



**ADACAS**  
A D V O C A C Y  
CELEBRATING 31 YEARS



**ADACAS**  
Annual Report  
2021-2022




## Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which ADACAS works: the Ngunnawal, Yuin and Dharawal, Wiradjuri peoples of Canberra and NSW South Coast, Illawarra-Shoalhaven and Murrumbidgee regions. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our communities.

## Acknowledgement of Community Diversity

We acknowledge the diversity of our community. We acknowledge LGBTIQA+ people's right to self-expression and self-determination. We celebrate the rich diversity of peoples bodies, genders, sexualities and relationships. We recognise the needs and contribution of people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds for our society. We value and strongly support the inclusion and participation of people with lived experience of disability and mental ill-health, and Carers in every part of community life. We offer our respect to older persons and recognise the life experience and wisdom they provide.



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## ABOUT ADACAS

The ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS) is an independent advocacy not-for-profit human rights organisation supporting people living with a disability, people with mental ill-health, older people and informal carers.

### Our vital role across communities:

- Advancing social justice to build a community that is more inclusive and responsive to diversity.
- Providing free advocacy support and information, as well as specialised services in the ACT and across areas of the South Coast and parts of regional NSW.
- Delivering skilled services and resources via our dedicated staff, that enable a person seeking assistance to be heard, supported in their decision making, and to have their human rights upheld.
- Standing beside people where and when the systems of our society are unjust, broken or have undue impact on living.
- Promoting the rights of people who are among society's most vulnerable, marginalised, disadvantaged and/or overlooked, so that they may have their needs, wishes, rights and goals met.
- Contributing to more just and practical systems through individual and systemic advocacy, so that our society can undertake positive change to be more inclusive and supportive for everyone.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### ● Purpose:

Assert, promote and protect the rights of people with disability, people experiencing mental ill-health, people who are older, and people who are informal carers.



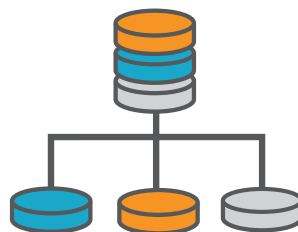
### ● Vision:

A community in which everyone may exercise their rights and responsibilities, lead lives of value and dignity, and pursue their dreams.



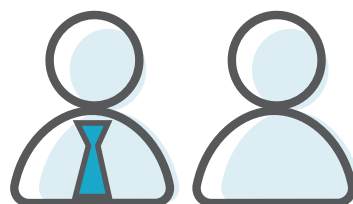
### ● Strategic Objectives:

- **Service Quality** - Respond to the changing needs of our clients through excellence in advocacy and service delivery.
- **Human Rights** - Advance human rights and social justice for population groups in the areas we serve.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** - Contribute to building a community more inclusive and responsive to diversity.



### ● Culture Charter:

- **Integrity** - We are transparent, authentic and ethical in our work and guided by human rights principles.
- **Pursue Excellence** - We are continuously learning and working in collaborative and innovative ways to effect positive change and meaningful outcomes.
- **Reflective in our Practice** - We are working to build trust, increase self-awareness, and improve our practices through respectful and constructive dialogue.
- **Social Justice** - We advocate for equitable access and fair and just outcomes via individual and systemic advocacy.



## SNAPSHOT OF OUR IMPACT 2021/2022

### Reach and Outcomes:

#### Priority Groups

Advocacy with  
First Nations people  
increased by

22%

this year

as we assisted with

171

Cases

Advocacy with  
Culturally and  
Linguistically Diverse  
clients increased this  
year by

17%

as we assisted with

66

Cases

Advocacy with the  
LGBTIQA+ community  
remained stable and  
we assisted with

20

Cases

“The work my  
advocate has  
completed has been  
life changing for me,  
thank you for your  
support ADACAS”

- Client Experience.

#### Total Figures

Clients

1,532  
to 1,616

Cases

2,690  
to 2,765

## Main Presenting Issues this year included

Matters relating to housing, the NDIS, appeals, communication with service providers, quality of service and care, and abuse of an older person.

## Client Experience:

95%

of clients surveyed would recommend ADACAS to friends for help.

Even though the advocacy is over, I know you will be there if I need assistance in the future. I am so grateful for the help they gave and continued to try to assist with.

- Client Experience.



“...Keep on doing the fabulous work that you do. The community would be lesser without you.”

- Client Experience.



## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

The Board is proud that this year ADACAS assisted 1,616 people with independent advocacy and access to supports and services. Importantly, the feedback we received from people we assisted, affirms the value of our services to promote, protect and uphold their rights. Increased funding for older persons advocacy and our new service for people with disability in NSW, allows us to provide advocacy to more people in need.

The Board applauds the tireless commitment of our staff in supporting those most in need, particularly during a year of ongoing disruption. Challenges such as the COVID pandemic and changing economic conditions, have exacerbated issues faced by people in having their rights upheld: access to services including COVID vaccinations, housing and adequate care; overcoming systemic barriers, such as in the child protection, justice and health systems; fighting to uphold the integrity of the NDIS; and educating providers and older people about exploitation and abuse.

We acknowledge the support of the Commonwealth, ACT and NSW governments, and the leadership of our peak bodies, OPAN and DANA. We continue to work collaboratively across sectors in line with our strategic direction.

The Board wishes to thank Alana Fraser, who retired after serving on the Board for eight years. We also thank our CEO, Wendy Prowse who led significant change and strengthened our capability – through excellence in people development, improved policies and systems, and commitment to human rights, social justice and inclusion. I also thank the Board directors who served this year for their insights, commitment and support.

As we reflect on 2021-2022, we also look towards continued growth, and maintaining sustainable services for the good of the communities we support.

**Helen McDevitt**





## CEO'S MESSAGE

This year has been one of constant change and continued to be a challenging time that has impacted everyone. I want to commence by acknowledging the tremendous efforts of our dedicated staff, who have shown their personal and professional resilience in adapting the way they work to meet the needs of our organisation and clients. They have continued to provide a quality service during lockdown in 2021, and then adapted to work in a hybrid environment focused on supporting clients and supporting each other.

The continuation of the global pandemic, rising costs of living, and ongoing barriers to care and support, often disproportionately impact people with disability, people with mental ill-health, older people and informal carers. The demand to assist people with NDIS appeals has exceeded the high demand that we saw last year, with an increase of almost 20%. We also saw a significant increase in the demand for individual advocacy for people with disability, with demand increasing by 56%. This has fortified the need for individual and systemic advocacy services.

In the past year there has been significant investment into re-enforcing the organisational foundations of ADACAS through the design and development of a new client relationship system, Salesforce, updating our finance system, and updating organisational policies and procedures. This work prepared us for the growth that ADACAS experienced in the Older Persons Team and the expansion across regional New South Wales, whilst also delivering efficiencies across the organisation. We are pleased to have completed the tasks in our Reflect RAP and look forward to developing our Innovation RAP in the coming year. ADACAS has demonstrated the ability to grow, adapt and innovate for continued impact. We also continue to stay-the-course with our core services and resources, which saw 10,414 hours of diverse advocacy support provided in 2021-2022. The quality of our advocacy was recognised through the independent accreditation process against the National Standards for Disability Services.

I want to acknowledge the vision, support and contribution of our Board of Directors led by our inspiring and professional Chairperson, Helen McDevitt. I also want to thank again the amazing staff at ADACAS who are dedicated to ensuring human rights are upheld and that our clients' expressed wishes are heard, as they address many social justice issues and systemic barriers.

Thank you to all our funders, supporters, collaborators and clients who continue to be such an important part of our community impact. I am proud to share with you our results from 2021-2022.

**Wendy Prowse**

## OUR COMMUNITY

### We protect the rights of people:

- With disability
- Experiencing mental ill-health
- Older people
- Informal carers

### We achieve this through:

- Individual advocacy
- Systemic advocacy
- NDIS support coordination
- Supported decision making
- Trauma informed and restorative practice

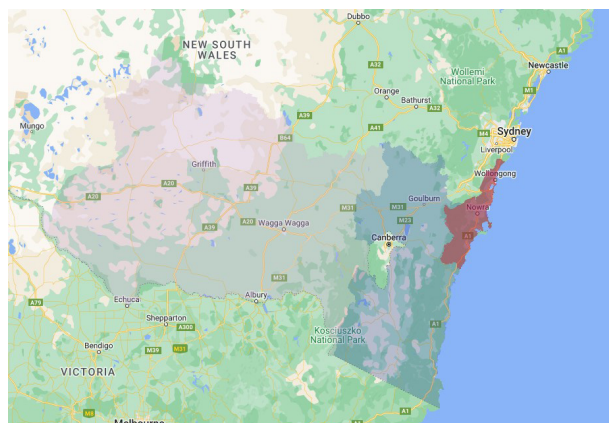
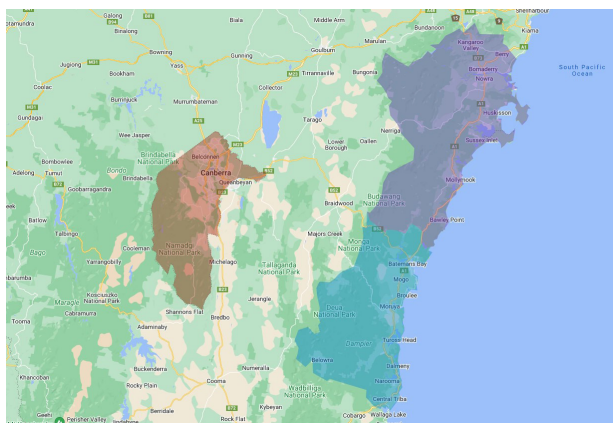
### We ensure:

- Voices are heard
- Needs are met
- No one needs to stand alone
- Diversity is embraced

### We achieve positive outcomes:

- Improving equitable access
- Improving quality of services
- Connecting people with appropriate supports
- Enabling human rights to be upheld and respected

**Where we operate:** ADACAS has a head office in Canberra and provides free and independent information, support and advocacy to clients across the Canberra region, Murrumbidgee, South Coast NSW (an expanding region for ADACAS), and Illawarra-Shoalhaven Local Health Districts. ADACAS has a number of specialty services which are specific to regions in which we operate. The jurisdiction where we can support people is determined by the funding body.



## EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES HIGHLIGHTS - 2021/2022

### Expansion in NSW

While ADACAS has its roots in the ACT, a successful tender with NSW Government has enabled an expanded footprint in regional NSW. We now offer support to people with a disability in the Murrumbidgee, Illawarra, Canberra Region, and place-based locations along South Coast NSW. ADACAS has employed staff along the South Coast, in Wagga and Albury, to ensure that clients can receive face-to-face or online support relevant to their localised needs. ADACAS has continued to build locally collaborative relationships with other service providers, to streamline support for people in the different communities we serve.

### Growth of Older Persons Team

The Older Person's Team has expanded considerably to meet recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. This has included: an increase in the number of advocacy staff to meet demand; the appointment of an Advocate to work with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and a dedicated Community Engagement Officer. Additional resources to support financial advocacy, and engagement with First Nations people, are in motion. These changes will allow for continued high quality services, and enhanced education and outreach to support the wellbeing of people over the age of 65, and over the age of 50 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We are taking action with a commitment to supporting dignified ageing and embracing diversity.

### Quality Improvement Initiatives

In March 2022, ADACAS underwent accreditation against the National Standards for Disability Services. We achieved an excellent result with zero non-conformities against the standards. The accreditation surveyors interviewed several staff and a random sample of 13 clients, and reviewed 18 client files. All clients interviewed were highly positive about their experience with ADACAS staff and the services they had received. The single minor recommendation for improvement from this process was actioned immediately. While we are confident and proud in our results, we do not rest on our laurels - ADACAS maintains robust quality improvement and assurance processes, and a cycle of review.

### Salesforce Rollout

ADACAS partnered with two external agencies on an eight-month operational project to implement a new Salesforce CRM system. This was an essential capacity evolution to replace an aging legacy system with nimble technology to meet organisational needs. This system will provide data driven insights, create efficiency and reduce risk. Since the successful go-live in April 2022, which was delivered on time and within budget, internal users are already finding efficiencies in their day-to-day work. The system will support the needs of staff, senior management and the Board with their decision making and reporting.

# YEAR IN REVIEW

## Older Persons Support and Advocacy

The Older Persons Team is funded by the Department of Health, via the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) to provide information and advocacy to persons 65+, and 50+ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The team also delivers education sessions to aged care residential facilities, and outreach to aged care service providers. This promotes understanding of consumer rights and raises awareness of elder abuse. In 2021-2022, the Older Persons Team continued to provide advocacy across a wide range of issues, despite limitations relating to lockdowns, including staff movement and a change in funded activities.

“Thank you again for being with me through this. I am very grateful that I had you on my side and that an organisation like ADACAS exists.”

Advocates supported clients to achieve successful outcomes on issues including misuse of Enduring Power of Attorney arrangements that had led to financial abuse, and on matters of guardianship. Advocates

used a collaborative approach, enabling clients to achieve positive outcomes that improved their financial security and living arrangements. This included ADACAS engagement with Australian Federal Police, Older Persons Liaison Officers, and the Older Persons ACT Legal Service (OPALS).

A common thread of advocacy issues addressed was ‘lack of communication’. Many clients who made complaints about aged care service providers or their quality of care, either had their issue rectified or successfully arranged new service providers, thanks to the assistance from ADACAS. Advocates were also able to identify service and compliance issues with some aged care service providers, and to deliver targeted advice for improvement. Through advocacy support many vulnerable older people were able to have their voices recognised, their independence enhanced, and to reinstate choice and autonomy. ADACAS’ Advocates also worked towards supported decision making - ensuring several clients had all the information and tools to make informed decisions about their own living and care arrangements.

### Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- 458 Older People were provided with advocacy support
- A total of 2,526 hours of support were provided to Older People throughout Financial Year 2022.
- A total of 872 issues were addressed throughout Financial Year 2022.



### Case Study: Improving access and inclusion for people in Residential Aged Care

Melody\* is a client living in a Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF), which was in lockdown due to a COVID-19 outbreak. Being unwell with Covid, Melody missed the postal voting deadline for the 2022 Federal Election, and was highly upset that she would not get the opportunity to exercise the right to vote.

The referral to ADACAS was received in the week of the election and the Advocate contacted Melody to better understand the situation. The Advocate then contacted the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) regarding options for those in lockdown. The advice was to register for telephone voting, however when Melody attempted to this, she was refused a registration pin (due to being outside the AEC registration period by just one day). She became despondent and called her ADACAS Advocate.

The Advocate called the AEC again, advocating for flexibility to meet the needs of the elderly in lockdown. The AEC acknowledged that as a Federal Election had never been conducted during a pandemic, they were reviewing options. They facilitated Melody speaking directly to a manager to receive a pin, so she was able to proceed with her vote. Inclusion and representation like *this* matters, and it can take persistence from Advocates to get the right outcome.

*\*Name changed for privacy*



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Intake, Mental Health and Disability in the ACT

This past year saw a high volume of people seeking support for NDIS applications or appealing decisions by the NDIA at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. ADACAS' support included facilitating participation, engaging with legal representation, attendance at case conferences, and assistance with Statements of Lived Experience/Carer Impact Statements. Advocates provided support with aspects such as: reviewing evidence; identifying gaps; assisting in the collation of evidence for applications; and accompanying clients at key medical appointments. ADACAS walked beside our clients through every step, to ensure rights were upheld.

“We are also very grateful to you and the team at ADACAS. The new plan with its increased funding will be wonderful for William. We would not have succeeded without your invaluable support and advice.”

The team supported clients who were without stable accommodation to access specialist services such as Onelink and Housing ACT, and to submit applications, source food pantries, and access long-term tenancy support through Everyman and YWCA. Access increased by women with disability fleeing family and domestic violence. Support included assisting their engagement with courts, and liaison with transitional housing through McKillop House and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

The mental health and disability team supported people with mental ill health to navigate the psychiatric treatment order process, either for appeals via ACAT or to support liaison with their treating team to address concerns and decisions impacting their lives. Fortnightly outreach occurred in Canberra's closed mental health facilities to ensure access and advocacy for consumers.

Housing remains an ongoing crisis for certain Canberra populations, with approximately 2000 people presently homeless<sup>1</sup>. ADACAS worked closely with Housing ACT and Onelink, to ensure people with complex disabilities and mental ill health did not 'fall through the gaps'. Many clients were identified for relocation as part of the Growing and Renewing Public Housing Program, and we worked with Canberra Community Law to support clients, such as older women with a disability/chronic ill-health, to complete an application for exemption.

The pandemic has required us to revisit how people access our support. We provided a separate phonenumber for people to call (Covid-19 Check In). Advocates assigned to clients would check in fortnightly on matters such as food, medication and mental health supports. Clients who lacked computer literacy or means could leave or pickup key documents from their mailbox. If the Client didn't have a computer or digital literacy, they could drop off paperwork to their mailbox, then would to-and-fro between their mailbox to pick up and drop off papers. We used this time to explore new collaborations with local services and the Minister for Homelessness and Housing Services, Rebecca Vassarotti – to address the accommodation emergency.

## Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- Over 732 hours of client support, with 69 clients supported at the Tribunal (increase of 10%\*)
- An estimated 95% success rate for the NDIS access applications through our advocacy assistance provided.
- ADACAS supported a record number of people to submit an application for NDIS access. (\*year-on-year)

### Case Study: Responding to the homelessness crisis with compassionate advocacy

Rory\* was a middle-aged client experiencing periodic homelessness alongside episodes of mental ill-health and a substance misuse problems. Their wellbeing challenges caused troubles in maintaining the property they had tenancy in, and they found themselves homeless again. This was complicated further by Canberra's COVID lockdown in 2021.

The Advocate contacted homeless services in Canberra to arrange emergency accommodation, then engaged community in-home supports to assist with activities of daily living - building capacity to maintain tenancy. The Advocate assisted Rory to apply for Priority Public Housing by providing information, and assisting with administration of forms for Housing ACT and the Disability Support Pension. Together they explored other living options, such as share-housing through 'Common' Ground'. This enabled Rory to feel informed and supported to make the choice that was right for the situation. The advocate also provided information about food pantries, emergency shelters and the Early Morning Centre, for access to affordable food, showers, and accommodation as needed.

After a year of living in and out of emergency accommodation Rory was placed in an accessible unit. They were linked into community transport and cleaning services, and able to pay rent contributions as they were successful in receiving a Disability Support Pension. This client was positively supported to take control of their situation. Advocates frequently work with people with complex needs - applying knowledge, support and compassion to each situation.

*\*Name changed for privacy.*

1. Homelessness Services - Commissioning, [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au); Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Census of Population and Housing - Estimating Homelessness" (2018), <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/census-population-and-housing-estimating-homelessness/2016>\*

\*The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a person as homeless if they do not have suitable accommodation alternatives and their current living arrangement:

- is in a dwelling that is inadequate;
- has no tenure, or if their initial tenure is short and not extendable; or
- does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations

### Disability Advocacy across NSW

In addition to the funding received through the Department of Social Services via the National Disability Advocacy Program ADACAS was able to increase our reach and impact in 2021-2022 financial year due to the new contract we received from the NSW Government. This new funding will assist people with disability who require advocacy in relation to NSW's funded services. . Our geographic footprint and resources for disability advocacy, have been extended within the Murrumbidgee, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Capital Region areas. This included the employment of four new dedicated staff members (in early 2022) based in Wagga, Albury Wodonga, Nowra and Moruya, who deliver place-based services to meet the diverse needs of clients with disability. This is important for respecting local area knowledge and networks, as the issues, barriers and support eco-systems experienced by rural and regional clients, will often differ to their metropolitan counterparts.

“ADACAS, you have caused life changing events in my life, you have brought me so much joy, light into dark places, more help than I have ever had.”

The team were busy delivering practical advocacy on matters of education, housing, health, justice and child protection, and supporting issues of guardianship. They delivered local area education and community awareness activities to help different populations understand the services available to them. They developed partnerships with local service networks for streamlined collaboration and referral pathways.

An ongoing campaign to engage with hostels was delivered across the NSW regions in which ADACAS operates, to educate staff on matters of disability advocacy, and to support vulnerable residents who otherwise may not have adequate information or access to appropriate services.

Another focus was the continued support of clients during bushfire recovery efforts. Many who lived through the Black Summer fires of 2019-2020, have experienced hardships with accommodation security due to housing scarcity, emotional distress and trauma, and service and resource limitations. ADACAS has helped connect these clients with services and resources.

The team have also supported many people within NSW who require assistance with matters relating to the NDIS.

#### Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- 165 total clients were supported across NSW, and a total of 248 issues were addressed
- 959 hours of advocacy support were delivered across a diverse range of issues and needs
- 100% of clients said they were satisfied with the support that ADACAS provided



### Case Study: Advocates going above and beyond

ADACAS Advocates will often deal with multiple cases at once, in which the individual needs are unique and complex, but a common goal is shared. In 2021-2022, an Advocate simultaneously supported three men (Glenn, Max and Vince\*), each aged in their 50s and living with varying intellectual disabilities and mental ill-health, in regional NSW. They were having similar challenges around the administrative requirements for applying to the NDIS.

Each of the clients had limited literacy skills to negotiate paperwork, and lacked formal records to demonstrate their education history and diagnoses of disability. Glenn was estranged from his family, while Max's parents had passed away. Vince was residing with his brother and ageing mother, neither of whom could offer the assistance needed. Each of the men had limited financial means and resources, due to their circumstances. Accessing the NDIS would be transformational in their ability to receive the supports they desperately needed.

The Advocate began tenaciously collating the necessary information to inform the process. This included many phone calls and emails to schools and medical professionals who had engaged with the clients. Each individual was supported with their application to the NDIS, including negotiation of a verbal access process for Glenn. All three clients were successful in their applications, and began receiving a new mix of resources, assessments and therapies.

ADACAS Advocates often go above and beyond – using resourceful means, to get positive outcomes for their clients.

*\*Names changed for privacy.*



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Disability Royal Commission – ACT and South Coast NSW

ADACAS has continued to work with vulnerable clients and their informal carers in ACT and South Coast NSW, to liaise with the Disability Royal Commission (DRC). The DRC was established in 2019 as a response to community concern about widespread reports of violence, neglect, abuse, and exploitation of people living with disability. It allows for submissions that detail past or recent lived experiences – giving people the opportunity to have their voices and stories heard, while acting as an agent for systemic change.

“I feel blessed that my advocate continues to be the wonderful, helping, caring person that... understands like she does, and makes it so much easier to not be shamed or humiliated to tell my story.”

ADACAS takes a trauma-informed approach and has supported clients to make DRC submissions through whichever means best suits their needs, circumstances and wellbeing journeys. This includes private sessions, written submissions, recorded submissions and supported verbal submissions. During COVID-19 restrictions, many of these approaches moved further online.

ADACAS employs a specialised Aboriginal liaison to support First Nations clients, and to connect with broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander networks and services. We often find through our engagement that First Nations people will refer themselves to receive support through our disability advocacy services. Our staff have also collaborated with external partners, to ensure that people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are able to engage with the DRC in an effective and supported way.

#### Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- 41 clients were supported to make their submissions to the DRC
- Participation of CALD clients has doubled
- Engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients has remained consistent
- Improved collaboration occurred to ensure clients in closed facilities received DRC support – including 5 inmates supported to make submissions.
- Wrap-around advocacy support was delivered on matters including child protection, housing and communication with service providers totalling 383 hours.

### Case Study: Supporting lived-experience stories is essential for positive change

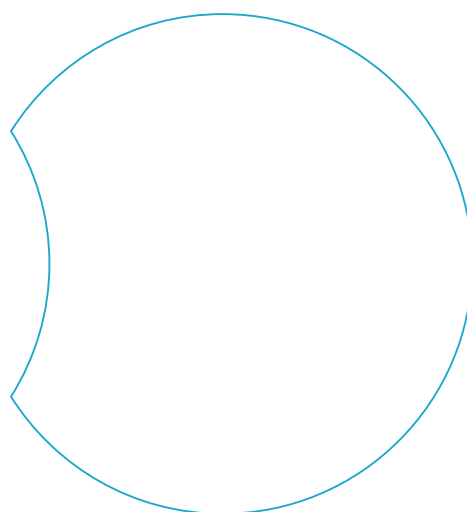
ADACAS was proud to stand beside and facilitate engagement with the DRC for Clara\*, a vulnerable client in her 80's who has diagnosed physical and psychosocial disabilities. Clara had previously sought to make a submission to the DRC but without the support of an Advocate, she had not succeeded.

After years of challenges in dealing with a commonwealth government organisation, Clara had sadly become disillusioned with her treatment, and tired of the ongoing fight to be treated fairly. ADACAS received a warm referral directly from the private sessions team at the DRC to support Clara. They identified the importance of her submission, and her need for advocacy support. ADACAS was promptly able to begin working with Clara to prepare her story for verbal submission to the Commissioner, in accordance with her personal choice. Her private session was held via video link from the ADACAS office, with support provided to navigate the process.

During a debriefing session, Clara was able to relay her relief that she had finally been able to say everything she had wanted to say. She was also provided with extra supporting documents to help her on her forward journey.

Lived-experience stories such as Clara's are essential in advocating for positive, systemic change. ADACAS assists individuals with disability and their carers to have their challenges and struggles formally captured. Their collective voices will lead to improvements in policy and practice, for supporting people with disability, now and into the future.

*\*Name changed for privacy*



### National Redress Scheme

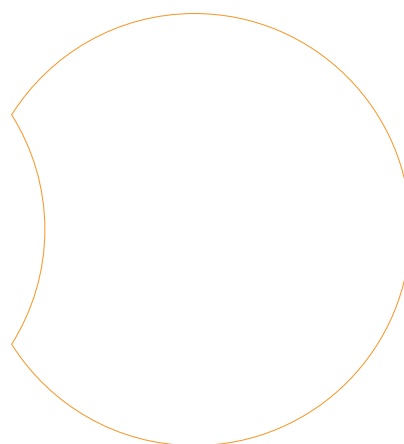
The National Redress Scheme is part of the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. ADACAS continues to provide free and independent support to people wishing to access the scheme in the ACT and across the South Coast of NSW. This includes support for: gaining free legal advice; completing official documentations; accessing suitable counselling; and accessing the Direct Personal Response (DPR) component of the scheme.

Clients have been supported through a trauma-informed and restorative practice approach, including clients with disabilities, LGBTQI+ clients, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and Culturally and Linguistically diverse clients.



ADACAS provides support that is in line with the recognised Gold Standard for redress supports. It is essential to provide this high level of assurance for such a sensitive and important process towards restitution and healing.

Clients accessing this scheme are living with trauma and other wellbeing challenges relating to their past experiences with child sexual abuse. The process of engaging with the scheme can be challenging and it is vital for ADACAS staff to reduce the risk of additional trauma. By walking beside our redress clients and supporting their pathways for restitution (both financial and non-financial), we can reduce their burden and support positive outcomes. This includes helping them to understand the DPR process and to receive responses from the offending institutions, which are meaningful and healing.



#### Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- 27 clients received support, with 41 different issues addressed
- Clients received 241 hours of support



**Case Study: Trauma-informed advocacy that empowers individuals through redress**

The ups and downs of liaising with the National Redress Scheme can be overwhelming for lived experience survivors of institutionalised sexual abuse. Having an ADACAS Advocate stand beside them, to help to explain the process, can assist people to continue towards the outcome they deserve. This can be an essential component towards healing.

Ebony\* became aware of the National Redress Scheme through her partner, and became interested in submitting an application regarding historic abuses that occurred in a different state to the one she now lives in. While she had previously received a financial settlement, she asserted that she had not disclosed all sets of institutional abuse that had occurred. She had concerns around the 'evidence' that would need to be documented. As a previous care-leaver, with no one to support her formally through the application, Ebony did not feel equipped to take on the process alone. She also had a strong distrust of institutions and legal processes, which could be triggering for her.

Ebony approached ADACAS when she began to feel overwhelmed – asking that they act as a Nominee for her. An ADACAS Advocate was able to work with Ebony through a trauma-informed approach, to help her feel more at-ease and empowered through the process. They helped her to understand the application requirements, options available to her, and to liaise with the scheme. Additional information was collated and submitted, and this has allowed Ebony's application to progress with the NRS.

While the outcome is being awaited, ADACAS staff are committed to supporting people like Ebony, on their often complex and sensitive journey. This often includes facilitating procedural steps, while supporting emotional wellbeing.

*\*Name changed for privacy*



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Aged Care System Navigator (ACSN) Trial Extension

The ADACAS Navigator provides free, independent and confidential services to older people, families and informal carers. The purpose is to inform and equip people to navigate the complexities of the current aged care system, so that they can access the supports they need. The Navigator Trial helps them to:

- Understand the types of subsidised aged care services available and how to access them;
- Increase understanding of their rights and responsibilities;
- Register for My Aged Care services; and
- Become supported through MAC assessment processes.

In 2021-2022 the team built on and expanded, existing relationships with a variety of consortium allies and community partner organisations, to progress a trial extension and help individuals in the community to better understand the My Aged Care system. The overall number of clients we assisted increased by 26%.

Building upon the achievements of the ACSN Pilot, this trial extension has been focussed on older persons with more complex aged care support needs that require greater support to engage with the My Aged Care system. The provision of data, knowledge and experience of the ADACAS Navigator, in collaboration with consortium partners, has been leveraged to assist in the rollout of the upcoming national Care Finder Program - commencing January 2023.

“I found the ADACAS navigator to be very empathetic and kind. He provided extensive support and followed through with providing extra information. I found myself feeling much more confident about My Aged Care services and reassured I have somewhere to get help.”

The trial has been community-led and co-designed with older people, through public outreach activities, information sessions, seminar presentations and face-to-face consultation meetings in a variety of locations. The ADACAS Aged Care System Navigator (ACSN) embedded a variety of approaches to support provision and ensure that individuals participating in the trial extension, had the opportunity to communicate their primary support needs in a safe and tailored environment. Building on the knowledge and experience of earlier activities, these practices have been driven by older people, and underpinned by their experience and insight with aged care and other sectors.



### Major achievements of the Navigator Trial Extension in 2021-2022:

- Developed relationships with partner organisations such as Ability First Australia, to provide better understanding of the process for clients.
- Ongoing professional development leading to better communication methods, which allowed clients to understand issues, processes, and outcomes addressing topics such as trauma, mental ill-health, and cognitive decline.
- Continued strong take-up and reach, with access to information for the ACT and Queanbeyan community through outreach activities across community groups, shopping centres and organisations.
- A total of 380 people had received individual support at June 2022.
- 100% of participants surveyed, who were classified as having more complex needs, stated that the information made them feel more confident in accessing help.
- 100% of participants surveyed, who were classified as having more complex needs, would recommend Navigator to others.
- 100% of participants surveyed, who were classified as having more complex needs, found information provided useful to their situation.
- A 26% increase in CALD Clients and 25% increase in First Nations Clients, and overall increase of 26%.



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Systemic Advocacy

Systemic advocacy seeks to influence broader policy, practice and service outcomes to improve the lives of people with disability, people experiencing mental ill-health, older persons, and informal carers. ADACAS systemic advocacy works together with clients and others to advocate for system reform.

In 2021-2022, ADACAS focused on systemic advocacy efforts across a range of issues encountered by our clients, including (but not limited to):

- COVID-19 response with a focus on people with disability/mental ill-health and older people;
- Child and Family Services reform, including Child Protection reform - as it impacts parents with disability/parents with mental ill-health and/or children with disability/mental ill-health;
- Housing and homelessness - in relation to the disproportionate impacts for people with disability, people with mental ill-health and older people;
- ACT Disability Justice review and reforms;
- ACT Sexual Assault Reform (ADACAS shared advocacy with collaborating organisations - Prevention Working group, Women with Disability ACT on the response working group, and Advocacy for Inclusion on the Law Reform working group);
- Implementation of improved supports and pathways for women (and other people) with disability, and older people, experiencing family or domestic violence and the prevention of this violence;
- ACT Disability Health Strategy;
- Older Persons Mental Health and Wellbeing;

- Equitable access to services/supports by Older people in the ACT;
- Supported Decision Making rights;
- Discrimination Law reform;
- Disability Royal Commission; and
- Contributing towards ACT Disability Strategy.

ADACAS lodged formal submissions in relation to many of the above topics (our submissions are available on the ADACAS website). Submissions are just one mechanism to highlight areas of social policy that require change and acknowledge the voices of lived experience that are often missed. ADACAS also participated in consultations related to human rights, such as the Healthy Prisons review, child protection reform, and housing/homelessness service commissioning.

ADACAS also advocated directly with ministers and governments, and via participation in committees and networks, including: the ACT Disability and Carers Policy Group; Justice Reform Group; ACT Legal Assistance Forum (Child Protection); Oversight Committee (relating to COVID), and Elder Abuse Network. We further provided feedback in relation to the development of Disability Action and Inclusion Plans, including in relation to Canberra Health Services, early consultations about the Disability Health Strategy, and a needs analysis occurring with Capital Health Network.

During 2021-2022, we welcomed outcomes of joint advocacy including Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, the ACT Carers Recognition Act, commencing agreement to implement reforms arising from: Sexual Assault Reform processes, and work towards the ACT Disability Strategy.



## Supported Decision Making

### Supported Decision Making Pilot:

This initiative supports people living with disability (aged 18 to 65) with no informal supports or carers, to access and navigate the NDIS. Many clients had reached a crisis point in their lives before reaching out to ADACAS for help. ADACAS staff build rapport and trust with these clients. Many of these clients require support and advocacy for an extended period of time – often with multiple and complex issues.

### Growing Decision Makers project:

ADACAS has continued the Growing Decision Makers Project this year. This project aims to improve the decision-making skills of a group of young people with disability aged between 15-17 years, to reduce substitute decision making, such as guardianship, in the future. The project focussed on teaching the participants and their families about supported decision making, including analysing risks, possible safeguards, and how to identify which people are best placed to offer support. In 2021-2022 this project included individual consultation, support and follow-up on targeted decision-making strategies. Wrap-around information was provided to parents and carers through online and in-person seminars. Each participant grew significantly in their decision-making capability throughout the life of the project, with many now being actively encouraged to increase the frequency, type and complexity of decisions they make.

### Understanding Disability Workshops Trial – Raising awareness within the Justice Sector

In July/August 2021, ADACAS facilitated a series of two half-day interactive workshops for people working in the Justice Sector, in line with the ACT Government's Disability Justice Strategy. Due to lockdown 3 of the proposed 8 workshop were delivered, with 40 participants engaged. The workshops were designed to generate awareness around recognising needs and providing reasonable adjustments for people with disability who interact with the ACT Justice system. Feedback from participants indicated that they had a greater understanding of people with disability, including risks and barriers they may face. This enables participants to make informed and respectful choices in their day-to-day work.

### Impact at a glance (2021-2022):

- 12 people with varying/complex needs were provided with support to apply to/navigate the NDIS.
- 15 young people with disability from Canberra schools participated in the Growing Decision Makers Project -engaged with in-person or online seminars.
- 40 workplace participants (justice Sector) took part in 3 Understanding Disability Workshops with feedback suggested strong attitudinal and behavioural change outcomes - 90% of participants indicated that they were more aware of people with disability in the Justice system and how to offer support; and 77% had implemented environmental changes to their workplaces, and made adjustments to their communication tools and informational resources.



## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Case Study: Growing Decision Makers Project – Empowering young people with disability

Rosie\* is 15 years old and is the youngest child in a large family. She lives with her parents and two sisters. Rosie speaks English and Arabic and loves vehicles, first aid, hip hop dance classes, and celebrations. Rosie also lives with an intellectual disability.

Rosie was making simple decisions autonomously, such as what to eat for breakfast, however for more complex decisions, her family realised they were not giving her the same age-appropriate control as her siblings. Through targeted consultation with the family, ADACAS encouraged Rosie's supporters to help her exercise more decision making. This would improve: self-expression; risk assessment/mitigation; self-esteem; community participation; and thinking and planning for greater autonomy in her life.

Rosie was supported to begin making more decisions – starting with what clothing she would wear each day and to special events. This would test strategies and tools that lead to bigger decisions long-term. During the trial, Rosie and her family were visited twice - with three weeks between. Opportunities were promoted by her Mother, to support Rosie in her decision making, such as being given money for purchasing clothes, making an independent grocery purchase, and going for a walk around the lake on her own.

A March follow-up with Rosie's family revealed that her decision-making and self-determination had flourished. Rosie had interviewed for and started a job selling donuts, commenced doing laundry, continued to choose clothing, and prepared her own school lunches. Her mother proudly stated that these decisions and skills were ones they "Could not have imagined happening, just four months ago."

*\*Names changed for privacy.*



## NDIS Support Coordination

NDIS Support Coordination has been one of the key services provided by ADACAS over six years. This team has worked hard to understand and support client needs, find solutions to daily challenges of people living with disability and their informal carers, liaise with the NDIS/NIDA, and to meet goals in alignment with client NDIS plans. In 2021-2022 the Support Coordination team assisted a diverse group of 84 clients. This included ensuring individuals received the right mix of formal and informal supports to meet wellbeing needs, manage daily living and independence, and be active in their communities.

“I wanted to call to say thank you to my support coordinator for all of her support. The mattress arrived on Sunday and it’s superb”.

Towards the end of the financial year, the ADACAS Board made a decision to withdraw from providing Support Coordination Services. Clients were transitioned to other service providers who will meet their ongoing needs.

The Board and Executive are grateful to both current and former Support Coordination staff for their hard work and dedication to supporting ADACAS Support Coordination clients.



## OUR LEADERSHIP AND PEOPLE

### ADACAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020/2021

**Helen McDevitt**, Chairperson  
**Andrew Cameron**, Treasurer

**Alana Fraser**, Board Member  
[resigned in May 2022]

**Andrew Mathieson**, Board Member

**Chris Potter**, Board Member

**Christine Bruce**, Board Member

**Gregory Mahony**, Board Member

**Jessica White**, Board Member

**Margot Harker**, Board Member

### Leadership Team

**Wendy Prowse**, CEO

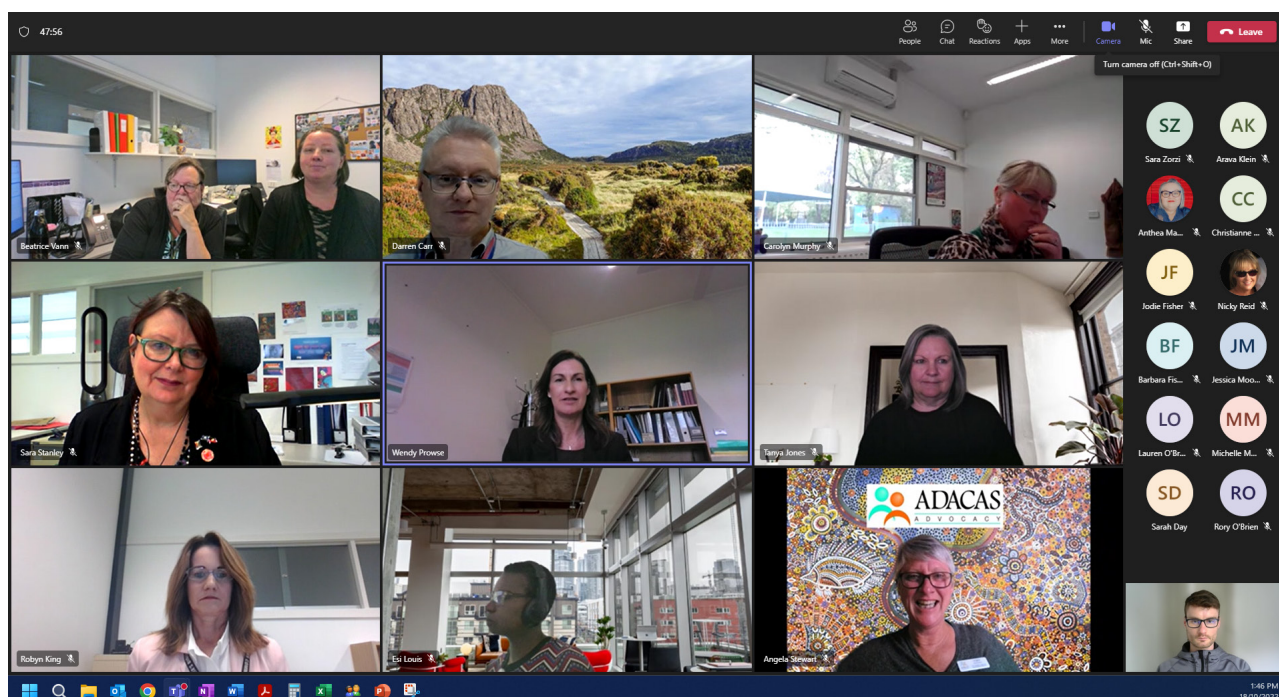
**Carolyn Murphy**, Business Manager

**Darren Carr**, Service Delivery &  
Quality Manager

### Our Staff

Our professional and highly skilled staff are dedicated to supporting the needs of our clients and the broader communities in which we operate. ADACAS has 30 staff working directly with clients or providing a critical service to support our operations.

ADACAS has a hybrid workplace, with our 4 staff working across NSW working remotely, and the ACT staff mainly in-office with the flexibility to work from home as needed. All staff are supported within a positive culture to uphold the values, mission and vision of ADACAS. We acknowledge and thank our staff for their tireless work and commitment over the past challenging years, and for their achievements in 2021-2022.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ADACAS would also like to acknowledge our supporters and collaborators:

- **The Commonwealth and ACT governments** who have supported us for thirty years.
- The **NSW Government** for their support of our services across regional and South Coast NSW.
- The **Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)** – our membership has contributed to a strong national voice for older people, and an efficient channelling of resources to national projects and to the local level to allow ADACAS to provide advocacy for older people.
- The **Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)** – our membership enables us to reflect our clients' voice on national advocacy and the ongoing challenge for improved rights and services for people with disability.
- **Proximity** law firm, who have been generous in their expert pro bono work with the Board on a new corporate structure and constitution.
- **Justice Connect**, who provide valuable guidance and assistance with our constitutional changes.
- **Vincent's** who have provided an efficient and professional service through their auditing services over the year, and for providing support and assistance to our team.
- **OPC IT** who have been instrumental in supporting us to have a continuity of service for our clients and prompt assistance with staff IT support.

- **IVO** for their assistance with our former CRM.
- **DCA Migration** for their assistance in migrating our client data to the new Salesforce CRM system.
- **SalesFix** for their ongoing consultative work in building and developing the Salesforce infrastructure.

A special thank you is reserved for our **cultural mentor Deborah Eades**, who provides ongoing guidance to us with wisdom and knowledge, as we implement our first Reconciliation Action Plan.

To our many community partners - the ongoing collaboration and camaraderie we share is instrumental to achieving significant positive change. A special thanks to:

- **ACTCOSS**
- **Advocacy for Inclusion**
- **Carers ACT**
- **COTA ACT**
- **Gugan Gulwan**
- **Mental Health Community Coalition**
- **National Disability Service**
- **Women with Disability ACT**

*Thank you to all the organisations and individuals who have worked with us across 2021-2022. We look forward to what we can achieve together over the coming years.*



## KEY FINANCIALS

### Financial Sustainability

ADACAS has achieved a surplus of \$349,113 in 2021/2022 compared to \$444,511 in 2020/2021. This is a positive result given the ongoing challenging environment raised by Covid 19 for staff and clients.

Financial sustainability is also being supported through our NDIS Support Coordination service, which saw an income of \$240,971 compared to the previous year of \$214,736. ADACAS ceased NDIS Support Coordination on 31 August 2022.

The main increase in revenue has come from Government grants with an overall increase of \$541,911 to the previous year.

We continue to demonstrate financial security through a disciplined focus and commitment in our stewardship, and responsibility in managing our resources and risks to ensure the organisation's long-term sustainability. Our cash reserve has been increased from \$1,163,222 in 2020/ 2021 to \$1,825,439 in 2021/2022. Our audited financial statements can be found at [www.adacas.org.au](http://www.adacas.org.au)

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<b>Revenue</b> (money received to do our work)	<b>\$3,495,962</b>
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<b>Expenses</b> (money spent to do our work)	<b>3,146,849</b>
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<b>Surplus</b> (money left over)	<b>\$349,113</b>
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<b>Reserves</b> (money in the bank)	<b>\$1,324,470</b>
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#### WHERE WE GET OUR MONEY FROM

Commonwealth Government	<b>\$1,861,081</b>
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ACT Government	<b>\$999,546</b>
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NDIS Support Coordination Service	<b>\$240,971</b>
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Other	<b>\$394,364</b>
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#### WHAT WE SPENT OUR MONEY ON

Staff wages, oncosts and their wellbeing	<b>\$2,604,207</b>
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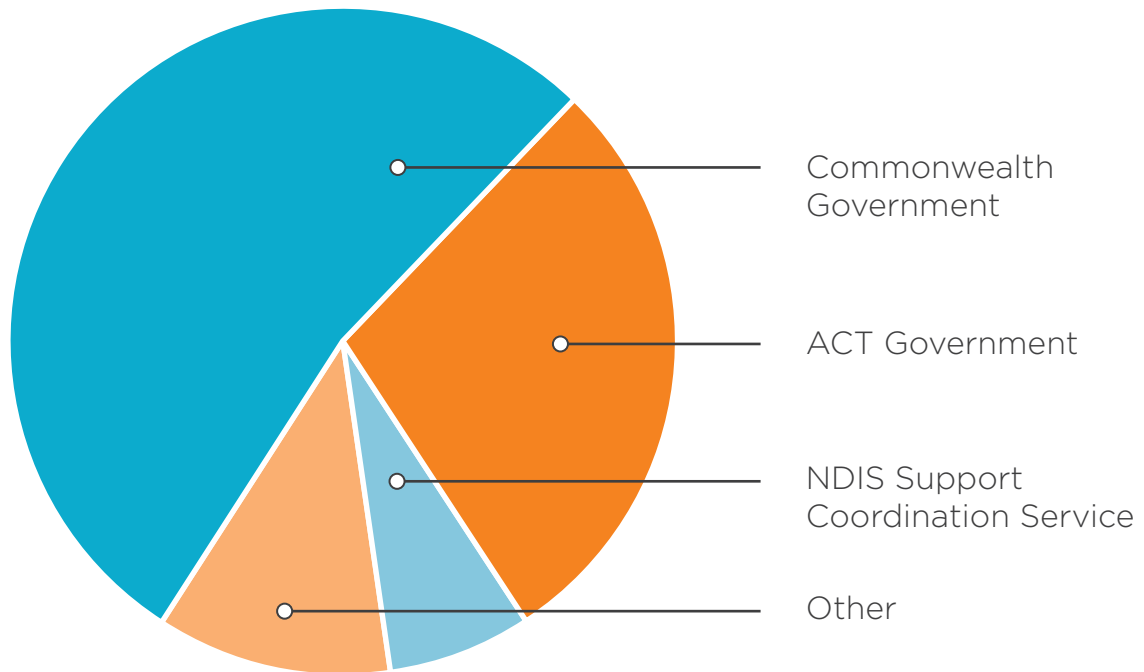
Operating costs	<b>\$433,022</b>
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Depreciation	<b>\$109,620</b>
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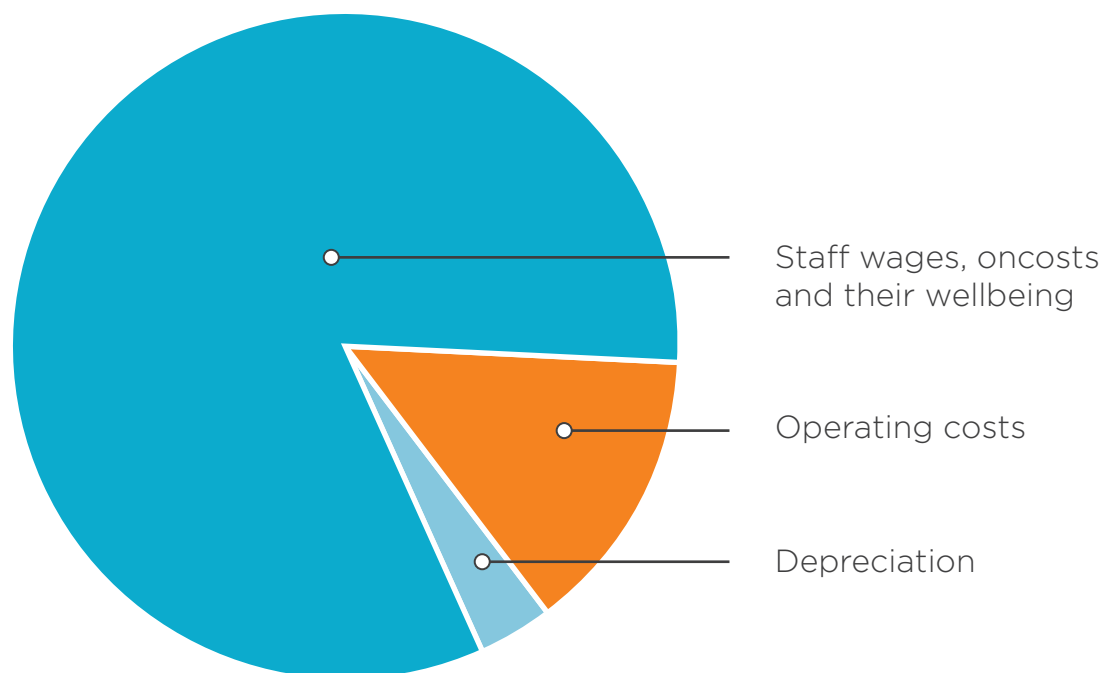
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## WHERE WE GET OUR MONEY FROM



## WHAT WE SPENT OUR MONEY ON





**ADACAS**  
A D V O C A C Y

## CONTACT US

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Website **[www.adacas.org.au](http://www.adacas.org.au)**

Phone **(02) 6242 5060**

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