

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.

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



Association for
Children with a
Disability

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

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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

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Disability Discrimination Act 1992

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

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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

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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

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Disability Royal Commission 2020