

*family*

A D V O C A C Y



Family Advocacy  
Annual Report  
2013 | 2014

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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.

<sup>1</sup> Developmental disability includes but is not limited to: autism, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, spina bifida and multiple disability.

# 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



Another year of change not only for Family Advocacy but for many people with disabilities and their families within NSW and nationally.

Consolidation was one of our key focuses with some new faces on the committee, new faces in the organisation and the hint of the new face of disability in Australia as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) started rolling out in trial regions.

The threats to advocacy for people with disabilities remains very real. Ongoing vigilance is required as is the need to be part of the consultation and collaboration processes moving forward. The NDIS is a paradigm shift in how disability supports will be addressed in Australia and it holds plenty of promise with 'choice and control' being touted loud and clear. However, we have much work to do because there are still too many people with disability outside their communities, without a vision for a good life, without dreams, being denied a place, being denied a voice, being denied a 'life'.

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 development work still drives us, still invigorates us and still inspires us. As the NSW Government tries to plan its future in how it can transition disability support through to the Federal level, it is clear there is much consultation needed and many conversations to be had around safeguarding the futures of people with disabilities in NSW, including keeping focus on the devolution of institutions.

So many great events have been run throughout the state over the year by our Advocacy Leadership and Development and Resourcing Families work areas in locations scattered around NSW, and, at times venturing into uncharted regions making new connections - planting the seeds for new direction and new approaches for people with disabilities and their families. For me, the highlight was the Leadership Weekend held at Dangar Island in August 2013. The weekend was an amazing experience, and to have the time to be able to spend it with so many allies and mentors. Even after all

these years of attending our events I still find this time "food for the soul" to re-energise and refocus.

Throughout 2013/14 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 and volunteers are committed to the organisation and continue to offer support or assistance when needed - so much of what we do would not be possible without you. In June 2014 we saw one of our very long term colleagues Belinda Epstein-Frisch leave Family Advocacy. We expect to see fantastic things for and from Belinda as her new futures develop and we wish her all the best.

I am incredibly grateful to my peers on the Management Committee, Andrew Brak, Vicky Logan, Lesley Light, Matt Dimmock and Rupert Theobald, who brought such a wonderful variety of skills, experience and inspiration to the table, including their unwavering commitment to the mission, vision and values of Family Advocacy. We farewell Andrew Brak as he must now step down after his four years as Treasurer. Thank you Andrew for an incredible job. I also thank Fiona, Brad and Judith for their contributions to the committee in the earlier parts of the year.

The committee worked together to strengthen our governance work and identify what we need to do to ensure we guide well and ensure growth - with good feedback and positive results from our National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) Audit we will continue to build on all areas to ensure we remain as efficient and effective as we can.

Thank you to all our members and allies who continue to make a difference. Here's to a successful 2014/2015 where lives and communities continue to change and we see more of the inclusive society we know is the basis for a good society.

**Gina Wilson-Burns**  
Chairperson



# Snapshot of the year 2013/2014

Highlights throughout 2013/2014, included successful Taking action for a good life, advocacy based workshops across various locations in New South Wales. This 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.

As the sector moves towards more self-managed and self-directed opportunities 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.

Family Advocacy continued to strengthen its Leadership development of families by providing a successful leadership weekend along with opportunities to participate in workshops, online education forums and be part of political and government consultations.

Resourcing Families continues to provide information and ideas for supporting people with disability to lead individual and typical lives as valued members of their community. A number of very successful new events have been developed this past year, that are aimed at providing opportunities to gain confidence and develop skills around creating individualised arrangements for lifestyle and supports.

The following snapshot of the year provides more highlights that have happened throughout 2013/2014.



Financial  
members  
**144 – 11 of them life  
members**



Number of contacts  
on our mailing list:  
**10,725**



Resources  
**15,000 resources  
accessed  
and distributed**



Website visits  
**Family Advocacy  
18,000**

**Resourcing Families  
28,000**

# Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families events in 2013/2014

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





## Advocacy and Leadership Development 2013/2014

2013/2014 has been a time of change and growth in the area of Advocacy and Leadership Development as we work in a sector under major reform. Our focus has been continuing to keep abreast of the changes, inform families of what these changes can mean to the lives of their family members and to also develop unique ways to reach people in NSW.

The Advocacy and Leadership Development team provide families from across NSW with a range of opportunities to enhance their understanding of how to bring about positive change in the lives of their family member with developmental disability.

This year has seen us embrace social media opportunities as well as proactively create film resources and record webinars in order to reach people in ways that are more convenient in both format and accessibility.

Family Advocacy aims to remove barriers and facilitate opportunities for children, young people and adults with disability to lead good lives as active members of their community.



Participants at Family Advocacy's Leadership weekend

## Family Advocacy events 2013/2014

Start Date	Campaign Name	Location
<b>2013</b>		
<b>July</b>	Early Childhood Interagency Presentation	Redfern
<b>August</b>	Family Advocacy Leadership Weekend	Dangar Island
	Advocacy information session	Charlestown
	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Webinar
	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Bondi Junction
<b>September</b>	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Teleconference
	Taking action for a good life	Gosford, Terrey Hills, Blacktown, Liverpool
<b>October</b>	Advocacy information session	Burwood
	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	St Marys
	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Wagga Wagga web meeting
<b>November</b>	Future planning information session	West Ryde
	Positive Directions	Bathurst, Katoomba, Rooty Hill, West Ryde
<b>2014</b>		
<b>March</b>	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Chifley
<b>April</b>	Taking action for a good life	Coffs Harbour, Newcastle, Penrith, Ryde, Merrylands
	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	St Mary's, Frenchs Forest
<b>May</b>	Lets get started...getting ready for school and life	Bankstown, Pennant Hills
	Advocacy information session	Australian Catholic University, Strathfield
	Taking action for a good life	Bathurst, Batemans Bay, Mittagong
<b>June</b>	Advocacy information session	Burwood
	Choices and opportunities after school information session	Epping

## Resourcing Families





Resourcing Families continues to provide information and ideas for supporting people with disability to lead individual and typical lives as valued members of their community.

A range of face to face and web based events have been presented across NSW covering the key themes of developing a positive vision, building support networks, creating community connections and exercising more choice and control through directing individualised supports.

Resourcing Families has been further funded by the NSW government as one of the 'Getting Prepared' - capacity building projects. This project aims to assist families and people with disability to be prepared for the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by providing opportunities to gain confidence and develop skills around creating individualised arrangements for lifestyle and supports.

Resourcing Families has created a number of new events for the Capacity Building Project.





Harness the possibilities for people with developmental disability in NSW

**1800 774 764**  
FREE CALL

[www.resourcingfamilies.org.au](http://www.resourcingfamilies.org.au)

# Resourcing Families events 2013/2014

Month	Event	Location
<b>2013</b>		
<b>July</b>	Information session	Epping, Campbelltown
	Individualised Funding in NSW	Bonnyrigg, West Ryde, Minto
<b>August</b>	Vision and a Positive Introduction	North Sydney
	Creating Community Connections	Webinar
<b>September</b>	Individualised Funding in NSW	Bega, Ulladulla, Nowra, Wollongong, South Hurstville, Ingleburn, Alexandria, Willoughby, Penrith
<b>October</b>	Real Lives, Real People Conference	Coffs Harbour
	Circles of Support	Webinar
<b>November</b>	Individualised Funding in NSW	Ryde, Picton, Dubbo, Orange
	Supported Living Fund Capacity Building	Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Ulladulla, West Ryde
	Making the most of the NDIS	West Ryde
<b>December</b>	Supported Living Fund Capacity Building	Campbelltown, Coffs Harbour, Lismore, Newcastle, Parramatta
	Information session	Liverpool
<b>2014</b>		
<b>February</b>	Individualised Funding in NSW	Broken Hill
	Reach for the Sky? Using the NDIS to Create the Life You Want	Newcastle
	Information session	Mount Druitt
<b>March</b>	From Planning to Action	Orange
	Involving Others and Building Networks	Orange
	Circles of Support	Coffs Harbour
<b>April</b>	Making the Most of Self Management	West Ryde
	From Planning to Action	Lismore, West Ryde
	Involving Others and Building Networks	Lismore, West Ryde
	'Building a Bridge: the onward journey from early years support'	Tweed Heads
	Making the most of circles of support	Maroubra Junction
	Circles of Support	Burwood
<b>May</b>	From Planning to Action	Nowra, Wagga Wagga
	Involving Others and Building Networks	Nowra, Wagga Wagga
	Choice, Independence and Best Interest	Webinar
<b>June</b>	From Planning to Action	Armidale
	Involving Others and Building Networks	Armidale

# 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

Over the last year our key advocacy workshop for families has been delivered in both a two hour and a four hour format. 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.

As the sector moves towards more self-managed and self-directed opportunities 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 three 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 Family Advocacy to discuss any specific issues and barriers they may be facing.

### **Participant comment:**

*> Great presentation. It will continue to inspire me to stand up for my son to enrich his life. Workshop participant*

## Advocacy related advice and information enquiries

Throughout 2013/2014, 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 Family Advocacy 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.

The area of education was primarily the topic that was discussed with families. As the Department of Education and Communities sanctioned the Disability Discrimination Act online training modules for teachers, there was a substantial focus on what the Disability Education Standards means for families. Families were able to utilise the standards in a positive way within their advocacy efforts to create change for their family member with disability.

There was a significant amount of enquiries from families who were already pursuing opportunities around supported living and individual accommodation funding packages. These enquiries were specifically about making the most of these opportunities, the expectations of a good life and a clearer understanding of a person centred life that includes increased social inclusion and purpose.

## Case study/family story

Family Advocacy has been in contact with a family member whose two daughters have individual accommodation packages. The family member was experiencing challenges with the support her daughters were receiving. The family member was also experiencing a lack of assistance for her daughters to reach their individual goals and aspirations and to have greater opportunities to build networks and relationships within their community. The family member was provided advocacy advice on how to speak to the service so they can better support her daughters to reach their goals.

The parent has developed a greater understanding of how her two daughters can be supported to have a good life on an individual basis by articulating what her expectation is of a self-directed approach; that is, the service should enhance her daughters valued roles within the community and support participation and belonging in the community.

Support and guidance has been provided to the parent to prepare for meetings and conversations with the service. Additionally, the family member has a great interest in individualising the funding package that her daughters have. The parent speaks English as a second language and for this reason, found it a challenge to have a thorough understanding of what it meant. Once this clarification was provided the family member was able to use their own skills and voice to make this request. The family member has now been informed that individualising the funds is possible. There will be continuing contact with the family member.

This avidness to find out what a person centred life entails is also demonstrated through the significant amount of enquiries on individualised funding as many families wanted to support their family in a more flexible way.

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.

The response to each enquiry has varied depending on the individual circumstances but has included:

- working 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.

The large number of these requests enables Family Advocacy to gather information about state wide trends and enables planning to be responsive to these needs. It also informs the organisation of systemic issues that are able to be raised in appropriate forums and with appropriate decision makers.

## 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 2013/2014 there has been a considered approach to encourage younger families and siblings to further their participation in advocacy and their connections to Family Advocacy.

There have been new and innovative 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. This involvement has been an effective way to encourage potential leadership skills within families.

## Leadership Weekend - Advocacy in a changing environment

The purpose of the Leadership weekend was about building advocacy skills in a range of contexts, to network with other families and to share developments of the sector.

Some of the sessions within the weekend included the significance of advocacy in these changing times, strategies to be an effective leader and advocate, what it means to have a good life, starting up user led organisations, the importance of inclusive communities and managing technology in relation to the way people

with disability are represented.

The main issues that are occurring on a national and state level that affect people with disability and their families was also discussed. These issues were then divided into four discussion groups that included goals and strategies to take further action.

## Supporting families to move from private to public issues in education

The Advocacy and Leadership team worked on a joint project with Systemic Advocacy that supports families to move from private to public issues in education.

Families were encouraged to build a positive relationship with their Director, Public Schools whose role includes mentoring the 20-30 Principals in their network. The aim is to have the opportunity to influence the Director on inclusive education and the importance of this for the whole life of a person with disability.

Resource material was created to prepare and up skill families to meet with their Director, Public Schools.

Through their own lived experience, the family leader was able to discuss the learning opportunities that her family member has experienced, which would not have been possible if they were not in mainstream education.

Another family member's meeting included a discussion on the importance of inclusion. The parent did vocalise what their vision is for their family member beyond school and how this will influence pathways leading into an inclusive adult life.

The discussions the families have had with Directors have given them the opportunity to gain confidence and capacity to speak out about systemic issues in education.

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:

- One Person at a Time Conference, Belonging matters, Melbourne
- Advocacy in a Changing Environment. Family Advocacy, Dangar Island
- Future Planning information session. Ashurst Law Firm, Sydney
- Social Role Valorisation Towards a better life, Foundations Forum, Sydney
- Taking action for a good life workshops
- Let's get started presentations

## Resources

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

This year we have created an advocacy tools booklet and are currently developing an e-booklet on inclusive education.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: NSW Inclusion Bill**

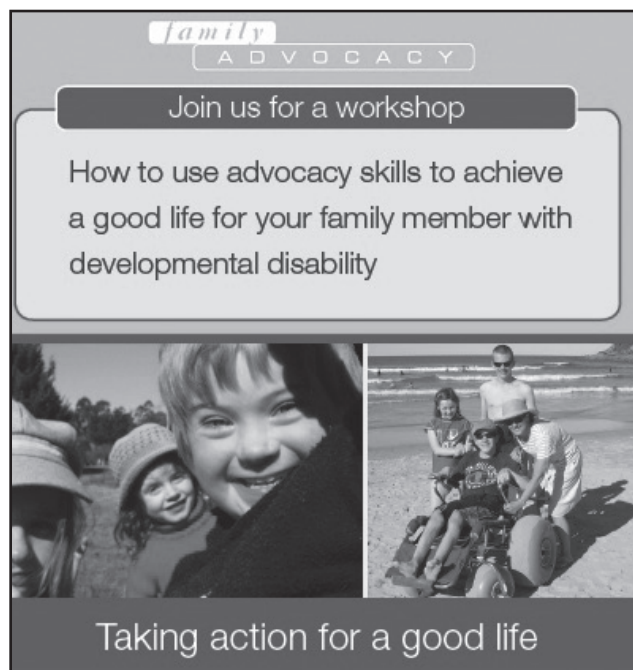
The NSW Government released a draft copy of their proposed Inclusion Bill to replace the Disability Services Act 1993.

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

We responded to the draft Bill at length. In particular we argued for the removal of the restrictive practices from the Bill and removal of government officers from the Disability Council of NSW.

#### **The Outcome:**

Restrictive practices were removed from the Bill and government officers will not be members of the Disability Council of NSW.



Taking action for a good life flier

### **Issue: Advocacy**

There is a threat to advocacy funding as the NDIS is seen as the solution to all problems, and the NSW government is unwilling to commit to funding beyond the full roll out of the NDIS in 2018.

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

We have worked with the Disability Network Forum to produce a lobbying kit for meeting with politicians. We held a meeting with Minister Ajaka and with Shadow Minister Barbara Perry and Greens spokesperson for Disability Jan Barham.

#### **The Outcome:**

The government has indicated an ongoing commitment to advocacy funding up to 2018, but not beyond this. The position of the federal government remains uncertain.

# 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.

## The legalities of Future Planning information session

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

Ashurst Australia lawyers were asked to host a session with families we are closely connected with on the legalities of future planning. The attendees of the session included Management Committee members and people who are part of our leadership development programme. Ashurst discussed wills and the ways in which families can provide for the person in their family with disability financially, including through a trust. They also discussed how they can appoint someone to make decisions for them if they can no longer make decisions for themselves.

One of the aims of this session was to gain a family member's perspective on the content discussed as there is a possibility of utilising Ashurst Australia Lawyers for a future planning event. The feedback we received from the evaluations was that the session was very informative and many said the differentiation of the terms was so helpful. Families also agreed that this topic would be extremely useful for families in a future planning workshop.

Feedback from the event was favourable and included:

*>So relevant & essential information*

*>Excellent for a workshop*

*>All was new and well presented*

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

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

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

Contribution to Ministerial reference group on person centeredness providing family perspectives.

Family Advocacy holds an advisory position on the My Choice Matters reference group, influencing the program to be responsive to the needs of families and their family member with disability.



Resourcing Families continues to provide information and ideas for supporting people with disability to lead individual and typical lives as valued members of their community. A range of face to face and web based events have been presented across NSW covering the key themes of developing a positive vision, building support networks, creating community connections and

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.

exercising more choice and control through directing individualised supports.

Resourcing Families has been further funded by the NSW government as one of the 'Getting Prepared' - capacity building projects. This project aims to assist families and people with disability to be prepared for the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by providing opportunities to gain confidence and develop skills around creating individualised arrangements for lifestyle and supports. Resourcing Families has created a number of new events for the Capacity Building Project that are detailed below.

The Capacity Building Project is also under external evaluation from a team of researchers from Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology. The evaluation is at the request of our funder who seeks to understand what type of information and capacity building support families find most helpful for the transition to the NDIS and individualised funding.

## Key Events

The core events for the Capacity Building Project are a series of five workshops – *Keys to Developing Meaningful Lives* - to be presented in seven NSW locations; Armidale, Broken Hill, Lismore, Nowra, Orange, Wagga Wagga and West Ryde (Sydney).

The five workshop series:

### **Workshop 1: From Planning to Action**

### **Workshop 2: Involving Others and Building Networks**

### **Workshop 3: Developing Community Connections**

### **Workshop 4: A Practical Pathway for a Better Life - presented by Jane Sherwin**

### **Workshop 5: Ideas for Self Directing Supports – presented by Meg Sweeney**

The last two workshops will be prepared and presented by guest speakers. Jane Sherwin, one of two Senior Trainers of SRV in Australasia, will share around the importance of valued roles for building rich and meaningful lives for people. Meg Sweeney will share her extensive experience and creative energy for self directing supports with clear vision and confidence for high expectations about the possibilities for peoples' lives.

The workshops aim to support families of people with disability to:

- Have high expectations – or imagine better.
- Develop choice and control over their lives and support options.
- Develop and strengthen support networks around an individual.
- Build the skills, knowledge and confidence to develop meaningful community connections, particularly through valued roles.
- Have the vision and confidence to take up self directed opportunities as they emerge and create personalised support arrangements that facilitate meaningful lives based on an individual's genuine interests and aspirations.

As well as attending events, participants can engage with as many individual meetings as they wish to focus on ideas and strategies for positive change for their family member with disability. Families can do this when Resourcing Families staff and Volunteer Session Leaders are in their location for workshops or anytime via email or phone through our free call number.

In each location contact is made with families, 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 in their communities.



The first two workshops have been presented in all locations and workshop three is well underway. Resourcing Families is greatly appreciative of the contributions of our Volunteer Session Leaders – Sharon Williams and Suzanne Healy – who have travelled to different parts of the state to assist us with workshop presentations and share their story of building inclusive lives for their family member.

## Making the Most of the NDIS – Opportunities and challenges for people with disability and families

This event presented by, Dr Michael Kendrick talked about how Australia can learn from international experiences of individualised funding. The workshop included discussion around what it would take for people to make the most of the new opportunities currently emerging and what barriers exist for people's potential success. Some identified barriers included a lack of knowledge, issues of bureaucracy and societal attitudes. Ideas around what would assist included suggestions like 'tools and resources' and 'help with planning for the future'.

## Supported Living Fund Capacity Building Workshops

Workshops were conducted in nine locations – Dubbo, West Ryde, Wagga Wagga, Ulladulla, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Campbelltown, South Hurstville and Newcastle. Families and allies of people who had received a Supported Living Fund package were encouraged to attend and become more aware of opportunities and strategies for creating successful supported living arrangements for people with disability. Meg Sweeney and Catherine Hogan conducted the workshops and their extensive knowledge and lived experience of assisting their family members into supported living arrangements was greatly appreciated by participants.

The workshops assisted participants to;

- build on their vision for the future;
- develop circles of support, community connections and relationships;
- plan and work with the Ageing Disability and Home Care Support Planner;
- choose and work with a service provider;
- learn about recruiting and supporting paid staff;
- develop practical safeguards.

### Feedback from participants included:

- > *It was great. The information was terrific and everyone was able to enter the discussion freely.*
- > *Extremely Helpful. The presenter having hands on experience was valuable and informative.*

## Individualised funding in NSW – what could it mean for you?

This information session was created to help people have a greater awareness and understanding of the changes occurring nationally and within NSW around the availability of individualised funding.

The information session also provided many examples of people with disability living inclusive and individual lives around their genuine interests and aspirations to raise expectations and expand thinking about what might be possible.

Since the last annual report this information session has been presented in another seventeen locations across NSW to 541 people, including sessions with Korean and Vietnamese interpretation.

### Feedback about the information sessions included:

- > *A very worthwhile seminar which was very professionally conducted – It has opened my eyes to other alternatives.*

*> A very helpful information session – presenters were clear and concise and very helpful.*

*> Thank you for your time to come to our little country town to help us, where we don't get much help.*

## Webinars

Web – based seminars (webinars) continue to be an effective vehicle for providing information to people across NSW with an ease of accessibility and convenience for participants. In fact, our webinars have attracted interest from people interstate and overseas.

### **Circles of Support – What are they and how can I get started?**

This first webinar presented the practical strategy of developing a circle of support to build a network of people to support a person with disability in their personal goals and to safeguard them into the future. Di Samuels was a guest presenter who shared her family's journey of starting a circle for her daughter. Her practical wisdom and approach was greatly appreciated by participants.

### **Choice, Independence and Best Interest: Finding the right balance around a person with Disability – presented by Dr Michael Kendrick**

In our second webinar Dr Michael Kendrick spoke about promoting a person's independence while considering their best interests, using supported decision making to support choice, balancing and evaluating the repercussions of choice and using paid support strategically to facilitate choice.

### **Participant feedback for the webinars included:**

*> It was a text book example of how to run a great webinar. The contents, the way contributions were handled, the three presenters, having the presentation and resource handbook beforehand, the input from participants from the country, administration, the whole lot – great experience and wise counsel.*

*> As I live in a regional area, it was great to be able to access Michael's webinar. He has many very valuable things to say to families with a child with a disability. We are at the moment changing to a self managed model and many of these points were very relevant for us. Thank you so much.*

## Making the Most of Self Management

This workshop was facilitated by Meg Sweeney and was designed for families that are currently self managing an ADHC funded package. It aimed to provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences and ideas, reflect on their current progress, develop more skills and identify further information needs.

### **Participant feedback included:**

*> Very well presented and organised.*

*> I found it very useful – of course, meeting the others (participants) was the key to it all.*

*> Invaluable.*

## Reach for the Sky – Using the NDIS to create the life you want

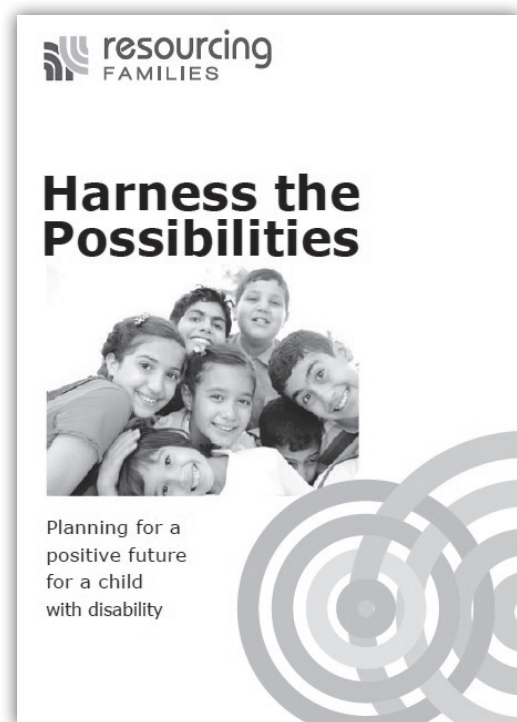
This workshop was presented in Newcastle for families who are within the NSW trial site for the NDIS. The workshop aimed to assist people in their planning and their thinking about goals and aspirations for their family members in preparation for the NDIS. It was co-hosted with Community Disability Alliance Hunter, a not for profit community organisation run by people with disability and family members who want to assist people to make the most of the NDIS.

### Participant feedback included:

- > *I found the talks really helpful – practical, easy to understand info and advice. It was really good to hear from parents who have been through the process into the NDIS already. Takes the fear away.*
- > *Well organised, informative program*
- > *Thank you for this opportunity. Great information.*

## A New Resource

*Harness the Possibilities – Planning for a positive future for a child with disability* is a booklet created for young families to assist them to consider the positive possibilities for an inclusive life for their child as a valued member of the community. It aims to present some key ideas that will help make this a reality and start the journey towards a fulfilling and purposeful life. The booklet has been distributed around the state and is ready for a third reprinting and copies continue to be requested.



# 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. Topics covered in the webinar included: choosing a school; the transition to school; possible supports at school, relationship with the school and research about the benefits of mainstream education.

Participants particularly enjoyed having a parent share their experiences and be able to answer questions in the webinar.

### **Participant comment:**

> *"The webinar has consolidated that I am on the right track and has also provided more information for me to confidently continue to support my son's full inclusion in mainstream education."*

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

## Information sessions

Family Advocacy also presented nine 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 through such organisations as Lifestart – early intervention and Koorana.

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

## Resources

The webinar was recorded and is available to view on the Family Advocacy website. It is set up in convenient chapter format to enable easy viewing for families wishing to revisit the information as well as families who may want to watch the webinar and follow through with a phone call to address any further questions or queries.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Inclusive Early Childhood Settings**

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

Family Advocacy holds an advisory position on the Strengthening Children and Families Reference Group, providing feedback on the accessibility and inclusiveness of support services.

Family Advocacy holds an advisory position on the ADHC External reference Group of Children and Young

People with Disability and their Families, promoting the interests of families and people with disability.

Family Advocacy holds an advisory position on the strengthen supports for children 0-8 and their families Reference Group.

Family Advocacy holds an Advisory position on the early diagnosis support Reference Group.

## Our vision for the future



# 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.

## Influencing NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC) school Directors

Changes within the NSW DEC with the implementation of their initiative *Local schools, Local decisions* brought about a new role of Director – Public schools. Alongside the systemic programmatic area of Family Advocacy we felt this allowed for a leadership opportunity to influence this key position on the benefits and importance of inclusive education for students with disability.

Families were invited to be supported to meet with their Director, who has a mentoring role to Principals in their network. Family Advocacy provided families who chose to participate with information on the education sector, changes to the DEC framework, current inclusive education research and shared educator online modules around the Disability Discrimination Act Education Standards (DDA) standards. A teleconference with all interested families provided an opportunity to discuss the details and share insights as to how to approach and conduct the meeting. A resource pack was provided to families to take with them to their meetings and leave with the Director. Two meetings have already taken place and there are more to occur next term.

## Resources

Families advise us that one of the most beneficial ways of receiving information is from the experiences and stories of other families. In this financial year Family Advocacy produced resources that we hope will be broadly viewed by families and also educators to highlight the possibilities and benefits of inclusive education.

## Video

### **Inclusive High School Education: Jacob's Story**

This 19 minute film features the journey of a teenager, who is now in year nine, at a local government high school. Jacob is an engaging and active member of his school and community.

Family Advocacy believes schooling is a natural progression for a child as they learn to become an adult, form their own viewpoints, determine who are their social peers and delve into their own self and what they believe in.

In this film you will be taken on a journey with Jacob and his family and friends to a place where Jacob's future looks bright and full of promise and opportunity.

As you will see in the film a leading factor to this promising future is the importance of Jacob's regular schooling as a key part of his whole of life.



This film was made with assistance and funding from the NSW DEC. It is available to view on the Family Advocacy website and is part of our e-video library.

#### **Comment from Jacob's mum:**

*> "We see that with Jacob, being included in everything at the school and all the learning opportunities that he is having, will set him up to be able to go into the community".*

## Short film clips

Family Advocacy produced over 50 short 3-6 minute film clips of families talking about various aspects of their mainstream schooling experiences such as:

- choosing a school
- preparing for school
- tips for communicating with schools
- what families can do to support their child's inclusion

These clips aim to help families in the thinking and planning by assisting families to see how students can be included in mainstream classes and schools.

These film clips are being placed onto the Family Advocacy website and will form a practical element to the other information provided. By having a quantity of clips available to upload we will be able to keep the website fresh and engaging which we anticipate will tempt people to make repeat visits.

The complete amount of clips will also be part of a Family Advocacy e-video library which people can access through the website, thereby making them available to those who wish to view more clips than those currently uploaded.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

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

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

We provided feedback on the inclusive education policy of the Schools Disability Advisory Committee based on family enquiries to Family Advocacy.

We have participated in the Ageing Disability and Home Care Regional Health and Education Forum and participated in Think Tank, convened by Children with Disability Australia to progress meaningful education reform for students with disability in Australia.

During 2013/14 we held a meeting with Melissa Clements, Director of Disability programs in the DEC to discuss recruitment of Support Teachers Learning Assistants (formerly TAS) as well as the functional assessment.



Film: Jacob's Story

# 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.

## Update of the Supported Living Website

The Supported Living website created by Family Advocacy has been updated in the period of 2013/2014 which has equipped families with more thorough information on what it means for people with disability to live in an inclusive community. The website aims to help families to develop an understanding and vision for supported living and how it can happen for people with disability. Supported living means that a person with disability gets the support they need to live in their own home and involves a deep level of community engagement and inclusion. Having a sense of belonging and having a real place in the community is also very important. Topics covered in the website include stories of Australians with diverse support needs who are living in their own homes; options for housing and support and ideas about the first steps people can take toward supported living.

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Devolution**

We have been focused on ensuring the closure of the Stockton institution. People living in the Stockton institution have had their plans for the National Disability

Insurance Scheme developed by registered nurses who work at Stockton and are working in a medical model.

### **What we did:**

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.

### **Issue: Housing**

People with disability find access to housing on the private market inadequate and social housing waiting lists are long.

### **What we did:**

We compiled a report on the current state of housing in Australia which was then distributed to NCOS and Shelter, as well as the shadow Minister for Disability. We submitted to both the federal and state based inquiries into housing affordability.

### **Outcome:**

Affordable housing is now a priority in the NCOS election platform. Public servants from Housing NSW are inquiring into the process of applying for an extra bedroom without the income of the house sharer being assessed, and whether any applications have been successful.

# 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.

## Positive Directions – For Lives of Meaning and Fulfilment

This workshop explored strategies to support a person with disability to have a good life as part of their community.

Strategies discussed included:

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

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

Individual follow up has also taken place as some families had quite specific queries on education, supported living and self-managed opportunities.

### Feedback and comments:

Families took a great interest in the importance of having a vision and found the concept of roles in relation to their family member a challenge but fundamental in creating a meaningful life included in the community. The feedback suggested that families gained capacity to identify possibilities for their family member to participate and contribute to their own community.

> *The friendliness and willingness to advise us with information.*

> *I've learnt a lot more than expected.*

> *So easy to understand – well thought and well organised.*

> *What you provided was beyond my expectation.*

> *I've been to many FA workshops and, as usual I'm very satisfied with the content and presentation.*

> *Everything was great! It was interesting to see and hear other parent perspectives. The thinking is so diverse.*

> *Very well presented and informative.*

## Possibilities, choices, opportunities information session

This presentation is about the possibilities, choices and opportunities after school. The content of the presentation included preparing and planning for when a student with disability, who will need ongoing support, leaves school. There was a focus on the possibilities of self-managing post school funds and how to navigate Government initiatives and supports.

The presentation discussed ordinary options from post education such as TAFE and university, work experience, employment and involvement within the community, but with a clear focus on what support is available to make it happen.

Feedback from the presentation, which was held in Epping, has been positive and included an email from the organiser of the event:

*> "I was going to forward the thank you emails that the parents are sending, but there are so many of them. Everyone was very happy with the evening and we are very grateful for such a professional presentation. I believe the parents will develop an ongoing relationship with Family Advocacy."*

## Systemic Advocacy: A snapshot of our work

### **Issue: Employment**

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

Family Advocacy made a brief submission when Department of Social Services applied for an exemption under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) for three years in relation to the Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT).

### **Issue: Lack of post-secondary education opportunities for young people leaving school**

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

We have sat on the Ombudsman Roundtable on Community Living Consultation and provided feedback.

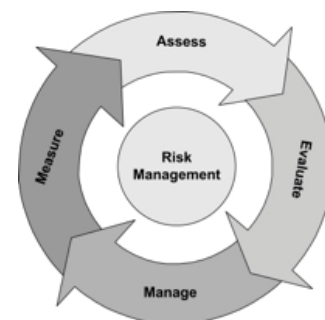
### **Issue: Inclusive adult education**

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

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

# 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

With the Quality Assurance (QA) system for the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) underway, Family Advocacy came through this year's surveillance audit with very positive feedback from International Standards Certifications Pty Ltd. This was the third party auditor who certified the organisation in 2013.

This coming year, the organisation will gear up to address the Quality Assurance requirements on a state level. A gap assessment will be conducted by a third party to address any areas that were not required by the federal Quality Assurance system.

## Risk management

The Management Committee has taken responsibility for undertaking risk analysis and management of the general areas of the organisation. While it is often taken for granted, Family Advocacy views it as a significant and effective exercise to undertake to ensure its sustainability. Risk in various areas of the organisation are monitored on a regular basis to ensure compliance and safeguard the organisation.

This regular assessment allows continuous improvement in our processes and procedures and provides greater security and confidence in the organisation. By putting measures in place to address possible risks, the organisation then proactively reduces any negative impact that could possibly arise from negligence.

One of the areas undertaken to reduce risk is in Work Health and Safety.

## Work Health and Safety

Family Advocacy endeavors to provide for the health and safety of its staff, volunteers and visitors. A deep clean and thorough decluttering of the office environment provided for a healthier workplace.

Emergency evacuation training is organised by the Building Superintendent twice a year, which two wardens from the organisation attend. All staff participate in the evacuation drill conducted thereafter. A risk assessment checklist on the office environment is conducted annually to address any potential risks. Workplace incidents are raised, addressed and recorded according to the federal quality assurance standards of our funder by which we are certified by a third party auditor.

Insurance policies on public liability, workers compensation, motor vehicle, as well as accident insurance for its volunteers are kept up to date.

## 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 funding and income received have been legitimately spent in accordance with the requirements of our contracts. The organisation values transparency with its membership and provides annual audited financial reports. The Treasurer's Report on page 43 provides further details.

# 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 managed 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, advocates 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, Immediate Past Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary and up to a maximum of 15 ordinary members, is elected each year at the time of the annual general meeting.

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; 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 Annual General Meeting. At the Annual General Meeting the Annual Report, which includes the audited financial report for the year just ended, is presented to members.

## Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Family Advocacy was held on Wednesday 13th of November 2013 at the Ryde/Eastwood Leagues Club in West Ryde. As the outgoing member of the Management Committee, Meg Sweeney undertook the proceedings. Long term supporter of Family Advocacy, Neale Waddy from the NSW Department of Education and Communities graced the meeting.

The Chairperson's Report and Treasurer's Reports for 2012/2013 were presented and accepted by the membership. Meg thanked the outgoing committee members, introduced Maree Salzano as the new Executive Officer of Family Advocacy and the election of the new committee members ensued. All nominations were accepted.

Andrew Brak was re-appointed as the Public Officer and Harley, Russell and Day chartered accountants was re-appointed as the Auditor for the year 2013/14.

Following the AGM, attendees were treated to a talk by Gina Wilson-Burns on *'Managing Messages: Considering the implications of new technologies'*. Speaking from experience, she talked about the various considerations in using social media to promote a good life for one's family member with disability. She is the author of the inclusive education blog Inky Ed.

## Committee Members

### **Andrew Brak**

#### **Treasurer**

Andrew and his wife live in Sydney, with their youngest son. After a career in accounting Andrew enjoys volunteering in community organisations. He is especially interested in self directed funding from government for individuals with disability, and the development of circles of support and the positive role they play for people with disability. Their family's involvement with Family Advocacy over the years has been instrumental in supporting them with some of the hurdles they have encountered in providing support to his son. Andrew and his family are entirely committed to providing a fulfilling inclusive life for him, with their belief that all people have a valuable contribution to make to the community.

### **Judith Ellis**

#### **Until May 2014**

Judith Ellis is the parent of three children. While her eldest son has high support needs as a result of his disability, he has lived in his own home with individualised support for over 16 years, has a small home-based business, a small circle of friends, and enjoys many valued roles. Judith has been a leader in advocacy for personalised and individualised support arrangements and family-governance for over 30 years and has had a long association with Family Advocacy.

### **Lesley Light**

Lesley has a strong belief to advocate for her son and 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.

### **Vicki Logan**

Vicki and her husband and their two beautiful teenage children live in the lively rural city of Armidale. Vicki attended her first Family Advocacy Workshop 'One of the Kids' 12 years ago and has since been a passionate advocate and practitioner of inclusive education. Vicki is excited about supporting people with disabilities to achieve good lives through having meaningful things to do, things to look forward to, loving relationships and positive community connections with valued social roles. Vicki brings a wide variety of experiences, skills and abilities to her new role, and looks forward to helping others to live their dreams.

### **Brad Templeton**

#### **Until August 2014**

Brad and his wife live in Sydney with their two young daughters. Brad's involvement with Family Advocacy came about after attending the Successful School Inclusion conference in 2009. Brad's youngest daughter started kindergarten at their local school in 2013 and Brad has always been an avid supporter of inclusion. After attending a number of advocacy forums, combined with interactions with the education system, Brad has become keenly aware of the early challenges and the need to raise the visibility of inclusive education.

### **Rupert Theobald**

Rupert lives in Sydney with his partner and two children. Rupert is a passionate advocate for his daughter and strives for both of his children to be valued members of the community.

### **Gina Wilson-Burns**

#### **Chairperson**

Gina is mum to a 10 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>).

Eight committee meetings were convened over the financial year and were held as either a face to face meeting or a teleconference.

Meg Sweeney, Maree Salzano, Margaret Curry, Clare Falzon, Amanda Fletcher and Jennifer Noble, all served on the committee until November 2013. Fiona Dorian served on committee from November 2013 until February 2014.

Jessica Watkins was the Director of Family Advocacy until October 2013 and held its Public Officer role until November October 2013. Andrew Brak was appointed Public Officer by the Committee and was reappointed during the AGM.

# Staff and Allies

# Staff and Allies



**Maree Salzano**  
**Executive Officer**  
(until August 2014 )

Maree 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.



**Jess Watkins**  
**Outgoing Director**

Jess was the Director of Family Advocacy until October 2013. Her main areas of work included guiding the strategic direction of the organisation, safeguarding and advancing advocacy in NSW/

Australia, working with families and influencing change at the broader level for people with disability.

## Advocacy and Leadership Development Team



**Lizzie Spasich**  
**Advocacy Leadership and Development Officer**

Lizzie is the Advocacy Leadership and Development Officer. Her role includes 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.



**Karen Tippet**  
**Advocacy and Leadership Developer**

Karen is the Advocacy and Leadership Developer, providing advocacy related advice and information to family members of

people with disability. Karen can also be contacted about workshops and coming events, as well as volunteering tasks.

## Systemic Advocacy



**Belinda Epstein-Frisch**  
**Senior Systemic Advocate**  
(until June 2014 )

Belinda works in the area of Systems Advocacy, negotiating with government on the rights and interests of people with disability and attempting to influence positive change.



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

Meg works in the area of Systems Advocacy, negotiating with government on the rights and interests of people with disability and attempting to influence positive change.

## Resourcing Families



**Kim Roots**  
**Resourcing Families Project Manager** (until July 2014 )

Kim 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. Kim 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.



**Emma Baxter**  
**Capacity Development Officer**

Emma'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.



**Nadia Samperi**  
**Resourcing Families Project Developer** (until August 2014 )

Nadia works in the Resourcing Families team to create, promote and deliver events and resources for families. She also manages technological aspects such as webinars (online workshops), the E-news online bulletin and the Resourcing Families website. Nadia presents at workshops and assists families over the phone to imagine and build a meaningful life for their family member.



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

Philippa works at reception and provides administrative support. Philippa arranges all the off-site events.



**Reno Phillip**  
**Accounts officer**

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

## Communications



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

Rhiannon is the Communications Officer for Family Advocacy. Her responsibilities are managing the websites and overseeing Family Advocacy's interactive technology 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 including HR matters, equipment, and compliance with statutory and administrative requirements.

## Volunteers

Family Advocacy thanks all the people who give extra time, commitment and dedication by volunteering to assist and thus support the work of the organisation.

Varied tasks such as: helping with the smooth running of various events and workshops; coming into the Epping office to help with large mailouts for upcoming events; providing local knowledge of organisations and people in their networks who we can approach to let families know of workshops we are running in the area; one off tasks like collating survey data or attending a local expo.

All these tasks – and more assist Family Advocacy to be professional and effective in all that we do.

Thank you for your contributions in 2013/2014.

**Andrew Brak, Naresh Saxena**



**Margaret Hardman**

## Volunteer Session Leaders

When running our workshops there is always good feedback from participants that they appreciate the contribution of the parent volunteer who often helps present the workshop and share their stories. This adds a layer of expertise and knowledge that both families who attended and Family Advocacy really do appreciate. So thank you for your generosity of time, personal stories and effort. In this past year some of these Volunteer Session Leaders also took the opportunity to meet with key community leaders whilst they were in some more rural locations. This assists our future relationships with these communities and their understanding of the work of Family Advocacy.

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.

Volunteer Session Leaders for 2013/2014 included:

**Annette Bush**

**Amanda Fletcher**

**Meg Sweeney**

**Sharon Williams**

**Catherine Hogan**

**Suzanne Healy**

**Cheryl Gardener**

## Volunteer guest speakers

Many Family Advocacy events and presentations included the sharing of family stories. Many thanks for being involved in such an enriching opportunity for the participants at these events.

Volunteer guest speakers for 2013/2014 included:

**Meg Sweeney**

**Brad Templeton**

**Judith Ellis**

**Shawn Burns**

**Linda Hughes**

**Jo Basha**

**Marion Trabe**

**Jan Kruger**

**Gina Wilson-Burns**

**Jenni Fenton**

**Di Samuels**

**Mel Shaw**

## Membership

As an Incorporated Association, Family Advocacy has a membership base. Membership is an important factor in keeping community based organisations relevant and strong and Family Advocacy acknowledges and thanks members for their support during the 2013/2014 financial year. Family Advocacy has 144 financial members throughout NSW, from Broken Hill in the far west to Albury in the south and Tweed Heads in the north.

Membership is open to individuals only (not organisations or individuals representing organisations). The membership fee has not changed and remains at \$10 per person per year or \$20 per person for three years.

Financial membership connects people who share the aims and goals of Family Advocacy. All of Family Advocacy's members are committed to achieving a vision of a genuinely inclusive society and our Management Committee is drawn from our membership base.

Some of the benefits of membership include:

- provide input into the policies of Family Advocacy; and
- the ability to nominate to become a member of the Management Committee and participate in the strategic planning for the organisation.



# 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 workshops
- Through our e-newsletters
- Facebook

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

## Communiqué - Family Advocacy's online e-newsletter

Communiqué is delivered up to six 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.

## Websites

The three websites; [www.family-advocacy.com.au](http://www.family-advocacy.com.au), [www.resourcingfamilies.org.au](http://www.resourcingfamilies.org.au) and [www.supportedliving.org.au](http://www.supportedliving.org.au) continue to be updated so people can access up to date and relevant information, resources and what events are running. All three websites are managed internally while maintaining their individual identities.

Information is provided on the Family Advocacy website in relevant key life areas including:

- Early childhood
- Education
- Planning for life after school
- Meaningful adult lives

This year a section on tools for advocacy was developed so families were able to access information about how to become an effective advocate.

This section includes information and resources on:

- Thinking and planning that can underpin your advocacy skills
- Considerations to enhance your advocacy

### **Topic 1: Written communication**

### **Topic 2: Planning for meetings**

### **Topic 3: Making phone calls**

### **Topic 4: Approaching advocacy issues**

It is planned for 2014/15 that this information is developed into a booklet and smart device app for easy access. This will be distributed to families widely throughout New South Wales.

# Internal Management and Administration

# Internal Management and Administration

Back office work is an essential part of any organisation. It is undertaken by the Administration and Accounts team that provides support to the Management Committee, the Executive Officer and staff, who carry out the core operations of Family Advocacy's based on its vision and mission.

The management of the office covers managing the organisational resources which consists of human resources, physical and technological infrastructure, and financial resources, as well as implementing policies and practices that support the running of the organisation. Work is conducted to a quality and safety standard with consideration for minimising environmental impact.

## Personnel and Operations

Family Advocacy underwent a change in leadership this year, with Jessica Watkins moving on and Maree Salzano taking on the helm of the organisation. Having had a long association with the organisation as an active member and chairperson of the Management Committee, Maree carried Family Advocacy's vision and mission, and interests of the organisation.

The year ended with a long standing staff member, Belinda Epstein-Frisch, moving on to continue her systems advocacy work within the sector. We are thankful that her work will continue to influence the sector and wish her all the best.

The leadership changes and quality assurance accreditation process brought on opportunities to improve the organisation in many ways. Existing operational practices were reviewed. In particular, with the assistance of a consultant, TABS, financial reporting format was revised to provide a clearer picture and more efficient consolidation of reports, for internal purposes as well as for funding acquittal purposes.

Family Advocacy started the year looking for ways to enhance staff skills and continue to enhance a good team environment. Relevant training and development and attendance at external events and meetings throughout the year all helped to enhance knowledge within staff roles. Keeping up to date with 21st century technology to address the changing needs of the

organisation was a project that involved both infrastructure upgrade as well as knowledge and skills development.

It has been a big year with positive as well as challenging situations. As with any challenge, getting through them provide the greatest learning benefits for those involved and provide insight for betterment. Continuous improvement to maintain high standards and best practice remains the underlying goal of the organisation, staff and committee, in all its activities.

## Technology Infrastructure

The organisation undertook a major computer infrastructure upgrade to keep up with the fast paced changes happening in the technology world. The first stage of the project involved upgrading the obsolete equipment staff depended on for their work. This enabled greater efficiency and access to new and relevant software available in the market. In succeeding stages, we will look into upgrading other key equipment, which would support quicker internet access for work as well as for the webinars being conducted on a more regular basis.

### Database and Data Collection

The previous year's plans of providing a more efficient data management system came to fruition with the implementation of supporter360. This new database, which is based on a Salesforce platform, initiated us into the cloud world. It has been a learning curve for all the staff as we struggled to change our ways and systems of gathering, collecting and extracting data. New habits were developed that are providing higher productivity and efficiency in data access. Staff will continue to learn and expand the use of this comprehensive system, finding new and appropriate ways of application in the organisation. The system has benefited the organisation through:

- Improved access to data by all staff
- Automised consolidation of statistics for funding reports thus improving productivity and efficiency in the organisation

- Ability to provide more relevant and timely information and statistics to staff and management committee for planning.
- Ability to provide the necessary demographics and other reporting requirements to the Federal and State funders in a timely manner.

In the coming year, we are looking to harness the capabilities of the system further to do other tasks, among which is to provide a link with online registration for events, and possibly to provide for online updating of information by website visitors.

## Environmental Consciousness

Family Advocacy implements environmental responsibility in various ways. After many years of encouraging the building management to provide for recycling of products other than paper and cardboard, plastics/glass collection for recycling has now been included as part of their service. Documents are printed on recycled paper if for internal reference. Communications are made through emails and digital means, and voluminous workshop material are provided on soft copies through a USB given to participants, thereby reducing the need for hard copy production and mail out in those instances. The ability to utilise our database to collect specific data also allows us to strategically provide only relevant information to recipients.

## Consultants

### Operational

**Accounts:** Cindy Drew, Training and Business Services Pty. Ltd (TABS)

**Communications:** Felicity Wells, Zones Creative  
Gabrielle Spalding

**Supported Living:** Catherine Hogan, Meg Sweeney

**Resourcing Families Project:** Queensland University of Technology - Evaluator

**Data Management System:** Drew Smith, Product Program Manager – Non-profit and Education, APAC, Salesforce.com Foundation

**IT Support:** Chris Bryant and Ben Newman from OPMC, supported and provided us advice around the three websites.

Henrique Bitencourt, Patrick Hasbani, Paul Jafari, and the rest of PC Quest team.

The Web Showroom

### Media Productions, Publications and Technology

Bernard Purcell, Rich Media

John Samperi, Graphic Designer

Felicity Wells, Graphic Designer

Rod Freedman, Change Focus Media

Motion Link

The Captioning Studio

Thank you to our colleagues and friends within these other important organisations. Family Advocacy does not function in isolation. Much of what we do and achieve is supported or aligned to the work of others in the sector:

- The Australian and New Zealand SRV Group
- The Alberta Association for Community Living, Canada
- Michael Kendrick
- Foundations Forum
- NSW Council on Intellectual Disability (NSWCID)
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)
- NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN)
- People with Disability Australia
- Community Resource Unit, QLD
- Belonging Matters, VIC
- CDAH – Mind the gap
- Disability Network Forum (DNF)
- In Control

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 2013/2014.

The Department of Social Services (DSS, formerly known as the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs or FaHCSIA) continued to support the organisation through recurrent funding.

The 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, this time through another state department, Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) in lieu of NSW Department of Community Services.
- Funding was also provided to Resourcing Families.
- The Resourcing Families Capacity Building Project was supported with the injection of project money of \$650,000 for two years from Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). This will carry through to the following financial year 2014/2015.

<b>Recurrent funding and One off Grants</b>		
	2013/2014	2012/2013
Recurrent Revenue from Commonwealth Government	259,097	253,373
One off grant from Commonwealth Government		12,000
Revenue from State Government for advocacy and information activities: ADHC	259,646	258,851
Revenue from ADHC for Resourcing Families	222,486	217,223
Revenue from ADHC for the Capacity Building Project of Resourcing Families	223,180 <sup>1</sup>	
Additional funding from ADHC for the Capacity Building Project of Resourcing Families		63,636
One off grant from Department of Education and Communities	32,000	32,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$996,409</b>	<b>\$ 837,083</b>

<sup>1</sup>\$650,000 was received in 2012/2013 for the next two years. \$223,180 was allocated for the first year (2013/14). \$427,820 was allocated for the second year (2014/15).

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for 2014/2015 has been ratified by the Management Committee.

## 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 \$315 was received from the following generous givers:

**Christine D Dawson**

**James & Kabita Kirkham**

**Michael & Leonine Herdman**

**Jacqueline Turner**

**Graeme & Janet West**

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

## Disclosure of Interests

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

Amanda Fletcher 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.

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.

**Andrew Brak**  
**Treasurer**

*family*

A D V O C A C Y

# Family Advocacy Annual Report 2013 | 2014

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