



# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**COMMUNITY DISABILITY  
ALLIANCE HUNTER**



**Community Disability Alliance  
Hunter acknowledge the  
traditional caretakers of the land  
that we work and live on.  
We pay our respect to Elders past  
and present and recognise the  
continuing connection to lands,  
waters and communities.  
We acknowledge that this land  
always was, and always will be,  
Aboriginal land.**



# ABOUT CDAH

At CDAH we are committed to building the capacity of peers to develop, organise and lead peer groups and develop peer mentoring relationships that enable peers to share their experiences and learn together.

We are an independent, collective voice committed to full inclusion and active citizenship. We are the first peer-led organisation established to prepare people for the national disability insurance scheme and we are forging new directions!

# PRESIDENTS REPORT



**KRISTY  
TRACJEVSKI**

\* Dear Members,

This year has been a year of consolidation for CDAH. We have survived a period of uncertainty created by the loss of one of our key project funding. Luckily we were able to strongly advocate for ourselves and secure a further extension. Our defining achievement of this year however, is the establishment of Disco. It is my hope that this will go from strength to strength and allow CDAH to eventually become self sufficient and not be beholden to government funding.

As President I would like to thank all members and staff for taking a little organisation and making it into a strong robust community. We must continue to fight for the rights of people with disabilities. I believe the peer movement is an important tool in the advocacy landscape and we need to keep moving forward towards equality.

I would love to say a special thanks to everyone who I have worked with at CDAH. Especially, all the Boards I have worked with over the years, thank you to the current Board and Staff and CEO. I have especially loved working with Andrew Vodic and thank him for his energy vision and support. I thank all the staff around Andrew that support us both.

Lastly, I thank the members for their support. We exist to serve your needs and you are the reason we are so strong. I am stepping down this year, but I look forward to seeing what CDAH can do under new leadership. I wish the new President well and hope that CDAH continues to go from strength to strength.

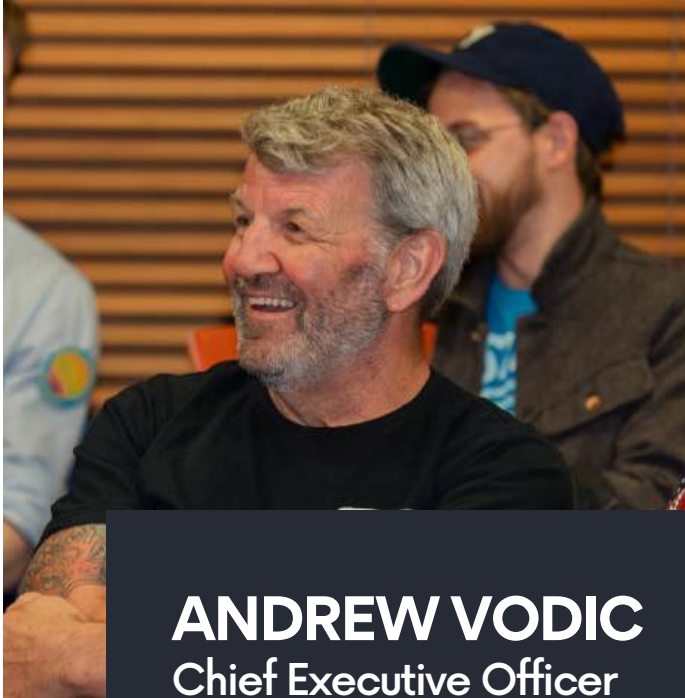
Thanks for everything,

Kristy Trajcevski





# CEO REPORT



**ANDREW VODICE**  
Chief Executive Officer

What another amazing and often challenging year 2023-24 was. We began this year with the launch of DISCO (Disability Consultants) and ended it with the conclusion of four major ILC grants. We were also informed that our funding application for the Powerful Peers project was successful and that our application for Deafblind Connect and Community Connections was not. We also moved into our new office at 202 King Street at the beginning of this year and together we voted to amend CDAH's constitution to become truly peer led.

DISCO has been launched with the generous support from a philanthropic trust, for a two-year pilot aimed at building a sustainable business model. The DISCO is run by people with disability, doing the critical work needed to support a more inclusive community and workplace culture. DISCO provides PWD opportunities to do paid work as lived experience consultants, change agents, leaders and facilitators. Our collective aim is to lead, as a strong voice for people with disability in the broader community and to lead in the co-development for real inclusion of people with disability, in all areas of society.

The Hunter Inclusion Project, which has been providing community connections for peers living in group homes who have transitioned from Large Residential Centres (LRCs) has now concluded, as we were unsuccessful in our application for the new round of funding. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the peers and allies who have committed their time to building connection with peers in closed systems. We will continue to look at ways to our peers living in closed systems into the future.

# CEO REPORT CONTINUED

\* The Peer Learning Hub and Powerful Peers projects will continue to provide great support for the development and facilitation of our Introduction to Peer Work, Facilitation and Mentoring programs. This powerful and unique training provides a solid foundation for CDAH peers to confidently engage in supporting other people with disability and the wider community towards inclusivity and genuine citizenship. This training shapes what it takes to engage in a community of practice and to undertake effective and genuine peer work. It also provides the framework of peer work that supports the development of DISCO.

Hunter Deafblind Connect has created an amazing platform and space for deafblind people to connect, communicate and socialise together. Support for this community of practice is undoubtedly a main part of CDAHs core business now and into the future. As with the Hunter Inclusion Project, we were unsuccessful in obtaining longer-term funding for Deafblind Connect. However, after a great deal of advocating, we did manage to obtain a 12 month ad hoc grant. This will provide us with the breathing space to seek ongoing funding options after June 2025.

Although the move from Hunter Workers Building was a difficult decision to make, we are now really enjoying a new chapter in the life of CDAH at our King Street office. This location gives us much more presence in the community and the ground floor street access makes it easy for peers to simply pop in for a visit. This has been a good move.

As with all things, CDAH is growing and changing all the time. Although we rely on support from governments and allies in the wider community for support, it is our members who guide the future direction of CDAH. As a peer led organisation, our priorities will be shaped through our involvement in peer groups, the Members Action Group and through mentoring, facilitation and other peer work.

I wish to conclude by thanking the Kristy and the CDAH Board for their good governance, support, time and effort during the year. Particularly in the work done on shaping our revised constitution. As Kristy is stepping down from her role as President after many years on the Board, I want to take this opportunity to thank her for her tireless energy and commitment to building CDAH into the organisation that it is today. Thanks also to our members, volunteers and staff for all that they have collectively done to keep CDAH going in such a positive direction during what has been a most challenging year. Also, thank you to all of the family members, allies and community supporters for your continued support and interest in this amazing and unique organisation.



# PEER GROUPS

\* This year we launched two new peer groups. Next Gen and Koori Connections. Although they both had a slow start with a small amount of attendees they now have a number of regular peers attending both groups.

\* Speak Up Hunter continues to meet monthly with regular peers, who enjoy coming to check in and talk about anything that is going on for them. They are always looking for new ideas and Peers to become involved.

Women First have been meeting monthly with great attendance with more women peers joining. Women first collaborated with Speak up Hunter, Queer Peers and Deafblind hub in hosting a Breast/Chest cancer awareness afternoon tea. Family planning came along to share information about doing regular breast and chest checks and shared where to go and what to do if you have any concerns.

Heather from Family Planning did a great presentation for us and will be doing more throughout the year.

\* Queer Peers also continues to be popular with a good number of regulars and new Peers

\* CDAH Writers is an interest and support group for peers with disability who are new or experienced writers in any genre or style. We have been running for 18 months now.

We share, discuss and develop our writing and exchange feedback, ideas, information and resources as peer equals, with steady attendance, participation on zoom and via email communication, and now have 23 members. We have interesting and fun exercises and prompts, and enjoy lively discussions.

On International Day of Disability 3rd December 2024 we will host a live reading/performance event in collaboration with Hunter Writers' Centre, to be a hybrid event - both in-person and on zoom. Both these events will be free of cost to participants. The editing workshop is an opportunity to develop a piece you might like to share at the International Day of Disability event.



Image of a group of women sitting at a table writing and thinking



Image below, members of the Koori Peergroup

# LEARNING HUB REPORT

BY CAYTLIN WEIR

\* What a year we had! We had a lot of changes with new training packages, new systems and even some new facilitators! What an honour to have Nat Welch working on updating our training freshening them up! They look fantastic and promoting the CDAH brand. The content is so much more linked to the CDAH values and the feedback is that it is more relatable to peers!

The new system Hubspot, what a gamechanger. Although it was a lot to learn, I think all of the team are more relaxed knowing that each peer's CDAH experience is now logged and we can make sure everybody gets a lot of training opportunities.

We learned from our mistakes and now our processes are better than they used to be.

We welcomed a couple of new facilitators on to the team including Bryson. What a star! Bryson is strengthening every time I see him facilitate and is someone I know other peers look up to

This year only brought positive changes to Learning Hub



Image of a group trained Peers with the trainers

BY ALEX PECK

\* This year Learning Hub has been busy and bustling with change. Cayt finished up her work as Learning Hub Co-ordinator and Emily stepped in, working with the existing team and expanding the team of peer facilitators and peer content developers.

This year has shown the launch of the popular Human Rights workshops, which have engaged a large number of peers within the CDAH community, coming together to talk about, and gain education on human rights. Welcome to CDAH has also been redeveloped and has been getting positive feedback, running bi-monthly.

Looking forward to the year ahead Learning Hub is planning to grow and extend, reviewing and redeveloping Intro to Peer Support and Peer Mentoring workshops. We are also working with Pod and Pen studios to develop a peer podcasting team and looking to launch monthly podcasts relating to human rights.



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS REPORT

BY ALEX PECK

\* This year in the Community Connections Project heralded many highs and a significant low. Unfortunately the Community Connections project lost funding due to an unsuccessful grant application to DSS – This wasn't the only CDAH project affected by this and CDAH wasn't the only organisation that was left without critical funding.

In the face of adversity CDAH's community connectors have shown amazing initiative in not losing connection with some of the most isolated peers within the community, with many peer connectors continuing to connect with peers that live in group homes in a friendship capacity outside of CDAH's funded projects.

This year the Community Connections project employed seven peer connectors to connect with 11 peers living within group homes. CDAH connectors met with peers regularly to connect with them, understand their communication styles, their preferences and goals.

Some highlights of the project this year have been:

- A peer from a group home joining and attending a CDAH peer group
- CDAH connectors facilitating regular connections for peers within a group home to grow community through attending bingo at their local bowling club
- CDAH peer connectors connecting with members of the Deafblind community who live in group homes

Thank you Community Connections team for all of the amazing connecting that you have done and are continuing to do.



Image of two peers laughing

# PEER MENTORING



**SUZY TRINDALL**  
Peer group Coordinator

\* The members action group has been meeting monthly with a representative from each group attending. The mag has been very successful with all groups gaining important information about the organisation and events to be able to share with their groups. The Peer group leaders also have been able to raise Concerns and potential activities their groups are interested in. We've also held to community of practices for our Peer group leaders which has had fantastic feedback and we will be booking in another one to end off this year.

\* There has been many Peer Mentoring relationships. This year especially from our Peer Group Leaders. For any new peer coming into CDAH our Peer Group Leaders mentor them into the peer space and what they may be interested in.

\* Other mentoring includes information about the NDIS, linking to other organisations and activities, mentoring in podcasting and many more.



Image of four women peers

# EVENTS

## MEL SCHLAEGER AND KATRINA FOWLER

The Events Team

\* Since CDAH has had a dedicated Events Team within the last calendar year, we have learnt that this role has been a part of creating engagement with peers.

CDAH has facilitated a variety of successful events during 2023-24. This has enabled us to engage with new and existing peers. Most recently CDAH ran a series of human rights planning cafes which were a raging success. We also hosted a paralympic watch party which had over 40 attendees, not to forget our 10 year celebration which acknowledged the hard work of all those who are a part of CDAH today and who were around in the early days to get us started.

At last count, we have had engagement with over 1000 peers. These are just a few of the events CDAH organised and facilitated during the year.

Looking ahead, the next year, the CDAH Events Team plans to continue to celebrate and support our peers with more events and activities.

Image of CDAH Peers celebrating, talking and smiling in the pub





# THE DEAFBLIND PROJECT

**ALISHA COOPER AND JUSTINE LORENZ**

\* The Deafblind project has received an extension of 12 months funding taking us until June 30th 2025, but the fight for ongoing funding continues.

Our project aims were and continue to be raising awareness of the DB community, providing individual and sector capacity building, supporting and developing peer connections through the Deafblind hub and with DB peers living in group homes and networking with community and partners.

Highlights over the last 12 months (just to name a few) include:

- Multiple information workshops
- Continuing Fortnightly Deafblind Hubs
- And a fabulous Deafblind event at Newcastle Museum developed and facilitated by the Deafblind community with over 120 people involved
- A collaboration with the Sydney University research team that included: 15 interviews with Deafblind community members, allies, interpreters, and support workers, to record the impact of the Deafblind Hub on their lives. Leading to a journal article being developed for possible publication in a tier1 community research journal.



Image tactile artwork created in collaboration with Lake Macquarie Council

Work is currently under way to support a Deafblind Hub in the Sydney area to meet the needs of the Deafblind community in this area.

Project team are also working towards a small group of Deafblind people visiting NSW parliament to garner support for ongoing funding for the deafblind community.





# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



**SUZY TRINDALL**  
Peergroup Coordinator

Image of two CDAH Peers presenting at The CDAH peer conference

\* We had a successful year in making strong community partnerships including:

- Shibui, Lucy did a healthy relationships workshop with Next Gen.
- International Women's Day - where peers represented women with disability
- Homeless Connect – we continued with Homeless Connect peers attended this annual expo which has now resulted in an extended partnership with Family Planning who are wanting to work with CDAH on barriers accessing health services.
- Family Planning, have come to CDAH to talk about breast, chest and cervical cancer screening
- Family and DV expo Newcastle women's Court Domestic Violence Advocacy Service
- Self Manager Hub
- University of Newcastle, Wollotuka Institute, University of Sydney, Macquarie University
- Disability Diversity Alliance, Together we Can, Conference. (See photo)
- Council for Intellectual Disability
- Hunter Community Alliance
- Uniting NDIS Local Area Coordination Newcastle
- National Disability Services

There were so many other connections made in community, and we will be progressing with building those connections going into 2024.



# READY SET DISCO

\* Disability Consulting (or DisCo) was launched in February to big industry players at Newcastle Museum. The launch was an outstanding success and grabbed the attention of large organisations and media alike.

Since this time, we have delivered consulting services to organisations including The Wests Group, Newcastle Knights, Balance Gyms and Hunter Valley Coal Chain Coordinator.

\* Working closely with Andrew and Dave, we are hoping to grow DisCo and upskill peers to deliver these services.

We have some contracts with big organisations in the pipeline, along with a new website, and a new communications employee to spread the word of DisCo. We are so excited to see what we achieve in the next 12 months!

Jamie

**JAMIE  
SONNEVELD**

Image of the DISCO launch event



# FINANCIALS

## \* STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF 31 JUNE 2024

Current Assets:  
How much money  
CDAH has **\$ 1,208,646**

Total Assets:  
Dollar amount of  
all the things we  
own and money **\$ 1,403,130**

Total Liabilities:  
What we owe to  
others **\$ 521,123**

Equity:  
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 **\$ 882,006**

## \* STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS FOR THE YEAR 31 JUNE 2024

Revenue  
how much money we  
got in this year **\$ 2,098,588**

Expenses,  
how much money  
we spent this year **\$ 1,783,868**

Profit  
how much  
money we have  
left over **\$ 314,720**

# CONTACT US



## COMMUNITY DISABILITY ALLIANCE HUNTER

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✉ [info@cdah.org.au](mailto:info@cdah.org.au)

Image of four Peers in front of CDAH banner