

Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd Annual Report 2013-2014

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Produced by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd For further information contact:

Mary Mallett

Chief Executive Officer Telephone: (02) 6175 1300 Email: ceo@dana.org.au Website: [www.dana.org.au](http://www.dana.org.au/)

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Directors’ Report

# Introduction

DANA's membership is comprised of disability advocacy organisations, spanning the six models of advocacy and every State and Territory of Australia. Some members advocate across all types of disability, some specialise in a type/category of disability (e.g. brain injury, intellectual, communication) or focus on the needs and intersectional disadvantage of a particular demographic

e.g. children, CALD/NESB. DANA's membership therefore represents extensive, diverse networks with lived experience of the barriers that people with disability confront. These vast formal and informal networks include the members, clients, staff, Boards, advisory committees, community connections, supporters and newsletter subscribers of our member organisations.

DANA is driven by a collective desire to defend and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of people with disability. 1.2 (f) of our constitution enunciates the purpose of "promoting the human rights, fundamental needs and value of people with disabilities". DANA was structured to focus on strengthening and supporting disability advocacy in Australia, at a national level.

DANA worked hard during the 2013-14 financial 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. Notably, DANA held the 5th National Disability Advocacy Conference in late 2013, and was funded to engage with the advocacy sector on consumer experiences of disability employment services.

Through the experience of its extensive networks, DANA has developed a thorough understanding of the need for building and developing sector capacity, disseminating information, performing research, consultation and human rights-based analysis, raising awareness, and representing and advocating at a national level.

*DANA's unique understanding of the lived experiences of people with disability provided to it by its constituent members in turn gives legislators a clearer understanding of the ways in which 'big picture' federal initiatives mesh with other systems and with individuals subject to them.*

*Our advocacy footprint/impact as individual organisations and collectively would be significantly less without a peak organisation1*

1 Throughout this report, quotes from feedback we have received are italicised and in blue font.

# 2013-2014 in review

In addition to organising the biennial National conference, and completing several special projects, DANA continued substantial ongoing work in:

* Sharing relevant information and resources with the advocacy sector and government;
* Advocating for the rights of people with disability in various research and policy projects;
* Raising awareness of disability rights issues in the media;
* Advocating for advocacy – highlighting the importance of the six models of disability advocacy and the need to develop a strong, independent advocacy sector;
* Listening to and engaging with the DANA membership;
* Working cooperatively and strengthening key relationships beyond the DANA membership; Members strongly attest to the value and benefits they have received from:

*having a national peak body in respect of a flow of vital information and direction as to the current and future issues for Advocacy.*

*connectedness, information, advice, guidance and mentoring significantly develops the quality of our work and strategies. DANA plays a key role in keeping us connected to multiple sectors - not just the advocacy sector. Quality resources, information and professional learning reduces our isolation as a small organisation in a geographically isolated area. DANA clearly articulates perspectives and positions in a sound measured way. When asked for comment on contentious issues, a key information source is DANA. Resources are unquestionably excellent.*

*vital information that is explained professionally and promptly!*

*DANA adds value to* [our organisation] *in the following ways: Providing information on current issues that people with disabilities face. A clear picture of strategies that relate to the sector moving forward and growing: Collate and analyse information in relation to Government policy in regards to how it will affect people with disabilities.*

## Sharing information and resources

Throughout the 2013-2014 year, DANA has responded to requests for information and referred members of the public to relevant advocacy services or other organisations. DANA has also actively disseminated government and sector information through a variety of methods, primarily to its membership base, but also to government, the community sector, other stakeholders and members of the public. 2

DANA has met and shared information with numerous staff and Board members of member organisations, and provided phone or email information to many more. Member engagement is discussed further below.

2 See p.21 Appendix A, for a non-exhaustive list of information provided during 2013-2014.

### DANA Website

The DANA website was frequently updated to incorporate DANA newsletters, position statements, submissions and any national events or news that may be of interest to independent advocacy organisations.

### Newsletters

DANA provided information to its members via e-bulletins and fortnightly or monthly newsletters. DANA newsletters are posted on the DANA Website.

According to one member: *Due to the small amount of funding that it receives,* [our organisation] *has very limited resources to pursue information in relation to sector development, changes in legislation and state and national disability issues. As a result [*our organisation] *often relies on DANA’s E-newsletters in these areas.*

### Advokit Updates

Having developed, created and launched its Practical Design Fund Project in the first half of 2013, DANA continued to promote this NDIS-specific resource to our members and the wider public. The Advokit, an online resource and toolkit to support advocacy for people with disabilities in connection with the NDIS, has gradually garnered a list of subscribers through the “Register for Alerts” facility built into the website. Advokit Updates

were used to share information about the NDIS and have particularly focused on promoting awareness of relevant events and resources. These Updates are emailed directly to everyone who has subscribed.

One member observed: *The rollout of the NDIS increases both the demand for and the importance of advocacy and the role of DANA in informing the development of the scheme. Its activities, including development and enhancement of the Advokit, will continue to help both individuals and advocates to ensure that people with disabilities are well served by the scheme and that it meets its objectives.*

One subscriber wrote: *I just wanted to let you know that your newsletter is great. Full of useful information. Thank you*.

### Social Media

DANA has strengthened its social media presence, using Facebook and Twitter to connect with member organisations, people with disability, other stakeholders and members of the public.

We have particularly used these methods to connect during NDIS webinars and similar events, submitting questions and comments about advocacy issues through online chat functions and Twitter, (e.g. one tweeted question was put to the panel of NDIS governors to respond) and promoting NDIS information. We also monitor and respond where possible to advocacy related queries and concerns on the NDIS Grassroots Facebook group.

### State and Territory networks

When possible the DANA CEO, Board Chair or Policy Officer has attended and provided relevant national information to meetings of State and Territory disability advocacy networks, including:

* Combined Advocacy Groups Queensland (CAGQ) teleconferences
* NSW Disability Advocacy Network (NDAN) and NCOSS Disability Network Forum
* ACT Disability Advocacy Network

### 2013 National Disability Advocacy Conference

On 31 October and 1 November DANA held its National Conference at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event was actively promoted through DANA’s extensive networks and submitted to a range of event calendars and newsletters. On 30 October a Managers’ Networking Day was held as a preconference event for the first time, providing an opportunity for learning and sharing, with a specific focus on the management of advocacy organisations whereas the Conference was focused on the work of advocacy, and the current issues.

The exciting line up of speakers included Queensland’s Anti- Discrimination Commissioner, Kevin Cocks, South Australia’s Public Advocate John Brayley, and Victoria’s Deputy Disability Services Commissioner Lynne Coulson Barr. The Conference program was designed to include a mix of academics, statutory officials, people with disabilities, carers and representatives from DPOs, bringing theoretical and practical perspectives on the Conference theme: “Independent Advocacy: Safeguarding Choice, Control & Well-being”.

The Plenary sessions and different Conference streams explored ways to better protect and advance the human rights of people with disabilities through independent advocacy, using different advocacy strategies and models of advocacy. Delegates to the

United Nations CRPD review of Australia shared their experiences and reflections. The Conference program also highlighted recent developments in supporting people to make decisions, data collection, the challenges in accessing, improving and evaluating the NDIS, and safeguarding human rights through complaints and dispute resolution. Employment issues were considered through the lens of CRPD Article 27, exploring the live issues of improving Disability Employment Services and ensuring wage justice in supported employment.

This Conference provided an important opportunity for disability advocacy organisations’ staff, board members and associates from all parts of Australia, and from widely varying backgrounds, to share experiences, knowledge and understanding with each other, with disabled peoples’ organisations and with representatives from government, business and academia.

In consultations for the NDAP Options Papers, *Ten respondents mentioned the value of the annual DANA conferences as a mechanism for collaboration.*

One member has noted: *It is through the DANA conferences that we all get to get together and discuss issues that are only relevant to us. It is particularly important for rural agencies, as we can often need the resources and help that DANA provides.*

DANA did an evaluation survey of the Conference held in November 2013. DANA received some valuable and constructive feedback in person, and in written and online evaluation forms, which will be used to inform and guide conference planning in future. Feedback was positive: “*interesting papers, diverse topics and high quality*”, and “*came away feeling very inspired and motivated*”. We have also taken on board the suggestions for topics and sessions that members would like to see, and will build them into future conferences.

## Advocating for people with disability

DANA's structure of a broad based network of organisations and individuals means we are ideally positioned to further strengthen and support disability rights advocacy and the voice of people with disability in Australia. Throughout the year, DANA continued to demonstrate its capacity to contribute to the evidence base in respect of policies, services, supports and programmes, by harnessing members' knowledge and insights to report on and evaluate what's happening on the ground.

One member observed: *As a small individual advocacy organisation it is helpful to us to be able to contribute our voice to national and local issues through DANA that we might not have the time or resources to do alone.*

DANA staff have used various strategies to enhance the capacity of DANA and the advocacy sector to provide input to policy development at the national level:

* Initiating and participating in a range of collaborative efforts with other advocacy organisations and DPOs;
* recognising the specialised knowledge and experience of other organisations on particular topics and drawing on their expertise;
* conducting online surveys designed to draw from the expertise of the DANA membership and network
* inviting input on particular issues

Among other Australia-wide issues, DANA has given extensive feedback and input on Disability Employment Services, and the implementation of the National Disability Strategy, including a report to DSS and participation with the other disability peaks in a focus group on the Strategy.

### The Disability Employment Services Engagement Project

In July 2013, the then Minister for Employment Participation, Hon Kate Ellis, announced that the Australian Government would provide funding to a number of national disability organisations, including DANA, to assist in improving the delivery of Disability Employment Services (DES). The purpose of these grants was to lift consumer engagement and knowledge of the DES program and to facilitate the provision of consumer advice to the Government about service needs and potential future improvements. In order to improve the performance of the DES program, the Government

expressed its desire to hear about the issues affecting the client group each organisation represents, and how this group could be better assisted to access information on DES.

As the peak body for disability advocacy organisations, DANA added value to the project by harnessing the knowledge and experience of our member agencies and their clients.

*The experience of advocates highlights that greater skills and expertise in job matching, workplace accommodation, and disability employment and supports would provide better outcomes for DES clients.*

Throughout 2013-14, DANA promoted awareness and understanding of DES through our newsletter, social media and website. In developing the program for the 5th National Disability Advocacy Conference, one session was focused on disability employment. This provided an ideal opportunity for a Department representative to present informative slides on

DES and for DANA to introduce attendees to the project and our engagement plan. To inform this final report, DANA distributed survey questions to gather the knowledge and insights of advocates on how the DES program responds to the needs of jobseekers and employees with disabilities. The final project report (which can be found on the DANA website) explores barriers and identifies potential enablers for the DES program to better meet the needs of the participants.

### The National Disability Insurance Scheme

In recent years, DANA has provided detailed advice and feedback to government in relation to the Scheme’s design and development.

As one member noted: *DANA did critical work, for example, on the Commonwealth's National Disability Insurance Scheme Bill 2012. Few other organisations provided such a keen analysis. DANA explained how legislative proposals would translate into practice on the ground and in the lives of individual people with disability. DANA offered clear insights into the bill’s treatment of decision-making, complaints and our global citizenship obligations, ensuring that government was aware that the NDIA must be given the legislative framework it needs to implement a truly person- centred scheme.*

Another member asserted: *Without DANA there would not have been a coherent voice providing input to the NDIA nor would the information about the NDIS framework been so clearly explained or disseminated.*

During the first year of NDIS implementation, DANA has retained this focus on the realisation of human rights through the NDIS, particularly in relation to the role of advocacy. **3** NDIS issues were highlighted in DANA’s Federal Election Call to Parties – specifically, noting ways that protections for the rights of individuals might be strengthened, in relation to independent oversight and review, the compensation recovery provisions and privacy concerns. In our Pre-Budget Submission to Treasury in early 2014, DANA reiterated the importance of fully funding and delivering the scheme according to the recommendations of the Productivity Commission’s 2011 report.

3 See p.27, Appendix B, for examples of DANA’s activities during 2013-2014 relevant to the NDIS.

Throughout the year DANA has monitored developments in Trial sites, and other locations preparing for the Scheme to launch. In early 2014, DANA collected some initial observations and information from advocates in Trial sites. At every opportunity DANA has gathered relevant data and listened with interest to how the advocacy sector is experience and responding to Scheme implementation. This ongoing project has been informed by a particularly interest in connecting advocacy organisations in trial sites, collating experiences of advocacy to the NDIA and identifying patterns nationally, to inform future systemic advocacy for improvements to the Scheme, at operational, policy and legislative levels.

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DANA's legislative and policy analysis of national issues has been strongly informed by and situated within the human rights framework of the UN Convention when, for example, making submissions to the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Australian Law Reform Commission, and Senate Committees. 4 DANA played a role in preparing for and organising the civil society delegation to the 10th session of the CRPD Committee in September 2013 - facilitating the selection of applicants for the delegation.

### The National Disability Strategy

In early 2014, DANA was invited by DSS to participate in this process by engaging with our constituents. We conducted online surveys of our members on progress made (and not yet made) under the National Disability Strategy under each of the six outcome areas. The resulting submission can be found on the DANA website, and is expected to inform the ideas and themes taken forward to the 2014 progress report to COAG and the National Disability Ministers’ Forum. Online surveys were chosen as an appropriate method to engage the representatives of advocacy organisations and collect a broad range of views from members. A survey for each of the six outcome areas asked open-ended questions around areas of improvement, examples of positive developments, areas in need of improvement, and priority actions. Over the course of a month, from mid-February to mid-March, survey responses were received from across all Australian states and territories and from a mix of metropolitan, regional, and rural and remote areas. The content of responses indicates that a range of advocacy models were represented in the organisations engaged, including citizen, family, legal, individual, self and systemic advocacy. Furthermore, the concerns raised indicate a diverse range of people with disabilities among advocacy clients and groups. Most surveys received ten to twenty responses and the sum of the written answers provided a qualitative richness, reflecting the serious engagement of advocates with disability rights. Many respondents included analytical summaries and detailed examples in answering the open-ended questions.

4 See p.30, Appendix D, for examples of DANA’s activities during 2013-2014 relevant to the implementation of the CRPD and the National Disability Strategy.

DANA’s contribution offers valuable, critical insight into the myriad human rights problems faced by people with disabilities in contemporary Australia. Our membership is comprised of advocacy organisations that work to protect the rights and interests of some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised people with disabilities, including

*The experience of disability advocacy organisations is that “little has changed in the lives of the people” for whom they advocate. Since Australian governments committed to the Strategy in 2011, most advocates report no changes, or only marginal improvements, under the identified outcomes and policy directions...*

people who may not be engaged by the regular activities of Disabled Peoples Organisations. To manage funding levels that are insufficient to meet the demand for advocates, advocacy services prioritise clients with cognitive impairments, communication barriers, complex needs, those with experience of institutionalisation, abuse or neglect, and those without strong networks of support from peers, family or friends. Our engagement with advocates on Strategy Progress report progress therefore provides a picture from the frontline of disability rights, at intersections of disadvantage and discrimination.

Apart from completing this lengthy report focused on Strategy progress, DANA had also previously

highlighted the importance of renewed government and community efforts to advance Strategy implementation, in the Federal Election Call to Parties and the Pre-Budget Submission to Treasury.

## Raising awareness

DANA has used media attention (on radio, television, and in print and online news) to draw attention to disability and human rights issues in relation to the Welfare Review, the Commission of Audit and the Federal Budget, reflecting the perspectives of people with disability and their advocates and promoting the positive standing of people with disability to the public by denouncing inappropriate media coverage. We have commenced an ongoing project to challenge organisations and conference coordinators to include a relevant disability perspective in all appropriate topics, presentation and panels.

## Advocating for advocacy

DANA has continued to provide a broad range of political, bureaucratic and community stakeholders with advice about the work that independent advocacy organisations do and the difference they make to the lives of people with disabilities, and the important role of independent advocacy into the future. Our work in these areas has included:

* Meetings and other communication with Senators and MPs, staff of the Department of Social Services, and the National Disability Insurance Agency.
* Provision of information about Advocacy to the Senate Community Affairs Committee

In relation to the National Disability Advocacy Programme, DANA has provided extensive policy advice and sector feedback over recent years. This year, DANA has continued to liaise with DSS regarding NDAP issues, such as Quality Assurance Processes and the costs of associated audits, and has also taken active part in meetings of the NDAP Implementation Reference Group and provided extensive oral and written feedback to inform the development of NDAP options papers. 5

One member explained: *DANA provides a unified voice for the disability advocacy sector which is able to communicate directly with DSS as the funder. This has a range of benefits including aiding communication between DSS and DANA's many members; aids implementation of change (e.g. certification process; introduction of the smart form; sector consultation generally).*

### 2013 Federal Election Call to Parties

In our Federal Election Call to Parties, DANA called on all parties to commit to the provision of funding to meet the increasing demand for independent advocacy during the progressive launch of the NDIS. The document argued that advocacy support and representation must be available from adequately resourced, independent advocacy organisations, effectively represented on the national stage.

Specifically DANA called on all political parties to:

Ensure access to independent advocacy for people with disabilities

* Increase funding for disability advocacy to 1.3% of service delivery expenditure
* Ensure advocacy remains independent
* Strengthen representation of the advocacy sector

### 2014 Pre- Budget Submission

DANA’s Pre-Budget Submission, made to the Department of Treasury in January 2014, elaborated on the policy recommendations made in the Call to Parties, explaining in greater depth the arguments for increased funding, including the unmet and growing demand for disability advocacy, its economic value and the human rights imperative. Also explored were the importance of independence, and peak representation and sector development.

### The Strategy Progress Report

The Engagement report on National Disability Strategy progress provided an ideal opportunity to highlight the vital role of independent disability advocacy –both at the beginning of the report in the thematic overview and throughout the sections focused on the six outcome areas of the strategy. The survey responses showed strongly that, where progress has been made under the Strategy, notably in securing political commitments and reforms, or in the ongoing protection of rights and access to supports, education, employment etc for people with disabilities, advocacy has often been vital to achieving those outcomes.

5 See p.28 Appendix C for examples of DANA’s activities during 2013-2014 relevant to NDAP.

## Membership

Membership levels remains strong, with DANA attracting a variety of new organisational members located across Australia, and between them providing provide individual, systemic, legal, citizen, family and self-advocacy support for some of the most vulnerable of all people with disability.

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.

DANA members have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the DANA Newsletters and submissions, in Network and DANA meetings, via email, in person and particularly through an online survey conducted at the end of the 2013-14 year:

Valued Resources and Actitivies - Online Survey of DANA Members, July 2014

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In the survey responses, members testified to the value of DANA’s activities and functions:

*DANA has grown and expanded services very quickly all of them are of a high quality and relevant for state level agencies’ needs. All of its services are of high quality and assist state level agencies to keep abreast of key national and international developments and standards. DANA also facilitates the needs of clients in the various states and territories to be brought to the attention of the federal government in a balanced and timely way.*

*As a small agency,* [our organisation] *benefits from having a national peak body in respect of a flow of vital information and direction as to the current and future issues for Advocacy.* [Our organisation] *also benefits from the communication between other advocacy agencies and DANA and in particular, participation in DANA hosted training and development opportunities such as Conferences. It is also considered to be of immeasurable assistance to have a peak body that advocates directly for independent advocacy agencies which means that we have a combined voice at government level.*

DANA would like to thank all those who completed this survey or sent DANA words of support. We greatly appreciated the positive acknowledgement we received and the time and consideration given by busy advocates and others.

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

DANA newsletters during the year asked people to contribute their opinions, views, and ideas, whether formally asking for input to systemic activities or encouraging members to email or call the office to discuss their thoughts or concerns. Members have frequently been invited to contribute to DANA submissions and DANA has stayed in touch with members through multiple email and telephone discussions.

We are extremely grateful that Members freely provided suggestions, advice, case studies, stories and were very generous in their time in working with DANA on shared activities. The success of DANA’s engagement projects relied on our constituents giving their time to share and contribute some of their knowledge and expertise on the issues at hand.

### Board of Directors

The DANA Board changed as usual at the AGM in November 2013, with a mix of experienced Board members in their 3rd and 4th year on the Board, and four new Board members excited to take the opportunity to join the national body as a Board member. The Board includes managers and CEOs of advocacy organisations as well as Board members of some agencies, and is representative of the range of models of advocacy. Board members in their networking at state and territory level gather informal feedback on DANA’s performance and channel it back to the DANA staff

The composition of the DANA Board has been arranged to provide for strong accountability, continuity, renewal and direct connection to the work of member agencies. DANA Board sub- committees, each consisting of three Board members, meet on an as needed basis and provide advice to the Board on specific governance matters.

### Individual Associate Members

At the 2013 AGM members voted to constitutionally expand the potential membership of DANA (previously restricted to organisations) to allow individuals to become members, recognising a need for DANA to formally include within its network those individuals not connected to its member organisations but supportive of DANA's Vision "of a nation that includes and values people with disabilities." In the next year DANA will be promoting this form of membership widely to people who are supporters and allies of advocacy. We look forward to welcoming Individual Associate Members into the DANA membership during the coming year.

## Building relationships

DANA continues to take active part in projects and dialogue, within the disability sector and beyond. One on one meetings have occurred during the year with a wide range of organisations across the disability and community sectors, Federal and State and Territory government departments and statutory bodies, the private sector and academia.

DANA has continually engaged productively with other organisations representing people with disability. We contributed to joint submissions to the Australian Human Rights Commission and collaborated with AFDO and NEDA on the topic of affordable housing - coordinating and collating contributions to produce a joint submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Economics.

DANA continues to build linkages with individuals and organisations with a specific area of knowledge or expertise with whom DANA can collaborate on an ‘as needed’ basis to add to the

breadth and depth of the advice we will be able to provide to members and to governments in the future.

Beyond considerable interaction with government departments, DANA has continued to forge connections with statutory authorities, and build relationships across the community sector, and in academia and the private sector. DANA has developed its reputation and standing beyond its membership, participating in alliances, collaborative projects and working groups such as the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis Disability Advisory Group.

Those who have subscribed to emails or Updates extends beyond advocacy organisations, to include:

* staff of Federal and State/Territory government departments
* statutory bodies,
* community legal centres
* law firms,
* service providers,
* members of the public, and
* people at research centres and universities.

For instance, a University of Sydney employee stated: *We look to DANA as the specialist peak body for disability advocacy to be subject matter experts, to disseminate information, and to provide advice and support when necessary. This is an essential organisation.*

An individual with disability explained that having DANA: *provides a voice, an ear and understanding for people with a lived experience of disability. They can support individuals or other agencies who continue to advocate for the rights and freedom for all people with disabilities and keep making sure we are heard by the government and community.*

# The Future

In the coming year, DANA hopes to secure greater funding certainty, and further develop its organisational capacity. Continuing to advocate for independent advocacy and developing our role in supporting the advocacy sector across Australia will be critical tasks.

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 and the National Disability Strategy.
* Continuing to build inclusive and representative policy positions on issues affecting the people with disability who use advocacy support
* Resourcing, supporting and developing the disability advocacy sector, aiding professional development in the advocacy workforce, effective information sharing and enhanced connectivity and collaboration
* Establish mechanisms for maintaining the interest and connectedness of key allies and supporters of DANA.

## Representing members

The value of DANA as a representative organisation lies in the collective weight and wisdom of all our members and stakeholders. DANA member organisations hold very detailed knowledge and expertise on issues, yet many of them do not have the resources to advocate systemically on the issues with which they deal so competently at an individual level. DANA represents these views to government in all consultation and submission processes. We aggregate information and constructively synthesise the experience of our member groups with our own policy expertise to provide a uniquely representative policy perspective.

DANA will continue to contribute to government policy on the relevant issues that impact on people with disability and their families. The reach of DANA's membership into a wide range of communities and all parts of Australia means that DANA can assist government to develop policy that takes comprehensive account of all the necessary stakeholders.

## Sharing information

DANA has regular communication to the advocacy and wider disability sector through fortnightly e- newsletters. An additional e-newsletter to Managers and Boards has been trialled recently, to improve supply of targeted governance and funding information. DANA uses Facebook and Twitter because the messages are seen and shared by other peak disability, human rights and civil society organisations, active individual disability advocates as well as by the media. DANA is currently scoping a social platform that would facilitate a process for all those interested in advocacy to discuss topics of interest in a moderated environment. The DANA website is used as a place to

position Government information so that it can be found readily e.g. the DVD about the NDAP developed by DSS in 2013.

## Sector support and development

DANA will extend its work to enable better service delivery and functioning of disability advocacy organisations by:

* Hosting a series of teleconferences to provide an avenue for organisations to discuss important issues e.g. recent teleconference for managers and Board members to clarify the DSS funding round when there was confusion about which organisations were able to apply.
* Promote Advocacy Training - for workers wanting to come into the sector to work for independent advocacy orgs, and promote professional development training for existing advocates.
* DANA will make additional advocacy resources available on the DANA website, as well as creating links between the advocacy organisations who have specialist expertise and those who require that expertise. This includes broadly to organisations who provide systemic advocacy for a specific group e.g. people with autism, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, neuromuscular conditions, mental health conditions etc., and also for parents and siblings who advocate for their family member with a disability.
* planning the next biannual DANA Conference taking into account the extensive evaluation from the 2013 Conference. The Conference ensures accessibility in all aspects including venue, captioning, Auslan interpreters & Easy English information and signage.

As a national peak organisation DANA is often contacted by people who have a problem and who don't know where to turn. We provide referrals to members and non-member advocacy organisations and other relevant agencies, such as Welfare Rights Centres & Community Legal Centres. We plan to formalise this referral process with follow up and monitoring of the referral outcomes and work with organisations to improve their interagency referral processes.

Sharing best practice and learning from independent advocacy organisations in other countries e.g. relationship developed with the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance who are doing relevant work on advocacy related to Self Directed Support which closely aligns to the issues in the NDIS trial sites.

## Policy analysis and programme development

DANA will continue to contribute to programme development of the advocacy programme at national level, with active participation in current and future NDAP Reference groups and a willingness to engage in discussion and consultation whenever appropriate.

One member has articulated DANA’s role as:

*-supporting advocacy organisations to be strong, capable organisations that can continue to meet the needs of the people they serve*

*-representing the importance of advocacy at a national level*

*-bringing the perspective of the people who need and use advocacy into the national policy debate*

*-providing a channel for collaboration both within the advocacy sector and with other key stakeholders for collaborative effort on issues of national importance.*

Despite extensive past efforts in advocating for disability advocacy, DANA perceives significant challenges on this front, and opportunities to strengthen the position of the sector going forward.

## Research and consultation

As an example of our research interests DANA is currently planning a major survey about access to independent advocacy, to be implemented with the assistance and involvement of the Carers associations and NDS so that we can research how service providers and carers can access independent advocacy for people with disability when they need to. Our research plans are strongly focused on developing an evidence base for the efficacy and value of independent advocacy, and include gathering case studies of conflict of interest.

## Working collaboratively

DANA will work collaboratively with the broader disability sector, and maintain good working relationships with the other national peaks, sharing good practice and potential shared development opportunities to enhance the amplification and support of the voice of people with disability.

DANA has comprehensive reach into the disability community through which the government and other stakeholders can provide information and receive input on current issues. Our formal and informal networks span all disability types and demographics, including age, gender, cultural background and metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

Formalising existing links, along with deliberate efforts to attract individual members and further expand our organisational membership, will hone the effectiveness of these networks and increase DANA's capacity to raise and promote community awareness of:

* the challenges people with disability face,
* the value of advocacy for people with disability,
* good advocacy practice, strategies and outcomes, and
* the human rights, choices and capabilities of people with disability to participate in the Australian community.

DANA Board of Directors 2013-2014

**Christina Ryan,** Deputy Chairperson, then Chairperson from Sept 2013 General Manager, Advocacy for Inclusion

**Craig Nadler**, Chairperson (to Sept 2013) Board Member/Treasurer, Family Advocacy Inc

**Andrew Jefferson,** (Vice Chair)

Executive Director, People with Disabilities (WA) Inc

**Robyn Renton,** Treasurer Manager, Rights in Action Inc

**Janene Cootes,**

Executive Officer, Intellectual Disability Rights Service (IDRS)

**Michael Hampton,** (from October 2013)

Advocacy Program Manager, Brain Injury Association NSW

**Arthur Bozikas,** (from October 2013) Executive Officer, Self Advocacy Sydney Inc.

**Rosey Olbrycht,** (from October 2013)

Senior Coordinator, Citizen Advocacy South Australia Inc.

**Judith Ellis,** (from October 2013) Board Member, Family Advocacy NSW

**Mary Mallett,** (to October 2013)

Manager, Speak Out Association of Tasmania

**Bob Lee,** (to October 2013)

Coordinator, Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

**Diana Palmer,** (to October 2013) Executive Officer, IDEAS

**Dr George Taleporos,** Board member (to Aug 2013) Manager, Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS)

**Company Secretary**

**Andrea Simmons,** past DANA Chief Executive Officer

**Auditor**

**Kim Hanna FCA**

DANA Staff

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Andrea Simmons** (Finished July 2013)

**Acting Chief Executive Officer**

**Simon Viereck** (From July 2013 to March 2014)

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Mary Mallett** (From March 2014)

**Policy & Research Officer Siobhan Clair** (From March 2013)

**Communications & Events Officer**

**Sean Kelly** (From March to October 2013)

**Contract Book-keeper Lesley Porroj**

# Appendix A: Information provided in 2013-14

This list is not exhaustive, but provides an indication of the frequency and breadth of DANA’s information provision.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Throughout Year | * Sharing details of numerous relevant events, news, activities, opportunities and online surveys, predominately through Newsletters emailed to members, and also on website and through social media, and Advokit
 |
| July 2013 | * Promotion of:
	+ DANA’s Advokit to membership and beyond, explaining NDIS legislation and processes
	+ Member projects including other Practical Design Fund resources
	+ AHRC podcasts and public meetings
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ NDIS launch,
	+ NDIS reviews at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal
	+ Vulnerable witnesses and victims amendment
	+ Fair Work Act changes
	+ Announced funding for children with disabilities in remote and rural locations
	+ New Minister for Ageing Portfolio
	+ Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse
	+ Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (ACNC) governance standards
	+ Productivity Commission report on Deep and Persistent Disadvantage
	+ Federal funding to inform and consult with consumer groups, and improve DES
	+ Senate Report on involuntary and coerced sterilisation
	+ criminal justice reviews and reforms in State jurisdictions
	+ ALRC Inquiry appointment
	+ National Disability Awards finalists
	+ Attorney General’s Department guidelines on emergency communication
	+ AIHW report on disability support services
	+ IDPwD celebrations and registration
* DANA Policy Working Group discussions, sharing information on NDAP projects, and NDIS trial sites advocacy and External Merits Review Support
 |
| August 2013 | * Promotion of:

- new Practical Design Fund resources; |

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|  | - Advocacy for Inclusion Voting Information Pack* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ National Disability Employment Initiative call for funding submissions,
	+ NDIS resources and commentary
	+ CRPD delegation to United Nations
* Participation in CAGQ teleconference
* Distribution of DANA Membership Renewal and organisation information
 |
| September 2013 | * Promotion of:
	+ World Mental Health Day
	+ opportunities to present at the National Disability Advocacy Conference
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ UNCRPD review of Australia
	+ New Ministry appointments
* Participation in forum on National disability peaks
* Participation in CAGQ teleconference
* Participation in NSW Disability Network Forum meeting and AGM
 |
| October 2013 | * Promotion of:
	+ the National Disability Advocacy Conference
	+ DANA Board opportunities
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ NDIA name change and rebranding strategy (from “DisabilityCare” back to NDIS)
	+ New Minister appointment for Disability and Aged Care
	+ AAT appointments to new NDIS division
	+ FaHCSIA becoming Department of Social Services
	+ National Disability Services Zero Tolerance (abuse prevention) forums
* Distribution of Advokit Update highlighting DANA Conference, and other NDIS-related events, news, commentary and resources.
* Distribution of Annual General Meeting Papers to members
* Participation in CAGQ teleconference
* pre-Conference face to face meeting of Managers (& EO/CEOs/Coordinators ) of member organisations
 |
| October- November 2013 | * The National Disability Advocacy Conference provided opportunities to provide and share relevant information between DANA, member organisations, advocates, people with disabilities and other stakeholders.
 |
| November 2013 | * Promotion of:

- IDPwD, including creation of blog forum for member organisation toshare advocacy stories to celebrate December 3. |

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|  | * Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ outcomes of DANA AGM
	+ resources from Conference, and online survey for attendees to give feedback
	+ AHRC’s National Review on Pregnancy and Return to Work
	+ Social Inclusion Week
	+ NDIS commentary
	+ Senator Fifield’s National Press Club address
	+ Disability Employment Services and Complaints Resolution and Referral Service

-‘knowmore’ free legal service assisting people with the Royal Commission (Abuse)* + Extension of deadline to submit to ALRC inquiry
* Participation in Self Advocacy Resource Unit forum and launch of Victorian Self Advocacy Network
* Participation in, and presentation about disability advocacy to, An Ordinary Life Conference (held by Imagine More, a Canberra-based member organisation)
* Presentation to the Disability Employees network of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
 |
| December 2013 | * Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ Appointment of Chair to Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee NDIS

-Australia Council of Arts’ Disability Action Plan; Arts Access Australia funding increases* + the NDIA draft Strategic Plan, inviting comment
	+ Announcement of Traditional Rights, Freedom and Privileges ALRC Inquiry
	+ Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into social Inclusion and disability
	+ New South Wales draft Disability Inclusion legislation
* Promotion of:
	+ NDIS Webinar on Breaking Down Barriers
 |
| January 2014 | * Distribution of Advokit Update - highlighting NDIS evaluation, relevant events and resources, and inviting suggestions, case studies and contributions through the website.
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ Disability Employment Services – ‘red tape cutting’ measures
	+ BSWAT Payment Scheme
	+ Deadline for 2014-2015 Pre-Budget Submissions
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| February 2014 | * Participation in CAGQ teleconference
* Provision of written DANA Update to NDAN
* Distribution of Advokit Update - highlighting the NDIS Self-advocacy webinar and related website content, relevant events and activities, and summarising the second Quarterly Report.
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ DANA CEO recruitment, submissions and opportunities for input
	+ BSWAT Payment Scheme update
	+ Senate Inquiry into speech, language and communication disorders and speech pathology in Australia
	+ Submissions on UNCRPD Draft General Comments
	+ new AFDO CEO Matthew Wright
	+ NDIS second Quarterly Report
	+ Senate Inquiry into Affordable Housing
* Promotion of:
	+ NDIS Webinar on Self-Advocacy
	+ DANA’s engagement on progress made on the Strategy – links to online surveys
	+ AHRC’s Equal Before The Law report and central register of programs
* Provision of information on advocacy and how to access it to Lifestart Online Inclusion portal
 |
| March 2014 | * Participation in CAGQ teleconference, and follow-up email briefing
* Promotion of:
	+ DANA’s engagement on progress made on the Strategy – links to online surveys
	+ NDIS Webinar on Women, Disability and the Broader Community
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ South Australia’s Draft Disability Justice Plan, Guidelines and Discussion Paper
	+ DANA CEO appointment
	+ NDAP Audit reminders, noting significant procedures in Quality Toolkit and discussion of member concerns with DSS
	+ Review of Welfare and Income Support
	+ incarceration of Roseanne Fulton and other people with intellectual disability found ‘unfit to plead’
* Participation in ACOSS disability sector meeting on welfare reform
* Collaboration with NEDA, AFDO and member organisations on affordable housing joint submission
* Participation in IGPA’s Disability Policy Reference Group
* Participation in AFDO teleconference developing disability policy agenda
 |

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| April 2014 | * Distribution of Advokit Update - highlighting upcoming events relevant to the NDIS.
* Promotion of:

NDIS ‘Meet the Governors’ Webinar NDAP informational video created by DSS* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ National Mental Health Commission online survey and consultation on services
	+ Applications for Capacity Building Grants (Disability Support Organisations)
	+ Nominations for Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission Disability Reference Group and seminars
* Participation in CAGQ teleconference
* Participation in NDAN meeting
* Participation in ACOSS disability sector meeting on welfare reform
 |
| May 2014 | * Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ Welfare Reform and sector collaboration
	+ AHRC Decision on BSWAT exemption
	+ affordable and accessible housing events
	+ Victorian consultation on State Disability Plan and independent review of residential charges in group homes
	+ Western Australian disability services draft legislation

-Review of the Disability Access Facilitation Plan Initiative by Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development* + Submissions on the ALRC inquiry discussion paper: [Equality, Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws](http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/legal-barriers-people-disability)
* Promotion of:
	+ DANA Engagement Report on Strategy Progress
	+ Productivity Commission public hearings on Access to Justice
	+ DSS information sessions on new grants arrangement
* Participation in ACOSS community sector press conference
* Participation in NSW Disability Network Forum run by NSW Council of Social Services, giving National update
 |
| June 2014 | * [Appearance](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/access-justice/public-hearings#hearings) before the Productivity Commission on Inquiry into Access to Justice including submission of [written comments](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) on Draft Report
* Distribution (through Newsletter) of relevant information on:
	+ Submissions on the ALRC inquiry discussion paper
	+ reminder for small charities to contact ACNC to remain registered
	+ New DSS grants arrangements
	+ Relevant questions and comments during Senate Estimates
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|  | * Youth delegation to CRPD Conference of State Parties
* DSS-commissioned Colmar Brunton Survey about communication in NDIS trial sites
* Nominations for 2014 National Disability Awards
* Nominations for 2014 Human Rights Awards
* Review of Accessible Public Transport by Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
* DANA Member Teleconference to brief Managers/EO/CEOs/Coordinators on new DSS Grants arrangements
 |

# Appendix B: Activities relevant to NDIS in 2013-2014

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Throughout year | * Promotion of human rights focus and importance of advocacy in NDIS roll out
 |
| August 2013 | * Promotion of DANA’s Pre-Election [Call to Parties](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/)
 |
| September 2013 | * Provision of [letter template](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/) on NDIS issues
 |
| October 2013 | * Media interview about NDIS, privatisation of government services and residential facilities
 |
| October- November 2013 | * National Disability Advocacy Conference included multiple sessions and keynote speeches focused on the NDIS, and specifically the role and value of advocacy as the NDIS is rolled out.
 |
| December 2013 | * Media interview about NDIS and advocacy
 |
| January 2014 | * Submission of brief comments on NDIA Draft Strategic Plan
 |
| February 2014 | * Invitation to all advocacy organisation in NDIS Trial Site to share their experiences of the scheme’s first two quarters with us through a focused online survey
* Participation via internet and social media in NDIS Webinar, promoting self-advocacy and other models of advocacy
* Nomination of Sean Fitzgerald for NDIS Assistive Technology Working Group
 |
| March 2014 | * Participation via internet and social media in NDIS Webinar, promoting value of independent advocacy
 |
| April 2014 | * Participation in the NDIS Webinar and discussions with NDIA Chair Bruce Bonyhady
 |
| May 2014 | * Participation in Advocacy for Inclusion’s Control and Choice Expo, and discussions with NDIA engagement staff
 |
| June 2014 | * Participation in joint University of Sydney/ANU/Macquarie University Forum on Financing and Costs of NDIS
* Participation via internet and social media in NDIS webinar
* Meeting with Denise Ryan, Adviser to Minister Fifield
* Input into development of NDIS Evaluation process by Flinders University
* Input to DSS & NDIA re concerns about the Communications Survey
 |

# Appendix C: Activities relevant to NDAP in 2013-2014

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| --- | --- |
| Throughout year | * Ongoing email and phone contact with Department
* Promotion of role and value of advocacy in all communications (including Facebook, and Twitter)
 |
| July 2013 | * Participation in NDAP Implementation Reference Group Meeting
 |
| August 2013 | * Promotion of DANA’s Pre-Election [Call to Parties](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/)
* Meeting with Joanne Llewellyn and Kris Fisher (DSS Policy branch), also discussing NDIS and other issues
 |
| September 2013 | * Provision of [letter template](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/) on independent advocacy
 |
| October 2013 | * Submission to consultants completing NDAP Option Papers
* Participation in NDAP Reference Group Teleconference
 |
| October- November 2013 | * 1 October-1 November – National Disability Advocacy Conference focused on nationally strengthening:
	+ knowledge, understanding and awareness of disability rights issues and the role and value of advocacy, particularly as the NDIS is rolled out
	+ advocacy practice – skills and strategies
	+ sector capacity and collaboration
 |
| November 2013 | * Meeting with consultants completing NDAP options papers, giving extensive verbal and written feedback on drafts
 |
| December 2013 | * Advocacy for Inclusion AGM, including screening of Self-advocacy section of new NDAP DVD
* Written submission to consultants completing NDAP options papers
 |
| January 2014 | * Meeting with Evan Lewis, Meg Skillman and Mitchell Cole, (DSS representatives from NDAP and Secretariat programs)
* [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) to Federal Budget 2014-15 recommending investment in disability advocacy
 |
| Februrary 2014 | * Promotion of advocacy during NDIS Self-advocacy webinar participation
* Provision of information on advocacy and how to access it to Lifestart Online Inclusion portal
 |
| March 2014 | * Reporting of member concerns on burden imposed by audit processes and discussion of future reviews of current Quality Assurance procedures with DSS
 |

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| April 2014 | * Participation in the NDIS Webinar via social media, with Twitter question prompting discussion of the vital role of independent advocacy
* Further feedback and advice to DSS on App for searching NDAP providers
 |
| May 2014 | * Participation in DSS grants information session
* Correspondence with Department seeking clarity on replacement of the Disability Advocacy Standards to the National Standards for Disability Services and how NDAP providers will be affected by the new DSS grants arrangements
* Participation in NSW Disability Network Forum run by NSW Council of Social Services
 |
| June 2014 | * Receipt of final NDAP options papers and preparation for NDAP Reference Group Meeting in July
* Promotion of NDAP DVD on DANA website homepage and News sidebar
* DANA coordinated a teleconference for managers and Boards of NDAP funded organisations, to clarify concerns re DSS funding round
 |

# Appendix D: Activities relevant to the National Disability Strategy and the UN CRPD in 2013-2014

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Throughout year | * human rights focus in completion of Disability Employment Services (DES) consumer engagement [project](http://www.dana.org.au/projects/disability-employment-services/) (CRPD Article 27)
* Involvement in National Disability Services [Zero Tolerance](http://www.nds.org.au/projects/article/171) Abuse & Neglect Prevention Framework Project (CRPD Article 16)
 |
| July 2013 | * Participation in Department of Social Services (then FaHCSIA) meeting, to explain government response to Business Services Wage Assessment Tool (BSWAT) case decision and discuss improvement of Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and supported employment (CRPD Article 27)
* [Joint statement](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/) of peak disability representative organisations on ADEs and BSWAT case included in National Council on Intellectual Disability factsheet
 |
| August 2013 | * CRPD and Strategy focus in DANA’s Pre-Election [Call to Parties](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/)
* Provision of factsheets to David Heckendorf, Canberra-based civil society delegate to UNCRPD in Geneva
 |
| September 2013 | * Provision of [letter templates](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/policy-statements/) on the Strategy, disability employment and institutional abuse to support advocacy on these issues
* Participation in forum on National disability peaks
 |
| October 2013 | * [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) to Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) on BSWAT exemption application; production and distribution of [letter templates](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/); contribution to Joint Peak and Advocacy [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/)
 |
| October- November 2013 | * National Disability Advocacy Conference included:
	+ Strong human rights focus in programme and invited speakers
	+ Expert Panel of UNCRPD delegates, academic and representative from Attorney-General’s Department
	+ Employment themed session focused on CRPD Article 27
 |
| November 2013 | * [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) to Productivity Commission Inquiry into [Access to Justice](http://pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/access-justice)
* Promotion of International Day of People with Disability, including creation of blog forum for member organisation to share advocacy stories to celebrate December 3.
* Attendance at the National Disability Awards
* Contribution to Right Now [article](http://rightnow.org.au/topics/reporting-mental-illness-the-sane-way/) on media representation and stigma (CRPD Article 8)
 |
| December 2013 | * Attendance at Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Disability Ageing and Caring launch
 |

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| January 2014 | * [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) to Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) Inquiry - [Equality, Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws](http://www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/legal-barriers-people-disability)
 |
| February 2014 | * Contribution to Joint Peak and Advocacy [Supplementary Response](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) on BSWAT exemption
* Attendance at Governor-General’s Farewell Afternoon Tea
* DSS teleconference briefing for engagement on Strategy Progress
 |
| March 2014 | * Participation in Australia Council of Social Service (ACOSS) disability sector meeting on welfare reform
* Promotion of Petition to transfer Roseanne Fulton (CRPD Article 13)
* [Joint Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) on Affordable Housing with National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) and Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) (CRPD Article 19)
* Participation in Institute of Governance and Policy Analysis Disability Policy Reference Group meeting
 |
| April 2014 | * Participation in teleconference meeting of Disability and advocacy peaks to discuss BSWAT exemption decision response
* Distribution of [Joint Media Release](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/media-releases/) on BSWAT exemption decision
* Participation in ACOSS disability sector meeting with Minister Andrews on welfare reform
* Attendance at Women with Disabilities ACT’s film premiere and showcase (CRPD Article 6)
* National Press Club presentation by President of the AHRC, Gillian Triggs
 |
| May 2014 | * ACOSS briefing and meeting on welfare reform
* [Submission](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) to DSS on Engagement for 2014 National Disability Strategy Progress Report (2013-2014 Policy Paper)
* Media interviews on income support, welfare review and DSP
* Publication of [Media Release](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/media-releases/) in response to Commission of Audit
* Participation in 2014 Federal Budget Lock Up, publication of [Media Release](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/media-releases/) and participation in ACOSS community sector Post-Budget press conference
* Attendance at ANU seminar on Inclusive Research – Kelley Johnson from the Social Policy Institute
 |
| June 2014 | * [Appearance](http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/inquiry/access-justice/public-hearings#hearings) before the Productivity Commission on Inquiry into Access to Justice including submission of [written comments](http://www.dana.org.au/publications/submissions/) on Draft Report
* Media interviews on income support, welfare review and DSP
* Participation via internet and social media in AHRC’s RightsTalk on access to justice (CRPD Article 13)
 |