

**Subject:** FOI-3 23/24-0833 – Your request for information – Acknowledgement [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**From:** foi <foi@ndis.gov.au>  
**Date:** 21/02/2024, 10:21 am  
**To:** "Bob Buckley (Co-convenor)" <convenor@a4.org.au>  
**CC:** foi <foi@ndis.gov.au>

Dear Bob Buckley

### **Freedom of Information Request: Acknowledgement**

Thank you for your request of 31 January 2024, made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (FOI Act), for copies of documents held by the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

### **Scope:**

*...documents relating to the NDIS Autism Advisory Group (AAG) including but not limited to minutes, agendas, briefing material and action/outcome reports.*

Unless you advise otherwise, we will take it that you agree to the names and contact details of NDIA staff being excluded from the scope of your request (that is, the information will be treated as irrelevant).

### **Processing timeframes**

I sincerely apologise that it has taken us longer than expected to process your request.

I have now been allocated your request to process and prioritising it to ensure it is processed within the timeframes set out in the FOI Act. We are therefore seeking your agreement to a **30-day** extension of time under section 15AA of the FOI Act.

If you agree to this extension, the new due date for us to make a decision on your request will be **30 March 2024**.

Please let us know whether you agree by **23 February 2024**.

If you don't agree, we may need to seek an extension of time from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

### **Charges**

We may apply a processing charge to your request and will advise you as soon as practicable if a charge is payable.

### **Disclosure Log**

Information released under the FOI Act may be published on the NDIA's disclosure log located on our website, subject to certain exceptions.

If you have any concerns about the publication of information you have requested, please contact us.

### **Further help**

Please contact us at [foi@ndis.gov.au](mailto:foi@ndis.gov.au) if you have any questions or need help.

We will contact you using the email address you provided. Please advise if you would prefer us to use an alternative means of contact.

### **Nickolas**

#### **Freedom of Information Officer**

Parliamentary, Ministerial and FOI Branch  
Government Division

#### **National Disability Insurance Agency**

E: [foi@ndis.gov.au](mailto:foi@ndis.gov.au)



The NDIA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to Elders past, present and emerging.




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**From:** Bob Buckley (Co-convenor) <convenor@a4.org.au>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 31 January 2024 6:58 AM  
**To:** foi <foi@ndis.gov.au>  
**Subject:** FOI Request - AAG documents

FOI Team  
 Legal Services Branch  
 Governance, Legal & Compensation  
 National Disability Insurance Agency

Dear FOI Team

I hereby request, under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* the documents relating to the NDIS Autism Advisory Group (AAG) including but not limited to minutes, agendas, briefing material and action/outcome reports.

Please provide your response in electronic form; we do not want a paper copy. Please note that I requested some of this material from the CEO (see below) but I have not had a response.

If you would like clarification of anything in this request or to discuss any matter relating to it, do not hesitate to contact me by email or on 0418 677 288.

*Bob Buckley*

**Co-convenor**, Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4)  
 website: <https://a4.org.au/>

*Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia*, known as *A4*, is the national grassroots organisation advocating for autistic people, their families, carers and associates. A4 is internet based so that Australians anywhere can participate.

Recipients of correspondence from A4 are all subject to *Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia's* policy on unanswered questions that is available at <https://a4.org.au/node/1419>.

A4 recognises and respects the traditional owners, elders past, present and emerging, of lands in Australia. Sovereignty was never ceded.

“The first step in solving any problem is recognising there is one.” Jeff Daniels as Will McEvoy in *The Newsroom*.

----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:** Re: question about the NDIA CEO's Autism Advisory Group [SEC=OFFICIAL]  
**Date:** Thu, 4 Jan 2024 10:31:54 +1100  
**From:** Bob Buckley (Co-convenor) <[convenor@a4.org.au](mailto:convenor@a4.org.au)>

**Organisation:**Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia (A4)

**To:**Falkingham, Rebecca <[Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au)>

**CC:**McKenzie, Corri <[Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au)>, Verlin, Aaron <[Aaron.Verlin@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Aaron.Verlin@ndis.gov.au)>

Hi Rebecca

I'm sorry I can't be specific because I get very little information about the AAG and its business to be specific about. I'm interested to see all the issues that the NDIA has raised with the AAG, all the information and advice that the AAG provided to the NDIS/NDIA, and what the outcomes of that advice have been. There were meant to be communiqués ... but that does not seem to have happened. And communiqués tend to be incomplete anyway (they are not Minutes).

The easiest and most complete way to help me see what the AAG has considered, advised and outcomes they were informed of would be to provide the Agendas, Minutes and Action logs for the AAG. That should require relatively little effort.

*Bob Buckley*

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On 4/01/2024 9:17 am, Falkingham, Rebecca wrote:

Hi Bob,

Happy New Year.

Your comments are noted.

We have received a lot of advice from the AAG since 2018. Is there something specific you would like the team to find over the 5 year period?

Kind regards

Rebecca

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**From:** Bob Buckley (Co-convenor) <[convenor@a4.org.au](mailto:convenor@a4.org.au)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 2, 2024 4:34 PM

**To:** Falkingham, Rebecca <[Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au)>

**Cc:** McKenzie, Corri <[Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au)>

**Subject:** Re: question about the NDIA CEO's Autism Advisory Group [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi

Your email fails to answer several of the questions asked. Hence, A4's unanswered questions policy kicks in. In particular, we understand your reply to mean we should take the worst possible response to questions 1 & 2.

In relation to Question 4, we interpret that to be the results of characteristically poor communications ... especially with the autism sector.

And in relation to question 5, the NDIA considers that it has not received any advice from the AAG ... other than who from these groups will be their representatives.

Feel free to reconsider your position on any of these.

*Bob Buckley*

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On 21/12/2023 12:06 pm, Falkingham, Rebecca wrote:

Hi Bob,

The Autism Advisory Group was established by the former Minister for Social Services, Dan Tehan back in June 2018. Minister Tehan established the group with the following representatives:

1. The Co-operative Research Centre for Living with Autism (Autism CRC),
2. Amaze
3. Autistic Self- Advocacy Network - Australia and New Zealand (ASAN),
4. Australian Advisory Board on Autism Spectrum Disorder (AABASD) and the
5. Australian Autism Alliance

The Autism Alliance has recommended to the NDIA who will represent them from their membership on the Autism Advisory Group. The Alliance has two representatives on the AAG membership, other groups have one representative.

In relation to the issuing of communiques, from time to time the AAG has decided to issue communiques. We will be working with the AAG in its first meeting of 2024 about how it would like to communicate its activities publicly going forward. We have also updated the website so that there is a more fulsome description of the AAG and the importance of it as an advisory body to the Agency. This update will include linking the 2021 communique, and an explanation of when the AAG will issue communiques.

Thank you for pointing out the possible confusion in relation to this.

Kind regards

Rebecca

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**From:** Bob Buckley (Co-convenor) <[convenor@a4.org.au](mailto:convenor@a4.org.au)>

**Sent:** Sunday, December 17, 2023 6:30 PM

**To:** Falkingham, Rebecca <[Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Rebecca.Falkingham@ndis.gov.au)>

**Cc:** McKenzie, Corri <[Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au](mailto:Corri.McKenzie@ndis.gov.au)>

**Subject:** question about the NDIA CEO's Autism Advisory Group

Dear Rebecca

I write to ask formally:

1. Why is *Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia* (A4) not included as a member of [the NDIA CEO's Autism Advisory Group](#) (AAG)?
2. Why has *Autism Aspergers Advocacy Australia* (A4) never been a member of the AAG?
3. Who are the current members of the AAG?
4. Why is [the AAG's June 2021 communiqué](#) not listed with the first two

communiqués on the AAG web page?

5. Other than the advice shown in the communiqués, what advice has the AAG provided to whom? And what has been the result of that advice?

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*Bob Buckley*

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