



LEADERSHIP PLUS

Annual Report 2017





Human Rights



NSDS

SAI GLOBAL

Chair Report

At the beginning of 2017, in addition to disability advocacy funding, Leadership Plus gained funding for an External Merits Review process. This supports any National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS) client to appeal against decisions taken by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) if they consider the process or its outcomes were unfair. This has allowed our experienced advocates to work with clients or their support persons if they are in dispute over NDIS eligibility, a disability plan or client support arrangements. In practice, the collaborative inquiry processes used by advocates has meant that most disputes are resolved through dialogue, discussion or mediation between agencies and few clients need to attend an AAT hearing – a great outcome. We are very grateful to the Department of Social Services who provide most of our funding, as with the cost of living increases we receive, together with continued low inflation and our prudent budgeting, this means that we can provide full services throughout the calendar year.

It has been another productive year for our advocate staff and Board. Our quality reviews during the year indicate that we are maintaining the efficiency and effectiveness of advocacy services, including Intake. The Board's focus during the year has been on strategic planning, and we began by appointing an external consultant to analyse our performance, review our position in the sector and prepare a report on our strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities. This initial report was the foundation for two major workshops by the Board in March and again in May, with all advocate staff being engaged in the process. These Board workshops re-confirmed our Vision, Mission and Values and created a comprehensive Strategic Plan that will provide us with clear directions to strengthen, enhance and expand our services. They also developed a framework for monitoring and evaluation to help us maintain an effective course. The implementation of our Plan will provide potential clients with clearer pathways into advocacy services, by strengthening the information and support services we provide to the general community.

Throughout the year, I have been pleased to observe the dedication, effort and creativity displayed by all our voluntary Board members and to see the interim outcomes we have achieved. Despite the effort deployed into our strategic planning operations, we have also maintained the more routine activities of the Board. These include ongoing monitoring and evaluation of service outcomes, reviewing and improving performance of advocates and Board, reviewing and updating organisational policies, and maintaining our knowledge about cultural and practice changes within the disability sector and the broader social environment. These changes include the increase by the general population in their use of web-based information and the social media, which has led us in turn to update and improve our website and rebuild our Facebook page to provide more useful information to



Leadership Plus clients. We aim to become a key portal for useful information that can be easily accessed by our clients, potential clients and their families. Knowledge is power, and access to power is especially important for people with disabilities (PWD).

Change processes can take time, and often encounter threats, challenges or obstacles that may threaten to delay or derail any of the elements of Change. The process of translating our Strategic Plan into a practical Business Plan in this instance was threatened by the resignation of our Executive Officer in August for personal reasons. We are very grateful to Jeff Coley for his commitment to the organisation and for the work he done for us throughout 2016 and 2017. He prepared us for our National Standards for Disability Program (NDAP) Audit so that we were successful in gaining certification of compliance with the NDAP Guidelines in October. As a result of experience, we have improved consent documentation and developed quality guidelines for documentation of advocacy plans. After Jeff's resignation, we were very fortunate that in September our Treasurer Geoff Southwell volunteered to take up a temporary EO role with Jeff providing part-time support while we sought a new CEO. We were able to attract a strong field of candidates, and in early November were delighted to appoint Geoff as the new Chief Executive Officer of Leadership Plus. He brings to Leadership Plus his significant business experience, high level financial management skills, contemporary knowledge of the disability sector, an entrepreneurial orientation and an engaging personality. The Board looks forward to working with Geoff in his new role over the coming year.

Other significant events during the year have been ratification of our new constitution and its lodgement with Consumer Affairs Victoria, and the appointment of a consultant to review and modernise all our organisational policies, so that they are fully aligned internally and externally with recent federal and state legislative changes. We have updated our logo in preparation for our new social media strategy, and in October made application for an NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Readiness Grant. Our services are already well aligned to provide relevant information to people with disabilities who, while they may not being eligible for NDIS funding, still need orientation to disability services and assistance or support from disability service providers. We already have strong links with other services, and are strengthening these linkages under our Strategic Plan together with our partnerships with other agencies that have specialist knowledge and experience with PWD, especially if they suffer from brain injury or come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. So, we end this year already prepared for an extremely busy, effective and exciting year ahead.

During the year, we have said 'goodbye' to Jeff Coley, Julie Fisher our Secretary and Ben Woodward who resigned from the Board to make more time in their busy lives for family or other activities. I thank them all for their input to Leadership Plus. Non-



Executive Board members volunteer their time to provide leadership and governance for Not For Profit Organisations like ours, and we couldn't do without them. Similarly, we are fortunate to have such skilled advocates who can stand up and effectively represent their client's best interests when their rights have been challenged and they have nowhere else to turn. I thank all our advocates for their work, especially Melanie Muir, who provides such strong professional leadership. I also will say 'goodbye' to the Chair role this year, although I will continue to serve on the Board. Finally, it was very sad to hear of Steve Peuschel's passing in November from a complication that emerged his previous chronic illness. Steve, together with George Panousieris, shared the same vision of empowering people with disabilities. They founded Leadership Plus to work towards a more inclusive world for everyone, especially people with disabilities. Vale Steve and George. You still inspire us.

Peter Birleson
Chairperson



Executive Officer Report 2016-17

The 2016 -17 years has seen the disability sector, including disability advocacy, heavily engaged with the reforms and changes to processes that the roll out of the NDIS have delivered. Like all major changes this has not been without disruption to “business as usual” and at times a lack of clarity about aspects of the changes inherent in a new system of service delivery for people with disability. Understanding the new systems through training, professional development, sharing of information with colleagues and through advocacy for clients engaged with the NDIS has occupied a lot of organisational time this year.

As I noted in last year’s report the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) has been undergoing a review by the Department of Social Services (DSS). This has involved a widespread consultation of stakeholders in the disability advocacy sector. Leadership Plus submitted a joint submission to the department with Communication Rights Australia and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service regarding the need for a strong and capable NDAP into the future. The submission made a number of recommendations, including; NDAP should fund advocacy independently of the NDIS, a framework is needed for shared planning and development for advocacy services between the jurisdictions across Australia and specialist agencies have proven means to connect with their communities that have been developed over a long history of involvement and a continued commitment to specialist agencies is essential. DSS have produced a consultation report which describes the themes and strategies identified in the review and provide some clarification of aspects of disability advocacy. Since the publication of the consultation DSS has announced that funding to current providers of NDAP has been extended until 30th June 2020. During this period up to 2020 they will implement a staged approach to the program reforms identified from the review.

Since December 2016 Leadership Plus has been in receipt of a new funding stream: NDIS Appeals. This funding has been made available by DSS to a number of disability advocacy agencies across the country. NDIS Appeals has been set up to ensure that all people with disability and other people affected by reviewable decisions of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), have access to support when seeking review of those decisions in the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT). This funding has been most welcome and has provided additional resources that will enable us to assist more clients through the appeals process. It has also enabled us to acquire a new office space, upgrade our office equipment and better resource our staff and clients regarding NDIS issues. This funding was initially for a 13 month period but has been subsequently extended until June 2020.

At the Board level, a large block of time and energy has been applied towards developing a new Strategic Plan for the organisation. We are grateful to DSS



providing approval to expend some funding on developing a plan for the 2017-2021 period. Looking at what we have been good at and what needs further development has been an exacting and at times demanding task but ultimately vital for the best understanding of the organisation's role and priorities in the future. The final plan has now been agreed by the Board and sets out our strategies in a clear and comprehensible fashion. Many thanks to the Board, staff and our stakeholders for their input into the final plan. I extend a particular thank you to Board member, Christine Taylor for her skills, energy and time in enabling the finalisation of the plan. We hope that through the wise application of this new strategy we can play our part in furthering the interests of people with disability.

An aspect of the organisation's work that has had a positive impact on the sector has been our willingness to share information and time with others in a collaborative manner. This has included encouraging peer support meetings, building supportive informal relationships with other advocacy groups and participation on peak bodies such as Disability Advocacy Victoria (DAV). As we move forward into a new world for people with disability the need for the disability advocacy sector to commit to a collaborative approach has never been more important. With this approach we can become more efficient in our work practices and support our clients most effectively while maintaining the specialist services that cater best for the diversity of needs presented by our community. This year Leadership Plus has taken on the role as facilitator of the NDIS Appeals Teleconference. These teleconferences occur once a month and assist the funded NDIS Appeals organisations to share their knowledge and experiences of their work. An online forum is also available to the organisations to communicate further between the regular monthly teleconferences. Another new initiative is our agreement to work with Rights Information and Advocacy Centre (RIAC) to fund and develop webinars that will assist advocates, service providers and other interested parties about the NDIS. This is likely to be just the start of a relationship which will share the experiences and knowledge of two of the biggest disability advocacy organisations in the state. The submission of a funding application under the NDIS - Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Program (ILC), if successful, would further add to the organisation's collaborative projects.

I would like to warmly congratulate the staff for their abilities to adapt so well to the new challenges that came their way this last year. I welcome our newest employee, Leigh Meyer, to our team. Leigh is an experienced advocate and has already added a lot to the organisation. Our advocacy Team Leader, Melanie Muir, continues to provide so much to the organisation through her experience, commitment to people with disability and support to staff. Thank you Mel. Giovanna Amato is able to cope so well in a number of roles; as our intake worker, advocate, purchasing officer, EO assistant and Board minute taker, etc. I am not sure what we would do without Giovanna.



I would like to thank the Board for their contributions to the success of the organisation this year. The completion of the Strategic Plan was a major achievement and sets the organisation up well for the future. A special thank you to Peter, Julie, Robbert and Geoff, our Office Bearers, who have been very supportive of me as Executive Officer throughout the year and given generously of their time to Leadership Plus.

As I have recently resigned as Executive Officer I wish to extend a warm welcome to Geoff Southwell, our former Treasurer, to the full-time role of CEO. Having worked closely with Geoff over a number of years I know well his skills and good personal qualities. I believe he is a great fit for the job.

Thank you.

Jeff Coley
Executive Officer



Treasurer's Report:

Income for the year totalled \$638,941 (up from \$583,347 2015-16) and expenditure totalled \$621,943 (\$575,605 in 2016-16), and the the organisation reported a net surplus for the 2016-17 financial year of \$16,999.

Our funding remains primarily sourced from the Department of Social Services, in the form of the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) and a new program for us in the financial year, the NDIS Appeals Program. As in the past, we have been prudent in maintaining our expenditure levels to ensure that we achieve the objectives of the programs we're funded to execute while staying within the funding provided for those programs. We believe that our capacity to reliably produce results while remaining financially sound will be helpful for us in seeking alternative funding sources in the future.

The Finance, Audit and Risk sub-committee, which oversees all matters in relation to its title, has again met monthly throughout the financial year. The committee continues to work effectively and performs its role as part of the necessary structure to ensure good governance of the organisation. The sub-committee reports monthly to the full Board of and I offer my thanks to the sub-committee members for their regular valuable participation.

For the coming year, we have ensured that the existing programs are adequately supported, and have allocated the overhead costs in accordance with the programs' demands on our resources, but with the expectation that we will be able to seek additional program funding and spread overheads over a wider base of activity. We continue to seek to develop alternative services and alternative sources of funding, along with any opportunities to partner with organisations with complementary or matching services.

I would finally like to record my thanks to the Board, the Management and the Staff of Leadership Plus for their contributions in regards to the organisation's financial management.

Geoff Southwell

Treasurer



Incoming CEO Report:

The strategy exercise that Leadership Plus undertook earlier this year helped clarify the organisation's preferred direction, and in particular, helped the board understand how our activities are affected by the National Disability Insurance Scheme and what the advent of the NDIS meant for our future.

In the period September to November this year, I have had the opportunity as acting CEO to get much closer to the day to day activities that Leadership Plus undertakes, and to study the NDIS program in much more detail. Two areas are of significance to us.

The NDIS Appeals program, a logical extension of our other advocacy activities, is going to be critical for people with disability in Victoria in the near future as the NDIS rolls out, with many signs pointing to the need for better processes within the NDIA, and hence the need for additional protection and support for people with disability.

The NDIS program for Information, Linkages and Capacity-building (ILC), is primarily supporting those with disability who will not receive direct funding packages through the NDIA, and is intended to make it easier for people with disabilities to achieve meaningful lives by better information provision, communication and better adaptation of mainstream services to ease access for people with disabilities. This is very much consistent with some of Leadership Plus's activities in leadership development and other training, and we have applied for funding in 2018 for developing self-advocacy groups for people with acquired brain injury. We see this as only one of the possible areas where we may be able to participate in the ILC program.

Apart from these areas, I anticipate that we will develop partnerships with other organisations in the sector and seek funding from private sources, broadening our access to funds and lessening our current dependence on a single set of programs.

In the brief period I have been more closely involved at Leadership Plus, I have found everyone extremely welcoming and helpful to me, and I thank the whole team for their generous support. More than that, I continue to be impressed with their skill in dealing with tasks which are rarely simple, and with their dedication to ensuring that the best possible result can be achieved for every client. In addition, I am very grateful to Jeff Coley for his enthusiastic support and ongoing assistance. Finally, my thanks to the board for their confidence in me in appointing me to the position.

Geoff Southwell

Acting Chief Executive Officer



Staff 2016 / 2017

Jeff Coley	Executive Officer
Geoff Southwell	Chief Executive Officer appointed November 2017
Melanie Muir	Team Leader
Paul Hume	Individual Advocate
Giovanna Amato	Individual Advocate /Program Coordinator /Administration
Amanda Roe	Individual Advocate
Andreas Cassinides	Individual Advocate
Leigh Meyer	Individual Advocate appointed June 2017
Bronwyn Trickett	Individual Advocate

Volunteers

Fiona Hand	Administration Volunteer
Nerida Roe	Administration Volunteer

Funding body

Department of Social Services



Human Rights



NSDS

SAI GLOBAL