

Annual Report 2021/2022



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AGM Minutes 2020/2021

Friday 15d October 2021
Novotel -122 Lake St, Cairns City QLD 4870

Chairperson: James Barnes
Minute Taker: Bernadette Dimla
Time: 6:11 pm

1. **Opening and Welcome** by James Barnes

Attendance

Angelika Williams, Robyn Renton, Maggie Robinson, Raoul Wilson, Wjnanda Vanden Brink; Danny Hart, Genevieve Cridge, Gwion Cain; Bob Patten, James Barnes, Janet Corcoran, John Hartigan, Edward Hill;

Apologies

Yvonne Todd

2. **Registration of Proxies** to nominated person – failing that person to the Chair of the meeting

• Yvonne Todd nominated James Barnes

3. **Reviewed Minutes of the last AGM** held on 23rd October 2020

Motion: The minutes of the meeting are a true reflection of the meeting held on 23rd October 2019

Moved: James Barnes **Seconded:** Yvonne Todd

All in Favour: carried unanimously

4. **President Report**

James tabled his President Report. He noted the 20th Anniversary event as a successful event. He spoke of the challenges posed by Covid19 over the last 18 months or so, but RIA staff rose to the occasion and continued to provide quality client service. He thanked the Board staff member and client for their support over the past 12 months. James noted the Auditor's Report. A special meeting will be called at a future date to nominate a new Auditor.

Motion: That the President's report is accepted.

Moved: James Barnes **Seconded:** Edward Hill

All in Favour: carried unanimously

The Chair called for nominations from the floor. No further nominations. All positions were accepted and unopposed.

Motion: To accept all nominations for the Board of Management 2021/2022.

Moved: James Barnes

Seconded: Janet Corcoran

All in Favour: carried unanimously

8. **General Business**

N/A

Meeting closed: 6.53 pm.

Section 1 – Strategic Direction



ABOUT US

Rights In Action Incorporated (RIA) is a community-based organisation formed in August 2001 to provide independent advocacy for people with disabilities who reside in Babinda, Cairns, Yarrabah, Kuranda, Atherton, Mareeba, Malanda & Yungaburra. In 2017, The Department of Social Services provided additional funding to assist people with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) appeals, including the broader geographical areas of Charters Towers, Ayr, Ingham, Port Douglas, Mossman and Daintree. RIA prides itself on delivering a unique face-to-face advocacy service in regional areas of Far North QLD.

ETHOS

Propelling Opportunity and Empowerment.

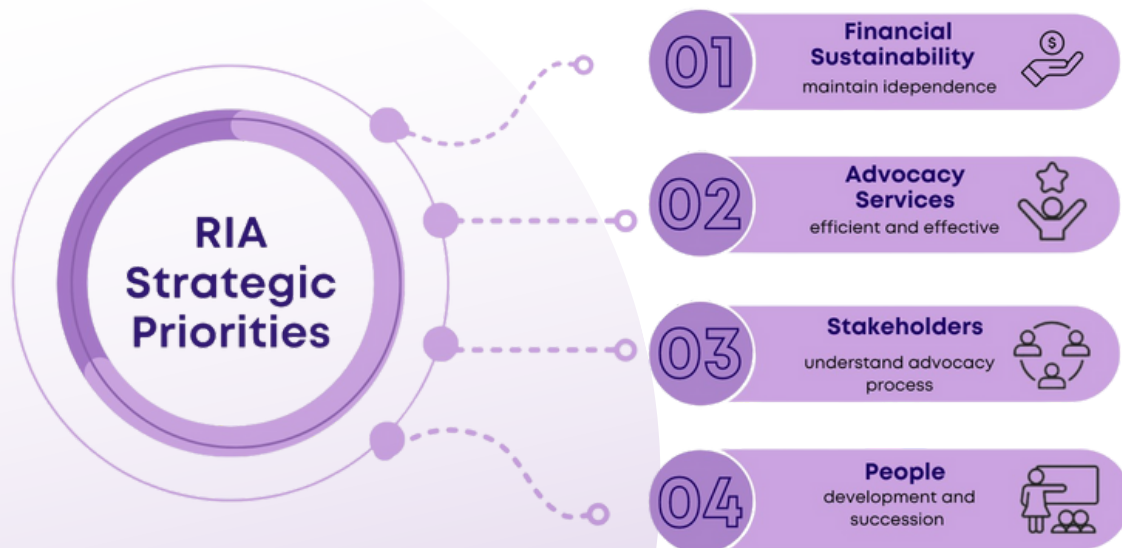
PURPOSE

Independent professional advocacy for people with disabilities that addresses instances of discrimination, abuse, neglect and or exploitation as well as breaches of human rights.

VALUES

Implement effective support- decision-making framework and safeguarding choice and control for people with disabilities.

Empowering the most vulnerable community members with opportunity and social inclusion.



What RIA does

Individual Advocacy is a process that involves an advocate taking action with and alongside a person with a disability and in their best interest, which can include the following.

- Providing information to enable a person to advocate for themselves.
- Supporting the person to take action on human rights and discrimination matters.

Independent Advocacy undertaken by RIA is being on the side of the person with a disability. We advocate only for the individual, not the family, carer or other interested parties.

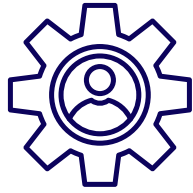
Self-Advocacy is when you speak for yourself. It is about understanding your rights. You may still seek help to find out information or make a decision, but you do it yourself with support from RIA.

NDIS Appeals Support Person is an RIA Advocate who assists people with disabilities to challenge NDIA decisions through an internal review or progressing to a formal appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT).

Systemic Advocacy undertakes actions to influence or secure positive long-term changes that remove barriers and address discriminatory practices to ensure the collective rights and interests of people with disabilities are upheld and pursues positive changes to legislation, policy and service practices in partnership with groups of people with disabilities, advocacy agencies and other relevant organisations.

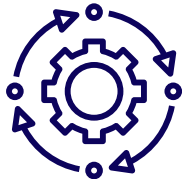
Community awareness, education and capacity-building activities are undertaken in response to requests received by external agencies or in response to broad social and systemic issues that impact people with disabilities where we can do so.

Essential RIA Advocacy Operational Elements



Skills

Diverse micro skill sets and qualifications that are professionally developed to enhance Advocacy implementation.



Process

A refined prescribed approach, which includes:

- intake
- dynamic dispute resolution
- vulnerable need establishment
- supported decision making
- trauma-informed and reflective practice
- follow through, and
- follow up.



Documentation

Compelling evidence safeguarding people with disabilities human rights and ensuring choice and control.



Professional Action Plan

A strengths-based and person-centred approach that develops an individualised strategy.



Course of Action

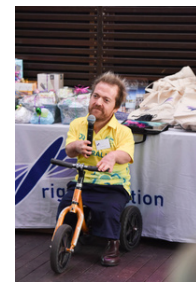
A timely response that gives resolution, opportunity and empowerment.



Outcome

Working in the very best interest of the vulnerable. Provide long-term people with disabilities benefits and social inclusion, which enable positive impact for the sector.

Our Local, QLD and National Networks








Our Supporters

Our Funding

| | |
|--|-------------------|
|  <p>Australian Government Department of Social Services</p> | |
|  Queensland Government | |
| Department of Disability Services | Queensland Health |

Our External Services

| | |
|---|--|
|  Pro-Advisor ONLINE BOOKKEEPING AND BEYOND JanelleRedgwell MYOB Consultant & Bookkeeper |  TECHNOLOGY HUB Nazir Riad Systems / Networking / IT Engineer |
|  National Standards for Disability Services Global-Mark.com.au® Global Mark Certification Quality Assurance Auditors |  GRUBERS BECKETT Chartered Accountants Independent Financial Auditors |
|  Clean Care Cairns COMMERCIAL & DOMESTIC CLEANING Office Cleaning | |

GM Report

It has been an extreme financial year of growth for Rights In Action (RIA). The team resolved several challenges, which turned into many opportunities. This gave the organisation more capacity and capability. Staff received sector-related qualifications and training, which met new and increased advocacy needs and demands in a post-COVID environment.

In September 2021, RIA proudly held our 20th Anniversary celebration, and we were blessed with our VIP guest Para-Olympic Champion Grant “Scooter” Patterson. Scooter motivated sector-wide stakeholders at this event with his life story and words of wisdom, which was well-needed coming out of the COVID lockdown.

For our team, some personal achievements included Angelika William’s Diplomas in Quality Auditing and Human Resource Management, John Jerry’s graduation from JCU with a Master of Social Work, and Maggie Robinson gaining her legal practising certificate.

We also covered much ground with our attendance and facilitation of events in Cairns, which flag-shipped RIA’s advocacy service provision in FNQ. In addition to the regular calendar sector stakeholder meetings, RIA was responsible for supporting and organising the following sector event: the QLD Independent Advocacy Disability Network conference, Cairns Disability Election Forum, Cairns Disability Support Workers Conference and FNQ National Disability Advocacy Framework forum. Not only did we get to showcase our unique and effective Advocacy approach, but as key participants and organisers of these events, we were pivotal contributors to shaping nationwide Advocacy service provision.

Our involvement in these events highlighted the importance of persons with disabilities needing access to independent advocacy. All of the mentioned, with superhuman work efforts from all RIA staff and Board of Management members, culminated in being nominated for the prestigious QCOSS Community Impact Human Rights Award.

Raoul Wilson, RIA GM

RIA Advocacy Impact and Outcomes

Rights In Action: Cairns, Atherton & Mareeba. During 2021 - 2022, RIA received **270** enquiries for direct independent advocacy.

112

**INDIVIDUALS
RECEIVED
INDEPENDENT
ADVOCACY**

During this period, RIA advocated for **112** persons in both DSS' & QIDAN funded programs, with **32** placed on RIA's waitlist (unmet need) which converted to advocacy.



158

**INDIVIDUALS
EMPOWERED TO
SELF ADVOCATE**

39%

PHYSICAL /DIVERSE

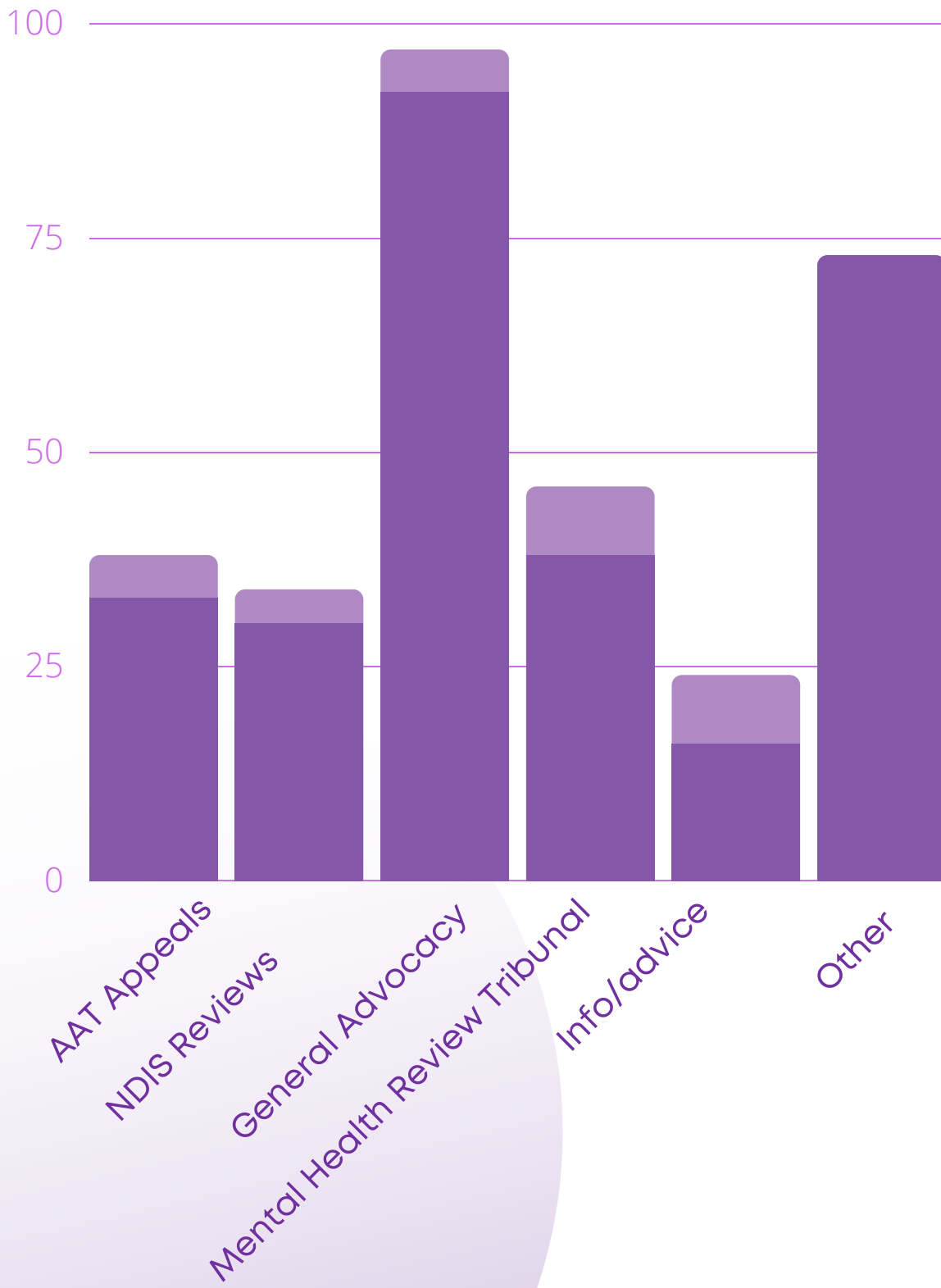
92 of RIA clients have a primary diagnosis of physical/diverse disability

37%

PSYCHOSOCIAL

86 of clients disclosed they had a primary or secondary Mental Health Diagnosis

Types of Advocacy supports



Advocacy Assistance

For FY 2022, Rights in Action completed:

- **232** individual enquiries and referrals for Advocacy support
- Advocacy support and assistance for **115** individuals with a disability
- **97** individual outgoing referrals for clients receiving our services for matters not directly related to Advocacy
- QLD Independent Disability Advocacy Network (QIDAN), we assisted **32** clients with 39 advocacy issues (311hrs)
- A combined total of **1,467hrs** spent on advocating for our clients, with the majority of hours spent on individual Advocacy (**571hrs**)

The unmet need in FNQ

- **37** people have been placed on our active waitlist (accepted); whilst
- **10x** people who were unable to access independent advocacy due to insufficient capacity
- **7x 30mins** telephone consultations (education sessions) conducted to assist individuals, parents and carers of people with disability (promoting family or self-advocacy)

Section 2 – Governance

President's Report

This year was a dynamic year for the RIA Board, with new ventures that we had never decided upon before. Plus, we saw the organisation receive the recognition we always knew it should get.

This time last year we welcomed John Hartigan to the Board. John brought a wealth of experience including his previous work as a RIA staff member years ago. John currently works in the employment and human resource area. When we needed to redraft our strategic plan, John facilitated the process and this was done in a style that afforded great cooperation with RIA staff. The process was calm, productive and organic. The final product of our 2022-2025 strategic plan was robust and clear.

In all my time on the Board of RIA, it has been a desire of many Board members to see RIA less reliant on government funding. We've always had a fear of funding cuts or funding cessation of the organisation. It's also the case that RIA has always exceeded their key performance indicators and provided more services that we are funded for, usually twice as many. However, we don't have the resources to perform all the work that we can see needs to be addressed. Some of those services are outside the scope of our funding agreements, but we have the knowledge and skill to help. This year the Board have worked with management to establish a secondary organisation, Supports in Action (SIA). The hope is we will have a second organisation that has different reporting to RIA, where we can undertake other work, still as a charity/not-for-profit, though we are considering undertaking some paid work with all profits being reinvested into the core business to build our capacity to provide more services. This brought all new challenges to the Board who had to learn, consider and make decisions on things we had never turned our minds to.

The commitment of the Board was shown through several extra meetings. Some via video link. Some were in the RIA Board room with lawyers who were able to advise us on laws, processes and options. Our General Manager had to make representations to our funding bodies of ensuring we weren't conflicting with our funding agreements. The personal and professional skills of the Board were exercised. It was a very exciting time, with all of us seeing our dream of securing RIA's future and increasing services to our client base and even increasing our client base as a potential outcome for all our work. Throughout this, the Board were courteous and professional and we enjoyed the challenges.

Further, the last year saw RIA being approached by the NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission as our assessment, investigation and documentation processes were seen of such high quality that the Commission is using our work as a reference source for their own work. This is the recognition that we all knew RIA deserved. A peak body in our field is now consulting with RIA. In the eyes of the Board, we have made it. The work of the staff, managers and the Board for more than two decades is receiving acknowledgment as being exceptional.

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I want to thank Mr Gwion Cain for his efforts in the last year. Gwion has tried and succeeded in making our financial affairs to be more transparent and easily readable for the Board. As one with little understanding of financial matters, I appreciated that with Mr Cain as Treasurer, I can follow our financial position without straining my brain.

Lastly, I have to thank the staff and managers for their continued hard work. The Board find it a pleasure to volunteer our time when we know you're working so hard. You inspire us to continue.

Thanks again.

This I present as the President's report for 2022. James Barnes, RIA President

Treasurer's Report

2022 saw a significant cut in our funding, which provided RIA with an opportunity to plan for a sustainable alternative source of income. This plan conquered the challenge of conflicts while maintaining RIA's independence and integrity.

An operational surplus from cost savings and new capability initiatives has filled the short-term issues of an inconsistent funding cycle, which RIA, with its networks, is lobbying for resolution. The set-up of a separate entity, Supports In Action, will provide long-term succession and stability for RIA operation into the future. We undertook a search outside of the traditional reliance on government funding and found a way forward for future RIA financial resilience.

RIA operations were strengthened by a framework that appropriately segregated financial duties and reconciliations of accounts.

The professional, reliable and accessible delivery of advocacy was supported by a process that optimised impact and mitigated risk. This was accomplished with worthwhile investments that included the following:

- public liability and professional indemnity upgrades
- professional development
- new human resource management system
- a new cyber security suite, and
- increase in WorkCover

Although RIA will be operating at a deficit in FY 23, financing operations will be bolstered with a contingency plan that will utilise significant cost savings and/or a reserved surplus.

Gwion Cain, RIA Treasurer

Section 3 – Other Important Information

Board of Management Nomination 2022/2023

| Nomination | Position |
|---------------|----------------|
| James Barnes | President |
| Yvonne Todd | Secretary |
| Gwion Cain | Treasurer |
| John Hartigan | General member |
| Luke Wenitong | General member |
| Priya Varsani | General member |
| Brody Oxenham | General member |

How you can help

There are many ways you can assist us in our work to promote the human rights of people with disabilities.

BECOME A MEMBER

RIA is committed to encouraging membership from a broad cross-section of the community. Membership is open for all interested in advocacy for people with disabilities. Members will be treated with equal fairness, respect and dignity, and their personal information will be protected. Applications for membership can be found on our website at www.rightsinaction.org or contact our office on 4031 7377 or email info@rightsinaction.org

DO YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Volunteer activities can be varied and may involve high levels of supervision. Due to our limited resources, these placements will be structured. It is also a requirement of our funding bodies that the engaged volunteer completes a Criminal History Screening before commencement.

Contact our office for further information on 4031 7377.

MAKE A DONATION

Rights In Action is a charitable organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). Donations over \$2.00 are tax-deductible. All donations can be made by EFT payment or via our website link, "Give Now."



Please visit www.rightsinaction.org

THE BENDIGO BANK – BUILDING ACTIVE, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES FNQ Ltd



This community banking program donates funds to RIA. Individuals, businesses and organisations that bank with Bendigo Bank inform the banking staff that they nominate us to receive the charitable funds. It costs nothing to do so; however, the more people that nominate Rights in Action, the more funds we receive to support people with disabilities in our community. So, please spread the word and next time you go into the Bendigo Bank, remember to nominate us as your preferred charity.