

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

Knowledge

Leadership

Advocacy

Family Advocacy  
Annual Report 2014 | 2015

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# Our vision

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

# Our mission

Our Mission is to attain positive social roles for people who have a developmental disability through the development and support of advocacy by families and by strengthening the knowledge, role and influence of the family.

# Advocacy is

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.<sup>1</sup>

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; and
- people who have a 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 who have a 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 who have a 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 of the interests of a person who has 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 esteemed as 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.

# Objects

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's on offer;
- isolation, vulnerability, extra pressures and financial costs;
- lack of opportunities for community members to get to know and value individuals who have 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 who have 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 who have disability.

As a result, the Objects of the Organisation 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 among families;

(d) to monitor and, where necessary, make representations about legislation, practices and policies which affect people who have 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

For people with developmental disability, 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



Change certainly stayed on the agenda for Family Advocacy with plenty of movement within the organisation and the realisation for many people with disabilities and their families within NSW and nationally that there really could be a paradigm shift around disability thinking and action occurring in Australia.

There are many new faces on the committee (many who have returned on to the committee after many years around the organisation) and lots of new faces around the office. We welcomed Cecile Sullivan Elder into the Executive Officer role replacing Maree Salzano.

It has been great to hear from members working their way through the Hunter National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial site processes with some promising outcomes, particularly those who have spent many years thinking about and working towards the ordinary and inclusive lives Family Advocacy works so hard to promote.

The future of funding for advocacy for people with disabilities is still largely an unknown. Vigilance and action to try to resolve the uncertainty is ongoing and remains a very high priority.

Our mission remains as current today as it did at the inception of Family Advocacy. Attaining positive social roles for people with developmental disabilities through our advocacy and leadership development work still drives us, still invigorates us and still inspires us. With much work to do around helping families create their vision for a good life we are buoyed by attendance at seminars and workshops by new faces and families who have never contemplated many of these concepts before, let alone being encouraged to think differently. Safeguarding the futures of people with disabilities in NSW is paramount and we do need to keep across developments around the devolution of institutions that may jeopardise that process.

Our Advocacy Leadership and Development and Resourcing Families work areas have been doing an amazing job all over NSW, making new connections, changing attitudes and ultimately, I expect, changing

lives for people with disability and their families. My personal highlight was the Education weekend with Darcy Elks back in July 2014 - such amazing energy and insights for us all to take away.

As I stated last year Family Advocacy remains steady and remains strong - a testament to the incredible staff we have in our team. People with disabilities and their families are fortunate to have such a professional and committed team working for and with them.

Our Volunteer Session Leaders allow us to do more than, at times, seems possible - thank you to all who allow our modest size organisation do big things.

In 2014/2015 year we farewelled another of our long term colleagues, Kim Roots and later saw Nadia Samperi and Lizzie Spasich also move into new and exciting areas within disability and education. While always sad to see such talent leave us it is also exciting knowing what they are capable of and look forward to what we will see from them in the future.

A few changes in the Management Committee line up saw Andrew Brak, Vicky Logan and Rupert Theobald finish up at the end 2014. Our current team of Alex Purvis, Meg Sweeney, Linda Hughes, Alison Wilson, Karen Houghton, Amanda Fletcher, Matt Dimmock and Lesley Light has been an absolute pleasure to work with and I am totally indebted to their experience, knowledge, constant source of inspiration and commitment to the mission, vision and values of Family Advocacy.

The committee and the team led by Cecile will continue to work together to ensure we remain as efficient and effective as we can.

To all our members and allies who continue to make a difference, thank you!

**Gina Wilson-Burns**  
Chairperson

# Highlights of the year 2014/2015

In 2014/2015 it has been exciting to be reaching many new families through the development of workshops around achieving meaningful lives. The workshops, *Enriching lives for people with disability* and *Practical pathways for lives of meaning and fulfilment* contained practical applications to the ideas and concepts discussed and offered participants very clear pathways to continue the discussions and onward thinking around their family member having truly individual lives in their communities. With much change happening in the sector it is a vital part of our work to provide space for this thinking and planning that empowers families to be driving the change and taking advantage of any sector opportunities.

Another highlight for the year was a two day weekend event around inclusive education for a small and committed group of families. The in-depth thinking and knowledge obtained in these style of events provides an excellent foundation for families to be supported with both information, ideas and importantly inspiration and mentoring between them all. It was ideal to have International consultant, Darcy Elks facilitating the learning during this event.

A barrier that families and others who support people with disability face is when the person is described as having challenging behaviours. Interstate speaker Ann Greer presented a terrific day that spoke to the person striving to communicate to those around them and that we need to pay attention to. Many strategies and experiences were shared making this a very memorable and important event in this year.

Resourcing Families continued to travel the state presenting Keys to Developing Meaningful Lives. A five workshop series presented in seven locations; Armidale, Broken Hill, Lismore, Nowra, Orange, West Ryde (Sydney) and Wagga Wagga. The workshops focused on building the confidence, skills and capacity of families to create unique, meaningful and inclusive lives around an individual. Guest presenter Jane Sherwin shared ideas and strategies to help families with their thinking



Financial  
members  
**143 – 11 of them life  
members**



Number of contacts  
on our mailing list:  
**11,276**



Resources  
**21,163 resources  
accessed  
and distributed**



Website visits  
**Family Advocacy  
11,349**  
**Resourcing Families  
22,233**

## Highlights of the year 2014/2015 continued

and planning for creating meaningful lives through valued roles. Guest presenter Meg Sweeney focused on ways of self directing to create full and inclusive lives and exercise more choice and control over support arrangements, including recruiting your own staff.

A webinar about Circles of Support highlighted the importance of building up a support network around an individual with practical advice from a parent about how to get started and the contribution the circle made to ideas for her son finding a job, building up his social network and moving into his own home. Ideas for Self Directing Supports presented by Meg Sweeney was a popular workshop in the Keys to Developing Meaningful Lives series and was converted into a three part webinar series over three weeks for the benefit of more people around the state to understand the potential of individualised funding.

Both Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families have had new websites this past twelve months. New features such as easier access to information, easy to find and register event pages, extensive and sophisticated resource libraries and more interactive opportunities to connect with us through the website.

Eighty percent of families are now accessing information via the internet. It is important as an organisation that we continue to provide resources and information to families via online.





# Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families events in 2014/2015

## Where Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families held face to face events



## Family Advocacy events 2014/2015

Start Date	Campaign Name	Location
<b>2014</b>		
<b>July</b>	Education Weekend	Parramatta
	Do it Naturally: Building Connections and Relationships	West Ryde
<b>August</b>	Family Advocacy Presentation	Roselands, Punchbowl, Wahroonga
<b>September</b>	Lets get started - getting ready for school and life	Marrickville
	Family Advocacy Presentation - Getting ready for High School	Concord West
<b>October</b>	Taking action for a good life	Taree, Campbelltown, Armidale, Bankstown
	Family Advocacy Presentation	Bonnyrigg
<b>November</b>	Family Advocacy Presentation	Punchbowl
<b>2015</b>		
<b>February</b>	Enriching Lives for people with disability	Hurstville, Newcastle, West Ryde, Wollongong
<b>March</b>	Information session	Milperra
<b>April</b>	Is it Behaviour or is it Communication?	West Ryde
	Information session	Coogee
<b>May</b>	Enriching Lives for people with disability	Grafton, Griffith, Queenbeyan, Albury
	Information session	Marrickville, Albury, Wollongong
	Lets get started - getting ready for school and life	Webinar
<b>June</b>	Information session	St. Marys

# Resourcing Families events 2014/2015

Start Date	Campaign Name	Location
<b>2014</b>		
<b>July</b>	From Planning to Action	Broken Hill
	Involving Others and Building Networks	Broken Hill
	Information session	Broken Hill, Orange
	Developing Community Connections	Orange
<b>August</b>	Developing Community Connections	West Ryde, Lismore
	Information session	Ballina
<b>September</b>	Developing Community Connections	Nowra, Wagga Wagga
<b>October</b>	A Practical Pathway to a Better Life	Wagga Wagga
<b>November</b>	A Practical Pathway to a Better Life	Orange, West Ryde, Nowra
	Developing Community Connections	Armidale
<b>December</b>	Developing Community Connections	Broken Hill
	A Practical Pathway to a Better Life	Broken Hill
<b>2015</b>		
<b>February</b>	A Practical Pathway to a Better Life	Lismore, Armidale
<b>March</b>	Ideas for Self-Directing Supports	Orange, Wagga Wagga, Nowra, West Ryde
<b>May</b>	Ideas for Self-Directing Supports	Armidale, Lismore, Broken Hill
	Circles of Support	Webinar
	Individualised funding session	Rosebery
<b>June</b>	Ideas for Self Directing Supports	Webinar 1
	Ideas for Self Directing Supports	Webinar 2
	Ideas for Self Directing Supports	Webinar 3

# Key focus areas

# Advocacy on behalf of people with developmental disability

People with developmental disability continue to be subject to discrimination, exploitation, oppression, segregation and rejection.

Family Advocacy is proactive and reactive in systemic advocacy, leadership development and continued development of independent advocacy.

Family Advocacy will act with minimum conflict of interest in order to promote, protect and defend the interests, rights and needs of people with developmental disability.

## Workshop: Taking action for a good life

This is our key advocacy workshop for families; the workshop clarifies the need for advocacy and aims to deepen the understanding of devaluation of vulnerable people and the importance of advocacy to address this. Over this financial year we have conducted five of these workshops one of which was delivered to a Vietnamese group with a translator.

As the sector moves towards more self-managed and self-directed opportunities and the NDIS starts to roll out across NSW we aim to have families well equipped with strong advocacy skills in order to make the most of these emerging opportunities for people with developmental disability. It is essential to reach as many families as possible with key information on the importance of advocacy and being effective in their efforts.

We have also, by invitation, conducted advocacy presentations to family groups on five occasions thereby extending our reach to families.

Participants receive a resource which has been created outlining the tools for being an effective advocate and

are encouraged to make contact with us to discuss any specific issues and barriers they may be facing.

### **Participant comment:**

*> Lizzie, Rhiannon and Hilary knew their stuff, this made it less daunting and more understandable for the whole workshop.*

*> It was challenging and refreshing to participate.*

## Advocacy related advice and information enquiries

Throughout 2014/2015, 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 has 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.

Education continues to form the majority of our contact with families at around one third of all enquiries taken. Barriers families are facing in education 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 seeing goals and strategies for the student;
- coercing parents to consider segregated school settings; and
- discouraging enrolments of students with disability and continuing to cite funding as being a reason to not have a student at the school.

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.

There was also a significant amount of enquiries from families who were contacting Family Advocacy around pursuing opportunities post school, supported living and planning for the future. These enquiries included information about making the most of these opportunities and transition times, the expectations of a good life and a clearer understanding of the importance of advocating to make change on behalf of their family member.

Other topics relating to key transition points continue to be a focus including; getting ready for school, moving between schools and moving from school to post school life. Other areas of interest were; preparing a vision for the future, establishing a network of support, developing a range of relationships, speaking to services and navigating the system, employment opportunities and making long term plans around the person with disability.

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; and
- 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.

It also informs the organisation of systemic issues that are able to be raised in appropriate forums and with appropriate decision makers.

## Case study

### Family Story One

Discussion about how X can be supported at school as she gets stressed and anxious at school. The school are labelling it as a “misbehaviour” issue and that other students are “missing out” on their learning. Discussions included accommodating a student's disability and how her mum can articulate in an upcoming meeting how to best support X (tools such as creating a personal profile and how to explain a task and understand her communication needs). Information was provided on supports and initiatives in the Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

A follow up discussion was had about a meeting the mum had with the school. Mum was pleased that she was equipped and prepared for the meeting. Actions are to take place to support X such as supporting her to re-enter regular classes with her same aged peers, as natural supports can greatly help avoid isolation and anxiety at school.

Mum is having her second meeting with the school and feels that there is a focus on her daughter's behaviour of “refusing” and “avoiding”, not complying with teachers and attending class. There was discussion about using words such as ‘strategies’ and ‘actions’ to move things forward and to consider what is school business and what is family business. Follow up: The meeting went very well - the schools attitude/mindset has changed as they want to know how they can support X. The conversation about communication needs made a big difference.

### Family Story Two

Information sent to a mum whose son, in his 40's, is with a Disability Employment Service (DES) provider but it has been difficult for him to gain regular employment (out of the two years he had employment for a very short period). Y worked at a disability enterprise which he did not enjoy at all as he did not like being placed in a congregated environment. Strategies and ideas were discussed such as volunteering, TAFE, other study, the

meaning of valued roles and how to best start conversations with the service to improve the support and possibilities for Y. Mum is going to read some resources that have been sent to her and will arrange a follow up chat.

## Leadership development and training

Leadership development and training at Family Advocacy involves the encouragement and nurturing of parents, other relatives and friends to take on leadership roles. In 2014/2015 there has been a continued approach to engage younger families and siblings 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 webinars, 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;
- present and assist at Family Advocacy workshops;
- share ideas and personal reflections in webinars;
- contribute stories to be shared at events;
- contribute articles to the Family Advocacy library and web sites; and
- attend and participate in meetings with politicians or senior bureaucrats.

## Developing advocacy skills

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.

Family Advocacy 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.

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

Families 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.

Family Advocacy encouraged individuals who expressed an interest in becoming a Volunteer Session Leader to gradually increase their skills, competence and confidence. Being a Volunteer Session Leader involves presenting material and assisting with 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.

Training for Volunteer Session Leaders is ongoing for those people who take on this role. Volunteer Session Leaders increase their level of participation at a rate and in a way that suits them. To ensure that they are as confident, prepared and professional as possible, relevant workshop materials are supplied and discussed in advance.

Self evaluation is encouraged and feedback offered. As well as contributing personal knowledge and experience at Family Advocacy workshops, Volunteer Session Leaders gain skills and strategies that are useful when advocating for the rights and interests of their own family member with disability and when planning for his or her future.

## Attending Events

As part of our leadership development programme Family Advocacy may provide sponsorship to families to attend events. These events may be run by other organisations as well as events run by Family Advocacy.

This strengthens knowledge, allows for networking and encourages idea generation.

Some events families were supported to attend were:

- Inclusive Education...The possibilities, learnings and experiences
- Success in transitions Conference, Imagine More
- Social Role Valorisation two day training- Towards a better life, Foundations Forum
- Taking action for a good life workshops
- Let's get started – getting ready for school and life presentations
- Is it Behaviour OR Is it Communication? Guest presenter Ann Greer
- Enriching Lives for people with disability workshop

## Resources

Family Advocacy aims to provide useful and practical information that will complement and extend the learnings from the various workshops and leadership development opportunities.

This year we are completing the development of a booklet on inclusive education which will next be published into an e-booklet.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF)**

The Federal Government released a discussion paper for the review of the National Disability Advocacy Framework.

#### **What we did:**

We responded to the discussion paper and review at length, in consultation with parents and experts. In



particular we argued for family advocates to be included more specifically in the NDAF and for the Framework and Program to maintain funding for individual advocacy. We also supported a number of parents to respond.

**The Outcome:**

The Review results have not yet been released.

**Issue: State advocacy funding**

The state government had indicated that it would not fund advocacy beyond the NDIS rollout in 2018. It had also not committed to funding beyond 2016.

**What we did:**

We produced material outlining the value of advocacy with the Disability Network Forum (a network of advocacy organisations) to be distributed to politicians and public servants and met with numerous decision makers.

**The Outcome:**

The Opposition made a statement supporting funding for disability advocacy, and the Government made a commitment to fund advocacy up until 2018.



# Personalised support<sup>1</sup>

Having control over what, when, where and by whom supports are provided, increases the opportunities for people with developmental disability to lead full and meaningful lives included in their communities.

Family Advocacy will influence opportunities for people with developmental disability to have access to personalised supports and enhance people's capacity to take up those opportunities.

## Event: Is it Behaviour or Is it Communication?

### Presenter Ann Greer

Planning for the future continues to be a topic of great interest to families who have a family member with developmental disability.

This one day event was an informative and interactive day for both families and those who work with people with disability of all ages. This event challenged the misinterpretation of someone's communication needs and instead focused on:

- behaviour as a means of communication;
- looking at ourselves and our part in the behaviour of others;
- practical tips when working with a person who provides behavioural challenges and
- developing a personal style which is not punishing.

Guest speaker, Ann Greer is a mother of two adults living with disability as well as having over twenty years of formal experience in working with people who are labelled as having challenging behavior. Ann is a well-known and highly sought after presenter in Australia and New Zealand. Ann's area of interest lies in understanding the inherent needs of people who are seen as challenging due to their behaviour and

being able to work collaboratively with those who support them. Eighty people attended the day made up of 64% families and 36% professionals.

This topic is clearly important to families as well as professionals trying to better support people with disability. An extensive follow up email was sent to all attendees as well as those who didn't make the workshop. Many articles and resources which Ann shared were included in the email.

#### Feedback and comments:

Feedback from the day was positive with many saying it went above their expectations and that Ann was an exceptional presenter with obvious experience and knowledge.

- > *Most useful was the behaviour principles, discussions on the possible causes behind behaviour, and thinking more carefully about behaviour.*
- > *Real life stories and examples drawn from experience from another parent, helped make the content more relatable to real world.*
- > *Practical tools to address behaviour e.g. topping up, sharing power, ideas on money.*

1. Personalised support is optimised when;  
a. the individual is at the centre of informed decision making  
b. includes supported decision making  
c. family members are partners in that informed decision making  
d. planning is directed by the person and their family/ support network and  
e. there is a separation between planning and service provision  
f. paid support complements rather than replaces informal support.

## Resources

On the day of the event we took the opportunity to interview Ann to harness some of the salient points and ideas that were raised. This is now uploaded to the Family Advocacy website.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Self-directed supports/personalised approaches**

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Quality and Safeguards Framework was being developed for the first time. This included issues like criteria for who can be employed using NDIS funding, and what checks they need to pass.

#### **What we did:**

We responded to the consultation at length. We also supported a number of parents to respond.

#### **The Outcome:**

The Framework results are yet to be released.



Resourcing Families continues to work with families to build their capacity to imagine better and create full, meaningful and inclusive lives for their family members as valued members of their communities through the creation of individualised supports. Family stories and experience remain central to inspiring raised expectations of what might be possible for people, as well as practical ideas of how things can be achieved. Information, resources and events continue to emphasise the importance of clear vision for assisting people with disability to experience the good things of life around community connections, strong support networks, meaningful experiences, valued roles, choice and control. The ongoing transition towards the NDIS

and its developing roll out across NSW highlights the importance of supporting people in their capacity to confidently and effectively direct support for inclusive lives for people. Information and resources have been provided through face to face events, webinars, new website content, E Newsletters and conversations via phone and email.

## Capacity Building Project

Resourcing Families was further funded in 2013 by the NSW government to assist families prepare for the transition to the NDIS. A series of five workshops – Keys to Developing Meaningful Lives – were created to increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of families to create unique and authentic lives for their family members through the intentional and strategic development of informal and formal individualised supports.

The workshop series was presented in seven locations across the state; Armidale, Broken Hill, Lismore, Nowra, Orange, Wagga Wagga and West Ryde (Sydney). Workshop 1: From Planning to Action, focused on the importance of developing clear vision to guide planning for individualised supports. Workshop 2: Involving Others and Building Networks, centred on strategies for involving others in supporting the goals of a person with disability. Workshop 3: Developing Community Connections provided concrete strategies and examples for supporting people to make meaningful connections with others in their local community. Workshop 4: A Practical Pathway for a Better Life, presented by Jane Sherwin, Accredited Teacher of SRV, explored practical strategies for crafting valued roles for people in their communities that develop skills, connections and enhance image. Workshop 5: Ideas for Self Directing Supports, presented by Meg Sweeney, focused on the principles behind self directing supports, how to shape a meaningful week, ways of self directing and employing staff to facilitate personal goals and aspirations.

The opportunity to return to the seven workshop locations over the last 12 months has afforded a greater opportunity to engage with families, especially in regional NSW. As well as attend workshops, families were able to make individual appointments with Resourcing Families staff to discuss opportunities and ideas specific to their family member. Time in each location also enabled contact to be made with community organisations, councils, community services and professionals to build awareness for the opportunity of people with disability and their families to arrange personalised supports to create inclusive and meaningful lives as valued members of their community. Resourcing Families appreciates the contribution of all presenters and volunteers who offered their expertise and experience towards the success of this workshop series. Special thanks to Suzanne Healy, Sharon Williams, Jane Sherwin and Meg Sweeney.

The Capacity Building Project has been under external evaluation at the request of Ageing Disability and Homecare (ADHC) the project's funder. A team of researchers from Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology have been engaged with analysing data from workshop evaluations and conducting a series of participant interviews with people from across the state to determine what capacity building assistance families think are most helpful for creating meaningful lives for their family member, their transition to the NDIS and any barriers they feel impede their efforts. The final report on this research project is due by the end of the year.

Participant feedback from evaluations was extensive and very positive and the following comments represent a small sample of what people shared.

- > I would just like to say a huge thank you for today. I have a much deeper idea of self-directing. I am so thankful for the chance of being here today.*
- > Easier than I thought (self directing), I feel inspired.*
- > Was great. I am still several years off needing this yet but it's been a great lesson in the importance to have the plan ready.*
- > This workshop has provided me with the knowledge of how I can now help my son in his life*

*with decisions/choices we didn't know existed.*

*> Excellent presentation: feeling a little more positive about the prospects of NDIS in Broken Hill given its remoteness.*

*> I got lots of ideas. It's got me thinking outside the square.*

*> I look forward to the NDIS with greater confidence.*

## Webinars

Resourcing Families continues to reach a wider audience across the state through webinars. The workshop Ideas for Self Directing Supports was very topical and generated a lot of interest. Thus it was converted into a webinar series to make the information available to more people. The webinar series was also presented by Meg Sweeney in three parts over three weeks. People participated from 28 different locations around the state. From places as far afield as Albury, Bega and Cooma in the south to Murwillumbah, Ballina, Tweed Heads and Tamworth in the north and Bourke, Broken Hill, Mendooran, Mungindi out west. The webinars were recorded with captions and are now available on the Resourcing Families website for people to continue to access the information.

A webinar was presented about Circles of Support, a strategy for getting more people involved to help formulate, promote and support the goals of a person with disability. The webinar explored the value and purpose of building up an intentional support network around an individual, as well as practical steps for getting started. One of the presenters was a parent who has facilitated her son's circle of support for nine years. His circle has assisted him to grow his social network, find a job and plan to move into his own home. Participants logged in from 35 different locations across the state. This webinar was also recorded with captions and is available on the Resourcing Families website.

All the webinars generated a lot of positive feedback and some examples are as follows.

- > Thank you to all the presenters. Special thanks to Karen for sharing her story and experience.*



> All great and useful info that should be helpful as we all move to NDIS.

> Thank you for your dedication and passion in helping families like us.

> A big thank you for putting together this series. It was informative and empowering. Creating it as a webinar made it very possible to attend as well. I look forward to the materials.

> Just wanted to drop you a line to congratulate Resourcing Families for all the relevant information supplied and the professional way you have done this. Look forward to participating in your webinars again in the future.

> This was truly the penny dropping moment for me and I'm so grateful for your organisation.

> The webinar was very informative and positive. I feel the future will be much better for our children with disabilities once we start down the road of self-managed funds.

## Information Sessions

Resourcing Families continues to be available to present information sessions to family groups on a number of topics upon request. Presentations to early childhood intervention centres in Broken Hill and Orange focused on the importance of vision and a positive introduction for connecting with others. A presentation on positive vision and circles of support was presented in Ballina. Information sessions about the principles and opportunities afforded by individualised funding were presented in Wagga Wagga and for parent groups from Italian and Spanish cultural background in Sydney.

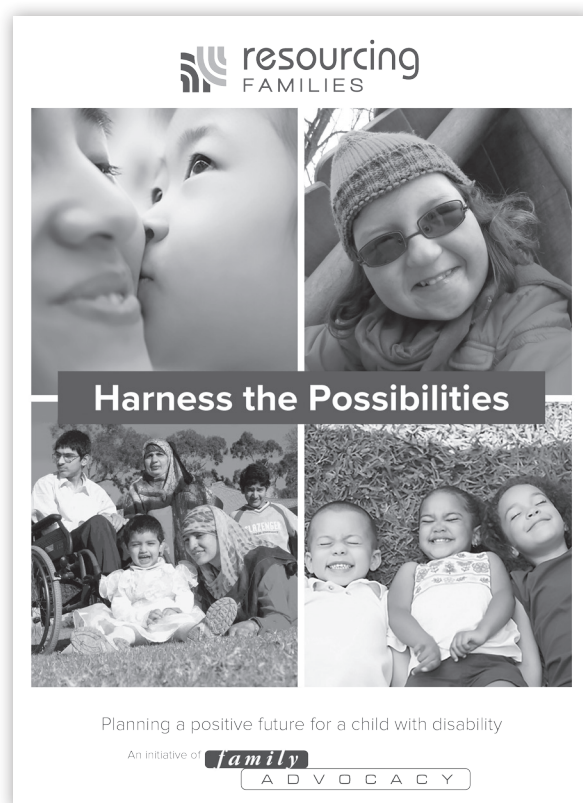
## Website

The Resourcing Families website was relaunched and has a new design and capacity to support more resources. Key additions include a revision and update for all content, resource library, information in six new languages, capacity for more video content, family stories and tools and templates for visioning and planning. The new website had 1,168 visitors in the first two weeks.

## Resources

New and revised resources have been produced to assist families in their capacity to take creative steps in facilitating full, meaningful and well supported lives for their family members. Examples include handbooks about circles of support and ways of self directing supports that complement the information presented in recent webinars and are also available on the website.

*Harness the Possibilities – Planning for a positive future for a child with disability* was first published in 2013 and has been distributed widely around the state. The booklet was written for young families to encourage them to think of the positive possibilities for an inclusive life for their child as a valued member of their community. The booklet has now been revised with a new graphic design and is targeted to reach more families with its message of shaping typical and meaningful pathways for children within families and into the wider community.



# Solid foundations for children 0-6

Getting off to a good start in life is vitally important 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.

The 'special and separate' path can leave families 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.

## Webinar:

### Let's get started...

#### getting ready for school and life

This webinar aimed to help families plan a positive future for their family member and looked at the benefits of an inclusive education. Families of children preparing for school or in their early school years were the focus.

The content is around inclusive schooling, the benefits and research, supports available and the importance of building relationships with the school.

Participants particularly valued the insights and experiences shared by a parent who was also able to answer questions within the webinar. This was held in the evening to attract working parents.

#### Participant feedback and comments:

- > *"The explaining of the funding issues and model was clear and concise and very useful. Also, hearing Gina's personal story and Monica's input to show us the lifelong benefits of inclusive education.*

- > *How to develop a vision and using the vision choices so the vision can be achieved was useful to hear.*

- > *Having a vision, having peers as part of the support system, areas where support can be needed, school memories aren't academic, remembering the playground as well as the class.*

- > The convenient format of a webinar allows more families, particularly from rural and remote areas, to be able to be involved.

## Family Advocacy Presentations

Family Advocacy also presented six information sessions throughout the year on the topic of Let's get started... getting ready for school and life to a variety of parent groups connected to early intervention organisations such as Lifestart – Aspire and Plumtree.

These organisations have invited Family Advocacy to deliver these presentations as part of their program supporting families to transition to school.

# Inclusive Education

Family Advocacy recognises the many barriers faced by people with disability and their families in enabling students to be included in mainstream learning environments.

Family Advocacy's aim is that all people with developmental disability are welcomed and educated, with adequate support, in the same learning environment as their non-disabled peers. This includes early childhood education, school and post school education systems.

## Weekend event: Inclusive Education...The possibilities, learnings and experiences.

Attending a two day inclusive education weekend event encourages a broadening of perspectives and deepening knowledge on what is possible for students with disability in reaching their potential in the school years. Mixing with other families who are working towards positive outcomes for their sons and daughters and hearing from speakers with both professional and personal experience is very powerful.

In July 2014 Family Advocacy hosted International consultant, Darcy Elks to lead a weekend on inclusive education. Darcy was assisted by Gina Wilson-Burns and Annette Bush, two family leaders who also shared their own perspectives and experiences with the group. Other guest speakers at the weekend were Bob Lee (Citizen Advocacy Sunshine Coast), Former Family Advocacy Senior Systemic Advocate Belinda Epstein-Frisch, Neale Waddy and Robyn Armstrong (NSW Department of Education and Communities).

There were 21 families who attended the event along with staff from the appropriate programmatic areas. The intention of the weekend was to open a space for families to share their own lived experiences and insights on inclusive education. This provided ownership from all involved and for families to achieve their individual purpose through meaningful engagement. The weekend had a strong leadership development focus and is incorporated within our leadership development program.

An extensive resource kit was developed for participants to use as a continuing source of information and for further individual research.

This weekend was possible through the funding of Grant in Aid with NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

### Participant comments:

- > Amazing, inspiration, energising. It came at a time in my journey when I needed to be here more than anything. I now have a plan and it is clear.*
- > "Thank you from the bottom of my heart!! This has changed my whole thinking around what/how/if/when/where ..."*

## Transitioning to High school - A Family Advocacy presentation

A two hour presentation was delivered around the key transition point of moving from Primary to High school. Family Advocacy was invited to speak with families from a Korean parent support group. This transition point can be a time when families are challenged around their decision to have their children educated in the regular class at school. The aim of the presentation was to assist families to have a clear vision, consider schooling choices, to understand enrolment procedures and apply strategies for communicating with schools.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Education of children and young people with developmental disability in NSW schools**

#### **What we did:**

During 2014/2015 we made representations to the federal Senate Inquiry into Education and Attainment for School Students with disability and also held a meeting with Melissa Clements, Director of Disability programs in the DEC to discuss ongoing communication as the NDIS rolls out.

We also contributed to the five yearly review of the Disability Standards in Education, and supported several families to respond.

#### **Outcome:**

The results of both the Inquiry and the review are yet to be finalised.





# Welcoming, inclusive communities

Communities are places of great possibility for natural supports and opportunities for people with developmental disability.

Family Advocacy enhances the capacity of families to develop and contribute to welcoming, inclusive communities.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Devolution**

The Stockton Centre remains open despite long term bi-partisan support for closure.

#### **What we did:**

We sit on the Ombudsman Roundtable on Community Living Consultation and provide feedback on the Stockton devolution process. Through this, we advocated on the issue of Stockton staff undertaking NDIS plans for residents and gained assurance that this would come to an end in November this year.

We also raised this issue with Shadow Spokesperson Linda Burney, who clarified her support for closure.

We supported several local parents to visit their MPs and advocate for closure.

This was raised at Stockton roundtables with ADHC Executive Director John Ryan. It was also raised at the NDIS Joint Standing Committee which resulted in a commitment to look at the issue by Senator Mal Brough. Meetings were held with both the Minister and Shadow Minister for Disability.

#### **Outcome:**

Re-commitment to the closure of Stockton was gained from both the Minister and Shadow Minister for Disability.

# Meaningful adult lives

Many people with developmental disability live under low expectations and limited opportunities that prevent the development of valued social roles.

Family Advocacy's aim is that all adults with developmental disability have lives that are rich with valued adult roles and have opportunities for personal growth and development, lifelong learning, employment, relationship building and supported living.

## Workshop: Enriching Lives for people with disability

This is an interactive workshop presented by Family Advocacy and Meg Sweeney that explored strategies to support a person with disability to have a good life as part of their community. Participants considered the individual interests of a person with disability to be able to engage in typical adult opportunities and provide the advocacy tools to make this happen.

Strategies discussed included:

- having a positive vision for the future;
- working towards participation in the community; and
- assisting people to attain positive roles as a path to a good life.

The format of delivery was presentation and small group work. The group work allowed for all participants to practice thinking of role development for each person's family member in the group. This is a powerful way of comprehending the theory and also stepping back from our own life and apply the ideas to others in the group. People particularly noted that they now understand the importance of having roles in overcoming barriers to inclusion.

Workshop participants received resources on the day as well as follow up articles and information on building relationships and how to strategically deepen connections.

Separate individual follow up has also taken place with families who required a more individual discussion.

### Feedback and comments:

- > *I will be considering how my child's interests (guitar) can enhance his social value and network.*
- > *I've learnt a lot more than expected.*
- > *Exceeded expectations, brought up much to think about and discuss with my family members.*
- > *Learning from others experiences and progressive development of roles with support from Family Advocacy was very helpful.*

## Event: Do it naturally- building connections and relationships

### Presenter Darcy Elks

This workshop explored the natural pathways for developing relationships that exist in our society and how to effectively use them. The ways to address exclusion, isolation and loneliness of people with disability were discussed. Twenty-five families attended and two brought with them a person who supports their family member.

The presenter Darcy Elks, is a parent of three adult children, one of whom has a disability. Darcy has an in depth knowledge of working with people who are marginalised in society. Through positive encouragement of social value and inclusion for people with disability, Darcy addresses the issue of those who are devalued in society in a practical and proactive way.

#### **Feedback and comments:**

- > It made me look at my daughter's life and her friendships and how we can encourage more "natural" friendships.*
- > Being patient!! Not every situation and strategy result in relationships.*

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Inclusive adult education**

#### **What we did:**

Family Advocacy is a member of the Steering committee for inclusive education at The University of Sydney run by Centre for Disability Studies, promoting the inclusion of people with disability in mainstream education.

### **Issue: Housing**

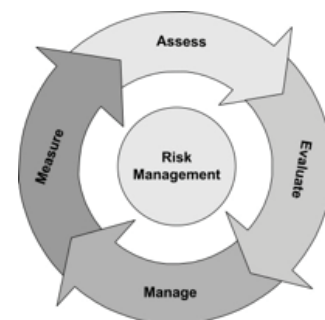
#### **What we did:**

We worked throughout the state election to support parents to get in touch with their local members, particularly those in swing seats, to communicate concerns about housing.

We also successfully advocated for ADHC to keep people informed of the transition arrangements for ADHC group homes in the Hunter region.

# Family Advocacy is an ethical, prudent and sustainable independent advocacy organisation

Family Advocacy strives to enhance the capacity and operation of the organisation to ensure its renewal, viability and effectiveness.



## Quality Assurance

Two audits were conducted this year. One was a surveillance/upgrade audit against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) - required by the Department of Social Services (DSS) providing Commonwealth funding. The other was a third party verification (TPV) against the NSW Disability Services Standards for ADHC funded organisations.

Both results were very positive for the organisation gaining both the NSDS certification and the NSW verification certificate. The TPV report indicated a 100% compliance with all the standards. The verification involved interviews as well as documentation review.

### Extract from the TPV Report by the auditor:

*"...(Family members) gave overwhelming feedback to their high level of satisfaction that they had in relation to the services that had been provided to them. They also held the Senior Management and Support Staff Members in high regard and demonstrated a great deal of gratitude to the Senior Management and Support Staff Members..."*

With the surveillance audit, again evidence was drawn from both documentation in files as well as interviews with family members, staff, senior management and a committee member.

### Extract from the Surveillance Audit Report by the auditors:

*...has an effective quality management system in place for an organisation of its size. There were some suggested opportunities for improvements to strengthen this further.*

*Committee Members and staff demonstrated a strong commitment to the organisation's mission and values and have the skills and experience to carry out their roles effectively.*

*Feedback from (families) was very positive*

*The audit team has the opportunity to observe at first hand the capacity of the staff to develop effective relations with (family members) as well as network with other (organisations).*

*The organisation demonstrated a positive attitude towards the continuous improvement process.*

## Risk management

Often taken for granted by organisations, Family Advocacy views it as a significant area to undertake to ensure its sustainability. In this view, various measures have been in place in the organisation for many years to address and/or minimise risk.

Various insurances are in place and are renewed annually. This includes Business insurance, public

liability (which includes personal accident insurance, covering both staff and volunteers) motor vehicle insurance and workers compensation.

Human Resource processes are in place and every employee is covered by the industry award. Roles are clearly defined. Admin, operational and financial processes have guidelines, timetables to keep track of statutory requirements. Family Advocacy undertakes a regular review of its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements as well as supporting best practice. This is part of our commitment towards continuous improvement. The membership can place their confidence in the organisation that it is proactively reducing any negative impact that could possibly arise from negligence.

Work Health and Safety is an area that impacts the employees, volunteers and visitors directly and we endeavour to keep it in our view constantly.

## Work Health and Safety (WHS)

Family Advocacy has two first aiders and two office wardens, as part of the Emergency Evacuation Team of the building. The wardens participate in emergency training organised by the Building Superintendent twice a year. All staff participate in the evacuation drill conducted thereafter.

A WHS assessment checklist on the office environment is conducted annually to address any potential risks. A workstation assessment is also conducted for all new staff or as needed to ensure the suitability of their furniture and equipment within their immediate work space. There is an Incident and Injury process in place that enables staff to raise any incidents that occur in the carrying out of their work activities, within and outside of the office. These incidents are monitored to ensure that any issues are resolved and if possible, remove or reduce the possibility of reoccurrence.

## Financial Management

The management and executive of the organisation are proactive in ensuring that there is sufficient income to sustain the operational and support activities that fulfil its Mission and Vision.

Family Advocacy regularly undertakes a financial audit by a third party to ensure that all accounting transactions have been entered and presented accurately in financial reports in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

The organisation values transparency with its membership and provides annual audited financial reports. The Treasurer's Report on page 41 provides further details.

# Management Committee

# Management Committee

## Governance statement

Family Advocacy is incorporated under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1984*, and operates under the rules of association adopted by members on 19 June 1991. This was later renamed the "Constitution" in 2011.

Under the Constitution Family Advocacy's affairs are governed by the Committee of Management (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;
- staffing and administrative matters;
- systemic and general advocacy matters;
- correspondence;
- complaints; and
- 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 report to members at the AGM. At the AGM the Annual Report, which includes the audited financial report for the year just ended, is presented to members.

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM of Family Advocacy was held on Friday 28 November 2014 at the Ryde-Eastwood Leagues Club in West Ryde. Gina Wilson-Burns as the incumbent Chairperson of the Management Committee presided over the AGM. Family Advocacy appreciated the presence of Neale Waddy from the Department of Education and Communities, who has been a great support through the years, and Sandra Conroy, from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services.

Gina presented the Chairperson's Report and Andrew Brak, the Treasurer's Reports as laid out in the 2013/2014 Annual Report. All nominations for membership onto the Management Committee were accepted and election of the new committee members followed. Andrew Brak was re-appointed as Public Officer and Harley, Russell and Day chartered accountants was re-appointed as the Auditor for the year 2014/2015.



# Committee Members

## **Gina Wilson-Burns**

### **Chairperson**

Gina is mum to a ten year old son. 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 and has been involved in advocacy for people with intellectual disability since the birth of her eldest daughter. Meg was a member of the Disability Council of NSW, a Community Visitor and is a life member of Family Advocacy. She is passionate about people developing and maintaining their own unique identity through valued roles and inclusive practice. Meg lives on the South Coast of NSW at Vincentia, Jervis Bay.

## **Alex Purvis**

### **Treasurer**

Alex is a father of four children and lives in Grafton. For many years, he has been involved in promoting the rights of his son. His knowledge of advocacy, legal and persuasive techniques were honed through his experiences in encouraging the education system to include all children. He has a particular interest in developing individualised self-managed approaches. An innovative support arrangement has given his son a meaningful and enriched life.

## **Matthew Dimmock**

### **Committee Member**

Matthew and his wife and two children live on the South Coast of NSW. He is a passionate advocate for his children and is guided by a firm belief in the potential of all people to live valued, contributing and connected lives embedded in their local community. He is also passionate about the transformative power of inclusive education on the lives of all children, and is excited about the possibilities presented by the expanding self-directed funding space in NSW.

## **Amanda Fletcher**

### **Committee Member**

Amanda Fletcher is from North Rocks in Sydney and lives with her partner and two children, her eldest child of ten years having an intellectual disability. Amanda has attended many Family Advocacy and Resourcing

Families events since her daughter was two years old and holds a firm belief of inclusion for everyone. Amanda has had a previous period of time on the committee, participated in events as a Volunteer Session Leader and participated in PASSING in 2013. Amanda currently contributes on the Resourcing Families Steering Committee. Amanda enjoys gardening, reading, music, cooking and walking her new dog with her family.

## **Linda Hughes**

### **Committee Member**

Linda is dedicated to working towards a socially just and inclusive society where people with disability are included as active and valued citizens. She lives in Newcastle with her 22 year old son Jacob who has disability. By self-directing Jacob's support together they are able to find creative solutions that ensure Jacob enjoys a good and typical life included in the full life of 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. Linda has been associated with Family Advocacy since the early nineties and continues to be inspired by the work of the organisation.

## **Lesley Light**

### **Committee Member**

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.

## **Alison Wilson**

### **Committee Member**

Alison lives with her husband and two children in the northwest suburbs of Sydney. Her professional background is in medical practice and her interest in disability advocacy started when volunteering as a general practitioner for the Sydney Paralympic Games in 2000. Especially since the birth of her daughter she has been a passionate advocate for inclusion and opportunities for her daughter comparable with her peers. She holds a firm belief about the inherent value and uniqueness of all people, and strives to encourage others to look beyond any diagnosis to the person. Since her daughter started school, she has been particularly involved in advocating for inclusion of all abilities in the education system, working to overcome the barriers to inclusion through effective social advocacy and education. She is also involved in promoting inclusion in community organisations such as church groups.

## **Karen Houghton**

### **Committee Member**



# 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.

## Advocacy and Leadership Development Team



**Karen Tippett**  
**Coordinator - Advocacy and Leadership Development Team**

Karen coordinates 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 Facilitator**

Monica is the Advocacy and Leadership Facilitator, providing advocacy related advice and information to family members of people with disability. Monica can

also be contacted about workshops and coming events.



**Lizzie Spasich**  
**Advocacy and Leadership Development Officer (until March 2015)**

Lizzie was the Advocacy, Leadership and Development Officer. Her role included providing advocacy related information and advice,

assisting families to develop their capacity to advocate for their family member with disability supporting the development of family leadership skills and organising and presenting at workshops across NSW.

## Systemic Advocacy



**Meg Clement-Couzner**  
**Senior Systemic Advocate**

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.

## Resourcing Families



**Emma Baxter**  
**Resourcing Families Coordinator**

Emma is the Coordinator 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. Emma and the Resourcing Families team present a range of events and create resources specifically designed to assist people to think and plan for a good life.



**Jessica Buhne**  
**Capacity Development Officer**

Jessica's role is within the Resourcing Families initiative that aims to provide information, ideas and resources for families who want

to develop strategies for creating inclusive lives for their family member with disability through developing valued social roles, building up support networks, making community connections and self directing supports.



**Claire Northrop**  
**Project Officer**

Claire provides technical, administrative, promotional and communications support for the Resourcing Families initiative, especially for events,

webinars and the web site.

## Communications



**Rhiannon Brodie**  
**Communications Officer**

Rhiannon is the Communications Officer for Family Advocacy. Her responsibilities are managing the websites and overseeing Family Advocacy's corporate

communication requirements. The position also manages the organisations resources, development and purchasing of new resources and keeping families and allies up to date with the latest information.

## Human Resources, Accounts and Administration



**Marybelle Ignacio**  
**Office Administrator**

As the Office Administrator, Marybelle is responsible for the overall management of the office. This includes compliance with statutory and administrative requirements, as well as quality

standards. Her role involves overseeing the financial aspect of the organisation, human resource and workplace health and safety matters, as well as addressing equipment procurement and maintenance.



**Philippa FitzPatrick**  
**Administrative Officer**

Philippa worked at reception and provided administrative support. Philippa arranged all of the off-site events and workshops.



**Paul Barrett**  
**Accounts Officer**

Paul manages the organisation's regular accounting tasks as well as payroll, financial reporting and budget and audit preparation.

## Volunteers and Volunteer Session Leaders

Family Advocacy heartfully thanks all of you who give extra time, commitment and dedication by volunteering to assist and thus support the work of the organisation. Some people who live close to our Epping office help with sending out mail for our events or other tasks to keep the office running smoothly.

When travelling through NSW conducting our events and reaching out to families we value the contribution of parent volunteers who help present at the events and share their stories. The insights and additional knowledge gives an important and necessary perspective to these face to face 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 this is to them. We also understand that it would not be possible for you 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 2014/2015.

**Andrew Brak**

**Margaret Hardman**

**Bettina Ignacio**

**Volunteer Session Leaders for 2014/2015  
included:**

**Annette Bush**

**Gina Wilson-Burns**

**Alison Wilson**

**Alex Purvis**

**Sharon Williams**

**Suzanne Healy**

**Hilary McPherson**

**Cheryl Gardener**

## Volunteer guest speakers

Many Family Advocacy events and presentations are enhanced through the expertise of guest speakers. A warm thankyou to each speaker for being involved in these events and offering such an enriching opportunity for the participants.

### **Volunteer guest speakers for 2014/2015 included:**

**Belinda Epstein-Frisch**

**Bob Lee**

**Karen Schwartz**

**Neale Waddy**

**Robyn Armstrong**



**Volunteer Margaret Hardman**



**Volunteer Andrew Brak**

## Membership

Family Advocacy is an incorporated association with 143 members from the various reaches of New South Wales. Membership is open to individuals only (not organisations or individuals representing organisations). The individuals that make up the membership 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 hold life membership and were awarded for having demonstrated long-term commitment to the work of Family Advocacy and they continue to provide a significant contribution to the work of the organisation.

Family Advocacy highly values its Members and all the contributions they make to the organisation. Members can actively participate in the organisation through providing input into policies, the systemic work of the organisation, presenting at events, contributing to the strategic planning and by becoming a member of the Management Committee.

Family Advocacy acknowledges the important role of its members and thanks them for their continued help and support throughout the 2014/2015 financial year.

# Communications

# Communications

## Resources

Providing information and resources to families and workers is a fundamental role of the organisation. We continue to provide information through different ways so we are accessible to all.

### Resources can now be accessed via:

- Our websites
- In person by visiting the office
- Telephone
- Post
- Email
- At our events
- Through our e-newsletters
- Facebook

Different types of resources including video content, webinars, articles, web-links, blogs, factsheets and learning tools continue to be developed and made available.

Over the past twelve months the Advocacy and Leadership work area of the organisation has been working with families to develop an Inclusive Education Booklet. The booklet aims to assist families in their advocacy efforts when talking to schools and the community on why they want their child to have an inclusive education. It will be a great resource for schools and the broader community such as medical professionals, social workers and therapists. The book is due for completion in October 2015 and will be made available in both print and online and with intention of developing an interactive e-book.

Our online video library which is made available online through Vimeo – a community based video storage system. We have over 117 videos available for families to access on a range of topics including inclusive education, advocacy, self managing, supported living, circles of support and many other topics.

## E newsletters

Communiqué – Family Advocacy's Enews is delivered four times a year to over 3,000 families in New South Wales. The purpose of communiqué is to provide up to date information about the issues that affect people with disability and the quest for inclusive lives. It highlights developments in Family Advocacy's systemic advocacy efforts, new resources, upcoming events, changes to policy or the system.

Resourcing Families emails out an Enews through out the year to both families and professionals. The news consists of useful links to new resources and other information and ideas that are helping to build capacity in people understanding and taking up self-directed opportunities in NSW.

## Websites

Family Advocacy has three websites:

[www.family-advocacy.com](http://www.family-advocacy.com),  
[www.resourcingfamilies.org.au](http://www.resourcingfamilies.org.au) and  
[www.supportedliving.org.au](http://www.supportedliving.org.au).

All three websites are managed internally while maintaining their individual identities.

Family Advocacy has invested heavily this past year in ensuring our websites are meeting the needs of the families we support and providing innovative and useful resources.

Both Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families have had new websites this past twelve months. New features such as easier access to information, easy to find and register event pages, extensive and sophisticated resource libraries and more interactive opportunities to connect with us through the website.

Eighty percent of families are now accessing information via the internet. It is important as an organisation that we continue to provide resources and information to families via online. We look forward to improving wherever possible our websites and looking at new ways we can continue to interact and engage with families, including investing in how we use social media.



02 9869 0866
1800 620 588

family  
ADVOCACY

[Ordinary Lives](#)
[Who We Are](#)
[What We Do](#)
[Events](#)
[News](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Resources](#)

Family Advocacy works with families to promote and defend the rights and interests of people with developmental disability

Who we are >

Early Childhood

School Years

Employment and Volunteering

Community Life

Creating a Home

Resourcing Families

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Harness the possibilities for people with disability

## Big Dreams - High Expectations - Full Lives

Every person with disability can lead a meaningful and fulfilling life that reflects his or her aspirations and personal interests. It may take some careful thinking and planning but a typical life in the general community, full of the experiences and opportunities that most of us enjoy and take for granted is possible.

# Internal Management and Administration



# Internal Management and Administration

The Administration and Accounts team provides a significant contribution in the life of the organisation by providing support to the Executive Officer and staff, who undertake the core operations of Family Advocacy in carrying out its Vision and Mission. They also provide support, as needed, to the Management Committee in carrying out their governance role.

The Administration and Accounts team role involves managing the organisation's resources and logistics, implementing policies and practices that support the running of the organisation and providing monitoring and feedback mechanisms to ensure continuous improvement.

## Personnel and Operations

Family Advocacy experienced a mix of both staff members moving out of the organisation and new staff coming into the organisation. As always we are grateful for the significant contribution of the staff that have moved on for their years of contribution – they have made an impact in the lives of people with disability and their families through their work with Family Advocacy. The new and existing staff combine to make a re-energised team, rich with their respective experiences and skills which they bring into the mix of strengths of the existing staff. Family Advocacy is delighted to welcome Cecile Sullivan Elder, the new Executive Officer, who leads this diverse team of professionals and is creating a fresh environment built on good communication, respect, trust and cooperation.

Family Advocacy values what each and every person in the team is already contributing in their respective roles but knows that it is important to continue their personal and professional development as this will ultimately make better employees, a better team and enhance further the organisational output. External workshops and trainings, webinars, conferences, forums helped deepen the industry knowledge, technology and skills required in the role, and the guiding principles that underpin the organisation. Staff members have travelled both nationally and internationally in this quest to ensure that what we bring together as a team is built on a strong foundation of sound knowledge and experience.

With the new set of eyes, systems and processes were reviewed and suggested improvements were taken on board. The end of the financial year June 2015 saw us transition to a new accounting software, Reckon from what was previously MYOB. This change is allowing for a more efficient access to accounting data and relevant information as well as providing greater flexibility in the generation and presentation of reports.

The organisation strives to maintain high standards and best practice in all that it does. It recognises though that there is always room for improvement and welcomes the opportunities to do so.

## Technology Infrastructure

We continue to look at ways to reach more families and ways to undertake our work more efficiently, through new technologies i.e. using the cloud further or through social media, new apps, or through other strategies. The organisation is looking to improve its internet speeds to enable the use of higher video content on its websites and its webinars.

### Database and Data Collection

The organisation has been using supporter360, based on a Salesforce platform, as its database. It was the organisation's first introduction to a cloud based product, which means that the database now sits on the internet, hosted by a third party provider.

The system has been used by the organisation to:

- be more precise and strategic with the mailing out of information relevant to families;
- provide useful and timely information to staff and management committee for planning purposes; and
- generate information and statistics required by funding reports.

# Environmental Consciousness

Family Advocacy strives to be a better global citizen by providing strategies to reduce paper wastage and reduce other impacts on the environment. Where ever possible:

- we use double sided printing, thus reducing the volume of paper used;
- documents for internal reference only is printed on recycled paper;
- we keep machines well maintained to reduce wastage from paper;
- we use environmentally friendly products for cleaning;
- we separate plastics, glass, tin, paper products for recycling;
- use of database allows us to send only relevant hardcopy (if needed) information to recipients and
- the bulk of our written communications are sent through email or digital means.

Over the past few years, there has been a large reduction in the use of paper for the events run by the organisation. This can be largely attributed to the clever use of emails to send out links and articles as well as a more considered approach to providing relevant information to families. Current technology will continue to play a large role in the reduction of paper wastage.

Thanks to the many organisations that distribute our brochures, fliers and provide links on their websites, as well as refer families to us.

# 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 2014/2015.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) continued to support the organisation through recurrent funding.

NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) also provided support through three streams of funding:

- Recurrent funding for the ongoing advocacy and information function and ongoing operations of Family Advocacy through the Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) Department.
- Funding was also provided to Resourcing Families.
- A one off injection of project money of \$650,000 provided on 27 June 2013 for the Resourcing Families Capacity Building Project has continued to be utilised this year and the balance will be expended in the following financial year 2015/2016.

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for 2015/2016 has been ratified by the Management Committee.

<b>Recurrent funding and One off Grants</b>		
	2014/2015	2013/2014
Revenue from Commonwealth Government	266,528	259,097
Revenue from State Government	267,780	259,646
Revenue funding from ADHC for Resourcing Families	200,000	222,486
Revenue from ADHC for the Capacity Building Project of Resourcing Families	273,978	223,180
One off grant from National Disability Services to offset costs incurred in ensuring that Family Advocacy meets the requirements of NSW Quality Framework for Disability Services for audit	7,739	
One off grant from Department of Education and Communities (DEC)	*26,667	32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,042,692</b>	<b>\$996,409</b>

<sup>1</sup> \*Total grant was \$32,000 with \$5,333 deferred to the 2015/2016 financial year.

## Donations

We would like to thank those who have provided their financial support throughout the year through their donations to the organisation. A total of \$4,210 was received from the following generous givers:

**Dianne Samuels**

**T M Little**

**Adil Foundation**

**J K Kirkham**

**One undisclosed donor**

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

- Salesforce Foundation – for ten free licences of Salesforce Enterprise Edition, available to NFP organisations
- Connecting Up: discounted softwares and training for NFP organisations
- Microsoft: discounted software

## Disclosure of Interests

I advise members of payments received by the following Committee Members:

Alison Wilson received Honoraria during the year, at the standard rate set out in the Volunteer Session Leaders Policy, for her contribution towards the work of the organisation as a Volunteer Session Leader.

Meg Sweeney received consulting fees during the year for her contribution towards the work of the organisation as an Event Consultant:

- For Advocacy Leadership and Development workshops - in accordance with the Session Leader Consultant policy
- For Resourcing Families workshops – at consultants own set rate.

In accordance with the requirements of the Constitution, 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**

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

# Family Advocacy Annual Report 2014 | 2015

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