Disability Advocacy Service

Annual Report

2024-2025

Table of Contents

Vision Statement	01
Our Values	02
Strategic Focus Areas	03
Chairperson Report	07
General Manger Report	08
Advocacy & Programs Report	10
Financial Statements	14
Acknowledgements	17



Our Vision Statement

An inclusive community that actively recognises and respects people with disability and their human rights.

Our Purpose

Disability Advocacy Service promotes and protects the rights of people with disability to access quality services, community inclusion and to build self-agency and choice.

We do this through individual and systemic advocacy and community education. We address discrimination and work with organisations and the community to promote inclusion in Central Australia and the Barkly.

Values

Our values form the foundation of everything we do at Disability Advocacy Service.

Integrity

We are transparent, honest, consistent, and accountable. Our work is free from any undue influence.

Social Justice & Equity

We are committed to eliminating discrimination in all its forms.

Choice

We assist people with disability to make their own decisions and choices through self-advocacy, training, information sharing, and fostering connections.

Respect

The voices of people with disability are at the forefront of our work. We are led by our clients.



Strategic Focus Areas

01 Advocacy

Supporting people with disability and their families to have a voice through:

- Practicing high quality individual advocacy.
- Providing support to help build skills and capacity.
- Promoting their right to make choices and decisions about their own lives.

02 Community

Creating a vibrant, engaged, and inclusive community through:

- Removing barriers to participation.
- Influencing systems with our unique perspective and through having a seat at the table.
- Celebrating and promoting the achievement and diversity of people with disability.
- Providing education and building awareness to improve community understanding.

03 Collaboration

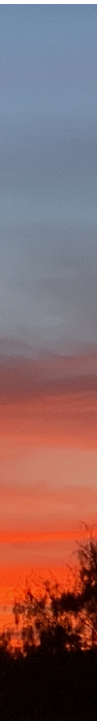
Working collaboratively while maintaining our independence and advocacy focus through:

- Robust engagement with service providers.
- Developing pathways within community sector.
- Forming strategic partnerships with advocacy agencies.
- Influencing systems and structures to support inclusion.

04 Sustainability

Cultivating a financially healthy, adaptive, and stable organisation through:

- Implementing quality, values-based leadership, and good governance.
- Training and supporting staff.
- Building a sound and secure financial base.
- Being guided by diverse voices of people with disability.





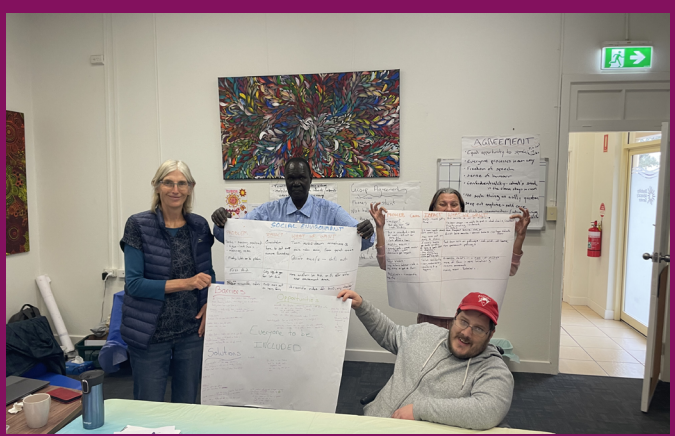

STOP
Defaulting to
Guardianship
(N.T.)
Last Resort!
Stop Defaulting
Guardianship
Last Resort!
Tiffany Malthouse
DAS


WE CAN HELP SORT IT OUT
WE CAN HELP SORT IT OUT
WE CAN HELP SORT IT OUT






WORKING TOGETHER EVERY STEP OF THE WAY


ADVANCEMENT

Chairperson Report

Stuart McGifford

Disability Advocacy Service (DAS) is pleased to acknowledge and pay respect to the Arrernte people, traditional custodians of Mparntwe and the Warumungu people, traditional owners of Tennant Creek, key places where DAS regularly delivers services. We pay respect to Elders, past and present and acknowledge Aboriginal peoples continuing connection to this land where we work, live and provide services.

A year ago, I commenced the role of Chairperson after a year serving on the DAS Board. While there was much to learn, it has been a remarkable year for DAS! Our organisation has continued to maintain its focus as a service centred on advocacy, individual, collective and systemic, while working toward our vision of an inclusive community that actively recognises and respects people with disability and their human rights.

The year saw the commencement of new General Manager, Scott Richardson. Scott comes to us with extensive experience in NDIS and Community Services work. His passion, professionalism, determination and work ethic has brought new energy and focus to DAS. Step by step Scott has put together a range of initiatives, funding applications and new processes, with new funding in place and an enlarged team Scott's first year at DAS has been truly remarkable.

I would also like to take a moment to acknowledge the work of former General Manager Merilee Cox, who finished up at the end of January. Her outstanding work, compassion, empathy and professionalism has left a lasting impact on the organisation and Board. Thank-you so much for your work at DAS and your assistance in a wonderful and seamless handover.

The year has involved major changes, including success on new funding grants and provision of new advocacy focused programs that broaden the impact of DAS, which continues to promote and protect the rights of people with disability to access quality services, community inclusion and to build self-agency and choice. With a focus on individual and systemic advocacy and community education. We address discrimination and work with organisations and the community to promote inclusivity in the Central Australian and the Barkly regions.

Finally, I would like to thank the remarkable DAS volunteer Board of Directors. Through regular meetings, good governance and strategic guidance Judith Torzillo (Deputy Chair), Tom Neville (Treasurer), Karen Tull (Secretary), Anna Yffer, Katherine Saxton and Michelle Mayes have kept our organisation on track. Thank-you, you are a remarkable, passionate and thoughtful group of people. Special thanks to our former Chair Anna Yffer who is stepping off the Board, you have provided leadership, kindness, focus and the whole organisation which is a fine and lasting legacy. I also want to thank Karen Tull for her long service to DAS and thank her for dedication and commitment.

With our site, new funding, new staff, a great team and board, DAS is looking forward to another great year ahead.



General Manger Report

Scott Richardson

The 2024–25 year has been a watershed for the Disability Advocacy Service (DAS).

Our organisation moved from strength to strength, deepening its impact across Central Australia and the Barkly while playing an increasingly influential role in national policy reform.

This year we signed a comprehensive service agreement with The Breakthrough Office for HR, payroll, accounting and governance support. This partnership allows our staff to concentrate on core advocacy while ensuring professional back office operations and financial management.

We also expanded our collaboration with Inclusion NT and the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability (SACID), strengthening research, capacity building and policy development initiatives Through these partnerships, DAS contributed to multiple national projects, including the Supported Employment Advocacy project led by DANA.

In August, the Board endorsed a restructure that elevated Mark Samec to full time employment as Program Manager, overseeing peer led programs and systemic projects. The appointment of Justin as an additional advocate in September, as well as the creation of a Peer Advocacy Support Officer position, has increased our capacity to manage complex cases and projects. This expansion reflects the growing demand for advocacy and ensures that the burden of caseloads is spread fairly across the team.

Following negotiations earlier in the year, DAS successfully relocated to 3/11 Railway Terrace. The new premises offer enhanced accessibility, private meeting rooms and technological upgrades. We installed multi factor authentication on all devices and upgraded our data backup systems as part of a broader digital security initiative.

A Toyota Land Cruiser, gifted through the Community Benefit Fund, joined our fleet, allowing our advocates to reach very remote communities more safely and reliably.

DAS was jointly appointed the Northern Territory's representative in the Commonwealth's design of the Individual Disability Advocacy Program (IDAP), which will replace the National Disability Advocacy Program in 2026. Through this role, we ensure that remote access barriers, unregistered provider risks and First Nations perspectives are embedded in the national program's design. We also influence the inclusion of trauma informed and culturally appropriate frameworks in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This appointment recognises DAS as a thought leader in advocacy and positions the organisation favourably for future reforms.





Our financial position remains robust. We secured significant grants including:

- **SACID and Inclusion NT project** – a two year grant to deliver leadership training and community capacity building.
- **SACID and Inclusion NT project** – a two year grant to deliver PATH to community leadership
- **Supported Employment Advocacy project** – a two year grant via DANA to develop employment pathways.
- **Disability Reform Implementation** - to June 2026.
- **National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)** – until June 2026.
- **NDIS Appeals funding** – until June 26.
- **Speaking Up** in Central Australia and Barkly until June 2027
- **Disability Advocacy and Information Service** until June 2029

These grants diversify our income base and ensure sustainability for core and innovative programs.

Our staff played a pivotal role in systemic advocacy. DAS collaborated a joint submission with the Darwin Community Legal Service (DCLS) and the NPY Women's Council calling on the NDIS Commission to mandate registration of support coordinators and supported living providers. We provided detailed input to the National NDIS Review, highlighting remote workforce shortages and cultural barriers. We also prepared a submission to the NDIA addressing restrictive practices and supported decision making models.

The Hospital Discharge Working Group, a partnership with Congress, Alice Springs Hospital and the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG), is finalising a registered provider hospital discharge checklist to reduce participant risk.

In the area of guardianship reform, DAS is working with the OPG to review existing orders for potential revocation and to explore supported decision making models for Northern Territory. We are also embedding risk management frameworks across the organisation; the updated risk register identifies staff burnout and information security risks, with mitigation strategies including staggered caseload intake and multi factor authentication.

The year ahead will focus on embedding trauma informed frameworks across all programs, scaling peer led advocacy models, enhancing data driven impact measurement and maintaining financial sustainability. We will intensify remote outreach by leveraging partnerships with regional clinics and exploring technology based support, and we will continue to press for stronger safeguards against provider misconduct.

On behalf of the DAS team, I thank our Board, staff, volunteers, partners and funders for their unwavering support. Together, we are building an inclusive community where people with disability exercise their rights, shape policy and enjoy full participation.

Advocacy & Programs Report

During 2024–25, DAS delivered integrated advocacy and program activities that achieved impactful outcomes across individual support, systemic reform and community engagement.

The following report summarises key achievements and highlights the systemic inputs that DAS has provided to strengthen the disability advocacy landscape.

Our advocates supported more than 140 participants, including handling NDIS appeals before the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) with most matters resolving at case conference stage.

Successes included a small shed structure at Hidden Valley town camp to store a mobility scooter, and securing full funding for home modifications, assistive technology and Supported Independent Living for clients facing significant safety and accessibility risks.

We prevented multiple guardianship appointments by presenting less restrictive alternatives and supported decision making plans. We also advocated for participants at Alice Springs Correctional Centre, assisting people to prepare NDIS access requests despite diagnostic and evidence delays.

These outcomes underscore the competence of our advocates and demonstrate the effectiveness of evidence based advocacy.



70

70 attendees at our annual DAS Disco event.

30

30 service providers, legal services and community organisations engaged in our advocacy work.



6

Involvement in 6 key policy reforms.

140

Across the year, our advocates supported more than 140 participants.

27

27 service providers convened to address unethical practices among NDIS providers.



Across the year, Disability Advocacy Service provided systemic input across a suite of policy reforms.

01

Mandatory Provider Registration

In late March we joined DCLS and the NPY Women's Council in a joint submission to the NT Government advocating for mandatory registration of support coordinators and supported living providers.

This submission argued that unregistered providers expose participants to exploitation and undermine service quality.

02

National NDIS Review

Our submission to the Commonwealth review highlighted the severe workforce shortages and cultural barriers that limit access to services in remote communities.



03

NDIA Restrictive Practices Consultation

DAS prepared a submission calling for stronger safeguards around restrictive practices and greater support for participant led decision making.

04

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission Consultation

We hosted an Alice Springs consultation where participants and providers described the targeted exploitation of Aboriginal NDIS participants, including inducements such as food vouchers and cash payments.

Our summary report to the Commission advocated for increased powers and mandatory registration of support coordinators and Supported Independent Living providers.

05

Hospital Discharge Checklist

Through the Hospital Discharge Working Group, DAS collaborated with Stakeholders and, the hospital to finalise a registered provider discharge checklist aimed at reducing participant risk and ensuing the correct training and supports are in place before leaving hospital.

06

Alice Springs Roundtables

Most recently the Alice Springs roundtables to discuss sharp, unethical and exploitative practices, and now in Darwin and Katherine with DCLS and IDA to be raised with all levels of governments.



These systemic inputs ensure that the experiences of people with disability in Central Australia are reflected in Territory and national policy frameworks.

DAS amplified the voices of people with disability through inclusive events and leadership initiatives. The I Can Lead program launched in Alice Springs with participants, equipping participants with leadership skills and facilitating direct engagement with council candidates.

Our DAS Disco drew around 70 attendees and raised awareness of disability rights, while an International Women's Day workshop spotlighted the lived experiences of women with disability. We convened 27 service providers at a roundtable to address unethical practices among NDIS providers and established an ongoing provider accountability forum.

Throughout the year our staff engaged with over 30 service providers, legal services and community organisations to ensure holistic support for clients.

Our advocacy work produced tangible improvements in participants' lives.

The team managed high profile cases requiring coordination across legal, clinical and social domains. Our human centred advocacy approach, which integrates trauma informed practice and strong partnerships, ensures that even the most complex cases receive tailored support.

Many very remote communities still lack adequate disability services. Our team documented extensive service gaps and exploited participants, particularly among Aboriginal people, where providers offered inducements or pushed for unnecessary uplift in support needs. Despite funding constraints, DAS maintained outreach visits to Tennant Creek and worked with partners to explore alternative service models, including block funded or directly commissioned allied health services. We plan to intensify remote outreach by coordinating with regional clinics and using phone or video clinics to reach communities that are hard to visit regularly.

DAS continues a client led Advisory Committee comprising people with disability. This committee advises on project evaluation and strategic priorities, ensuring that client voices shape our work. In the coming year we will explore a direct connection between the Advisory Committee and the Board to further enhance the voices of people with disabilities within DAS.

We also strengthened our Project programs, supporting peer leaders who drive systemic advocacy and provide peer support.

2024–25 was marked by strong advocacy outcomes, sector leadership and robust growth for DAS.

We will continue to:

- scale peer led models and leadership programs;
- embed trauma informed practice across all programs;
- strengthen risk management and governance; and
- collaborate with partners to improve access, choice and control for people with disability.

By combining individual advocacy with systemic reform, and by grounding our work in lived experience and strong partnerships, DAS is delivering positive change for people with disability throughout Central Australia and beyond.



Financial Statements

Disability Advocacy Service
For the year ended 30 June 2025

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

Disability Advocacy Service
For the year ended 30 June 2025

	30 June 2025	30 June 2024
Income		
Grant Revenue	716,211	529,509
Other Revenue	8,914	47,051
Total Income	**725,125**	**576,560**
Expenses		
Auditor's Remuneration	2,750	2,500
Depreciation and Amortisation Expenses	21,561	18,900
Employee Benefit Expense	477,087	346,083
Finance Costs	516	116
Unexpended Grants	-	22,537
Other Expenses	214,296	186,424
Total Expenses	**716,211**	**716,211**
Profit/(Loss) before Taxation	**8,914**	**-**
Net Profit After Tax	**8,914**	**-**

Statement of Financial Position

Disability Advocacy Service
As at 30 June 2025

	30 June 2025	30 June 2024
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	584,123	557,593
Trade and Other Receivables	55,067	
Other Current Assets	7,878	13,545
Total Current Assets	**647,067**	**571,137**
Non-Current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment	19,652	22,672
Right of Use Assets	34,477	
Total Non-Current Assets	**54,130**	**22,672**
Total Assets	**701,197**	**593,809**
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	30,746	54,529
Provisions	28,419	19,865
Other Current Liabilities	392,839	322,537
Lease Liabilities	20,437	-
Total Current Liabilities	**472,441**	**396,931**
Non-Current Liabilities		
Lease Liabilities	14,371	-
Provisions	8,592	-
Total Non-Current Liabilities	**22,963**	**-**
Net Assets	**205,793**	**196,879**
Equity		
Retained Earnings	205,793	196,879
Total Equity	**205,793**	**196,879**

Disability Advocacy Services would like to acknowledge the support of our funding partners Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments.









Disability Advocacy Service

DAS acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country on which we work and live thoughout Central Australia. We recognise their continuing connection to land, culture and language and pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders both past and present.

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79E Todd Mall, Alice Springs NT 0870

REGISTERED CHARITY
acnc.gov.au/charityregister