



Queenslanders with  
Disability Network

Annual Report  
2013 - 2014

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# Part 1: Introduction

## Welcome

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodial Elders and their descendants of the lands on which we carry out our work. We thank them for their custodianship of the land, past and present.

QDN also acknowledges people with disability who have come before us and died in institutional settings, as well as those who are still trapped in institutions or silenced by institutional practices. We take on the responsibilities of being clear about the rights of ALL people with disability and, where necessary, speak in an informed and considered manner, for those who cannot speak for themselves.

All QDN meetings and events start with a welcome and acknowledgement of Traditional Owners and Elders and acknowledgement of people with disability who cannot be present. This recognises our cultural heritage and draws attention to people with disability who are silenced and marginalised.

## About us

Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) is a Company Limited by Guarantee, governed by a Board of Directors, who are people with disability.

QDN provides a mechanism for people with disability to have a say in the issues that affect our lives – to have a voice.

QDN is funded by the Queensland Government (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) to provide information, referral and advice and systemic advocacy to influence Government policy development.

QDN provides information and builds the capacity of people with disability to more fully participate in their communities.

QDN is a member organisation. It has 3 membership categories:

- Ordinary Members – people with disability
- Supporters Members – family and others who support QDN's goals
- Corporate Members – corporate bodies that support QDN's goals

Only Ordinary Members have voting rights and are eligible for Board of Directors membership.

New members are welcome. Membership is free.

QDN has the following membership numbers:

- 598 Ordinary Members – including 41 who identify as Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders
- 388 Supporters
- 40 Corporate Members

There are also an additional 60 organisations or individuals who receive our eBulletin.

There have been 81 new members added to our network since the end of the 2012-13 financial year, demonstrating a strong and growing membership base.

## **Our vision**

People with disability achieve full citizenship and are active and valued members of the community.

## **Our mission**

QDN is a state-wide network of people with disability connecting for collective and affirmative action.

## **Our values**

- **Authentic voice:** being for, of, with and by people with disability, speaking with a strong voice, ensuring that those with no voice are heard and valued.
- **Collaborative action:** we work jointly with others to build an inclusive network and culture based on shared experiences, shared values and collective wisdom.
- **Rights:** we model a human rights approach which recognises disability as a social issue.
- **Respect:** we value human difference and diversity and build mutual respect through our openness and fellowship.
- **Resilience:** we are hopeful, even about the most complex challenges, and we are here for the long term.

## **Our motto**

Nothing about us, without us

## Chairperson's report

It has been a successful yet challenging 2013-14 for QDN. Our achievements have happened at a time when transformational change is impacting upon the organisation, our members and supporters as the disability sector prepares for the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Thank you to my fellow Directors and their families for your resilience and continued commitment to QDN members, Queenslanders with disability and the Queensland community.

I acknowledge QDN Director, David Swift, who is stepping down after a 3 year contribution which has included his role as QDN's Treasurer. David has also been a key driver around improvements to our quality management system. Thank you David for your dedication and contribution and I look forward to your continued involvement in QDN. Your community development skills will be invaluable as QDN moves to develop new local groups in 2015.

QDN's strength lies in its members who bring lived experience of disability and passion to drive the conversations and decisions on issues that impact upon lives. Thank you to the members who work in your communities to make a difference, to improve the lives of people with disability and live our motto: *Nothing about us without us*.

### Focus on NDIS

This year again, the NDIS has been a key focus of QDN's work. QDN sponsored the 2014 Queensland Disability Conference – *Our path to the National Disability Insurance Scheme*. This was a unique opportunity to promote QDN's work to a sector-wide audience. In fact, throughout 2014 QDN has been in the 'thick' of NDIS readiness work. We have gained funding for the Plan Ahead and Ready to go projects and participated in a number of reference groups and committees advising the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Tracy Davis and her department around NDIS implementation. QDN has positioned itself well to continue to influence the Queensland NDIS roll-out, informed by our wide network reach and member feedback.

I congratulate the Queensland Government for funding a range of Participant Readiness initiatives, including funding QDN. These initiatives support people with disability and their families to better understand opportunities offered through the NDIS, and to begin their planning journey. The Queensland Government also funded an initiative to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and rural and remote communities and QDN considers such work vital.

QDN pro-actively campaigned to secure Participant Readiness funding. I commend Minister Davis and her senior departmental officers for their collective determination and foresight in funding these initiatives, and undertaking other work to progress NDIS implementation.

## **Your Life, Your Choice**

Our work in this area has also been informed by the Queensland Government's Your Life, Your Choice. This program allows people to self-manage their funded services and goes some way towards enabling people with disability to have choice and control over their personal circumstances, mirroring the potential of the NDIS.

QDN's position is that people have the right to have absolute choice and control over their lives, including the funded services and supports they receive. We welcome the shift by State and Commonwealth Governments in this direction.

People also have a right to know the type and amount of funding they receive and how it is spent. The shift to a more individualised funding is an approach QDN will continue to champion as part of the NDIS roll-out.

## **Organisational changes**

In the past year, we said farewell to former CEO Fran Vicary, whose term was significant in addressing concerns of our members. Fran helped to raise the profile of QDN as a serious contributor in the Queensland disability sector and nationally.

Paige Armstrong has been CEO since late October 2013, and has brought skills needed at QDN at this period of our development as an organisation. She has great ability to form and develop relationships and partnerships with key Government and community organisations. This has helped us in our negotiations with the Department of Communities to secure continued core State Government funding until 1 July 2016, and securing project funds to do further work with people with disability around the NDIS.

The new project funding was timely, given the end of the Community Enablers program as a result of the wind-up of the Department's Community Living Initiative in 2013. Thank you to the program's Advisory Group members and staff for your commitment to delivering innovative, person-driven and directed outcomes.

QDN was able to negotiate the use of the remaining funds for a new initiative, the Plan Ahead project. This popular project involved a series of peer co-designed and facilitated, interactive workshops about the NDIS for people with intellectual disability by people with disability. Thank you to the Plan Ahead Advisory Group for your important work in supporting and advising on this project.

Thank you especially to Rachel Matthews, QDN Director and our representative on both of these advisory groups, for your willingness to give your time and energy to ensure the Board had a strong connection with these projects.

## **Funding opportunities**

Learnings from Plan Ahead informed QDN's successful submission to the Department for NDIS Participant Readiness Initiative funding. QDN will be responsible for delivering the Ready to go project, for people with intellectual or learning disability, throughout the rest of 2014 and 2015.

These projects also informed QDN's submission to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), applying for Disability Support Organisation (DSO) funding. DSOs have responsibility for building networks of people with disability in local communities, to inform and mentor them on NDIS issues. DSOs also undertake activities to increase the social and economic participation of people with disability in their community.

## **Network engagement**

A highlight of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland (A&TSIDNQ) in 2013-14 was the production of the Yarning Circle digital stories, featuring a number of founding network members. This network continues to evolve with the support of a consortium of like-minded organisations supporting it through a time of change. The QDN Board of Directors thanks our consortium partners for their continued support of A&TSIDNQ. QDN has a clear objective to grow the A&TSIDNQ through 2014-15.

QDN's membership continues to grow and the member network itself continues to thrive. Some members are very present in their communities, growing networks of support more organically and informally.

QDN Directors are committed to supporting further growth of the network and engaging more closely with members. We asked the Network Facilitator to undertake a network review in mid-2014, to gather your feedback on current work and the future role of the organisation. This member feedback has informed QDN's future direction and strategic planning.

Directors will meet with local, regional and Hot Topics facilitators following the Annual General Meeting in December, to collaboratively discuss QDN's future under the NDIS, and ways to improve communication between Directors and members.

## **Looking forward**

Going forward there is a need for QDN to focus on results and outcomes – it's what our membership asks of us, and also a Government expectation.

We are a learning organisation, and a grass-roots one, and growing and supporting member networks will be a challenge, given the rapidly changing and complex disability environment in Queensland. It also brings opportunities for QDN to evolve and be more responsive to members' shifting needs and focus.



The Board of Directors thanks each QDN employee: your work efforts have been vital to the success and growth of our member networks.

QDN has many members, friends, allies and consultants we engage with each year to undertake our work. We are used to change, and the pace of change does require resilience and flexibility as we move forward. Thank you to each of you for your efforts in keeping our members at the heart of what we do – providing a strong voice for people with disability.

Regards

Nigel Webb  
Chairperson

# Chief Executive Officers' Report

Disability is in a period of generational system reform, and the voice of people with disability is playing an important role in shaping and influencing these important changes.

As we move towards the NDIS, it is essential that people with disability have choice and control in an environment that enables them to meet their needs and achieve greater social and economic participation in their lives and communities.

Thank you to QDN's members, supporters and key stakeholders that have worked together to ensure the voice of people with disability is central to the conversations, planning and system reforms.

Since I started with QDN in October 2013, the organisation has engaged and led some important initiatives contributing to systemic policy issues for people with disability.

The Queensland National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Planning and Implementation Group (QPAIG) is an important advisory group of key stakeholders and voices within the disability sector, and is an opportunity to engage directly with Minister Davis.

As QDN's representative member on QPAIG, I have been involved in highlighting the need to deliver opportunities for people with disability and their families and carers, to prepare for transition to the NDIS. QDN welcomes the decision of the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to provide such funding and is pleased to be one of the 9 successful organisations to be funded.

In my role as CEO and representative on a number of key steering and reference groups QDN has continued to ensure the voice of people with disability is part of the conversation. We have highlighted policy matters, including the NDIS, with all levels of Government, peak organisations and the Department. These groups include:

- Steering Group – discrete and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and small rural and remote community capacity building project;
- NDIS Communications and Engagement Reference Group;
- NOUS reference group – Building capability of providers to respond to consumer demand in the NDIS; and
- The Partnership Forum – peak and key stakeholder organisation to discuss policy matters relating to disability.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland continues to be an important part of QDN's work. As part of a consortium of organisations to revitalise the network, our aim is to ensure that the needs and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability is central to significant policy reform and implementation, including the NDIS. A special thank you to

Rebecca McElroy for all her work around the A&TSIDNQ and her film production skills in the making of the digital stories.

I acknowledge the positive work of the Community Enablers Program and the support that it delivered to almost 50 people with disability and their families to assist people to plan for their future on an individual basis. Unfortunately changes to Government funding priorities, brought the program to a close earlier than expected.

However this work has been an important contribution to policy – recognising the need to provide opportunities for people with disability to engage in meaningful planning about their future. Thank you to Josey McMahon, Natalie Palelei and Liz Cattermole and consultants for their empathy, enthusiasm and drive in assisting people with disability and families to vision a better life, and assisting them to work with services to make this happen.

In February 2014, QDN responded to issues identified by the QDN members and other organisations around the need to support people with intellectual or learning disability to get ready for, and build their capacity to engage with the NDIS. The Plan Ahead project has received national recognition for its innovative model and peer-led approach and delivery. It empowered people through development of knowledge and skills about the NDIS in a fun, interactive and respectful way.

I thank the group of Plan Ahead peer co-facilitators for their enthusiasm, professionalism and brilliance. I acknowledge and thank Michelle Moss, Jen Barrkman and Valmae Rose for the work we have undertaken together to support, hold and steward this important work.

QDN's Network has continued to play a pivotal role in the work of the organisation, informing discussions, advice and policy issues centred in the experiences of people with disability. The Network's review this year highlighted peoples' desire and need to develop their knowledge and skills. To support this, QDN has sponsored members to attend events such as Griffith University Symposium.

QDN also successfully engaged with Department to provide \$30,000 in financial subsidies to support to 32 Queenslanders with disability and their carers to attend the 2014 Queensland Disability Conference – *Our path to the National Disability Insurance Scheme* by contributing to travel and accommodation costs.

QDN has also faced a number of challenges this year in regards to financial sustainability – receiving advice about continuation of core funding just one week before the end of the 2013-14 year. This impacted upon opportunities for forward planning and growth. However, QDN also secured funds for new initiatives such as the Ready to go NDIS Participant Readiness project.

QDN moves into the next exciting stage of its operation with a continued commitment to ensuring the voice of people with disability are part of all conversations to influence and shape policy and systems.

QDN's engagement with members to highlight these significant systemic policy issues is an important part of our work as we move forward. We will also focus on ensuring QDN's sustainability as we move to a market-based environment under the NDIS.

Overall, it has been a busy year and one where the support of a dedicated team of staff and consultants has been essential in delivering on QDN goals. I thank QDN's core staff; Mark Edmonds, Janell Tong and Karen Hardy for their work in keeping QDN's many activities flowing smoothly throughout the year. I again thank Community Enablers and Plan Ahead staff and consultants who ensured the success of these innovative projects. Your collective wisdom, empathy, dedication and good humour in "sometimes trying circumstances" have greatly assisted me in delivering on QDN's key initiatives.

Thank you again to the members of QDN for your invaluable feedback, input and participation and the Board of Directors, our key allies, and stakeholders for all your commitment and work this year.

Paige Armstrong  
CEO

# Part 2: Outcomes in 2013–14

## Strategic Plan

QDN's Strategic Plan guides our work along with our vision, mission, values and motto. This is the current Strategic Plan that QDN is reporting against for 2013-14.

<b>We will measure our success by:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining comprehensive member participation data</li><li>• Maintaining stakeholder engagement data</li><li>• Maintaining a financially sustainable position</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Steady membership growth <math>\geq</math> 10%pa</li><li>• Annual member satisfaction, needs and interests survey</li><li>• Stakeholder and staff satisfaction survey</li><li>• Reviewing our Strategic Plan at least annually</li></ul>
<b>We will maximise our strengths and opportunities by:</b>	Our deep knowledge of the lived experience of people with disability; our passion, creativity, history and values base; our capacity to respectfully engage all, including the most vulnerable; our demonstration of valued status; our confident, professional solutions driven approach; our growing reputation, brand and relationships of influence; our sound financial management
<b>We will actively manage internal and external risks by:</b>	Managing the expectations of ourselves and others and not expecting more than is reasonable of our Board and staff; doing things well rather than trying to do everything; intentionally mentoring our most valued assets, our people; proactively succession planning

### Goal 1: Promote and maintain strong vibrant networks throughout Queensland

<b>Strategic priorities:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategically resource and develop the Network, with a focus on <b>state-wide member participation</b> and supporting the action and leadership of <b>Regional Networks</b></li><li>• Acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and identity by supporting the <b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland</b></li><li>• Grow and maintain <b>alliances</b> with like-minded organisations and communities</li></ul>

## Goal 2: Facilitate the exchange of accessible information and lived experiences

### Strategic priorities:

- Continuously update our **information platform** and capability
- Ensure information is **accessible** and shared amongst members
- Facilitate the **engagement and skilling** of people with disability in clearly articulating their lived experiences and aspirations to the community

## Goal 3: Influence governments and others to bring about full and equal participation and citizenship

### Strategic priorities:

- Seek opportunities and influence to ensure QDN's values and the voice of people with disability drive **NDIS implementation and sector change**
- Identify and respond to at least **three significant state systemic** issues impacting on people with disability
- Promote and **model full and equal participation** and citizenship

## Goal 4: Grow an effective, sustainable, accountable organisation that reflects our values

### Strategic priorities:

- Maintain financial sustainability and accountability through diversifying funding sources beyond our core funder and implementing flexible budget review processes when new funds are obtained
- Ethical, **mission led leadership and good governance**, regularly reviewing and updating governance policy & procedures
- Effective management, **valuing our staff**, creating a welcoming organisational environment, maintaining and updating human resource management systems
- Whole of organisation commitment to **continuous improvement** through effective planning, monitoring and evaluation of our work and maintaining our quality management system
- Working within our **capacity** while aspiring for **growth** and greater impact through internal capability development and linking with external expertise

## **Goal 5: To facilitate the use of resources that supports the Community Enablers Project to achieve its objectives.**

### **Strategic priorities:**

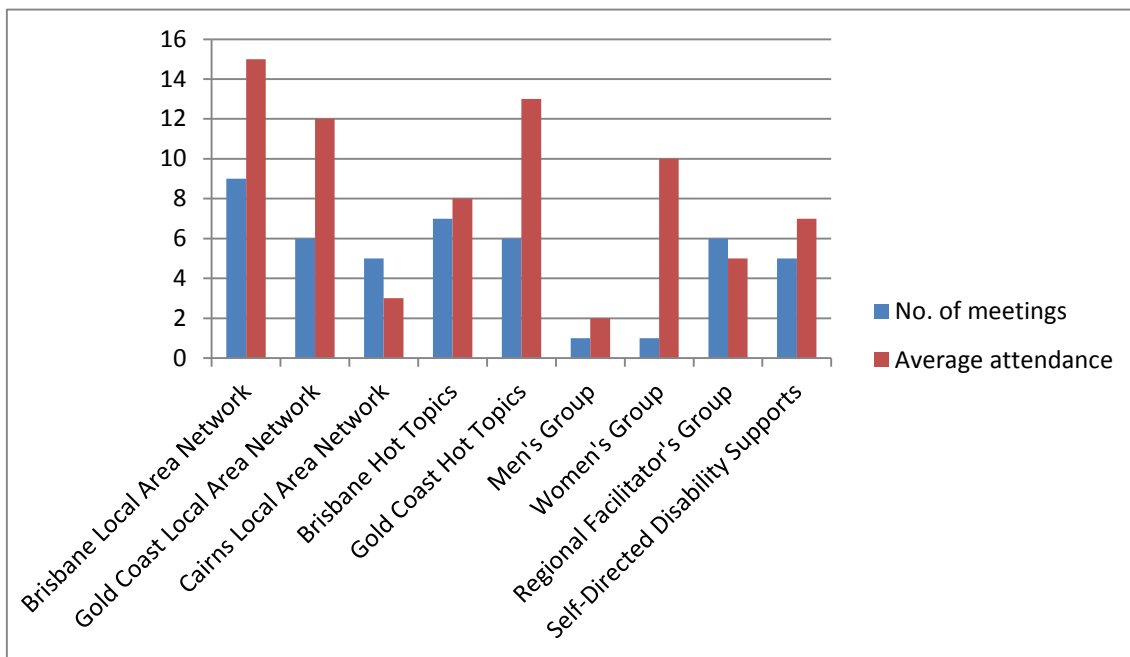
- Build the Capacity of Individuals and Families to enhance their vision, connection and life in the community.
  - Deliver direct services that complement the intentions of the Community Living Initiative, to support the readiness and resilience of individuals and their families to develop and implement their plans.
- Establish the identity and reputation of the Community Enablers as a valued resource for conversation and discussion of Community Living Practice.
  - They are valued because they are based on a relationship that has been built and remains in an independent and position that gains no benefit.
  - The conversations stimulate the exploration of questions and ideas, so that, ultimately, people create their own ideas and put them into action.
  - The practices, marketing and resource development focusses on being able to replicate and share our experiences of Community Living as a source of development for others.
- Develop and strengthen the governance and stewardship that promotes and protects the integrity of the objectives, the innovative foundations and the developmental nature of the Community Enablers.
  - Explore models of governance that best suit Community Enablers.
  - Strengthening access to and use of, leadership networks that safeguard the intentions of the Community Enablers.
  - Developing the next wave of leadership to continue to grow the Community Living Movement and Community Enablers.
- Develop and maintain an accountable, effective and efficient management structure that can meet the business and contract agreements that are needed for Community Enablers to exist and function.

# Goal 1: Promote and maintain strong vibrant Networks throughout Queensland

QDN supports members with disability to come together in varying ways and locations across Queensland. Members cross a range of disabilities and life situations. Network members contribute a rich source of lived experience and information which is harnessed to guide and shape QDN’s position on policy issues and the strategic direction of its programs and projects.

## Participation of members

This graph shows the meetings QDN has held in 2013-14, and the average number of members who have participated:



QDN supported the following networks during 2013-14:

### Network

- Brisbane Local Area Network
- Gold Coast Local Area Network
- Cairns/Mareeba Local Area Network
- Brisbane Hot Topics
- Gold Coast Hot Topics
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network of Queensland
- Regional Facilitators Network
- Women’s Group
- Men’s group



## Highlights and Achievements

### Local Network Groups

Local Network Groups usually meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Meetings are used to mentor and support members, discuss and action local issues and to provide feedback on “bigger picture” policy issues in line with QDN’s strategic plan.

**The Brisbane Local Network** continues to bring a wealth of experience and information to guide and inform QDN’s policy work. Issues the network has been consulted on and provided feedback to include the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry and the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Review. The network has also discussed issues surrounding Self-Directing Supports, and preparing for the NDIS.

One of the network members, Danny Graham, played an instrumental role in the development of *Mobile in Moreton* Information Booklet for users of powered mobility.

Attendance levels have remained consistent throughout the year, with average attendance at the meetings between 15-20 people.

**The Gold Coast Local Network** meetings have been well attended throughout 2013-14. The group meets bi-monthly and meetings have covered a range of topics, including transport issues in the area and the accessibility of community facilities in preparation for the up-coming Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Attendance levels have remained consistently good throughout the year.

**The Cairns/Mareeba Group** sent a strong contingent to Brisbane to participate in the Queensland Disability Conference in March 2014. Learnings from the conference were shared through local networks.

Additionally, Lyn Coyle, Cairns group convener, took part in the Cairns-based peer support network of the *Your Life, Your Choice* program, funded through the Department of Communities.

These network sessions, led by Pathways to Leadership, gave people the opportunity to come together with their peers to explore self-directed support and to establish peer support networks.

Overall, attendance has varied with the group holding several informal meetings throughout the year.

## Hot Topics

**Hot Topics groups** are a forum for people with intellectual disability to speak up for themselves and learn about the things that matter to them. There are active Hot Topics groups in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast and both have developed the information below, to report on their key activities during 2013-14.

The Brisbane and Gold Coast Hot Topics groups have both had a busy year. Our focus has been on the NDIS and making sure specific issues that impact upon people with intellectual disability in Queensland are heard loudly and clearly.

Morrie O'Connor, President of Australian Society for Intellectual Disability, met with both groups. We told him how the Society could involve and listen to us better. The Society has made changes to do this. They have put us on their mailing list, will use words we understand, make it easier for us to join and help us to attend their events, when they can.

We also got involved in the Plan Ahead project. A Brisbane Hot Topics member, Donna Best and the Gold Coast Hot Topics group facilitator, Judy Richardson were peer co-facilitators at the Plan Ahead workshops. Other members from the Brisbane and Gold Coast groups attended the workshops to learn about the NDIS. Some of our members also went to the Round Table for people with intellectual disabilities where Donna and other peer co-facilitators spoke about their involvement in the Plan Ahead project.

The **Brisbane Group** developed a plan for 2014. We wanted to find out more about our rights, people from different cultures and about transport. Guest Speakers included:

- Lurline Cummerford, Welfare Rights President, and solicitor Bryony Walters
- Hana Alraman, a Muslim woman from Iran who works at the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland
- Penny Xie, from China, social work student Griffith University.

At the moment we have about 8 members who come regularly and we meet 6 times a year. We want everyone to know we want to keep speaking up and invite new members to join us.

The **Gold Coast group** meets formally every 2 months and socially at other times. Guest speakers included:

- Mark Reimers, Endeavour and Nick Collyer, QAI, who spoke about the NDIS
- A Queensland Health person who spoke about nutrition.
- Paige Armstrong, QDN's CEO

The Gold Coast Hot Topics Group is very important to its members as a forum where members can discuss issues, be listened to, learn new things, speak up about the things that matter, be treated as equals and meet with friends.

Judy Richardson, Gold Coast Group facilitator is stepping down from this role at the end of 2014 to pursue other challenges. Judy has done an excellent job in supporting members and building the group into a cohesive body. Group members, QDN Directors and staff thank her for her wonderful work and look forward to working with her in other QDN activities in the future.



*Photo: Brisbane Hot Topics group members*

## **Regional Facilitator's Group**

**The Regional Facilitators** group is made up of QDN's volunteer facilitators from across regional and rural Queensland. The group meets by teleconference on a monthly basis. Each teleconference meeting includes a catch-up from each region followed by feedback on current QDN issues and developments in relation to policy and project issues as they arise.

In 2013-14 Regional Facilitators played a key role in policy consultations and funding submissions, such as QDN's Participant Readiness and DSO funding submissions.

Two Regional Facilitators, Ted Thorburn and Peter Tully, also appeared in the Yarning Circle digital stories produced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland (A&TSIDNQ).

## **QDN Women's group**

**QDN Women's Group** has a great diversity of members from different backgrounds, interests and lived experience of disability.

In 2014, the group focused on employment, holding a joint forum with Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) on women with disabilities' access to Disability Employment Services (DES) in May, 2014. This was part of a national consumer engagement project undertaken by WWDA and funded by the Commonwealth Government.

The Forum was co-facilitated by WWDA President and QDN Women's Group Convenor, Karin Swift, and QDN CEO, Paige Armstrong and included a guest speaker from a local DES.

The group's collective knowledge and experience informed discussion about the inequities faced by women with disabilities in relation to employment, and strategies for improving the DES system.

The Group developed a report: *Women with Disabilities and Employment: the double-glazed ceiling*, which outlined key issues that emerged from the forum and provided recommendations for further action. The report informed WWDA's final project report to the Commonwealth Government.



*Picture: Women's group members participate in a forum on women with disabilities' access to Disability Employment Services*

## **QDN Men's group**

**QDN Men's Group** meets around issues that impact them, with participant-driven agendas. This year, members met to discuss the NDIS and what it might mean going forward. There was also a meeting focussed on general negotiation skills and conflict resolution, which was extremely well received.

Members are looking forward to future meetings of the men of QDN, on topics such as health, finances, housing and the NDIS.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland (A&TSIDNQ)

A big part of the Network's achievements in the past year has been the creation of digital stories titled The Yarning Circle. The stories focus on how the Network can support and inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability across the state and opportunities presented through the NDIS.

The Yarning Circle comprises 7 digital stories from long-standing members who share the history of how the Network began and its positive impact on each of their lives. The participants also discuss how the Network can support and guide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability their families and carers as we move towards the NDIS.

We are very grateful to all the participants who generously shared their insights and experiences. Willie Prince is a founding member of the A&TSIDNQ and was a driving force behind the digital story project. Willie shared his story, growing up being separated from family, friends and culture and how this contributed to his desire to start a Network to support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability who had also been disenfranchised.

Doug Thomson showed us around his apartment, explaining how being able to live in the community was the whole concept of being independent. While Nick Darby, a young indigenous didgeridoo player and artist from Ipswich, illustrated through his artwork how the Network has provided a cultural link for him and his family, mum and dad, Linda and Peter Tully.

Ted Thorburn, Maryborough Regional Facilitator was able to talk of his experiences living and travelling across the state. His observations provide a unique insight into the issues being faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in rural and remote locations. Melissa Ah Wong, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advocate from Queensland Aged and Disability Advocacy shared her knowledge of the NDIS and the importance of engaging meaningfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people with disability through family and community.

Thank you also to Uncle Sam Watson and Kim Kilroy for their participation in the digital stories.

**We completed the actual filming by 30 June, 2014 and after early screenings of the stories we all knew we had something special!**

***Photo: Some of the Yarning Circle team (from left) Doug Thomson, Peter Tully, Nick Darby and Ted Thorburn.***



## QDN's Network Review

By its very nature, QDN relies on its members, people with disability and supporters across the state, to help shape our vision and strategic direction. In 2014, QDN Directors asked that a broad review of QDN's networks and all members be conducted. The purpose was to ensure QDN continues to be relevant to its membership and to gather member perspectives about the organisation's future direction.

The review was carried out from February to June, 2014 and was vital to help focus QDN as the disability sector undergoes major reform with the pending implementation of the NDIS.

The review process included meetings with Network, Hot Topics and other groups and Regional facilitators. There was also a state-wide survey of members and supporters. There was strong support with around 20% of QDN members responding by email, post, online or in person.

Through the consultation with members and supporters and survey results, a number of themes became apparent. These included that:

- One of QDN's strengths is the diversity of disability in its membership. This should be utilised as QDN's point of difference in the sector, and should be fostered and encouraged
- One of QDN's primary roles should be to empower people with disability by developing their skills
- There is a demand for network meetings to be held in a wider variety of locations throughout the state
- There is an ongoing concern for people with disability in institutional settings (examples include health facilities, prisons, aged care hostels and nursing homes), and the need for QDN to continue to contribute to the policy debate in this area
- There is a need for improved communication links across many aspects of the organisation
- Informal information sharing at meetings is highly valued by members
- Social support and friendships within the Network are highly valued, and
- There is a need to retain a strong consumer voice for people with disability at a policy level.

QDN Directors and management are using the feedback above to inform the organisation's work and have committed to the following:

- Using the review feedback, and consultation with Local Networks, Hot Topics and Regional Facilitators, and the broader membership to inform development of QDN's updated Strategic Plan, 2014-16
- Seeking opportunities for members to undertake NDIS readiness activities, which focus on building peoples' skills and capacity and confidence in relation to the NDIS
- Expand Local Network groups to more locations across Queensland in 2015–2016. Local networks will focus upon empowering people with disability through building their knowledge, skills, leadership capacity and networks via peer facilitated learning and mentoring
- Continuing to subsidise members' participation in NDIS symposiums, forums and workshops, to expand their knowledge and confidence in regard to the NDIS and what the scheme can do for them
- Participating in the National Disability Services' Expert Reference Group relating to Preventing and responding to abuse and neglect of people with disability accessing funded disability services.
- Continuing to work with other advocacy organisations to advocate against forced co-tenancy and congregate care, in institutional settings or group homes.
- QDN Directors will meet with Local Network, Hot Topics and Regional facilitators following the 2014 AGM, to discuss improved communication pathways between facilitators and the Board and the future direction of QDN under the NDIS.

The Network Review report is available on QDN's website, or you can also contact the office if you would like a copy.



## Goal 2: Facilitate the exchange of accessible information and lived experiences

### Communication with members

QDN produced 7 eBulletins to inform members of the work of the organisation, including a special Federal election issue in August 2013. The eBulletins are also a tool to present and advocate for the views of people with disability to be included in policies, processes and decisions that impact on their lives.

The QDN eBulletin is emailed (or posted) to over 1,300 people each time and is widely read by people with disability, families, supporters and Government representatives. This is an increase of 200 subscribers in the past year.

News items are also distributed through the QDN website [www.qdn.org.au](http://www.qdn.org.au). Statistics to show how much the website is used, are now being recorded, and will be available for the next financial year.

### Plan Ahead

#### What was Plan Ahead?

The Plan Ahead project was an initiative of QDN and supported by funding from Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Plan Ahead focused on helping people with intellectual disability get ready for the NDIS through a model of peer co-design and facilitation. A series of 3 workshops were delivered by people with disability, for people with intellectual disability.

The workshops provided an interactive and supportive learning environment for participants, building upon peoples' learnings and knowledge over a 3 week period. The workshops supported participants to learn about the NDIS, what it will mean for them, and provided an opportunity to start thinking about their goals and dreams for their future and the supports that they will need to achieve their goals.

The project delivered **24 workshops** in 3 locations across **Ipswich, Brisbane and the Gold Coast** to approximately **150 people with intellectual disability and their supporters** in May and June 2014.

The project's work was enriched and informed by an advisory group comprising representatives from key tertiary, government and non-government organisations.

#### Purpose

Plan Ahead responded to issues identified by QDN through engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including members to ensure a dedicated focus upon disability groups "who may get left behind", or become excluded from the NDIS conversation.



Plan Ahead had two key aims:

- To develop the capacity and skills of people with disability, including intellectual disability to be peer leaders, facilitators and mentors amongst their communities – specifically with regards to the implementation of the NDIS.
- Increase the awareness, knowledge and confidence of people with intellectual disability to explore and navigate the NDIS.

### Principles of the project

- Commitment to doing this work together
- Commitment to working in mutually respectful ways
- Alignment and commitment to communicating the positive opportunities for people with disability for their future under a NDIS
- Commitment to project co-design and input into project
- Acknowledging a diversity of views and perspectives but commitment to working together collaboratively
- Alignment to mission and value base of QDN.



*Plan Ahead workshop, Ipswich, June 2014. From left: Praveen Weergsooriya, Amanda Upton and Heather Raas from Endeavour Wacol Business service, with Peer co-facilitator Sam Matheson.*

### Participant feedback

Overall participants indicated that they felt more ready for the NDIS after the workshops. General observations were that participants were comfortable with the materials, engaged well and appeared to become more confident and more willing to ask questions over time.

## Feedback from the workshops

- “People working in little groups worked really well, and got people out of their shell, could see their minds getting involved.”
- “There was one person in the group that had never spoken in front of a group of people before and got up and spoke up. People really opened up and wanted to become active members of the group.”
- “We had a group with a number of young people which brought a sense of optimism.”
- “Confidence of people in the workshops.”
- “People wanted to have their voice heard.”
- “Project more proof of the effectiveness of people with disability as peer facilitators.”
- “Rewarding feeling in role of facilitator to see people get more knowledge.”
- “See the light in people’s eyes is rewarding.”
- “Most effective way of learning is by doing.”

## Co-facilitators

Nine peer co-facilitators were trained and supported to deliver the Plan Ahead project, further developing the capacity of and opportunities for, people with disability.

Plan Ahead co-facilitators were:

- Peter Tully, Ipswich
- Karin Swift, Brisbane
- Judy Richardson, Gold Coast
- Alex Baker, Brisbane
- Sam Matheson, Chermside
- Daniel Rowe, Gold Coast
- Kane Wojcicki, Ipswich
- Donna Best, Brisbane
- Dan Rivers, Wacol

The co-facilitators reported that they experienced a huge growth in terms of their confidence (“I’m feeling lots more confident and open”); were able to hold conversations about the NDIS (“I’ve started having conversations with family and friends and workmates”); experienced high trust (“I like that I’m working with people I know and trust”) and felt safe (“I felt safe to ask questions and liked the chance to practice”).

## Feedback from the facilitator workshops

- “I started out not knowing too much, and got to the end of 6 weeks feeling confident that I could train it.”
- “Co-design process worked well, one of the key parts of the workshop that worked so well was the Mythbuster NDIS quiz game which was designed by peer co-facilitators.”
- “Was a different way of getting the NDIS message across and I was excited by the different way.”
- “Was great to use different processes like Art, Whoosh and movement in different ways to learn.”
- “We worked quite well as a team and everyone got their voice heard.”
- “Got me out of my shell, gave me confidence.”
- “Behind the scenes support was helpful. Felt so supported in the environment that I felt I couldn’t fail.”

## What’s next?

The Plan Ahead project provided an opportunity for people with intellectual disability to begin their journey of engagement with the NDIS in a way that is tailored to meet their learning needs and provided in a fun, interactive environment.

The learnings and experiences from this project have informed QDN’s work, in particular its’ Ready to go funding submission to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services for Participant Readiness funding for people with intellectual disability. This project will be delivered state-wide from September 2014 to 31 December 2015.



*Plan Ahead peer co-facilitators celebrate completing their training with the Plan Ahead project team.*

# Goal 3: Influence governments and others to bring about full and equal participation and citizenship, working with Government and others

QDN continues to engage with government and other peak community, advocacy, service provider and family organisations to influence policy and bring about full and equal participation and citizenship for people with disabilities. Some of this work has been outlined in Goal 1.

As the disability and human services sector in Queensland continues to go through massive change, in preparation for the NDIS, it is critical that QDN assertively and coherently present the views of members on issues that impact on their lives.

During 2013-14 QDN made contributions in over 23 forums, including responses to policy submissions, engaging with government and departments on issues important to members.



*Pictured left: Ipswich Regional Facilitators Peter Tully and Linda Tully at QDN Christmas Party 2013*

*Pictured below: participants in the Plan Ahead workshop in Brisbane, June 2014.*





## Policy development

QDN's Contribution to Policy Development included:

- Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) Inquiry into Equality, Capacity and Disability in Commonwealth Laws
  - QDN met with the ALRC Commissioner and Disability Discrimination Commissioner outlining issues raised by members
  - QDN submitted a response to the Issues Paper and Discussion Paper informed by feedback from QDN Network and Hot Topics groups and regional facilitators.
- Formal submission to the Queensland Competition Authority Medical and Disability Aids and Equipment Pricing Investigation
- Response to the Queensland Government's Scoping Paper in regard to Mobility Scooters
- Membership of the Expert Reference Group advising National Disability Services (NDS) on their national project: Preventing and Responding to Abuse and Neglect in the disability sector
- Membership of Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Review Panel
- Participating in Public Transport Advisory Group meetings
- Representing QDN at Electoral Commission of Queensland Disability Consultation meetings
- Contributing to Community Safeguards Coalition's work
- Attending NDS Working Together for Transformational Change Workshop
- Attending QCOSS Budget Breakfast
- Hosting a Queensland information session for people with disability and community organisations in relation to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Lodging a formal submission to Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Consultation.

## Community and stakeholder education

QDN's work in educating the community and stakeholders of disability-related issues included:

- NDIS information at Carers' Lunch
- NDIS presentation at CheckUP for stakeholders in health sector
- NDIS presentation for Home Modifications Special Interest Group
- NDIS information as part of Muscular Dystrophy Queensland Teleconference
- NDIS presentation for Queensland Association of Special Education Leaders Conference
- NDIS update for Education Queensland Therapist Teachers and Nurses Conference
- Systemic Advocacy lecture for TAFE Southbank Community Services Course
- Lecture on *Working in Disability Sector* to University of Queensland Occupational Therapy and Social Work students
- QDN promotion for Logan Disability Coalition.

## Member participation

QDN has also facilitated member participation at events including:

- Queensland Disability Conference 2014
- Griffith University NDIS Symposium  
2014 Roundtable on Issues for People with Intellectual Disabilities hosted by Community Living Association, Endeavour and WWILD
- Mobile in Moreton Powered Mobility Information Launch.

## Self-Directed Disability Support Research

QDN has also been involved with The University of New South Wales, in partnership with People with Disability Australia, in undertaking a national study: *Self-directed disability support: building capacity through action research*.

The facilitators from around Australia met for one day's training in Sydney before facilitating a group of people with disability either currently self-directing, or interested in self-directing in the future. The **Self-Directed Disability Support Group** met 5 times in the second half of 2013. The input from the group was highly valued by the researchers, and QDN has since been invited onto a Steering Committee for a follow up study. A copy of the final study was sent to all participants.

## **Goal 4: Grow an effective, sustainable, accountable organisation that reflects our values**

### **Long-term sustainability**

The last year was both challenging and a good opportunity to build towards the future long term sustainability of QDN.

QDN's budget for 2013-14 was similar in funding to the previous financial year, with significant funding once again attached to the Community Enablers program until they were re-purposed for NDIS related activities, in the later part of the financial year.

The securing of Participant Readiness funds in the last weeks of June, 2014 will allow QDN to maintain its focus on ensuring vulnerable people are not "left behind" in the roll-out of the NDIS.

In the next financial year QDN will continue its going work to broaden its funding base in a way that best serves the wishes of members as well as placing QDN in a strong financial position moving forward.

### **Quality Management System**

QDN strives to incorporate a quality framework into all of its work. In 2013-14 QDN was under two quality systems. General operations came under ISO9001:2008 and Community Enablers came under the Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF). When Community Enablers project ended, QDN no longer needed HSQF certification.

In April 2014, QDN underwent re-certification against the ISO framework and was successful, with some minor non-conformities. These are being addressed in a planned way as part of QDN's commitment to continuous improvement, with the expectation they will be rectified and closed off by the next audit.

This work is improving QDN's corporate governance and sets the organisation up for future opportunities and success.

## Board development

The QDN Board of Directors met regularly during the year to make decisions on strategic direction, governance, staffing and financial matters.

In addition to 2 full day strategic planning sessions, there were 5 general Board meetings in 2013-14, plus the Annual General Meeting in October 2013. The Board of Directors' Executive also met 4 times, addressing follow-up issues from the Board meetings, and ensuring they were dealt promptly.

An induction for QDN's new director, Sharon Boyce, was conducted following the 2013 AGM. Sharon brings a strong suit of skills to the Board from a broad range of lived, professional and academic experience with disability and is a powerful mentor for people with disability.

Board members participated in network meetings and professional development opportunities. This included David Swift's attendance at a 2-day Social Return on Investment workshop.

The Board of Directors has worked alongside staff to develop strong plans for the future of QDN.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Board member since</b>
Nigel Webb	Chairperson	Brisbane	2009
Rachel Matthews	Vice Chairperson	Brisbane	2009
Willie Prince	Secretary	Brisbane	2008
David Swift	Treasurer	Brisbane	2011
Sharon Boyce	Board Member	South West Qld	2013
Lyn Coyle	Board Member	Far North Qld	2012
John MacPherson	Board Member	Brisbane	2002

## Staff recruitment and retention

QDN had a reasonably stable team of staff members during 2013-14.

Paige Armstrong took over as CEO in October 2013, following the resignation of Fran Vicary, when she moved to Melbourne to pursue a new career opportunity.

The Community Enablers team (staff and consultants) also finished in the first few months of 2014 as the project wound up.

A number of consultants worked alongside QDN staff to develop and deliver the Plan Ahead project.



<b>Staff</b>		
QDN Chief Executive Officer	Fran Vicary	to 18 October 2013
	Paige Armstrong	from 31 October 2013
QDN Network Facilitator	Mark Edmonds	Current at 30 June, 2014
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Disability Network Queensland	Rebecca McElroy	from 24 January 2014
Administration Officer	Janell Tong	Current
Administration Assistant	Karen Hardy	Current
Community Enablers Manager	Josey McMahan	to 7 March 2014
Community Enablers Assistant Manager	Natalie Palelei	to 21 February 2014
Community Enablers Administration Assistant	Liz Cattermole	to 31 January 2014

## Consultants

A number of consultants have helped QDN meet its goals during 2013-14, as part of the Community Enablers project, Plan Ahead, A&TSIDNQ and other QDN activities.

<b>Consultants and facilitators</b>	
Community Enablers consultants	Penelope Sampson Sharon Bourke Carol Holt Jen Barrkman Elissa Farrow Jeannette Hietzke Bobbie Bright
QDN consultants	Valmae Rose Elissa Farrow
Plan ahead consultants	Michelle Moss Valmae Rose Jen Barrkman
A&TSIDNQ consultants	Valmae Rose Michelle Moss

## **Goal 5: To facilitate the use of resources that support the Community Enablers Project to achieve its objectives**

### **Community Enablers**

The Community Enablers project was funded through the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services a part of the Community Living Initiative (CLI). The project ran from September 2010 to March 2014 and supported 48 individuals and families. It grew out of recognition by the Department that many individuals and families would benefit from extra support in further developing and implementing their Community Living Plans.

Community Enablers embodied a welcoming, flexible and innovative approach to supporting and building the capacity of individuals to further develop their plans to live meaningful and fulfilling lives in their local communities.

Individuals and their families were encouraged to think outside of the box from the usual traditional model of support, to design their own styles of support that would give them lives that were *ordinary, independent and rich*.

Individuals and families were referred to Community Enablers by the Department. Project staff had conversations and provided information and resources. They also supported individuals and family members to attend workshops, seminars and conferences; all with the aim of enabling them to develop more robust plans. Community Enablers provided individualised assistance for up to 8 months. The project's work was informed by a reference group comprising members with strong "community living" values, knowledge and skills. The reference group provided invaluable advice throughout the project and informed its quality outcomes.

During 2013 the Department changed policy direction and stopped referrals to Community Enablers. QDN was advised to develop a proposal for usage of the remainder of Enablers funding. The new project, Plan Ahead was informed from the project's learnings and was implemented from March – June 2014. A survey of the 48 Community Enablers participants informed the project's recommendations, detailed below, and QDN's Plan Ahead and Ready to go projects.

### **Recommendations**

- The approach and processes used by Community Enablers was well received. It was developmental in nature and flexible. It built positive working relationships with individuals and families, getting to know the person and their individual situation well, keeping the person with disability at the centre and heart of the planning and ensuring that the plans were person owned plans.

- The Importance of developing dreams and visions – Individuals and families need the support of others to help them with this. This support can come in one-to-one conversations, and opportunities to attend workshops and other educational events. Individuals and families also wished to engage and listen to the stories of others – the successes and pitfalls.
- Mentoring – Individuals and families appreciated the opportunity of having an Enabler walk beside them for a period of time assisting them with planning and the implementation of the plan. Others would like the opportunity to plug into this type of support from time to time.
- The use of skilled planners – It was important that those working with individuals and families had the knowledge and skills about planning and an understanding of what a good life could look like for a person with disability.
- Modelling the Community Enablers – There was an overall sense from individuals, families, reference group members and Enabler consultants that the Community Enablers Project and framework had worked well.
- The flexibility of the CLI – Individuals and families benefited from the flexibility of the CLI program, which was more aligned to the way NDIS will work.
- Mentoring of service providers about what it means for a person with disability to have a good life. This is crucial if people with disability are to have good lives – lives that are inclusive, meaningful and fulfilling.
- Listening to the feedback of individuals and families – It is important to take on board what they say as individuals and families are the experts of their own lives.

The Community Enablers team witnessed individuals and families gain a greater confidence during the project. One consultant had this to say:

*The outcomes are obvious as people's lives change and they are less dependent of Community Enablers and start owning their own achievements and gain faith in the achievements of their family members with a disability.*

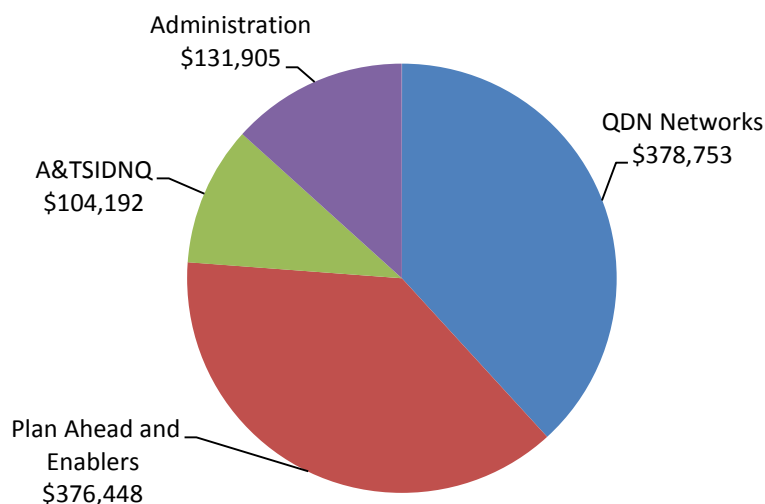
# Part 3: Financial overview

The report below is a summary of QDN's income and expenditure for the 2013-2014 financial year. (Note that these figures do not include GST).

## Income

QDN's total income for the 2013-2014 financial year was \$1,096,061.99. This was primarily comprised of:

- \$378,891.69** QDN core business
- \$546,511** Community Enablers
- \$106,969** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Disability Network of Queensland
- \$32,903.16** QDN non-government income
- \$37,966.06** Increase in Net market value of investments



## Expenditure

QDN's total expenditure for the 2013-2014 financial year was **\$978,425.25**.

The Community Enablers funding contributed to a large proportion of the expenditure, however, changing priorities with government led to a decision by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to bring this program to close earlier than expected.

QDN was able to negotiate with the Department for a re-purpose of this funding from February 2014 which enabled the organisation to lead the innovative work of participant readiness for people with intellectual disability in the preparation for the NDIS.

QDN has used its core funds to continue to engage members from across the state on issues that impact upon their lives. Through engagement with the Network and members, QDN has been able to undertake specific activities that support issues that have been highlighted by the membership base.

QDN has continued to support members' participation in activities in a variety of ways in recognition of the various impacts that people experience in their life. Other expenditure has continued to reflect previous years in terms of rent, information technology, staff development and operational expenditure areas including governance, communication, regional member resourcing and staffing costs.

## Surplus

The current surplus of **\$117,636.74** represents approximately 10% of QDN's 2013-14 budget. QDN's Board of Directors will engage in discussions with the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to seek endorsement to re-purpose this money to further support capacity building and readiness for people with disability as Queensland transitions to the NDIS.

QDN's Board of Directors will also continue to explore ways of supporting the financial sustainability and viability of the organisation.

# Part 4: Appendices

## 1. Organisational structure 2013-14

