



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

We are driven by a commitment to justice, human rights and self-determination. We act with integrity and accountability and embrace innovation to meet the evolving needs of our community. We take pride in our professionalism and celebrate the successes of staff and clients as we work toward a more inclusive society

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Kaya Wandjoo.

We would like to acknowledge the Wadandi Noongar people, the Saltwater people of the South West, as the Traditional Custodians of the sky, land and sea on which we live, work, and advocate.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Their stories, language, and knowledge are woven into the very fabric of the South West and continue to inform our practices.

We also acknowledge the cultural and linguistic diversity of all people in the region and value the customs and traditions they contribute to making the South West a diverse community.

We honour their resilience, their wisdom, and their ongoing contributions to our communities.



Dear Members, Clients and Stakeholders,

Advocacy WA was established in 1990 in response to a growing need for independent advocacy for people with disabilities in the South West region of Western Australia. Founded on the principles of inclusion, equity, and empowerment, we began as a small team committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities could access the support and services they needed to live full and independent lives.

Over the years, Advocacy WA has grown in both scope and impact. We expanded to address complex systems and issues such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Disability Support Pension (DSP), NDIS Quality and Safeguards, and the underemployment of people with disability. To that end we have built strong partnerships with Allied Health, legal professionals, LGA's and community organisations to ensure that our clients receive holistic and informed support.

Through decades of change, Advocacy WA has remained a trusted voice for rural people with disabilities, advocating for systemic improvements and individual justice. Our history is a testament to the power of advocacy, collaboration, and resilience.

In 2025, we travelled thousands of kilometres, connected with communities in 80 towns and suburbs, and stood alongside people with disability to ensure their voices were heard and their rights upheld.

At Advocacy WA, our mission remains steadfast: to empower people with disabilities! Over the past year, we have continued to advocate for individuals navigating increasingly complex and bureaucratic systems.

This year has brought both challenges and opportunities. With increasing demand for advocacy around the Disability Support Pension (DSP), NDIS Access and Appeals, housing, and access to justice, our team has worked tirelessly to ensure that every person we support receives fair and informed representation.

Our collaboration with partners, government, disability representative organisations, and service providers has been instrumental in achieving positive outcomes for our clients. We are proud of the dedication shown by our staff, volunteers, and partners whose commitment to justice and inclusion continues to drive our work and success.

As we reflect on the past year, we also look ahead with renewed determination to strengthen our advocacy, expand our reach, and remain a trusted voice for people with disabilities across Western Australia.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (now Department of Health, Disability and Aging), the WA Government Department of Communities and Lotterywest for their continued support and trust in our organisation. The grants we receive are used judiciously to empower and support individuals living with disability and their families, furthering our mission of advocating for their rights and well-being.

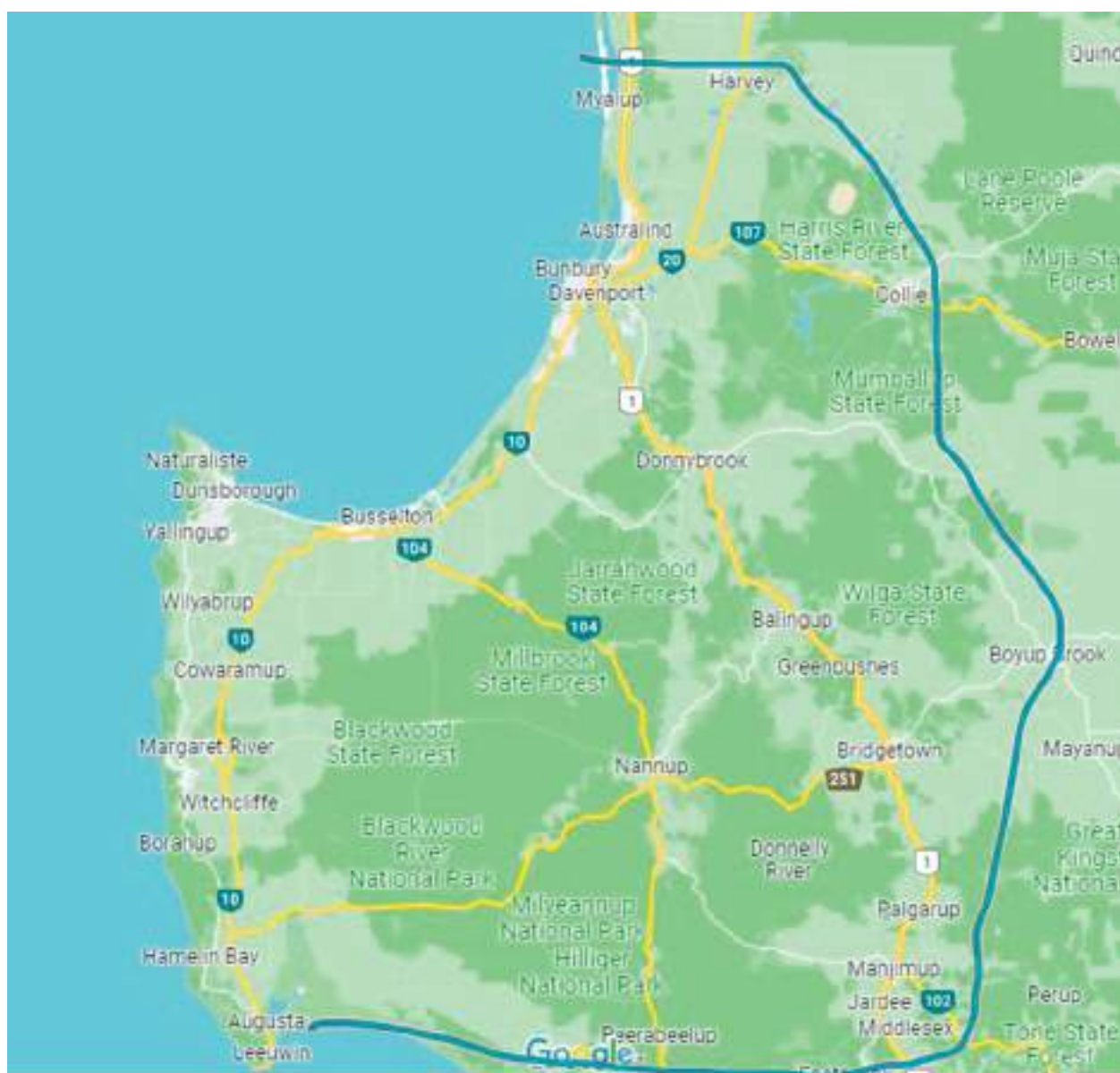
Stu Schonell

Chief Executive Officer

Who we are

Advocacy WA supports people with disability, their families, and communities right across the South West. We cover towns including Harvey, Collie, Dardanup, Capel, Donnybrook, Balingup, Boyup Brook, Greenbushes, Bridgetown, Nannup, Busselton, Dunsborough, Yallingup, Augusta, Margaret River, and Manjimup.

Our main office is located in Bunbury and is open to the public Monday to Friday by appointment. To make sure our services are accessible to as many people as possible, we also provide regular outreach in Bridgetown, Collie, Manjimup, Margaret River, and Busselton.



The People Behind the Purpose



Jethro Hepton
Chairperson



Denise Clement
Board Member



Ryan Gay
Board Member



Rajinder Sunner
Board Treasurer



Kimberley Robbins
Board Member



Lynnee Reeve
Board Member

Thanking Our Board of Directors

The governance of AdvocacyWA is overseen by a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors, who possess extensive experience either working within or having a lived experience of the disability sector. Our staff are highly trained professionals, many with degrees relevant to advocacy, and a number with lived experience of disability.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our Board of Directors for their leadership, commitment, and vision throughout the past year. Their guidance ensures that Advocacy WA continues to grow as a strong, independent voice for people with disability. Each member brings unique experience, wisdom, and lived knowledge that shapes the way we work and keeps us grounded in our values.

Their dedication to good governance, strategic thinking, and championing inclusion makes a real difference, not only to our organisation, but to the lives of the people and communities we serve.



Stu Schonell
CEO

After many years in business, and then as an academic, I wanted to work in the disability sector to seek social justice for, and to empower, people living with disability. I work on systemic advocacy issues, attempting to influence policy, legislation and practices for the betterment of rural people living with disability. I am a keen fisherman and traveller, and love spending time in the outdoors. I enjoy doing anything that breaks down barriers for people living with disability.



Hellen Madzingira
Senior Advocate

I joined Advocacy WA in August 2021 as an Individual Advocate and was promoted to Senior Advocate in August 2022. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Social Work from Edith Cowan University. Before joining Advocacy WA, I worked as a disability support worker and a crisis accommodation support worker, gaining valuable frontline experience that fuels my passion for advocacy. I have a passion for photography, and will spend hours perfecting a selfie.



Sue Alexander
Individual Advocate

I joined Advocacy WA in January 2025, bringing with me over 15 years of experience in the human services sector. With a strong focus on human rights, inclusion, diversity, and empowerment, I'm especially passionate about co-design and creating meaningful change through collaboration. I love cows and can identify and name 12 different types and I am not shy about hugging a cow or two.



Joan Sang
Individual Advocate

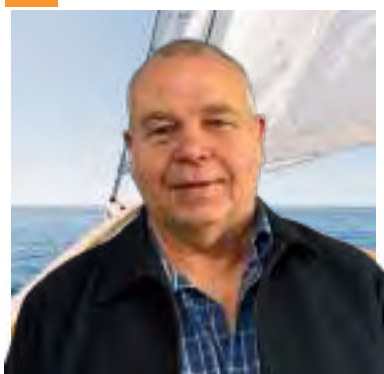
I joined Advocacy WA in May 2022. As a Social Worker, I'm dedicated to amplifying the voices of my clients, and I find my greatest joy in seeing their smiles after achieving positive outcomes. Outside of work, I enjoy unwinding with movies on my days off and occasionally going for relaxing drives. I can also speak four different languages.



Margaret Fogarty

Intake Officer

Originally from Ireland, I joined Advocacy WA in March 2023 as the Intake and Information Officer. I've gained skills and experience through a wide variety of roles, from childcare to Quality Assurance and IT. After spending several years volunteering with community NFOs overseas, I've continued my commitment to community inclusion, diversity, and empowerment within the disability sector here in my adopted home of WA. I still love to travel and looking forward to driving across the Nullarbor again.



Phil Cutting

Individual Advocate & Intake Officer

I recently joined the Advocacy WA team in a dual role as Intake Officer and Individual Advocate. As the first point of contact for many people seeking support, I make sure everyone feels heard and respected. A fun part of my background is that I was once employed at the company that created the famous winged keel for Australia II, the yacht that won the 1983 America's Cup!



Carolyn Cousins

Executive Assistant

Over my career, I've worked in numerous roles that have helped me build the skills and experience I draw on today. My greatest achievement will always be my children. My happy place is boarding a plane and travelling the world. I love music, the Eagles, and making people happy.



Lorelei Giorgi

Reception Officer

I've been with Advocacy WA for four years, working in reception and administration. I greet clients, manage front-desk communications, and help create a welcoming and supportive environment for people with disabilities seeking advocacy services. I also take care of a wide range of administrative tasks. Outside of work, I enjoy playing video games.



Jesse Bohning

Finance Officer

I joined Advocacy WA in 2025 and bring over five years of experience in accounting. I keep our finances running smoothly by managing payroll, invoices, and preparing our accounts for auditing. I am also a huge fan of Japanese pop and rock music, with a collection of more than 500 CDs!



Larissa Beeby

Community Project Manager

I joined Advocacy WA as Community Project Manager in 2025. I'm passionate about creating inclusive programs and supporting people with disability to build confidence and connection. Outside of work, I'm a big fan of live music, video games, and all things tabletop role-playing. I've been rolling dice and adventuring through stories since I was a child, and I still love the creativity and connection these games bring.



Trish Tofarirepi

Projects Officer

I joined Advocacy WA in 2025 as a Projects Officer. My role focuses on socials, marketing, connect groups, networking, and events, all the things that bring people together and keep our community energy flowing. Outside of work, I love to travel and have even managed to visit Bali five times in a single year!



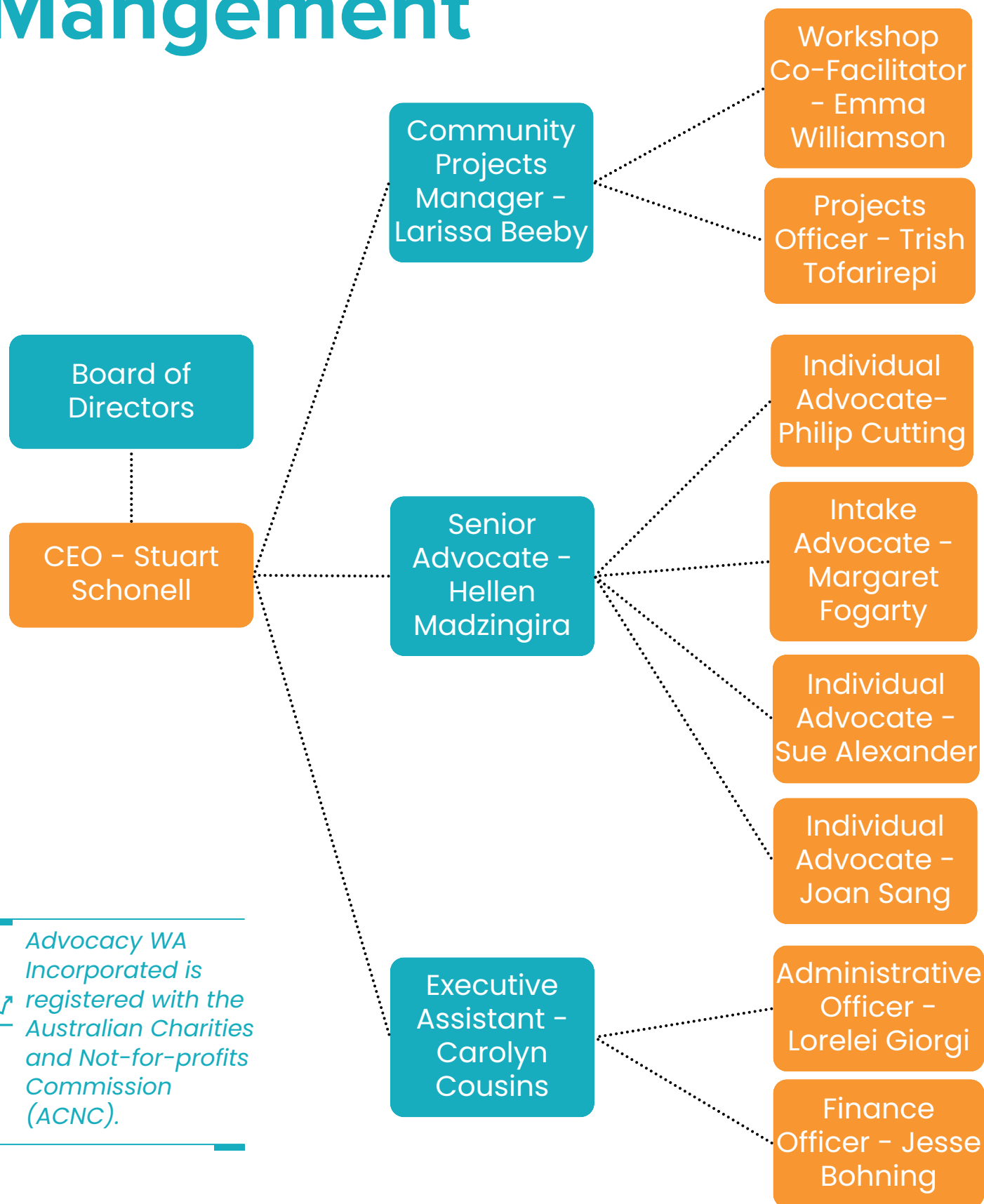
Emma Williamson

Workshop Co-facilitator

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I joined Advocacy WA in 2025 and I'm loving the opportunity to make an impact with my passion for empowering others and my natural ability to connect with people. I bring a thoughtful, hands-on approach to supporting our community and thrive on building meaningful relationships. Outside of work, I'm a self-proclaimed TikTok queen, always creating content and sharing moments that bring a bit of joy, creativity, and fun to everyday life.

Structure and Mangement



Advocacy WA Incorporated is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

As Chair of Advocacy WA, I am proud to present this year's report, reflecting the challenges we've faced, the successes we have achieved and the meaningful progress we've made in advancing the rights and wellbeing of people with disabilities across South West Western Australia.

The NDIS : The past year has seen significant shifts in legislation and implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), many of which have placed additional strain on participants—particularly those in regional and rural communities. It remains deeply challenging for rural participants to access the NDIS in a way that ensures adequate funding to live the life they choose. The complexity of the system, inconsistent decision-making and unfair pricing in rural areas continue to undermine the scheme's original intent.

Legislative Barriers: New legislation from the NDIS has introduced further obstacles, particularly for individuals in small towns and rural areas. These changes have made it harder to access essential services and supports and limited the types of supports that can be accessed, exacerbating existing inequities.

Advocacy WA has remained steadfast in our mission to empower and uplift people with disabilities.

Provider Shortages: A lack of registered providers willing to service regional and rural areas—due to unsustainable travel and operational costs—has created service deserts, leaving vulnerable individuals without critical support.

Despite these challenges, Advocacy WA has remained steadfast in our mission to empower and uplift people with disabilities. This year, we've delivered multiple impactful projects.



Board and Governance Training:

Thanks to LotteryWest we provided tailored training for people with disabilities aspiring to join boards, equipping them with the confidence and skills to become influential and productive members of governance bodies.

Access to Government Assistance:

Thanks to the Department of Social Services, our team conducted workshops to help individuals navigate complex systems, such as Centrelink and other government support services, ensuring they can access the assistance they are entitled to.

Understanding Rights: Thanks to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, we were able to partner with Enable WA to deliver workshops throughout the South West on NDIS participant rights.

Anti-Bullying Workshops: We ran inclusive education workshops in schools, promoting understanding of disability and fostering more compassionate, inclusive school communities.

Peer Support: Thanks to an NDIS grant we have been developing peer support networks and disability mentors across the South West and running self-advocacy workshops.

Systemic Advocacy: Thanks to the WA Department of Communities, we are able to advocate at a systemic level for regional and rural people living with disability.

Economic Participation: In collaboration with our lead partner, PWdWA, we have conducted work readiness training for young people with disabilities and audited local businesses alongside these young participants.

Accessibility Audits: We have continued to conduct fee for service access assessments of buildings and leisure facilities for LGA's. Our fee for service work has now expanded into assisting with developing disability access and inclusion plans.

Operating within the constraints of limited government funding remains one of our greatest challenges. The demand for our services continues to grow, along with the complexity of issues people with disability are facing. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a waitlist of individuals seeking advocacy for issues ranging from housing and homelessness to legal matters, education access, and NDIS appeals.

Advocacy WA remains committed to ensuring that every person with a disability, regardless of where they live, has access to the supports, services, and opportunities they deserve. We will continue to push for systemic reform, amplify the voices of our community, and deliver high-impact advocacy that drives real change. We are proud of our strong and effective relationships with local, state and federal governments.

We consistently advocate for the inclusion of rural and regional needs in NDIS funding and policy development. The voice of rural disability is being heard by government agencies, and media outlets increasingly seek our insights and feedback on the state of disability services in WA.

Thank you to our dedicated staff, volunteers, partners, funders and supporters. Together, we are building a more inclusive and equitable Western Australia.

Jethro Hepton, Chairperson

CEO'S REPORT



Reflecting on my third year leading Advocacy WA, I remain in awe of our team's unwavering commitment to people living with disability. Their passion and resilience drive our successes, even as we navigate an increasingly complex funding, legislative and policy environment. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every staff member, board member and volunteer whose dedication underpins the successes we achieve for our clients.

We secured several new grants during the year as well as additional funding for continuing grants. Securing these funds represents a marked improvement on the previous year, though competition for commonwealth and state grants remains fierce. To improve our grant success rate we refined our grant writing; streamlining application processes, strengthening budget narratives, refining grant outcomes and measurables and partnering on some proposals.

Last year's resource constraints saw us reduce costs across the organisation. At the same time our core advocacy activities expanded:

- Client numbers grew by 25% for NDAP and 15% for NDIS Appeals.
- We launched various advocacy training modules on Moodle, our new learning management platform.
- We expanded many of our advocacy resources into Easy Read as well as into Noongar, Tagalog, and Swahili (common languages in the South West).
- Our feedback ratings remained very high, as did our success rate of 80% in NDIS Appeals cases.

Strategic partnerships have extended our capacity to serve the community. We strengthened ties with People with Disabilities WA and Great Southern Community Legal Centre. We made new connections with Enable WA paving the way for a NDIS Quality and Safeguards grant. We strengthened relationships with LGA's, service providers and community organisations resulted in greater community engagement and impact.

As the sector undergoes rapid reform, Advocacy WA has amplified its voice. We participated in state and commonwealth roundtables, legislation reviews, and policy reviews. We met with Ministers and key public servants to push for more equitable funding across regions. We spoke at the National Disability Summit and the International Day of Disability event in Bunbury attended by local politicians and community leaders. We were interviewed by television, radio and print media on a range of issues impacting people living with disability. Our media outreach has highlighted rural disadvantage and the gaps emerging from current policy shifts.

Investing in our people remains central to our values:

- We welcomed five student placements from Edith Cowan University and University of WA, contributing to research, administration and on-the-ground advocacy.
- We expanded our team with a new Project Manager, a Project Officer, a Workshop Co-facilitator and in August 2025, a new part time Advocate
- We said farewell to three long-standing staff and we express deep thanks for their service and wish them success in new endeavours.
- We underwent professional development workshops on cultural competence, trauma-informed practice and AI tools, ensuring our people stayed at the forefront of best practice.

We continue to engage our community across the South West and this included delivering talks at Schools and TAFE to foster early awareness of disability rights. We engaged in City of Busselton and City of Bunbury events, including a wheelchair accessibility simulation with local council staff. We celebrated NAIDOC week alongside community elders, reinforcing our commitment to First Nations inclusion. We visited all southwest towns, providing disability related information sessions and face to face advocacy. These activities not only deepen local connections but also affirm our role as a trusted community partner.

As the sector undergoes rapid reform, Advocacy WA has amplified its voice:

The coming year promises both challenges and opportunities. The revised NDIS Act and the limited implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations demand vigilant oversight. We will:

- Advocate for full adoption of Royal Commission recommendations affecting regional areas.
- Pilot Teams information sessions to provide more advocacy options for rural people with disability.
- Strengthen our financial resilience by diversifying revenue streams, including fee-for-service consultations and philanthropic partnerships.

Stu Schonell, CEO



OUR YEAR IN ACTION

Community Project Manager's Report

I was delighted to step into the role of Community Project Manager in early 2025, after serving several years on the Board of Directors at Advocacy WA. It has been both an honour and a privilege to bring my knowledge, lived experience, and over a decade of leadership experience into this new role, and to continue contributing to an organisation I have been proud to support for many years. Stepping into this position has allowed me to work more closely with our incredible team, strengthen partnerships across the South West, and connect directly with our community to drive projects that make a real difference in people's lives.

This project was about more than skills; it was about confidence, inclusion, and the power of young people's voices in shaping their futures



Economic Participation Project

This year, in partnership with People with Disabilities WA (PwDWA), we delivered the Economic Participation Project in two Busselton schools. Together, we supported students with disability to build soft skills, job-readiness, and confidence for their future careers.

What made this project especially meaningful was the time spent in classrooms, listening to students' ideas, encouraging their ambitions, and helping them shape what their future careers might look like. The creativity of their dreams was energising; my personal favourite was a student who imagined running a café that also shows movies, complete with themed food to match each film. This project was about more than skills; it was about confidence, inclusion, and the power of young people's voices in shaping their futures.

The project also extended beyond the school gates. Our youth consultants carried out free accessibility audits with local businesses in Busselton and Dunsborough. These audits not only provided businesses with practical advice on how to improve inclusion but also highlighted the unique perspectives and insights young people with disability bring to the workforce.

We look forward to continuing this project in 2025, working with more youth consultants and expanding it into the Shire of Dardanup.

Your Rights, Your Supports, Your Service

Funded by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, these workshops travelled across the South West to empower people with disability. Participants built knowledge of their rights, learned how to recognise quality services, and gained confidence to speak up when things aren't right. Service providers also received practical tools to deliver more respectful, rights-based support.

Peer Support and Capacity Building

Funded by the NDIS Peer Support and Capacity Building Grant enabled us to expand opportunities for people with disability to connect and strengthen their advocacy skills. Through this grant, we delivered self-advocacy workshops across the South West and established community mentors to provide ongoing guidance and support.

The grant also supported the launch of D-Connect and D-Connect Local peer groups creating accessible resources, events, and inclusive spaces where people can share experiences, build confidence, and foster strong community connections.

Inclusive Leadership Project

With support from Lotterywest, we delivered the Inclusive Leadership Program across the South West. This included working with boards and committees to embed inclusive practices at every level, from recruitment through to decision-making. We provided training and mentoring for people with disability aspiring to leadership roles. This work reflects our guiding principle: "Nothing about us, without us." People with disability must be at the tables where decisions are made, shaping organisations and communities with their lived experience.

Our Growing Team

This year we also welcomed two new members to the Projects Team. Trish brings with her years of experience in support work and a passion for empowering the lives of people with disability. Emma, who joined us as a co-facilitator, brings her lived experience, creativity, and a flair for TikTok, ensuring our workshops are not only informative but also engaging and accessible. Their energy and expertise have strengthened our team immeasurably. Their energy and expertise have strengthened our team immeasurably.

True change happens when every voice is heard, and every person is valued.

Looking back, I am so proud of what we have achieved together. From leadership to employment, from rights to connection, every project has been about one thing: empowering people with disability to lead, to speak up, and to thrive.

As we look to the future, my commitment remains the same to ensure that every project we deliver breaks down barriers, amplifies lived experience, and leaves our communities more inclusive than we found them.

Because true change happens when every voice is heard, and every person is valued.

Larissa Beeby
Community Project Manager

Our Year in Action



“Nothing about us,
without us”



“Diversity is a fact. Equity is a choice. Inclusion is an action. Belonging is an outcome.” Arthur Chan



A Year of Action and Impact



30,000
km traveled



611
advocacy issues
resolved



468
clients supported



87
rural town trips



260
hours of work for people
with disability



9
grants completed



5
interns hosted from two
universities

Community Feedback Top Issues



Disability Support Pension

This is becoming more complex and with poor internet services in rural areas, increasingly difficult.



NDIS Access and Appeals

75% of respondents said rural people living with disability get a very bad service from the NDIS.



Housing and Homelessness

An increasing number of people with disability are ending up on the street.



Access to Justice

Guardianship cases remain the main issue.



Mental Health Services

Another year passes with little genuine improvement.



Transport

Regional voices were ignored again in the taxi user subsidy scheme review.

Individual Advocacy Year-Over-Year

In the 2024–2025 financial year, Advocacy WA received over 600 requests for support across three distinct funding streams. Consistent with previous years over half of these matters fell under the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP), underscoring the sustained need for rural advocacy in areas such as protecting rights, service access, and individual outcomes.

Demand for assistance with government payments remained high, with the Disability Support Pension (DSP) continuing to be the most frequently raised issue by clients. In response to the growing volume of inquiries, and recognising the limitations of one-on-one support, our advocates delivered targeted information sessions throughout the South West.

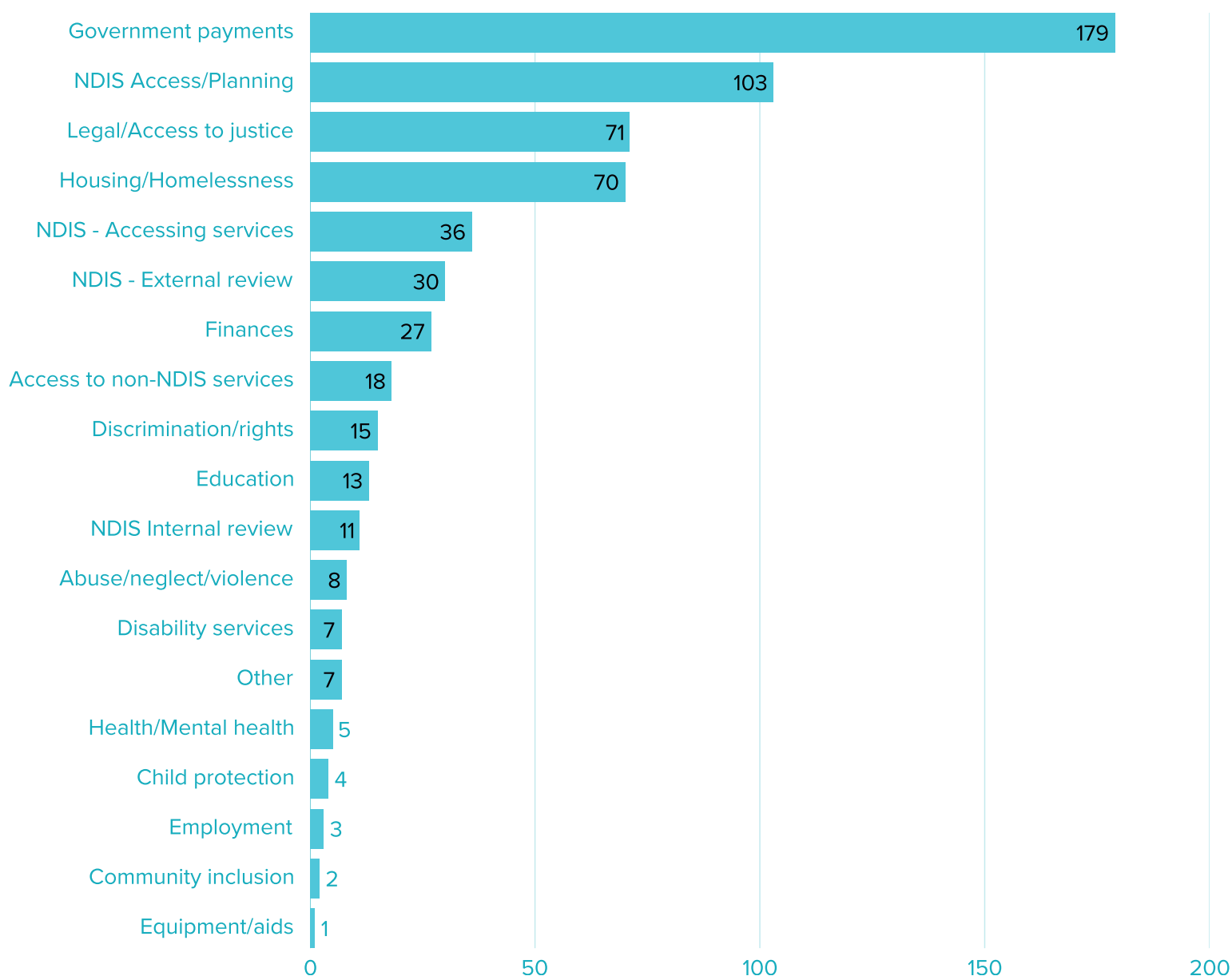
These sessions focused on DSP eligibility and application processes and equipped community members with the tools to self-advocate. We held our first online session via Teams, attracting participants from multiple towns and demonstrating strong regional engagement with digital outreach initiatives.

Support provided for state-funded matters declined slightly compared to the previous year, primarily due to funding constraints. Unfortunately, this resulted in a period of waitlist closure and client referrals to external services. Despite these challenges, Advocacy WA remains committed to maintaining service quality and continuity wherever possible. A particularly notable development this year was the sharp rise in clients seeking assistance with NDIS external appeals.

Unlike the previous year, where appeal-related cases were relatively few, 2024–2025 saw a marked increase. Our advocates worked diligently to guide clients through the complex appeals process, with the majority of cases resulting in favourable outcomes, reflecting both the effectiveness of our support and the resilience of our clients.

***“reflecting both the
effectiveness of our
support and the resilience
of our clients”***

Individual Advocacy Barriers Addressed





Beyond these focal areas, Advocacy WA continued to address broader systemic issues affecting people with disabilities. Advocates supported individuals in accessing housing, inclusive education, mental health services, and legal representation. Their efforts are especially critical in overcoming geographic and service access barriers across the South West.

Through strategic outreach, informed advocacy, and a commitment to equity, Advocacy WA has continued to empower individuals with disabilities and strengthen community resilience across the region.

Advocates on the move

Throughout the year, our team of advocates travelled to communities across the South West, including those in small remote towns and often overlooked locations.

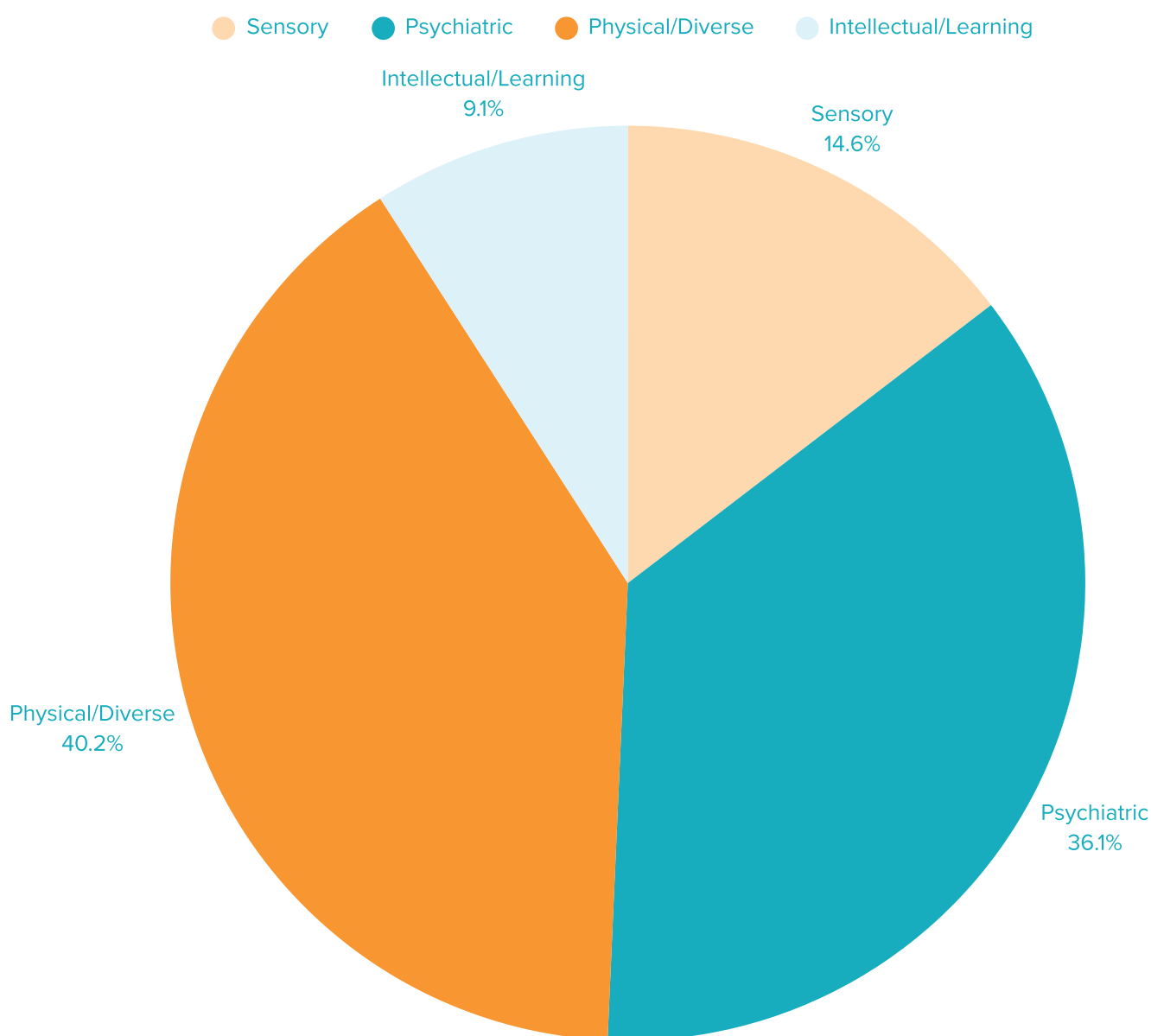
By prioritising in-person engagement, we were able to deliver meaningful support directly to individuals facing barriers to accessing disability services. These visits helped bridge gaps in service delivery, especially in areas with limited transport and infrastructure.

***“Advocacy WA has
continued to empower
individuals with
disabilities.”***

Our presence in these communities not only improved access but also fostered stronger relationships and trust. Staying responsive to local needs and ensuring our services are truly inclusive continues to be a guiding principle of our work.

**Hellen Madzingira
Senior Advocate**

Individual Advocacy Who We Supported



Harassment from a Debt Collector

**Names changed to protect identities*

In 2018, Sean's* life changed in an instant when he was involved in a serious car accident. The crash left him with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), affecting his memory and cognitive function. In the months that followed, still confused and vulnerable, Sean signed paperwork with the Insurance Commission of Western Australia (ICWA) accepting responsibility for the accident.

Years passed, and in 2023 ICWA finalised the claim, capping Sean's liability at \$5,000 because he was living on the Disability Support Pension. But due to his memory loss, Sean could not recall the accident at all and believed the letters he received were a scam. His debt was quickly handed to Baycorp, a debt collection agency, who began phoning and sending letters relentlessly. The harassment left Sean frightened, overwhelmed, and unsure where to turn.

"A fair outcome meant Sean could focus on his wellbeing, not constant fear of debt."



Sean's support coordinator recognised the toll this was taking and referred him to Advocacy WA. With Sean's consent, an advocate contacted Baycorp, only to discover that ICWA still technically owned the debt. A formal complaint was lodged with ICWA, outlining the inappropriate harassment of a person with an ABI and severe memory loss. To their credit, ICWA responded quickly, apologising and halting all collection activity immediately.

"The calls and letters were relentless"

To help Sean understand what had happened, ICWA provided him with copies of the paperwork he had signed back in 2018, which helped refresh his memory. From there, Advocacy WA worked with ICWA to negotiate the debt. While the agency would not agree to waive it completely, they did reduce the amount to \$3,000 and arranged a compassionate repayment plan of just \$10 a month — an outcome that finally gave Sean some peace of mind.

When Systems Fail, Advocacy Steps In

In 2024, Advocacy WA was contacted by a therapy team seeking urgent help for a young non-verbal client with Level 3 Autism. The client had lived with their father in a remote WA town since childhood. Over time, the client's behaviours of concern had intensified, and their rigid routines required constant attention. The father, who also lives with hearing loss, was struggling to cope. His health was deteriorating, and he could no longer provide the care his adult child needed.

Although the client's NDIS plan included support coordination, services in their small town were almost impossible to access. The only support coordination available was via phone, which the father found unworkable due to his hearing loss. He soon lost trust in the service, and repeated attempts to find a new coordinator went nowhere. This family was left isolated, exhausted, and without the support they so desperately needed.

An AWA advocate stepped in and lodged a change of situation with the NDIS. The process was far from simple. The town lacked adequate services, and vital documentation — including Functional and Behavioural Assessments and provider letters — was slow to arrive. The Occupational Therapist's report, critical to the application, was delayed and required multiple follow-ups. Communication with the father was difficult, often limited to text messages with delayed responses. Despite every obstacle, the advocate persisted until all required documents were finally secured.

With encouragement from the client's Positive Behaviour Support practitioner, the father agreed to try support coordination again. A new coordinator was found who worked face-to-face, and the father felt comfortable re-engaging. For a moment, there was real hope. But soon after, that coordinator left the company, without submitting the family's application. Once again, they were left stranded, and the fragile trust they had begun to rebuild was shattered.

“They were left stranded, and the fragile trust they had begun to rebuild was shattered.”

Recognising the urgency, the AdvocacyWA advocate took on full responsibility for the case. They completed a change of situation application themselves and lodged a formal complaint against the provider to ensure accountability and prevent others from facing the same neglect.

The outcome was transformative. The client's NDIS request was accepted, and they successfully transitioned into Supported Independent Living (SIL) accommodation, where they now receive consistent, high-level support. Their father also receives the help he needs to care for himself, while still being an important part of his son's life.

Finding Hope Through Advocacy: Sarah's* Story

**Names changed to protect identities*

By early 2024, Sarah* was overwhelmed and exhausted. She had been living with chronic back pain for years, compounded by psychological health challenges that made even everyday tasks feel impossible. Hoping for some stability, she had applied for the Disability Support Pension (DSP), but her application was declined by Centrelink. The rejection left her feeling defeated, confused, and unsure where to turn.

***“it told the full story backed by strong medical evidence
and clear advocacy.”***

When Sarah reached out to Advocacy WA, she met with an advocate who immediately recognised the barriers she faced. Together with a trusted support person, Sarah was guided through the intake process, with the advocate carefully explaining the DSP eligibility criteria, what evidence was required, and how the appeals process worked. This clarity gave Sarah a renewed sense of hope.

Over the following weeks, the advocate worked alongside Sarah and her treating professionals to gather detailed medical reports, outlining the extent of her pain and the impact on her daily life. With support, she completed the paperwork correctly, making sure her lived experience was reflected in every part of her application.

***“This clarity gave Sarah a
renewed sense of hope”***

This time, when her application was resubmitted, it told the full story backed by strong medical evidence and clear advocacy. Just one month later, Sarah received the news she had been waiting for: her DSP had been approved.

The payment meant she finally had the financial stability to focus on her health and wellbeing, instead of constant fear of rejection and hardship.



Driving Systemic Change

At Advocacy WA, we know that supporting individual clients is only one part of our role. To create lasting impact, we must also challenge the systems and structures that create barriers for people with disability. Over the past 12 months, we have worked hard to ensure that the voices of people in regional Western Australia are represented in conversations about housing, health, education, and community inclusion.

Amplifying Regional Voices

Over the past 12 months, Advocacy WA has worked tirelessly to make sure the voices of people with disability in rural and regional WA are heard where it matters most — at the decision-making table. Our CEO joined the boards of the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA), Edith Cowan University (ECU), and ECU South West, providing lived, local insight into the unique barriers faced by regional communities. These roles ensure that issues such as access to services, rural disadvantage, and inclusive education are not overshadowed by metropolitan priorities.

To create lasting impact, we must also challenge the systems and structures that create barriers for people with disability

Housing and Homelessness

Housing continues to be one of the most urgent systemic issues in regional WA. In 2024, Advocacy WA submitted a detailed paper outlining the homelessness and rental affordability crisis impacting people with disability. We heard from many clients who were forced into unstable living situations or even homelessness due to skyrocketing rents and the limited availability of accessible housing in regional towns.

To broaden awareness, we partnered with the Real Estate Institute of WA (REIWA) to produce a series of short videos. These stories gave a human face to the statistics, highlighting the daily realities of trying to secure housing as a person with disability, and offering practical solutions for the private rental market.

We also campaigned strongly for the WA Government to sign on to the National Construction Code 2022. WA remains one of only two states yet to adopt the standards, meaning most new homes are still being built without basic accessibility features. Without this change, we will continue to see new houses that exclude people with disability, reinforcing cycles of disadvantage.

Community Presence and Awareness

Advocacy doesn't just happen behind closed doors — it begins in the community. In the past year, our Projects Team, led by Larissa and Trish, expanded our presence at local events across the South West. From stalls and workshops to interactive activities, we created spaces where people could learn more about their rights, share their experiences, and connect with advocacy in an approachable way.

Education and Anti-Bullying

Our advocacy extended into the education sector through our continued role on the WA Department of Education's Access and Inclusion Committee. This position gave us direct access to decision-makers and allowed us to bring forward the experiences of regional students with disability, who face not only limited supports but also long-standing systemic inequities compared to their metropolitan peers. We supported families dealing with discrimination in schools, as well as those impacted by the national bullying crisis — an issue that disproportionately affects children with disability. Advocacy WA also made a formal submission to the Commonwealth's Anti-Bullying Rapid Review, ensuring the voices and needs of students with disability were not overlooked in shaping national responses.

Advocacy in the Media

We continued our strategy of trial by media to amplify the realities of disability in regional WA. Through interviews with ABC's Andrew Collins, Peter Barr, Nadia Mitsopoulos, Nas Campanella, and multiple appearances on GWN, as well as stories in the West Australian, South West Times, Bunbury Herald, and Busselton Dunsborough Times, we kept disability front of mind in public discourse.

These stories covered everything from inaccessible housing and transport, to education barriers and lack of services. By sharing real lived experiences, we highlighted not just the gaps, but also the urgent need for government, business, and communities to step up.

ensuring the voices and needs of students with disability were not overlooked in shaping national responses.

Policy Influence and Submissions

Behind the scenes, Advocacy WA engaged in a wide program of lobbying and submissions to ensure systemic change. We met with:

- Hon. Don Punch, Hannah Beazley, Steve Thomas, Michelle Boylan
- Senior policy advisors
- Shire representatives
- The Jobs and Skills Commissioner
- The NDIS State Manager

We also submitted to over 10 major reviews and consultations, including:

- WA School Education Act Review
- Foundational Supports Review
- NDIS Amendment Bill
- Post-School Success Review
- NDIS Support Lists Review
- Aviation Ombudsman Scheme
- Registration Framework Review
- DITRD's Whole of Journey Guide
- Guardianship and Administration Act Review
- WA Firearms Act Review

Each submission was built on client stories and data from our region ensuring that rural experiences were not just included, but prioritised.



2025-2026 RoadMap

As we embark on the 2025-2026 year, Advocacy WA remains dedicated to championing the rights, needs, and aspirations of individuals with disabilities, their families and carers. Through proactive advocacy, strategic partnerships, and continuous improvement, we are poised to make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

Projects that Support the Disability Community

We will focus on projects that we think add value and opportunity to the disability community in South West WA. This includes pushing for free tickets to events for people living with disability and pushing for more inclusive events. We will run our very successful youth employment project with PWDWA once again, this time in Eaton and the Shire of Dardanup. We will also run training and information sessions on self-advocacy and develop peer support networks and disability mentors across the South West. We will continue our project with Enable WA, running provider and support worker workshops on the rights of NDIS participants.

Empowering Staff for Client-Centric Service:

Our staff members are the heart of Advocacy WA, and we recognise the pivotal role they play in serving our clients. We will expand our continuous improvement and staff development activities to ensure we are up to date on legislative and policy changes and can provide the best advice and advocacy to our clients. We will continue to provide client-centric, empathetic, and effective support.

“we are poised to make a lasting impact on the live of those we serve”



Seek more diversified funding streams:

We will seek alternative avenues of funding. We will also tender to expand our service area to include the Geraldton region and parts of the wheatbelt. We are the leading rural advocacy agency in WA with a better understanding of the needs of rural people with disability than any other agency. We will of course keep our home base firmly in Bunbury.



Strong collaborative partnerships:

Advocacy WA will not only sustain our valuable partnerships with organisations like PWdWA, GSCLS, Enable WA and VALID but also actively seek new partners. More partnerships will enable us to broaden our impact and tackle disability-related challenges on a larger scale.



Advocate for a fair go for regional, rural and remote people with disability:

In the upcoming year, Advocacy WA remains committed to systemic advocacy for people with disabilities. We will continue to push for better outcomes for regional and rural people with disability (the lowest plan utilisation rates for any NDIS cohort), particularly regarding changes to the NDIS and the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations.

We will continue to write to and seek audiences with ministers and their advisors, ensuring that the voices and concerns of those we represent are heard at the highest levels of government.



A continued focus on financial management:

Advocacy WA is committed to enhancing our financial management processes to ensure that every dollar we receive is utilised to its fullest potential in supporting those we serve. This commitment to transparency, accountability, and prudent financial stewardship is fundamental to our mission.



Buy our own building

We believe that long term sustainability will only be achieved if we own our premises and if we can find a building that allows us to lease a small portion to neutralise costs.



Rajinder (Raj) Sunner

Treasurer's Report



Auditors Report

Everything we achieve is made possible because of the people we work with and for. Thank you for being part of Advocacy WA's story here's to another year of creating change together.

We welcome new members to be part of the Advocacy WA community. By joining, you bring your skills, ideas, and passion for inclusion to help strengthen our work and amplify the voices of people with disability. Membership is simple forms are available on our website.

Connect with Us



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