Association for Children with a Disability

40 YEARS OF SPEAKING UP

Annual Report 2020

Contents

ACD is the leading advocacy organisation for children with disability and their families in Victoria. Our vision is for children with disability and their families to have the same rights and opportunities as other children and families. We are a not-for-profit organisation led by and for families of children with disability.

Our work

- We **empower** families with knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve the best for their children.
- We **advocate** for children with disability and their families.
- We **educate** service providers, professionals and the community to be inclusive of children with disability and to work in partnership with families.
- We **influence** government and public policy to advance the rights of children with disability and their families.

ACD supports all families in Victoria with children with disability aged 0 to 18 years old.

Our services

For families and professionals we offer:

- Support Line
- Workshops and peer support
- Information and resources

For more information visit **www.acd.org.au**

President's Report

At the heart of ACD is empowering families with the knowledge, skills and confidence to speak up for their child.

This year we developed our new three-year Strategic Plan with a focus on four priority areas where we want to make a difference:

1. **Safety of children**
2. **NDIS**
3. **Education and employment**
4. **Support for families**

Our Strategic Plan embeds an approach to measuring our progress, which includes determining how much we do and who we reach. We want to ensure the families we support reflect the diversity of the Victorian community, satisfaction with our services and the difference we make.

Over the past year we have strengthened our systemic advocacy voice to speak up for children with disability and their families. We have made submissions on important areas such as education and the NDIS, met with state and federal ministers, hosted roundtable discussions and developed our Federal Election Platform. Our voice is strong because it is informed by our direct work with families.

The importance of ACD is reflected in the work the team has delivered over the past year, including:

- **Building the capacity of families through the delivery of 100 workshops**
- **Empowering more than 1,000 families who called our Support Line**
- **Providing more than 10,000 families with information and resources**

We have also done significant work to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of our communication channels. I would particularly like to thank the Marketing Sub-Committee Chair Sarah Mitchell and members Alison Polyik and Catherine Devine who highlighted the strategic need to implement these improvements.

As I come to the end of my seven-year term as ACD President, I am especially proud of our work supporting more than 5,000 families transition to the NDIS – the biggest social reform of our generation. We also trained more than 3,000 professionals to ensure the child and family workforce can assist families to enter the NDIS now, and into the future. Another great achievement was our lead role in establishing Changing Places in Victoria, which has gone on to become a national government initiative.

A special highlight of recent years has been our partnership with Zoos Victoria to host Dream Night at Melbourne Zoo. This magical event is a wonderful example of inclusive fun and entertainment.

I would like to thank the ACD Board for ensuring our strong governance, and the ACD staff team for their work supporting families of children with disability every day.

For the first time in our history, ACD will be led by a young person with disability. I congratulate Matthew Holland on his appointment as ACD's next President and welcome his contribution to ACD's voice as we continue to speak up.

Georgina Frost, President

CEO's Report

In this our 40th anniversary year, there has never been a more important time to speak up for children with disability and their families.

In 1980 a group of parents got together to try and stop the closure of a respite facility. They spoke up and took action. These families went on to build a network of support for other families and ACD was born. All that we have achieved this year has held true to the legacy of those parents 40 years ago.

A great example of this was our systemic advocacy throughout COVID, which was informed by the direct experiences of children with disability and their families in Victoria.

By engaging with families through our Facebook page we were able to take the issues raised directly to government and decision-makers to ensure the voices of children with disability and their families were heard. We provided insight into the issues families were facing and advocated for practical solutions.

We worked collaboratively with other disability organisations to speak up for better support for students with disability during learning from home and for more flexible support through the NDIS.

Much of our work today is done in partnership. A highlight over the past 12 months has been our work with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to train more than 1,700 child and family workers in how the NDIS can support at-risk families.

> *"I think people underestimate how challenging these times are for families of children with disabilities. I'm so glad we have you in there batting for us every day. You are greatly appreciated." - Parent*

Looking ahead, ACD is in a strong position going forward. We were successful in securing an Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grant to fund our Support Line, workshops, and peer support for families over the next three years. We also have additional funding from the Victorian Government to provide enhanced advocacy support through the Support Line for complex family situations.

Our work this year was made possible with support from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Education and Training, the NDIA and our philanthropic partners the Barr Family Foundation and The Harry Secomb Foundation.

I would like to thank the ACD Board and staff team for continuing to deliver on the vision of those parents who founded ACD 40 years ago.

Karen Dimmock, CEO

Support Line

We supported 1,047 families with over-the-phone information and advocacy support that improved the lives of their child and family.

Our Support Line provided information and advocacy support to 1,047 families of children with disability across Victoria. This included a 15% increase in advocacy support for complex situations on the previous year.

Families who contacted our Support Line reported they received timely and accurate information that increased their capacity to advocate for their child. Families said they felt more confident to resolve issues and concerns themselves and were better equipped with strategies to drive positive outcomes for their child. Feedback from families highlighted the professionalism, knowledge and empathy of ACD Support Advisors.

ACD was highly responsive to the increased demand for advocacy support due to COVID, as families navigated new levels of complexity in the areas of education and the NDIS. We successfully met this demand and supported families to advocate for their child during learning from home, and to find innovative ways to use their child's NDIS Plan to meet the needs of their child and family.

Our work with Parentline was an opportunity to improve the capacity of over-the-phone services to support families of children with disability. A child's disability impacts all aspects of family life, and by working together with other services we seek to ensure that families' needs are fully understood and lead to connection with appropriate supports.

ACD continued to facilitate the Strengthening Parent Support Program network that connects families of children with disability with information and support in their local area.

> *"I could ask for information on behalf of the families and get a comprehensive answer to give to families." - Professional*

> *"ACD helped me clarify my thoughts and gave me positive, practical suggestions to move forward." - Parent*

Service delivery

1,047 calls to Support Line

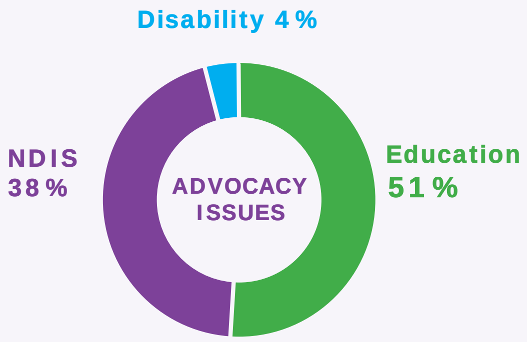
Positive impact

92% reported an improvement in their child's situation

Satisfaction

97% would recommend the Support Line

Advocacy issues



Child's disability

75%	Autism Spectrum Disorder
15%	Intellectual Disability
10%	Physical Disability

Who we reached

20%	Regional/rural
18%	Culturally and linguistically diverse
2%	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Workshops & Peer Support

We delivered 105 workshops and attended five expos, reaching 2,394 families and professionals across Victoria.

This year we found new ways to deliver our workshops as we moved from face-to-face to online delivery due to COVID.

Strengthening the child and family workforce

Through our strong partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare we delivered 24 NDIS training sessions to 1,150 professionals across metropolitan Melbourne and in six regional communities. Our focus was on supporting the child and family workforce to work with the NDIS to support at-risk families. 93% of attendees rated our training as very good to excellent.

> *"I've worked with families and disability for over 20 years and that was the most inspiring training I've been to on the NDIS."*
> *- Child and family professional*

Supporting regional families

We expanded our reach in northern regional Victoria through our work with Inspired Carers. ACD workshops were presented to families in Wodonga, Shepparton and Bendigo on a range of topics including Healthy Mothers Healthy Families, NDIS Plan Review, Self-managing your NDIS Plan, Preparing for your Student Support Group meeting, Advocating for your child at school, and Think about the Future career planning.

> *"Often I can't travel to where the workshops are, but with the online sessions I've been able to attend and get lots of information."*
> *- Parent*

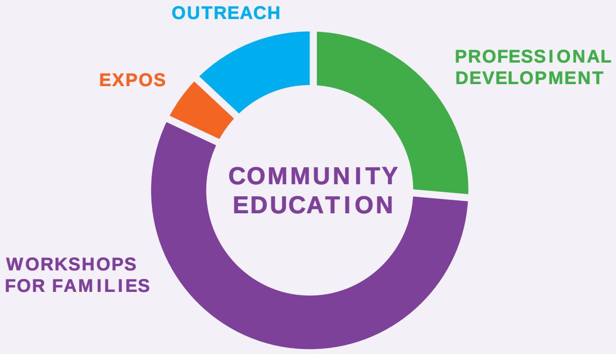
Community education

105
workshops & expos

Audience

1,416 professionals

978 families



Positive impact

✓ **100%** of families reported an increase in their understanding of Student Support Groups (SSGs)

✓ **100%** reported a better understanding of their child's NDIS Plan Review

✓ **100%** of families reported an increase in aspirations for their child's transition to work or study

Satisfaction

☺ **97%** would recommend ACD workshops to others

Helping families prepare for Student Support Group meetings

ACD delivered six online workshops to 108 families to help them prepare for Student Support Group (SSG) meetings with their child's school. Content was expanded to include information about reasonable adjustments during learning from home in response to the changing needs of families during COVID. Post-workshop feedback showed 100% of families now had a better understanding of SSGs and 91% felt more confident speaking up for their child.

> *"It was so good to get clear and practical information from someone with lived experience of supporting their child with disability at school. I walked away feeling hopeful and stronger." - Parent*

Healthy Mothers Healthy Families

With support from the NDIA, we concluded our two-year collaboration with Monash University to run Healthy Mothers Healthy Families workshops. Mothers who attended these workshops reported a positive improvement in their personal health and well-being and capacity for self-care.

> *"I've finally given myself permission to take time out." – Parent*

Think about the Future

Our series of Think about the Future workshops developed in partnership with the Department of Education and Training continued to be popular this year. Families who attended these workshops reported a 60% increase in confidence to start a career planning conversation with their child as well as higher aspirations for their child's future as they enter adulthood. These workshops looked at parent and child aspirations, the role of families in career education and how schools support the transition to work.

> *"I have a son with high support needs and this workshop opened my eyes to some options I hadn't previously thought about. I left feeling quite energised." - Parent*

NDIS Plan Review and Self-managing

Our NDIS workshops provided practical information and tips for how to prepare for a Plan Review and self-manage your child's NDIS Plan. Workshop content included the latest information about changes to the NDIS to support families during COVID. Post-workshop feedback showed that all workshop participants had a better understanding of the Plan Review process and 90% felt more confident speaking up for their child.

Celebrating 40 Years of Advocacy

Our history

In 1980 a small group of families of children with disability met to try and stop the closure of a respite facility for children. These families went on to establish what would become the Association for Children with Disability (ACD).

What began from self-interest soon moved to a cause much greater as they tackled other issues affecting all children with disability. They had ideas about how the system and services could be improved. They worked collectively for positive change in the community. These families were trail-blazers and led the way for others who would follow. These families hoped for a better future for their children.

Then and now

Families and their love for their children is the driving strength of how ACD came to be. The over-the-phone support that was started by parent volunteers is now our busy Support Line. This free service is highly valued by both families and professionals across Victoria.

ACD produced its first information guide for families in 1985 and we have continued to provide up-to-date and independent information ever since. All of our information is written by families with lived experience of disability. Our online information and resources now reach a wide audience of both families and professionals across Victoria.

Our information sessions to small groups of parents have expanded to become a comprehensive program of workshops and peer support delivered to hundreds of families and professionals each year.

1980s

- Campaigned for supervisors and seat belts on school buses
- Appealed a decision that exempted children in preschool and early intervention from accessing the Handicapped Child's Allowance
- Campaigned for additional funding through the Program of Aids for Disabled People to address backlog
- Advocated for HACC personal care services to be provided by Support Workers not qualified nurses

Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

1990s

- Campaigned for widening eligibility criteria for Disabled Parking Scheme
- Advocated for expansion of home help services through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program
- Campaigned for increased early intervention for children with disability
- Advocated for the needs of families of children with disability during palliative care

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Association for Children with a Disability

Strong partnerships

ACD was built on working in partnership with families. We walk alongside families to support them as they navigate the journey of having a child with disability and what it means for their family.

We also work in partnership with other disability, child and family organisations to ensure that children with disability and their families are supported, valued and included in all aspects of life.

Speaking up

As a small group of parents we came together to write letters to Ministers and MPs raising our concerns and speaking up for the rights of our children. We met with many politicians telling them first-hand of our experiences and how the system needed to change. ACD now sits on multiple advisory groups and regularly meets with key decision-makers.

Forty years on and the challenges that families still face continue to motivate us. Many issues are still relevant today - inclusive education, early intervention, in-home help, funding for Assistive Technology and adequate respite. The strength of our advocacy is the model we use:

Self-advocacy: empowering families with the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their child

Individual advocacy: supporting families to advocate for their child

Systemic advocacy: raising families' issues with government and key decision-makers

2000s

- Advocated for better funding for early intervention and support to attend preschool
- Developed action plan with Royal Children's Hospital to better support rural families
- Spoke up to address the gap between Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement
- Advocated for better support for students with disability in government schools

Disability Standards for Education 2005

Convention on the Rights of People with Disability 2006

2010s

- Advocated to address waiting times for children to access Early Childhood Early Intervention plans
- Campaigned for the expansion of Changing Places across Victoria
- Spoke up at the Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion and Victorians with Disability
- Advocated for children with disability and families in the NDIS rollout, including quality and safeguarding

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 2013

2020s

- Campaigned for a family-centred approach to early childhood and the NDIS
- Advocated for Mental Health Practitioners in Schools to include Specialist Schools
- Spoke up for students with disability to be prioritised during COVID

Disability Royal Commission 2020

Information & Resources

Our online information and resources reached 10,000+ families and we are a trusted source of information.

The past year saw high growth in our online communications as we responded to the needs of families of children with disability during times of crisis and emergency. We also continued to provide regular information about disability, child and family supports across our communications channels.

Social media and website

Our Facebook page grew as a trusted source of information for families. From bushfires to COVID, we posted a range of information that met the needs of families of children with disability, including health and safety information, PPE, reasonable adjustments during learning from home, flexible use of NDIS Plans, the return to school, and respite options during restrictions.

We achieved this by using a breaking news format to share information as soon as it became available, and increased the frequency of posts from three a week to daily or twice daily.

Our Facebook community became a key driver of our systemic advocacy during COVID, as we took the issues that families raised directly to government and decision-makers. We also held a successful Facebook Live Q&A session with families about the outcome of our systemic advocacy on education issues with the Department of Education and Training.

We developed a COVID-19 latest information web page where we shared more detailed plain English information, including social stories for children with disability and resources for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. We developed nine fact sheets, including three in response to the needs of families during COVID, covering the NDIS, Support Workers, education and the Disability Royal Commission.

The frequency, breadth and high quality of our online communications was welcomed by families and returned a high level of engagement and positive feedback.

> *"The information from ACD has been my lifeline this year. I always point people in your direction for updates on COVID and the NDIS."*
> *- Parent*

Facebook

8,105 followers and likes

Website

🌐 **51,853** visitors

Top 3 ACD Fact Sheets

1. Writing a Carer Statement
2. Reasonable adjustments at school
3. 10 Tips for your NDIS planning meeting

Online newsletter

✉ **6,537** subscribers

NoticeBoard online newsletter

Our online newsletter reached over 6,500 subscribers, delivering information about supports, resources, family stories, opportunities to speak up, workshops and events. Both our newsletter and Facebook page included positive representation of children with disability in books and movies, reflecting the voice of children with disability to families and the community.

Advocacy

We increased our systemic advocacy to speak up for children with disability and their families.

Over the past 12 months ACD has undertaken significant systemic advocacy informed by the direct experiences of children with disability and their families.

Our submission to the Tune Review into the NDIS highlighted the need for family-centred planning, separate plans for major Assistive Technology and home and vehicle modifications, acceptance of recommendations of therapists and medical practitioners, face-to-face planning meetings and a clearer understanding around parental responsibility. We welcomed the government's response to the Review which included many of the things we advocated for in our submission.

Throughout COVID we collaborated with other disability organisations, such as Amaze, to advocate for the needs of students with disability during learning from home and the return to school. Our ongoing communication with the Department of Education and Training led to greater support for students with disability and more inclusive measures in the Victorian Government's COVID Response.

We also joined with disability advocacy organisations across Australia in an open letter to National Cabinet that resulted in an Advisory Committee for the COVID-19 Response for People with Disability.

We encouraged families to share their stories with the Disability Royal Commission, with a focus on the experiences of students with disability. ACD also joined with other disability and children’s organisations in making recommendations to the Minister for Disability, Child Protection and Carers to strengthen the safety net for children.

Across our submissions and consultations we highlighted the need for disability confidence and NDIS training for the child and family workforce. We continue to speak up for children with disability and their families at every opportunity.

> *"Thank you for being the voice of our kids." - Parent*

Advocacy success

✓ Mental Health Practitioners in Schools to include specialist schools

✓ Students with disability prioritised during COVID

Our systemic advocacy included:

- Meetings with the Deputy Premier, Minister for Disability, Parliamentary Secretary for Schools and Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood
- Two Roundtable discussions on starting school transition and experiences of remote and flexible learning
- Presentation to the Joint Standing Committee on NDIS
- Submission to the Tune Review into the NDIS
- Disability Taskforce on COVID Response
- Regular advice to DET and DHHS

We welcomed announcements in relation to:

- Early Childhood Early Intervention Reset
- Students with disability prioritised in the return to school after remote and flexible learning
- Mental Health Practitioners extended to Special schools

ACD Board

ACD is run by and for families of children with disability and our Board brings both personal experience and diverse skills to the work we do.

Georgina Frost, President
Georgina is a lawyer with more than 20 years' experience in dispute resolution and as a board member in the legal, education and disability sectors. As the mother of a young woman with learning disability, she understands the complexity and challenges of navigating the education and disability systems. Georgina has been on the Board since 2011 and President from 2013.

Matthew Holland, Vice President
Matthew works full-time at the Level Crossing Removal Project and is captain of the Victorian Paralympic Football Team. He has been a Board member since 2017 and is Vice President. Matthew has cerebral palsy.

Liz Ellis, Secretary
Liz is a qualified social worker and works in the disability sector. Liz has lived experience of disability and brings extensive experience in the advocacy sector. Liz has been a Board member since 2013 and Secretary since 2017.

Nicole Butera, Treasurer
Nicole is a chartered accountant and a foster carer who has provided a home to many children with disability over the past eight years. Nicole has been a Board member since 2012 and is Treasurer.

Sarah Mitchell
Sarah is an experienced sales and marketing leader who has been a Board member since 2017 and is Chair of the Marketing Sub-Committee.

Mathew Hilakari
Mathew has worked in the public sector for the last decade, and brings experience in government and communications. He has been a Board member since 2012 and is on the Policy Sub-committee.

Alison Polyik
Alison has experience in funding, partnerships and marketing in the corporate and philanthropic sectors, she has been a Board member since 2017 and is on the Marketing Sub-committee.

Catherine Devine
Catherine is the mother of three young boys, one of whom has complex medical needs and disability. Catherine's background is in marketing, communications and events in the corporate sector.

Erica Hussien
Erica has a background in administration and hospitality and two of her three children have disability. Her experiences encompass both early childhood and late teens.

Susan Stork-Finlay
Susan is as an occupational therapist, the mother of two children with disability and has a disability herself. Susan is a disability advocate with experience in governance, policy, finance and administration.

Financial Report

Balance Sheet as at 30 June 2020

ASSETS	2020	2019
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,337,032	1,566,904
Trade and Other Receivables	49,714	118,000
Total Current Assets	**2,386,746**	**1,684,904**
Non-current Assets		
Property, Plant and Equipment	41,790	59,055
TOTAL ASSETS	**2,428,536**	**1,743,959**
LIABILITIES		
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	48,659	90,607
Provisions	71,601	74,143
Deferred Revenue	1,338,152	808,027
Total Current Liabilities	**1,458,412**	**972,777**
Non-current Liabilities		
Provisions	8,681	6,617
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**1,467,093**	**979,394**
NET ASSETS	**961,443**	**764,565**

Profit & Loss as at 30 June 2020

INCOME		
Donations	942	7,131
Fee for Service	212,491	50,068
Government COVID Stimulus	158,000	0
Government Grants	432,460	805,556
Interest	10,015	8,984
Memberships	3,971	3,841
NDIA	395,465	392,002
NDIS Transition Grants	273,333	260,815
Philanthropic Grants	43,150	84,545
Sundry Income	15,302	1,643
TOTAL INCOME	**1,545,129**	**1,614,586**
EXPENDITURE		
Administration Expenses	28,987	41,769
Capital Purchases and Depreciation	26,477	25,146
Communications	31,926	17,589
Compliance	26,452	51,140
IT Development/Maintenance	42,875	44,316
Occupancy Expenses	57,386	73,460
Parent Workshops/Consultations	32,822	8,120
Project Partner Fees	131,119	259,195
Staffing Costs	959,696	1,033,224
Travel & Accommodation	10,513	17,626
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**1,348,251**	**1,571,584**
NET CURRENT YEAR SURPLUS	**196,878**	**43,002**

Auditor's Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of the Association for Children with a Disability Inc. (the Association), which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2020, the income and expenditure statement for the year then ended, the cash flow statement, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the certification by members of the committee on the annual statements giving a true and fair view of the financial position and performance of the Association.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Committee of the Association is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report, and has determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The Committee's responsibility also includes such internal control as the Committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the Association's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the Committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report gives a true and fair view of the financial position of the Association for Children with a Disability Inc. as at 30 June 2020 and its financial performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements, and the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012.

Basis of Accounting

Without modifying our opinion, we draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist the Association for Children with a Disability Inc. to meet the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose.

Graham Morris
Level 2, 33 Bank Street
South Melbourne, Victoria
Dated this 19 day of October 2020

Thank you

Thanks to the following organisations for their support throughout the year:

- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Health and Human Services
- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
- Barr Family Foundation
- The Harry Secomb Foundation (via Perpetual Trustees)

Dream Night at Melbourne Zoo

In October 2019 we held our third and largest Dream Night in partnership with Zoos Victoria. We distributed 2,300 tickets to children with disability and their families for this magical night of inclusive fun and entertainment.

Our aim this year was to increase the participation of families from culturally diverse and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. To do this, we reached out to a range of parent support groups and organisations which enabled us to build new relationships with these communities.

We also connected with organisations such as Gymnastics Victoria who set up inclusive activities for children to try out and get involved with in their local community.

Post-event surveys showed that 97% of families felt confident after Dream Night to visit the zoo on a regular day.

> *“Thank you for a truly magical evening - Dream Night is one of the highlights of our year when we feel free to just be us with no judgement." - Parent*

Association for
Children with a
Disability

40 YEARS
OF SPEAKING UP

www.acd.org.au