

## HAVING A SAY 2015

change  
your  
future



Colleen Pearce presenting VALID President, Dot Leigh,  
with the 2015 Public Advocate Award at Having a Say (page 12)

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# Disability activists concerned about transition to national framework for people in care

By Geelong reporter Margaret Paul, 12 Feb 2015

**"Having established safeguards over the past 20 years in Victoria, we're very, very frightened about going back to the lowest common denominator." Kevin Stone**

Victoria's disability activists are concerned 20-year-old safeguards protecting vulnerable people in care will be watered down by the introduction of a national scheme.

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) will release a discussion paper into a proposed national safeguard framework in the next week, bringing together the frameworks across states and territories.

The ABC has obtained a draft copy of the discussion paper, which calls for input on topics such as managing risk, registering staff and service providers, and handling complaints. The agency wants the use of medication or force, to control people who are being violent, reduced.

It says restrictive practices like restraining people with challenging behaviour, using medication to control behaviour, or leaving people alone, should be "a last resort or not used at all".

Kevin Stone of the disability advocate group, VALID, said the discussion paper was a good start.

"In the sector we have been quite concerned about the absence of a quality framework," he said.

"We're talking about a particularly vulnerable group of people, people with intellectual disability and others who can be quite exposed to risk."

Mr Stone said moving from a model where the states monitor disability care to a national model will be a big change.

"People used to be put on to medications, locked up and just forgotten about," he said.

"That doesn't happen any more in Victoria anywhere near as much, thank God."

"So having established those sorts of safeguards over the past 20 years in Victoria, we're very, very frightened about going back to the lowest common denominator."



## Choices vital for people in care

Darlane McLean's son is on the autism spectrum and has spent time in state-funded accommodation because of his challenging behaviour.

Ms McLean said her son felt powerless in that situation, and eight years on was living in private rental accommodation with state-funded staff providing support to him at home.

She wants the NDIA to make sure people who have trouble communicating are given a high quality life.

"I don't want to see service providers receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars to support these individuals who live shocking lives, terrible lives, who have no choice over anything in their life," she said.

The discussion paper will look at how to register service providers and staff, and how to make sure people can have a say in their own lives.

The Victorian secretary of the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU), Lloyd Williams, said his union will make a submission on the discussion paper.

He said the union supports the goal of reducing restrictive practices on hard to manage clients.

"But that takes resources, that takes staffing and it requires that the services are properly funded for adequately trained and experienced and knowledgeable staff - and an adequate number of staff."

"We don't believe that the funding structures we've seen around the NDIS have been structured adequately to deal with behaviours of concern and where we require multiple staffing to support individuals."



# Ombudsman's priority Key is to protect disabled

**DANNY LANNEN**

VICTORIAN Ombudsman Deborah Glass hopes learning from her inquiry into the handling of abuse allegations in the disability sector will help build safeguards into the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Ms Glass told people with disability, family members and carers during Geelong's Having A Say disability conference that shaping the right and a strong framework for oversight of abuse reporting would be critical for the groundbreaking scheme.

Many Australian states, in future to be covered by the one scheme, now have different oversight arrangements.

Speaking after the conference, Ms Glass said many concerns remained over the effectiveness of existing arrangements, even in Victoria which has a disability services commissioner, Department of Human Services and the Office of the Public Advocate.

"It does lead to some big questions about what will happen when the arrangements move away from the states and are entirely federal. What will the safeguards then be?" Ms Glass said.

The Ombudsman launched an inquiry in December into the handling of reporting and investigation of allegations of abuse of people with disability.

"Part of what I am looking at in this investigation is oversight arrangements because if there are gaps in oversight we don't want that replicated in the national system," Ms Glass

said yesterday. "What I want to do with this is not only come up with the pattern of this is how oversight works in disability abuse reporting but also to say this is what's effective and here are some aspects that aren't which need to be fixed."

"The purpose of this would be to inform the NDIS."

A Department of Social Services spokesperson said yesterday considerable thought and effort had gone into planning for a national approach to safety and quality assurance for when the NDIS rolled out nationally.

"This work is being progressed by government officials, led at the commonwealth level and reporting to the COAG Disability Reform Council," the spokesperson said.

"There will be a consultation process and opportunity for interested parties to provide comment and the National Disability Insurance Agency will be working to ensure people are aware of these opportunities and can have their say."

Ms Glass outlined her investigation process for Having A Say conference delegates and emphasised she would be taking submissions until February 15.

She said people who had reported abuses should feel safe speaking up about their experiences and people with disability, family members or carers could call the National Disability Abuse and Neglect hotline on 1800 880 052.

**Read more on the Having A Say conference in Weekend Extra, P33, 38-39**

## Meeting with Premier of Victoria, Daniel Andrews



**Debs Johnson and Kevin Stone meeting with Premier Daniel Andrews to discuss issues in the disability sector in Victoria.**

VALID representatives Debs Johnson and Kevin Stone met recently with Premier Daniel Andrews to discuss a range of issues confronting the disability sector. On the agenda were the issues of:

- the impact of disability service fees and charges on people with a disability living on the DSP
- the need to restore the right of residents in DHS-managed services to appeal rental increases
- the need to protect people with a disability from potential profiteering in the disability 'market place'
- the need for State Government to restore proper consultative mechanisms with the disability sector - particularly to ensure the lessons of the NDIS launch site experience are properly heeded
- the need to ensure decisions regarding the roll-out of the NDIS and the future role of the State in service provision are based on evidence and outcomes rather than either political ideology or economic rationalism

We were greatly encouraged by the Premier's willingness to listen and engage, and we are looking forward to further engagement with the new Government.



# Individual Advocacy Update

## *How is the sector coping with less funding and how are we feeling about services currently?*

As the VALID representative on the Board of the Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA) I have connected with some amazing people representing advocacy organisations around Australia.

The latest news is that DANA was unsuccessful in its more recent funding application for national representation of advocacy organisations.

Many other representative advocacy organisations will have also folded after being defunded. The DANA Board however are still vigilant and committed to both lobbying in the political arena, systemic advocacy and supporting agencies who provide individual advocacy.

Unfortunately, DANA was also unsuccessful in its bid for a Community Capacity-Building grant. This grant would have greatly provided the resources to develop a searchable systemic advocacy database for the Disability Support Services (DSS) website. Despite the loss in funding, good news is that an extension has since been granted, giving DANA more time to remain with a foot in the disability sector camp, and continue to represent systemic issues that all agencies are voicing support for. Member agencies are thankful that DANA will remain at the forefront of disability related discussion groups.

At a more local level, VALID is moving forward strongly with the business of advocacy, both individually and systemically.

With regards to what is happening in the field, a growing concern, from my experience over the last few months, is that communication barriers are mostly to blame for the unfortunate outcomes for people with intellectual disability. Reform that addresses this problem would be remarkable. The new NDIS world will hopefully play a major role in creating this.



The goal is that any reform would have to give more power and position for real choice and control being in the hands of each individual. The stumbling block will be that every one's goals and ambitions differ. In the pursuit of such goals, barriers tend to cloud the road ahead and collaboration is often the problem that is the hardest to overcome. Collaboration is difficult because the first tendency is to sentence the person and judge too quickly, rather than attempt to work more towards a tenable solution.

It is very much déjà vu for many people competing for a voice within the sector with advocates competing just as much. However, with advocacy comes the potential for leadership and recognition. This is reliant on clearer thinking and reverence to being innovative. To think outside the box and tackle an issue from the outside is a great way to respect someone's story all facets of their situation and the people involved in their lives, as friends, family or professionals.

Imparting this skill onto every person I assist and support is the key to success. Being realistic though, even at VALID, with our approach to advocacy, not all problems can be met head on. Not all solutions are simple. Not all issues are clearly understood in the beginning, nor are the people involved in each case clear about their goal.

However, our successes occur only when we ultimately remain focused on the best interest of the person in the centre of the situation, the person with a disability.

There is no better substitute than to empower the key leaders or person with a disability themselves. Over the past few months I have been improving on developing and delivery good practice with regards to recognising the ability for each person to identify any challenges they face and work as best as possible cooperatively.

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In most, if not all cases, VALIDs individual advocacy service is about finding a solution that involves the least amount of compromise, with the best outcome possible.

I believe my role so far has been to de-fragment any situation and rise above any barriers to ensure that there is little conditions or impairment that can adversely block a person's chance for a good, well-guided outcome.

I must admit though, the success of good advocacy relies heavily on good team work, support for open and transparent debate, and a healthy degree of compromise with the right blend of respectful social justice.

The results are positive outcomes we can be proud to celebrate. There are always better days ahead.

**Dominique Moollan**  
Individual Advocacy Coordinator

## Circles of Support

**UnitingCare lifeAssist is offers support to individuals/families with developing and maintaining (facilitating) Circles of Support.**

The facilitator assists in identifying and strengthening natural supports (unpaid people) around the individual and in identifying goals and areas where ideas and actions are identified. Each 'Circle' is tailored to the individual and is developed/maintained using 'person-centred' approaches. This means that the individual guides the conversation (where communication is difficult the person that knows them best will advocate).

The main aim of a 'circle' is for the individual to be supported to both, achieve their goals and dreams and to be included in their community.

### Linda's Story

Linda decided to have a Circle of Support in mid-2013. Her main reason for developing her Circle of Support was so that she *"would never feel lonely and would always feel involved in the community around her"*.

Linda relies heavily on other people to help her experience life. Linda has no vision and an intellectual disability. She enjoys socialising and singing at church, coffee chats as well as sweet treats. However, to achieve most of these things she needs others to assist her in arranging appointments, letting her know what is around and sometimes in front of her and also to transport her to appointments. (Although she is becoming competent in using taxis).

After the first Circle meeting Linda was already meeting these expectations. By the second meeting, after creating a MAP, most people felt they knew better how to support Linda, and she was bringing her diary to meetings so that she could book in "catch ups" with everyone. Linda was enjoying the feeling of people paying attention to what she wanted to achieve out of life and her contributions.

By the third Circle meeting the conversation had moved to Linda wanting to move out of home and live, with some support, in the community. Over the next couple of meetings the Circle developed a PATH to assist Linda in her efforts to move out of the family home. The PATH supported the group to break down the steps required for Linda into small and achievable steps, to move them along to the best result.

The date for the move was planned and a suitable house was found. A lead tenant was identified from the Circle, Linda's cousin, and it was full steam ahead. Linda moved out successfully in August 2014. There were many steps and some bumps, but the Circle was there to support and brainstorm solutions. Goals continue to be achieved and the Circle

**More info about lifeAssist's 'Circles of Support' program, visit [www.lifeassist.org.au](http://www.lifeassist.org.au) or call 1300-ASSIST.**

UnitingCare  
**lifeAssist**



# HAVING A SAY

## change your future

*Last week I attended the VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability) Having a Say 2015 conference in Geelong. This conference attracts around 1500 people with disability and their families and both encourages and assists participants to take charge of their lives through self-direction and self-management. VALID's mission is to protect and defend the human rights of people with an intellectual disability and to champion their rights as citizens to self-determination, choice, respect and community participation.*

*I was honoured to take part in a session on self-advocacy networks in which individuals shared their experience of the networks and the progress they had achieved through the assistance of VALID and the encouragement of their peers. One participant, Lisa, spoke of being able to catch public transport to the city on her own and the sense of independence this gave her. Another participant, Emma, talked about her experience of studying drama and dance and her ambitions to work in government for people with disability. I also heard the stories of those who had transitioned from institutionalised care to supported residential care, giving them greater independence and choice about the way they live their lives.*

*It was an absolute delight to spend time with such a passionate group of people who are so determined to live life to the fullest. I must make special mention to Adam, whose enthusiasm was inspiring. He also wins a special place in my heart for nicknaming me 'Cool Gabby' — that does not happen often. I thank Kevin Stone, CEO of VALID, and the many wonderful participants and families I met on the day. I was there to listen and learn, and they imparted knowledge with warmth and respect. For that I am truly grateful.*

Gabrielle Williams MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Carers and Volunteers

The above  
Hansard  
transcript was  
presented as a  
Members  
statement to  
Parliament by  
Gabrielle.



**Gabrielle Williams MP**  
State Member for Dandenong



## Having a Say: Dinner Disco

The feedback from people about the night was that the food was good but the new band, Controversy, was **AWESOME!** The band told us afterwards that they absolutely loved performing for us and are looking forward to returning in 2016.

Thank you to **Elaine Valentine** and her team for all their hard work decorating the tables and helping making the disco a fun night for all.

The theme this year was “Glitz, Glamour & Bling” and we saw lots of it with people arriving in their chains, tiaras and fancy clothes.



New band, Controversy



*“Best ever disco, great band, great atmosphere. Yummy*



VALID staff glamouring it up

## Having a Say: Dinner and Chat

As an alternative to the disco, a dinner was held in the Baveras Restaurant where people could have a quieter environment.

Guest speaker, David Bowen, CEO of the NDIA talked about what the NDIS is doing. *“They are having conversations, talking about people’s dreams and aspirations and how putting people with disability front and centre because that is where they belong in the scheme.”*



A special thank you to Laurie Harkin AM and the team from the Disability Services Commissioner for sponsoring the Dinner Disco.



*Thank you!*



# Having a Say: Awards

## ROBERT MARTIN SELF ADVOCATE LEADER AWARD



### Desiree Johnston

Desiree Johnston, from Speak Up Advocacy Tasmania, is the winner of the 2015 Robert Martin Award.

Robert chose Desiree as the person who most impressed him at the conference for speaking up about issues that are important to people with disability.

Robert Martin is a self advocate from New Zealand. He is internationally recognized for his passion to close institutions in New Zealand and across the world. In recognition of Roberts achievements VALID sponsors the Robert Martin Award.

## DOUG PENTLAND - DAVID BANFIELD AWARD



### Georgia Green

Congratulations to Georgia from Moe Life Skills as the winner of the 2015 Pentland and Banfield Award. Colin Hiscoe from Reinforce and Kevin Stone, Executive Office of VALID, jointly presented the award to Georgia.

Doug Pentland and David Banfield were pioneers of self advocacy with a passion and commitment for all people with an intellectual disability. They were members of Reinforce, which is the first self advocacy group formed in Victoria and Australia.

## FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AWARD



### Dariane McLean

Dariane was selected to receive the 2015 Family Empowerment Award for her tireless efforts and advocacy on behalf of her son

- advocating for his right to a good life with community inclusion and appropriate support
- empowering him to take up these rights and realise his potential
- ensuring that what he wants to communicate is heard loud and clear



# Red Faces Talent Show



The Red Faces auditions were held at the Sphinx Hotel in North Geelong on Wednesday evening. There were twenty acts by talented performers with disability who entertained the audience and had people dancing and singing along.

Judges at the auditions were Half Cat (mascot from the Geelong Football Club), Peter Abbey and Kylie Fisher from the Local organising Committee.

Thank you to the Geelong Football Club for letting their Half Cat out for the night, everyone loves the fun he brings to the night regardless of their team affiliations.

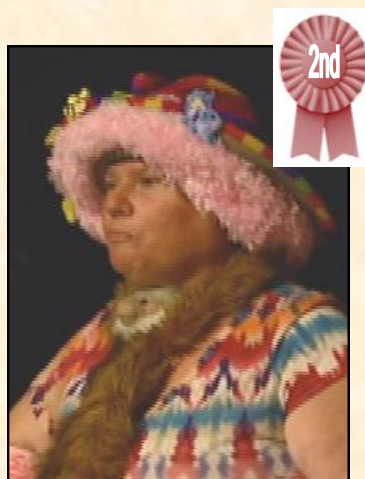
The top three finalists performed their act again Friday at the closing ceremony in Costa Hall. The judges Sadat-Jon Hassain, Judy Huett and Maree Nicholls then had the tough job of deciding which act they thought deserved the top spot.



Thank you to the management and staff of the Sphinx for the wonderful night!



Marcus Schindler from Focus was awarded 1st prize for his hip hop dance routine.



Sonja Van Buren from Mawarra was awarded 2nd prize. Sonja sang "*Poetry in Motion*"



Cayden Bettles from Alkira was awarded 3rd prize for his performance of "*A Moment with You*"



# Having a Say: Art Competition

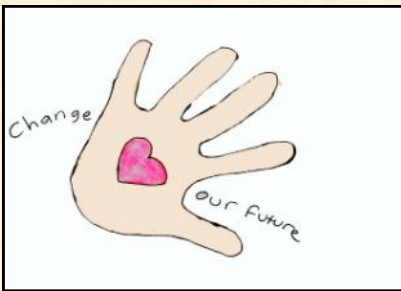
This year's art competition was based on the conference theme 'Change Your Future'.

The winning entries were selected by the Senior Practitioner, Frank Lambrick, who presented winners with their certificate and prize at the closing ceremony. The winning artworks are proudly displayed at the Office of Professional Practice.



## **Home Not House by Sarah Guilfoil**

*My home is living with mum and dad and people I like where I can get help when I need it. Home is warm and bright. Home is where I can smell the flowers. I want to keep going out with my family and friends, make new friends and do things I like. But I love coming home. Like Dorothy said in The Wizard Of Oz, "There's no place like home."*



## **Change My Future by Pippa Swanwick**

The name of the conference inspired me



## **Queensland by Kylie Gentle**

I like Queensland & I love to draw birds & animals wherever I can. I like to show my work. I want to save my money from selling my drawings to go somewhere nice like in my picture



## **People in a thunderstorm at Greensborough Shopping Centre by Joyce Davies**

I paint people especially people at shopping centres because I like people and like to buy nice things.  
Next year when I go shopping I will also learn about getting to the bank so I can save my money for bigger things in the future

The Having a Say Art Competition is proudly sponsored by the Office of Professional Practice.





# Our Choice Expo

The second Our Choice Expo was held at Deakin University on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb as part of the Having a Say Conference. The expo was extremely successful with hundreds of people streaming through all day to look at the exhibits and discuss services with the exhibitors.

As well as the information tables in the mezzanine there were equipment exhibits such as wheelchairs and modified vehicles in the courtyard. There was even a more 'hands on' massage exhibit. Holding the expo at Deakin University this year meant that it was easy for conference delegates to also have a look at the expo.



Exhibitors provided participants and families with information on the wide range of services available through the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme)

There were workshops and Information sessions on the NDIS running throughout the day as part of the expo. Sessions looked at what people want to do with their lives, preparing for transition to the NDIS and how to access aids, equipment and services under the NDIS.



There were over 80 exhibitors in the expo split into categories of:

- Flexible Supports
- Rights & Empowerment
- Community, Recreation & Travel
- Training & Employment
- Therapeutic Supports
- Equipment & Assistive Technology
- Accommodation

VALID would like to **thank Karingal** Inc for sponsoring the tea and coffee for visitors attending the Expo.





## Public Advocate Award 2015 presented to VALID at The Having a Say Conference



My name is Colleen Pearce and I am the Public Advocate for Victoria. My job is to protect the rights of people with disability, and to make sure they are safe and supported. I work at the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA).



Office of the  
Public Advocate

I have lots of staff and volunteers who help me do my job. Some of the people I work with might have also helped you. You might have met an Independent Third Person or ITP, who helps people with disability talk to the police. Some of you might have called OPA's Advice Service to tell us about a problem where you live, or to ask a Community Visitor to visit your house.

I would like to thank you for inviting me to the Having a Say Conference. I am very impressed with the good ideas and the passion of everyone here today. I am also here today to present a very special award, called the Public Advocate's Award. Once a year I give this award to a group or a person who has done really great work promoting the rights of people with disability. This year I want to give the award to VALID and to its members, because I think you do an amazing job. VALID has been working hard for more than 25 years to make life better for people with disability. They have done a lot of very important work standing up for people with disability, and telling the government about things that need to change.

One of the first things VALID did was to tell the government to close institutions including Caloola, Pleasant Creek, Mayday Hills, Kingsbury, Janefield and Kew Cottages. They did this because people living at the institutions were not being treated fairly, and did not have a say in their lives. VALID told the government that people with disability should be able to have houses and support services in the community, instead of in institutions. It has taken a long time but thanks to the work VALID and other places like OPA nearly all the institutions are closed and people with disability are living better lives in the community.

VALID has done a great job of speaking up about the times when people with disability have been abused or neglected.

They encourage other people and groups to speak up too and called on the governments to investigate how the abuse and neglect is happening and how we can stop it. Last year the government and the Ombudsman both said they would investigate abuse and neglect of people with disability, which is something OPA and VALID are glad to hear.

Another really important thing VALID has done is to help change the way people think about supporting people with disability. They have helped people understand that support for people with disability should be about human rights and what the person wants and needs. For 25 years, VALID has kept trying to make support services better and to make the laws and rule about support services fairer for people with disability. One of the biggest ways they have helped has been to campaign for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the NDIS, which we all hope will make it easier for people with disability to get the support they need.

VALID has done a lot of big things to help improve life for many people with disability over the past 25 years. But they have also done lots of smaller things for individual people that are just as important. VALID has helped people with disability by supporting self advocacy groups and networks and supporting family and parent groups. They have helped thousands of individual people with disability and their families to be treated fairly and get justice. And of course, they have held the Having a Say Conference for 16 years, to give people with disability a chance to have a say in the things that matter to them.

Last week, VALID's executive officer, Kevin Stone described the Having a Say Conference as absolutely the best conference for people with disability in the universe, and I think we all agree with him.

I would like to congratulate VALID and all its members for 25 years of amazing work. The award that I am presenting today is a small way of recognizing the enormous contribution VALID has made to the lives of people with disability. I would like to invite VALID President, Dot Leigh to accept this award, as someone who has been a big part of VALID and a board member for more than 20 years.



# Geelong Awards for People with a Disability

The Geelong Awards for People with a Disability is a new partnership between Karingal and the City of Greater Geelong. The awards celebrate the contribution of people with a disability to the Geelong community and aim to strengthen the region's status as the centre for innovation and change in the disability sector. The awards were also supported by VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability), BDRC, K-Rock, Bay FM and Geelong News.

*"People with a disability are making valuable contributions to our community and it is important we recognise their efforts and achievements"*

Daryl Starkey, Chief Executive Officer Karingal

The Awards Ceremony was held on Tuesday, 3rd February at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre along with the conference welcome for international delegates to the Having a Say Conference.



Congratulations to the 5 winners:

**1. Ingrid Hindell - Volunteering Award**

Recognizing Ingrid's large contribution as a volunteer and member of numerous community groups to empowering others

**2. Cassy Geffke - Achievement Award**

Recognizing Cassy for her achieving many successes in life. Cassy has competed as a gymnast in the special Olympics at state, national and world levels.

**3. Phoebe Mitchell - Sport & Recreation Award**

For Pheobe's high level achievements in sport as a multiple world swimming record holder

**4. Bronwyn McGuire - Outstanding Employee Award**

Recognising Bronwyn's contributions and success in her work at Shannon Park Industries. Among her many workplace achievements, Bronwyn is also a member of the Employee Representative Committee.

**5. Thomas Banks - Leadership and Advocacy Award**

As an author and a public speaker Tom's leadership and advocacy has helped educate people and raise awareness about people with a disability.

Pictured are the winners and some of the finalist with the main sponsors, Daryl Starkey from Karingal and Kylie Fisher from City of Greater Geelong.





# A celebration of people who live to give

INGRID Hindell's words glowed with a sense of strength and high purpose.

Her community was formally celebrating and saluting her as a winner in Geelong's first awards for people with disability, acknowledging decades dedicated to volunteering.

"I am accepting this award very gratefully," she said via husband Robert.

"Not as a person with disability but on behalf of all of us community development workers, paid and unpaid, who work passionately, largely behind the scenes for the issues and the people we believe in and often don't get a fair go in our society and in our media.

"I know this is a 'disability award' but I am accepting it as a community development worker ... as I don't want to become a figure of 'inspiration porn' as the comedienne Stella Young called it.

"I am no more inspirational than all of us.

"Or to put it another way, what you see in me is also in you, otherwise you couldn't see it in me."

Thus with succinct measures of gracious thanks, firm embrace and strong statement, Mrs Hindell pointed eloquently to a determined personal charter, perception of the strength in others and 64 years of insight.

The event was, after all, the portal to a week for having a say.



**DANNY LANNEN**

danny.lannen@news.com.au

About 130 people attended the presentation of the first annual awards at Geelong Performing Arts Centre.

The product of collaboration between major partners Karingal and the City of Greater Geelong, they did far more than celebrate winners in five categories, they applauded two more finalists in each category and illuminated countless unsung others quietly living remarkable lives with

immense capacity to give, contribute and inspire.

It seems remarkable that a city of Geelong's dimension and sense of community might have taken so long to formalise awards such as these.

We commend their founding and trust they are here to stay and grow along with the city's burgeoning standing as a leader in the disability sector, and as the prelude to the annual national Having A Say conference staged by the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability, VALID.

Having A Say, in its 16th year and at home for a tenth year in Geelong, attracts 1200 or more people each year, including this year a delegation from China. It provides a powerful forum for expression, connection, empowerment, education and liberation.

Geelong is growing in status as a major events stage. Having A Say is already firmly entrenched as one of them.

The space for presentation of the inaugural awards lit with pride, purpose, enthusiasm and excitement.

Bree-Arne Manley, living with multiple sclerosis, performed powerfully on stage solo on guitar and in song with her own compositions, and gold medal Paralympian Richard Colman shared a rousing reflection on what his home town had gifted him.

The wheelchair athlete is known

**I know this is a 'disability award' but I am accepting it as a community development worker ... as I don't want to become a figure of 'inspiration porn' as the comedienne Stella Young called it.**



**DEDICATION:** Disability advocate Ingrid Hindell.

Picture: MITCH BEAR

on global athletics tracks as a racer, but recalled having had a crack at any sports he could as a youngster.

He said his first athletics memory wasn't of racing, but of competing in long jump.

"Everyone else was doing these events," he said simply.

Colman spoke of his goal to visit 100 countries, embracing the challenge of each new experience. He has 52 already ticked off, including having negotiated Bolivia's notorious gravel Death Road in his racing chair.

"Yes, I thought I might die a few times," he conceded, met by laughter. But the point was that possibilities are just that.

With a world view, Colman hailed

Geelong's standing in the disability domain and urged people to believe.

"Build on this, make the most of those opportunities, make sure you always believe in what you're doing," he said.

"Always be happy, positive and let's get things happening in Geelong."

A burst of applause provided a ringing endorsement.

Karingal chief executive Daryl Starkey and city councillor Kylie Fisher endorsed the new awards as a natural fit in the home of the National Disability Insurance Agency, National Disability Insurance Scheme, Transport Accident Commission and Having A Say.

"First and foremost it shows the community people with disability have a lot to offer, and one of our goals is to have a fully inclusive community," Mr Starkey said.

"People with disability can make incredible contribution to society."

So they can, so they do, every other unsung day.

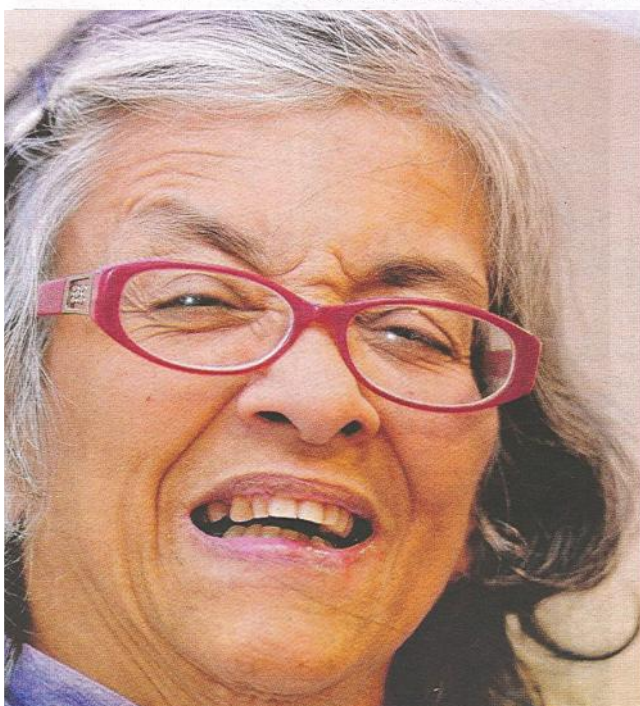
Profiles on each of the category winners illustrated immense zeal and commitment, Phoebe Mitchell as a multiple world and Australian record-holding swimmer, Thomas Banks as a leader and international advocate committed to revealing the imperfect world of being a gay person with a disability, Cassy Geffke as a Special Olympics gymnast and community volunteer,

Bronwyn McGuire as an exemplary employee and workplace leader, and Ingrid Hindell as a community volunteer and advocate across decades.

Mrs Hindell's volunteer devotions include Barwon Disability Resource Council, Geelong Sustainability Group, Geelong Interfaith Network and Geelong Organic Gardeners. She administers websites and Facebook pages for some.

Like others she said much for many with her acceptance speech and amid the happy din of conversation after the awards she emphatically emphasised there was no need for anybody to be bored.

"There's so much to be done," she smiled.





# The VALID Dress



The VALID Dress (above) was one of the costumes displayed by Alkira at their catwalk show at the Having a Say conference. The show, *"This must be underwater love"* featured performers parading their costumes on stage to the Beatles song, "Octopus Garden"

The VALID Dress was constructed from past editions of VALID newsletters and materials.

Earlier in March Alkira wearable artists took the stage by storm at 'Perfect', part of the Virgin Australia's Melbourne Fashion Festival.

They were incredibly well received with their costumes, including the VALID Dress, and thoroughly enjoyed their catwalk experience.



Sarah Laycock confidently starring on the VAMFF catwalk as 'Swan Lake'

All dressed up and nowhere to go!  
The Alkira group is currently fund raising to compete in the Wearable Arts competition in Alice Springs

An exciting and vibrant opportunity for artists with intellectual disabilities to be involved in an inclusive and exciting performance of EPIC proportions! It is fashion, it is fun and it is definitely going to be fabulous!

check out their video at  
<http://www.pozible.com/project/188171>

## Some conference feedback

*"The venue and food was great and the band was awesome. Everyone enjoyed themselves".*  
Raymond

*"Thank you for the hard work, your team work, your smiles and your support to make this a great conference",* Thea

*"I found the workshops and presentations to be very interesting, to be a part of, as it is all about building an inclusive society for people disabilities",* Raymond

*"The best thing about the conference is the way people have learnt to speak up.",* Robert Martin

*"Before, I was not keen to go. Now that I have been I am glad I did and will be there next year."*

*"The presentations that I went to were great and that people with disabilities did it themselves.",* Robert Martin

*"What I liked most about the conference was the intense and overwhelming enjoyment by people who have a disability.",* Chris

*"I loved the All Ability Circus which was a lot of fun with great enthusiasm",* Raymond



**w** weekend extra

# Having A Say rocks to grand, and fun, finale

SIX hundred people rocking the dance floor gave an emphatic endorsement of the success of Geelong's tenth annual Having A Say disability conference as it reached a disco crescendo on Thursday night.

The conference dinner and dance at The Pier provided the forum for plenty of frivolity as well as some serious business via a presentation by National Disability Insurance Agency chief executive David Bowen.

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability, VALID, has run 16 annual Having A Say conferences but has declared Geelong home for the past decade.

More than 1000 people from across Australia, New Zealand and, for the first time, China attended this week's three-day gathering, meeting old friends, making new ones, finding answers and alternatives from service providers and joining forums and activities ranging from fun come-and-try sessions to learning about legal rights, the power of self-advocacy and speaking up about dreams and aspirations.

The event was preceded by the joyous presentation of Geelong's first awards for people with disability and,



**Danny LANNEN**  
danny.lannen@news.com.au

against the backdrop of Barwon region's place as a trial site for rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, further highlighted Geelong's status as an epicentre for disability services.

Newcastle's Leigh Creighton captured the atmosphere of the conference with his comment, shared during a circus skills session.

Having attended Having A Say for the first time last year he said he had to come back.

"Because I loved it, it was great and I made good friendships with other people," he said.

"It's awesome, it's having that real connection with everyone."

Looking back on the conference, which closed yesterday, VALID executive officer Kevin Stone effusively sang Geelong's praises.

"Geelong is the centre of the disability service world and our conference is one of the highlights and we want



"Because I loved it, it was great and I made good friendships with other people. It's awesome, it's having that real connection with everyone."

**LEIGH CREIGHTON**

Picture: MITCH BEAR

Geelong people to be proud of the support they give to people with disabilities and we want them to show the rest of Australia," Mr Stone said.

"It's a buzz, it's an absolute buzz."

"We get the bay, we get the best scenery, we get the support of Deakin University. We get the support of all of the

organisations in Geelong: they all assist us by volunteering staff and by sponsoring.

"There's a great collaborative vibe."

Geelong has so much to gain much from sharing of its big major events heart.

One thousand people from across Australia might just find the place worth

recommending to many more.

"People all go down along the waterfront to the restaurants and the cafes," Mr Stone said.

"For a lot of people from rural and regional cities around Victoria and Australia this is a real eye-opener to them. This is such a unique place."

## Volunteers

Thank you to the 100+ volunteers, including 20 volunteers with a disability, who answered the call to help make Having a Say 2015 a fun and successful event. Volunteers, identified by their blue (or orange for catering) tee shirts helped with a myriad of tasks including ushering, catering, facilitating come and try sessions and many, many other tasks.





## COME AND TRY ACTIVITIES



**Cupcakes facilitated by Woodbine**

***"Coming to it was not all about business, you got to have activities."***

***"Loved the stories of inspiration and achievement. I loved the activities, the fun."***



**Mazda**



**Print Making Tea Towel facilitated by Distinctive Options**



**Art facilitated by Tina**



**Bag Art facilitated by Zoe from Karingallery**



**Sports Games facilitated by Tina**

The full conference report is available for download from the Having a Say conference website soon [www.valid.org.au/conference](http://www.valid.org.au/conference).

If you have not already done so please download a conference feedback form and let us know your thoughts on what you loved about the conference .. and what needs some improvement.



Michael Sullivan, an advocate for people with disabilities. Photo: Christopher Pearce

## Change the words, change the reality

### Julia May

Michael Sullivan has his own name for the NDIS, one he believes better explains the scheme's purpose.

Speaking at a disability conference earlier this month, he said a National Disability Insurance Scheme "sounds like something might go wrong".

"How would that make you feel?" he asked the crowd at Geelong's Deakin University, to boos and groans.

"I say the 'I' in NDIS should stand for 'investment'. We are worth the investment.

"To move forward we need people to believe in us, to back us up and create opportunities. When people have confidence in us then we start to believe in ourselves. We need to change the words to change the thinking."

Mr Sullivan has an intellectual disability. Aged 49, and a leader three decades in the making, his speech has made him something of a poster boy for the push to recognise that different types of disabilities have different needs, and require different types of advocacy and support.

Earlier this month the federal government announced details of a shake-up of the disability sector that will force a radical overhaul of how the sector is funded.

Where there were once 11 bodies – including Inclusion Australia for people with an intellectual disability and Vision Australia for people with vision impairment – there will be six bodies defined by demography, rather than need. Collectively, they will get \$3.6 million, 40 per cent less funding than under the old model.

Mr Sullivan is board member of Our Voice, a national disability advisory committee that may cease and chairman of the NSW Council for Intellectual Disabilities.

He is passionate about advocacy and, as shown at the Geelong conference of advocacy group Valid, a powerful voice for people with an intellectual disability.

But Mark Pattison, executive director of Inclusion Australia, said following the funding cuts there will be no more Michael Sullivans. He said, helping members such as Mr Sullivan develop into leaders had been a priority.

"We train them how to speak on behalf of others and present ideas, how to negotiate with people in a policy development and implementation environment," he said.

"The Commonwealth government has clearly said to people like

Michael, 'We don't value you. We don't want to listen to you and we don't want to give younger generations the opportunity to do what you've done'."

Stepping on to the Deakin University stage, Mr Sullivan looked diminutive, but his first words were firm and clear: "I am Michael Sullivan. I am here as one of you."

What followed was a rousing speech to hundreds of Australians with a mix of intellectual and physical impairments. It drew a noisy, enthusiastic response. People later thronged around him.

Mr Sullivan's idea of calling the program a national investment scheme became an unofficial theme for the three-day conference, embraced by Victorian Public Advocate Colleen Pearce and acknowledged by a senior representative from the National Dis-

ability Insurance Agency, which administers the NDIS. During her presentation Meg Parsons said "insurance" before jokingly correcting herself as the audience groaned. "Sorry," she said. "I hear it should be investment."

Mr Sullivan had many kindred spirits at the conference who determinedly speak into microphones, not letting cerebral palsy, severe speech impediments or cognitive impairments prevent them from asserting their views and championing their rights.

Like many, Mr Sullivan is angry at the government cuts. "But we need to get past our anger and do something about it," he said.

"We need to keep pushing and saying it's about us. Start pushing those doors open, sit in the gallery at Parliament and make our voices heard."

Michael's presentation at the Having a Say conference can be viewed on youtube. Find the link on the conference website [www.valid.org.au/conference](http://www.valid.org.au/conference)



*When I heard the keynote presentation by Michael Sullivan at the Having a Say Conference I came away thinking that yes, investment is what the NDIS should be called.*

*The money for the NDIS needs to be invested into a term deposit to build interest. Then the NDIS needs to invest that money the right way, into providing the right services for people with disabilities.*

*It needs to provide housing, good services, management, work training and help to provide or find work.*

*Insurance is one of the things that people want. To be able to **invest** in the good support that people need. So I think that Investment instead of Insurance would be the right name for the NDIS.*



*Whatever the NDIS stands for however, it needs to be about helping people of all disabilities to get what they want out of life*

*Gerard Langridge*

## Self Management Resources

The Self Manager (below) is an example of one of the resources that can help with self management. We recommend having a look at all the different technology available to assist you to self manage before signing up with any particular organisation.

Look at the NDIS website [www.ndis.gov.au](http://www.ndis.gov.au) for other self managing resources.

### **The Self Manager - Manage your services anywhere, anytime on any device!**

The Self Manager is an online management tool developed in close consultation with individuals with disabilities and their families and support networks. It is a unique product that is easy to use, but at the same time produces comprehensive usage reports and financial statements, making reporting quick and easy. The detailed usage reports allows for transparency in how funding is spent, giving you a greater sense of control over your services.

You can administer and monitor your own disability funding and services on your dedicated database at any time, on any device.

The Self Manager caters for both self-managing individuals and organisations that offer shared managed services to their clients. With its multiple access levels, Self Manager offers individuals as much or as little responsibility as they desire, but encourages them to gradually take on more responsibilities as they become comfortable with using the system.



More information about the Self Manager is available on the website ([www.selfmanager.com.au](http://www.selfmanager.com.au)), along with short introductory videos and testimonials from current clients.

Email: [info@manageitwa.com.au](mailto:info@manageitwa.com.au)



# Heather Speaks Up

Articles on self advocacy by *Heather Forsyth, a highly experienced self advocate, who has overcome many challenges in her life to become a leader and support worker for other people with a disability.*



## Canberra Inquiry Into Abuse

On 11th February this year I joined other advocates in Canberra to support a motion that the Commonwealth Senate hold an inquiry into the abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities. The Senate agreed to hold the inquiry.



On the same day I chose to publicly reveal my own personal experience of abuse; something that I have not shared before. In an interview with Paul Cain I discussed my memories of abuse and how this has affected me for 40 years. We also discussed the role of self advocacy as a response to the issue of abuse and what might assist other people with intellectual disability to “have a say” about this very personal but often hidden issue.

When the abuse happened to me I tried to tell family and the police, but no one would believe me. After this I always felt that there was no one I could tell and so have kept this abuse secret for 40 years. Later in life I also experienced victimisation and bullying from a disability service provider. This had a negative impact on my self esteem and the harmful words used by the service provider are difficult to forget and still causes pain today.

It was soon after this experience that I became actively involved in self advocacy, at first building up my own skills and then becoming a leader to help others on the same journey to speak up and assert their rights.

The experiences of my life and my journey to become a leader have forged me into a confident self advocate prepared to have a say, stand up for my rights and make people listen and believe me!

I now work with VALID to help other people become confident to speak up as part of an ongoing self advocacy training program across Victoria. This self advocacy training builds the confidence of people with disability to stand up for themselves, be assertive, and stay safe.

The VALID self advocacy networks also provide a safe place for individuals to share personal issues that might not otherwise be raised with anybody else. When no one will listen, the self advocacy network provides an opportunity to grow and share.

A discussion about the abuse of people with disabilities is currently the subject of many inquiries and strategies, including the Commonwealth Senate, the Victorian Government and Ombudsman, and the National Disability Insurance Agency.

I believe that the self advocacy network could play a major role in helping people with intellectual disability have their say in these inquiries about their personal experience with abuse.

This is clearly a difficult and disturbing issue to discuss especially for those who have been abused. Yet it is something that must be addressed openly by the community.

At such tough times we often look to someone to show us the way. We are fortunate to have self advocacy leaders who are prepared to share with us their pain as victims of abuse, and teach us what needs to change so that they may be loved and accepted as part of the community.

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If you or your service is interested in Self Advocacy Training please contact Jon [jon@valid.org.au](mailto:jon@valid.org.au) to discuss the training that VALID can offer.

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# Heather Speaks Up

## Bullying

Friday, 20th March is the National Day of Action against Bullying. During March Jon and I ran presentations on relationships and bullying to the Melbourne Self Advocacy Network meetings. In April a speaker from the Ombudsman's Office will talk about abuse and neglect and what you can do about it.

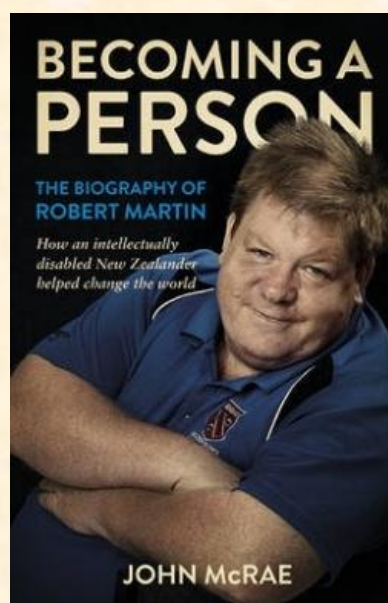
I also talked about bullying with Our Voice (national self advocacy group which is part of Inclusion Australia) and Inclusion Australia will be drafting a statement on bullying.

## My reflections on the 2015 Having a Say conference

Every year I get to experience something new and exciting at the Having a Say conference. This year I was very happy to meet with a group of self advocates from China who came to the conference to learn about disability and self advocacy in Australia. Over lunch on Tuesday we chatted about self advocacy in China and here in Australia.

We travelled to Geelong together in the bus where we attended a meeting about Peer Support run by John McKenna. The meeting talked about how to get the best out of the NDIS and the Chinese group introduced themselves and talked about their group in China.

Robert Martin surprised me on Thursday at the conference by presenting me with the gift of a signed copy of his book.



Purchase your own copy online at [www.craigpotton.co.nz/store/becoming-a-person](http://www.craigpotton.co.nz/store/becoming-a-person)

*I enjoyed this year's conference. I made a presentation talking about my life story and about what I want. It was great. I also talked about the VALID Self Advocacy Groups, I am a member of the Southern Network and the Self Advocacy Forum, and how we vote at the forum on who the self advocate representatives will be on the Committee of Management.*

*I liked listening to the Chinese talk and then afterwards talking to them about how they're trying to start up a self advocacy group*

*This year I had a carer who took me which made me have more independence and responsibility. I liked the theme of the dinner and disco. And on Friday, before the closing ceremony, the Inclusion Australia session talked about disabilities and what should happen. And lastly I was very pleased that my artwork made it to the display in the Costa Hall foyer.*

*Lisa McLeish*



# Heather Speaks Up

## Inaugural Geelong Disability Awards

On Tuesday, the 3rd February, at the Having a Say Welcome, Karingal hosted the inaugural disability awards. Two of the winners were self advocates that I know very well, Tom Banks, and Ingrid Hindell. I was very happy to see two self advocates and colleagues receive the respect and recognition that they deserve. Well done Ingrid, Tom and the other winners.

During the Tuesday Welcome the group of self advocates from China talked to people about self advocacy in China and learnt a lot about disability in Australia.



## Congratulations to all of the winners of the Geelong Awards for People with a Disability 2015.



Volunteering - Ingrid Hindell

Sport and Recreation - Phoebe Mitchell

Leadership and Advocacy - Thomas Banks

Achievement Award - Cassy Geffke

Outstanding Employee - Bronwyn McGuire



## Frankston Self Advocacy Group

Starting soon I will be facilitating a new self advocacy group in Frankston. The monthly meetings will be held at the Frankston Library Community Meeting Room with the first one probably commencing in May.

The meetings will include looking at the NDIS and Keys to Success Program Training. At the first meeting we will also have a chat about what else we might want to get out of the of group meetings over some morning tea.

I would like for self advocates in the area to come and share information and be involved. If you are interested please send me an email: [heather@valid.org.au](mailto:heather@valid.org.au) so that I can keep you informed:



## Alkira and their Wearable Arts

Here's an example of people working towards 'living the dream'..... I hope it inspires!

<http://www.pozible.com/project/188171>



# Expert can't prove she can communicate with disabled man who may be victim of sex assault, judge rules



By Bill Wichert : | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com, Feb 20, 2015

NEWARK - Accused of sexually assaulting a severely mentally disabled man, Rutgers-Newark professor Anna Stubblefield had sought to present an expert at her upcoming trial to show the alleged victim was able to give his consent.

But since that defense expert improperly assisted the man during an examination, a Superior Court judge said on Thursday that the evaluation cannot be presented to the jury.

Judge Siobhan Teare ruled the expert, Rosemary Crossley, will not be allowed to testify in regard to her assessment of the alleged victim, known as D.J.

The evaluation was meant to test D.J.'s ability to communicate. The judge found Crossley's methods were "unreliable," because she assisted D.J. in moving a communication device during the assessment.

But Stubblefield's attorney, James Patton, said he is still requesting that Crossley be permitted to testify at the trial about the methodology used by the state's experts in evaluating D.J., if those experts are allowed to testify.

Those experts have determined D.J. did not have the ability to consent to the sexual activity.

Crossley, who lives in Australia, has said she is an "AAC specialist," referring to augmentative and alternative communication.

In her evaluation, Crossley said she found D.J. "wanted to communicate and was able to communicate, given appropriate strategies."

Stubblefield, 45, of West Orange, has been charged with repeatedly sexually assaulting D.J. in her Newark office in 2011. She was indicted in January 2013 on two counts of aggravated sexual assault.

Rutgers placed Stubblefield on administrative leave without pay and stripped her of the title of chairwoman of the philosophy department after the sexual assault allegations surfaced.

Her trial is scheduled to begin in April.

Teare ruled last month that a document detailing the sexual relationship is admissible at the trial. Stubblefield's ex-husband had turned over that document to prosecutors.

At the center of the case is a controversial technique championed by Stubblefield, known as "facilitated communication."

Stubblefield has asserted that the technique allows the disabled to communicate with the assistance of a "facilitator," who helps guide the individual's hand as it moves over a keyboard or steadies the body so he or she can strike keys.

After meeting D.J. in 2008 through his brother, Stubblefield allegedly worked with him with the technique and brought him along to conferences, where she held him out as a success story, according to a lawsuit filed against her by D.J.'s family.

Stubblefield revealed to D.J.'s mother and brother in May 2011, during a meeting at their home, that she had sexual relations with D.J., the lawsuit states.

In August 2011, the family went to Rutgers police, who contacted Essex County prosecutors.

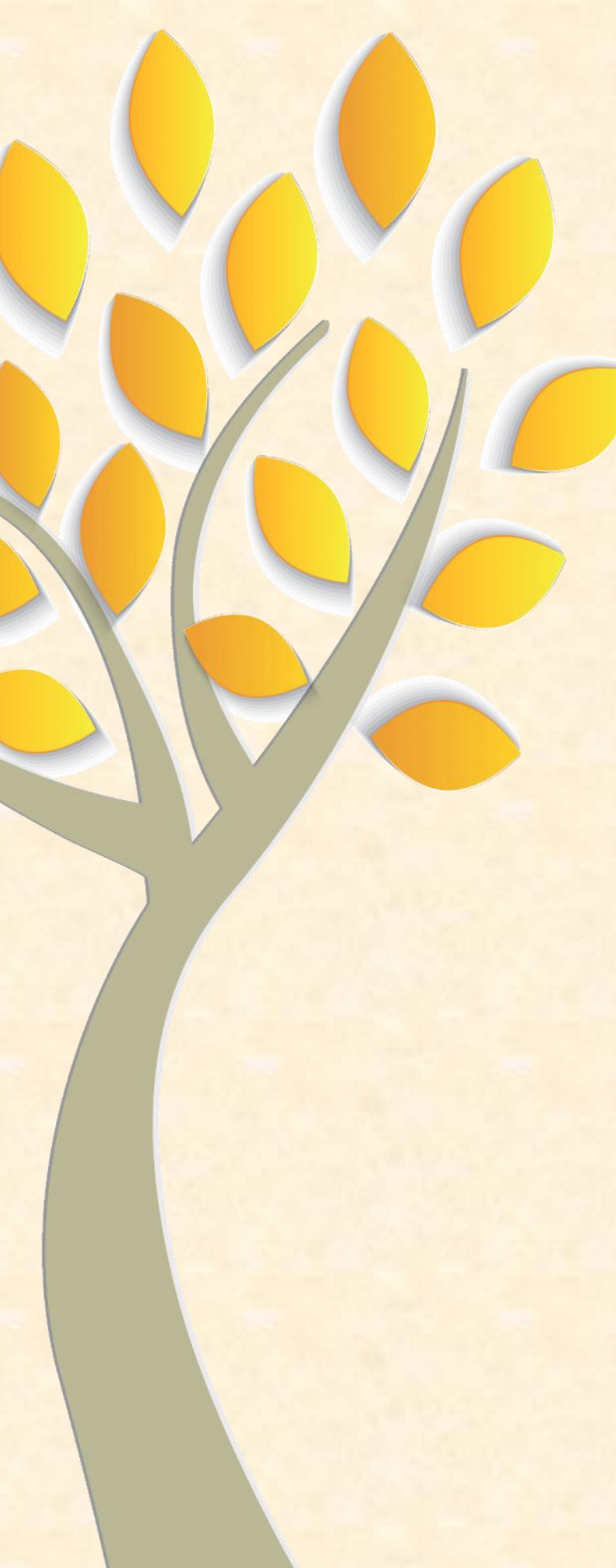
But Teare ruled last year that expert testimony about facilitated communication was inadmissible at the trial, because she determined it is an "unrecognized field of science," the judge said on Thursday.

Since the methods used by Crossley were similar to facilitated communication, her analysis is invalid, according to Teare.

After the hearing, however, Patton argued Crossley's assessment of D.J. did not involve facilitated communication.

"It was an assessment of his ability to communicate," Patton said outside the courtroom, adding that "the assessment was not based on facilitated communication. It did not comment on facilitated communication."





***VALID is committed to the vision of an Australian nation in which people with a disability are empowered to exercise their rights, as human beings and as citizens, in accordance with the Victorian Charter on Human Rights and Responsibilities, the Disability Act 2006 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.***

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