



# International Alliance of Academies of Childhood Disability

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



## Update from Arnab Seal, President, IAACD

Dear friends and colleagues of IAACD Member Academies,

2026 has started with some exciting developments for the IAACD. Our **standing committees** have been hives of activity, and with this first Newsletter of 2026 it is a perfect time to update you. Last year at the Joint IAACD-EACD meeting in Heidelberg we reviewed our Strategic Plan and specific deliverables. In addition, we collected views from all our **Member Academies** on what objectives and actions they would like the IAACD to deliver on. These gave us plenty of stuff to get on with. An initial push to update our committee memberships, led by Claudia Duran (Secretary, IAACD) has now been completed. Our committees are now fully representative of our members, leading to greater capacity, improved collaborative learning & skill enhancement within and across our committees. Through the last couple of years our **Partnership Working Group (PWG)**, led brilliantly by Gillian Saloojee, has produced a framework for inclusion of **People with Lived Experience (PwLE)** in the work of the IAACD. They have produced a Charter, a survey of practice of PwLE inclusion in member academies, and made recommendations to create a new IAACD Committee which would be tasked with implementing the Charter. They further recommended electing an additional PwLE member in the Executive Committee to ensure the voice of PwLE is strong in everything that we do. Last year the IAACD Governing Council and the Executive Committee voted unanimously to adopt both these recommendations. We are currently taking steps to put these recommendations to action. I personally think this a major achievement of our organisation. It makes us stronger, more relevant and credible in the work that we do for and with children with disabilities and their families.

A persistent request from members has been for better information sharing. Our **Communications Committee**, led by the Sruthi Thomas, has worked tirelessly to improve our visibility across social media, started a regular Newsletter (which you are enjoying!) and reviewed the needs for a more responsive website. From our foundation years, the **IAACD website** has been developed and supported by a contract with CanChild. Following a detailed review of the organizational needs, led by Sruthi and Deirdre McDowell (Chair of the Membership Committee), the IAACD now has moved our provider to the TAPP network. We are working hard to bring you the new features of the website, which should be available over the next few months. Our immense thanks to CanChild, especially Danijela Grahovic and Rachel Teplicky, for their huge support through these years. We will remain ever grateful.

A part of our vision is to bring our member academies closer together, to share initiatives and collaborate closely. In response to academy requests we have started regular meetings of the Presidents/Chairs of academies with the IAACD Executive Committee and Committee Chairs. The first meeting held in November 2025 generated great collaborative ideas and a networking opportunity for our senior leaders to get to know each other. That personal connection is what I find to be crucially important for future collaborations to flourish. Encouraged by the success, we plan to continue these meetings every 6 months.

### In this newsletter you can expect:

Presidential  
Update

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Upcoming  
Events

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Our **Global Professional Education Committee**, led by Jenny Carroll, has been beaver away at many initiatives. We have started modelling Local Communities of practice, supported by the GPEC and the **Best Practice Committee**, ably headed up by Noula Gibson and Megan Auld. These Local COPs will focus on issues of importance to the local/regional academies, have the opportunity to have different language sessions and be supported by the IAACD. Another exciting development is the **Joint IAACD-Local Academy Masterclass/conference** via the web. A pilot led by SA-ChiLD, under the leadership of Jacqui Bez, was successful in engaging local clinicians, improving the visibility of the academy, generate income for the academy to support local initiatives and help build local capacity. It provides the IAACD a future model which can be replicated with other members.

Another excellent initiative I want to shout about is the **Humanitarian Crises Resources Group**. For the last couple of years a small group of dedicated people within GPEC have been working towards a mammoth initiative of creating an archive of resources. These resources are for use by children with disabilities, their families and the professionals who serve them, when they are caught up in any humanitarian crisis situation. This ranges from acute natural disasters or human conflict to longer term challenges posed by the effects of climate change. The group has now gathered over 60 volunteers and have started pulling this major initiative together under the able leadership of Gaela Kilgour and Claudia Duran. In addition, the Steering Group is being supported by Selamenesh Tsigie Legas, Kasia Swieczkowska, Gabriel Ronan and Olaf Kraus de Camargo.

A key IAACD strategic pillar is to partner with global organisations with shared vision, values and objectives. The **Organisational Partnership Group**, led by Hayley Smithers- Sheedy, has been busy for the last few years drafting our terms of reference and reaching out to organisations of potential shared interest. The fruits of that hard work has led to the recent signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the **International Cerebral Palsy Society (ICPS)**. Other conversations with mutually aligned organisations are also at an advanced stage. Stay tuned for further updates!

There is plenty more inspirational work going on in extending our membership, adapting best practice to different contexts, supporting needs-based research capacity, recognition of significant contributions to the IAACD work and measures to find fair and inclusive times for our committee meetings. More about that in the coming newsletters. Before signing off, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Josh Hyman (Treasurer) and Professor Xiaojie Lie for their enormous contribution to the IAACD Executive Committee. Huge thanks also to many other contributors to our committees and councils who are stepping down. We are an army of volunteers, and the organisation remains ever grateful for your generous contribution of time and expertise. Without your contributions none of this would be possible. Together we are infinitely stronger!

Till next time, be happy and be well.

*Anne Seal*



You can nominate your candidate for the **Elsass Foundation Research Prize 2027** now. To be considered, nominations must be submitted in English before **June 12, 2026**.

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# Announcements

## Transforming Care Across Oceans Wrap-Up

The **Oceania Academy of Cerebral Palsy and other Childhood-onset Disabilities** held the 13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference on 4-7 March 2026, in the beautiful city of Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. The conference theme Transforming Care Across Oceans attracted 653 delegates from 36 countries, making this a truly international conference. The conference program was extensive, comprising six preconference workshops, 18 breakfast seminars, 18 instructional workshops, 187 oral presentations and 60 posters. We introduced a new initiative with 10 “skills labs” featured across the program which were heavily attended. The calibre of the research presented was exceptional. People with lived experience made a substantial contribution to the program and the central involvement of people with lived experience in research aligns with the values and Strategy of the Oceania Academy.

We had renowned national and international keynote speakers with diverse topics ranging from global health, population-specific health and wellbeing, Pacific health, Artificial Intelligence, physical activity, co-design, advocacy and systems change and lived experience. The Academy welcomed and supported scholarship winners from Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, New Zealand, Fiji and Australia and enjoyed their contribution to the conference. The Academy continues its commitment to equity, with the conference delivered as fully hybrid. Delegates will be able to access the recordings of the conference content for up to six months. The Oceania Academy was excited to announce the location for our 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference in 2028 – Christchurch, New Zealand. We look forward to welcoming you to Christchurch.

## Website Updates

Our website has officially transitioned to our new host, Tapp Network! In the next few months, you will be seeing updates to the site to make for a smoother interface. We have already made updates to include a **mobile view** for easier viewing on smartphones as well as a **new updated accessibility** feature. More to come!

**\*\*Coming Soon\*\***

## New IAACD WhatsApp Channel

We have listened and heard - WhatsApp is one of the primary conveyors of information in South America, Africa, and Asia. We will be building our social media presence with regular posts on the new IAACD WhatsApp channel. Join now to not miss any upcoming posts!



**Ubuntu - I am because WE are**  
Humanity Towards Others

