



Association for
Children with a
Disability

Annual Report

2024



President's message



2024 has been a positive year for ACD. We have grown stronger financially, expanded our reach, and deepened our impact with families of children with disability across Victoria.

Our funding increased by more than 40% – one of our most successful years to date. This vital growth was made possible by strong partnerships:

- A commitment of \$3 million over four years from the Victorian Government
- \$2.3 million over three years from the Australian Government Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program
- Continued support from our philanthropic partner, Equity Trustees

This year we worked with families, staff, board members and key stakeholders to co-design our 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, which sets out a clear roadmap for the next three years. The plan captures our ambitions, identifies priority areas, and ensures we remain true to our vision: that every child with disability has the opportunity to thrive.

Over the next three years we seek to:

- Empower families – equip families with the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their children
- Champion inclusive practice – promote inclusive approaches across sectors and support professionals to work effectively with families of children with disability
- Advance rights and systems change – influence public policy and practice to ensure the rights of children with disability are realised and protected

None of this would have been possible without the energy and commitment of our staff, board and volunteers. Their expertise, passion and lived experience are the heart of ACD. We were especially proud to be recognised with the Victorian Award for Innovation in Volunteering for our flexible volunteer program.

Catherine Devine
President of ACD

A year of highlights



15,000+
Victorian families supported by ACD



96%
of families said they had a better understanding of their child's rights



2024-27
Strategic Plan provides a three-year roadmap

A lived experience approach

Information and resources

We create fact sheets, guides and blogs on topics such as the NDIS, education, advocacy and family wellbeing.

Developed from lived experience, our resources help families make informed decisions and take charge of their child's journey. Our website and resources are available in five community languages to ensure access for all families across Victoria.

Workshops

Our workshops and webinars build families' knowledge and capacity across every stage of childhood – from early years and school transitions to teenage years and post-school pathways. Designed and delivered by parents of children with disability, they are practical, interactive, and strengths based. Families leave feeling informed, confident, and better equipped to advocate.

Peer support

Through Virtual MyTime, families connect with others who understand their experiences. These online peer groups provide a safe and inclusive space to share ideas, learn from one another, and develop self-advocacy skills. Facilitated by trained parent peers, they help reduce isolation and strengthen families' sense of community.

Support Line

Our Support Line provides free, confidential advice to families raising children with disability. We listen, explain rights and options, and help parents take practical steps to resolve issues. Every call aims to build families' confidence and skills, so they feel empowered to speak up for their child and create positive change.

Community Champions

Our volunteer Community Champions are parents of children with disability who share their lived experience to inform and inspire others. They raise awareness of ACD's services, represent family voices in consultations and research, and help shape more inclusive communities.

Professional training

We also build the capacity of professionals who work with families of children with disability. Through workshops, information sessions and Communities of Practice, we strengthen knowledge, collaboration and shared understanding to ensure families are supported by informed, responsive services.



Community Champions

Families leading change

Our Community Champions are volunteers who live the reality of raising a child with disability every day. These parents contributed more than 950 hours of volunteer time this year to raise awareness of ACD, share their stories, and represent families at research forums, advisory groups and consultations.

The impact of their voices is significant. When decision-makers hear directly from families about their experiences, the message carries authenticity and weight that drives change.

Our Community Champions have also helped to grow ACD's visibility across Victoria by speaking at events, meeting with local leaders, and supporting outreach in their communities.

We are proud that this innovative model of virtual, flexible volunteering was recognised with the Victorian Volunteering Award for Innovation 2024. It proves that even busy parents can make a difference when the right support and structures are in place.



Knowledge is power

Families tell us that reliable information is one of their greatest needs. With so many complex systems to navigate, clear and accessible guidance can make the difference between stress and confidence.

Families used our website, blogs, fact sheets and workshop booking system to learn about topics from NDIS planning to school transition. Importantly, all our resources are written by staff who are themselves parents of children with disability, ensuring content is both practical and authentic. Resources are also available in five community languages to support Victoria's diverse families.

Our social media community continues to grow. Through Facebook and Instagram, families stayed connected with policy updates, information on workshops, inclusive family activities, and advocacy campaigns.

Once again, we partnered with Zoos Victoria at Dream Day, welcoming 679 families for an inclusive day out. We also connected with families and professionals at expos, conferences and community forums, building awareness of ACD and sharing trusted information.



Our information resources



98%
of families said
the information
from ACD was easy
to understand



145,000
Facebook reach



14,230
newsletter
subscribers



113,000
website visitors

Workshops and peer support

Building confidence



Workshops are one of ACD's most valued services, giving families a chance to learn, connect and grow. Topics spanned all stages of childhood – from early years through to school transitions, teenage years and post-school options.

Workshops included:

- An NDIS Review Q&A with Professor Bruce Bonyhady, providing families with timely information about national reform
- Let's Talk: Relationships and Pornography, a webinar in partnership with Amaze equipping parents to mitigate the harm of pornography
- Teens and Beyond: a three-part workshop series designed to build knowledge and confidence in supporting their teen's growing independence, wellbeing, and future pathways
- Advocating at School: helping families to build their skills and confidence to advocate for their child at school, understand their rights and reasonable adjustments

Workshops are all designed and facilitated by parents of children with disability, giving them credibility and relatability.

"The information was really relevant and has made me feel much more confident about helping my son transition to Prep next year. This workshop is an amazing resource for parents." – Parent



This year we launched **Virtual MyTime**, a weekly online peer support group. For many families, especially those balancing work or living in rural areas, Virtual MyTime has created an accessible, safe space to connect with others, share experiences and reduce isolation.

Virtual MyTime is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, nationally coordinated by the Parenting Research Centre.

At a glance



100
workshops delivered



1,467
workshop attendees



98%
of attendees said they felt more confident to speak up for their child



93%
of families said the information was easy to understand

Advocacy in action

Our Support Line is at the core of our advocacy. It is a lifeline for many families, building knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their children.

Our qualified Support Advisors use an empowerment approach. We listen to families' concerns, explain their children's rights, outline processes and policies, and help them plan practical next steps. Advisors assist with communicating concerns, suggest reasonable adjustments, and can attend meetings alongside families when needed.

Every call is grounded in respect and empowerment – helping families feel supported, informed and confident to create positive change for their children.

The most common concerns were education and the NDIS – two areas that have a profound impact on children's daily lives.



1,556
families assisted



97%
of callers said they
felt more confident
to advocate



279
families given an enhanced
level of advocacy support



84%
reported that their child's
situation improved after
contacting us

Case study

Adam is a seven-year-old autistic boy who lives with his grandmother, Pat.

When Pat contacted the ACD Support Line, Adam was only allowed to attend school for three hours a day. She was worried that this limited attendance was affecting both his learning and confidence.

Our Support Advisors talked Pat through Adam's right to attend school full-time and explained the reasonable adjustments that schools can make to support students with disability. Together, they prepared for a conversation with the school and helped Pat request a Student Support Group meeting.

At Pat's request, ACD attended the meeting to provide advocacy support and share examples of how other schools have successfully included students through flexible supports and tailored plans.

Following the meeting, the school developed a structured return-to-school plan. Adam now attends school full-time three days a week, with a plan in place to gradually increase his attendance on the remaining days.

Pat says she feels much more confident in understanding Adam's rights and working with the school to support him.

"I felt validated and empowered after talking to the Support Line, and I love the extent of the knowledge of the advisors and the range of solutions that we can work towards."

"I feel that there was a move and change in the school that only happened because I was able to speak with your service and advocate for my child. Thank you so much, it has been invaluable."

Building the capacity of professionals

549

professionals attended

24

workshops run by ACD to support the knowledge and development of those working with families of children with disability.

Our professional workshops included NDIS information sessions for professionals working with at-risk families through the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

16 Communities of Practice meetings were facilitated by ACD for 67 family services specialist disability practitioners, including Strengthening Parent Support Coordinators from across the state. These sessions provide support and interconnection between professionals across Victoria.



Driving change together

Beyond supporting individual families, ACD works to influence the systems that shape children's lives. We bring together family voices, research evidence and partnerships with the community sector to advocate for policy change.

This year, ACD:

- Made five major submissions, including to the NDIS Review and the Inquiry into State Education in Victoria
- Successfully campaigned against reductions to Visiting Teachers, securing ongoing support for children who need them
- Contributed to the State Autism Plan, highlighting the needs of autistic children in out-of-home care
- Delivered evidence to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into State Education, highlighting the importance of leadership, staff training and accountability in schools

Through our Have Your Say consultations, families shared lived experiences on issues like Disability Inclusion Profiles and Foundational Supports. These insights directly inform our advocacy and ensure that government reforms reflect what families need.

ACD continues to represent families on a range of advisory groups:

- Autism Education Strategy Advisory Group
- Autism Plan Advisory Group
- Best Start, Best Life Taskforce membership
- Disability Inclusion Advisory Group
- Healthy Trajectories Advisory Group
- Kindergarten Inclusion Reform Reference Group
- Victorian NDIS Community Advisory Group

To see all our submissions visit – [Advocacy - ACD](#)



Families we supported

Who we reached



The diversity of families who access ACD shows the breadth of our impact.

This diversity reinforces the importance of inclusive, flexible, and culturally safe services that reflect the reality of families across Victoria.



71%
have a child aged 5 to 14

55%
are raising an autistic child

3%
are caring for children in out-of-home care

30%
come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

19%
live in rural or regional Victoria

We reached families from every one of the **79** Local Government Areas in Victoria

Our supporters

Our work is only possible through strong partnerships.

Together, we are creating a more inclusive Victoria where children with disability can thrive.

In 2024, we thank:

Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Victorian Government
Department of Education
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Victorian Disability Advocacy Program

Philanthropic and community partners
Equity Trustees
Parenting Research Centre
Zoos Victoria

About ACD

ACD is Victoria's leading advocacy organisation for children with disability and their families.

For over 40 years, we have been led by families, for families, supporting parents and carers across Victoria and advocating for children with all types of disability.

We help families build the knowledge, skills and confidence to advocate for their children. Our free services support families of children aged 0 to 18 and the professionals who work alongside them.

Our services are free and include:

- Trusted information and resources
- Workshops and peer connection
- The ACD Support Line – a free telephone advocacy service

Every year, we hear from thousands of families. Their voices shape our systemic advocacy, driving positive change for children with disability and their families across Victoria.

www.acd.org.au

Information about the ACD Board is available at: <https://www.acd.org.au/about-us/our-people/>

Our financial report is available at: www.acnc.gov.au