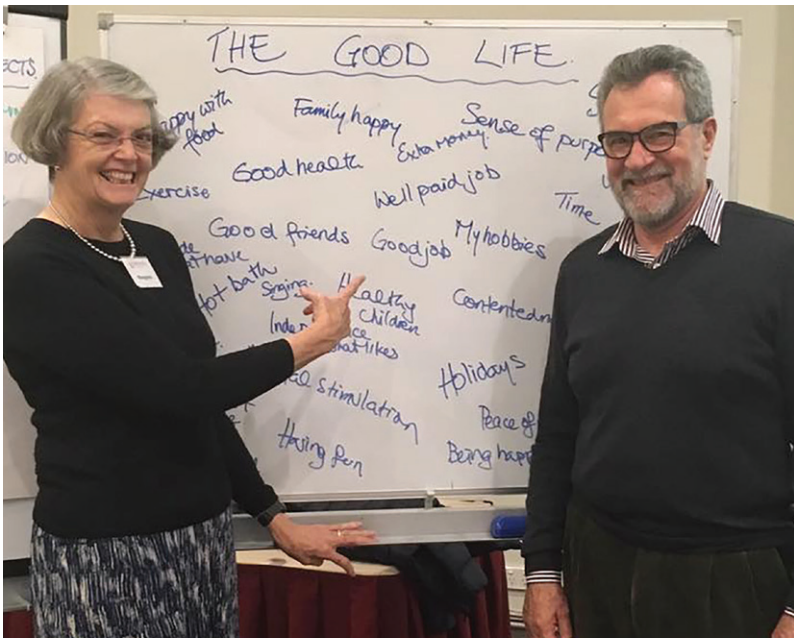


family

A D V O C A C Y



Strength of Families
Strength of Communities
Strength of Advocacy

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Our vision

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

Our mission

Our mission is for people with developmental disability to attain socially valued roles within the community. This is accomplished through strengthening the advocacy, knowledge and understanding of families. Our 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 that are afforded to most Australians.

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.

This definition of advocacy has been adapted from the original Wolfensberger definition so as to make it specific to social advocacy with, and for, people with disability.

Who we are

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.*

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 *Objects and Principles of the Commonwealth Disability Services Act 1986* and the *Objects, Principles and Applications of Principles of the NSW Disability Services Act 1993*. Regulatory processes designed to ensure that direct services adhere to these principles are also critical.

Our Principles

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 a 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 changes as a person grows, for all adults, the family continues to act as an important emotional and strategic link into the community.

Positive growth and development is most likely to occur within a family in which each member is valued

Principles about the Community:

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

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

Our Mission

In carrying out its mission, Family Advocacy recognises that families often find it difficult to affect ways 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 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 family about its role and influence in the life of the person with disability
- lack of flexible, family-focussed 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.

As a result, the Objects of Family Advocacy are:

- (a) 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
- (b) to encourage the development and effectiveness of family-based advocacy groups
- (c) to provide an avenue for the development of leadership amongst families

(d) to monitor and, where necessary, make representations about legislation, practices and policies which affect people with developmental disability and their families

(e) to disseminate information about legislation, policies and practices to families

(f) to encourage the involvement of people who have disability, families and friends, in the work of the Organisation.

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.

Chairperson's Report



As an Advocacy organisation, I think our members and the wider community would agree we have a lot going for us. Our capacity to inform, our clear vision, our resourceful staff who are able to educate and empower people.

However there is a challenge for us as an Advocacy organisation to ensure we have the funding to continue and move forward with our vision. There is a perception from some areas that advocacy is not as necessary because of the establishment of the NDIS.

So we are in an interesting situation, as we are lauded for the work we do and the change we have helped bring about, for our strength and stability and the contribution we make to people with disabilities.

Many people trust us and have a good experience and outcome from their contact with Family Advocacy.

We have a well managed and well audited organisation, with staff who perform their roles well and want to do the right thing by people with disabilities and the wider community, not just members.

The Management committee are doing our best for people with disabilities and to move Family Advocacy forward to meet the changing times, to be innovative and to adapt.

We are prepared to be on the front foot always putting people with disabilities first. We are embracing the change to NDIS

We need to be proactive. We need to navigate through the changes to continue to be a unique advocacy organisation.

We are investing in technology and new staff and looking for new ways of doing things. We want to be adaptive. We want to meet community expectations and lead the way. And show the long term value of Family Advocacy. I see a dynamic environment to work in.

It is not enough to make commitments. To fulfil our vision we need ongoing funding to help people with disabilities prosper and grow.

What we do is important and we need to get people on board. We ask our members and the wider community to be proactive with people of influence, MP's and business leaders in advocating for advocacy and the funds required to continue this work. Please take a stand on this issue.

Family Advocacy has always had an approach to meet the current and future needs of people with disability. Our work in this space has been consistent and intensive over the past 12 months.

We need to be confident and courageous about our purpose and about the need for advocacy and the difference we make in the lives of people with disabilities.

Lesley Light
Chairperson

Highlights of the year 2016/2017

The 2016/2017 year saw the following highlights which strengthened work in some key areas.

International speakers Bruce Uditsky and Ann Hughson presented two events to an audience of families, educators and workers within the disability sectors. One event focused on the importance of partnerships between families and educators in achieving authentic inclusion at school, and the other built on the continuing pathways into community inclusion where people with disability are supported to be fully participating citizens within our communities. Practical applications and many shared stories were the focus of these events. With the continuing changes within the disability sector it is particularly important that we bring events to families that challenge the status quo and allow for both idea generation as well as practical application.

Inclusive education as a key part of our work has seen Family Advocacy run a further 14-one-day One of the Kids workshops for families over the financial year. Alongside this state-wide work, Family Advocacy brought together 27 people from across NSW, QLD and WA to participate and learn in a 2-day workshop tackling topics such as; key barriers to inclusion, working with the United Nations General comment, considering mind-sets, taking our advocacy from private to public, and staying strong. This work intersects with our systemic advocacy area and will continue to be an important approach to making change in Education.

Co-author of our inclusive education booklet, All Students Learning Together – Professor Mara Sapon-Shevin presented a one-day event on creating positive social climates for inclusion. This brought her extensive experience in collaborative learning, teaching about differences and dealing with bullying and exclusion to our families. The event was strategically placed in February as a lead into the new school year.

Family Advocacy had the opportunity to hear from Dr Marc Tumeinski, who was in Australia for a training

event, presenting an informative day on Restrictive Practices within Human Services. Dr Tumeinski has spoken internationally on the issue of violence and the use of restrictive practices in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands. The event was well attended by families, service workers and managers. It providing a forum to hear about the damaging impact of these practices as well as propose guidelines for how to approach the issue of restraint use on vulnerable people.

Resourcing Families continues to assist families to vision better for the lives of their family member with disability. It is a vision that raises expectations to recognise the uniqueness of the individual and tailor supports to reflect his or her interests, skill development and connection with community. More and more people have become participants of the NDIS and whilst individualised funding is welcome, it will not change lives without the vision to imagine greater possibilities. A number of workshops, information sessions and individual meetings have been conducted across NSW to achieve this aim. *Families Getting NDIS Ready* was presented by Jan and Jack Kruger and shared their NDIS journey to help families



Highlights continued

prepare and plan for the NDIS with the purpose of supporting meaningful outcomes. *Right Relationship – How to create a partnership between families and services that really works* was presented by Margaret and Jeremy Ward and again lived experience, as well as creative ideas for directing supports helped many families expand their thinking and become strategic and creative in building good lives for people.

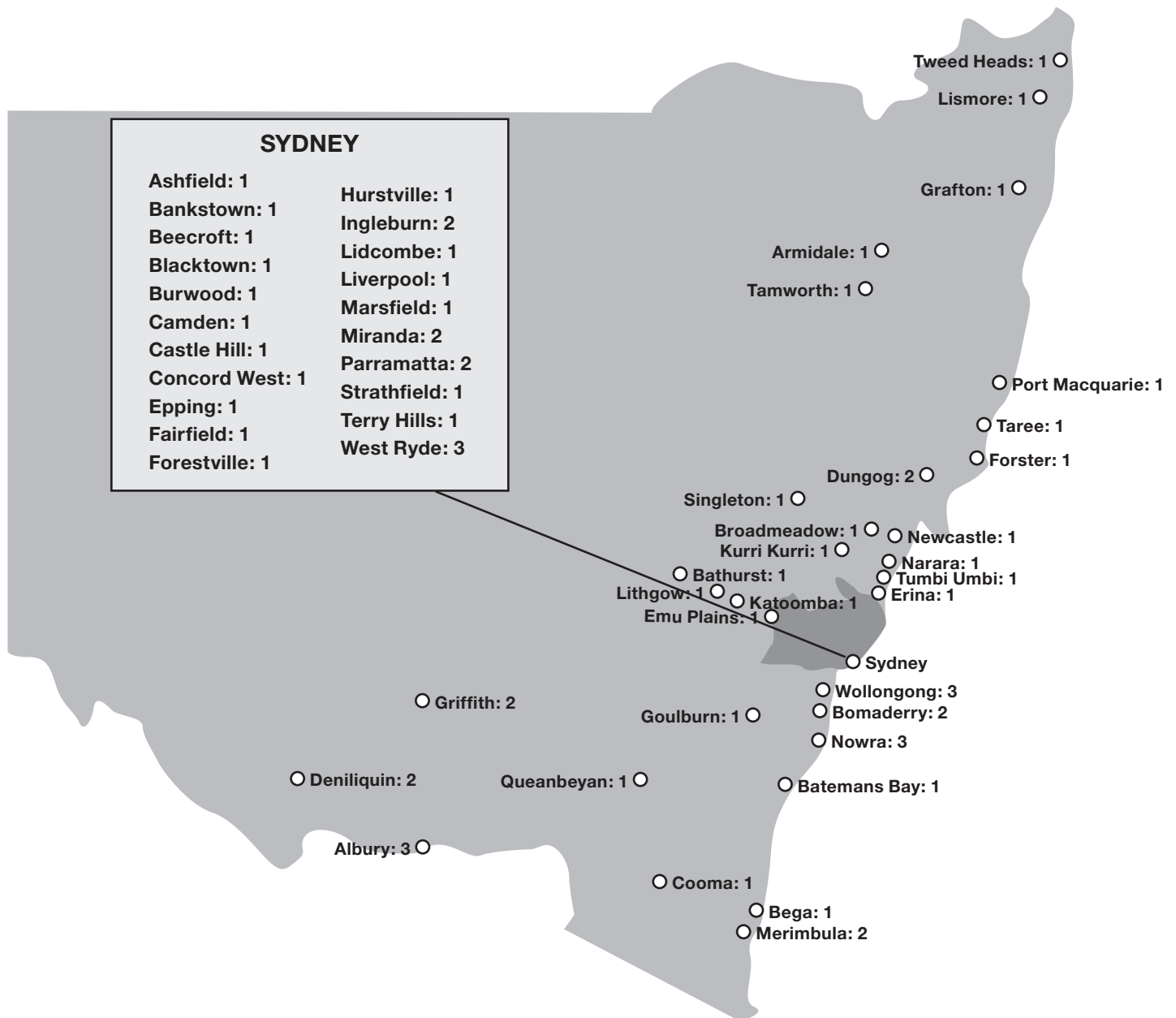
Family Advocacy's systemic work for 2016/2017 has been focused on education and advocacy.

We have pursued the issue of rising enrolments in segregated school settings relentlessly, through an inquiry into education for children with disabilities in the NSW Upper House, as well as in partnership with the NSW Ombudsman as they investigated behaviour management in schools. Family Advocacy made a submission with recommendations to the inquiry. We have conducted many lobbying meetings with members of the committee and with the Ombudsman, with the Shadow Education Minister and the Minister's Chief of Staff. Gina Wilson Burns, Alison Wilson, Yolande Cailly, Michelle Sutton, Susan Hoffman, Lucy Doherty, Meg Sweeney, and Dianne Samuels have been particularly active in this space.

2016 was a significant year for Family Advocacy as the organisation celebrated its 25th Anniversary. Held right after its Annual General Meeting, members, friends, allies, ex staff and ex committee members joined the committee and staff of Family Advocacy in celebrating the struggles and achievements of the organisation from the 90s to this date. The celebrations were opened by a speech by Judith Ellis, one of the founders of Family Advocacy, and her daughter, Libby Ellis. We appreciated the many congratulatory messages received via email and video capture by friends and allies of the organisation here in Australia as well as overseas. It was a good occasion to meet other family members and the driving forces behind the organisation, as well as reconnect with lost links.

	2016/2017
Financial Members (including life members)	139
Life Members	11
Contacts on our mailing list	11,164
Number of enquiries	530
Resources distributed	91,070
Website visits	29,595
Number of people engaged at events:	
Family Advocacy	511
Resourcing Families	673
Combined events	40
Total	1,224

Advocacy and leadership development and Resourcing Families events in 2016/2017



Advocacy and Leadership Development events 2016/2017

2016

August	Information Session Information Session Information Session	Kurri Kurri, Broadmeadow Samaritans Singleton
September	Inclusive Education Community Pathways Information Session	West Ryde West Ryde Dungog
October	Information Session Information Session One of The Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids	Beecroft Castle Hill Port Macquarie Dungog Forster
November	Information Session Information Session Information Session Education Weekend Information Session One of the Kids Information Session	Erina Bankstown Blacktown Terry Hills Epping Albury Deniliquin
December	One of the Kids	Griffith

Advocacy and Leadership Development events 2016/2017

2017

February	Creating Positive Social Climates for Inclusion	Parramatta
March	Information Session Information Session Information Session Information Session	Strathfield Wollongong Nowra Nowra
April	One of the Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids	Bathurst Lithgow Katoomba Emu Plains
May	One of the Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids Ideas Expo One of the Kids Information Session	Camden Ashfield Forestville Albury Miranda Fairfield
June	Information Session Information Session One of the Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids One of the Kids Restrictive practices within human services	Burwood Hurstville Bega Batemans Bay Nowra Wollongong Parramatta

Resourcing Families events 2016/2017

2016

July	Getting Prepared – Info Session	Tumbi Umbi
September	Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready	Merimbula Cooma Goulburn
October	Right Relationship Right Relationship Right Relationship	Tamworth Armidale Taree
November	Right Relationship Right Relationship Right Relationship Getting Prepared – Info session	Merimbula Queanbeyan Liverpool Narara
December	Getting Prepared – Info session	Ingleburn

2017

February	Right Relationship	Albury
March	Right Relationship Right Relationship Getting Prepared Info Session Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready	Deniliquin Griffith Marsfield Grafton Lismore Tweed Heads
April	Getting Prepared – Info session	Ingleburn
May	Family Forum – People leaving metro residences Korean Cockatoos – Circles of Support Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready Families Getting NDIS Ready	West Ryde Concord West Bomaderry Wollongong Miranda
June	Right Relationship Right Relationship Right Relationship	Bomaderry Lidcombe Newcastle

Combined events 2016/2017

2017

May	Information session	Ryde
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Key focus areas

1. Strength of Families

1a. Self-directed Lives

1b. Leadership

2. Strength of Community

2a. Being Included

2b. Education

3. Strength of Advocacy

3a. Internal

3b. Profile



1. Strength of Families

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

1a. Self-directed Lives

People with disability with the support of family and allies should determine their own lives as active and valued citizens.

With an emerging disability funding structure in the National Disability Insurance Scheme there has been a significant increase in the 2016/2017 year of inquiries. Approximately a quarter of all enquiries have involved discussion and queries around the NDIS.

The majority of inquiries are from families whose family member had a plan established and the plan does not meet the persons needs so they are seeking a review. The newly created role of our systemic advocate and leadership facilitator has allowed Family Advocacy to spend time taking families through the NDIS process, alleviate miscommunication and provide strategy and structure to the next steps in securing a positive outcome for their family member.

Family Story

A mum rang after receiving her son's NDIS plan which did not meet his needs or reflect his stated goals in the plan. We provided advice on how to apply for an internal review of his NDIS plan and discussed the relevant legislation, NDIS Operational Guidelines and Australian Appeals Tribunal decisions. We also discussed the best strategy and preparation for her internal review. For example, the preparation of follow up reports from therapists to justify why he needed the supports that

had been rejected and to have one of those therapists present at the internal review. We suggested she insist on having the internal review face to face in her own house with her son present, rather than being pushed into a phone meeting which seemed to be a preference by the NDIA. We also tried to build the mum's confidence as being her son's best advocate – she certainly rose to the challenge.

After the internal review, she had a win in that her son's specialised wheelchair was approved but also a loss in that her car modifications were not. This is particularly significant because the mum had purchased a van in anticipation of the car modifications being approved (as she was told by her Local Area Coordinator it would be approved). We advised her how to apply to appeal the internal review called an External Merits Review.

Families Getting NDIS Ready

Resourcing Families was successful in receiving further funding to present this workshop around the state and nine workshops were presented this financial year. The aim of the workshop is to assist families prepare for the NDIS by developing clear vision and raising expectations as to the life and experiences possible for their family members. Clear vision is the vital factor in determining goals and outcomes for a funding vehicle like the NDIS.

Jan Kruger, from the ACT, was the key workshop presenter. Her teenage son Jack has an intellectual disability and has been a participant in the NDIS for three years. Jack's vision is for him to experience the typical things that all kids his age learn and develop through. Jack's NDIS supports enable him to be in community team sports, pursue his passions and prepare for a part-time job whilst still at school. Workshop participants



appreciated Jan's clear presentation and planning tips that moved beyond the rhetoric of the NDIS, to what actually can be achieved with creative and strategic thinking.

Jan has self-managed all of Jack's NDIS plans and was able to share good advice about how this can be made to work. Self-management is the most flexible option within the NDIS and enables a greater level of self-direction of supports. This workshop was one of few opportunities for families to hear about this option in detail and understand from a family with experience how it can work. Self-management enables Jan to employ her own staff and recruit beyond NDIS registered providers to find people with the skills pertinent to Jack's areas of interest. Jack's sports coach is a tertiary student studying for a career in sports, his communications mentor is training to be a teacher and they are now considering who might have the right skills to expand Jack's lawn mowing business and increase his part-time work. Jan shared her staff recruitment and training processes which demonstrated that families can manage these processes extremely effectively.

Jack Kruger also presented at these workshops and shared a few words around his achievements. A clear outcome from his work with a communications mentor. With the support of a sports coach Jack has been a member of his local soccer club, attended a professional soccer clinic and completed the Weetbix Triathlon in his age group. Jack has low muscle tone which added to what is already a great physical challenge for most people. Jack caught the vision, however, and pushed his fitness and skill development with his personal coach. Jack's next NDIS plan will be used to take the vision further and focus on new achievements and learnings.

Participant feedback for the workshop included:

- > *Excellent hearing information from a family who have firsthand experience of the NDIS and such a positive role model is Jack. Expanded our vision of what's possible.*
- > *The workshop was excellent in showing how it works with a family sharing their story. Easiest way for me to understand. Spurred me into action – I was feeling scared and intimidated but appreciate the informative approach and encouragement.*

- > *Good to hear how it is working for someone real. I have greater confidence about self-management.*
- > *An example of a real family's journey sheds much light on what/how we could go about planning.*
- > *This increased my expectations of what is possible. Where to start, what to include and how not to accept negative responses.*

Right Relationship – How to create a partnership between families and services that really works

This workshop was presented by Dr Margaret and Jeremy Ward. 12 workshops were presented across NSW.

Before now, families have taken the lead and directed supports for their family members, so that they could create a personalised approach to support. It required creativity and a new way of families and services working together to forward the interests of the person with disability. The NDIS offers more people the opportunity, as never before, to personalise support but it will take more than a change in a funding mechanism to see people actively determining the nature of their own lives.

Margaret and Jeremy Ward were two such parent pioneers who more than 30 years ago worked with other families to create a service that enabled individualised funding, personalised support, families to recruit their own staff and a vision for people with significant disability to live in their own homes and work in open employment. With so much experience, Margaret and Jeremy, are able to provide real insight and practical strategies about how to build partnerships with families, services, support workers and allies that keep the interests of the person with disability at the centre and drive all decisions made.

Key to their presentation was an exploration of what constitutes family business and thus what families should keep responsibility for and how services can best assist. This was informed by an explanation of the objectives of

the NDIS Act that require services to support dignity, privacy, self-determination, safety and social and economic inclusion in mainstream community. It also stipulates that services respect informal networks around an individual and demonstrate a capacity for innovation and responsive change. In the light of this, families will need to give clear direction as to how this will best be approached to meet the specific needs and desires of their family member.

Margaret and Jeremy also present how this big picture legislation can work on the ground. How it should inform people's practice within the day to day work of finding and training the right staff, resolving conflicts, balancing dignity, safety and risk, building up support networks and managing emotions and fears. Margaret and Jeremy share generously their family story to help families and service workers understand and navigate these processes. This story has been beautifully told in Jeremy's book about their daughter with disability; *The Shouted Goodbye*. A very good and recommended read.

Participant feedback for the workshop included:

- > *This was fabulous – so important to have the benefit of presenters who have lived their presentation.*
- > *I feel empowered as a parent. Ready for NDIS meeting tomorrow.*
- > *Really insightful about networking and safeguarding – in all workshops to date have never received this information before – Please keep this up.*
- > *It was the first time I have become aware of/ considered succession planning.*
- > *Really open(sic) my eyes about how extremely important it is for individuals to have 100% control of their everyday living choices.*

Forums attended	
20 April	Liaison meeting with Dept Education, NDIS transition team
April	Liaison meeting with Dept Fair Trading, who we have worked alongside to manage several NDIS matters
2 May	Meeting with Project Manager, NDIS Transition at St Vincent de Paul, Antony Jaeger
4 May	NDIS Price Guide Webinar
23 May	Supplementary Support Expo organised by FACS – providing opportunity to speak with many families and professionals including Dept Health NDIS Transition delegate
May/June	Optimal Individual Service Design 2 week course with International consultant Michael Kendrick- many Local Area Coordinators attended allowing for good networking opportunities.
2 June	Administrative Appeals Tribunal Liaison meeting – networking with NDIA legal team, Legal Aid staff and other Advocacy groups with funding for NDIS review and appeal.

Systemic Snapshot

Family Advocacy consulted extensively with the NDIA in relation to the self-management option being as accessible and user friendly as possible for people with disability and families. Our work in this area was undertaken both formally and informally with much information gathered from families across NSW.

We have used Facebook as a platform to communicate to families:

- to take our survey in relation to the Productivity Commission submission
- to provide the results of our survey with a link to our Productivity Commission submissions

We have also produced the following resources to support families in harnessing the increased self-direction opportunities that these sector changes have attempted to bring about.

- NDIS update – for the website, email and Facebook
- Factsheet – NDIS Pre-planning tips
- Factsheet – NDIS Troubleshooting Guide
- Factsheet – NDIS Appeals and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
- The NDIS family updates

Written Submissions

In May, we were invited by the National Disability Insurance Agency to make submissions on their NDIS Consultation Paper on “Intermediaries: a vital component of the NDIS in achieving an ordinary life for people with disabilities. We provided submissions on how the system can be improved to promote self-direction and are awaiting the outcome from the NDIA regarding any changes that will be implemented. No change to the structure or process has yet occurred.

In June, we were invited by the National Disability Insurance Agency to make submissions on the Consultation Paper on NDIS Code of Conduct for Service Providers and Workers. We provided submissions based on the feedback from our families and their experiences in the past with service providers. We are awaiting the

outcome of the consultation paper. No code of conduct has yet been released.

Verbal Submissions

NDIS Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing – provided submission on behalf of feedback from families regarding the challenges in their NDIS experiences. Our submissions were recorded on Hansard.

NDIS Survey

We conducted a survey using our NDIS email list and received 100 responses. It was specifically focused on the planning process and happiness of the NDIS plan. We used the survey results as the backbone of our submissions to the Productivity Commission on NDIS Costs. We also communicated the survey results to our NDIS email list, and posted them on our facebook page.

1b. Leadership

There are many confident and active family leaders connected to the organisation. A robust and targeted strategy supports and encourages families to take up leadership roles in line with the mission and vision of the organisation.

Family Advocacy has a vision of families being agents of positive social change so the inherent value of people with developmental disability is recognised within a just and inclusive community.

The organisation recognises families are in the best position to be effective advocates for their family member/s with disability and believes in the importance of events that develop the connections, awareness and individual skills of families.

Leadership Development and Training

Our family leadership development and training at Family Advocacy involves the encouragement and nurturing of parents, other relatives and friends to take on leadership roles. In 2016/2017 there has been a continued approach to engage younger families and extended family members to further their participation in advocacy and their connections to Family Advocacy.



There have been many ways of supporting leadership development. Families have shared their knowledge on a broader level, within workshops and information sessions, as a guest speaker and as part of the workshop audience.

Family Advocacy has also supported family members to:

- attend events sponsored by Family Advocacy
- enhance their skills and knowledge by undergoing specific training
- Provide values based training for deeper understanding and community building
- present and assist at Family Advocacy workshops
- contribute stories to be shared at events
- contribute articles to the Family Advocacy library and web sites
- attend and participate in meetings with politicians or senior bureaucrats.

Family Advocacy encouraged individuals to become involved in presenting material and facilitating group work at workshops, information sessions and, sometimes, conferences run across the state. It is also a great way to meet a wide and diverse range of people to expand knowledge and share experiences. This often increases skills, competence and confidence for their own advocacy efforts, as well as more broadly for others, as a family leader.

Workshop materials are supplied and discussed in advance so family leaders are well prepared and comfortable with their valuable contribution. Self-evaluation is encouraged and feedback offered.

Attending Events

As part of our leadership development programme Family Advocacy provides sponsorship to members to attend events. These events can be run by other organisations as well as events run by Family Advocacy. This strengthens knowledge, allows for networking and encourages idea generation.

Family Advocacy has provided many exciting opportunities for family members to increase their skills in the past year.

Some events families were supported to attend were:

- Social Role Valorisation two-day training- Towards a Better Life, Foundations Forum, Sydney
- One of the Kids- Inclusive education workshops
- Council for Intellectual Disability Conference, Sydney
- Inclusive Education- From promise to practise with Bruce Uditsky & Anne Hughson, Sydney
- Community Pathways – A powerful means to an inclusive life with Bruce Uditsky & Anne Hughson, Sydney
- Lets Get Started presentations on inclusive schooling, regional and metro locations
- Taking Action for School Inclusion in NSW with national and interstate speakers, Terrey Hills
- The Issue of Restrictive Practices within Human Services with Dr Marc Tumeinski, Parramatta
- Social Role Valorisation 5-day practicum training- PASSING, Foundations Forum, Sydney
- Social Role Valorisation two-day training- Towards a better life, Belonging Matters, Melbourne



2. Strength of Community

The narrative within Australian society has changed regarding people with disability leading ordinary lives rather than specialised and programmed lives.

2a. Being Included

People are living authentic lives in the community as active and valued citizens.

Resourcing Families has had the opportunity to continue to work with outstanding workshop presenters who generously share what they have learned through their own personal journeys for the benefit of other families. We continue to endeavour to build the capacity of families to understand the importance of personalised supports and how to shape them, in order to facilitate good lives for people in the heart of community. Good lives centre on the personal interests of individuals with disability and reflect meaningful connections with the wider community around those interests.

PossABLE Ideas Expo Albury

Resourcing Families was invited to attend an expo in Albury on the 12th and 13th of May. There were many conversations with people passing the expo table, as well as a number of individual planning meetings with families wanting to prepare for the NDIS. Resourcing Families was also invited to present an information session, on both days of the expo, about how families can self-manage supports. We greatly appreciate the contribution of Kim Roots, Janelle Cosier and Wendy McGlynn who represented Resourcing Families at the event and shared ideas and support for self-direction with so many families.

Information Sessions

Resourcing Families continued to present information sessions upon request, particularly about preparing for the NDIS. Presentations emphasised the importance of clear vision, what constitutes the good life, how to tailor supports to an individual's interests, strategies for building support networks and developing meaningful connections with the community. Seven information sessions were presented this financial year to parent groups, including those from specific cultural backgrounds. Two information sessions for parents were presented at a forum hosted by Dr Mike Freeland, the member for Macarthur.

Individual meetings with family members have also occurred where face to face meetings were possible. These meetings explored the same key themes and assisted people with their capacity to think and act in more personalised ways on behalf of their family member with disability.



Community Pathways – A powerful means to an inclusive life with guest speakers Bruce Uditsky and Anne Hughson

Family Advocacy hosted Bruce Uditsky and Anne Hughson from Canada to meet with families and deliver relevant workshops.

Bruce Uditsky M.Ed. C.E.O Inclusion Alberta is internationally recognized for his leadership and advocacy in social justice and inclusion for individuals with intellectual disability and their families. He serves in an advisory capacity to government on many issues and is currently engaged in contributing to the development of Alberta's policy framework on inclusive education. He is the parent of two adult sons, one of whom has intellectual disability.

Anne Hughson Ph.D is a recipient of the Faculty of Education Excellence in Teaching Award and the author and co-author of texts, chapters and articles on a wide range of disability-related subjects. She has lectured and consulted in many countries. As a researcher in disability studies and program evaluation her work is grounded in the lived experiences of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

In light of the implementation of the NDIS, this workshop aimed to define what authentic community inclusion looks like, and how to be aware of less authentic practices.

Participants heard about other families efforts and discussed practical strategies that can be utilised to enable a more meaningful future through the transition to and over the course of adulthood. Stories of inclusion across peoples life-span through committed engagement in normative pathways, community capacity and partnerships was shared.

Participant feedback from the workshop:

> "Totally reinforced realistic expectations and the need to aim high in all areas of my family members life"

> "Enjoyed the speakers and their passion, but also how realistic they are"

> "A really enjoyable and informative day"

> "Bruce and Anne are engaging speakers, they speak in everyday language"

2b. Education

Transformation of education leads to the elimination of exclusionary settings.

Getting off to a good start in life is vital for all children, particularly children with developmental disability. A good start means to start on a path that keeps the child embedded in their family and community.

A 'special' and '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 the regular education classroom.

Education continues to form a large part of our contact with families at just over one third of all enquiries taken. Barriers families are facing 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.

Family Advocacy continues to assist families to advocate in a positive way with the school to respond to the barriers listed above and to create a good learning environment for their family member with disability. The knowledge and understanding we receive from families then informs our systemic work to affect broader change.

Responses to each enquiry will depend on the individual circumstances but typically may include:

- considering strategies with the individual to formulate a course of action
- providing resources such as articles or documents to increase knowledge and assist people in coming to an informed decision
- advising contact details for other organisations when the request is outside the expertise of Family Advocacy (e.g. legal matters)
- linking the person seeking information to another family with insights to share
- gathering research around a specific topic to ensure that up to date information or new perspectives are supplied
- making contact with senior decision makers where an issue is of systemic significance.

Family Advocacy gathers this information to highlight state-wide trends and enable responsive planning.

Family Story

A parent rang after attending a Family Advocacy workshop held in her area on inclusive education. In Term 4 of her daughters first year at her local school in the regular class, there had been a limited amount of support provided and the mum felt she was now being pressed to move her daughter into the support unit at a different school. She then contacted Family Advocacy's Advocacy and

Leadership Development team to talk through the issues and to seek advice on her next steps. Subsequent discussions with Family Advocacy staff over the next five months provided her with information about the Integration Funding Support Program through the Department of Education, knowledge of the education standards and advocacy strategies. Staff also shared advocacy resources including the Advocacy and Tools booklet, the importance of strength based language, and tips to have effective meetings with the school. The school is now working with the parent to determine the best approach to support her daughter. The conversation has now changed to focus on her needs and the provision of supports.

Let's get started: Getting ready for school and life: Inclusive Education

This two-hour presentation aimed to assist families plan a positive future for their family member and consider the benefits of an inclusive education in achieving this. The focus is families of children preparing for or in the early years of school. Family Advocacy were invited to present this to families connected with early intervention organisations supporting their transition to school.

Seven of these were held throughout the year in both metro and regional locations reaching over 60 people.

This transition point is a time when families are making key choices on schooling for their child and often they miss out on information about the benefits of being educated in the regular class and the supports available to facilitate this. Other families say they are often challenged around their decision to have their children educated in the regular class at school is often challenged. The aim of the presentation is to assist families to have a clear vision, gain knowledge of the evidence base for inclusive education and apply strategies for communicating with schools.

This is an important presentation for reaching families early in their child's journey.

Participants particularly valued the insights and



experiences shared by a family leader who was also able to answer questions.

One of the Kids: Inclusive Education

Continuing our work traveling to talk with families throughout NSW saw us present this core workshop on inclusive education to over 60 families.

This workshop is appropriate for families of preschool, primary and high school students who are looking to learn advocacy skills and strategies to assist in achieving an inclusive education for their children with disability.

The workshop covered 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, education policies and supports that exist within schools and necessary advocacy tools and strategies for families.

The workshops have provided an opportunity for strong and often challenging discussions. Families have made the most of networking with others and asking questions around their own specific issues. Evaluations indicated that people's expectations of the workshop were either met or exceeded and we look forward to further these relationships and supporting these families.

Many resources were provided on the day and in a follow up email to continue the thought process and encourage families to extend their knowledge and understanding. The education booklet, All Students Learning Together-Taking Action on Education, was provided to all participants and extra copies were available for them to take to share with others.

Evaluations have indicated that participants were pleased with the amount of information shared.

Participant feedback from the workshop:

- > *"Very empowering and just when I needed it!"*
- > *"Yes, it exceeded my expectations. I feel encouraged, inspired and empowered"*

> *"This would rate as one of the best workshops I've attended in a personal or professional capacity. The real life examples/ideas were very helpful and to have a parent guest speaker was invaluable"*

> *"Thank you for offering such a generous (time/resource/content) event"*

> *"It was great information and I feel so positive after today, thanks so much!"*

Inclusive Education –from Promise to Practice with guest speakers Bruce Uditsky and Anne Hughson

Presented by Bruce Uditsky and Anne Hughson this workshop explored the value's and cultural implications of inclusive education, as well as common themes in exclusionary arguments, the culture of inclusive school settings, and practical examples of inclusion in schools. It drew on examples from the Canadian inclusive education experience, particularly in Alberta.

The audience of 50 people was made up of families as well as educators and people supporting a student with disability in school. The content provided some challenging discussions and perspectives.

Participant feedback:

- > *"Content covered was well rounded, supported and discussed"*
- > *"Anne and Bruce were captivating and highly knowledgeable"*

Inclusive education presentation

Family Advocacy was invited by Carers NSW to present a 30-minute segment on inclusive education at their Moving Forward forums for families. Further information was



provided as well as many articles made available on the day to assist.

Comment from the organisers:

"The feedback we had from the group was really positive so the families are clearly getting a lot out of the information presented- thank you for your valuable contribution"

Taking action on education in NSW weekend event

This fully sponsored weekend event brought together 33 people from around the state and interstate all keen to move forward on a systemic level towards a truly inclusive education system. Conversations will continue with interstate organisations to further this systemic work.

The weekend provided information on inclusive education from an international, national and State perspective with presentations by Dr Bob Jackson and Catia Malaquias. Attention was given to moving from the private to public space when advocating, considering mindsets and building skills with interactive presentations. Sessions also covered families staying resilient in their advocacy efforts and a comprehensive breakdown of leadership within the context of social advocacy.

Anita Tang who has led campaigns for the NSW Cancer Council, provided an informative presentation on community campaigning to win. This was an inspiring look into what may be possible. The event concluded with some shared thinking about what's next, a practical reminder of the challenges faced in inclusive schooling and a call to action from attendees in taking things further.

A comprehensive resource kit including a USB was provided. Going forward we will be keeping in touch with attendees, as well as others who had shown interest but couldn't attend the event, to progress and support their public work towards inclusive education more broadly. This work was possible through the Grant in Aid funding from the NSW Department of Education (DoE).

Participant feedback:

> "Great group of positive leaders and advocates"

> "A defining event, well done Family Advocacy. This is the beginning of even bigger change"

> "It informed, engaged and entertained"

> "Very comprehensive content and great opportunity to meet other advocates"

All Students Learning Together - Creating Positive Social Climates for Inclusion with guest speaker Mara Sapon-Shevin.

Professor Mara Sapon-Shevin is a specialist in diversity and social justice issues, including full inclusion, bullying & harassment and cooperative learning. Mara has written countless books and articles and has presented keynotes and workshops internationally. Mara co-authored our education booklet, All Students Learning Together – Taking Action on Education. In this booklet she makes invaluable contributions to develop a clear understanding of the value, teaching methods, and social implications of inclusive education for students with disability and the wider community.

In this workshop Mara covered topic areas that families from our inclusive education workshops had told us were issues and barriers for them and their children.

- Where do we stand? The joys and challenges of inclusion
- Teaching about differences openly and honestly
- Friendship skills: social skills teaching through activities, music and play
- Dealing with bullying and exclusion
- Practical strategies in the classroom
- Remembering our vision: responding to naysayers and finding allies



The day was very interactive which was empowering and motivating for the participants at the workshop. A number of helpful resources and books were shared by Mara.

Participant feedback:

- > *"Mara is BRILLIANT!"*
- > *"Mara was so amazingly engaging and wise"*
- > *"Excellent workshop, thank you"*
- > *"Thank you! I always find Family Advocacy events and staff welcoming and helpful"*
- > *"The quality was exceptional and it was practical and helpful""Well done!"*
- "> Just an amazing day, thank you"*

Systems Snapshot

As with previous financial years 2016/2017 remains constant with families continuing to experience significant issues with their child obtaining a good education in the regular class at their local school. There still remains a stark reality between policy and practice and much improvement is needed in setting a clear direction of inclusive practice within the NSW education system. Family Advocacy staff and families has attended many meetings with politicians and Department of Education staff, we have contributed to the NSW Education inquiry into the provision of education to students with disability, worked closely with the NSW Ombudsman Department and other representative organisations and held many meetings with stakeholders. We have developed clear objectives to work towards in change and have continued to build the momentum of this work over the last 12 months.

3. Strength of Advocacy

Advocacy has a large support base and independent resources.

3a. Internal

Family Advocacy is a robust, viable organisation that has sound operational and governance practices.

Family Advocacy consistently works to a high standard in providing families of people with disability the information and support they seek. As required by our federal and state funders, the organisation undergoes quality assurance audits at regular designated periods i.e. every one to one and a half years. There is clear delineation of roles among staff and between the Executive Officer and the Management Committee, who provides the direction of the organisation. Family Advocacy has a strong Committee that conducts regular meetings throughout the year, takes conflicts of interest, complaints and risk management seriously, including it as part of the discussion agenda.

Financial Management

Good financial management is at the core of any organisation for it to be sustainable. The management committee appreciates that in order for Family Advocacy to continue its important work with families and people with disability, it needs to ensure that the organisation is in a sound financial position and ensure that this is sustainable. New committee members initially undergo internal finance training to obtain a basic understanding of the organisations finances. A finance report is provided regularly to reflect the current standing of finances as well as the projected standing at the end of the financial year.

An annual financial audit is conducted by a qualified independent auditor, to ensure that the accounts are accurate and in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards. Please see the Treasurer's Report for more financial details of the organisation.

Quality Assurance



Last year, Family Advocacy commenced a new three year quality audit cycle for its federal funder, the Department of Social Services (DSS). The succeeding maintenance audit is required within 18 months from the last audit held in May 2016 and is therefore scheduled early in the next financial year. This audit is against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) and will be undertaken by accredited quality assurance auditors.

The quality assurance requirements for the state funders will be addressed by the same external auditors. The Third Party Verification against the NSW Disability Services Standards is scheduled for the new financial year.

Risk management

"Knowing our risks provides opportunities to manage and improve our chances of success," Roger VanScoy

The Management Committee (The Committee) is committed to ensuring that Family Advocacy continues to be a robust and viable organisation. The members of the Committee take risk management seriously and have it

embedded in its meeting agenda.

Operationally, measures are in place to address and/or minimise various risks covering the financial, physical, security, legal and safety areas as well as reputation, privacy and confidentiality.

The appropriate types and levels of insurances are in place including business insurance, public liability (which includes personal accident insurance covering both staff and volunteers), motor vehicle insurance and workers compensation policies.

Policies and practices of the organisation are reviewed periodically to ensure relevance and address any risk factors. This is part of our commitment towards continuous improvement and sustainability.

Work Health and Safety

Part of addressing risk is considering the Work Health and Safety (WHS) conditions of the workplace. We have addressed this over the years with an established set of roles and procedures. Two staff act as the emergency wardens of the organisation, forming part of the Emergency Evacuation Team of the building. They undergo training with the rest of the emergency wardens in the building. We have a first aider on our team with up to date qualifications. A WHS Representative is appointed to ensure that the WHS processes are being implemented and that issues are addressed.

There are regular inspections conducted internally to assess possible hazards and safety issues within the premises, and WHS is a permanent agenda item during staff meetings. It is an opportunity for staff to raise any observations that need to be investigated further or any concerns within this area that need to be addressed. Having said that, all staff are aware that it is every individual's responsibility to work safely and raise any urgent issues with the WHS Representative.

Any incidents within the workplace, including during events where staff are working remotely or have organised, follow a system of reporting and recording to ensure it is acted on appropriately.

Family Advocacy believes in the importance of a safe and positive working environment where each staff member feels secure and supported to be their best in their roles. For many years, the use of appropriate ergonomic equipment has supported staff with any physical issues experienced and these have also been used to prevent other health issues from occurring. These are assessed to determine whether they are still in good condition and/or appropriate. In the past year, staff wellness has become an even bigger priority with the organisation encouraging a better working culture within the office with sit stand options available and a free meditation program.

Environmental Consciousness

Family Advocacy strives to be a responsible organisation not only in the way it implements its vision and mission but also as global citizens. In our desire to have a positive and lasting impact on the lives of people with disability and the world we live in, we inversely strive to reduce the environmental footprint on this planet.

Over the years, we have adopted strategic use of our database to minimise hard copy promotion to families, based on location and relevance to family member.

Increasing online communication and reducing paper mail, has meant less paper as well as downsizing of copier machines in number and capacity. This has meant a reduction in energy consumption and travel by technicians required to maintain the equipment. The organisation continues to utilise double sided printing wherever possible as well as using recycled paper, and continues to recycle plastic, glass, and tin containers aside from paper.



3b. Profile

Family Advocacy continues to be a proactive and relevant advocacy organisation within NSW and nationally.

Information Session: The power of families undertaking advocacy

A presentation was delivered at the Council for Intellectual Disability Conference in a break out session about the importance and benefits of advocacy via families. The focus was on the role of family members as advocates and how to respectfully manage some of the challenges.

Information Session: Advocacy by families

A presentation was delivered to a Year 3 undergraduate university student class studying inclusion. The presentation outlined this form of advocacy with explanation and examples of the work of Family Advocacy.

Participants from events received a resource which outlines the tools for being an effective advocate. They were also encouraged to make contact with us to discuss any specific issues and barriers they may be facing.

Restrictive Practices within Human Services with guest speaker Marc Tumeinski

Marc Tumeinski Phd has evaluated a variety of human service programs in North America. He has given workshops and spoken at conferences on issues of violence in services, as well as the use of restrictive practices such as restraint, in the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Netherlands.

This workshop explored the fundamental issues that arise with the use of restrictive practices, which are too commonly used as a strategy for containing vulnerable people. The aim of the day was to provide attendees with

a more complete understanding of the issue allowing for a better and more accurate response.

Topics included:

- The different types of restrictive practices
- Common risks and dangers of using restrictive practices
- Personal and social costs involved
- Proposed guidelines for how to approach the issue of restraint use.

The audience was a good mix of families, people with disability, service managers and workers supporting individuals. It was pleasing to have people travel from New Zealand as well as many from interstate, reflecting the importance of this topic.

Evaluations indicated people were extremely engaged in the content, wanted more information and further events to assist in reducing this practice and working towards better solutions to support people with disability in challenging situations.

Participant comments:

- > *'Thank you – this was a worthwhile seminar!'*
- > *'Everything is valuable for me as a researcher'*
- > *'Great resources and references'*
- > *'Helpful principles, handouts and articles'*
- > *'It was valuable hearing from people'*

Advocacy related advice and information enquiries

Throughout 2016/2017, an important part of the work of Family Advocacy continues to be the provision of advocacy related information and advice to the families, friends and allies of people with disability. Family members and others have made contact to receive ideas and information to enable them to advocate around the rights and interests of the person with disability. People can

receive advocacy related information and advice as often as they need to and this varies according to the nature and the level of complexity of the topic.

Communication is most frequently via telephone and email, while some people have visited the Family Advocacy office. To ensure that people living outside the Sydney metropolitan area have access to information and advice offered by us, there is a free 1800 telephone number available. There have been an extensive amount of topics that have been discussed throughout the year. Such discussions have exposed the challenges and topics of interest when speaking with families.

Systems Snapshot

Significant lobbying has been ongoing in relation to the future funding of advocacy. Within NSW we have had extensive discussions concerning how best to work collectively to safeguard advocacy funding post June 2018. To accomplish this Family Advocacy was a founding member of the new Disability Advocacy Alliance NSW. It also includes Council for Intellectual Disability (CID), People with Disability Australia (PWDA), the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN), Disability Advocacy NSW (DA NSW), IDEAS, Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA) and involving 17 advocacy organisations in total. With this group, we have developed a strategy for maintaining advocacy funding in NSW, and already secured a commitment to advocacy from the NSW opposition government.

Family Advocacy continues to receive requests within the sector to bring voice and representation to key issues for people with disability both within NSW and nationally. A few examples of this have included:

- participating in the Family and Community Services (FACS) Executive Briefing concerning the FACS transition of direct services to people with disability and the transition of people's funding to the NDIS
- participating in the Disability round table
- involvement in the Disability Network Forum (DNF)
- working with the NSW Ombudsman Department on education
- the forming of a national alliance with like-minded organisation from around Australia to bring a collective voice to the NDIA

Breakdown of enquiries:	2015/2016	2016/2017
Education	33%	36.6%
NDIS	11%	25.7%
Future Planning	5.8%	1.5%
Systems Issues	5.8%	9.2%
Post School Support	5.4%	<2%
Services	5.4%	4.6%
Discrimination	5.2%	5.7%
Accommodation	4.8%	2.4%
Recreational	4.2%	2.0%
Individualised funding	3.4%	<2%
Isolation	3.4%	<2%
Legal	3.4%	<2%
Employment	2%	2.2%
Abuse / Neglect	<2%	2.6%
Equipment	<2%	<2%
Finances	<2%	<2%
Health	<2%	<2%
Independent Living Support	<2%	<2%
Transport	<2%	<2%

Management Committee

Management Committee

Governance statement

Family Advocacy is incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act and operates under the rules of association adopted by members on 19 June 1991.

Under these rules Family Advocacy's affairs are governed by the Committee. This governance statement outlines how the Committee discharges that responsibility.

The Committee's primary responsibility is to ensure Family Advocacy stays true to its vision and mission in advocating effectively on behalf of people with developmental disability in NSW and achieves the goals set out in the Strategic Plan.

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 fulfilling its primary role, the Committee meet at least six times per year. 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
- outcomes of program delivery to families and people with disability in NSW.

The proceedings at each meeting are minuted and kept as a permanent record of the business conducted by the Committee.

The Committee reports to members at the AGM where the Annual Report and the audited financial report for the year ended is presented to members.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Family Advocacy was held on Sunday 30 October 2016 at the Epping Club. Gina Wilson-Burns, chairperson of the Management Committee presided over the meeting. She presented her Chairperson's report and Alex Purvis presented the Treasurer's Report. Both were included in the 2015/2016 Annual Report which had been sent to the membership and was available at the venue. With the number of nominations received for membership onto the Committee for the following year 2016/2017, all were accepted and the nominees were deemed elected. Andrew Brak was reappointed as Public Officer and Harley, Russel and Day Chartered Accountants was reappointed as the Auditor for 2016/2017.

Committee Members



Gina Wilson-Burns

Gina is an unapologetic advocate for her son, she promotes the life changing experience of parenting a child with multiple severe disabilities not as a 'traumatic or crushing experience' but one of hope and possibilities, of love and laughter. Gina acknowledges we need to remove much of the red-tape and perceived limitations to empower families to do what families do best... live, love and grow. She is the author of the inclusive education blog Inky Ed!

(<http://inkyed.wordpress.com>)



Meg Sweeney

Secretary

Meg is the mother of three young adults. Her eldest daughter has a significant intellectual disability which led Meg to be involved in advocacy to enable a more just and inclusive society. Meg was a Community Visitor, a member of the Disability Council of NSW and is a life member of Family Advocacy. Meg currently facilitates workshops on the NDIS and self-management and is involved in personal planning. She is passionate about people developing and maintaining their own unique identity in the community through valued roles and inclusive practice.



Alex Purvis

Treasurer

Alex is a father of four adult children and for many years he has been involved in promoting the rights of his son and developing individualised self-managed support to give his son a meaningful and enriched life. His knowledge of advocacy, legal and persuasive techniques were honed through his experiences in encouraging the education system to include all children.



Linda Hughes

Linda is dedicated to working towards a socially just and inclusive society where people with disability are included as active and valued citizens. Linda and her son self-direct his NDIS supports and together they are able to find creative solutions that ensure he enjoys a good and typical life in the community. Linda has recently been involved in establishing a user led disability support organisation in the Hunter and works with people with disability and families to get them on the road to self-direction.



Lesley Light

Chairperson

Lesley has a strong belief to advocate for her son and for others to be treated fairly in their pursuit of a rich life, full of opportunities and experiences. Lesley through her role on the Committee is committed to improve the lives of people living with developmental disability.



Andrew Wilson

Andrew is the proud parent of two children and his daughter has a disability. After many years as a lawyer, he worked as a risk manager and then worked for BHP Billiton in Indonesia for eight years. Now a professional non-executive director, Andrew has a mix of corporate and not for profit roles with experience in corporate governance and change management. Andrew is a past director and Chairman of Lifestart and is active in various community organisations. Andrew's goal is to help his kids and others to reach their full potential and enjoy the best quality of life available



Annette Bush

Annette is a mother of five children and her youngest son has an intellectual disability. Annette has a passion for her son's right to lead an ordinary life filled with learning opportunities that give him skills to be a contributing member of his community. Currently her son is an ambassador for an initiative on the Mid North Coast to show the community how a person with disability can work in a local business successfully with natural supports from fellow workers. Annette has been associated with Family Advocacy for 12 years and has learnt many skills in navigating and advocating for her son's life and is eager to help other families create good lives for their sons and daughters.



Di Samuels

Di is a proud mother of four rapidly maturing individuals. She is increasingly determined that her youngest daughter will have the same opportunities as her brothers and sister. She believes that fostering and sustaining community connections is at the heart of safeguarding a life of her daughter's choosing. Her eight year association with Family Advocacy has fuelled her tenacious personality and passion to speak up against injustices while striving for grass roots and systemic changes that create better, more inclusive lives for people with developmental disabilities.



Melissa Smith

Melissa is a proud sole parent to three children. Since the birth of her daughter, Melissa has dared for her to live a life of opportunities the same as her siblings. Melissa has a passion for creating inclusive communities. She is a keen speaker, sharing her thoughts and experiences with various audiences, including the World Forum in Melbourne on Social Inclusion for people with a disability, conferences, workshops, a 'Living with a disability' playgroup, and other community initiatives. She was nominated for 'Australian of the Year' in 2013.

Staff and Allies

Staff and Allies



Cecile Sullivan Elder
Executive Officer

Cecile is responsible for the leadership of the organisation in its vigorous and independent advocacy efforts and for the overall day to day management and strategic direction of Family Advocacy in line with its Mission, Vision, policies and practices. Cecile has been appointed by the Management Committee to undertake this task and is responsible for reporting back to governance.



Karen Tippett
Advocacy and Leadership Development Manager

Karen manages the Advocacy and Leadership Development Team. The team's purpose is to support, assist and contribute to the enhancement of families' knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively advocate for a life of meaningful community inclusion for their family member with a disability.



Monica Sweeney
Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator

Monica is the Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator, providing advocacy related advice and information to family members of people with disability. Monica can also be contacted about workshops and coming events.



Meg Clement-Couzner
Systemic Advocacy and Campaigns Manager

Meg works in the area of systems advocacy, representing the voices of families by negotiating with government on the rights, interests and inclusion of people with disability.



Leanne Varga
Systemic Advocate and Leadership Coordinator

Leanne works in the systems advocacy area, providing advice and support to families around the NDIS with a particular concentration around NDIS reviews and appeals.



Emma Baxter

Manager - Resourcing Families

Emma is the Manager of Resourcing Families – an initiative that assists people with disability and their families to have the information they need to have more choice and control in their lives – including via self-directed opportunities where appropriate.



Alex Potter

Media and Digital Communications Manager

Alex is responsible for all internal and external communication requirements, including the website, social media, press releases, branding and resource development.



Marybelle Ignacio

Office Manager

Marybelle is responsible for the overall management of the office. This includes compliance with statutory and administration requirements, as well as quality standards. Marybelle oversees the organisation's finances, elements of human resources, assets and WHS.



Paul Barrett

Accounts, Administration and Events Coordinator

Paul has a dual role within Family Advocacy. One is coordinating the finance and accounting requirements of the organisation, including budgets, audits and financial acquittals and the other role is coordinating the logistics for the many workshops that the organisation presents each year.



Rhiannon Brodie

Communications Coordinator

Rhiannon was responsible for all internal and external communication requirements, including the website, social media, press releases, branding and resource development.



Jessica Buhne

Capacity Development Officer

Jessica's role was to provide information, ideas and resources for families who want to develop strategies for creating inclusive lives through developing valued social roles, building support networks, making community connections and self-directing supports.

Volunteers and Family Leaders

A warm thank you to all our Family Leaders and volunteers who give extra time, commitment and dedication by volunteering to assist and thus support the work of the organisation. Some who live close to our Epping office help with tasks to keep the office running smoothly. Others contribute to resource and workshop development and share stories for articles and the website.

When travelling throughout NSW conducting workshops and connecting with families, we value the contribution of Family Leaders. They help present at events and share their stories. The insights and additional knowledge from their lived experience is an extremely valuable component of these events.

Thank you for your generosity of time and personal effort to provide this valued role. Families who attend our events continue to let us know how important hearing from other families is to them. We also understand that it would not be possible for our Family Leaders to take this time to assist without the support of your family, so we extend our thanks to your families as well.

Thank you for your contributions in 2016/2017.

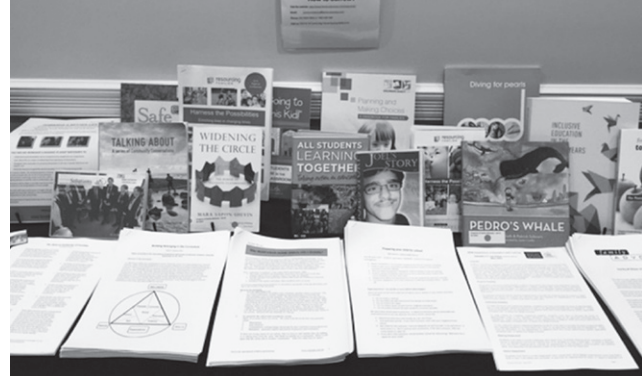
Margaret Ward	Margaret Hardman
Andrew Brak	Sarah Harvey
Shawn Burns	Catherine Hogan
Annette Bush	Linda Hughes
Yolande Cailly	Jack Kruger
Janelle Cosier	Lyn Legge
Jo Cross	Catia Malaquias
Anne Cregan –	Wendy McGlynn
Gilbert and Tobin	Mary Naim
Law Firm	Di Samuels
Caroline Daley	Melissa Smith
Matt Dimmock	Meg Sweeney
Judith Ellis	Carolyn Tumminello
Jane Gilkes	Alison Wilson
Nadine Grootenboer	Gina Wilson-Burns

Membership

Family Advocacy is an incorporated association with membership across NSW. Membership is open to individuals only and not organisations or individuals representing organisations. The individuals that make up the membership of Family Advocacy believe in and support the vision and mission of the organisation and are committed to its goals of creating a genuinely inclusive society. Eleven members have been awarded life membership for their significant contribution and support to the organisation over many years. Family Advocacy highly values its members and all the contributions they make to the organisation. Members can actively participate in the work of Family Advocacy by presenting at events, providing input into policy, systems advocacy, strategic planning and by becoming a member of the Committee. Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of its members and thanks them for their continued help and support throughout the 2016/2017 year.

Communications

Communications



Resources

Providing information and resources to families and professionals is a fundamental role of Family Advocacy. Our resource collection provides practical and inspiring examples of what is being achieved by people with disability not only in Australia but all over the world. Different types of resources including video content, webinars, articles, weblinks, blogs, factsheets, booklets and learning tools continue to be developed and made available.

Resources can be accessed through:

- our websites
- Inclusion Collection
- post
- email
- events
- Facebook
- YouTube
- Twitter
- visiting the Family Advocacy office.

Family Advocacy holds multiple workshops and events throughout the year where resources, such as books, research articles and information sheets are made available for attendees to take or borrow.

Family Advocacy hosts one of the biggest inclusion collections in Australia. We get borrowing requests from individuals and organisations from around the world. We have continued to add to this collection throughout the 2016/2017 financial year.

Websites

Family Advocacy has two websites:

www.family-advocacy.com

www.resourcingfamilies.org.au

These websites are managed internally and Family Advocacy aims to ensure that we provide easy access to

information that meets the needs of the families we support. This includes easy-to-find and register event pages, an extensive and sophisticated resource library and more interactive opportunities to connect with us through our websites. The Resourcing Families website continues to be an important site for resources, content and up-to-date information on capacity building and community inclusion. Both websites have an approximate 70-30 ratio of new visitors to the site vs returning visitors, demonstrating a high level of engagement of both sites with new visitors. Both websites have experienced an extra few thousands hits since last year, and we will continue to expand our online reach as continue to bring our work into the public eye.

Social Media

The Family Advocacy Facebook page has been growing this year with our page now having 1000 likes, and our top posts reaching between 6000 and 22,000 people. We are continuing to grow our social media presence to reach a larger number of people and encourage discussion around sector developments. We see social media as a vehicle to connect more widely with families as well as a mechanism to get social change issues to the forefront of everyday Australian.

Family Advocacy has a Twitter account which is being used to connect with other organisations in the sector and share important updates. The account is growing as we connect with more sector colleagues and families.

Internal Management And Administration

Internal Management And Administration

The Back Office

Family Advocacy has solid operational and HR policies and procedures in place to provide an environment where staff can function collectively and collaboratively in harmony and execute their individual roles effectively. The policies that underpin how Family Advocacy behaves as an organisation are sent to the membership for review approximately every two years. This was reviewed last year, and Family Advocacy was happy to receive a relatively higher number of responses than past years.

- 14% responded, up from 11% in the last review
- 95% of the respondents agreed with the way the current policies were stated
- respondents were three times more inclined to qualify any statements they disagreed with
- there were additional comments/suggestions for each question, in total seven times more than in the previous review
- the results seem to reflect a more engaged membership and all suggestions received are considered

The Operational Practice Manual contains the day to day procedures and protocols across the operational, personnel, resources and finance areas. This is reviewed by staff every two years to ensure that it is relevant, consistent with practice and addresses the current environment and needs. This was meticulously reviewed in 2016 to 2017, as a number of roles and processes had changed over time. Risk management was assessed and incorporated.

Timelines, checklists and set processes exist to ensure that these reviews as well as statutory obligations occur when they should. There is also an understanding that with anything, there is always room for improvement and we view feedback positively as an opportunity to be better.

The Human Resource

The start of the new financial year saw Family Advocacy farewelling Rhiannon Brodie, who contributed her energy to Family Advocacy for five years, being a driving force in establishing clear processes and improvements around her role as the Communications Coordinator as well as in many other areas of the organisation. Jessica Buhne, the Resourcing Families Capacity Building Officer who then covered the Communications role, provided many positive contributions to the Resourcing Families Project and to Family Advocacy before moving on to another organisation. Family Advocacy wishes them both well in their new roles within the industry, where continue to be connected to the organisation in one way or another.

Family Advocacy welcomed new staff members, Alex Potter and Leanne Varga. Alex brings her social media skills and new dynamics to the Communications Coordinator role. She is already making great progress with milestone hits on our Facebook page in the first few months since joining our organisation. Leanne breathed life to a new role in the organisation, as the Systems Advocacy and Leadership Facilitator, providing much needed support to people with disability and their families around the NDIS.

The staff continue to develop personally and professionally under the mentoring guidance of the Executive Officer, Cecile Sullivan Elder. Family Advocacy recognises that it is important for staff to keep up to date with their knowledge and skills required for them to carry out their roles in the best way possible. Training and workshops that nurture the common base values that serve as the foundational pillars of the organisation are quickly taken up as development opportunities, such as the SRV and PASSING workshops. Opportunities to develop soft skills such as communication, mindfulness, emotional intelligence and leadership are also within the training agenda of the organisation.

Attendance to relevant events, forums, public hearings and conferences (both nationally and internationally)

provides benefits on many levels including:

- nurturing links with likeminded organisations and families
- contributing to a dynamic and updated knowledge bank that they can tap when advising and informing other families
- opportunity to provide leadership in the industry and help families to develop leadership in this area as well
- informing the organisation in their systemic advocacy approach of providing policy input to government.

Technology Resources

Family Advocacy is in a fortunate position to be able to keep abreast with technology offline and online. Obsolete equipment in the office has made way to more modern and updated facilities. Our virtual presence on the world wide web and social media is expanding and we are ensuring that our online resources are also kept updated.

The ability to reach people effectively and as broadly as possible is now dictated by the efficient provision of information and resources in the manner that people are communicating in modern times. Our current technology is now faster, has greater capacity to store, produce and process massive amounts of information, has more features and apps to assist in communicating our messages and is also more portable. It now is a better medium in organising our thoughts and facilitating better discussions. This has opened the way for staff to work in new ways and has provided more flexibility in working conditions.

Database and Data Collection

Over the past years, the database has served to consolidate and centralise the information and contacts that develops and is acquired within the various parts of the organisation. This has facilitated the postal and email distribution of material, provided greater ease in reporting and enabled internal use and analysis, an area which can be further developed.

Clean up of data is an on-going endeavour as it is important in ensuring integrity of reports and mail outs. We are in the midst of transitioning from the existing platform to the not-for-profit pack of Salesforce, where we look forward to reliable support in navigating the potential of our database system.

In an effort as well to streamline internal processes and capture information more efficiently, we have contracted IT experts to link our website to our database.

Treasurer's Report



Treasurer's Report

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

We are grateful for the funding provided by government, both on a federal and state level for this financial year 2016/2017.

The Department of Social Services continued to support the organisation through both:

- (1) recurrent funding and
- (2) a one off grant to assist NDIS applicants in navigating the NDIS application procedures.

NSW Department of Family and Community Services also provided support through five streams of funding:

- (3) recurrent funding for advocacy and information work and ongoing operations of Family Advocacy through the NSW Government, Ageing, Disability and Home Care
- (4) a one off grant was received on 21st June 2016 to be expended between 8th June 2016 and 30th June 2018. This grant is to provide supplementary funding for increased demand in information supports during the NDIS transition period. 50% of this grant was included as income during 2016/2017

(5) recurrent funding for Resourcing Families

(6) a one off grant was received in on 1st June 2016 to be expended between 29th April 2016 and 30th June 2018. This grant is to fund a series of capacity building workshops "Right Relationships" and "Families Getting NDIS Ready". 50% of the grant was included as income in 2016/2017

A second one off grant was received on 22nd December 2016 to be expended between 15th December 2016 and 30th June 2018. This grant is to fund a series of capacity building workshops on Developing Community Connections. 25% of this grant was included in income during 2016/2017.

NSW Department of Education:

(7) provided grant in aid of \$32,993.

Aged and Community Services NSW & ACT:

(8) provided a one off funding to upgrade the organisation's websites and database.

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for 2017/2018 has been ratified by the Committee.

Recurrent Funding and One Off Grants			
Revenue from Commonwealth Government	Ref*	2016/17	2015/16
Disability Advocacy	(1)	291,618	264,091
NDIS Appeals funding	(2)	53,750	0
Revenue from State Government			
Information advocacy	(3)	292,605	280,538
Information advocacy (supplementary)	(4)	28,054	0
Resourcing Families – Entity	(5)	200,000	205,750
Resourcing Families – Capacity Building	(6)	371,750	152,842
Resourcing Families – Regional conferences	n/a	0	200,000
Grant in Aid from DoE	(7)	32,993	32,000
Aged & Community Funding	(8)	34,320	0
Total		\$1,305,090	\$1,135,221

Donations

We would like to thank those who have provided financial support throughout the year through their donations to the organisation. A total of \$5,030 was received from the following generous givers:

Adil Foundation

Philippa FitzPatrick

We would also like to acknowledge those organisations who have donated in kind:

- Salesforce Foundation: ten free licences of Salesforce Enterprise Edition, available for not for profit (NFP) organisations
- Microsoft: discounted software.

Disclosure of Interests

Payments were made to the following committee members:

Gina Wilson-Burns, Meg Sweeney and Annette Bush 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 Family Leader.

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

Alex Purvis

Treasurer

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADEs	Australian Disability Enterprises
ADHC	Ageing Disability and Homecare
ADN NSW	Aboriginal Disability Network New South Wales
AGM	Annual General Meeting
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CID	Council for Intellectual Disability
DA NSW	Disability Advocacy NSW
DNF	Disability Network Forum
DoE	Department of Education
DSS	Department of Social Services
FACS	Family and Community Services
MDAA	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association
NDAN	New South Wales Disability Advocacy Network
NDAP	National Disability Advocacy Program
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSDS	National Standard for Disability Services
NSW	New South Wales
PDCN	The Physical Disability Council of NSW
PWDA	People with Disability Australia
WHS	Workplace Health and Safety

family

A D V O C A C Y

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