

THE ADVOCATE

Your aged care and disability advocacy news, 10 September 2025

Contact us: 1800 700 600

Message from the CEO

Keeping heart

Last month the entire ADA Australia team had the rare and valuable opportunity to come together for staff training and development. A key theme clearly emerged independently among all the key speakers we had invited which was how do we keep the heart, the soul, and the humanness in care and advocacy?



Perhaps this is not surprising given the current state of the world, but I was reassured by the fact that while both aged care and the NDIS are undergoing such major reforms, that keeping heart and soul is still the 'north star'.

The Australian Government recent announcement of \$2 billion over 5 years towards a Thriving Kids program, which will see children with milder development delay or autism supported outside of the NDIS starting from July 2026, reignited ongoing economic-based discussion about the rising and unsustainable cost and issues with the scheme.

But again, I was encouraged to see some of the public discourse focus back on the human element. Health Editor for The Australian, Natasha Robinson, in her article '*The NDIS is on life-support. But my aunt Vicki is why this vital scheme needs to be saved*' talks about the experience of her Aunt who has a disability. She expressed concern that the NDIS is "now widely viewed as a fiscal burden rather than a vital safety net" as was intended, and rightly reminded us that the "cost of care has been hidden within state institutions, mainstream services and family homes".

In short, we must also consider the benefits in the cost-benefit equation. The NDIS is keeping people well, getting kids out the door to school, getting carers back to work, getting people with disability in work, and keeping people connected in their community.

It's what people with disability deserve but if you also look at the economics, it is ultimately putting people with disability and their carers into the economy and keeping people with disability out of other systems such as hospitals, child protection and prisons, which in the long run are much more costly.

It will cost everybody more to do nothing, so advocates, governments and policy makers and the NDIA must keep working to make the NDIS work - not only be sustainable but keep its core purpose at the heart.

We also need to see a detailed blueprint for Thriving Kids, which is the new name for foundational supports, or disability supports outside of individual NDIS packages. What this program will look like in Queensland is yet to be seen. We know that early intervention is so important for good life outcomes and don't want to see children with autism or developmental delay left behind.

Independent Disability Advocacy Program Review

Access to free and independent individual advocacy support for people with disability is now more important than ever. A review and consultation, led by the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), is currently underway to make recommendations for a new national program.

We are looking forward to increased investment - there has been very little change and investment in the national disability advocacy program for decades, and it has not kept up with costs or demand, nor has it matched the state's investment. [Contribute or keep up to date on the consultation](#).

Supported Employment Advocacy Program

I am also pleased to announce that ADA Australia will be one of the organisations delivering the new Supported Employment Advocacy program. Under the program we will deliver case-based advocacy support to people with disability across Queensland to resolve supported employment related issues.

Introducing Yarn'n Strong

Part of our greater vision at ADA Australia is to not only help people with disability advocate for their rights and needs, but to also educate and give confidence for people to be able to advocate for themselves into the future.

That's why we are pleased to be a part of the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building program, with two self-advocacy projects.

Previously we launched Words 2 Action, and I am now pleased to officially announce Yarn'n Strong. The Yarn'n Strong self-advocacy project will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to speak up for their rights and needs, through information and yarning to help understand their rights, and through peer-to-peer community support. More about Yarn'n Strong, our partners and the team in this edition.

Aged care in the spotlight

On a final note, I have been approached by several media outlets in recent weeks, seeking comment on a range of aged care issues. On one hand I wish that there was nothing for advocates like me to make comment about, but on the other hand, I am glad that critical aged care issues are getting the attention and public interest they deserve.

Most recently, there was the call in the Senate for the immediate release of more home care packages, which are long overdue and have been strongly supported by advocates. The announcement of 20,000 extra packages between now and November 1 was welcome but doesn't go far enough.

The release of the [Inspector-General's Report](#) on the progress of implementation of recommendations from the Aged Care Royal Commission, highlights concerns we have held about the user pays system structure for the new Support at Home program, and the classification of hygiene outside of clinical care will leave some older people making unfair choices about their care - 'do I shower this week or get support with meals?'

We are also concerned about reports providers are increasing their hourly fees, to compensate for changes in administration fee arrangements. We will be monitoring these issues closely, to feed back any concerns directly to government.

I have also been able to speak to a passion issue for me which is the need for a change of thinking in aged care. Implementing a rights-based Aged Care Act, first and foremost requires a change in perspective, not necessarily a change in budget.

And where is the investment and thinking about alternative models of care? What's in between home care and residential care? The first is not timely enough, and the second is often a costly alternative where not many would choose to be.

Until next time.

Geoff Rowe

Introducing Yarn'n Strong

Yarn'n Strong will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, and their families and carers, to give education, tools and greater confidence to speak up and be heard about disability matters.

We are working with local partners to deliver the project:

[Central Queensland Indigenous Development \(CQID\)](#) in Rockhampton, Central Highlands, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay and Maryborough.

[Gallang Place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation](#) in Caboolture, Cleveland/Stradbroke Island, Springwood/Kingston, Ipswich.

We are looking to employ a Yarn'n Strong advocate in Cherbourg and will work in collaboration with the [Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council](#).

The project will also identify local community champions to lead peer-to-peer support activities into the future.

If you would like more information about the project and how you can be involved please contact kristal.west@adaaustralia.com.au.

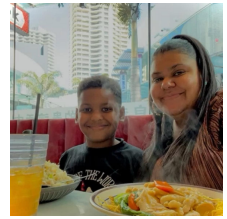
Meet the team: Kristal West - Team Leader

Mother, Aunty, Sister & proud Meriam, Manbarra & Palawa woman.

Kristal has spent 15+ years working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in health, employment & human services and previously worked in Intensive Family Support as a Senior Cultural Advisor.



"I have worked in both urban and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and have a deep passion for culture. I am also a singer/songwriter & enjoy live music, theatre and music festivals. I'm grateful to be part of ADA Australia." 😊



Seth Willie - Project Officer

Seth is a proud Wiradjuri and Ni-Van woman from Nanima Mission (Wellington), with strong ties to Dubbo and Peak Hill NSW. With 15+ years' experience across Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health, youth services, education, and community engagement, she brings creativity, energy, and deep cultural knowledge to the role.



"I am excited to co-design the Yarn'n Strong program alongside Kristal, working with mob across QLD to build something powerful — for our people, by our people."

More support for people with disability in Central Queensland and Gold Coast

ADA Australia is now delivering a number of services to support people with disability living in Central Queensland and on the Gold Coast.

- Individual advocacy support to resolve issues (Disability Advocacy)
- Individual advocacy support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability (Yarn 2 Action)
- One-on-one coaching to build self-advocacy skills and confidence (Words 2 Action)
- Information, yarning and peer support to build self-advocacy skills and confidence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability (Yarn'n Strong)
- Supported employment advocacy support to uphold your rights and understand your options at work (Rights at Work)



[Contact us](#) for information about these services for you or for your clients.

Supported Employment Advocacy Program - Rights at Work

Our new Rights at Work advocacy service is here to help people with disability across Queensland be informed about their rights and options at work and to raise issues and be heard at work.

What we do

1. Raise issues and be heard

- address unfair treatment (discrimination) or bullying at work
- resolve issues with your employer
- understand your rights

2. Speak up to feel safe and supported at work

- work conditions and adjustments
- inclusion in the workplace
- asking for what you need in the workplace

3. Understand your work options

- your work choices
- understand payments
- navigate work processes

Contact us on 1800 818 338 or email intake@adaaustralia.com.au if you or someone you know needs help at work.



Where to catch us in September



Our Words 2 Action team will be at the following locations in September for people with disability to come along and meet your local advocate, and learn more about our free self-advocacy coaching program.

It's a free program and no NDIS plan required!

10 September, 1pm - Prospect Wellness Hub, 11-15 Church Street Charters Towers

11 September, 1pm - The Charters Towers Excelsior Library, 130-132 Gill Street Charters Towers
 15 September, 9am - Beenleigh Library, Crete Street Beenleigh
 15 September, 2pm - Beenleigh Library, Crete Street Beenleigh
 19 September, 11am - Country Women's Association Ballina, 236 River Street Ballina

[Register now >>](#)

Keep Livable Housing Design Standards

Everyone needs a place to call home that meets their needs.

ADA Australia has joined 52 organisations representing people with disability, older people, families/carers and the disability, housing and community sectors have joined together to show their support for Queensland's continued implementation of the Livable Housing Design Standard (LHDS) under the National Construction Code.

Accessible housing is not a luxury; it's a basic human right for all people. Let's continue to build accessible homes now that meet the needs of both today and tomorrow's Queenslanders.



Queensland Inquiry into Elder Abuse

CEO Geoff Rowe, and Principal Solicitor Karen Williams, have recently given evidence at the Queensland Parliament's Education, Arts and Communities Committee Inquiry into Elder Abuse in Queensland.

In partnership with The Public Advocate and Caxton Legal Centre, we have published this [article in the Queensland Law Society Proctor](#) which outlines the three priorities we see for elder abuse reform.



1. The creation of a stand-alone adult safeguarding agency.
2. The development of clear governance arrangements between that agency and existing legal, advocacy and support services.
3. The development of a robust Queensland plan to prevent and address the abuse of older Queenslanders.

Read the article [here](#).

Changing orders

So you have made plans for who can support you with decisions about your finances, health and personal life if you become unable to in the future.

But things can change, so how do you make changes to these arrangements?

You can change a guardianship, financial management or administration order if your circumstances change, but the process varies from state to state.



Karen Williams, our Principal Solicitor for ADA Law explains in this article for Compass - [Reviewing your decision-maker if things change](#).

High Quality Care

Don't miss OPAN's next webinar in their series talking about the new Aged Care Act - High Quality Care.

23 September
1-2pm AEST

The new Aged Care Act describes what high quality care looks like, but how are we going to achieve that in practice?

Hear from Panelists:

- Loren deVries, Senior Practitioner, Behaviour Support and Restrictive Practices Unit, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
- Chris Atmore, Policy and Advocacy Senior Advisor, Allied Health Professions Australia
- Robin Vote, Member, OPAN's National Older Persons Reference Group



Register now - <https://opan.org.au/event/high-quality-care/>

Celebrating seniors from different cultures!

August was Multicultural Queensland Month, which means it is time for ADA Australia's annual celebration of diversity among older Queenslanders at the Gold Coast Seniors Lunch and, for the first time, a Seniors Lunch celebration in Cairns.

Everyone has the right to be supported and age well, and at ADA Australia we welcome clients from all cultural backgrounds. We know that older people from different cultural backgrounds can often experience barriers to accessing support or speaking up for your rights and needs, and that's where our advocacy services are here to help.

More than 150 seniors attended the celebrations which were a great mix of entertainment, useful information, and most importantly, good food. People brought along a photo or item that has a special memory to share and get to know each other at the tables.

Thank you to all those that came along and our supporting partners in the events. Until next year....



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