



Mute

2021

COMMUNITY DISABILITY ALLIANCE HUNTER

ANNUAL REPORT



The cover photo are lots of images from different CDAH members and staff doing Zoom

Community Disability Alliance Hunter stands in solidarity with the traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to Elders past present and emerging. We acknowledge that this land always was and always will be Aboriginal land.



Photo: Kristy Trajcevski CDAH President

A Message from the President

Dear Members,

This year has seen quite a bit of growth at CDAH. We've taken on new projects, new staff, formed new alliances within our community and worked through some of the greatest challenges the organisation has had to face so far due to the pandemic.

I am proud of the way our staff have pivoted in order to manage the challenges of the pandemic through switching to an online service delivery where we can. I thank them and hope for an even better year next year. Hopefully with less stress for everybody!

This year the Board has been working very hard to get good governance practices going. Thank you very much to all the Board members for working with me to make these changes so that we can become a more effective and professional Board.

The Board has continued to work through Constitutional changes that we will hopefully present next year. I thank the Constitutional change working group for all their efforts.

Best wishes to all the Members and staff and I hope for a better less stressful year next year.

Kind regards

Kristy Trajcevski CDAH President

A Message from the Executive Officer

Another big year for CDAH. Firstly, I would like to thank the current board for their collective hard work and commitment to CDAH and very much look forward to working with the incoming board. As an alliance, CDAH grows through the efforts and aspirations its members and supporters. The ongoing support and development of our peer groups, peer mentor community of practice, community outreach and other activities all continue to shape a solid future for CDAH.

This year CDAH has continued to strengthen relationships with our sister organisation, Disability Diversity Alliance (DDA) and together have also seen the development of an incredible peer research team. These well trained peers are in the process of evaluating the outcomes of the projects that we share with DDA. I urge any CDAH members to support this process and to consent to being interviewed by one of your peers.

Several CDAH members have also undertaken community organising training with the Hunter Community Alliance (HCA) and are now actively involved in campaigns on a number of community and environmental issues.

This year CDAH moved to the much larger office space on level three of Hunter Workers building. This new space has provided a great venue for the establishment and incredible growth and success of the DeafBlind drop in group and the peer mentor community of practice. Sadly, COVID lockdown saw a short-term halt to these activities.

A Message from the Executive Officer

We will be safely back in this space very soon.

This has been my first year as Executive Officer. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Jess Watkins who was in the role before me and to pay humble tribute to her and to Jen Cush who resigned from CDAH at the end of the financial year. Thanks so much to you both.

Finally, I must offer my deepest thanks to all of the volunteers, staff and supporters of CDAH, for the incredible efforts in going way beyond in a combined effort to change the world one starfish at a time...

Andrew Vodic



Photo: Andrew Vodic, CDAH Executive officer, screenshot from zoom

Yarnbombing in the Lane



Photo: Yarn creation put together by the Hunter Deafblind community and CDAH peers being installed on a tree. The photo shows 2 women on ladders with a man and young girl on the ground assisting them to install a yarn creation on one of the trees in Devonshire Lane Newcastle West.

Hunter Deafblind Project

Over the last year the Hunter Deafblind Project has continued to work alongside the deafblind community here in the Hunter, including people who until recently were living in the Stockton Centre.

The Project continues to build community connections at both a local and national level to raise awareness of deafblindness to ensure that Hunter deafblind peers have opportunities for choice, voice and control in their lives. We are excited to be continuing this work over the next year, thanks to the ILC funding from the NDIS.

Justine and Alisha

“I have worked on The Deafblind Project for close to a year now, and I continue to learn more every day from people that are deafblind. I am excited to see deafblind people connecting with peers to learn new skills, problem solve and build their social networks. I passionately believe that everyone deserves the right to be heard... so when I see volunteers learning Auslan or tactile Auslan to become a better communication partner, I can't help but smile.” - Alisha Cooper, Project Worker

Hunter Deafblind Group

It has been difficult for the Deafblind Group to continue their monthly get-togethers with all the Covid lockdowns and restrictions but those who could have continue to keep connected each fortnight through zoom.

Most of our community require touch to communicate so during lockdowns our isolation becomes even greater. We have used our Facebook page as a way of keeping the community connected but more importantly with encouragement and humour during these difficult times with “Humour Corner”.

Once or twice a week we put up a funny story from a peer about a funny experience they have had as a way of hopefully bringing a smile to people who need it.

We use this Facebook page to raise awareness about the Deafblind community, promote our events, connect with the wider community and show that deafblind people can do anything!

Justine and Alisha



Photo
Another yarn creation during Deafblind Awareness Week in June 2021
Photo shows a deafblind man and a deafblind woman standing at the base of one of the yarn bombed trees with their hands reaching up to touch the yarn.

Museum Visit



Photo

Some of the Hunter deafblind community on a visit to the Newcastle regional museum for a tactile tour.

Photo shows a deafblind man and his male support worker and a deafblind woman in a wheelchair with her female deaf support worker gathered around a large statue of a sheep with a donut on its back. There are other group members in the background.

“I enjoy being part of the Deafblind project and organising events because it keeps me active and gets me out of the house into the community. It is an opportunity to meet new people who are Deafblind and we learn from each other to build our skills. This will assist us to gain employment. It also allows for us to try new things and build on our friendships.”
-Geoff Locock, Deafblind Peer Group Connector

Hunter Deafblind Connect



Photo :The Hunter Deafblind Group on a Dolphin watching cruise

Photo shows a group of deafblind people, their supports, guide dogs, friends and interpreters sitting on the terraced steps on the front of a dolphin cruise boat.

I started coming to the Hunter deafblind drop-in because I do not have any Deafblind Community in Sydney, there is only DBA of NSW (Deafblind Association of NSW) which is more suited to deafblind people who do not use signing to communicate.

I first started coming by invitation from a Hunter deafblind man and I met some people I knew very well from a long time ago who I met at camps, socials and clubs etc but I had not seen them in a long time.

Everyone was so welcoming and made me feel special and I enjoyed catching up with old friends, they continued to keep in touch with me and included me in everything then Covid lockdown came back but I still join with them in zoom each fortnight. I really enjoyed very much share with new friendly people was awesome big smile.

- Leonie Hely Deafblind Peer from Sydney.

Hunter Deafblind Connect

Hunter Deafblind Connect

Hunter Deafblind Connect started as a monthly meeting in September 2019 and due to changing Covid restrictions evolved into a fortnightly drop-in for deafblind peers in January 2021. This is a place for Deafblind people to meet, share information, learn from each other and be a space that others including volunteers, Auslan students, family members and CDAH peers could meet and develop relationships with each other. This fortnightly event has been crucial in providing a safe environment for people who would like to learn more about deafblindness with the focus always being this is run by and for people living with deafblindness.

During covid lockdown the drop-in has continued to keep some of the deafblind community connected and informed through zoom meetings. For Deafblind people living in group homes or Deafblind people who cannot access using this technology the drop-in team members would send regular emails or make calls to family members or house managers to ask about the people who could not attend.

Peer Training

This year started in the office so we were able to hold our first Facilitation Training in person. We had four of our Peers attend and graduate.

We were also able to hold our First Introduction to Peer Support for the year in person. We held the training over one day with 3 of our new Facilitators running the training.

Our Intro to Peer Support was then held another 2 times over Zoom. We are currently preparing for our next 1 or possibly 2 more sessions.

It has been great having new Peers involved in our training and welcoming them to CDAH and we really hope they stay around as they bring a new energy

Peer Mentoring was held over Zoom for 8 weeks with 3 amazing Peer Mentors graduating.

We also ran some Zoom Facilitation Training for Peers who were running their Peer Groups via Zoom.

I would like to thank my Team and Peers for all their support this year as it takes a bit of preparation and organising to run training and a great team to pull it all together.

I am very much looking to 2022 we will start our Training year with Peer Mentoring.

Suzy Trindall

Peer Training

We are heading into week three the completion of our introduction to peer support training. We have an awesome fresh group of peers during the training and hopefully will go on to do further training and join some of our peer groups. It has been really enjoyable having new peers during the training as they have brought such a fresh perspective to building a peer movement.

We will be running one more introduction to peer support next month so if you are interested please get in touch with Suzy

Suzy@CDAH.org.au

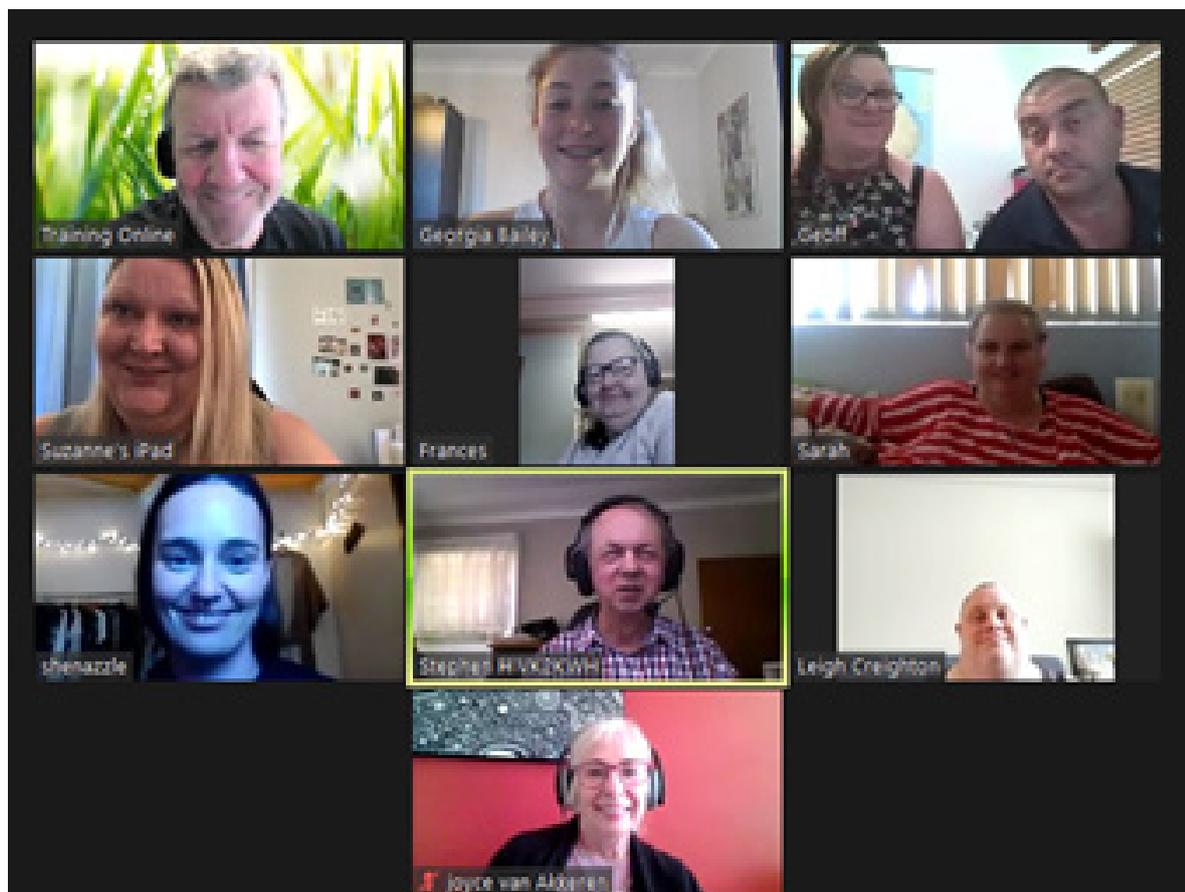


Photo : A screenshot of the Graduation of Peer mentoring course. Lots of happy faces



Photo : Deb, Douglas -the MAG coordinator and Jen

Members' Action Group

The Members Action Group (MAG) met monthly until March 2021. The MAG has been interrupted by Covid-19 restrictions.

We promote the aims of CDAH to make a stronger peer movement and a more inclusive Hunter community, building our capacity to learn, grow and gain support from each other.

This is a volunteer group of CDAH peers with lived experience of disability.

Our current projects include:

- The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.
- The History Project - the history of the Peer Led Disability Movement in Newcastle and the Hunter region. Some members are working on a podcast including CDAH history.
- Citizenship and inclusivity through representation at local councils by CDAH members.
- Making CDAH information accessible for everyone.
- Developing the Members Action Group Terms of Reference

- Douglas Holmes

CDAH Peer Groups

Women first peer group

Our peer group has now been going for over two years and for the past year it has been over zoom. our group is essentially a Peer group but also had a big aspect on being a social group as we would have lunch after our meetings.. this year the numbers have been low and I'm sure it's due to being in lockdown and the group not being a social as it once was..

The group will take a couple of months break and we will regroup early next year and hopefully we will be able to meet in person and make a plan for the year. If any of our group members would like to know about other peer groups please read on our website or in this newsletter and if it suits you please get in touch with the Peer group leader.

suzy@cdah.org.au



Photo of a meeting of the Women first peer group at the CDAH office. You can see six women who sit around a table and all smile at the camera.

CDAH Peer Groups

The Hive

The Hive is CDAH's mental health support group, and we are very much a part of CDAH. We have been around for over three years and have a solid regular following. Covid has seen the Hive move entirely online using Zoom. Discussions are ongoing as to whether we will continue with this format. Although some people have left because of this, we have added a few members from afar (Sydney, etc.).

Our meetings are a mix of support, careful listening and learnings. Over the year, there have been some challenges, but we have stuck together and grown as a community of peers. Anyone is welcome to come to the Hive. We are a friendly and inclusive group. We meet on the third Thursday of the month from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. If you are interested, contact Deb on 0410599576 or deb@cdah.org.au and I will put you on our regular mailing list.

Queer Peer group

Our peer group has now been going for over two years and for the past year it has been over zoom. our group is essentially a Peer group but also had a big aspect on being a social group as we would have lunch after our meetings.. this year the numbers have been low and I'm sure it's due to being in lockdown and the group not being a social as it once was..

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Community Connections Project

“I’m Caytlin Weir and I’m happy to say I’m the peer leader on the Community Connections project. I came to the project in July, really excited to get stuck into the work! However not long after we started, Newcastle went into lockdown and therefore we really had to take a different direction on our original plans as we had no way to physically connect with our peer participants. In this time, we did what we could to get connected with peers living in group homes, get in contact with people who know them and learn a few things about them. We also gathered an incredible group of peer workers.

COVID has presented a lot of challenges for us, as it has for everyone. As people with disability, we know how important it is to keep ourselves and each other safe, and we also know how isolating the COVID world has been for us. For some people, this level of isolation has been a lifelong experience. We want to be able to work confidently in a COVID safe way, so as a team we have put time in to come together and talk about how we do this, so we can be as safe as we all can and be committed to the work we want to do.

We are very pleased to have started face to face work with our peers living in group homes. We are incredibly excited about this and looking forward to meeting all of the peers. We are entering “the getting to know you stage” which we believe is vital in forming any kind of human connection. It is most important to spend quality time getting to know each of our peers and finding out what their loves and hates and also their hopes and dreams. We are so excited about this; the possibilities are endless!

We are really passionate about the potential to uncover peers’ passions and trying new things together. Only last week, I uncovered that two peers I work with have never on swam in salt

water. After hearing this, I reflected that swimming at the beach was something I take for granted, having done it since I was a child. After watching both of my peer participant's eyes light up at this prospect, I feel awfully determined to make this beach day happen. We'll see what opportunities come out of this ordinary yet magical experience!"

- Caytlin Weir, Peer Project Leader

Over the last year, we have worked hard to maintain connection with people who have moved out of Large Residential Centres around the Hunter. We gladly welcome the closure of these institutions, and we celebrate people moving into the community. However, we know that a lot more work needs to be done for people to live full, meaningful lives in their communities.

The Community Connections Project is about bringing about belonging and inclusion of people who've moved out of institutions around the Hunter. We are a group of peer workers passionate about working alongside people to get more connected in their communities. We know that one of the most vital ingredients to living the good life is friendship, and we know that connection and belonging don't just happen because people are present in their community. It takes intention to support people to be included. Our lived experience of disability gives us unique insight into how we can work with people and their communities to do this.

Lucy Biddle

Peer Mentor Network

This year has asked us to tap into our resilience, engage with our community and remember the importance of rest and self-care. And despite the challenges presented, everyone in the Peer Mentor Network has worked hard towards different projects and made the effort to stay connected and support one another.

We have been holding monthly Community of Practices, which involve coming together as Peer Mentors to discuss opportunities, build on our existing relationships, explore different aspects of what it means to be a Peer Mentor and engage in different projects through-out CDAH.

Many of our Peer Mentors are working as Peer Researchers, creating and facilitating Peer Groups as well as delivering one on one mentoring relationships. They have been co-facilitators in the CDAH training, spoken at conferences, worked with Newcastle Council on the Local Social Strategy, developed and delivered workshops, created and ran CDAH Zoom Office sessions, networked and strengthened relationships with different stakeholders through-out the Hunter and have supported one another during the extended lockdown.

Next year we hope to welcome more peers into the space, develop our mentoring skills and continue to broaden the scope of what Peer Mentoring is and how we can continue to be a voice for change in our community.

Sinead Lewis



Photo: Graduation of the Intro to Peer Mentoring training course
From left to right: Andrew, Dave, Arron, Sarah, Owain and Suzy



Photo: Tania, Lucy and Robyn, Community Connections Project

Money

Statement of Financial Position as of 31 June 2021

Current Assets	How much money CDAH has	\$1,435,205
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Total Assets	Dollar amount of all the things we own and money we have:	\$1,499,014
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Total Liabilities	What we owe to others	\$1,398,346
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Equity	this is how much we have at the end of the year if we sell everything we own and pay all the money we owe to others:	\$100,668

Statement of profit and loss for the year 31 June 2021

Revenue	How much money we got in this year	\$1,282,865
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Expenses	How much money we spent this year:	\$1,165,101
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Profit for the year	How much money we have left over this year:	\$117,764



CONTACT US



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