



Advocacy Law Alliance Inc.

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Information for Prospective [Advocacy Law Alliance](#) Board Members

Thinking of joining a not-for-profit Board of Management?

The key responsibilities of the Board are:

- to set the strategic direction for the organisation
- to monitor its performance
- to maintain control of the organisation, ensuring that it stays on track according to agreed priorities and planned activities.

The Board does not run the day-to-day activities of ALA; this responsibility is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer.

Photo: Board and Senior Staff



About Advocacy Law Alliance (ALA)

ALA employs around 100 staff and has an annual budget of approximately \$10 million.

ALA takes good governance and management seriously as it believes people with a disability and other disadvantaged people deserve a well-run and professional service. Good governance and management are also required because of the increasing legislative, contractual, legal and ethical standards ALA must meet.

ALA is the governing organisation for four separate programs:

1. [Mid North Coast Legal Centre](#)(MNCLC)
2. [Disability Advocacy NSW](#) (DA).

3. [Disability Law NSW](#) DLNSW
4. National [Disability Advocacy Support Helpline](#) (The Helpline)

Our Vision

All people should have the right to equity and fairness.

Our Mission

To provide high quality social and legal advocacy to people in need. We are committed to servicing regional, rural and remote communities as well as metropolitan communities and we focus on empowering clients to navigate the legal and social systems to achieve fair outcomes.

Our Values (summary)

1. Courageous: we have the courage to do what's right.
2. Caring: we care about our people and the work we do.
3. Creative: we use innovation, evidence and curiosity to continually strive to improve.
4. Connected: we are better together

ALA History

The story of ALA began in Newcastle and Tamworth NSW Australia in about 1985.

In Tamworth a small group of locals set up an association to advocate for people with an intellectual disability (Citizen Advocacy Northwest). At the same time a self-advocacy association started in Newcastle. In 1994, Disability Advocacy Service Hunter (DASH) was established in Newcastle to advocate for all people with a disability and mental illness. In 2006, DASH and Advocacy Northwest joined forces to become Disability Advocacy NSW (DA) and gradually expanded to cover the Mid North Coast region.

Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre (MNCLC)

Mid North Coast advocates found that the region was one of the few in NSW that did not have a community legal centre that could ensure disadvantaged people (including people with a disability) get fair access to justice. DA advocates worked over several years with local groups to research legal needs and gather relevant evidence to show that a community legal centre should be based on the Mid North Coast. In 2010 the Commonwealth and NSW governments offered funds to establish a community legal centre in Port Macquarie. MNCLC opened in 2011.



Name Change

To reflect the diversity of the services it provided and the alliance between legal and social advocacy, Disability Advocacy NSW changed its name to Advocacy Law Alliance.

Photo: Staff Conference

In 2016 Disability Information and Advocacy Service (Bathurst) joined forces to become DA's new Central West region. About the same time, DA opened a new office in Parramatta and Lower Blue Mountains to service the Sydney West region. DA also established offices in, Dubbo and Broken Hill to better service remote regional populations.

Disability Law NSW

In 2019 ALA began Disability Law NSW. ALA had been providing legal support for people with all types of disability including mental illness via the MNCLC practice for 10 years. However, in 2019 the legal centre supported its sister program DA to employ specialist disability law solicitors to meet the growing demand for legal help, expand our coverage, and become Disability Law NSW. Disability Law NSW employs solicitors within the MNCLC legal practice to provide legal advice and support to people with a disability who are clients of DA. DA covers around two thirds of NSW.

ALA has offices in Newcastle, Paramatta, Blue Mountains, Broken Hill, Dubbo, Gosford, Taree, Port Macquarie (2), Tamworth, Armidale, Bathurst, Coffs Harbour (2), Taree and Armidale. Along with advocates located in other parts of NSW.

National Advocacy Helpline

In 2021 ALA began to operate the National Disability Advocacy Support Helpline (the Helpline or DASH). The Helpline is for all people with disability, their families and carers. The Helpline is a three-year pilot phone-based individual advocacy service which will be delivered by ALA and accessed through the Disability Gateway. The Helpline will provide people with disability access to advocacy support over the phone and refer to in-person National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) providers and other community and government agencies if required.

ALA receives funding from the Commonwealth Attorney Generals Department, Legal Aid, Commonwealth Department of Social Services and NSW Department of Community and Justice. ALA has also received grants from other sources.

ALA Governance

ALA needs people with the time and governance skills to oversee the organisation and encourages and welcomes people from its target groups to join the Board. The Board is elected each year at the annual general meeting. However, the Board may also appoint new Board members to fill casual vacancies throughout the year.

Generally, the Board is made up of a balance of people from: the regions ALA covers, the target groups it assists and people with legal, financial and management skills. Orientation, support and ongoing governance training is provided for Board members.

As part of its commitment to good governance and high ethical standards the ALA Board have resolved to undergo police checks as do all staff and volunteers of the organisation.

Governance over distance

ALA currently covers much of NSW and has many locations across the State. To effectively meet on a regular basis the Board uses Zoom meetings. Therefore, to participate, a Board member must have access to a device with a web camera/microphone and be able to readily communicate via email. Meetings can be attended in this way from home or office.



The Board usually meets face-to-face one or two times a year on a weekend, so occasional travel will be involved. The Board usually meets 6-7 times a year. Sometimes extra meetings are called.

Board Overview

The Service is currently an Incorporated Association.

Office bearer positions

Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, along with between 3-6 Board members.

Board Duties - Governance

The key responsibilities of the Board are to set the direction for the organisation, to monitor its performance and to maintain control of the organisation, ensuring that it stays on track according to its strategic plan.

Delegation of Management

The day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated to the CEO (Chief Executive Officer who is a paid staff member) and is based on policies approved by the Board. The CEO reports back regularly to the Board.

Board Responsibilities

We ask that all prospective Board members read the document in this link before putting in an expression of interest.

<https://www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources/who-runs-the-organisation/responsibilities-of-the-board-and-committee-members>

The satisfaction of being a Board member

“Personal satisfaction” is the phrase that most commonly crops up when various Australian leaders and community organisation Board members are asked to articulate their experiences. Most agree that while outsiders may see their contribution as selfless, the benefits derived from the experience usually outweigh the sacrifices.

***Making a difference.** There can be few more satisfying experiences than being able to see your goals and vision – and those of the organisation you are representing – come to fruition in the form of successfully completed projects. Contributing to the achievement of something you really believe in brings a form of satisfaction that is unlikely to be equalled in other areas of your professional life. Recognising that you are making a significant difference to people’s lives and contributing to the betterment of the community is a fine reward indeed.*

***Gaining new knowledge.** Becoming involved in a community organisation can open up whole new areas of interest, resulting in a greatly expanded appreciation for how community organisations are run and of the specific sector in which the organisation is operating. As a wise person once said, no knowledge is ever wasted.*

***Gaining new skills.** Successfully negotiating the challenges of the community sector - those involving fundraising and advocacy, for example – can pose challenges quite distinct from those required in the commercial or government sectors. Learning how to overcome these challenges can allow Board*

members to develop an entirely different, and highly useful, set of skills. Meeting and working with other talented people can also lead to a valuable expansion of skills.

Expanding your networks. Most often people are invited to sit on a Board because of their particular skills or attributes – and taking a seat alongside them at the Board table can allow you to benefit from those attributes. Making connections through the development of relationships and friendships with other Board members can have long-lasting positive personal and professional implications.

Putting yourself in context. Often in the day-to-day grind of work and personal lives, it is easy to lose sight of what skills and expertise you actually have to offer the world. Joining the Board of a community organisation, and acknowledging your contribution to its success, can lead to a more finely tuned understanding of your own worth – and a realisation that what you have to say is just as important as anyone else.

Finding it's not just about the bottom line. Many Board members find a passion and commitment that is unlike the search for shareholder returns in a company boardroom. The motivation to achieve a mission rather than just increase revenues can be very inspiring.

Being inspired. Most people know the buzz that can come from being part of an effective team. Working with like-minded, dedicated people, not for material gain but for the good of the cause, is another experience opened up to community group Board members. That passion, commitment and spirit of generosity can be difficult to find in other arenas.

Being included. Participating in the community that the Board represents also presents immense rewards. Whether you are working for a lost dog's home, a sporting group, a church or a school, serving on the Board can put you in contact with people you may have not have otherwise encountered. Getting to know your stakeholders, watching them live and work and participate, can be an exhilarating as any other experience you are likely to have.

(Extracted from *Surviving and Thriving as a Safe, Effective Board Member*, Our Community Pty Ltd 2009.)

Advocacy Law Alliance Board Member - Expression of Interest

This form is for people who are interested in becoming a voluntary Board member of Advocacy Law Alliance Inc. (ALA).

Name	
Phone	
E mail	
Address	

1. Can you tell us about yourself and why you would like to be a Board member?
2. What skills or attributes do you think you could bring to the board?
3. Do you have a disability?
4. Are you from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background?
5. Are you from a non-English speaking (CALD) background?
6. Do you have easy access to a computer and email to receive and send relevant board information? *ALA covers a wide geographic area in NSW. Meetings are mostly held via web conferencing "Zoom" meetings.*
7. From time-to-time Board Members may have to do some training related to being on a non-profit board. Do you have the time and willingness to occasionally do this?
8. Would you be willing to travel to a Saturday meeting once or twice a year? *Most board meetings are via web conference (in the late afternoon or evening). However, the Board meets face-to-face one or two times a year at either on a Saturday (travel and accommodation expenses paid).*

As part of its legal and contractual obligations Board members must provide responses to the following questions.

9. Have you ever been declared bankrupt? (If yes please provide details)
10. Have you ever been a director or an officer of an organisation or its subsidiaries that has been placed in receivership, liquidation or provisional liquidation? (If yes please provide details).
11. Have you ever had a conviction for crimes of dishonesty? (If yes please provide details). *Please note that all new Board Members are required to undertake a criminal record/ police check which will be periodically updated.*
12. Please describe below any potential or actual interests you have identified in relation to ALA's conflict of interest policy. *As a guide: organisations or individuals you may have*

some association or relationship with, that have the potential to conflict with ALA's interests and independence. Please note that declaring a potential or perceived conflict of interest does not necessarily disqualify a Board Member. By declaring a potential conflict of interest the Service seeks to deal with such in a transparent manner.

From ALA's Policy this might include situations in where:

- close personal friends or family members are involved, such as decisions about employment, discipline or dismissal, service allocation or awarding of contracts*
- an individual or their close friends or family members may make a financial gain or gain some other form of advantage*
- an individual is involved with another organisation or offers services that are in a competitive relationship with our organisation and therefore may have access to commercially sensitive information, plans or financial information.*
- an individual is bound by prior agreements or allegiances to other individuals or agencies that require them to act in the interests of that person or agency or to take a particular position on an issue.*
- Involvement in external activities – It is possible that Board Members may undertake volunteer or professional roles outside the organisation that potentially give rise to a conflict of interest, or a perception of conflict (e.g. Board Members undertaking consultancy work for other organisations or government agencies). As a result Service expects that all Board Members declare their involvement in external activities related to the work of the Service*

For further information about ALA or becoming a Board Member please go to www.advocacylaw.org.au contact the CEO, Mark Grierson. The CEO can also provide you with the details of the Board Chairperson.

If you are interested in joining the Board please fill out the form and return to ALA ala@advocacylaw.org.au. We try to get a mix of people on the Board with relevant skills, from the regions our service covers, as well as people from the target groups we assist.