

Issues affecting the future of accommodation support services in Victoria

Letter to the Premier

As you know, VALID actively campaigned for the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and remains a committed and active supporter. VALID's comments in this letter should not be interpreted as any reduction of support for this vital reform that is fundamental to improving life outcomes for people with disabilities.

The transition of Victoria's supported accommodation services to the NDIS, via Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA), represents a fundamental shift in the way in which eligible people with disability will have their accommodation needs met.



VALID shares the hope that as the market responds to funding opportunities made possible through the NDIS, new housing will become available in the long term and address the critical shortage of specialist disability accommodation in Victoria.

However, in the case of Supported Independent Living (SIL), VALID is deeply concerned that the current NDIS pricing is grossly unfit for purpose.

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**Your VALID Membership
is due for renewal -
an application form is
included.**

Having a Say Conference 2018



Monday 5th, Tuesday 6th & Wednesday 7th February

Deakin University
Waterfront Campus, Geelong



Australia's largest conference for people with disability

The Having a Say conference is a place where people can speak up and have their voice heard, be respected and empowered and it's a lot of fun!

The Expression of Interest form to do a presentation or performance at the conference is now available. Registration opens in September.

Some of the features include:

- Presentations and performances by people with disability
- Workshops and information sessions
- Dinner Disco
- Red Faces Talent Show



If you would like more information about the Having a Say conference check out the VALID website: www.valid.org.au

Issues affecting the future of accommodation support services in Victoria

In light of several reports, including the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into NDIS Costs, and the Pricing Disability Services for Quality Support and Decent Jobs (UNSW, RMIT, Macquarie Uni & Social Policy Research Centre), along with the experiences of people from within our extensive networks, we believe the current NDIS prices will neither generate services capable of recruiting, training and retaining skilled disability support workers, nor allow them to provide adequate supervision and effective management.

In our experience, the quality of outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities living in group homes is almost entirely dependent on the quality of staff, in particular house supervisors, who support them. In the current context, we have come to the view that privatisation represents a serious threat to the security and wellbeing of group home residents.

For this reason, VALID calls on the Victorian Government to:

- Cease all moves towards the privatisation of services until the issues around appropriate pricing have been satisfactorily resolved.
- Demand that the current cap on NDIS expenditure be lifted to allow NDIA to properly fund the transition to full scale implementation.
- Commit to retaining DHHS as the provider of last resort of both SDA and SIL supports.

Having a Say 2018 VOLUNTEERS



WE NEED YOU

Help support the largest conference for people with disabilities in Australia. Having a Say needs volunteers for a variety of roles so please contact us if you can help.

Contact havingasay@valid.org.au for a volunteer expression of interest.

Not a VALID Member or need to renew?

Being a VALID Member supports our work within Victoria. It links you into VALID's *state-wide* community and through Inclusion Australia (NCID), both national and international communities.

Stay informed through our newsletters and bulletins, as well as our various online discussions, forums, conferences, meetings and campaigns.

Membership renewal form (enclosed or available from www.valid.org.au)

**Don't
forget**



PRIDE

"Hi, my name is John. I am 26 and live in country Victoria in Hamilton. I have a respite family in Willaura which is at the foot of the Grampians. I am identified as gay and cisgender. I love my family and friends. I am an artist and I love running, park runs, biking, swimming and also watching local football as well as singing in the choir."

Looking back at my childhood I was a normal boy who was confused and trying to fit in wherever I could. I had a disability and was dual enrolled in a normal school and a special school. That meant that I had a lot of friends. Even then I didn't fit in. I was outside of the box.

I was house captain for Pierrepont at high school, which was a special time for me. At the end of my time at SHDS I was school captain. That was awesome. On the inside I was still trying to fit in, trying to keep my head above water. It is hard for me being on my own when the broader Hamilton community does not accept me as a gay man who has a disability who also believes in the Christian faith. I am the only one in my family who is single and is gay.

I came out when I was 24 years old. It takes a lot of time and strength to come out to your family and friends. Expect that it is a gift that has been bestowed to you. It is so personal. After PRIDE has ended I would love to see in Hamilton, more acceptance of the LGBTI community so we are able to show affection in public and not to be judged or harassed. No one likes judgment. For trans people to be able to transition to female to male or vice versa, we are years behind in acceptance.

We have monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of the month at the Francis Hewitt Community Centre. Come and be part of the conversation that initiates positive change in Hamilton.

Support, support, support. We definitely need to give these guys more support because these guys are vulnerable and they are our brothers and sisters and friends. I would love equal pathways to our employment and to also know that we are safe. Even at our sporting clubs.

To conclude, we have to support our LGBTI community. We have to create safe places in our town. It is awesome to see such support around the town with more businesses showing their support and advocating this cause. Hopefully the PRIDE Round of Footy will become a permanent fixture. Thank you to the Equality Roadshow for visiting Hamilton and for travelling so far, and thank you to the committee that helped make all this happen."

John O'Donnell



Hamilton's PRIDE

I met John, his mum and dad in Hamilton last year. VALID became involved to support John's voice about pretty much all of the issues he touched on in his article. He spoke about his story proudly at a formal luncheon held at Alexander House in Hamilton. John spoke in front of a very supportive crowd of local community members and distinguished guests who were whole heartedly involved in Hamilton's inaugural PRIDE event on June 17th. To keep with the theme of inclusion this event was open to everyone. John was joined by three guest speakers including three time premiership player Russell Greene, Charles Beaton and Annie Nolan.

Gay That's OK! was the theme for Hamilton's 2017 PRIDE event. The PRIDE Park Run was held early Saturday morning. Attendees were very social, friendly, welcoming and eager. Just what Hamilton PRIDE was all about.

The town businesses made an extra effort to brighten up the town shop windows and proclaim their acceptance of the gay community. The whole community being inclusive and accepting was amazing to witness. For John, he was enthralled with the uptake. As a young man going through so much he is naturally keen for things to move forward faster.

The event has supported the way John has always envisaged his community embrace and include him. The weekend's program highlighted the amount of support within Hamilton. Many businesses showed their colours of support proudly. It's comforting to know that John has the choice to remain in Hamilton and continue to develop connections over time or venture further out into the world. To further support community inclusion VALID hopes to set up a local Peer Action Group and resources where possible.

VALID is happy to be part of and supportive of, inclusive community conversation around LGBTI issues. We will continue to work towards breaking down the walls and stigmas that exist for people with disability and those who feel excluded.

John's determination to advocate for the LGBTI community and the disability community in a small country town is commendable. Congratulations John on promoting Hamilton PRIDE. It was an amazing experience.

Dom Moollan
Individual Advocate



Welcome David

VALID welcomes David Petherick, to the VALID team, joining us as Senior Advocate and Advocacy Manager.

David, who has worked in the disability sector for over 25 years, is excited about *"being a part of the great work that VALID does and learning from everyone in the VALID family."*

Before starting with VALID David worked with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) for 20 months at their National Office in Geelong, mostly working on projects to increase employment opportunities for people with disability.

David was also the CEO of the Australian Camps Association and People Outdoors for almost 10 years until 2015 and during that time through People Outdoors, he saw the great benefits that camps and outdoor adventure can provide for all of us. He also worked in advocacy for 8 years at the Office of the Public Advocate and for another 3 years as CEO of the Barwon Disability Resource Council in Geelong.

David was a teacher at Karingal in Geelong and before that was an integration teacher and classroom teacher and was a youth worker for 10 years.

Recently he and his wife Mary became registered and certified Wellness Coaches and they hope that through wellness coaching they can help people to live better lives and to reach their goals.



David barracks for the Richmond Tigers and loves long distance hiking and golf.

It's an absolute corruption of what the NDIS is supposed to be: advocate

Miki Perkins

Social Affairs Reporter

"It was supposed to offer hope, but that's just been trashed".

It's not the way you'd expect the head of one of Victoria's peak disability groups to describe Australia's rapidly growing national scheme for people with disabilities.

But Kevin Stone has had a gutful. At every meeting he goes to, the stories are the same.

Exhausted parents tell him about adult children who have lost funding for their day program, transport or cookery classes. Or inept planners who draw up disability plans over the phone, and never meet the person whose life they shape.

So for the first time Mr Stone, head of the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALID), has publicly slammed the "mean-minded" National Disability Insurance Scheme.

"It's an absolute corruption of what the NDIS is supposed to be. Each person is supposed to be treated as an individual, but in order to get everyone through, they have cut heaps of corners," Mr Stone says. "You can't put our clients through a cookie-cutter approach."

The quietly spoken advocate is not one to make such statements lightly. For the past three years he

has been on Victoria's NDIS implementation taskforce, and the intellectual disability reference group for the national scheme.

And it's not everyone on the NDIS that Mr Stone is concerned about.

For people with relatively straightforward needs it has been a boon, particularly those who weren't getting any disability support before, he says.

But for the people he supports who have an intellectual disability, autism and "challenging behaviours", the NDIS has ushered in a period of greater bureaucracy and neglect, he says. Planning their support takes time, and requires great patience and expertise.

But Pascoe Vale residents Peter and Paula Curotte say these have not been evident in the treatment of their 31-year-old son, Alexander.

They entrusted Alexander to the care of the Department of Human Services at age 11, after they found it was impossible to manage his behaviour at home. They made the "least worst decision" to protect his brothers and sisters, and it's one they now regret, says Ms Curotte.

Alexander suffered sexual and physical assault and neglect while in care. Years of trauma saw his behaviour deteriorate to the point he was moribund - strapped to a bed during stints in hospital and heavily medic-

ated. Two years ago Alexander got a boost in his disability funding - from \$20,000 to \$143,000 a year - and his parents organised specialist care, such as art and music therapy, physio and occupational therapy.

Gradually, he became more engaged, calmer. He was able to have outings, visit his parents' country holiday home and meet volunteers with service animals. But the switch to the NDIS has shattered this fragile calm, says Paul Curotte.

Alexander's parents weren't given the opportunity to review his plan. "We took the rhetoric seriously. The NDIS was supposed to be a new world. But they've never met Alexander. Never sighted him, never been out to see him," says Mr Curotte.

He and his wife are satisfied with the amount of funding (more than \$400,000 including accommodation costs), but say red tape means it is far less flexible than before.

Without consulting the NDIS



Kevin Stone

planner decided funding should be spent on staff to come each day and take Alexander into the community.

A fine idea in theory, says Ms Curotte, but recruiting and training these employees to understand Alexander's needs would take months. In the meantime that funding has sat there, almost untouched.

Ms Curotte has been unable to use it for specialist therapies, and so Alexander's programs have abruptly stopped. He has become withdrawn and depressed again.

A spokesperson said the National Disability Insurance Agency (which is running the introduction of the scheme) will work with the Victorian government to ensure more effective support for people with complex needs during the transition to the NDIS.

"We have acknowledged the participant and provider experience can be improved and are committed to listening to feedback to strengthen the scheme as we continue to roll it out nationally," the spokesperson said in a statement.

The number of people with an intellectual disability and challenging behaviours is relatively low, about 500 in Victoria, Kevin Stone estimates. "You don't get positive outcomes unless you put in proper expert training and support. But if you do, you can get amazing results."

Save
the
Date

VALID

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, 11th October 2017

Venue (to be confirmed)


Overall the consultations were well received and valuable feedback from residents was recorded.

Above are examples of the slide show used with some feedback from participants.

Housemates and the NDIS

People don't get much choice about who they live with now.

With the NDIS people may be able to choose their "housemates" – who they live with.




VALID

"Living with one person for me would be a great choice to have and I hope the NDIS would permit this to happen and at least give me the choice to. It should be OUR choice not the carers' or providers'

Group Homes and the NDIS

People will have:

- One service that looks after the house (SDA)
- One service that looks after the staff (SIL)



Let's talk about this!

VALID

"The idea seems good. I would like to see it first because it is hard to predict or imagine what it will look like or how it will happen and what will happen. "

Rights in Specialist Disability Accommodation Consultations

VALID was contacted by the Department of Health and Human Services Central Office and asked to conduct consultation sessions with people with disabilities living in shared support accommodation. These consultation sessions were to gather advice and opinions on resident rights and also look at legislation that may need to change under the NDIS model for supported accommodation.

Under the NDIS, supported accommodation will be separated into two different parts:

- Support services (Staff support), known as Supported Independent Living (SIL); and
- Specialised housing (the house itself including repairs and maintenance). Shared supported accommodation or community residential units, will be known as Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA).

Under the NDIS, SIL providers will be different from SDA providers. This separation may improve choice and control for residents by allowing for a change of one support or accommodation provider without necessarily changing the other.

VALID developed a slide show presentation which was used during each consultation to assist the facilitator to explain the different topics to the participants. People that were part of the consultation were then asked for feedback regarding these topics and their rights under the Disability Act.

The topics included:

- Agreements e.g. Residential Statements
- Choosing housemates
- Accessing the house and Resident rooms
- Paying Rent and Money Management
- Modifying the House
- Repairing Damages
- Notice to Vacate and Relocation
- House Management
- Legislation

Key to Success Training (KSP)

VALID provides training sessions to people who use disability support services and their support staff. The training includes sessions on Human Rights, Self Advocacy and Planning.

Through the training people will learn to communicate in an assertive way, which will empower them to speak up for themselves, make choices and decisions and build healthy relationships.

The course content is covered by six workbooks which is accompanied by a powerpoint presentations. The training is conversation based which creates a relaxed environment for individuals to share their own experiences, thoughts and feelings.

The training also helps people to understand their rights and responsibilities and to be more confident in speaking up, when making choices and decisions about their lives.

The content in the workbooks helps people to learn about how they can have a better say in the planning process. The information can be helpful when doing planning with the National Disability Insurance Agency and disability services.

Overview of the content

The KSP training is usually conducted over a six to eight week period with each session taking up to approximately 90 minutes. We usually work with up to twelve people per group, this enables everyone to be a part of the conversation.

Information covered during the sessions include:

- Human Rights and Responsibilities
- Self Advocacy
- Planning (includes workbooks covering Person Centred Planning, NDIS Planning, Individual Planning Workbook)

Feedback about the KSP training

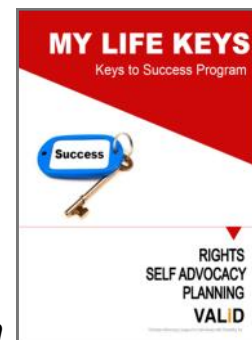
Latrobe Life Skills - Bundoora:

"VALID worked alongside members from Latrobe - Life Skills Bundoora, to run the Keys to Success Program. We talked about having a good life and what that can look like. We talked about making choices and decisions, and the best way people can have more control in their lives. Many of the participants shared their own stories with the group, giving advice and learning from one another."

"We talked about the government, so I can vote" - David Domini

"It's pretty good because we talked about our future and our goals" - Vasi M

"Thank you Zoe for coming to teach us about advocacy" - Ann



Back row ~ Simon, Ben & George
Middle Row ~ Alex, Zoe, Ann & Rachel
Front Row ~ Emma, Maddy & Vasi

KSP delivered 2016 — 2017 including TSP sessions	
Number of Groups	Number of Participants
35	298

'Staying Safe'

Freedom from Abuse and Neglect Program

A forum held on Tuesday 16th May, services meet to work on ways to support people with a disability, their families and disability support workers to help prevent, identify and report abuse.

Services that were in attendance were: VALID, SCOPE, National Disability Services (NDS), Family Planning Victoria, Association for Children with Disability, Women with Disability and South Eastern Centre Against Sexual Assault



Jon from VALID has also been to Tasmania, Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and South Australia and will be heading off to the Northern Territory in September, to share the 'Staying Safe' message with James and Liz from National Disability Services who have been talking about how staff can keep people safe.



VALID and NDS were asked to visit the ABC radio station in South Australia to talk about the training and share the message that Abuse and Neglect is Not Okay! We all need to do something about it to make it STOP...



So remember:

- ✓ **Speak Up!**
- ✓ **Reach Out!**
- ✓ **Get Help!**



Employment Forum Moe

Originally scheduled as part of Start Community Arts Dangerous Deeds touring exhibition in Moe, the ***Living Productive Lives – Employment, Disability and other Dangerous Deeds*** forum was held on Friday the 7th of June at the High Street Community Hub in Moe

This was the first event conducted by the Moe Peer Action Group (PAG) who have been meeting now for about 12 months and have identified getting access to paid work as one of their key issues.

It was great to see the community of Moe support the event with over 30 people attending the forum from a range of local organisations. The forum included presentations from Moe PAG members, Georgia Green, Rachael Walters and Andrew Prior who spoke about their work experiences and the challenges associated with getting a job.

This was followed by another panel presentation comprising Neil Pawson from Moe Life Skills, Claudia from Claudia's Cafe in Morwell and Yvonne Fawcett from Work Solutions. The panel was able to draw on the insights provided by Georgia, Rachel and Andrew to identify strategies for improving employment outcomes for people with disability as well as sharing some of their own challenges and achievements in inclusive employment. Claudia's story of her work at her cafe in Morwell was a highlight. Claudia is a powerful advocate for inclusive employment, and she spoke passionately about the benefits to her business of including people with disabilities.

We concluded the day with a presentation from Paul Cain from Inclusion Australia. Paul hails from Western Australia and is a great friend of VALID. He has over 20 years research experience in employment and disability, which he shared with us in a terrific summary presentation which brought together the 2 panel presentations. We were very lucky to be able to fly Paul over for the day. We look forward to working with him as we plan and develop more initiatives in Moe through the work of the PAG in response to this important issue.

A big thank you to Karleen Plunkett, the Moe PAG Facilitator for her work in helping to set up the forum and to Lynn Lancaster, the Moe PAG Co Facilitator, for her support on the day to make the forum a success. And finally, thank you to Moe Life Skills for letting us use the High Street Community Hub to host the event.



The Moe PAG meets on the first Friday of the month from 10.00am – 2.00pm at the Latrobe City Council Library, 1 – 29 George Street, Moe.

If you are interested in getting involved in the Moe PAG please contact Paul Dunn at VALID. Email: paul@valid.org.au



Community, Inclusion and the NDIS

For people with disabilities to participate fully in the life of the community, work often needs to be done to change the way that communities imagine, plan and respond to their needs and aspirations. Whilst the NDIS has initiated a greater commitment to providing individuals with choice and control about how they wish to live, a stronger understanding of community development principles and practice is still key to building communities that are responsive and inclusive. To live truly meaningful lives, change is required in how we plan and provide individual supports **and** how we plan with communities.

Just where community development fits in relation to NDIS reforms was the motivation for our forum in Geelong on Monday 26th May at the Deakin Cats Community Centre in Geelong.

Three years into the roll out of the NDIS, just how well are we working with communities to promote a stronger commitment to the inclusion of people with disability in all aspects of community life? The Three Years In forum enabled us to reflect on some of the key achievements and challenges associated with engaging communities since commencement of the NDIS in Barwon.

The forum targeted people with disabilities, service providers and community development workers interested in building more inclusive communities. Almost 50 people attended the forum. Presenters included Professor Joe Graffam from Deakin University, Jacqui Pierce from Jacqueline Pierce and Associates, Thomas Banks from the Centre for Access and Cameron Libbis from Leisure Networks. We also had the privilege of hearing some beautiful songs from local singer Aaron Inglis.

Some of the key issues emerging from the forum included:

- How best to invest in training/education that promotes disability awareness;
- Promoting diversity as a core value in community planning;
- Engaging key community stakeholders and developing effective partnerships and collaborative approaches;
- Encouraging greater integration of NDIS reforms across a range of local, state and national policy and planning reforms; and
- How we can get better at understanding the context of community development practice and projects.

VALID is interested in running similar forums in local areas which will help to start a discussion about how better to position community development practice in NDIS reforms.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Geelong forum or would like to talk about hosting a local forum in your community please contact Paul Dunn, paul@valid.org.au

Peer Action Groups

The Peer Action Group (PAG) facilitators meet every month to develop their facilitation skills along with sharing their experiences and strategies for their upcoming meetings. At their last meeting, guest speaker Michelle Howard talked about facilitation and shared tips and techniques on how to run a successful Peer Action Group.

"I got a lot out of the session, the knowledge and the fresh ideas shared by the group and Michelle really helped me. I will be able to use these when facilitating the Banyule Peer Action Group." Luke Nelson, PAG Facilitator.

It is important not to be over controlling and to be flexible. Agendas are there to keep the group on track but sometimes other issues come up that need to be dealt with. Michelle Howard will be providing more tips and strategies at the two day facilitator retreat in September.

Peer Action Groups Established in Benalla

David Craig from VALID and Bec Feldman from Yooralla's Client Rights and Empowerment team visited employees at the Benalla Business Enterprise to run an information session about the role VALID's Peer Action Groups play in local settings across Victoria.

Following an information session for family members in April this year, we have established a Peer Action Group that meets at the Benalla Library with an afternoon and an evening session. Following several visits to Yooralla's Benalla Business Enterprise to meet with workers and visits to other agencies in the town, we are also looking to have a group for adults with disability living in the Benalla area up and running in August or September.

Benalla Peer Action Groups meet on the 3rd Wednesday each month and have a strong initial focus on helping people with disability and their families prepare for their first NDIS Plan and for life beyond the NDIS rollout.

Anyone in this area who would like to know more about these groups should contact David Craig at VALID by email - david@valid.org.au or call David on 0422 516 245.



PAG Leaders, Peer Action Group



Benalla Peer Action Group



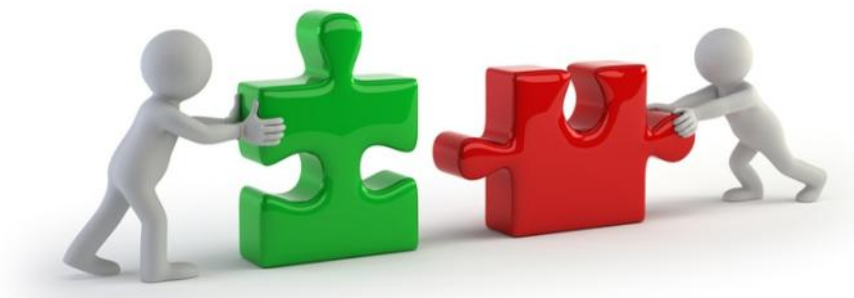
Volunteers Wanted!!

- ♦ Are you interested in getting to know a person with a disability?
- ♦ Do you think you would be good at supporting a person with disability to make their own decisions?
- ♦ Do you have two hours a fortnight for up to 12 months to commit to this new relationship?

WE NEED PEOPLE LIKE YOU!

Choice Mentor Program is aimed at supporting people with a disability to build their capacity to make decisions about the support they receive from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), with the assistance from trained volunteers called Choice Mentors.

The **Choice Mentor Program** team will train and match volunteers to people with disability who are isolated and want help to make choices and decisions in their life. We are currently looking for volunteers to support people in the Inner Eastern area and North Eastern area.



Volunteers come from all walks of life, a variety of professional & personal backgrounds, age groups and communities. VALID appreciates our volunteers for the time they generously give to our programs.

This program is an opportunity for volunteers to help protect and promote the rights and interests of people with a disability and work to eliminate abuse, neglect and exploitation.

If you would like to know more about becoming a Choice Mentor or want to know more about the program, contact VALID on 03 9416 4003 or email brenda@valid.org.au

Families as Planning Partners

The family team have continually been running the Families as Planning Partners course, providing information about preparing and managing the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The team have been conducting the sessions all over the state including Swan Hill, Wodonga, Ballarat, Moe, Seaford, Portland, Hamilton, Warrnambool, Horsham, Warracknabeal, St Arnaud, Leongatha, Warragul .

They are now running courses in the Eastern region: Ringwood, Boronia and Ferntree Gully. To find out if they are in your area go to the events page on the VALID website: www.valid.org.au

Pictured are a group of parents and family members who attended the course in Warragul.



Community of Practice Forum

Thirteen Disability Service Organisations attended the VALID Community of Practice Forum on the 8th of June.

The following topics were discussed: advocacy / provider partnership, recognising and strengthening the empowerment process, building individual and community capacity and sharing experiences about good practice

We were encouraged by some of the feedback we received:

“The continued importance of the role of service users in our organisation and developing opportunities to explore further involvement in organisation structure and decision making”

“We would like to have continuous conversations with other like-minded service providers. This forum provides us a unique opportunity for sharing ideas, activities and opportunities for our future”

VALID is pleased to be collaborating with these organisations to build stronger services for people with a disability living in Victoria. These are important discussions about person centred practice and client empowerment during the transition to the NDIS.



John
McKenna



'OUR CHOICE EXPO'

Information & exhibits about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for people with disability & their supporters.



Are you getting ready for the NDIS?

Do you need to find out what is out there?

We expect over 120 exhibits.

Information Sessions on NDIS related topics.

National
disabilityinsurance
Scheme

10.00am - 4pm, Tuesday 21st November, 2017

**Caulfield Racecourse
pedestrian entrance via Gate 23 / carpark via Gate 2
Station St, Caulfield East**

VALID invites you to visit the Our Choice Expo featuring a wide range of services - day activity, leisure, travel, personal care, equipment, training, early intervention, housing, technology and other supports available for participants of the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) and their families.

Especially of interest to Southern Metro residents looking to be informed and prepared for the transition to the NDIS during 2018.

Free visitor entry

For more information on becoming an exhibitor at the Expo contact
VALID, 235 Napier Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065

Phone: 03 9416 4003 Website: www.valid.org.au

Life is a Journey



Stories of Success....

Welcome to '*Life is a Journey*' by Annette Axen
This section is dedicated to you, our reader.
An opportunity for you to send in your stories of success, funny stories, or anything of interest that will be of benefit or inspire others.

Your stories can encourage others to think outside the box.



Send your stories to:
annette@valid.org.au

Circles of Support...

How can they be useful?

Some key reasons to start a circle include to:

- build a community of support around the person at the centre of the circle
- involve others in the thinking and planning for the present and future
- engage people in imagining better for someone's life
- multiply ideas, resources and networks
- encourage opportunities for people to contribute
- have a group of people to look out for a person's best interests
- assist the person to grow in confidence and promote their own interests.

People with disability are often at risk of becoming isolated and surrounded by people who are paid to be in their life (Chernets, G. as cited in Ward, J, 2010). Circles of support can be a strategy for connecting everyday people to a person with disability in freely given ways. Circles can also help keep a person safe by having a good number of people close enough to speak up on the person's behalf and watch that their life is meaningful and secure in the present and future.



A mum's thoughts....

Succession planning....

What happens when I am no longer here to do and care for my daughter? What do I need to think about? Who needs to know what?



Annette Axen

Lots of questions of which I don't have all the answers to, but what I do know is that if I don't begin to think about it then the consequences for my daughter are not acceptable. As a first step, I believe that its people in my daughters life are what will keep her safe and connected to her community. Another way to look at the people we know is to think about the role they plan in our sons or daughters lives.

Looking at who are the people in our or our son or daughters lives? As a start, this can be broken up into three categories:

1. **ANCHOR** - Who are those who have a personal commitment to:
 - a source of continuity by sharing life over time
 - stands by the person when times are difficult
 - has good knowledge about the person
 - includes the person in decision making
 - protects the person from harm
2. **ALLIES** - Who are those who have a personal relationship with the person where people:
 - share time and activities
 - share knowledge of the persons gifts and challenges
 - share knowledge of the community
 - make contacts for one another
 - lend practical help
 - enjoy one another
3. **ASSOCIATIONS** - Formal and Informal groups organised
 - to animate the persons life by promoting member's interests
 - to develop the persons skills
 - to work for change in practices the are unfair or unjust

These descriptions were developed by John O'Brien as he studied successful circles of support.

Simone Stevens Reporting



Future Metro Trains update

On Wednesday 17th May, I attended a Public Transport Victoria (PTV) meeting in Geelong regarding services for people with disabilities living in Regional Victoria who want to travel anywhere within Victoria.



On the day we learnt about Travellers Aid, which is located at Southern Cross Station and Flinders Street Station, which assists people with a disability who are accessing the city. They also provide: meal assistance; easy to read maps and volunteers to guide and attend medical appointments with passengers. People can ask for assistance accessing the V/Line or Metro trains.

At VALID we support people with an intellectual disability. We believe in making information accessible for everyone and it was good to see that PTV has the same opinion.

Metro trains are trialling a text messaging service which enables people with disabilities who have difficulties with reading a way to feel included when accessing the community. This service was a temporary service from May 1st until July 1st. The service was available during Flinders Street Info Central staffed hours 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturdays and Sundays.

The service was reachable by texting 0428 789 329. PTV are looking into getting V / Line on board with the texting communication reading material to make it easier for everyone with or without a disability who have reading difficulties.

On Wednesday 24th another PTV meeting was held in Ballarat. I was proud to be there and be a voice for people with an intellectual disabilities and I look forward to continuing being involved in this project.

Ten Year Anniversary celebrations for Senior Practitioner

On Tuesday 4th July, the Senior Practitioner, Office of Professional Practice (OPP) celebrated 10 years of service and providing information to people with disabilities, families and services.

Jon Slingsby from VALID, MC'd the day. There were speakers from Department of Premier and Cabinet, VCAT, RMIT University, Disability Services Commissioner, Office of the Public Advocate, Swinburne University, students from Monash University as well as Kevin Stone, CEO of VALID. The presenters talked about relevant issues and ideas of what the future should look like for people with a disability.

The OPP also acknowledged the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee week. Celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The OPP have sponsored the Art Competition at the Having a Say conference for many years. There were copies of the winning artwork on display.

We finished the day off with lunch, giving us a chance to mingle and network.

VALID and Writers Victoria



Dulcie Stone Writers Competition

This is a new writing competition open to people with intellectual disability.

Are you a writer or do you draw pictures? Do you have a story to tell?

The Writers Competition is designed to showcase the voices of people with intellectual disability and recognises the lifetime contribution of Dulcie Stone to services for people with intellectual disability and writing.

The theme for the 2018 Competition is:
Community – Here I come!

*What gives life meaning and purpose?
What does a good life look like?*

So start putting pen to paper for the 2018 Writers competition

You can request a 2018 entry form from the VALID office.

The 2017 Award Ceremony
was held at
The Wheeler Centre, Melbourne

The theme for the 2017 inaugural competition was: *Lead Your Life!*
How do you feel? What do you think?
What do you want? The time has come for you to: Lead Your Life!

Winners were presented with their awards and they read selections from their work.

Office of the Public Advocate

On Thursday, 6th July the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) held a forum for self advocates and people who work in the disability sector to help OPA choose advocacy issues to work on over the next twelve months.

Representatives from Brain Injury Matters, Women with Disabilities Victoria, Arts Access Victoria, Reinforce and VALID shared their knowledge and their lived experiences with the representatives from OPA.

Some of the issues that came up were:

- Disability awareness training for the community, support workers, doctors and other specialists
- Parents with a disability and their rights
- Abuse and neglect within disability services
- Young disabled people living in nursing homes
- People with a disability living in prisons
- NDIS and supported decision making

The meeting ended with the group suggesting ways to make the information accessible to all people with a disability:

- Connecting and sharing information with community centres, hospitals and disability advocacy organisations
- Developing fact sheets about OPA, VCAT and State Trustees
- Developing resources with simple information and questions on what people should do when dealing with OPA
- A list of questions for people to have when dealing with the National Disability Insurance Scheme

OPA plans to take the feedback from the forum and put it into a report and Easy English. OPA will use the report to help them develop their systemic strategy for the next twelve months.

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