# Treasurer's Report

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

Family Advocacy acknowledges the funding provided by Government, both at federal and state levels for this financial year 2019/2020.

## **Federal Government Funding**

(1). The Department of Social Services (DSS) continued to support the organisation through recurrent funding as well as providing additional funding to provide advocacy support to people wishing to engage with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. In addition, funding was provided by NDIS under their Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Readiness Grant.

## **State Government Funding**

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

## **NSW Department of Education Funding**

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

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for period July – December 2020 has been ratified by the Management Committee, whilst we await a delayed decision on State Government Advocacy funding for January – June 2021.

## **Donations and Disclosure of Interests**

### **Donations**

Family Advocacy would like to thank those who have provided financial support throughout the year through their donations to the organisation. A total of \$140.00 was received from Stanley Po, Dianne Ward, Wilma Reibel, Victoria Seekamp and Matthew Dimmock.

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



**Alex Purvis**

- Salesforce Foundation: ten free licences of Salesforce Nonprofit Success Pack, available for not-for-profit (NFP) organisations
- Connecting Up: discounted software and training for NFP organisations
- Microsoft: discounted software.

### **Disclosure of Interests**

I advise members of payments received by the following committee members:

Di Samuels, Meg Sweeney, Annette Bush and Yolande Cailly 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 a Volunteer Session Leader. Di Samuels, Annette Bush and Yolande Cailly also received the standard per diem travel allowance.

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

**Alex Purvis**  
*Treasurer*

# Operations and People

Family Advocacy operates under set policies and operational procedures, which are reviewed regularly by the membership and staff, respectively. In 2019/2020 we conducted a review of the Policy and Practices Manual in consultation with our members. The Manual carries the underlying principles that guide the actions of the organisation.

The Operational Practices Manual provides the guidelines for the day to day operations of the staff. The financial policies were reviewed and updated over the past year and two new policies were developed. One was triggered by the requirement for all staff to work from home as a result of the government restrictions to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the circumstances brought upon us by the pandemic, Family Advocacy had to act quickly to follow the guidelines and ensure that staff continued to carry out their work in a safe manner. Equipment was taken home and staff were required to complete a Work from Home Checklist that included knowledge around the relevant policies, communication protocols during the work from home situation, access to the equipment and the data network, and the Work Health and Safety (WHS) requirements to enable staff to work safely.

Several months down the track, it has been a smooth transition to a work from home arrangement. Staff were supported through the provision of adequate equipment, communication guidelines, and wellness training and support program.

## Quality Assurance

Family Advocacy constantly strives to ensure that our work is relevant, up to date and timely to the families that we assist. To ensure that we are able to provide quality in all that we do, we hold ourselves accountable to a high standard. This is attested by third party Quality Assurance auditors, who certified our management system in mid 2019. The certification is valid until June 2022 but a surveillance audit is conducted every year to ensure that the system is still carried out to a high standard.

## Risk Management

The Management Committee of Family Advocacy takes its governance responsibilities seriously.



**Marybelle Ignacio**

Part of these responsibilities is risk management which is carried out across the various layers of the organisation. Processes and measures are in place to minimise and/or address potential risk in the areas of finance, WHS, security, and legal as well as reputation, privacy and confidentiality. Risk is addressed on a governance as well as operational level, and is a regular agenda item in both Management Committee meetings as well as staff meetings.

Risk management has become more significant this year with the onset of the global pandemic. In following the guidance set nationally and by the state around the safety measures, Family Advocacy set out policies and protocols for remote working arrangements. The timing and guidelines for returning to the office, as well as what future work arrangements will look like, are also a major consideration for the committee and executive management.

## Internal Resources

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

## Human Resources

Family Advocacy has an excellent team of talented people, passionate and committed in their respective

# Operations and People

areas of work. With new funding acquired to support families to engage with the Disability Royal Commission, the organisation welcomed a new staff member, Troy Hester to work in that area. Family Advocacy ensures that through proper recruitment and insightful processes, we are able to select people who we believe would understand and embrace the principles and work of the organisation. It doesn't however stop with the hiring process - it is important to provide the appropriate orientation so that new staff have the necessary understanding of the organisation and context of the what, where and how their role fits within the rest of the team.

The organisation went through what would have been a challenging period for many employers, requiring employees to work from home to maintain the prescribed physical distancing to minimise the spread of COVID-19. Zoom technology and communication protocols enabled staff members to remain connected through this period. A more flexible work arrangement ensued with the understanding of work commitments and expectations, and responsibilities towards the organisation and the families that continued to require our advocacy efforts. Employees have fed back that there were also opportunities to rethink their lifestyle to incorporate healthier habits and family commitments. There is also a good appreciation for supporting each other and efforts toward teamwork and collaboration. Employees also took the opportunity to update and upskill through a surge of online training that had become available.

The professional and personal development of staff has always been encouraged as the organisation recognises the importance of equipping staff to carry out their roles effectively. All staff undergo the Social Role Valorisation (SRV) training at various levels in order to support and enhance the knowledge and insight into the foundational pillars of the organisation.

## **Information Communication Technology (ICT)**

The executive management of Family Advocacy had the foresight to install the Zoom video conferencing technology in 2019. It was a step into the unknown which promised opportunities and possibilities of internal and external meetings, online collaboration, and broader reach of audiences. Family Advocacy had the advantage of many months' experience in

using the facility by the time the COVID-19 restrictions occurred, which helped in the smooth transition to work from home arrangements. The organisation went a step further, enabling the Zoom webinar feature in order to reach audiences of up to 500 people.

## **Database and Data Collection**

In our bid to continuously improve the way we work, changes to the database were implemented to update it and ensure that it remained relevant to its users. This required a Salesforce consultant to assist us. The specialist also moved us away from a third party that was no longer providing the support that we required and onto a platform, where we would be assured of long term support. This was addressing one of the risk factors around our data.

There is a second lot of changes underway to address new reporting requirements of the government funders. This is setting up the requirements for data reporting for the work undertaken to support families to engage with the Disability Royal Commission. The changes include addressing the partnership requirements of the Department of Social Services, as well as addressing internal data requirements of other areas of the organisation. A Salesforce consultant was engaged to undertake this work.

## **Inclusion Collection**

The Inclusion Collection is a unique library designed to inform, support and motivate. The resources provide practical and inspiring examples of what is being achieved not only in Australia but throughout the world.

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

## **WHS and Environmental Footprint**

### **Work Health and Safety**

With the human resources being the most highly valued resource of the organisation, it then follows that the organisation places a high priority on the work health and safety of its employees. There

# Operations and People

are policies and practices in place, which new staff members are made aware of through their orientation. There is a WHS Representative to whom WHS issues and incidents may be raised. On a more regular basis, there is opportunity for staff to raise concerns during staff meetings. There is a process in place for the reporting of incidents so that they may be addressed and monitored. WHS is a responsibility of the organisation as well as each individual employee.

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed WHS concerns to the forefront and more than ever, this has become an area that has drawn a greater appreciation from staff, particularly those who may be considered vulnerable to it.

WHS considerations during the work from home period included ensuring staff complied with WHS within the work environment at home. This included access to training that supported this new way of working, such as workshops on Dealing with Change, Working Effectively from Home, and Maintaining

Motivation and Focus. Support also included an Employee Assistance Program which we were able to offer thanks to the Department of Communities and Justice. WHS will continue to be a significant consideration in returning to work and establishing new working arrangements.

## **Environmental Footprint**

The organisation continues to support the green economy in finding ways to reduce waste and remain conscious of its duties as a global citizen. Many of the staff carry out individual initiatives to reduce their individual carbon footprints. As an organisation, moving to a more digital method of reaching out to families has proven less taxing on paper and postal usage. We continue to recycle paper, plastic, glass, and tin containers, as well as use environmentally friendly products.

**Marybelle Ignacio**  
*Office Manager*

*Karen Tippett and Jacqueline Currey at the Fairfield Community Services Expo, 2019*



# Staff 2019/2020



**Cecile Sullivan Elder**  
Executive Officer



**Karen Tippett**  
Advocacy and Leadership  
Development Manager



**Leanne Varga**  
Systems Advocacy and  
Campaigns Manager



**Emma Baxter**  
Resourcing Inclusive  
Communities Manager  
*(to August 2019)*



**Clara Maldonado**  
Media and Digital  
Communications Manager



**Marybelle Ignacio**  
Office Manager



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



**Jacqueline Currey**  
Advocacy and Leadership  
Development Coordinator



**Troy Hester**  
Advocacy Project Officer -  
Royal Commission

# 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
DA NSW	Disability Advocacy New South Wales
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
MDAA	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NACBO	National Alliance of Capacity Building Organisations
NESA	NSW Education Standards Authority
PAAA	Parents for ADHD Advocacy Australia
PDCN	Physical Disability Council NSW
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PWDA	People with Disability Australia
SRV	Social Role Valorisation
WHS	Work Health and Safety

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

W [family-advocacy.com](http://family-advocacy.com) | [ric.org.au](http://ric.org.au)

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