

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2011–2014

JULY 2011

# CHAIRPERSON'S FORWARD

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The Board and staff at Children with Disability Australia (CDA) are committed to advocating for the best outcomes for all children and young people with disability in Australia. We believe the best way to focus our commitment is through a long-term strategic plan.

This plan has been constructed with the help of our members and stakeholders. We thank you for your commitment to giving us your time and thoughts — your feedback has been invaluable to setting the broader strategic directions of CDA over the next three years.

CDA is the only national organisation in Australia mandated to advocate systemically for the interests of children and young people with disability at a population level. In undertaking this work, we:

- Believe our children and young people can and should be educated.
- Believe that our children and young people are entitled to the support and services they need so they can enjoy full and satisfying lives.
- Celebrate every child and young person that has a disability.

As a relatively new organisation it is crucial that we get our first years right to build a strong foundation that will take us many years into the future — we believe that this three year strategic plan will guide and focus our activities and set us in that direction.

On behalf of the Board and Staff of CDA, I present our strategic plan and welcome the partnerships that will assist in its implementation

**Melinda Ewin**

Chairperson



# INTRODUCTION

## HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT

In 2002, the Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD) was established under the auspices of the Association for Children with Disability in Victoria. In 2009, Children with Disability Australia (CDA) was formally incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee to advocate at the national level for children and young people aged 0–25 years.

CDA receives funding under the Commonwealth Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) national secretariat program. As a relatively new organisation, CDA is progressing through its establishment phase as it consolidates its position as the peak body in Australia representing the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.

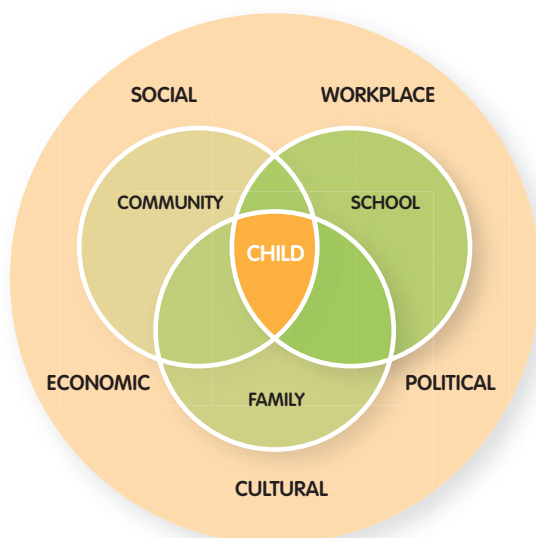
## A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To assist CDA to articulate the position that children and young people with disability hold as individuals, as members of a family (whatever form that family may take) and as members of a community it has been useful to consider theories on childhood development.

The most appropriate theory that has been considered to guide the development of the strategic plan and the future work of CDA is Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory which seeks to understand children within a series of multiple and interconnected 'systems' including the family, neighbourhood, school, peer group and the community.

As Figure 1 shows, a child primarily interacts with the family, school and community. The family is the strongest influence on a child's development but interactions with the school and community are also highly influential on a child. These interactions comprise a child's microsystem.

A child's family, school and community also interact with one another and these interactions form a child's mesosystem.



Finally, the macrosystem is the broader political, economic and cultural conditions of society which includes the influences asserted by the mass media and internet technology. A child interacts with the macrosystem indirectly as the macrosystem influences a child's microsystem.

**Figure 1. Model of child and youth development**

**Source: Adapted from materials provided by ARACY (21 April 2008)**

## A RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Australia is a signatory to two international treaties that provide a useful framework to guide the work of CDA:

1. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, the Convention with more signatories than any other in the world.
2. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006, one of the newest Conventions reflecting growing community awareness and support for the needs and interests of people with disability.

Both Conventions clearly state that children and young people with disability are holders of rights — they do not have their rights bestowed upon them by others — and recognise their multiple and complex vulnerabilities.

While adults and other care givers make decisions that impact on children and young (both within their families and within the community they live in), they have critical and unique perspectives into their own lives and need to be supported to contribute to decisions that impact on their lives. This is a guiding principle of the work of CDA.

While CDA recognises that rights are indivisible, the following highlights are given to provide context for the CDA strategic plan and to reflect key areas of focus.

## CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### Article 12: A right to participate

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

### Article 23: A right to a full and decent life

1. States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.
2. States Parties recognize the right of the disabled child to special care and shall encourage and ensure the extension, subject to available resources, to the eligible child and those responsible for his or her care, of assistance for which application is made and which is appropriate to the child's condition and to the circumstances of the parents or others caring for the child.
3. Recognizing the special needs of a disabled child, assistance extended in accordance with paragraph 2 of the present article shall be provided free of charge, whenever possible, taking into account the financial resources of the parents or

others caring for the child, and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development

4. States Parties shall promote, in the spirit of international cooperation, the exchange of appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children, including dissemination of and access to information concerning methods of rehabilitation, education and vocational services, with the aim of enabling States Parties to improve their capabilities and skills and to widen their experience in these areas. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

## **Article 28: A right to an education**

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
  - a. Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
  - b. Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
  - c. Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
  - d. Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
  - e. Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.
3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.





# CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## Article 7: A right to childhood

1. States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children.
2. In all actions concerning children with disabilities, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
3. States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right.

## Article 24: A right to an education

1. States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning directed to:
  - a. The full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human diversity;
  - b. The development by persons with disabilities of their personality, talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities, to their fullest potential;
  - c. Enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society.
2. In realizing this right, States Parties shall ensure that:
  - a. Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;
  - b. Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;
  - c. Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;
  - d. Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;
  - e. Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.
3. States Parties shall enable persons with disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and

as members of the community. To this end, States Parties shall take appropriate measures, including:

- a. Facilitating the learning of Braille, alternative script, augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication and orientation and mobility skills, and facilitating peer support and mentoring;
  - b. Facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community;
  - c. Ensuring that the education of persons, and in particular children, who are blind, deaf or deafblind, is delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize academic and social development.
4. In order to help ensure the realization of this right, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to employ teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language and/or Braille, and to train professionals and staff who work at all levels of education. Such training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.
  5. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.









# STRATEGIC PLAN 2011–2014

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## CDA'S 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'S PURPOSE

CDA's purpose is to advocate systemically at the national level for the rights and interests of all children and young people with disability living in Australia as individuals, members of a family and their community.

## CDA'S ROLE

CDA has the mandate to advocate for children and young people with disability living in Australia and undertakes the following to achieve its Purpose:

- **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, families and care givers about their rights and entitlements to services and support.
- **Celebrate** the successes and achievements of children and young people with disability.

## CDA'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work of CDA is guided by the following principles:

- **Children first:** 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 on the Rights on the Child and 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.

## CDA'S OBJECTIVES

CDA will work over the next 3 years to achieve the following 5 objectives:

1. Promote the role of CDA as the peak body in Australia for children and young people with disability aged 0–25 years.
2. Contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of Australian Government policy that impact on the lives of children and young people with disability.
3. Build knowledge and expertise on key policy issues for children and young people with disability.
4. Represent the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.
5. Strengthen the internal operations of the organisation.



## OBJECTIVE 1

**Promote the role of CDA as the peak body in Australia for children and young people with disability aged 0–25 years.**

### STRATEGIES

### GOALS

**CDA will promote its role as the peak body in Australia for children and young people with disability using a variety of mechanisms and strategy:**

Review, update and maintain its organisational website.

- Review of website informs CDA of current limitations and opportunities to better promote the work of the organisation.
- CDA website is updated reflecting the findings of the review.
- CDA website meets the information needs of users.
- CDA website 'hits' increase.

Re-brand its promotional materials, including its primary external publication Family Voices.

- Review of promotional materials informs CDA of current limitations and opportunities to better promote the work of the organisation.
- CDA promotional materials are updated reflecting the findings of the review.
- CDA promotional materials effectively communicate the role and work of the organisation.
- Requests for CDA publication increases.

Use the media (where and when appropriate) to promote the role of CDA and the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.

- Media coverage positively promotes the role of CDA and rights and interests of children and young people with disability.

Develop and maintain networks with relevant government agencies and non-government organisations to promote and supports its work.

- Networks exist that promote and support the work of CDA.

Work collaboratively with state and territory peak organisations (where they exist) for children and young people with disability.

- State and territory peak organisations (where they exist) for children and young people with disability report a positive working relationship with CDA.
- Contact with State and territory peak organisations (where they exist) for children and young people with disability increases.

Maintain a presence at relevant national functions and events.

- CDA is represented at relevant national functions and events.
- CDA presence increases.

Implement a membership drive.

- Strategy to support a membership drive is developed that includes the resources required to attract and maintain the needs of its membership base.
- CDA membership increases.



## OBJECTIVE 2

**Contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of Australian Government policy that impact on the lives of children and young people with disability.**

### STRATEGIES

### GOALS

**CDA will contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of Australian Government policy that impacts on the lives of children and young people with disability by undertaking the following:**

Respond to relevant government reviews, inquiries and consultative processes.

- CDA's responses to relevant government reviews, inquiries and consultative processes are timely and informed by the best available evidence.
- Relevant government reviews, inquiries and consultative processes cite CDA's advice and input.

Provide advice to FaHCSIA with information about emerging issues for children and young people with disability.

- CDA's advice about emerging issues for children and young people with disability reflect:
- The views of its membership.
  - Input from established networks of relevant government agencies and non-government organisations, include state and territory peak organisations (where they exist).

Provide input into submissions and/or ad hoc requests from FaHCSIA.

- CDA's responses to submissions and/or ad hoc requests from FaHCSIA are timely and informed by the best available evidence.
- FaHCSIA reports no issues or concerns with CDA's input.

At the request of FaHCSIA, disseminate information about government policy, programs, services and entitlements relevant to children and young people with disability.

- CDA's promotional mechanisms, including its website, contain the most relevant information about government policy, programs, services and entitlements for children and young people with disability.

Submit to FaHCSIA an annual policy paper.

- CDA submits an annual policy paper to FaHCSIA on a negotiated and mutually agreed topic area.
- CDA's policy paper is informed by the best available evidence.
- Information from CDA's policy paper is reflected in the work of FaHCSIA.

Participate in regular reviews with FaHCSIA about CDA performance.

- FaHCSIA reports no concerns with CDA's performance at its regular performance reviews.

## OBJECTIVE 3

**Build knowledge and expertise on key policy issues for children and young people with disability.**

### STRATEGIES

### GOALS

**CDA will focus on the following priority areas for children and young people with disability:**

Children's access and support needs in mainstream and special education.

Supporting the whole of childhood approach to service delivery and other needs for children and young people with disability, including at critical transition points:

- Support at diagnosis and early intervention.
- Entry to school.
- Transition between primary and secondary school.
- Transition into post-school options and early adulthood.

Supporting the participation of children and young people with disability and their families in policy development.

- Research partners identified and relationships developed.
- Funding sources identified and proposals developed with research partners submitted initiatives to build knowledge and expertise.
- CDA contributes to the development and implementation of a National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- CDA contributes to the national review of funding for schooling.
- CDA contributes to the development of materials by state and territory Children's Commissioners and Guardians to support participation of children and young people in policy development.

## OBJECTIVE 4

**Represent the rights and interests of children and young people with disability.**

### STRATEGIES

### GOALS

**CDA will seek to represent the rights and interests of children and young people with disability using a variety of mechanisms including:**

Promote Australia's obligations to children and young people with disability under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- Information about Australia's obligations is reflected in all of CDA's policy advice.
- Information about Australia's obligations is available on CDA's Website.

Develop information to educate and raise awareness about Australia's obligations to children and young people with disability under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- A formal partnership is established with the Australian Human Rights Commission.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission favourably considers the development of an information resource on the rights of children and young people with disability.
- Information resource is disseminated to CDA's stakeholders.

Participate in the NGO Shadow Reporting processes for both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- CDA's participation in the processes is reflected in the Shadow Reports.

Maintain representation on relevant and priority national committees, working group and advisory bodies.

- CDA is represented on priority Commonwealth working groups, committees and advisory bodies.
- CDA's knowledge of Commonwealth legislation, policies and programs that impact on children and young people with disability is current.



## OBJECTIVE 5

**Strengthen the internal operations of the organisation.**

STRATEGIES	GOALS
<b>CDA will strengthen its internal operations to maximise its efficiency and effectiveness by undertaking the following:</b>	
Develop and implement Board recruitment strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA attracts Board members with skill sets that match the positions they hold.</li> <li>• Interest in participating on the CDA Board increases.</li> </ul>
Support all Board members to access governance training and a full orientation into their duties once appointed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and approach comparable organisations that have an existing governance training program in place.</li> <li>• Adapt governance training program for CDA purposes.</li> <li>• CDA Board members complete training program.</li> <li>• CDA Board members demonstrate competency in the area of governance.</li> </ul>
Develop and review organisational policies and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA develops organisational policies and procedures that address organisational risks.</li> <li>• Organisational policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated.</li> </ul>
Provide supervision to CDA staff, including supporting professional development needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA staff have a professional development plan in place.</li> <li>• CDA staff access regular and quality supervision.</li> </ul>
Re-locate the CDA Office.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA office is located in a suitable and secure premise.</li> </ul>
Publish an Annual Report with audited financial statements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA audited financial statements comply with the requirements of Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).</li> </ul>
Host Annual General Meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CDA Annual General Meetings comply with the requirements of Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).</li> </ul>



Suite 2, 98 Morang Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122

**Phone** 03 9815 1094 or 1800 222 660 (regional and interstate callers)

**Fax** (03) 9818 1999

**Email** [info@cda.org.au](mailto:info@cda.org.au) **ABN** 42 140 529 273

**[www.cda.com.au](http://www.cda.com.au)**