



COMMONWEALTH TAKES NDIS BACK TO THE 'BAD OLD DAYS'

Minister Porter's unilateral action in appointing new Board members to the NDIS has cast a shadow over the successful implementation of the NDIS.

"Inclusion Australia's strong support for the NDIS was largely based on the belief that the new scheme would end decades of 'bickering' between the States and Commonwealth over meeting the daily support needs of people with disability; co-operation not competition.

Minister Porter's authoritarian approach will destroy the co-operation that has been built up to date and replace it with a new Centrelink, currently in the spotlight for its adverse treatment of people with severe disabilities", says Mr Kevin Stone, President. Inclusion Australia.

Continued page 3

NDIS boss Bruce Bonyhady first to go in agency clean-out

Rick Morton, *The Australian*, 19 October



The purge of management at the \$22 billion National Disability Insurance Scheme has begun following years of blunders and scandals, with federal minister Christian Porter finalising a list of corporate heavyweights to be brought in to replace the board.

Leaked documents show the list of new appointees — who can be approved by Mr Porter after consultation — will mean the end of the troubled chairmanship of NDIS "grandfather" Bruce Bonyhady at the start of the new year. He will be replaced by Helen - Nugent, the chairwoman of credit reference outfit Veda Group.

Though Mr Porter must consult the states on the final make-up of the board, he is not required to listen to them and, in a letter to the states, he declared the list of board appointees, including Optus chairman Paul O'Sullivan, was a fait accompli.

Continued page 3

Membership Renewal

If there is a red dot showing on the front cover of the newsletter it means you are not currently listed as a financial member of VALID.



If you are not currently a financial member please consider renewing or joining up. Not only will you receive membership benefits such as 10% discount on a number of VALID Products (including the HaS conference), you will also become linked into the state wide and national disability communities while supporting VALID in its work within Victoria.

VALID8 Premium Associate Membership for organisations

VALID has a new Premium Associate Membership, which will bring together VALID with our allies into a collaborative, community of practice and one that we have named the **“VALID 8 Community of Practice for Service User Empowerment.”**

For more information go to page 8

In this Issue

NDIS Board Take Over	2 - 3
NDIS NEMA Roll Out	4
VALID Spirituality Statement	7
AGM Report	9 - 21
Heather Speaks Out	22 - 23
Centrelink Reviews	24 - 25
Having a Say Conference	26
Our Choice Expo Ballarat	27

AFDO Media Release: 19 October 2016

“NDIS Board Recruiter must be replaced after failing to offer up a single candidate with either a disclosed disability or lived experience of disability.” said Trevor Carroll, President of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) and spokesperson for Disability Australia.

This is in response to today’s article in The Australian by Rick Morton that indicated not one of the potential candidates for NDIS Board positions has either a disclosed disability or lived experience of disability.

“Disability Australia members are dismayed at the fact that not one of the candidates put forward has been identified as a person with disability or having lived experience of disability’ said AFDO President Trevor Carroll representing 200,000 people with disability.”

AFDO first raised these concerns in its Media Release on 4th September 2015, when the Department of Social Services (DSS) advertised for Board positions without including selection criteria that placed any value on a potential Board member being a person with a disability.

We acknowledge the need for a Board which represents a range of different disability perspectives in the disability space, most importantly people with disability.

“The NDIS is at its heart a scheme about people with disability. It beggars belief that experience of disability is not valued when recruiting for Board positions.” Imagine the community uproar if the government decided to appoint only men to an agency focusing on the wellbeing and rights of women: this is how people with a disability will feel about these mooted changes.

It is the Minister’s responsibility to talk to people with disability organisations about suitably qualified applicants.

“If you want the NDIS to be a success a Board member must understand and have first hand knowledge and experience of the constituents he/she intends to serve.”

Please direct all media enquiries to Mr Trevor Carroll on 0418 513 304.

COMMONWEALTH TAKES NDIS BACK TO THE 'BAD OLD DAYS'

The States and Territories must be equal partners in NDIS. This is the only way in which people with disability and their families will have a direct say in how the Scheme works, or not, for them as this is where trusted relationships currently exist.

Inclusion Australia calls on the Commonwealth Government to genuinely consult with the States and Territories. As a matter of urgency the Commonwealth must re-establish the cooperative spirit of the NDIS and build the trust of people with disability and their families. Without this the NDIS will just become another Commonwealth department with all the inherent faults of a political and centralized bureaucracy.

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Mark Pattison.

Email : media@inclusionaustralia.org.au

NDIS boss Bruce Bonyhady first to go in agency clean-out **Rick Morton, *The Australian*, 19 October**

From Page 1

"To that end, should we not be able to reach agreement on any of these appointments, I intend to exercise my powers to appoint the nominees in the above final list after 90 days from the date of this letter (September 30) to ensure there is a fully functioning, high-quality board in place from 1 January 2017," he wrote.

Four state and territory ministers supported the nomination of Dr Nugent, Mr O'Sullivan and Westpac Western Australia chairman John Langoulant, but the process has sparked the ire of Victorian Disability Minister Martin Foley and threatens to reignite a debate about the federal government's quest for control of the scheme.

"I note, more broadly, that this approach you have taken to these board appointments, and the changes you have proposed to governance arrangements under the act, suggest that the commonwealth is seeking to centralise control over key decisions affecting the scheme," Mr Foley wrote in response to the minister.

"Your recent decision to make changes to the organisational structure and executive of the (NDIS agency) without consulting states and territories is further evidence of a mounting trend of centralisation, potentially at the expense of service delivery and accountability to all stakeholders and jurisdictions."

Mr Porter began consultation with the states about a new board last November, and after eight other instances of changes, discussions and tweaks presented the final list of board members last month.

"While I have noted Victoria's views about the consultation process for board appointments, given that on two separate and critical points when Victoria was asked to provide nominations and positions, they failed to respond," Mr Porter told *The Australian*.

Other board members include former top public servant Robyn Kruk, who oversaw the department in charge of Labor's fatal home insulation scheme.

The NDIS was set up as a shared project in which state and federal governments make key decisions about its future while the federal government bears more of the financial risk when things go wrong.

The Coalition has already had to revisit agreements with South Australia and the ACT because both jurisdictions, together with the former Labor government, underestimated the number of participants in the trial and full scheme.

Rick Morton, *The Australian*, 19 October

First Rollout of National Disability Insurance Scheme fails disabled
Excerpt from Press Release by
Peter Rankin 17/10/16

Parents and guardians of SSA residents who held such high hopes for the NDIS feel their relatives have been betrayed. At a SSA house in Epping, relatives of residents have expressed disbelief at the NDIS plans the residents have been presented with. "We didn't for one moment believe that Services and funding would be reduced" said one parent. "We can't work out what the plans mean, there is no way of working out what supports are going to be funded." said another guardian.

One resident at the SSA house in Epping, who is blind, autistic and epileptic, has had his day program stopped with just two days' notice because NDIS won't fund to the same level as the Victorian DHS. The day program provider cannot pay their workers. The resident's program has been operating for the last 5 years and allows the resident to access community facilities. NDIS were warned of the possible effect the cessation of services would have on the resident's emotional health, but have refused to match the funding previously provided by the Victorian government....

Peter Rankin the father of one of the residents said "he and his wife had attended NDIS briefing sessions and had completed the NDIS workbook in preparation for development of his son's plan. "We must have been operating in a parallel universe" he said, "what actually happened was nothing like what they said would happen. There was none of the promised consultation and we didn't even get to give them the workbook we had spent so much time writing ".

Mr. Rankin said that the plan for his son was indecipherable. You just can't figure out what supports the plan is supposed to be providing. "It may as well have been written in double Dutch"

The NDIS Roll-Out
Reality vs Rhetoric

VALID has been receiving many complaints similar to those expressed by Peter Rankin, opposite. Many of these problems appear to be mostly the result of the pressure on NDIA to meet targets without adequate staffing to ensure time for proper planning. Some are related to the faulty design of the NDIA planning process.

This is a new process for everyone and it will take some getting used to. The NDIA inform us that they are trying to get people into the NDIS who have been without supports for a long time and need to transition about 10,000 people into the NDIS in NEMA in 12 months.

VALID is working hard to alert NDIA at every level and to fix and address problems as they occur. We have developed a working protocol with the NDIA to resolve issues as they arise before the need for formal review. So far, we feel we are being heard.

VALID advises people who have queries about their plan to initially work with their Support Co-ordinator or their LAC to implement their plan. It may be the plan has the right amount of funding but requires some interpretation and assistance to find providers, set up agreements in the portal and to test the plan's effectiveness.

If people do this and it is clear that the plan is still inadequate the plan can be amended. To request an amendment, email: vicnorth@ndis.gov.au

A review of a plan can be requested if there is a major change in the participant or their circumstances and the plan is no longer able to meet their needs.

If you wish to provide feedback about the planning process, you can email: feedback@ndis.gov.au

Contact VALID or your preferred advocacy agency if you are not getting heard.

A delegation from VALID met with Minister Foley on 22/9/2016 to discuss:

The Need for an Alternative Model of Service for Individuals with Behaviours of Concern

CONTEXT

VALID represents many parents who have an adult son or daughter with autism, intellectual disability, mental illness and severe behaviours of concern who have experienced consistent and sometimes catastrophic failure in service provision over many years. VALID is very concerned about the capacity of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) to provide adequate support to these individuals and their families.

Families supporting an individual with behaviours of concern have been anticipating the arrival of the NDIS, hoping to finally have access to the range of specialist supports and expertise they need. However, for those individuals with complex needs now entering the scheme, early indications are that they and their families will again face extreme frustration and despair. Typically, such individuals and families are currently being supported by DHHS through a range of inadequate and ad hoc arrangements, including:

Family Governed Services - Set Up to Fail
Funding has sometimes been provided to families via substantial Individual Support Packages (ISP) that have been regularly supplemented with non-recurrent funds. In the absence of willing and capable disability service providers, these families often feel they have been forced to create stand-alone arrangements for their son or daughter including creating business entities, managing multi-disciplinary teams and staffing, and taking on unmanageable compliance and insurance risks. Without adequate information, support or guidance, such arrangements are often sadly doomed to fail.

Forced Relinquishment

Families are frequently pushed beyond the limits of their capacity to cope.

They are often traumatised by the behaviours of their son or daughter, including injurious and self-injurious behaviours. They are constantly let down by services and professionals in the disability, mental health and health sectors. They frequently feel they have no option other than to relinquish.

Toxic Service Culture

Individuals with severe behaviours of concern are frequently placed together in group home settings, often exacerbating their behaviours and leading to heightened levels of injurious and self-injurious behaviours. The staffing of such homes often becomes a major challenge, leading to high levels of staff burn-out and turn-over, and contributing to what is best described as a toxic service culture.

Family Trauma

Many families are also choosing to keep their adult son or daughter with severe behaviours of concern at home, often because they are terrified by the horror stories that often characterise the response of services. As a result, their sons and daughters are often denied access to appropriate care and parents are forced to manage their behaviours without professional support.

ISSUES

Lack of Planner Expertise

VALID is concerned that many NDIS planners do not have the necessary specialist expertise and experience to provide these families with the support necessary to develop highly complex plans that include all the funded items that people with complex behaviours of concern require.



Need for Specialist Supports

These individuals and their families need access to a range of specialist supports, including:

- The involvement and oversight of highly specialised multi-disciplinary therapy teams over the long-term with expertise in Autism and mental illness, trauma-informed positive behaviour support, specialist therapies and methods for creating highly individualised lifestyles in the community.
- Ongoing intensive practice coaching for direct support staff and family members working with people who may have violent and self-harming behaviours
- A comprehensive plan for providing individualised emergency supports if necessary.
- Ongoing coordination roles in a team structure to manage expert staff teams.
- Highly specialised and regular training for families and support staff
- Targeted facilitation of informal supports that can provide governance over time (e.g. Microboards, Circles of Support, supported decision-making) and can strengthen their capacity to have reasonable and shared authority with providers over funded supports.
- Regular and emergency specialist planning that takes a comprehensive and whole-of life approach inclusive of the individual's family, friends, allies and paid support workers.
- The ongoing provision of a specialised vehicle for individuals that cannot use any other mode of transport due to violent behaviours of concern.

Ongoing Market Failure

Individuals with severe behaviours of concern have a long history of being rejected by service providers across Victoria because their needs are considered 'too complex'.

Even when DHHS has offered significant funding to disability service providers to meet the individual's needs, they have often refused to work with them. Support providers who take on the support of someone with behaviours of concern are often inadequately resourced to do so effectively, leading to neglect, loss of skills and trauma for the individual being supported and those working directly with them - including their families.

Some families have already contacted registered providers to request services with NDIS funding and have been told they cannot offer services to people with severe behaviours of concern due to lack of expertise. The hope of these families has been that the NDIS will offer their sons and daughters access to services that might support a more ordinary life. VALID is deeply concerned that such hope seems to be disappearing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

VALID recommends that the Victorian Government convene a taskforce with invited representation from DHHS, NDIA, VALID, Carers Victoria and the Association for Children with Disabilities and concerned families to:

1. identify best practice principles and examples
2. develop strategies to stimulate growth in expert disability services
3. identify and deploy expert planning staff from DHHS (e.g. specialist case managers and planners) to specifically resource the effective transition of individuals with complex behaviours of concern to NDIS.

VALID Statement on Spirituality

Statement of Purpose

Ratified by VALID Committee
14th September 2016

Faith and spirituality provide positive supports to many Victorians.

The rights, needs and wishes of many people with disabilities, in regards to their spiritual expression, have been largely overlooked or denied. Spirituality is a very important part of the human condition. It is expressed uniquely, and may be formal or informal, individual or communal, and maybe expressed through music, art, creativity, religion and/or relationships.

Rationale

The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (2006) recognises discrimination should not occur on the basis of many factors, religion being one of them. Within Australia the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, (DDA) makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis that they have or might have a disability.

VALID supports an individual's right to express and have access to the spirituality of their choice, provided it communicates value and respect for all people. Such spirituality may represent beliefs, definitions and expressions of a particular faith community or of a particular way of life. VALID, a state advocacy association of people with disabilities, their advocates and people who work in the disability sector, believes that all people with disabilities have the right to spiritual expression of their choice, and that any necessary supports need to be provided for such participation.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Community Development Forum

Presented by the

Victorian Inclusive Community Development Network



'It Can Happen If' Linking Individual and Community Planning

15th November 2016

JASPER HOTEL

489 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne

The **Building Inclusive Communities** forums are designed to provide an opportunity for people with disabilities, service providers and community development workers to engage in a range of discussions focussing on community development practice and issues of inclusion and community membership.

The forums will include presentations from researchers with interests in disability and community development and a range of practice and lived experience presentations/perspectives. There will also be opportunity for workshop discussions and reflections on key issues, challenges and opportunities associated with creating communities that are inclusive of people with disabilities.

For more information about the forum, contact Paul Dunn on 9416 4003 or email: paul@valid.org.au

VALID8 Premium Associate Membership

In the new world of disability service provision, as we all know, change has become the norm. One aspect of change is how people with a disability and families select their services of choice from within what promises to be an expanding and varied marketplace. In VALID's experience, one of the key factors for people making that choice is the extent to which the service projects a culture of person-centredness and empowerment. How do you think your organisation rates in this regard?

VALID is pleased to introduce a new Premium Membership, to be supported with a collaborative approach and a business tool, which can help your organisation to secure referrals, protect the integrity of your service and provide additional credibility to your brand.

VALID8 is a self assessment tool which directs services to self audit their own services and programs to determine how effective or to what extent they are involving and empowering their service users.

Benefits for service providers to use VALID8 are:

- When reviewing your strategic plan
- Exploring new growth opportunities
- Seeking to improve performance on multiple levels
- Striving to deliver better outcomes for clients
- Greater opportunities for staff development that can also lead to enhanced productivity

VALID has a new Premium Associate Membership, which will bring together VALID with our allies into a collaborative, community of practice and one that we have named the **"VALID 8 Community of Practice for Service User Empowerment."**

The proposal arose from discussions with a number of service providers, who value collaboration with VALID in the development of their organisation's empowerment practices.

The VALID8 Community of Practice will benefit in the following ways:

- A service organisation will have the option of becoming a VALID8 Community of Practice Associate Member, by paying a premium Associate Membership fee of \$500.
- A VALID representative will visit you as a VALID8 Associate Member to discuss and assist in developing your organisation's service user empowerment strategies and practices (guided by the VALID8 tool).
- VALID8 Associate Member organisations will be invited to participate in three (3) to four (4) Community of Practice Forums per year, to exchange ideas, information, resources and expertise with VALID and other member organisations.

For more information please contact John McKenna Mon - Wed on (03)9416 4003 or Mobile: 0419 877 712
Email: johnmck@valid.org.au



Retiring Committee Member

VALID especially thanks Tony McDonald, who after many years of service on the committee has sadly decided it was time to retire. Tony remains actively involved in her local community including facilitating craft groups and dances for people with disability.

Tony pictured with her husband Arch have also been long supporters of the Having a Say conference. Tony not only helped out with the working bee she also ran the card making come & try sessions.



VALID: Year in Review 2015 / 2016

It's been a big year. The roll-out of the NDIS, and the issues arising from it, have kept VALID busier than ever. The promise of the NDIS is continually undermined by the pressure to meet unrealistic time targets with inadequate staffing and resourcing. This puts enormous pressure on the entire sector, and we have become increasingly concerned that the so-called teething problems of the NDIS might become fatal in the long-term.

Like many organisations, we are grappling with the challenge of change, and the need to ensure it is change for the better.

From a purely internal perspective, we have certainly felt the pressure of trying to fulfil our responsibilities and to hold it all together. It is a testimony to the capacity and commitment of our committee of management members and our staff team that, in the midst of uncertainty and high level pressure, we have gone from strength to strength.

During 2015-16, the focus of the NDIS roll-out in Victoria shifted from Barwon, the largely successful scheme pilot, to the North East Melbourne Area. The demand on VALID's individual advocacy work intensified during this period and hasn't let up. The same is also true of the demand on our systemic advocacy role, which continues to be unfunded.

VALID has continued to be strongly involved in the NDIA Board's Intellectual Disability Reference Group, chaired by Rhonda Galbally, and in the policy co-design activities of that body. VALID was also invited to participate in the Victorian State Government's NDIS Implementation Task Group, chaired jointly Ministers Martin Foley and Gavin Jennings.

Being engaged at both the individual and systemic levels allows VALID to serve as an effective conduit for the lived experience of people with intellectual disability and their families, and an effective contributor to policy development. Without adequate capacity to keep pace with the demand, however, we risk doing neither well. It is the area of greatest tension and complexity of VALID's work, and



Kevin Stone
CEO



Dot Leigh
President

one which continues to be largely neglected and overlooked in the NDIS scheme of things.

Having a Say Conference

The 2016 event attracted close to 1,200 delegates and was another huge success. Delegates shared their stories, goals and achievements in the presentations and workshops which were well attended.

We had the privilege of having the Hon Martin Foley MP, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, Mental Health, Equality and Creative Industries as Guest Speaker at the Dinner Chat. After his speech Minister Foley mingled with the delegates in the Dinner Disco.

The Red Faces Talent Show auditions was another great night with the three finalists, Josh Moorfoot, Meredith Smith and Aaron Inglis performing at the closing ceremony on Friday.

Friday was all about the Our Choice Expo where delegates and members of the public could gain valuable information about the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Transition Support Package

At the beginning of 2016, we received additional funds through the Transition Support Package, along with several other organisations, to deliver information and support to people with a disability and families as they prepare for the NDIS.

Building on our existing platform of information and support activities, we quickly restructured and recruited new staff to meet our ambitious targets. As the following VALID Coordinator reports show, we hit the ground running and the pace just hasn't let up.

Individual Advocacy

Much has been said and written about protecting people with disabilities from abuse and violence – including reports from the Public Advocate, the Disability Services Commissioner, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, and the Victorian Ombudsman to name a few.

Cases of abuse continue to shock the public. There is widespread agreement that abuse of people with a disability is an unconscionable violation of human rights, yet it continues to happen.

VALID's advocacy case notes are powerful evidence of the very real problems people have faced in living with abuse, and the inability of the people within services and within the system to adequately report the problem, acknowledge the pain and suffering the person is experiencing and adequately addressing the problem at its core.

35 out of VALID's 274 cases for 2015-16 are specifically lodged as abuse cases, and abuse also features as a factor in a range of other cases. In our experience, abuse occurs and goes on for far too long before support is sought and action is taken.

For example:

1. In a recent case, years of failed service for a young gentleman left him with no other option in his mind but to seek an Intervention Order against a staff member. This resulted in hours of deliberation, anxiety, frustration and loss whilst the matter was argued in and out of the magistrates courtroom over 7 hours. The outcome? Case dropped. Evidence was lacking. Person with an intellectual disability was unable to argue the case on facts and with adequate evidence despite swearing on the bible that his testimony was nothing less than the truth.

2. A young man was bullied in his home by fellow residents over 4 years, with a rat being placed in his bed as the final straw.

Relationships with and faith in the service provider are now completely broken. Salvaging any sense of apology or duty of care from the service and or the perpetrator is zero. Young man now back at home waiting for alternate accommodation.

3. A man with no verbal skills or means of protecting himself is bullied and shoved and cornered by a co-resident with a milder degree of intellectual disability. The perpetrator outspoken about his dislike for people with a disability falls on deaf ears. The service provider pleads to the system for eviction and placement of the perpetrator in a more suitable accommodation model. The advocate attends a meeting to hear the story and advise the system of its failure. The system presents no solution and no relocation plans and blames the service provider. All of this, despite the perpetrator admitting to not wanting to live with people with a disability greater than his own.

The system is broken. The solution is unfair. The respect is non-existent. The responsibility and accountability is nowhere to be seen.

As advocacy does its best to prod and kick the system where it can, the abuse continues. And the solution is still nowhere in sight.

Dom Moollan

Individual Advocacy
Coordinator



Keys to Success Self Advocacy (KSP)

The KSP Self Advocacy and other Projects team has been able to increase its capacity since Zoe joined the team.

We have been reviewing our resources and updating the content as required to meet the needs of the rollout of the NDIS in the North East Metropolitan Region and to reflect the observations we make during the sessions.

We have been working with lots of groups through Keys to Success Self Advocacy training program.

All training focuses on communicating in an assertive way, empowering people to speak up for themselves and build healthy relationships.

The training is conversation based, as this gives VALID staff an indication as to participants perception and understanding of the content; as well as creating a relaxed environment for individuals to share their own experiences, thoughts and feelings.

We also delivered a modified version of the KSP program which focused on the planning sections of the training to the:

- Moe Peer Group
- Frankston Peer Group

Some of the services that we have worked with have included:

Numbers of people who were trained in Key to Success - Self Advocacy			
Service	Numbers of Sessions	Number of workers	Number of people with disability
Aspect	1 x 6-8 weeks	4	10
Alkira	1 x 6-8 weeks	3	13
St John of God	1 x 6-8 weeks	4	6
Belgrave South Community House	2 x 6-8 weeks	6	27
Burke and Beyond	1 x 6-8 weeks	2	9
Carinya	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	4
Nadrasca	2 x 6-8 weeks	4	26
Oakleigh Residential Services	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	6
Connections - Oakleigh Day Service	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	7
Villa Maria	1 x 6-8 weeks	3	13
Mountain District Community House	1 x 6-8 weeks	2	6
Wallara	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	6
Bayley House	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	10
Kangan Institute	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	8
Yooralla	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	10
Scope	1 x 6-8 weeks	1	8



Pictured above: Some of the groups who have completed the Keys to Success Self Advocacy training.

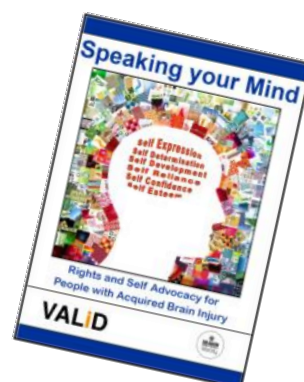
'Speaking your Mind' Self Advocacy Training program

The 'Speaking your Mind' resource is a workbook for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI).

VALID was invited to join with Deakin University and Yooralla to adapt the Keys to success - My Life Program so that it could be used by people with ABI. the program was funded through a small grant from the Transport Accident Commission. At the conclusion of the first phase of the project Deakin was successful in applying for funding to assess the effectiveness of the program and whether it will make a difference to the lives of people with ABI who complete the course.

We are currently working with Jenny Crosby from Deakin University to run training sessions to evaluate the program. So far the feedback has been very positive with many of the participants saying that they liked the way the resource flowed and that the information was really helpful and beneficial.

One of the participants said that she found the information helped to strengthen her Self Advocacy skills and was very useful in its layout. She said that she was currently dealing with health professionals who were not being very helpful and were disempowering her. She used the information provided in the training to prepare herself to deal with the organisation and the barriers that the staff were using to take away her right to information.



'Staying Safe' Abuse & Neglect Project



The team are working on the second phase of the 'Staying Safe' project which includes the development of some further resources to be included with the original PowerPoint presentation and video scenarios. These resources will be packaged up as a standalone kit that can be used by both services and individuals.

So far this year we have delivered the abuse and neglect program to the four metro Networks and we have conducted seven forums around Victoria in collaboration with NDS in the following locations:

After the success of the first round of forums in

Staying Safe in Tasmania

We had two excellent forums in Hobart and Launceston on 11th and 12th August; over 160 people attended across the two events with around a half of the attendees people with disability. Hobart in particular was a fantastic experience for everyone concerned.

- Morwell
- Ballarat
- Bendigo
- Noble Park
- Geelong
- Preston
- Wangaratta

NDS and VALID are now arranging to do an additional four forums around the state;

- Ringwood
- Broadmeadows
- Shepparton
- Sale

Speak Out and National Disability Service (NDS) Tasmania co-hosted both sessions which were a great success. We received highly positive feedback from the audience through verbal and written comments.



We were pleased to be able to leave all who attended with the positive message that abuse and neglect are not okay and we all need to do something about it; 'speak Up, Reach Out and Get Help!'

Arrangements are now being made with Inclusion Australia and NDS National to take the VALID 'staying safe' and NDS understanding Abuse and Neglect presentations to Queensland and New South Wales.

We are currently setting dates to deliver the 'Staying Safe' training program to people who use Scope services; starting in the in the Southern Region, then moving around the state to the Eastern, Western and finally the Northern Region.

The Northern Region will be the last area as they are currently busy with the rollout of the NDIS.

We also did a session in Colac and another with the South West Self Advocacy Network in Warrnambool where 80 self advocates attended a very lively presentation.

Thanks to the team, Zoe and Heather for your continued support and advice.

Great work!

Jon Slingsby

KSP Self Advocacy Coordinator



Communications Program

The Communications team was established at the beginning of the financial year in response to the transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme world. The aim of the team is to ensure that VALID's communications are effective and targeted, and to promote the work that VALID does to support and empower people with a disability and their families.

Our main duties and responsibilities are:

- To support and empower people with a disability and their families
- To develop and implement VALID's communication strategy
- To develop and execute VALID's communications strategy across all platforms, including press, social media and publications
- To develop and maintain VALID's website and to keep content up-to-date and appropriately targeted.

Our team achieved this through a number of exciting projects:

- Communications and journalism training for people with a disability to help develop their confidence and promote VALID's programs
- Fresh social media updates and approaches to promote VALID's work and promote two-way communication with our users
- Regular columns and profiles for VALID's quarterly newsletter.

John McKenna provided hands-on media training to people with a disability wanting to develop their communication skills. Next year our trainee journalists will promote VALID by interviewing VALID staff and participants from our training, forums and conferences.

Simone Stevens maintained our social media platforms for the Having a Say (HaS) conference. Simone has also worked with the Local Reference Committee for the HaS conference, profiling members for the VALID newsletter and website.



The HaS Facebook page has 1380 likes and Simone has kept people up to date with information on the upcoming conference in 2017. It was developed to promote the conference and the work of committee members.

The Communications team alongside the Admin team have been working on the development of the new VALID website. We recruited the expertise of web designers Precedent who have created an events calendar along with membership and subscription options. We had a soft launch in May at the Our Choice Expo and the site goes live in November.

In 2016/2017 we are planning to present our top journalists at the HaS conference. John will run ongoing training for new journalists who will be involved in our newly established YouTube channel.

Other plans for 2016/2017 are to:

- Maintain our new website
- Increase membership on our social media platforms
- Increase VALID membership

Tully Zygier

Communications Coordinator



Want to contribute a story or article to the VALID Newsletter?

If you have a story or article you would like us to consider for including in VALID News please email it to either:

VALID Information Officer: Tully Zygier
Email: tully@valid.org.au

VALID News Editor: Derek Scriven
Email: office@valid.org.au

Families and Information Training

The Family Training program had continued to focus on empowering families for the transition to the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme). Feedback from families predominantly is that they are afraid about the impending NDIS, especially given the negative things they hear in the media. So due to this and the demand from parent groups, Metro/Rural Access Workers and disability organisations (to support the families of their clients), the main activities of the 'core' families program has been delivering NDIS Information Sessions.

In January 2016 the Families Team was given additional capacity to conduct courses, workshops and information sessions for families focused on preparing for families for transition to the NDIS. The key focus was on supporting families in the first roll out areas. We have recruited two new staff members from our experienced Family Mentor Team volunteers and from our Peer Groups.

The course had already been revised to focus on the NDIS but in February the new team, Maree Hewitt, Donna Shaw and myself streamlined it down to five sessions, rather than the original six.

Information Sessions

Over the last year we have delivered 77 information sessions and workshops to 1,867 family members, 500 workers and over 260 people with disabilities. Full statistics are included in the table below. Given the confusion about the move to the NDIS, these sessions aim to:

- support families to empower their family member to have a good life
- provide user-friendly info on the basics of the NDIS
- dispel misconceptions and provide accurate information in response to questions

- promote the need for preparation for the transition, including person-centred planning and supporting participants to develop life goals i.e. not service goals
- empower families and others who attend to feel more confident about the transition

Families as Planning Partners course

The Info Sessions also are a doorway for families to learn about the Families as Planning Partners Course. The demand for these courses was beyond our capacity in the middle of the year with at one stage five courses per week being conducted in order to reduce the waiting list. In total twelve courses have been conducted in NEMA since the start of 2016 with 142 family members attending the full five session course.

Three of these courses were conducted as part of our core program and the remainder with the additional resources of the NDIS Transition project. In August we moved geographical focus to Central Highlands with the first course almost finished, three more fully booked and two more advertised.

In addition to the aims above, the course also aims to assist families who wish to:

- get a good start on their family member's person-centred plan
- see their family member's perspective and understand their role as one of empowerment
- develop the basis of broad NDIS goals from their family member's perspective
- understand the NDIS process, including understanding the choices and responsibilities involved in managing an NDIS package

Families Feedback

"I've been to a few forums and this one is the first one that I could make sense of it all... as it's all overwhelming" Ann

"I think it makes a great difference when someone can talk from a personal experience of the NDIS, not just the jargon"

"I think it has made me more confident in knowing what my rights are with NDIS and what I can ask for the girls, more prepared"

"We found this course very helpful. It broke down the complexity about the NDIS. Learnt a lot of valuable information and also how to approach the planning. We had no idea before this course. So yes it has been very helpful and valuable"

"I am very grateful for this opportunity. I do feel overwhelmed by it all but glad I have the information"

Christine Scott

Families and Events Coordinator



STATISTICS on Sessions in the last year (Oct. 2015 - Sept. 2016)

	Number of sessions	Family members	Workers	People with Disability
Information Sessions				
Transition Project NEMA	16	369	172	77
Transition Project Central Highlands	9	165	41	34
Transition Project in other areas	13	571	161	91
Core Families Program	23	602	158	49
Planning Workshops				
Transition Project NEMA	6	58	10	3
Transition Project in other areas	1	5	1	4
Core Families Program	3	35	6	1
Self Management workshops				
Transition Project NEMA	2	13		3
Transition Project in other areas	1	13		
Core Families Program	3	36	1	
Families as Planning Partners Course				
Transition Project NEMA courses x 9	45	107	1	2
Transition Proj. Central Highlands x 1 course	5	8	1	
Core Families Program courses x 3	15	35	1	
Total Sessions	142			
TOTAL attendance by group			2017	553
				264

VALID Self Advocacy

VALID Self Advocacy has enjoyed a successful 2015 - 2016 period with its mission to build the capacity of people with a disability in the Melbourne Metropolitan Divisions in full swing!

VALID supports people with intellectual disability to become strong self advocates. Self advocacy empowers people to have control and influence over the decisions and choices that affect their lives. This is the key mission behind VALiD Self Advocacy's work .

In this 2015 - 2016 period VALID Self Advocacy has gone through many changes, we farewelled Zoe Broadway who transferred to the VALID KSP team. Zoe had been a part of the VALiD Self Advocacy team since 2011 and with it brought dedication, hard work and commitment. We wish Zoe well and thank her for the contribution she made.

In March 2016 two new staff members, Anthony Risoli and Katie White, joined the VALID Self Advocacy team.

Anthony has worked at Northern Support Services (NSS) for 22 years. Previous duties at NSS included support worker, Employment Outcomes Co-ordinator for the past two years and facilitator of Certificate 1 in Work Education for 12 years. Anthony has also encouraged and empowered participants at NSS to be involved in monthly Peer Support Committee and to have a say about decisions made at their service.

Katie has worked as an Occupational Therapist with children in Kindergartens and schools. She has also had experience working on research projects with Deakin University and the Office of Professional Practice.

VALiD Self Advocacy welcomes both Anthony and Katie to the team!!

The Eastern and Northern Divisions in partnership with the Western Division continued to fund VALID's Self Advocacy programs recurrently and all targets were met in the 2015-16 period.

Since the roll out of the NDIS into the Northern Division VALID's funding has been transferred to the Office for Disability. We anticipate that this will be the case for the Eastern Division funding once the NDIS continues to roll out.

Activities that were conducted by the VALID Self Advocacy team to support people in Group Homes & Day Services within both government & non-government included:

- Maintaining & consolidating the VALID Self Advocacy Networks
- Providing support to CSO's with consolidating, enhancing or establishing Client Committees or Advisory Groups
- Providing support to CSO's & Government Disability Accommodation Services (DAS) with starting or enhancing Resident Meetings
- Support CSO's & Government services (DAS) with the implementation of Quality Initiatives and resources
- Support to 5 DAS Resident Focus groups in the North West Metropolitan Region & 7 SUFY (Speaking Up For Yourself) groups and 2 next level Advisory groups in the Eastern Metropolitan Region.
- Ongoing support to members of the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Self Advocacy Networks to attend forums and events in a representative role.

VALID Self Advocacy would like to acknowledge the achievements of self advocates from the Metropolitan Networks, in particular nominees for the Inspire Awards 2016. These self advocates provide encouragement and motivation that life can be fulfilling and exciting when you practice your right to 'Speak Up'.



Inspire Awards 2016

Funds in Court, with the support of the Transport Accident Commission, Women with Disabilities and the Portland House Foundation hosted the Inaugural Inspire Awards which were held on Thursday 21st April at the Price Waterhouse Cooper Building on Melbourne's South Bank.

The Awards recognise those who identify with disability and whose aim it is to make a difference in their own lives and in turn making an impact on their peers and the community around them.

The nominees are nominated by their peers.

The categories celebrate and acknowledge people who demonstrate: excellence, passion, vision, and a commitment to assisting their profession and people to achieve their goals.

Adam James, Paul Campbell and Hayden McLean were nominated for the Advocacy & Speaking Up award that was presented by the Disability Services Commissioner. Hayden and Paul received certificates of merit while Adam was awarded with 1st place and received a trophy.



The DAS Focus Groups in the Northern and Western Divisions alongside the SUFY (Speaking Up For Yourself) groups in the Eastern Division have flourished and remain an integral part of conveying ideas and providing feedback to DAS managers directly on issues that concern them & encourage information flow from DAS management to residents & visa versa. The groups are made up of residents that live in DAS group homes throughout the Divisions.

VALID, together with DAS services in the Northern, Western & Eastern Divisions have continued to strengthen self advocacy & resident involvement within DAS services. One of these initiatives involves DAS services empowering residents in Group Homes to have more say at both personal and service levels through Resident Meetings. With the help of the residents and support staff, resources have been developed and individualised for resident meetings. Easy English pictorial posters include a complaints process, talk sheets and an agenda at many Group Homes throughout the Divisions.

We also would particularly like to thank the many guest speakers who attended and presented at the VALID Self Advocacy Network meetings throughout 2015 - 2016.

NDIS Information Sessions

In January 2016 VALiD was given additional capacity through the Victorian Government NDIS Transition Support Package. This funding was geared to development of resources and the delivery of information sessions for people with a disability to prepare for transition to the NDIS. The key focus was on supporting people with a disability in the initial NDIS roll out area (NEMA) and then to subsequent roll out areas. Resources were developed in partnership with the NDIA NEMA Engagement team and based on the NDIA Community Forums.

Over the last year VALiD have delivered 62 information sessions to over 1,300 people with disabilities and supporters. The demand for these NDIS information sessions continues to grow with many more sessions scheduled through 2016 and into the first quarter of 2017.

Rick Ruin

VALiD Self Advocacy Networks
Coordinator



Community Development

The expansion into Community Development work in 2016 is a new area for VALID. The impetus for this commenced with a successful application for funding under the Disability Support Organisation program funded by the NDIA and Department of Social Security to develop peer support groups across the state which will see 26 new local groups established by the end of June 2016.

Community Development is a natural fit with VALID's core advocacy role in Victoria, as it brings together citizens with disabilities and their supporters to engage with individual advocacy concerns and to connect them with systemic advocacy strategies to make positive change. This work also aligns with the vision and mission of Inclusion Australia, our national organisation, enabling it to build a national strategy for the development of communities that are more inclusive of all people with disabilities, their families and supporters.

Citizen Engagement and Empowerment

The establishment of Peer Action Groups has been a core focus of our Community Development work in 2016. Initially the groups had responsibility to develop awareness, understanding and practical knowledge of how the NDIS works to create new opportunities for people with disabilities and their families to exercise choice and control over their supports. However over time we are finding that the groups are evolving and beginning to take on a broader focus with an interest in being more engaged as local citizens and challenging the disabling structures and attitudes in their communities.

Establishing the groups is an organic process which involves finding people who are motivated and committed to regular meetings and prepared to work together with others with similar interests and concerns; finding volunteer facilitators who can lead the group; and locating a suitable community venue that is used by other citizens and is a 'hive' of community activity with opportunities for meeting and connecting.

Currently we have 16 established groups and another 6 that are in an establishment phase. Most of these are in the Melbourne metro area with some recent expansion into rural areas in the Barwon Region and Moe. We have focussed on areas where the NDIS roll out is happening or imminent to enable participants of the scheme to be properly prepared, and to make effective use of the new funding arrangements. We have also set up four groups in the NEMA implementation area and will look to establish new groups in the Central Highlands and Loddon areas as the rollout in these areas commences in early 2017.

Leadership in each group is provided by volunteers who have either been recruited specifically for this role or have emerged from within a group. The PAG initiative has required VALID to establish a volunteer program with the necessary policies, training and induction support to build an effective and empowered volunteer workforce. At this point, 70% of the volunteers leading the PAGs have a lived experience of disability.

Our leaders meet monthly to train, share ideas, plan and evaluate the program and strengthen the network connections between PAGs. While the majority of the PAGs are local community focussed groups, we do have several special interest groups including a group comprising Families of individuals labelled with 'Behaviours of Concern', a Family Inclusion Network supporting parents with disabilities who are dealing with the child protection system; and another group focussed on Self Management of NDIS funding.



A number of issues have emerged from our Peer Action Groups that indicate a need for systemic advocacy. The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Services for People with Autism provided an opportunity for the Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group to make a powerful submission drawing on the individual stories of members of this group. Systemic advocacy has continued on this issue with both the NDIA, DHHS and Minister for Community Services to ensure that the NDIS delivers on its promise to those who have significant and complex support needs. Other issues emerging from the PAGs include, getting access to paid work opportunities; moving out of home and support to become more independent; acknowledging the leadership skills of people with disabilities and nurturing their development; access to affordable and accessible transport; developing friendships and supportive social networks; and the interface between health and the NDIS.

Building Community Development Knowledge and Practice

Our community development team brings expertise and an extensive background in community development practice to VALID and we are committed to creating opportunities for practitioners, researchers and interested citizens to network, and learn from each other and to engage with emerging challenges and opportunities in our communities. To assist in this aim we created the Victorian Inclusive Community Development Network in October 2015. The network meets bi monthly at VALID and is already attracting a regular group of up to 20 people to network meetings. We have also planned 3 statewide Community Development Forums for the latter half of 2016 that will provide an opportunity for a wider audience to listen to prominent Community Development experts, practitioners and individuals with the wisdom of lived experience of disability.

The Community Development Team is also able to offer expertise, advice, and leadership to a range of organisations interested in increasing participation and inclusion in community life.

The team has already conducted some in-service training and information sessions, and offers advice to disability support services, mainstream community organisations and local councils who are interested in deepening their engagement with their local communities as a key part of their disability support arrangements and community planning functions.

To assist with this work we have developed a partnership with Borderlands Community Development Cooperative who have been very generous in offering their considerable knowledge and experience to our endeavours.

Networks and Strategic Partnerships

VALID has worked hard to engage the Victorian Government and to influence its role in the transition to the NDIS. This has seen VALID convene meetings with statewide consumer peak organisations and has led to interest in the creation of an informal network between these agencies to promote collaboration and greater unity of voice around matters of common concern. At the local and regional level, we are actively seeking partnerships to strengthen our community development work. This includes connections with Local Government Authorities, Local Area Coordinators, and disability support agencies.

David Craig

Community Development
Coordinator



OVAL Project

The OVAL Project is a joint initiative between the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALiD) and the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA). The project was funded by an NDIS Community Inclusion and Capacity Development grant.



The OVAL Project matches NDIS participants in the Barwon NDIS trial site who want help making decisions with a volunteer who has been trained in how to provide support for decision making.



The volunteer meets with the participant at least once a fortnight to help them explore options and make decisions that are important to them.

Where we are up to:

- 21 volunteers recruited and trained
- 13 participants matched with volunteers
- 11 pairs currently engaging in support for decision making
- Volunteer training on support for decision making and NDIA support planning
- Participant capacity building on rights/responsibilities and self-advocacy

Participant decisions so far have been:

- Change of service providers
- Change of accommodation
- Employment
- Health related issues
- Education

What we have learnt:

- There have been challenges finding and connecting with participants (market flooding, gate keeping, time constraints)
- The complexity of some participants' lives have led to exclusion (e.g. communication support, need for professional advocacy)
- To date younger participants have been most actively seeking the support of a volunteer
- There have been challenges working with the NDIA as a fast growing agency (unmanageable workloads, constant changes in staffing)
- Finding volunteers/participants, recruiting, matching and getting to know each other all takes time.
- It is time intensive to establish and maintain support for decision making relationships.

Project evaluation:

- The OVAL Project is being independently evaluated by Deakin University.
- Pre-post test design
- Exploring the experience of volunteers and participants and the impact of the OVAL Project model of practice

Kylie Fisher

Supported Decision Engagement Manager



Heather Forsyth

Supported Decision Peer Worker

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.*



Women with a disability Deakin University research project

At the last meeting for the research project we heard about the recent trip to Sydney the researchers made. Patsy and Amie visited three services to interview a group of women with a disability who have experienced abuse and accessed services.

Some women didn't want to talk about their experiences in fear that they may be abused again by their partner, family member or friend.

Even though the abuse may have occurred a long time ago, women still get emotional when the issue is raised as it is a reminder of what happened. The research has shown that people need counselling to deal with the trauma. I am lucky as I have the support of my colleagues and if I need to debrief with them I can.

We ended the meeting by planning a meeting for all the researchers and the steering committee to get together to discuss the next steps in the project.

IASSIDD Conference

I was part of the Organising Committee that organized the 2016 Melbourne World IASSIDD Conference held in August at the Melbourne Exhibition Building.

The conference lets researches share information about disabilities from across the world.

On Sunday the 14th of August a group of self advocates from around Australia got together at the VALID office to go over the plain English IASSIDD accessible booklet.

We went over the accessible booklet so they would know what their roles would be at the conference. The roles were co chair accessible sessions, being part of a panel at some of the sessions and making up questions to be asked at the accessible sessions.

Having all the self advocates getting together was a great opportunity for everyone to support each other and get to know each other better.

On the day we had Shu Hua Chan from Sydney CID, Maria Strong, Chris Bergen and Michael Mooney from South Australia, Peter and Judith Huett from Tasmania Speak Out, Colin Cowlin and Kate-Lyn McKenzie from Queensland Loud & Clear, Colin Hiscoe and Susan Arthurs from Reinforce, Patricia O'Brien and Jemima MacDonald from Centre for Disability Studies, Luke Nelson, Simone Stevens and Heather Forsyth from VALID.

Before the IASSIDD conference opening ceremony, I Chaired a session at the Disability Support Workers conference. The session had Keynote speaker Dr Amy Hewitt talk about how to be a good support worker and Dr Bob Schalock on how support workers can work as a team member.

On the Monday the Self Advocates from all over Australia and the world went to the Eureka Sky deck for drinks and nibs. We went to the 89th floor where the Self advocates had the opportunity to meet and get know each other better.

On the Wednesday night of the conference five Our Voice members went to the Lord Mayor dinner for drinks and nibs. We meet the deputy Mayor who welcome us all at the Melbourne Town Hall.

There were 4 Accessible sessions throughout conference. The presenters present in an easy English format that people with a disability and people who are not researches could understand.

I co-chaired an Accessible session on the Tuesday with Katie from VALID. My favorite presenter was Paul Cain who spoke about employment and how people with disabilities can get a job.



Katie-Lyn, Heather, Judy and Chris

Interview with
Elica Petroska
By Simone Stevens

How long have you been a part of the Having A Say Conference for?

I have been a part of the Local Reference Committee for 6 years.



Why did you want to get involved with the Local Reference Committee?

I wanted to get involved because I wanted to be a part of the community, I love being around people and I wanted to be a part of the actual conference.

What roles have you had since becoming involved with the LRC?

In 2015 I was deputy Chair person and this year I was Chairperson which I loved I opened the conference and chaired some sessions as well as during the year I chaired regular meetings which helped organise the conference. I also fascinate a peer support group in Geelong which I love.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In my spare time I like to draw paint and spend time with my family.

David and Deb Johnson, with their son, Andrew, who has been in care since he was 13. Photo: Penny Stephens



Family's Centrelink trauma

Neelima Choahan

A man with severe disabilities who has been in state care since 1999 was ordered by Centrelink to prove his eligibility for a disability pension.

Andrew Johnson was diagnosed with profound autism when he was four and went into a Department of Human Services-managed group home when he was 13.

The 30-year-old cannot speak, has autism, Tourette syndrome, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, epilepsy, and needs a stomach tube to help him feed.

His mother, Deb Johnson, said she felt "physically sick" after re-

ceiving a letter from Centrelink on September 15 demanding evidence that her son was entitled to the pension.

She was given just two weeks to collate the paperwork, which included decades-old documents.

Mrs Johnson was finally granted an extension, but was then told to start preparing for a review for her elder son, William, 32, who has been in state care since 1999, and suffers from profound autism.

She was also told Andrew would be required to undergo an IQ test.

But on Thursday, the mother-of-four suddenly received a call from Centrelink saying no further action would be required, citing a

letter from Andrew's gastroenterologist as the reason behind the decision.

Human Services Minister Alan Tudge – who stepped in following questions from Fairfax Media – said Andrew would continue to receive his disability pension.

"We will not be asking him to look for work because he has met the specific criteria for manifest eligibility," Mr Tudge said.

"Once the department can confirm a person meets the specific criteria for manifest eligibility for DSP, they will not need to complete another review again in future."

While Mrs Johnson was happy with the eventual outcome, she was

less than pleased with the process.

"They have put me through absolute hell," she said. "I have been really severely stressed. I have been to four appointments in a week, three specialists and one GP."

"I can't believe they have accepted just a gastroenterologist's report and say it covers all disabilities, when they have asked us to jump through hoops with [documents showing] onset of symptoms, dates of diagnosis, and an IQ test," she said.

Federal MP for Bruce, Julian Hill who wrote to the Human Services Minister on behalf of the Johnson family, said the review was "more than a little ridiculous".

DSP Reviews

Centrelink is currently undertaking medical reviews of 90,000 people on the Disability Support Pension (DSP). In the past such reviews have excluded people who are deemed to have a 'manifest' condition, i.e., the person has a severe disability has a continuing inability to work', i.e., an 'inability to work independently of a programme of support within the next 2 years because of their impairment'. A person with intellectual disability 'whose medical evidence clearly indicates that they have an IQ of less than 70 is accepted as manifestly qualified for DSP'. (This information is taken from the Commonwealth Government's Guide to Social Security Law'.)

People who are 'manifest' should not receive a letter saying that they need to be medically reviewed, but, many people who are 'manifest' are not flagged/coded as such on the Centrelink database and hence they fall into the lottery of the current medical reviews.

If you receive a letter Centrelink stating that your son/daughter is being medically reviewed and you consider them to be manifest;

1. check to see if they have ever had an IQ test, or an assessment that states that they fall within the moderate or severe range of intellectual disability.
2. visit your local Centrelink office with a copy of the letter and any other evidence, and say that you believe your son/daughter is exempt from the medical review as they have a 'manifest condition'.
3. If you do not have evidence, and the Centrelink officer is unable to make a determination from speaking to your daughter/son, or they do not accept the evidence, ask for the assessment to be undertaken by a government Medical Officer.
4. If you are successful in having your daughter/son classified as 'manifest' ask that they be coded/flagged on the Centrelink database so that they are not subjected to a medical review in the future.
5. Having visited Centrelink and they insist on further testing at your expense contact VALID on (03) 9416 4003.

New Website in Action

VALID's old website was in need of a makeover and with the help of web designers Precedent, we will be launching our new website this month.

Visitors to our website will be able to read about What We Do to inform, education and support people with a disability and their families. Our new calendar will be regularly updated with information on our training, Peer Action Groups, forums and expos.

We have dedicated a page to the Having a Say Conference. Visitors will be able to register for the conference and access the program and other information as we move closer to the Conference in February 2017.

Our Blog will provide information and opinions on disability issues, such as the NDIS, person-centred planning, human rights and the Having a Say conference.

If you have any questions about the changes to the website, please contact us at:

office@valid.org.au



Tully Zygier
Communications Coordinator

VALID

Presents

The 18th Annual

HAVING a SAY CONFERENCE

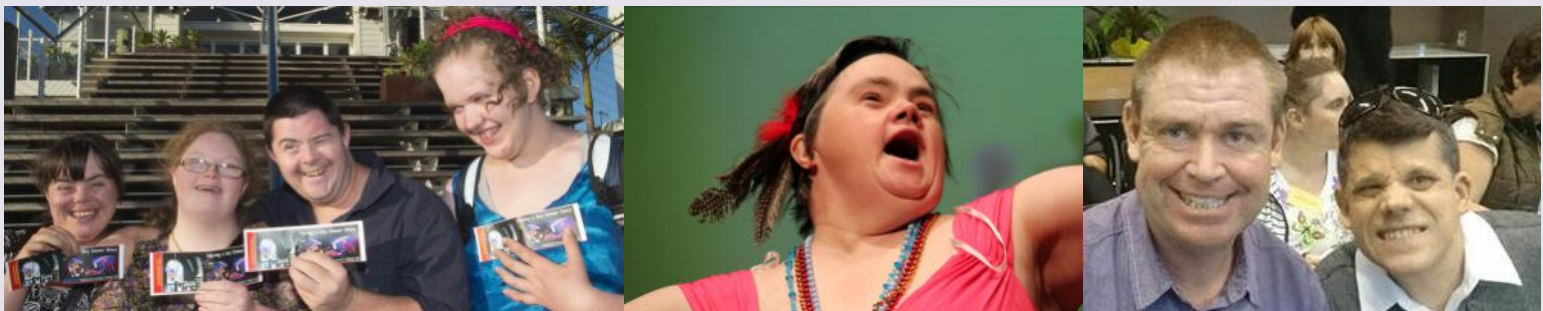
Lead YOUR Life!

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus, Geelong

8th – 10th February, 2017

Australia's largest conference for people with disability

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



Features include:

Presentations and performances by people with disability

Workshops and information sessions

Dinner Disco

Red Faces Talent Show

Want to know more?

Contact: VALiD

Email: havingasay@valid.org.au

Phone: 03 9416 4003

Website: www.valid.org.au

'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 available?

Come and look at over 60 exhibits with a range of services for all ages, equipment, community and disability supports.

Information Sessions on NDIS related topics.



12pm - 7.00pm, Thursday 10th November, 2016

**Ballarat & District Trotting Club
Cnr. Sutton & Bell Sts., Ballarat**

VALID invite you to visit the Our Choice Expo featuring a wide range of local, regional and state wide services, including day activity, community activities, travel, personal care, equipment, training, early intervention, housing, technology and other supports available for participants of the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme). Especially of interest to individuals in Central Highlands who are looking to be informed and prepared for the transition to the NDIS, starting from 1st January 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

General Inquiries: christine@valid.org.au

Exhibitor Registrations email: brenda@valid.org.au

VALID

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



Email Contacts



General enquiries:

office@valid.org.au

Advocacy enquires:

dom@valid.org.au

Having a Say Conference:

havingasay@valid.org.au

Registrations:

bookings@valid.org.au

(Training/workshops)

Disclaimer

All information contained within VALID News is as accurate as possible and is provided in good faith, however it is not guaranteed. VALID does not recommend any product, activity, organisation, service or item - such details are provided within VALID News for general information and interest only.