



Fun at the 2016 Having a Say conference report inside

VALID welcomes Critically Urgent initiative

In responding to the State Budget, VALID was initially concerned that there appeared to be no provision for new ISP's - additional to the 398 for school leavers - which would have meant people with urgent needs across the State may have been waiting for another 2-3 years for support. Fortunately we are able to confirm the additional very welcome news:

- An estimated 1,000 people registered on the Disability Support Register (DSR) with the most urgent need for support across the state will be provided with the opportunity to transition to the NDIS within the first 12 months of roll out.

These people will need to be assessed by the department as having an immediate and pressing need for support. Factors that will be considered include the need for additional support to ensure safety and well-being and a stable living situation.

- In addition an estimated 200 people on the DSR will transition over the first 12 months as their Areas are scheduled to commence transition in 2016-17 (NEMA, Central Highlands and Loddon).
- An estimated 1,800 children on the Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS) waitlist will transition over the first 18 months of rollout. This will still occur on a staged area by area basis, but will occur ahead of the current Area rollout schedule in the Bilateral Agreement.
- All remaining people registered on the DSR (those who do not come into the scheme over the first 12 months) will transition to the NDIS in accordance with the agreed NDIS rollout schedule.

As each Area commences transition, these remaining people on the DSR will move into the scheme in the first month or two as the first group of existing clients in their Area.

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
tully@valid.org.au

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

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VALID Welcomes State Budget Measures

The Victorian Budget 2016/17 sends a strong message that the Andrews State Government remains committed to people with a disability.

With the transition to the NDIS, VALID's greatest fear was that the State Government would walk away from its responsibility for ensuring Victorians with a disability are equal and included citizens. The commitment to the closure of Colanda is greatly welcomed, as part of a \$60.9m boost to prepare for the NDIS roll-out. Good news, too, is the \$3.3m to develop a new State Plan - an initiative which signals the Government's clear understanding that it must have an ongoing role in ensuring Victorians with a disability are included and valued citizens.

The NDIS, for all its benefits, will never be able to achieve that goal without strong State Government involvement.

The measures to support Victorians with a disability include:

- \$45.3 million over the next four years to fund 398 packages for school leavers with a disability
- \$60.9 million for the first stage of the NDIS rollout, including funding to support the closure of Colanda Residential Services – Victoria's last disability institution – and additional investment in supported accommodation facilities.
- \$3.3 million to support the work of the 2017-2020 State Disability Plan, including greater civic participation, a stronger advocacy sector and building 15 changing rooms for people with a disability
- \$500,000 grant to Vision Australia to establish an indoor mobility and training centre for vision impaired Victorians.

Urgent Notice

regarding contact
from the NDIA



As part of preparations for the implementation of the NDIS throughout the North East Melbourne Area from 1 July 2016, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) is making contact via phone calls with prospective participants who are either currently on the Disability Support Register or in an existing DHHS programme such as Shared Supported Accommodation.

The contact from the NDIA is to ascertain a participant's eligibility for the NDIS and seek their consent to enter the NDIS. The NDIA are also gathering some key information such as the person's home address and their CRM number from Centrelink. At no stage however will the NDIA be seeking people's bank account details. Following this initial contact, the NDIA will be in touch again to start the development of the participant's first plan to enter the NDIS.

The contact by the NDIA has followed the earlier distribution of a letter from the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to prospective participants outlining the transition into the NDIS.

There has been some concerns raised by families of participants that the phone calls may not be from the NDIA but from other organisations seeking personal information for other reasons.

People should be aware that:

- These calls might also be received by potential participants in other areas of the State, who are being considered for early entry to the NDIS as part of the Critically Urgent initiative (see Front Page).
- These calls from the NDIA will continue for the next few weeks and if they have any concerns or queries they can raise them with the NDIA by calling: NDIS National Access Team directly on 1800 800 110.

Parliamentary Inquiry into Autism Spectrum Disorder

VALID has worked in partnership with the Behaviours of Concern (BOC) Peer Action Group to prepare a submission to the Victorian Government Parliamentary Inquiry into Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Behaviour of Concern Peer Action Group comprises parents of adult children with Autism Spectrum Disorder who present with challenging behaviours. VALID has facilitated the development of the Behaviours of Concern, Peer Action Group through funding provided by the NDIS Peer Support Program.

The BOC Peer Action Group supports parents and carers of people aged 18 and over who have an intellectual disability and behaviours of concern and may have a history of seclusion, physical and chemical restraint, injury and trauma.

The Group aims to provide a safe and confidential opportunity for parents and carers to tell their stories, share accurate information and learn about the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). It meets monthly at VALID on the third Thursday of the month from 6.30pm – 8.30pm.

Our response was informed by a number of written submissions from parents and interviews we conducted with families who have a son or daughter with ASD and behaviours of concern.

The families we spoke to reported a litany of failure in relation to responses from a range of services. This includes initial assessment, early intervention, school, disability support, community and other related services – essentially services across the life span.

"We couldn't go anywhere; we couldn't bring friends home.

We didn't know what was wrong. We didn't know where to turn. We had no idea of how we were adjusting our lives to D.

The sense of isolation and despair they describe is acute – as one parent put it, *'there is no support for a better life for my son other than what I can provide as his mother'*. Their experience of the system that is supposed to provide support is that it is broken and unable to respond to both the demand and the complexity of challenges posed by their son or daughter.

Carers reported finding themselves in desperate situations and at a loss about what to do, and who to turn to for help.

"During S's last year at school, we approached 14 day programs - no one would take him."

The sense of moving from crisis to crisis without any resolution to challenges also promotes a lack of trust and faith in the capacity of government programs and disability support services to provide advice and assistance. Carers also report being bumped from service to service as they try to find a place for their children to fit in. They feel that services are at a loss as to what to do next and are ill equipped to respond effectively to their needs and demands.

Many of the issues they raised are endemic to a system that is both crisis-driven and crisis-producing which leave advocacy groups like VALID to try and bandage a system that we all know is badly broken.

"Families want to learn more about behaviour management strategies - they want to be advised, assisted, encouraged and supported. We need to be able to identify, show and feel hope. When our children lash out they are communicating something to us. We need to ask ourselves, what is the function and meaning of that behaviour?"

VALID does not pretend to know all of the answers to these complex issues. However in trying to work towards a solution, we felt it was essential to listen to the families who live with the issues everyday and who are constantly working and struggling to develop effective strategies that enable their children to live meaningful lives. Based on their experience and evidence, VALID has come to a number of conclusions about the way forward which includes:

- Development of a stronger understanding and application of best practice based on international evidence based research;
- Development of stronger administrative and management infrastructure support for families who elect to self manage;
- Development of a multi disciplinary framework for individualised planning, case management and support coordination;
- Investment in peer support groups representing families who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and behaviours of concern; and
- Investment in community capacity building initiatives which enable mainstream community organisations to support and include people with ASD and behaviours of concern

VALID and the Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group has requested an opportunity to appear at the Parliamentary Inquiry Hearings to present the issues and potential strategies raised in the submission.



Paul Dunn

Paul joined the VALID Community Development Team in February 2016.

The complete submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry is available on the VALID website

To be sure ... to be sure

The need for trustworthy information

Unless you're living under a rock, you've probably noticed the disability world is going through a period of massive change. More than ever, we need to be sure that the information we are acting on is trustworthy and accurate.

Often the information we are given access to is confusing and even a little misleading.

In determining its responses, VALID is constantly trying to sift through the overwhelming world of information and opinion in order to get to the heart of the issue.

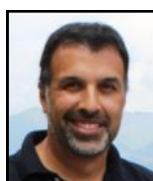
We make a point of finding out as much as we can and look for reliable, clear and easy to understand information. We regard being well-informed as a condition of not only good citizenship but smart citizenship and even smarter advocacy.

We strive to provide you with information that assists you to understand the options and issues, and serves as a solid basis for your own decision-making.

Good advocacy is reliant on trustworthy information and confidence in other's opinions. Even though the facts are not always clearly in sight or available, with the right tools and confident sense of direction we can provide hope and hopefully reassurance.

If you're in doubt regarding the accuracy of any information you're being given in relation to the changes to the disability system, I urge you to give us a call. If we don't have the facts at hand, we'll do everything we can to point you in the right direction.

The VALID Advocacy Team in 2016



Dariane McLean, Dom Moollan, Kevin Stone

Inclusion Australia's Federal Budget Snapshot

1. Rollout of the NDIS - the Federal Budget includes funds to roll out the NDIS in Qld and NT, all the other States and Territory have funding agreements. WA trial sites have been extended with an Agreement expected by the end of the Year.
2. NDIS Savings Fund - there is supposed to be a 'shortfall' of \$5 billion in the NDIS funding. The Commonwealth has established the 'NDIS Savings Fund' to cover this 'shortfall' into which it will put savings from the NDIS (delayed transition from State services) and a range of savings from ending welfare benefits (e.g., energy supplement), including savings to be made to DSP payments from the Review.
3. Mobility Allowance transition into the NDIS - the mobility allowance is being abolished! In the first instance it is being restricted to those who are eligible for NDIS, under 65, 'severe and profound' disability, unable to catch public transport and working or studying, with it being phased out in 2020 when the NDIS is fully rolled out. It is expected that NDIS participants will receive funding for transport in their funding packages.
4. Review of DSP - Again! 90,000 more people are going to be medically assessed with the expectation that some "people where appropriate will move into study and work, instead of getting stuck in the welfare system". Again, the effect for people with intellectual disability will be small as they are not seen as the 'target group' and have a 'mandated entitlement'.
5. Additional funding for students with disability - \$118 million over 2 years
6. Funding to adapt school curriculum for students with disability



Sarah Forbes has worked in a broad range of roles alongside people with disabilities in advocacy, training, community development, employment, recreation, and in public and community health since 2000. Sarah is also a guest lecturer for Monash University. Sarah lives in the Yarra Valley with her husband and two children and loves music, motorbike riding, and cooking up feasts with the locals.



Kate Fitt was a primary school teacher and is currently a social worker, PhD candidate and sessional tutor/lecturer at La Trobe University's Rural Health School. Over the last 19 years of her 30 years involvement in community, state, national and international activities Kate has worked with vulnerable families and individuals as an Advocate, Case Manager, Project Manager and Service Manager in a range of community settings. In 2010 Kate authored 'Our Forgotten Families, Issues and Challenges faced by parents with a disability in Victoria' http://www.valid.org.au/documents/our_forgotten_families.pdf

The Keys to Success Program/KSP team welcome their new team member Zoe, who will be transitioning in to her new role over the next month.

The team are currently conducting a number of KSP - My Life Keys training sessions around Melbourne. The workshops are for people with disability and their staff to learn about Human Rights, Build Self Advocacy skills and Planning for the Future.

Some of the services we are delivering the workshops to are, Belgrave South Community House, Villa Maria, Annecto, Aspect, Bayley House, Belgrave South Community House, Burke and Beyond, Villa Maria and Yooralla, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Carinya Services, Inclusion Melbourne, Kangan Institute, SCOPE Nadrasca Disability Services and St John of God

A group of young adults and their support staff from Plenty Valley Community Health have been working through the Keys to Success Program.



Back row: Suzette Lervese, Paula Menelaou, Cara Holt, Fiona Trowell, Jordan Hristovski, Codey Bowen-Cruse, Natalie Mitchell, Front row: Elise Wojciech-Higgs,, Sibel Civan, Liam Auhl, Dylan Meany, Jake Rodrigues)

Jon has been working extensively with FRANS, a disability service in NSW. He has been supporting them with their quality processes such as ways they can support the voice of service users to be heard with in the service.

Jon has worked through the VALID8 audit tool aligning FRANS with its quality practices as well as running the Keys to Success training.

Over all Jon, along with Heather, spent 6 days in Sydney, 3 in march and 3 in April, gathering information and running KSP sessions with their participants. Jon is still working with FRANS to deliver the outcomes of the VALID8 audit.



The VALID KSP Team!
Jon Slingsby and
Zoe Broadway

Staff feedback from Plenty Valley:

"The information has been really good for the participants; it's great to have someone from VALID come and work through the workbooks."

"We've been able to build on what we've talked about and learnt in the sessions during the week. It has been great to brain storm some of the real questions that are asked by the participants and come up with some possible solutions that can be practiced and build on their self advocacy skills"

Inspire Awards



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 life 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.

The categories covered:

- Law
- Human Rights
- Architecture
- Advocacy & Speaking Up
- Community Volunteering
- Innovation
- Medicine & Research
- Performing Arts
- Policing
- Writing & Journalism



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 the 1st place and received a trophy.



Above and to the left: Nominees for the Inspire Awards 2016

‘Staying Safe’

Freedom from Abuse and Neglect Project



spea k up



reach out



get help



VALiD have been funded to develop workshops to educate adults with disability about what Abuse and Neglect looks like.

VALiD have developed the ‘Staying Safe’ workshops using a PowerPoint presentation which has been piloted at the four metropolitan Self Advocacy Network meetings along with the evening Focus and Speaking Up for Yourself (SUFY) groups.

VALiD commissioned and worked alongside Silverpod Productions to

develop a DVD on different scenarios of Abuse and Neglect and ‘Staying Safe’. The response and feedback that we received was very encouraging and highlighted the importance to continue having this discussion around staying safe.

VALID and National Disability Services are working together to help people with disability and their support staff to identify abuse and neglect, know about good practice in services and how to prevent abuse and neglect from happening. They will be running 8 forums around Victoria in May and June.

Understanding Abuse and 'Staying Safe' Forums

Who should come to the Forums?

The forums are for people with disability and staff from disability services including direct support staff, managers and supervisors.

About the Sessions

The forums will be delivered by staff from NDS and VALID in eight locations across Victoria. There will be two sessions during the forum.

VALID **Session 1: 10.00am-11.15am**
This session will focus on VALID's 'Staying Safe' workshop for people with disability. We want people who use disability services to come to the forum and make sure they bring along staff from the service.

Light morning tea: 11.15am-11.45am



Session 2: 11.45am-1.00pm
This session will introduce NDS's Understanding Abuse e-learning and resource kit. Supervisors, team leaders and direct **support workers should attend this session to learn about how to** use these resources within their workplace. People with disability are also welcome to attend this session.

The forums are funded by the
Department of Health and Human Services



Dates and Locations

Friday	13th May	Morwell:	Wednesday	25th May	Bendigo
Thursday	19th May	Geelong	Thursday	26th May	Wangaratta
Friday	20th May	Ballarat	Monday	30th May	Noble Park
Monday	23rd May	Preston	Friday	3 June	Warrnambool

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.*



Having a Say conference

I started the year off by attending the Having a Say conference in Geelong in February. I have attended this conference for a number of years now as a self advocate and its something I look forward to every year.

On the Tuesday night before the conference I attend the Disability Awards run by the Geelong Council and Karingal Centre. This year it was held at the Geelong Library. I would like to congratulate all the winners they've done a good job!

The conference started on the Wednesday and it was a busy time for all of us. I was so excited to see the delegates coming back for another year to catch up with friends from other organisations. Judy Huett was the key note speaker that morning and she spoke about Our Voice, a sub-committee of Inclusion Australia, and how well they connect across Australia.



The Our Voice committee spoke about the reasons why we became leaders in the disability sector. I believe that people with a disability have the right to be treated as equals in the community.

I love going to the Having a Say conference as a staff member of VALID and being an equal.

The NDS Conference

In March I attended the (NDS) National Disability Services Conference with Jon. We were invited to join a panel to talk about our new project focusing on abuse and neglect. Our project describes all forms of abuse and neglect and what to do if it's happening to you.

We will be presenting the information at a few forums and if you have any questions you can contact us at VALID.



The OVAL project

VALID and the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) are working together on a project in the Barwon region.

I have been recruiting volunteers with Kylie through information sessions. We interviewed the volunteers with OPA and worked together to run training sessions for the volunteers. We currently have twenty volunteers ready to go and we are now recruiting participants with a cognitive impairment.

The project is important because it gives people with a cognitive impairment a chance to be heard. It also helps people who have been isolated most of their lives to know that there is help out there.



Illustrated above is the OVAL Project logo designed and painted by Meg Stewart-Snoad, a young artist with a disability from Geelong.

The logo represents giving a voice to the choices and decisions of a person with intellectual disability.

The OVAL Project brings together people with cognitive impairment and volunteers, who live in the Barwon region, to support them in making their own decisions. This project specifically targets people with disability who lack their own network of support (family, friends and people they know and trust) who are at danger of being isolated.

If you are interested in getting to know a person with disability in the Barwon region and supporting them to make their own decisions we need you.

To find out more contact the OVAL Project Team
kylie@valid.org.au

VALID Self Advocacy Program Networks

VALID Self Advocacy Network meetings run once a month in the four metropolitan regions; East, South, West, North. Members of the Networks meet to learn new things and gain information. The meetings are also an opportunity to use and develop their self-advocacy skills. At each meeting there are guest speakers to assist members to gain information.



At the March Network meetings we had guest speakers from the Taxi Service Commission come along to discuss the use of Taxi Cards. They also talked about what to do if you have complaint about a Taxi service. To find out more contact the Taxi Service Commission or look at their website: <http://taxi.vic.gov.au>

At the April Network meetings we had Wendy and Danijela from the Victorian Electoral Commission come and talk about voting in local council elections. The members of the Network had the opportunity to participate in a mock preferential vote.

If you are interested in attending the Network meetings please contact Katie or Anthony. Also if you or people from your service attend the Networks make sure you are on our email list to receive the Minutes and correspondence throughout the month. Some emails on our lists require updating.

katie@valid.org.au anthony@valid.org.au

Speak up for yourself (SUFYs) and Focus Groups

Voting has been a big topic in the Self Advocacy Program this year as we have two elections coming up. The members of the Eastern SUFY groups have been talking and supporting each other in learning more about how to vote in the Federal and Local Government Elections this and why it is important to vote.

The Focus groups in the North and West regions are up and running for the year. A big focus for the members has been the roll out of the NDIS and how it will affect them.

The reaction has been mixed with some feeling anxious and others not overly concerned. The focus group members are looking forward to Rick (from VALID) presenting a basic session on the NDIS. Discussion has already begun on the importance of thinking about their future goals and how the NDIS can develop their skills and independence to fulfil their dreams and needs.

Katie and Anthony
The VALID Self Advocacy Team



New VALID team members
Anthony Risolli and
Katie White (far right)

Peer Action Groups

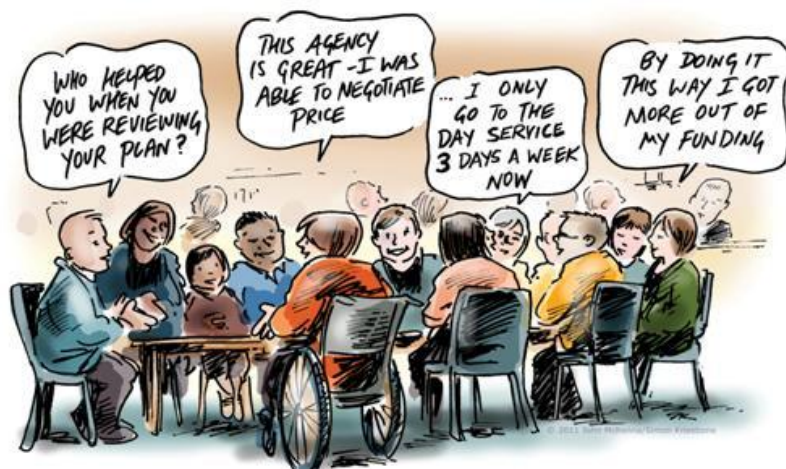
New members of the VALID Self Advocacy Team

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

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.

Both Anthony and Katie are excited to be a part of VALID and look forward to meeting members of the Networks and others who engage in the Self Advocacy program.



VALID is setting up a Self Management Peer Action Group in Preston.

This new group will be of particular interest to those people who are transitioning from Direct Payments (ISP) to the Self Management options with the (NDIS)

Guest speakers, Christine Scott and Donna Shaw from VALID will be talking about NDIS Self Management.

Thursday 26th May 2016

Session 1

Will be held at the Preston Library, 266 Gower Street, Preston from 12.30 pm - 2.30 pm

Session 2

Will be held at Reservoir Community and Learning Centre, 23 Edwardes Street, Reservoir from 6.30 pm - 8.30pm

If you would like more information about the Self Management Group contact:
John McKenna
0419 877 712

VALID Peer Action Groups – An exercise in building mutual supports!

Peer Action Groups are as different as the people who join a group and are shaped by the energies, passion and needs of those who participate in the groups. Currently we have 17 active groups across Victoria, 3 that are about to start and 2 or 3 that may not continue in 2016. We are looking to have at least 26 groups active by the end of 2016.

Most of the groups are local groups that are close to where people live and are held in community settings used by the rest of the community. We also have several special interest Peer Action Groups that bring together people with disability and/or families and supporters who share a common interest in a particular issue. These include a group for family members of people who have behaviours of concern, parents with disabilities and people who are interested in self-managing their support packages.

As Peer Action Groups play a role in supporting people with disability and their families to prepare for the roll out of the NDIS, the North East Metro Area of Melbourne (NEMA) has become a priority to establish Peer Action Groups. VALID is working in collaboration with Yooralla to develop Peer Action Groups in this area that encourage Yooralla clients to become involved in preparing for the NDIS. The first two groups have been formed and they meet on a monthly basis at the Northcote Public Library. Participants are wrapping their heads around the up-coming changes and at each meeting they keep coming back with more questions.

New groups in this area are also in the process of being established at Whittlesea and Banyule with some support from Metro Access Workers at these councils. Our capacity to expand the number of peer action groups depends on access to skilled, committed and enthusiastic volunteer facilitators. Currently 8 of our groups are facilitated by volunteers who usually operate in pairs for support and to share the challenge of facilitating dynamic groups. Group leaders meet together monthly for training, peer support, skill development and knowledge building around the NDIS.



David Craig

Feedback from Peer Group Participants

"When you speak up for yourself about an issue often no one will do anything but when we speak and act as a group people take notice of what you are saying and are more likely to do something about it."

"I went to an information session about the NDIS but it was just too, much to take in. In the Peer Action Group we get a chance to ask all our questions, get some answers and understand better what is going to happen when it is rolled out here."



News from the PAG Network

The **FIN group** have been focusing on what supports are available to parents with a disability. Barbara Carter from the Office of the Public Advocate spoke at their last meeting about the project “Rebuilding the Village: Supporting families where a parent has a disability”.

Members from the **Clayton Peer Action Group** have been working on a list of goals they would like to achieve. Members are focusing on being active and independent.

The group meets at the Monash Community Centre which has a gym and a swimming pool – the perfect location for them to start achieving their goals!



Tully Zygiar (pictured above), VALID Information and Media Officer supports the Yooralla groups that meet monthly in the Northcote Public Library.

Gaining Independence Peer Action Group will commence in Geelong in May and will be encouraging people with disability who are keen to become more independent and more confident in accessing life in the community. Jenny MacPherson is looking to use her own life experience of moving out of home and living independently to facilitate this group and is currently looking for a co-facilitator for this group.

Members in the **Behaviours of Concern Peer Action Group** have been supporting each other and discussing ways for their family members to connect with their local communities. Another community that has been helpful to some of the members have been those online through social media. By creating these communities, parents are working towards create protective mechanisms for their children along with encouraging their independence. They will also be a key support

“**READY, SET, CONNECT**” was the theme for the “Having a Say Conference 2016” and there was a stream in the conference promoting the Peer Action Groups. Three of our Peer Action Groups attended the conference in February and each group presented on the work they are doing together in their meetings. The **FIN group** got the chance to connect with another support group for parents with disabilities (**Powerful Parenting**) and plan on reconnecting in the future.

The **Clayton Peer Action Group** got the chance to travel to Geelong together as a group via train. Working together they got in touch with V/Line to check whether the trains would be running and if they would have enough room for all of them. The group enjoyed the day despite having to get up early to catch the 9 o'clock train.

David Craig

Community Development Coordinator

The VALID Families Team

With our new project funding we have been able to bring on two additional Family Trainers, Maree and Donna who will introduce themselves below.

In the last two months the team has been busy delivering fourteen NDIS Information Sessions across a range of regions and completed three courses (four sessions with optional planning workshop - see next page) in the first NDIS roll out area in North East metro area. At present Info Sessions and courses are primarily focused on assisting families with preparing for transition to the NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme).



The participant feedback from parents who have done the course this year:

"Excellent. As well as taking notes, I have the booklets, mock plans & the USB info to refer to"

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

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

Introducing Maree Hewitt

I am married with two children, two grandchildren and I love them all. I live on a farm near St. Arnaud in north central Victoria.

I have been involved in the 'disability world' for 36 years through my daughter who has Prader Willi Syndrome and trichotillomania. As a mum I have enjoyed the journey so far, and look forward to the adventures and learning to come. I have also been involved with VALID for many years through volunteering in the VALID Family Mentor Team. I am enjoying working with families as I conduct the families course.



Introducing Donna Shaw

I have lived in Geelong most of my life. I have been involved in disability since my daughters birth almost 21 years ago. Yes we have a big party to organise this year.

One of my philosophies has been not to wait for the Government to do it, If you need it do it yourself. I have always worked hard to obtain services for my daughter and this in hand has provided services for other families.

I am a founding director of Kids Plus Foundation who have provided therapy for over 12 years FREE to over 70 families in the Barwon Region. Kids Plus Foundation now live in NDIA world so I can appreciate NDIA from both a participant and service provider perspective. I now 'Self Manage' my daughters NDIA plan and that has definitely been a huge learning curve. I have no time for hobbies, but if I did, I would read, listen to music, eat beautiful food and pay more attention to family and friends.



Families as Planning Partners

Members of the VALID Family Mentor Team (FMT) present the course from a unique family-member (and ally) perspective. This is especially valuable with the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The FMT is a team of parents and allies. They each have undertaken extensive training in supporting families, facilitation, advocacy and person-centred planning through a VALID project over the last eight years.

In addition to the course information, the FMT offers:

- peer support
- sharing of information from personal experience
- empathy & validation of individual circumstances

Families can choose to develop either 'core' of a person-centred plan or a more extensive (whole of life) plan during the course if they choose to.

Session 1. NDIS intro & the Families' role

- An Intro to the what, how & who gets the NDIS
- What is my role in light of changes & the NDIS?

Session 2. *Getting your point across effectively!*

- Being aware of how I communicate
- Communicating your needs with the NDIS, workers & services

Session 3. NDIS Planning & Why have a PCP

- person-centred plan (PCP) & its' benefits
- the NDIS planning process
- types of plans & what suits your situation

Session 4. The NDIS funding & purchasing process

- how the NDIS funding process works
- managing your funding package
- engaging & purchasing services

Each session is approx. 4 - 4.5 hours long and usually held 9:45am - 2:00pm . An optional fifth session is available to consolidate a whole of life plan.

Cost: There is no cost to families to attend the course.

More information:
christine@valid.org.au or contact
Chris or Maree at the VALID office
9416 4003.



Family as Planning Partners

This course assists parents and families of people with disability to prepare for the transition to the NDIS and become confident in dealing with the new disability 'system'.

Having a Say



ready, set, CONNECT!



This year the Having a Say conference was all about forming connections with the community.

Life doesn't have to be a lonely marathon. It can also be a fun run. There are others who share your hopes and dreams. There are others who share your doubts and fears. They need you as much as you need them.

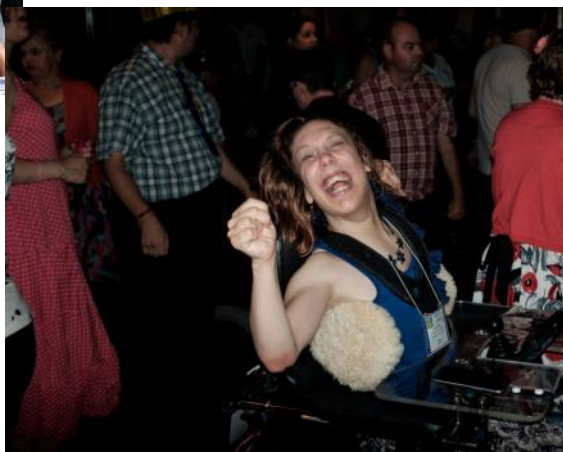
To be part of the community you first need to be part of a community.

You need to connect! and for the past sixteen years, the Having a Say Conference has been the number one place to come together to connect.

The following pages show some photo highlights the 2016 Having a Say conference.



'The conference was Fantastic, we enjoyed it, interesting, great atmosphere.'



'I think the conference was absolutely excellent, I totally enjoyed myself as I do each year. I belong to a group called community disability alliance hunter known as CDAH and we are based in Newcastle and it would be a good opportunity for this group to come down and present.' (Leigh Creighton NSW)



'Continues to be an excellent 'coming together' celebrating, exploring, challenging and exchanging between people. The headings of meeting up with and sharing could well be made part of the evaluation.' These experiences outside of sessions are one of the best features of conference. The awards as lead in to the conference might also be part of evaluation. (Brian Donovan)



One of VALID's quiet achievers Brenda Tranter (centre) was presented with an award of appreciation by delegates from Woodbine Service and Minister Foley.

The group wanted Brenda to know her hard work for the conference behind the scenes was recognised and appreciated.



Thank you Elaine

Elaine Valentine (pictured with Minister Foley and Kevin Stone, VALID) presented Elaine with a bouquet of flowers to thank her for many years organising the wonderful decorations at the Having a Say dinner disco.

The beautiful centrepieces Elaine provided have long been a collectors item for people at the disco.



Thank you to our volunteers, identified by their blue t-shirts or orange for catering..

Without volunteers, many of whom take leave from work to help out, there would not be a Having a Say conference.





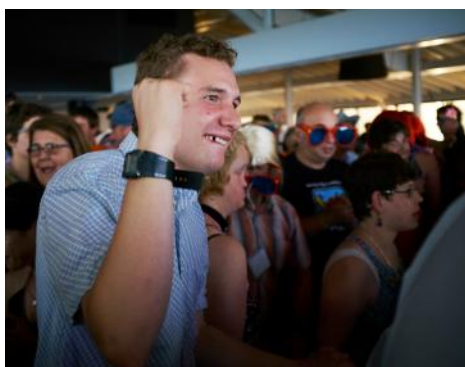
[The Dinner Disco] 'Was Fantastic, I loved the magical atmosphere. Engaging and dancing with others is such a privilege for me. (Katrina Sneath NZ)'



Thank you Disability Services Commissioner for their Sponsorship of the Thursday conference dinner and disco at The Pier which helps us keep the registration costs as low as possible.



'Thank you for your support and as a first timer to HaS my feedback is "what an amazing event, showcasing what having a say means ... everyone needs to get to Geelong and see it for themselves.'" (Tom Bevan, Metro Access worker, Hobson Bay City Council)



Art Competition

Thank you to the Office of Professional Practice for their continued sponsorship of the Having a Say Art Competition. If you ever visit the Office of Professional Practice make sure to have a look at the art on display in their foyer.



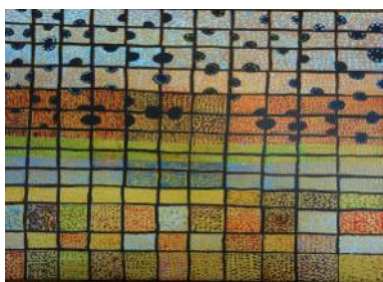
Jane Rosengrave



Brady Freeman



James Barden



Steve Canning

Congratulations to this years winners!

The theme for this year's competition was "ready, set, CONNECT! Frank Lambrick, The Senior Practitioner, selected the 4 winning artworks (shown above) from 31 entries. Frank presented the winners with a certificate and cheque at the conference.

Performances



'Super cool and lots of fun, love talking to people as I walk around. Loved learning the thriller dance and performing myself.'



Red Faces



Thank you to the 20 performers who competed in Red Faces auditions at the Sphinx on Wednesday night. It was a fabulous night of entertainment for everyone.

Thank you also to our guest judges Half Cat (and Geelong Football Club), Sadat-Jon Hussain and Brooke Boyle who selected the 3 finalists.

Thank you to the management and staff of the Sphinx Hotel for another great night.

The three finalists performed at the Friday closing ceremony in Costa Hall where the judges Sadat-Jon Hussain, Colin Hiscoe & Elica Petrovska faced the difficult task of who would take out the major prize from 3 amazing acts.



Josh Moorfoot



Meredith Smith



Aaron Inglis

Awards

Robert Martin Award

Robert selects whoever impresses him at the conference who speaks up about issues and has a significant impact for people with a disability.

This year Robert gave the award to the Our Voice Committee



Family Empowerment Award

The Family Empowerment Award was presented to Denise Leembruggen from Horsham for standing beside her son Tom to empower him to be a strong self advocate.



Pentland and Banfield Award

The Pentland - Banfield Award is awarded to a self advocate who speaks up about being part of the community.

This year the award was presented to Andrew Prior from Moe Life Skills.



Geelong Disability Awards



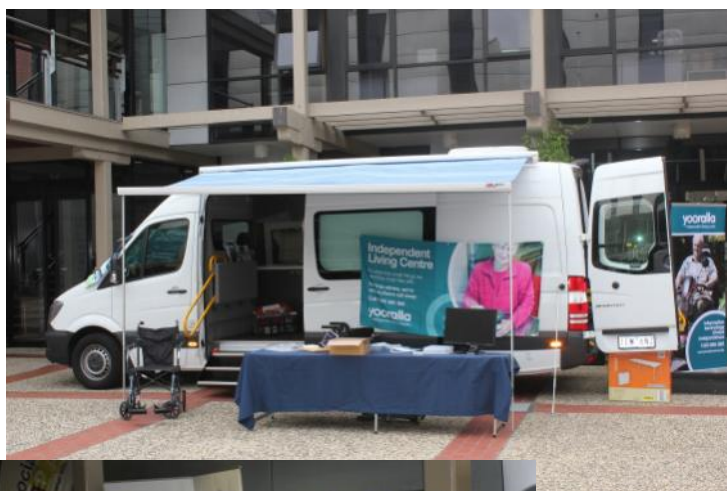
Geelong Awards for People with a Disability 2016

Held in partnership with Karingal and the City of Greater Geelong the Geelong Disability Awards ceremony occurred on Tuesday during the HaS welcome event.

Congratulations to this years winners

- VOLUNTEERING: Tamika Simpson
- SPORT AND RECREATION: Sam McIntosh
- LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY: Lynne Foreman
- ACHIEVEMENT: Kylie McCutcheon
- OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEE: Sarah Foley
- ARTS: Liam O'Neil.
- YOUNG ACHIEVERS: Tyson Bell and Cooper Hall

Having a Say and Our Choice Expos



'Thought Friday expo was outstanding/amazing, thank you, very helpful. Thank you to all who had anything to do with organising this conference, looks a huge task but appreciated very much by our family.'



Clickability team reviews the Having a Say conference

We were so thrilled to participate at the VALID Having a Say and Our Choice Expo this year. We had a stall set up across the three days and presented on the Wednesday and Friday.

It was a great few days, and along with our social media buff, Kirrily, we spent the time connecting with people, gathering reviews, and having some great conversations about why review sites like ours are so important!

The year prior we had come along to the Our Choice Expo. At that stage, it was just Aviva and I. We had some business cards, but no website yet. I remember hearing in one of the sessions someone mutter to themselves “we need a TripAdvisor for disability services”. I popped up my hand and told her what we were planning. That feels like a long time ago now.

The atmosphere over the three days was great – we had a lot of fun running the wheel of fortune at our stall and encouraging people to review the services they used.

We noticed how great some of the support workers were in facilitating this as well. Some would help-out with the communication, others would say “ok, I’m going to give you some privacy” and off they would go. We were very impressed! We even received some reviews of the conference! My favourite is this one:

"I loved all the activities at Having-a-Say.

All the volunteers are very caring. Loved the badge making" - 4 stars. Of course, there is always room for improvement and we were given some feedback about the signage being too small.

The seminars on the final day weren’t particularly well attended unfortunately, though our one on Wednesday got a great response (perhaps this had something to do with Aviva dancing to Taylor Swift?).

All in all, it is a wonderful and unique conference. We are very grateful for the response we had, and particularly for the opportunity to find out more about what it means to provide a great service.

Well another successful year has gone we had over 1,200 delegates attend the conference with a wonderful bunch of volunteers who are always brilliant we would like to thank everyone who volunteered this year.

For those who were unable to attend the conference we set up a Twitter account where people who were attending could interact with those who couldn’t, we had a lot of participation and interaction.



The Facebook page is a successful one too as we have 1,328 likes which is a fantastic effort from everyone. Thanks to the VALID team thank you for your ongoing support and please keep following Facebook and Twitter though they will be getting updated in the next few months

Simone Stevens



Dinner and Chat speech by The Hon. Martin Foley, Minister for Disability

It's a privilege to be here tonight at the Having A Say conference. What a spectacularly, glittery event, with suitably glittery stars in this room.

Not only is this conference Australia's largest conference for people with a disability, but its success is clearly that its designed, organised and run in the interests of people with disability. It's the opportunity to connect with peers and have a say on issues that matter to you – None more so that the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

So I commend VALID, not just for this conference but for the work they do all throughout the year to empower people with a disability – operating through a focus on building rights into a framework and an advocacy system based on asserting choice and control by people with a disability.

Those rights are not something that sit in glorious isolation on statute books or policies. They are contested and nuanced every day.

No more so than when the rights of people with disabilities have long been fought for. No more so than in the vision and campaign for the NDIS which is now so close that you can almost touch it.

They are rights that are built up over time through organisation and advocacy activists like VALID.

The nation transforming NDIS reflects that activism. It didn't happen by accident. It came about through campaigns led by people with disabilities and their allies. So reflect on your achievements tonight while you ponder the next challenge.



This conference neatly sums up what disability rights reform has been about for 30 years, and what the soon to roll out National Disability Insurance Scheme, in particular should mean.

In December last year I announced additional funding of \$10 million to support Victorians with disabilities, their families, service providers and staff in the transition to the new scheme.

VALID is a recipient of some of this support and it will provide practical and targeted information and resources for people with a disability, particularly around promotion of people's rights and empowering people to make choices that best fits their aspirations and goals and engaging families. I know that VALID will make good use of this.

The Andrews' Labor Government shares VALID's focus on participation and opportunity and rights as being at the heart of disability reform – not just better services.

Our vision is to create an inclusive community where people with a disability are supported and empowered to make choices that enable them to live a life they value – to bring to fruition in peoples' lives the promise of "choice" and "control".

A central task for all levels of Government in this effort is the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme as promised. Across Victoria, starting in July this year we will see participants in the North/East of metropolitan Melbourne enter the scheme. Ultimately this will transform the lives of more than 100,000 Victorians with a disability, their families and carers as the scheme ramps up over 3 years.

As you know, the NDIS represents the most significant change in the way disability services are provided in our history.

It's the greatest social policy reform since the introduction of Medicare. It is an opportunity for us to see social justice delivered to people long locked out of consideration for outcomes in so many walks of life.

Social justice built on the back of access to better – decent services.

It is about re-shaping Australian society into a better place, for people with disability for sure – but for all Australian's to give concrete meaning to "inclusion" – or perhaps how we bring our commitment to the Great Australian 'Fair Go' into a 21st century context.
It's a new deal.

To really place people at the heart of the NDIS system, we need a new relationship, one based on notions of rights and citizenship – not just consumers and markets – as important as they are.

Strong, empowered, confident participants in a market, of course. But citizens, supported in their rights as well.

This new system we are on the verge of also needs a skilled, values based and well-paid workforce to support people with a disability in this task.

It is the highest benchmark of outcomes, safeguards and quality we are looking for – not the lowest common denominator of minimum services.

And to do this, we need the Commonwealth Government to lead in the delivery of the NDIS as promised; based on the necessary pillars of a system that will make sure the system works. The window for the Commonwealth to put these pillars in place – sustain them, fund them and secure them – is closing fast. And frankly we have a long way to go to achieve this in this short window.

So tonight I'm asking the Commonwealth Minister – who you might be seeing tomorrow – to sign up. Sign up to four pillars necessary to achieve the goals of the NDIS.

The first pillar - Advocacy and rights.

The NDIS must be a system where services and interests must be framed around "rights," which can only be exercised when they are articulated and enforced.

So it's now well overdue to not only reverse the Commonwealth Government's cuts to advocacy services but to include funding for advocacy components into the heart of the system.

In Victoria we have done our bit with the recent \$10 million package – But from the Federal Government's \$140 million NDIS Sector Development Fund, Victorian organisations have received just \$500,000. Victoria must at least see funds matched from the commonwealth.

Pillar Two – A Fair Price

The NDIS must offer a price structure that adequately supports a system capable of delivery.

The current multi-layered review of price needs to recognise the investments and economic opportunities of the NDIS, as it moves towards a mature and functioning market.

It must be a price mechanism that genuinely meets the plans and aspirations of the 105,000 Victorians expected to enter the NDIS, their families and carers over the next four years.

For participants to have confidence in markets – we need to recognise the reality that sometimes markets fail. But market failure cannot be at the expense of participants or the workforce.

Particularly in the early years of transition we need support for a “designed market system” that ensures it is sustainable and in the interests of all players.

A price that will underpin quality standards, training and a growing and motivated workforce is therefore critical. It is one the current NDIA review must deliver.

And of course a fair price is central to allowing us to confidently build a growing and skilled labour market for the NDIS – expected to double in Victoria over the next five years.

Pillar Three – Quality and Standards must be at the highest possible level, nationally consistent and enforceable. Both rights and the instrument of price should be supported by quality standards and safeguards that people with disability can have confidence in.

The Commonwealth Government must work with state and territory Ministers at the Disability Reform Council next month to deliver a genuine national system of safeguards and quality service. National – Rigorous – Consistent – Enforceable – Accessible.

The Andrew’s Government position is clear. Until a high quality and strong safeguard framework can be assured for Victorian participants through a national system we will continue to operate a Victorian system of quality and safeguards.

We are interested in the high road of building on and improving the system in the interests of people with a disability foremost. We will not participate in a race to the bottom. We will continue to resist and will not support the low rent road of the lowest common denominator.

I have been heartened by the position of the federal minister but the proof will be in the delivery of a clear, funded system of Quality Safeguards and Standards, before scheme roll out commences. The good will is there. It’s just that the national in the N.D.I.S needs to emerge more clearly and boldly, and soon.

Pillar Four – Housing and Capital Investment

The NDIS trials have shown that when financially supported, people with a disability, are articulating housing and lifestyle aspirations (from construction, renovation to replacement value) that move away from the current cookie cutter options our systems deliver. And who is really surprised that when empowered to make these decisions, people with disability choose different options to that which our inflexible system serves up.

Increasingly, they need capital investment in innovative housing that is fit for purpose. I have seen the designs and the dreams of a number of people with disabilities and their families across the state and they deserve to be fully funded like people were promised. The current investment from the NDIA and the Commonwealth has failed to deliver the original promise of \$700 million in this area.

I do not accept that an insurance system – with a whole of life approach – cannot accommodate this investment. That’s what Insurance risk management is meant to be about.

As grateful as we are for expressions of interest of “ideas” and \$10 million for “trials,” they do not scratch the surface of need. \$10 million will deliver us about a brick per participant. When the ‘need’ requires investment across an asset’s lifetime.

If we are serious about governments’ jointly - investing over the life span of people with disability, via an insurance based model, then the Federal

Government needs to allow the NDIA to deliver these promises.

For these Pillars to be delivered, voices like VALID's need to be supported.

The Andrews' Labor Government is committed to getting the NDIS right: of securing an investment and supporting its values, the transformative high road of quality - of safeguards, of standards, of advocacy, of rights.

The Andrews' Labor Government is committed to getting the NDIS right.

All of these 4 pillars are capable of being delivered by the Commonwealth and the states/territories.

People with disabilities, their advocates, their carers, their families, their allies - have waited, campaigned, organised and won this scheme.

The NDIS needs leadership and partnership from governments at all levels.

It needs investment and delivery on what has been promised.

It does not need straw man arguments from Commonwealth Treasurers that seek to create the falsehood that a lifetime insurance scheme – a system based on managing risk, managing returns and benefits over time – is somehow fatally weakened unless it is capped or limited now at start up – which by its definition is a time of massive growth.

The chance to show leadership exists over the next few months at the Disability Reform Council, through the Federal Budget and indeed if not then, then during the Federal Election campaign!

For 30 years, successive Victorian governments have worked with people with a disability, with the support of organisations like VALID, to deliver on a vision of a "people-focused" disability sector.

We have closed institutions and rejected segregation.

We have shone the light on abuse and neglect.

We have sought to deliver services and support that are based on inclusion and active delivery of a rights based framework.

We have achieved much.

The NDIS is now facing decisions that will set the standards and outcomes for the next 30 years.

We are on the cusp of a system that is capable of being enduring, high quality and truly bi-partisan, in the interests of people with disability driving the campaign.

I look forward to working with VALID to achieve that kind of an NDIS – an NDIS that delivers its promise.



After his speech at the dinner chat Minister Foley mixed and chatted with people in the disco

Visitors from Korea

In May, VALID had the pleasure of welcoming guests from Korea.

The Korean Association on Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (KAIDD) spent two weeks visiting disability services in Sydney and Melbourne to learn how the Australian disability sector works, focusing on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).



VALID hosted the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) in the morning to give an overview of the funding scheme. This was then followed by a presentation from Kevin who shared with them a range of initiatives that VALID is involved in.

VALID is always interested in connecting with other disability organisations to share ideas and information.



Inclusion International Conference

In October VALID will be sending a delegation to help represent Victoria and Australia at the Inclusion International and the Arc's National Convention & International Forum being held 27 – 29 October 2016 in Orlando, Florida.

VALID is requesting donations to help support us include as many people as we can in our delegation (people with disabilities and families).

If you are able to help out please send any donations to VALID (address on the back page or online payments through www.valid.org.au). We will send a receipt and any payment over \$2 is tax deductible.

The Inclusion International conference theme is Shaping the Future: Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Opportunities.

The conference brings together families, self-advocates and other leaders from across the world to :

- Build the Inclusion International shared agenda for inclusion
- Share and learn experiences and good practices
- Develop and share strategies, tools and resources for families, self-advocates and organizations to use in advancing inclusion.

Our Choice Expo Melbourne

Tuesday, 7th June 2016
12noon - 7:30pm

Darebin Arts and
Entertainment Centre
Cnr. Bell Street and
St Georges Road
Preston

Informing participants and
families about the services
and issues related to the
NDIS.

Our Choice Expo

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

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).

- Are you getting ready for the NDIS?
- Do you need to find out what is out there?

Especially of interest to North East Metro residents looking to be informed and prepared for the transition to the NDIS starting from 1st July this year

Over 100 exhibits plus Information Sessions on NDIS related topics!



For more information on becoming an Our
Choice exhibitor registrations email:
christine@valid.org.au

VALID

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc



235 Napier Street
Fitzroy VIC 3065



PHONE 03 9416 4003

FAX 03 9416 0850

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(rural people with disabilities & families)



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Registrations:

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(Training/workshops)

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