

Annual Report 2023





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 a safe and accessible space for us to provide our service to the community.

CONTACT US



Action For People With Disability provides independent individual advocacy and support for people with disability in the Northern Region of Sydney.

If you or someone you know requires an advocate, please don't hesitate to contact us.

WEBSITE

www.actionadvocacy.org.au

PHONE

02 9449 5355

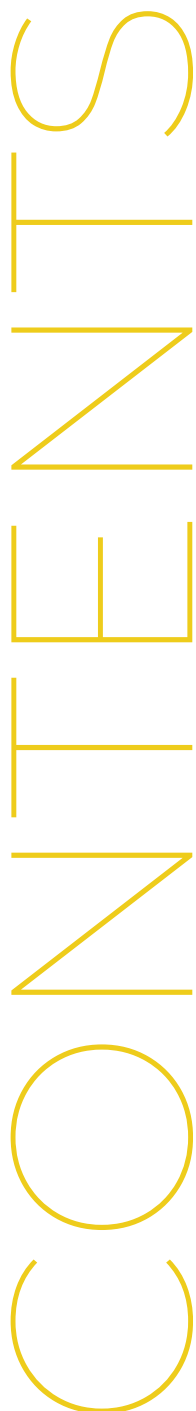
ADDRESS

Corner of Mona Vale Road
& Rosedale Road
St Ives NSW 2075
Australia

SOCIAL MEDIA

[Facebook: Action For People with Disability](#)

[Instagram: Action For People with Disability](#)



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OUR VISION

Our vision is built on our foundational commitment and belief that people with disability have the same rights as all other people.

We believe that the physical, emotional, educational, economic and social wellbeing needs of people with disability are best met in environments which:

- Reflect rights rather than privilege
- Include rather than segregate
- Reflect the status of people with disability as valued citizens.
- Ensure that people with disability are treated with respect and dignity
- Are the most advantageous for people with disability and do not impose inappropriate restrictions.

OUR MISSION

To speak, act or write with minimum conflict of interest in order to promote, protect and defend the rights and interests of people with disability and to meet their needs in the northern metropolitan region of Sydney.



OUR OBJECTIVES



- 01 Offering independent advocacy and support to people with disability and support for their families.
- 02 Promoting opportunities for people with disability to speak for themselves and to make informed decisions.
- 03 Communicating the rights and interests of people with disability to people in both government and non-government services.
- 04 Pressing for government and non-government services to achieve valued roles for people with disability.
- 05 Developing an awareness of, and acceptance by, the general public of contributions, rights and interests of people with disability.
- 06 Promoting new ways of supporting people with disability to further achieve valued roles in the community.
- 07 Consulting and actively seeking the views of people with disability and, where suitable, their families to remain informed about real-life experiences of people with disability, the barriers to people with disability achieving valued roles in the community and ways of addressing these.

OUR TEAM



Taylor Bellomo
Chief Executive
Officer



Jacob Basken
Chief Financial
Officer



Leanne Hastings
Human Resources



Susan Parker
Advocate



Peta Barry
Advocate



Lindsay Jackson
Advocate



Kelly Harrison Willis
Executive Assistant

OUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Clare Stewart
President



Betty Harris
Vice President



Debbie O'Flynn
Treasurer



Robyn Chapman
Secretary



Alejandra Rosales
Member



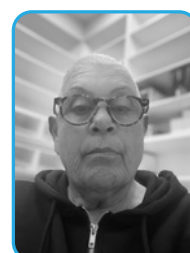
Rita Kolano
Member



Eric Cooper
Member



Fiona Anthony
Member



Serena Marinucci
Member

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Hello ACTION members

This is my final letter as ACTION's President, as I step down after 7 years at the helm.

It has been a turbulent and at times difficult 7 years, as ACTION faced the real prospect of having its funding withdrawn. The work undertaken by NSW advocacy organisations, who formed the 'Stand By Me' group and spearheaded the campaign, led to the review of disability advocacy undertaken by Commissioner Fitzgerald. That review resulted in the recognition of the value of advocacy and the ongoing commitment of the NSW Government to fund this vital support.

I am so pleased that as I now step down from ACTION's board, the organisation is in a secure position of growth and development. The team at ACTION is growing and there are a number of exciting new programs in development, and I am looking forward to attending some valuable information sessions and training programs that will be presented by ACTION in 2024.

For ACTION, overarching these achievements, is, and always will be, the focus on providing independent individual advocacy to people with disability. Personally, my own family has in the past benefited enormously from having an advocate to make sure that my sons voice was heard, and his rights were upheld. This experience drives the commitment of all of ACTION's committee members. Every person who holds a position on ACTION's management committee is a person with disability, or a person providing direct support to an immediate family member with disability. This ensures that ACTION continues to keep people with disability at the centre of everything we do.

It has been an honour to work alongside such a strong and supportive Management Committee with very clear understanding of the need for independence in advocacy, and with highly skilled staff who continuously display their commitment to their important work.

I look forward to seeing the future of ACTION.

Thank you.

CLARE STEWART
PRESIDENT



EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



The 2022-2023 year has been one of growth for ACTION. The Disability Advocacy Futures Program funding provided by the NSW Government has enabled ACTION to continue to provide vital advocacy and support for people with disability.

This year ACTION's advocates have supported our clients with disability in court rooms, police stations, school meetings, meetings with service providers, mental health facilities and workplaces providing a cost-free service that supports people to have their voices heard and achieve equity of access through some of the toughest challenges they face.



In 2023, ACTION accomplished the following:

- Secured a number of new funding grants to support existing and new programs.
- Obtained funding through the Department of Education to increase our advocacy for school students with disability.
- Employed 2 new Advocates to increase our advocacy delivery and reduce the existing waitlist for advocacy and support in the Northern region of Sydney.
- Employed a Project Manager to develop, plan, and deliver face-to-face information sessions for people with disability. Collaboration with experts in our community enable a targeted set of workshops that are both informative, and interactive, acting as a 'one stop shop' for people with a disability to obtain specialised information and legal advice, on housing, education, financial and legal matters.
- Increased public awareness of the needs of people with disability through advocacy and outreach efforts, including through developing and delivering disability awareness training.

These positive outcomes were made possible by our team of skilled and dedicated staff and driven by a management committee who are united in their commitment to obtaining positive outcomes for people with disability. I am grateful to ACTION's President Clare Stewart who steps down from her role after 7 years of invaluable organisational guidance and commitment. Clare's insightful and calm support will be greatly missed.

As ACTION enters its 45th year of providing vital advocacy and support, I am looking to 2024 with energy, and a vision for continued growth and development for this organisation with a long and proud history.



Susan
Parker

I have had a long association with ACTION – which has included but is not limited to completing my third year as paid Advocate for this organization

I continue to advocate on a wide variety of equity issues for people with disability such as finding appropriate housing and accommodation. In 2023, Action was funded by the NSW Department of Education through the Disability Advocacy Futures Program to engage in educational workshops, to understand the educational philosophy of inclusion, and the NSW Educational policies and procedures that facilitate inclusion in the educational setting.

I have been involved in an increasing number of Financial Guardianship Tribunal Issues and Public Guardianship issues, as people with a disability seek to have autonomy over their lives and their decisions. I have been fortunate to be involved in a Supreme Court hearing, overturning the current Financial Manager so that the client could choose who they wanted to run the trust. I have been involved in recovering over \$300,000 inheritance that had been inappropriately spent by the Trustee of a client's inheritance. It is a joy to see people regain their autonomy over their lives and decision-making ability. I would like to thank all the legal professionals who have given their expertise to these complex matters.

Over the last year, my work in the domestic abuse, sexual assault and the justice system has increased dramatically, unfortunately reflecting the sad statistic that people with disability are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence. I have assisted domestic violence services, attended police interviews, communicated with the Office of Director of the Public Prosecutions, and attended court as a support person. It is clear there is a significant challenge of navigating these systems and achieving justice for people with disability who can be either the alleged perpetrator of the crime or the alleged victim of crime.

I look forward to 2024 with added vigour to work with a dedicated team, continuously learning and developing.



Peta
Barry

What a 12 months it's been since my first report as an ACTION Advocate last year! I don't think I've ever had a year fly by so quickly – I call it being 'purposefully busy'!! Looking back at my pre-ACTION life, I can't believe how ignorant and naive I was about the level of inequity in our society for people with disabilities.

As an Advocate I witness daily the many difficulties, barriers and injustices people with disability and their families face. Shock, disbelief, and outrage have been very regular emotions for me when I have met with clients to understand their advocacy needs and how ACTION could best support them.

This year I have predominately advocated for clients in Housing, Education, Finances, Guardianship and Service Provider issues. The issues are complex and multifaceted and have really tested my skills as a former lawyer. Some notable 'wins' this year have included the client who finally succeeded in obtaining accessible social housing after 10 years on the 'Priority Housing list'; the student refusing to go to school now attending regularly; improved policies and procedures for a client hospitalized after taking another resident's medication; clawing back monies for a client scammed online. Unfortunately, positive outcomes are not always possible to achieve - for these clients they report that having an advocate made them feel that their voice was heard. This has reinforced for me the importance of individual advocacy in promoting, protecting, and supporting the rights of people with disability.

I have both delivered and attended valuable training and seminars in the Sector. Education is key in communicating the rights of people with disability and ACTION is doing some really great work in this space.

On a final note, I want to thank my wonderful colleagues at ACTION. I have learnt and continue to learn so much from them. They make going to work such a safe, supportive, and inspiring environment. I also wanted to acknowledge the wonderful support of the ACTION Management Committee – their contribution to facilitating the work we do is so valued.

Executive Assistant's Report



This year has been an eventful and fulfilling period for me, both in my personal and professional life. At the start of this year, I was tasked with completing three significant projects before commencing my maternity leave in March. These projects included the development of the Future Planning Workshop, managing the Sales Force setup, and data preparation, as well as establishing a university student placement program. While these projects were massive undertakings, they have been highly beneficial to ACTION as we progress into our next phase of growth.



In April I welcomed my twin boys and as of October I have begun my transition back to work.

My aim and focus for 2024 is to continue to support our advocates in their invaluable work as well as developing opportunities for funding and programs that contribute to making a difference in the lives of people with disability and their families.

Meet Our New Advocate



Hi, I'm Lindsay and I am a Brit who has lived in Australia for the past 5 years. My family and I have now settled here long-term.

Once my youngest child started Kindergarten I decided to retrain as a social worker, (I had previously worked in software testing), which meant a major transition back to full-time study. I'm pleased to report I'll graduate mid-2024!

Since coming to Action as a student on placement, I have been amazed at the level of passion, commitment and knowledge that exists in the team I've been working alongside. It turns out this passion and drive is infectious and has helped build in me an enjoyment and satisfaction in being able to advocate with clients and help them to claim their rights using the skills I have been developing as an advocate. I personally think advocacy is a field of social work practice where there is scope to make tangible and impactful change.

It has been a huge learning curve for me over the past few months and now I'm really looking forward to learning more from the team here as I transition to a permanent position.

It is an absolute privilege to be joining ACTION as an advocate.

20
23

THE ROYAL COMMISSION



The Royal Commission into Violence, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.



This year the final report from the Royal Commission into Violence, Neglect and Exploitation of People with disability was released. This Royal Commission gave people with disability the opportunity to share their stories, experiences and to identify areas and systems that require great change.

ACTION made a submission on behalf of the organisation along with staff and management committee members making their own individual submissions.

Action also provided assistance to several members of our community who wished to make their own submission.

222 recommendations have now been handed down and ACTION looks forward to seeing the government's response and commitment for change.

Fast Figures

- **32** public hearings with evidence from 837 witnesses
- **1785** private sessions, where over 60% of participants were people with disability.
- **7944** submissions from people with disability and 29% from family members.
- **14** issues papers, with 710 responses.
- **700**-plus community engagement activities, with 374 events held for First Nations people with disability.
- **16,940** enquiries via phone and email by 31 December 2022.
- **12** policy roundtables or workshops with stakeholders.
- **28** research reports

Our Achievements



Last year, we identified three key areas where we aimed to offer additional support and resources to people with disability in our community. These areas were Future Planning, Fair and Reasonable Access to Justice, and Equity of Access to Education. We are happy to announce that ACTION has fulfilled all three calls to action, as well as taken advantage of several additional opportunities that arose in 2023.

Disability Outreach

This year, we've continued our dedication to community outreach through our participation in three expos. These events, namely the Northern Sydney Expo, the Multicultural Disability Expo, and the NYSD Disability Expo offer a diverse range of products and services aimed at breaking down barriers and enhancing access to the community for people with disability.

At ACTION, we're committed to spreading the word about the power of advocacy and ensuring our community is aware of the support we provide. We'd like to extend our gratitude to Lyn Allen, whose voluntary service allowed us to offer an additional level of approachable, knowledgeable, and compassionate support at our stand during these events.



Susan Parker, Taylor Bellomo and Peta Barry
Advocates
Action for People with Disability



Volunteer Lyn Allen with Taylor
Bellomo CEO & Advocate
Action for People with Disability

Our Achievements



Future Planning Workshop

ACTION delivered a cost-free Future Planning workshop for people with disability and their families at Hornsby RSL on 15th March 2023. The workshop was delivered to help navigate the complex and often difficult task of future planning for a person with disability. Senior lawyers Stephen Booth from Coleman Greig and Nicole Lojszczyk from Gilbert + Tobin covered everything from Wills & Trusts to medical decisions, financial management orders, power of attorney, Guardianship and much more. We offer a sincere thanks to Ku-ring-gai council for understanding the value of this workshop and sponsoring us to make it happen. A special thanks to Stephen Booth and Nicole Lojszczyk for tackling such a complex topic and provide expert advice to our attendees.



Taylor Bellomo
CEO & Advocate
Action for People with Disability



Peta Barry
Advocate
Action for People with Disability



Nicole Lojszczyk
Senior Lawyer
Gilbert + Tobin



Susan Parker
Advocate
Action for People with Disability

- **85%** of attendees were satisfied with the workshop.
- **72%** of attendees found the quality of the presentation exceeded their expectations.
- **86%** of attendees would attend another Action workshop in the future.



COLEMAN GREIG LAWYERS
YOUR FUTURE COMES **FIRST**

Our Achievements



Disability Awareness and Overview training

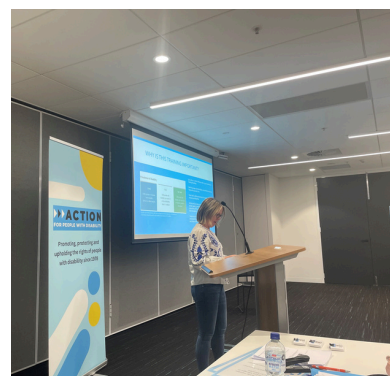
We would like to thank Hornsby Council for inviting us to deliver our recently developed Disability Awareness and Overview training program. This program is designed to give an overview of disability and the barriers that people with disability can face in our community. It is designed to combat misinformation, create awareness and foster understanding which we hope leads to a shift in attitudes and provide the tools to break down barriers.



Action Advocates with Mark Powell and Julie Manning from Hornsby Council
Action for People with Disability



Taylor Bellomo
CEO & Advocate
Action for People with Disability



Lindsay Jackson
Advocate
Action for People with Disability

“Great session. Very informative without info overload. Moved at a great pace.”

“This training made me think more about unconscious bias and how I may be unintentionally putting people into categories or not fully thinking about disability and people with disability in day-to-day life and some of the cases we deal with. It has been very beneficial to be made more aware of the prevalence of disability in society and some of the categories and how we could assist people better who may have a disability.”

“Very informative. Excellent presentation and speakers”

88% of attendees now feel more confident to interact and work with people with disability in an informed manner.

94% of attendees were satisfied with the content of the course.

92% of attendees feel they have a better understanding of the concept of disability.

Our Achievements



Student Placement Program

ACTION's University student placement program has been a truly gratifying and enlightening experience. We have taken great pleasure in hosting students at our office, sharing our passion for advocacy, and imparting the knowledge and expertise gained from 45 years of Disability Advocacy work. In 2023, ACTION had the privilege of hosting three university students from the Western Sydney and Sydney University, providing 1600 hours of in-field training and development.

Our students were not only here to learn from us, they also brought a tremendous amount of fresh perspective and enthusiasm to our office. As a result, we have a renewed sense of optimism in the future of social justice and change.



Western Sydney
University

Department of Education Funding

ACTION was provided funding from the Department of Education to increase our advocacy for students in the education system, strengthen our connections with schools and support personnel, offer assistance to students with disabilities and their families in navigating the education system, and enhance access to the Disability Advocacy Futures Program within the education community.



Australian Government
Department of Education

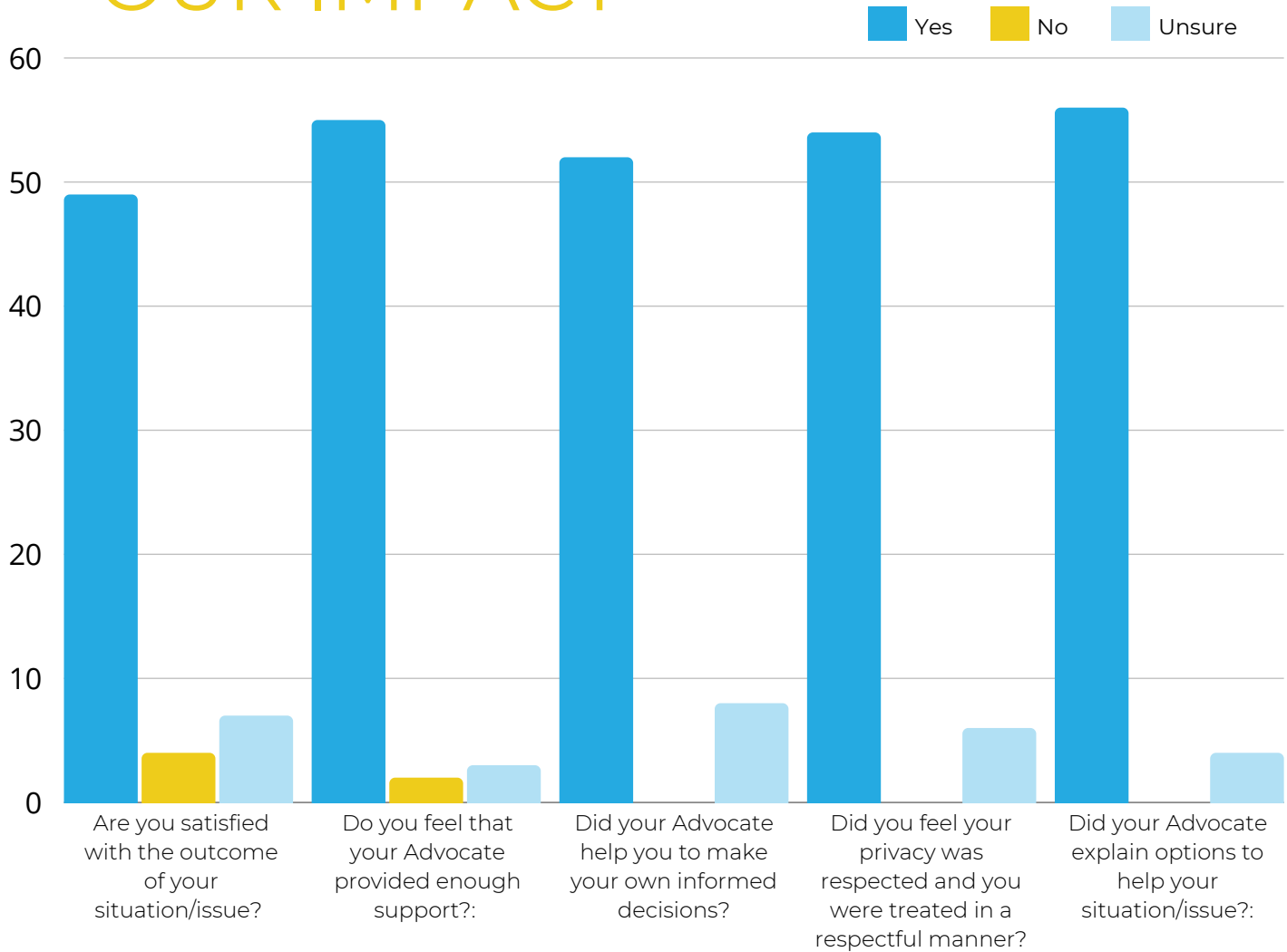
Successful Grant Applications

ACTION has secured three grants to support people with disability, including a cost-free advocacy drop-in center, a workshop to help parents seeking equitable education access, and training for advocates to better support people with psychosocial disability.



Communities and Justice

OUR IMPACT



COMMENTS

“Already have and will continue to recommend Action. Keep up the wonderful work you do. “

“Peta did a great job in supporting us and we feel in a much better place to work with the school and get the best outcome for our son.”

“Taylor and Action Team,
Thank you very much for your time, patience and so needed knowledge provided, without it we would not be able to help our son! Highly recommended to all families needing help navigating disability services and government agencies.”

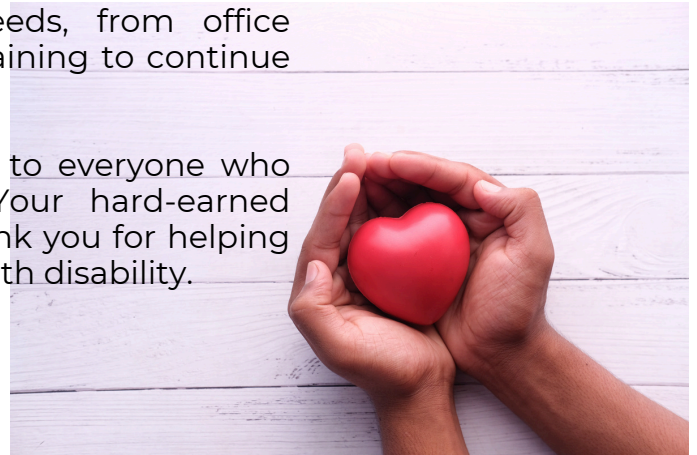
DONATIONS



ACTION has been fortunate enough to receive many generous donations this year. These contributions, no matter the size, have significantly impacted our organisation.

Every donation goes towards essential needs, from office supplies to outreach efforts, as well as staff training to continue growing the knowledge of our team.

The team at ACTION are immensely grateful to everyone who contributed to our organisation in 2023. Your hard-earned donation has not gone unnoticed, and we thank you for helping us to make a difference in the lives of people with disability.



MEMBERSHIP

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our ACTION members, both existing and new.

Your unwavering support and contributions play an instrumental role in empowering our organisation.

Our collective voice is amplified, thanks to your continued patronage.

Once again, thank you for being an integral part of our community, and for helping us make a positive impact.

IN-KIND DONATIONS

We at ACTION would like to express our profound gratitude for the generosity exhibited through the in-kind donations we received in 2023. Your contributions and dedication have enabled us to dream big and achieve. We remain committed to our mission, and your continued support is invaluable.



Special thanks to:

Our Management Committee
Tiffany Smyth
Lyn Allen
Jenny Young



Action for People with Disability Incorporated

ABN 73 393 583 996

Financial Statements
For the Year Ended 30 June 2023



Clear pathways - Navigating the school system when your child has a learning disability

ACTION has seen a huge unmet need in our community to assist parents of children with learning disabilities that don't qualify for the NDIS. Breaking down barriers to education is not only vital to the individual and their family but essential to building healthy and inclusive communities. Thanks to Northern Beaches council, ACTION will be running a workshop to assist parents with navigating the school system and obtaining adjustments to maintain a positive relationship with school staff.



The Disability Advocacy Drop In Centre



ACTION will be running a disability drop-in center two days a month in the Ku-ring-gai Council Building at St Ives. This is where people with disability and their families can receive cost free advice from experts on matters including education, housing. Stay tuned for further details!

Upskilling For Advocates in the Area of Psychosocial Disability

We have received grant funding for our advocates to receive further training and support in the areas of mental health and psychosocial disability. As our clients' needs become more complex, we recognise that our advocates must be prepared to address these challenges effectively. This additional funding will allow our team to receive relevant training and new strategies to aid our clients.



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.

BECOME A MEMBER



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.

DONATE



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.