

# Looking Ahead

## Strategic Plan 2006–2009



Association for Children with a Disability



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# Looking ahead

This Strategic Plan looks ahead to June 2009, the year before the 2010 Victorian State Election and the 2010 Federal Election.

When our Association began as the Action Group for Disabled Children on 13 September 1980, it was made up of six parents of children with a disability sitting in a lounge room.

They talked about how to overturn a decision made by a service provider which they believed was not in the best interests of their children. Then they took action. Those parents won that battle and word spread.

Since then, our Association has grown to a membership of over 4,000 families, covering all types of disabilities and all areas of Victoria.

## Telling it like it is

Despite our increased size, in both membership and budget, we remain the same passionate and determined self-help and advocacy group exemplified by 'the originals' of 1980 and other parent activists involved throughout the years.

Our tell-it-like-it-is approach challenges professionals and government decision-makers to think beyond the comforts of policy rhetoric and to focus on the way families live.

It is more important than ever that public policy decision-making is based on a true reflection of real-life family experiences of disability.

## Parent passion and energy

The strength of our Association is the passion and energy of parents of children with a disability. Other family members, including grandparents and siblings, are also major contributors to our overall family perspective on disability.

When you harness the passion and skills of our members with the best aspects of corporate professionalism, you get a very strong organisation, one that changes lives and makes a real and positive difference to the world.



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# Purpose and principles



Our tell-it-like-it-is approach challenges professionals and government decision-makers to think beyond the comforts of policy rhetoric and to focus on the way families live.

The Association for Children with a Disability exists to assist families of children with a disability through information, support and advocacy.

## Statement of purpose

- To empower parents of children with a disability to be as self-sufficient as possible in advocating on behalf of their child and family.
- To promote and advance the rights of children with a disability and their families.
- To advocate on behalf of children with a disability and their families to ensure the best possible support and services are available.
- To work collaboratively with other organisations to improve the service system for children with a disability and their families.

## Our services

- Information resources for families.
- Parent Support (free telephone information and advocacy support for families).
- Advocacy and community education.

## Guiding principles

- To be responsive to the needs of families of children with a disability.
- To provide a professional, quality service.
- To be proactive by raising ideas with government and awareness in the community about the needs of families of children with a disability.

## Age range of children

Our Association is focussed on families of children with a disability aged 0-18 years.

While we work in close co-operation with other organisations and networks that provide advocacy and support for young adults with a disability aged 19+ and their families, our core business activities are designed to provide direct support to families who have a child with a disability up to the age of 18.

# Strategic directions

The strategic directions which underpin our Plan are:

## Building on our strengths

We will maintain the high quality of our existing core business strengths, including our:

- Parent Support service.
- Bi-monthly *NoticeBoard* magazine.
- Sibling information resources.
- *Family Perspectives on Disability* community education presentations for professionals and the community.

## Advocacy loud and clear

We will be louder, clearer and more visible in our public policy advocacy to state and federal governments.

## Clear priorities

We will be more systematic about setting realistic priorities and goals for our work, given our level of staffing and resources.

## Collaboration

We will be more proactive in building collaborative relationships with other organisations and networks that are working to improve services and assistance for families of children with a disability.

## New spheres of support

We will think and act creatively to harness support from the corporate sector and the community.

## Being there for parents

We will always be there for parents, just a phone call away, to provide information and support.



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# Organisational structure

Our Association is a non-profit organisation with a membership of parents of children with a disability, other family members and supporters from the community, including professionals and service providers who work with families.

We are incorporated as an Association under the Victorian Associations Incorporation Act (1981) and officially registered as a charity with Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status from the Australian Taxation Office.

Our organisation is governed by a voluntary Committee of Management (CoM) which operates under rules set out in our Constitution. As part of their responsibilities, CoM members are actively involved in publicly representing our Association.

Our audited financial accounts are published in the September Annual Report edition of our bi-monthly magazine, NoticeBoard.

## Income from government

The largest source of funding for our core business is from the Disability Services Division of the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS). We also receive significant grants from the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET) and the DHS Office for Children (OFC).

## Donations and philanthropic support

In Victoria, we have a vibrant philanthropic sector willing to consider funding an organisation like ours for one-off projects of benefit to families of children with a disability.

Over the past three years, we have had support from a variety of trusts and foundations. We envisage that we will continue to seek and receive philanthropic support for one-off projects during the next three years.

Our Association does not employ any paid staff in a fundraising role, nor undertake traditional fundraising activities such as raffles, tin collections or phone canvassing for donations.

Rather, in an effort to increase our income from donations, we have focussed on a low-key, 'no cost' approach by inviting our members to consider making a donation in addition to their membership fee and/or drawing on their personal and professional networks to encourage others to make a donation.

## Paid staff

Our current number of paid staff is equivalent to 6.6 Effective Full Time (EFT) positions. See Organisational Chart on page 5.

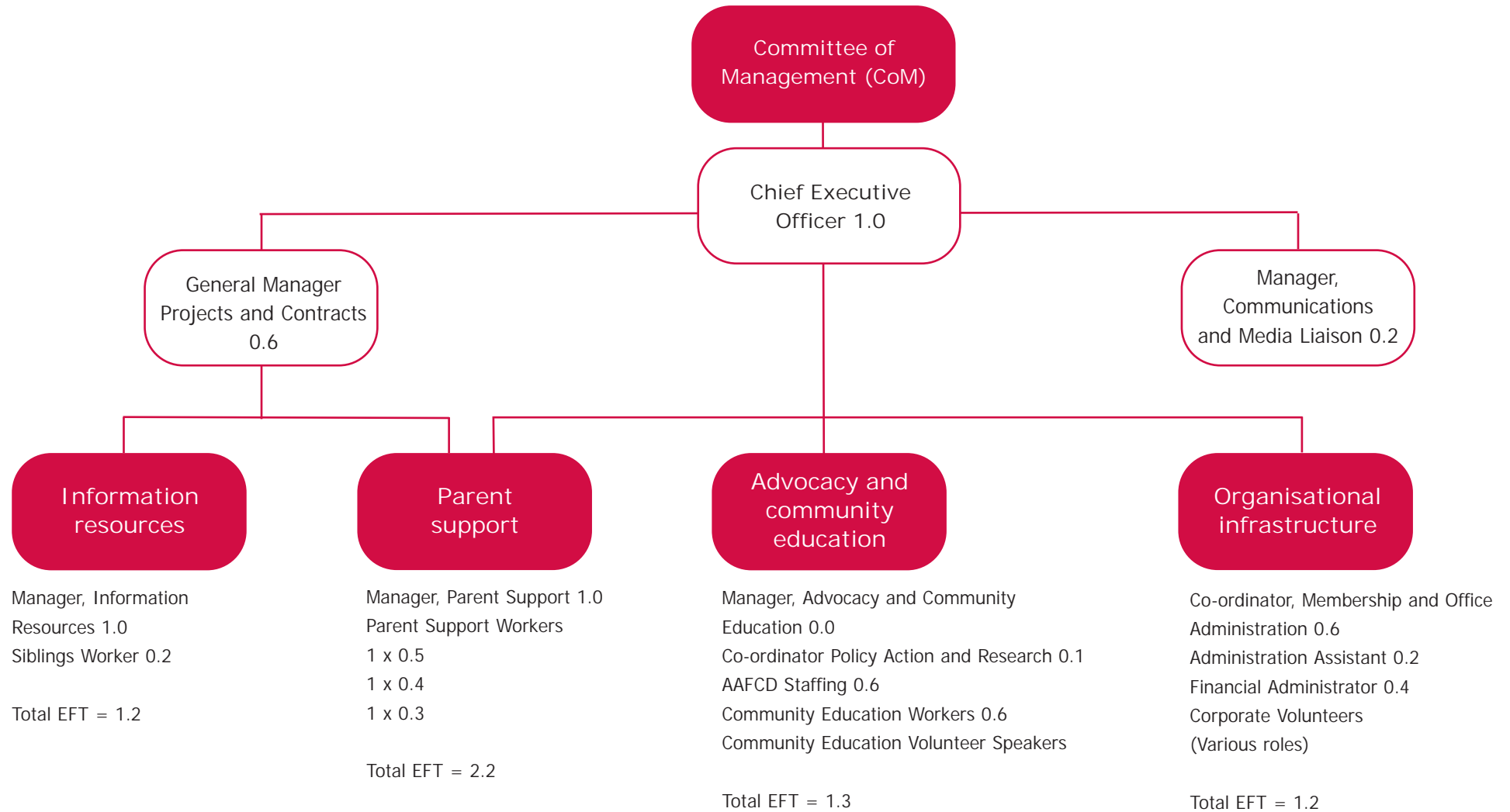
## Volunteers

In addition to the voluntary commitment of our CoM members, our community education work is built on contributions from our team of volunteer parent speakers who help to conduct our *Family Perspectives on Disability* community education presentations for professionals and service providers and students.

We have recently recruited a number of volunteers from the corporate sector. The skills and commitment of our growing band of corporate volunteers are a much appreciated new asset for our Association.

# Organisational chart 2007

Note: Decimals refer to EFT (effective full-time fraction), eg. based on a 38 hour week, 0.5 EFT is 19 hours per week. Total EFT=7.7



# 1. Information resources

## Objective:

To provide a range of comprehensive information resources for families of children with a disability to assist them to be as self-sufficient as possible in advocating on behalf of their family.

### Existing strengths

- High quality *NoticeBoard* magazine that is widely read and appreciated by members.
- Extensive recognition of the *Through the Maze* and *Helping You and Your Family* booklets as key statewide resources for families of children with a disability.
- Unique resources to assist siblings through [www.yourshout.org.au](http://www.yourshout.org.au) and the *Supporting Siblings* booklet for parents.
- Widespread recognition of the value of our publication *The Behaviour Challenge: Issues and Solutions for Children and Young Adults with Difficult Behaviour*.



### Issues and challenges

- Providing access to the specific information families and carers seek in relation to particular disabilities, the different stages of childhood, and local and regional services.
- Maintaining an appropriate mix of information resources in an environment where there is increasing use of the Internet by families and professionals but many families who do not use the Internet.
- Ensuring that our information reaches all who need it in a format that is accessible and useful to them.
- Maintaining an appropriate mix of information targeted directly to siblings, together with information on sibling issues for families and service providers.

### Strategic directions 2006–09

- Build on existing strengths by improving core information resources:
  - NoticeBoard
  - Association website
  - Through the Maze
  - Helping You and Your Family
  - Supporting Siblings
  - Your Shout website
- Improve the design of our information resources to ensure that at each stage throughout childhood, families and carers of children with a disability have access to key information relevant to that particular stage.
- Strengthen partnerships with a range of organisations and community networks to achieve improved provision of information to families.

In addition to:

- Publishing four high quality editions of *NoticeBoard*.
- Regular updates to our website [www.acd.org.au](http://www.acd.org.au)

We will:

- Establish a new website [www.sibs.org.au](http://www.sibs.org.au) for young children, parents and professionals who are not catered for by the teenage sibling focus of the Your Shout website [www.yourshout.org.au](http://www.yourshout.org.au).
  - Improve arrangements for the distribution of information resources to families in co-operation with other services and networks.
  - Contribute to the combined efforts of parent groups and organisations to publish information resources on post-school options for parents of young adults with a disability aged 15+.
- Publish a series of new information resources for parents including:
    - *Helping You and Your Family* for families of children with a disability during the early years.
    - Through the Maze Information Sheets
    - Education Tip Sheets
    - Sibling Fact Sheets

## 2. Parent support

### Objective:

To provide a high quality Parent Support service (free telephone information and advocacy support), to empower families to be as self-sufficient as possible in advocating on behalf of their family.

#### Existing strengths

- Experienced Parent Support team, all of whom are parents of children with a disability, with a well established reputation for providing high quality service.
- Unique service model incorporating a combination of understanding, motivation and empowerment for families that can only be delivered by another parent of a child with a disability.

#### Issues and challenges

- Ensuring that all Victorian parents of children with a disability aged 0–18 years have information about our service.
- Responding with positive strategies to address systemic problems evident in the reasons families call us for assistance, including: education issues; referral options for families of children with severe behavioural difficulties; aids and equipment; post-school issues for young adults aged 15+; complex family issues such as poverty, loneliness and social isolation, mental health, family breakdown and domestic violence.
- Optimising the balance of Parent Support staff time dedicated to one-to-one provision of information and support with involvement in broader information, support and advocacy strategies to assist parents and families.

#### Strategic directions 2006–09

- Improve knowledge of our Parent Support service amongst: early years families of children with a disability (ages 0–6); parents of children with a disability whose first language is other than English; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents of children with a disability.
- Ensure our advocacy and community work is informed by evidence from Parent Support about the structural causes of difficulties for families.
- Increase opportunities for Parent Support Workers to contribute to information resources, parent workshops and other strategies to provide information to parents at an earlier stage of the life cycle.

In addition to:

- Parent Support Workers contributing to our information resources and advocacy and community education work.

We will:

- Maintain the high quality of our Parent Support service (free telephone information and advocacy support for families).
- Review our provision of workshops and information sessions for parents and implement new arrangements for these in the future.
- Improve administrative systems for recording and analysing key advocacy and community education issues evident from our Parent Support service.

### 3. Advocacy and community education

#### Objective:

To educate key decision-makers within government, service providers and the community about the realities of life for families of children with a disability and to influence these groups to improve the support available to families.

#### Existing strengths

- Our Association is held in high regard by many key decision-makers for the value we add to public policy decision-making processes.
- Our *Family Perspectives on Disability* presentations are well recognised for the value they offer to the training and professional development of students and staff who work with families of children with a disability.
- Through our role in auspicing the Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD), we have a significant presence for input into decision-making on national policy.

#### Issues and challenges

- Ensuring that our advocacy and community education work reflects our broad membership—across all ages, all disabilities, and all areas of Victoria.
- Fully utilising our potential to influence public policy decision-making through the mainstream media.
- Limited staffing capacity to undertake advocacy and community education work
- Prioritising issues and deploying our advocacy and community education resources in a way that optimises positive results for families.

#### Strategic directions 2006–09

- Maintain strong contributions to key public policy consultation and advisory processes.
- Be active in the mainstream media when necessary to achieve outcomes for families of children with a disability.
- Foster co-operative relationships with other organisations that shape public opinion on disability and social policy.
- Be more systematic in prioritising and actioning our advocacy work.
- Expand the reach of our *Family Perspectives on Disability* community education presentations.
- Contribute to the strength of AAFCD as a voice for families on national issues.

In addition to:

- Maintaining strong representation on key government reference groups and other advisory processes.
- Actively promoting the interests of parents of children with a disability within the decision-making processes of the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH).
- Maintaining high quality provision of our *Family Perspectives on Disability* community education presentations for professionals, service providers and students.

We will:

- Actively support the co-operative efforts of the Coalition for Disability Rights to raise the profile of disability issues and seek a range of new policy commitments from the major parties in the lead up to the 2010 Victorian State Election.
- Foster collaborative approaches to advocacy with a range of other key networks and organisations.
- Initiate advocacy action in priority areas not covered by the work of existing advocacy networks and coalitions.
- Increase our capacity for mainstream media coverage through training and support for key members of Committee and staff.
- Implement a consultation process with members to update our public policy advocacy priorities after the 2006 Victorian State Election.
- Extend the reach of our *Family Perspectives on Disability* community education presentations to all Victorian trainee teachers in 2008.
- Strengthen the AAFCD website to provide a focus for member input to national policy priorities for the 2007 Federal Election.

## 4. Organisational infrastructure

### Objective:

To maintain efficient and transparent systems for all matters relating to management, administration and corporate governance.

#### Existing strengths

- An experienced and committed team of staff and volunteers.
- A Committee of Management with a breadth of experience and skills.
- An organisational culture that values member input to evaluation, review and quality improvement.
- A sound financial position including guaranteed core funding from government to 2009 and increased income from memberships and donations.
- A recent upgrade of our IT systems.
- A long-term lease for our office premises.

#### Issues and challenges

- The demand for our services often exceeds our capacity to deliver based on current staffing levels.
- Maintaining service quality during peak times, particularly in the event of staff absence due to illness or leave.
- Promoting the benefits of membership to families and professionals who may not be aware of our service.
- Increasing awareness of our organisation within the corporate sector and community who are not directly affected by disability.
- Limited funding to cover the costs of running the Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD).

#### Strategic directions 2006–09

- Ensure quality management arrangements for all staff and volunteers are maintained.
- Identify priority areas for the deployment of new staffing in the event that additional funding is secured.
- Explore options to achieve new funding and staffing targets while still maintaining a focus on delivering quality outcomes from existing funding levels.
- Be more assertive in promoting the benefits of membership to families of children with a disability, professionals and other supporters within the corporate sector and the community.
- Resolve long-term funding issues for the Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD) and our work on national issues.

In addition to:

- Maintaining quality management and support of paid staff and volunteers.
- Continued effectiveness of Committee of Management decision-making processes.
- Fulfilling all accountability and corporate governance requirements.
- Continued efficiency in membership administration.
- Maintaining efficient day-to-day financial management.
- Continuing with the current low-key approach of encouraging members to make a donation and/or draw on their personal and professional networks to encourage others to make a donation.

We will:

- Complete the transition to new office premises.
- Pursue funding for additional paid staff up to a total of 10 Effective Full-time (EFT) positions with a focus on increased capacity for our advocacy and community education work. (See Projected Organisational Chart on page 14.)
- Devise and implement decision-making protocols for all new staffing positions or projects, including a checklist to ensure that any new staffing or funding proposals take into account appropriate management support.
- Update our Constitution to reflect modern corporate governance arrangements.
- Launch specific marketing strategies to promote the benefits of membership to families, professionals and organisations, and to attract financial support from the corporate sector and community.
- Initiate a comprehensive business planning process for the Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD).

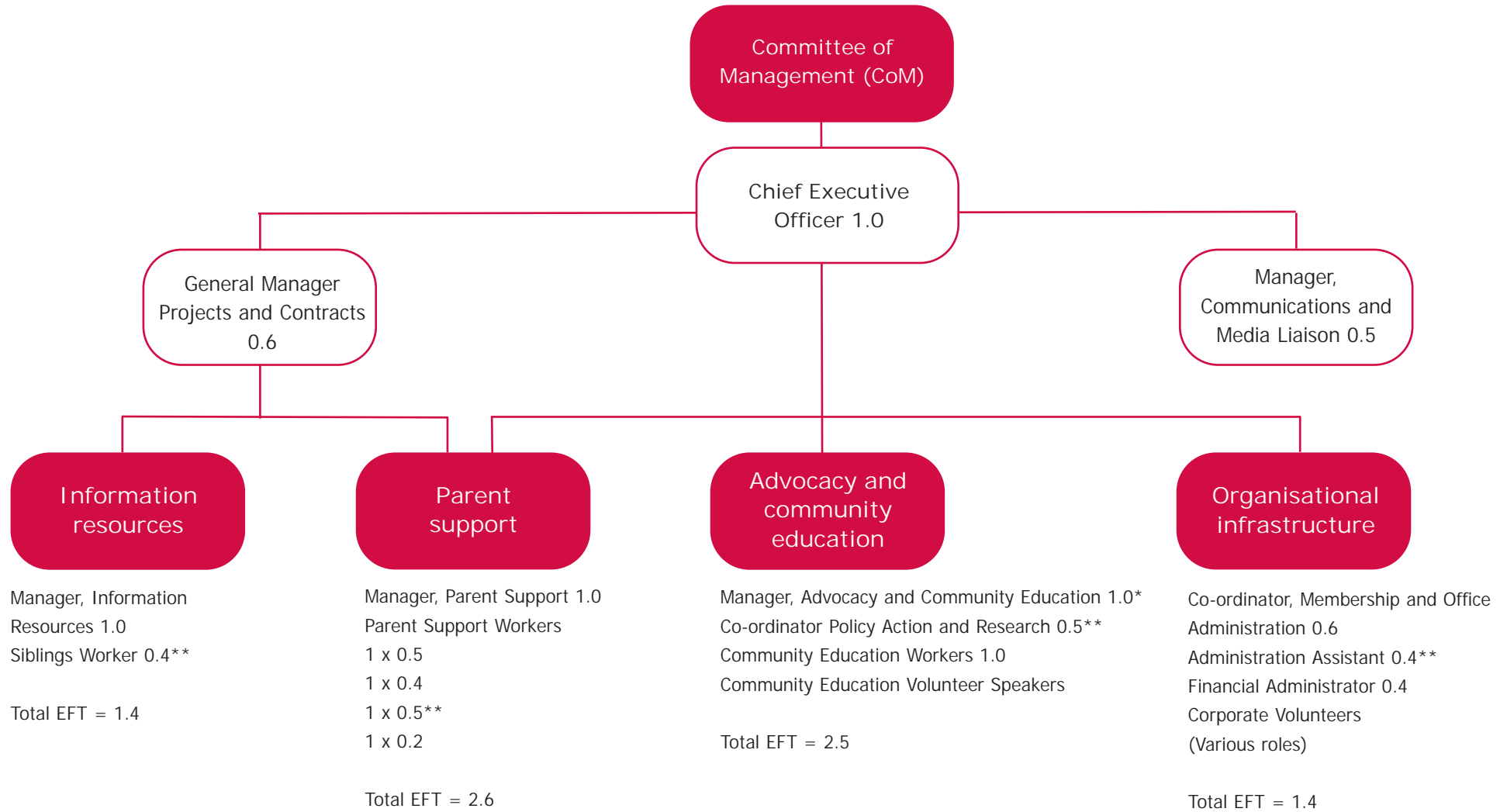
# Projected organisational chart

Decimals refer to EFT (effective full-time fraction)  
 Total EFT= 10.0 increased from 7.1 (Growth of 40%)

\*Denotes new position

\*\*Denotes upgrade of current position

Note: This chart does not include volunteers or AAFCD staff.



# Measuring outcomes

In addition to monitoring the progress of the implementation of the key tasks outlined above, the following output measures will be recorded to assist in evaluating organisational performance during 2007.

Information resources	Parent support	Advocacy and community education
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Number of printed copies of our information resources distributed.</li><li>2. Number of hits on our websites.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Number of families assisted through our Parent Support service.</li><li>4. Number of other instances of assisting families indirectly through information provided to professionals, organisations.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Details of positive government decisions for families of children with a disability that we have contributed to through our advocacy and community work.</li><li>6. Audience numbers for our <i>Family Perspectives on Disability</i> presentations and analysis of evaluation data on their views of the value of the presentation in assisting their work with families of children with a disability.</li></ol>

# Annual Strategic Plan review



Our Association has grown to a membership of over 4,000 families, covering all types of disabilities and all areas of Victoria.

This Strategic Plan will be updated in January 2008 to include lists of key initiatives for the period to June 2009.

## Your feedback

Your feedback on our Strategic Plan or any other aspect of our work is most welcome at any time.

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