**Statement from the DANA Board - September 2024**

# Australia's Disability Representative Organisations recently released a statement condemning violence and abuse being experienced within our community.

Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) endorses this statement and its central message: differences of opinion are fine, but violence and abuse should not be tolerated and needs to stop now.

Right now, at a time when many in our community are feeling heightened frustration and anger, we’ve seen an increase in violence and abuse directed from one person with a disability to another. This often happens within marginalised communities like ours, and we reiterate — there is absolutely no place for this within the Australian disability community.

In our work and through our members, we’ve seen firsthand how vital community and inclusion are to people’s wellbeing. Whether it’s through programs that support engagement in local groups or efforts to ensure people can stay connected through access to resources, the effects of belonging are clear. But when violence and abuse, especially on social media, becomes widespread, it undermines all these positive efforts.

Social media can and should be a place to build connections and foster discussions. But too often, it can become an unsafe place, where uninformed debate devolves into personal attacks. Make no mistake—this is a form of violence and abuse, and DANA condemns such behaviour. We are doing this because people with disability and those who advocate for their rights, deserve to feel safe.

Our work is too important to be divided by anger and frustration. Yes, differences in opinion are natural, even necessary, for constructive dialogue. But let’s keep these discussions respectful. Abusing, trolling or bullying other Australians with disability only weakens us as a community. We should be upholding and respecting each other’s human rights—not tearing one another down.

Let’s not allow anger to divide us. Let’s use our collective strength to demand the rights we deserve, together, rather than letting violence and abuse pull us apart.

**David Petherick**
Deputy Chair

On behalf of the DANA Board of Directors