From the EO

Welcome to 2018. As you will see from the newsletter, the end of 2017 was a busy one for us.

At the beginning of December RDAS was involved with events throughout the region to celebrate International Day of People with Disability. The annual Dance Party in Wagga Wagga was another big success. Board members and staff attended events organised in Albury/Wodonga and Benalla.

During 2018, RDAS is looking at another big year of events and activities. Our focus will be to continue to help people to understand the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and how to get the most out of your plans. We are all learning about the NDIS together.

The great news is that the government has given RDAS some money to help people who are not happy with their NDIS plans. We can help you to apply for a review and support you to appeal the plan.

RDAS is committed to seeing that all people living in the region have equal access to advocacy. We want to provide appropriate support services regardless of where you live or your background. Meet our diversity team. Their job will be to find people with disability who may live out of towns, are aboriginal or born overseas, live in hard to reach locations and communities. The diversity team will provide information about advocacy or link people into the NDIS.

Martin Butcher
Executive Officer

New RDAS office in WAGGA WAGGA

RDAS is growing. We have new projects and more staff. Therefore … WE ARE MOVING!!! to a bigger, better office just around the corner.

Our new address is:
Suite 104/105 Wollundry Chambers
63 Johnston Street
Wagga Wagga

Other contacts will remain the same.

Opening ceremony of new office

You are invited to join the Board and staff to the opening ceremony of the new office.

Join the traditional owners as they welcome us to Wollundry Country.

Date: Wednesday 24 January 2018
Time: 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm
Light lunch provided

RSVP: 02 6921 9225
wagga@rdas.org.au
The New South Wales government has said that they will not be funding advocacy, and information peak organisations, like RDAS, after June 2018.

The Minister for Disability Services The Hon Ray Williams, said;

“The NSW government has handed all its disability funding to the commonwealth government for the NDIS.”

The Commonwealth Minister The Hon Christian Porter, says;

“All states should continue to have a role in disability advocacy as the majority of people requiring advocacy support sit outside the NDIS.”

The NDIS will not pay for advocacy out of an individual’s support package.

While the politicians work out who will fund advocacy, The big losers could be people with disability and their families who will not have access to advocacy support and information when they need it.

**What does this mean for RDAS?**

Without funding RDAS will not be able to provide advocacy to people living in Southern NSW including Albury, Henty, Finley, Corowa or Deniliquin.

**What are we doing?**

RDAS has joined with 20 other disability advocacy, information and peak representative organisations including Council for Intellectual Disability, Physical Disability Council, Family Advocacy and IDEAS. Together we are calling on the NSW government to:

Continue to provide $13 million funding to advocacy, information and representative services to enable them to stand up for the rights of People with Disabilities.

**Our Rights**

**Article 8 Awareness Raising**

“Countries must raise awareness of the rights, capabilities and contributions of people with disability.”

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Dance party Wagga Wagga. 1st December 2017
There are a number of ways you can take action:

Sign the online petition
go to www.standbyme.org.au

A lot of our members have signed a “stand by me” postcard to the premier. If you want more you can contact the RDAS office and ask for a pack of postcards and ask your friends to sign them.

Aboriginal engagement
The Victorian government has provided funding to engage with the aboriginal community in Northeast Victoria to look at ways to provide disability advocacy that is culturally appropriate.

The project will include running peer and self advocacy courses in the community. The project will also train volunteers to support aboriginal people through the Justice System.

Hard to reach and CALD community engagement
RDAS has partnered with Ethnic Community Services Cooperative to provide NDIS information sessions for people living in hard to reach locations and communities in Southern NSW and Riverina. The particular focus is on people who were born overseas or who are aboriginal.

It is planned to organise events in Tumut, Deniliquin, Coleambally, Young, Corowa, Temora and Cootamundra.

Visit your local members and tell them why advocacy is important to you, and why we need strong independent advocacy, information and peak representative organisations in NSW:

Member for Albury: Greg Aplin
02 6021 3024
albury@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Member for Wagga Wagga: Daryl Maguire
02 6921 1622
waggawagga@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Member for Cootamundra Stephen Cooke
02 6382 2399

RDAS EO met with Labour Party during the Cootamundra by-election

Meet the Diversity Team
Davina, Vijay and Ruth

RDAS has received funding to undertake community engagement projects to support people from diverse backgrounds to access advocacy and the NDIS.
Despite the bad weather, the number of Dance Party attendees was approximately 250 people, with partygoers coming from Wagga Wagga and surrounding towns.

Mr Daryl Maguire MP and Councillor Greg Concky said a few words. An apology was received from the Hon. Michael McCormack MP.

Martin Butcher presented the appreciation awards to six businesses who made significant contributions towards the party. Lead by Chief Judge, Sue Davys, the five best dressed winners chosen were welcomed by all. Prizes including a tablet worth about $130 was donated by the Good Guys for the first winner. Everyone gave it a go at dancing. The three best dancers were awarded with free game bowling vouchers donated by Wagga Bowling and Entertainment. Oscar Crouz had a steady flow of people wanting to be photographed while Rochelle from the drinks department had non-stop requests for cold soft drink and water.

Joshua Mozes of Temora had the honour of cutting the official cake joined by Martin.

No doubt a happy time was had by all. Hoping that next year’s celebration will even be merrier and create greater disability awareness. RDAS appreciates the efforts of the Dance Party steering committee and everyone’s support - without them the dance party wouldn’t be anywhere near the success that it is. Until next year everyone!!

See more photos in the gallery on RDAS website www.rdas.org.au
Over the past 3 months RDAS has held workshops at Kurrajong outlets - in Wagga Wagga (Community Living), West Wyalong (Recycling and Cafe) and in Narrandera (Recycling, Laundry/Linen/Ironing Basket) to provide training as per Standard 4 of the National Standards for Disability Services - Feedback and Complaints. These are some of the groups who attended the sessions.

### Enabling Women Program

RDAS combined with City of Wodonga and Women with a Disability Victoria to bring the Enabling Women leadership program to Wodonga. Fifteen women from Wodonga and surroundings participated in a 6 week program to encourage them to build their self confidence and self advocacy skills.

Each participant was encouraged to set a goal regarding what they hoped to get out of participating in the program. Some of the goals included setting up a community garden, gaining confidence to use public transport or finding a job.

Each participant benefited from having a mentor, who they met with several times during the program, to discuss their goals and gain confidence.
October:
The Self Advocacy Support group attended a Budgeting training session which was a most useful workshop for them.

The group sent three representatives (Michael, Leonie and Cynthia) to attend the National Self Advocacy Forum organised by SARU in Melbourne. Michael talked about the groups activities and what RDAS does in front of many people. Both Cynthia and Leonie joined the Story Book Making workshop and Michael joined the Video and Sign Making workshops.

November

Ruth Crawford, a nutritionist and dietician who works at CSU, helped the group with information on healthy eating habits and how to prepare healthy food on a low budget. Most of the people present got involved in making healthy and delicious food.

Cynthia Butler received a Shine Award from Wagga Wagga Rotary Club in recognition of her outstanding work. Leonie, Len and Swie went to support her.

The group participated in the Stand By Me campaign. Most members took home a bundle of Stand By Me campaign cards from the RDAS office to take to their friends to ask them to support the campaign.

December

The group had a brief Christmas party before the meeting. Some members brought something to eat to share around. Members had a friendship circle and thanked each other for their friendship. Members who helped out at the Dance Party talked about their experiences.

The group put forward ten (10) topical training session suggestions that they would like RDAS to support. Each member will complete a new "Client Training Plan" form individually, showing their preferences and their order of priority.

The group held an election:
- Michael Ingold was re-elected Group Leader
- Leonie was elected Secretary
- Cynthia Butler was elected Activities Coordinator.

Next meeting: Monday - 12/2/2018 - 4:30pm - 6:30pm, at Suite 104/105 Wollundry Chambers, Wagga Wagga.

Anyone who would like to join the SAS group or learn more about the group's activities, please ring Swie at RDAS on 69 219 225.
Plan & Connect: We can help you to:

1. Plan your goal/s.
   ⇒ Talk about things that you need
   ⇒ Talk about activities that you would like to do

2. Find services that may go well with what you would like to do and need.
   Things you like to do may be:
   ⇒ Learning new skills
   ⇒ Working
   ⇒ Doing activities
   ⇒ Living independently
   ⇒ and others.

3. Help you make decisions.
   ⇒ Help you choose the services and buy the things you need.
   ⇒ Help you when talking to those services about your goal/s.
   ⇒ Help you process the paperwork.

The Support Coordination worker will help you until you feel that you can manage your NDIS plan yourself.

You don’t need to pay for this service.

Your issue will be treated as Private and Confidential.

1800 250 292 to make an appointment.
Regional Disability Advocacy Service provides an independent voice. The information contained in this newsletter is not necessarily the views of the organisation as a whole or any funding bodies.