



DANA

Disability Advocacy
Network Australia

ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited (DANA)
ABN 53 136 792 884

For the Year ended 30 June 2023

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ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited (DANA) acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and to Elders past, present and emerging.

About Disability Advocacy Network Australia

Who we are

Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) is the national representative body for a network of independent disability advocacy organisations throughout Australia. Established in 2008, DANA's members are community-based organisations that advocate for and with people with disability. DANA maintains strong links with the Australian state and territory disability advocacy networks and with the peak representative organisations for people with disabilities.

»» Our Vision

DANA's vision is of a nation that includes and values people with disabilities and respects human rights for all.

»» Our Purpose

DANA's purpose is to strengthen, support and provide a collective voice for independent disability advocacy organisations across Australia that advocates for and with people with disability.

We achieve this by

- promoting the role and value of independent disability advocacy
- providing a collective voice for our members
- providing communication and information sharing between disability advocacy organisations
- providing support and development for members, staff and volunteers of disability advocacy organisations
- building the evidence base to demonstrate the value of disability advocacy
- promoting the human rights, needs, value and diversity of people with disabilities

DANA is a company limited by guarantee and the liability of Members is limited as provided in our constitution.





A Word from our Chairs

Last year, our longstanding CEO Mary Mallett stated it was a formative year for DANA; this year is best described as a transformative one.

Our new programs - the National Centre for Disability Advocacy and as a Secretariat for National Systemic Advocacy - have underpinned this transformation. They have allowed us to take DANA to a new level - as the Minister for Social Services, the Hon Amanda Rishworth, has said:

“DANA plays an important role in the disability advocacy sector in representing and supporting individual advocacy organisations across Australia. This role has expanded significantly in recent years, in particular with the new functions of the National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA) and the National Coordination Function (NCF).”

The role of representing and supporting the advocacy sector is our reason for being. We have worked hard over the past year to cement this role as the ‘advocate for the advocates’, to both provide member services and to promote the value of independent advocacy. This work stands alongside that of our nascent NCDA and NCF and is detailed throughout the report.

The members, of course, also support and strengthen the work of DANA. This support has been intrinsic to our survival in recent years as it sustained us through difficult and trying times. Likewise, we derive strength from the extraordinary diversity of our members, which practice multiple forms of advocacy, operate across all Australian States and Territories, and are variously big and small, as well as urban, rural, regional and remote. The lives of people with disability are much richer for the efforts of our members and our work would not be possible without them.

We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of our staff and Board. Staff have been extraordinary in meeting the challenges and expectations of a new expanded organisation, going above and beyond when staff shortages were a challenge. This report is a tribute to the depth and breadth of DANA’s work, and the expertise and judgment which underpins it. The Board has been active in ensuring that our expansion is measured and sustainable, and we thank them for both their insights and the gift of their time.

Furthermore, we would like to acknowledge our funders, both government and philanthropic, who have allowed us to do the work we do.

As DANA members are already aware, we bid farewell to our long serving CEO, Mary Mallett, in December last year. After dedicating more than 8 years to leading DANA, Mary assumed the role of interim Disability Commissioner of Tasmania, a position in which we have no doubt she will excel. On behalf of the Board, we take this opportunity to express its appreciation for Mary’s unwavering commitment to the organisation during her time as CEO. Under Mary’s leadership she not only restored our reputation and strengthened our relationships with government, but also elevated our stature as the national peak body for the advocacy sector.

Mary consistently made herself available to assist members with their issues and enquiries, and more recently played a pivotal role in securing substantial funding which enabled DANA to establish the National Centre for Disability Advocacy and allowed us to assemble a robust, professional team to guide us as we navigate the findings of the Disability Royal Commission. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mary for her contribution during her tenure as CEO and wish her every success in her new position. Further tributes to Mary appear in the body of this report.

A Final word from our outgoing Chair, Serena Ovens:

Finally, as outgoing Chair, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Jeff Smith for his work over the past year, stepping in as interim CEO when Mary moved on, ensuring DANA’s projects and reputation continued to grow without pause. His appointment as CEO is a boon for DANA and I believe will lead to an even more influential organisation into the future.

I’m disappointed to leave DANA just as things are ‘hotting up’, but know I leave the organisation in a much better place under the amazing guidance of both Jeff and DANA’s incoming chair, Wendy Prowse and wish DANA and all its members the very best.

Serena Ovens, outgoing Chair

Wendy Prowse, incoming Chair



CEO Report

The only constant in life is change, a wise man once said. This axiom has certainly rung true for DANA over the last 12 months. The seismic shift started when our much-loved CEO, Mary Mallett, departed to take up the position of Interim Disability Commissioner in Tasmania. Mary has been a force of nature for DANA throughout her tenure and she leaves us with big boots to fill. At the same time, our new programs - the National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA) and the National Coordination Function (NCF) - commenced in earnest and are starting to roll out and make an impact. These new functions have, in turn, increased our organisational size, capacity and reach in ways unimaginable in DANAs recent past. All this has meant a very new look DANA, particularly in the second half of the year.

Notwithstanding these shifts, our core purpose - to strengthen and support disability advocacy organisations across Australia - remains unchanged. To this end, throughout the year we prepared a major piece of work on the value of independent advocacy for the Disability Royal Commission, commissioned a membership review and began to actively engage with members on what services and leadership they wanted from DANA. We also undertook important policy and advocacy work around the changes to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal and the Quality and Safeguarding Framework as well as working with the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) to begin the process of developing an advocacy standard that applies across both sectors.

As part of Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, DANA has received funding to establish a National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA). The NCDA has three principal aims - to build sector capacity; to identify and elevate unmet demand and need; and to identify and elevate systemic advocacy issues. We recruited our inaugural Manager and began building the team and consulting with the sector on the priorities for the NCDA, a process that took place over many months and took us across Australia and resulted in a comprehensive consultation report. The consultation report identified not only our priorities but the principles that are to underpin the work of the NCDA.

The National Coordination Function (NCF) was also established during the year, enabling disability representative organisations to do systemic advocacy that promotes and protects the rights and dignity of people with disability as well as fostering support for the participation of people with disability in the life of the community. DANA is the secretariat for this work and we have worked hard to establish the program, its protocols and procedures, as well as preparing a coordinated submission and ongoing advocacy on the Disability Services and Inclusion Bill and to produce an extensive report to assist the accessibility of Australia's Disability Strategy based on extensive consultations with people with disability.

All these changes have been significant and iterative over the course of the year. I would like to express my ongoing appreciation to staff who have been part of this (sometimes) difficult change process and/or who decided to join us along the way. I think we are creating something very special here at DANA and it is our staff who are embracing this change. The Board has also been instrumental in guiding DANA through this period of change, recognising the opportunities but not shirking from the challenges - their counsel, good grace and wisdom cannot be gainsaid.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our funders, both government and philanthropic, who have allowed us to do the work we do. In this regard, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has been a longstanding funder, and has also supported our expansion. The NDIA and foundations have also provided vital financial support, and are testament to our resolve to diversify our funding base.

Serena Ovens, our outgoing Chair, deserves special mention. She has shown extraordinary leadership in driving the changes needed while all the while ensuring we stay true to our purpose. I will miss her collegiality and vision; equally, I look forward to working with our incoming Chair, Wendy Prowse, in rolling out the next stage of DANAs evolution.

Jeff Smith

At a glance

Our Key Achievements



36,287

People reached on social media



973

Advocates participating in DANA events



84

Member newsletters, bulletins and sector reports delivered



340

New subscribers to the NCDA mailing list



31

DRC small funding grants



14%

Increase in newsletter subscribers



9

Submissions made



28

Consultations DANA participated in



14

Staff members

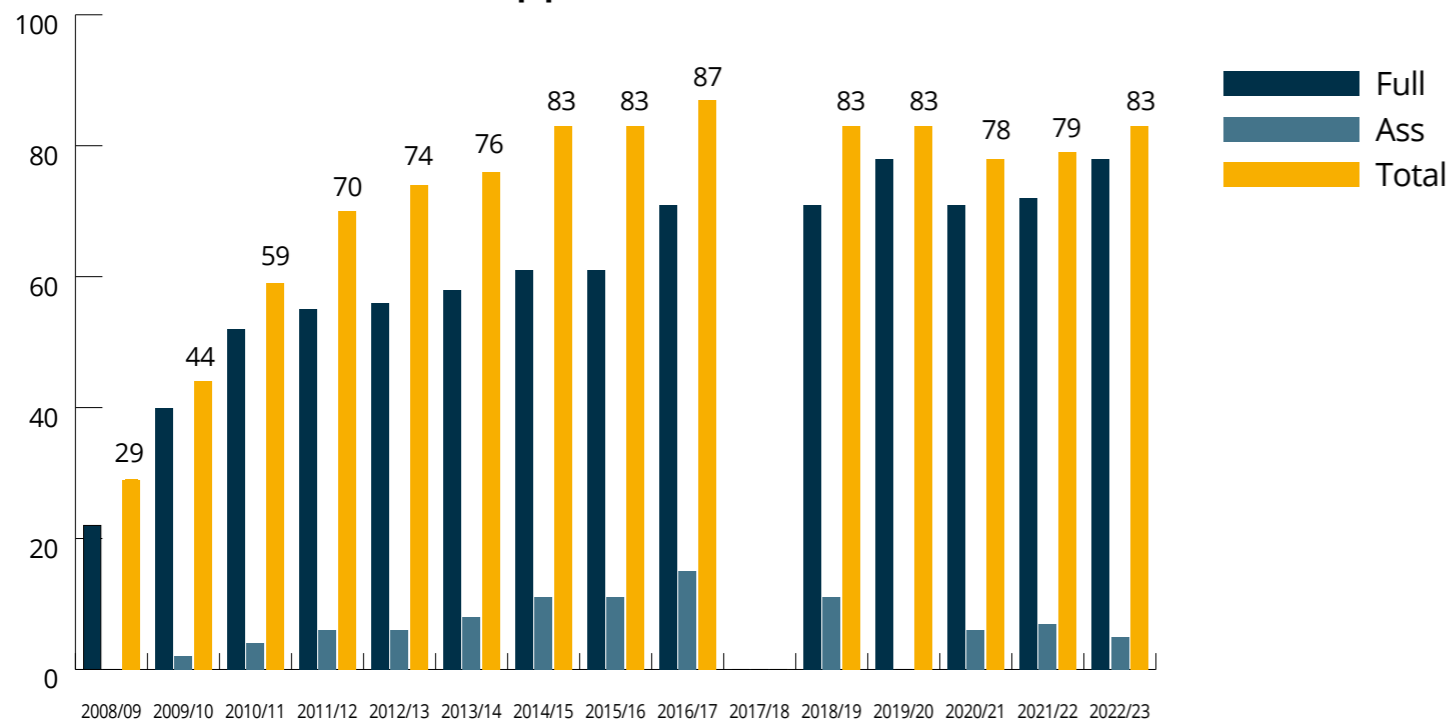
Our Members

Our members help advocate for and with people with disability so that they are valued and included members of the community, their fundamental needs are met, and their human rights respected.

DANA members are represented in advocacy organisations who offer a range of disciplines for disability advocacy, including:

- Self advocacy
- Family advocacy
- Citizen advocacy
- Individual advocacy
- Legal advocacy
- Systemic advocacy

DANA membership profile 2008 – 2023



DANA supports the value of independent advocacy in promoting the human rights, needs, value and diversity of people with disabilities. How people with disability view advocacy, their need for advocacy and their experiences using independent advocacy services, are key factors for informing the development of the advocacy sector and to strengthen calls for increased funding.

A recent example that highlights this is the Engagement Review conducted by El Gibbs in May 2023 which interviewed selected DANA members in each state and territory, across a range of advocacy types and from different sized organisations. The data showed that members are broadly supportive of DANA having a stronger national voice to increase members capacity and support their calls for funding. However, to do so, there is a need for clarification between the systemic roles of state and territory members and in some cases, advocacy peaks.

The review concluded that a full membership engagement strategy, government relations strategy, and a detailed look at the national coordination function was required to maintain and strengthen the value in DANA membership. In June 2023, DANA committed to a new Membership Engagement project that enhances the values of DANA membership while growing the membership base. The engagement strategy has developed key activities to be delivered over the next 12-24 months with a focus on understanding the diversity of our members, strengthening systemic advocacy to help identify gaps, and to increase overall capacity of members.





Our Work

Under our Strategic Plan 2021-24, DANA identified four focus areas:

1

Lead & Strengthen

Provide a leadership role for the collective voice of independent disability advocacy organisations Australia wide.

2

Communication & Connection

Provide expert commentary on the issues that affect the sector and develop and strengthen partnerships to enhance the work we do.

3

Promote Independent Advocacy

Champion the benefits of independent disability advocacy for people with disability and governments.

4

Sustainability

Build a sustainable organisation that delivers on its vision and values and supports recurrent funding of the disability advocacy sector nationally.





Lead & Strengthen

DANA influences policy to support and demonstrate the value of independent disability advocacy in Australia. DANA focuses on providing a leadership role for the collective voice of independent advocacy, supporting adequate and recurrent funding of the national sector, and advocating for systemic changes to uphold the rights of people with disabilities.

During 2022-23, DANA has done this in various capacities as a peak organisation by advocating for sector funding, establishing the National Centre for Disability Advocacy, leading the National Coordination Function, and committing to a membership engagement strategy.



Systemic advocacy

DANA actively liaises between advocacy organisations to coordinate and participates in various forms, seeks feedback, and steers discussions on advocating for systemic change. This work supports our role as the advocate for advocates and enables us to amplify the voice of advocates and people with disability.



Disability Royal Commission Advocacy

DANA has produced an impressive body of work in the last year on the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), using our extensive network to analyse key topics emerging from the DRC. For example, DANA held 11 Advocates Discuss forums in late 2022, where staff and volunteers at disability advocacy organisations engaged in hour-long online discussions. These discussions and similar forums from previous years were delivered to the DRC as part of a package of 36 submissions.

In late 2022, DANA submitted a major submission on the value of independent advocacy. The submission was based on, and informed by, a series of consultations with member organisations. The submission addressed the context, key barriers and challenges for the disability advocacy sector and went on to make four key recommendations as follows:

- enhance the capacity of disability advocacy services
- improve and develop the quality of the disability advocacy sector
- improve coordination and data at a national level
- enhance safeguarding mechanisms

Voices of Advocacy

DANA also prepared an extensive Voices of Advocacy Submission which drew on DANA engagement with advocates throughout the course of the DRC and reflected key insights and experiences of advocates and independent advocacy organisations in their work upholding the rights of people with disability around Australia.

Joint Submissions

DANA made several joint submissions throughout the year. These included:

- calling on the Australian Human Rights Commission to include in its Final Report a recommendation that there be an Australian Charter of Human Rights (with the Human Rights Law Centre, People with Disability Australia, and Children and Young People with Disability Australia)
- seeking long overdue action on housing action for people with disability (with Inclusion Australia and People with Disability Australia)
- demanding the end to segregation for people with disability (with 7 national organisations and endorsed by over 50 organisations and 150 individuals)

Accessible Housing

Before the August 2022 Disability Royal Commission public hearing on homelessness, DANA worked with People with Disability Australia and Inclusion Australia to release a joint statement on the urgent need for action to address the housing crisis for people with disability.

The statement said:

- safe and secure housing is critical to exercising our human rights and accessing supports and services
- people with disability have a right to choose where, and with whom, we live
- structural barriers to safe, secure and accessible housing must be addressed to create genuine inclusion for people with disability

Disability advocates raise the lack of affordable and accessible housing a key barrier for people with disability to both escape violence and to be fully included in the community.

Quality and Safeguarding Framework

DANA engaged significantly with the NDIS Review, including providing submissions to discussion papers such as to the Quality and Safeguarding Framework.

Disability advocates are often involved in trying to:

- make sure people with disability are safe from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation
- help people navigate systems to find better supports; and
- support people to fix problems and make complaints about poor quality or mistreatment

DANA has recommended that:

- people with disability can find a disability advocate when they need one
- the role of independent advocates be recognised and better resourced
- the future Framework makes clearer the roles of different actors in keeping people safe, and checking on and improving quality of NDIS supports
- processes for people with disability to complain are made better, simpler and more responsive

Reform of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

DANA identified this reform process around the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) as key to the everyday work of many of our members and the advocacy sector. We consulted with a wide range of our members, legal groups and other representative organisations to develop a comprehensive submission about the proposed changes to the AAT that addressed the top 20 priority issues for members. Over 30 organisations contributed to the DANA Submission. DANA proposed key reforms on:

- key principles to underpin the work of the tribunal
- improving the quality and consistency of decision-making
- making the process less adversarial
- ensuring the tribunal is fair, safe, more accessible and more inclusive to people with disability

24 organisations endorsed the Submission.

Advocacy Standards Project

Together with Older People Advocacy Network (OPAN), DANA took a lead role with Standards Australia in drafting an Aged Care and Disability Advocacy Standard. The project was launched with a Forum held in Melbourne, on 26th October 2022, and attended by representatives from both the aged care and disability advocacy sector. DANA organised representation from disability advocacy organisations and people who use advocacy to participate on the working groups to assist in drafting the standards.

The Advocacy Standards Project aims to develop an Australian standard that has formal recognition and standing, that is auditable and capable of being deployed across the funded Advocacy sector in Australia as the key benchmark of quality and the driver of continuous improvement and development to ensure consistent and quality services to people we serve. It is hoped the new standard will be used for certification of aged care and disability advocacy services which will reduce duplication and costs. Public consultation will begin in November 2023, and the new Standard will hope to be adopted and ready to use by June 2025.



National Coordination Function

This year, the new National Coordination Function (NCF) role for DANA got underway, providing secretariat and coordination support to the national Disability Representative Organisations (DROs). In its inception phase, Anna Burke and Siobhan Clair developed the systems and relationships to get the program up and running, liaising with other organisations and the Department of Social Services (DSS). In May, El Gibbs joined as Director, Policy and Advocacy and took over the NCF.

The NCF provides additional systemic advocacy support to the DROs, including sharing information from DSS and coordinating joint responses to key government activity, including managing the Forward Workplan of upcoming activity.

The review of the Disability Services Act – and the subsequent Disability Services Inclusion Bill - was a wonderful example of how the NCF works, bringing together a wide range of organisations, including the national DROs, to discuss the response of people with disability and our organisations. With Inclusion Australia, we developed a substantial joint submission on behalf of the group and have continued to be a focal point for this significant legislative change. Other NCF work has been coordinating a joint submission with all national DROs to the draft National Care and Support Economy Strategy.

The NCF holds regular meetings with policy lead staff from DROs and convenes CEO meetings to discuss systemic advocacy issues. NCF staff also attend Australian Federation of Disability Organisations member and consortia meetings.

We were also commissioned to organise focus groups with people with disability to inform the Guides for Australia's Disability Strategy, working with members to ensure that a wide range of people with disability got to have their say on this important document.



National Centre for Disability Advocacy

The National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA) is an initiative under the National Disability Strategy 2022 – 2031. The NCDA aim is to improve access to and quality of the independent disability advocacy sector with a focus on the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) funded organisations. The NCDA has 3 core functions.

- Capacity building
- Identifying and addressing unmet demand and unmet need
- Identifying and elevating systemic advocacy issues

The NCDA has been funded by the Department of Social Services.

The NCDA commenced in August 2022 with the employment of Martin Butcher as the Manager of the Centre. The first task was to undertake consultations in each jurisdiction to find out how the NCDA could assist the advocacy sector. Online and face-to-face consultation forums were held between October 2022 to February 2023, with 140 people and 52 advocacy organisations participating. The consultation report was presented to the sector at an online forum in May 2023. A consistent theme received in the consultations, was a need for the sector to receive training and resources that would enable advocates and managers to undertake good practice.

By May 2023, the NCDA team consisted of 4 staff members employed by DANA. The team's first focus was to coordinate a program of activities that would deliver advocacy support, resources and capacity building for the sector. The scheduled program included the following webinars:

- 'How to Get Heard'
- 'Why Data is Important'

The team also hope to increase other online and face to face events to engage with the sector. Some of the events attended included NDIS Commission Advocacy Forum in Melbourne, Advancing Citizen Advocacy and the Queensland Advocacy Conference where team member Courtney Wolf presented on "Why data is my BFF".

The primary target group for the NCDA at present are the front-line advocates who are delivering individual advocacy. The NCDA also has a key role to assist CEOs and managers to find efficiencies in their ever-increasing reporting and compliance activities.

2

Communication & Connection

DANA provides expert commentary on the issues that affect the sector, working extensively and collaboratively to develop and strengthen partnerships that enhance the work we do and how we communicate with stakeholders.

The depth of our partnerships is reflected through the diversity of our members, our expertise on issues that affect the advocacy sector, and the impact of our work.

ABC News

“ El Gibbs, Director of Policy and Advocacy at Disability Advocacy Network Australia, said the report's findings were unsurprising. "People with disability and their advocates have been raising issues with substandard housing for many years," she said.

The Guardian

“ The large backlog at the AAT has meant some people with disability have been left without support for months or even years, while some believed the agency's lawyers have sought to prolong the process so appellants simply give up. Advocacy groups have described this as a David and Goliath situation where ordinary people were pitted against lawyers from external law firms.

Probono Australia

“ Mary Mallett, CEO of Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), shares Wallace's concerns and says information from the government and public health officials about long COVID is “not easy to find”. “In the disability sector, what I would say we are worried about is the lack of information, the fact that it's not being shared wide”.

Media and Strategic Communication

In 2022-23, DANA continues to demonstrate significant progress in expanding, diversifying, and enhancing our communication strategies. Our primary objectives have been to elevate our presence as national leaders in disability advocacy, and to maximise the impact of DANA's work and its member community. We have placed a strong emphasis on member engagement through substantial investments in our member communication processes and the committed to a CRM database for improved audience and member engagement.

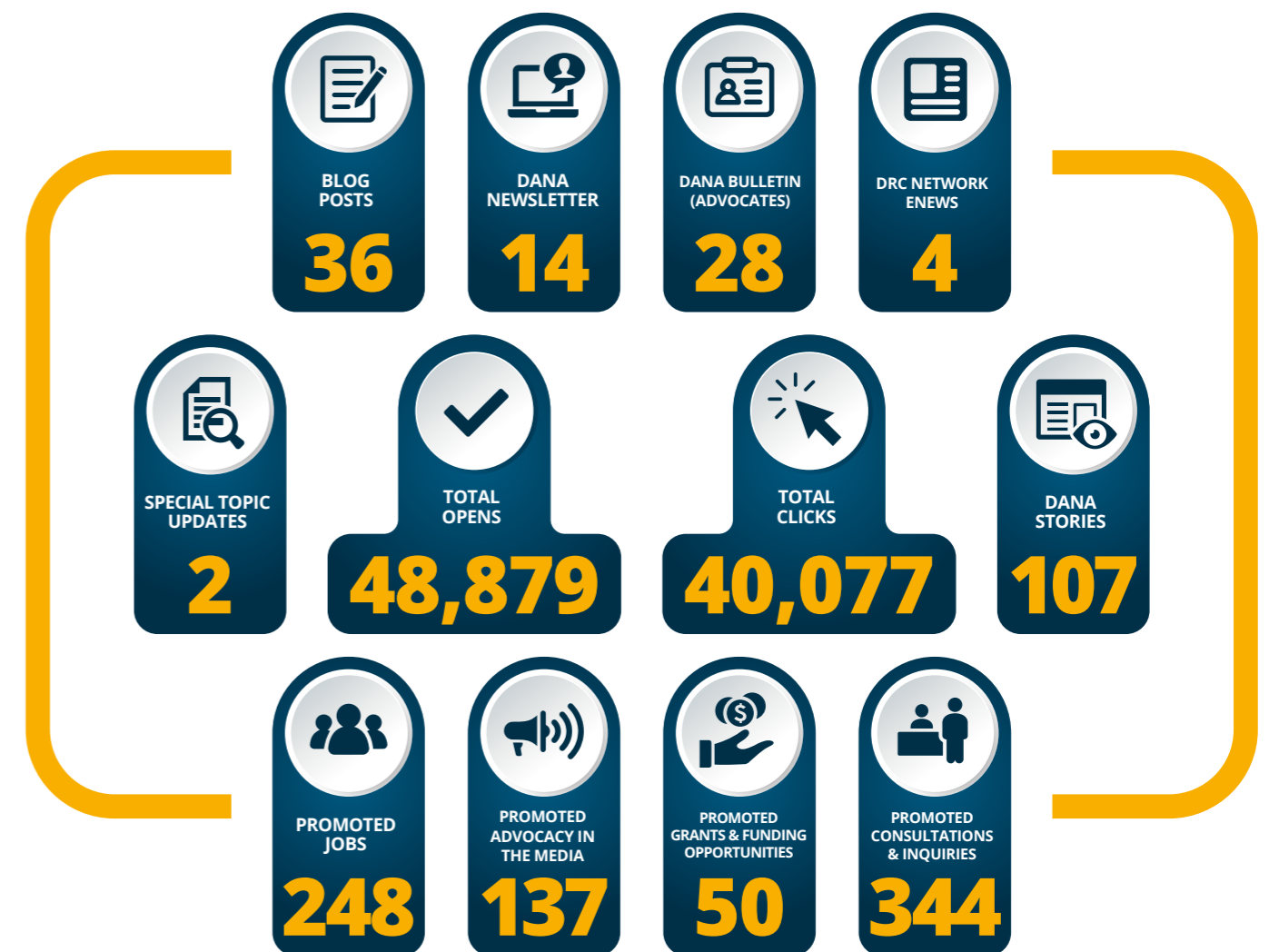
We have been dedicating our social media efforts to addressing significant matters that have a broad-reaching influence on both our community and the sector. Key subjects include the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), the NDIS Review, and the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Our presence in these areas is consistently expanding, marked by frequent and vibrant interactions across our social media channels.

Specifically, we have achieved the following milestones:

- Issued 36 blog articles, distributed 46 newsletters, and shared 2 communiques with our members and stakeholders, reaching a distribution list that expanded to include 1,593 subscribers
- Achieved a high open rate, signifying the effectiveness and value of DANA's communications to stakeholders
- Witnessed growth on DANA's primary social media platforms, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, with a respective 13.8, 21.9 and 3.1 per cent increase in followers, along with heightened engagement
- Continuing to establish our new social media channels to engage members and stakeholders, including LinkedIn

The DANA website offers a platform for both internal and external users to access information about DANA, and matters affecting our member community and the disability advocacy sector. DANA consistently upholds the responsibility of website maintenance and ensures regular updates, while continuously monitoring online functionality and user-friendliness. Consequently, DANA's website remains a source of significant interest and engagement.

DANA E-News was released weekly and monthly during this reporting period. With the monthly edition serving as a summary of the weekly news. In addition, DANA is excited to announce the roll-out of a new look newsletter in June, which will further enhance their communication and engagement efforts.



Government and Stakeholder Engagement

DANA regularly attends Disability Representative Organisation meetings, to raise key issues from members and advocate for increased funding for advocacy organisations.

From our memberships' work and expertise, we provide significant expertise to discussions and reforms of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, including on quality and safeguarding issues. Disability advocates around the country work every day with systems that exclude and harm people with disability and DANA ensures these are heard in national forums.

Australian Disability Dialogue

This year, DANA has been a partner in an exciting new project, the Australian Disability Dialogue, which aims to build trust and consensus between different parts of the disability community, led by people with disability.

Working with Inclusion Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance, Essential Media and Alliance 20, the Dialogue brought three separate groups together to discuss how to find common ground on housing. People with disability, including people with an intellectual disability, disability support providers, housing providers and allies discussed innovative ideas to solve the housing crisis.

The final ideas that were agreed by all parties were presented to Minister Shorten and submitted to the NDIS Review. The Dialogue will continue to tackle other topics and develop consensus on innovative solutions.

DANA worked with advocates and member organisations to highlight the work they have done to support people with disability tell their stories to the Disability Royal Commission in a large submission in December 2022. Filled with case studies about the value of advocacy, we made detailed recommendations to the DRC about funding, data and building capacity and capability.

Disability Royal Commission, Advocacy Tribute Forum

Before submissions closed at the end of 2022, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) had held 1,722 private sessions and received 7,944 submissions and 710 responses to the 14 issues papers.

To commemorate the four and a half years of advocacy, DANA hosted a Tribute Forum on June 28, 2023. The online gathering of individual and systemic advocacy organisations was a platform to celebrate and reflect on the incredible efforts, courage, and strength of people with disability sharing their experiences and perspectives during the Disability Royal Commission, and the advocacy and representative organisations supporting their voices to be heard.

Following an introduction by CEO Jeff Smith and brief presentation by Policy Officer Siobhan Clair, attendees from a diverse range of organisations shared their proud moments, hopes and other reflections from their work over the last few years. There was a surprise appearance from Mary Mallett, DANA's former CEO and current Interim Disability Commissioner for Tasmania.



3

Promote Independent Advocacy

DANA is committed to promoting the strength, value and role of the advocacy sector in improving the lives of people with disability. DANA seeks to champion the benefits of independent disability advocacy in our work.

“ I would like to acknowledge DANA for its ongoing and productive engagement with my department [and] I would like to thank DANA for its contribution to the National Disability Advocacy Framework (NDAF).

The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP

Expert Reference Group

During this reporting period, former CEO Mary Mallet was invited to join an Expert Reference Group for the Disability Royal Commission, to report on complaint mechanisms. Mary joined other leading organisations in the disability sector, showing a unity in the sector at addressing the major limitations in existing approaches to dealing with complaints.

The final report, titled “Complaint mechanisms: Reporting pathways for violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation”, was published in November 2022. The report identified several improvements that could be made to existing complaints mechanisms including:

- providing access to information and making information consistent
- having dedicated reporting pathways for violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- having supported decision-making available for those making a complaint



Case Studies

A focus of this reporting period has been the implementation of a case study database, with case studies sourced from independent disability organisations. This allows DANA to monitor and review the value of independent disability advocacy, including the recognition of this work from stakeholders. Backdating the database to 2015, this has been an extensive amount of work to report on.



An independent advocacy organisation reported on the need for short-term as well as long-term advocacy support. Early in 2022, they assisted a person with intellectual disability who had suffered a loss of the parent and subsequently, she needed to find suitable accommodation that she could afford whilst she was grieving and adjusting to having less support at home. Through being matched with a caring and appropriately skilled citizen advocate on the short-term basis, the person with disability was able to navigate the various accommodation options and be able to voice their opinion on their choices. The citizen advocate was able to fill in where services were not able to, by providing emotional and practical support such as setting up the apartment and linking her into accessing nutritional food. Most importantly, the citizen advocate helped to keep the person safe from harm during this stressful period.

4

Sustainability

Building a sustainable and professional organisation that delivers on its purpose and values, is at the heart of DANA. We continue to work to maintain recurrent funding of the disability advocacy sector reflecting our dedication to both sector stability and the continued support of our valued members.



Pre-Budget Submission

DANA collaborated with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisation (AFDO) to prepare a pre-Budget submission in late 2022. Our goal was to emphasise the importance of sustaining nationwide advocacy funding beyond June 2023, particularly considering the forthcoming Disability Royal Commission (DRC) final report.

We expressed serious concerns about the discontinuation of DRC funding and the impact on people with disability. We also discussed how this could affect retaining skilled staff and in responding to the final report's recommendations.



Towards a sustainable organisation

DANA is working hard to both consolidate and enhance existing funding sources from within government, as well as to diversify our funding base. DANA's advocacy efforts as an industry body are crucial to the ongoing strength of the disability advocacy sector. Attracting funds from philanthropic sources is a critical step to reduce DANA's reliance on government support, enhance our organisational resilience and exercise our independence. Over the past year, DANA has been working with philanthropic organisations and foundations. This work has included:

- partnering with Inclusion Australia, Young People in Nursing Homes Alliance, Essential Media and Alliance 20 as part of a Disability Dialogue on housing advising on how philanthropy can support inclusion
- sitting on a Steering Committee led by people with disability as part of the Disability Employment Catalyst





Inclusion and staff development

DANA is proud to highlight the diversity that defines our organisation. Within our senior leadership team, we are pleased to report that three of our key senior staff members are people with disability. Additionally, we proudly acknowledge that many of our staff members, beyond the senior team, bring their own lived experiences as carers of people with disability. DANA's expertise of the challenges and opportunities faced by those we advocate for, are what strengthens our capacity to deliver impact and outcome focused work.

The DANA team expanded significantly during this reporting period, each new team member bringing extensive expertise of the disability and advocacy sector:

- El Gibbs, our Director of Policy and Advocacy, is a seasoned advocate, disability advocacy specialist, and media expert with over 15 years of experience
- Kim Tyson, an Education and Engagement Officer, offers 15 years of diverse disability sector experience, from direct care to project management
- Courtney Wolf, also an Education and Engagement Officer, brings valuable lived experience as a carer and a background in individual disability advocacy and NDIS appeals
- Jessica Schulz, our Communications Officer, has a decade of non-profit communications experience, aligning perfectly with our advocacy mission
- Martin Butcher, our Manager of the National Centre for Disability Advocacy, has 30 years of experience in advocacy disability including 12 as an Executive Officer of a disability advocacy organisation

These new team members significantly enhance our capabilities and deepen our commitment to disability advocacy.

We provide ongoing opportunities for professional development and staying current with the latest industry best practices. DANA staff are encouraged and supported in their professional development, in return benefitting DANA and the disability advocacy sector. In the last 12 months staff have participated in more than 20 training activities including short courses, webinars, and professional development

sessions related to their employment and activity outcomes. Some highlights of the training and development our staff participated in during this reporting period include:



Attended the Queensland Disability Advocacy Conference, and presented on the importance of data collection



Attended a webinar on Readability and Accessibility



Completed training on understanding marketing automation



Completed training on KPI's and metrics for Not-for-Profits



Completed training in self-leadership



Completed training in boosting Microsoft Teams presentation skills



Attended a webinar on UX/UI Design: Creating a Design System



Attended a webinar on qualitative data and disability research, by University of Melbourne



Attended a webinar on How to lobby for your funding asks, by Fifty Acres Academy



Attended a webinar on Contemporary Legal Advocacy and Social Change



Our Board

Our board of directors sets the direction and policy on key issues, based on the agreement of our members. The board ensures that the organisation remains dedicated to its mission and strategic goals while efficiently and effectively overseeing resource management.



DANA

Disability Advocacy
Network Australia

Directors



Wendy Prowse
Member (retired June 2023)
Chairperson (elected June 2023)
(CEO, ADACAS, ACT)



Serena Ovens
Chairperson (retired June 2023)
(CEO Physical Disability Council of NSW)



Deborah Wilson
Deputy Chairperson
(retired December 2022)
(EO Independent Advocacy
in the Tropics, QLD)



Geoff Southwell
Treasurer (elected June 2023)
(CEO Leadership Plus, VIC)



Fiona Campbell
Member (retired December 2022)
(Manager, Independent Advocacy SA)



David Petherick
Secretary (retired June 2023)
Deputy Chair (elected June 2023)
(EO, Barwin Disability Resource Council VIC)



Denise Boyd
Member (retired December 2022)
Secretary (elected June 2023)
(EO, STAR Victoria)



Brendan Cullinan
Member (elected December 2022)
(CEO, People with Disabilities WA)



Jenny Hughes
Member
(CEO, Advocacy for Disability Access
and Inclusion SA)



Kim Roots
Member (elected December 2022)
(EO, Side By Side Advocacy)



Terri-Ann Dwyer
Member (retired December 2022)
(Manager, Aged and Disability
Advocacy Australia)

Co-opted members



Christopher Quizeman
Member (elected February 2023)
(EO, ADHD Foundation)



Stephen Ellis
Member (elected February 2023)
(General Manager, Clue)



Our Staff

Our staff comprises committed individuals who draw upon their personal experiences, dedication, and expertise in the disability advocacy field to achieve meaningful, systemic improvements for people with disability. We are committed to ensuring that independent advocacy organisations receive the necessary support, knowledge, and services for enhancing their capacity within the sector.



DANA

Disability Advocacy
Network Australia

Staff



Mary Mallett

Chief Executive Officer
(until December 2022)

Jeff Smith

Chief Operating Officer (until December 2022)
Interim CEO (from December 2022)
Appointed Chief Executive Officer
(from March 2023)

Policy and Advocacy



El Gibbs

Director, Policy and
Advocacy (from May 2023)

Siobhan Clair

Policy Officer

Caitlin Clair

Communications Officer (until May 2023),
Project Officer (from May 2023)

Sara Franzoni

Project Officer
(until April 2023)

Anna Burke

Coordinator - National
Coordination Function
(September 2022 - March 2023)

National Centre for Disability Advocacy



Martin Butcher

Manager, National Centre for
Disability Advocacy (from August 2022)

Kim Tyson

Education and Engagement
Officer (February 2023)

Courtney Wolf

Data Analyst/ Education and
Engagement Officer (May 2023)

Corporate Services



Jess Schulz

Communications Officer
(from May 2023)

Anna Lienhop

Project Coordinator

Lesley Porroj

Finance Officer

Tracey White

Administration Officer

Tribute to Mary Mallet

This year, we farewelled longstanding and dedicated former DANA CEO, Mary Mallet. Mary stood down from her role as CEO to undertake the exciting role of Interim Disability Commissioner in Tasmania. We pay tribute to Mary and her contribution to progressing the importance of the advocacy sector, including calling for better recognition and funding. On behalf of the team at DANA, we thank Mary for her efforts to help make the organisation what it is today.



// Mary is a tireless advocate for people with disability. I value Mary's experience and wisdom and the invaluable advice she has always given me. She could always be trusted to have the latest intel on what was happening in government and the advocacy sector. She made a truly wonderful contribution to the sector and to DANA and all the organisations and leaders she mentored and supported.

————— **Mary Sayers**
Formerly CYDAtt

// We would like to acknowledge the contribution made to DANA by Mary Mallett. Mary was CEO of DANA for 8 (??) years and for much of this time the political climate was difficult, and funding was scarce. Mary's extraordinary ability to build relationships in a respectful, but assertive, way and her capacity to distil and communicate a position meant that DANA was seen as an honest broker and was able to have a positive influence despite the precarious funding position we were often in. This helped to lay the foundation for a strong and meaningful place for DANA as the peak body in Australia for Advocacy organisations and is a legacy that we are all proud of. Thank you for your wonderful contribution, Mary.

————— **David Petherick**
Barwon Disability Resource Council VIC

// Mary, thank you so much for the invaluable support you've consistently offered to Citizen Advocacy Launceston Region Inc throughout the years at DANA. Your remarkable dedication, expertise and passion for individuals with disabilities and their advocates are truly outstanding. We feel fortunate to still have access to your extensive knowledge and experience as you serve as the acting Disability Commissioner for Tasmania.

————— **Nicole Marquis**
Citizen Advocacy

// Mary always made time to listen with her engaging and consultative manner providing confidence that our views from Western Australia were heard and acknowledged. On behalf of PWdWA, I acknowledge and thank Mary for her tireless work and support.

————— **Brendan Cullinan**
PWdWA

// Mary helped forge DANA into one of the nation's most effective peak bodies, through her enormous commitment and immense tenacity. She led the advocacy sector not only to speak with one voice on the important issues affecting advocacy groups, but also to understand that the essential mission of advocacy is to empower the person with a disability to speak up. Her dedication to this mission has helped drive advocacy groups to support and facilitate the voice of self advocates, which in turn has achieved profoundly positive outcomes for the credibility and strength of advocacy as an essential service.

————— **Kevin Stone**
Formerly VALID

// Mary is an inspiring disability advocate who as CEO of DANA was unwavering in championing disability advocacy, determined to get support for a well-funded, robust sector.

Mary's time as CEO was characterised by big change. Mary led DANA through the transformative roll out of the NDIS, which changed the landscape of disability support and disability advocacy across Australia. Over the past four years Mary worked to ensure people with disability and advocates were able to make submissions and give powerful evidence to the Disability Royal Commission.

Mary worked collaboratively with advocates across Australia. Amplifying our voice for positive change.

————— **Karen Dimmock**
ACD Vic

// I first met Mary in the late 2000s when she was the Manager of Speak Out Tasmania. I visited her office in Hobart and noted she always had lots of irons in the fire. I recall her having 3 laptops on the go at the time.

Mary took over as CEO of DANA in 2014 and managed to negotiate with government about the importance of advocacy for people with disability. All the time keeping the sector informed. Mary worked steadily to bring DANA back to a respected organisation after a shaky start, before her time at the helm. It is important to note that Mary did this all on the "smell of an oily rag" as DANA received very little funding during this period. Mary laid the foundation for the professional organisation that DANA has become.

————— **Mark Grierson**
Advocacy Law Alliance



I first met Mary in 2009 when she was the Manager of Speak Out Tasmania. I had just started as an Executive Officer of an advocacy organisation, where we were part of a Quality Improvement Partnership (QIP) which was established to assist like-minded organisations to prepare for the introduction of new standards including third-party certification. A key component of QIP was visiting each organisation to audit their system, which is where Mary became a mentor to me.

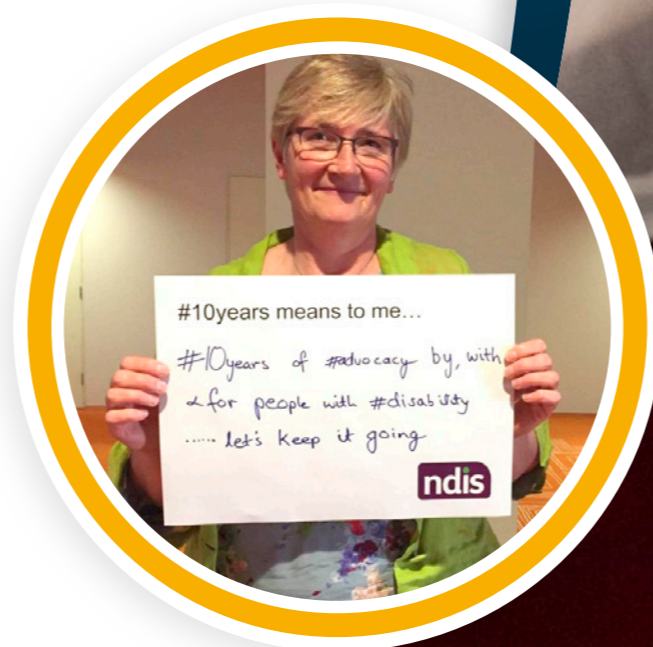
Mary was freely willing to share her knowledge of independent advocacy. As the CEO of DANA, Mary always used her networking and diplomacy skills to advance the role of independent disability advocacy to government and the wider community. She shared her insight into government policy which could be used to set strategic direction for the sector.

As a DANA board member, I saw first-hand Mary's commitment to DANA and the advocacy sector even when it meant a personal cost to her. There were some weeks when Mary continued to work knowing she would not be paid as DANA did not have money in the bank.

Mary - Thank you for being the Advocate for the advocates.

Martin Butcher

Formerly Regional Disability Advocacy Service





Financial Report 2023

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

	NOTE	2023	2022
ASSETS			
CURRENT ASSETS		\$	\$
Cash and cash equivalents	3	1,382,020	750,572
Trade and other receivables	4	17,846	143
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		1,399,866	750,715
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	5	11,590	8,332
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		11,590	8,332
TOTAL ASSETS		1,411,456	759,047
LIABILITIES			
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and other payables	6	92,357	22,694
Other current liabilities	7	690,052	220,296
Employee provisions	8	36,958	26,488
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		819,367	269,478
TOTAL LIABILITIES		819,367	269,478
NET ASSETS		592,089	489,568
EQUITY			
Retained earnings		592,089	489,569
TOTAL EQUITY		592,089	489,569



Note the above data is an excerpt from the 2023 Financial Statement only.

For full audited financial statements [click here](#)





Independent Auditors Report

Independent Audit Report to the members of Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

I have audited the financial report of Disability Advocacy Network Australia Limited (the "Company"), which comprises the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the directors' declaration.

In my opinion, the financial report of the company is in accordance with the Corporations Act 2001 and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012, including:

- (i) Giving a true and fair view of the company's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (ii) Complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the Corporations Regulations 2001.

Basis for Opinion

I have conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. I am independent of the Company in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the Corporations Act 2001, the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012 and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. I have also fulfilled my other responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I confirm that the independence declaration required by the Corporations Act 2001, the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012 which has been given to the directors of the company, would be in the same terms if given to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

I believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Other Information

The directors are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the Director's report for the year ended 30 June 2023 but does not include the financial report and my auditor's report thereon.

My opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with my audit of the financial report, my responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report, or my knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work we have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of Directors for the Financial Report

The responsible entities of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the registered entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure, and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with responsible entities regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during my audit.

David Perceval, Fellow Chartered Accountant
Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia #45109

5th August 2023
Canberra ACT



DANA

Disability Advocacy
Network Australia

The national voice
of independent
advocacy

ANNUAL REPORT **2023**

 www.dana.org.au