**Annual Report 2014**

A bigger voice for kids

Children with Disability Australia (CDA) is the national peak body that represents children and young people with disability. The organisation is primarily funded through the Department of Social Services national secretariat program and is a not for profit organisation. CDA also receives project funding from the Australian Government Department of Education to expand the education policy capacity of the organisation. CDA has a national membership of 5000.

CDA provides a link between the direct experiences of children and young people with disability to the Australian Government and other key stakeholders. This link is essential for the creation of a true appreciation of the experiences of and challenges for children and young people with disability.

**Vision**

CDA’s vision is that children and young people with disability living in Australia are afforded every opportunity to thrive, achieve their potential and that their rights and interests as individuals, members of a family and their community are met.

CDA works to achieve these aims by:

**Education** of national public policy-makers and the broader community about the needs of children and young people with disability.

**Advocacy** on behalf of children and young people with disability to ensure the best possible support and services are available from government and   
the community.

**Inform** children and young people with disability and families about their entitlements to services and support.

**Celebrate** the successes and achievements of children and young people with disability.

**Guiding Principles**

**Children the priority** the rights and interests of children and young people with disability are CDA’s highest priority consistent with Australia’s obligations under the UN Conventions, Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Right to childhood** children and young people with disability are children first and foremost and have a right to all aspects of childhood that children without disability are afforded.

**Right to participation** children and young people with disability have the right to participate, in whatever capacity, in decisions that impact on their lives.

**Inclusion** children and young people with all types of disability, from all cultural and religious backgrounds and all geographic locations are supported by the work of CDA.

**Recognition** for the contributions made by families and care givers to support the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.

**Partnerships** CDA works collaboratively with relevant government, non-government and private sector agencies to promote the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.

**Transparency** CDA is accountable, effective and ethical as the national peak body charged with the mandate of advocating for children and young people with disability.

**Celebrate** the successes and achievements of children and young people with disability.

**CDA Board**

Melinda Ewin (QLD) Chair

Melinda has two children, Angus and Declan. Her son Angus who is 21 years old has a disability. Through Angus and his experiences, Melinda is a strong believer in the effectiveness of good advocacy.

Melinda has been involved with CDA since the early days when it was known as the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability (AAFCD). She has been Chair of the CDA Board since 2009. Melinda works as a Senior Advisor for the Endeavour Foundation in Queensland. She has over 14 years experience in systemic advocacy.

Tracey Myles (NT) Secretary

Tracey has been involved in the disability sector since 2005 both as a volunteer and employee and she currently works in the mental health field.

Tracey has three teenage children with disability. Throughout their education Tracey has been active within the education system promoting assistance and advocacy for students.

Brian Babington (ACT)

Brian Babington is the CEO of Families Australia. He is the Coordinator of the Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia’s Children, a Director of Plan International Australia (an overseas child-centred community development agency), a member of the Alliance for Forgotten Australians (a national group that promotes greater recognition of the needs of people who were in institutional care in Australia in the 20th century), and a member of the Implementation Working Group for the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children.

Brian is a member of the Advisory Board of the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University. A former Australian diplomat and overseas aid coordinator, Brian’s tertiary qualifications include BA (Hons.) and MA degrees. He is completing his doctorate on children’s residential institutions in Indonesia. He was a 2009 Churchill Fellow on national child protection systems. As well as published works on contemporary child protection issues in Australia, he wrote a book on loss and resilience.

Tom Byrne (SA)

Tom has two children. His adult son Laurence has a disability. Tom has played an active role in Laurence’s education and as an advocate for Laurence. He has also served on committees and as a member of a number of disability organisations and is actively involved in extra-curricular activities for people with disability.

Tom is a partner in a legal practice in Adelaide specialising in personal injuries and family law. Prior to that Tom worked in Legal Aid. He has been a lawyer for over 30 years.

Heike Fabig (NSW)

Heike Fabig has three children and experience as a parent with disability. When she realised how little information parents of children with disability receive, Heike created an e-mail support group for parents of children with disability which now has over 250 Australian members. This group inspired Heike’s interest in advocating for systemic change for children and young people with disability.

Heike is the President of the NSW Association for Children with a Disability. She also currently works as a volunteer wildlife carer in Sydney. Prior to that she worked as a human rights activist with indigenous people worldwide, and as a university tutor.

Con Fourkiotis (QLD)

Con has four children. His son Eamonn has a disability. Con has a genuine passion to advocate for children and young people with disability. Con is also on the Board of Xavier Children’s Support Network (Qld) and is a Volunteer Ambassador for Variety Queensland. Professionally Con works as the State Manager for Health Safety and Wellbeing at the Westpac Group.

Con takes tremendous satisfaction in openly engaging with individuals at all levels, in all walks of life. He believes that identifying, embracing and realizing potential in all people should always be our common goal.

Liz Kelly (VIC)

Liz has two children. Her son has a disability. Liz is a member of the Disability Services Board and the Victorian Disability Advisory Council.

Liz is a director of a human resource and management consulting firm. She brings over 20 years management experience in a broad range of industries including profit and not for profit organisations and various levels of government.

Liz works on the CDA Board to assist the national organisation that represents all children and young people with disability to create systemic change. She believes in the child and youth centered approach of CDA that challenges all to think beyond the comforts of policy rhetoric and to focus on the way families live.

**CDA Staff**

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| Stephanie Gotlib | Executive Officer — 1.0 EFT |
| Alan Blackwood | Education Policy Officer — 0.4 EFT |
| Winnie Bridie | Membership Officer — 0.3 EFT (until February 2014)  Information & Policy Support Officer — 0.3EFT  (commenced February 2014) |
| Gwenda Cannard | Business Operations Manager — 0.2EFT  Information and Community Liaison Officer for Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse — 0.4 EFT |
| Sunni Dawson | Policy Officer — 0.6 EFT |
| Joanne Ellingworth | Executive Assistant — 0.4 EFT |
| Darrell Harding | Financial Officer — 0.1 EFT |
| Volunteers | Danny Dickson  Anne Murphy  Yen Li Wong |

**Chair’s Report**

Welcome to the Annual Report for 2013–2014. I am very proud of the systemic advocacy undertaken for children and young people with disability over this time.

CDA continues to seek new and innovative ways to ensure that the voice we promote comes directly from the lived experience of children and young people with disability. Your continued support by responding to our calls for information, stories and your personal experiences are valued highly and used with the utmost respect and dedication. We thank you for your support.

It has been another extraordinary year in many ways, we are still moving towards the realisation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and dealing with the impact the implementation of the NDIS has on children and young people in the scheme’s trial regions. We continue to ensure that the experience of children with disability is promoted in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, an arena where often the horror and appropriate responses to child sex abuse are diminished due to a child’s disability. As an organisation we have faced a change of government and with it a change of funding arrangements. Disability Persons Organisations have been required to tender for funding. We continue to operate at full steam, mindful that our core funding may cease in 2015.

The Board takes very seriously its responsibility to provide the strategic framework for our systemic advocacy to occur, while at all times staying true to the core values of CDA and our mission of responding to those children and young people who experience exclusion, injustice and social isolation. I thank the Board members for their dedication and genuine commitment to the task of producing the Strategic Plan 2014–2017.

I thank my fellow board members for their continued contribution to the work of CDA, Liz Kelly, Heike Fabig, Brian Babington, Tom Byrne, Con Fourkiotis and Tracey Myles.

Our staff and volunteers are the strength of our organisation and I cannot praise them highly enough. I thank them for their compassion and humility, and their willingness to always ‘go the extra mile’ especially under such precarious funding times. They work under the exemplary leadership of Stephanie Gotlib our Executive Officer. On behalf of the Board I thank Stephanie most sincerely for the professional manner in which she supports us and embraces our decisions, and with the vision and dedication she shows for the organisation.

The future looks exciting and challenging, we look forward to spending another successful year working with you to promote the rights, voices and experiences of children and young people with disability across Australia.

**Melinda Ewin**  
Chair

**EO’S Report**

It has again been a momentous year for CDA with the organisation growing significantly in strength, reach, size and capacity. There have been significant achievements in disability reform and progressing the rights of children and young people with disability. There is also still so much work to do as we continue to hear constantly of children and young people with disability having to fight for equal opportunities for participation and inclusion in our community. CDA work has focused particularly on education reform, the National Disability Strategy and the National Disability Insurance Scheme. There has also been significant work completed regarding the unacceptably high levels of abuse experienced by children and young people with disability, particularly in the work we have undertaken regarding the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

A particular highlight of the year was the launch in October 2013 of our landmark issues paper *‘Inclusion in education: towards equality for students with disability’*. CDA wanted to present the evidence about the realities and the benefits of inclusion to inform the education reform process in Australia. I believe that this paper is an important key reference point for all those involved in the reform, including students and parents. To date there has a high demand for the paper with 9800 copies distributed (hard copy and electronically). The report details research which overwhelmingly supports inclusive education. It outlines the positive outcomes of inclusive education for social justice, senses of belonging and connection, social, academic, cognitive and physical development in children who do and do not experience disability.

This year has also seen the organisation develop its new strategic plan. This strategic plan aims to create a more inclusive Australian community which values and welcomes children and young people with disability and stimulates much needed reform. A key focus of this is on the promotion and advancement of meaningful participation of children and young people with disability in the work of CDA. I greatly look forward to the implementation of this plan.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the members, Board, staff and volunteers of CDA for your ongoing commitment and dedication. Our voice is getting louder and stronger as we champion that an exemplary community is one that is inclusive of children and young people with disability.

**Stephanie Gotlib**  
Executive Officer

**CDA Achievements for 2013/14**

An Overview

Advocacy & Education

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| **AREA** | **ACTIVITY** |
| Education | Direct representation to relevant Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries |
| Ongoing consultation with the Department of Social Services and the Australian Government Department of Education |
| Formal submissions re: Productivity Commission’s Inquiry into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning; The immediate future of the childcare sector in Australia; The delivery of quality and affordable early childhood education and care services, Senate Select Committee Inquiry into School Funding; Removal of the command and control features of the Australian Education Act; Teacher Quality and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Human Rights Resolution 22/3 — “The work and education of persons with disabilities.” |
| Completed Issues Papers — Education and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Interface — Where are we now? and Positive Education Experiences |
| Appeared before Senate Select Committee Inquiry into School Funding |
| Co-hosted a pre-Budget forum on education reform and students with disability — Parliament House Canberra |
| Hosted and attended various forums on education and students with disability |
| Ongoing consultation with education peak bodies |
| Ongoing media campaign — significant coverage by newspaper, radio, television and on-line media forums |
| NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME | Attended South Australian launch of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) |
| Ongoing member consultation on establishment and introduction of the NDIS |
| Direct representation to relevant Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries |
|  | Created booklet for families accessing the NDIS on inclusive education |
|  | Member consultation and preparation of issue paper on education and the NDIS interface |
|  | Presented at NDIS Independent Advisory Council |
|  | Submission lodged on the NDIS Draft Strategic Plan |
| ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY | Ongoing advocacy and representation to government, community and media |
| Member of coalition of organisations committed to the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s |
| Obtained funding to provide information, support and systemic advocacy regarding the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse |
| Other Areas | Promotion and reference to the National Disability Strategy in all areas of CDA’s work |
| Submissions provided to; the Australian Law Reform Inquiry into “Equality, Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws Issues Paper; National Disability Strategy 2014 Progress Report to Council of Australian Government |
| Ongoing advocacy regarding disability vilification in the media |

Information

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| **ACTIVITY** | **DETAILS** |
| Telephone Information Service | 1140 calls were received by CDA |
| Other contacts | Significant contact with constituents through direct email, post and direct inquiry service through CDA website |
| Publications | ListenUp! — CDA national publication May 2014 edition (estimated readership 15,000) |
| Commissioned “Strengthening participation of children and young people with disability in advocacy” (to be launched 3 December, 2014) |
| CDA Issue Papers — Enabling & Protecting: Proactive Approaches to Addressing the Abuse and Neglect of Children and Young People with Disability (2663 copies distributed); Inclusion in Education: Towards Equality for Students with Disability (9594 copies distributed); and Belonging and Connection of School Students with Disability (1412 copies distributed) |
| CDA website | CDA website is reviewed fortnightly and updated accordingly |
| Page views and visits steadily increased throughout the year. Yearly totals — Visits 63,054, page Views 105,127. This represents a 100% increase from the previous year. |
| E-Bulletins | 32 e-Bulletins were sent to members and subscribers over the year (a total of 62,097 individual emails). These emails were updates on policy, service initiatives, reform, events, consultations or information on the work of CDA |
| Social Media | CDA Facebook page maintained — a total of 2369 likes for the year |
| CDA Twitter account maintained — a total of 589 new followers for the year |
| CDA has 7000+ followers across the major platforms of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. This represents a 75% increase on last year |
| Other Media | Numerous published letters to the editor in various major metropolitan and national newspapers |
| Various articles and opinion pieces published in ProBono, The Sunday Age, RampUp! |
| Articles quoting CDA in Illawara Mercury, Sydney Morning Herald, The Examiner, The Educator |
| Radio and television on a range of issues including education, abuse and disability reform with The Wire, ABC and SBS |

Celebration

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| **EVENT** | **DETAILS** |
| Alice’s playground | Inclusive playspace — attended opening |
| National Disability Awards | Attended awards ceremony |
| Celebration of Families Week | Co-hosted with Touched by Olivia and Families Australia – Sydney |

Representation

Representation to Australian government departments and relevant ministers, including:

* The Hon. Kevin Andrews — Minister for Social Services
* The Hon. Christopher Pyne — Minister for Education
* Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield — Assistant Minister for Social Services
* Department of Social Services (previously Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs)
* Australian Government Department of Education (previously Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations)
* The Hon. Bill Shorten (Opposition Leader and in former capacity as Minister for Education)

Participation in meetings and collaborative work with national disability sector organisations and key state and territory organisations and stakeholders including:

* Association for Children with a Disability — Victoria
* Association for Children with a Disability — New South Wales
* Association for Children with a Disability — Tasmania
* Australian Children’s Commissioner
* Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS)
* Australian Disability Employment
* Australian Education Union
* Australian Federation Disability Organisations
* Australian Human Rights Commission
* Australian Law Reform Commission
* Australian Parents Council
* Blind Citizens Australia
* Communication Rights Australia
* Disability Discrimination Legal Service (Melbourne)
* Down Syndrome Australia
* Families Australia
* First Peoples Disability Network
* Global Partnership on Education
* Independent Education Union
* Julia Farr
* National Disability Insurance Agency
* National Council on Intellectual Disability
* Noah’s Ark
* Office for Commissioner of Children and Young People WA
* Pack a Punch Lobby Group
* People with Disability Australia
* Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
* Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby
* Touched by Olivia Foundation
* Victorian Commission for Children and Young People
* Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
* Women with Disabilities Australia
* World Disability Union
* Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance
* Youth Disability Advocacy Service

Participation in advisory committees and national forums on key issues of relevance to children and young people with disability including:

* Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia’s Children
* National Disability Strategy Implementation Reference Group
* National audit of disability research in Australia — advisory group
* e-Learning Resource on Disability Standards for Education Working Group (hosted by Australian Government Department of Education)
* Ministerial Roundtable on Students with Dyslexia
* OECD Roundtable on youth unemployment
* Roundtable on “access to the criminal justice system for peole with disability” hosted by the Australian Human Rights Commission
* Presented at Noah’s Ark Staff Conference

**CDA Membership Summary**

Membership by State

ACT 2.2%

NSW 22%

NT 0.7%

VIC 51.7%

QLD 8.0%

SA 8.3%

TAS 4.0%

WA 3.1%

Member Feedback

CDA members were surveyed regarding their level of satisfaction regarding the work of CDA.

**How often do you use website**

daily 2%

weekly 6%

monthly 19%

less than monthly 57%

never use 16%

**Is the current CDA website useful**

Yes 85%

No 15%

**Consultation on key issues**

Very high 28%

high 32%

Average 32%

Low 8%

**Information provided by CDA**

**Information provided by CDA**

Very high 34%

High 36%

Average 26%

Low 4%

**Representation to government of your key issues**

Very high 37%

High 28%

Average 26%

Low 9%