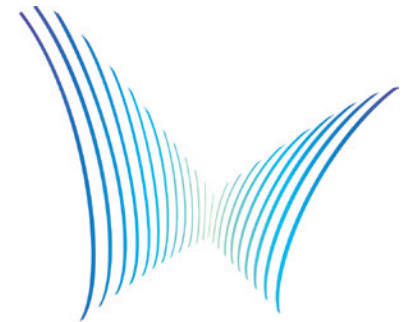


Annual Report 2013–2014



**Communication Rights
Australia**



Promoting rights for people with little or no speech

Communication Rights Australia

Communication Rights
Australia advocates for people
with little or no speech.
We offer free advocacy and
information services with a
human rights approach.



Meet the Board: David Ewens – Chairperson (absent), back row, right to left: Benny Browne, Julie Phillips, Craig McIntosh, Bob Ilievski, Evelyn Moseley, Wayne Green and Jan Ashford (CEO)

Highlights of 2013-2014

This year saw our first community performance and our move into event fundraising. The performers donated their time and our volunteers organised funding, donations and the overall running of the program. It was a most successful event enjoyed by all who attended.

In addition we held a very successful Open Day on 3 December 2013 to celebrate International Day of People with Disability. This provided people with the opportunity to come in and find out more about our services.

Information services

Communication Rights Australia offers a range of information services to help people understand and exercise their rights. We provide free and confidential advice to people with little or no speech, their parents/carers, service providers and the general public.

Our education sessions are provided to schools, service providers and other key groups within the general community. Sessions deliver an understanding of effective advocacy using a human rights framework and service providers' obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

832
attendees at
CRA education
sessions

98,314
websites
visits



101
instances of
advocacy
provided



6,950
requests for
information
and support



Chairperson's message

Much has happened during the last 12 months:

- The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) was established and has streamlined 18 grants and funding programs into seven. The sector was then asked to tender for services.
- The 'One DHS' new structure has rolled on with the objective to remove program-based silos and duplication. The Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) has reduced its staff by 300 and is now operating across the state from 17 local areas.
- The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rolled out in a number of trial sites across Australia, the Barwon area being the Victorian trial site.

It was sad to see our long time staff member, Eden Parris, leave for a permanent move to the United Kingdom.

Eden was replaced by Georgina Wu, who put her legal studies on hold to work with us for eight months. Since then, Jana Majdalani has joined Jan Ashford, Jade Johnson, Jai Phillips and our volunteer advocate, Monique Sweetland.

Our hard-working team has performed outstandingly over the last 12 months, given the increased demand for services and the complexity of many cases.

To our Chief Executive Officer, Jan Ashford, I wish to extend a heartfelt thank you for nourishing our organisation and ensuring the wheels keep moving in the right direction. Jan strongly supports our staff who, in turn, show a solid commitment to the organisation.

Thanks also to our volunteers and students who have helped us in many areas from advocacy through to administration and fundraising. This sector relies on the dedication of volunteers to add value at every level of operation.

It was estimated that our volunteers added over \$18,000 value to our organisation during the last year.

Our strong and committed Board of Directors have worked tirelessly on behalf of the organisation to ensure we meet our obligations.

To people with little or no speech, we hope that Communication Rights Australia is providing you with the support you require. Our long-term vision is to be a 'one-stop shop' for information and services that will help you understand and exercise your rights.

David Ewens
Chairperson



Chief Executive Officer's message

Over the last year, we have been able to achieve some outstanding outcomes for individuals despite a number of challenges including complex advocacy requests, increased demand for services and the frustration of limited resources.

Systemically, Communication Rights Australia has been actively influencing decisions on behalf our community by:

- providing recommendations for improvements to the National Relay Service at the consultative council; and by working with the Telecommunications Ombudsman in relation to general access complaints and services
- working with the Barwon Disability Advocacy Network, a network of both advocacy and legal services established to review issues within the pilot area of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA); and lobbying on community issues through joint sector collaboration represented by Disability Advocacy Victoria

- working with committees and advisory groups, such as the Inclusive Education Alliance, the Disability Discrimination Legal Service, the Disability Services Commissioner's Complaint Tool Reference Committee and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) committees, which review higher level changes in the environment.

In addition, we have provided written submissions to the Australian and Victorian governments, parliamentary inquiries, senate committee inquiries, the Australian Law Commission and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Copies of our submissions can be found on our website at caus.com.au

Communication Rights Australia received its Quality Accreditation under the Department of Human Services Standards and ISO Management System during the year.

To our team: Jai, Eden, Jana, Jade, Monique, Georgina and all of our volunteers, thank you for the support and commitment you have provided to the organisation over the last 12 months. It has been a pleasure working with you and your commitment to human rights makes this agency an outstanding example of best practice in the not-for-profit sector.

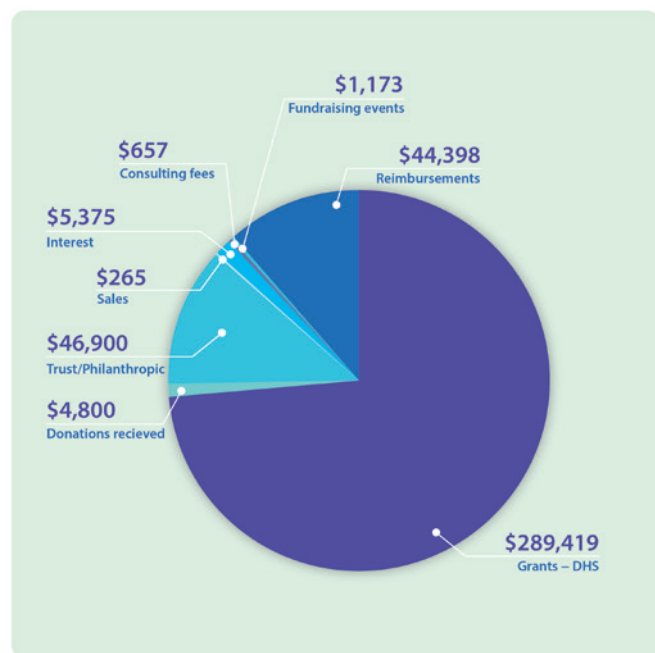
Jan Ashford
CEO



Financial overview of 2013-2014

For a fully audited copy of the Communication Rights Australia accounts, visit caus.com.au

Where the money comes from:



Current Assets

\$176,572

Fixed Assets

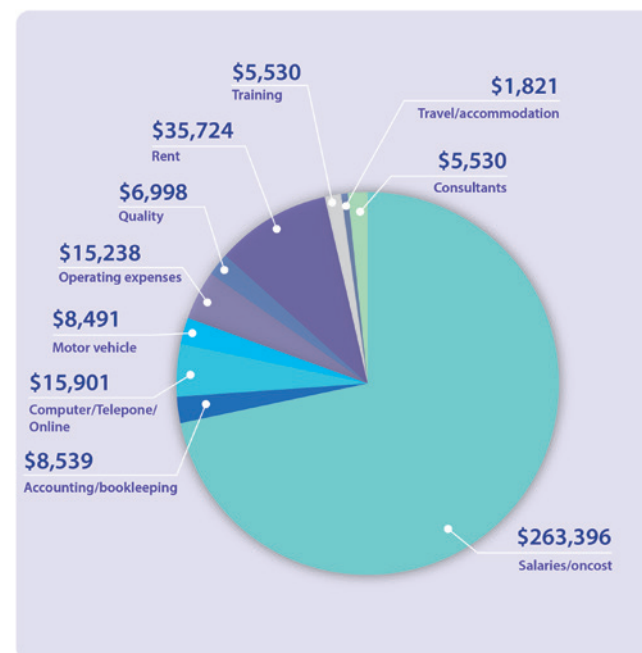
Leasehold improvements	\$18,586
Motor Vehicles	\$6,825
Office Equipment	\$2,434
Furniture and Fittings	\$655

Total Assets

\$205,072

Just under ¾ of our funding comes through Victorian Department of Human Services while the next major funding block was project work from both Philanthropic Trusts and government.

How the money is spent:



Current Liabilities

\$0

Long-term Liabilities

Provision for Annual leave	\$7,229
Provision for Long Service Leave	\$41,059

Total Liabilities

\$48,287

Equity

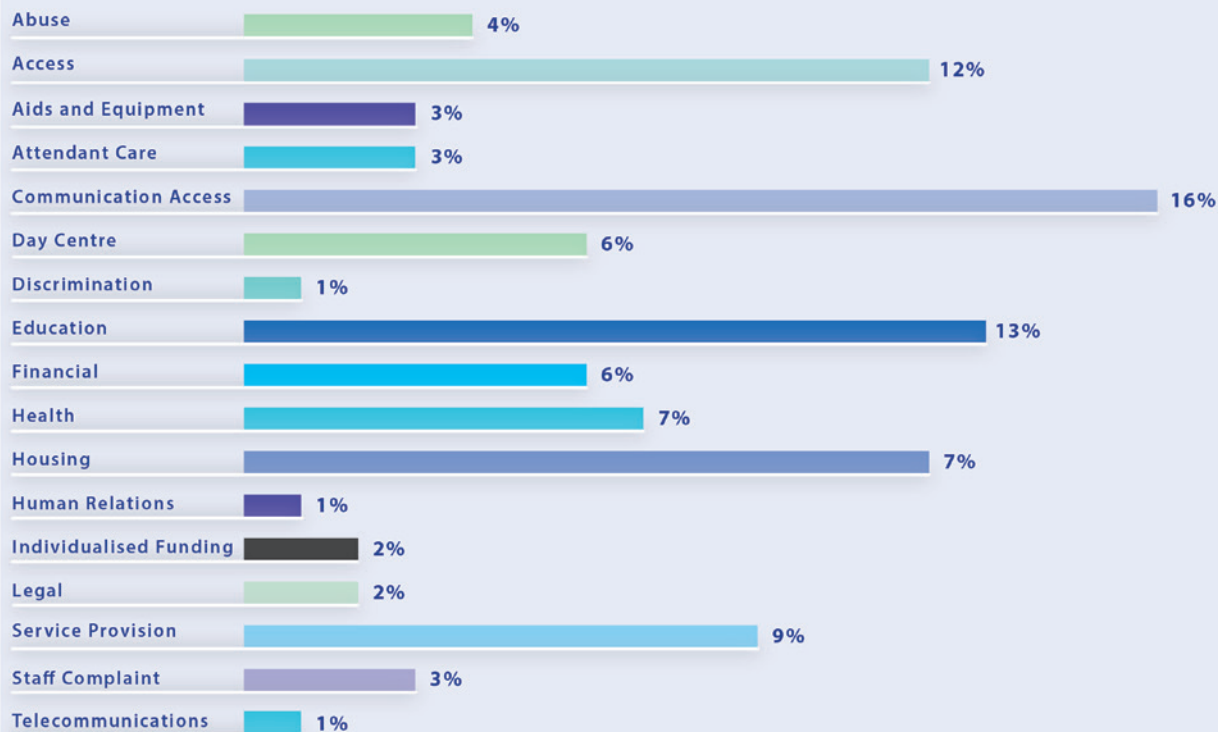
Retained Earnings	\$116,804
Current Year Earnings	\$39,981
Total Equity	\$156,785

The major expense for 2013–2014 is the cost of salaries and on costs for the provision of services. Rent was the next major expense followed by transport.

Advocacy services

Communication Rights Australia provides a free advocacy service across Victoria for people who have little or no speech. We are funded through the Department of Human Services for one advocate, with a case load of 60 clients. Gandel Philanthropy provides funding for eight education clients this financial year and, with the assistance of a volunteer, we were able to assist 101 clients to exercise their human rights within a range of settings.

2013 - 2014



An advocate's perspective

It has been a rollercoaster eight months with Communication Rights Australia. The role of an advocate is not easy to explain and truly needs to be experienced firsthand. Advocacy is a role that takes time to settle into – the learning curve is long and steep. It's really important to be yourself. The outcomes achieved often come down to personalities – managing the personalities is half the job. It has been an eye-opening experience to learn that rationality and reason can never be assumed.

Advocacy is never simple, in fact some of the seemingly simple cases end up being the most complex.

The last two months in particular went by way too quickly. I am grateful to Jan and Jai for helping me to become (almost) a fully-fledged advocate. They have been most generous in their time and attention. I expect that I will draw on the skills and knowledge they have instilled in me for years to come. Thank you.

Georgina Wu
Advocate



Jane has the right to be protected from inhumane or degrading treatment

Jane was experiencing an emotional breakdown when she was left alone for several hours in a hospital cubical waiting for someone to see her. During that time, she tried to communicate her need to use the toilet but the nurse did not understand. Jane tried to vocalise her needs but the nurse responded by having her forcibly sedated.

Jane was mortified by the experience and she wanted the hospital to know about the distress it had caused her. 'I could not believe what was happening to me as I only needed assistance to use the toilet – it was so embarrassing', Jane said. Despite having access to a communication device at the hospital, the nurse had not received any training in alternative methods of communication.

The hospital had effectively breached Jane's human rights – to be protected from inhumane or degrading treatment.

Jane approached Communications Rights Australia and we helped her to gather the facts and find a legal service to prepare a case against the hospital.

Kirsty has the right to access education and feel safe in the school environment

Kirsty found it difficult to communicate with her grade two peers, and school staff were not trained to support her. The Principal had no intention of providing the training and she told Kirsty's mother that it would be better for her to leave the school.

Kirsty felt isolated and her mother was worried about the level of care provided to Kirsty in class and in the playground. She was also outraged by the injustice of the situation.

Kirsty had the right to take part in public life, to access education and to feel safe in the school environment. The Principal's stance was an infringement of Kirsty's human rights.

In her quest for justice, Kirsty's mother approached Communication Rights Australia. We were able to attend meetings with the family and school principal, and negotiate until we achieved a fair outcome.

The school staff received training in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). Kirsty is now much happier and better equipped to learn and socialise at her school.

Jimmy has the right to community access

Jim received an individual funding package, which included funding for attended care, so that he could participate in activities he enjoyed. But when his attended care allowance was reduced, he felt like a prisoner in his own home.

Jim felt trapped, angry and unhappy with his living conditions. He could no longer travel or socialise and his ability to look after himself was also diminished.

Jim's basic right to community access had effectively been breached, which is why he approached Communication Rights Australia for help.

We worked with Jim to submit a case to the Victorian Department of Human Services, requesting an increase in attended care and an improvement in Jim's living conditions.

We were successful in our arguments and Jim's funding was subsequently increased, enabling him to pursue his interests and social activities once again.

Volunteers

Thank you!

We would like to thank the following volunteers and students for their support of our organisation over the last 12 months:

Rebecca Naylor	Colbee Mifsud
Netta Yogev	Manisha Lal
Poujah Maghun	Laura Salamito
Gabriella Abrahm	Debassa Wakjira
Monique Sweetland	Annika Lang

A volunteer's perspective

My role as a volunteer advocate with Communication Rights Australia has been hugely rewarding and enlightening. I have felt privileged to work with some incredible people including the Communication Rights' staff, our clients and many others who support people with communication needs, from occupational therapists, personal carers and medical practitioners to council officers, case managers and housing officers.

It has also been an eye-opening experience, as each separate matter demonstrates a different gap in the system, and bureaucratic impediments to often seemingly straightforward solutions.

Despite the challenges, the work is very rewarding because you get to meet inspirational people and gain a broad range of experience, from legislative research and analysis to networking and collaborative problem solving across many areas including housing, health and education.

The human rights framework that underpins our approach provides direction as we deal with competing interests and a variety of departments and agencies to find the best solution. The organisation also has a holistic approach: staff take the time to understand all of our clients' issues and they think laterally to achieve great outcomes.

I am indebted to Communication Rights Australia for giving me the opportunity to help make our society more equitable for some of our community's most vulnerable people.

Monique Sweetland
Volunteer Advocate

Financial support and partnerships

Communication Rights Australia acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



The Victorian Department of Human Services continues to provide the core funding for our agency, which allows us to advance the human rights of many people.

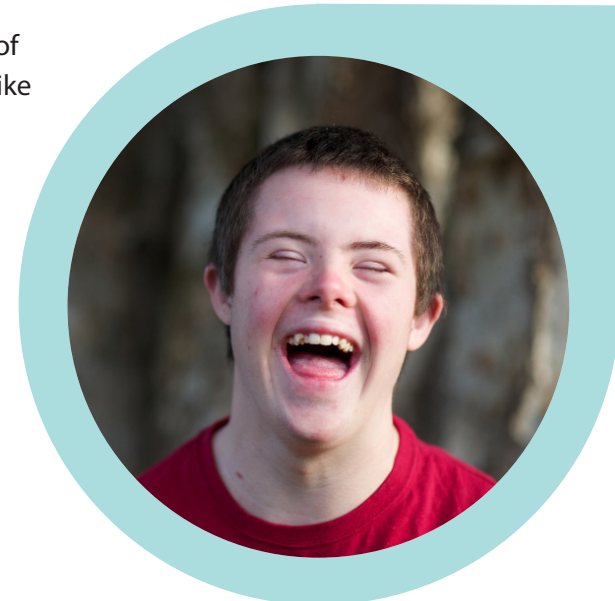
We are grateful for the financial support we have received from a number of philanthropic trusts, including the R.E. Ross Trust, the Myer Foundation, the Shult Foundation and Gandel Philanthropy.

We would like to thank all of the individuals and families who have made generous donations to our organisation.

Thanks also to the following sponsors/corporate partners who have supported us in many ways over the last year:

- Bit of Both Bakery Hampton
- Coles Bentleigh
- Corporate Data Solutions
- Footscray Community Art Centre
- Hampton Fruit Centre
- Jehan Jayasinghe – DJ
- Sandhill Roads Karma Kegs Richmond
- The Information Access Group
- Woolworths Moorabbin

On behalf of the Board, staff and volunteers of Communication Rights Australia, we would like thank you for your ongoing support.



Communication Rights Australia



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