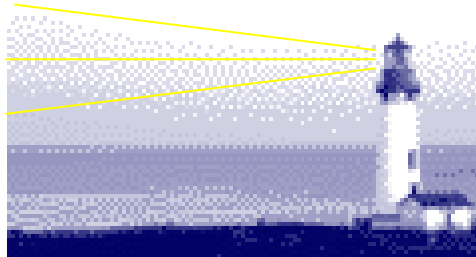




Clarity of Purpose

**Our Strategic Plan
2006—2009**



“QDN is like a lighthouse—
A beacon in the fog”

QDN member



**QUEENSLANDERS WITH
DISABILITY NETWORK INC**

NOTHING ABOUT US.....WITHOUT US

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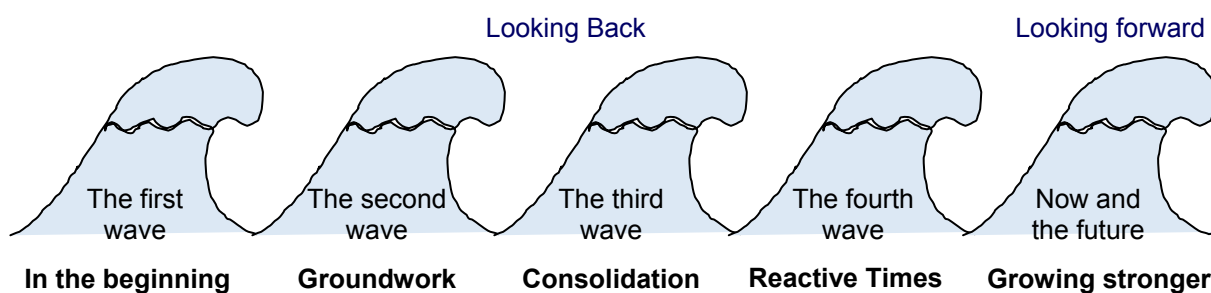
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Background to the Strategic Plan

In July 2006, management committee, staff, and local and regional members of Queenslanders with Disability Network (QDN) came together to develop a strategic plan for the organisation for the next three years. Together our group held around 600 years of wisdom about the lives of people with disability.

Lessons from our History

QDN has been operating since the late 1990s. During this time the organisation has progressed through a number of different phases.



In the beginning

Until the late 1990s, Queensland did not have an organisation driven by people with disability which represented their collective voice across the state. Earlier attempts had been service or parent driven, or had been label specific, or short-lived. Following defunding of one venture, in 1998 the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care called for expressions of interest to reuse the money to establish a consumer consultative body to inform government about issues, especially relating to how services affected the lives of people with disability.

A small group of people with disability and allies met to discuss possibilities for use of these funds and identified and encouraged a core group of people with disability to apply for the tender. These people were drawn together or approached because they were known to share the same values and commitment about all people with disability living as active members of their communities. Within a short time they had developed a vision for an organisation, established a steering committee, negotiated and auspice, written a submission and gained around 660 letters of support for the venture. With successful funding, QDN was born.

Key learnings from this time were the importance standing up for what we believed about our natural authority and the rightful place of people with disability being included in all aspects of community life.

Groundwork

QDN was now up and running, housed in the offices of our auspice, Queensland Advocacy Incorporated (QAI). We had sufficient funds to employ 3 part time staff. We were clear about what we didn't want, so soon turned our energy to developing organisational policy and clarifying what we did want. It was all happening! We held regional meetings and a state wide gathering *Seeking a Voice*, which involved membership in developing and affirming our direction. We raised expectations and expanded fast, especially regionally, where we opened two part time branches.

Although we were involved in putting our issues to government, we had said right from the start that we were not there to be the sidekick of government. Rather, QDN would prioritise our own agendas around a particular stance, representing the widely held voice of people with disability wanting active citizenship and all that it involves. This stance was affirmed and strengthened in all contacts with members. We were also clear that we did not want to be seen as an exclusive group. We wanted to be inclusive of all people with disability, including those who did not have a voice.

Key learnings from this time were the importance of not expanding too fast, understanding that we cannot help everyone personally, and remaining clear about who drives our agendas.

Consolidation

QDN continued our work with new clarity about how we were structured. We held another large state-wide gathering, *Voices in Action*, reclaiming the space of the Convention Centre, previously the site of an Anti-Discrimination case which had been fought and won in the decade before. At this we formulated policies and statements about key areas which affected our lives and fed these back to senior bureaucrats and policy advisers in government.

We now saw ourselves as a network with a central point or hub. This hub, through the committee's governance and the work of the office, supported things to happen in local areas (the micro level), as well as consolidated and strengthened the voice of people with disability state-wide (the macro level). The systemic work involved hearing stories and gaining feedback about life from members, analysing government policy in light of what we knew, developing positions based on our collective wisdom, and writing, reporting and lobbying on issues to government.

Key learnings from this time were the importance of not lighting too many fires and being realistic about our limited capacity, yet still supporting member involvement and nurturing a sense of belonging.

Reactive Times

QDN worked hard with growing pressure for our participation in government consultations, which were being put to the community at a rapid rate. Many of these had pre-set agendas with huge implications for our lives. To add to our concerns, poor processes did not enable people with disability to be active participants. So at this time, rather than moving agendas forward, we struggled to hold our ground, especially with regard to funding reform and changes to the *Disability Services Act*.

By now we had become an incorporated body in our own right and had moved to our own premises taking full charge of running our own organisation. We focussed our energies on gaining our rightful place at the table (*Nothing about us without us*) and spent most of our time meeting, writing and reacting to policy changes to make known the negative impacts on our lives. We also held community forums at the State Parliamentary Annexe to publicise our issues widely.

Key learnings from this time were the importance of balancing inward and outward energies, of supporting staff, of reflecting on where and how we prioritised our efforts, and of learning and moving on.

Growing Stronger

During this latest phase we have developed greater clarity about how we work, both at local and systemic levels, as well as with our staff and allies. Our energies have gone into providing information, travelling and making regional connections to develop and strengthen our network, as well as to identify key people who can be supported to take on roles in QDN. We realised that we had to be more inclusive of people who had greater difficulty in voicing their concerns, so we have set up *Hot Topics* groups and are also supporting a group to establish an Indigenous Network.

We have more to say! continued our lobbying for better funding reform, and our campaign around the new legislation bore fruit with some of our suggestions taken up. We have continued involvement in many areas that affect our lives, including the disability sector quality system, building codes, rail transport standards, universal, accessible and sustainable housing, young people in nursing homes and many other issues. *Welfare to work* saw us taking on our first federal priority.

The key challenges for this next phase are to keep true to our values and mission, to obtain funds to increase our capacity from part time to full time staff, to manage the proactive/reactive balance of our work, to attract a new generation of people with new energy, and to renew and refresh our active members.

Our Vision, Values and Beliefs

Our vision is for people with disability to achieve full and active citizenship and all it involves.

We know:

Culturally and historically, people with disability are not afforded the same value, opportunities or access to community life as other citizens. In fact, here in Queensland, many people with disability continue to be excluded from the most basic experiences of ordinary life. Even when their inclusion is sought, it is often conditional and open to withdrawal, especially when myths, prejudices, stereotypes and low cost take over reason and justice.

We believe:

Such practices are unacceptable and must be challenged. This is not only a concern for people with disability or even for their families, but rather it is one for the whole community, especially if justice and diversity are to be values held by all. We believe the community is richer because of the involvement of people with disability and therefore the responsibility is a shared one. Governments and the community at large have a role to play to ensure that people with disability are entitled to a lifestyle which is based on what is valued and preferred by most citizens, and to ensure that people have resources that enable their belonging, participation and contribution.

Therefore people associated with QDN believe that people with disability have a **rightful place in community life** where they:

- are welcomed, valued and present
- have opportunities to live an ordinary life
- have a home of their own in their preferred social context
- have opportunity to move around their neighbourhood
- are participating and contributing members in social, economic and political life
- have their gifts and talents recognised
- have their lived experience acknowledged
- have natural authority to influence the direction of their own lives.

Our Mission

Our mission builds on our values and beliefs and is the promise of our organisational behaviour. This statement sets the direction for our organisation and the work of our management committee, our staff and our members. It is continually referred to, so that all our decisions about our policies and practices remain in keeping with what we say we stand for.

QDN's mission is:

**People with disabilities connecting for
collective and affirmative action**

Our motto is:

Nothing about us without us

Our Objectives

In line with our mission, values and beliefs, the constitutional objects of our association are:

- To resource, develop and maintain a network of people with disability.
- To be of, by, for and with people with disability.
- To stand by and for people with disability who don't have avenues to be heard on the issues that affect them.
- To resource and support individual and network action on issues that affect people with disability.
- To provide a mechanism and vehicle for the voice of people with disability to be heard on and influence the issues that affect them.
- To take part in government processes and/or lobby on matters that affect people with disability.
- To promote the valued status and participation of all people with disability in all aspects of community life as full citizens.
- To be responsible and accountable in the management of the resources of the network to achieve organisational goals.

Our Purpose and Core Values

Historically, people with disability have had little opportunity to access, participate and contribute to the processes of community life and government, to speak up, to be heard and to be given credibility on the issues that affect our own lives and the lives of others with disability. In Queensland family members, friends, advocates and other allies have had opportunity to speak on our behalf, as well as service providers who have come together around specific issues that affect our lives. Whilst we respect and join with others who hold a similar vision and values, we recognise the importance of having our own voice in influencing policy and practice that often have life defining consequences for us.

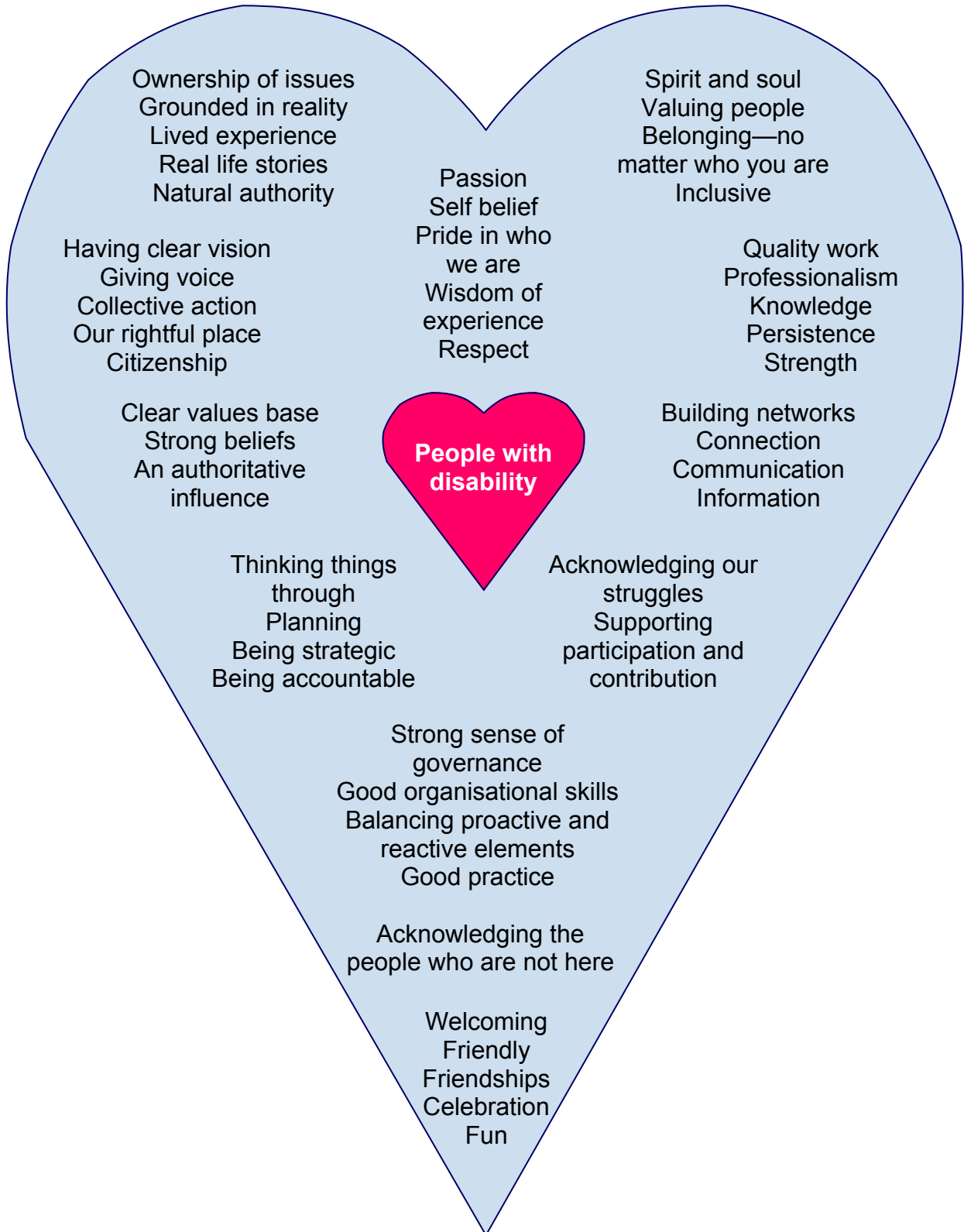
QDN has broken new ground in developing a small, state-wide vehicle available to all people with disability. Our group has taken up the missing role of people with disability having information and building knowledge collectively so that we can speak on our own behalf about a range of issues that directly affect us and others in communities across the state. Without funding to support this to happen, it is very difficult to develop a knowledgeable and an effective network that has capacity to organise itself into becoming a legitimate voice. This needs planning, coordination and the maximising of both paid and unpaid resources.

QDN is committed to ensuring that the voice of our network is diverse and includes the concerns of people living in isolated rural and remote parts of Queensland, people with complex needs, people with limited decision making capacity, people who are hidden from public view, and people from Indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds.

QDN enables people with disability to be at the centre of a vibrant network which:

- is for, of, with and by people with disability
- is inclusive and values all people with disability
- claims a strong relevant, active, significant and influential voice
- operates in line with a framework of human rights and justice, with disability seen as a social issue
- organises by harnessing energy, experience and wisdom
- takes a strategic and collective stand in line with shared values
- speaks out vigorously and works to change society so that people with disability have active citizenship and all it involves
- is here for the long term
- undertakes action in the spirit of shared experience, independence, mutual respect, openness, hospitality and fellowship.

The Heart of QDN



About Our Network

QDN's network includes:

- People with disability who are ordinary members of the organisation, giving them access to organisational information and support and formal voting rights, with the possibility of becoming part of the governance group
- Junior members of the organisation with particular interest in how their life opportunities are developing
- Many other people with disability who link up on areas of interest, or provide information, or become involved in particular aspects of the organisation's work such as particular campaigns.

QDN also has many allies who are part of our network. These individuals hold the same vision and values as QDN and want people with disability to have good lives. They respect the centrality of people with disability in our network structure and support strong ethical direction and leadership by people with disability. Many of these people are family members, advocates or workers who have direct connection with the lives of people with disability. At the interface with our network are people and organisations who want to know what QDN is doing and proposing, as well as people and systems that QDN might wish to influence.

QDN's networks operate within the following context:

- Demonstrating rights and justice for people with disability, with opportunity for their lives to be played out in ways that are comparable to those of other Queenslanders
- Interpreting disability as a social issue, with expectations about people's lives able to be influenced by collective social and political action
- Valuing all people with disability, knowing their stories and harnessing and nurturing their energy, wisdom and leadership in setting life's agendas
- Linking with other allies with similar beliefs about people with disability and strengthening the community living movement
- Demonstrating diversity, inclusiveness and the spirit of 'witness' in all relationships with people with disability
- Supporting an informed voice of people with disability on key issues that affect the our lives
- Acknowledging the need and taking a stand for vulnerable people with disability who have little voice of influence
- Demonstrating positive imagery of people with disability and honouring their achievements.

Our Practice Framework

QDN talks about people with disability being the focus of the networks. What this means in practice is that they are visible in the different aspects of QDN’s work, developing our knowledge base, direction and progress. People with disability:

- Have opportunities to input their knowledge and wisdom of life
- Are encouraged to be active, connected and informed about issues
- Are part of local or collective strategic action
- Have opportunities to influence organisational priorities or to govern the organisation’s work, in line with the vision and beliefs of QDN
- Have opportunities to understand and represent the much broader issues of people with disability as part of the public face of the organisation.

QDN sees its framework as having three components:

1. A **Hub** or central core involving the governance group and the office who hold and transmit the values and priorities of the organisation and enable action

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning decisions • Systemic issues and priorities of the organisation • Use of Resources • Employment and deployment of staff • Expectations of legal, funding bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action re mission, goals, priorities, policies, practices of the organisation • Development, support of leadership • Stewardship of mission, values, spirit of the organisation, sustainability, well being of people involved
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2. A **Macro** or big picture response, developing policy and taking a public stance on strategic state-wide priorities that affect the lives of people with disability

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational stance and public response to state-wide issues • Driven by the hub • Influenced by network membership • Collective knowledge and sharing of information, skills and strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving membership in discussion, policy development, representation, influencing priorities • Mentoring new leadership • Directed toward positive social change and better lives
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3. A **Micro** or local picture response which supports ideas and strategies in local communities and assists in driving agendas of people with disability forward.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of issues of local concern • Support of local leadership • Negotiated support to do things • Sharing information, ideas, skills, advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action taken locally in sync with the values and priorities of QDN • Wider connections and opportunities to connect • Linking/reporting back.
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Our Core Business

The core business of QDN has been identified as **building a network with a collective voice for affirmative action by, for and with people with disability.**

QDN'S PRACTICE FILTER

<p>For Whom?</p> <p>Queenslanders with disability inclusive of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All disabilities including people with significant or complex needs • People living in urban, regional and remote communities • Indigenous people • People from non-English speaking backgrounds 	<p>By Whom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management committee members and staff who take a public role in QDN • Key people with disability who identify as part of our network • People with disability who join in as a collective voice of QDN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With allies who value our stance and join in campaigns 	
<p>For What?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our humanity • Community living • Full citizenship • Inclusion in life • Affirmative action • Equity and equality • Justice • Diversity • Empowerment • Inspiration • Not being put down • Achieving human rights • Access, participation and contribution • The voice of lived experience • Our driving things that affect us • Being at the table in decision making • Taking our rightful place in society • Long haul social and cultural change 	<p style="text-align: center;">How Done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing, maintaining and renewing a network of people with disability around the state • Listening, informing, analysing, sharing information • Prioritising, being strategic and clear in our messages • Organising for collective action • Using our natural authority to be in the decision making processes which affect our lives • Being at the table in discussions to drive our agendas forward • Remaining independent of the systems we attempt to influence 	<p>Against What?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No voice or influence • Tokenistic processes • Myths & stereotypes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse and neglect • Them/us mentality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination • Exploitation • Ignorance • Intimidation • Rhetoric not reality • Lack of access and opportunity • Restrictive policy and procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of \$ as excuse for inaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regimentation of daily life • Congregation on the basis of disability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion from ordinary life • Being treated as second class citizens

Being Good Stewards of the Organisation

The **governance role of the management committee** of QDN is more than just overseeing the running of an efficient organisation. It involves **organisational leadership**, which ties together the key functions of:

- Setting the strategic direction for the organisation, informed by members of our network
- Overseeing the use of human and financial resources and the work of the Network Coordinator
- Reviewing the organisation's progress towards its goals.

However these functions do not happen in a vacuum, but rather are within the bounds of the organisation's **mission, vision, values and beliefs** and in the context of the broader climate of **collective opinion of membership**.

Committee members are therefore the stewards of organisational action, culture, history and spirit. They hold its stories, honour its people and their intent, and use the past to help to understand and inform their current and future work. When they move on, they leave a road map to the future for others so that the well being of the organisation is assured.

This means that committee members demonstrate these values and beliefs in practice by being passionate about their worth and using them as the basis for their decision making regarding organisational policies and procedures. These set clear direction for staff and for reviewing the operation of the organisation. Hand in hand is the expectation of taking well planned, ethical action in keeping with accountability requirements and available resources.

Good stewardship is also expected of QDN's **network coordinator** who translates the decisions of the committee into supporting the priorities of the organisation with members. The network coordinator is expected to demonstrate the values and beliefs by example and to provide feedback, information and advice as to how the strategic directions are progressing in practice, enabling good decision making at the committee level. This is also a stewardship role in relation to managing the coherency between the values and the action, holding up to date knowledge of the political context and upholding the reputation of the organisation in all its work.

Analysing the situation

On analysis of the current situation, QDN is seen to have the following strengths and weaknesses.

Our current strengths

- Our clear values base and beliefs
- The people we attract as active members of our network
- Our listening to our membership and valuing their wisdom
- The sum of knowledge and lived experience of members
- Our state-wide focus with regional involvements
- Grass roots driven, non tokenistic
- Collective action around issues
- A committed management committee
- Skilled staff
- Good analysis of issues
- Our professional image and style of operating
- Competence and respect attributed to us
- Consistency and persistence on issues of concern
- Methods and solutions that empower
- Mindful of what it takes to make things happen well for people with disability
- Reflecting and learning from doing things
- Doing such a lot with such little funding
- Not afraid to take on the hard issues and box above our weight.

Our current weaknesses

- Poor funding base—limited capacity—one source
- Part time staff limits the support of organising what we can do
- Size of Queensland limits travel and presence, especially with limited funding
- If not well known, not seen as relevant
- Finding a place for and maintaining connections with everyone
- Difficult to be seen as for all, especially our having connections and knowledge of those with little voice, or who are hidden, or from different cultures
- Current rate of growth places huge personal and systemic expectations on us
- Catch 22 of living with disability and of being an active member—the more we do, the harder it is for us to do it, as it takes up our energy and increases our vulnerability, but if we don't do it, our agendas do not progress forward and we need to do more—its a vicious circle that takes us away from ordinary life
- Managing the pulls between the micro level in people's communities and the macro level.

Over the next three years, QDN will be presented with a variety of opportunities and threats. These were identified as the following:

Our Opportunities

- Put concentrated effort into creating equality with other state wide organisations—establish a viable funding base which supports the equivalent of 3 full time staff with enough flexible funds to support small projects, travel around the state, small seeding of local ventures and gathering to think through and contribute to lobbying and organisational priorities
- Continue to build evidence from real life to counter the arguments for congregation
- Sell ourselves as an investment opportunity for the future—good services and supports lead to good lives and less crises, isolation and segregation
- Learn from people who cannot contribute because of disability, distance or confinement and include their concerns
- Consider ways of continuing to support indigenous people with disability to establish their own network
- Head hunt and support people with good values to keep the organisation strong as members and as allies
- Continue ways of reaching out—meeting with people—building knowledge and strength—renewing our leadership—establishing good allies—keeping connections—being proactive
- Clarify an acceptable code of behaviour for people representing the public face of QDN and support people to do this well
- Use people’s energies wisely and build around key concerns.

Our Threats

- Blurred vision of government—with accompanying expectation that we will support Disability Services Queensland agendas—constant reactive focus
- Backward attitudinal swing—lesser expectations, congregation agenda and lack of understanding about the concerns of people with disability and the need for flexibility and change over time
- Possibility QDN could be compromised if funding agreement is prescriptive and expectations take us off course—eg forced amalgamation etc
- Not being able to evaluate our outcomes in terms that the government expects—difficult to evaluate or quantify our influence—possible defunding if we do not comply with funding body’s wishes
- Growth of membership with greater expectations of supporting people around the state, but without increased organisational capacity
- Lone guns with personal agendas could say they represent QDN.

Our Strategic Planning Goals

QDN has identified four strategic planning goals to drive our work over the next three years:

- Goal 1. Build a strong vibrant network by, for and with people with disability**
- Goal 2. Support collective action to improve the lives of people with disability**
- Goal 3. Share relevant information and knowledge in appropriate formats**
- Goal 4. Be an effective and accountable organisation that reflects our values in all we do**

Goal 1. Build a strong vibrant network by, for and with people with disability

- 1.1 Promote QDN in a range of different forums
- 1.2 Seek out and connect with people with disability in different parts of the state
- 1.3 Identify key people with disability who could take an active role in the work of QDN
- 1.4 Identify and connect with possible allies who are aligned with QDN's values and beliefs
- 1.5 Share skills and knowledge between network members
- 1.6 Give support to limited negotiated local action
- 1.7 Support regular contact and connections between members
- 1.8 Provide opportunity for key people to come together to support the work of QDN
- 1.9 Celebrate who we are and what we stand for
- 1.10 Establish a strong state-wide membership base

Goal 2.

Support collective action to improve the lives of people with disability

- 2.1 Identify priority state-wide issues and concerns that affect the lives of people with disability
- 2.2 Gather evidence about priority areas and how they affect people's lives
- 2.3 Keep abreast of government trends, legislation, policy and upcoming consultations
- 2.4 Produce QDN policy documents on priority issues, informed by membership
- 2.5 Plan strategies and campaigns so that QDN policy becomes known to those in positions of influence
- 2.6 Support people with disability to have the knowledge, skills and capacity to be part of public face of QDN's strategies and campaigns
- 2.7 Auspice small projects that advance agendas of people with disability
- 2.8 Join with allies in broader campaigns that drive forward QDN's agendas.

Goal 3.

Share relevant information and knowledge in appropriate formats

- 3.1 Seek and listen to concerns and stories of people with disability
- 3.2 Keep up with sources of information that impact on the lives of people with disability
- 3.3 Provide up to date information about issues that affect the lives of people with disability
- 3.4 Provide a range of supports to people with disability so they can contribute to the information and knowledge of QDN
- 3.5 Provide information in accessible formats
- 3.6 Communicate in culturally appropriate ways
- 3.7 Act as a source of information to the wider community living movement
- 3.8 Oppose tokenistic use of people with disability in the name of consultation.

Goal 4.

Be an effective and accountable organisation that reflects our values in all we do

- 4.1 Develop a dedicated and competent management committee
- 4.2 Develop a dedicated and competent staff
- 4.3 Provide ethical direction and leadership of the organisation through practices that reflect good governance and working within capacity
- 4.4 Ensure the service fulfils its mission and remains faithful to its original intent, spirit and culture
- 4.5 Have good planning and evaluation processes that enable continuous improvement in our work
- 4.6 Develop and maintain good management and human relations practices
- 4.7 Run and manage an office
- 4.8 Be welcoming, respectful and hospitable to all involved
- 4.9 Be compliant with legislative, constitutional, funding and industrial requirements of being a public funded body
- 4.10 Meet the ISO services standards as an accredited disability service
- 4.11 Increase QDN's capacity to work as a state wide organisation
- 4.12 Maintain organisational strength, vitality and coherency over time.

Implementing the Strategic Plan

QDN is committed to implementing this strategic plan and will develop an accompanying operational or action plan which will highlight the priorities of the organisation. These will become the blue prints for our work over the next three years. They hold the elements for reporting our progress for all aspects of the organisation's work. QDN will also evaluate our progress on a regular basis against the goals.

These documents are not set in stone, but rather are dynamic works in progress which can be modified depending on need, changing circumstances and the external political climate.

Appendix 1 Key Compliance Priorities

QDN must comply with the new **Disability Services Act (2006)** and the **ISO Standards** used for small business, during this three year period in order to meet the requirements of law and to become an accredited disability service.

Disability Services Act Requirements

The new Disability Services Act (2006) sets the following mandatory requirements:

- Keeping of a register containing up to date, written organisational policy that takes into account differences, customs and diversity
- Demonstrating coherency between policies and practices
- Working to the signed funding agreement with Disability Services Queensland
- Having a governance policy which includes:
 - An election policy for the governing body
 - An induction policy for the executive officers of governing body
 - A conflict of interest policy for the executive officers of governing body
 - A financial delegations policy
 - An accounting and financial record keeping policy
 - A yearly budget policy
- Having policy which protects people from abuse, neglect or exploitation and clearly outlines practices that prevent and respond to any allegations
- Stating the eligibility and capacity for service delivery by the organisation (entry and exit policies and procedures)
- Having a known policy on resolution of complaints
- Collecting and reporting data about the provision of the funded service
- Holding adequate insurances
- Doing criminal history screenings for all involved.

QDN is also required to meet the **ISO Standards** indicators, with the expectation of our working towards compliance in order to become an accredited disability service. QDN has chosen to work with these standards as the disability service standards need considerable modification to be meaningful for QDN's work.