



ANNUAL REPORT

2024

Promoting, protecting and upholding the rights
of people with disability since 1978



ACTION acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and we pay respect to them and their cultures, and to their elders past, and present. We acknowledge their connection and care for the land on which we live and work.



ACTION would like to thank Ku-ring-gai Council for continuing to provide us with an accessible space for us to provide our service to the community.



Communities and Justice

ACTION expresses its gratitude to the NSW Department of Communities & Justice for funding our individual advocacy through the Disability Advocacy Futures Program.



Education

ACTION extends its gratitude to the NSW Department of Education for the funding they provide, which enables ACTION to advocate for children within the public school system.

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MEET OUR



Betty Harris
Board President



Kerry Parnaby
Board Vice President



Debbie O'Flynn
Board Treasurer



Dominique Abagi
Board Secretary



Fiona Anthony
Board Member



Scott Taylor
Board Member



Eric Cooper
Board Member



Serena Marunucci
Board Member



Alexjandra Rosales
Board Member

BOARD



MEET OUR



Taylor Bellomo
Chief Executive Officer
& Advocate



Jacob Basden
Chief Financial Officer



Leanne Hasting
Human Resources



**Kelly Harrison
Willis**
Operations & Grants
Coordinator



Lisa Duffy
Project Manager



Susan Parker
Advocate



Peta Barry
Advocate



Lindsay Jackson
Advocate



Michael Rahme
Advocate

TEAM





PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear ACTION members,

As I step into my first year as President of the Action Board, I reflect on the incredible journey we've had as a team. After two fulfilling years as Vice-President, it's truly an honour to be part of an organization that is not only growing but also making a profound difference in the lives of so many.

This year, we welcomed Lisa as our project manager, and her energy and dedication has already sparked exciting new workshops in the northern region. Our commitment to outreach has deepened, allowing us to strengthen our ties within the local community in ways that truly matter.

At the heart of Action is our amazing team of Advocates. Their unwavering commitment and compassionate support, shine brightly in the face of challenges. They have tirelessly assisted our members through difficult life situations—whether it's navigating homelessness, facing eviction, or dealing with issues in health, education, or criminal justice. The countless hours they dedicate to our clients, demonstrate their deep commitment to making a real difference, and it's a privilege to witness their impact firsthand.

Within the wider disability sector, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation of People with Disability has ignited important conversations about the systemic issues our community faces. We recognize the weight of this inquiry and are dedicated to amplifying the voices of those we assist. Our responsibility is to ensure that the insights gained not only inform our practices but also help pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

As many of you know, the NDIS has been a transformative initiative, providing essential support and services to individuals with disabilities. Yet, the recent review underscores the need for vigilance and advocacy as we navigate both challenges and opportunities for improvement. Staying informed and engaged is crucial, as the outcomes will directly impact countless lives in our community.

Looking ahead, I am filled with hope and excitement. We have incredible initiatives on the horizon, and I firmly believe that, together, we can continue to break down barriers, foster awareness, and inspire meaningful change. The work we do with our advocacy, is about building a future where everyone feels valued and heard.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

BETTY HARRIS
PRESIDENT



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



As I reflect on the year 2024, I am proud to share the progress we've made in advancing the mission of our organization and improving the lives of the individuals we serve. Despite the challenges that many small not-for-profit organizations face - particularly in the areas of funding, systems development and demand for our service exceeding capacity - this year has been one of growth and meaningful impact.

One of our key priorities this year has been to focus on improving our internal systems and processes to increase our efficiency, streamline our operations, and provide higher-quality services to our clients. We undertook a review of our processes, particularly focusing on areas such as referral and intake, formalising our 'way of working' for our clients, and reviewing and updating our policies focusing on the beginning and end of the advocacy process. Through this work, we've laid a solid foundation for meeting the increasing demand for disability advocacy.

In line with our commitment to improving operations, we successfully onboarded a new Client Relationship Management (CRM) system. This tool will allow us to better track client interactions, manage cases, and coordinate services more seamlessly. The CRM system has already enhanced our ability to deliver timely, personalized support, and we are excited about the long-term benefits it will bring, including increased data-driven decision-making and stronger relationships with the people we serve.

A key area of focus this year has been investing in the development of our team. Our staff is the heart of our organization, and we are committed to providing them with the training, tools, and support they need to perform their roles. We invested in the wellbeing of our team by providing them with monthly external supervision. We've prioritized professional development opportunities, including workshops and seminars on advocacy best practices, legal and policy updates, person-centred, trauma informed approaches and applied suicide intervention skills training. This focus on our team ensures that we can consistently deliver the highest-quality service to our clients.

The core of our work is advocacy, and we have remained steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that every client receives the support they need to navigate the systems that impact their lives. We have worked tirelessly to amplify the voices of people with disability and fight for full inclusion and participation in society. This year, we've seen significant progress in our advocacy outcomes which are a testament to the impact of our work.

As we look to the future, we remain focused on continuous improvement. We will continue to build on the successes of 2024 and remain committed to our clients and making them the focal point of everything we do. Thank you to everyone who has supported Action this year.



A WORD FROM OUR TEAM



Susan Parker– Advocate

Best Outcome in 2024: I have supported many clients in the Guardianship Tribunal process, protecting the rights of people with disability to enable their voice to be heard and ensure their rights are protected.

Biggest Challenge in 2024: Returning to the training arena to facilitate training/learning workshops for Action for People with Disability.

Personal Achievement: I applied and accepted a role as a community representative on the Status of Women's Advisory Committee Ku-ring-gai Council

Favourite thing you have watched, read or listened to this year: RBG - Sydney Theatre Company's one woman play outlining the life and achievements of Ruth Bader Ginsburg



Peta Barry– Advocate

Best Outcome in 2024: Social Housing in a thriving new community development for a client with a physical disability who was socially isolated and living in a dilapidated inaccessible tiny bedsit.

Biggest Challenge in 2024: Setting out to understand the entire Education sector in Australia/NSW to speak on 'The Right to Education' for people with disability.

Personal Achievement: Welcoming a new puppy after losing our beloved dog last year

Favourite thing you have watched, read or listened to this year: 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' with Sarah Snook



Lindsay Jackson– Advocate

Best Outcome in 2024: Further developing 3 disability training packages to raise awareness of disability and rights within our community.

Biggest Challenge in 2024: The complexity of the needs of my clients and navigating this as a newly qualified social worker.

Personal Achievement: Graduating after 4 years studying a Bachelor of Social Work.

Favourite thing you have watched, read or listened to this year: Reading Boy Swallows Universe by Trent Dalton. A modern classic!



A WORD FROM OUR TEAM



Meet Michael Rahme – Advocate

Hello!

I'm a final-term Master of Law student, primary carer, and person with Autism.

Since starting here as an Advocate last November, I have never seen a more inclusive, passionate, and driven workspace which has been foundational to my skills and abilities as an advocate. Action has found every chance to teach me more, give me more, and show me more, whether that be through life-changing training, participation in interagency groups, and opportunities to build and design workshops for the community, on top of the amazing nuggets of knowledge that casually whiz through the office every hour.

It is a privilege to work with such a team and I cannot thank them all enough for making me part of the Action family.

Best Outcome in 2024: Supporting a client in dropping a number of charges during a period of cognitive decline and replacing the penalty with access to a number of holistic supports which he was unable to engage prior.

Biggest Challenge in 2024: Frame working that client's decisions to engage with these supports and communicating his needs to the courts, police, and services.

Personal Achievement: Supporting the creation of a nationwide letter in response to the 2024 NDIS Bill which was recognised by the senate and legislators.

Favourite thing you have watched, read or listened to this year:

Album and Song, Deira by Saint Levant is a must listen and Peanut Butter Falcon is a must watch.



Kelly Harrison Willis– Operations & Grants Coordinator

Best Outcome in 2024: Development and implementation of the Our Way of Working booklet. Helping clients to have a clearer understanding of the advocacy process from the beginning.

Biggest Challenge in 2024: The development and onboarding of all staff onto our new CRM.

Personal Achievement: Surviving motherhood of two 18-month-old boys!

Favourite thing you have watched, read or listened to this year:

Girl Women Other by Bernardine Evaristo



PUBLIC OFFICER UPDATE



Terry Ryan

Written by Advocate and Action's former EO Christine Agius OAM

Terry Ryan has advocated for people with disability and their families, and he has been a mainstay and source of support and expertise for ACTION for decades.

Terry has been President of ACTION's Management Committee a number of times, and his tireless work and leadership as one of a small group of members in 1999 was vital to ensure that Action's aims and

work continued as requested and required by people with disability and their families. Without Terry's resolve and support during this time, Action would not have achieved the high level of provision of individual advocacy and the systemic advocacy which achieved positive change for people with disability.

Terry's other role as Public Officer for ACTION for decades ensured that successive Management Committees and staff were provided with all relevant and required information, direction and support to ensure adherence to all legal requirements, processes and procedures.

Terry's advocacy included the Blythe Report that reformed the NSW Department of Community Services; improved practices in respite/group homes in the Manly Warringah area; chaired public forums; led parent delegations to NSW Ministers for Community Services; raised issues with the NSW Department of Community Services; chaired monthly meetings of parents and friends; supported people with disability and families; influenced policy and operation of disability services through training and publications.

Terry was Chairperson of the Many Warringah Families and Friends of People With Disability, an independent organisation which achieved significant change and provided support to family members.

With his son Christopher, Terry authored 'What About Me ...A Guide For Caring' published in 2009, with Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision Australia, writing "There is increasing talk these days about caring for the carers. But how does that talk translate into reality? Here is a guide that goes right to the heart of the matter." Terry then devised and conducted 91 Family Care workshops held in metropolitan, regional and rural venues across NSW during 2005 – 2012 with over 4,000 attendees. Positive feedback from attendees included "It is not only information...it is certainties... the kind of realities that go straight to the heart." Terry's work was a response to a need for practical guidance when there was no effective help and nowhere else to turn for the most vulnerable people.

PUBLIC OFFICER UPDATE



Terry's other written works include 'Understanding the needs of parents providing lifelong care', 'Family Care – A Partnership Making A difference', 'Family Care', 'What is it if it's not grief' and 'Conflict of Caring Cultures', with these and his presentations at public forums, on radio and at conferences attracted international attention and local acclaim by participants, listeners, agencies and service providers.

Following his stroke in July, 2023, Terry was discharged in September, 2023 with personal care provided by his daughters Elyce and Emilia and with assistance provided for him to sustain his relationship with his beloved son Christopher. With his experience of the lack of visionary approach and the ignoring of sensory input areas which are fundamental to brain recovery, Terry was concerned for stroke patients and their carers. Terry has now written 'Stroke Recovery and Care Plan' to ensure that the fundamentals of recovery are understood, to assist and support stroke patients and their carers and to inform relevant practitioners.

ACTION is highly appreciative of Terry's support over decades and our members, Board and staff wish him well in his recovery and we look forward to his future publications and endeavours.



Thank You



ACTION expresses thanks for the experienced leadership, support, and guidance provided by Clare Stewart, who has served as our Board President for seven years, concluding at the end of 2023. Clare has taken on the role of Public Officer, succeeding Terry Ryan.

THANK YOU



ACTION is incredibly grateful for the strength, vision, support and dedication Kerry Parnaby has provided over many years. After more than 14 years of intermittent service on ACTION's board, including her recent role as Vice President, Kerry has made a lasting impact as a strong advocate for our mission and values. Her personal experience as a parent of a person with a disability has fueled her passion for our work and the support we offer to our community.

As Kerry concludes her final year on the board, we wish her all the best. She will remain a valued member of the ACTION organisation.

OUT & ABOUT



EO Taylor Bellomo, Jerome Laxale MP & Operations & Grants Coordinator Kelly Harrison Willis meet to discuss the Speak Up Campaign for Independent Advocacy.



Project Manager Lisa Duffy with Speakers Rukiya Stein from Articulate Me Now and Barrister Ben Fogarty from Black Chambers at the Disability and the Justice System Workshop.



Public Officer Clare Stewart, EO Taylor Bellomo, and former EO Christine Agius OAM attended in a seminar focused on Wills and Estate Planning for people with disability



ACTION Advocates Lindsay Jackson, Susan Parker, EO Taylor Bellomo, along with Operations & Grants Coordinator Kelly Harrison Willis, grabbed a quick moment to discuss the NDIS Review with Professor Bruce Bonyhady OAM during the DSC Conference.



L- R- Michael Rahme (Advocate), Taylor Bellomo (EO), Debbie O'Flynn (Board Treasurer), Clare Stewart (Public Officer), Betty Harris (President), Eric Cooper (Board Member) Peta Barry (Advocate), Scott Taylor (Board Member), Susan Parker (Advocate) Lisa Duffy (Project Manager), Lindsay Jackson (Advocate)

Informed & Empowered Workshop Series

Project Manager: Lisa Duffy

During the 2023/24 financial year, Action for People with Disability was successful in applying for and securing two grants funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), as part of the Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP):

1. **The DAFP Sector Development grant** provided key funding to facilitate professional supervision and training opportunities for ACTION staff members.

Staff members accessed monthly online supervision with specially trained Social Workers to build skills and awareness about their practice as independent disability advocates, as well as build skills to ensure sustainability and resilience in the sector.

Training attended included:

- Accidental Counsellor Training
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training)
- Trauma Sensitive Practice - Working with Complex Trauma
- First Aid and CPR Training
- Easy Read Training, run by the Council for Intellectual Disability

2. The DAFP Special Purposes and Projects grant aims to:

- support initiatives to assist people with disability in NSW to actively engage in their communities in a more informed and empowered way, for which alternative funding sources are not available; and
- drive quality improvement, collaboration and innovation among advocacy organisations, and to build stronger networks and learning opportunities.

Action for People with Disability fulfilled the aims of this grant by designing, coordinating, and providing 8 free community education workshops, as part of our **'Informed and Empowered'** Workshop series.

This series was built around the concepts of 'you don't know what you don't know' and 'knowledge is power' and provided opportunities for people in the Northern Sydney area to have access to targeted information about key areas that impact the disability community. The workshops provided opportunities to build community networks and relationships, as well as build knowledge and confidence to self-advocate.



Informed & Empowered Workshop Series

Project Manager: Lisa Duffy

Each workshop hosted subject matter experts in the topic area, including ACTION staff members and people with lived experience in the workshop area, as well as providing resources for additional learning. Across the 8 Informed and Empowered workshops, there were 411 registrations, with the 8 topics presented as follows:

1. Disability and Sex, Love and Dating
2. Disability and The Justice System
3. Disability and Safety
4. Disability and Mental Health
5. Disability and Education
6. Disability and Decision Making
7. Disability and Employment
8. Disability and Housing

“
This was probably the best workshop I have ever attended. I learnt a lot and continued the conversation with the speakers.
”

Feedback and testimonials from the Informed and Empowered workshop series was overwhelmingly positive, and included the following:

“
It was very informative and well-presented.
”

“
Well organised event with some great information sharing & positive connections made
”

“
I attended three “informed and empowered” workshops run by ACTION and I am so grateful for the three days. I am a single mum caring for a son with Autism. Life with disabilities has been very challenging, isolating and exhausting. At the workshops I learned so much about education, employment and decisions making which were like torches lighting up the dark nights. The presenters and speakers showed me that there is hope, and quality of life can be improved even with disabilities. I made friends with another autism mum and connected with some services providers. The uplifting experience stay with me for the rest of the year. Lisa showed that there are people in the community that care. I look forward to next years workshops which I can attend to fill up my other knowledge gaps and connect with others.
”

WORKSHOPS

CLEAR PATHWAYS: NAVIGATING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A LEARNING DISABILITY

Workshop developed & delivered by: Michael Rahme & Susan Parker



This workshop aims to empower parents and caregivers by informing them of their child's rights and the adjustments and supports available to them while navigating the education system for children with learning disabilities.

“ I thought it was excellent and very positive. I loved that it gives hope and does not focus on the negatives. I feel hope! ”

AGEING & DISABILITY RIGHTS AND SELF ADVOCACY WORKSHOP

Workshop developed by: Lindsay Jackson & Kelly Harrison Willis



Ageing & Disability Rights and Self-Advocacy Workshop

This workshop was designed to inform the Ku-ring-gai Community about their rights, how to advocate for those rights, and where to voice their concerns. Additionally, it provides valuable information on how to engage the community and gather support for ideas aimed at instigating change.

WORKSHOPS

DISABILITY AWARENESS TRAINING

Workshop developed by: Lindsay Jackson

Delivered by: Susan Parker, Michael Rahme & Kelly Willis

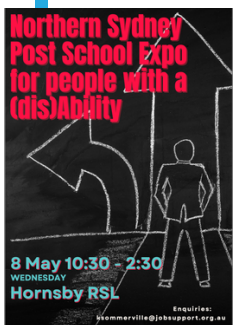
The Disability Awareness Training was created to help breakdown stigmas and barriers in the community. ACTION believes that by enhancing people's understanding of disability and the impact disability can have on individuals in their community can improve accessibility and support for people with disability.

Disability awareness is extremely important and although I believe we've come a long way there is still a long way to go, so training like yours is extremely important.

OUTREACH



ACTION created a communication package and distributed it via email to all public schools in the Northern Sydney Region. This initiative aims to inform parents and students about the advocacy services we offer and the support available to help children with disability achieve equitable access to education.



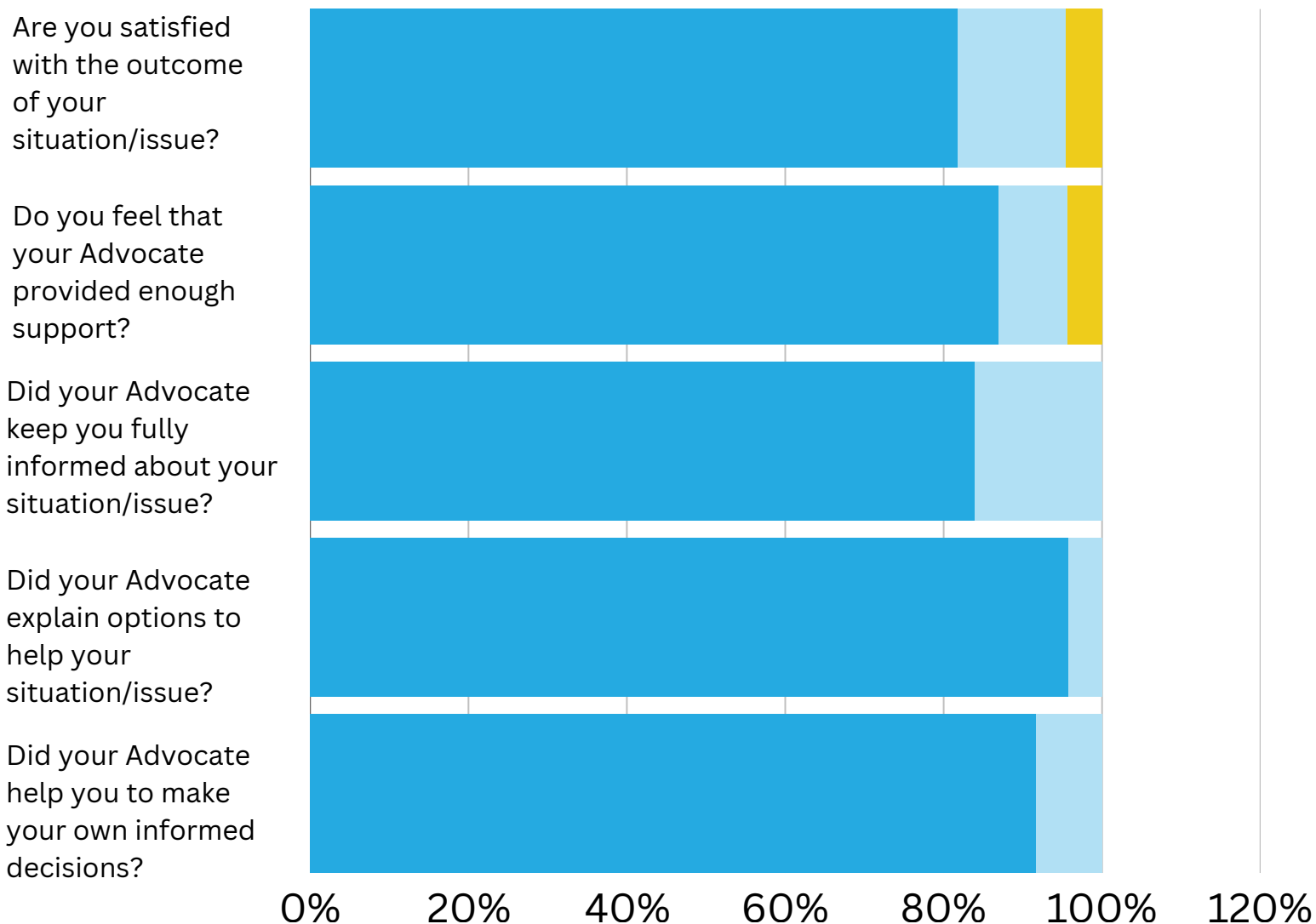
ACTION participated as a stallholder at the Northern Sydney Post School Expo for people with disability. We engaged in conversations with numerous school leavers and their parents about the significance of advocacy and how an advocate can support a person with a disability as they transition into the workforce or pursue further studies.



ACTION was invited by Services Australia to participate in the Northern Sydney Multicultural Disability Network Meeting, where we provided insights about ACTION and discussed when government organizations should suggest the involvement of an advocate.

OUR IMPACT

● YES ● UNSURE ● NO



Comments:

“This organisation and the incredible support we received literally changed our lives. LITERALLY!”

“(Advocate) stepping into our lives has shown me what true respect and care for our child looks likes. A belief in her and giving her agency over her future whilst listening to us as parents and also imparting his own lived experience and drawing on his research and experts in the field to best support us.. he is a very special individual with endless patience and importantly a sincere and genuine passion and desire to see the best outcomes for children like mine.”

“I can’t thank you enough for all the support you have given us and being on the journey to assist (Client) to live his best life. You built up a really great rapport with (Client) you always have had his best interest at heart, and I can’t thank you enough for that.

I wish you well and hope to see you in the future but it’s good to know you are out there doing what you do to support others who need your help”

STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM



Felicity Penze

“I have loved spending my placement with likeminded people who share the same vision and hope for this community that we work within. Working with you all has confirmed this thought that I’ve been having for a while that the industry and society as a whole is about to make some pivotal and positive attitudinal changes, I can feel it in my bones! You have all inspired so many ideas, thinking and reflection for me that I can’t wait to delve into now. I’m excited to get back into my passion of supporting people my age.

Death to colouring in sheets!

More life to the night club!

Thank you all for teaching me how to turbo charge this advocacy.

Keep up the life changing work.”



Kailash Karel

“My placement at ACTION has provided me with valuable insights into the challenges faced by people with disabilities in our society. I have gained a deep understanding of the importance of advocacy and the positive impact it has on the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. This experience was both enriching and inspiring, as I had the opportunity to learn from highly skilled professionals, empathetic advocates, and individuals with lived experience. Their dedication to creating meaningful change within the Northern Sydney community has profoundly shaped my understanding of effective support and empowerment strategies.”



Connor Monroe

Working at Action taught me that true empowerment comes from listening to people's stories and recognizing the unique strengths they bring. I learned that advocacy is not only about addressing immediate needs but also about fostering long-term independence through capacity building and respect.

ACTION would like to thank Felicity, Kailash, and Connor for their dedication and active involvement throughout their placement. We hope that the knowledge and experience gained will guide you toward rewarding careers and empower you to make a positive impact in the world.

ACTION would also like to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to **Katelyn Freestone**, who completed her Business Administration Placement with us and offered invaluable support on an administrative project.

SUPPORT ACTION

We are grateful to each and every person and organisation who supports ACTION's vision, mission and objectives. If you would like to support ACTION, there are many ways you can help us continue to provide our independent advocacy for people with disability in Northern Sydney.

ACTION gratefully receives our funding from the New South Wales government through the Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP).



BECOME A MEMBER

ACTION's members are an essential part of our organisation, allowing us to have a stronger presence and voice in the community. Membership of the organisation is through application and the payment of an annual membership fee.

Simply head to the membership page on our website.



MAKE A DONATION

As a registered charity we accept financial support to augment government funding so that we can continue to meet the ever-increasing demand for advocacy for people with disability. Every dollar donated can help an individual and/or their family through times of crisis. A donation of \$2 or more is tax deductible. You can donate securely by clicking the donate now button on our website.



VOLUNTEER

The gift of your time, talents or expertise is warmly appreciated and helps us continue our important work. You can volunteer on a one-off or regular basis, for a specific project, or anything in between. Many of our volunteers are people with disability or family members of the people we support. To find out more about how you can help ACTION, call us on 02 9449 5355.



Contact Us

*Action for People with Disability
provides independent, individual
advocacy to people living in the
Northern Region of Sydney.*

If you have any questions, need further clarification on this report or if you or someone you know needs an advocate please don't hesitate to contact us.

Phone Number
02 9449 5355

Website
www.actionadvocacy.org.au

E-mail
office@actionadvocacy.org.au