

Annual Report 2020-21

# Making Real Change: Systemic Advocacy in Focus



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# About ADA Australia



Aged and Disability Advocacy (ADA) Australia is a not-for-profit, independent, community-based advocacy and education service that in 2021 celebrates 30 years' supporting and improving the wellbeing of older people and people with disability in Queensland.

## Our Mission

To enable people to be heard, informed, and exercise their rights

## Our Vision

Our vision is to give vulnerable people a voice

## Our Values

**Respect:** We show respect for the wellbeing of our clients and their communities.

**Collaboration:** We work with clients and value our partnerships to deliver the best possible outcomes at individual and systemic levels.

**Empowerment:** We provide our clients with a wide range of services including information, advocacy, education and training to support their own skills.

**Creativity:** We embrace professionally creative approaches, working with individuals on individual issues, to achieve the best results for clients. We embrace all cultures, special needs, sexual orientation and gender identity.

With headquarters in Brisbane and advocates in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast, ADA Australia provides advocacy services to older people and people with disability in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Queensland.

Our mission 'to enable people to be heard, informed, and exercise their rights' is achieved through provision of accurate information, education and valuable individual advocacy support across a range of programs that have a consumer directed focus.

ADA Australia is a member of the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) funded through the Australian Government's National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) to deliver individual advocacy, information and education services to older people (and their representatives) who receive or are eligible to receive, Australian Government funded aged care services.

ADA Australia provides disability advocacy funded through the Queensland Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, and the Australian Government's National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP). Also funded under NDAP, ADA Australia is a nominated advocacy support agency for the Disability Royal Commission into Violence Abuse Neglect and Exploitation, for the Gold Coast and Central Queensland regions.

ADA Australia also operates a registered Community Legal Service, ADA Law, funded through Legal Aid Queensland, which supports people with cognitive impairments or whose capacity is questioned with guardianship, administration and Enduring Power of Attorney matters, including legal support and representation before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT).

ADA Australia hosts the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (ATSIDNQ), a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities and their families and carers. ATSIDNQ provides a culturally safe space for its members to connect and share stories, issues and information, and contribute to the conversation about disability.

Our services are free, independent, confidential, consumer-directed and reflective of our core values of respect, collaboration, empowerment and creativity.

# What We Do

ADA Australia provides information and resources, education and individual advocacy support across a range of programs that have a consumer directed focus.

## Aged Care Advocacy And Education



Advocacy support for people receiving government-funded aged care services who have issues with accessing services, or are experiencing service provision and care related problems including for:

- Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)
- Home Care Packages (HCP)
- Residential Aged Care Homes
- Commonwealth Continuity of Support (CoS) Program
- Commonwealth funded dementia services
- Flexible care services

Free education and information sessions on advocacy services which are available to residents and staff of residential aged care facilities, home care recipients and services and community groups.

### Aged Care Systems Navigator

The Aged Care Systems Navigator service provides information, education and practical support to older people to access aged care services in the home or in residential aged care.

It was under trial in 2019-20 in the Wide Bay region and Brisbane South (supported by the Brisbane South Primary Health Network) and is continuing for 2020-21.

### Fee for service workshops

MHWise - mental health training for community and residential care staff to support care for older people experiencing mental illness or mental health decline.

## Disability Advocacy



Information, referrals or individual advocacy support to people with disability who are experiencing issues with support services, including support with the NDIS access and planning processes, discrimination or unfair treatment.

### Disability Royal Commission

Advocacy support to help people with disability to participate in the Disability Royal Commission, including support to make a submission and referral to counselling and legal services as required.

## ADA Law



ADA Law is ADA Australia's Community Legal Centre and specialises in legal help for tribunal matters and decision-making issues for people with cognitive impairments or whose capacity is being questioned. ADA Law can also represent people at Mental Health Review Tribunal hearings who have been referred by Legal Aid Queensland.

### Elder abuse advocacy

Information and individual advocacy support for older people living in residential care who are experiencing or at risk of elder abuse, including from Enduring Powers of Attorney, or informal decision makers, carers or friends.

### Fee for service workshops

Individual and group-based training sessions on "Understanding Decision Making" to help people understand the intricacies of guardianship and administration issues, including Health Decision Making training.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland (ATSIDNQ)



Supporting a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, and their families and carers to connect, share and speak up about issues that matter most to them. Membership is free and is supported by a Network team of ADA advocates.

ATSIDNQ, is also part of a partnership participating in the NDIS Targeted Outreach Project which is helping more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with disability to join the NDIS.



# Chair's Report



While the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact our lives in 2020-21, ADA Australia remained agile and accessible to our clients, continuing to deliver advocacy support to older Queenslanders and people with a disability.

In my last report I said, "whatever 2021 brings, we stand ready to advocate for those who need us and advance the rights of older people and people with disability". And that's what we have done.

We championed the rights of older people and people with a disability through some tough challenges, including:

- extended periods of visitor restrictions for people in aged and disability care
- COVID-19 vaccine rollout delays and issues
- failures in the aged care system
- proposed detrimental changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and
- uncertainty about the future of disability advocacy services in Queensland.

ADA Australia stepped up to be a key voice on these issues, participating in collective action with key stakeholders, and contributing to conversations across state and national media. A major outcome of the year was the much-anticipated Final Report from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the subsequent May 2021-22 Federal Budget response. As both a member of the Older Persons Advocacy Network and a stand-alone advocacy service, we were an active contributor to the Royal Commission.

A welcome outcome was the recommendation for a new Aged Care Act, which will embed human rights in aged care. A rights-based approach is fundamental to an aged care system that protects people and focuses on the human experience of older people in aged care, including their rights, preferences and needs. The Federal Government announced a \$17.7 billion investment in the aged care system over five years, which is a positive step in making much needed changes. The critical role of advocacy was also recognised with an additional investment of \$94 million. This will increase the reach of advocacy services to more older Australians receiving or waiting to receive aged care.

There is more work to do, and we will keep working with government to make sure the total investment translates into action and that we see real transformation.

In March, I was especially proud of the team's collaboration with people with disability and disability advocacy organisations across Queensland to appeal to

the Queensland Government for continued funding of disability advocacy services through the Stand with Us! campaign.

It showed just how fundamental disability advocacy is for real inclusion in the community and how people with disabilities depend on advocacy support. Our collective voices were heard, and the Queensland Government announced continued funding of \$8.1 million over two years. A great outcome.

Another significant achievement for the organisation was the launch of ADA Law, our specialist community legal service. This is recognition of what was ADA Australia's human rights advocacy service and allows the organisation to provide legal advice and representation, further strengthening our human rights focus.

**In closing, I would like to acknowledge and thank the dedicated ADA Australia team. Our people provide vital support to vulnerable Queenslanders and work tirelessly to affect real change in the systems that support them.**

I would also like to thank my Board colleagues, who have provided support and guidance to ADA Australia throughout this challenging year.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge Director Stephanie Gallagher, who resigned from the ADA Australia Board just after the end of the financial year. I thank Stephanie for contributing her time, energy and expertise to the organisation over the last four years.

We are delighted to welcome new board directors Natalie Siegel-Brown, Lucille Chalmers and John Devereux. Natalie, Lucille and John bring us a wealth of experience and their personal passion for advocating for the rights of people experiencing vulnerability.

We hope 2022 brings greater freedoms and safety as COVID-19 vaccination rates increase across the country. We will be expanding our team and our reach to help more of the people who need us.

**Liz Kearins**

Chair

# CEO's Report



**While we continued to deal with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, we also welcomed some key wins for the systems which support our clients.**

**In this Annual Report we will review our achievements in providing advocacy services to older people and people with disability across Queensland, during what turned out to be another difficult pandemic year, but also, we review the significant gains made through systemic advocacy to the service systems that support them.**

In 2020-21 we saw just how quickly things can change with the COVID-19 pandemic and that we needed to remain vigilant. Our advocates started the year lending support to our Victorian colleagues in the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN), who needed extra staff resources to meet demand from older Victorians for advocacy support and information, as they faced a major coronavirus outbreak.

Subsequently, many local government areas across Queensland found themselves in and out of lockdown throughout the year – several times in some areas. Unfortunately, it is aged and disability care residents who are hit hardest by these lockdowns, which generally spark visitor bans for extended periods beyond the lockdown.

**We saw how important it is for residents' physical and mental health that they continue to have contact with their friends and family members, during times of restrictions.**

The Aged Care Visitor Access Code, released in July 2020, was developed to provide a nationally consistent approach to ensuring aged care residents can continue receiving visitors, while minimising the risk of COVID-19. Throughout the year ADA Australia actively promoted the Code through the media and worked with families and providers to apply the Code to develop solutions for residents to keep in touch with their family and loved ones.

The COVID-19 vaccination rollout commenced, with the plan for people living in aged care and disability group accommodation, and their workers, to be given priority. It didn't go as planned and these vulnerable groups, particularly people with disability were slow to be vaccinated. Through media and OPAN we kept up the call for government to urgently solve communication and logistical challenges between services and vaccine providers.

While we encouraged everyone who can to get vaccinated, we also promoted the importance of aged care residents having the opportunity to give valid consent for the vaccine, reinforcing the rights of older people to make decisions. This includes those who may have impaired or declining cognitive ability and need a supported approach to decision-making.

The national focus on the system failures of aged care continued, and in February, the much-anticipated outcome to the Royal Commission into Aged Care was delivered, followed by the Federal Budget response in May. The Australian Government announced a total investment of \$17.7 billion over five years. It is a welcome increase in funding for aged care which will deliver some positive changes, but in the context of what the Royal Commission was asking for to fix the system, around \$9 billion per year, further government investment is required.

The Royal Commission and government also listened to aged care advocacy organisations on the need for a human rights-based approach to aged care, and increased advocacy services to extend the reach to unmet demand. Government announced a \$94 million additional investment in aged care advocacy over five years, from 2021-22. This will provide a vital safeguard against abuse and breaches of rights for older people in aged care while reforms are taking place and into the future.

A significant achievement for the organisation was the launch of ADA Law, our specialist community legal service. While the work to certify ADA Australia's former human rights advocacy service as a registered Queensland community legal service was undertaken in 2019-20, the service became fully operational in August 2020. ADA Law can provide legal advice and representation when people are facing guardianship and administration matters. It is also available to support people who are receiving aged care and experiencing elder abuse. ADA Law provided legal and advocacy support to 507 Queenslanders during 2020-21.

ADA Australia has long campaigned on raising awareness and taking action against elder abuse. In 2020-21 we collaborated with Griffith University Business School who conducted research on our elder abuse case data to identify the top risk factors for financial elder abuse. This research resulted in a suite of resources launched on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day with information aimed at helping finance, wills and estate planning professionals to recognise when their clients are at risk, how to take action and to provide support.

In June we also had the opportunity to give feedback to the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department on their plan to develop a national register for Enduring Powers of Attorney in an effort to reduce the opportunity for financial elder abuse. While we think it is a step in the right direction, we also advocated to the Attorney-General for more sector and community education about the role of an Attorney and the importance of including the individual in decision-making.

Reflecting on disability advocacy support, 2020-21 was a year of important campaigns. People with disability and disability organisations across Queensland came together to call on the Queensland government to continue funding disability advocacy services in Queensland through the Stand with us! campaign, and again to voice their concerns about proposed reforms to the NDIS, which included mandatory independent assessments. Both had a successful outcome. The Queensland Government has committed \$8.1 million over two years to continue disability advocacy services, and mandatory independent assessments have been removed from the NDIS reform agenda.

Work on encouraging and supporting people with disability to tell their story to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability continued and advocates supported 50 people to make a submission.

**In summary, 2020-2021 has presented many challenges for the people we support. ADA Australia has continued provide extensive individual advocacy support but has also taken a key role in fostering and protecting the rights and wellbeing of older people and people with disability across the systems, programs and initiatives that support them. We will continue to advocate for systemic change and the improvements needed to provide choice, control, independence and inclusion for all.**

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Board and staff at ADA Australia. The Board for their support and direction throughout this challenging year, and in particular Chair Liz Kearins for her vision and leadership, and the entire ADA Australia team for their tireless work and commitment to supporting vulnerable Queenslanders.

**Geoff Rowe**  
CEO



# Organisational Structure

**Board of Directors**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Project Team**

- 2x Senior Project Officers (1x on secondment)
- 1x Marketing & Communications Officer
- 1x Senior Policy & Research Officer



# Board Members



## Liz Kearins

**Chair – ADA Australia elected November 2019**

(Board Director, ADA Australia, February 2016)  
(Board Director, QADA December 2012)

Liz Kearins is an experienced senior executive, board director and consultant, with expertise in strategy, culture change, engagement, and communication. Her diverse background spans the management consultancy, utilities, healthcare, local government, environment, tourism, and media sectors.

Liz is the Director Performance Partnerships at Actrua Performance Cultures, where she leads project strategy, design and delivery to help organisations and leaders engage, inspire and empower people to be their best.

She also serves on the Board of Australia's Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) and chairs OPAN's Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

Liz is a Fellow of the Institute of Managers and Leaders, a certified Change Management Practitioner, and a member of the Australian HR Institute, the Public Relations Institute of Australia and the International Association of Public Participation.



## Paul Johnson

**Deputy Chair – Elected to Board 2014**

*BSocSc (HumServ), DipBus(Frontline Mgt), Cert IV TAA*

Paul brings professional and personal carer insights to his role on the ADA Australia Board. As EPOA for a close relative Paul actively negotiates the aged care and healthcare systems regularly to ensure optimal care and rights are afforded.

Professionally Paul brings a wealth of experience from a career in the ageing industry spanning two states, over two decades and across the spectra of service provider, industry adviser and public servant.

With qualifications in human services, training and management, Paul is passionate about exceptional customer service, redefining ageing, and enjoying life.

Paul is currently the Chief Opportunity Officer at BallyCara where he has executive leadership for People & Culture, Service Excellence, Compliance, Communications & Engagement and Business Development. Paul actively engages with key stakeholders across Australia and continues to contribute to national policy development and reform of Australia's aged care system through his involvement with Leading Aged Services Australia. Paul chairs ADA Australia's Quality & Compliance sub-committee.



## Ian Edwards

**Treasurer – Elected to Board 2015**

*MHA BBUS (HRM), Assoc Dip Bus (Mgt)*

Ian has over 30 years' experience in health and education sectors, including positions at Griffith University and various Queensland Health Units (Central Area Health Service, Health Service Directorate, Princess Alexandra Hospital and Organisational Improvement Unit).

He has also contributed to a number of commissioned reports, publications and conferences.

Ian has recently retired and is discovering a variety of new interests to continue his active lifestyle.



## Stephanie Gallagher

**Director- Elected to Board 2017  
(Resigned July 2021)**  
*BA, LLB, MHA*

Stephanie has acted for Queensland Health and other health industry clients over the length of her career, which spans more than 30 years. Her experience includes acting in; matters arising from the public and private health sectors as both a solicitor and barrister, in an advisory capacity, in relation to and appearing on behalf of QH to defend claims, in litigation and before regulatory bodies and tribunals.

For more than 15 years she sat as a member of institutional ethics committees of tertiary hospitals.

Her extensive experience in the regulation of health professionals was recognised when she was asked by the Minister for Health to chair the interim Medical Board (in Queensland) upon his dissolution of the existing Board (in Queensland).

Her experience and expertise extend to matters of health service management. Her Master in Health Administration enables her to bring additional insight into advising clients in relation to matters involving the legal implications arising from clinical service delivery, policy and procedure and matters of public health and clinical governance.

Stephanie resigned from ADA in July 2021 upon her appointment as a Magistrate and Coroner.



## Jennifer Pouwer

**Director – Elected to Board 2017**  
*Bachelor of Occupational Therapy and MAICD*

Jennifer has extensive senior executive experience in the government (Commonwealth and State) and diverse non-government health and social services sectors. Since 2002 this experience has been supplemented by Corporate governance qualifications and through service to diverse not for profit Boards, supporting their governance, strategy and policy.

Presently Jennifer is also Deputy Chair, Checkup, a not for profit, non-government organisation assisting communities to address health inequities and contributes into consulting assignments.



## Dan O'Sullivan

**Director – Elected to Board 2009**  
*BBus (HA), MACHSM, Commissioner for Declarations*

Dan has more than 30 years' experience in the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, particularly in aged and community care, as well as previously holding positions at Wesley Mission and Blue Care. He is currently a Project Director with the Capital and Asset Services Branch of Queensland Health.

ADA Australia has since welcomed three new members to the Board in 2021-22.

Natalie Siegel-Brown, Managing Director of Child Wise

Lucille Chalmers, Deputy CEO at Brisbane South Primary Health Network

John Devereux, Professor of Law at University of Queensland, Barrister

# Advocacy Services Overview

In the previous financial year (2019-20) ADA Australia saw the number of cases increase almost 100%. In 2020-21, demand for ADA Australia's advocacy services remained high. Delivery of information and advocacy services for aged care increased from 3,552 in 2019-20 to 4,082 – a 15% increase.

There were also 116 additional requests for assistance that were out of scope for our support services and were referred to alternative services.

The regional breakdown is representative of the spread of population and ADA Australia resources, with a large amount of service delivery across the Brisbane and Gold Coast regions.

## Information and Advocacy by Program Area



Aged Care Advocacy  
**4,082**



Disability Advocacy  
**1,267**



Disability Royal Commission  
**60**



ADA Law  
**449**



Elder Abuse  
**191**

Total Information and Advocacy  
**6,049**

## 20-21 Education Snapshot



**4,790**  
Number of consumers receiving education

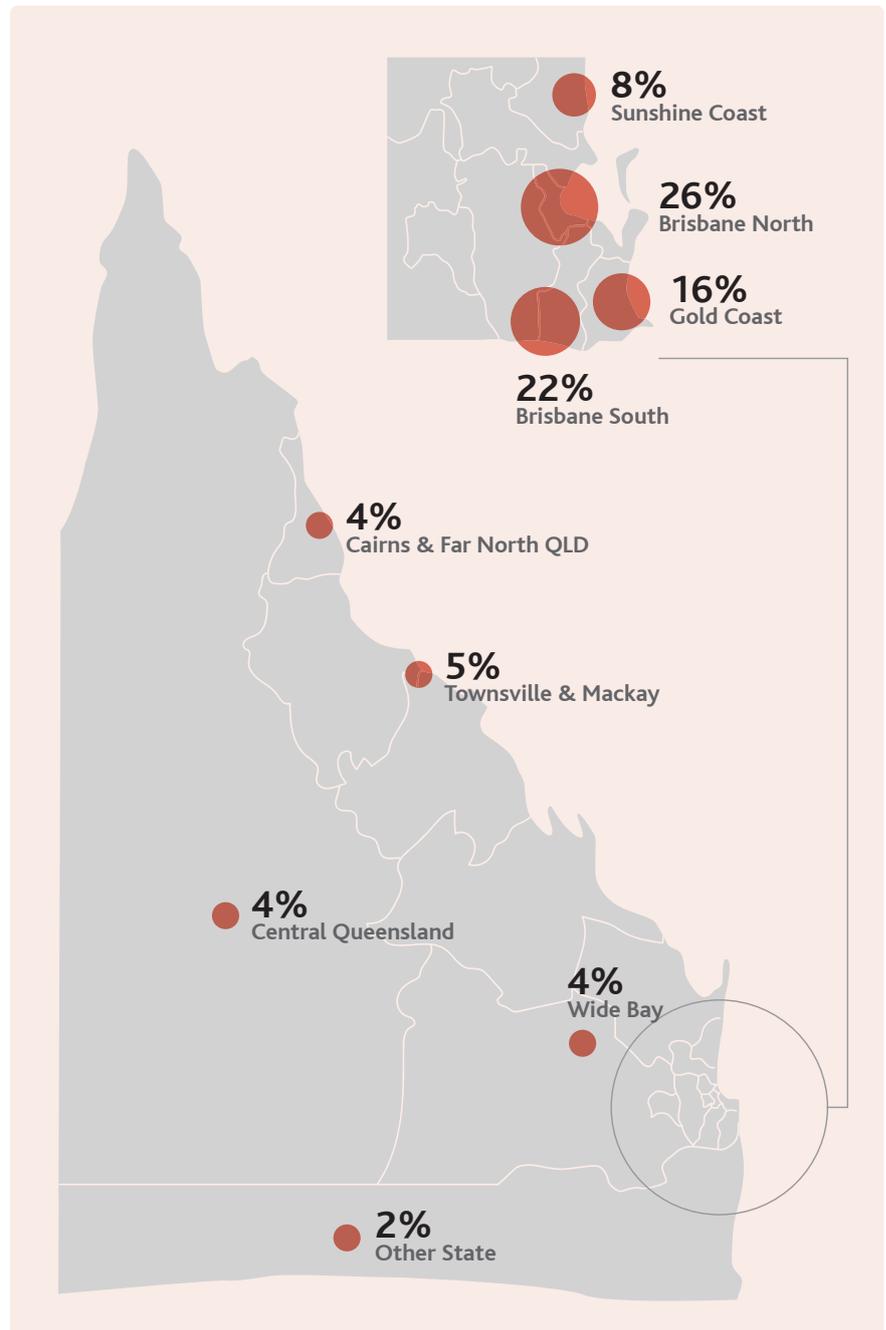


**412**  
Number of education sessions



**1,183**  
Number of aged care staff receiving education

## Regional Breakdown of Service Delivery





# ADA Law

ADA Law launched as a Community Legal Centre in August 2020, offering improved services to Queensland adults who have or are considered to have a decision-making disability. This may be an intellectual disability, a mental illness, an acquired brain injury or an age-related cognitive decline.

## Our Activity

Overall, ADA Law activity increased 25% from the previous year. This is largely due to COVID-19 funding received to target people with a disability or older people with cognitive impairment experiencing Domestic or Family Violence on the Gold Coast and in Brisbane South.

Our elder abuse advocate has been able to respond to allegations of abuse (often social isolation or financial) regarding the decisions of an attorney when the person (principal) is in residential aged care. There has been a slight increase in these cases this year. The key issues clients in residential aged care have reported are:

- Misuse of the Enduring Power of Attorney
- Financial abuse
- Psychological and/or emotional abuse

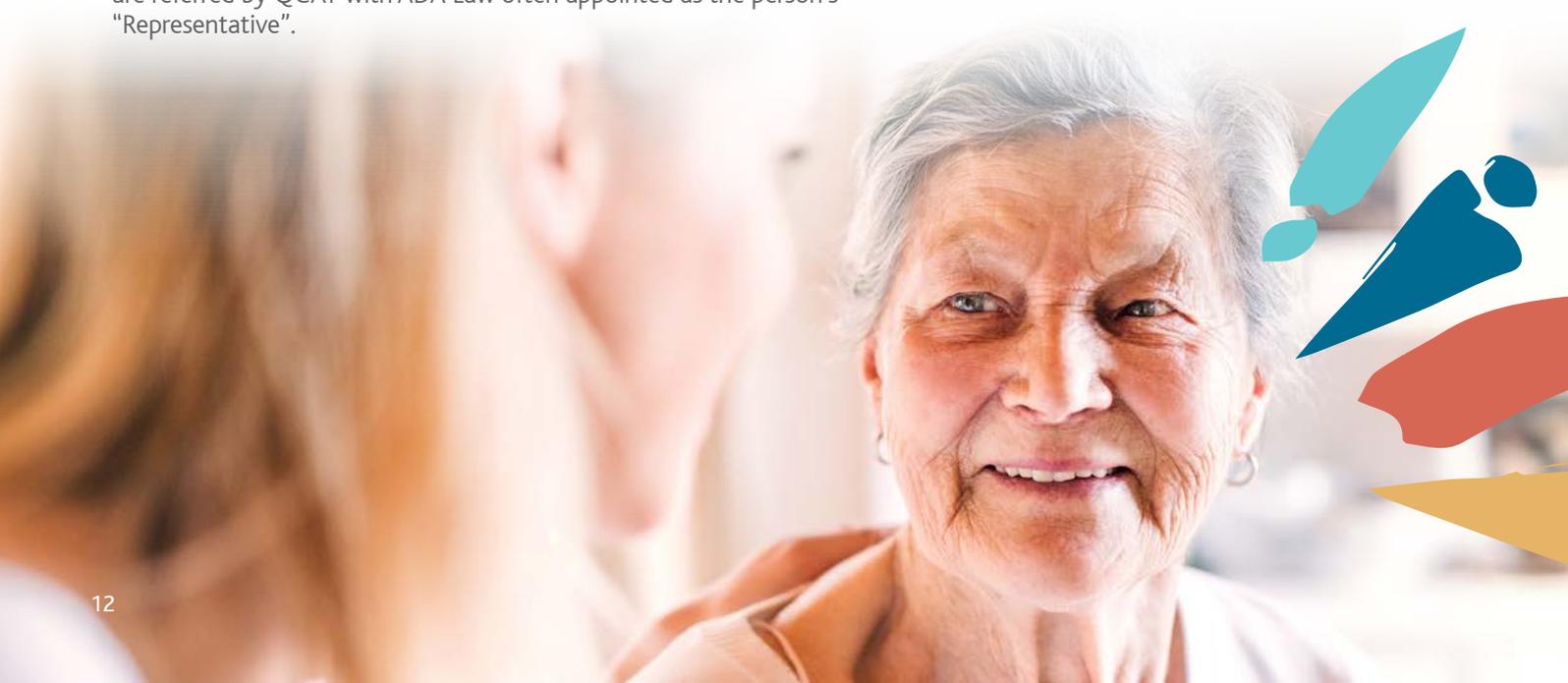
Advocacy provided to people between 18-64 years regarding their current decision makers remained at the same level as previous years.

ADA Law has continued to provide legal representation at the Mental Health Review Tribunal as referred by Legal Aid Queensland, at a slightly increased level on the previous year.

Negotiation with decision makers on QCAT Guardianship and Administration matters has increased over 50%. Many of these cases are referred by QCAT with ADA Law often appointed as the person's "Representative".

### 2019-20 & 2020-21 Snapshot

	2019-2020	2020-21
 Mental Health Review Tribunal Legal Representation	49	62
 People with a disability (18-64) decision making support	110	100
 People 65+ legal services including decision making support & QCAT guardianship & administration matters	170	268
 People experiencing elder abuse in residential aged care (greater Brisbane)	71	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>507</b>



## Systemic Advocacy

ADA Law continued to contribute to systemic change during 2020-21.

This included:

- Providing feedback to the Commonwealth Government on proposed development of an Enduring Power of Attorney Register
- Working with University of Queensland Law School Pro Bono Centre in the development of resources for Healthcare Decision Making in Queensland
- Working with Dr Tracey West, Griffith University Business School, in the development of resources for the community to understand and prevent financial elder abuse
- Participation in the Public Trustee Queensland's external stakeholder panel
- Participation in the development of national resources for OPAN, including resources on chemical restraint and elder abuse
- ADA Law has also contributed to development of resources to assist people with a disability who are also experiencing family and domestic violence.

safety – from parent's perspective, disability or aged care). This system or sector knowledge is important as it is pivotal in more fully understanding the opportunities that may be available to clients.



Caption: Karen Williams, Principal Solicitor introducing ADA Law at launch event.



Caption: Former Queensland Attorney-General, Yvette D'Ath, ADA Australia CEO Geoff Rowe and Principal Solicitor Karen Williams at the launch of ADA Law.

The Guardianship and Administration Act 2000 was amended allowing, amongst other things, for an expanded role of representative. This role includes representing the adult's views, wishes and preferences as well as safeguarding their interests and promoting their opportunities.

This requires the representative to understand the adult's circumstances in relation to any property or financial obligations, the service system (such as NDIS) and sectors that clients are located within (such as mental health, child

The representative role is appointed by the Tribunal and subject to any procedural directions imposed by the Tribunal and the role is limited to the proceeding of the Tribunal.

Essentially, the role is broader than the usual advocate/lawyer client relationship and does not attract extra funding. ADA Law is usually quite receptive to taking on the role, but the increasing requests due to the increasing complexity of cases coming before the Tribunal have meant that due to resource limitations, the service has been unable to take on all requests.



## Case Study1



Ju is an 88 year old woman who lived with her son Hu, daughter-in-law Fen and their children. They had lived in Ju's house since the late 90's, which was located in the Gold Coast.

Ju had owned several houses in her lifetime and had provided previous financial support to her daughter Chyou and another son Chaoxiang.

Ju had a stroke in 2019 which impacted on her capacity and limited her ability to communicate in English or Chinese. In 2010, Ju had previously appointed Hu and Fen as her attorneys under an Enduring Power of Attorney.

Before her stroke, Ju decided to transfer her home to Hu and Fen, in anticipation of her ongoing care. When Chaoxiang and Chyou heard about this after Ju's stroke,

they approached a lawyer to challenge this decision on the grounds that Ju lacked capacity to make this decision.

This became a QCAT application. When they received an application, QCAT decided that Ju should have her own representative and they approached ADA Law for assistance.

Ju was agreeable for our involvement, and we met her in her own home, both by herself and with her family that she was comfortable with.

With the QCAT Order appointing us, we were able to get further information about her health conditions and care needs from her GP and specialists. We were able to contact the solicitor that had previously advised and acted for Ju, and they were able to provide a report for QCAT, as well as making themselves available for the QCAT hearing.

Overall, Ju was able to demonstrate her preferences for her living arrangements and to demonstrate that she was comfortable in this setting. The Tribunal decided that Ju had capacity at the time of the transfer and although there was a presumption of undue influence raised by the transfer against the attorney, Ju had received sufficient independent legal advice at the time of the transfer.

Ju was happy that the Tribunal had understood her views and preferences and was glad that her original decision remained.

## Case Study2

Allyra is a young aboriginal woman, who has three children. It is suggested that Allyra has cognitive impairments, because of learning disabilities and some drug use.

All the children are under the responsibility of the Department of Child Safety (DOCS), with some living in Queensland and some living interstate. Allyra has different access arrangements, depending on which government office is involved, and the location of the particular child.

Allyra did not complete high school and has made some life decisions which other people disagree with, sometimes being negatively influenced by her partners and friends.

Recently Allyra was attending the Court to resist a

DOCS application for long term guardianship of her youngest child, who was living with their father. During that hearing the judge became concerned that Allyra did not have sufficient cognitive ability to understand what was involved and to instruct her lawyers capably. The judge sent a referral to QCAT so that QCAT could consider whether Allyra had decision making capacity in relation to the children's matters. If found that she did not, QCAT was requested to appoint the Public Guardian for her legal matters.

In a preliminary step QCAT appointed ADA Law as the legal representative for Allyra. ADA Law was required to support her through the QCAT process, including: obtaining medical reports about her decision-making capacity; speaking to her and her support network; helping her express her views and wishes to the Tribunal; but also making submissions to the Tribunal in regard to her interests.

While it was plain that Allyra struggled with some theoretical concepts, it was apparent that she was very familiar and comfortable with court matters, children's legal matters such as negotiating with foster families, DOCS, ex partners, and being resourceful. She was working well with her community support workers to establish stable and suitable accommodation for herself and was developing more life skills and resilience. She understood what was required of her to enable her youngest child to be approved to live with her. She was well versed in legal "speak" and was able to explain to the Tribunal her understanding of her legal situation, as well as what her options and possible outcomes were.

Allyra was able to demonstrate that she had sufficient decision-making capacity to remain her own decision maker for her legal matters. As she did not require a legal guardian, no guardian could be appointed.

# Aged Care Services

The 2020-21 financial year was a challenging one for the aged care advocacy service as we adapted to changes in the delivery of individual advocacy support.

With the impact of COVID-19 and the nationwide lockdown advocates again worked remotely. This combined with the inability to meet with clients face to face impacted the way advocacy services were delivered. Being able to provide advocacy support to the most vulnerable was imperative. Using technology by undertaking phone support or linking in via facetime and Zoom meetings meant we could continue supporting clients effectively.

Information and individual advocacy support was provided to 4,082 older people across the state. This was an increase of 15% over the previous year, showing the demand for aged care advocacy continuing to be high, with the COVID-19 pandemic also causing additional issues for older Queenslanders.

During the pandemic restrictions on visitation continued to be of great concern for clients and their families. Lack of contact impacted older people's mental health and wellbeing as well as causing physical decline.

The implementation of the Industry Code for Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes During COVID-19 assisted on a systemic level, however individual advocacy was required for a number of clients who were in need of continuity of care visits which could only be undertaken in a face-to-face capacity. In addition to visitor restrictions aged care advocates supported residents to leave their facility to attend appointments and access their community for essential reasons when restrictions were in place as well as advocating to reduce isolation periods residents experienced on their return to facilities.

Advocates also supported a number of older people requiring extended social leave to remain at home during the pandemic period, and this resulted in the implementation of an emergency leave provision to provide extended leave from Residential Aged Care

Facilities (RACF) during pandemic times.

Aged care advocates supported clients in the community facing cancellation of Home Care services, due to COVID-19 restrictions, by assisting older people to access services they required via alternative means such as using technology for social support or implementing strategies to receive services in a safe manner in their home.

ADA Australia also undertook a number of additional services during this time, including providing information and options to residents and families wanting to transfer family members from the RACF to their home to be cared for, and access support in the community whilst restrictions were in place.

Another service was the OPAN national advocacy afterhours escalation service which provided urgent support to those requiring assistance after business hours and on weekends.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic ADA Australia has seen a significant issue emerge for older people in the assessments for aged care services. The Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) and the Regional Assessment Service (RAS) have moved assessments to a telephone assessment rather than face-to-face. Unfortunately, this has meant that many clients are not receiving the services and supports they require as a phone assessment will not always identify their functional needs. Whilst reduced in some areas, a number of services still continue to conduct assessments in this way causing significant concern for the most vulnerable people.

Within the home care space ADA Australia saw significant issues regarding increased costs across Home Care Packages. Whether this be in relation to increased transport costs, direct service delivery or overall package management fees, it is impacting the amount of service clients have access to.

Exercising choice and control over their Home Care Package continues to be a significant concern for older people. With many items linking back to a care recipient's care needs but not specified as a requirement in the Home Care Packages Program Operational Manual, advocates frequently work within the inclusions and exclusions framework to support clients in accessing what they need.

The demand for Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) services continues to be of significant concern with older people across the state unable to access a number of CHSP service types. In particular, home maintenance services and domestic support, requiring advocates to problem-solve alternative options or look at whether a Home Care Package is a better option so that older people do not miss out on the care they require.



# Aged Care System Navigator



ADA Australia’s participation in the Aged Care System Navigator (ACSN) trial which commenced in February 2019 was extended through to June 2021. A new trial commenced in July 2021 which will run until December 2022, after which time the Navigator service will transition to the new Australian Government Care Finders service, to be launched and run by local Primary Health Networks (PHN) across Australia.

As this program was still at trial phase, ADA Australia’s ACSN services were only available to people residing in the Brisbane South and Wide Bay regions, providing information about aged care options, or help to access aged care supports. This included older people, their families, friends and others. ADA Australia’s information hub was based in Bundaberg to cover the Wide Bay area, with the mobile Woolloongabba based hub servicing the greater Brisbane South region. ADA Australia was contracted and worked together with the Brisbane South PHN to deliver the mobile information hub to this region.

The ACSN services were promoted in a variety of ways to ensure the community was aware of the support the teams could offer. This ranged from flyer and information drop offs, written information to key stakeholders, utilising community agencies with established consumer communication pipelines, traditional print media, local radio and news segments and regional trips to smaller rural communities, connecting with local community groups and services.

During 2020-21 the trial was at times impacted by COVID-19 restrictions. During the COVID-19 restrictions, consumers still found great benefit in remote phone-based support from Navigators.

The ACSN trials highlighted that there were high levels of confusion and a lack of information in the general community regarding aged care options and how to access these. Being able to have a short discussion with a Navigator was effective in giving people the knowledge and confidence to make those first steps towards accessing supports. Navigators also spent time reassuring people’s concerns that accessing aged care services did not mean that aged care facilities were the only option. The Navigator teams encountered general community fear about this, and other issues related to ageing.

Throughout the trial it was also noted that there was a high demand for support in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and a need for better resourcing in this area.

Across all trial sites nation-wide over the past 2.5 years the ACSN trial service was able to:

- Provide navigation services to over 105,343 people
- Support 23,383 individuals navigate aged care services
- Deliver 2,853 group sessions to 82,424 attendees.

## Wide Bay

Individual support sessions  
**185**

Information sessions and presentations  
**24**

## Brisbane South

Individual support sessions  
**513**

Information sessions and presentations  
**43**

The Aged Care Navigator service provided support, education and assistance to people by informing and linking them with suitable aged care services. It assisted people to build their own knowledge by guiding them through the steps from information to assessment to receiving care. Particularly in the Wide Bay area, the service looked to support older people living in regional and rural areas.

The Navigator teams in this trial comprised of skilled advocates experienced in working within the aged care sector and with My Aged Care (MAC). Navigators were also part of the advocates as agents project with MAC which made contact with MAC much easier, particularly for consumers who struggled to interact with MAC without support.

Navigator teams also found that they were regularly ensuring people were aware of their options and rights, and linking people with other support services including financial, legal and counselling services. Teams also provided links to information regarding decision making and Enduring Power of Attorney matters.

The information hubs provided targeted information in both group and individual settings throughout the community. The teams also attended expos, forums, network meetings and community events within both regions.

# Disability Advocacy

Since 2018, ADA Australia has been delivering disability advocacy under the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) to people with disability in the Gold Coast and Central Queensland regions. Under NDAP funding, advocates can support people of any age, with a permanent or likely to be permanent disability who may be facing issues related to abuse, neglect or discrimination.

From July 2019 a change in state government funding saw the expansion of disability advocacy support throughout the state for any person with disability who is 65 years or under.

Advocates help people with disability to protect their rights. This may include support in the areas of:

- Service provision
- Assistance with government agencies
- Accessing and using services or supports
- Decision making
- People being unfairly treated or discriminated against
- NDIS access, planning and reviews and NDIS-related services (excluding NDIS Appeals)
- Assisting people to exercise their rights and freedoms.

There continues to be a significant increase in the state-wide demand for disability advocacy and the level of complexity of cases continues to be extremely high. Some cases continue for over 12 months before the identified issue can

be resolved and advocates frequently put over 80 hours into a single case. This severely impacts on the service's capacity. ADA Australia tries to adhere to a one-issue-per-client process as the service is not funded to provide permanent support. This process also ensures that others who might be waiting will be allocated an advocate sooner. Lack of referral options particularly for social work support and case management continue to impact on the service. The introduction of the NDIS has seen these services rapidly diminished and clients turning more to advocacy to fulfil this need. Sourcing appropriate referral pathways has become increasingly difficult for advocates.

**COVID-19 has continued to impact further on the intensity and complexity of advocacy work across both regions. Advocacy support has had to be flexible and innovative in order to achieve support continuity.**



## Systemic Issues

### NDIS access & support

Nearly 60% of all advocacy case work has been linked to NDIS access, planning, services or reviews. This has also led to assisting people access non-NDIS services whilst they wait to meet NDIS access. There is still a large number of people without adequate supports and services. Wait times for NDIS outcomes are also lengthy causing long periods of inadequate support for people with disability. Accessibility of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for example, for people with hearing or other sensory impairments, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people or those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, continues to be an issue leading to poor information and awareness as well as underutilisation of NDIS plans/funding.

Inconsistency of advice and support provided by the NDIA and partners has led to client frustration with the mixed messages and has increased requests for advocacy support.

ADA Australia engages with the NDIA and partners. Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are invited to attend team meetings etc, to work towards a collaborative approach to improving client outcomes. We also continue our involvement with the Assessment and Referral Team (ART) project, which is a state government initiative to assist people apply for the NDIS, and work with LACs, NDIA community connectors and other government and community groups to assist people access services.

ADA Australia continues to spend a lot of time supporting clients with NDIS reviews (\$100) however these are becoming less successful and there is a need for more support for people taking matters to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). ADA Australia is not funded to provide AAT support and local services are at capacity, meaning clients are waiting for long periods of time with inadequate support.

### Limited resources in rural and remote regions

'Thin markets' for NDIS services has given power to service providers and people have found themselves with diminished choice and control and without access to services. Clients can easily be disadvantaged in small communities by being labeled as 'difficult'. Advocacy is important in resolving issues with a high commitment to diplomacy in this environment to prevent exclusion. Strong communication is required when assisting someone to regain services. Inclusion is important and quality services has an impact.

### Health

People with disability can experience poorer outcomes in hospital, further heightened in regional areas. Strong advocacy has shown to improve peoples' experiences in regional hospitals, and this has a dramatic impact. It has been observed that poor linkages between Health, Disability and Aged Care sectors can cause poorer outcomes for people with disability.

### Housing

Waiting times for housing is causing peoples' issues to become more complex, particularly with the housing/homelessness crisis in the Gold Coast region. There is limited access to affordable housing and no movement on the Department of Housing local waiting lists for public or social housing. COVID-19 related interstate relocation has also impacted this further on the Gold Coast. A rental housing crisis is emerging in Central Queensland, particularly in Rockhampton due to upturn of mining in the region and increased presence of non-local trades people engaged in repair work, following a significant regional weather event earlier this year.



## Disability Royal Commission

This year ADA Australia has continued to build its Disability Royal Commission (DRC) service on the Gold Coast and in Central Queensland, which supports people with disability to participate in the DRC. ADA Australia advocated strongly for the extension of the DRC, which has now been extended until September 2023, which means that more people can participate and share their story.

ADA Australia has spent considerable time engaged in activities to raise the profile of the DRC within the community and encourage people to share their story and make a difference to the future for people with disability.

- Targeted communication programs, including outreach by in-person visits to community centres and libraries on the Gold Coast and rural communities of Central Queensland.
- Provision of information to people about the DRC via telephone, including existing and past clients of ADA Australia, new clients through Intake and clients secured through referrals from Your Story Disability Legal Support.
- Extensive mail, email and telephone campaign informing people with disability, services and community organisations about the DRC.
- Offering individualised information sessions to small groups within the community.
- Information drops to local services, community groups and government supports.
- Attendance at local disability expo's, ADA Australia took the opportunity to be featured speakers during Expo's to further inform the community.

ADA Australia also works collaboratively with the ATSIDNQ (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability

Network Queensland) team to reach Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people wishing to share their stories and has actively engaged with The First Nations Peoples Strategic Advisory Group. The ADA Australia DRC team also liaise with ATSIDNQ representatives to arrange warm introductions to community groups. The teams collaborated to run a number of specific engagement activities to try to connect with the First Nations community on the Gold Coast.



Caption: Invitation to Your Story Matters! event on the Gold Coast

ADA Australia also contracted a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) specialist for the Gold Coast region in May 2021 to identify key stakeholders and leaders in the community to facilitate people with disability and their supporters in these communities engage in the DRC. The CALD specialist has been providing information sessions/materials to various culturally diverse groups on the Gold Coast. In addition, ADA Australia made a submission to the Royal Commission on the experiences of people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



Caption: ATSIDNQ Champion Cody Skinner, and Disability Advocacy Manager, Rebecca Daniloff talking about the Disability Royal Commission at the Gold Coast Disability Expo

# Advocating for Diverse Needs

## 2020-21 Snapshot



**131**  
people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities



**762**  
people who live rurally or remotely



**351**  
CALD backgrounds



**1**  
parent separated from their children by forced adoption or removal



**27**  
Veterans



**37**  
people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Everyone has the right to be supported. ADA Australia embraces inclusivity and welcomes and encourages clients from diverse age groups, genders and abilities, cultural backgrounds, sexualities and religious or spiritual beliefs.

ADA Australia has advocates who reflect our diversity including male and female advocates, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates and advocates who specialise in the areas of LGBTIQ+, South Sea Islanders and multicultural services.

ADA Australia is committed to ensuring all advocates can offer culturally sensitive and appropriate support to diverse groups, and in 2020-21 provided the following training for all staff.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency, including building awareness of the issues and barriers to effective professional practice and best practice in the advocacy sector.
- LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy awareness training, including understanding LGBTIQ+ identities, discrimination and stigma, support for LGBTIQ+ people and inclusive workplace practice.

ADA Australia's LGBTIQ+ Working Group continued to implement strategies promoting inclusion, including the addition of pronouns to intake forms and staff emails, and addition of modern pride flags to email footers.

## Multicultural advocacy

During 2020-21, it became clear that COVID-19 information needed to be provided not only in different languages but in different ways for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. There has been a great national and state response to this with many resources now available.

Issues with accessing interpreters continued for some languages, for example, Afrikaans, Polish and Spanish. There can be limited availability for these speakers which can impact on the My Aged Care process, as an independent interpreter is required.

ADA Australia's dedicated multicultural advocate also participated in a number of successful community networks and initiatives. These provided the opportunity to learn more about perceptions and understanding of the Australian aged care system in multicultural communities and to share information about the range of aged care services and advocacy services.

- Logan Multicultural Community Network partnered with TAFE Queensland Mt Gravatt and Logan campuses to host sessions with English Language Course students. This involved hosting English practice sessions to discuss topics of health and wellbeing, including services available that may not have been available to them in their country of origin, such as health, mental health and aged care.
- Inala dinner for community leaders and influencers to hear what they would like to see in the area to make their community stronger. Greater visibility of services and building local relationships is a key need and ADA Australia is exploring strategies in this area for 2021-22.





# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland

ADA Australia has a long history of supporting people in regional, rural, and remote communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. ADA Australia accepted the auspice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (ATSIDNQ) in 2015.

ATSIDNQ offers a culturally safe space for members to connect, share and raise awareness of the issues they are facing. It also gives members the opportunity to celebrate their strengths, share their stories and contribute to the conversation about disability in positive ways.

ATSIDNQ is a collective voice that represents systemic advocacy, disability access, and clearer NDIS pathways. Strong membership voices provide great focus to ensure ATSIDNQ stays true to its core purpose and what this signifies.

Over the past twelve months, ATSIDNQ has continued to facilitate culturally safe platforms to support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, their carers, families, community. ATSIDNQ has also provided support to non-Indigenous service providers. Fantastic relationships have been established through membership, networking with government and non-government agencies and community groups.

ATSIDNQ has witnessed a lot of changes in the past year during this period of COVID-19. Changes in how we carry out business through community engagement, yarning circles, recruitment of Champions and Membership and address systemic issues through the Network. ATSIDNQ has readjusted the way we do business by connecting through mediums of social media, videoconferencing and frequent telephone calls.

During these challenging times, ATSIDNQ has continued to ensure the Network maintains the support of existing members and grows through reaching new members. New memberships for period 2020-21 were 96, with total memberships now at 1,313. ATSIDNQ staff have engaged face-to-face with an estimated 2,000 people around Queensland this year. The Network has also supported 8 Yarning Circles, which have been successful in engaging participants across the Maryborough, Hervey Bay, Cairns and Brisbane North areas. The Yarning Circles have been a useful platform for information sharing and gathering feedback from members about important issues.

ATSIDNQ continues to regularly connect with members providing all communications, events, website, Facebook page posts and documents in an accessible and culturally appropriate format. Members enjoy the Newsletters which share personal stories, resources, training and NDIS information and support information. Newsletters are also uploaded to the ATSIDNQ website, promoted via Facebook and distributed at a range of expos and cultural events across the state. This year ATSIDNQ also engaged Blackstar Radio and Bumma Bipperra Media to promote ATSIDNQ across 23 communities in far north Queensland targeting rural and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



# ATSIDNQ Team

The ATSIDNQ team also underwent some changes this year as senior project officer Bruce Simpson took leave to work for the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Engagement team at the Disability Royal Commission. Melissa Grundon took on the senior project role in late 2020 and has been joined by a number of ADA Australia Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander advocates and a new assistant project officer to continue to provide support and deliver key programs within ATSIDNQ.

## ATSIDNQ Champions

An important strategy of the Network is to ensure that it continues to recruit Champions within the regions of Queensland. Champions can add 'voice' to ATSIDNQ through lived experiences and in-depth knowledge of the challenges that are occurring throughout the regions. Champions advocate for change within their local, state, and federal platforms. Champions attended community meetings and networking opportunities during this period. Champions meet regularly to discuss issues, challenges, and succession planning. Champion strategic planning this year focused on plans for reengaging members particularly to address the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, supporting leadership and capacity building within the membership.

ATSIDNQ Champion Cody Skinner was formally engaged by ADA Australia to support engagement with Network members and local community on the Gold Coast regarding the Disability Royal Commission throughout 2021. As

ATSIDNQ is also supported by the ATSIDNQ Working Group, which is made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and management, who meet bi-monthly. Meetings specifically include the following:

- Informing ATSIDNQ of Systemic Issues
- Feedback for submissions to policy
- Networking and Regional Information sharing
- New Memberships
- Event organisation and attendance.

part of this work Cody had the opportunity to attend the Gold Coast Disability Expo in June, sharing his story about his participation in the Disability Royal Commission, and how important it is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to share their experiences. ATSIDNQ had a stall at the expo where Cody was able to network with members and community in the Gold Coast region.

ATSIDNQ welcomed 4 new Champions to the team. ATSIDNQ recognises and is grateful for the continued support of ATSIDNQ Champions, Uncle Willie Prince (Brisbane), Aunty Semah Mokak-Wischki (Brisbane), Aunty Ruth Miller (Cairns), Cody Skinner (Brisbane), MC Chosen Shaun Fabila and Leon Petrou (Brisbane).

ADA Australia would like to thank all Champions for their ongoing commitment to ATSIDNQ.



## Systemic Issues

Feedback gained from a wide variety of engagement activities with members is valuable in identifying the gaps and supporting systemic change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. The ATSIDNQ team will continue to engage and listen to the issues impacting them individually and/or on a larger community scale. As a collective voice ATSIDNQ supports these issues to be raised through systemic advocacy and feedback on all levels. We hope that this will influence Government policies and systems to ensure it is inclusive of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.

- Engagement with members has specifically highlighted systemic issues related to the NDIS – access, participation and engagement of services. Members fed back common themes regarding the NDIS to ATSIDNQ throughout the year which informed a number of submissions and advice to stakeholders and government bodies.
- Members were concerned that the flow of information regarding the NDIS has declined leaving a gap in knowledge and awareness by the community. Members want to reignite NDIS conversations within community as there is still limited information and awareness in some areas about the NDIS.
- Members were concerned that funding a 12-month contract for a NDIS Indigenous Community Connector was not going to make an impact and will disadvantage community. It takes time to engage and build relationships before even starting the NDIS process.
- Members raised that there is a distinct lack of culturally capable services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to access.
- Members reported a lack of access to Allied Health services locally, which is having a huge impact on community. Even when individuals have NDIS plans there are long wait lists for access to therapists.
- A lack of Support Coordination given to people who require it.
- Members were very concerned about proposed



Caption: ATSIDNQ Champion MC Chosen Sean Fabila with the ADA Australia team at the Brisbane Stand with us! rally

mandatory independent assessments, and particularly whether community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services were going to assist in the delivery of these independent assessments. \*Given the overwhelmingly negative response plans to implement independent assessments are not going ahead.

- Members in rural communities raised reservations about when a service provider also acts as Support Coordinator for participants. Concerns that the participant may then be restricted to only the services provided by that specific service provider, regardless of cost and suitability. Participants may not be able to get the most out of their funding.
- Other broader concerns raised touched on confusion navigating the system, underutilisation of plans, reduced choice and control in rural areas and a system that is not supportive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Caption: ATSIDNQ Champions Uncle Willie Prince and Aunty Semah Mokak-Wischki

As part of its response to this feedback, ATSIDNQ, in collaboration with local level Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the NDIS Local Area Coordinator (LAC) Engagement Officer in the Logan region, is working to establish culturally safe spaces for members to receive information and individual support on how to navigate through the NDIS.

ATSIDNQ also continues to take part in the Targeted Outreach Program in partnership with Queensland Disability Network and the Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS), managed by the Department of Seniors, Disability Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships. This forms part of the Queensland Government's continued effort to ensure as many Queenslanders with disability as possible are supported to access the NDIS.

ATSIDNQ also supported the Stand with us! campaign to highlight the importance of ongoing funding for ATSIDNQ, its members and access to advocacy services for people with disability across Queensland. ATSIDNQ joined forces with ten other advocacy organisations to appeal to the Queensland Government to continue funding for these essential services. Network members supported the campaign and attended the rallies which were held in Brisbane and Rockhampton.

# Snapshot of the Year



Members  
**1,313**



Champions  
**Brisbane  
Redcliffe  
Cairns**

## ATSIDNQ additional projects

- Targeted Outreach Project
- Power of Peers (Information, Linkages and Capacity funding)

## Yarning Circles

- Wuchopperen Health Services, Cairns
- Galangoor Duwalami Primary Health Care Centres - Maryborough and Hervey Bay

## Policy

Submission to the Disability Royal Commission on the experience of First Nations People with Disability in Australia

Submission to the Disability Royal Commission on the Impact of COVID-19 on First Nations People with Disability

ATSIDNQ's response to issue paper, Qld Law Reform Commission 2020 – A Legal Framework for Voluntary Assisted Dying.

## Consultative Committees & Feedback

- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women - Consultative Working Group (CWG) meeting for Queensland's plan to address Domestic and Family Violence against people with disability. - ATSIDNQ is a member of the CWG, as an integral member to assist guide the implementation of Queensland's plan to address Domestic and Family Violence against people with disability.
- Disability Royal Commission (DRC) – ATSIDNQ attended a private session, outlining systemic issues.
- Disability Royal Commission (DRC) – ATSIDNQ had negotiations with DRC to disseminate Brisbane Hearings information/engagement forums to ATSIDNQ Network. The DRC met with ADA Australia's CEO to also discuss the process of these hearings and the legal and welfare support for ATSIDNQ members (if they share their experiences/stories). ATSIDNQ along with the DRC visited Cherbourg to hear the stories of neglect and abuse. The DRC welcomed the community to submit their stories, via skype, private sessions as part of the hearings.
- Disability Worker Screening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Strategy – (NDIS National Worker Screening Transition Project) Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership.
- Fresh Future's Planning Committee (NDIS LAC Partners in the Community Program) Careers Queensland / National Disability Insurance Agency.
- ATSIDNQ provided feedback to primary health care as Domestic and Family Violence support pathway for people with a disability, relating to Brisbane South Primary Health Network's [Recognise, Respond, Refer](#) program.
- Developed a survey for ATSIDNQ Members to complete feedback to the Disability Royal Commission Issues paper for Emergency Planning and Response.
- Forging partnerships with Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women - Child and Family Operations – Director Specialists Services.
- Inclusive and accessible communication and engagement for people with disability experiencing Domestic and Family Violence forum.
- Domestic and Family Violence, Queensland's Plan to 2020 Domestic Violence Strategy.
- Disability Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction Advisory Group.
- To celebrate National Reconciliation Week 2021, ATSIDNQ and ADA Australia hosted the first Your Story Matters! on the Gold Coast.

# Communications and Resources

In 2020-21, ADA Australia brought management of communications in-house through appointment of a Marketing and Communications Officer. Dedicated in-house communications could provide the organisation with greater flexibility and outputs across a range of projects. It was also an opportunity to increase our internal communications, to keep staff informed across our expanding range of service delivery and project activities.

Along with management of ongoing regular communications, in 2020-21 communications and media activities also supported the organisation's systemic advocacy work across aged care and disability systems.

With many key issues impacting older people and people with a disability in focus during the year, our media profile increased significantly. ADA Australia participated in and generated media coverage across: numerous failures in aged care; COVID-19 restrictions in aged and disability care and their impact on residents; mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations in the aged care sector; COVID-19 vaccination rollout including consent, delays and issues with the rollout program; issues raised about the Queensland Public Trustee; outcomes from the Royal Commission into Aged Care and government response; the campaign for continued state government funding for disability advocacy services; risk factors for financial elder abuse and taking action against elder abuse.



## In Print

ADA Australia continued to seek publication in key aged and disability care sector and target group publications and online platforms to raise awareness of key issues and inform people of their rights.

### Aged Care Australia Magazine

Balancing Rights & Risk: applying a rights-based approach to aged care in day-to-day practice

The choice is theirs: the importance of consent for COVID-19 vaccinations for aged care residents, and supporting decision-making

### HelloCare online sector news

Snap quality inspections reveal "serious failings" in Qld aged care homes. Facilities on the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Townsville have failed to meet performance standards in recent quality audits, and priority actions needed by government.

### The Last Post Magazine

A voice for Veterans in aged care: protecting your rights and getting the service you deserve

Enduring Power of Attorney: Planning ahead, choosing wisely, and being a good attorney

### Your Time Magazine

Choose your decision-maker while you can – planning ahead and choosing someone to help with everyday life and financial decisions when you are unable.

Chemical Restraint is not a necessary evil – stopping overuse of medication or 'chemical restraint' in aged care.

### Queensland Law Society Proctor Magazine

ADA Australia's Principal Solicitor at ADA Law, Karen Williams, in collaboration with Caxton Legal published *The presumption of capacity: How human rights are ignored in guardianship and administration proceedings* – highlighting discrimination based on age and disability in guardianship and administration proceedings.



Caption: Geoff Rowe ABC Radio Capricornia

## Podcasts

Following the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aged Care, CEO Geoff Rowe spoke with The Last Post's Editor, Greg T Ross about the federal government's response to the commission's findings Available on [www.thelastpostmagazine.com](http://www.thelastpostmagazine.com)

Speak-up. CEO Geoff Rowe spoke with Nigel Webb then Chair of Queenslanders with Disability Network about the importance of people with disability building confidence to speak up for their rights, especially as we deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Available on [www.adaaustralia.com.au/speak-up](http://www.adaaustralia.com.au/speak-up)



Caption: Geoff Rowe and Nigel Webb recording the Speak-up podcast

## COVID-19

Throughout 2020-21 ADA Australia supported national and state efforts to disseminate important information about COVID-19 as widely as possible.

- Established a COVID-19 resources web page with information to assist aged care service providers and provide links to the latest government and health direction advice.
- Social media regarding restrictions, mandates such as QR check-in, and information for navigating aged care and disability supports during COVID-19.

## Campaigns

### Disability Royal Commission

As a dedicated advocacy support service for the Disability Royal Commission (DRC), in 2020-21 ADA Australia commenced a communications campaign to encourage more people with disability, and their families and carers to step forward and make a submission to the Disability Royal Commission.

- Developed DRC factsheet and distributed to over 600 providers and community organisations on the Gold Coast and in Central Queensland.
- Developed DRC promotional flyers and merchandise, including information targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability.
- Developed and published a video of ATSIDNQ Champion Cody Skinner sharing his experience of the Disability Royal Commission.
- Facebook promotional campaign reaching almost 15,000 with over 300 engagements across ADA Australia and ATSIDNQ facebook channels.

## Aged Care Navigator

In 2020-21, ADA Australia trialed a targeted advertising campaign for the Aged Care Navigator Service in Wide Bay, to coincide with the Bundaberg Seniors and Hervey Bay Retirement and Aged Care Expos and saw a 25% increase in intakes for this service over the previous year.

- Advert and editorial Bundaberg Today Seniors Liftout, February and May 2021
- Advert and editorial The Fraser Coast Beacon, February and April 2021



Caption: Aged Care System Navigator advertisement

## Queensland and Federal MPs

As part of the Stand with us! campaign to call on State Government to continue funding for disability advocacy support beyond 30 June 2021, ADA Australia provided information packs to all MPs highlighting disability advocacy service delivery, and ADA support available to assist electorate offices with disability, aged care and guardianship matters raised by constituents.

## World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2021

To recognise World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2021, Griffith University partnered with ADA Law to develop and launch a new suite of resources to assist financial and legal professionals take action on preventing financial elder abuse. The resources were developed on the back of research into the top risk factors for financial elder abuse published by Griffith University in January 2021 and were released via social media and direct email through campaign 'Don't cross the line'.



Caption: Filming education videos with Stranger Film

## Education Videos

To increase the reach of advocacy education sessions ADA Australia filmed and developed education sessions in video format and made them available for download:

- Advocacy for residential aged care – for people living in an aged care home, and their families.
- Advocacy in the community – for people receiving aged care services at home or in the community, or who are looking to access aged care services, and their families and carers.

## Events

2021 saw the return of more face-to-face events where the ADA Australia team were able to promote advocacy services.

- Regional Disability Expo Rockhampton
- Get Savvy Expo Beaudesert
- Retirement & Aged Care Expo Hervey Bay
- Gold Coast Disability Expo
- Bundaberg Seniors Expo
- PRIDE Fair, Brisbane
- Townsville Community Organisations Networking Forum
- Cherbourg Services Expo



Caption: Townsville Community Forum

## Awareness Days

ADA Australia continued to support national and international awareness campaigns and celebrations, relevant to older people and people with disability, through social media.

**We are now looking forward to the year ahead with communication activity expected to continue around further implementation by government of their commitments in response to findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, as well as communication activity advocating for the rights of older people and people with disability as we see the roadmap out of COVID-19 restrictions unfold.**

# Making Real Change: systemic advocacy in focus

The events and many challenges of 2020-21 saw ADA Australia increasingly become a national voice for the rights of older people and people with disability. We continued to take a key role in fostering and protecting the rights and wellbeing of older people and people with disability across the systems, programs and initiatives that support them.

## Royal Commission into Aged Care

In March 2021, the much-anticipated Final Report of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was released. As aged care advocates, we had been closely following the Royal Commission and strongly lobbied throughout the process to influence reform to deliver on what we know older Australians want and deserve from an aged care system.

We were pleased to see the final report put the rights of older people at the core of reform and that the recommendations made person-centred care, choice and dignity the top priority.

A key win was the recommendation for a new Aged Care Act which embeds human rights into aged care – this is what aged care advocates have been asking for and is the fundamental building block for a better aged care system.

Following release of the Final Report, ADA Australia through

OPAN, joined eleven other aged care consumer organisations and after consumer consultation put forward a plan of action for the Australian Government through a Joint Consumer Statement. The Statement detailed the ten urgent reforms that aged care advocates expect to be delivered within a twelve-to-eighteen-month timeframe.

The government response on 11 May, announced a total investment of \$17.7 billion over five years in aged care. It was a welcome increase which will deliver some positive changes, but in the context of the \$9 billion per year to fix the aged care system that the Royal Commission recommended, we know there is much more work to do.

An additional \$94 million will be invested in aged care advocacy, recognising the important role of advocacy in providing a safeguard against abuse and breaches of rights for older people receiving aged care, both while reforms are taking place and into the future.



## Budget 2021-22 key wins and losses for aged care

✓ A new Aged Care Act that has the older person at its core	✗ No staff ratios
✓ Contribution of older people's voices through a Council of Elders	✗ No 24-7 nursing requirement
✓ 80,000 Home Care Packages by 30 June 2023	✗ No wage increase to attract more workers to the sector
✓ Investment in increased independent advocacy	✗ No mandatory staff training
✓ 200 minutes of care per day each resident by October 2023	✗ No aged care whistleblower protections
✓ 40 minutes nursing per day for each resident by October 2023	
✓ Investment to grow and upskill the care workforce	
✓ A new star rating system for the quality of aged care services and a care finder service	

## Aged Care Visitor Access Code

With some people in residential aged care facilities in south-east Queensland experiencing up to 59 days where no visitors were allowed at their aged care home between January and July 2021, we were seeing the toll this isolation was taking on the health and wellbeing of residents, particularly for those who are living with dementia or who are reliant on friends and family members for additional care.

This is one of the reasons the aged care sector worked together to develop the Aged Care Visitor Access Code. The Code is about protecting and respecting aged care residents' rights to visitors. ADA Australia took many opportunities in the media to promote the Visitor Code and inform people that providers have a responsibility to ensure that residents can maintain contact with their friends and family members, whether that requires assistance with technology to make or receive video calls, or by alternative means such as window visits. The message for providers was to balance rights and risk and to look for solutions.

The importance of 'Partners in Care' – people who play an active and regular role in supporting their loved one, became apparent during this time, and the Visitor Code was reviewed and updated to call for State and Territory Health Directives to include 'Partners in Care' as essential visitors. Recognition in Health Directives would mean that they are always permitted to visit and provide care at residential facilities during community outbreaks.

## Elder Abuse Awareness & Prevention

Unfortunately, during 2020-21 we saw a rise in cases of elder abuse reported with the COVID-19 pandemic seen as a contributing factor with increased financial pressure on families. We know that financial abuse is the most common form of elder abuse, accounting for around 68% of elder abuse cases, and around 10 to 15% of these cases involve wrongdoing or mishandling by an appointed enduring power of attorney.

We continue to see the lack of understanding about the role of an attorney and how to be a good attorney, cause infringements on the rights of older people.

In June, ADA Australia met with officers from the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra regarding their plan to develop a national register of Enduring Power of Attorneys (EPOA) to give feedback about the proposed structure of the register and what is required. While we think it is a step in the right direction, we have called for a greater focus on sector and community education about the role of an Attorney and how the individual must be included in decision-making.

During 2019-20, ADA Australia partnered with Griffith University Business School who conducted research on the [top risk factors associated with financial elder abuse](#). During 2020-21 the partnership continued to develop and launch a suite of new resources, based on the findings of the research, to assist financial and legal professionals take action on preventing elder abuse, and to provide information for enduring power of attorneys.

The resources were released on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day under the campaign 'Don't cross the line' which had a reach of around 2,000 views on social media and via direct email.

## Eliminating Restraints in Aged Care

Further to our previous work with Human Rights Watch (New York) and the release of the Human Rights Watch Report "Fading Away" How Aged Care Facilities in Australia Chemically Restrain Older People with Dementia, in 2020-21 we saw significant changes made to legislation through Amendments to the Aged Care Act 1997 which took effect on 1 July 2021; outcomes to a Review of the Restraints Principles contained in Part 4A of the Quality of Care Principles 2014; and recommendations for further regulation of the use of restraints from the Royal Commission into Aged Care.

ADA Australia participated in a Review of the Restraints Principles, advocating strongly for further legislative changes. We continued to push for banning the use of chemical restraint in the aged care system, except in cases where short-term use of psychotropic medication is clinically indicated and approved and consented to. We want to see more support for providers to use alternative approaches, and to that end participated in a number of forums including OPAN's Alternative Approaches to Chemical Restraint, and Restrictive Practices and Human Rights hosted by Caxton Legal Centre.

Regulating and restricting the use of restraints in aged care is now firmly on the national agenda.

## Disability Advocacy

In 2020-21 there were several issues that had potential negative impacts for Queenslanders with a disability and the disability sector. These included uncertainty around State Government support and investment in disability services, including disability advocacy, and proposed changes to the NDIS. Queensland disability advocacy organisations came together through a number of forums to advocate for continued support for disability inclusion and advocacy services.

### Make Disability Count

In the lead up to the State Election in October 2020, eight organisations, including ADA Australia and ATSIDNQ, representing the disability, mental health and community services hosted the Make Disability Count Forum. A representative of each state political party attended the forum where they had the opportunity to respond with their commitments to the key priorities of:

- Independent and individual systemic advocacy
- Investment in frontline community services
- Disability leadership, governance and accountability across mainstream services
- A commitment to the Human Rights Act Qld
- Workforce development for the disability, community, and mental health workforce
- Increasing sector capacity
- Implementing the 17 recommendations from the Deloitte Review of Education for Students with Disability in Queensland State Schools.

It was an opportunity to raise awareness with political leaders of the key areas of importance for vulnerable Queenslanders, and the organisations and people who support them.



Caption: Minister for Seniors and Disability Services, Craig Crawford, with campaign supporters at the Brisbane Stand with us! rally

### Stand with us!

In March 2021, Queenslanders with disability and disability advocacy organisations were concerned that the Queensland Government had not made a commitment to further funding for disability advocacy services beyond 30 June 2021. Disability advocacy is a foundation for inclusion in the community and without it many people with disability would be left out.

ADA Australia and ATSIDNQ joined forces with ten other disability advocacy organisations to form the Queensland Disability Advocacy Alliance. The Alliance launched the Stand with us! campaign to call on the state government to continue funding for essential advocacy services.

The campaign included media, individual meetings and correspondence with State MPs about the important role disability advocacy plays and culminated in Stand with us! rallies in Rockhampton and at Queensland Parliament House on 24 March 2021, attended by around 200 people.

On the eve of the rallies, the Alliance welcomed an announcement by the Queensland Minister for Disability Services, the Honourable Craig Crawford, that the government would extend its funding of disability advocacy services in Queensland, committing \$8.1 million over the next two years.

While the funding was welcome, it was widely acknowledged as a stop-gap measure while an ongoing funding model for advocacy is developed between the state and federal governments. ADA Australia will continue to monitor progress of this work to ensure that certainty of advocacy support is provided for Queenslanders with disability into the future.

### Pause, Reset, Co-design

In May 2021, ADA Australia and ATSIDNQ joined the Queenslanders with Disability Network and others in the disability sector to raise issues regarding proposed changes to the NDIS through the NDIS Reforms: Pause, Reset, Co-Design Forum. Issues included the NDIS proposal to implement mandatory Independent Assessments and make changes to the definition of 'reasonable and necessary' supports. The Forum was an opportunity for people with disability to raise their concerns and talk about other options for improving the scheme and ensuring its sustainability. A summary position statement on NDIS Reforms was produced from the Forum and presented to the Queensland Minister for Disability Services to assist with negotiations on the matter with the Federal Government.

On 9 July 2021, people with disability welcomed the announcement by the Minister for the NDIS that independent assessments will not proceed, and that proposed changes to the NDIS Act will be put out for consultation. ADA Australia has subsequently provided a submission to the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS.

**We greatly welcome the positive steps towards meaningful change we are seeing for older people and people with a disability across the areas outlined above. When working for long-term social change many small parts make up the whole and ADA Australia will continue to play our part in giving vulnerable people a voice.**

# Business Support Services

ADA Australia's greatest asset is its dedicated and professional staff base which is critical to the development and success of the organisation. Advocates have extensive experience and skills in the community, disability, legal and aged care sectors, with professional backgrounds in nursing, social work, human services, diversional therapy, rehabilitation, education, and law.

Integral to the capacity to deliver our services is ADA Australia's dedicated support staff, providing back of house support to ensure the seamless ongoing operations of the organisation. An independent review of ADA Australia's support structure in April saw a restructure of the team to better support the organisation's growing needs and build a stronger foundation for service delivery. Implementation of the new enhanced Business Support Services structure including the addition of senior expert roles was finalised in late September 2021.

Volunteers and students also support our staff, providing many hours of assistance in areas such as administration, information/referral and advocacy support.

ADA Australia continues to be an employer of choice, with staff retention rates remaining high, with almost 40% of staff having worked for the organisation for more than 7 years. ADA Australia continues to enhance the skills, capabilities, and knowledge of its valuable employees by providing regular training and development opportunities.

ADA Australia upholds a strong commitment to being a quality organisation. This was demonstrated through ADA Australia once again successfully passing audits and maintaining certification against the Australia and New Zealand Standards (AS/NZS) International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 9001:2015 Quality Management

Standards and the National Standards for Disability Services (NSDS).

ADA Australia also undertook certification against the National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) in early July 2021. The National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) is an industry-based certification process for community legal centres (CLCs) which supports and recognises good service delivery practice, and a quality assurance process which ensures that CLCs are operating according to good practice and industry standards.

Certification against such leading quality standards is a testament to ADA Australia's commitment of being a quality organisation for all of our stakeholders and clients.

**In closing, 2020-21 was certainly another challenging year with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to impose travel and visitor restrictions, requiring several transitions to remote operations. I am very proud to say that our dedicated team continually rose to the challenge, always ensuring seamless business-as-usual operations for our vulnerable clients and community.**



# 2020-21 Financial Snapshot

Financially 2020-21 was a very successful year for ADA Australia. Overall, actual income for the year was \$5,196,163, up by \$552,458 from the previous year.

2020-21 saw ADA Australia continuing to deliver advocacy services to clients of the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP), through a partnership with the Older People's Advocacy Network (OPAN) and eight other Service Delivery Organisations (SDOs) across the nation. This national partnership has not only ensured that older vulnerable people continue to be heard and supported but has created consistency on how these services are delivered to clients and consumers across the nation. The value of this national partnership was highlighted throughout COVID-19 with SDOs crossing state borders to assist with advocacy support to states impacted by outbreaks.

Through partnerships with OPAN, Council on the Ageing, and the Brisbane South Primary Health Network, ADA Australia has continued to participate in the Aged Care Systems Navigator trial services in the Brisbane South and Bundaberg/Wide Bay regions. These trials are funded by the Australian Government to provide information about aged care options and assist older people, their families and friends access aged care supports. The trial services have been extended through to December 2022.

Through funding from the Department of Social Services, ADA Australia has continued to support people with disability to make submissions to the Disability Royal Commission. This funding is an extension to the existing National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) funding provided for the Rockhampton and Gold Coast Regions.

Through funding from the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, ADA Australia has continued to support vulnerable people with disability under the age of 65 to be heard and supported.

While this

funding was due to cease in June 2021, ADA Australia welcomed a 6-month extension of the funding through to December 2021 while an open tender process was being developed. The demand for this service continues to grow exponentially, and ADA Australia will tender for funding to continue supporting vulnerable Queenslanders with disability.

ADA Australia has continued to partner with the Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) to undertake a range of key activities to support a dedicated statewide network for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability – ATSIDNQ. Funding for this very successful Network was also due to cease in June 2021, with ADA Australia welcoming a 6-month extension of funding through to December 2021. The ongoing viability of this Network will be dependent on the outcome of the tender process through the Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

ADA Australia's Human Rights Service, funded by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, has continued to support adults with impaired decision-making capacity to resolve guardianship and administration issues. To better support vulnerable and disadvantaged people with multiple and/or complex legal and associated non-legal problems, ADA Australia commenced a specialist Community Legal Service, with ADA Law officially being launched in August 2020.

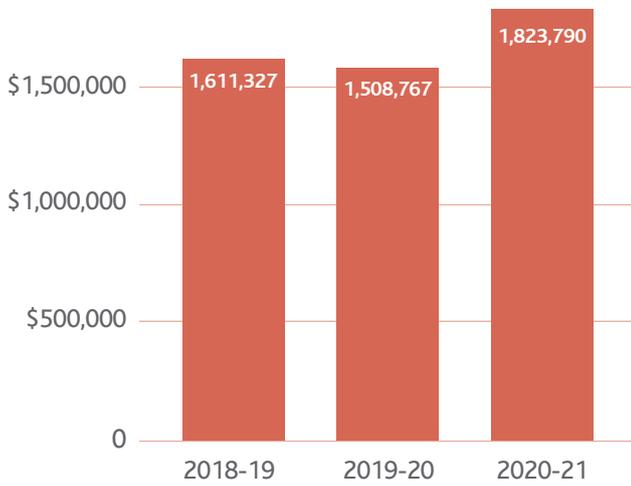
Total expenditure for the year was \$5,134,132, an increase of \$571,144 from the previous year. This escalation in expenditure is predominantly the result of the continued investment in increased staff wages and associated direct service delivery costs, to meet the increasing client demand for ADA Australia's services.

ADA Australia's cash position increased with a closing cash balance of \$1,823,790 at the end of the financial year, up by \$243,024 from the previous year. The closing cash balance has been impacted due to grants and funding received prior to year-end being reflected in the financial report as unexpended funds carried forward.

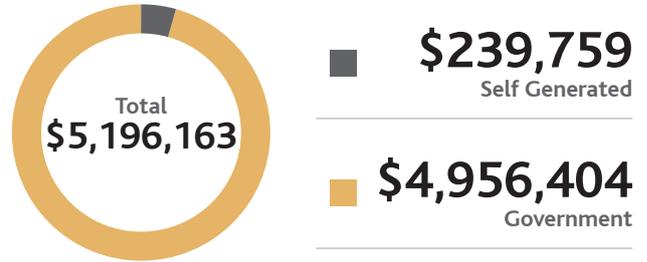




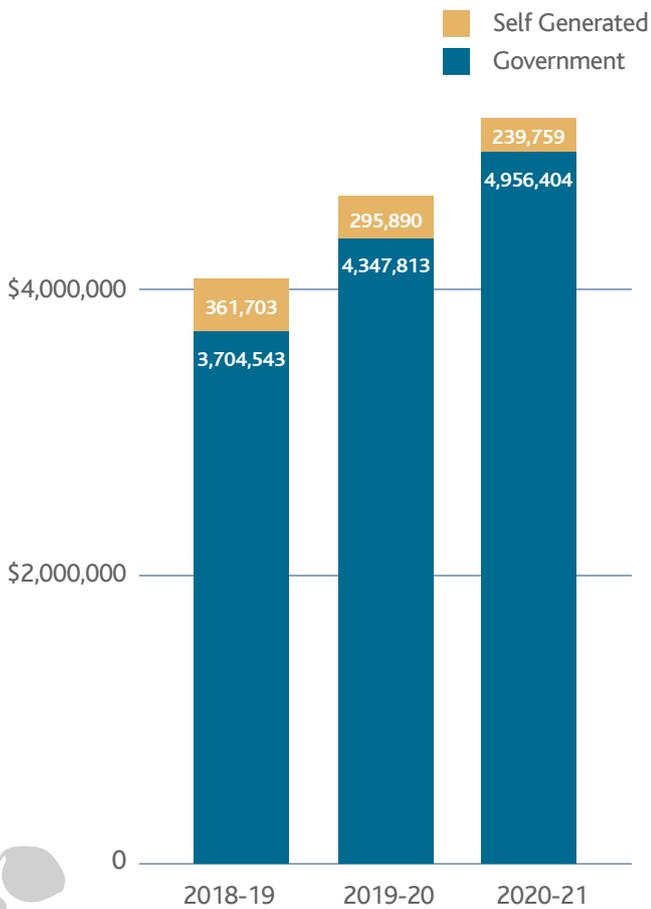
### Cash at the end of year



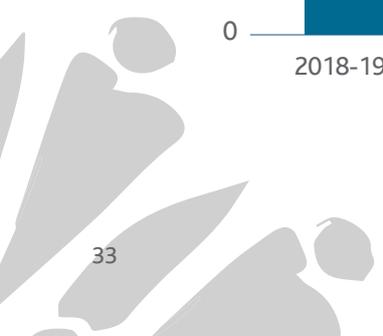
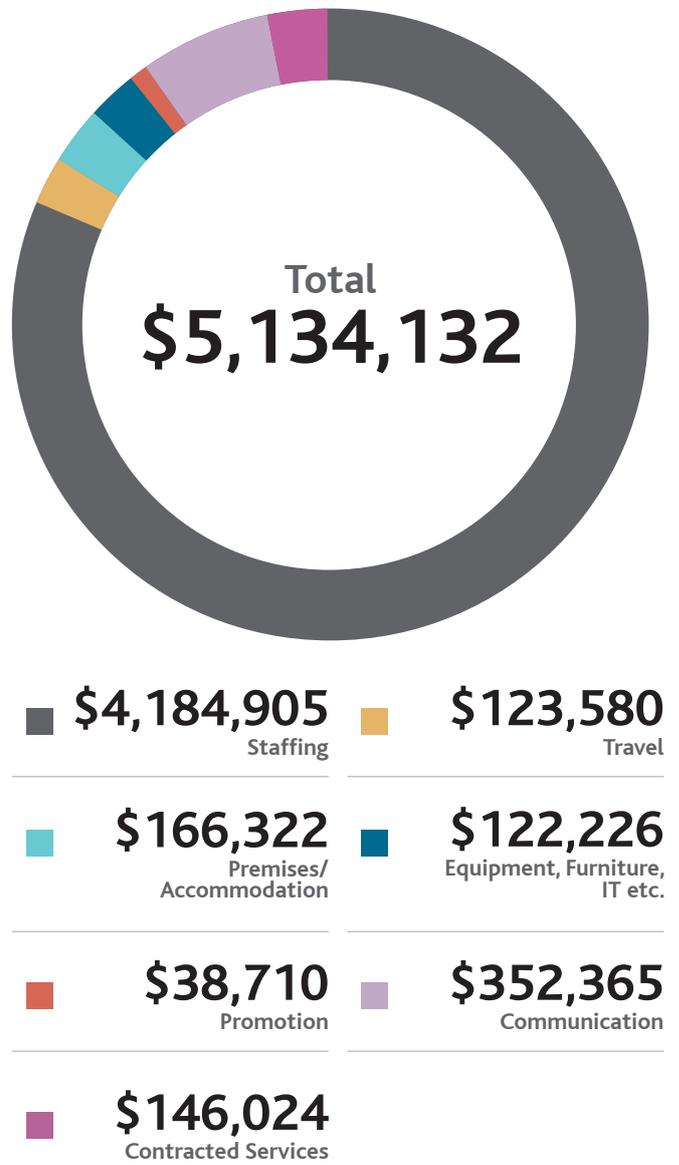
### Where the money came from 2020-21



### Sources of income



### Expenditure



# Glossary of Terms

**ACAT**

Aged Care Assessment Team

**ACSN**

Aged Care System Navigator

**ADA Australia**

Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia

**Aged Care Royal Commission**

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality & Safety

**ATSIDNQ**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland

**CALD**

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

**CDC**

Consumer Directed Care

**CHSP**

Commonwealth Home Support Program

**DRC**

Disability Royal Commission

**Disability Royal Commission**

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse and Neglect of People with Disability

**EPOA**

Enduring Power of Attorney

**HCP**

Home Care Packages

**ISO**

International Organisation for Standardisation

**LAC**

Local Area Coordinator

**LGBTIQ+**

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and gender diverse, Intersex, Queer and questioning

**MAC**

My Aged Care

**MHRT**

Mental Health Review Tribunal

**NACAP**

National Aged Care Advocacy Program

**NAIDOC**

National Aboriginal & Islander Day Observance Committee

**NDAP**

National Disability Advocacy Program

**NDIA**

National Disability Insurance Agency

**NDIS**

National Disability Insurance Scheme

**OPAN**

Older Persons Advocacy Network

**PHN**

Primary Health Network

**QCAT**

Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal

**RACF**

Residential Aged Care Facility

**RAP**

Reconciliation Action Plan

**RAS**

Regional Assessment Service



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