

Issue 1, 2020

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Melbourne East Disability Advocacy promotes and protects the rights and interests of people who have an intellectual disability.

“Disability Rights are Human Rights”

Greetings friends of MEDA...

Here at MEDA, we are deeply concerned by the COVID-19 outbreak and our thoughts are with those impacted during this time.

At MEDA our top priority continues to be the health and safety of our community; which includes our consumers, our people and their families.

In these difficult circumstances we have implemented our business continuity plans and are focused on maintaining our connections with our community. We have implemented work from home for all staff and have conducted our last two Committee of Management meetings virtually to help keep staff and COM safe. We hope MEDA's newsletter finds you safe and taking care of your loved ones. It has certainly been a challenging time for many individuals.

This year we welcome two new Committee of Management members; Tony Corrigan and Debbie Orr. Tony is an experienced leader in Banking, Finance and Wealth markets and brings financial acumen and knowledge to MEDA. Debbie joins us with a strong client service and stakeholder management background. Both have been wonderful additions to the COM and have assimilated extraordinarily well under the circumstances.

Will Elder, our Vice President, and his wife Rochelle welcomed their first child, a beautiful baby boy at the beginning of March. It was a delight to celebrate his arrival and we are looking forward to meeting him face to face in the future.

Whilst the way we conduct our work has changed, MEDA's COM is actively working to see how we can continue to fundraise online and develop alternative ways to interact with our Volunteer community and consumers.



We welcome any feedback or suggestions from our community on how we take carriage over the next few months.

Stay safe and take care.

Mary Appleby
President

Citizen Advocacy Partnership Updates

We welcome new volunteer citizen advocate partners Kathleen and Nikola.

We farewell Caroline Kok who suddenly and sadly passed away in March. We thank and applaud Volunteer Citizen Advocate Rosemary C for her dedication and commitment to Carol over the past 31 years. We acknowledge and celebrate Carol & Rosemary's friendship and Carol's life.



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MEDA Program Manager's Update

We welcome everyone to 2020 and acknowledge what an extraordinary year it has been so far. **During this disruptive time please remember that MEDA remains available for advocacy whilst we are self isolating.**

Within Individual advocacy we are supporting 95 consumers with 110 advocacy issues. The top 3 advocacy issues include NDIS access and planning, abuse and neglect and discrimination.

With our Citizen Advocacy program we continue to engage our current volunteer citizen advocacy partnerships and support the recruitment of new volunteer citizen advocates.

Within the Systemic Advocacy program a lot of work has been happening around responding to key consultations around the Victorian State Disability Plan, and the National Disability Strategy.

The Royal Commission into violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disability commenced April 2019 and MEDA received additional funding to support people to be engaged with the Commission. With this additional funding MEDA has recruited a part time individual advocate, Miranda Darrer. We feel honored to be in a position to support people to have their stories and voices heard at the Commission. Since November 2019 we have supported 18 people to engage with the Royal Commission with public hearings, private sessions and written submissions.

Additionally we have worked in consultation with our Consumer Advisory Group to respond to the Commissions Issue Papers and have submitted a response to the Group Homes and Health Care for people with Cognitive disability issue papers.

February saw MEDA's Committee of Management meet for a planning day, reviewing MEDA's strategic plan, updating the fundraising plan and considering the organization's response to the Royal Commission.

We welcome 2 new Committee of management members Tony C and Debbie O who will provide great value to our diverse and dedicated committee.



As we continue to serve people with disability in our catchment we have received confirmation from our funding body, Department of Social Services (DSS) that our National Disability Advocacy Program funding will continue for another 2 years.

Jan M Executive Officer

MEDA is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS)

MEDA Privacy and Confidentiality

All information that MEDA collects in the provision of Advocacy Services in regards to consumers and volunteer citizen advocates is stored securely by staff and all your personal information is not disclosed to others without your consent. Please contact us if you have any questions.



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COVID-19 & MEDA's Response

MEDA remains firmly committed to continuing to provide our individual and volunteer citizen advocacy programs alongside people with disability. Although the MEDA team are working remotely we are regularly engaging with current consumers and responding to new enquiries. We are exploring a range of communication options with people in an effort to reduce feelings of isolation and to continue to support individual's diverse communication needs.

MEDA has joined many organisations in advocating for the visibility of people with disability to Government so additional supports and measures are considered when Government propose financial, workforce and resource supports.

We are continuing to support people to engage with the Royal Commission and to have their stories heard.

Although we appreciate it is an incredibly disruptive and difficult time we recognise the importance of having access to advocacy and advocates so we are doing everything we can to be available and to be present for people, whilst ensuring that protect some of our most vulnerable community members by

ensuring we follow the COVID-19 health and safety recommendations.



“Disability Rights are Human Rights”

MEDA's new slogan “Disability Rights are Human Rights”.

MEDA's Consumer Advisory Group spent some time considering what would be a slogan that would best represent or capture the purpose or principle of MEDA.

After much discussion and considering a range of options the Consumer Advisory Group recommended “Disability Rights are Human Rights” to highlight the importance of people with disability having rights alongside or complementary to human rights.

The plan is to use this slogan alongside MEDA's logo



“Disability Rights are Human Rights”

“Advocacy at the Intersections” Project

Jan and Libby are active members of a LGBTIQ+ Disability Advocacy Training and education Project Co-Design Team, facilitated by queerspace and the Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU). The Team’s goals include building capacity in the disability advocacy sector to respond to the needs of LGBTIQ+ people living with disability and shaping the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people within the sector.

MEDA is also reflecting upon how inclusive we are of LGBTIQ+ people living with disability and we continue to review our practice in this space.



Royal Commission Updates

The Royal Commission is an opportunity for people with disability to share their stories and to have their say about experiences around violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

We are particularly interested in ensuring that people with intellectual disability from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and CALD background are supported and visible to the Royal Commission.

We are spending time engaging with our local ATSI, Mullum Mullum Community and our local Chinese community



Issue Papers

MEDA has submitted a response to the Group Homes issues paper and the health care for people with cognitive disability issues paper.

We look forward to further opportunity to provide a voice for people with intellectual disability around key issues raised by the Royal Commission.

Consumer Advisory Group Update

Consumer Group

Members:

Jim, Jodie, Kathleen,
Eddie, Andrew & Jason



MEDA's Consumer Group members meet every 2 months. At the Consumer Advisory Group meetings in February a number of topics were discussed including an introduction to new staff member Miranda, results of the Sept - December consumer focused feedback question and selection of future questions, feedback on two of the Royal Commission Issues papers (Group Homes and Health Care access and support), and discussions on future training and activities of the Consumer Advisory Group. If anyone is interested in joining the Consumer Group please contact MEDA on 9877 7990.

MEDA New Staff Member : Miranda Darrer

Hi, I'm Miranda and I am very excited to be a new addition to the staff team here at MEDA! I am MEDA's new disability advocate and I started in January this year.

So far, I have really enjoyed working for MEDA, and feel really welcomed by our small team of staff, the consumer group and the consumers I have been supporting.

Here is a bit about me and my history:

I have worked in the disability sector for over 5 years ; working for organisations such as: Arts Access Victoria, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Yooralla, DHHS, YourDNA Creative Arts and volunteering for Arts Projects Australia.

I am currently near the end of my studies in a post graduate certificate in Disability and Inclusion at Deakin University. I also currently work for Arts Access Victoria supporting artists with intellectual disabilities in their creative practices.

With my sister and many friends of mine having intellectual disabilities, I recognise how disabling societal and attitudinal barriers are, and how essential it is that they are broken down. I am passionate about raising awareness of the human rights model of disability, with much work needing to be done for their to be true access and inclusion in our society.

I feel very lucky to be working with MEDA and am looking forward to the times ahead working here!



Consumer Focussed Feedback Question

During the September to December 2019 consumer focussed feedback question period there were 50 responses to the question “Do you feel included when working with your advocate” Of the 50 responses 100% said yes.

The comments reflect a continued positive response to the advocacy work undertaken by MEDA’s individual advocates.

“relief you are here”

“Couldn’t be without you”

“You are the only one who listens to me”

“Thankyou for letting me tell my story”

“You are the only one who helps me”

Be a part of MEDA

Become a Member or a Friend / Supporter

Do you know you can be a member or a friend or Supporter of MEDA?

Membership enables individuals to vote, to receive updates and support MEDA’s purpose. [We welcome new members Tony, Margaret, James, Alice, Annie & Jen Corrigan.](#)

Membership is \$30 individual, \$5 concession and \$50 for an organization.

Friends and Supporters of MEDA are engaged with MEDA’s fundraising and social activities.

Follow MEDA on Facebook or our Web site

Follow MEDA on Facebook. Like our MEDA Facebook page. Join in on the conversation that we are starting to build. Go to MEDA web site www.meda.org.au

MEDA’s Newsletter

If at any stage you are wanting to receive this newsletter by email or you are no longer wanting to receive this newsletter please let us know.

Contact Details:

Please don’t hesitate to call or email us if you have any questions or comments about this newsletter. We welcome your contributions.

If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please contact us.

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