Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd

Annual Report 2011-2012

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Produced by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd

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**Directors’ Report**

**Introduction**

DANA has worked hard in the past year to consolidate its position as the representative body for independent disability advocacy organisations across Australia and as the means by which the interests of those people with disabilities who rely on advocacy agencies to take up their issues are represented in national level policy discussion and decision-making processes. During this period much of our work has focused on promoting understanding of the role and value of independent advocacy; ensuring the workability and appropriateness of the new National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) quality assurance processes and Guidelines; and contributing to the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the National Disability Strategy (NDS) and the Shadow Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

DANA’s membership and funding base has continued to grow and in April /May of this year we held the very successful DANA 4th National Disability Advocacy Conference “Advocating for Inclusion” in Canberra focusing on the National Disability Strategy.

**Advocating for People with Disabilities**

**National Disability Strategy**

Late in 2011 DANA joined with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and People with Disability Australia (PWDA) to advise government about improvements that might be made to the  [*National Disability Strategy 2010-2020: Laying the Groundwork (2011-2014)*](http://dana.org.au/wp-content/uploads/DANA-NDS-Sub-Implementation-Plan-Sub.doc)*.* DANA subsequently provided a substantial written submissionwith more detailed analysis and advice.

**National Disability Insurance Scheme**

During 2011 and until May 2012 DANA worked in partnership with AFDO and PWDA to coordinate and facilitate DANA members and national consumer peak bodies to discuss together and with Government, key NDIS issues and how they might be resolved. In this period, 3 different day long joint meetings of DANA members and consumer peak bodies were held and key areas of interest were identified and considered.

In May of 2012 AFDO and PWDA decided to join with National Disability Services and Carers Australia to engage the community in providing comment about NDIS developments. DANA declined to be involved in this form of engagement process in favour of providing its advice directly to government to ensure that Government received advice that was independent and free from the conflicting interests of service providers.

**Shadow Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

Throughout the year DANA worked consistently as part of a Project Group with other advocacy, consumer, legal and human rights organisations and the pro-bono support of DLA Piper Australia to refine and publish the Shadow Report**.** This Shadow Report has been endorsed by more than 70 organisations and was launched in the media in August 2012. The purpose of the Report is to assist the International Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to consider Australia’s level of compliance with the CRPD and to make recommendations to the Australian Government about areas for improvement.

**Independent Advocacy in the Future:**

In July 2011, echoing the various DANA and advocacy organisation submissions, the Productivity Commission Inquiry Report into Disability Care and Support strongly endorsed the important role of independent advocacy when there is an NDIS and was clear that to avoid any conflict of interest, advocacy organisations should not be funded through the NDIS and should also not be Disability Support Organisations or service providers.

DANA has continued, post the Report, to provide the government and community with advice about the work that independent advocacy organisations do and the difference they make to the lives of people with disabilities. We have done this through the production and broad distribution of a position paper and separate research paper on independent advocacy and the NDIS, though addressing in submissions on other matters (for example the NDS) the contribution advocacy makes to the inclusion, rights realisation and well-being of people with disabilities; though presentations to groups and at Conferences and through direct advice to government officials.

Extensive work undertaken by DANA since its inception has resulted in the release by government in March 2012 of a National Disability Advocacy Framework in which all Australian governments acknowledge the key role that advocacy plays in addressing the marginalisation and disadvantage experienced by people with disabilities. The Framework also commits, among other things, to in the future funding disability advocacy organisations that are free from conflict of interest and independent from the broader service system.

**National Strategy on Restraint and Seclusion**

DANA provided, in March 2012, feedback in relation to the proposed National Strategy on Restraint and Seclusion in Disability Services. Our feedback called for the progressive elimination of restraint and seclusion practices in line with the CRPD.

 **Advocating for Advocacy**

Much of DANA’s work over the course of the year has been directed to providing advice to government in relation to advocacy and the NDIS and NDS as detailed above. Other key aspects of our work have involved the provision of advice and feedback to government on the operation of the National Disability Advocacy Program particularly in respect of the development of the NDAP Quality Assurance Processes and the NDAP Program Guidelines.

Our work in these areas has involved:

* Participating in the NDAP Quality Assurance Trial Evaluation Reference Group, the NDAP Quality Assurance Implementation Reference Group and the NDAP Quality Assurance Technical Committee
* the provision of detailed written feedback on the NDAP Program Guidelines
* Regular meetings with each of the Policy and Advocacy areas of FaHCSIA
* Regular meetings with Senator McLucas and/or her advisors

This sustained engagement with government has led to a number of improvements in the operation of NDAP including:

* Three year funding agreements for NDAP agencies
* Ongoing indexation of NDAP agency funding
* Program Guidelines that:
	+ specify Program objectives as being to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights for people with disabilities and enabling full community participation
	+ expressly permit Program funding to be used for employee training for paid and unpaid staff, Committee and Board members
	+ expressly permit Program funding to be used for motor vehicle purchase or lease
	+ explicitly recognise that providing support to people with complex needs or multiple disabilities may affect an agency’s capacity to provide advocacy support to large numbers of people
	+ specify that the limitation on subcontracting applies only to the subcontracting of advocacy and permits advocacy subcontracting with FaHCSIA permission
* Additional funding of $15,000 per agency to prepare for accreditation against the National Disability Advocacy Standards and to support consumer involvement in the audit processes
* National Disability Advocacy Standards that incorporate Key Performance Indicators and Examples of Evidence that are relevant and appropriate all the models of advocacy
* NDAP Quality Assurance auditing procedures that:
	+ are sensitive to the circumstances, experiences and rights of the people with disabilities who will be involved in the audit process;
	+ recognise the organisational size and other logistical constraints faced by advocacy organisations
	+ take account of the multiple quality assurance processes applying to advocacy organisations by requiring auditors to avoid duplication through recognising compliance with other similar audit processes
* An NDAP Quality Assurance Toolkit that is a relevant and useful resource for advocacy agencies undertaking certification processes.

**Connecting with our Members**

The DANA CEO has been a guest at and provided reports to NSW, Victorian, Queensland and ACT State Disability Advocacy Network meetings throughout the year. DANA Board members have also been active in each of these Networks and have maintained good connections with advocacy organisations in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Members have been invited to contribute to DANA submissions and DANA has stayed in touch with members though organisation visits, multiple email and telephone discussions and through NDIS specific forums held jointly with AFDO and PWDA.

The DANA 4th National Disability Advocacy Conference was held in Canberra on 30 April and 1 May of 2012. Speakers addressed issues contained in the National Disability Strategy that impact on the lives and well-being of people with disabilities. The issues included Society, Culture and Recreation, Employment, Decision-making, Life-long Learning, the Right to Family and Relationships and Community Living. Presentations are progressively being posted on the DANA website.

Throughout the year this variety of mechanisms has led to strong engagement by the membership of DANA with the work undertaken by DANA.

**Networks and Linkages**

In addition to the linkages with other disability consumer and human rights organisations though the joint NDIS and Shadow Report work outlined above, DANA maintains contact with National Disability Services, Carers Australia and a range of mainstream community services peak bodies. We have recently joined ACOSS and contributed to NCOSS work on advocacy in NSW.

Additionally DANA continues to build linkages with individuals with a specific area of knowledge or expertise who are willing to provide pro bono advice and support to DANA on an ‘as needed’ basis. This has the potential to add significantly to the breadth and depth of the advice we will be able to provide to members and to governments in the future.

**Membership**

DANA membership includes almost 70 advocacy organisations from all the States and Territories of Australia and advocacy organisations that between them provide individual, systemic, legal, citizen, family and self advocacy support for some of the most vulnerable of all people with disability.

All of our members are committed to DANA’s vision of “A nation that includes and values people with disabilities and respects human rights for all”; all work incredibly hard to improve the life circumstances of people with disabilities and all, to the extent possible, support and lend their expertise and skills to the work that DANA does on behalf of people with disabilities nationally.

**Board of Directors**

The DANA Board composition has been constitutionally arranged to provide for strong accountability, continuity, renewal and direct connection to the work of member agencies. This means, among other things, that when Board members move on from their agencies they automatically vacate their Board position. It also means that each year, at the AGM, half the Board must vacate their positions. No Board member is permitted to serve on the Board for more than two consecutive two year terms.

In line with these principles the 2011 AGM saw the DANA Board say farewell to foundation Directors Catherine Hogan and Kevin Stone. Catherine served as Chair and Deputy Chair during her period on the Board and Kevin carried out the function of Treasurer for much of his Board term. DANA owes a great deal to the vision, passion and commitment of these two long serving and well-respected disability advocates and we wish them well for the future. Jennifer au Yeong and David Owen also left the Board during the year when they moved on from their member agency roles. Each brought a valued and unique perspective to the work of the Board and we thank them for their contribution.

With the addition to the Board during the year of Diana Palmer, Andrew Jefferson and David Owen, the Board has continued to be strong and broadly representative of DANA’s membership throughout the year; maintaining at least one Director coming from each of the six Australian States and the ACT, from rural and metropolitan based organisations, from organisations that provide individual, systemic, citizen, family, legal and self advocacy, from Federal and State funded organisations and from those with a mixture of funding. Thus DANA began and has continued with leadership from across the broad spectrum of the disability advocacy sector.

Board members met face to face for two consecutive days in March 2012 and otherwise attended monthly meetings via teleconference. In total the DANA directors took part in eleven Board meetings over the course of the year. Urgent business was conducted via email exchanges and the Directors made themselves available to provide feedback and support to the DANA CEO on an ‘as needed’ basis. Board members also contributed to the work of the Board as members of Board Sub-committees. The Board membership, their Board roles and their attendance at Board meetings is detailed below.

**The Future**

DANA expects the coming year to be one of continued growth and development. FaHCSIA has lifted our funding for 2012-13 to match that provided to other smaller peak bodies and this will allow for the appointment of a part-time policy officer and the establishment of a DANA office. Our work plans for the year include:

* Continuing to promote the role of independent disability advocacy and its value to people with disabilities, both in relation to the NDIS and across the spectrum of government and community activity
* Continuing to promote the inclusion of and human rights for people with disability with a particular focus on promotion of the implementation of the UNCRPD.
* Continuing to promote improved administration of and funding for independent advocacy
* Continuing to seek improvements in the quality assurance processes applied to advocacy organisations and in the independence of organisations funded to undertake advocacy
* Continuing to build and promote DANA policy/positions on issues affecting the people with disabilities who use advocacy support
* Improving our communication with and resources for members
* Improving our engagement with the broader community

DANA Board of Directors 2011-2012

**Catherine Hogan**, (to November 2011) Chairperson to November 2011

Director, Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development Association

**Craig Nadler**, Deputy Chairperson to November 2011, Chairperson from Dec 2011

Board Member/Treasurer, Family Advocacy Inc

**Christina Ryan,** Deputy Chairperson from December 2011

General Manager, Advocacy for Inclusion

**Kairsty Wilson**, Treasurer

Legal Manager, Principal Legal Practitioner, AED Legal Centre

**Mary Mallett,**

Manager, Speak Out Association of Tasmania

**Bob Lee,**

Coordinator, Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

**Jennifer Smith,**

Board Member, Capricorn Citizen Advocacy Inc.

**Kevin Stone**,(to November 2011)

Executive Officer, VALID

**Jenny Au Yeong,** (to November 2011)

Chief Executive Officer, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre

**David Owen,** (from October 2011 to June 2012)

Policy Officer, Advocacy Tasmania

**Andrew Jefferson,** (from November 2011)

Executive Director, People with Disabilities (WA) Inc

**Diana Palmer,** (from November 2011)

Executive Officer, IDEAS

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Board Member** | **Meetings Possible**  | **Meetings Attended** |
| Catherine Hogan | 4 | 3 |
| Craig Nadler | 11 | 9 |
| Christina Ryan | 11 | 10 |
| Kairstien Wilson | 11 | 4 |
| Mary Mallett | 11 | 9 |
| Robert Lee | 11 | 10 |
| Jennifer Smith | 11 | 8 |
| Kevin Stone | 4 | 3 |
| Jennifer au Yeong | 4 | 0 |
| David Owen | 9 | 7 |
| Andrew Jefferson | 7 | 4 |
| Diana Palmer | 7 | 5 |

**Company Secretary**

**Andrea Simmons,** DANA Chief Executive Officer

**Auditor**

**Kim Hanna FCA**

**Patron**

**Governor-General, Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO**

DANA Staff

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Andrea Simmons**

**Finance Administrator**

**Sharon Pfeifer** (to July 2012)

**Finance Consultant**

**Kerrie Newham** (from August 2012)