



Newsletter

Summer 2018



From the EO

Yet another busy year comes to an end. We are getting ready to close for the Christmas break to give our staff a well earned rest.

Personally I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for your hard work during the year. You have been working hard for your clients and ensuring RDAS runs smoothly.

It has been a busy 12 months for RDAS. Some of our achievements include:

- Providing advocacy to over 800 people.
- Increasing our service area to include Yass, Hay, Moama and Barham.
- Opening a new office in Griffith.
- Establishing the Access and Support services into Southern NSW. (See Page 3)
- Successfully lobbied for continuation of advocacy funding from the NSW government which will enable us to continue to provide advocacy to people living in the Albury Region. As you will see on page 3 the fight is still going.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you, our members, clients, and supporters, the very best for Christmas, and a safe and happy 2019.

Martin Butcher



From the Chairperson

At the last board meeting I was appointed as the new chairperson. It is my job to chair the board meetings and to represent the RDAS

Board and members. I look forward to the challenges this role will bring.

We also appointed 3 new directors:

Kate Fiedler brings to the board her life experience of being a person with a physical disability. Kate would like to see improved access services for people who need them.

Sheridan Leonard has had a long association with RDAS as a volunteer with the Justice Support program. Sheridan works for a disability employment service assisting people with disabilities to maintain employment.

Paul Power is a regional manager of a disability employment service whose footprint covers a similar region as RDAS. Paul will bring his management skills, as well as his personal experience of disability.

At the AGM held in October, we farewelled Thara Pech, Tom Cobban and Joan Page who stood down as directors. Their contribution to RDAS governance was invaluable. During the AGM Joan Page was presented with the Jack Irvine Award for her many years of service to the advocacy and disability service sector in Wagga Wagga.

Johanna Schmidt

New Aged and Disability Commissioner announced For NSW

RDAS welcomes the news that the NSW Government has announced it will establish a new Ageing and Disability Commissioner position starting from 1 July 2019.

The Commissioner will be a new, statutory authority that will strengthen Government's ability to respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability, and the elderly in home and community settings.

It's key functions will be receiving and investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation with a focus of prevention.

This is distinct from the role of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commissioner and Aged Care Commissioner, who are responsible for safeguarding people receiving NDIS and aged care services.

The establishment of the position of Commissioner will be responsive to a number of reviews and inquiries which have highlighted the need for a new Public Advocate type body, to better respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation. For example, the Ombudsman's recent Special Report on abuse of vulnerable adults, the Law Reform Commission's Review of the Guardianship Act, the Parliamentary Inquiry into Elder Abuse and the Implementation of the NDIS in NSW inquiry.

The name, Ageing and Disability Commissioner, has been chosen to speak more clearly to the community about its functions, and reflect its regulatory role.

Further information on the establishment of the Commissioner will be made available on the Family and Community Services website as it becomes available.

Access and Support crosses the river into NSW Murrumbidgee

In August this year we were successful in obtaining a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Information, Linkages & Capacity building grant (Murrumbidgee region) for the next two years ending June 2020. This has resulted in the appointments of Kellie Clarke who comes to us with previous experience as Intereach Ability Linkers program manager. Also, Phil Thorneycroft from community engagement with Merri Health, Ovens Murray NDIS Partner in Community as team leader for both Victorian and NSW programs.

The NDIS ILC grant carries on from some great work undertaken by Access and Support workers Eliz Mitchell (covering the Shires of Mansfield, Alpine (Bright), Benalla & Wangaratta) and Karen Anderson (covering the City of Wodonga, Indigo & Towong Shires and Mount Beauty).

Phil and Kellie will be seeking out communities seen as hard to reach and diverse (Aboriginal/ Torres Strait Islander, Cultural & Linguistic Diverse (CALD), towns with less than 5,000 population and people who identify as LGBTQI. We aim to connect with community champions to partner in community events that promote the NDIS and assist people with a disability get past barriers to make that first phone call to request access to the NDIS.

Karen and Eliz's primary focus is assisting older people with disability gain access to My Aged Care.

Both programs also cross areas of expertise i.e. assist with NDIS/My Aged Care or someone who needs help applying for the Disability Support Pension, and other mainstream services.



Photo of NSW Team Kellie Clarke and Phil Thorneycroft.

Jack Irvine was a foundation member of DAIS (now RDAS), served as President for many years, and lobbied for people with a disability to have their rights upheld. Jack passed away in May 2007.

To acknowledge and commemorate his legacy with the Jack Irvine Memorial Shield, the RDAS board decided to continue the tradition of awarding the Shield at each AGM to recognise an individual who had demonstrated qualities of leadership, self advocacy and community inclusion principles.

The 2018 Recipient was Joan Page

Joan Page has had a long standing involvement in the disability sector and Disability Advocacy Network (DAN) in Wagga Wagga.

Joan worked for the Northcott Society for 10 years before working as an advocate with DAN in 1999. After Joan “retired”, she joined DAN board and was Chairperson up to the time of merger with DAIS in 2017. Joan continued on the Board of the merged organisation Regional Disability Advocacy Service.

Joan’s volunteer work with DAN was more than as a board member. Over the years she was actively involved in ‘walk a mile in my shoes’ and the annual dance party, just to name a few. Joan is an active volunteer with Rotary and their Book Fair.

Community organisations rely very much on volunteers. Joan Page has been one of those volunteers who has always gone ‘above and beyond’ in her involvement with the organisation. Her dedication and commitment is acknowledged and appreciated, and Joan will be greatly missed.



Joan was presented with the Jack Irvine Shield by Dr Joe McGirr MP

Pledge of support: Stand by Me

Over the past 18 months we have been reporting on the **Stand by Me** campaign calling on the NSW government to reinstate ongoing funding to advocacy, information and peak representative organisations.

As a lead-up to the NSW state election, the NSW Disability Alliance is calling on all parties and candidates to pledge their support and **Stand by Me**.

We are calling on the NSW Government, whichever party wins the election, to commit to long term, sustainable funding to the advocacy sector.



At the Wagga Wagga Dance Party Independent MP Dr Joe McGirr signed a pledge to do everything he can to maintain advocacy funding.

Leading up to the state election we are asking you to do your bit.

As people with disability our vote counts.

Tell your politicians that your vote counts and that advocacy provided by organisations like RDAS is important to you.

Visit www.standbyme.org.au and find out how to email the Premier, or visit your local MP.

Snap shots taken during the Standard 4 Complaints and Feedback training sessions provided by RDAS at various outlets of Kurrajong and Valmar Support Services over the last three months.

Kurrajong outlets



Valmar Support Services Ltd outlets





RDAS Self Advocacy Support (SAS) groups continue to strive through holding group discussion sessions. Recently, some members from a group discussion session indicated that attending group meetings regularly increases their independence and reduces reliance on their support persons. The formation of Narrandera SAS group did not eventuate - lack of transport and support to get to the meeting have been cited as the major reasons for the setback. The Advocate has encouraged people to include 'Transport to meetings' on their NDIS budgets at their next review.

RDAS continues to promote its Self Advocacy Support provision to get more people to join the groups because having a larger number of people advocating for reform can lead to systemic change. Some members were involved in the focus group meeting of the DSS' "Future of Supported Employment for People with an Intellectual Disability" and the preparations for the Dance Party. In late August this year, two SAS members were invited to the SARU's Website Development consultation workshop in Sydney.

Lockhart group at their monthly meeting.



Wagga group at the Drum Calling workshop.



Wagga group at their monthly meeting and at the My Health Record workshop.



Wagga group and other community members at the Be Safe & Be Alert workshop.



2018 Dance Party - A hugely successful IDPD celebration

The 30 degree heat that we had on the day of the Dance Party didn't stop our serious party goers from coming. We had approximately 350 people through the door on the night (312 tickets were sold which was an increase on last year). The night went very smoothly; the MCs Leighton Marshall, Cameron Ellis (Intereach), and Sam Mulloy and Christall Papadakis (Northcott) had everything under control. The photos on the night speak for themselves.



Dr. Joe McGirr MP performed the official opening and also endorsed the 'Stand By Me' campaign by RDAS. A group of 14 people from Northcott performed the dance part to the song "Welcome" from the movie Moana. Roger Crawford from Cootamundra sang 'All My Loving'. Miss Wagga Wagga, Stina Constantine joined in the party and was one of the judges for the best costumes. Judged by Dr. Joe McGirr MP and RDAS' EO - Martin Butcher, the winner of the Photo Competitions was Reilly Jackson-Parsell. Tim Wilson (Griffith Post School Options) had the honour of cutting the official cake.

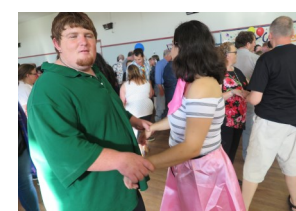
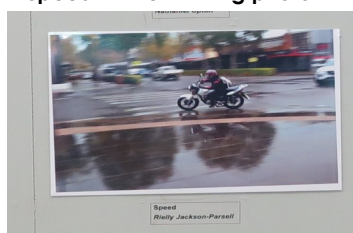
Needless-to-say, the event wouldn't have been nearly as successful without the generous support and assistance of all involved. The careful planning and organising by the steering committee and the various volunteers should be congratulated. RDAS is looking forward to everyone's on-going support for next year's Dance Party.



2018 Dance Party - A hugely successful IDPD celebration



"Speed" - The winning photo



Contact RDAS



Toll free 1800 250 292

Email admin@rdas.org.au

Offices 132 Melbourne Road, Wodonga

Suites 104-105, 1st Floor, Wollundry Chambers,
63-65 Johnston St. Wagga Wagga

Mail PO Box 982, Wodonga VIC 3689

Web www.rdas.org.au

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 of its funding bodies.

**The RDAS offices will be closed
over Christmas**

**We will be closed from
Friday 21 December.**

We will reopen Monday, 7 January.

The Management
and Staff of
Regional Disability
Advocacy Service
would like to wish
everyone
a relaxing and safe
Christmas
and
best wishes
for 2019



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