Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd

Annual Report 2010-2011

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Produced by Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) Ltd

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**Directors’ Report**

**Introduction**

The past year has been a period of significant growth and development for DANA. In this time we have established a National Office, appointed a Chief Executive Officer, developed a Strategic Plan to guide our work until 2014 and established a comprehensive governance framework. DANA has increased its membership by more than one third and represented the interests of our members and people with disabilities on key matters influencing national disability and advocacy policy including the National Disability Strategy, the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support, the Shadow Report to the International Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities , the National Disability Advocacy Framework and the National Disability Advocacy Program – Program Guidelines.

**Advocating for People with Disabilities**

The Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support has been the prime focus of DANA’s public policy work during the year and many of the recommendations and comments included in the Inquiry report reflect positions promoted in DANA’s submissions.

We began the year by working with organisations of people with disabilities to develop a human rights compliant framework to assist people with disabilities and advocacy organisations to respond to the Inquiry. We provided the Framework to advocacy organisations across Australia and in late July, early August 2010, held forums in every State and in the ACT. Feedback from these forums provided the basis for DANA’s first Inquiry Submission.

We held a second round of discussions with organisations of people with disabilities and with State and Territory groupings of advocacy organisations during April 2011 to determine our response to the Productivity Commission Draft Report. This led to two more submissions to the Inquiry and a presentation to the Perth Productivity Commission Hearing in April 2011.

DANA was among the national disability peak bodies asked to provide last minute advice to government on the content of the National Disability Strategy in July 2010. Our focus at that time was on ensuring that the Strategy incorporated appropriate advocacy and other mechanisms to enable all people with disabilities to fulfil their potential in accordance with the Strategy vision.

We have also worked throughout the year with organisations of people with disabilities and legal disability advocacy agencies to develop the Shadow Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities. This report will highlight the many ways in which our country continues to deny to people with disabilities, the rights and fundamental freedoms enjoyed by other Australians.

**Advocating for Advocacy**

Much of DANA’s work over the course of the year has been directed to providing advice to government in relation to elements of the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) and the National Disability Advocacy Framework (the Framework). We provided this advice based on feedback received through the various DANA State and Territory advocacy agency forums held during the year and through information gathered during attendance at State Advocacy Network meetings. Our mechanisms for providing advice to Government during the year included:

* The provision of two comprehensive submissions, one on the Framework and the other on the NDAP – Program Guidelines
* Quarterly meetings with each of the Policy, Advocacy and Disability Secretariat areas of FaHCSIA
* Quarterly meetings with Senator McLucas
* Participation in the Quality Assurance Trial Evaluation Reference Group
* Negotiations with Government about the content of the NDAP - Program Guidelines when they were being implemented
* Written and verbal feedback to Government in relation to the implementation of the NDAP Trail Evaluation Report
* Negotiations with Government in relation to indexation of annual funding to NDAP funded organisations.

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

* The provision, for the first time in many years, of Program indexation (1.5%) similar to that received by other FaHCSIA funded community organisations
* Confirmation provided to agencies that the newly introduced Performance Targets would be agreed through negotiation and would be regarded as indicative not determinative
* Program Guidelines that require the NDAP to be guided by the principles and objectives of key legislation, conventions, agreements and frameworks, including but not limited to: the United Nationals Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and the National Disability Strategy
* Appropriate broadening of the aims and objectives of NDAP to better reflect the diversity of the work undertaken by advocacy agencies
* Agreement that the Program Guidelines may be reviewed later in 2011 and from time to time thereafter
* The establishment of a NDAP Quality Assurance Implementation Reference Group involving DANA and other advocacy agencies.

Three of the four DANA submissions to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support were devoted in whole or in part to promoting the value and importance to people with disabilities of ready access to independent advocacy support. The first submission made the case for the inclusion of access to independent advocacy support in any schema addressing the service and support needs of people with disabilities. Our second submission and our presentation to the Perth Productivity Commission Hearing in April 2011 focused on identifying how a properly funded and administered advocacy sector would complement and act as a vital safeguard for people with disabilities if the Productivity Commission’s proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) were introduced.

In its final Report the Productivity Commission accepted the views put forward in DANA’s later submission and in our Perth presentation that:

* Advocacy organisations play an important and widely varied role in relation to the disability services system
* This role should continue and be properly funded
* Advocacy is not well-suited to a user pays system
* Genuine independence from the NDIS will be a critical determinant of the effectiveness of advocacy
* Advocacy organisations need to maintain the perception and practice of independence from service providers and disability support organisations.

**Connecting with our Members**

The DANA website, after a long gestation period, was launched during the year and now acts as a resource for our members in relation to DANA activity.

DANA also provides members with a range of information through the distribution of the DANA Communiqué and specific purpose e-bulletins.

As noted above, DANA has held two advocacy agency forums in each Australian State and in the ACT during the year. We have also directly consulted with each of the advocacy agencies in the Northern Territory. The DANA CEO has been a guest at and provided reports to NSW, Victorian, Queensland and ACT State Disability Advocacy Network meetings and also to meetings of the Citizen Advocacy Network and the Aged Care Advocacy Network. DANA Board members, between them have also been active in all of these Networks.

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

**Networks and Linkages**

DANA has worked closely with the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), its members and People with Disability Australia to develop submissions, resources and shared policy positions as appropriate in relation to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Disability Care and Support. We have also developed useful contacts with Australian Council of Social Services, the State Councils of Social Services, the Australian Local Government Association and National Disability Services.

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

**Membership**

DANA registered as a company with 20 member organisations in May 2009. At 30 June 2010 our membership had grown to 45 disability advocacy organisations (including two associate members) and by 30 June 2011 to 62 disability advocacy organisations (including four associate members). Our membership includes advocacy organisations from all the States and Territories of Australia and advocacy organisations that between them provide individual, systemic, legal, citizen, family and self advocacy support for some of the most vulnerable of all people with disability.

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

**Board of Directors**

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

During this financial year the impact of these constitutional requirements, when taken together with the personal and organisational circumstances of individual Board members, has led to substantial Board member change. The two remaining foundation Board members will retire at the November 2011 Annual General Meeting. The good news is that other DANA members are stepping forward to take the place on the Board of those who are retiring. At the conclusion of the financial year the Board continued to have nine Directors coming from the six Australian States and the ACT. The Directors come from rural and metropolitan based organisations; from organisations that provide individual, systemic, citizen, family, legal and self advocacy; from Federal and State funded organisations and from those with a mixture of funding. Thus DANA began and has continued with leadership from across the broad spectrum of the disability advocacy sector.

Board members met face to face for two consecutive days in each of September 2010 and March 2011. In the intervening periods Board meeting were conducted monthly via teleconference. In total Board members took part in eleven Board meetings over the course of the year. Urgent business was conducted via email exchanges and Board members made themselves available to provide feedback and support to the DANA CEO on an ‘as needed’ basis.

**DANA Governance and Finance**

As a growing and developing organisation, DANA has strongly focused this year on becoming a model of good governance and management practice. We have developed a comprehensive set of governance policies in line with the Carver Governance model that clearly defines the Board and CEO roles and responsibilities. A Strategic Plan is in place detailing the results in four key result areas that we aim to achieve over a five year period. Reporting frameworks that align with the Strategic Plan have been established to the Board to monitor the performance of DANA on a monthly basis.

FaHCSIA provided DANA with $60,000 for 2010-11 to assist in the establishment of the organisation as a peak disability advocacy body and to support DANA in meeting with advocacy organisations and providing submissions to the Productivity Commission Inquiry. They have agreed to provide DANA with $80,000 for 2011-12 and peak body funding of $163,000 per annum for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 financial years. This is welcome support indeed. It provides us with important certainty and a base from which to seek more diversified funding sources. A plan for this is in the development phase.

**The Future**

DANA expects the coming year to be one of continued growth and development. Our plans for the year include:

* Continuing to promote the value of independent disability advocacy
* Continuing to promote improved administration and funding for independent advocacy
* Continuing to promote the inclusion of and human rights for people with disability
* Continuing strategic engagement with the political and administrative arms of government
* Continuing to build the DANA policy/positions base
* Continuing to expand our membership base
* Expanding our resources to members
* Developing and implementing a DANA member engagement strategy
* Developing and implementing a DANA marketing strategy
* Continuing to improve the breadth and depth of content on the DANA website
* Developing and implementing a DANA financial sustainability strategy
* Developing and implementing a disability advocacy workforce development strategy.
* Establishing mechanisms for maintaining the interest and connectedness of key allies and supporters of DANA.

DANA Board of Directors 2010-2011

**Catherine Hogan**, Deputy Chairperson to February 2011, Chairperson from February 2011

Director, Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development Association

**Kevin Stone**,Treasurer to November 2010,

Executive Officer, VALID

**Kevin Cocks**, (to January 2011), Chairperson to January 2011

Director, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated

**Craig Nadler**, (from November 2010), Deputy Chairperson from February 2011

Board Member/Treasurer, Family Advocacy Inc

**Kairsty Wilson**, (from September 2010) Treasurer from November 2010

Legal Manager, Principal Legal Practitioner, AED Legal Centre

**Jennifer Smith** (from September 2010)

Board Member, Capricorn Citizen Advocacy Inc.

**Christina Ryan** (from November 2010)

General Manager, Advocacy for Inclusion

**Mary Mallett** (from November 2011)

Manager, Speak Out Association of Tasmania

**Jenny Au Yeong** (from March 2011)

Chief Executive Officer, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre

**Bob Lee** (from June 2011)

Coordinator, Sunshine Coast Citizen Advocacy

**Monika Baker**, (to April 2011)

**Systems Advocacy and Project Coordinator**, Disability Advocacy and Complaints Service of South Australia Inc

**Rebecca Thompson**, (to November 2011)

Senior Advocate, Advocacy Tasmania

**Steve Doran,** (to August 2010),

Chief Executive Officer, Regional Information and Advocacy Council

**Andrea Simmons**, (to July 2010),

Manager, ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service

**Catherine Peek,** (to July 2010),

Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Disability Advocacy NSW

**David Craig,** (to July 2010)

Chief Executive Officer, Action for Community Living

**Helen Lynes,** (Sept 2010 to November 2010)

**Company Secretary**

**Andrea Simmons,** DANA Chief Executive Officer

**Auditor**

**Kim Hanna FCA**

DANA Staff

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Andrea Simmons** (from July 2010)

**Finance Administrator**

**Sharon Pfeifer** (from July 2010)