**Hunter Peer2Peer Project**

The Hunter Peer2Peer initiative was delivered with funding support from NSW Department of Family and Community Services. From 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, key activities of the initiative included:

* Peer support events – including Planning Café’s, Speak Up Hunter, Members Action Group and Catch Up Crew.
* Peer mentoring
* Large Residential Centre Home Meeting Training

**Planning Cafes**

We ran Planning Café’s every month – bringing peers together to talk, connect and learn from each other. Over the last year we ran 10 Planning Café’s with over 270 peers attending. Popular topics from the year included:

* co-design event with the NDIA on self-management
* workshop on “creating your dream team of support” with peer leader Carolyn Campbell McLean
* opportunities for peers to explore innovative housing and support options

“I always feel really welcome at Planning Cafes. Most importantly, I am reminded that I am not alone. I learn so much each month and I am always encouraged by the peers who share their stories. Your empathy and sharing I think will help me move on more positively and with hope.” Nic, CDAH member

**Speak Up Hunter**

Speak Up Hunter is a peer group run for, and by, people with intellectual disability. We ran 11 meetings with over 90 peers attending – a regular group of 8 people attend each month and new members are always welcome.

This year, Speak Up Hunter members collaborated with 3x3 Media, UpNUp and Newcastle Scratch Academy with funding from the Team Up project to create a hip-hop music clip about their lives and what’s important to them.

*We're gonna be seen  
We're gonna be heard  
Get out of the way  
This Is My World!*

**Catch Up Crew**

A group that has been meeting since February 2017 for people with and without disability who take over a Newcastle pub each month to socialise and to build belonging. We ran 12 Catch Up events with over 420 people attending this year.

Catch Up Crew - we’re pretty saucy – get it?

“I can’t remember the last time I felt comfortable and safe to have a drink in a pub with mates. As a woman with disability, you can feel pretty vulnerable at times. With all the business of being a mum and having a family, I always make time for Catch Up Crew as a monthly event in my calendar. It’s always so great for a laugh.”

Lisa, CDAH member

**Members Action Group**

We ran 5 meetings with over 50 peers attending. We ran campaign and advocacy training and we made an action plan for the things that mattered most to us – jobs and fair wages for people with disability. The Members Action Group also came out in force to support the “Stand By Me’ rally in March to maintain advocacy funding from the NSW Government for people with disability.

“When we gather together, we harness peer power to fight for what matters most to us. Together, we made an impact on changing attitudes about fair wages for people with disability in our region. With our peer movement, we can really start to build proper advocacy for our issues – it’s you and your peers advocating for issues that are important to you. We can have a real impact on changing societal concepts and perceptions about what disability is.”

David Belcher, CDAH President

**Peer Mentoring**

CDAH Peer Mentor’s provide one-to-one peer support and guidance to people with disability and their family members who have a specific goal to get the most out of the mentoring relationship so people can grow and develop in their own lives and communities.

Peer mentoring relationships at CDAH are purposeful, specific and time-limited.

CDAH’s Peer Mentors have engaged in 12 peer mentoring relationships and an additional 9 peer mentors were trained and registered with CDAH this year.

Peer mentoring goals have included

* learning how to self manage
* developing skills and confidence to speak up
* learning how to interview support workers.

A Peer Mentoring Community of Practice has been developed which meets monthly to oversee and strengthen the peer mentoring initiative at CDAH.

“Peer mentoring is where we value lived experience, it’s where we recognise ourselves as the experts in our own lives and it’s a pretty amazing space to work in and be involved with.” Raelene, CDAH Peer Mentor

**Smart Art Includes You**

During May, 7 CDAH peers presented at 11 schools throughout the Hunter and Upper Hunter, Lake Macquarie and Central Coast. Funded by Ability Links, CDAH was a project partner (along with Octapod) in the Smart Art Includes you Schools Challenge.

We shared our personal stories of exclusion and inclusion during our school years, always highlighting that inclusion for all is not only essential but is also very achievable.

We engaged with the students around their feelings when hearing our stories and some strategies they could think of to make inclusion happen.

Often school students would speak of their own experiences of bullying and exclusion.

Ability Linkers attended the presentations and offered practical assistance, particularly during group activities.

CDAH peers were really thrilled to be part of this project, understanding the power and importance of working with schools to change attitudes.

Octapod Artists with lived experience of disability also presented to the students who were invited to reflect on their experiences and learnings through art.

Several schools invited CDAH peers to attend their exhibitions

Quotes from School Students

“it must have been really tough for you to come and share with us your experiences of being excluded”

Cessnock High School

“I learnt to be more accepting and that you can’t always see the disability”

Tumbi Umbi High School

Quotes from Teacher

“I overheard in the playground, one student who has a sibling with autism, talking to her friends about what it’s like to live at home. Her friends were asking questions about what life was like and then they finally asked the question how can we help you and your brother at school?”

Speers Point Primary School

“Some of the students from the older classes are now running games for the students of the younger classes at lunch and recess such as duck duck Goose and tips. This happened organically by the students themselves and not by teacher intervention. The best things about these games are that they include students from the support unit as well as students from mainstream classes. One student from the support unit is in a walking frame and students from the older classes hold both her hands so she can run and play tips”.

Speers Point Primary School