



family
ADVOCACY

Family Advocacy Annual Report 2012/2013

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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

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Family Advocacy is an independent, state-wide, community-based advocacy organisation which promotes and protects the rights, needs and interests of children and adults with developmental disability.

Family Advocacy bases its work on the belief that:

- all people with disability are full members of the community
- good communities are made up of a diverse range of people
- people who have 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

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So much has happened in the last year and it certainly has been a time requiring thought and a time seeking answers to so many questions. A time of anticipation, challenge, celebration and hope.

Our year began with our Odyssey Conference, a celebration of the journeys and achievements of so many people with disability who had dared to dream and imagine beyond the limitations of service provision. We were inspired by people who shared their stories and international and national speakers who spoke of a good life being achievable for all people. Dreams are to be realised!

Following the Odyssey, Catherine Hogan our Director and dedicated leader of nine years, was succeeded, by Jess Watkins. Jess brought new skills and took on her Director role with great enthusiasm and commitment. Thank you, Jess for your fine leadership during a very eventful and busy year.

In 21 years, Family Advocacy has certainly witnessed many policy changes and many promises of reform. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and The National Disability Strategy (NDS) are potentially significant social reforms. There is much hope and expectation that people with disability will move from being receivers of charitable acts, vulnerable within a crisis driven service system to their rightful position of entitlement, fellow citizen. Even in this time of great hope, in 2013, many people with disability remain invisible, voiceless and denied their fundamental human rights. Currently, there is a real threat to independent advocacy, a threat to people with disability having a voice. Family Advocacy remains watchful and vigilant in our advocacy actions and we acknowledge that achieving real change, a just and inclusive society is reliant on Independent Advocacy and consultation with, and leadership by people with disability.

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. Even after 21 long years, our advocacy work remains fundamental to people with disability having a strong voice, having a good life.

The Management Committee is responsible for safeguarding the Mission, Vision and values of Family Advocacy, and our strategic direction. We are continually strengthening our Governance work. This year we were fortunate to have the facilitation skills of David White to lead us in our Risk Analysis and Risk Management session. Thank you, David

We are also pleased that our Quality Assurance Accreditation process revealed that we comply with the National Disability Advocacy Standards and we are now certified. We have implemented a continuous improvement process and we will be audited on an annual basis.

The work of Family Advocacy is achieved by the contributions of so many dedicated and dynamic people who share an unswerving commitment to our Mission, Vision and values. Thank you to all of our loyal Volunteers, Session Leaders and to our finest and most exceptional and professional staff who accomplish so much.

I sincerely thank my fellow team members who are the most inspiring and respectful group of individuals. Farewell to Amanda Fletcher and Meg Sweeney who must step down after serving a four year term. Also, Jenny Noble and Clare Falzon who served for one year. Our sincerest wishes for good health to Margaret Curry who has had to resign after serving three years.

Thank you to all our members, friends and allies who share our journey and commitment to gaining a just and inclusive society.

Maree Salzano
Chairperson

Snapshot of the year



Highlights throughout 2012/2013 included the successful second National Odyssey Conference held in August 2012. Over 300 people attended from across Australia, New South Wales and internationally. The conference provided an opportunity to celebrate some of the wonderful

things that are happening in the lives of people with disability and to provide caution about some of the challenges that may emerge as policies change. The conference dinner also provided an opportunity to celebrate Family Advocacy's 21st birthday.

Family Advocacy continued to increase its capacity to reach new families across New South Wales through its online webinars on various topics, with 13 webinar events held throughout the year reaching over 200 people.

Successful events with high attendance throughout 2013 included: *Role of paid support*, *After school...what then?*, *Individualised funding in NSW*, *Supported living* and *Creating community connections*.

International speaker Dr Michael Kendrick presented a very successful series of workshops, *Creating a home and life where I can thrive* in various locations in New South Wales and International consultant Darcy Elks presented an excellent one day workshop in Sydney, *Making the vision a reality: the power of roles*.

The Family Advocacy website was redeveloped and launched in April giving the organisation a modern style and importantly providing more interactive resources. The website features more information and advice on key life stages, tools for advocacy and the latest news and updates on what is happening in the sector.

The following snapshot of the year provides more highlights that have happened throughout 2012/2013.

Jessica Watkins
Director

Financial members

148 10 of them life members

Our mailing list

12,661 Number of contacts

8% Increase from last year

Website visits

23,305 Family Advocacy

34,475 Resourcing Families

Systemic issues*

9 Number of issues worked on

25 Number of outcomes achieved

105 Number of expert advice to government (submissions and Advisory Group participation)

*These numbers represent systemic issues reported to The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)

Resources

23,000 Resources accessed and distributed

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Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families events in 2012/2013

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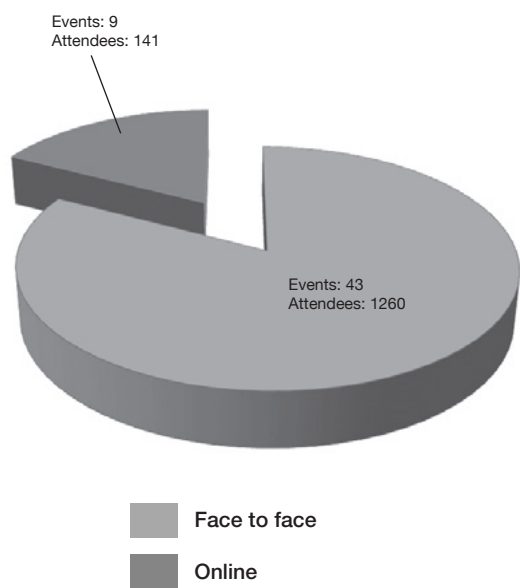
Where Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families held face to face events



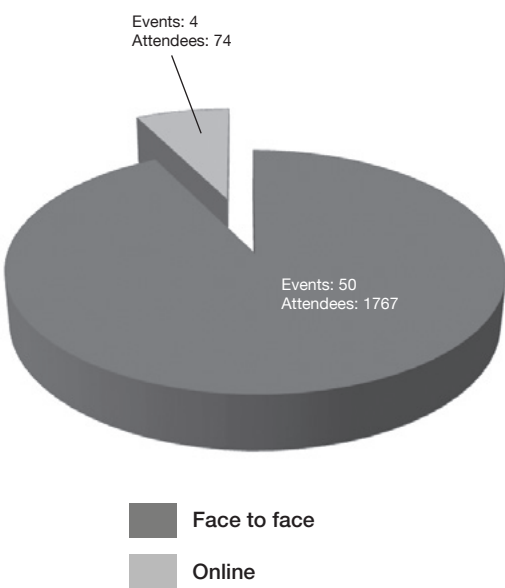
Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families events in 2012/2013

Number of face to face events

Family Advocacy



Resourcing Families



Advocacy and Leadership Development and systems advocacy 2012/2013

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2012/2013 has been an exciting year in the area of Advocacy and Leadership Development. Continuing to develop new and interesting ways to reach people in NSW with webinars as well as more concise two hour topic based information sessions.

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.

Given the diversity of people who make contact with Family Advocacy, the organisation has received feedback that families sometimes find it difficult to attend workshops because of their location or commitments. Hosting webinars is one approach to making information available in another way that may make it more accessible for some.

Family Advocacy has also attempted to make information available to more families by presenting workshops in rural and remote locations as well as hosting workshops and/or webinars with guest speakers (Dr Bob Jackson and Michael Kendrick) in multiple locations and/or locations outside of Sydney.

Family Advocacy also continues to receive feedback from families that it can be useful for them if professionals that are working with their family member attend Family Advocacy events. It is hoped that by opening the event beyond families this may contribute to a shared understanding of what it takes to achieve meaningful inclusion. For this reason, where appropriate, events have been open to both families and professionals.

This feedback provides guidance to our systemic work. 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.

Family Advocacy events 2012/2013



Month	Event	Location
2012		
July	Information session - Cantonese Parent Support Group	Roseville
August	Conference – The Odyssey... celebrating achievements, progress and change	Parramatta
	Odyssey Conference Dinner	Parramatta
	Creating a home and life where I can thrive – Michael Kendrick	Newcastle, Ryde, South Hurstville and Wollongong
September	Information session: Inclusive education	Hornsby
October	Making a difference	Coffs Harbour, Nowra
November	Making a difference – Vietnamese	Bonnyrigg
	Getting ready for school – Dr Bob Jackson	Webinar x 2
	Getting the most out of school – Dr Bob Jackson	Webinar
2013		
February	After school...what then?	Deniliquin, Albury, Parkes, Bankstown, Lismore, West Ryde
	Information session	Albury
	Information session - Italian	Griffith
March	After school...what then?	Batemans Bay, Campbelltown, Gosford, Maitland, Penrith, Taree, Wollongong
	Early Childhood Expo (Spoke to)	Newcastle
	Information session	West Epping
	Information session	Catholic University, Strathfield
	Information session	Kogarah
April	Information session ECICP	Wallsend
May	After school...what then?	Webinar x 4
	Information session	Rosebery
	Lets get started... getting ready for school and life	Web
June	Information session	Penshurst
	Supported living... what it means, what it takes	Webinar

Resourcing Families 2012/2013

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- Webinars have proved a successful way of sharing information – particularly for families in rural and remote locations. Webinar topics around starting Circles of Support and Developing Community Connections have proved popular.
- Co-hosted *NDIS in the Hunter – Getting in Control* attended by more than 200 people in the DisabilityCare launch area.
- The Resourcing Families website has been widely accessed – including a new section titled *Tools for a self managed/self directed approach* with 8421 pieces of information downloaded.
- *Individualised Funding in NSW* information sessions have been attended by more than 460 people across NSW.
- Sharing family stories at events – *More Choice and Control* and *The Role of Paid Support: how to enrich someone's life*.
- The Circles Project has continued to support families to start a circle of support.
- Resourcing Families has distributed an e-news bulletin to assist in the dissemination of relevant information.
- *Harness the Possibilities – Planning for a positive future for a child with disability* was created to assist families of young children to plan for a positive future.
- Online learning materials about employing staff and having a positive vision for the future were created.

Resourcing Families events 2012/2013



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Month	Event	Location
2012		
July	Making the vision a reality: The Power of Roles	Hornsby
August	Conference – The Odyssey... celebrating achievements, progress and change	Parramatta
September	Information session: Harness the possibilities	Hornsby
October	Positive directions - for lives of meaning and fulfilment	Coffs Harbour, Nowra
November	Circles of Support: How to get started and keep going!	West Ryde, Newcastle, Coffs Harbour
	NDIS in the Hunter - Getting in Control	Newcastle
	Supported Living Fund two day event	Newcastle, Cowra
December	Supported Living Fund two day event	Campbelltown, Coffs Harbour, Hornsby
2013		
February	Creating Community Connections	Webinar
	Information session: Harness the possibilities	Albury, Griffith
	Early Childhood Expo (Spoke to)	Cardiff
March	Creating Community Connections	Webinar x 2
	More Choice and Control	West Ryde
April	Information session	Wallsend
	The Role of Paid Support	Newcastle
	Information session	Kogarah
	Information session	(via telephone)
	Circle of support information session for family	Ryde
May	Circle of support information session for family	Woollahra
	IDEAS Expo (spoke to)	Newcastle
	IDEAS Expo - Avoiding Tears at Transitions	Newcastle
	Circles of Support	Webinar
	Information session: Harness the possibilities	Rosebery
	Supported Living Fund (SLF) Direct training	Goulburn, Ocean shores nr Byron Bay, South Golden Beach nr Byron Bay, Griffith, Coffs Harbour, Lavington nr Albury, Armidale, Nowra, Tamworth
June	Supported Living Fund (SLF) Direct training	Kiama, Helensburgh
	Individualised Funding in NSW Information session	Bankstown, Mittagong, Queanbeyan, Wagga, Tweed Heads, Lismore, Grafton, Armidale

Personalised support

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

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Personalised support describes an approach that places the individual at the centre of decision making and treats their family members as partners. It is built on planning that is directed by the person and their family/support network, uses resources that are allocated to the individual and uses paid support to complement rather than replace informal support.

Family Advocacy seeks to exert influence to enable all people with disability to receive personalised support.

Feedback from both families and workers included:

- > *The good life is available for all just need continued effort*
- > *Look at the small things that bring meaning*
- > *Have high expectations*
- > *Many evaluations commented that the day was 'inspiring.'*

Workshop

Getting a good life: Creating a Home and Life where I can thrive

Dr Michael Kendrick presented four workshops focusing on the theme people are more likely to thrive and have a good life if they are supported one by one in a home of their own.

Some of the topics covered on the day were:

- What features of home and a good life are important to consider?
- Factors that contribute to getting a good life and support positive home making
- Relationships and roles—who can play a helpful part in making things happen?
- What can get in the way of a person with disability having a home and life that suits them?
- Discovering and building upon a person's life interests, passions, gifts and strengths
- Consideration of home in the context of a whole life—including community involvement
- How can arrangements be safeguarded?

Systemic Advocacy

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

ISSUE NSW has the infrastructure to enable people with disability and their families to have control over their supports.

What we did

Membership of:

- Ministerial Reference Group on Person Centred Approaches
- Ability Links Expert Advisory Group
- Supported Living Fund Working Group
- Disability Network Forum
- In Control Australia
- My Choice Matters Advisory Group

These provide opportunities to advance issues such as capacity building, the need for supported decision making, the independence of planning and the critical requirement for advocacy in reforms taking place at the national and state level.

When the NSW Government withdrew its commitment to offer individualised funding for all people with disability from 1 July 2014, we informed families of this decision and supported targeted contact with the Minister to create pressure for change.

The outcome

NSW infrastructure has been enhanced by a framework to provide more choice and control over how current Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) funding is used in people's lives.

ADHC has allocated additional resources for capacity building for the next two years across NSW.

NSW Ability Links coordinators in the Hunter will have 10 days of training within a values based community development framework.

ISSUE The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides the individualised support people need to lead the lives they want.

What we did

Family Advocacy was actively involved in discussions and negotiations around the legislation, rules and guidelines of the NDIS via:

- the preparation of submissions
- giving evidence at Senate Inquiries
- membership of reference groups and representations to Senator Jan McLucas, Senator Mitch Fifield and NSW Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance.

In addition, we took up issues of staffing, housing and advocacy directly with David Bowen, CEO of the Launch Transition Agency (later named DisabilityCare Australia).

Family Advocacy highlighted the importance of independent support for planning and capacity building. The Productivity Commission had identified a new type of organisation, a Disability Support Organisation (DSO) in its report on Long Term Care and Support.

We joined together with the Physical Disability Council of NSW (PDCN) and led the work of creating a DSO in the Hunter launch site for the NDIS in NSW. With funding from the Federal Practical Design Fund (PDF) the project employed two community development staff in the Hunter to build momentum and energy among people

with disability and families, build partnerships with mainstream organisations in the community, build the infrastructure of a new organisation and provide a voice for people with disability and their families in the Hunter.

The outcome

Changes were made to the NDIS legislation and rules as a result of our representation.

Community Disability Alliance Hunter (CDAH) was formed in the Hunter region.



Resourcing Families continues to work with families around building skills, knowledge, strategies and confidence to support their family member with disability to take control and forge a life that is meaningful for them.

It provides information and ideas about:

- developing a vision or plan for the future
- building informal supports
- facilitating community connections
- establishing networks of support
- developing, implementing, directing and sustaining individualised, self managed supports.

2012/2013 was a busy period for Resourcing Families with numerous events taking place. Our growth in use of webinars has made it possible for people in rural and remote locations and people who have little time, to access information.

Resourcing Families continues to facilitate opportunities for families to learn from each other. This has included hosting events that showcased family experiences as well as inviting families to share their stories and ideas in resources that have been created.

Resourcing Families has a continuing commitment to be useful to families who identify as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) backgrounds and from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Positive quotes

- > *Thanks also for proving the webinar - my head is buzzing with ideas and people to invite.*
- > *I have sent off an expression of interest for Supported Living Fund and have registered my husband and self for an information session at Coffs Harbour....just wanted to let you know that keeping me informed has been extremely helpful.*
- > *I would like to thank you for this excellent website and information. I have worked in the disability industry for 27 years and am always looking for ways to better support families. I'm very impressed with the content of your website and will definitely be using some of the resources and templates as early as today! Please include me in your enews updates. Thanks again.*

Snapshot of events

Making the vision a reality: the power of roles

International speaker, Darcy Elks, spoke with families about the power of roles for people with disability and how to support their development. Darcy is an educator, consultant, evaluator and advocate. Over the years, Darcy has developed and taught many different workshops that focus on the roles that we can all play in supporting people to lead valued lives. Darcy is the mother of three children, one of whom has a disability who has graduated from high school in the United States and who is now attending university and working.

The day was promoted as an opportunity to move beyond a plan and get ideas and strategies for enriching the life of a person with disability.

NSW family member, Meg Sweeney, also presented.

Feedback included:

- > *I would definitely be interested in anything Resourcing Families has to offer. I think it's a fantastic initiative.*
- > *...thought provoking. Totally different to other conferences I've attended.*
- > *...full of good information.*

Positive Directions – for lives of meaning and fulfilment

This workshop took place in Coffs Harbour on 11 October and Nowra on 17 October and explored

strategies to support a person with disability to have a good life as part of their community. Staff members Emma and Kim presented at the workshop along with Mentors, Annette Bush (Coffs Harbour) and Sharon Williams (Nowra).

Strategies discussed included:

- having a positive vision for the future;
- working for community participation;
- assisting people to attain positive roles in their community by looking and acting the part.

This workshop was promoted as being of relevance to families of people with disability wanting to explore self directed opportunities.

Resources were distributed about self directed opportunities as were articles to assist with planning - such as about roles as a pathway to skills and relationships.

The event was a highly participatory one and feedback was positive including:

- > *...provided more ideas and approaches to expand our son's participation and sense of belonging.*
- > *I think the information is invaluable.*
- > *Very friendly, informative and approachable presenters.*

Circles of support: How to get started and keep going!

This workshop was created to meet the interests of families wanting to start a circle of support. The event was very practical and intended to be useful for people who had little knowledge about circles of support as well as those who have started the process. Those starting a circle were encouraged to invite potential circle members so that they could have a deeper understanding of what could be possible.

The content of the event attempted to address concerns and considerations raised by families and provided examples of invitations, agendas and action sheets so that participants had concrete ideas of what could be involved.

Participants included families of young children as well as some families keen to start a circle for a specific purpose – such as to support a move from home following the receipt of a Supported Living Fund package.

At each event, a family member who is involved in a circle of support was invited to attend and share insights around their own experience. Video segments from circle members were also shared.

Feedback from the event included:

- > *I have learnt so very much that will help in the future with my sister.*
- > *Workshop was extremely informative. Brilliant idea for people in similar situation to share ideas and experiences.*
- > *...gave me a good insight into how I could set up a circle of support.*

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in the Hunter – Getting In Control

This one day event brought people with disability, their family, friends and allies, service providers and other interested people together so that they could get more information to be better prepared for the NDIS and also explore ways to strengthen the voice of people with disability and families in the Hunter area.

Resourcing Families co-hosted the event as well as presenting a session about the importance of developing a vision, building support networks, making community connections and having more choice and control over supports as essential elements for lives of meaning and fulfilment for people with disability.

More Choice and Control

This event involved four family members sharing their experiences of self direction in an interview format. These family members were Meg Sweeney, Helen Hooper, Sylvana Mahmic and Di Samuels. Kim and Emma took on the role of interviewers. It was open to both families and professionals to attend and was intended to inspire people to have ideas to take up self managed opportunities.

Feedback included:

- > *One of the best seminars I have ever attended. Nothing beats real life stories...*
- > *It was a really professional worthwhile day.*
- > *Excellent facilitators – great mix of parents.*

The Role of Paid Support – How to enrich someone's life

With more people with disability and their families taking the opportunity to self manage supports in NSW and with the Hunter as the NDIS launch site for NSW, Resourcing Families decided to host a one off, practical, event in that area.

This event involved three families and a person in a paid support role sharing their experiences of how paid support can be used to facilitate good lives.

The day provided an opportunity for people think differently about the role of people in paid support roles and was open to families and professionals.

Feedback included:

- > *Very professional presentation.*
- > *Very diverse in content with real life families sharing their success and keeping it real.*
- > *It was a very helpful and informative seminar.*
- > *Thank you for the encouragement to dream.*

Supported Living Fund weekend events

The Supported Living Fund (SLF) capacity building events and direct training opportunities were for families who had a family member who received a Supported Living Fund package.

Presenters included family members with experience of a son or daughter moving out of home.

Sessions covered information to help participants have a better understanding of how Supported Living Fund packages could be utilised including:

- building on their vision for the SLF
- how to develop community connections and relationships
- how to plan and work with the relevant regional ADHC Support Planner
- identifying how circles of support may be useful and how to get started
- choosing and working with a service provider
- learning about recruiting and supporting paid staff
- developing practical safeguards.

Workshops also provided the opportunity for participants to talk and listen to other participants in their region, in a structured way.

Feedback was very positive and included:

- > *Feel more optimistic about getting people to have a positive reaction to our plans and goals.*
- > *Great to meet other families and share experiences.*
- > *Thank you for a most informative 2 days. You have made us a lot wiser and understanding of the issues ahead. Well done!*

Information sessions

Information sessions took place in a range of locations for families and for people in paid support roles. These sessions discussed the role of Resourcing Families as well ideas for forging a good life for a person with disability. Sessions were adapted according to the needs of the group, the most well received was *Individualised Funding in NSW* with attendance of over 460 people across 8 towns in NSW.

Individualised Funding in NSW – What could it mean for you?

This information session was created to assist people to prepare for the changes occurring within NSW around the options of self management and individualised funding. The sessions were open to anyone, including professionals and were held in mainly regional areas where it is believed information about such opportunities is not well known. All sessions had large registrations indicating the interest and need for information. The session focused on NSW and national changes and what we know so far. However, the main emphasis was on how people can be supported to live meaningful and inclusive lives through the choice, flexibility and control individualised funding can offer.

The information sessions were largely well received and feedback was positive. Some individuals, especially professionals, wanted more detail and specifics about the mechanics of the new system/processes which is not yet available. Most people appreciated the ideas, strategies, resources and inspiration the session provided towards establishing individualised arrangements for people.

Feedback included:

- > *Fantastic couple of hours.*
- > *Continue spreading the word to as many families as possible. Many people are still in the dark.*
- > *Great presentation – very informative. Examples of individuals currently using individualised funding model is a great way to demonstrate opportunities available.*

Circles Project

In 2012 and 2013 Resourcing Families has invited families keen to start a circle of support to join the Circles Project.

The aim of the Project is to work with a small number of families in NSW who are keen to start a circle of support in the near future. Families that include a young person with disability are encouraged to apply. Families are assisted by talking through the process and receiving ongoing guidance. Resourcing Families helps families think through the purpose of the circle, who they could invite, how to invite them, how to go about the first meeting and beyond.

Families who take part in the Circles Project agree to share their learnings and have done so by contributing articles or speaking at a workshop.

In 2012 the Circles Project worked with five families around starting a circle of support. Three of those families started a circle of support and two families that include young children decided to put more thought into who would be involved before getting started.

In December, Resourcing Families received expressions of interest from 11 families keen to start a circle in 2013. Conversations are continuing with seven of those families. Each family is progressing at a different rate, with those further ahead having had at least three conversations about their preparatory thinking. Most conversations are for more than an hour. Resourcing Families presented an information session for two circle meetings.

Three families within the Project have now had their first circle meetings and are now established with a circle of support.

E-news bulletin

The e-news bulletin was distributed to families, friends and allies of people with disability in December 2012, in May 2013 and in June 2013

We encouraged recipients to pass on the bulletin to others who may be interested.

More information was accessed on the website directly following the distribution of the e-news bulletin and we received feedback that people were finding the resources discussed useful.

Solid foundations for children 0-6

Getting off to a good start is vitally important for all children, particularly children with developmental disability. A good start means a start on a path that keeps the child embedded in their family and community. It is too easy to follow the 'special and separate' path which can leave families isolated, vulnerable and disconnected from the typical and ordinary environments other children and families enjoy.

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Family Advocacy seeks to exert influence so that all children are supported in age appropriate ways to be active members of their families and communities.

Webinars

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

Kim Roots, Lizzie Spasich, Karen Tippet and Volunteer Session Leader Sharon Williams presented.

Most families who provided feedback after the webinar found the vision planning strategies very useful.

Feedback from the webinar was positive and comments from the online evaluation include:

- > *Thank you, feel more empowered now.*
- > *It was my first experience doing this and I found it excellent. Having the panellist to give her experience was extremely helpful.*
- > *Thank you, this was great and I'm so grateful to have found out about you and the things you offer, I am feeling almost excited about getting going with applying to school.*

Information sessions

Family Advocacy presented a number of 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 Learning Links.

Systemic Advocacy

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

ISSUE Supports and services for children with disability and their families are inclusive and responsive.

What we did

Membership of:

- Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC) Expert Advisory Committee on Children, Young People and their Families
- Strengthening Supports for Children 0-8 and their Families (an interdepartmental committee providing a forum for discussion in relation to whole of government responsibilities for children with disability and their families.)

Family Advocacy supported families to advocate for more effective therapy services when their children were caught between the responsibilities of ADHC and NSW Health

The outcome

ADHC is actively implementing a reform process with all new early childhood specialist resources directed at services and supports in inclusive settings.

Welcoming, inclusive communities

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Communities are places of great possibility. Much can be gained by supporting families to look to their own neighbourhoods and communities for the natural supports and opportunities they can provide people with developmental disability. Family Advocacy seeks to support families to build and contribute to welcoming, inclusive communities.

Webinars

PRESENTED BY DR BOB JACKSON

Getting ready for school and Getting the most out of school

Getting ready for school was pitched to families who had a family member with disability soon to start school. Information about how students with disability are supported in mainstream schools and tips on the planning process were discussed

Getting the most out of school was for families who have a family member with disability attending a mainstream class. Families were given tips on ways they could talk to the school when explaining how their family member can be supported to achieve their learning potential.

Feedback from those taking part was positive with comments including:

- > *Excellent speaker and content.*
- > *I enjoyed the webinar – Bob was knowledgeable and easy to understand.*
- > *Very easy to follow and terrific content.*

Systemic advocacy

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

ISSUE Students with disability are welcomed and educated in the regular class of their local neighbourhood school with appropriate support.

What we did

New opportunities arose over the past 12 months as a result of the Gonski Report 'Review of Funding for Schools'.

We participated in national forums hosted by Children with Disability Australia, enabling discussion with the Parliamentary Secretary for School Education, Jacinta Collins, the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Jan McLucas and David Gonski. Here we explored the requirements for reform for students with disability including issues of funding, infrastructure for support, school improvement plans and reporting via My Schools Website. These issues were taken up further in discussion with staff of Jacinta Collins.

We hosted an education gathering with NSW Department of Education and Family Advocacy staff, and met with the State Coordinator of Special Learning Needs for Catholic Education to facilitate a clearer understanding of processes in State and Catholic schools.

We assisted families to problem solve about inadequacies and inequities in the *Every Student Every School* program, met with senior education staff to take forward issues and sought to contribute to training for school leaders, teachers and parents on the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Standards for Education*.

ISSUE Family involvement in systemic advocacy relating to education.

What we did

We invited families who share the vision and values of Family Advocacy to form an Education Working Group (EWG) to provide input into issues Family Advocacy should take up and actively participate in actions to change the system.

To date the working group has refined the issues that it will target and begun working on strategies to achieve identified goals.

The outcome

Family Advocacy has benefited greatly from the input of families into crucial issues affecting students with disability and their families.

Working group members have shared ideas, experiences and expanded their knowledge and understanding of systemic issues in education and possible ways to address them.

ISSUE School Leaver Consent Form – The School Leaver Consent Form enabled student information to be electronically transferred between schools and service providers. This could have included the transfer of assessments and behaviour reports that the student or their family have never seen or want to share.

What we did

We took up the issue in writing and at meetings with senior Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC) staff and distributed a fact sheet to families alerting them to the potential implications and making suggestions as to how to fill out the form.

The outcome

ADHC agreed that the form was not appropriate and has committed to changing the requirements for 2014 school leavers.

ISSUE The National Disability Strategy (NDS) supports whole of government reform to achieve its vision of 'an inclusive Australian society that enables people with disability to fulfil their potential as equal citizens'

What we did

Participated in:

- National Disability Strategy (NDS) Implementation Reference Group and its Indigenous Working Group Providing advice on options for a Closing the Gap disability target to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can experience the full benefit of access to DisabilityCare Australia services as they are rolled out across Australia.

We participate in these forums with government at a Commonwealth, State level and in the community to strengthen the strategies put forward as part of the NDS and to critique the strategy.

The outcome

The National Disability Strategy is stronger than it may otherwise have been but still requires continued monitoring and input.

The Federal Government has committed to new 'Closing the Gap' targets to improve access to services for Aboriginal people with disability to ensure that 90 per cent of eligible Aboriginal people will be receiving funded support from DisabilityCare Australia by 2020.

Family Advocacy

The Odyssey... celebrating

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On the 9 and 10 of August Family Advocacy held The Odyssey Conference, attended by 300 people from across the state, country and the world.

Attendees heard real ways in which people with disability have taken control of their lives; how services have transformed to better meet the needs of the people supported; how families and services can work together in 'right' relationship; about daring to dream of high workplace expectations; about people with disability studying at university; about developing community connections and about people with disability living in a home that suits them.

The Odyssey provided an opportunity to celebrate some of the wonderful things that are happening in the lives of people with disability and to provide caution about some of the challenges that may emerge as policies change.



“ It was also enlightening to me to hear about experiences of conference presenters and participants. I became excited to hear about person-centred outcomes and triumphs that were shared, and at the same time knew we all have a long way to go to achieve full-rights and the best supports for people with disabilities. It was heartening to know that we are all in this together... I want to thank all of the Family Advocacy leadership and staff who made this possible. I found everyone to be committed to our cause, impassioned to make strides and very gracious at the same time. ”

PATRICK SCHWARZ, PH.D.
Professor, Diversity in Learning
and Teaching Department
National-Louis University, Chicago

The conference included:

- Presentations by Sylvana Mahmic, Abdul-Karim Bouchafaa, Frank Crupi and Michael Kendrick who discussed personalised supports - their implementation and benefits
- Dr Patrick Schwarz, in particular, spoke of the importance of solid foundations for young children
- Strategies around nurturing welcoming communities were embraced by many speakers including Jane Sherwin and Meg Sweeney, Bob Lee, Margaret Hardman, Nadia Samperi, Emma and Rhiannon Brodie
- What it means to have a good life and possible ways to make it more likely were shared by Michael Schweiger, Patricia O'Brien, Nathan and Jo Basha and others.
- Margaret Ward discussed the importance of right relationship between people with disability and their families and the service providers they work with
- The theme of the Conference Dinner reinforced the power and value of advocacy
- The need for advocacy for people with developmental disability pervaded the whole event.

The conference gave attendees the opportunity to hear how an ordinary, meaningful life is achievable for all people with disability. A vision or dream can become reality.

conference

achievements, progress and change

“ The atmosphere was electrifying, lots of penetrating questions and authentic answers from Q&A sessions seasoned with lots of laughs and tears too. It provided a friendly environment for meeting new people and allowed people to reconnect with colleagues and families. The history of disability has moved in a significant way from people with disability and their families not getting adequate services and support to people getting a good life. ”

DISABILITY COUNCIL OF NSW

Responses were overwhelming and, at this time of change it is energising to find people excited, enthused and taking control.

Feedback after the conference included:

- > *We are so grateful to Family Advocacy for giving us such a wonderful opportunity to attend the Odyssey, it was an experience that we will never forget. It is so uplifting to know that there are so many wonderful caring people out there such as yourself and everyone at Family Advocacy! We can't wait for the next one!*
- > *I was very impressed at the organisation of the conference and the incredible stories people had to share and we have spent this morning talking about some of the learning's that I bought back.*
- > *I just wanted to say what a fabulous conference you organised and hosted. The people you invited to speak, the content of the papers and the flow of each day was marvellous.*
- > *The magic in a conference like the one hosted by Family Advocacy is very remarkable. There is something that happens to people's hearts and minds (and souls) when amongst the mix of people who were there and hearing the papers of hope, inspiration, cautions and ideas.*

Family Advocacy waits in anticipation for the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter and looks forward to being able to utilise the resources Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families has to assist people with disability and their families to progress from having a vision of a good life to having a good life.



Meaningful adult lives

Too many people with developmental disability are living lives of little meaning. A schedule full of 'programs' and 'activities' keep people busy, but can serve little purpose. Family Advocacy seeks to exert influence so that all adults with developmental disability have lives that are rich with valued adult roles, opportunities for personal growth and development of lifelong learning and employment and relationship building.

Workshop

After school what then?

This workshop is about preparing and planning for when a student with disability, who will need ongoing support, leaves school.

The focus of the day is on the system of funding and support, with a focus on the self managed options. The workshop 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.

Lizzie, Rhiannon and Kim presented in various locations.

Volunteer Session Leaders Meg Sweeney and Annette Bush were involved.

In one location a local family member with long term links to Family Advocacy, Hilary McPherson, was invited to share the experiences of her family.

Feedback from the workshops has been positive and included an email received after the Lismore event:

- > *I just wanted to send a quick email to say thank you to you and the wonderful ladies who conducted the workshop at Lismore last week.*
- > *It was a fantastic, informative day and I know I am in for a long haul, but left the day feeling hopeful for my son's future.*
- > *Thank you again for all the great work your organisation does.*

Webinars

After school - what then?

The two hour webinars were a condensed version of the workshops. The webinars were to help families think and plan as the end of high school approaches for their son or daughter with disability. Families were informed about the self managed support options.

Kim Roots and Lizzie Spasich presented.

Participants were invited to make contact after webinars to discuss individual considerations. Many did take up this offer. Families were pleased to know that Family Advocacy could be an ongoing, independent, source of information and ideas.

Feedback from the webinar was positive and comments from the evaluation include:

- > *All of the information you have covered has been very useful! Being given a real life perspective is useful when interpreting the information provided.*
- > *Very easy to participate and can be done in own home without travelling.*
- > *Where do I start! It was all really useful, even though I had some knowledge now feel much more informed. It was great to have so much information about the option.*

Webinar

Supported Living...what it means, what it takes

The webinar aimed 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. Topics covered included: 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.

Kim Roots, Lizzie Spasich and Rhiannon Brodie presented.

Feedback from the webinar was positive and comments from the online evaluation include:

- > *It was really good & inspiring – thank you!*
- > *Very good- very simple. Wonderful support from Family Advocacy. Thank you!*
- > *I thought the process was very excellent.*

Systemic Advocacy

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

ISSUE Rent subsidy for housemates for people with a Supported Living Fund (SLF) package – Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC) restrictions on the ability of people with disability to use their SLF package to subsidise the rent of a house sharer inhibited the opportunity for people with disability to live with a house mate who did not have a disability.

What we did

We wrote an issues paper that provided the basis of our advocacy to senior ADHC staff with whom we met on many occasions to argue our case.

The outcome

ADHC did not remove the cap on rent subsidy for house sharers. However, there is an agreement that any applicant can make a case for the removal of the cap for their specific circumstances

ISSUE New Community Participation Program guidelines indicated that the more hours a participant was employed, the less hours of support they would receive under the Community Participation (CP) Program, thereby limiting the opportunities for people with disability to engage in employment.

What we did

Made representations to senior ADHC staff arguing that many young people in self managed CP programs use their CP funding to support them in work related roles including small businesses and that these roles are only sustainable with the CP funding.

The outcome

ADHC modified the guidelines and fact sheet which gave a threshold of 12 hours of employment before a person's funding may be affected, and reinforced the necessity of people with disability and families to negotiate on an individual basis to gain the supports required.

Advocacy for people with developmental disability

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Some people with developmental disability are subject to oppression, exploitation, discrimination, segregation and rejection. Family Advocacy is proactive and reactive in relation to unfolding issues which may lead to these negative impacts on the lives of people with disability.

Workshop

Making a Difference

Family Advocacy's key advocacy workshop discussed what advocacy is, why advocacy is needed and how to advocate effectively.

The event explained why advocacy is needed in these changing times and was raised as a useful workshop to attend for families wanting to support their family member with disability.

This event was also translated into Vietnamese for families from this cultural background.

Feedback from this event included:

- > *Parents found the information that you presented in the workshop were very useful for them to plan for their children's future. All the more so seeing there is no information in Vietnamese from any government agencies regarding the topic. You gave parents much needed up-to-date knowledge and how-to expertise in the field of caring for people with disability, enabling families to play an active role in planning a better life for their family member.*

Advocacy related advice and information

Throughout 2012/2013, 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.

A wide variety of topics have been covered throughout the year – many of which reflect the particular challenges and opportunities being experienced. For example, with changes to the way people with disability can access support to move out of home, Family Advocacy has continued to receive a greater number of calls than in previous years from families keen to pursue opportunities around supported living and the Supported Living Fund.

Other topics relating to key transition points continue to be focuses 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 or circle of support, developing a range of relationships, considering leisure options and making long term plans around the person with disability.

The response to each information request 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
- 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 2012/2013 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.

Family Advocacy 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
- 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

Part of the way Family Advocacy assists those taking on leadership roles is to support them to attend training run by other organisations as well as events run by Family Advocacy. This offers exposure to fresh examples and ideas as well as networking opportunities.

Some of the events families were supported to attend:

- Challenges of social inclusion, presented by Darcy Elks, Centre for disability studies
- The Odyssey Conference – celebrating achievements, progress and change
- Darcy Elks, The power of roles
- After school – what then?
- Circles of support.

Systemic Advocacy

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK

ISSUE People with disability living in institutions in the DisabilityCare Australia's Launch Sites are unlikely to have the full benefit of an individualised approach through DisabilityCare Australia. The process of assisting people and families takes time and needs a planned approach.

What we did

We have worked with Shut In, Disability Advocacy Network Australia and the NSW Disability Network Forum to raise the issue with the CEO of Disability Care, the Ombudsman and ADHC.

The outcome

Key decision makers recognise a different approach is necessary for people living in large residential centres if the reform agenda is to enable them to live in the community.

The advocacy sector is pushing to work with the residents of these institutions; this is yet to be instigated.

ISSUE Draft guidelines for the medication policy of the Home Care Service of NSW prevented staff from giving PRN medication (i.e. medication given as the circumstances arise) to non-self directing clients. This had the effect of preventing Home Care staff from giving liquid paracetamol to people who could not give informed consent, from giving a puffer to a child with asthma or an EpiPen to a person in an emergency.

What we did

We took up the issues with the Minister demonstrating the way in which non government services handled the issue.

The outcome

The draft guidelines have not been released.

ISSUE All current advocacy contracts with the NSW government end in 2015 and all funding for disability advocacy, supports and services is to go to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) by 2018. The NDIS has not committed to funding advocacy, meaning that the future of advocacy is unknown.

The general perception is that the NDIS will be a cure-all, and people with disability will no longer require advocacy.

What we did

Participated in:

- Meetings with the minister both as Family Advocacy and representatives of NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN) and the Disability Network Forum (DNF)
- Sat at secretary of NDAN
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Policy Working Group
- Ombudsman round table discussions on the issue
- Compiling data from NDAN for DNF's paper 'Independent Advocacy and Independent Information'
- National Disability Advocacy program (NDAP) working groups towards implementing recommendations from consultations February 2013:
 - » advocacy training
 - » recording systemic advocacy
 - » accessing advocacy information tools
 - » collaboration

The outcome

Minister Constance commented that he understood the need to for advocacy, and was working on a federal level to create security for the sector. However, in NSW particularly, but also across Australia, advocacy has not secured confirmation from state departments or government in relation to its future.

It has been identified as a significant issue being taken into 2013/2014 for people with disability.

Family Advocacy as a prudent and sustainable organisation

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

Quality Assurance



Over the past years, the federal funding agency has been focusing on developing a Quality Assurance (QA) system for the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP). With the legislative stamp of approval, the QA program commenced in July 2012. With the provision of financial support to prepare and implement this goal, the organisation undertook a review of the systems and procedures from the point of view of the Disability Advocacy Standards. In May 2013, Family Advocacy undertook its first Quality Assurance Audit by a third party certifier, International Standards Certifications Pty Ltd. Family Advocacy was subsequently awarded the Certification, in recognition of its compliance with the National Disability Advocacy Standards.

Risk management

The Management Committee is responsible for setting and monitoring the strategic direction of the organisation and for identifying and managing risks. Effective Risk analysis and risk management is a governance responsibility and an area that Family Advocacy recognises to be vital to us being a prudent and sustainable organisation. In an ongoing effort to continuously improve the organisation, a risk and compliance assessment was undertaken. Risk in the various areas of the organisation were identified, assessed, and actions to address those that required action were taken. This will be monitored regularly to safeguard the organisation and ensure compliance.

Management Committee

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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
- 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 Friday 26 October 2012 at the Ryde/Eastwood Leagues Club in West Ryde. Our new Director, Jess Watkins, kicked off with the acknowledgement of country, before transferring over to Maree Salzano, Chairperson of the Management Committee to carry the AGM through. It was attended by Neale Waddy of the NSW Department of Education and Communities, our keynote speaker, Dr. Donnie Maclurcan, members of the organisation, incumbent members of the Committee, nominees to the Committee for the next financial year 2012/2013, and staff.

Maree thanked the outgoing committee members for their contribution throughout the year and welcomed on board four new members to the committee.

Office bearers were elected by the committee on 7 December, 2012.

At the 2012 AGM Lifetime Membership was awarded to outgoing committee member Alex Purvis in recognition for all his ongoing contributions to the organisation and the sector and past Family Advocacy Director Catherine Hogan in recognition for her valuable contribution to the organisation and the sector.

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.

Margaret Curry

Margaret lives with her husband in Epping and has three daughters. One of her daughters works in open employment in a childcare centre. She moved into her own cottage which has recently been completed in the backyard of the family home. Margaret is an educator and has worked with students of all ages including those with an intellectual disability. She and her family have a firm and abiding commitment to the principles of equity and justice for all, and in particular for family members who cannot advocate for themselves.

Judith Ellis

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.

Clare Falzon

Clare is married with two children and lives in Sydney. She has found the workshops and conferences run by Family Advocacy to be both life changing and life

affirming. She has particularly appreciated the practical advice given by family members who have shared their stories of advocacy and strategies to achieve their vision.

Amanda Fletcher

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

Jennifer Noble

Jenny and her family live in Sydney. Her eldest child has moderate support needs. Jenny has been heavily involved in her daughter's education and still works part time for the Catholic Education Office assisting students with disability find suitable work placements in their senior years. This experience has given Jenny a real insight into the reality of post-school options.

Maree Salzano

CHAIRPERSON

Maree is committed to promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities and is passionate about social justice. Maree has worked for many years within the Advocacy sector, advocating for the interests, rights and needs of people with disability. She recognises the significance of every individual having valued social roles and being supported in seeking the good life.

Maree has been a committee member and Chairperson of Family Advocacy.

Meaghan Sweeney

SECRETARY

Meg has been involved in advocacy for people with intellectual disability for over 19 years. Meg's experience has seen her serving on the Disability Council of NSW, acting as a Community Visitor, and achieving life member with the Institute of Family Advocacy and Leadership Development. Meg is passionate about assisting people to develop and maintain their own unique identity through valued roles and inclusive practice.

Brad Templeton

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.

Gina Wilson-Burns

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>).

Jess Watkins

PUBLIC OFFICER

Jess is the Director of Family Advocacy and is the incumbent Public Officer.

Jill Ahoy, Lyn Bruce, Alex Purvis, Garry Smith all served on the committee until October 2012.

Catherine Hogan was the Director of Family Advocacy until August 2012 and held the Public Officer role until October 2012.

Committee meetings

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

Director

Jess Watkins
DIRECTOR

Jess is the Director of Family Advocacy. Her main areas of work are in 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.



Catherine Hogan
OUTGOING DIRECTOR

Catherine worked in Family Advocacy for 16 years. She was the Director for nine of those years until August 2012. The Management Committee and staff applaud her for her dedication to the Mission and Vision of Family Advocacy, for her strong management at the helm of the organisation and for the courageous voice in and for the industry. We thank you for having touched countless lives as a colleague, an advocate, Director, and friend.

Communications

Rhiannon Brodie
COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

Rhiannon is the Communications Officer for Family Advocacy and Resourcing Families. 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.

Advocacy and Leadership Development Team

Kim Roots
ADVOCACY AND LEADERSHIP COORDINATOR

Kim is the Advocacy and Leadership Coordinator, which includes coordination of the Resourcing Families Project. Her main responsibilities are to provide advocacy related advice and information to family members of people with disability over the phone; develop new face to face events and resource materials and support the parent leadership strategy of the organisation.



Lizzie Spasich
ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP AND
DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Lizzie is the Advocacy and Leadership 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

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.



Nadia Samperi
SYSTEMIC ADVOCATE

Nadia works with Belinda to make changes at the systemic level so that people with developmental disability can have full lives included in the community.

Resourcing Families



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.

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.



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.

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 2012/2013.

- Andrew Brak
- Wilma Reed
- Paivi Russanen
- Wendy McGlynn
- Margaret Curry
- Naresh Saxena
- Margaret Hardman

A special mention to Jon Watkins, Freelance Graphic Designer for designing the 2012 Annual Report and various other projects throughout the year free of charge.

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 2012/2013 included:

- Annette Bush
- Amanda Fletcher
- Meg Sweeney
- Sharon Williams

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 2012/2013 included:

- Meg Sweeney
- Catherine Hogan
- Judith Ellis
- Hilary McPherson
- Sylvana Mahmic
- Jo Basha
- Janet West
- Linda Hughes
- Helen Hooper
- Di Samuels

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 2012/2013 financial year. Family Advocacy has 148 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
- the ability to nominate to become a member of the Management Committee and participate in the strategic planning for the organisation.

Information sessions

Family Advocacy runs information sessions throughout the year as a way of introducing attendees to the work we carry out and the vision and the mission of the organisation.

We encourage attendees at an information session to continue to connect with us via the mailing list as well as contacting us directly for further information or assistance with their advocacy efforts for their family member.

In this past year we have been invited to present information sessions to specific groups as well as initiating information sessions to parent groups through organisations such as Lifestart – early intervention and Learning Links thus targeting our efforts through the key focus areas.

Family Advocacy presented nine information sessions during 2012/2013 to 135 attendees.

Two of the information sessions were presented to families from Cantonese language background and an Italian language background.

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 2, 5000 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, www.resourcingfamilies.org.au and 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.

In April 2013 Family Advocacy launched its new look website which has been a key success to providing information to families and allies.

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

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

A tools for advocacy section has been created to provide tips and ideas to families.

By focusing on these areas we are able to provide more relevant information to our audience including linking to policies, government and other useful websites, resources, family stories and factsheets.

An online library and resource section which will include the former Inclusion Collection library will be launched in late 2013.

Our systemic advocacy section on the website is also being redeveloped so we are able to provide more information on the topics that we take up systemically.

We also encourage families to connect with us through our website on the issues their family member is experiencing which could be an overall systemic issue.

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Information Technology (IT)

A significant IT strategy was implemented this year which improved the performance of our technology infrastructure. This involved freeing up the server by moving the websites, emails and database offsite. Numerous issues involving these three areas were progressively being experienced over the past years and more significantly in the first half of the year prior to moving the websites and emails to an external host. When Family Advocacy moved its email facility offsite, the server was freed up and this improved the overall performance of our IT system.

Family Advocacy continues to monitor new ways of communicating with our audience. The success of the webinars continued into 2012/2013 and increasingly has become a cost efficient and popular way of reaching more people across NSW.

Online registration for all of our events was introduced as a new way of effectively managing our events along with our data and adding people who chose to be on our mailing list.

Since October 2012 Family Advocacy has used social media in particular Facebook as another way of staying connected to our audience and reaching new families.

The backbone to the operational side of Family Advocacy is the Internal Management and Administration team as well as having the proper infrastructure in place.

This team supports the Management Committee, Director and staff in implementing the organisation's vision and mission. The infrastructure referred to is adequate knowledge and skills training for staff, efficient physical and interactive technology system, and quality standards, systems and procedures. Improvements in these areas all contributed to productivity of staff in meeting the organisation's goals. Consciousness of safety and environment are priorities that the organisation continues to carry.

Personnel

Family Advocacy recognises that staff members are better equipped to undertake their roles when they have opportunities for continuous training and development. Relevant training and workshops and other venues to expand ones knowledge and skills are provided throughout the year. The organisation is proud to have built up competent personnel, who in turn have developed an atmosphere of communication, teamwork and camaraderie that makes for a very pleasant work environment.

The industry has experienced a number of legislative and industrial changes, which the organisation keeps up to date with. The modern award classification came into effect at the start of July 2012. This allowed management to have a good look at each of the roles in the organisation as well as to have an overview and provide the proper levels for each role. With proper planning and guidance, the organisation went through the change smoothly. The Equal Remuneration Order became effective in December 2012 and this will provide an on going change in remuneration in the industry for the next eight years.

Experienced consultants supplemented the organisation's operational capacity particularly in implementing the Supported Living Fund workshops and information sessions.

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 stats 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 client 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.

Work Health and Safety

The health and safety of Family Advocacy staff, volunteers and visitors are always a paramount concern to the organisation. The organisation holds insurance policies on public liability, workers compensation, motor vehicle, as well as accident insurance for its volunteers.

Two staff members serve as wardens on the Emergency Evacuation Team of the building. Training is organised by the Building Superintendent twice a year. Internal training on emergencies is also provided for all staff, including the use of an evacuation chair that the organisation has maintained on its premises throughout the years. This is to be used by a person who may have a mobility impairment at the time of the emergency. Safety inspections of the office premises are conducted regularly by two members of staff.

Environmental Consciousness

Over the years, Family Advocacy has always sought to reinforce existing as well as find new ways of reducing its environmental footprint. Paper and cardboard are disposed of separately from the regular refuse, to allow for recycling. Documents for internal reference are printed on recycled paper.

Event and workshop communications as well as requested articles continue to be provided in digital form as a default, with hard copies provided only upon request. We continue to campaign with our database mail recipients to provide their email addresses as the main mode of communication. Any hardcopy mailouts have been further reduced by considering age-relevant events in relation to recipients.

The organisation has also started to use more environmentally friendly products for cleaning and washing.

Consultants

Governance

Alison Plant

Donnie Maclurcan

David White

Supported Living

Judith Ellis, MacRae & Associates

Catherine Hogan

Meg Sweeney

Data Management System

Al de Guzman, Implementation Consultant, appiChar

Drew Smith, Product Program Manager - Nonprofit and Education, APAC,

Salesforce.com Foundation

IT Support

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

Patrick Hasbani, Paul Jafari, Waley, Henrique Bitencourt, Robbie Jiang and the rest of his team at PCQuest

Media Productions, Publications and Technology

Nick Townend and his team at Microhire for providing sound at lighting at our Conference in August 2012

Paul Hardman of TradeMark Design

Joseph Lewis, Mosaic Collective for the Family Advocacy website graphic design

Gerald Lee, Freelance cameraman and film maker at our Conference

Redback Conferencing and Go to Webinar for all of our webinar requirements

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
- ADHC Local Support Coordinators

Thanks to the many organisations that distribute our brochures, fliers and provides links on their websites.

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

The financial year 2012/2013 saw the Resourcing Families Project continue to be supported through Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). Family Advocacy received additional project money for Resourcing Families for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 of \$650,000, not reflected below.

Recurrent funding grants from the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) are supporting the ongoing advocacy function and ongoing operations of Family Advocacy.

Recurrent funding from the NSW Department of Family and Community Services has been secured.

Recurrent funding and one-off grants

	2012/2013 (\$AUD)	2011/2012 (\$AUD)
Revenue from Commonwealth Government	253,373	242,990
One off grant from Commonwealth Government	12,000	15,000
Revenue from State Government: Community Services	258,851	250,862
One-off grant from State Government		21,600
Revenue funding from ADHC for Resourcing Families	217,223	210,227
One-off grant from DEC	32,000	32,000
Project funding from ADHC for Capacity Building Project Seminars	63,636	181,818
TOTAL	\$837,083	\$955,852

The organisation's liabilities can be fully funded from its accumulated provisions and the organisation continues in a sound financial position. A budget for 2013/2014 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 \$1,120 was received from the following generous givers:

- Alex Purvis
- Isabel Brak
- James and Kabita Kirkham
- Jennifer Price
- Joyce Bellchambers
- Laurel Prince
- James Oliver Meek
- Angela Kuo
- Alexandra Leafe
- Pam Morris
- Stanley Po
- Wendy and Hans Stroeve
- Wendy Rafferty
- Wilma Reibel

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

- PC Quest – for three refurbished computers; discounts provided for IT services rendered
- Salesforce Foundation – for ten free licences of Salesforce Enterprise Edition

Disclosure of Interests

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

Meg Sweeney 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 and Judith Ellis received consultancy fees for the Capacity Building Project Seminars.

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

