



Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW

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MINUTES of the 26th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 9th December 2021

Held at: Holroyd Function Centre, Merrylands NSW

Meeting Commenced: 10:20 am

Meeting Closed: 12:00 pm

Welcome to MDAA: Susan Laguna

Master of Ceremonies (MC): Evrim Gunce

Welcome to Country: Peta-Marie Rixon

Chairperson: Mary Kumar in absence of Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis

Minutes: Charlotte Dela Roca

Present: Abu Bakar Sadozai, Alicia Rodriguez (Zoom), Anna Ung (Zoom), Anthony Borg, Arnold Agda, Aruni Rajagulasingham (Zoom), Barry Mackey, Cathy Naing, Charlotte Dela Roca, Coen Lourigan, Cora Maloney, Corazon Resurrecion, David Skidmore (Zoom), Dolma Sherpa (Zoom), Edwin Ikwu (Zoom), Evrim Gunce, Farida Oemar, Flora Lee, Harrick Sinpraseuth, Hugh Evans, Jozmaye Benn (Zoom), Judith Goddard, Julie Magill (Zoom), June Riemer (Zoom), Kaysey Sinpraseuth, Kun Huang, Laura Naing, Lillian Hururan, Loreto Eduardo, Luke Spradbrow, Mahammed Safauns, Marian Onofomi, Marilou Eduardo, Mary Kumar, Matthew Hana (Zoom), Mely Mackey, Mouna Elyundi, Muriel Hayman (Zoom), Nadia Madrajat, Natalie Deng, Nidhi Shekaran, Norma Denicolay (Zoom), Peta-Marie Rixon, Quang Nguyen, Rachel Lazarov, Rajni Chandran (Zoom), Renga Rajan, Robina Yasmin, Rod Lee, Rosa Touch, Rosie Gulle, Sarah Butler, Sera Yilmaz, Sheron Eagar, Shikha Choudhary, Shu-Hua Chan, Simon Weldemichael, Susan Laguna, Thanh Kim Huynh (Zoom), Thi Phuong (Zoom), Vivi Germanos Koutsanadis (Zoom), Yasmeen Shah, Yvonne Munce, Zaineb Sadozai, Zaya Toma, Zora Nawaz

Apologies: The Hon Dominic Perrottet MP, Julie Owens MP, Rochelle Croucamp, Michelle Chen, Hon Kristina Keneally, Heba Kassoua, Haydon Boyd-Skinner, Nelly Sinha, Daniela de Deus Correia, Paul Caesar

Official Opening of the 26th Annual General Meeting (AGM):

Governance Committee Vice Chairperson Mary Kumar thanked everyone for the support throughout the year and declared the 2021 AGM officially open at 10:20am.

Welcome to Country

Peta-Marie Rixon welcomed all to the MDAA AGM.

Welcome to MDAA, Executive Director, Susan Laguna

Susan Laguna, Executive Director (ED), welcomed everyone to the 26th AGM and thanked the staff, volunteers, Governance Committee (GC), and funders such as the Commonwealth Government Department of Social Services and New South Wales Department of Communities and Justice for the support.

Guest Speaker: Councillor Kun Huang, Cumberland City Council

Councillor Huang acknowledged the important role of community organisations during these challenging times, especially in supporting the delivery of public health information and services to the community.

Confirmation of apologies from 2021 AGM

Arnold Agda read the apologies.

Nominations

Shikha Chowdhary, Chief Executive Officer of Ethnic Community Services Co-operative, explained the procedures for the elections according to the Constitution. With enough committee members for re-nomination – Cathy Naing, Arnold Agda, Mary Kumar, there was no election. They were accepted as elected. Sarah Butler moved, and Rachel Lazarov seconded. No comments or alterations.

Confirmation of minutes from 2020 AGM

Barry Mackey moved the minutes and Robina Yasmin seconded. No comments or alterations.

Chairperson's Report, Mary Kumar on behalf of Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis

Mary expressed appreciation of the support and hard work of staff, management, consumers, and volunteers. She highlighted the achievements from 2020-2021:

- Regular review of MDAA's policies
- Meetings with funders and politicians (e.g., Penny Sharpe, Julia Finn, Anthony Roberts MP)
- MDAA Chairperson Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis was awarded ASPIRE Awards – Individual Best Achievement for Human Rights by the Supreme Court of Melbourne
- Recruitment and induction of new GC member Edwin Ikwu
- Conducted the Annual Performance Review of the Executive Director
- Completion of the renovation of the training room (i.e., wall and kitchenette). Thanked Zaya, who managed the project
- Conducted membership satisfaction survey where majority of the respondents provided positive feedback
- Creation of Membership Committee headed by GC Member Paul Caesar
- Submitted nominations for Blacktown Council Volunteer of the Year. MDAA volunteer Anthony Borg received the award.
- Conducted fundraising projects including the raffle during the NSW Network of Women with Disability Coffee Club Launch in August 2020

- Review of MDAA's Strategic Plan and developed proposals for the following areas: services one-stop shop, research on ageing advocacy, and projects research and evaluation
- Conducted consumer and membership survey on how MDAA can improve the delivery of its services and better communicate and engage with consumers and other stakeholders through social media
- Creation of the position of Community Engagement Officer
- Compliance with the Justice Connect requirements, receiving positive feedback on governance and records management as highlighted in the assessment report

Mary stressed that in 2022, the priority will be about increasing engagement with MDAA members.

Report from Executive Director, Susan Laguna

Susan discussed the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and emphasised that MDAA should continue to be open and provide services to the community. She highlighted the accomplishments from 2020-2021:

- MDAA acted quickly, developed and adopted a Covid-19 Management Plan and did a review of some policies especially the business continuity and recovery plan
- Had the surveillance audit, which is required by funders to be conducted every 18 months. MDAA passed without any corrective actions.
- Subcontracted by the National Ethnic Disability Alliance to implement a project called the National Community Connectors Project, which aims to increase access to NDIS by people with disability from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities
- Held fundraising events. Acknowledged the NSW Network of Women with Disability and GC members who helped with the fundraising
- Successfully finalised and evaluated 2 projects
 - Future Leaders Program (led by Marian Onofomi)
 - Intercultural Sound and Movements
- Held end-of-year consumer consultation in Granville office
- Travelled around the regions to consult with people to know the issues in the regions (Newcastle, Wollongong, Griffith, Bega)
- Held the Annual Consumer Conference (I Am Human, I have Rights) led by Sera Yilmaz (Interim Policy Officer and Systemic Advocate)
- Strengthened partnerships with universities (e.g., Western Sydney University, Notre Dame University) and other community organisations (e.g., Ethnic Community Services Co-operative)
- Submission with the Immigration Advice & Rights Centre on Family and Carer Visa
- Successfully launched the Photo Voice Project during the International Day of People with Disability 2020
- Evaluation of the NDIS Appeals and Community Voices Project in progress
- Responded to Disability Royal Commission regarding CALD issues
- Applied and successfully received funding for 5 grants
- Workplace improvement led by Zaya Toma
- Sent GC member/volunteer Arnold Agda to a course on tagging electricals for work health and safety
- Upgraded the database to be compliant with the requirements of the funders
- Upgraded to digital phones (funded by the Social Sector Transformation Fund from the Department of Communities and Justice)
- Continued Staff Development and Networking even during Covid-19 lockdown, with sessions conducted via Zoom

- GC Chairperson Vivi Germanos-Koutsounadis received an award from the Supreme Court of Melbourne, while MDAA volunteer Anthony was awarded by the Blacktown Council
- Hired Community Engagement Officer

Susan emphasised GC's priority in 2022, which is to improve membership and community engagement. She also stressed the importance of continuously supporting the staff with ongoing supervision and performance reviews.

Adoption of Chairperson's and Executive Director's Reports

Shikha Chowdhary moved the reports and Nidhi Shekaran seconded. No comments or alterations.

Treasurer's Report by Robina Yasmin, MDAA Treasurer

The Total Revenue for the Financial Year (FY) 2020/2021 was \$3,333,378 compared to FY 2019/2020 which was \$2,627,718.

The Total Expenditure for FY2020/2021 was \$3,195,346 compared to FY 2019/2020 which was \$2,478,752.

The Net Surplus for FY2020/2021 was \$138,032 compared to FY2019/2020 which was \$148,966.

The Treasurer noted that MDAA is solvent and will continuously implement better financial practices. She sincerely thanked the funding bodies, community members, volunteers, staff, GC, and everyone who donated to MDAA.

Sarah Butler moved to accept the report and Arnold Agda seconded. No objections, alterations, or comments.

Adoption of the 2020-2021 Report

Adoption of the Annual Report 2020/2021 moved by Cathy Naing and Quang Nguyen seconded.

Appointment of Public Officer

Sera Yilmaz was appointed as new Public Officer. Nominated by Arnold Agda and seconded by Nidhi Shekaran. No other nominations on the floor.

Appointment of Auditor

Steven Sproats was appointed as Auditor. Moved by Mary Kumar and seconded by Robina Yasmin. No other nominations on the floor.

Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to Volunteers by Susan Laguna, Robina Yasmin, and Arnold Agda:

- Carmelita Bongo
- Mely Mackey
- Barry Mackey
- Anthony Borg
- Ismael Khan
- Arnold Agda
- Anthony Borg

Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation to staff by Susan Laguna, Arnold Agda, and Cathy Naing

Susan acknowledged the 2020 awardees because they were not given the proper recognition last year. This was followed by the recognition of 2021 staff awardees.

Past Awardees:

- Alicia Rodriguez-2018
- Marilou Eduardo-2019
- Farida Omar-2019
- Marian Onofomi-2020

2021 Awardees:

- Yvonne Munce – Worked alongside the Executive Director during Covid. Has shown so much positivity, innovation, and passion in her work.
- Sera Yilmaz – Outstanding performance in promoting MDAA, lobbying, and grant submissions

Guest Speaker via ZOOM: June Riemer, Gumbayngirr Dunghutti woman, Deputy CEO for First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year

June Riemer congratulated the workers behind the scenes and those who received awards and acknowledged the importance of MDAA's work. She noted the synergies between CALD communities and First Nations communities, especially about similar issues that both communities are facing. June gave the Acknowledgement of Country. The topics discussed included:

- Lack of representation when government develops programs for First Nations or CALD communities. Failure to truly acknowledge that organisations such as FPDN does business in cultural ways and culture has to be foremost in any programs and services developed.
- History of FPDN – has been existing for 20 years and the only national peak representing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability in Australia and their families and communities.
- Findings from FPDN's research report: "Culture is Inclusion" – For most First Nation people, sometimes to have access to services mean they would have to leave their country, a choice between their culture and getting the services they need. When services are being provided to them, culture is not included. It is important to keep fighting to have that voice at the table and be included in all policies and directives developed across government and non-government agencies.
- Closing the Gap Program – first time in 10 years that disability is a priority. June stressed the importance of including people with disability across all layers. Accessibility is a real issue, especially when entering education or employment platforms.
- Disability education standards and employment services – June mentioned that they received feedback from communities that their disability and culture are not being included. June stressed the importance of having an inclusive education for their children and that the government needs to fund this area and ensure that children from aboriginal communities are included in all education systems.
- Language issues – Programs launched in Australia are all in English. In some aboriginal communities, English is probably their 4th or 5th language
- Work of FPDN is to ensure that people understand programs, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Currently, there is low number of First Nations people entering the scheme because they do not understand the system that was

not design for them. FPDN has been working closely for over 10 years with National Disability Insurance Agency on this issue.

- June mentioned that FPDN is happy to share resources with MDAA to help consumers understand and navigate systems.
- Q&A
 - Raising awareness of some of the terminologies being used. “Indigenous” is a government terminology. Most Aboriginal people do not call themselves indigenous. It is better to ask people how they prefer to be called. When writing a policy paper or submission, use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and do not shorten it to ATSI because it is offensive. However, for long policy paper or submission, use in the first line “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander”, then at the bottom of the paper put a short explanation that you will be using ATSI to reference the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
 - Stolen Generation. Issue with certificate of Aboriginality to prove they are aboriginals. Some aboriginal people do not acknowledge that they are aboriginal due to the White Australian policy before where being an aboriginal is a sin. So, they claim to be from other background/nationalities to hide their aboriginality. This is a very difficult issue regarding further education. However, in regard to receiving services like NDIS or other capacity building projects for aboriginal people, one does not need to show proof of aboriginality. Proof of aboriginality is required if you are buying aboriginal house or applying for aboriginal scholarships. FPDN doesn’t ask for aboriginality.
 - How to address the issue on proof of aboriginality: Join local land councils. If you have some identity from the area you are from or you think you maybe from, find connections. Within aboriginal communities, they know names and families.
 - Clarifications around welcoming to the country. For instance, if someone who is aboriginal but doing acknowledgement in a different country or people from CALD communities giving welcoming to the country. For welcoming to the country, you have to be from that nation/land and be acknowledged as an elder of that land. Best to always do an acknowledgement. CALD people doing acknowledgement of country is okay because it is about showing respect and asking permission from elders.

Other business:

- Susan acknowledged Renga Rajan, District Director of Rotary Club Granville. Renga mentioned the upcoming MDAA event in partnership with the Rotary Club on 14 December 2021– a mental health session with the NSW Network of Women with Disability. Renga also mentioned that Rotary has been distributing boxes of goods during the pandemic and thanked MDAA for supporting their initiative.
- St Vincent Hospital Network is partnering with MDAA. They are happy to come to provide the booster shots to whoever is willing to get vaccinated (staff, consumers, members, volunteers) early next year.
- Partnering with TAFE for a barista course

GC Vice Chairperson Mary Kumar declared the 2021 AGM closed at 12:00pm and thanked everyone for their support and attendance.