



ANNUAL REPORT

2022



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.

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 Our Vision & Mission

6 Our Objectives & Our Services

7-8 Who We Are

9 Membership & Donations

10 President's Report

11 Executives Officers Report

12 Advocates Report

13 Our Impact & Comments

14 Case Studies

15 Financial Report

16 A call to Action

17 Support Action

18 Thank You

OUR VISION & MISSION

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 people with disability's physical, emotional, educational, economic and social wellbeing needs 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

- Offering independent advocacy and support to people with disability and support for their families.
- Promoting opportunities for people with disability to speak for themselves and to make informed decisions.
- Communicating the rights and interests of people with disability to people in both government and non-government services.
- 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.
- Pressing for government and non-government services to achieve valued roles for people with disability.
- Developing an awareness of, and acceptance by, the general public of contributions, rights and interests of people with disability.
- Promoting new ways of supporting people with disability to further achieve valued roles in the community.

OUR SERVICES

Action had changes to their funding this year which has meant that we have been unable to advocate for Commonwealth funded issues like NDIS, AAT & DSP. We have been working hard to find additional funding for this valuable resource and will continue to work hard so we will be able to deliver this service again.

- Rights
- Discrimination
- State-funded services
- Finances
- Housing & Accommodation
- Community Inclusion
- Justice
- Disability services complaints
- Employment services
- Child protection
- Equipment & Aids
- Abuse & Neglect
- Access to services
- Transport

WHO WE ARE



Taylor Bellomo
Chief Executive
Officer



Peta Barry
Advocate



Susan Parker
Advocate



Kelly Harrison Willis
Administrator



Colette Palmisano
Office Manager

STAFF

WHO WE ARE



Clare Stewart
President



Kerry Parnaby
Vice President



Debbie O'Flynn
Treasurer



Mary Mockler
Secretary



Serena Marinucci
Member



Eric Cooper
Member



Alejandra Rosales
Member



Rita Kolano
Member



Betty Harris
Member

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



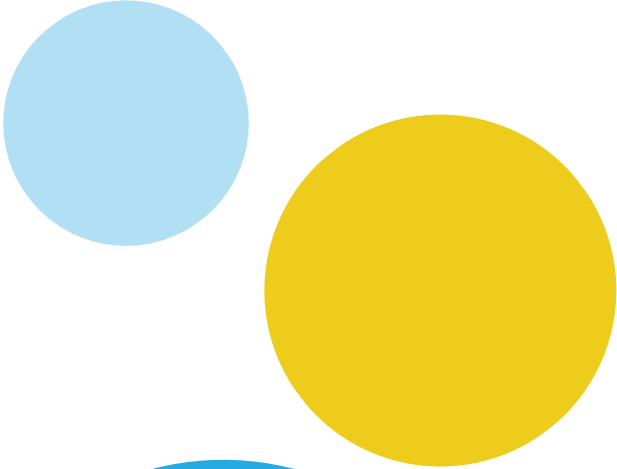
MEMBERSHIP

Our members make a valuable contribution to *Action*. The true power of membership lies in strengthening our voice in our community. We would like to offer a sincere thank you to all our members.

You help us make a difference!

Our sincerest thanks to all our donors. Big or small every cent makes a difference!

The Andrew McDonald Trust
Anne Verner
Belinda Sims
Brendan Hull
Carole Walters
Clare Stewart
Colette Palmisano
Edwina Guinan
Gavin Schwarcz
Kelly Harrison Willis
Leanne Hastings
Lindsay & Celeste Showyin
Margaret Veal
Mary Mockler
Robyn Chapman
Steven Allman
Harry Guinan
Daniel Zachariou
Riccardo Pignotti
Serena Marinucci
Stone Real Estate
Sam Carson
Parnaby Family



DONATIONS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past 5 years that I have been President of *Action*, have certainly been filled with change. During these years *Action* faced the genuine possibility of the NSW Government withdrawing their funding for provision of advocacy. It was a hard-fought battle from the sector to ensure that people with disability would continue receiving this vital support through organisations like *Action*, that have a wealth of experience and knowledge.

It was a relief when the NSW Government confirmed their commitment to continue funding advocacy across the state, yet there was still uncertainty about how this funding would be allocated. *Action* entered into a competitive tender process during 2021 and was successful in securing funding through the Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) which means that *Action* is now funded until 30th June 2024.

It is a testament to the staff at *Action* that during this time of upheaval and uncertainty their commitment to their role never wavered. The organisation has delivered individual advocacy and support to more than 400 people with disability during the year and provided information and support to hundreds more.

Action is a small organisation, and some people may make the mistake of underestimating the impact that this organisation has on the lives of people with disability. *Action* is embedded in the local community that it serves, and the advocates regularly receive calls from people with disability in times of crisis and can be by their side in Police stations, hospitals and attend meetings in real time. I personally hear feedback from families who have told me that without the advocacy provided by *Action* they would have had nowhere else to turn, and that having an advocate by their side has been life changing.

Receiving the DAFP funding enabled *Action* to hire a new advocate Peta Barry. Peta is a lawyer with over 20 years' experience in the commercial sector working in private law firms, and has lived experience of disability, having a sister with Down syndrome a niece with significant disability diagnosis. Peta has already shown the positive way her skillset and commitment will impact both the organisation and the people we support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Colette, *Action's* Office Manager who has finished in her role after almost 6 years.

Next year is my 6th year as *Action's* President, and as such, this will be my last year delivering you this report as I will step down at the end of 2023 and hand over the role of President to a new person. Renewal of leadership for any board is a positive thing and I look forward to seeing the direction they will help take *Action* in.



Ms Clare Stewart
President

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Hello,

2021-2022 has been a year of significant change for *Action*! We finished the last financial year facing a competitive tender process to secure ongoing funding for individual advocacy from the NSW Government. *Action* was successful in our tender bid and is now funded under the Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP) to provide independent individual advocacy until 30th June, 2024. We are grateful for the commitment from the state government to continue to fund this vital work for people with disability.

Action's advocates have achieved hundreds of positive outcomes for people with disability during the past year. *Action's* advocacy supports people with disability to achieve equity of access in all government and social systems, such as accommodation, education, health, justice, employment, and transport among many others. Through independent advocacy *Action's* input has helped people with disability to secure appropriate housing, return to school or work, obtain appropriate medical care, seek justice and more. We have sat next to people with disability in doctors' offices, school meetings, court rooms, guardianship reviews, at local councils, opposite lawyers, in mental health facilities, tribunals, across from service providers and fought to ensure that they have their voice heard and their viewpoint held at the forefront of decision making.

Amongst the many wins, the reality of the ongoing barriers to equitable access that people with disability face every day remain present. There is an increase in requests for advocacy for children with disability who are being prevented from accessing an appropriate education. There is a significant lack of safe housing options, and we receive many requests for advocacy from people with disability who are homeless. There has been an increase during this year of people with disability who have disclosed to us that they are victims of physical and sexual abuse and domestic violence. We have assisted these survivors to make Police reports, to relocate homes, linked them in with specialist domestic violence services and attended Court, either as a support person or as a subpoenaed witness. The significant challenge of navigating these systems and achieving justice for people with disability who are the victim of crime is a sobering reminder that our society still has far to go in achieving equity.

This work is meaningful and important. It is also challenging. That is why I am so thankful to have the skilled team of staff at *Action* that I do. During this year Sue, Peta, Colette and Kelly have shown their commitment to working to improve outcomes for people with disability and have worked with me to achieve these results. I want to thank each one of them for their dedication, support, and positive attitude.



TAYLOR BELLOMO
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

ADVOCATE'S REPORTS



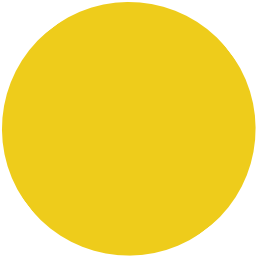
Susan Parker

I have experienced a long association with *Action* –over 10 years as parent working alongside ACTION advocating for my children and over 4 years working on *Action's* management committee helping to steer the organisation into a new era. I have been fortunate to be engaged as an Advocate for *Action* for over 2 years.

Over the last year, I have worked on advocacy cases involving, housing and accommodation, NDIS access, Financial Discrimination and Guardianship Issues. Unfortunately, there have also been clients who have who experienced domestic abuse and sexual assault, where there is considerable help required for equity of access to the justice system. Equity of access to Education is another prominent advocacy issue with at least 1 one client of mine per month experiencing significant difficulty gaining reasonable adjustments in schooling settings which can often result in escalating behaviours and in schools imposing restrictive practices. In all areas of advocacy, I provide a wide range of services, such as arranging and attending appointments, sending formal letters, liaising and negotiating with stakeholders, and providing information and resources. As part of the Continuous Improvement Policy, I have been involved in several learning and development experiences which will aid my advocacy work in the future. I thank all staff and Management Committee for their support and look forward to the year ahead

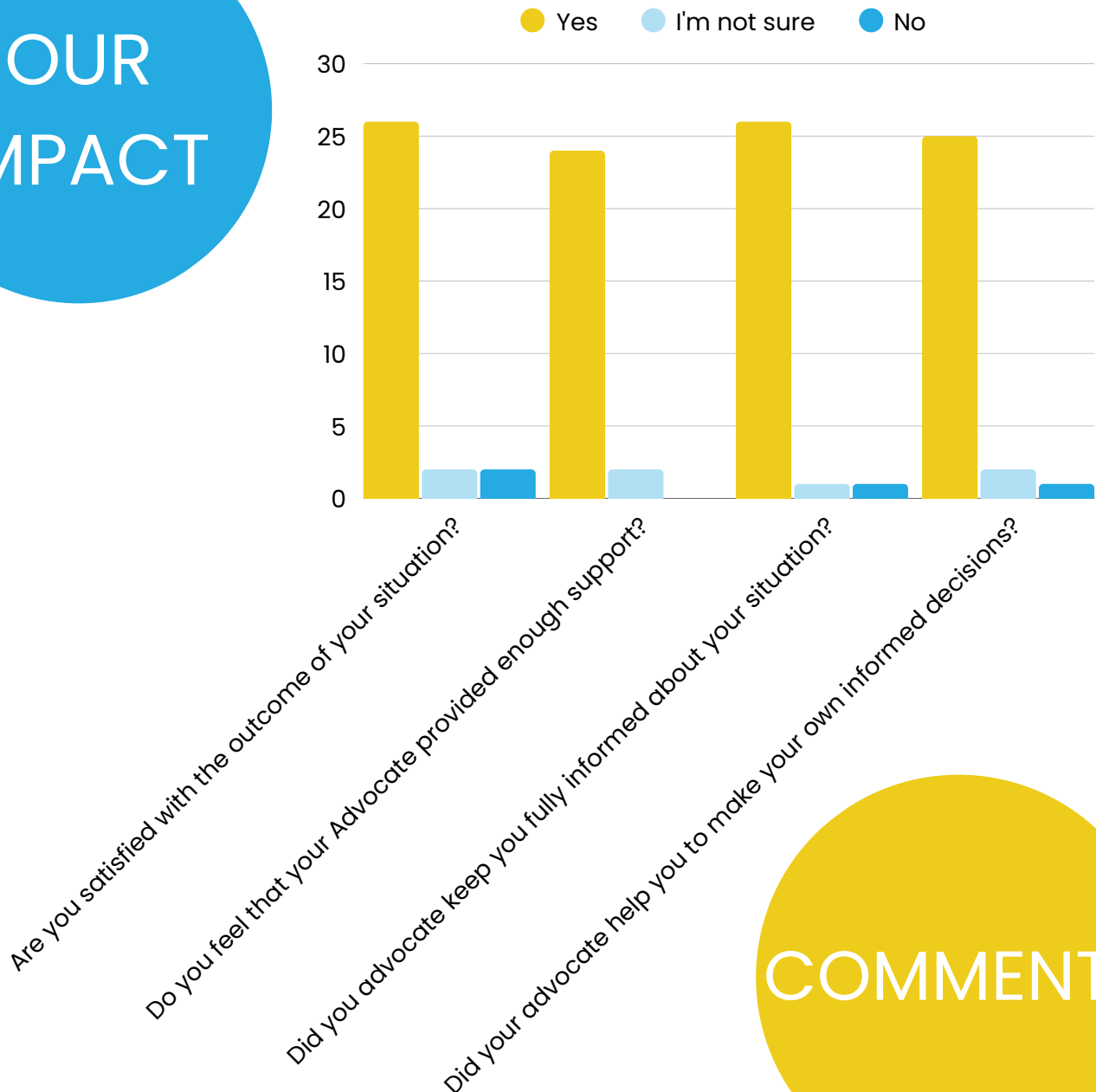


Peta Barry



Commencing work as an Advocate with *Action* in late June 2022 has been life changing for me both professionally and personally. After nearly 25 years as a qualified lawyer in commercial practice I felt like so many others, that COVID was the impetus to make some long overdue changes. This appeared in the form of an online job advertisement entitled: "Are you passionate about advocating for people with disability?". Having a sister with Down syndrome and a niece with significant disabilities I didn't have to read any further – I wanted the job!! It will only be just over 4 months since I started when you read this report, but I honestly feel like I have been part of the *Action* family for so much longer. This is because my talented and dedicated colleagues, our wonderful clients, their families and supporters, you our amazing members and the Management committee have made me feel so welcomed and valued. I am so lucky to witness first-hand passion commitment resilience and courage every day that I go to work, but the flip side is I also witness the frustrations disappointments fatigue and injustices too. This is why I feel so empowered and privileged to be asked to walk beside and support people who inspire me on so many levels to assert, promote and protect the rights of people with disability. To date I have advocated for *Action* clients in the areas of housing, finance, education, health and justice and we've had some 'wins' already. I'm so looking forward to the next 12 months working in this fabulous organisation and seeing what can be achieved.

OUR IMPACT



COMMENTS

Susan's experience and consistency shines through

Action let me feel heard

Action game-changed the family situation through creating positive change in our circumstances.

Without *Action* we would be none the wiser of what is available to us. We would have thought we had achieved the best outcome when there was much more available.

Action achieved the best possible outcome for me I feel that I would never have achieved on my own.

CASE STUDIES

Case 1

John has a daughter Fiona with a physical and intellectual disability and is her sole guardian and informal support. As John reaches his late 80's he wants to make sure that he has a clear plan for Fiona's future when he is no longer able or around to make those important life decisions.

In John's initial meeting with *Action* he expressed his frustration and anxiety about finding the correct information to make sure that his wishes were followed and the plan that he set in place for Fiona would be activated.

The *Action* advocate set about finding a barrister-in-law that specialised in Disability Trusts and Wills. Over a couple of meetings, the advocate helped John to communicate his wishes and they were put into a legal framework to ensure that Fiona's future was planned effectively, and John could take comfort in the fact that he had done all he could to secure a well supported future for Fiona.

Case 2

Chrissy is a teenage girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder living in Sydney's Northern Beaches. Her parent's contacted Action as Chrissy's school had failed to make reasonable educational adjustments which had resulted in significant behavioural issues at school, where in was a incident where police and medical intervention was used. This incident resulted in a recorded suspension.

In the initial meeting Chrissy's parents expressed they needed advocacy in developing the Behavioural Management Plan in line with curriculum adjustments and behavioural management suggestions, appealing the suspension notice and developing a collaborative transition plan to get Chrissy back to school.

The Action Advocate held several meetings with the school, consulted with specialists, spent considerable time in consultation with transitioning Chrissy back to school. However, due to covid restrictions, management changes and the disruptions of getting Chrissy back to school. The Advocate is still working with Chrissy's parents to ensure Chrissy has equity of access to education.



FINANCIAL REPORT

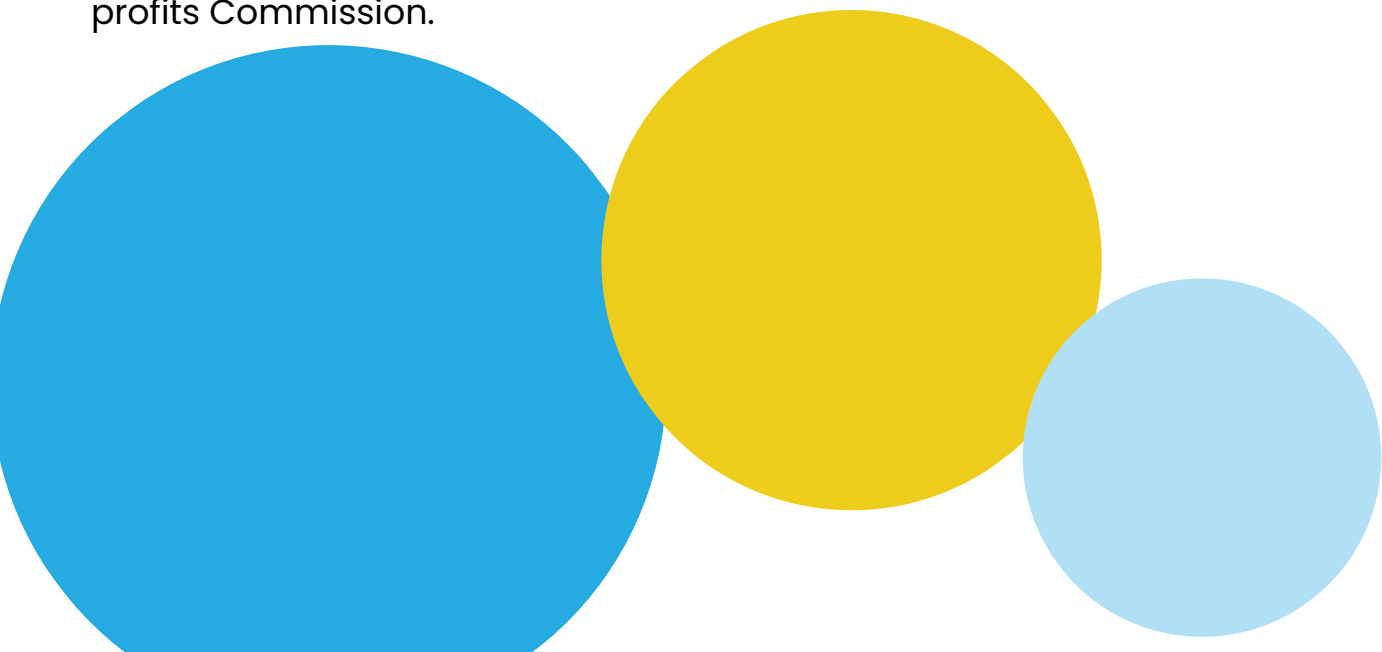
Action reported an income of \$539,337 for the financial year, with \$214,508 being allocated to DA NSW as part of the subcontracting agreement for the NSW Disability Futures Program (DAFP) for delivering advocacy on the central coast.

Action has reported a financial deficit for the year ended 30 June 2022 of \$58,377.00

The NSW Disability Futures Program (DAFP) has replaced our previous funding stream from NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ).

Our advocacy workforce continues to be our most valuable asset. Employment costs represent 76% of the total expenditure. Other significant expense categories comprise of administrative expenses (including rent and other overheads) representing 19% of costs, and operating expenses (such as travel and meeting costs) representing 5% of total costs.

The audited financial statements of *Action* for the year ended 30 June 2022 are available upon request or by download from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.



A CALL TO ACTION!

We are led to find solutions to issues and barriers within in our community by the people we support and their families. In the past few months, we have had three issues stand out to us: Equitable Access to the Justice System, Future Planning and Equity of Access to Education. We continue to look for additional funding to work towards making meaningful change in these areas. If you have any suggestions or resources to help *Action* get these projects off the ground, please contact Kelly at: admin@actionadvocacy.org.au or simply call the office.

FAIR & REASONABLE ACCESS TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Everybody deserves fair and reasonable access to the justice system. People with disability are three times more likely to become a victim of crime. This is an area often overlooked as too difficult. *Action* would like to undertake valuable systemic work in this area to help change that statistic for all people with disability.

FUTURE PLANNING

Future planning for people with disability and their families is often daunting, difficult, expensive and hard to navigate. We know because we get requests for help with this every week. We would like to make planning for the future something accessible for all members of our community.

EQUITY OF ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Education is a fundamental human right. Everybody has the right to access an education. A large portion of our advocacy takes part in the education field. Children and young people with disability still have significant difficulty in accessing a regular education at their local school. *Action* would like to undertake systemic work to address this issue.

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.



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.

www.actionadvocacy.org.au/membership



DONATE

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 on the "Donations" page of our website, available at:

www.actionadvocacy.org.au/donations-1



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 or fill out an enquiry form on our website:

www.actionadvocacy.org.au/contactus

THANK YOU



Action's Management Committee

Thank you to our Management Committee who are all volunteers who commit their time to help *Action*.

Marc Bellomo

Video Editing

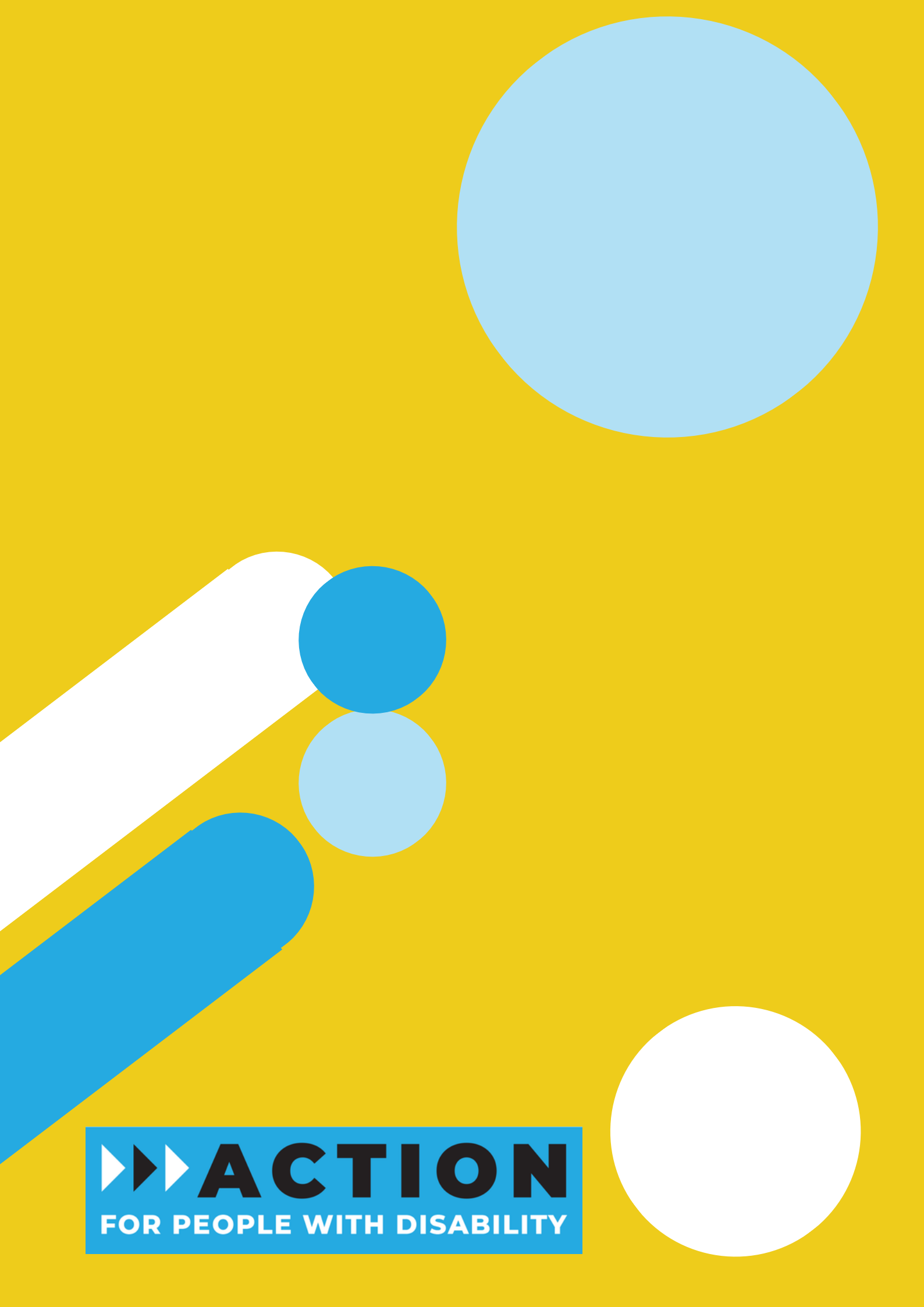
Maurice Baroni
Barrister-at-Law

Denman
Chambers

Tiffany Smyth

BAS Agent





ACTION

FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY