



A Good Home

The program on Four Corners which aired March 27th on ABC television is nothing new. It is nothing we have not all heard before. That's the real tragedy.

As an advocate having watched that program, I started my next morning with similar allegations of abuse within a funded group home, it was another bad day and I can only imagine how parents, living with this challenge, must have endless sleepless nights and difficult days.

If you Google people living in group homes you will find that each and every year the media has done an investigative story on the tragedies that have occurred in group homes and serviced homes, both private and government run.

Are the responses to growing tensions around group homes ever really dealt with? Are we truly innovative and challenged to provide a person centred group home model?

These are dilemmas parents and people with disability struggle with every hour of the day.

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Everyone deserves a home and a life where they feel safe, and in control of their own lives, and indeed many homes are extremely homely and welcoming. Unfortunately as an advocate I do not feel this is the reality for some residents in group homes.

There are also homes that can be disempowering, where 'home' is an uncomfortable place, with other people's rules and shifts of strangers (casual staff), where the residents feel they are not meant to talk about the things that upset them.

When a resident feels that nobody 'has their back', where they live in fear but feel powerless to create any changes what do they do? Who do they talk to?

As an advocate it is easy to fall into negativity and cynicism, especially when I become involved in cases with people grouped into bad home situations, usually for fiscal reasons. A person centred group home model is needed where people are given a voice, be encouraged to talk up and most importantly have people listen. If we do not have strong systemic change then I fear these stories of abuse and tragedy will continue.

At VALID we work from a foundation of Human Rights; Through building peoples capacities and Self Advocacy skills we can arm and empower individuals to Speak Up.

VALID has been working extensively on the 'Staying Safe' project to highlight what abuse and neglect looks like and reinforce the importance of Speaking Up, Reaching Out and Getting Help!

VALID
Advocacy Team

View the VALID Accommodation
Position Statement at www.valid.org.au



VALID MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 28th March 2017

A National Disgrace

VALID congratulates the producers of last night's 4 Corners on exposing a national disgrace – the prevalence of abuse and neglect in services for people with a disability, and the failure of governments to effectively address it.

We also congratulate the people with a disability and family members who had the courage to speak up about their horrific experiences.

Since 1989, VALID has been supporting people to speak up about abuse and neglect, yet the problems have continued. We believe they are a reflection of the many problems that have been allowed to develop in the service system, including poor staff recruitment and training practices, casualisation of the workforce, lack of professional expertise and, in some agencies, poor management and a 'cover-up' culture.

In 2012, VALID called for a Royal Commission into abuse and neglect, a call which has been continually rejected. While we have welcomed and contributed to the Senate and the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiries, we continue to despair at the lack of significant national action. If it has to take a Royal Commission to bring about change, then what are we waiting for?

The prevalence of abuse and neglect in disability services undermines the confidence of all families in the capacity of the service system to provide quality services that are safe and reliable. Nowhere is this problem more evident than in the care and support of people with autism and intellectual disability, who sometimes displays behaviours of concern. In our experience, the system's practice of housing clients with challenging behaviours together, and failing to provide proper person-centred planning and support, is one of the main factors contributing to abuse and neglect.

The failure of governments to fund individualised support for individuals who need their personal space and individualised care has created a wicked problem from which there is, for many vulnerable people, no escape.

Last night, Anne Malia and Maria Thomas told the stories of their sons' horrific experiences. Both Anne and Maria regularly attend VALID's Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group, where they, along with over a dozen other families, are battling to bring about change. Almost every member of the group has a similar story to tell about their experiences with a service system that has been correctly described as 'broken'.

They tell their stories reluctantly, but in hope they can help shape the future of the service system. They pray, as we all do, that the lessons they've learned will be heeded by those in the NDIA who are inheriting that broken system.

Kevin Stone
CEO VALID

FOUR CORNERS

Investigative journalism
at its best

Fighting the System

By Linton Besser, Klaus Toft, Jeanavive McGregor

Updated March 27, 2017 20:36:31



*See article from VALID's Behaviours of
Concern Peer Action Group on page 4*

VALID's Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group

It has been an emotion charged time for members of the VALID's Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group, following the screening of the Four Corners. The program highlighted the shocking stories of abuse and neglect of Matthew Thomas and Matthew Malia. Maria Thomas and Ann Malia, two of the mothers interviewed in the program, are members of our Peer Action Group who showed great courage in speaking out and telling their son's heartbreaking stories.

VALID knows these stories are just the tip of the iceberg in relation to abuse and neglect of people with a history of behaviours of concern and complex support needs. VALID's individual advocates are frequently involved in similar cases. Through VALID's Peer Action Group work we are very committed to offering support to the individuals and families affected. We are constantly advocating individually and systemically for change and a better life for our family member and others not presently served appropriately by the 'support system'.

We have no confidence at this point that the NDIS is going to fully address the issues of abuse and neglect - based on inadequate plan allocations and lack of service providers skilled in supporting someone with a trauma history, as well as the cognitive impairments found in this group of people.

We believe that the collective stories are where the power for change will come from and are committed to bringing these stories together to inform all the stake holders including both state and federal governments.

We also support the view that a Royal Commission would be the best way to gather stories of the lived experience of many more people, and their families, who face horrific levels of abuse and neglect in the 'support system'.

Based on VALID's Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group's lived experience nobody offering supports should be deluding themselves that the Victorian support system is currently functioning in the 'best interest' of the people in this cohort. At least a good place to start would be to offer housing and support models that do not force them to live together!!

The VALID Behaviours of Concern Action Group meets monthly and we can also organise for parents and family members to participate by phone if travel is an issue.

We will be starting a Facebook group to offer support and connection to all those who have a family member with this lived experience. Details of this will be posted on the VALID website when they are available.

Families have always been the drivers for change in the disability support system and we are excited by the power that is building already from our collective stories, please join us in our pursuit of a 'better life' for our family members.

Dariane McLean



VALID Behaviours of Concern Action Group

"Citizenship, Dignity and Inclusion for All"

This peer action group supports parents and adult carers of people aged 18 and over having intellectual disability and behaviours of concern. There may be a history of seclusion, physical and chemical restraint, injury and trauma. We seek to provide a safe and confidential opportunity to tell our stories, share accurate information and learn about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Our monthly meetings are on the 3rd Thursday of each month (except January)
6:30pm-8:30pm at VALID 235 Napier Street, Fitzroy Vic 3065

If you are interested in attending a meeting please RSVP to Brenda on 03 9416 4003 or email to office@valid.org.au (you can also join us via teleconferencing if preferred).



(ABC News: Guy Stayner)

Liam McGarrigle smiles and hugs his mum, as his father stands behind him, outside court.

The Federal Court has upheld an appeal against the funding arrangements for transport under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Liam McGarrigle, 21, challenged an earlier ruling that the NDIS pay only 75 per cent of his necessary transport costs.

Justice Debbie Mortimer ruled that the decision by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal erred in law and be set aside.

She has ordered the tribunal to reconsider the matter.

Mr McGarrigle, who has autism, lives at Moriac, 25 kilometres from Geelong.

He spends nearly \$16,000 per year on taxis transporting him to and from his work and NDIS-supported activities.

Victorian Legal Aid's Joel Townsend said the McGarrigle family were pleased with the decision.

"The support Liam's receiving is not for transport in general, it's for transport for him to attend his supported employment and to attend at his social skills classes, and those are really enormously important parts of Liam's life," he said.

"For other people under the scheme it will mean that whatever their particular supports are that they need they will get those if they are reasonable and necessary."

The court decision could benefit hundreds and possibly thousands of NDIS participants who live in remote localities.



Photo: Liam McGarrigle (front) spends nearly \$16,000 per year on taxis to transport him to and from work.

A decision to fund 100 per cent of transport costs could have significant implications for the ongoing viability of the \$22 billion NDIS. Transport allows Liam to be 'independent young man'

Michelle McGarrigle, Liam's mother, said support from the NDIS had helped her son, but the decision would "iron out some wrinkles."

"We don't have high expectations — the scheme is not meant to give us a limousine service — we just wanted the basics for Liam to be able to be an independent young man in his own right," she said.

"Not have to rely on his mum and dad to have to drive him to work for the rest of his life, because what 21-year-old wants that?"

She said Liam got a sense of purpose from his work.

"He waits outside every morning for that taxi to go to work, like his dad does, and we've seen him grow into a beautiful young man because of the independence."

Justice Mortimer also ordered the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to pay the costs of the McGarrigle family.

Simone Stevens Reporting



On Friday 24th of February 2017, I attended the SexED Up Expo which was held at the Darebin Arts Center in Preston.



The "SexED UP Expo" was aimed at adults living with a disability, their partners, family, current and future Health, Community and Disability sector workers and those with an interest in this area.

There were workshops, information and training sessions which addressed sexuality and intimacy of people living with a disability.

It was a very long day, starting at 9am and finishing at 6pm, with a lot of interesting speakers including academics, sex workers and advocates. They talked about the importance of people with a disability being able to express their sexuality. This is a topic that is not often addressed which can lead to people feeling vulnerable and uninformed. VALID also presented during the day with Kevin Stone talking about 'Staying Safe' from abuse as part of a panel, which was very interesting and educational.

As well listening to the guest speakers I also liked visiting the stalls. People who didn't feel like participating in a session could visit the different tables and speak to organisations about their information. There was also a room where people could see and feel products relating to sex.

During the breaks there were short DVD's about sexuality and how people need to speak up about issues such as their sexual identity and how other people need to be more understanding of other people and how different their lives are.

What was great about this conference is how it has started a conversation around disability and sexuality and I hope it continues.

Future Metro Trains



On Thursday 16th March I had the pleasure of attending a commuter advisory panel to design the future Metro trains here in Melbourne.

First of all the panel looked at current issues with using Metro either physical accessibility or audio, visual or easy to read content for people with an Intellectual disability.

We were then shown an eight minute video which showed the design of the new train as well as the concept of where the structural design will come into it.

Construction will start in 2018 in Newport but before then Metro will run a few more focus groups, and the advisory panel will have the opportunity to provide feedback leading up to the start of construction. People will be able to see a mock up carriage and will be involved throughout the whole process.

So far this has been extremely insightful and it's exciting to be part of the process. I cannot wait for each mock up design to see what people have contributed as this process is a huge one.



‘Lead Your Life’

February 8th - 10th, 2017 was the 18th annual Having a Conference, and the 12th time HaS was held in Geelong.

The theme was “Lead Your Life” and we asked people to think about what they want in their lives and what goals do they want to achieve.

Featuring the usual favourites there were also some exciting new highlights, for example the launch of the Inaugural Dulcie Stone Writer’s competition.

The Writers Competition will be an annual event designed to showcase the voices of people with intellectual disability while also recognizing the lifetime of contribution by Dulcie Stone as an author and to services for people with intellectual disability.

The conference was enjoyed by 1094 people who attended over the 3 days. Delegates were predominantly people with disability but also included support staff, parents/family, volunteers and interested people.

There were 44 workshops and presentations which included 3 keynote presentations and 10 performances.

A change this year was that the Our Choice Expo will no longer be held on Friday at the conference, although the HaS Expo will continue in the foyer for people to visit for information about the services available to them.

Our Choice Expo’s will continue to be held in other regions and venues across Victoria as the NDIS rolls out.

Thank you to our Sponsors and Volunteers

The Having a Say conference thanks its major sponsors and volunteers without whom the conference would not be the major success that it is each year.

Thank you especially to our major sponsors The Disability Services Commissioner, DSS and DHHS

‘I congratulate you all for an absolutely wonderful event last week. It was great to be part of such an empowering and lively experience, and to share in many great experiences with a range of people.’

Shol, Seeva

If you have a comment or feedback about the conference you would like to share with us please download the Having a Say evaluation form is available for download from the website at www.valid.org.au



Reflections on the 2017 Having A Say Conference

In the lead up to the 2017 Having a Say Conference, a number of friends and colleagues mentioned to me that the 'conference is something special' and 'is an event that you won't experience anywhere else'. I was therefore excited to be able to attend and be part of the 2017 Having A Say Conference in Geelong. I can now also tell others about the immense fun, energy, and sense of community that the conference delivers.

Reflecting on the 2017 event, there are a number of conversations, presentations and performances that stood out. Unfortunately, I cannot write about them all, so below I will capture a few of the moments that emphasise the spirit and energy of the event.

The first moment occurred as my team and I were setting up our marquee in the courtyard at 7 am on the morning of the conference. We were busily setting up our fruit stall when all of a sudden Simone Stevens comes racing down the ramp wanting to arrange a time to do a Facebook Live interview for later in the day.

This was a constant during the entire conference. Wherever I went, I saw Simone tirelessly working – taking videos, posting, or snapping photos with people. While it may only appear small, this moment stood out to me as it emphasised that the Having A Say Conference (and VALID, more generally) was for and by people with a disability.

Another moment that stood out to me was a presentation involving three people who were talking about their personal journey. This included talking about their interests, their challenges and their passions.

Each story was different. For example, one of the presenters mentioned that he had his first brain surgery when he was four, another spoke about representing Victoria in bowling, while another spoke about travelling around the world.

The honesty of the presenters was powerful and inspiring, and led many people in the audience to join the conversation to talk about their own journeys, life goals and challenges.

Being part of such an honest and inspiring conversation was a privilege, and gave me a brief insight into the power of commitment and peer support.

There were certainly many other moments that I could write about, including the Red Faces and the high energy disco on the final evening of the conference. These and many other moments are great reminders of how the Having A Say Conference brings together people with a disability, service providers and other members of the community to celebrate, empower, teach and inspire others.

I look forward to returning next year to Geelong for the 2018 conference!

Shol created Seeva after experiencing first-hand the challenges associated with the NDIS, including the difficulty for service providers to engage effectively with people with a disability in consumer-oriented marketplace.

Seeva is a way for people with a disability and their carers to search, compare and book NDIS services – on the phone or online.

VALID's Self Advocacy forum has consulted with Seeva to provide feedback and comments on Seeva's online and phone based platform.

Shol Blustein is the founder and CEO of Seeva.





Red Faces

The Red Faces auditions were held at the Sphinx restaurant. There were a lot of talented performances this year which made the audience laugh, dance and sing along. Thank you to our guest judges Half Cat, Maree and Sadat.



Congratulations to the Red Faces finalists who faced off on the Friday for a thrilling talent showdown. First prize went to an amazing performance by Chloe Hayden.

Second prize was awarded to Andrew Prior and Justin Hallinan for their absolutely fabulous Pricilla, Queen of the Desert performance. Third prize went to Harley Muscat for his enthusiastic performance of The Time Warp.

Congratulations to all the performers at the Red Faces auditions on Wednesday who entertained a packed house of people enjoying an evening of fun with dancing and good cheer.



Hi I'm Aaron Inglis. I have been attending the Having a Say Conference Since 2006, which just celebrated its 12th time in Geelong.

I heard About the Conference through Our Voice, which is a disability organisation in South Australia, as well as some friends of mine on Facebook.

I loved all aspects of the conference when I first went and decided to keep going.

It provided a platform for people with a disability to speak up and be listened to. I found that the disability services in Victoria were way better than those that were in South Australia so in 2013 I moved from Adelaide to Geelong. Through the Conference I made loads of friends and some of those have supported me through some difficult times and helped me achieve loads of things like how to be a leader and advocate for myself first then assist others to do the same.

I love getting involved with Red Faces because I get a real hype to see everyone enjoying and showcasing what I can do, which for me has been a confidence booster over the past few years since becoming involved. I also love hearing and watching others play and perform.

Having a Say Awards



Robert Martin Award

Robert chose the members from Stockton Institution for 'shining the lights of rights and justice for people with disabilities' to receive the 2017 Robert Martin award.

(Congratulations also to Robert for being elected to the UN CRPD Committee in 2016, becoming the first person in the world with a learning disability to be on a United Nations committee).



Pentland and Banfield Award

Norrie Blythman from Reinforce presented the Pentland Banfield award to Stephanie Challis as a self advocate who spoke up about being part of the community.



Family Empowerment Award

The Family Empowerment Award was presented to Elly Stewart (pictured right with daughter Meg) for helping empower her daughter to have a good life, with community inclusion, and to be heard.



Art Competition

Thank you to the Office of Professional Practice for again sponsoring the Having a Say Art competition. The four winning artworks were selected by Frank Lambrik, Senior Practitioner, and were awarded a certificate and a cheque prize at the closing ceremony on Friday. The winning artworks are kept at the Office of Professional Practice where they are proudly displayed on the walls and are also used to illustrate OPP books and documents.



Congratulations to winners

Watch what you eat

By Steve Canning



Jellyfish Gathering

by Brady Freeman

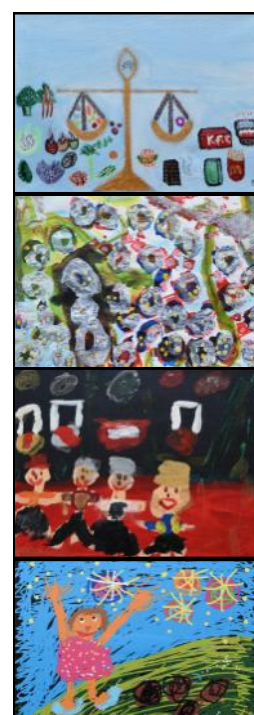


Smile on the dial

By Tom Leembruggen

Reach for the stars

by Sarah Guilfoil



Come and Try Activities

Having a Say is a conference, not a camp, but participating in some fun activities provides an opportunity for people to try something new while taking a break from workshops and sessions. A variety of activities such as Speed Friendship let people make new friends, and build their self confidence, talking to others from across Australia in a relaxed and fun environment. Thank you to the facilitators of our Come and Try activities.



Karaoke



Bike riding



The One that Didn't Get Away
Fishing at The Pier



Bringing out competitive spirit
Wheelchair Balloon Football



Scrapbooking



Harley Rides with Gringo
A perennial favorite

Dinner and Disco



The disco was a success as always with everyone dressing up for the theme as hippies.

The new band this year was called 'Un-Limited' who were a big hit with the crowd.

'I would really like to have the band back who played at the disco, they were awesome', Cathy

The dinner speaker was Michelle Dodd, CEO of NSW Council for Intellectual Disability. Michelle spoke about the lessons and issues from the NDIS roll out in NSW.

Fabulous dinner speaker, witty, clever. Very well done, informative, exciting and entertaining. Thank you



Accommodation Forum

Presentation by Minister Foley and Panel Discussion held Friday, 10th



Thank you for the invitation to have me back at this year's Having a Say Conference and this forum on future housing and accommodation options.

Housing Reform for people with a disability has enormous changes under way and we need to set it in the context of the big cultural and service delivery reforms we are seeing with the NDIS.

Minister Martin Foley



On Friday the Employment Forum featured a speech by Minister Martin Foley which was followed by a panel discussion.

You can view the Minister speech and forum speakers on the VALID youtube channel at www.valid.org.au

Thank you to the Disability Services Commissioner for their sponsorship of the conference. The DSC sponsorship helps subsidize the dinner disco and concession registrations.



2017 Dulcie Stone Writers Competition

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

The theme for 2017 Competition is: Lead Your Life!
How do you feel? What do you think? What do you want?



The inaugural Dulcie Stone Writers Competition will be an annual writing 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.

Works can be of any length up to a maximum of 1,000 words or up to 3 x A4 pages of drawings.

You can download the competition application from the VALID website www.valid.org.au (events). The deadline for submissions is 5pm, Thursday 27th April, 2017.

Thank you to our volunteers

The Having a Say conference is supported by a contingent of people who volunteer their time and skills to make Having a Say an exciting experience for everyone who attends. Without that support the conference would not be the great success every year that people look forward to.

Thank you all!



Did you notice some people wearing orange shirts? These were our catering staff, working behind the scenes, organising morning and afternoon tea and making sure workers were looked after.



A total of 102 volunteers helped with a variety of tasks in 2017.

Students from Point Lonsdale consider it an honour to be volunteers at Having a Say. We applaud and respect their wonderful community spirit.



In 2006 I gave a presentation for the Having a Say conference for a group that I was involved with. I remember being impressed with the size of the conference, but afterwards went back to doing what I was doing without giving it a thought until 2010 when I was a member of the Disability Advisory Committee. Kylie Fisher was the Chairperson back then and she had some flyers asking for Volunteers - I thought why not.

So in 2011 I started volunteering at the Having a Say Conference and I have never looked back.

There is such a buzz and over the 3 days there is so much to do. I get to catch up with old friends and make plenty of new ones. You can either give a presentation or do one of the many activities they have. At lunch time you can have a Harley Ride, relax in the courtyard or visit the beautiful waterfront to have lunch.

There are many highlights throughout the conference, starting with the opening night. This is now the Geelong Disability Awards. Red Faces is a lot of fun and the dinner/disco gives everyone the chance to dress up and let loose.

It's all about empowering delegates and letting everyone have their voice. They are in a safe place and feel comfortable speaking up.

I just love attending and wouldn't miss it for the world. Now I am a member of the Local Reference Group so I can be more involved in the Having a Say conference.

Lynne Foreman





Stories of Success....

Welcome to 'Life is a Journey'. It will be a new feature in the VALID newsletter. 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.



Man with Down syndrome owns, operates 'world's friendliest restaurants' that doles out kindness...

The self-proclaimed "world's friendliest restaurant" is in Albuquerque, USA, and serves 'breakfast, lunch and hugs' every day of the week. **Tim's Place** is owned and operated by Tim Harris, a 31 year old man with Down syndrome. Tim's parents said; "When you have a kid with substantial disabilities you have to think a lot about their future. We were very motivated for Tim to have as normal a life as possible. Our philosophy as a family was to push the envelope as much as we could toward independence, so that one day when we are no longer in the picture, Tim will be settled and have his own life."



You can read more about Tim and his success at www.timsplace.com



Bits'n'pieces...

- [Adult sibling peer support groups](#)
Melbourne on the 8th April <http://siblingsaustralia.org.au/events.php>
- [World Autism Awareness Day](#)
2 April; world wide <http://www.un.org/en/events/autismday/>
- [65 Roses](#)
1-31 May; National fundraising campaign, 65 Roses raises awareness and essential funds to extend and improve the quality of life for people with cystic fibrosis. <http://www.65roses.org.au>



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

A Mum's thoughts....

I have a daughter who after many challenges has lived an ordinary life. She has been married, lives independently and experiences life with Down syndrome. I have many stories that I can recall about her journey that make me giggle now but the journey wasn't always so smooth. For many highs, there were as many lows. I don't focus too much on those times now, but only to reflect where we have ended up and the successes we have achieved together.

My daughter was born in 1982, at a time when early intervention was still a 'radical' thing to do, but do it we did. She had Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy & Physiotherapy twice a week from 4 months to 4 years old. This helped incredibly with her milestones, but just as importantly gave me opportunity to chat with other mum's that had children with different disabilities. It gave me some validation as a caring mother, as I started to think I was 'losing it' often.



*"Life is either a daring
adventure or nothing"
- Helen Keller*

When my daughter was about 2, she developed a cough, which sounded very nasty. After a trip to our local doctor we were whisked off to the hospital with a suspected case of Whooping Cough! It was soon discovered that she did not have Whooping Cough at all but a two cent piece lodged in her throat! Blimey, it's a wonder it didn't choke her!! I didn't realize until then that she was even putting things into her mouth. It was during that visit to the hospital it was discovered that she also had congenital heart disease - Tetralogy of Fallots. This ended up requiring 2 open heart surgeries, and many, many tests over the years. My beautiful baby was now fragile - or so I thought. After her first op and when she got out of intensive care into the ward, she smiled and wanted to get off the floor to crawl around (with a cut from the base of her throat to her belly button) she did on hands and feet. She taught me then that no matter what life throws at you, it's the attitude that nothing will stop you doing what you want to do, which is what allows you to do it.

Having her attitude of 'I can do it...', made it easier for me to, over the years, let her do all the things that other people her age did. What I had to do was figure out the 'how' bit i.e. what support was needed; what did she need to learn herself; how can I be strong enough to encourage her dreams to happen.

As a result of her will, she has lived independently for many years, had a go at being married for 5 years, and with the right support, lives a good ordinary life.

The next chapter in our lives, or mine in particular, is to figure out what needs to be done to make it ok for her when I am not around to support her. I believe that having people in her life is what will keep her safe and enable her to continue striving toward her dreams.

Annette Axen

Inclusive Community Development Network Meetings in 2017

The Inclusive Community Development Network is a bi-monthly forum which brings together people with an interest in a diversity of views and approaches to community development practice, who are committed to creating a more inclusive society in a spirit of respectful dialogue

For those who have been coming along to network meetings in 2016 you will notice a few changes to our 2017 program. Rather than holding the meetings at VALID, we will be co-hosting the meetings with key organisations who are engaged in community development practice.

We will be holding the meetings at the 'home offices' of these organisations. The meetings will include presentations from speakers who will address topical issues. We have also changed the times of the meetings which will vary across the 5 sessions to cater for the different needs of people interested in attending.

Finally, we have included 1 regional meeting this year which will be held in Ballarat in September.

The dates for the 2017 network meetings are:

- Wednesday 10th May
2.00pm – 4.30pm - Arts Access Victoria, 222 Bank Street, South Melbourne
- Wednesday 12 July
(Venue, times and meeting agenda to be confirmed)
- Wednesday 13 September
11.am - 2.00pm
Ballarat - Venue to be confirmed
- Wednesday 15 November
(Venue, times and meeting agenda to be confirmed)



Photo 'Women with Disabilities Unite'
Speak Up Alexandra
Start Community Art
Projection

Our first meeting for the year was held on the 15th of March with the **Self Advocacy Resource Unit (SARU)** and stART **Community Art** who are closely associated with SARU.

Jacqui Ward from SARU talked about a range of projects SARU is working on to position self advocacy more strategically across both State government programs and the NDIS.

This work includes support for the development of new self advocacy groups across Victoria; the Voice at the Table toolkit and a range of other resources promoting self advocacy and leadership, strategies for lobbying and campaigning; and other work associated with the development of a national model and approach to resourcing, supporting and strengthening group self advocacy in Australia.

As one of the original convenors for stART Community Art, a collective of artists who have been involved in a range of community cultural development initiatives, Jacqui also told us about some exciting projects across a range of different contexts.

This work includes **Warrior Women** focussing on the stories of women who have experienced breast cancer; **Hidden Lives** which captured the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities who had lived in Victoria's state institutions; and recent work with Speak Up Alexandra who have done some fabulous work with projection art to help celebrate the 150th anniversary of the town.

Our next meeting in May is with Arts Access Victoria (AAV) who have embarked on an exciting range of community development and advocacy work which challenges the way

communities and government responds to the artistic aspirations of people with disabilities.

This includes capacity building work with the arts industry, activism and campaign development, community cultural development initiatives, and resource development which empowers people to advocate more effectively for inclusion of the arts in their NDIS planning discussions. AAV will share a range of insights with us into some of this work – it promises to be a very exciting network meeting which will provoke plenty of ideas for discussion.

If you would like to come along to the Network meetings please RSVP to Paul Dunn paul@valid.org.au

VALID Geelong Community Development Forum Three Years In: Community, Inclusion and The NDIS

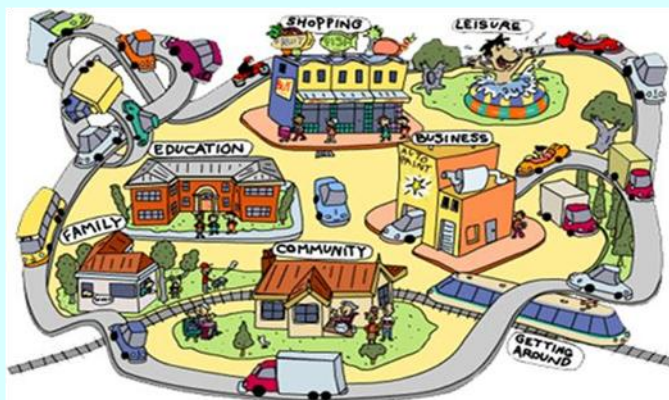
26th May 9.30am – 4.00pm

Deakin Cats Community Centre, Kardinia Park, Geelong

Three years into the roll out of the NDIS though, how well are we working with communities to inspire a stronger commitment to the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life.

The Three Years In forum will reflect on some of the key achievements and challenges associated with engaging communities since commencement of the NDIS in Barwon. It will include presentations from local people and organisations who have experienced the impact of the NDIS and also provide opportunities for workshop discussions.

For info about speakers and to book a place in the forum please go to the VALID website www.valid.org.au.



These awards celebrate the amazing contribution people with a disability make to our city. Submit nominations to recognise some incredible achievements and help promote a fully inclusive community.

Geelong Disability Awards 2017

The Geelong Community celebrates the amazing contributions of people with a disability to the City of Geelong



Michael Chan Arts

Celebrating Michael's achievements in the Arts

Nicci Wall Leadership and Advocacy

Recognises Nicci's advocating for others to achieve a considerable outcome or advancement.

Chloe Hayden Young Achiever

Recognizing Chloe's achievements and supporting the achievements of others.

Annaliese Bishop Sports and Recreation

Recognises Annaliese's achievements in sport and recreation.

Ryan Schmidtke Achievement

Recognises Ryan as someone who has achieved a significant milestone in any area.

Simone Stevens Employment/Volunteering

Recognising Simone's substantial contribution to empowering and developing others in the workplace or community.

VALID's self advocate, Heather, interviewed Simone Stevens about her big day

What is the aim of the event?

To show that people with a disability are doing great things in the community.

Who nominated you?

My service provider nominated me for the volunteer work I do. I give presentations on the NDIS and how it has helped me.

What category were you nominated for?

Employment and Voluntary work.

How did it make you feel?

I was shocked. No words could ever describe it. I was proud of myself. Part of this award was also for the people who have supported me.

How was the night?

It was awesome. All of the nominees were so deserving. No one felt excluded

Who was the guest speaker?

Kelly Cartwright , Australian paralympian won two medals at the London 2012 Paralympics, and represented Australia in the Beijing 2008 Paralympics

How was Kelly's presentation?

She was very open and inspiring. She used appropriate humour and made the audience relax

One sentence to motivate others to volunteer: live your dreams.



*Kelly Cartwright,
The inspiring
Guest speaker at
the awards Night*

'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

10.30am - 4pm, Wednesday 7th June, 2017

**State Basketball Centre
291 Georges St, Wantirna South**

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 Eastern Metro residents looking to be informed and prepared for the transition to the NDIS, starting from 1st November 2017.

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

Exhibitor enquiries email: christine@valid.org.au

Exhibitor registration email: brenda@valid.org.au

This event is supported by the City of Knox Metro Access program.

Have you looked at the VALID website recently?

VALID has a new Webpage so check it out at www.valid.org.au

We welcome your feedback.

VALID

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc



235 Napier Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065



PHONE 03 9416 4003

FAX 03 9416 0850

Free Call 1800 5655 570

(rural people with disabilities & families)



www.valid.org.au



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(Training/workshops)

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