



**ADACAS**  
Advocacy

# Annual Report A Year of Driving Change

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**2025**

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which ADACAS works: the Ngunnawal, Ngambri, 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.

Always was, always will be Aboriginal land. Sovereignty was never ceded.



*Wings of Advocacy by Sarah Richards, a Ngiyampaa woman born on Gadigal land, living and painting on Ngunnawal and Ngambri countries since 2012.*

*This work was presented to ADACAS in 2024 and represents our values and purpose.*





**ADACAS**  
Advocacy

# A Year of Driving Change 2025







## Acknowledgement of Diversity

We acknowledge the diversity of our community. We acknowledge LGBTIQ+ people's right to self-expression and self-determination. We celebrate the rich diversity of people's bodies, genders, sexualities and relationships.

We recognise the needs and contributions of people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

ADACAS is committed to having a workforce that represents our local community.

We are committed to providing a safe and ethical work environment that supports and embraces diversity.

We are committed to working to the expectations of the Carers Recognition Act.

We offer our respect to older persons and recognise the life experience and wisdom they provide.

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# Our Board Chair message

This year saw strong progress on the implementation of our Strategic Plan. Our financial position is strong and we signed a new 4-year contract for delivery of the National Aged Care Advocacy Program. We updated our risk management frameworks and policies, and continued with the development of our Impact Framework. A major focus has been on understanding and reporting on how our services make a real difference in peoples' lives, and how we influence positive changes to services and systems.

We continued to ensure that every person is heard, valued, and supported, and we have deepened the foundations that uphold human rights through both individual and systemic advocacy. Across the ACT, Murrumbidgee, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW, we have stood alongside people with disabilities, older adults, people experiencing mental health challenges, and their carers, helping them understand and exercise their rights in a complex and changing world.

We have supported our peak body, OPAN, to influence the development of the new Aged Care Act, which enshrines the rights of older people and the role of advocacy in the aged care system. NDIS reforms have also continued. Throughout these changes, ADACAS remained a trusted advocate, ensuring that the voices and

lived experiences of our clients are heard in policy discussions across the ACT and NSW.

The Board continued to prioritise sustainability, good governance, and organisational resilience, including strengthening data capability, risk oversight, and cybersecurity. These priorities ensure ADACAS is well-equipped to deliver high-quality advocacy now and into the future.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Wendy Prowse for her strong leadership, to our dedicated staff for their compassion and integrity, and to my fellow Board members for their strategic guidance and unwavering commitment. In December 2024 Raechel Johns retired from the Board and in June 2025 we welcomed three new directors: Bridget Browne, incoming Board Chair, Michael Nemarich and Liana Dobson.

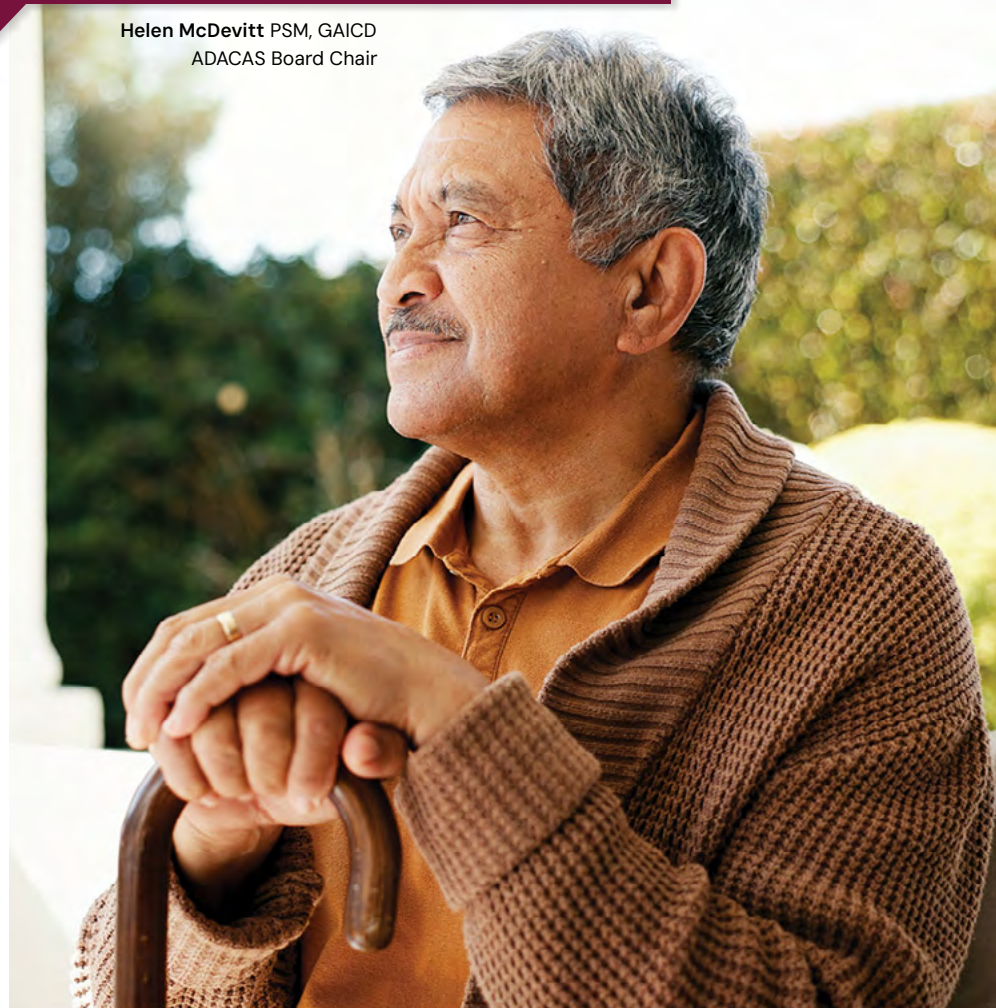
As I conclude my term as Chair, I am confident that ADACAS is well positioned for the future. Together with our partners, funders, and community, ADACAS will continue to champion human rights, inclusion, and systems that enable people to live with dignity and choice.

**Helen McDevitt** PSM, GAICD  
Board Chair

"As I conclude my term as Chair, I am filled with confidence in the road ahead for ADACAS. With our partners, funders and community ADACAS will continue to lead with courage – championing human rights, strengthening inclusion and shaping systems that enable every person to live with dignity and choice."



**Helen McDevitt** PSM, GAICD  
ADACAS Board Chair





# Our CEO message

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This year was one of change, reflection, and impact for ADACAS.

Across our communities, people with disabilities, older adults, and those living with mental ill health have continued to face complex systems and unfair barriers. In this environment, rights-based advocacy has never been more vital. So every day, our advocates stand beside people, helping them to make informed decisions, to understand their rights, and to speak up when their voices aren't being heard. Whether it's in a hospital, an aged care facility, correction facility or in someone's home, the heart of our work is ensuring every person is valued, respected, and empowered to live the life they choose.

This year, we deeply invested to drive change.

We invested in establishing a dedicated systemic advocacy, policy and impact function to ensure that what we can influence reforms in aged care, disability, and mental health systems.

We invested in an enhanced client record management system to help us take real-time client outcome data into our systemic advocacy.

We invested in developing an organisation-wide Impact Measurement Framework to strengthen how we demonstrate our impact across all our Programs.

We invested in strengthening our intake and outreach systems, reducing intake waiting times and extending advocacy into hospitals, custodial facilities, and closed mental health settings.

We also committed to, and achieved, a significant increase in the number of First Nations people and members of the LGBTIQ+ community seeking advocacy.

We focused on how we can be more resilient to the impact of climate change ensuring our staff are able to continue to support our clients in a place-based way.

We also drew on the principles of fairness, dignity, and inclusion – values embedded in the ACT Human Rights Act 2004 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

All our achievements this year reflect the dedication of our 40 staff, dedicated Board Directors, and the trust placed in us by the communities we support. I would like to give a special acknowledgement to Helen McDevitt who has been the Board Chair supporting me for the last 5 years. Her leadership and commitment to ADACAS and work on the OPAN Board have been instrumental in supporting the work of ADACAS and to me personally. I also provide a warm welcome and recognise the expertise of Bridget Browne

who has joined the ADACAS Board as the new incoming Chair and look forward to what we will be able to achieve together.

As we look to the year ahead, ADACAS will continue to promote a simple but powerful idea: when people are heard, respected, and supported to decide about their own lives, systems can change for the better and we can aim for a fairer and inclusive society for all.

Warmly,

**Wendy Prowse**

Chief Executive Officer, ADACAS



"We hear stories everyday that clearly highlight where systems are working well and where change is urgently needed. Each story matters, because when one person's rights are protected, it can lead to lasting change that benefits many others."

Wendy Prowse  
Chief Executive Officer, ADACAS



## Why ADACAS?

-  With 80,000 people living with a disability in the ACT currently, and potentially 35,000 having complex needs, we estimate that we are only supporting about 5% of these people within our current funding.\*
-  We know that in NSW approximately 20% of people have a disability, and we estimate that at least 120,000 of these people live in NSW, where we have a footprint.\*\*  
**We want to do more for people living with disability in the ACT & NSW!**
-  We know that there are over 65,000 people aged over 65 in the ACT, and we estimate we are only able to help 2% within our current funding.  
**We want to do more for older Australians!**
-  Our wait lists often have over 200 people waiting for our support.  
**We don't want to make hundreds of people wait to have their voices heard and their needs met!**
-  We know that community engagement helps people to understand what advocacy is and how we can help.



ADACAS works across nearly 50,000 square kilometres to address what clients and carers need.

\* Calculation based on data noting 18% of Australians have disability and data noting that 32% of people with disability have severe or profound disability, sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) and cited by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2024) People with disability in Australia 2024, catalogue number DIS 72, AIHW, Australian Government.

\*\* Calculation based on data noting 18% of Australians have disability and data noting population of relevant NSW Local Health Districts via HealthStats NSW.

## 2025 highlights



### We supported older Australians to get My Aged Care access

We were able to support older people get access to the services they need to uphold their rights and make informed decisions through our National Aged Care Advocacy Program and our Care Finder Program.



### We advocated for improved access to services across the ACT & NSW

Through our National Disability Advocacy Programs, we advocated on close to 1,000 occasions about NDIS decisions, housing, education and child protection issues. We were able to improve on the services our clients were accessing by getting greater recognition of what they really needed.



### We helped vulnerable people appeal NDIS decisions

We supported people dealing with the shrinking options for services and those who were trying to navigate new NDIS plans and appeals. We aimed to provide our clients with the skills to self-advocate but many found the emotional toll of dealing with the National Disability Insurance Agency, and the Local Area Coordinators, too challenging and preferred to wait for our help.





### We worked across NSW to make sure people had what they needed from

**local disability services** Our Disability Futures Advocacy Program funded staff to support clients to access the Government and non-government services they needed.



### We brought our trauma informed approach to the Redress Scheme

We supported people who have experienced institutional sexual abuse. This was, and continues, to be one of the most sensitive and important parts of our work, and we do this via trauma informed advocacy.



### We worked across the ACT to make advocacy available to people in mental health

**facilities** We embedded our work into the Canberra Hospital Adult Mental Health Unit, the Step Up, Step Down Service, and the University of Canberra Hospital, so that people can know their rights early in their recovery.



### We supported people with disability to have their voices heard and rights upheld across the ACT

Via our Individual Advocacy for People with Disability Program we worked with clients to deal with their housing, education, justice and child protection issues.



### We helped people in the ACT to leave hospital safely

We rolled-out nearly 1,000 hours of support, via our Community Assistance and Temporary Support Program funding, to support people to leave hospital safely and avoid readmission.



### We built ACT employer confidence to recruit people

**with disability** Through our Employer Confidence Program we supported hundreds of businesses to be more inclusive employers. We have also directly supported people with disability to find meaningful work.



Scan the code to download a copy of our Employer Confidence Program Report



## Stronger systems. Greater reach. Real results.

ADACAS delivered advocacy, support and outreach across more programs, regions, and communities than ever before.

Our Teams worked alongside people in hospitals, aged care, justice, and community settings, and almost every funded program exceeded its performance targets.

Our innovation, responsiveness, and our ongoing commitment to equity and dignity drove change.



# About us

## For over three decades, ADACAS has stood alongside people whose voices are too often unheard

We are an independent, rights-based advocacy organisation working with people with disability, older people, people experiencing mental ill-health, and their carers.

ADACAS exists to make sure that everyone, no matter their circumstances, can be heard, respected, and supported to make their own choices.

At the heart of our work is a belief in human rights and dignity.

We focus on supporting those most at risk of being excluded or silenced, ensuring their voices, wishes, and needs guide every step of the advocacy process.

**"Knowing that assistance is available gave me confidence and the mental fortitude to tackle the difficulties head on."**

ADACAS client, 2025

**"The support and advice I received from ADACAS contributed in no small way to a positive outcome, I cannot thank you enough."**

ADACAS client, 2024

## Our work

- ✓ Our advocates support people with disability to navigate complex systems in both the ACT and NSW, so they can access the services and support they need to live safely and independently.
- ✓ Across the ACT we connect with people in residential aged care, hospitals, community settings and in their homes so that vulnerable people who need advocacy can access it.
- ✓ We have staff in regional NSW to ensure that we can offer place-based advocacy and meet people where they are at.
- ✓ We use supported decision-making in all our work, which is grounded in human rights principles and aims to empower people to make their own choices with the necessary support.

## Our purpose

It's simple, we amplify the voices of people at risk of being unheard and we aim to ensure their rights and dignity are respected in every systems that touches their lives.



## This year, more people reached out to ADACAS than ever before

This year we saw a growing demand in services and a growing complexity in the issues faced.

Our advocacy work is now characterised by more cross-sector coordination, more time-intensive cases and clients whose circumstances span multiple domains of need.



60%

**60% increase** in advocacy cases related to the education system.

57%

**57% increase** in individual advocacy support for older people who have faced abuse.

33%

**33% increase** in advocacy support for individuals with mental ill-health seeking help from providers.

45%

**45% increase** in advocacy cases related to accessing aged care services or finding suitable care.

51%

**51% increase** in advocacy cases regarding housing matters for people with disability.



ADACAS is seeing a growing demand for our vital advocacy services, and people's needs are getting more complex.

This growing demand and complexity demonstrate the vital need for advocacy services – and the importance of government investment to ensure everyone can access timely support. Early, accessible advocacy means less distress and lowers risks for the most vulnerable members of our community.

By being present and active in the community, ADACAS helps people who might otherwise go unheard, enabling them to know their rights, get the services they need, and make informed choices.





**We reached people from diverse backgrounds and communities, expanding support to those who often face barriers to getting advocacy support**



**Engagement with First Nations clients continued to strengthen** Over the past three years, there has been a steady increase in First Nations clients accessing our advocacy support. Strong partnerships across the ACT and regional NSW have helped make this change possible.



**Members of the LGBTQIA+ communities are increasingly coming to us for support** We are proud to say that clients identifying as LGBTQIA+ has grown over the last year and we are making progress towards our goal of making our services welcoming and accessible.



Our work with clients from **culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds** remains steady and strong, with ADACAS maintaining a reputation for fair, culturally responsive support.



**We are committed to reaching the Aged Care Act's priority groups** More than 70% of our Care Finder Program recipients identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, as from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds, and/or experiencing homelessness or hardship.





## Supporting students and strengthening communities

## Our advocacy drives change

Every student deserves the chance to learn in an environment where they feel supported, included, and respected for who they are.

Through the NSW Disability Advocacy Futures Program our advocates partnered with students with disability, their families and their schools. We helped students understand their rights, navigate the complex education system. And we worked closely with schools to create learning plans shaped by each child's strengths and aspirations.

Our Team supported families in the Murrumbidgee, Southern NSW, and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health Districts as they tackled challenges like delayed assessments, the absence of reasonable adjustments, and difficulties communicating between home and school.

This work went beyond solving problems in the moment, it built accountability under the Disability Standards for Education (2005) and human rights principles, and turned rights into real change so that every student thrived.

As one ADACAS advocate shared, "Education advocacy isn't about speaking for people, but standing beside them so their voices are truly heard."

# Our advocacy services



Every hour of advocacy represented a conversation that restored dignity, clarified a right, or made the system fairer.

Our outreach and partnerships helped us reach more people and provide advocacy earlier.

Our data showed that clients required deeper and longer-term support across multiple issues.



We learned from our clients' experiences and listened to their voices to help shape fairer and more responsive systems. This systemic advocacy work was done in partnership with the Older Persons Advocacy Network and the Disability Advocacy Network Australia.

People supported  
**nearly 1,800 people**

We welcomed nearly 1,800 people through our advocacy services, a 9% increase on last year.

New contacts  
**over 900 new clients**

We connected with over 900 new clients this year, an increase of 5% from last year.

Advocacy cases  
**over 3,200 active cases**

We supported more than 3,200 active cases, reflecting sustained growth in advocacy demand.

Advocacy hours  
**over 18,500 hours provided**

We delivered over 18,500 hours of advocacy, responding to an increased demand and greater case complexity.

Successful partnerships  
**extended referral pathways**

We worked alongside more than 30 organisations, to make referral pathways more accessible to those who need them most.

**We saw...**

Nearly 10% increase in people supported  
Nearly 10% increase in advocacy hours committed





## ADACAS recognises the support and funding received from:

- Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- Commonwealth Department of Social Services
- NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- NSW Department of Education
- ACT Government – Health and Community Services Directorate
- Capital Health Network

## In Summary

- ✓ We saw a 22% jump in advocacy cases from the previous year.
- ✓ Each month, we advocated for over 500 individuals in need.
- ✓ Across the ACT and NSW regions, we were a trusted voice for people with disabilities, with a caseload of over 1,500.
- ✓ In the complex aged care system, we supported nearly 1,000 older people.
- ✓ Through our Employer Confidence Program, we helped 120 people with disability find employment, while educating over 220 businesses on inclusive hiring practices.



# Our commitment to carers

## We partnered with carers

Our work always acknowledged carers as key partners, and we remained committed to working collaboratively so their loved ones received the support and services they needed.



## We aligned to the ACT Carers Recognition Act 2023

We respected how carers self-identified, rather than limiting recognition only to those formally registered with Carers Recognition ACT.

We also continued to support staff with caring responsibilities to work flexibly and to provide a good quality service to our clients.



## We worked to directly advocate for carers

We ensured carers were listened to and respected when our advocacy was needed to support a person with disability, mental ill-health or an older person.

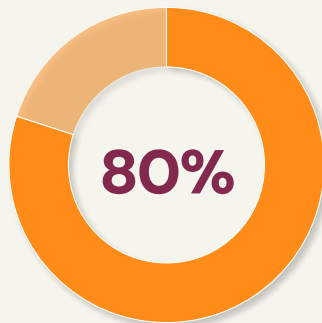




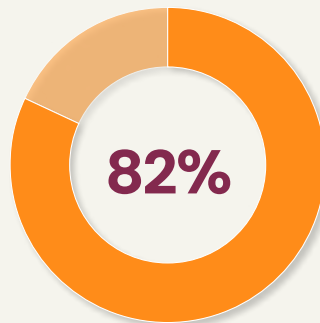
# Our commitment to quality improvement

This year, our advocacy support made a real difference in how clients felt about themselves and their ability to navigate complex systems.

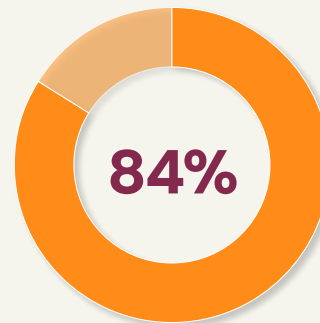
We know because we asked for feedback.



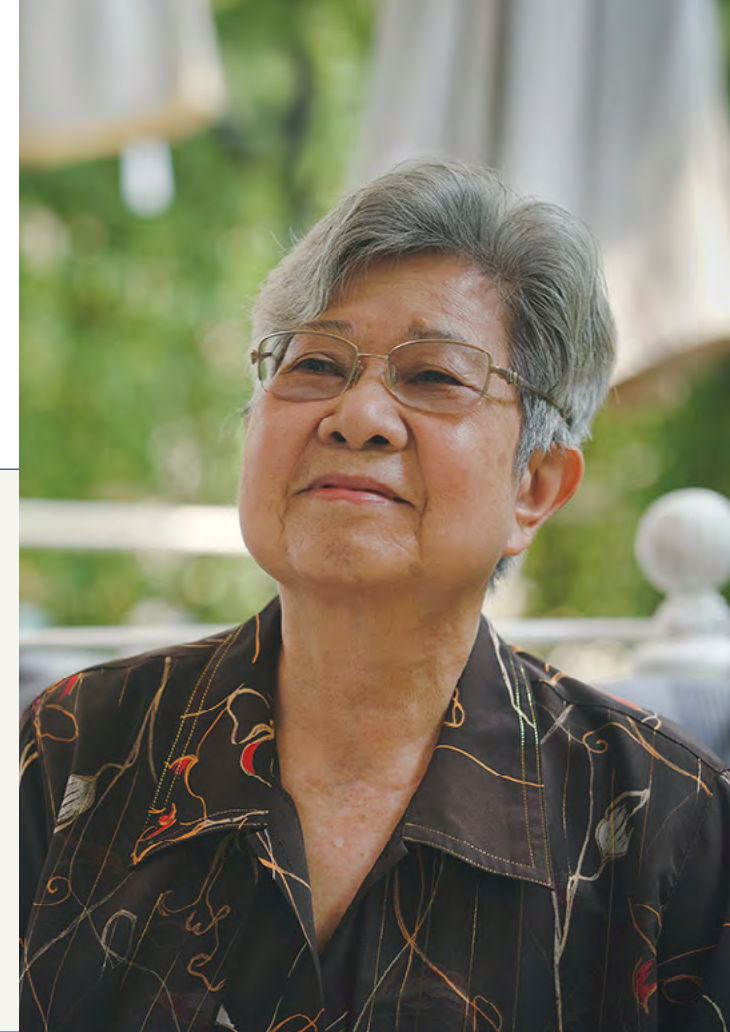
of clients were better able to deal with issues  
"Clients felt more capable."



of clients were satisfied with our services  
"Satisfaction improved."



of our clients were listened to and understood  
"Clients felt more heard."



"I was listened to and accommodated, and I had agency to proceed in a manner that I preferred. It felt effortless to communicate with someone who truly understood disability and support work."


ADACAS client, 2025

While our clients' positive experiences were encouraging, we also heard that there were challenges we needed to address.

They told us about the delays in getting our support. And, they told us about their frustrations about how much our advocacy was constrained by system barriers.

We took their feedback, and used it to guide how we improved our outreach, our intake and triage, and service delivery.

## Our client satisfaction



**100%** of clients said they would feel comfortable approaching ADACAS again

We ask our clients every year to share how they feel about ADACAS, because their voices guide everything we do.

This year we heard:

### **97% were appreciative**

Nearly all our clients, 97%, appreciated the support they got from our staff.

### **91% were pleased**

9 out of 10 clients were pleased with the help they got from our staff.

### **90% were able to recommend us**

And 90% of clients are willing to recommend ADACAS to others.

### **97% were understood**

Nearly all our clients, 97%, said that our advocates grasped what they needed help with.

### **100% would come back to us for help**

Every client said they would feel comfortable coming back to ADACAS for help.

Our annual client satisfaction survey showed that there is trust, respect, and real connections built between our Team and the people we support every day.





## Restoring confidence and independence



### Penny's story

Penny is 68-years-old and has lived with rheumatoid arthritis since she was 30. Living alone in her four-bedroom home and, due to her limited mobility, she relied on a lot of help to maintain her wellbeing and independence.

#### The challenge faced

After surgery, Penny's mobility and pain worsened, making daily tasks difficult and leaving her dependent on paid supports that no longer met her needs.

Although she had NDIS funding, it did not reflect her changed circumstances. Delays in reassessment and poor coordination between the hospital, NDIS, and service providers created significant gaps in care.

Without timely support, Penny risked being discharged into an unsafe situation and felt anxious, isolated, and unsure how to get the help she needed.

\*Not their real name or photograph.

#### The action taken

Penny contacted ADACAS seeking advocacy support to request an NDIS Change of Circumstances review.

Her ADACAS advocate ensured that Penny's voice remained central and worked with her to:

- 1 Identify current and emerging support needs following surgery.
- 2 Understand the options available to her.
- 3 Find short-term solutions via NDIS and CATS Programs.
- 4 Coordinate community providers to ensure continuity of care.
- 5 Recommend fall prevention measures for supported recovery.

#### The impact made




With support from ADACAS, Penny could safely recover in her own home after surgery, honouring her preferences and preserving her autonomy.



Penny was supported to navigate complex systems and make informed choices about her care. Through the CATS funding Penny's recovery needs were met without creating a financial burden.



**Penny's experience showed how advocacy can bridge service gaps, promote independence, and uphold rights. By ensuring timely access to practical supports and reinforcing her understanding of options, ADACAS helped Penny regain confidence and stability after surgery.**



"Thank you again for the important work ADACAS continues to do. You are an incredible organisation that truly listens to, understands and advocates for people with disability with compassion and dedication."

ADACAS client, 2025

"Just so grateful that we were able to benefit from your services and would love to see more advocates as the work you do is critical, the assistance you offer is fantastic and the need for your help is ever increasing!"

ADACAS client, 2024



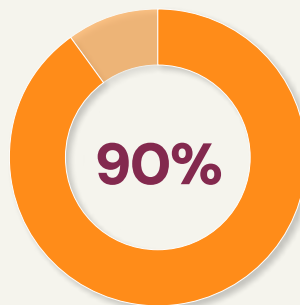
# Our commitment to measuring what matters

Drawn from the nationally recognised Standard Client Outcomes Reporting (SCORE) our data showed clear, measurable change.

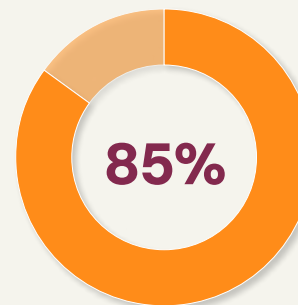
These outcomes showed the measurable impact of our advocacy in helping people rebuild confidence, stability, and control.

"The services ADACAS and you provided contributed in no small way towards this outcome, and for this I cannot thank you enough."

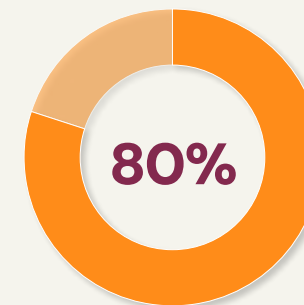
ADACAS client, 2025



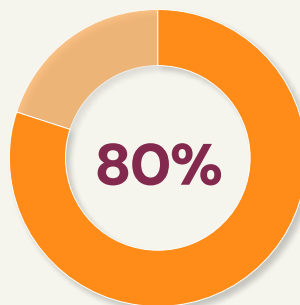
of clients felt supported, and less isolated after working with our advocates.



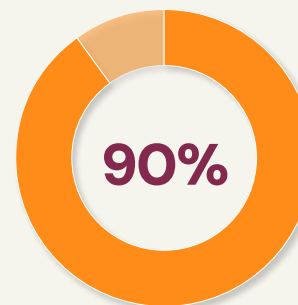
of clients felt supported to find more stable and safe housing.



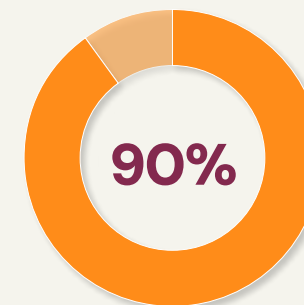
of clients felt advocates had helped them resolve their unsafe living situations.



of clients reported becoming more connected and involved in their communities after working with an advocate.



of clients felt more confident making decisions and advocating for themselves.



of clients reported they were more connected to the supports they needed.

# Our work with older people

At ADACAS, advocacy is about much more than solving problems, it's about restoring dignity, trust, and confidence. Every older person deserves respect, the freedom to make their own choices, and support when they need it most.



Our Team met people wherever they needed us – whether at home, in aged care facilities, or in their community.

Often our work began by simply listening.

**"I didn't know how to ask for help."**

– Clients reported feeling less isolated and more able to navigate My Aged Care after working with an advocate.

**"They finally listened when I had someone beside me."**

– Many clients saw a tangible improvement in care and provider responsiveness when they were supported by an advocate.

**"I was being overcharged & didn't know what to do."**

– Our advocates helped clients gain reimbursement and protection from further exploitation.

**"I had felt invisible in appointments."**

– With our advocates beside them, clients felt seen and included in care decisions.



## Stronger support and growing reach

The demand for advocacy from our Older Persons Team grew year on year.

- ✓ Supported nearly **750 clients**, many for the first time.
- ✓ Managed over **1,200 active cases**, reflecting a sharp increase in complexity.
- ✓ Delivered nearly **4,500 hours of advocacy support**, with an average of more than 3 hours dedicated to each case.
- ✓ **New clients increased by 65%** in the second half of the year, showing a growing rise in need and **greater awareness** of our services.



The **ADACAS Older Persons Team** worked to ensure older people were heard, respected, and empowered – whether living independently or in residential aged care. Through advocacy, education, and outreach, we helped restore confidence in the systems meant to support them, always placing clients' rights at the heart of every decision.

Through the National Aged Care Advocacy Program, our advocates made sure people understood their rights, raised concerns safely, and accessed the support they were entitled to.

This included help with:



Quality and access to services



Communication barriers with providers



Abuse, neglect, and dignity of risk concerns



Invoice and fee confusion



## Targets were exceeded through the NACAP program

Our advocates went above and beyond to support the older members of our community.



Information & advocacy sessions

**193%**  
of target achieved



Community engagement events

**166%**  
of target achieved



Home Care education

**110%**  
of target achieved



Financial advocacy

**109%**  
of target achieved



Abuse prevention education

**175%**  
of target achieved



Special needs group engagement

**106%**  
of target achieved

### Educating older people about their rights.

**Over 80 aged care rights sessions conducted** across aged care and community settings.

**At least 2 community events were held each week**, promoting the value of advocacy to older people.

**Almost weekly abuse prevention sessions**, were held for older people, families, and aged care staff.



## Looking Ahead

In the year ahead, our Older Persons Team will continue to:

- ✓ Expand our delivery of outreach and information sessions, building on the strong community partnerships we have built.
- ✓ Provide more education about aged care rights for residents and workers in Residential Aged Care Facilities.
- ✓ Work with older people and aged care providers to ensure services are being provided in accordance with the new Aged Care Act.
- ✓ Empower older people through Supported Decision Making, with a focus on the new Aged Care Statement of Rights.



## Building trust and system accountability

When residential aged care education reached 70% of its target, our team began developing new approaches for the year ahead, aiming to engage more facilities and strengthen trust within the community. Our goal remained clear: to ensure older people knew where to turn when their rights, dignity, or wellbeing were at risk.



## Care Finder: Helping navigate aged care

Finding and accessing aged care can be daunting. The Care Finder Program provided one-on-one support, often in people's homes or community spaces, to help vulnerable older people understand their options and connect with the right services. This personal approach built trust and made it easier for people who might otherwise struggle to seek support.



# What older people wanted us to know

Older people and families reached out more than ever for advocacy, especially around staying safe in aged care. These trends reflected rising awareness of rights, and highlighted just how complex the aged care system can be.



## Financial issues in residential aged care

Financial transparency was a growing concern, especially for residents in aged care, and advocacy for financial fairness nearly doubled.

Fees, charges, and unexplained costs were key issues for those in residential care and those in both residential care and those with Home Care Packages.



Our Financial Advocacy Officer helped older people better understand and question their invoices, secure itemised statements, and demand transparency and fairness in all financial matters.



## Addressing abuse of older people

Reports of elder abuse – including emotional, financial, and neglect – rose 57% over the past year. This underscored the critical need for ongoing education, awareness, and intervention to address the abuse of older people.



ADACAS continued delivering Abuse Prevention Education and partnered with service providers to build cultures of respect and safety.



## Access to services

Requests for advocacy support to access services rose sharply this year – a 45% increase.

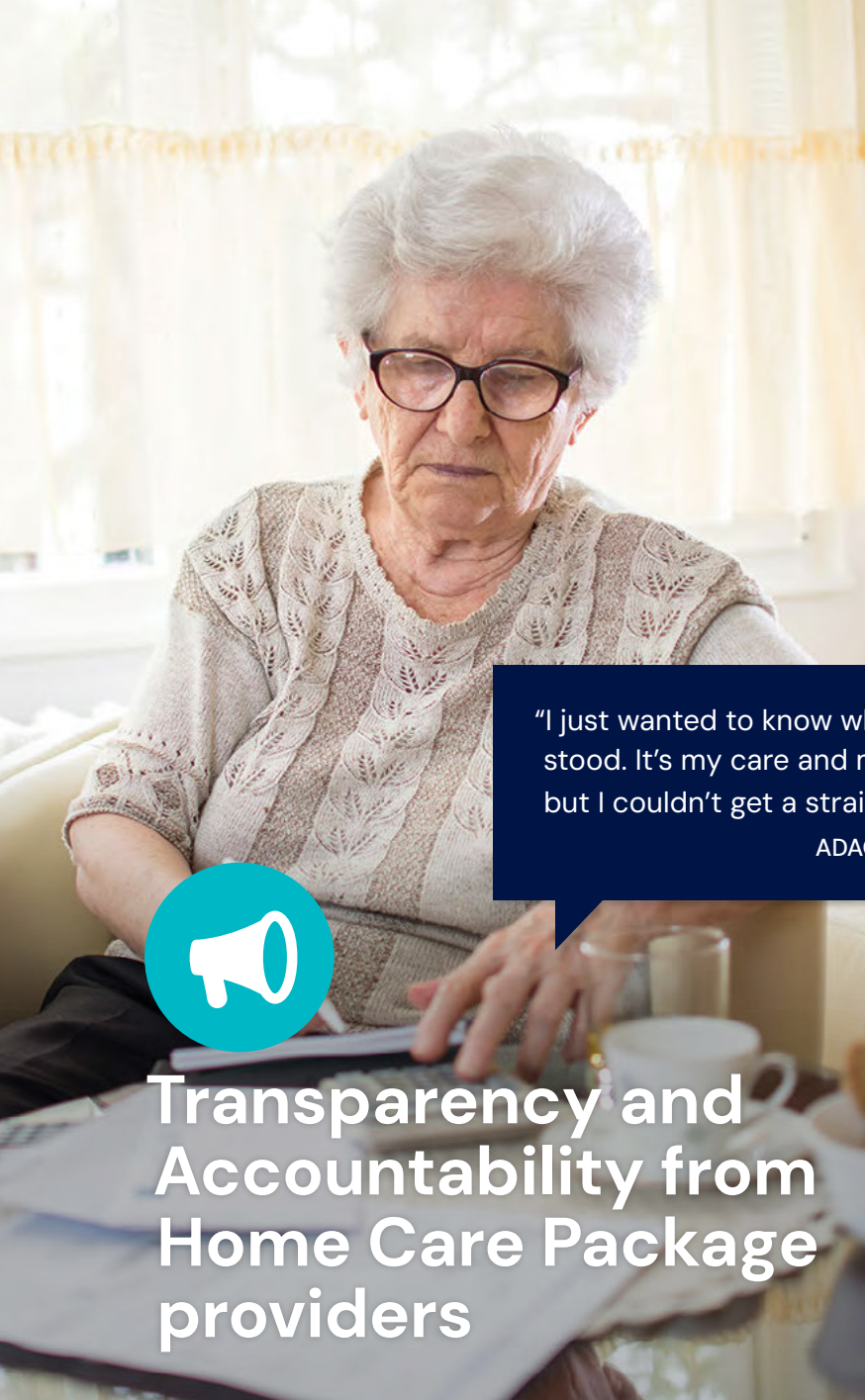
People most often needed support in:

- Finding and comparing suitable services
- Understanding options for residential aged care
- Dealing with My Aged Care re-assessments.



ADACAS advocates made sure clients could connect to the right supports and request reassessments, so their needs didn't go unheard.





"I just wanted to know where things stood. It's my care and my money, but I couldn't get a straight answer."

ADACAS client, 2025



## Transparency and Accountability from Home Care Package providers

## Our advocacy drives change

We heard from several older people that they had been waiting months for financial statements from their Home Care Package provider. When they asked for updates, they were repeatedly told to wait, leaving them feeling dismissed, powerless and worried.

### We dived in to understand the problem

These financial statements were essential for keeping track of what they were charged for and what funds remained in their accounts. Without them, they couldn't plan or feel confident that their money was being used as agreed.

### We listened to the clients

Our Financial Advocacy Officer (FAO) began by listening and carefully capturing each person's experience before approaching the provider.

Through calm, respectful dialogue, our FAO shared clear information about the provider's legal obligations, including every client's right to receive accurate, regular financial statements.

**We educated the provider** Instead of escalating straight away, the FAO focused on collaboration and education.

We helped the provider understand not just what the legislation required, but why transparency matters for people's dignity, peace of mind, and independence.

**We escalated the action** When formal

escalation was needed, our message was clear: older people have a right to clarity and confidence in how their care funds are managed.

**We got a result for our clients** The provider acknowledged the issue, corrected their accounting processes, and reinstated monthly statements for all clients. Staff also received additional training on communicating clearly and respectfully with older people receiving care. For those directly affected, the change brought real relief and reassurance.

**We saw rights-based advocacy in action** Through persistence and respect, we didn't just solve a short-term problem for several clients; we helped shift a provider's culture toward greater accountability and openness.

This was a powerful reminder that advocacy isn't only about fixing what's broken. It's about strengthening trust, restoring dignity, and helping older people live with the confidence and independence they deserve.





## Restoring choice and dignity

### The challenge faced

When we met Mei they were facing imminent discharge from the hospital into an home environment without essential 24-hour support. Their previous NDIS funded support Team had disbanded during the hospital stay, leaving significant service gaps. The relationship between the family and the hospital treating team had deteriorated and Mei was feeling vulnerable and without a clear path to a safe discharge.

\*Not their real name or photograph.



## Mei's story

Mei has lived with Motor Neurone Disease for over 40 years and requires both formal and informal support to manage daily life. Following a recent medical treatment, Mei experienced their first episode of mental ill health, leading to hospitalisation for over six months. During this time, their 90-year-old parent, who was also managing age-related health issues, became increasingly strained as Mei's primary informal carer. Family members travelled from interstate to assist, and tensions grew around care decisions.

While the family strongly advocated for Mei to remain in hospital, private discussions with the ADACAS advocate revealed that Mei's clear preference was to return home. Mei felt excluded from key decisions and distressed by the pressure from both hospital staff and family members.

### The action taken

ADACAS implemented a multi-faceted advocacy response:

#### 1 Hospital Discharge Advocacy

We met with Mei and their siblings at the hospital to hear all perspectives and support collaborative and fair discharge planning.

#### 2 NDIS Coordination

We assisted Mei to reconnect with the NDIS system, including the transition to a new service provider and re-establishing essential supports with Mei's wishes clearly prioritised.

#### 3 Systemic Escalation

We supported Mei during a key meeting with the treating team and family to ensure their voice was heard and their self-determination was upheld. Our advocate's presence helped balance the dynamics.

### The impact made



#### Restoring choice and control

Through sustained advocacy, Mei regained autonomy over their care decisions. They were safely discharged home with supports reinstated to help with stability, safety, and continuity of care.



#### Rebuilding trust and collaboration

The advocate's presence created space for open communication, turning a high-conflict situation into a more cooperative and respectful process.




#### Strengthening confidence and wellbeing

With their preferences respected, Mei regained confidence and independence.



By focusing on what mattered most to Mei and promoting collaboration between family and services, ADACAS helped achieve a safe, respectful, and person-centred outcome.





"I was very happy with the prompt and friendly service provided by my aged care advocate. She answered all my questions and quickly followed up with Aged Care providers who unfortunately never answered my calls or messages. I would still be waiting after many months if it wasn't for your advocacy."

ADACAS client, 2024

"We were very happy with the support from our disability advocate. He was very understanding and caring. He understood how our son communicated and could help him comprehend or translate his feelings and wishes. He went out of his way to make sure our son was supported."

ADACAS client, 2025



# Our work with people with disability and experiencing mental ill-health

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We continued to strengthen the delivery of our rights-based advocacy to ensure people with disability can access the services they need, assert their rights, and fully participate in their communities.

Across the ACT and NSW, **we provided over 3,700 hours of individual advocacy and worked on over 1,500 cases to support people with disability.** We helped people resolve issues with the NDIS and with their housing, education, and child protection issues. We also invested our resources in **systemic advocacy to address the broader policy issues that are creating barriers for our clients.** We successfully continued the delivery of our delivered our Employer Confidence Program that **addressed barriers to employment of people with disability.**

In the ACT, there was **significant demand from people with disability.**

Across NSW, **we supported people with disability to resolve issues with both government and non-government Providers.**





# Disability

Demand for advocacy grew across nearly every area. More people with disability reached out for help, not only because of increased need, but because the systems they're dealing with are becoming more complex.



## Education

**Up 60% from last year.** Families sought help to get adjustments and improve communication with schools.



## Legal

**Up more than 20% from last year.** People needed support to communicate with courts and justice systems, including hearings and appeals.



## Health

**Up 55% from last year.** People sought help to access hospitals and allied health services.



## Housing

**Up 51% from last year.** People needed help with applications, transfers, maintenance, and safety issues.



## NDIS

Advocacy around NDIS access declined slightly this year, as the team prioritised urgent and complex cases, referring new applicants to other specialist agencies to ensure timely support.



## Our impact

ADACAS's disability advocacy is broader and more sophisticated than ever, tackling both individual and systemic barriers and empowering people with disability to make informed decisions about their own lives.





# Mental Health

Requests for advocacy from people experiencing mental ill-health also increased. This highlighted the persistent challenges people were facing in accessing services and stable housing they need, and the vital role of advocacy.



## Legal matters

**Up more than 20% from last year.** We responded to an increasing number of criminal cases, psychiatric treatment orders and appeals.



## Service provider issues

**Rose by 33% from last year.** More people came to ADACAS needing help overcoming communication barriers with their service providers and accessing appropriate support services.



## Accommodation and housing

**Demand remained high.** Clients requesting help in housing transfers and navigating communication challenges continued at a high level, similar to last year.



## Our impact

ADACAS's mental health advocacy focused on continuity of care, safety, and fairness – helping clients stand up for their rights in complex justice, housing, and clinical settings.

“Whilst my (legal) matter dragged on and many of our correspondences were merely check-ins, knowing that assistance is available gave me great confidence and the mental fortitude to tackle the difficulties head on.”

ADACAS client, 2024





## Supported decision-making in juvenile justice

## Our advocacy drives change

Our Mental Health and Disability Team was proud of the work they did to support young people in Bimberi – the ACT's youth detention centre for young people aged 12 to 21 years.

Together with young people, we designed and delivered a Supported Decision Making (SDM) Workshop that aimed to:

- empower young people to view themselves as decision-makers, fostering self-determination and confidence.
- encourage them to involve trusted supporters in their lives to help navigate and process decisions, ensuring they actively shape their own outcomes.
- strengthen their decision-making skills and enhances their ability to make informed choices in vital areas such as relationships, housing, education, and legal matters.
- meet the unique needs of young people with disabilities, helping them achieve positive long-term outcomes and promoting their equitable participation in society.

While the workshop's goal is to empower young people, it also acknowledges the crucial role of supporters in fostering the development of decision-making skills.

Aligned with the Disability Justice Strategy 2019–2029, this approach recognised the intersectionality of disability, justice, and empowerment.

The primary goal of the ADACAS SDM program is to ensure young people living with disability in the justice system have their voices heard and were provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential.





## Community connections

## Our advocacy drives change

ADACAS's education encompassed visits to community groups, information sessions in nursing homes for residents and their families, and at a variety of expos across Canberra and NSW, including the Shoalhaven Disability Expo and the ACT Seniors and Better Ageing Expo. Discussions ranged from navigating the NDIS to understanding the new Aged Care Act and they reflected the everyday challenges people face when navigating complex systems. We attended these type of events to let people know that our independent advocacy is readily accessible.

Our presence in the community also remained visible and personal, with outreach stalls regularly held at ACT hospitals, the ACT library network and local shopping centres. Smaller community settings were also ideal for advocacy, including presentations at Men's Shed and at participant-led support groups like roundsquared in Moruya.

These settings created space for open conversation about rights and inclusion in aged care, disability and mental health.

Each event put us in front of the communities we serve. Wherever our advocates set up their advocacy stalls, the goal of helping people understand their rights and find the support they need, remained the same.

# Our people and culture

## ADACAS continued to grow our workforce capacity and capability

- ✓ We invested in ensuring our staff were well supported and trained, so that our clients received high quality services.
- ✓ We achieved independent external accreditation via National Standards for Disability Services, confirming that we had the internal and quality improvement processes to achieve great client outcomes.

"We encourage staff to forget the suit and come as you are, be who you are. We value authenticity."

"Our office coffee is strong, but our dedication to human rights is even stronger."

At ADACAS, our people are the heart of our impact.

Their dedication, compassion, and expertise ensure that every person we support is heard, respected, and empowered to make their own choices.

We have a values-driven culture, grounded in respect, inclusion, and dignity.

Through our One ADACAS philosophy, our Teams collaborate across Programs and regions to share knowledge, mentor one another, and build capability. This approach fosters a learning culture where reflection and mutual support are part of everyday practice.

## Our Values

**Social Justice** We advocate for the realisation of a person's human rights, equitable access and fair and just outcomes via individual and systemic advocacy.

**Pursue Excellence** We are continuously learning and working in collaborative and innovative ways to effect positive change & meaningful outcomes.

**Integrity** We are transparent, authentic and ethical in our work and guided by human rights principles.

**Reflective in our Practice** We consciously work to build trust, increase self-awareness and improve our practices through respectful and constructive dialogue.



## Our diverse and inclusive workforce

Our Team reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We are proud to include people with lived experience of disability, mental ill-health, caring, ageing, and cultural diversity. This diversity strengthens our understanding of our clients and enhances the cultural safety of our services.

## Our safe and connected workplace

Wellbeing and connection are woven into the everyday life of ADACAS. This year, staff took part in a water blessing ceremony led by Aboriginal Elder Serena Williams, deepening our collective commitment to cultural learning and respect. We continue to strengthen support for our people through fleet vehicles that enable community outreach, digital upgrades that enhance flexible working, and training in data and cyber safety to protect client information.

## Our staff wellbeing, safety, and growth

ADACAS is committed to being an employer of choice within the community sector. Staff wellbeing is supported through access to our Employee Assistance Program and clinical supervision, reflective practice and trauma-informed training, and opportunities for connection such as staff morning teas, birthday leave, and team development days.

A highlight of 2025 was our staff completing updated training in de-escalation, complex trauma, cultural competence, and managing vicarious trauma – building confidence and resilience to support clients with complex needs.

ADACAS is committed to professional growth and to nurturing the next generation of advocacy leaders.



### Looking ahead

Our commitment remains clear – to sustain a capable, connected, and compassionate workforce that stands alongside the people and communities we serve.

# The year ahead

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We will be operating within significant periods of reform that will create new opportunities for advocacy to shape fairer systems.

ADACAS is positioned to ensure that the voices and lived experiences of the people we support inform their implementation.

**The Aged Care Act 2024** – effective from 1st November 2025 – embeds a rights-based framework that places older people's dignity, choice, and safety at its centre.

**Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031** will continue to guide whole-of-government action toward genuine inclusion and participation for people with disability.







## Our priorities for the coming year

- ✓ **Finalise our Impact Framework** and embed this across every Program so we can capture data and sharing stories that show our impact.
- ✓ **Improve our data systems**, to make it easier to gather insights, understand, and act.
- ✓ **Invest in our people** through ongoing training and support staff to stay connected, confident, and well.
- ✓ **Strengthen our systemic advocacy** to ensure client experiences help shape aged-care, disability, and mental health reforms.
- ✓ **Expand our inclusive practice**, guided by our Reconciliation Action Plan and the development of our Inclusion and Accessibility Plan.
- ✓ **Continue to build upon our strong partnerships** with First Nations, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and LGBTIQ+ communities.

Together, we will keep learning, growing, and standing beside the people we serve – measuring what matters most: confidence, safety, and the freedom to make one's own choices.



**Ensuring safety,  
choice, and dignity  
for older people**

## Our advocacy drives change

Across the ACT, many older people are living longer and wish to remain in their own homes. When they have a hospital stay or their health declines, they often need higher levels of support to recover safely at home or to access residential aged care.

### The challenge faced

Long waiting times for reassessment and limited services available under the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Home Care Package (HCP) Programs leave many people without the care they need. In some cases, providers hold referral codes despite having no capacity, blocking other providers from accepting the referral and leaving older people without timely support.

### The action taken

ADACAS advocates worked alongside older people who were unable to return home after hospitalisation. They liaised with My Aged Care, hospital staff, and service providers to clarify responsibilities, escalate urgent cases, and advocate for timely reassessments or alternative care arrangements.

### The impact made

Through sustained advocacy, ADACAS helped prevent unsafe discharges and supported older people to access the right level of care more quickly. Their work often meant the difference between a safe return home and unnecessary entry into residential aged care.

ADACAS contributed to national conversations about the reforms needed to ensure older Australians have the care and support they need to live safely and with dignity.

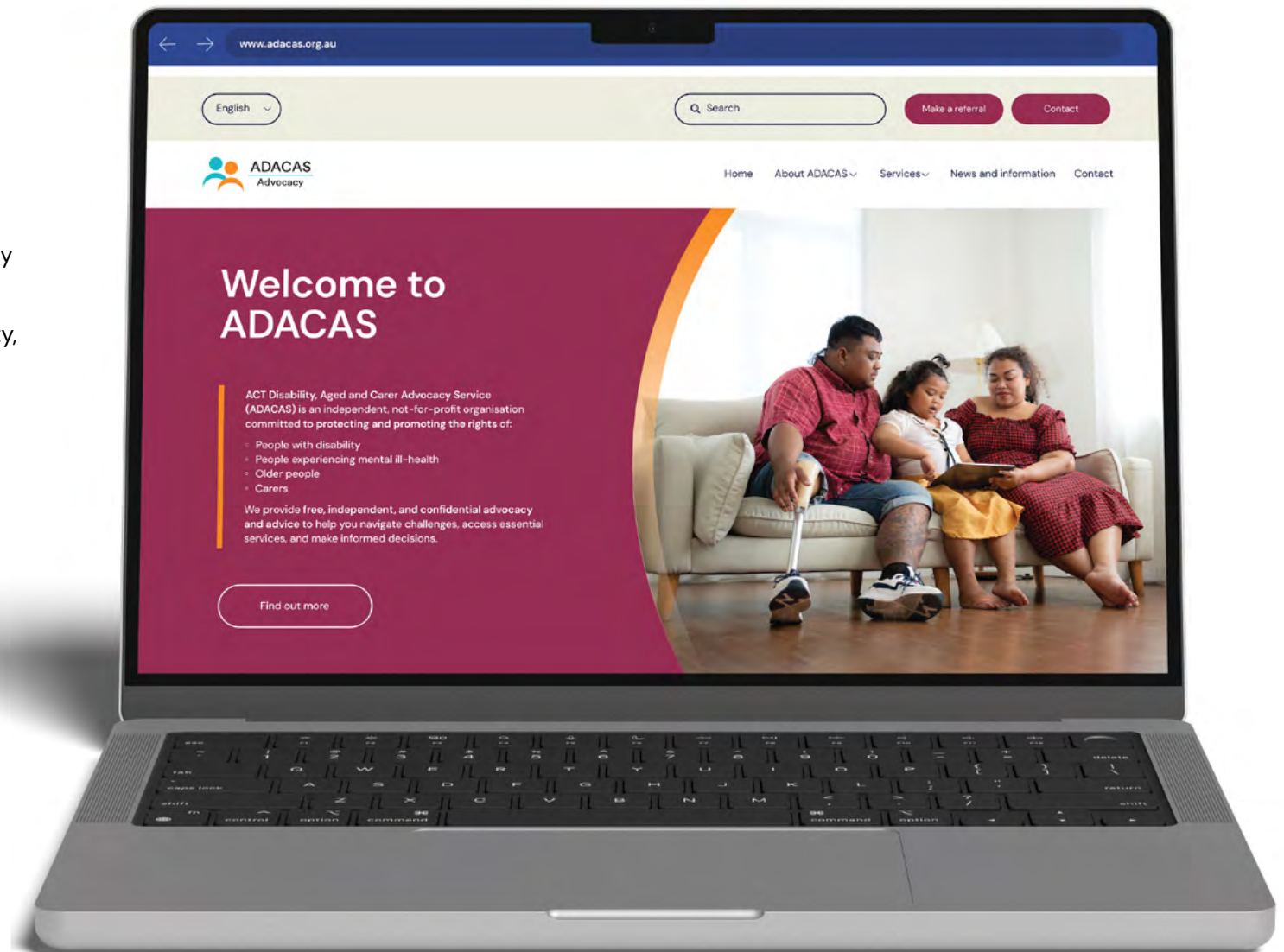


# Launch of our new website

We're proud to announce that our new ADACAS website has launched!

It has been designed to make it easier for individuals, families, and carers to find clear information, understand their options, and connect with our advocacy teams when they need us.

Built with a strong focus on accessibility, the new platform reflects our commitment to meeting people where they are and ensuring it is easy for everyone to navigate.



# Our Board

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## **Helen McDevitt**

Chairperson – up to 17/6/25, Board member 18/6/25

## **Andrew Cameron**

Treasurer

## **Bridget Browne**

Board member – up to 1/5/25, Chair – appointed 17/6/25

## **Dr Andrew Mathieson**

Board Member

## **Christine Bruce**

Board Member

## **Dr Raechel Johns**

Board Member – resigned 26/11/24

## **Giang Khanh Hong Tan**

Board Member

## **Vaughn Melano**

Board Member

## **Chris Collett**

Board Member

## **Michael Nemarich**

Board member – appointed 1/5/25

## **Liana Dobson**

Board Member – appointed 1/5/25

## **Executive Team**

## **Wendy Prowse**

CEO

## **Alison Kennedy**

Dep CEO and Company Secretary





# Financials

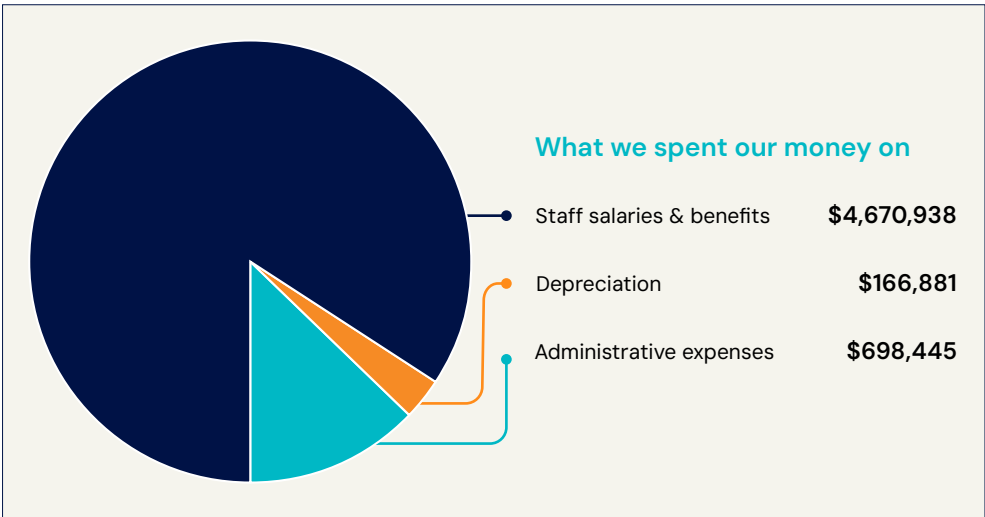
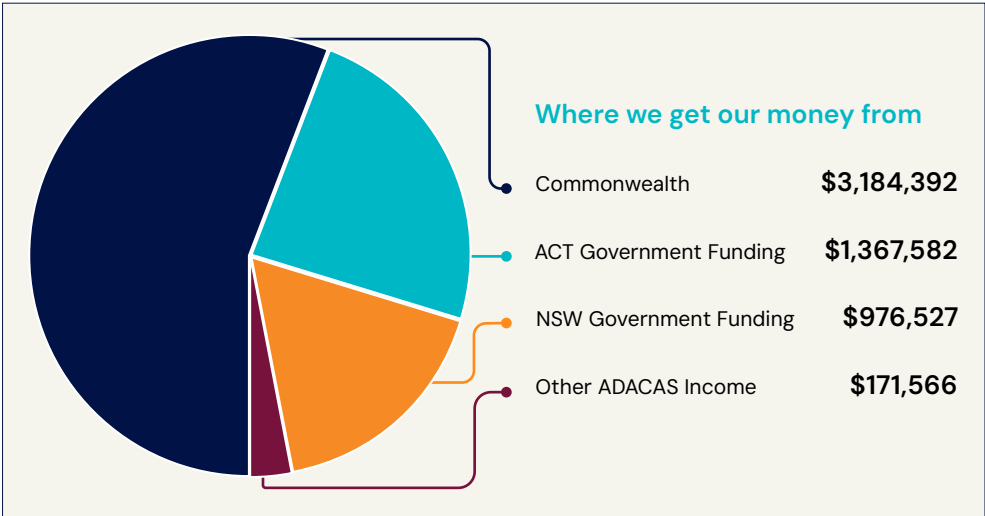
## A summary ADACAS’s financial performance

Revenue (money received to do our work)	\$5,700,067
Expenses (money spent to do our work)	\$5,536,264
Surplus (money left over)	\$163,803
Reserves (money in the bank)	\$1,315,076

ADACAS continues to be in a strong financial position, ending the year with a surplus of \$163,803 and reserves of \$1,315,076. We have demonstrated sound financial stewardship, responsibly managing our resources and risks.

Staff salaries and benefits increased again this financial year, reflecting the growth in advocacy services delivered to clients. Our focus has remained firmly on our staff, their professional development, and their wellbeing.

We have also remained committed to strengthening our data maturity and impact measurement. This report represents our second year of annual reporting that highlights our outcomes and social impact.



# Acknowledgements

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ADACAS acknowledges the support and collaboration of the many partners and organisations that make our work possible. Their contribution helps us to ensure people's voices are heard and their rights are upheld.

## Funding and Government Partners

For over thirty years, ADACAS has been supported by the **Commonwealth and ACT Governments**, whose ongoing investment enables the delivery of advocacy services across the ACT.

The NSW Government supports us to deliver disability advocacy across Murrumbidgee, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Southern NSW Local Health Districts.

**Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)** – As members of OPAN, the national peak body for advocacy for older people, ADACAS receives **National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP)** funding and contributes to a coordinated national approach to aged care advocacy.

**Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA)** – Membership of DANA, the national peak for disability advocacy, ensures the voices of people with disability are represented at a national level. The ADACAS CEO currently serves as **Chair of the DANA Board**.

**Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS)** – Provides funding through the **National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP)**, the **National Redress Scheme**, and the **Employer Confidence Program** (through an ILC grant) which supports inclusive employment practices.

**Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing** – Engages with ADACAS primarily through OPAN to strengthen advocacy for older people.

**ACT Government** – Funds several ADACAS programs and maintains constructive relationships across relevant directorates.

**NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ)** – Funds the **NSW Disability Future Advocacy Program**, supporting people with disability to engage with NSW Government services.

**Capital Health Network (CHN)** – Funds the Care Finder Program, assisting older people with complex needs to access health and community supports.

## Community, Corporate, and Professional Partners

We appreciate the expertise and collaboration of a range of professional and corporate partners who contribute to the effective delivery of our work.

**Justice Connect** – Legal and governance guidance.

**Hands Across Canberra** – Support through the **Canberra Day Appeal**.

**Hardwicks** – Auditing services and operational support.

**Employ for Ability** – Collaboration on the **Employer Confidence Program**.

**OPC IT** – Ongoing IT support and service continuity.

**Exhale Consulting** – Support for the **One ADACAS** initiative and professional development workshops.

**SalesFix** – Ongoing development and maintenance of Salesforce infrastructure.

**Blue Rydge** – provided an independent review of our Essential 8 cybersecurity and supported us to update our Business Continuity Plan

## Community and Sector Collaboration

ADACAS continues to work closely with community and sector partners whose collaboration supports effective advocacy and systemic improvement. We acknowledge the contribution of: **ACTCOSS, Advocacy for Inclusion, Carers ACT, COTA ACT, Gudan Gulwan, Mental Health Community Coalition, National Disability Services, and Women with Disabilities ACT.**







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