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SHEPPARTON | GEELONG | BENDIGO | HORSHAM | MILDURA

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT



THE RIGHTS
INFORMATION AND
ADVOCACY CENTRE

"Walking With"

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FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to RIAC's 2018/2019 Annual Report. This year has seen much change to the organisation with the retirement of Leah Katieva as CEO. Leah led the organisation over the past 5 years, and we wish her all the best in her next phase of life.

This year also welcomed Karryn Goode as CEO. Karryn is no stranger to the organisation and had been part of the Board and chairperson of RIAC for 5 years in total.. Karryn is passionate about advocating for people in need in regional Victoria, including the elderly, those with a disability, the unemployed and in particular Indigenous Australians.

She has been a board director of RIAC (Rights Information Advocacy Centre) since 2013 and the Chairperson from 2015 – 2018. Her commitment and service to regional Victoria has been outstanding including her role as the Registrar at GOTAFE, as well as other managerial positions with GOTAFE, MEGT and The Salvation Army Employment Plus, she has developed, delivered and implemented programs to help thousands of Victorians develop the skills, knowledge and confidence required to enable them to find employment in their chosen career. As a natural change agent, her role as CEO for Rights Information & Advocacy Centre will see her address systemic issues within the Disability sector. Engaging with politicians to advocate change around the NDIS has been amongst her first priorities.

The Board would also like to thank Adriano Patti for his service as Board member to RIAC for 4 years and wish him all the best in his future pursuits. After several months of searching, I would like to welcome our new board members who have recently joined to provide the breadth and experience required to take the organization to the next level. The roll-out of NDIS into regional Victoria has put a lot of pressure onto our management, staff, and overall organization as the need for advocacy is on the rise. I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of our Executive Team in delivering consistent performance in a dynamic and changing landscape. In the first six months of this year, we have been awarded new grants in areas that we have not previously been considered.

This is due to the diligence of Karryn and the executive team in their grant application process and efforts. I am hopeful that this trend will continue as we address the ever-increasing need to advocate for people with disability across the region. Our passion and commitment to advocate for people with disability across the region remains ever so strong and I would like to thank and acknowledge the RIAC staff and volunteers for embracing this on a daily basis.

Edmund Wong



FROM THE CEO

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to RIAC's 2018-2019 Annual Report.

In many ways 2018-2019 was a year of great change for RIAC. I started as the new CEO in late January and I want to thank Leah Kateiva for the wonderful work she did in her time as CEO. In early 2019, we were saddened to farewell Kerrie Reardon our Quality Control, Reports and Records Manager. Both Leah and Kerrie have contributed much to the longevity and success of this organisation, and I would like to acknowledge their efforts, and thank them for the unconditional commitment and dedication throughout the years.

Our team grew in many ways, with new staff joining the RIAC team, and our amazing volunteers who helped us collect important statistical data that will assist RIAC with our service delivery in the future.

We have made changes to our organisational structure and leadership team to reflect what we aspire to become; a sustainable and contemporary organisation for people with disabilities.

Among other developments this year, we have updated our branding, marketing material, brochures, vehicles and social media content to create a higher profile for the organisation. The year continues to see more demand for advocacy services as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) continues to roll out across the State. As expected, the ambitious timetable of NDIS roll out has had many consequences around resources and thin markets.



In our advocacy work, RIAC has been a driving force for advocacy in our regions. We continue to provide advocacy to hundreds of clients through this funding, but there have been periods where we have had to close our intake due to the volume of clients we are supporting.

Systemic Advocacy is the way large scale change is made that can improve the lives of so many people. RIAC have conveyed the view of our participants to both State and Federal Ministers, highlighting the continued demand on the sector. This is due to an increase in advocacy required to address the difficulties people with disabilities are experiencing with the NDIS.



We further forwarded two submissions to the Joint Standing Committee on the NDIS Planning and Inquiry into general issues around the implementation and performance of the NDIS.

Our NDIS Appeals program continues to support clients to appeal decisions made by the NDIA through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The roll out has meant many more NDIA decisions are being made, and many more people have issues with those decisions. It is fair to say that the NDIA itself has many issues arising simply through process inconsistencies and breakdowns within the agency.

We have found it necessary to increase the legal focus and skills within the team to ensure cases are brought to the AAT as quickly as possible and are not delayed. Whilst there was a view that the demand would wane after the roll out, we are not seeing any signs of cases abating in well-established regions. But we remain optimistic about its future as pressure is applied to Government to bring about improvements and change.



As part of our strategic planning, RIAC has been successful in State and Commonwealth Grant applications either as the lead agency or partnering with other like-minded agencies. We value our partnerships and we extend our sincere thanks to Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, Woodbine Inc. and Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Services its Board, CEO's and staff for collaborating with us to deliver quality outcomes for all our clients.

This year, RIAC's annual report truly reflects the incredible work undertaken by staff across our footprint working in line with our strategic direction, values and vision. I continue to be inspired by the dedication, enthusiasm, professionalism and commitment of the RIAC team. All of whom I sincerely thank. We are also fortunate to have an engaged Board who unselfishly give their time for the sake of the organisation and our clients within our community.



Karryn Goode

Karryn Goode
Chief Executive Officer
Rights Information and Advocacy
Centre 2019

FROM THE OPERATIONS MANAGER

What a great year we have had at RIAC!

I would firstly like to welcome Felicity Grosse and Melissa Irwin to our Bendigo team and Kate Peeters to our Geelong team. All three bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience. Leaving our team has been Adam Veitch, Bridey Mildren and Pamela Bibby.

Advocacy and NDIS Appeals

I would like to acknowledge all the advocates on their hard work, passion and tenacity to get great outcomes for all our clients.

All of our advocates have been working very hard this year to support people. We have been very busy and unfortunately due to the need for advocacy support we now have waiting lists and have had to close our books on a few occasions. I would like to specifically thank Amanda Robinson and Rachael Thompson for stepping into the Team Leaders role. They have been integral part of creating better systems within RIAC to build the knowledge and capacity of our clients.



Rachael Thompson: Team
Leader Geelong Office



I would like to also add that one of our newest employees Felicity Grosse has had a major impact on how we run our programs. Her feedback and ideas to make our processes better has been extremely useful.

The NDIS has now fully rolled out across Victoria and all of our RIAC sites now provide assistance with advocacy and NDIS Appeals. Tanya Harding and Roslyn Watts have put in a lot of time and effort to build their knowledge to support their clients in the Shepparton and Mildura areas, and are doing a great job.

Access and Support

There have been a lot of changes to the Access and support program most notably Bridey Mildren resigned from RIAC as Access and Support manager. With Bridey leaving, her vast and experienced knowledge of the program, this has given an opportunity to reassess how the Access and Support program runs and how we can better support our clients. The Access and Support team have been working very hard to put in place systems that can assist with meeting targets within this program.

I would like to acknowledge Terri-ann McGill on her outstanding work that she has done within this program, she has worked extremely hard to build on her targets. Alone she contributed to almost half of the hours that accounted to towards our targets for the year.



The Future

As the Operations Manager I oversee six of RIAC's programs; Advocacy, NDIS Appeals, HACC PYP, CHSP, SPSP and HACC groups.

With the ever changing landscape within the Community sector it is very important that our programs are continually assessed to meet the needs of our clients.

We will be looking at creating more groups within all our programs, building our capacity to offer online assistance and online, interactive groups to support people in regional and remote communities.

The Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with a disability will be a major focus for RIAC over the next three years. RIAC will work with other disability advocacy organisations to build awareness of the Royal Commission and develop resources to assist people wanting to make a submission.

Nicole James
Operations Manager RIAC

FROM THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ADVOCACY MANAGER

It has been an amazing year for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy Program. Based in Shepparton and funded to work across the Local Government Areas of Greater Shepparton, Moria, Mitchell, Campaspe and Strathbogie; our staff of two 0.5 EFT and 1.0 EFT are kept busy.

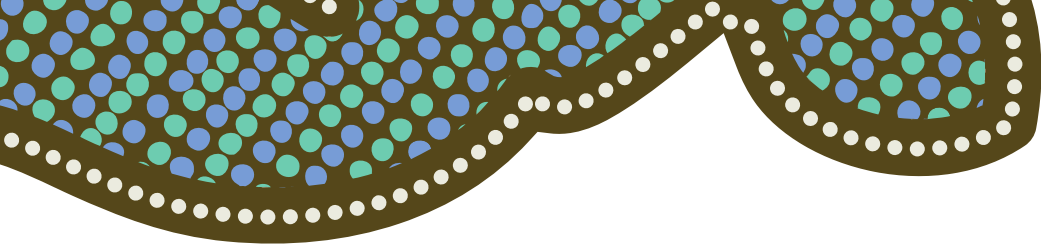
The Aboriginal communities in these regions are far better serviced now due to some extra funding received that allowed RIAC to employ Anne and Annie 19 hours each a week. Originally RIAC advertised one part time position; but were we so impressed with their abilities and experience that we stretched our budgets and employed both!



These staff commenced with RIAC in 2019 and undertook a comprehensive orientation process before starting to advocate for and with community members. We have since worked hard to put together an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy Program Brochure that is culturally sensitive and engaging to our target group, people with a disability, their family's and carers. For the year June 30th 2018 to July 1st 2019 this program has engaged with and worked with community members.



Some of these engagements arose from the Royal Commissions into abuse and still continue, Aboriginal Advocates assisting community members to make submissions to the inquiries and in some cases; seek redress for the abuses they endured. Our Aboriginal Advocates regularly attend significant community events like Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week and it's important to note that this year, RIAC staff from 3 offices attended their local events. In its broadest sense 'reconciliation' means 'coming together'. In Australia, 'reconciliation' refers to bringing together Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians. Reconciliation has elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love. National Sorry Day is held on 26 May each year to acknowledge and recognise members of the Stolen Generations. The Bringing Them Home report (1997) estimates "one in three" Aboriginal persons were separated from their families. It truly is "Sorry Business."



The number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care has doubled in the decade since the 2008 apology to the stolen generations, according to figures released by the Productivity Commission. The Report on Government Services (released 2018,) said there were 17,664 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in 2016-17, compared with 9,070 in 2007-08.

Healing Foundation chief executive Richard Weston said the “shocking” figures reflected the failure of Australian governments to address inter generational trauma caused by the stolen generation and other colonial policies, and said effort should be focused on healing and supporting families before they reach the point where children are removed.

RIAC certainly agrees with the Healing Foundation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability were 1.3 times more likely than non-Indigenous people with disability to have reported Year 10 or below as their highest level of educational attainment (59.7% compared with 45.1%), and were less than half as likely to have a bachelor degree or higher (6.3% compared with 13.0%).

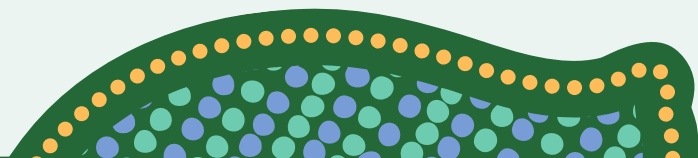
Education provides both financial and social benefits. Generally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had lower labour force participation than non-Indigenous people (64.5% compared with 78.6%), however, the gap was wider amongst those with disability (34.8% and 53.6%).

We have partnered with “Walking With” an 18 month project to “walk with” the Aboriginal community in the Goulburn Valley area in regards to Disability Advocacy. This multiple faceted program is an initiative of RIAC to connect with and build upon current networks of service providers and government agencies to ensure that people with disabilities, who identify as Aboriginal, can have the best possible opportunity to have their needs articulated and heard in a timely manner.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability were significantly less likely than non-Indigenous people with disability to be employed (25.6% compared with 48.7%); and the unemployment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability was nearly three times as high as the comparable rate for non-Indigenous people with disability (25.3% compared with 9.0%) (Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 2012).

Galnya nangarna nginak,
Daryl Sloan
Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander Advocacy
Manager



FROM THE SUPPORT GROUP FOR CARERS COORDINATOR

It has been a fantastic year for the Support Groups for Carers. RIAC have assisted faciliation of groups across the Local Government areas of Echuca, Wedderburn, Bendigo, Maryborough, Cohuna, Kerang, Macedon Ranges, Kyabram, Mildura, and Swan Hill. Many of these groups are now independent or in the process of becoming independent from RIAC, which is important for the sustainability of the groups beyond funding.

RIAC partnered with Carer's Victoria to deliver workshops across the region to help support and build the capacity of its carers, with a focus on carer well-being in our region.

RIAC has assisted carers with information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme and provided a direct pathway to our internal advocacy advice and assistance where required. The fabulous thing about RIAC is that we can often provide a 'one stop shop' for carers and care recipients.

RIAC has further provided carers with opportunities to attend some special events, and was able to secure 100 Circus Quirkus tickets, 70 Special Children's Christmas Party tickets and 60 National Festival of Magic tickets for carers and the care reciepent.

The Support Group for Carers will continue its great work into 2019 and 2020 and our goals are as follows:

- **To continue to maintain existing groups**
- **establish new groups across the region**
- **Provide individual support as required**



11

www.riac.org.au



Christine Slattery

SGC Coordinator
Rights Information and Advocacy
Centre 2019



FROM THE PROJECT'S MANAGER

The past year has been a time of growth and integration for the projects area of RIAC. Due to the number of projects, and to support the organisational ability to integrate learnings and outcomes into core practice, RIAC has now created the position of a dedicated Projects Manager.

The early part of this year was the final phase of the two year Disability Advocacy Innovation/Partnership project with three Aboriginal Controlled Health organisations. RIAC is fortunate to have learnt from, and has built sustainable partnerships, with the opportunity for continual co-operation, learning and growth with Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative and Njernda Aboriginal Corporation.



Lance Youston: Project's Manager



The relationships built with the Aboriginal community is enabling more people in those communities to receive the supports and services in a culturally appropriate manner, with the capacity of the co-ops and referral pathways enhanced and integrated. RIAC has embarked on a journey of growth for all its staff through looking at how we deliver services that work for the Aboriginal communities in Victoria.

Disability is disproportionately experienced by Aboriginal people, and the language and understandings of First Nations lived experience of disability is being heard by RIAC, and we see our role as one of walking alongside the Aboriginal communities in supporting self-determination for all service delivery.

We were honoured to be given further funding as part of the DSS Disability Advocacy Futures fund. This project commenced in June, with the intent of 'Walking With 'the Aboriginal community in the greater Shepparton region, in relation to advocacy and the NDIS. This project seeks to build upon all we have learnt and integrated from previous years and collaborations, and projects such as these allow RIAC to build into the core of its practice more fully formed and contemporary work practices which are needed to meet the Advocacy needs of people in the 21st Century.

In the Horsham area, Aly Clements is our project co-coordinator, who is responsible for working both with individuals around Self advocacy as well as facilitating/co-facilitating capacity building groups for people with a disability . Some of the areas of focus are NDIS and Self-Advocacy, Cyber safety, Emotional Regulation (Interoception), and also an Advisory group of people with a lived experience of disability is working with RIAC around ideas for groups, as well as looking at community capacity building in the broader Horsham area, which is chronically under-serviced.



Project coordinator: Aly Clements



RIAC is continually looking at new funding opportunities to support our work with and for People experiencing disability.

Overall this is an exciting time for the organisation, and innovative project work allows us great opportunities to develop new creative advocacy models, and broaden our ability to support more people. It also provides the spaces to develop robust models of participation and co-design with people who live with a disability. We will continue to innovate and work alongside all people for a more inclusive, interesting and just society. Thank you to all our wonderful staff, who either do direct project work, or as part of their role as advocates. It is fantastic to be part of such a dedicated and committed team.

I will leave the closing words from the inspirational Greta Thunberg, climate activist who became an activist, not in spite of her autism, but because of it:

"I see the world a bit different, from another perspective."

Lance Youston
Project's Manager.

Advocacy

Through advocacy we stand alongside you.
We'll ensure your voice is heard, that you're fairly treated and
that you have the help you need to make any decisions.



773

Advocacy Cases
opened from July 1st
2018-June 30th 2019

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocacy



79

New advocacy cases
opened from July 1st
2018-June 30th 2019

**42 Female
and 55 Male
clients**



NDIS Appeals

If people have been denied access to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), or are unhappy with the support provided within the National Disability Insurance Agency's Participant Plan, then we're here to help.



36

Cases at the Tribunal
opened from July 1st
2018-June 30th 2019

External review: we can help you seek an external review by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). External reviews help shape the support services covered by the NDIS, benefiting not only you, but the entire community.

Self-Advocacy: we provide the information and support you need to be confident in standing up for your rights, so you can progress towards the resolutions you require.

Accountability & transparency:
we collaboratively work with the idea that the NDIS is a community held scheme and as such, ensure it is accountable, transparent and progressive, to provide the best possible scheme for the entire community.

Peer support group (Geelong) to further develop and foster Self-Advocacy skills, if you've been involved or are about to go through an NDIA review, then you may be interested in joining our peer support group.

Access and Support

Funded by the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) (a joint initiative between Commonwealth and Victorian Governments), our Access and Support Program provides further support to those who have barriers in accessing services that assist them to remain living at home.



The Access and Support worker's aim is to work with individuals and service providers to remove barriers for individuals to enable them to access the necessary care and support they need so they can remain living independently in their homes and communities.



994

HACC hours recorded
from July 1st 2018-
June 30th 2019

698

CHSP hours recorded
from July 1st 2018-
June 30th 2019

Support Groups for Carers

Rights Information and Advocacy Centre program for parents/carers who care for someone who has a disability/provide extra support to someone 0 - 65 years of age.

The Support Groups for Carers Program provides assistance to new, emerging and existing groups throughout the Loddon Mallee region.

The Support Groups for Carers Program assists parents/carers who care for someone 0 - 65 years of age who has a disability/requires extra support. 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
- social interaction
- education
- information
- share ideas and strategies
- mutual support
- share a cuppa

12 Existing Groups from July 1st 2018-June 30th 2019

131 Individual Support Sessions from July 1st 2018-June 30th 2019

Name of Group	No of families	Name of Group	No of families
Bendigo	98	Macedon Ranges	34
Cohuna	11	Echuca	56
Kerang	8	PACS Mildura	13
Maryborough	34	ADHD Mildura	20
Autism Mildura	25	Downes Syndrome Mildura	9
Swan Hill	16	Wedderburn	13

Case Study

The 'NDIS' and support for parents and carers

I was referred to RIAC by my sons psychologist for advocacy support as my teenage son who has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) had been rejected for National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). My advocate worked with the co-coordinator of the Support Groups for Carers Program which is another program within RIAC.



During this time I developed a rapport with the co-coordinator who then encouraged me to attend the Support Group which she facilitated. By being a part of the group I have been able to attend the workshops and information sessions as well.

The coordinator's role also includes providing Individual Support and as I feel very comfortable with the co-coordinator I have taken the opportunity to use this on a number of occasions each time feeling that it was definitely worthwhile.



Through the collaboration and hard work of both programs, my son was finally accepted for NDIS.

Before linking in with the Support Groups for Carers Program I was a very quiet person who tended to spend the majority of my time at home. I have only ever missed 1 group meeting and that was because my son had an appointment which I couldn't change.

Being a part of the Support Group for Carers program has made me feel that I am no longer alone and that there are other people out there who have similar issues as me. It has given me the opportunity to learn from the sharing of ideas and strategies from group members at the meetings but also from the workshops and information sessions.

Being a part of the Support Groups for Carers has become an extremely valuable part of my life and it gives me a reason to get out of bed.

RIAC Carer Group Recipient 2019

Case Study Advocacy

ADVOCACY



The client first attended our Advocacy service as she had been rejected access to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIS) as the NDIA stated in their reasons that it was because he was already receiving funding from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) compensation for a spinal injury.

The client had a pre-existing Intellectual Disability (ID) and Acquired Brain injury (ABI) which was not recognised by the TAC as being caused or exacerbated by the accident. Hence, no compensation was acquired for these diagnosed conditions.

The client was not receiving sufficient support from the TAC and struggled with daily tasks such as cooking, recalling information, cleaning, social and recreational activities.

The client was almost 65 years of age, so her other option would be to access an Aged Care Package in the next few months. This process could take up to two years to be implemented and she could not apply until the day that she turned 65. The client was advised by outside sources that an Aged Care package would not provide as much support as the NDIS would and the wait time would be much greater if approved.

The client was happy to continue her application to the NDIA. After reading the previous application to the NDIS and supporting evidence, the advocate decided that the initial application completed by the GP was insufficient. The access application that was completed by the client's GP focused on her spinal injury and physical mobility deficits. The advocate assisted the client to provide her GP with information to complete a new Access Request Form which focussed primarily on the ID and ABI.



The advocate assisted the client to sort through her complete medical record and gather relevant evidence to support her claim. The advocate further contacted the TAC to obtain a letter that stated the provision of funding was ONLY provided for the spinal injury and there was no assistance for the ID or ABI. Once the Access Request was completed by the GP, the Advocate submitted this form and supporting evidence to the NDIA. This occurred one week before the client turned 65. The NDIA responded within a month and had approved access to the NDIS.

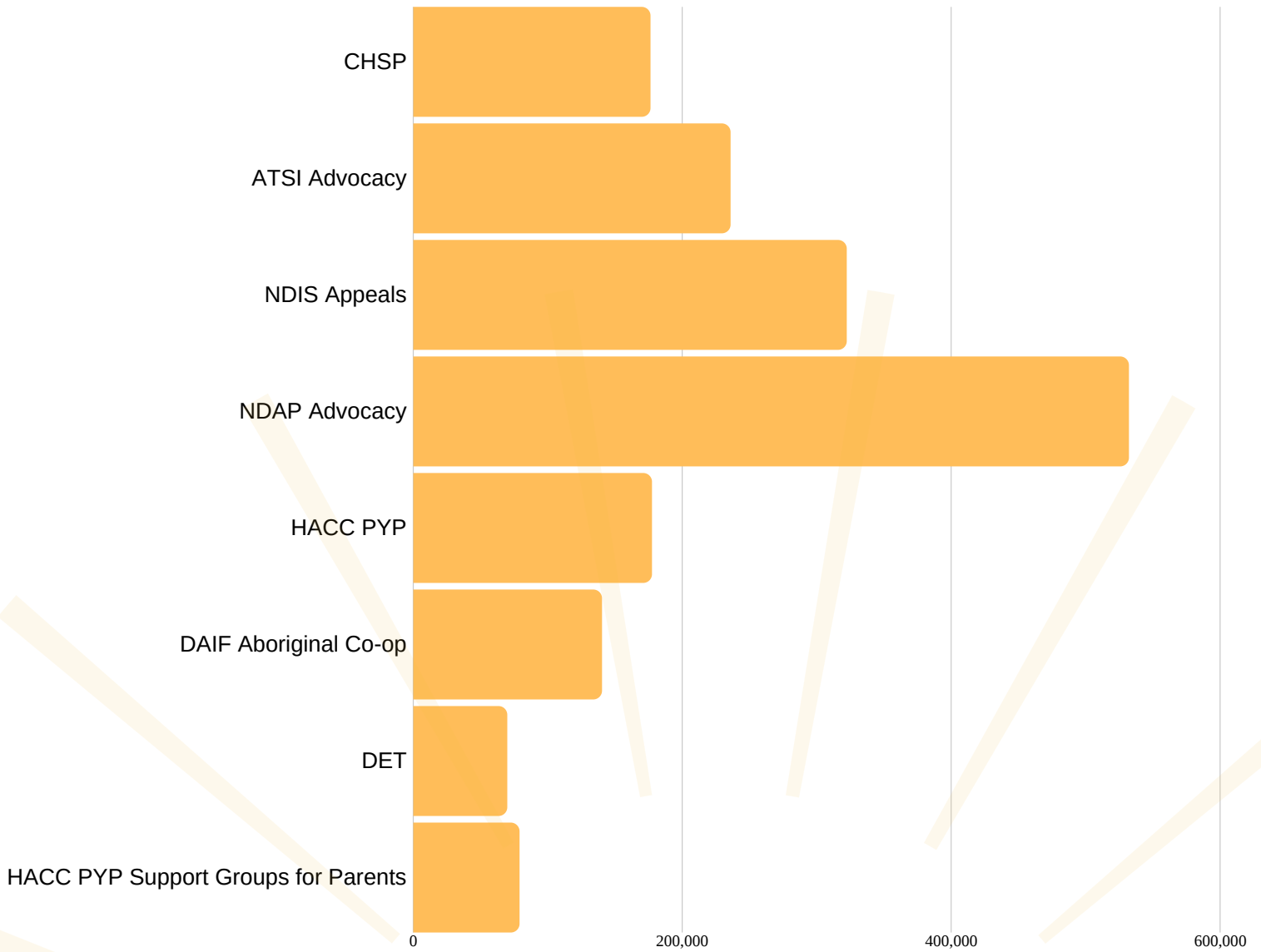


The advocate assisted the client at her planning meeting as she had no other informal supports. The plan was implemented successfully and the client now has Support Coordination assistance to connect her with supports to enhance her quality of life, access her community, and live life to its fullest. Unfortunately, the process was extremely stressful for our client and she would not have been able to have this outcome without the support of advocacy. The lack of understanding from the initial NDIA reviews team member and their assumption that our client already received funding for her disability from TAC was the reason for the long and arduous process that our client had to experience.

- Disability Advocate/NDIS Appeals Officer



Funding Income 2018-2019

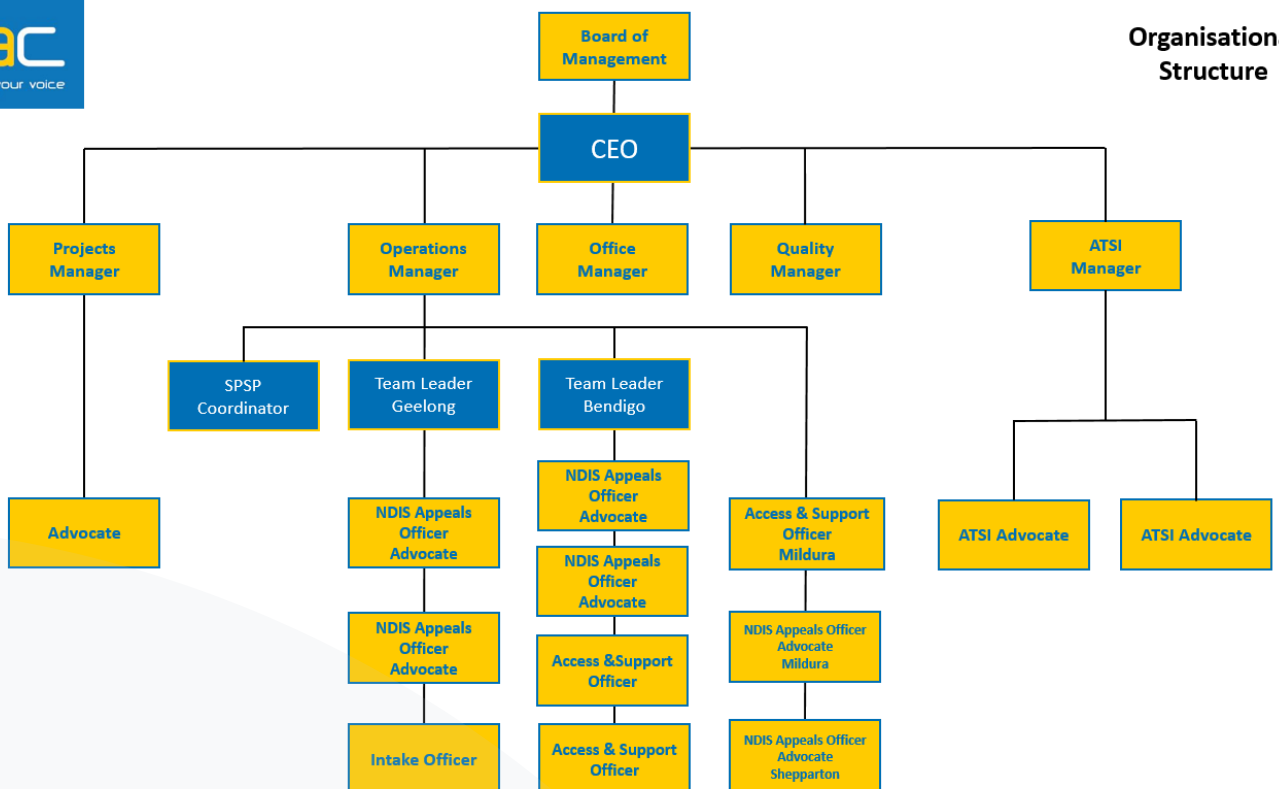


Sandra Boyd, Office Manager

Organisational Structure



Organisational Structure



Version 2

Our Executive Team



Daryl Sloan
Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Manager



Nicole James
Operations Manager



Sandra Boyd
Office Manager



Karryn Goode
Chief Executive Officer



Lance Youston
Projects Manager



Amanda Robinson
Quality Assurance Manager

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Health and Human Services



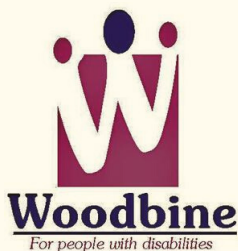
Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Thank you to our project partners:



BDAC
BENDIGO & DISTRICT
ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE



**Villamanta Disability Rights
Legal Service Inc.**

Figure 1:
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.



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