

Annual Report
2017/2018

**Rights Information and
Advocacy
Centre**



your rights, your voice

Chairperson's Report

Welcome to RIAC's 2018 Annual Report. This year has seen RIAC re evaluating many aspects of our work. The requirements and obligations for organisations have expanded and grown over the years and this year has proved no different. We have had to work to so many different Standards and keep abreast of the changing needs of this organisation.

Cyber Security, Risk and Strategic plans for the future (to name just a few) of this organisation means a strong commitment from our Board to be totally aware of their responsibilities and to the needs of the community they serve. The Board voluntarily provides this commitment and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for another year of service.

The rollout of NDIS into regional Victoria has put a lot of pressure onto our Management and staff to find new ways of offering support and advocacy. Funding in particular for Advocacy has not increased to meet the demand we are facing now and in the future.

I am hopeful that in the next year we will see the work provided by Agencies to People with Disabilities, their families and carers be seen as valued work and that we can look forward to the future with certainty of funding and agreements that provide security for staff into the future.

After 5.5 years with RIAC our CEO Leah will retire at the end of November.

Leah has been CEO for the past 3.5 years and has worked extremely hard with her Executive Team and the Board to secure the future of the organisation. She has had to make some very tough business decisions, and during this time has shown great leadership, passion and dedication not only to the organisation, staff but most of all to all of our clients.

On behalf of the Board, we wish Leah all the best with her retirement and next phase of her life and thank her for her tireless efforts over the past 5 years with RIAC.

Karryn Goode

Chairperson



Our Mission

To encourage achievement and acceptance of all individuals irrespective of age, religion, race, sexual identity, culture or disability through the provision of quality support and service. To also ensure an understanding of the life difficulties of all areas of diversity and disability.

Our Vision

Improving the lives of people by helping to build capacity and wellbeing of individuals, families, carers and communities.

Our Core Values

Respect

Independence

Acceptance

Collaboration

Our Board

Karryn Goode-Chairperson

Adriano Pati-Deputy Chairperson

Thomas Kilmartin-Secretary

Edmund Wong-Treasurer

Michael Curtis-General Board Member

Sophie Ratnatunga-General Board Member

Trevor Barker-General Board Member

Peter Carkeek- General Board Member

Hilary Russell - General Board Member

(commenced March 18)

CEO REPORT

I don't really know how this year has flown by so fast but here I am again writing the 2018 Annual Report.

This will be my last Annual Report as I have decided to retire at the end of the year.

During the past five years I have been so inspired by the Board Members and staff with their ongoing commitment to people with disabilities, the frail aged and their families/carers.

And I have been in awe of the community of people who have a disability, their families and carers.

Their strength , resilience and love have informed our services and our practice.

They are the people who never give up trying to get the best possible outcomes for their lives or their loved ones lives.

It has been an absolute honour and privilege to have served you in some small way.

The Disability communities, advocates, Legal advocates and the disability sector are still fighting for the voices of people with a disability to be heard.

I hope that in the very near future that they can relax in the knowledge that people with disabilities are valued, respected and are given the same opportunities and chances to have control over their own lives.

I will miss you all but I don't intend to disappear completely from this sector, I will be looking for opportunities to support this community in different ways.

Warmest regards

Leah Kateiva



Our Locations



ADVOCACY

All our offices provide advocacy support to people with disabilities of all ages.

Mildura, Wentworth, Balranald, Mount Alexander, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Buloke, Macedon Ranges, Greater Bendigo, Gannawarra, Swan Hill, Greater Geelong, Queenscliffe, West Wimmera, Hindmarsh, Yarriambiack, Greater Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Murrindindi, Moira and Campaspe

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ADVOCACY

Shepparton, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Murrindindi, Moira and Campaspe.

STRENGTHENING PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAM

Bendigo office covers Loddon Mallee Region

ACCESS AND SUPPORT

Mildura
Bendigo Office covers Bendigo & Swan Hill

RIAC is an independent and accredited Advocacy service.

NDIS Appeals

Geelong, Colac-Otway, Queenscliffe Surf Coast Shire, Ararat, Ballarat, Golden plains Shire, Hepburn Shire, Moorabool Shire, Pyrenees Shire, Campaspe, Central-Goldfields, Bendigo, Loddon, Macedon & Mt Alexander.



Support Groups for Carers

Strengthening Parents Support Program/HACC PYP is a Rights Information and Advocacy Centre program funded by DET for parents/carers who care for someone who has a disability/provide extra support to someone 0 – 18years of age and funded by HACC PYP for someone aged 18-65 years of age.

The program operates from a self- help model and provides opportunities for parents/carers in similar situations to meet on a regular basis.

- social interaction
- ♦ education
- ♦ information
- ♦ share ideas and strategies
- ♦ mutual support
- ♦ share a cuppa

Existing Groups can be found in Mildura, Swan Hill, Kerang, Cohuna, Echuca, Kyabram, Bendigo, Wedderburn, Maryborough and Macedon Ranges.



Update on the Support Groups

Stress Reduction Workshops have been provided right across the region, these have been very successful with good attendance and feedback. These workshops have helped to remind carers that their own mental health and wellbeing is just as important as the person/people that they care for.

A new group in Wedderburn.

An expression of interest meeting was held at Community House in June to determine the need for a Support Group to be established in Wedderburn.

There has been some interest for a Kinship Care Group to be established in Bendigo. Kinship Care is when children (for various reasons) are placed into the care a family member eg grandparent etc. Often these children have a disability or trauma issues.

If you are interested in joining an existing or establishing a new group please see [RIAC's website](#) for more information.

A carers Story

My husband was a very controlling person and the mental abuse was to the extreme, he had worn me down to being just a shell. There was physical abuse as well but I now realise that for me the mental abuse was worse than the physical abuse. His reasoning was that I deserved everything I received. 2 of our 3 children had already been diagnosed with ASD and just before my husband walked out our youngest child had been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and that was the last straw for him, he just couldn't cope so he left the family. So I packed up the children and we moved to Victoria to be closer to my mother for support. Not long after moving to Victoria my mother had a stroke and then had to move in with me and the children. I was already struggling with being a mother/carer and now I was a carer of my mother as well, I was at breaking point.

Soon after I was in the supermarket and saw a flyer about a support group for carers and immediately felt that I needed this so after finding out more information I went along to the meeting not really knowing what to expect. As soon as I very tentatively walked in I was warmly welcomed and immediately made to feel that I belonged.

My husband had been a very private person and had not allowed me to have any help/support for the children or myself. Through the group I learnt about the NDIS and after a lot of toing and froing finally got the children linked in which has eased my caring role a lot and has given the children many opportunities to experience things with other people and not only me. I was also able get my mother onto the NDIS as she was under 65. The facilitator and the other group members are very encouraging and supportive I am now attending counselling and now understand that I did not ask or deserve any of the abuse from my husband and that asking for help does not mean that you are weak and hopeless as a person. Not long after my husband left I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression and I am very pleased to say that I am now slowly being weaned off my medications. The group has given me a safe place to vent and to ask advice. I am always learning, whether it be through the education/information sessions or even discussions at the group meetings. My husband had never allowed me to have friends in the past and through the group I now have friends and more importantly friends who have some understanding of my situation. I would say that being a member of the support group has definitely changed my life to the extent that before I only existed and now I have a life as me who just happens to have quite a few other roles including being a mother, daughter, carer and friend but I have a life. I would definitely recommend to anyone to join a support group.

Self Advocacy

We'll always encourage you to stand up for your rights through Self-Advocacy, and will provide support as you or your Self-Advocacy group require it.

Self-Advocacy groups empower attendees to have the confidence they need to make decisions and choices about their lives, as well as push for equality throughout the entire community.

In 2017 RIAC received funding from the State Government as part of the Disability Advocacy Innovation Fund to undertake a self-advocacy project which was completed in June 2018.



Six Powers of Self Advocacy

Self Expression

Self Determination

Self Confidence

Self Reliance

Self Development

Self Esteem

Speaking up, speaking out, doing things I
never thought I could

I'm more able to do things
now, I'm not shy anymore

We have a story for all the
world to see, of never ending
possibilities

The one who won't be left behind,
that's me

"I made a lot more friends
than I normally would"

I learnt how to introduce myself

I will shout if I need
help but I can shine

I don't get frustrated anymore, doing the
workshops has brought us a lot closer



Self Advocacy Workshop Group Sessions

Program structure

The program consisted of 8 sessions on Self Advocacy, regular group meetings, the development of a video and a Roadshow delivered over the period of a month to share the video and the participants' stories about the program. The program included two Self Advocacy groups, who got together for key elements of the program.

To access and view the Speaking Up video developed by Musomagic and RIAC go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tvcULGalPk>



Partnership with Aboriginal Co-operatives

In 2017 RIAC received funding from the State Government as part of the Disability Advocacy Innovation Fund to work with three Aboriginal Co-ops to provide mentoring and training to the Co-op staff and provide a team approach to working with people with disabilities in their communities to ensure they have information and access to advocacy and the NDIS. I think then at the end of that page it should mention that the initial part of the project finished in June 2018, but has now been re-funded for an additional year.

This is a capacity building project in regards to the NDIS and three Aboriginal Co-ops, Wathaurong in Geelong, Njernda in Echuca, and BDAC in Bendigo.

The project has been successful in creating the following outcomes:

Continual and on-going organisational relationships have been developed between RIAC and all three Co-operatives.

This has resulted in:

- a sharing of information
- improved cooperative working arrangements and referrals.
- creating good outcomes for clients
- a confidence that RIAC is 'walking alongside' the Aboriginal Community in respect to the challenges of the NDIS roll-out
- Regular communication pathways have been created and are now ongoing between the NDIA and Wathaurong in Geelong

All three Co-ops have indicated that they are now very comfortable to refer clients to RIAC and trust that we are able to assist with any future reviews/ or other more complex NDIA related Appeals if required.

In Bendigo and Geelong RIAC advocates and Co-op staff co-locate in their respective office's, on a rotating weekly basis. The aim of this is for all staff to learn from each other regarding unique skill sets, namely for the Co-op staff to develop greater advocacy skills and NDIS knowledge, and for RIAC staff to gain a better more nuanced approach to working with the Aboriginal community in their respective regions. Staff from have worked together to resolve client NDIS support issues. Referral pathways have been established and this will continue beyond the life of this funded project.

Outcome

Considerable advocacy/lobbying has been undertaken in every meeting/forum/conversation to engage the NDIA around their relationship with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

"In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future." These words from the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart' (May 2017), both inform and inspire RIAC , working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for a better future for all Australians.



Clan: Wemba Wemba

Title: kethawil (Wemba Wemba: many children)

Description: This painting represents looking out for each other and caring for our many children who need to be supported.

The figure in the centre of the painting represents the workforce such as Njernda and RIAC in providing a voice and working alongside families to assist with nurturing and growing our young people.

The small figures surrounding the figure represent Koorie children at different ages and stages. They are being surrounded with support and guided by Elders, workers and community.

The curved green lines with dots represent reaching out to community through providing information, yarning and building relationships.

The three curved rivers with lines connecting throughout them represent the three rivers; Murray, Goulbourn and Campaspe.



**Lance RIAC's DAIF Project worker
& Karlisha from Njernda
DARU Conference 2018**

NDIS Peer Support Group – Geelong

At the Beginning of 2018 an invitation was put out to participants and carers in the Geelong region to gather together, have a cuppa, and share knowledge and experiences as users of the NDIS.

At our first meeting in February, we had six carers come along and start to share their stories and experiences with the NDIS. Since then, we have been meeting once a month, either at the RIAC office, or at a café. I have tried to get in guest speakers, but there is always something to chat about so it hasn't been an issue.

We now have just under 20 members, after 8 meetings. It has become a positive support network for people and our conversations have extended beyond our NDIS experiences - brainstorming ideas and sharing information about all things disability. We also have a closed group on Facebook, where we share articles and information between meetings, so the connection is continuous even if a meeting is missed.

The group dynamic is different each meeting, but always supportive, enlightening, and full of laughter. And that's the way life should be!



Advocacy and NDIS Appeals Programs

Managers Report

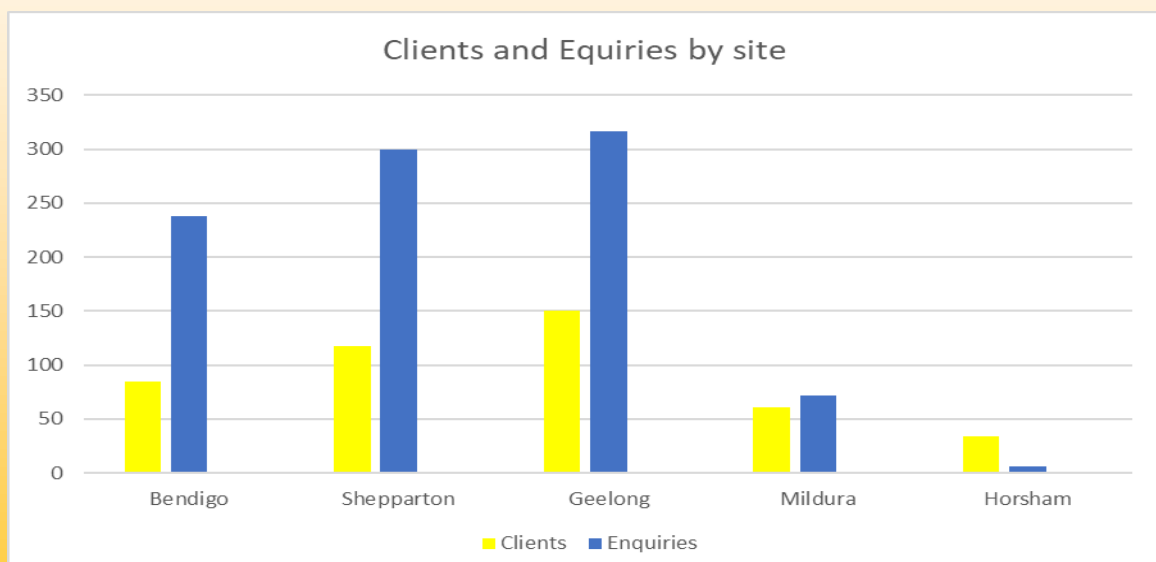
The 2017-2018 financial year has been extremely busy for our Advocacy and NDIS Appeals program. We have seen an increase in numbers of people we support with the roll out of the NDIS in the Bendigo region and expect this to continue when the NDIS rolls out in January 2019 in our Shepparton and Mildura areas.

We have welcomed new staff to our team this year at our Bendigo and Geelong offices. Rachael Thompson and Anna Oliveria-Fry lead our Geelong team with great knowledge and passion as do Amanda Robinson and Adam Veitch who also started with RIAC this year and work from our Bendigo site.

All of the Advocacy and NDIS Appeals team have a passion for their work and work tirelessly to support our communities most vulnerable people to have their voices heard. Each and every day. I would like to acknowledge all my team and their efforts over the past year. Feedback from clients assisted is positive and we have once again surpassed our targets for our Advocacy program.

**34 NDIS APPEALS
CLIENTS SUPPORTED
AT THE AAT**

**1381 CLIENTS
SUPPORTED
WITH ADVOCACY**





Access and Support



RIAC has been funded to deliver the Access and Support Program since 2013.

Manager's Report

The 2017-2018 financial year has been extremely busy for the Access and Support Team. We have seen an increase in clients requiring assistance with NDIS eligibility and access in the Bendigo Region, and expect this to occur with the roll out of NDIS in Mildura in January.

We have also seen an increase in working with clients experiencing financial difficulties and who are at risk of homelessness or who are homeless.

Access and Support workers have been working hard over the past year in attempting to engage with the HACC PYP/CHSP Special Needs Groups across the Loddon Mallee region and working collaboratively with local service providers.

The Access and Support Team have been a part of the LGBTI Roadshow across the Loddon Mallee region which has increased awareness for the barriers faced by the LGBTI Community and we have seen an increase in referrals to the Access and Support Program as a result.

We have also been working with local service providers around awareness of family violence for women with disabilities.

The Access and Support Team have attended two forums for Forgotten Australians in 2018 which has also resulted in referrals from this Diversity Group.



Pam, Mildura Access and Support was nominated and shortlisted the Olga Kanitsaki Award for Individual Excellence, a Cultural Diversity in Aging Excellence Award 2018. Pam was awarded an Outstanding Achievement Award. This was presented to Pam at the Cultural Diversity in Aging Conference and Awards Dinner in Melbourne.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy Program

Once again RIAC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Manager Daryl Sloan has been busy supporting clients over the past year. Daryl has seen a total of 86 clients over the past year and assisted with a wide range of advocacy issues.

The most common issues that his clients have faced over the past year have been advocacy concerning abuse and neglect, accommodation issues, health related issues and disability services.

Daryl also attended the 2018 National Indigenous Men's Health Conference in June in Cairns.



ANNUAL REPORT-QUALITY

Quality committee

This has been a very busy year in quality. We established a quality committee in August 2017. The committee has been doing a lot of great work. Thanks to the dedicated members:

Bridey Mildren

Nicole James

Christine Slattery-Stuart

Mark Naughton.

Audits

The committee was busy preparing for the 3 audits that were conducted this year

National Standards for Disability Services

Disability Service Standards

Home Care Standards.

We were successful in passing all standards and requirements within all the audits, with no non-compliances. Thanks to all the RIAC staff for their hard work and ongoing dedication to the organisation.



Additional accreditation

The committee is now working towards preparing RIAC for accreditation under the White Ribbon Standards and the Rainbow Tick Standards. We hope to report next year that we have been successful with these accreditations.

Kerrie Reardon

Quality Manager

We want to thank every person who has shared their story for our
Annual report 2017/2018.

The support of our stakeholders is critical to our success and the Board would like to thank everyone who plays a role in our work, from the supporter who contributes with gifts of time and money to the skilled professionals who maintain the high quality of our services, to the people who put their trust in us. We are determined to continue making a difference. With your continued support we can.

Thank you

Visit RIAC Website: www.riac.org.au

Or find us on Facebook

