



# RIGHTS IN ACTION INC

*Independent advocacy for people with disabilities*

## NEWSLETTER

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**March 2020 – Issue 53**

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### *Message from the Manager*



Hello All – Firstly, I would like to acknowledge and thank Robyn Renton for all the hard work she has carried out over the years, which has sustained and ensured the growth of Right In Action (RIA) operations throughout Far North QLD. Robyn's legacy has given me "big shoes to fill."

I would like to also say a big THANK YOU to the RIA Staff and Board for welcoming and onboarding me. I feel very honoured to be working with you all and privileged to be a part of the RIA vision.

My ability to absorb a handover was tested, as I soon discovered that there are a lot of moving parts to managing an independent advocate organisation. However, this was made much smoother with the aid of professional RIA staff who have unique set of skills.

With essential Federal and QLD state funding, we have continued to provide a premium advocacy service to the most vulnerable in FNQ. During the month of February this was done with the roll out of RIA Disability Royal Commission (DRC) community engagement workshops, which assisted people to give accounts of their neglect and abuse. Ultimately, this will bring about positive changes to the disability sector. The tenacity of RIA staff has maintained operations during the COVID-19 pandemic in March. Even with necessary procedural face to face appointment restrictions, we have increased our capacity to deliver advocacy. This has prompted us to recruit two more staff members, ensuring that we deliver an essential service for the vulnerable in this time of mandatory social isolation. Due to the dedication of the RIA team, we have managed to mobilise operations even in these most challenging times.

We will continue to help marginalised community members to:

- navigate complex government and private sector systems;
- gather evidence in support of their cases; and
- get appropriate service provision

## Rights In Action

### Staff

MANAGER  
**Raoul Wilson**

SENIOR ADVOCATE  
**Bob Paten**

### ADVOCATES

**Dianne Wellington**  
**Marlene Levasseur**  
**Angelika Williams**

ADMINISTRATION OFFICER  
**Mary Klasek**

**RIA Board of  
Management  
2018/19**

PRESIDENT  
**James Barnes**

VICE PRESIDENT  
**Jane Simpson**

SECRETARY  
**Bernadette Dimla**

TREASURER  
**Allan Wilson**

GENERAL MEMBERS  
**Jan Corcoran**



Staff

Due to Government Health advice Rights in Action will be suspend face to face appointments with clients and service providers.

This action is in response to the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic and escalating public health measures to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Until further notice, RIA will provide advocate support via telephone, email and skype.

## Congratulations & Happy Retirement to Robyn Renton!

*“The joy of retirement comes in those everyday pursuits that embrace the joy of life; to experience daily the freedom to invest one’s life-long knowledge for the betterment of others; and, to allocate time to pursuits that only received, in years of working, a fleeting moment.” – Byron Pulsifer.*



Robyn spent the last 15 years guiding and inspiring the Rights In Action team. Words alone are insufficient to express how much we are going to miss her.

Robyn has been an exceptional leader and a mentor. Her professional skills are well known and include advocacy for the most vulnerable in our community, effective financial management, conflict resolution, strategic planning, human resource management, decision making, delegation, communication, a sense of humour and a ‘common-sense approach’ to management.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Robyn for her contribution not only to the organisation but to each and every staff member and client over the years. It has been a privilege and pleasure working with Robyn. Some of us have known her for years, while others have only had the pleasure of working alongside her for a short time. She has led and inspired the team by example and helped shape our work and ethics as advocates and administrators.



**Membership** fees are a small contribution of \$5.00 per year or \$20 for 5 years. However, we do accept more generous financial donations.

Membership benefits include:

You receive our quarterly Newsletter that provides current information on local services, systemic issues and campaigns, changes to government legislation, social events and activities.

You can contribute to the direction of our organisation by attending meetings and providing your views and feedback that is welcomed and valued.

Financial members are encouraged to nominate as a Board member at our annual general meeting.



Donations help us promote the rights of people with disabilities by addressing systemic issues and campaigns, presentations and static displays, social events and activities.

<https://www.givenow.com>.

Robyn always had time to listen and give us wise counsel. Not only was she an amazing manager, but she was a caring person who saw the best in all of us. She gave us moral support during difficult times. Through her compassionate support, Robyn has put smiles on all of our faces time and time again.

We say goodbye to someone who was an incredible manager and also a highly respected colleague and friend. We wish Robyn a relaxing and rewarding retirement and we know her support for Rights In Action will continue in the future.

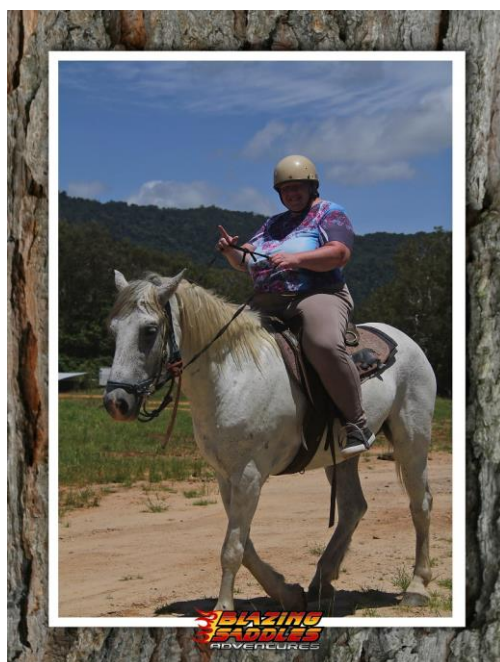


## Horse riding for Angela

**When** Angela was younger, she loved horse riding and spent a lot of time caring for her horse and going on trial rides. Over the years her health and well-being suffered and she was unable to care or ride her horse anymore.

She spent a lot of time at home alone and she felt isolated and vulnerable. Since Angela has been receiving NDIS supports, she has been getting out into the community regularly and receiving supports to improve her life at home as well.

Her support worker Kat was able to find a horse stable that caters to a wide variety of clients. Angela was so excited and happy to be able to go horse riding again recently after eight long years. Kat joined her on the ride too.



Angela



Support Worker- Kat and Angela

Article from Dianne Wellington – Advocate



## NDIA announces massive changes to the NDIS amid COVID-19 pandemic

The [NDIA](#) has just announced a sweeping changes to the operations of the NDIS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These will have a huge (likely positive) impact on every participant in the Scheme.

## Support Coordination in Core!

With many people struggling to access their disability supports, Support Coordination has become an essential service. Thankfully, the Agency has reconginsed that.

A new line item for Support Coordination has been added to Core.

This allows participants without Support Coordination funding (or who have used all theirs up) to access the service through their Core budget.

The Support Coordinator does not need to be registered to provide Core services. But people who are Agency managed will still need to use a registered provider.

[Read more](#)

# "I'm Going Home"

[Finally](#) after 2 long years of continual advocacy and liaising with numerous stakeholders such as the Public Trustee, the NDIS, Synapse, Office of the Public Guardian, Wuchopperen health services and various members of the Kowanyama community – our lovely client Fiona Coglin (who resides in supported accommodation at Synapse and has not been home to country for many years) gets to go home to Kowanyama for a holiday.

When first meeting Fiona, I was quite struck by her inner strength and self-respect. Our first meeting occurred around the campfire at Synapse and involved a lot of smoke! When asking Fiona how I could help her with advocacy, I still remember Fiona's quite voice and simple words (which most of us can identify with) **'I want to go home'**. Well, we are finally there – Fiona is holding her plane ticket in this photo and sets off in late March 2020.

For making Fiona's dream come true, I would like to thank Janine Taylor, Manager, and Tonia Savo, Support Co-ordinator (who is also in the photo), of Synapse, and Marina Peace from the Office of the Public Guardian for all their wonderful support in protecting and promoting Fiona's human rights.

Rights in Action also have Federal funding for people to tell their 'Story' to the Disability Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Fiona has consented to us making a submission and recommendations on her behalf to the commission around, amongst other things, the terrible delay caused by systemic bureaucracy within some Qld State public sectors and the human rights approach that needs to be taken by the public sector when dealing with people like Fiona and others. As at January 2020, the Queensland public sector is now required to build a culture within their sector and protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) which came into effect in Qld, in January 2020.

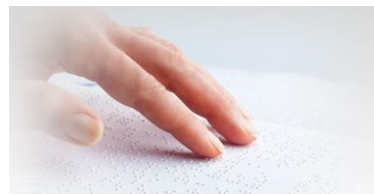
Postscript to this story...unfortunately Fiona's dream has now been delayed again due to COVID-19 and not being able to enter her community for fear of causing any harm – but, she will be going home when the all clear is given

Marlene Levasseur  
Advocate



*Tonia Savo Support Co-ordinator & Fiona Coglin*

# Print Disability Services Program



A [person](#) experiencing a print disability is typically denied a broad range of information that the majority of Australians take for granted. The Print Disability Services Program (PDSP) ensures that those with a print disability have equal access to information.

PDSP supports organisations to produce print material in alternative formats for people with print disability, who have difficulty reading standard print due to vision impairment, a physical disability or a learning disability

The Program provides accessible information and materials that assist people with a print disability to live independently, participate in education, gain employment and be active participants in their local community.

The reasons for print disability may include:

- vision impairment or blindness
- physical dexterity problems such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, arthritis or paralysis
- learning disability, such as dyslexia
- brain injury or cognitive impairment
- literacy difficulties
- early dementia

Organisations funded under the PDSP produce digital masters that can be converted to a number of alternative formats including Braille, Audio, Large Print, Tactical Graphics, E Text (downloadable format), Easy English, Accessible PDF, DAISY and MP3.

Digital masters of printed material are made available on Trove, an online database of Australian resources developed by the National Library of Australia.

There are two organisations currently funded under PDSP: Vision Australia and VisAbility.

For further information on PDSP and organisation contact details, visit the [DSS website](#).

**From the Board of Management and Staff at RIA  
We would like to wish everyone a Happy & Safe Easter**



**Rights in Action will be closed on the following days**

**10<sup>th</sup> April 2020  
Good Friday**

**13<sup>th</sup> April 2020  
Easter Monday**

**27<sup>th</sup> April 2020  
Anzac Day**

**4<sup>th</sup> May 2020  
Labour Day**

## Jokes

Q. Why was the Easter Bunny so upset?

A. He was having a bad hare day!

Q. What kind of stories do Easter bunnies like best?

A. One with hoppy endings!

Q. How does the Easter Bunny keep his fur neat?

A. With a hare brush!

Q. How does a Easter Bunny travel?

A. By hare plane

## RIA Newsletter Articles

We encourage members, local services and the community to provide stories, interesting articles and advertisements for our quarterly Newsletter.

Our Newsletter is distributed **free** of charge by emails, post or by accessing our website.

If you would like to contribute to our next Newsletter, please contact Mary Klanssek at our office on 40317377 or email [info@rightsinaction.org](mailto:info@rightsinaction.org)

*NB: Sometimes space is limited and we reserve the right to decide on the content of The RIA Newsletter*



### Reminder

**Please contact Mary on 40317377 if you do not want us to send you our Newsletter**

### **DISCLAIMER:**

*Our Newsletter is a way to share information.*

*The information published is intended for general information only. RIA checks that information is factual however we are not responsible for any opinions or Articles provided by other services.*

*Information is not considered professional advice.*

[From](#) the Department of Health

# Protect yourself from COVID-19 and stop the spread of germs.

## Simple steps help stop the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses:



**Wash your hands** often with soap and water **for at least 20 seconds**, especially before eating.



**Avoid close contact** with people who are sick.



**Avoid touching** your eyes, nose, and mouth.



**Stay home** when you are sick.



**Cover your cough or sneeze** with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.



**Clean and disinfect** frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay up to date by visiting  
[www.ny.gov/coronavirus](http://www.ny.gov/coronavirus)



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