ADACAS
Advocacy

Annual Impact Report 2026

Growing our impact





Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which ADACAS works: the Ngunnawal, Ngambri, Yuin and Dharawal, Darramurragal, and Wiradjuri peoples of Canberra and the NSW South Coast, Illawarra Shoalhaven and Murrumbidgee regions.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our communities.

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

A Commitment to Reconciliation

As a community-based, independent advocacy organisation, ADACAS is committed to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in ways that support justice, dignity, self-determination and cultural responsiveness and safety.

ADACAS works across the ACT, Capital Region, Illawarra, Murrumbidgee, Shoalhaven and the South Coast region of NSW. This means our reconciliation work must be place-based, respectful of local knowledge, and grounded in relationships with community.

ADACAS' Commitment to Reconciliation documentation which was finalised following consultation with the Aboriginal Community sets out the direction we will take to strengthen culturally safe advocacy practice, deepen respectful relationships, and embed reconciliation into our everyday work in a way that is meaningful, practical and sustainable.

Acknowledgement of 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 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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About ADACAS

Our vision is to live in a community in which everyone may exercise their rights and responsibilities, lead lives of value and dignity and pursue their dreams.

Our purpose is to assert, promote and protect the rights and responsibilities of people with disability, people who are older, people experiencing mental ill-health, and people who are informal carers.

Our social impact goal is to ensure people with disability, older people, people experiencing mental ill-health and carers have their rights, voices, choices and dignity respected and upheld.

Our work

- We provide free, confidential and independent individual advocacy.
- We use supported decision-making so that people remain at the centre of decisions about their own lives.
- We meet people in places that suit them. This includes homes, hospitals, aged care settings, mental health facilities, custodial settings, and community locations.
- We provide information, education and outreach.
- We bring evidence and lived experience into systemic advocacy.
- We work with community organisations, government, service providers, peak bodies and people with lived experience. Sustainable change requires collective action.

"Thanks so much. My advocate sorted out an issue I'd had for a long time. I was impressed with everything. Great service. Can't fault them - you've got a great team."

ADACAS client, 2026

Our guiding principles

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.

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 Practice

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

Human rights are the foundation for how we do our work, what outcomes we seek, and how we understand impact.

Why independent advocacy matters

Independent individual advocacy is a critical safeguard for people's rights, voice, dignity, choice, and control.

The Disability Royal Commission and **Aged Care Royal Commission** both reinforced the importance of individual advocacy in helping people understand and exercise their rights, make complaints, challenge poor treatment and participate in decisions that affect their lives. They also identified that advocacy funding was insufficient to meet demand.

Protecting rights and dignity

Independent advocacy helps protect people's human rights by addressing discrimination, challenging unfair treatment and supporting people to raise concerns or complaints.

Strengthening voice, choice and control

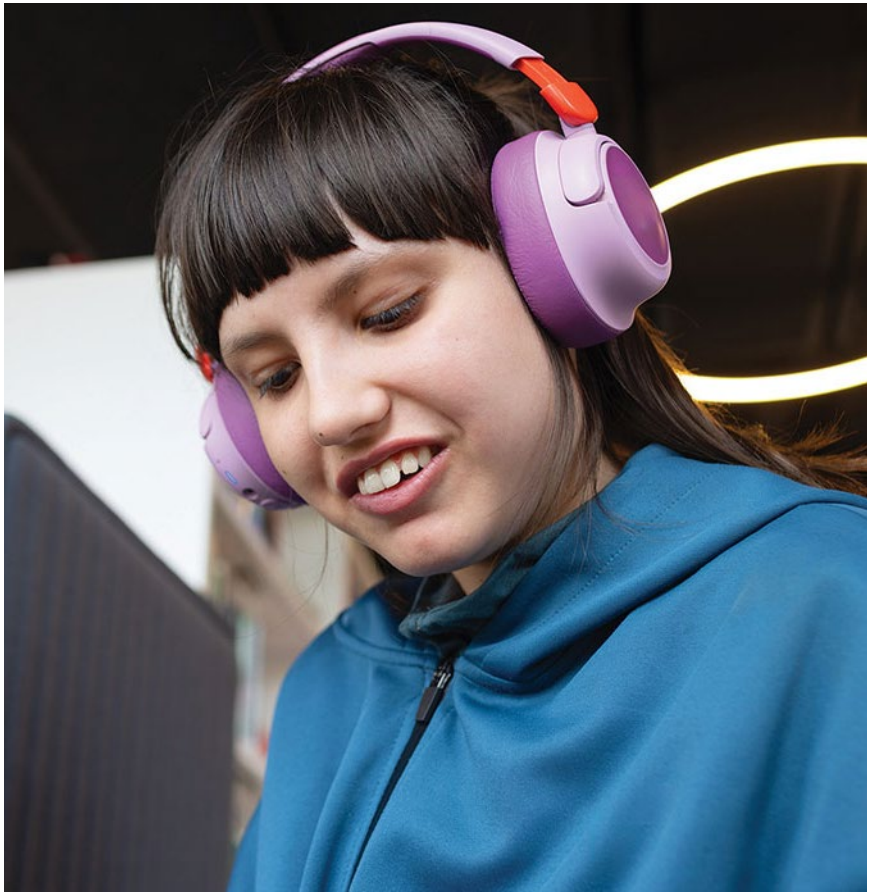
Our advocates support people to express their preferences and wishes, understand their options and participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, ensuring their voices remain central.

Navigating complex systems

Our advocates help people address issues relating to the NDIS, disability services, My Aged Care, aged care services, the healthcare and mental health system, housing, education and justice systems, Commonwealth and State and Territory government services, while keeping the person's rights, wishes and decisions at the centre.

Independent advocacy can be particularly important when a person is experiencing isolation, distress, cognitive or communication barriers, increased risk of abuse or neglect, or difficulty being able to navigate and be heard within complex systems.

At ADACAS, independent advocacy means working alongside people so their rights, voice, choices and dignity remain at the centre.



2025–26 highlights – greater demand, broader reach, stronger voices

Across the ACT and NSW, ADACAS continued to respond to the growing demand for independent individual advocacy, working alongside people to uphold their rights, make informed choices, and have a voice in decisions affecting their lives.

Demand for independent advocacy continues to grow

In 2025–26, more people turned to ADACAS for advocacy, information, advice and support to understand their rights, navigate complex systems and have their voices heard.

What people needed help with

Housing and accommodation continued to be among the most common issues for which people with disability sought advocacy support across the ACT and NSW.

Access to aged care remained challenging and older people continued to experience difficulty obtaining appropriate services and navigating changes within the aged care system.

Reaching increasingly diverse communities

More clients from diverse communities accessed ADACAS services during 2025–26, compared with the previous year.

- **19% increase in clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.**
- **98% increase in clients identifying as LGBTIQA+.**
- **25% increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.**

Our reach in 2025–26

- **4,000+ advocacy cases** (18% increase on the previous year)
- **3,800+ people supported** (18% increase on the previous year)
- **1,700+ new clients supported** (33% increase on the previous year)
- **21,000+ hours of advocacy provided** (14% increase on the previous year)

Throughout 2025–26, ADACAS delivered independent advocacy, support and outreach across the ACT and regional NSW.

Our teams worked alongside people across the ACT and regional NSW in disability, health, mental health, housing, justice and community settings. In the ACT, we also supported older people to understand their rights and navigate aged-care services.

Across our programs and communities, we continued to respond to growing demand while strengthening access to independent individual advocacy.

Message from the Board Chair

This year has been one of continued growth and change for ADACAS, and I am pleased and honoured to have joined the organisation as Chair during this important period.

As the systems around disability, aged care and community services continue to evolve, the strong independent advocacy that ADACAS offers remains essential to ensuring people can understand their rights, have their voices heard and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

One area of progress this year I am particularly proud to note is the way ADACAS connects with the community. The launch of our new, more accessible website, our increased digital reach via social media and greater consistency across our communications have helped make it easier for people to understand who we are, what we do and how to seek the support we offer. Our targeted campaigns have helped raise awareness of services, including education advocacy in NSW, while more consistent promotion of programs such as Community Assistance and Temporary Supports (CATS) Program and the National Redress Scheme has helped make sure our support services are easy to find.

My own work across disability and aged care, including as a Director of the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) since December 2025, has reinforced for me the importance of independent advocacy, rights-based systems and strong sector collaboration. These are critical foundations for ensuring people are supported to exercise choice, understand their options and have meaningful influence over the decisions that affect them.

From a Board perspective, our focus this year has continued to be on stewardship: ensuring ADACAS remains sustainable, well governed and prepared for change and innovation. This means maintaining our strong oversight of risk and strategic decision-making, and ensuring ADACAS has the organisational capability and resilience needed in an increasingly complex funding environment.

We have also kept sight of new opportunities, and the Board has played a role finding strategic, impactful partnerships that align with its purpose and values.

I extend my sincere thanks to Wendy Prowse for her leadership and wisdom, to my fellow Board members for their contribution and stewardship, and to the ADACAS staff team for the work they continue to deliver across the ACT and NSW. They have collectively been a huge support as I transitioned into the role of Chair.

Most importantly, I acknowledge the people who place their trust in ADACAS. Their experiences and voice continue to shape our work and remind us why independent advocacy matters.

Looking ahead, I am confident that ADACAS is well placed to continue grow our impact and that we will continue to support people to exercise their rights, make informed choices and have a stronger voice in the systems that affect their lives.

Bridget Browne FIAA, CERA
ADACAS Board Chair



"As the systems around disability, aged care and community services continue to evolve, the strong independent advocacy that ADACAS offers remains essential to ensuring people can understand their rights, have their voices heard and participate in decisions that affect their lives."

Bridget Browne FIAA, CERA
ADACAS Board Chair



"When I contacted ADACAS I was feeling overwhelmed by the important life choices I was making for both myself and my husband. The response from the advocacy team was immediate and the attentive listening and insightful inputs provided a clear pathway forward for me. I could not have imaged such timely support for a mind and body on overload. I will contact ADACAS again if needed and I have spread the word to friends."

ADACAS Client, 2026

Our CEO message

I would like to start with a really BIG shout out to the ADACAS team who have worked tirelessly supporting people with disability, people living with mental ill-health, older people and carers. We have certainly experienced a significant year of change which has highlighted the importance of the work we do and the impact we make in people's lives.

The last 12 months has seen significant uncertainty with the new Aged Care Act coming into effect on the 1st November 2025. The preparatory work was extensive for the team and the confusion and concern from older people across the ACT community trying to navigate a new system saw a significant increase in demand.

The continuous reforms and changes to the NDIS and the challenges that many people with a disability experience when engaging with the legal system, housing, health, education and service provision saw our demand for individual advocacy increase exponentially.

ADACAS experienced an 18% increase in the number of people seeking advocacy over the last 12 months and over the last 2 years we have had a 38% increase. There has been a 14% increase in advocacy hours and a 33% increase in new clients over the last year. New clients are people who have never engaged with us before. I think this really sets the scene for the experience we had for the year. With the ongoing changes and major reforms with the NDIS and the continued roll out of My Aged Care we know the need has never been greater.

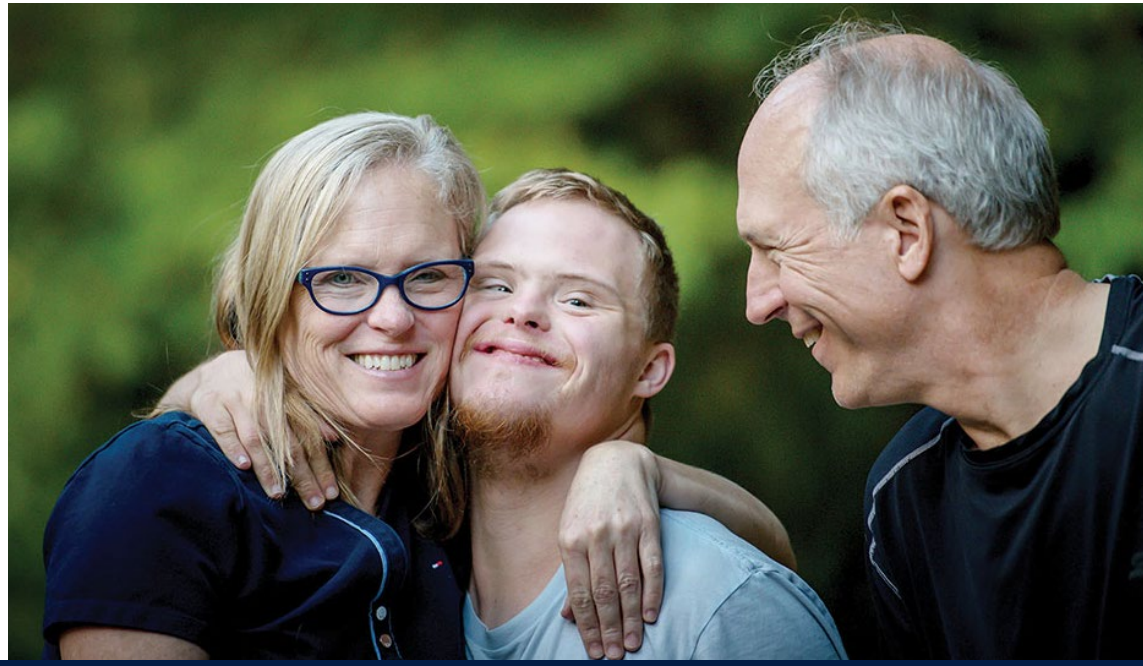
We have continued to see a growing increase for people seeking advocacy to assist them with access to housing and housing matters, legal and justice services, access to quality services in Aged Care at home and in a residential setting. We have supported 236 people with their NDIS Appeals in the ACT, which has been a significant increase, of 98% from the previous year.

This kind of demand puts significant pressure on the advocates as this support is time critical and people going through this process are often extremely distressed.

A priority for the year has been improving the voice of Lived Experience and how we understand and address Access and Inclusion in all we do.

We are very pleased to have five amazing people join our Lived Experience Advisory Panel which has really started to hit the ground towards the end of this financial year.

I am also very proud of the bespoke design and delivery of our own Access and Inclusion training for ADACAS staff and how this work will build into our Disability Action and Inclusion Plan.



We have also taken the bold move of developing our Commitment to Reconciliation that is a fit for purpose document that outlines our objectives and holds us to account. We have engaged with the Aboriginal community and will continue to meet with them to gain feedback on our progress.

At the heart of ADACAS is our people. Across the ACT and NSW, our 44 staff bring their experience and commitment to supporting people whose voices are too often unheard. Our team includes skilled intake staff and advocates that support people with disability, mental ill-health, older people, carers and those wanting to access the Redress Scheme. Their deep understanding of the systems supports our clients to navigate, make decisions and ensure their voices are heard and rights are upheld.

Our Employer Confidence Program came to an end this year as the funding ceased. Our two staff members, Ben and Karen, who shared their lived experience of disability engaged with hundreds of mainstream businesses and supported many of these organisations to gain the knowledge and skills to employ people with disability. We are very grateful for the work they undertook to highlight how we can be a more accessible community.

This work at ADACAS, across all the different roles and positions is often complex and demanding. We know that sustaining impact means sustaining our workforce. I am proud of the strong and healthy culture we continue to build, with staff located in the ACT and across the areas where we are funded in NSW. Our regional advocates are embedded in their local communities, strengthening local responsiveness, relationships and outreach.

I am grateful to the ADACAS Board who continue to provide a supportive environment and true guidance as we have and continue to navigate some complex times around funding and commissioning, risks associated with cybersecurity and the opportunities around AI and mergers. I would also like to give a special thanks to Bridget Browne, who is our newly appointed Chair for all the support she has provided me over the past year.

Building off a strong collaborative relationship over many years we are delighted to have Illawarra Advocacy joining the One ADACAS team in September 2026. Through a strong values alignment and deep commitment to individual disability advocacy and supporting people with NDIS Appeals our Stronger Together approach will bring greater capacity to provide disability advocacy across our NSW footprint and extend into the Southern Highlands.

We are committed to stay focused on impact and to strengthen and extend the impact of our support and services. We recognise the importance of measuring and communicating our impact so that we can contribute to building a community in which everyone may exercise their rights and responsibilities, lead lives of value and dignity and pursue their dreams.

Wendy Prowse
Chief Executive Officer, ADACAS



> "We know that sustaining impact means sustaining our workforce. I am proud of the strong and healthy culture we continue to build, and our One ADACAS philosophy that has all the staff supporting each other across our different roles and geographical regions. We are also excited to have the Illawarra Advocacy team join our organisation as part of our Stronger Together approach to support the community."

Wendy Prowse
Chief Executive Officer, ADACAS

The challenges we are addressing

People are struggling to navigate complex and rapidly changing systems.

Aged care, the NDIS, housing, health, education, justice and mental health systems can be confusing, fragmented and difficult to navigate, especially during a crisis or major life change.

Older people face barriers to safe, timely and transparent aged care.

Barriers include delays in accessing support, confusion about fees and programs, fear of raising concerns, limited-service availability and risks to consumer choice.

Services and systems are not always accessible, inclusive or culturally safe.

People with disability, older people, people experiencing mental ill-health, carers, First Nations peoples and diverse communities continue to face access, communication and participation barriers.

Students with disability are not always fully included in education.

Students and their families may struggle to get reasonable adjustments due to poor communication and lack of participation in school decisions.

Independent advocacy remains under-resourced despite the growing need.

Without timely advocacy, problems can escalate into crisis, unsafe situations, costly system failures, or complaints before people are heard.

Many people face long waits for essential support.

Delays in assessments, home care, hospital discharge support, NDIS decisions and other services are placing people's safety, independence and wellbeing at risk.

People do not always know their rights, options or where to seek independent help.

Some people are unsure how advocacy can help them, support them to learn their rights and get what they need without fear of repercussions.

People with disability risk losing access, choice and rights during system reform.

Changes to the NDIS may have serious consequences when alternative supports are not genuinely available, appropriate, timely and accountable.

Lived experience is not consistently heard or reflected in decisions.

Policies, services and community planning do not always respond to what people say they need, or recognise their right to choice, control and self-determination.

The growing demand we are facing

We are seeing a growing demand for our services and increasing complexity in the issues people bring to us.

Many people are facing challenges that involve more than one service or system. Housing, disability, aged care, health and justice issues often overlap, making independent individual advocacy often the only support a person has.

We saw significant demand in areas affecting people's rights, safety, independence, and ability to navigate complex systems. For our clients, housing, health and mental health, legal decision-making, financial abuse, NDIS Appeals and access to support that enables people to remain living independently are key issues.

Where people need support

Housing and accommodation remain major concerns for people with disability seeking advocacy support across the ACT and NSW. People need help to access suitable housing, resolve issues with services and maintenance, and navigate decisions that affect their safety and independence.

Older people face ongoing barriers to accessing aged care and changes to aged care arrangements. Difficulties to have a timely assessment, then finding available services and delays in receiving support can make it harder for older people to get the care they need when they need it.

Demand for people seeking assistance with their NDIS Appeals in the ACT has accelerated sharply, at 111% over the past 2 years, a rate not experienced across the preceding 5 years. This represents a structural shift in demand for advocacy services, rather than a short-term increase, and is placing sustained pressure on ADACAS's existing workforce and funded capacity.

Why growing demand matters

For many people, advocacy is needed when decisions are urgent, services are difficult to access, or problems have already escalated.

As demand grows and service systems become more complex, timely access to independent advocacy is increasingly important to help people exercise their rights, make informed decisions, and have a voice in the systems affecting their lives.

"People are being asked to navigate systems that do not always work together. When responsibilities are unclear and services are fragmented, people can be left without information, support or a clear pathway forward."

ADACAS Stakeholder, 2026

"The support ADACAS gave me has provided great comfort in a time of significant difficulty."

ADACAS Client, 2026

Kattie's story – moving from hospital to a safer home



The crisis

Kattie*, 74, was referred to ADACAS after a fall led to a hospital admission. Although medically ready to return home, she required home modifications and coordinated support services to make her discharge safe and sustainable.

During a home visit, the advocate and Kattie's occupational therapist identified that her public housing property was no longer safe or suitable for her changing needs. Access throughout the home was severely restricted, essential areas could not be used safely, and incomplete maintenance works had left exposed wall cavities, electrical hazards, and other significant safety risks. These conditions presented a serious barrier to Kattie returning home safely and maintaining her independence.

*Name and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

Returning home placed Kattie's health and safety at risk and increased the likelihood of further hospitalisation. However, leaving was also difficult. She had lived in the property for many years, and it held important memories of the life she had shared with her late husband and children.

Kattie needed an urgent housing response that also respected her attachment to her home, choices and dignity.

What ADACAS did

ADACAS immediately raised concerns with Housing ACT and advocated for an urgent assessment of Kattie's home. The advocate insisted on an in-person home visit involving Housing ACT, Kattie and her occupational therapist to fully assess the property.

When the assessment confirmed the property was unsuitable for continued occupation or repair, ADACAS supported Kattie to transition to more appropriate housing. The advocate also connected her with My Aged Care and other supports to help maintain her health, independence and safety.

What changed

Kattie was offered safer and more appropriate accommodation in a seniors complex close to shops and essential services, with a small backyard for her dogs.

The move to a safer home removed the immediate risks posed by her previous property. It also gave Kattie a safer foundation for her recovery and access to ongoing support, while keeping her informed and involved in decisions about her future.

It is important to note that Kattie's former home has since been condemned and is being prepared for demolition, with the site scheduled for redevelopment. This outcome highlights the seriousness of the safety and structural concerns identified during the advocacy process.

Our advocacy services

The demand to receive support from advocates continues to grow.

Over 3,800 people supported

We supported 3,806 clients through our advocacy services, an 18% increase on last year.

Over 1,700 new clients

We supported 1,704 new clients during the year, 33% more than last year.

Over 4,000 advocacy cases

We worked on 4,008 advocacy cases, an 18% increase, reflecting growing demand and complexity.

Over 21,000 advocacy hours

Our advocates provided 21,021 hours of advocacy, 14% more than last year.

Most people self-refer

The majority of our clients self-refer or are referred by a family member, friend or through another service they are using.

Outreach

We visited mental health facilities, hospitals and custodial settings to make sure **the most vulnerable people are able to access support through individual advocacy, self-advocacy and supported decision-making**.

We are growing our impact.

33% increase in new clients.

18% increase in advocacy cases.

Growing our reach

This year ADACAS became more visible, more consistent, more accessible, and better able to connect people with advocacy and information.

- LinkedIn followers **increased by more than 50%.**
- **Record LinkedIn month:** 6,934 post views.
- Facebook page visits **increased by more than 40%.**
- Facebook followers **grew to more than 1,250.**



Our client satisfaction

Our clients told us they felt heard, supported and confident to come back to ADACAS.

This year, 133 clients shared their feedback and told us:

- 😊 **95%** were satisfied with the support they received.
- 😊 **94%** said their advocate understood what they needed help with.
- 😊 **96%** felt supported by ADACAS.
- 😊 **97%** said they would recommend ADACAS to others.

Almost every respondent (99%) said they would feel comfortable approaching ADACAS again.

These results show strong levels of trust, understanding and connection between our advocates and the people we support.

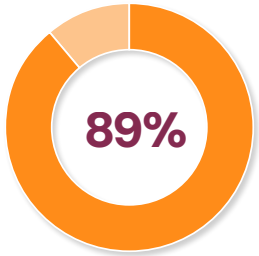
They also provide an important evidence base we can build on as we continue to strengthen how client experience and outcomes are measured across ADACAS.

> "I am extremely grateful that the advocate and ADACAS made my case a priority to support me with the meeting within a very short and urgent timeframe. Thank you so much."
>
> **ADACAS Client, 2026**

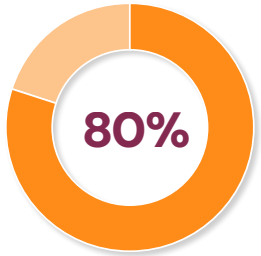
Measuring the change we make

Drawn from the nationally recognised Standard Client Outcomes Reporting (SCORE), our data helps us understand the difference advocacy makes in people's lives. This year the data continued to show change in areas that matter to the people we support.

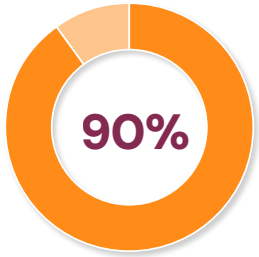




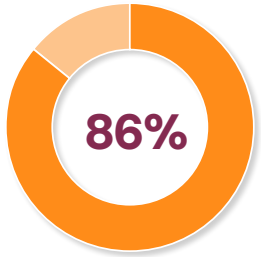
89% of clients increased their confidence, choice and control.



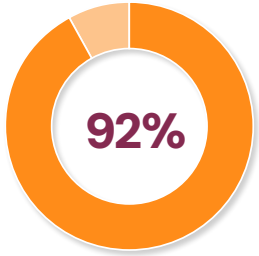
80% of clients improved their knowledge of rights, options and access to information.



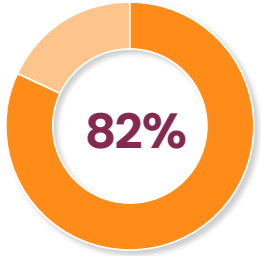
90% of clients became better connected to the services and supports they needed.



86% of clients were better able to manage the impact of an immediate crisis.



92% of clients reported an improvement in mental health, wellbeing and self-care.



82% of clients experienced an improvement in housing, safety or stability.

Morris's story – hospital long stay and NDIS review

The crisis

Morris is a 38-year-old man who experienced a stroke approximately 18 months ago, resulting in significant and permanent disability. After spending 12 months in hospital, he was discharged to a Supported Independent Living (SIL) arrangement with an NDIS plan established during his hospital admission.

While Morris and his partner understood life would be different following the stroke, they remained committed to rebuilding their future together. However, only a few months after moving into the SIL, Morris became seriously unwell. His deteriorating physical condition was not recognised or responded to appropriately, despite Morris no longer being able to communicate verbally. It was only when his partner arrived for a visit and found him in distress that emergency services were called.

Morris was readmitted to hospital and remained there for five months. Although he no longer required medical treatment, he could not be safely discharged because his NDIS funding did not provide the level of support needed to meet his complex needs in the community.

*Name and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

Without a substantially improved NDIS plan, Morris faced the risk of returning to an unsuitable living arrangement that could lead to further hospitalisation, serious harm, or worse. Despite being medically ready for discharge, he remained stuck in hospital with no safe pathway forward.

The ongoing uncertainty, separation from his partner, and inability to move on with his life began to significantly impact his mental health and wellbeing. Morris and his partner had initially believed his first NDIS plan was well funded, but like many families adjusting to acquired disability, they had limited opportunity to understand the true level of support he would need until they experienced life after discharge.

What ADACAS did

Following a referral from the hospital social worker, ADACAS met with Morris and his partner to understand what had gone wrong, identify gaps in his existing supports, and explore their goals for the future.

ADACAS supported Morris to communicate his needs and preferences with the hospital team, worked closely with the hospital's NDIS Lead, and assisted in gathering and strengthening evidence for an NDIS plan review. We ensured Morris's voice remained central to discussions and highlighted the risks associated with another underfunded plan.

ADACAS also supported Morris and his partner throughout the review process, including a face-to-face planning meeting where they were able to clearly demonstrate the complexity of his support needs.

What changed

The review resulted in a new NDIS plan that better reflects Morris's needs and provides the level of support required for him to live safely outside hospital.

With appropriate funding now secured, Morris has a pathway out of hospital and greater confidence that his future supports will be sustainable. He and his partner are now exploring living options that meet Morris's care needs while preserving their relationship and their shared goal of living together again in the future.

"Thank you for your support. It was essential for me. I struggled despite my advocate's support. Not having that support would have made everything so much harder."

ADACAS Client, 2026

"Great job to the ADACAS staff that helped on my case, I appreciate them all and the hard work they do and put in to advocate for people's rights."

ADACAS Client, 2026

"I received excellent service, I felt supported and heard through my entire experience."

ADACAS Client, 2026

"My advocate was so helpful and understanding. I feel so grateful that I had someone to help me. She kept in touch and sorted things I would not have been able to do."

ADACAS Client, 2026



Acknowledgement of Funding

ADACAS gratefully acknowledges the funding provided by the Australian Government, ACT Government and NSW Government. Their ongoing support enables us to deliver free, independent individual advocacy. This ensures people across the ACT and the NSW regions where we work can get support to navigate complex systems and personal challenges that impact their lives. They can understand and exercise their rights, have their voices heard, and make informed decisions about their lives.

Standing alongside older people

Protecting rights, supporting choice and helping older people access the care they need.

ADACAS provides free, independent individual advocacy to older people across the ACT, supporting them to understand and access My Aged Care ensure their rights are being upheld with the services they are trying to access or are receiving, make informed decisions through building capability to self-advocate and/or use supported decision making and overall have their voices heard.

Our Older Persons Team supports people aged 65 and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 and over. Whether living independently at home or in residential aged care, we help people navigate services, raise concerns and make choices about their care and wellbeing. The team also provides education sessions to residents and workers in Aged Care Facilities and to interested community groups.

A changing aged care system.

The Aged Care Act 2024, which was passed by the Australian Parliament on 25 November, 2024 and officially commenced on 1 November, 2025, marked a significant change for older people and the services they rely on.

As people navigate new arrangements, ADACAS is seeing growing demand for help with accessing services, understanding their options and protecting their rights.

Our focus remains on ensuring older people are heard, their choices are respected and their rights are upheld.

What we're seeing

Supporting over 1200 clients with advocacy, information, and advice, mainly on navigating the Aged Care System, accessing and provision of services, and general communication.

Advocacy matters involving equipment and assistive technology increased dramatically over this period.

Issues regarding Abuse of Older People, Guardianship and Enduring Powers of Attorney are increasing.

56% of Commonwealth Home Support Program cases involved concerns about accessing services or the services being provided.

1 in 2 new Support at Home cases involved access or service provision concerns.

The challenges older people are facing and seeking support from ADACAS highlights that for many people the Aged Care System is not working for them, and we continue to see many people in hospital unable to return home or receive timely support from the Aged Care System. People are seeking self-determination, dignity of risk and timely access to the practical supports they need to live safely and independently.



What we heard from older people.

Getting help early can be difficult. Our advocates hear from people who sought support when they first noticed changes in their health or ability to manage day to day but were told they were not yet eligible to apply for supports they could see they will need in the near future. In some cases, support only became available after their needs had become more significant.

Affordability is a growing concern. Cost issues came up in one in four Support at Home transition cases and one in six Residential Aged Care Home cases. For many pensioners, the concern was how to keep paying for the care they need while managing on a limited budget.

Accessing services continues to be a problem. In the first half of 2026, more than one in two Commonwealth Home Support Program cases and one in two new Support at Home cases involved problems accessing services or getting the right support in place.

Older people also told us about long waits, services that were not available when needed, and difficulties getting help early enough as their needs changed.

> "Our experience reinforces a simple message: timely access to affordable, entry-level support helps older people remain safe, independent, and connected to their communities for longer. Delaying care does not reduce costs; it often increases the likelihood of crisis, more complex care needs, and earlier entry into residential aged care."
>
> **ADACAS Staff, 2025**

Marli's story – care restored and independence protected



The crisis

Marli*, a 65-year-old Aboriginal woman receiving Support at Home (SaH) Level 4 services was living independently at home while managing a complex skin condition, significant mobility limitations, and substantial personal care needs. Over a six-month period, her health condition had resulted in several hospital admissions. She relied on regular in-home support, assistive equipment, and physical assistance to maintain her personal hygiene, health and wellbeing. The client contacted ADACAS after being advised by her aged care provider that she had accrued a debt of more than $2,700. Consequently, her services were reduced from four days per week to just one day per week. The client was distressed by the reduction and concerned about her ability to safely manage at home without adequate support.

*Name and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

The reduction in services placed the client at significant risk due to her complex skin condition, recent hospital admissions, and reliance on support for daily living and personal care. Without adequate assistance, she faced higher risks of infection, declining hygiene, falls, injury, and further hospitalisation. The unexplained debt caused financial stress and uncertainty, while reduced support threatened her ability to remain safe and independent in her own home.

What ADACAS did

With the client's consent, the advocate contacted the provider to request account statements and clarify the circumstances surrounding the debt and service reduction. After several attempts, the advocate reached the care partner, who confirmed that an overspend from the previous quarter had prompted a temporary reduction in services pending a formal service plan review. The advocate emphasised the client's complex care needs and the importance of maintaining regular services to prevent further hospital admissions. The advocate also raised concerns about the client's inability to afford the proposed direct debit repayment arrangement and requested greater transparency regarding how the overspend had occurred. Although unable to provide historical details, the care partner authorised the immediate reinstatement of regular services. The advocate continued to press for a service plan review and reassessment, arguing that the client's funding was insufficient to meet her needs, and supported the client to lodge a complaint with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

What changed

As a result of ADACAS's advocacy, the client's debt issue was resolved, and regular support services were reinstated, immediately reducing associated risks. Through continued advocacy, a formal review of her care needs approved Support at Home Level 8, better reflecting her complex health and support requirements. Increased funding provided a more sustainable level of care, reducing the risk of future service interruptions and overspending. The client was also supported to lodge a complaint with the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission, with advocacy continuing until the complaint was finalised.



"ADACAS helped me twice before when I really needed it. Both times we had an excellent outcome. This is the third time I have had to call on you and thanks to your support and that of Legal Aid the outcome is nothing short of victorious. And that is by having gone through the ART External Review. Their decision and ruling restored my faith which had taken a severe hit. But we did it. Well done you!"

ADACAS Client, 2025

Our work with people with disability and mental ill-health

People with disability and people experiencing mental ill-health continued to seek advocacy across matters relating to housing, the NDIS, education, health, mental health, justice, child protection, discrimination, service access, complaints and assistance with NDIS Appeals.

Many matters crossed more than one system, and this complexity increases the need for our rights-based and person-centred advocacy and stronger collaboration between services.

ADACAS is appreciative of the funding we receive from the Commonwealth Government, ACT Government and NSW Government, which enables us to provide a person-centred, trauma informed and culturally safe individual advocacy service for people with disability, people with mental ill-health and carers.

ACT Government

- Independent Individual Advocacy Support
- Community Mental Health Program
- Community Assistance and Temporary Supports Program (CATS)
- Supported Decision Making (concluded 30 June 2026)

Commonwealth Government

- Disability Employer Confidence Program (concluded 30 June 2026)
- NDAP and NDIS Appeals
- National Redress Scheme

NSW Government

- Disability Advocacy Futures
- DAFP education supplement



Our disability-focused advocacy

Housing remained one of the most persistent areas of advocacy needed for people with disability. Requests for help communicating with ACT Housing increased by 57%, while support with housing transfers increased by 36%. Demand for help with housing applications and maintenance also continued to be a frequent area of advocacy need very high compared with the previous year.

Guardianship matters more than doubled. Demand for advocacy relating to guardianship matters increased by 133%.

Legal and justice matters continued to create challenges. People sought advocacy around legal and justice matters, particularly criminal proceedings and family law. Communication across the justice system continued to be a matter where people sought our support.

Discrimination-related matters decreased. ADACAS recorded 31% fewer discrimination-related advocacy matters than in the previous year. We hope this is a genuine positive trend.

Meeting people where they are

Across the ACT and regional NSW, we met people in the places and ways that suited them. Local relationships and referral pathways helped our advocates understand the service context and connect people with relevant supports.

Through the relationships that our advocates have with government agencies and community organisations, we are able to connect people with other services that they need.

Our mental health advocacy work

We support people in clinical and community settings to understand their rights, participate in decisions and raise concerns. For people experiencing mental ill-health, health and legal systems continue to be significant areas where independent individual advocacy is needed.

Demand for health-related advocacy increased significantly. ADACAS recorded a 42% increase in health-related advocacy, much of it relating to mental health and wellbeing. Requests for help communicating with allied health professionals also increased substantially, tripling compared with the previous year.

Legal matters remained a significant area of need. People sought advocacy relating to protection orders, family law and criminal proceedings, as well as matters before the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT), including Psychiatric Treatment Orders, guardianship and appeals.

Keeping people's voices and choices at the centre. Our advocates walk alongside people, often using supported decision-making to identify what matters to them, understand their options and communicate their decisions.
Where appropriate, advocates also work with families, carers, services and agencies, while ensuring the person's own voice, preferences and consent remain central to the process.

Tuki's story – when gaps between systems placed a family in crisis



The crisis

Tuki* is the mother of Tomic*, a young person living with autism, sensory sensitivities, communication needs and intellectual disability.

As the school environment became increasingly difficult for Tomic, his attendance reduced. The response focused substantially on absence, behaviour and compliance rather than the adjustments he needed to participate safely.

Reduced school attendance transferred greater responsibility to Tuki. As a single parent, she relied on NDIS-funded support to keep Tomic safe while she worked. As his needs increased, the available funding was depleted more quickly than anticipated.

Tuki asked for help because the arrangement had become unsustainable. Tomic subsequently entered a voluntary care arrangement and did not return to the family home.

*Names and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

A crisis involving education and disability-support gaps had become a child-protection matter.

Tuki maintained that she had asked for practical help to continue caring for her son, not separation from him. She felt excluded from decisions and believed that systemic support failures were being treated as shortcomings in her parenting.

What ADACAS did

ADACAS helped ensure Tuki's voice remained central at a time when she felt excluded from decisions about her son. The advocate worked alongside Tuki to facilitate communication between the family, the school and other services, ensuring everyone had a shared understanding of Tomic's needs and the challenges that had led to the crisis.

Through advocacy, ADACAS helped bring Tuki and Tomic back together and supported the development of a coordinated plan involving Tuki, Tomic, the school and key service providers. The focus shifted from attendance and behaviour concerns to identifying practical adjustments, disability supports and shared responsibilities that would help Tomic participate more successfully and safely.

What changed

Advocacy helped shift the focus from blaming Tuki for a crisis she could not manage alone to addressing the gaps in education and disability supports that had contributed to the situation. Through improved collaboration between Tuki, Tomic, the school and other services, a coordinated plan was developed that better reflected Tomic's needs and strengthened the supports around him.

As a result, Tuki was able to re-establish her role in planning and decision-making for her son, and communication with services became more constructive and responsive. Most importantly, Tuki and Tomic were reunited, with clearer pathways in place to support Tomic's education, wellbeing and long-term stability at home.



Our Employer Confidence Program

Our Employer Confidence Program concluded on 30 June 2026, and we are proud that its legacy will continue via the educational resources, employer newsletters, training materials and practical tools we developed to support more inclusive workplaces.

Through the Program, we worked directly with businesses across the ACT and Queanbeyan to strengthen inclusive recruitment, workplace accessibility and the retention of employees with disability.

The program combined training, tailored advice, employer outreach and peer learning, with delivery informed by staff with lived experience of disability.

Across the life of the Employer Confidence Program, ADACAS engaged and educated more than 220 businesses on inclusive employment and supported 120 people with disability into employment. Through training, tailored advice, employer networking and ongoing relationships, the program helped businesses strengthen their confidence and capability to recruit, support and retain people with disability.

> "Building employer confidence takes sustained engagement. Employers valued access to ongoing advice and practical guidance, suggesting that continued support is important if changes in workplace culture and practice are to be embedded over time."
>
> **ADACAS Staff, 2026**

Artie's story – moving through Redress with safety, trust and control



The crisis

Artie*, 25, had been trying to obtain records and information for a National Redress Scheme application.

Navigating the process alone required him to revisit deeply traumatic experiences while managing unfamiliar administrative requirements. The burden became overwhelming, and Artie began considering withdrawing from the application.

Previous disappointment with services also meant that he was cautious about trusting another organisation.

*Name and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

Without support that respected Artie's boundaries, he was likely to leave a process that remained deeply important to him.

Moving too quickly or requiring him to repeatedly revisit traumatic experiences also risked causing further distress. Support needed to reduce the burden without taking control of the application away from him.

What ADACAS did

The advocate worked with Artie to establish what safety, choice and control looked like for him.

Meetings were arranged later in the day when the effects of his medication were less disruptive. They occurred away from his home so it could remain a place of safety. The advocate used text messages before calling and established flexible fortnightly appointments.

Artie could progress the application, pause it or use the appointment for support. The advocate also obtained important records and information, reducing the administrative and emotional burden on him.

What changed

Artie's application remains underway, but he has stayed engaged in a process he had been close to leaving. Information that had required considerable effort to pursue independently was obtained with less burden on him.

The flexible approach made the process more manageable while preserving Artie's choices, pace and control.

Supporting people through the National Redress Scheme

The National Redress Scheme recognises the harm caused by institutional child sexual abuse, holds participating institutions accountable, and connects survivors with free and confidential support.

For many people, the process of seeking redress can involve revisiting deeply traumatic experiences, gathering evidence and navigating unfamiliar application requirements.

ADACAS helps people understand the Scheme, their rights and options, gather information, and make informed decisions about whether and how they want to proceed.

Our support is tailored to each applicant, which can mean changing when meetings occur, reducing the need to repeatedly retell traumatic experiences, allowing people to pause when needed, and ensuring they remain in control of the process. Our focus is on helping people engage with the Redress Scheme in a way that supports them and their wellbeing.

With applications to the National Redress Scheme closing on 30 June 2027, timely access to clear information and independent advocacy is increasingly important.



A Commitment to Reconciliation

In 2026, we engaged with the Aboriginal Community, and from their feedback, we have established our own commitment to reconciliation action plan. For us, reconciliation is not a separate project or a compliance exercise. It is part of how we engage, provide advocacy, build trust, listen to community, respond to racism and discrimination, and work alongside people whose rights, choices and dignity are affected by service systems.

Our commitment to reconciliation is connected to ADACAS' broader role as a human rights-focused advocacy organisation. It supports our work to strengthen culturally safe, rights-based advocacy; improve access to our services, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and ensure their voices, priorities and lived experience inform our individual and systemic advocacy.

We committed to focusing on:

- **listening and respectful relationships**
- **culturally safe advocacy practice**
- **learning, reflection, accountability**
- **practical and sustainable action**



ADACAS' Commitment to Reconciliation is grounded in listening, respect, cultural safety and action. We know this work is ongoing as we supported over 200 Aboriginal clients throughout the year, an increase of 25% from the previous year. We will continue to learn, build relationships, strengthen our practice, and walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in pursuit of justice, dignity and self-determination.

How we will stay accountable

ADACAS will monitor progress through our accountability framework which aligns to existing organisational processes, including staff reflection, management reporting, Executive oversight, and Board reporting.

We will focus on meaningful learning and practical change rather than activity for its own sake. Where appropriate, we will report on what we have heard, what we have learned, what has changed, and what further action is needed.

ADACAS will continue to review this commitment and its implementation so that our reconciliation work remains practical, respectful, sustainable and connected to community.



This artwork was commissioned to represent ADACAS' values. It is called 'Wings of Advocacy', by Sarah Richards, a Ngiyampaa woman. The artist was born on Gadigal land and has been living and painting on Ngunnawal and Ngambri countries since 2012.


"Thanks so much. Support sorted out an issue I'd had for a long time. I was impressed with everything. Great service. Can't fault them – you've got a great team."
ADACAS Client, 2026

Working together for systemic change



Individual advocacy resolves issues with and for one person. It also reveals patterns that can help improve systems for many people. During 2025–26, ADACAS strengthened how we identify trends and communicate systemic issues.

From individual experience to collective evidence

Advocates and other members of our team identify recurring barriers through casework, client feedback and community engagement. Our systemic advocacy, policy and impact-focused work can then bring these insights together, assess their wider significance and identify the most useful pathway for action.

Our contribution to policy and public discussion

ADACAS contributed to submissions, consultations, advisory groups, roundtables and sector discussions. These activities provided opportunities to bring rights-based analysis and lived experience into decisions about disability, aged care, mental health, housing, education, justice and related services.

Policy influence is rarely linear or immediate. ADACAS therefore assesses contribution in several ways: whether lived experience evidence was included; whether decision-makers sought ADACAS's input; whether recommendations were reflected in discussion or draft proposals; whether relationships and future opportunities for influence were strengthened; and whether a service or agency changed practice in response to an issue raised.

Partnerships extend our influence

ADACAS worked with OPAN, DANA, community organisations, service providers, government agencies and other partners. These relationships help combine expertise, avoid duplication, strengthen referrals and amplify the experiences of people whose voices may otherwise be overlooked.

Main submissions made

- **Inquiry into the ACT Bail Amendment Bill 2026**, addressing disability-responsive bail decisions, accessible communication, reasonable adjustments, supported decision-making and safeguards for people facing overlapping barriers.
- **Review of Mental Health and Policing Interactions in NSW**, calling for trauma-informed, least-restrictive and disability-responsive police practices, accessible complaints processes and stronger referral pathways.
- **Inquiry into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Securing the NDIS for Future Generations) Bill 2026**, advocating for choice and control, fair assessment, effective review rights, continuity of support and meaningful lived-experience consultation.
- **National Disability Safeguards Consultation**, promoting independent advocacy as a core safeguard and calling for stronger accountability, trauma-informed practice and protection of autonomy. **Signatory to Advocacy for Inclusion's Disability Discrimination Act submission**.
- Contribution to **National Advocacy Collective advocacy opposing Schedule 5 of the Social Security Bill 2025**, with ADACAS suggestions adopted into the collective position.

Main consultations provided

- ACT Government consultation on the **Mental Health Services Plan**.
- ACT Government consultation on **Best Start for Canberra's Children: The First 1000 Days Strategy**, contributing during the initial phase of consultation.
- Feedback to the **Older Persons Advocacy Network residential aged-care pricing review**.
- Feedback to Canberra Health Services on its **Policy Document Development and Review Procedure**, including person-centred practice, cultural safety, accessibility, co-design and inclusive policy governance.
- Feedback to Canberra Health Services on **Managing the Disposition of Patients in Hospital When Treatment Is Complete**, including human rights, supported decision-making, independent advocacy and safe, person-centred transitions from hospital.
- Feedback to the Canberra Health Services Office of Research and Education on the **Consumer and Carer Research Partner Toolkit**, including accessibility, lived experience as expertise, meaningful participation and safeguards against tokenism.
- Support for and contribution to the Health Care Consumers Association advice paper on **sub-acute hospital patients transitioning to residential aged care**.

Where our impact is growing – Supported Decision-Making

With the goal of helping young people build the confidence and skills to make decisions about their own lives, we continued to roll out our Supported Decision-Making Project at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre during 2025–26.

Many of the young people had experienced disrupted education, limited support networks and long periods within the youth justice system. Some were also navigating disability, mental ill-health, housing uncertainty, legal issues and the transition from custody back into the community.

We worked with 13 young people aged 14–19, 10 of whom successfully completed a Supported Decision-Making Plan. The 3 young people who did not complete the workshops were released from custody before they finished. This translated to over 30 individual engagements with the young people.

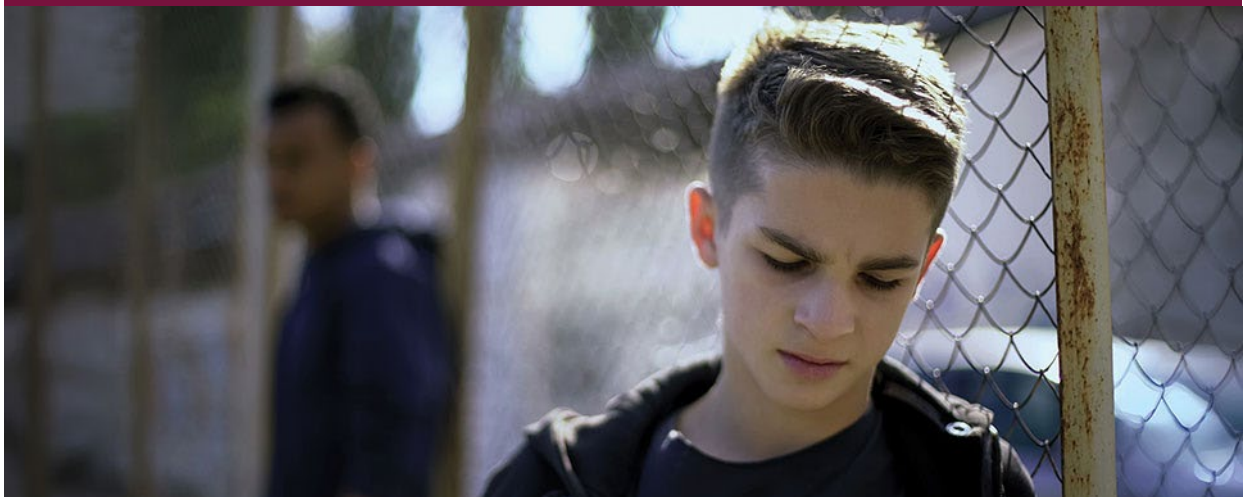
We adapted the program to meet each young person where they were. Our facilitators used plain language, practical scenarios, repetition, additional processing time and strengths-based approaches to make complex ideas such as choice, risk and consequences easier to understand.

What changed

We saw the young people become more confident saying what they wanted, weighing up options and thinking through different pathways. They strengthened the skills needed to make informed choices, solve problems and take a more active role in shaping their future.

The trust built through the program opened the door to ongoing advocacy, stronger self-advocacy and deeper connection with community supports.

- Several young people came back to ADACAS for help, showing that the relationships, trust and confidence built through supported decision-making continued to encourage help-seeking behaviours.
- Supported decision-making strengthens young people's voice, autonomy and right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. At Bimberi, it also provides practical skills for navigating services, planning for the future and preparing for greater independence in the community.



Daniel's story – brain injury and participation in criminal proceedings



The crisis

Daniel* lives with a brain injury and entered the criminal justice system after being charged with property damage.

His cognitive impairment made it difficult to understand legal terminology, the charge against him, and the advice provided by his lawyer. He struggled to communicate clear instructions or participate effectively in preparing his defence. Daniel was also inclined to agree to proposals or decisions, even when he did not fully understand what was being discussed or the implications for his case. While this had become a coping strategy that helped him navigate everyday interactions, it placed him at significant risk within the justice system, where informed decision-making and clear instructions were critical. As the legal process progressed, his anxiety increased and his ability to engage meaningfully became more challenging.

*Name and some identifying details changed.

What was at risk

There was a significant risk that Daniel's brain injury would be overlooked and that he would move through criminal proceedings without understanding or participating meaningfully in his own case.

The combined effect of the communication barriers and mounting anxiety also placed him at risk of experiencing a mental-health crisis during the proceedings.

What ADACAS did

ADACAS helped bridge the communication gap between Daniel, his lawyer and the justice system. The advocate explained legal language in ways Daniel could process, helped him understand the charge and the legal advice he received, and facilitated clearer communication with his lawyer. The advocate also supported Daniel to provide instructions and maintained a consistent presence during court appearances to help him manage stress.

What changed

Daniel was better able to communicate with his lawyer, understand the proceedings and participate in his defence. His brain injury was recognised as a relevant factor in the case rather than remaining invisible.

The advocate's support also reduced Daniel's anxiety and helped prevent his distress from escalating during the proceedings.

ADACAS did not replace Daniel's voice or provide legal representation. It helped create the communication access and stability he needed to understand, instruct and participate in a process directly affecting his future.

Our Lived Experience Advisory Panel

People with lived experience understand how policies, services and systems operate in practice. Their insight is essential to ensure we are genuinely meeting the needs of people with disability and so we are relevant, accessible and accountable.

Establishing the Lived Experience Advisory Panel

This year, ADACAS established a Lived Experience Advisory Panel to create a more consistent and meaningful pathway for lived experience to inform organisational decision-making. This complements the voice of the board and staff, many of whom also have lived experience.

The Panel's role is to advise on areas such as service design, policies, accessibility, communication, strategic priorities and the interpretation of impact evidence. Its establishment moves ADACAS beyond one-off consultation toward an ongoing relationship in which people with lived experience can question, guide and strengthen the organisation's work.

Why this matters

- It helps ADACAS identify barriers that may not be visible through service data alone.
- It brings lived experience into decisions before approaches are finalised.
- It strengthens accountability to the people and communities ADACAS exists to serve.
- It can improve the relevance, clarity and accessibility of services and information.
- It supports better interpretation of data by asking what the evidence means in people's lives.



Our commitment to carers

Carers make an important contribution to the lives of the people they support and to our community. ADACAS is committed to recognising carers as individuals in their own right, listening to their experience and supporting their voice, while always respecting the rights, choices and preferences of the person receiving advocacy.



ADACAS' organisational culture and values demonstrates our strong commitment to those who are carer's supporting them with flexible work arrangements and their overall wellbeing.

We work alongside carers while keeping the person's voice at the centre

Where appropriate and with the person's consent, advocates may work with families, carers, services, and agencies while ensuring the person's rights, will, preferences, choices, and voice guide the advocacy.

Our independent individual advocacy remains centred on the rights, will, preferences, choices and voice of the person we are supporting, while recognising the important role carers can play in their lives.

This balance aligns with the Aged Care Royal Commission's emphasis on older people's autonomy and preferences while also recognising and fostering relationships with significant people in their lives.

We support carers to be heard

Carers can face complex systems themselves. Where a matter falls within our advocacy role, ADACAS can provide advocacy directly to carers, helping them understand information and options, communicate their concerns and navigate relevant systems. We will also work constructively with carers when advocating for the person they support. Where the interests or needs of those involved differ, our advocacy prioritises the person experiencing the greatest vulnerability, who may not be the carer.

We put our commitment into practice

Consistent with the **Carers Recognition Act 2021 (ACT)**, our approach includes raising awareness of the care relationship principles, listening to and consulting carers when relevant services or programs are developed or changed, and reporting on how we uphold these principles.

Carers have a voice of their own. We recognise their contribution, listen to their experiences and respect the role they may play, while keeping the rights, will, preferences and choices of the person receiving advocacy at the centre.

Growing our capability

Strong advocacy starts with a supported, skilled and connected workforce.

Our people. One ADACAS.

Across the ACT and NSW, our staff bring expertise in disability, mental health, aged care and individual advocacy, including valuable lived experience. Over the past five years, ADACAS has invested in building a strong organisational culture through our **One ADACAS** approach, strengthening collaboration and connection across teams and locations.

Our annual staff engagement surveys, followed by discussions and improvement planning, help shape how we work together. Staff and management have developed a Culture Charter setting out the behaviours we value, centred on six priorities: Collaboration, Wellbeing, Accountability and Transparency, Diversity and Inclusion, Innovation, and Stewardship.

Our regional advocates live and work within communities across NSW, strengthening local relationships, responsiveness and outreach, while remaining connected to the wider ADACAS team.

Supporting staff wellbeing and development

Advocacy can be complex and emotionally demanding. We invest in our people's wellbeing, professional development and the support they need to do their work safely and effectively.

This includes regular individual supervision, team meetings, clinical supervision, confidential employee assistance program, professional development plans and training in mental health first aid, trauma-informed practice, cultural awareness, diversity, vicarious trauma, child safety and de-escalation.

Regular One ADACAS culture days, whole-of-organisation meetings and learning opportunities help build relationships and share expertise across our geographically dispersed workforce.

Investing in our people helps sustain the workforce that people and communities rely on for independent advocacy.

Growing inclusion and accessibility

In 2026, we designed and delivered Access and Inclusion Foundation training and completed a broad accessibility assessment of our ACT office and organisational practices.

These initiatives are informing the development of our first Disability Action and Inclusion Plan, which will guide practical improvements across our services, workplace, communications and organisational practices.

With ACT Government funding, we are also developing an Accessible Governance and Systemic Advocacy Toolkit to make important information easier to understand and support more inclusive participation.

Measuring what matters

We continue to progress our organisation-wide Social Impact Measurement Framework, connecting our Strategic Plan to a Theory of Change, rights-based outcomes and practical measures.

The Framework strengthens our ability to understand who we reach, what changes for people, what their experiences tell us about systems, and how evidence can improve our work.

Our future focus

The year ahead will be one of continued growth and strengthening our foundations as we work to ensure more people across the ACT and NSW can access independent advocacy when they need it.

A key priority will be developing our next Strategic Plan, setting the direction for ADACAS and building on our commitment to protecting rights, strengthening voices and improving outcomes for the people and communities we support.

ADACAS is also developing a Disability Peer Support Framework to support people with disability to connect through shared lived experience, build relationships and belonging, contribute their strengths, and develop individual and collective capability. The Framework is intended to provide a disability-led, accessible and evidence-informed approach to peer support and community capacity building. Its development will be informed by lived experience, evidence, and ongoing review.

Having built a solid and respectful relationship over many years, Illawarra Advocacy approached ADACAS with a proposal to join our organisation. Recognising our shared values and commitment to independent advocacy, Illawarra Advocacy undertook a process to voluntarily wind up their organisation. ADACAS employed the Illawarra Advocacy staff, and their contracts to provide individual advocacy and support with NDIS Appeals were novated to ADACAS following government approval. This will give us the opportunity to work as one team with a collective expertise of over 70 years supporting people with disability across ACT and NSW.

This important step will bring together the experience, knowledge and local relationships of both organisations, strengthening our capacity to provide disability advocacy across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Southern Highlands and South Coast.

As we grow, we remain committed to strengthening our organisational capability, embedding social impact measurement and ensuring that the voices, rights and choices of the people we support remain at the centre of everything we do.

Our priorities

- **Embed our Social Impact Measurement Framework** - integrate a focused set of outcome measures into everyday systems, strengthen data quality and use six-monthly and annual reflection cycles to improve practice and reporting.
- **Strengthen lived experience leadership** - support the Lived Experience Advisory Panel to influence real decisions and report transparently on how advice has been considered and acted upon.
- **Make communication more accessible** - co-design and implement the Accessible Communication Toolkit and build Easy English and accessibility checks into organisational communication.
- **Implement the Disability Action and Inclusion Plan** - translate commitments into accountable actions, monitor progress and involve people with disability in reviewing results.
- **Deepen systemic advocacy** - use evidence from individual advocacy, client outcomes and lived experience to prioritise issues, develop stronger submissions and build ADACAS's thought-leadership role.
- **Sustain trusted services and partnerships** - deliver funded advocacy programs well, strengthen referral pathways and work with partners to improve access across the ACT and regional NSW.
- **Build organisational strength** - continue to invest in governance, workforce capability, wellbeing, data systems and any collaboration that strengthens advocacy impact.

Our Board and Governance

The Board

Bridget Browne
Chairperson

Andrew Cameron
Treasurer

Dr Andrew Mathieson
Board Member

Christine Bruce
Board Member

Giang Khanh Hong Tan
Board Member

Vaughn Melano
Board Member

Chris Collett
Board Member

Michael Nemarich
Board member

Liana Dobson
Board Member

Executive Team

Wendy Prowse
CEO

Alison Kennedy
Deputy CEO and Company Secretary

Catherine Horner
Chief Financial and Operations Officer



Financial Overview

A summary ADACAS's financial performance

Revenue (money received to do our work) — **$5,890,906**

Expenses (money spent to do our work) — $5,629,969

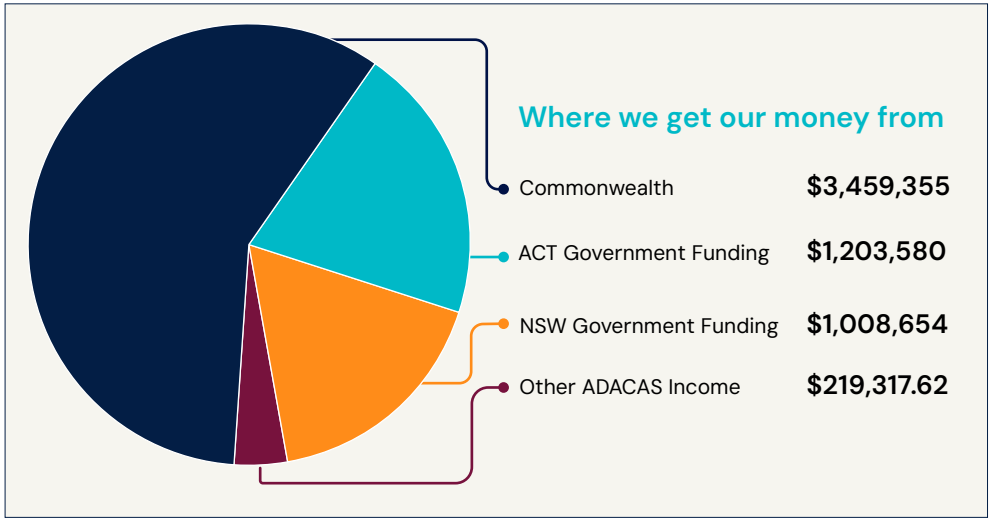
Surplus (money left over) — $260,937

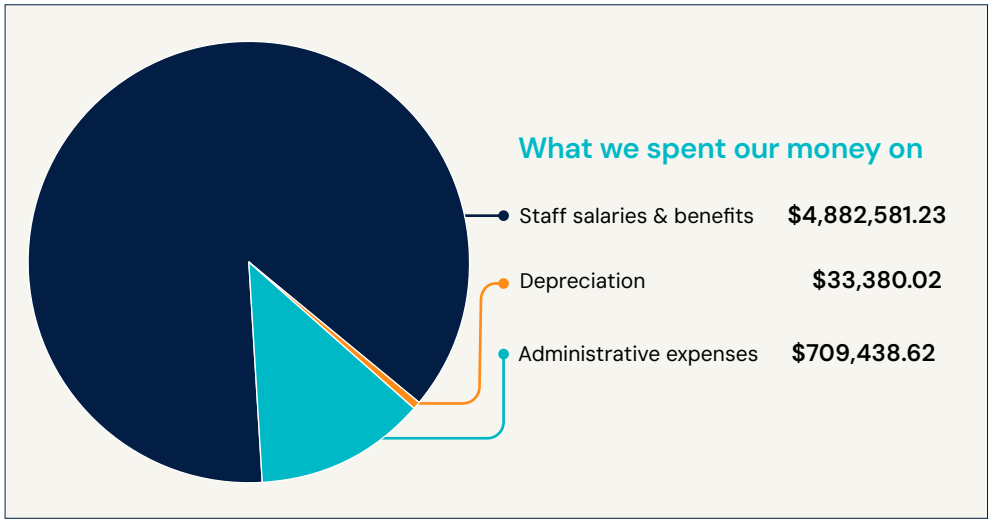
Reserves (money in the bank) — $2,826,615

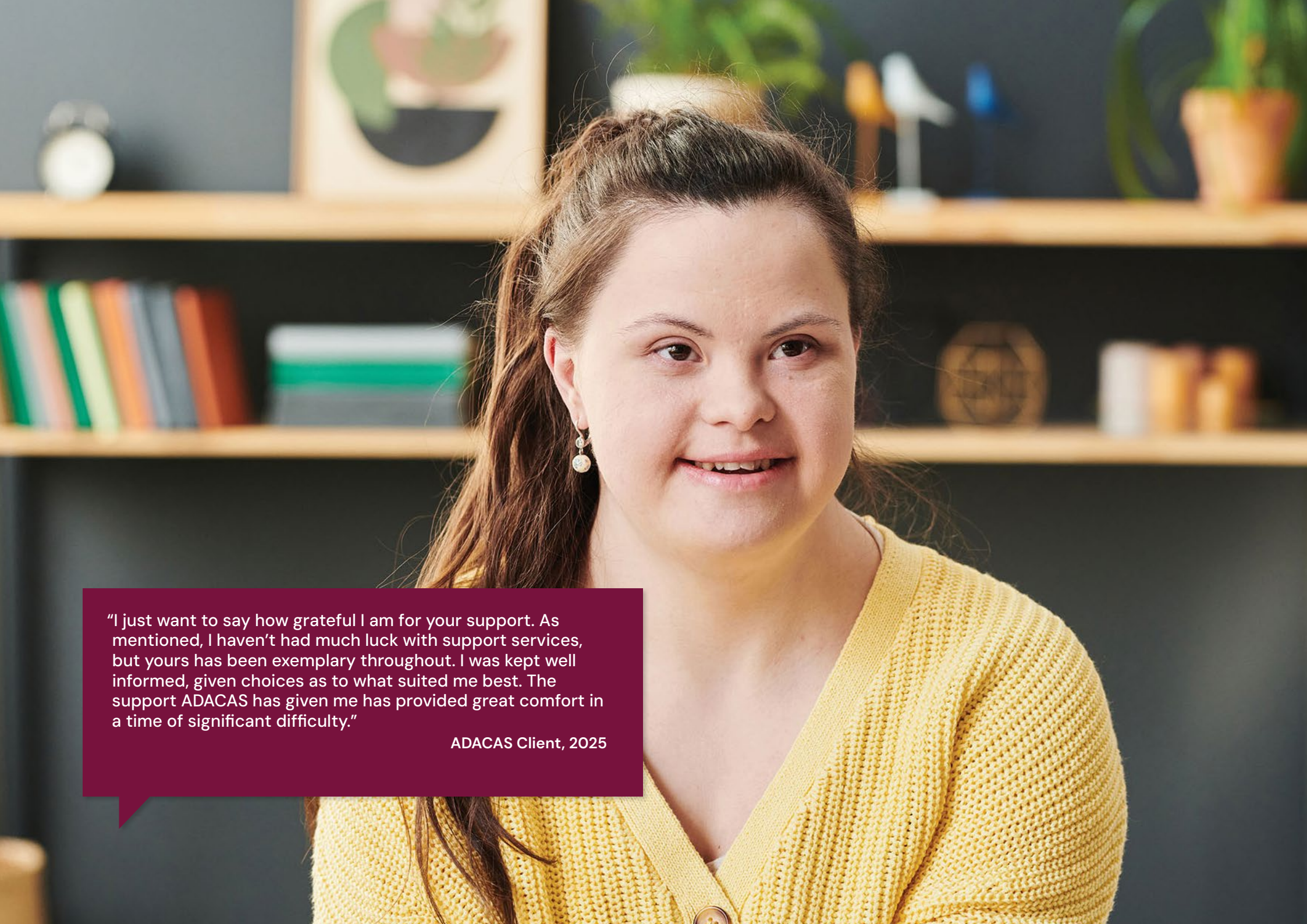
ADACAS continued to strengthen its financial position during 2025–26, achieving a higher operating surplus, $260,937, than the previous year. Income increased while expenditure remained well managed, resulting in a further increase in the organisation's overall net assets (total reserves or money in the bank $2,826,615).

Our people continued to represent the organisation's largest investment, reflecting the importance of skilled staff in delivering quality advocacy services. During the year there was also increased investment in areas such as quality and business improvement, occupancy and organisational promotion, supporting ADACAS's ongoing operations and development.

ADACAS finished the year in a strong financial position, with higher cash holdings and financial assets than at the end of 2024–25. The improved operating result and growth in reserves provide a sound foundation for the organisation to continue delivering advocacy services and responding to future needs.







"I just want to say how grateful I am for your support. As mentioned, I haven't had much luck with support services, but yours has been exemplary throughout. I was kept well informed, given choices as to what suited me best. The support ADACAS has given me has provided great comfort in a time of significant difficulty."

ADACAS Client, 2025

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