

ARBN: 629 441 078

ABN: 95 702 434 250

A background photograph showing a person's hands using red-handled scissors to cut a piece of paper. The person is wearing a silver metal watch and a black beaded bracelet. The table in front of them is covered with various items: a clear plastic cup, a stack of papers, a box of Post-it notes, and several sheets of paper with text and images. One sheet has the text "Could you be my hobby?" and another has "Co-ga-ci".

DISABILITY JUSTICE AUSTRALIA ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

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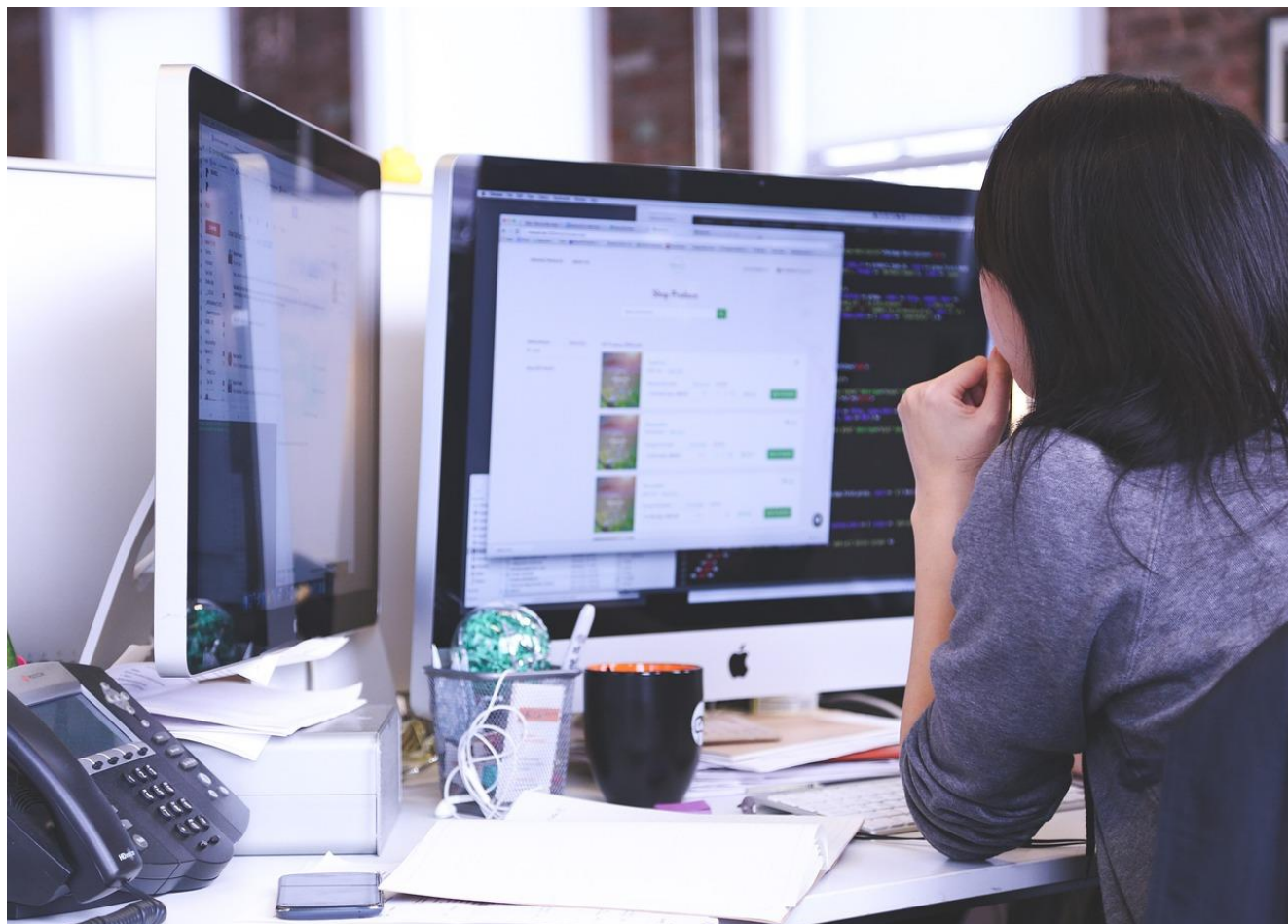
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WELCOME TO OUR 34TH ANNUAL REPORT

Disability Justice Australia acknowledges the Wurundjeri people and their Elders Past and Present of the Kulin Nation where our head office in Preston, Victoria is located. We also acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the different lands on which many of us are attending from today and pay our respects to their Elders' past, present and emerging.

WHO ARE WE?



This is the report on our 34th year of operation.

Disability Justice Australia Inc (DJA) is a Not-for-Profit agency providing Disability Advocacy and NDIS Appeals advocacy support services to people who have ongoing support needs associated with disability.

Our service is free, independent, flexible and mobile. We meet where it best suits our clients and their families, when and where it is mutually convenient.

We are totally independent and free from conflicts of interest. Our reputation is our greatest asset and word of mouth referrals from hundreds of satisfied clients continue to make us a sought-after service. Most of our members with disabilities have been former clients of our advocacy services.

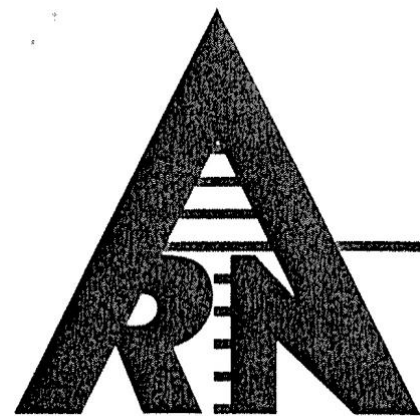
Our Vision is to be the leading provider of advocacy and support services for people with disabilities.

Our membership is diverse in the intersectionality between disability, gender, race, culture, religion, language, LGBTIQ+ status, and special interests including hobbies, the arts, dining out, cooking and being a member of a support group and many others.

OUR HISTORY

Disability Justice Australia Inc (DJA) was formed in 1990 to provide advocacy support to people with disabilities, as the result of a decision by the Spastic Society of Victoria (now known as SCOPE) which saw a need for an independent agency to provide this service.

DJA was originally known as the Action Resource Network (ARN)

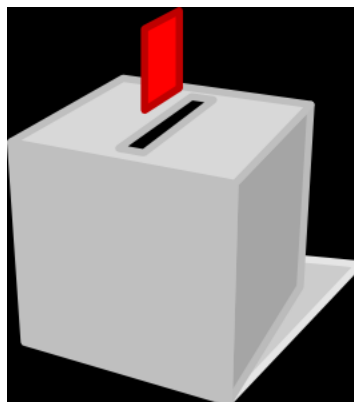


Unfortunately, “ARN” was also the initials of a garbage truck pick up service in the area where our Office was in Collingwood. So, it was felt that a name with the word “advocacy” in it would be more appropriate.

In 1995, after consultation with our members, our name was changed to Disability Justice Advocacy.

Then, on the 12 September 2018, over 85% of members voted to:

- Change our name to Disability Justice Australia Inc
- Become a national Registrable Australian Body with ASIC ([See Certificate of Registration](#))
- Make changes to our Vision, Mission, Objectives, Philosophy and Values, and
- Make minor definition changes within the constitution.



Certificate of Registration of a Registrable Australian Body

Corporations Act 2001 Sub-section 601CU(1)

This is to certify that

DISABILITY JUSTICE AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

Australian Registered Body Number 629 441 078

which was formed or incorporated in Victoria
was registered as a Registrable Australian Body.

The date of commencement of registration was
the seventeenth day of October 2018.



Given under the seal of the
Australian Securities and Investments Commission
on this seventeenth day of October, 2018.



James Shipton
Chair

CERTIFICATE

This was followed on the 21 September 2021 with an overwhelming vote of members to change our membership categories and

eligibility criteria, the Board structure, number of Board our historys and their length of service. This Report is now our 34th since we opened our doors.

So, today, DJA is a well-managed Not-for-Profit charitable organisation providing disability advocacy services to many people in need of them.

We have also provided NDIS Appeals support to Participants to lodge appeals against decisions by the NDIA in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).



However, this has already changed under the reforms introduced by the Minister, The Honourable Bill Shorten.

For the interest of members and readers of the report, from the 14 October 2024 all existing AAT Appeals and any new ones will be heard by the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), see <https://www.art.gov.au/> for more information.

DJA has been in continuous operation since 1990, and we are registered with and report to the Australian Not-for-profit Charities Commission (ACNC). See Registration Certificate below.



We are governed by a Board of Directors, all of whom have disabilities and are elected by our members with disabilities and those who are carers. The Board can invite four additional members who are carers of people with disabilities who aren't eligible for membership of DJA in their own right; for example, children under 18.

To be invited to join the Board, carers need to have the experience, knowledge and skills required to help the Board achieve its strategic objectives.

DJA has a national and international footprint through our memberships of

- The Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), and
- Disabled Peoples' International (DPI)

We have been working on a 12-month Interim Strategic Plan 2023-2024 and will soon begin developing our next longer term one.



We also have a national Systemic Advocacy footprint in such areas as:

- Accessible airline travel
- Public transport
- Disability discrimination
- People with disabilities as victims of crime, abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Relinquishment of people with disability into state care
- Facility Based respite, and
- Representation at the United Nations Conference of States Parties in New York to name a few.



At the end of this reporting period, the 30/06/2024 we had 295 members across all states and territories in Australia except the NT. In fact, we increased our membership by another 42 new Members and 27 renewals. This is an amazing achievement, but we have work to do tracking those whose memberships expired after the 2021 change to our Constitution. They remain members but cannot vote until they renew their memberships. (See the President's annual report).



Our employees and volunteers are highly committed and motivated to achieving positive outcomes for clients, and resolving problems backed up by excellent independently audited policies and procedures in place to facilitate a strong and efficient work ethic.

We also have an unblemished compliance record of independent Quality Assurance registration since 2013 against the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS). See certificate ([below](#)) and for further information please go to <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/standards-and-quality-assurance/national-standards-for-disability-services>



CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION

This is to certify that:

Disability Justice Australia Inc

ABN 95 702 434 250

Unit 2 28a Albert Street Preston VIC 3072 AUSTRALIA

complies with the requirements of the

National Standards for Disability Services - 2013

for the following scope

Providing support for people with disability overcome barriers that impact on their daily life and their ability to participate in the community. Advocacy Models Individual and Systemic.

Certificate No: HDS40210

Issued: 8 April 2022

Originally Certified: 12 May 2016

Expires: 14 May 2025

Current Certification: 25 March 2022



Calin Moldovean
President, Business Assurance
SAI Global Assurance



NSDS



WWW.JAS-ANZ.ORG/REGISTER

Registered by:
SAI Global Certification Services Pty Ltd (ACN 108 716 669) 680 George Street Sydney NSW 2000 Australia with SAI Global Limited 680 George Street Sydney NSW 2000 Australia ("SAI Global") and subject to the SAI Global Terms and Conditions for Certification. While all due care and skill was exercised in carrying out this assessment, SAI Global accepts responsibility only for proven negligence. This certificate remains the property of SAI Global and must be returned to SAI Global upon its request. To verify that this certificate is current please refer to SAI Global On-Line Certification register at <http://www.sai-global.com>



**Our next Full Certification Audit against all 6 standards is in
February 2025.**

AGM GUEST SPEAKER – AHMED KELLY, AUSTRALIAN PARALYMIAN

We are very honoured to have Ahmed as our guest speaker at this year's Annual General meeting.



Ahmed Kelly was born in Baghdad with significant disabilities in all four limbs. In 2008 Ahmed started training for swimming, and since then has been able to achieve several sporting goals, including winning his first international gold medal at last year's Para World Swimming Championships.

Just recently, Ahmed won silver at the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games. Ahmed currently holds a part time job for both ABC Radio and Telstra.

2023-24 BOARD MEMBER PROFILES



Richard Beardmore

President

DJA Member since 2022

Greetings everyone!

I am the President of DJA's Board. See more about me and what the Board has achieved in my 2023-24 Presidents report on page 22 of this Annual Report.





Ben Cocoran

Vice President

DJA Member since 2016

My name is Ben Corcoran, and I live in South Gippsland. In the past, I travelled each month to Board meetings in Melbourne. But, during the pandemic, we all attended these meetings by videoconference and have been doing so in this reporting period as well.

I have been a member of Disability Justice Australia's Board for five years. When I first started on the Board, I was in my late 20's and was elected the Vice Chairperson and held this position for three years while also jumping into the Chairperson position on the odd occasion until being elected Chairperson last financial year.

Within this role, I have had many opportunities to help with the operation and sustainability of DJA. For example, being on the selection panel for the recruitment of new staff members, and assisting in the development of our Sub-Committees, while also having attended conferences and extra training events, such as a Board Summit, and Strategic Planning meetings which assisted DJA in mapping out its future direction, and governance training sessions.

Being on the Board has given me the opportunity to express my views from the perspective of a younger person living with a disability in regional Victoria. This has been particularly useful when we have been investigating the options to expand DJA to become a national organisation.



Simon Young

Secretary

DJA Member since 2019

Formerly a research-active career academic with more than 20 years' experience, I have significant experience as an academic, practising pharmacist and business partner to the pharmaceutical industry. In my career, I have specialised in procedural matters including curricular design and review, accreditation, governance, representation and negotiation, disciplinary cases, management, and the provision of academic and pastoral support to both students and staff.

I have extensive experience in academic leadership and management and a proven track record in implementing innovation — including leading others through change processes.

Previously registered as a practising pharmacist in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, I am currently registered in Australia and

have over 30 years of experience of serving the community in the hospital, retail management and academic environments. Under confidentiality restrictions, I have experience of working with industrial, educational, and commercial partners; both on a project basis and on a consultancy basis. I am a member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

Following careers as a pharmacist and academic, I now work for Disability Justice Australia in the not-for-profit sector as an employee and consultant and as a volunteer Board member. I have a formal diagnosis and identify as Autistic. I am the father of an Autistic child with high support needs.



Paul Creswick

Board Member

DJA Member since 2018

I have a long time demonstrated passion for Social Justice (particularly those related to Inclusiveness, Accessibility and Diversity principles) with direct career experience in NDIS Support Coordination, Mentoring, Training and Individual and Systemic Advocacy with a strong understanding of the frameworks, principles and practices of Legal Advocacy.

I have formulated and applied programs encompassing IAP2 principles and practices (i.e. based on Information Provision, Consultation, Collaboration and Empowerment) that greatly enhanced the Health and Wellbeing of a disadvantaged community in Asia and while employed as Facilitator for several Self-Advocacy Groups in Victoria, Australia.

The earlier part of my career has primarily been in business development and team leadership roles in Healthcare products and service industries, including Pharmaceuticals and Harm Reduction (needle and syringe) products and associated services and extends to Marketing and Operational Management and Training and Organisation Intervention Services.

I have lived in Thailand, the Philippines and India and visited many other countries for business purposes and have proven ability to communicate and connect with a variety of people in highly regulated and diverse cultural settings.

I enjoy my role as a Board member at Disability Justice Australia and look forward to a prosperous and fulfilling year ahead.





Jim Preketes

Board Member

DJA Member since 2023

I am an experienced executive with over 25 years of experience in technology leadership and have extensive expertise collaborating with international clients in retail, financial services, cybersecurity, and IT sectors.

I specialize in complex project delivery, governance, strategic alignment, and operational management, emphasizing business scalability and effective organizational change.

In addition, I serve as a Non-Executive Director on several not-for-profit boards, focusing on ensuring compliance and driving strategic growth.





Paul Calcott

Board Member

DJA Member since 2023

I am Uncle Paul Calcott a proud descendant of the Wiradjuri peoples from central NSW.

I contracted Polio at the age of 18 months back in 1960, and this is what has driven me as an advocate for my community around disability rights.

I am recognised as a Community Elder with working knowledge of disability and sit on the Murri Court on the Sunshine Coast. I am a renowned Australian artist who has lived with a degenerative disability after I contracted polio.

As a proud Wiradjuri man growing up with disability and a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, I have first-hand experience of how intersectionality can lead to marginalization and discrimination.

As a long-time advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, I am passionate about supporting Australia's

First Peoples living with disability who are LGBTIQ+. I advocate for more culturally appropriate programs and activities for people with disability and facilitate a local art group of First Peoples artists living with disability using traditional art and storytelling to raise awareness around issues such as health, social isolation, economic participation and resilience building. In 2019, my art group held an exhibition at the United Nations in Geneva called 'Culture is Inclusion' and in 2017 I spoke at the United Nations Headquarters in New York regarding LGBTIQ+ First Nations Peoples living with disability and the intersectionality between them.

I attended the Conference of State Parties at the United Nations Convention on the Rights Of Persons with Disability at the UN headquarters in New York, along with Members of the Nuuna Ron art group and Mob4Mob, where I did a number of presentations on Disability rights from a First Nations perspective and presented art work by First nations artists with disabilities.

I was commissioned to develop the artwork for the Paralympics committee RAP, and to design the logo to be used for promotion in 2032, elements of this artwork are already being used in promotional material.

I see the Paralympians as true role models for the resilience of People with disability and modern-day Warriors.



Advocacy

PRESIDENT'S 2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



Richard Beardmore, President

About Me

Greetings everyone!

I have had the honour to be the elected President of DJA's Board during this reporting period.

I want to acknowledge that the land we occupy has never been relinquished by the traditional owners. I am also aware of the abuse, mistreatment and even deaths caused by our governments' systems of health which have failed people with disabilities. I joined

DJA's Board in 2022 after being recruited by a DJA member who felt I had gifts and abilities which would enhance DJA and its Board.

From childhood and throughout my work life, including a police career, I have experienced extensive trauma, as well as bullying. I have also been misdiagnosed by the health system and struggled to interact with the social security system. I have mental health disabilities of Anxiety and Trauma, and late-diagnosed Autism and ADHD.

My lived experience of disability means that I understand how “the way society operates” discriminates against, and damages, people with disabilities, and I can therefore empathize with them. I am on DJA's board to help others and because the commitment it asks of me is manageable

In addition to studies as part of my Police career, I have completed four certificate IV's, an undergraduate degree and two post graduate degrees, and training in ISO management systems.

When I joined the DJA board I read all its policies and procedures. I have since completed governance training and I am studying Privacy law. I have attended 11/13 Board meetings and actively participate in discussions and decision making.

I look forward to contributing to the work of DJA's Board and to ensuring its financial sustainability, good governance, and excellent strategic planning.

Our Vision

To be the leading provider of advocacy and support services for people with disabilities.

Our Philosophy

- (a) We are accessible and non-discriminatory in everything we do
- (b) We are specialists in our field with a proud history of achievement and outcomes for people with disabilities.
- (c) We have a strong commitment to disability rights.
- (d) We strive for excellence in everything we do.

Membership

At the end of this reporting period, the 30/06/2024 we had 295 members across all states and territories in Australia except the NT. In fact, we increased our membership by another 42 new Members and 27 renewals. This is an amazing achievement, but we have work to do tracking those whose memberships expired after the 2021 change to our Constitution.



There is an online sign up and renewal process at a link on our website at <https://dja.org.au/membership/> Click on the **join DJA** or **renew your membership** highlighted icons to show your support for us.

If you need help to renew your Membership or join DJA for the first time, contact the Office on 03 9474 0077.

Membership is free for all of the following three categories.

FULL MEMBERSHIP: for people with disability over 18. Can vote at any meeting of DJA and can nominate for election to the Board.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP: for parents, carers, support persons, or guardians of a person with a disability who is not a FULL Member of DJA. Can vote at any meeting of DJA and can be invited to join the Board

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP: for organisations that can't be a Full Member. There are two types: Charitable and Corporate. Members can attend meetings and support DJA in a range of activities; but have no voting rights

If you know of any individual or organisation that would like to join, please contact the DJA office Phone: (03) 9474 0077 or Email: info@dja.org.au or refer them to this link <https://dja.org.au/membership/>

BOARD MEMBERSHIP 2023-24

There were 9 Members who served on the Board of Directors. Four (4) until the last AGM on the 20/11/2023, then five (5) new members joined the Board at the AGM for the rest of this reporting period.

All Board members are volunteers but have any expense claims paid from the DJA budget.



This is the summary below of Board members and positions held.

PRE-2022-23 AGM

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| President | Ben Corcoran (he/him/his) |
| Vice President | Nimo Hersi (she/her/hers) |
| Secretary | Richard Beardmore (he/him/his) |
| Co-opted Board Member | James Warr (he/him/his) |

POST 2022-23 AGM

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| President | Richard Beardmore (he/him/his) |
| Vice President | Ben Corcoran (he/him/his) |
| Secretary | Simon Young (he/him/his) |
| Treasurer | Clare Gibellini (she/her/hers) |
| Member | Paul Calcott (he/him/his) |
| Member | Paul Creswick (he/him/his) |
| Member | Jim Preketes (he/him/his) |

BOARD CHANGES

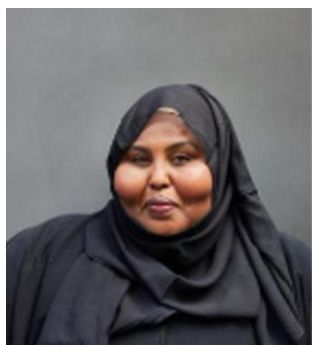
Three Board members resigned during the financial year for a range of personal and health reasons.

It is my pleasure to thank those listed below on behalf of the Board, employees, volunteers and members for their outstanding commitment and service to DJA as members of the Board of Directors. We are saddened to see them leave but we sincerely hope they will return at some time in the future.



James Warr (he/him/his) has been a DJA Member since 2017 and resigned in the week before the last AGM for personal and family reasons. He was appointed to the Board of Directors on the 03/02/2022 after serving as a Board Volunteer on the Targeted Relationships Strategy Board Sub-Committee since 2019.

James' business professional skill set, combined with excellent experience in strategic direction, driving business development opportunities and stakeholder management made him an invaluable member of the Board, additionally serving as Acting Secretary for a short period.



Nimo Hersi (she/her/hers) was recruited by the Board in October 2022 to fill a Casual Vacancy and then was elected in her own right by members at the 2022-23 AGM.

Nimo brought impressive experience to the Board as the Disability Advocacy Coordinator for the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Incorporated but resigned before the last AGM for personal and health reasons.



Clare Gibellini (she/her/hers) joined DJA in October 2023 then self-nominated for election to the Board for the 2022-23 AGM and was subsequently elected as Treasurer.

Clare has an outstanding record as a national and international disability advocate and was our first ever Board director elected from WA.

Clare resigned in April 2024 due to health reasons, leaving the Treasurer's position temporarily vacant until the Election of Office Bearers which takes place after the 2023-24 AGM.

**On behalf of the Board, staff and members, I thank all three for their service to Disability Justice Australia and hope to see you back on the Board at some time in the future.
We miss you.**



BOARD ATTENDANCE

The Board met 13 times during the 2023-24 Financial year
Including the AGM as shown below.
July 2023-June 2024

| Date | BC Ben Corcoran | RB Richard Beardmore | JW James Warr | NH Nimo Hersi | CG Clare Gibellini | PCa Paul Calcott | PCr Paul Creswick | JP Jim Preketes | SY Simon Young |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 20/07/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 17/08/23 | 😞 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 21/09/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 19/10/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 02/11/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 09/11/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15/11/23 | 👍 | 😞 | 👍 | 🙅 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 2022-23 AGM 20/11/23 | 👍 | 👍 | 🙅 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 15/12/24 | 👍 | 👍 | - | - | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 |
| 13/02/24 | IN CAMERA | | | | | | | | |
| 20/03/24 | 😞 | 👍 | - | - | 😞 | 😞 | 👍 | 👍 | 👍 |
| 08/05/24 | 👍 | 👍 | - | - | 🙅 | 👍 | 👍 | 😞 | 👍 |
| 03/06/24 | 👍 | 😞 | - | - | - | 👍 | 😞 | 👍 | 👍 |
| Total | 10/13 | 11/13 | 7/7 | 1/6 | 1/3 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 | 3/5 |

Legend

Present



Apology



Absent



Resigned



Casual Vacancy

The Board undertook a casual vacancy recruitment process in October 2023 which saw Simon Young and Jim Preketes appointed to the Board in November 2023, then elected at the AGM on the 20/11/2023.

Conflicts of Interest

We had two (2) declared conflicts of interests by Board members during the year and they were successfully managed in accordance with the Board's procedure.

These Board members did not participate in any meetings where their Conflict of Interest Agenda items were discussed, and decisions made nor were any Board meeting papers provided to these members.

Activities and Decisions by the Board

We made significant decisions and approved and reviewed some important Policies and Procedures. I congratulate the Board for their outstanding contributions at Board meetings for the achievements shown below.

1. Copies of the DSS National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) and the Code of Ethics declarations for Board and staff were provided to Board members at their request
2. The Draft 2023-24 Interim Strategic Plan was amended and adopted.
3. The following Policies, Procedures and tools and were amended, approved and adopted as per the 2023-24 Interim Strategic Plan
 - The Governance Privacy Policy
 - The Board Privacy and Confidentiality Undertaking
 - Procedure for Filling Casual Vacancies
 - The Occupational Health and Safety Policy

- The Prevention of Workplace Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- 4. One member was appointed to summarise the Board skills matrix data and prepare a draft Casual Vacancy advertisement to be circulated and approved via a memorandum.
- 5. Two members were appointed to sign a DSS Deed of Variation to delay our grant acquittals to a later more convenient date in the financial year.
- 6. A date was set to meet and process the Casual Vacancy applications.
- 7. Two Board members agreed to meet with the DJA Finance Officer to gain an insight into the monthly financial reports.
- 8. The Jasper Hotel was chosen as the venue for the 2022-23 AGM which included hiring professional audio-visual equipment as a reasonable adjustment for members who participated online.
- 9. DJA's financial situation with the loss of funding for the Disability Royal Commission was identified as a priority at future meetings.
- 10. The Board noted the casual vacancy application received from a DJA casual employee and former DJA Board member.

Agreement was reached that the Board and staff had policies and procedures in place to deal with any conflict-of-interest situations if they arose.
- 11. Interviews with Casual Vacancy applicants were held in the week commencing 13 November 2023.

12. Five (5) new members were elected to the Board at the 2022-23 AGM.
13. The election of Office Bearers saw the following members elected to vacant positions

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| President | Richard Beardmore |
| Vice President | Ben Corcoran |
| Secretary | Simon Young |
| Treasurer | Clare Gibellini |
14. We approved 42 new memberships and 27 renewed memberships.
15. Preparations for this 2023-24 AGM and the Annual Report were commenced.

Special Thanks

The Board was ably supported during the year by others shown below whom I would particularly like to identify and thank:

- **Trevor Carroll** (he/him/his) Chief Executive Officer.
Prepares the agendas for each meeting in consultation with the President and provides reports to the Board on the day-to-day operations of the delivery of advocacy services, advises the Board on funding, constitutional, governance, policy, strategic directions, membership, and risk issues and seeks advice on behalf of the Board.
- **Deidre Griffiths** (she/her/hers) (Acting CEO)
Attends and supports the CEO at Board Meetings and reports to the Board during leave by the CEO.

- **Simone Young** (she/her/hers) (Administration Officer and Personal Assistant to the CEO). Keeps minutes of Board meetings and provides members with meeting papers and updates prior to each meeting.
- **Darrell Harding** (he/him/his) Finance Officer
Supports the Board Treasurer and maintains records of the income and expenditure in accordance with the Board approved budget and provides financial reports as required for each Board Meeting.
- **Simon Young** for his project work as Membership Officer which has seen our membership process automated and grow during the financial year.
- **Claudia Scardigno, Martin Kudnig, Jan Dransfield, Alyssa Aboultaif and Kathryn Bertram** at Johnson, Winter and Slattery for ongoing pro-bono legal advice <https://jws.com.au/>
- **David Prior & David Amesbury Jobs** at Australia for insurance, employee pay scales, and industrial relations advice.
- **Microsoft** for registration of DJA as a not-for-profit which facilitates the production of documents, DJA intranet, data storage and online Board meetings.

Summary

It has been a successful year for the Board, and I thank all current and departed Board members for their amazing resilience and contributions during the year. I also look forward to the election of new Board members at the AGM.

Importantly too, I want to thank again the Chief Executive Officer, the disability advocates, support staff, and volunteers on behalf of the Board, because without their support, DJA could not achieve the excellent outcomes for our clients that it does.

I have enjoyed serving DJA on the Board as President and look forward to another year of service on the DJA Board.

My very best wishes.

Richard Beardmore
President



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S 2023-2024 OPERATIONAL REPORT



Trevor Carroll, CEO

I have great pleasure in presenting this report about the advocacy services provided to and on behalf of people with disabilities and their families and on the operation of Disability Justice Australia Inc.

Funding

We were block funded by contract with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) for

1. Individual and Legal Advocacy (70%)
2. Systemic Advocacy (30%)
3. NDIS Appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)
4. Referrals for people with disabilities and others to alternative services when needed.

Individual and Legal Advocacy

This is funded by DSS under the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) for people with disabilities who live in Metropolitan Melbourne as shown in the graphic below:



To be eligible for our service, they must have one or more of the following disabilities:

- Intellectual
- Psycho-social
- Sensory
- Physical; or
- Any combination of these

Statistics for People with disabilities (Clients) who received NDAP Individual and Legal Advocacy

| Details | This Year | Last Year |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Individual | 22 | 32 |
| Legal | 54 | 24 |
| Family | 2 | 1 |
| Withdrew during advocacy | 4 | 0 |
| Total | 82* | 57 |
| Annual Target | 80 | 80 |
| Total File Notes | 3982** | 3247 |
| Number of NDIS issues not related our funding for the Administrative Appeals Tribunal | 21 | 17 |

***35% increase**

****18.45% increase**

NDAP Waiting List

Client details as added to our waiting list.

One carried forward from last year + **22** new clients **Total 23**

Why we have Waiting Lists

1. There are more Clients who require advocacy support than we have the staff, funding, and time available to support them. This means not everyone who is eligible for advocacy support will get it straight away.

2. There will be times when demand is so high that our Waiting Lists are closed. This is because we cannot provide a service within a reasonable time frame. It also means we cannot accept any new intake requests for Advocacy.

3. The amount of time a client spends on the NDAP waiting list is different for everyone, but it depends on which of the following factors apply for each person:

How urgent the issue is, for example:

- a tribunal or court hearing next week.
- an eviction notice.
- the cancellation of pension.
- the Client is homeless, or at risk of homelessness.
- is involved in the justice system or child protection and/or
- is a victim of crime

Whether the person with a disability:

- is in imminent danger
- is a victim of abuse, neglect, or violence
- is vulnerable to exploitation
- has the capacity to self-advocate
- has family or other supports in place that can help
- needs reasonable adjustments to participate in the Advocacy process.

Referrals

2023-24 Summary

| Eligible for Advocacy | Minutes spent on referrals |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| People with disabilities | 7632 |
| *Professional Referrals | 1884 |
| Totals | 9516 |

*A Professional Referral is when the caller seeks a referral on behalf of a person with disability they are supporting. These most often come from allied health, medical, hospital, NDIS service providers, lawyers, social workers, and advocates from other agencies seeking our advice.



Cultural Background of clients seeking NDAP Individual and Legal Advocacy

| | |
|---|---|
| Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Clients | 2 |
| Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Clients | 9 |

Summary of Client Disabilities

| Disability Type | Primary Disability | Secondary Disability |
|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Psychosocial | 16 | 17 |
| Intellectual | *14 | 7 |
| Autism Spectrum Disorder | 12 | 3 |
| Physical | *11 | 10 |
| Neurological | 9 | 7 |
| Sensory and speech | 7 | 9 |
| Acquired Brain Injury | 6 | 6 |
| Other | 5 | 8 |
| Specific learning/ADD | *1 | 8 |
| Developmental Delay | *1 | 5 |
| Total | 82 | 80 |

*4 clients withdrew from advocacy after allocation to an Advocate

Individual Advocacy Case Study

Client KZ had a car accident on the way to work in the late 1980's, and his injury resulted in Paraplegia. He lives alone with his 2 dogs and needs support for many aspects of his life.

He needed 28 hours per week of support for personal care, cleaning, shopping, and community access after written advice

from his doctor. However, he was initially only given 6 hours by TAC, but after challenging this he was given 14 hours, only half what was recommended.

DJA successfully advocated for KZ over a two-year period to obtain the 28 hours per week and additional equipment and home modifications he subsequently needed.

Legal Advocacy

We specialise in providing the following Legal Advocacy in the areas shown below:

- NDIS Access Requests
- NDIS Internal Reviews
- NDIS Change of Circumstances requests
- Freedom of Information requests
- AAT Centrelink Appeals
- Disability Support Pension Rejections
- Aged Care Pension Rejections
- Access to Justice
- Victims of crime
- Abuse, neglect, or discrimination,
- Guardianship and Financial Administration
- Child Protection
- Relinquishment
- Intervention Orders



As well as complaints to

- Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA)
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)
- Australian Charities and Not-for Profit Commission

- Commonwealth Ombudsman
- Australia Post
- Australian Securities and Investment Commission
- Office of the Australian Information Privacy Commissioner
- Australian Taxation Office
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Australian Communications and Media Authority
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
- Australian Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- Australian Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
- Australian Skills Quality Authority
- Airline Customer Advocate (ACA)
- Private Health Insurance Ombudsman
- Services Australia (Centrelink, Child Support and Medicare)
- VCAT Residential Tenancy Tribunal
- Domestic Building Dispute Resolution Victoria
- Victorian Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT)
- Consumer Affairs Victoria
- Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- Victorian Disability Worker Commission
- Victorian Department of Education
- Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority
- Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Commissioner
- Victorian Disability Services Commissioner
- Victorian Legal Services Commissioner
- Victorian Energy and Water Ombudsman
- Victorian Public Transport Ombudsman
- Victorian Ombudsman
- NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission
- Victorian Auditor General



- Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC)
- Victorian Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC)
- Victorian Inspectorate
- Victoria Police Conduct Unit
- WorkSafe Victoria
- Victorian Local Government Inspectorate
- UN Office of Internal Oversight Services

DJA is the only Commonwealth-funded NDAP service in Victoria that offers this range and combination of legal advocacy, but despite the demand for our services we are not funded by DSS to deliver these services statewide.

Legal Advocacy Case Study

Client XY who has spinal compression and an autoimmune disease, lives at home with her 18yo son in metropolitan Melbourne.

She was the victim of an assault by her co-tenant which she believed resulted in an acquired brain injury and PTSD. Initially she was charged with the assault, but this was later dropped.

AUTOIMMUNE
DISEASE



She came to a private agreement with regards to costs with the police, but through a communication mix up, missed the hearing when she arrived at court and found it was online. It was adjourned, but in the meantime her private lawyer convinced her to plead guilty, which she later thought was to avoid her making a complaint about police misconduct.

Victoria Legal Aid took over the matter and eventually the charges were dropped due to lack of evidence.

After getting written advice from the Legal Services Board, she made a complaint about the lawyer whom she felt exploited her due to the acquired brain injury, leaving her confused, forgetful and vulnerable. She missed the VCAT hearing about this due to illness but received legal advocacy support and assistance from DJA at the next VCAT hearing and follow up on the formal complaint about the lawyer as per the priorities in her Legal Advocacy Plan.

Why we are so successful in delivering advocacy

1. All our Advocates have formal legal qualifications
2. We use a consistent approach to the collation and collection of information about each potential client during the Intake process, before placing them on our Waiting List.
3. We achieve outstanding results for clients especially in the delivery of Legal Advocacy using unique individually tailored Legal Advocacy Plans.
4. We use a person-centred model of service delivery which is underpinned by a commitment to the protection of human rights.
5. We have loyal, repeat customers who consistently rely on DJA to meet their disability advocacy needs.
6. The compliments received by disability advocates from satisfied clients and their families verify their satisfaction with our service delivery and outcomes



7. The unique Human Rights Tool we have developed enables us to provide emergency disability advocacy to those who are in crisis, even if our Waiting List is closed.
8. We have Procedures in place to ensure the continuity of service even when Advocates are on leave
9. Our commitment to continuous improvement and compliance with the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS)

Factors that impacted on our Individual and Legal advocacy

We met our annual target of 80 NDAP Clients albeit with 4 who withdrew during advocacy. This was despite

1. The NDAP Waiting List being closed from the 08 December 2023 to 07 April 2024 and from the 04 May 2024-30 June 2024 (Total days closed: 181).
2. One Disability Advocate being on Annual Leave from the 21 December 2023 to the 22 January 2024, then leave without pay until the 17 April.
3. The loss of two other Disability Advocates came after the Disability Royal Commission closed and funding ceased.
4. We had Professional Inquiries from, and gave referrals to Social Workers, Allied Health professionals, NDIS Support Workers and Coordinators, and those without disabilities who were ineligible to receive advocacy support. Some were from outside our funded service areas. Some callers came back many times so the number of file notes can add up to hours for some individuals.
5. The combination of services we provide is unique and there is high demand for our knowledge, skills and expertise.

6. We are obliged to ask each client if they want to have their de-identified personal information provided to DSS for tracking through other government services.
7. A significant number of clients do not want us to provide their personal information to DSS for de-identification because they have rational concerns for their safety due to Family Court orders, Child Protection issues, being victims of crime, and having Intervention Orders in place against former partners.
8. If they refuse, we must record this as “Not Stated” but this does not have the same meaning to them or us as “Refusing to provide the information”. We have requested this additional status be added by DSS for record keeping. So far, we have met resistance for this to be done.
9. Due to the specialist nature of our Legal advocacy work and of the clients we support, there are few other Agencies to which we can refer.



DSS has cost shifted non-AAT NDIS Appeals issues such as Access requests, internal reviews, change of circumstances notifications, and Planning meetings etc., from our separate funding for AAT appeals into Individual and Legal NDAP advocacy funding.

We had 21 such cases included in our Statistics for People with disabilities (Clients) who received NDAP Individual and Legal Advocacy above. This is 25.6% of the total. When this is added to the 45 AAT NDIS Appeals Participants shown further in this report it means that 51.96% of all clients provided with advocacy support by DJA were NDIS related.

This has serious policy implications for the equity of DSS advocacy support funding because at the 30/06/2024, 661,267

NDIS participants had approved plans as shown at <https://www.ndis.gov.au/about-us/publications/quarterly-reports>

However, when this is compared to the 5.5 million Australians who have been recorded as having disabilities shown at <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/55-million-australians-have-disability> it indicates a serious advocacy underfunding issue for Australians who are not NDIS participants but may be eligible for NDAP funding. This has been reflected in our client statistics over the last two financial years and is a significant issue for our waiting lists

Problem with setting DSS targets for Disability Advocacy

Each person receiving disability advocacy is a single target, yet the time spent on each issue varies considerably. This does not provide a true reflection of the workload of our staff.

For example, a complaint about disability discrimination might show 372 different file note entries. By contrast, another file, involving advocacy provided to a person who needs help to lodge a Disability Support Pension application, may show only 34 file note entries.

Yet they both count as one each towards our annual target.

Challenges in delivering advocacy include:

1. The increasing unfunded bureaucratic data collection demands placed on disability advocates through the Partnership approach.
2. The constant changes to the Data Exchange Protocols (DEX) without any



- input from the disability advocacy agencies such as DJA who must collect this data. There is no co-design process.
3. The data that DSS wants us to collect has very little to do with our advocacy services and how they are delivered to our clients.
 4. The one size fits all approach to data collection disadvantages funded agencies like DJA.
 5. The information provided about DEX is not in accessible formatting for many people with disabilities who are expected to use it. This includes DJA Board members and staff with cognitive impairments, ABIs and PTSD from previous traumas.
 6. The data collected by disability advocates does not come back to them in any way that can meaningfully inform or improve their professional practice.
 7. The lack of transparency by DSS in responding to complaints about its Data Exchange Partnership Protocols.
 8. High demand for our Legal Advocacy services but insufficient funding to meet this demand which could be resolved if we were funded for Statewide service delivery for all advocacy services.
 9. The lack of transparency and consultation by DSS in relation to its provision of funding for the National Centre for Disability Advocacy (NCDA) with the expectation that our disability advocates must engage with them through our NDAP funding.

Our Engagement with the NCDA

The NCDA is auspiced by the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) of which we have been a member. It was funded by DSS under the National Disability Strategy not the NDAP without prior consultation or an open selection process to the

sector. We have had a Waiting List Policy and Procedure for over 11 years which has proven highly effective.

We have an excellent record of reporting any closures of our Waiting List to our Funding Arrangement Manager as soon as decisions like this have been made.

In addition, some of the consultation with the NCDA on some Systemic Issues facing the NDAP disability advocacy sector have been held in the presence of state-based members of DANA at forums. Some have then been taken up by DANA and lodged under its branding not the NCDA's. This Conflict of Interest between membership of DANA and our reporting and engagement responsibilities to the NCDA under NDAP funding remains a barrier to meaningful engagement. This Conflict of Interest issue is not addressed by DANA on its website at <https://www.dana.org.au/> or the NCDA at <https://ncda.org.au/>.

NDIS AAT Appeals

We provide NDIS Appeals AAT Advocacy for Participants who meet the eligibility criteria with any type of disability, as follows:

- Intellectual
- Psychosocial
- Sensory
- Physical; or
- Any combination of these.

This is what we provide for each Participant

1. Access to a skilled disability advocate from DJA with legal qualifications who acts as a support person.

2. Their disability advocate will support them to Apply for funding for legal services from Victoria Legal Aid, with eligibility based on whether there is a wider community benefit from legal representation.

Types of Services provided to Participants by DJA

1. Explaining the review process, including what is involved in appealing to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT)
2. Detailing and coordinating activities involved in appealing to the AAT.
3. Supporting the development and gathering of all relevant documents in preparation for the AAT's review.
4. Providing legal and administrative advice and skills to empower and enable applicants to better represent themselves.
5. Attending AAT conferences and hearings to help the applicant present their case to the AAT, and
6. Reporting on the deliverables through the DSS Data Exchange (DEX).

Success in obtaining an increase in Funding and Geographical Intake areas for NDIS AAT Appeals

We lodged a submission to the Disability Royal Commission in late December 2022 about numerous previous failed submissions to DSS to increase our funding and geographical intake area to match that of our NDAP advocacy services.

This was successful but the increase in funding did not match our expectations.

The underfunding for NDIS AAT Appeals based on our Service area, which is now the same as NDAP, is a major problem.

Despite an approximately 85% increase in the Coverage area, it was matched with only a 42% increase in funding. This was challenged in writing, and we received a reply from the Policy Team at DSS on 18/06/2024 with the key question of funding responded to as follows:

The department is unable to elaborate further on any in-confidence deliberations.

We provided NDIS Appeals support in the AAT for 45 Participants (15 last year)

Summary

| | |
|--|-------------|
| AAT Appeals on behalf of Participants | 45 |
| Withdrawal from AAT Appeals Advocacy | 4 |
| Total Time Spent on AAT Appeals (Hours) | 1508 |
| Referrals for Participants | 5111 |
| *Professional Referrals | 3090 |
| Time Spent on Referrals (Minutes) | 9456 |
| Total Number of File Notes Entries | 3764 |

*A Professional Referral is when the caller seeks a referral on behalf of a Participant with disability they support. These most often

come from allied health, medical, hospital, NDIS service providers, lawyers, social workers, and advocates from other agencies seeking our advice.

NDIS Appeals Waiting List Summary

| | |
|--|----|
| Total new during Period | 28 |
| Carried forward from 30/06/2023 | 1 |
| Clients still on the list at the 30/06/2024 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 31 |

1. We have a Policy and Procedure for the Waiting List which is time sensitive due to NDIS legislated timeframes.
2. Participants who have an AAT Appeal must be “seen” within 5 business days of the completion of the NDIS Appeals Intake Form and have 28 days in which to lodge an AAT Appeal.
3. We have been a member of the NDIS Vic/Tas Community Engagement Group which exchanges many ideas, case studies and statistics with each other. This group meets monthly with NDIS employees providing updates on NDIS matters at the state and National Level.

NDIS Appeals Case Study

MF is 46 years old and lives with his parents. He has Spastic Quadriplegia.

He and his family have requested that the NDIA fund 34 hours per week of 1:1 support be paid directly to the family due to exceptional circumstances.

The parents are part of a religious community, so their faith is an integral part of their lives. Therefore, having support people not of their faith in their home to attend to their adult son is not in line with their beliefs and way of life.

The NDIA agreed to fund MF's family for 3 months while alternative support options were explored. However, they have not been able to find paid support workers of their faith to support their son. MF's mother lodged the AAT appeal herself then sought the expertise of DJA.

The 1st AAT Case Conference was held in February 2024 and another in May 2024. This is a unique Appeal and is ongoing as no final decision has been reached. It exemplifies the amazing reputation we have for achieving outcomes for participants in the AAT and why so many seek our expertise.

Why we are so successful in delivering NDIS AAT Appeals Advocacy to Participants.

17 of the 28 Participants (60.7%) whose files were closed during the reporting period had a successful outcome.

1. We use a consistent approach to the collation and collection of information about each Participant during the Intake process, before placing their names on our Waiting List.
2. We achieved outstanding results for Participants at the AAT.



3. We use a person-centred model of service delivery which is underpinned by a commitment to the protection of human rights.
4. We have loyal, repeat customers who consistently rely on DJA's legal advocacy to meet their AAT Appeal needs.
5. The compliments received by our disability advocates as NDIS Support Persons, from participants and their families, highlight the excellent satisfaction levels with our service and the outcomes.
6. The unique Human Rights Tool we have developed enables us to provide emergency NDIS AAT Appeals support to those who are in crisis, even if our Waiting List is closed.

These are the factors that have impacted on our ability to meet our target during the reporting period

1. The NDIS Appeals Waiting List was closed from the 08 December 2023 to 07 April 2024 and from the 04 May 2024-30 June 2024 (Total of 181 days) due to extremely high demand. However, we easily met our Target of providing support to 15 participants to lodge AAT Appeals against decisions by the NDIS.



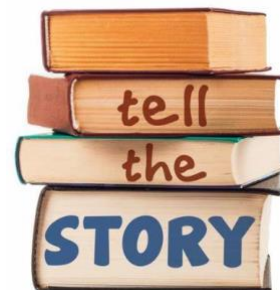
2. There are some Participants who seek advocacy for AAT appeals from us who have already lodged their appeal documentation with the assistance of NDIS Support Coordinators. Some of whom stand to gain financially if the appeal is successful. These Participants subsequently learn via the AAT appeals process that the Support Coordinator cannot represent them due to a conflict of interest. They are often referred to DJA to take over the appeal.

3. Four AAT appeals Participants gave less than 5 days' notice to DJA of their hearing or case conference, which provides little time to prepare.
4. Applications on behalf of Participants to Victoria Legal Aid for assistance with AAT appeals can take a long time to lodge and be processed. However, Legal Aid will only take on cases and defend them if there is a community benefit likely in the outcome.
5. Yet 100% of the applicants have had a NDIA funded lawyer appointed to oppose them.
6. We had 3 staff vacancies which were temporarily filled by two qualified casual legal disability advocates between April and June 2024.
7. All our NDIS Support Persons are qualified legal practitioners (lawyers) or have formal legal training.
8. Our recruitment policy statement is that all our NDAP disability advocates must also be skilled at providing NDIS Appeals AAT support as well. This is so that we can always cover for a Team member who is temporarily on leave, so that Participants have continuity of support.
9. We have an excellent success rate at the AAT in reaching successful outcomes for Participants.

Operational Achievements

Despite the various challenges encountered in providing our advocacy services, as a staff Team we achieved a great deal.

1. We successfully completed a Quality Assurance Audit on 4 of 6 National Standards for Disability Service (NSDS) after finalising a draft Audit plan.
2. We discussed and approved amendments to NDIS AAT Appeals Policies and Procedures.
3. We consolidated our transition to our own Not-for-Profit SharePoint server and apps donated by Microsoft. We have since identified several issues with the use of our web-based client management software which have had an impact on data collection and workloads.
4. An automated system for the consideration and approval of new or renewed DJA memberships was successfully introduced.
5. A review of the NDAP Client Intake and Exit Policy, Procedure and Flowchart to include the recommendations on Child Safety was completed.
6. The Client Privacy Policy and Procedure were reviewed.
7. Compulsory CPR Training was completed.
8. We had guest speakers from the Disability Advocacy Support Helpline (DASH), followed by a Q&A information exchange.
9. We discussed and approved the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy.



10. All staff signed the Child Safety declarations for our funded programs.
11. The implication of the loss of funding since the Disability Royal Commission funding ceased was discussed so the CEO requested that DSS fund us statewide for NDAP and NDIS Appeals going forward.
12. We completed in house training on the UNCRPD and how our own Australian Laws harmonized with the UNCRPD with a focus on reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities.
13. Staff discussed the receipt of unsolicited emails from some federal coalition MPs encouraging voting against the Voice Referendum. This was considered inappropriate, and the CEO was authorized to lodge a complaint about this to DSS.
14. Our service delivery model is person-centred face-to-face outreach. We travel to meet clients, they rarely come to our office.
15. All clients have a right to a service from us that protects and enhances their human rights.
16. I met monthly with our DSS Victorian Funding Arrangement Manager (FAM), Mr Karl Bull, where a whole range of issues and topics relevant to our DSS Funding Contracts and the unique work we do for people with disabilities and their families were enthusiastically discussed. Karl has proven to be a wonderful listener and a fantastic sounding board; we learn a lot from each other about how the advocacy process

can be improved through better collaboration. These sessions are invaluable.

We have 34 years of reputation as a fierce defender of the rights of people with disabilities to maintain. This is why we developed, reviewed, and implemented the range of policies and procedures and issues listed above to demonstrate our commitment to continuous improvement.



Staffing

The DJA Team had 12 members as follows:

| Name | Position | Employment |
|--------------------|---|-------------|
| Trevor Carroll | CEO Full Time | 38 hours pw |
| Deidre Griffiths | Disability Advocate & Acting CEO, Full Time | 38 hours pw |
| Louise Kay | Disability Advocate ongoing | 21 hours pw |
| Pauline Boyd | Disability Advocate temporary contract | 24 hours pw |
| Danielle Fernandez | Disability Advocate temporary contract | 24 hours pw |
| Eleanor McCooley | Disability Advocate temporary contract | 16 hours pw |
| Kate McGrath | Casual Disability Advocate temporary contract | 20 hours pw |
| Sue Wolter | Casual Disability Advocate temporary contract | 20 hours pw |
| Simone Young | Administration Officer, PA to the CEO, and Intake Officer, temporary contract | 24 hours pw |
| Darrell Harding | Finance Officer Casual temporary contract | 6 hours pw |
| Simon Young | Membership Project Officer Casual temporary contract | 16 hours pw |
| Rosie Beaumont | Volunteer Disability Advocate | 8 hours pw |

The CEO and Disability Advocates are employed as Community Development Workers known and classified in Victoria as SACS workers under the Social and Community Services Award.

All employees are covered by the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 (SCHCADS) the National Employment Standards (NES) and the DJA Enterprise Bargaining Agreement 2013 (EBA).

Farewell, thank you and best wishes to our departing colleagues highlighted below:

Disability Advocates Eleanor McCooey, Danielle Fernandez, and Pauline Boyd all part-time temporary contract employees funded from our Disability Royal Commission Grant which has ceased. As well as Rosie Beaumont Volunteer disability advocate who has taken a temporary leave of absence. We hope to have her back in some capacity in 2025.

I congratulate the whole staff team on their commitment to our person-centred, human rights-based approach to the delivery of disability advocacy, and NDIS AAT Appeals support services to people with disabilities and their families.

Professional Development

Staff participated in 105 episodes of Professional Development during the financial year, a huge increase on the 26 episodes last year.



Client Complaints

| | |
|----------|---|
| Internal | 1 |
| External | 0 |

Given that we provided services to more people with disabilities than ever before, this is a very pleasing result. Our person centred approach to service delivery minimizes complaints. The Feedback Questionnaires we receive when a client file is closed have been collated and show that the top rating has been consistently given for each area as follows:



Quality of Advocacy Services
Satisfaction with your Advocate
Satisfaction with the Advocacy Experience

Excellent
Very Satisfied
Very Satisfied

Staff Conflicts of Interest

One declared event. We managed this in accordance with our Procedure and made a record of it in the register.



Systemic Advocacy

DSS funds 30% of our NDAP advocacy work for Systemic Issues on behalf of people with disabilities. Our reach includes state, national and international systemic Advocacy. However, we have been given notice that this must be reduced to 10% by the 30/06/2025.

We have a Systemic Advocacy policy and procedure for both Advocacy services and referrals, as well as for issues that are raised by DJA members, staff, and at Board meetings.

There were 22 different Systemic Issues undertaken by DJA during the reporting period (one more than the previous report) that were reported to DSS. These 22 activities must be relevant to one or more of the following systemic campaign issues which have been approved by the Board of DJA:

1. Access to Justice
2. Accommodation
3. Federal and International Disability Rights
4. Transport
5. Discrimination
6. Access to Services
7. Health Services
8. Individualised Funding

Rather than itemize all 22 activities, a sample under some of the above are detailed below.

1. Access to Justice

- Member of the VicPol Disability Portfolio Reference Group
- Judging panel for the Office of the Public Advocate Victoria Police Disability Awards

2. Accommodation

- Support in joint submission for Recommendation 7.33 of the Disability Royal Commission to prioritise people with disabilities in key national housing and homelessness approaches

3. Federal and International Disability Rights

- Member of the Australian Electoral Commission Disability Reference Group representing the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
- Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) CEO Trevor Carroll Election as World President in August 2023
- Member of Disabled Peoples' International (DPI) Unification Coordination Committee
- Executive Committee member of Pacific Disability Forum representing the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
- Executive Committee member Australian Disability Development Consortium representing the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)

4. Transport

- National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN)

5. Discrimination

- Engagement with and submissions to DSS re access to the National Relay Service in communication with funding recipients

6. Access to Services

- Submission to DSS re inadequate funding to DJA for for NDIS AAT Appeals

7. Health Services

- Joint response to Australian Government 2024 Budget on health funding to strengthen Medicare, provide cheaper medicines and expand urgent care clinics

8. Individualised Funding

- Member of the Vic/Tas NDIS Community Engagement network
- Submission to the Independent Review of the NDIS

Our key stakeholder and partner in many of our Systemic Advocacy campaigns, activities and submissions is the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), the national voice representing people with disability in Australia.

See <https://afdo.org.au/about-us/our-people/our-board/>

These are the strategies below we used to advocate for systemic change at the state, national and international level.

- Written submissions to inquiries
- Collaboration with other organisations
- Online meetings with key stakeholders e.g., policy makers and senior departmental officers, online presentations of research findings and reports
- Online participation at international forums e.g., UN Conference of State Parties (COSPP) to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the UNCRPD) in New York
- Online presentations at conferences and major events

- Submissions to members of parliament
- Submissions to government departments
- Media articles
- Complaints under state and federal discrimination legislation
- Use of social media such as Facebook

We achieved systemic outcomes by:

- Developing written systemic advocacy plans for each campaign.
- Partnering with or being members of other organisations, alliances, campaigns, groups and working with key individuals to maximise the input from people with disability and others with relevant skills, knowledge and experience to facilitate change.
- Holding online meetings with key stakeholders
- Making submissions to parliamentary or department inquiries
- Making online presentations at international forums e.g., UN Conference of State Parties in New York
- Making online presentations at conferences to Systemic Advocacy partners
- Making Submissions to members of parliament

Submissions on behalf of people with disabilities

During the reporting period Disability Justice Australia made the following submissions:

- DSS on disability discrimination issues relating to communication and the inadequate use of the National Relay Service for members of the deaf community

- Joint Submission with the Australia Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) on the Response to the NDIS Review Report Recommendations
- The National Inclusive Transport Advocacy Network (NITAN) submission on the Aviation Green Paper and accessibility by people with disabilities
- Joint Submission with AFDO on the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024 [Provisions]
- DSS on funding for the National Centre for Disability Advocacy
- DSS on the 17th Conference of States Parties in New York
- The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services about the UN Secretariat and COSP17 and accessibility of the COSP opening ceremony
- DFAT and DSS on the misuse of Australian funding to the International Disability Alliance (IDA) by the former Executive Director
- World Councillors of Disabled Peoples' International on a new unified constitution
- G3ICT's Digital Accessibility Policy, Guidelines, and Standards Harmonization (DASH) Work Group on the United Nations Global Digital Compact (GDC) at Microsoft UN office in New York
- The League for Persons with Disabilities, R.O.C (Taiwan) 2024 Study Visit to Australia on the international work undertaken by AFDO.

Other Projects

| | Deliverables | Outcome |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Manage our own website, email and server needs | We used our NFP registration with Microsoft to reduce our IT overheads and ongoing service request costs |
| 2 | Move to a web based Client management third party Software environment | This proved difficult for advocates for the first 6-8 months but has improved with greater familiarity. This project is ongoing. |
| 3 | Expand our membership base to states and territories outside Victoria | The automation of DJA's membership services was completed. It has been so successful that we had members in all states and territories except the NT at the 30/06/2024 |
| 4 | Work with AFDO and some members to implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software package | We commenced this project, but charges imposed on our NFP SharePoint made it unviable. We developed our own customised solution for DJA, with no ongoing usage costs. This project is ongoing. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | Upgrade our IT desktop hardware and software | We purchased and installed new Desktop PCs and customised them to work with our NFP Microsoft SharePoint which we manage ourselves. |
| 6 | Improve cyber security | We placed internal restrictions on access to information, re-arranged folders on SharePoint, loaded cyber security software, automated information available to employees, the Board and our members and purchased relevant insurance. This project is ongoing. |
| 7 | Advocate to DSS to inaccessible URLs on its website | We provided a DSS Corporate Manager with a list of URLs on various pages on its website for which videos had no captions or Auslan versions with an expectation that these be rectified. This is an ongoing campaign. |
| 8 | Resolving issues with our Client Management | We have found a number of internal inconsistencies with reporting in the transition to |

| | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| | software for DSS data collection | a web-based version of our client Management software. We are working hard to find solutions and seek alternatives. |
|--|----------------------------------|---|

External Stakeholder Memberships

DJA was also a financial member of the following organisations:

- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
- Philanthropy Australia
- Jobs Australia
- Our Community
- Ethical Jobs
- Pro Bono Australia
- Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)



Where to from here?

Our 4-year Strategic Plan was extended with a one-year interim plan for this reporting period after an evaluation of progress against the Strategic priorities for Action was completed.

The next challenge for DJA's new Board, the CEO, staff, volunteers, and members will be to finalise a new Strategic Plan in a reduced government funded environment and look for alternative and innovative sources of income.

These are the advantages below that we already have at our disposal

1. We are registered with and report to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) as a national organisation under the Commonwealth Corporations Act.
2. We are a registered charity and report to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC).
3. We are an ATO Deductible Gift Recipient, exempt from Income Tax, have GST concessions and are exempt from the Fringe Benefits Tax.
4. Donations to DJA over \$2.00 are Tax Deductible.
5. We have all the legal endorsements in place to expand nationally.
6. There is an increasing demand for our advocacy services, including repeated requests from satisfied and loyal clients, many of whom go on to join DJA as members.
7. We have a perfect compliance record with the independent quality assurance process since its introduction in 2013 under the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS) which maintains our certification as a DSS funded organisation.
8. We are committed to building DJA's capacity with innovative ways to become less reliant on government grants and generate income from other activities.

My Thanks

I want to thank the Board President **Richard Beardmore**, Vice President **Ben Corcoran** and Secretary **Simon Young**, and **all other Board members** listed in this Annual Report who have contributed their time and expertise through a financially, staff shortage and policy challenging financial year.



I also express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all employees, volunteers and our loyal members for their ongoing commitment to DJA, with special mentions to the following employees

Disability Advocate, Deidre Griffiths, who is extremely loyal and conscientious and has acted as CEO when I have been on leave or otherwise unavailable at least 4 times during this reporting period. Deidre lives in Geelong and travels to Preston for up to 4 days each week.

Administration Officer and CEO Personal Assistant, Simone Young, who is incredibly thorough, conscientious and reliable and has re-organized the Office routines to be the first point of contact for all callers needing advice or a place on our Waiting Lists.

Finance Officer, Darrell Harding, who also lives in Geelong and remains very loyal, meticulous and dependable in managing our spending and income in accordance with the Board approved budget.

Project Officer, Simon Young, who has been largely responsible for implementing and monitoring the **Other Projects** listed above in addition to managing his

volunteer role as Board Secretary, always mindful of and 100% compliant with any perceived or actual conflict of interest.

Casual Temporary Disability Advocates, Kate McGrath and Sue Wolter who expertly filled a gap in part of the last quarter of the reporting period when we were short staffed.

Disability Advocate, Louise Kay who started with DJA on the 29/04/2013 and reached the 11-year milestone as the longest serving disability advocate on the staff. Congratulations.

Conclusion

This reporting year 2023-24 has been a very successful one measured against Board achievements, the number of clients and their positive outcomes accomplished by our team of disability advocates expertly supported by the others mentioned above.

The DJA office is a fulfilling place to work where we place a high value on loyalty to each other, the Social Model of Disability, protecting the rights of people with disability under the UNCRPD and making a real difference in the lives of people with disability and their families.

I commend this report to you.

Trevor Carroll
Chief Executive Officer

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

| | 2024 \$ | 2023 \$ |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income | | |
| For the year ended 30 June 2024 | | |
| | <u>2024 \$</u> | <u>2023 \$</u> |
| Income | | |
| Grants | 857,031 | 740,316 |
| Other Income | 4,583 | 11,075 |
| Total Income | <u>861,614</u> | <u>751,391</u> |
| Expense | | |
| Employment Expenses | 641,168 | 561,593 |
| Administration | 47,662 | 47,839 |
| Rent | 34,806 | 31,731 |
| Communications | 13,894 | 13,458 |
| Board Expenses | 3,956 | 6,414 |
| Other Expenses | 9,542 | 11,454 |
| Total Expense | <u>751,028</u> | <u>672,489</u> |
| Surplus for the year | <u>110,586</u> | <u>78,902</u> |
| Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024 | | |
| | <u>2024 \$</u> | <u>2023 \$</u> |
| ASSETS | | |
| Current Assets | 615,256 | 689,625 |
| Non-Current Assets | 9,280 | 10,531 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | <u>624,536</u> | <u>700,156</u> |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| Current Liabilities | 106,338 | 288,884 |
| Non-Current Liabilities | 8,906 | 12,566 |
| TOTAL LIABILITIES | <u>115,244</u> | <u>301,450</u> |
| NET ASSETS | <u>509,292</u> | <u>398,706</u> |
| MEMBERS FUNDS | | |
| Retained Earnings | 509,292 | 398,706 |
| TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS | <u>509,292</u> | <u>398,706</u> |
| The full Audited Financial Statements are publicly available on the ACNC website. | | |

AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENT DECLARATION



Disability Justice Australia Inc

ARBN 629 441 078

ABN 95 702 434 250

**Auditor's Independence Declaration to the Board of
Disability Justice Australia Inc**

We declare that, to the best of our knowledge and belief, during the year ended 30 June, 2024 there have been :

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012 in relation to the Audit; and
- (ii) no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit

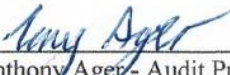
Signed on: 9 September, 2024

CONNECT NATIONAL AUDIT PTY LTD

Connect National Audit PTY LTD

Authorised Audit Company Number: 521888

Chartered Accountants



Anthony Ager - Audit Principal
Registered Company Auditor
Chartered Accountant