

December 2015

The VALID
Committee and Staff
wishes everyone a
safe and happy
Christmas and
New Year



NDIS and the Victorian Government's role in disability service provision



VALID believes the NDIS has the potential to be a wonderful thing for people with disability if done right. There is no question though that the changes that are coming are fraught with risk if they get it wrong!

The State Government, contrary to its pre-election promise, has announced that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) will be transferring disability services to NDIS funded non government and private providers.

See inside for VALID's response

NDIS and the Victorian Government's role in disability service provision

VALID's Position

Following the recent signing of a Bilateral Agreement with the Federal Government on the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the Victorian Government has announced that:

'... a transparent process will commence to identify which organisations are best placed to provide NDIS services currently provided by the Victorian Government. This process will include disability specialist services and services provided in group homes, respite facilities and residential institutions by the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as early childhood intervention services provided by the Department of Education and Training.'

VALID is enthusiastic about the roll-out of the NDIS but we are deeply disappointed by the lack of honesty and transparency surrounding this decision. It betrays a direct pre-election commitment from the now-Premier Daniel Andrews to maintain Government's service provision role.

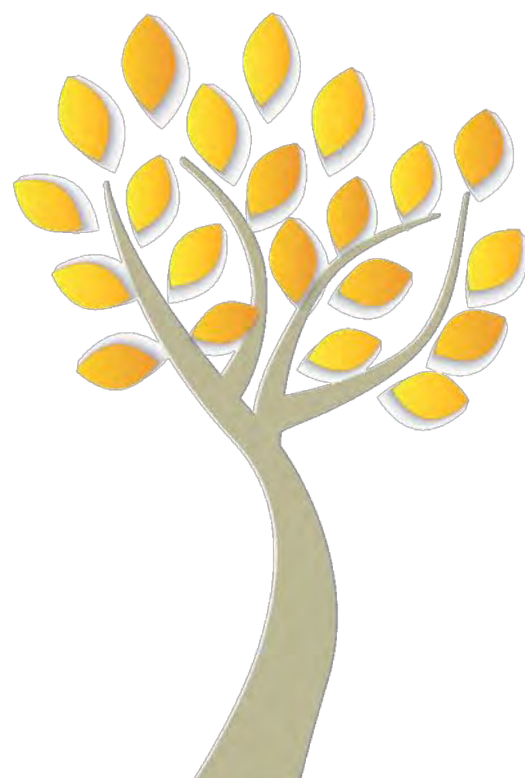
The balance between Government and non-Government service delivery has been an important feature of the Victorian disability sector for many years. While it is true to say the system overall is broken, it is also true that there are aspects of Government, Non-Government and Privately-run services that have advantages and benefits that the new NDIS should be seeking to build upon.

The NDIS is an historic opportunity to ensure people with disability are finally able to get the services they need and want. We recognise that the transfer of services to a cheaper and more competitive 'market' has the potential to offer the NDIA more „bang for their buck". We accept such efficiencies might support the long term viability of the Scheme. However we are deeply concerned that the real driver of Government decision-making may be cost-saving rather than the needs of people with disability.

In VALID's experience, the quality of a person with intellectual disability's life is usually dependent on support from quality staff. We therefore have great sympathy for the plight of the many DHHS workers who are feeling betrayed and undermined. However, we will leave it to the unions to represent their interests.

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For our part, we will be working to ensure the people they support gain maximum benefit from the promise of the NDIS.

We will therefore support any transfer that can demonstrate clear benefits and advantages to the lives of DHHS clients, and we will oppose any transfer that fails to prove an organisation's capacity, commitment and capability. Our focus will be on securing a monitoring and safeguards framework that holds services to account. Quality outcomes must be the driver of service delivery – not the interests of Government and Providers.

VALID is represented on the State Government's NDIS Implementation Task Force, along with other representative bodies. We will be using this forum to ensure the Government delivers on its following promise:

'The transfer of Victorian Government disability services to NDIS funded organisations in the non-government sector will be conditional on providers establishing that they have the capacity and expertise to deliver quality services for clients; with strong and enduring safeguards; and support for staff including moving to employment in the non-government sector on fair terms. Throughout this process the Victorian Government's priority will be to ensure that people with disability continue to receive high quality services with minimal disruption.'

To this end, VALID will be advocating for:

- Congregate models to be deemed contrary to the objects and principles of the NDIS Act and not be funded.
- People currently in congregate services to be provided more appropriate housing, consistent with the NDIS and Disability Services Act.
- Service providers to be given incentives to innovate and trial various models of individualised support.
- Housing to be kept independent from service provision.
- Any handover of housing ownership to be to community housing or other independent not-for-profit housing organisations.
- Residents of DHHS homes to be given the opportunity to choose their provider – including the option of remaining with DHHS. (As occurred with Sandhurst.)
- The intensive support needs of people with complex behavioural issues to be properly met.
- The right to access advocacy - including self advocacy, individual advocacy, legal advocacy, family advocacy and systemic advocacy - to be properly funded and guaranteed.

VALID Peer Action Group News

Most of our established Peer Action Groups have had their Christmas breakup parties and will resume in February. There are currently 14 active peer action groups connected to VALID and more groups in planning stages to commence early in 2016.

With the release of the announcement from the bi-lateral agreement between the Federal Government and the Victorian State Government of the commitment to roll out the NDIS across the state in a phased manner, our Peer Action Groups now have a clearer idea of when the NDIS changes will become a reality in their local region. This announcement means that we will be endeavouring to create some new groups in the areas that will roll out first, such as Northeast Melbourne Metro, Central Highlands and Bendigo.

However, we will maintain a commitment to set up new groups and maintain existing groups wherever we find the resources and capacity to respond to local interest from people with disabilities and their families.

As some areas will not see the NDIS rolled out for 2 or 3 years it is our belief that there is still an existing need for peer action groups that provide independent and trustworthy information and support people with disabilities to make choices, take control of their lives and build their self advocacy capacity.

For those people with disabilities whose family members play a critical role in the development of person centred supports and

who support the choices of their family member with a disability, we are keen to make sure that they too, have good information and advice through peer support.

For people with disabilities who have higher support needs, we are working closely with their support agencies to make it possible for them to participate in a VALID Peer Action Group.

Organisations that have been supporting our Peer Action Group program include - Yooralla, Northern Support Services, Moe Life Skills, Scope and Bailey House.

Wherever possible, we endeavour to hold our Peer Action Group meetings away from disability service facilities and try to find community facilities and centres that are a hub for a range of community activities. This has been enabling Peer Action Group participants to check out other community activities and increase their engagement in mainstream community settings. A number of Metro and Rural Access workers in councils have been particularly helpful in this respect.

Since establishing the VALID Peer Action Program in 2015, we have seen the value of tapping the talents and capacities of citizens with skills and interests in facilitating and supporting our Peer Action Groups. Currently we have 6 new volunteers at VALID who are taking on this challenge and bringing their skills and expertise to this work. Our capacity to expand the number of groups in 2016 and build a sustainable model for Peer Action Groups will be linked to the number of skilled and well matched volunteers that we can attract.

If you are interested in joining a group as a participant or would like to volunteer to support a Peer Action Group, please contact David Craig at VALID on 03 9416 4003 or david@valid.org.au.



Clayton Peer Action Group



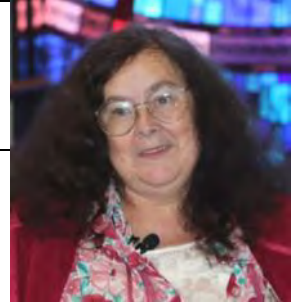
Frankston Peer Action Group's Christmas break up lunch.



Moe Peer Action Group breakup lunch

Heather Speaks Up

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



Violence and Abuse of Women with Disabilities

Patsie Frawley, Sue Dyson and Sally Robinson are working together on research about violence and abuse for women with disability.

VALID is working with the consultative research group for this project, advising the researchers on how to work with women with intellectual disability and women with complex communication needs.

The research will be finished next year and we will be able to share with you what the researchers have learned. If you have any questions you can contact Patsie Frawley: patsie.frawley@deakin.edu.au

Speak Out Conference

The Annual Tasmanian Speak Out conference is one of the longest running conferences for people with an intellectual disability in Australia. This year it was held in Launceston and they mainly focused on the NDIS, the theme this year was "NDIS full rollout: time to get ready"

Kylie Fisher and I attended the conference together. We attended quite a few sessions but the one that stood out to me was when they focused on employment. Paul Cain led the discussion and a key point was that people with a disability should be able to work in open employment and receive a wage that isn't tokenistic.

Another interesting session was the panel focusing on the NDIS. There were people working in the field on the panel and people who are receiving funding through the NDIS. It was interesting hearing their stories and experiences.

My highlight of the conference was presenting with Kylie on Supported Decision Making. Some people need support. I was very excited and it was good speaking to people with a disability and hearing their thoughts on the topic.

I was impressed by all of the self advocates who shared their stories and experiences of being a self advocate. I shared my personal story too and while it was hard, I was really proud of myself and so was Kylie.

On a lighter note, there was a lot of time for people to socialise and get to know each other. We danced all night and didn't get home until midnight! After the three days I felt really connected with everyone and have developed some great friendships.

Thank you to Speak out Tasmanian for the invitation to present. I look forward to coming back next year to follow up on our Supported Decision Making project.

OVAL Project

VALID is working together with OPA (Office of the Public Advocate) on a project about Supported Decision Making. The OVAL project will be supporting people to make decisions about their NDIS plan.

I am working closely with the OVAL team, as the self advocate who helps to run participants information sessions and be the contact for participants when they get involved. I will also be helping with volunteer training.

The participants are NDIS clients that the NDIS have referred to us as people with cognitive and intellectual disability who are isolated in the community, with no informal contacts or networks, who need support with making decisions.

Participants will be matched with volunteers early next year to support them to make decisions, so far we have got 6 fantastic volunteers.



I would also like to wish a happy Christmas to all my readers and look forward to seeing many of you at the Having a Say conference in February.

Heather Forsyth



Office of the Public Advocate

VALID
Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability

The OVAL Project



Are you interested in getting to know a person with disability?

Do you think you would be good at supporting a person with disability to make their own decisions?

Do you have two hours a fortnight for up to 12 months to commit to this new relationship?

We need people like you!

The Office of the Public Advocate (OPA) and the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability (VALiD) are seeking volunteers to join our exciting new OVAL Project in Barwon.

To find out more, contact the OVAL Project Team

Phone: 1300 309 337

Email: oval.project@justice.vic.gov.au

This project is funded via the NDIS Community Inclusion and Capacity Development Grant.

Artwork by Meghan Stewart-Snoad, a local artist on the Autism Spectrum.

Self Advocacy Melbourne

During October and November, members from Victoria Legal Aids" Community Engagement team, talked at the Melbourne Self Advocacy Network Meetings.

Volunteers from the audience, along with VALID staff, were chosen to play a part in the scenarios presented. The sessions were not only engaging and informative but by being interactive they were a lot of fun for everyone.



Victoria Legal Aids"
Community Engagement
team



"The VALID network meetings are a fantastic opportunity for Victoria Legal Aid to reach self-advocates from across metro Melbourne to talk about our services and how we can assist if a legal problem should arise in people's lives. By focussing on a particular legal problem such as fines and delivering this through role play, we felt the audience was engaged and took away key messages whilst also having a good time. We certainly find visiting the network meetings and working with VALID extremely rewarding and worthwhile and look forward to continuing and strengthening the relationship."

Erin Murray, VLA"s Community Legal Education Co-ordinator - Community Engagement

In November I talked to staff in a Scope group home about „Self Advocacy“, and the ways VALID can support staff and residents with their resident meeting process.

A couple of weeks later I was invited back to talk to the residents of the Mt Waverley home about what VALID can do to support their resident meetings. Karin, Natalie and Susan (pictured to the right) were keen to try some of the resources from VALID at their next resident meeting.

VALID produces a range of resources to help with choice making, documenting and a structure to follow.



Zoe with Karin, Natalie and Susan - Nov 25th 2015

Staff were excited to use the new documents also, saying :

"It will help build on the resident meetings and also make the process easier". "Having the structure and the tactile agenda and minutes will be great and give the ladies more ownership".

If you are living in a Group home and would like support from VALID, to build on your resident meetings or to get support to get them started contact Zoe at VALID on 9416 4003

Self Advocacy Melbourne

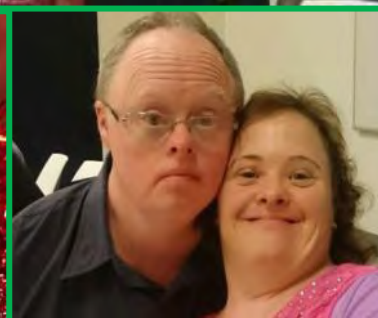
As 2015 drew to an close we celebrated the years achievements with an end of year lunch and look forward to new challenges in 2016. I hope all of the members of the Melbourne Self Advocacy groups enjoy a Happy Christmas.

Zoe Broadway

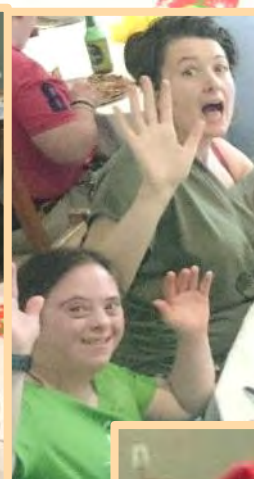
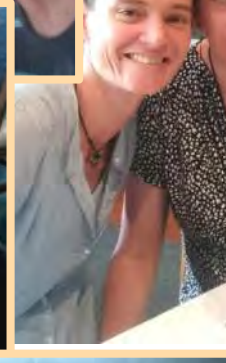
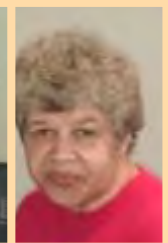
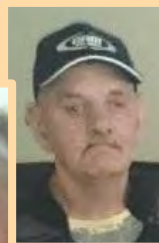
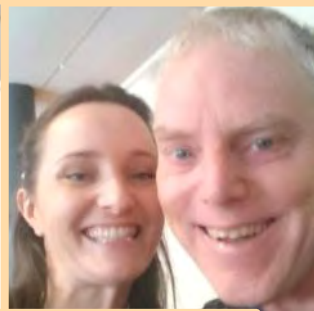
2015 has come to an end for the Eastern Speaking Up for Yourself (SUFY) groups.

It was a year full of learning, sharing, listening and growing for many who attend one of the seven evening meetings.

It has been a positive year of change and we look forward to an exciting 2016.



Photos above include members from the two JAPARA House SUFY groups.



2015 Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



2015 Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Having a Say Conference

Art Competition

Calling all budding artists! The Office of Professional Practice sponsors the art competition and presents 4 artists with a cash prize of \$600. The artwork is to be based on the conference theme of the competition is ready, set, CONNECT! If your coming to the Having a Say conference and would like to enter the art competition you can download an entry from the VALID website or call the office on 03 9416 4003.



Volunteers needed

The Having a Say conference is the largest conference for people with disability in Australia. Each year 600+ people with disability registered to attend the conference, and we are seeking volunteers to assist the VALID team with supporting the delegates. It is a rewarding and unique experience. If you are interested in volunteering contact VALID for more information.



Reminder: registration and come & try bookings close on the 29th January 2016.

Want to volunteer?

Want to support people with disability in your local area?

VALID is looking for members of the community to volunteer with assisting us in various programs.

Volunteering can help to make positive changes that directly effect the lives of people with disability.

Volunteers can help empower people with disability to connect with their communities.



VOLUNTEERS



WE NEED YOU

Orientation and training will be provided for all volunteers to assist them in their role.

If you are interested in volunteering and would like more information please call the VALID office on 9416 4003 or email:

volunteers@valid.org.au

ADVOCATE'S REPORT

Looking back over 2015 ...

It's good to see that the Human Rights Watch 2015 in Australia includes Disability Rights as the third most important concern. It would be more comforting not to have it listed, but sadly Australia is reportedly one of the biggest rights abusers.

A shocking forty-five per cent of Australians with disabilities live near or below the poverty line, according to their report, and a Human Rights Commission inquiry found inadequate safeguards and poor access to support. From an advocacy perspective, more and more cases are starting to emerge re funding issues being the main concern for people with disability. Families and even service providers have voiced concerns throughout 2015 around the lack of sufficient funds and likelihood that the future looks bleaker for some still.

An article reported by New Matilda on June 30, 2014, Welfare Fix Needs Boost Not Cuts, say Advocacy Groups, states that welfare groups have expressed serious concern about suggestions the Disability Support Pension should be reserved for those who have a permanent disability.

Maree O'Halloran, director of the Welfare Rights Centre, said this would push people who were virtually unable to work onto much lower Newstart payments. *"It basically means that hundreds of thousands of people who are living with very significant chronic illnesses and physical or intellectual disabilities could be taken off the Disability Support Pension,"* O'Halloran.

Looking back over 2015 also, in a blow for advocacy in the field, activist and comedian Stella Young passed away late last year, a short time after the ABC axed Ramp Up, a website dedicated to news and opinion for and from the disability community.

In a meeting with a service provider this week, other concerns surfaced in an informative discussion group. These included:

Mental Health supports within disability; staff in the disability sector having a minimum training requirement to ensure professional practice and services are respectfully upheld and can allow for best practice;

Online chat rooms for NDIS enquiries to ensure that knowledge is shared and people

STOP PRESS!!



ADVOCATE'S REPORT

are better empowered around NDIS facts and strategies; is the group home model changing in the future?; what does accommodation look like in a NDIS world?;

How is the NDIS permitting greater and more amazing choices for people with disability if there are reportedly little to no housing vacancies to accommodate so many on the waiting list? Mental Health and Wellbeing strategies adopted by agencies not being sufficiently funded or researched for a better future. There are many concerns about the future beyond 2015. I wonder what 2016 will bring.

As an advocate I am also astonished at why people with disability are forcibly required to know their goals and have goals listed and set out in life. Every other person I know, who does not have a disability, does not know what their own future will really look like. I'm sure many Australians travel through life day by day trying to achieve as much as they can, until they are more self assured. Reassurance of who they are as a person and what they want to achieve in life is often not realized for some.

As an observation it seems as though the system and society is content in putting a lot of pressure on people with disability. Is it because they receive a tax funded disability support pension? Is there responsibility and accountability required or expected because of this? I wonder. If the Human Rights Watch 2015 is as accurate as it reports, if so we are in for an interesting 2016.

At well over case capacity in this quarter, our advocacy cases now touching over 63, the pressure will surely put our own resources and strengths to the test in the new year. We have coped rather well in 2015. Let's hope our power cells remain fully charged for what's around the corner.

Dominique Moollan
Advocacy Coordinator

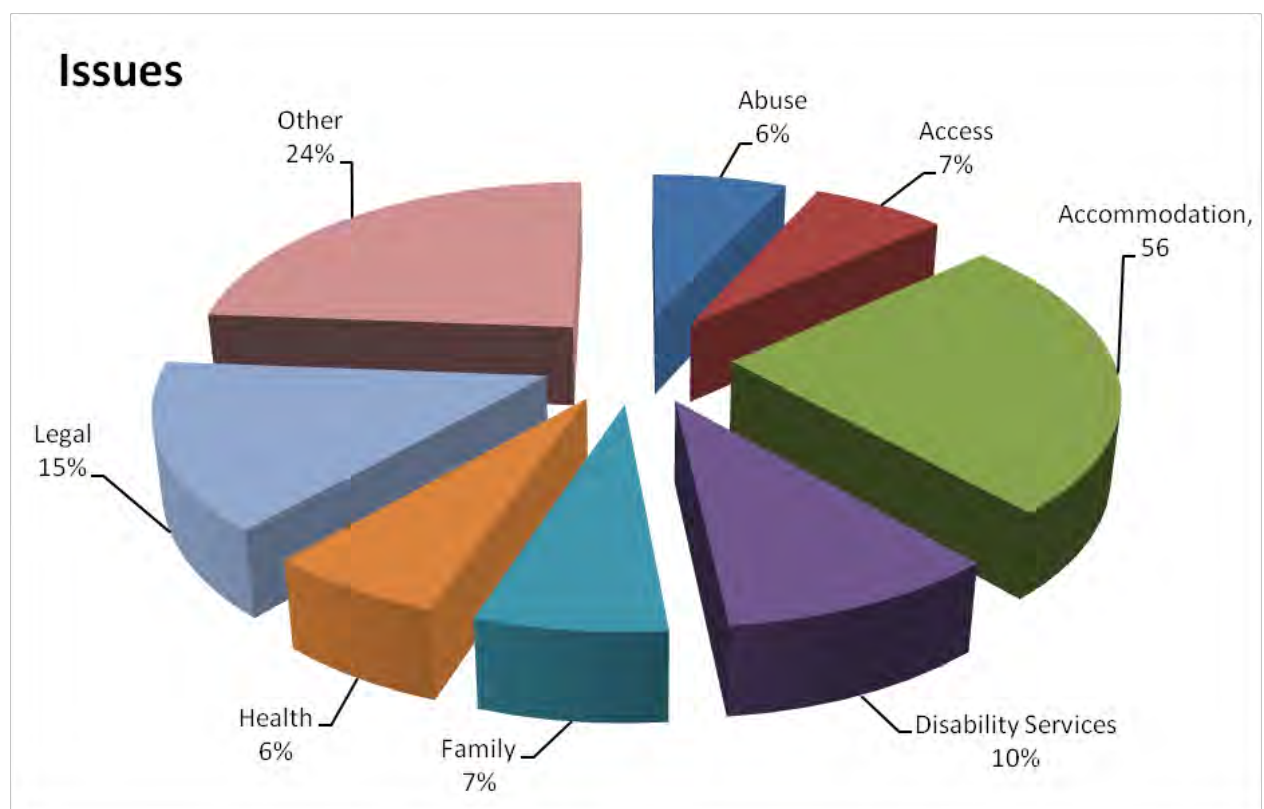
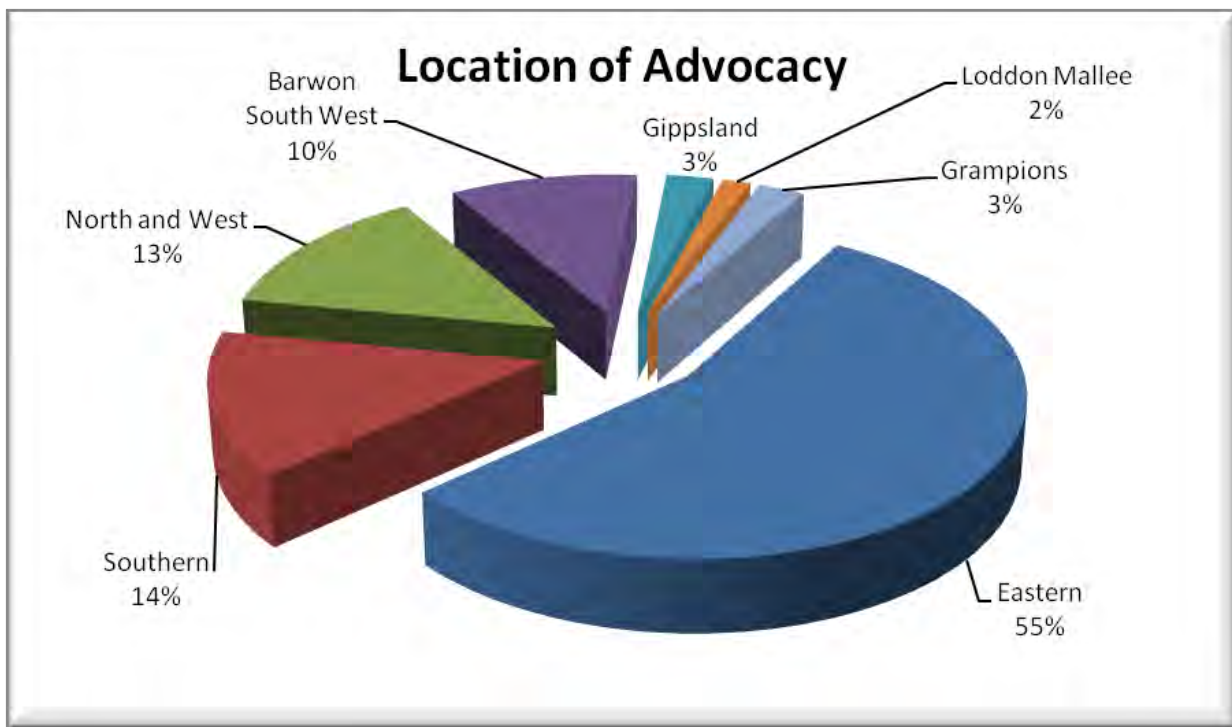


The Minister of DHHS, Martin Foley, in response to a submission from VALID to increase its advocacy capacity, has approved a significant increase to VALID's core capacity over the next 18 months to help meet the upcoming demand from the NDIS roll out in Victoria.

2015

VALID's Year in Review

The following pages are from the 2015 VALID Annual General Report



The 2015 VALID Year in Review

NDIS

During 2014-15, the pressure on NDIA to establish NDIS on-budget and on-schedule has in some instances led to the cutting of corners on proper planning processes, which has kept VALID extremely busy in both its individual and systemic advocacy work.

Typically the problems arose from inadequate planning time and inadequate understanding of the needs of people with intellectual disability, sometimes compounded by an inadequate service system. VALID has worked through many of these issues - which might be described as NDIA "teething problems" and is continuing to advocate at the highest levels to ensure more appropriate system design. One key issue was the absence at the NDIA Board and Advisory Group level of substantial experience in the intellectual disability area.

VALID drove a campaign, through Inclusion Australia: The National Council on Intellectual Disability, to rectify this problem and was successful in influencing the establishment of the NDIA Advisory Board's Intellectual Disability Reference Group. Co-chaired by NDIA General Manager Liz Cairns and Board Member Rhonda Galbally, the IDRG has already grown to play a vitally influential role in shaping the design of the new system and in ensuring people with intellectual disability and their families obtain maximum benefit from the scheme.

Additionally, at the annual Having a Say Conference Dinner we were addressed by the NDIA CEO, David Bowen, who engaged in a highly productive conversation directly with our Committee Members and supporters.

Having a Say Conference

Speaking of the conference, the 2015 again attracted over 1,000 delegates and was again the highlight of our year. We were privileged to be addressed by Commissioner Robert



Kevin Stone
Executive Officer



Dot Leigh
President

Fitzgerald AM on the Royal Commissioner's inquiry into abuse, which then led to a series of highly informative discussions. Thanks to People with Disability Australia for helping us to organise for the Commissioner to attend. Another great privilege - and a great surprise - was for VALID to be presented with the Public Advocate's Award for 2015 by Colleen Pearce. Her speech noted some of VALID's achievements over the years and was greatly appreciated.

On the eve of the conference, VALID teamed with Karingal and the City of Greater Geelong. The Geelong Awards for People with a Disability is a new partnership between Karingal and the City of Greater Geelong. The awards celebrate the contribution of people with a disability to the Geelong community and aim to strengthen the region's status as the centre for innovation and change in the disability sector.

The awards were also supported by BDRC, K-Rock, Bay FM and Geelong News.

The Awards Ceremony was held on Tuesday, 3rd February at the Geelong Performing Arts Centre which marked the start of the Having a Say Conference.

The Winners of the 5 categories were:

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



The 2015 VALID Year in Review

Cassy Geffke - Achievement Award -

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



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

and world levels.

Phoebe Mitchell - Sport & Recreation Award - for Pheobe's high level achievements in sport as a multiple world swimming record holder

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

Thomas Banks - Leadership and Advocacy Award - As an author and a public speaker Tom's leadership and advocacy has helped educate people and raise awareness about people with a disability.

During the conference, the following Awards were also presented:

ROBERT MARTIN SELF ADVOCATE LEADER AWARD

Robert Martin is one of the leading international self advocates from New Zealand. He led the charge to close institutions in New Zealand and took the fight all around the world. In recognition of Robert's achievements VALID sponsors the Annual Robert Martin Award.

The Award is given to the person who most impresses Robert at the conference as having a significant impact on behalf of others with a disability, who speaks up about issues that are important to people with disability.



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

DOUG PENTLAND - DAVID BANFIELD AWARD

Doug Pentland and David Banfield were members of Reinforce which was the first self advocacy group in Victoria and Australia. Doug and David were pioneers of self advocacy and they both had passion and commitment for all people with an intellectual disability.

Colin Hiscoe from Reinforce & Kevin Stone, Executive Officer of VALID presented the award to Georgia Green from Moe Life Skills.



FAMILY EMPOWERMENT AWARD

The Family Empowerment Award is awarded to a family member who has „stood beside“ their family member and advocated for their rights to appropriate support, community inclusion and a good life.

Kevin Stone, Executive Officer of VALID, presented the award to Dariane McLean.



The 2015 VALID Year in Review

State Government

The change of Government in Victoria led to a renewal of discussions with DHHS on a range of issues that are of serious concern, including the lack of consultation and engagement with sector generally, and specifically with regard to the NDIS transition; the inadequacy of responses to abuse and neglect; the lack of capacity among advocacy organisations to cope with demand.

Early in 2015 VALID Committee Member Debs Johnson and the EO met with the new Premier Daniel Andrews to raise these and other issues and were greatly impressed by his grasp of the issues and his commitment to listen and engage. This welcome commitment has since been reflected in discussions with Minister Martin Foley and the Parliamentary Secretary Gabrielle Williams.

Having a Say Conference 2016

10th - 12th February, 2016

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus
Geelong



**The largest conference for people
with disability in Australia**

Our Choice Expo

Friday 12th February, 2016

9.30 - 3.30pm



Are you getting ready for the NDIS?

Visit over 80 exhibits and attend information sessions to learn more about what is available to you through the NDIS. **Free entry to the public.**

View John McKenna talking about the expo on youtube at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol2H065t8UM>

For more information about the Having a Say Conference or the Our Choice Expo contact the VALID office on 9416 4003 or email: havingasay@valid.org.au

Individual Advocacy

If you conduct a *Google* search on advocacy and narrow your search with “*a review of advocacy over the last year*”, the items listed include; Minister responded to concerns about child protection; Rosie Batty, Australian of the Year, says more money needed for advocacy groups ... still inadequately funded; Diabetes advocacy organisations, did they live up to their own expectations?; someone writes about Self-advocacy and inclusion ... a book launch; and the lucky fourth listing for Google is Will 2014 be the Year of Advocacy Marketing? The funnier entry in the *Google* search, as you scroll down, is ... Advocacy Organisation of the Year – Alliance for Biking.

What does that tell you? Well it tells me that Advocacy for people with an Intellectual Disability needs to market services and stories much more in 2016. Otherwise, to be seen and be heard, get on your bike! ... and for the Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty has been amazingly committed to the cause for more awareness and respect for family violence issues. It is great to see a champion achieve so much. VALID, is a quieter achiever though, despite having a great profile in the disability community and being renowned for taking positive action for so many who struggle to remain empowered and informed in the world of disability services and supports.

The system is a tough one to navigate, but our advocacy services work hard to empower people, especially those who support, assist or represent people with an intellectual disability. In following the *Stand Beside* method of advocacy, for the last 12 months I have been working with people to bridge the gap that exists between people with an intellectual disability and the mechanics of the Victorian disability system. There are many different approaches, ideas and beliefs that push Individual Advocates like myself, to rise above and challenge the system and people's thinking. Being an effective advocate involves many hours of discussion, mediation, sharing of ideas, and transparent communication that talks to injustice and unfairness when and where possible.

In retrospect, over 12 months VALID's advocacy service has worked with 275 individuals, well above the number we are actually funded to assist. Interestingly enough, the largest group of cases originate from the Eastern region. A third of our case load involved conversations around accommodation issues. The second most popular issue presented by people during the 2014-2015 financial year related to legal matters. Thanks to our preferred legal advisor Villamanta, many issues had positive outcomes for our clients.

With the NDIS designed so that planners and representatives work positively with people to identify supports they need to live as full a life as possible, goals for individuals and aspects of the lives should improve dramatically. Let's hope that its design is such that people can be supported adequately to become as independent as possible, involved in their community and their community welcoming them in return, greater opportunities for education and employment, and more.

Above all, if the system works well, the future will be bright and ought to be brighter than yesterday and today. Greater choice and control means better health and wellbeing. The world and people's opinions and feelings are always changing. With that in mind advocacy will continue to exist as long as it is adequately staffed, funded and resourced to empower people within the system to help reduce any negative impact on people with a disability.

Dominique Moollan
Individual Advocacy
Coordinator



Self Advocacy Melbourne

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 Self Advocacy Melbourne's work in the Melbourne Metropolitan Divisions.

The Eastern and Northern Divisions in partnership with the Western Division continue to fund VALID's Self Advocacy programs recurrently and all targets were met in the 2014-15 period. The fact that Self Advocacy Melbourne remains recurrently funded underpins the value of VALIDs Self Advocacy programs and the commitment of staff to reach desired outcomes. We are still waiting for confirmation from the Southern Division on funding for the Southern Self Advocacy Network in the 2015-2016 period.

Activities that were conducted by the VALID Self Advocacy Melbourne 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.

Arthur Rogers' meetings - Ongoing support to representatives of the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Self Advocacy Networks to attend regular meetings. These meetings are an avenue for representatives to raise issues and concerns that affect them and for Government to hear firsthand, the voice of PWD.



Self advocates from the Melbourne Self Advocacy Networks meeting with Arthur Rogers. The meeting gave self advocates the opportunity to comment and raise concerns they had in regard to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

This year Self Advocacy Melbourne would like to acknowledge the achievements of self advocates from the Metropolitan Networks, in particular presenting their stories to others. These stories provide encouragement and motivation that life can be fulfilling and exciting when you practice your right to „Speak Up“. A highlight was Caitlin's story (pg 10)

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.



Self Advocacy Melbourne

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 would particularly like to thank the many guest speakers who attended and presented at the VALID Self Advocacy Network meetings throughout 2014-2015.

Finally, I would like to make particular mention of Zoe Broadway for her dedication & hard work throughout the year; she is an invaluable member of the VALID Self Advocacy Melbourne team.

Rick Ruin

Melbourne Self Advocacy
Coordinator



Gabrielle Williams MP

In June Gabrielle Williams MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Carers & Volunteers presented at the Eastern & Southern Network meetings. Network members were thrilled to have a chance to speak with Gabrielle and tell her about their dreams and aspirations. Below is an excerpt from the Hansard transcript that was presented as a Members statement to Parliament by Gabrielle.

"I was honoured to take part in a session on self-advocacy networks in which individuals shared their experience of the networks and the progress they had achieved through the assistance of VALID and the encouragement of their peers. One participant, Lisa, spoke of being able to catch public transport to the city on her own and the sense of independence this gave her. Another participant, Emma, talked about her experience of studying drama and

dance and her ambitions to work in government for people with disability. I also heard the stories of those who had transitioned from institutionalised care to supported residential care, giving them greater independence and choice about the way they live their lives.

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



Self Advocacy Melbourne

Caitlin's Story "*Movin on Up*"

In 2013 Caitlin's life was different she lived with her parents. She cleaned her room but didn't do much housework and had a job that didn't work out.

Caitlin did sports, some cooking and went out occasionally with people from her day service.

She didn't use public transport but was using buses from her Day Service and her parents to get around.

Caitlin was shy and when things didn't go her way she had trouble coping with that but then things started to change.

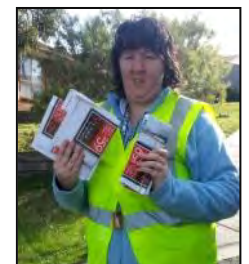
Caitlin did a Certificate 1 in Work Education, it helped with her writing. She learnt about jobs on the computer, how to dress smart casual and meeting new people. She got a job at Nadrasca, Witt Street working in reception and did a course on phone answering skills.

She started working at industry where she has gained skills in stock processing and keeping herself safe and busy in a production environment. Caitlin delivers pamphlets every Thursday to earn extra money.

She was told about a house where she could live with some other ladies, she talked to her parents and met with the ladies. Caitlin now lives mostly independent, an outreach worker comes in occasionally.

Caitlin now uses public transport and has joined the Peer Action Group to find out more about the NDIS. She would like to get a job working in a cafe.

"The more I do, the more I can see things I would like to try. I feel excited with the way things are going."



VALID Peer Action Groups

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) across Australia in 2014, and a commitment by Australian governments to expand the program from the initial launch sites to the rest of the country over the next 4 years, means there will be some big changes for many people with disabilities and their families who are eligible for disability supports.

So that people with disabilities and their families can find out what is happening, and how this will affect people currently receiving or waiting for disability support packages, the government has funded a number of organisations with time limited funding to operate as Disability Support Organisations to support people with disabilities and their families get ready for the full introduction of this scheme.

VALID is one of six community organisations in Victoria that received funding to support the development of at least 20 peer groups. The groups will prepare people with disabilities and their families for participation in the National Disability Scheme (NDIS). This has been an opportunity to develop a network of peer groups across the state, built on the work VALID has done previously to support people with disabilities and families with the introduction and implementation of Individual Support Packages (ISP) in Victoria under the State Disability Plan.

VALID has endeavoured to create new peer groups as well as creating smaller Peer Action Groups of existing client and family networks. We have called the VALID groups *Peer Action Groups* to encourage groups to be active, self-determining and effective supports for people

with disabilities wanting to be more involved in their community.



What is a Peer Action Group?

VALID's Peer Action Groups will be made up of between 5-12 people who will meet regularly (usually monthly) to:

- Get up-to-date information about the roll out of the NDIS and how this will affect participants and to support readiness for participation
- Share information and ideas with other people about how to make good use of this funding, and to support them with existing support arrangements until the NDIS is rolled out in their area
- To get new skills in making choices and taking control over decisions about work, recreation, skill development and home life.
- To promote and encourage participation in relevant activities and opportunities available in the local community
- To have a place where there is encouragement to speak up and be heard
- To give advice on issues to VALID so that we can take up issues with the NDIS and governments to make systemic changes
- To build social connections and friendships with other peers that support participants to feel strong, safe and connected

Most of the Peer Action Groups are face to face meetings. These can either be for people with disabilities (currently 10 groups), family members (5 groups) or mixed membership (3 groups). There is also a teleconference option for people who cannot make it to a face to face meeting or prefer this format. There are also a number of new groups in the process of being set up across the state and some existing groups wanting to be connected to our networks.

While most of these groups are local groups that meet in local community settings, we also have some special interest groups such as:

VALID Peer Action Groups

- Family members of people with behaviours of concern,
- A group who support parents with disabilities in partnership with Families Inclusion Network, and
- Peer groups for people using self management and direct employment packages.

Many of these groups have been in place for a short while or are still in the process of being established and the full benefits of this network of peer action groups will take awhile to have an impact.

Strategic Considerations for 2016 & Beyond

Future Funding

Funding for this initiative ends in December 2016. While it is hoped that funding may be extended, it is vital that this program endeavours to develop a lean and resourceful approach that maximises sustainability of this initiative into the future and reduces its dependence on a single source of funding. We have already sought to develop partnerships with local government (Metro Access Workers), and community agencies that support our objectives to ensure that costs are low and resourcing demands minimised.

Volunteer Support

In order to have capacity to increase the number of groups we can support across the state, we will

need to develop a volunteer engagement strategy to ensure that we have access to good facilitation for each group. This will also enable VALID staff to focus on existing responsibilities and bring their expertise to all these groups when and as needed. We are establishing a volunteer management strategy for VALID to support this program and to link it with other VALID programs such as the Having a Say Conference and Supported Decision-making Project that will also be using volunteers. Volunteer engagement will require additional administrative supports and systems and solid training at the start but should return this investment several times over if we can attract the right kind of volunteers for this role.

Building Community Engagement for VALID

Peer Action Groups will benefit from VALID's capacity to use its systemic advocacy capacity to follow up issues and recommendations emerging from local groups. VALID will also benefit from local groups that can bring lived experience of diverse groups across the state to inform VALID's advocacy work. This provides greater legitimacy to VALID's statewide representation of the needs of people with disabilities and their families. It also sits well with some of the proposed directions for Inclusion Australia.

David Craig

PAG Project Coordinator



Setting Up a VALID Peer Action Group

If you are part of a group of people with disabilities or family members, who would like to be linked to VALID's advocacy work across Victoria around the roll out of the NDIS, then you can help us to set up a group near you. Groups can have a local focus providing peer support that is local and accessible or it can be around a specific area of interest such as housing, employment, self-managed packages, etc.

While most groups are face to face we are also supporting tele-conferencing and on-line options.



Please feel free to have a conversation with David Craig at VALID about support with setting up a group in your local area or special area of interest.

Contacts

(03) 9416 4003

Mob. 0422 516 245 or

david@valid.org.au

Keys to Success Program - Self Advocacy

The Keys to Success Self Advocacy Team has once again been very busy over the past 12 months. The team has continued to offer training to clients in disability support services across Victoria. We have supported over 150 people to work through the program. The aim of the program is to provide information and support to participants of disability services so that they know about their rights, know how to speak up for themselves and can be an active participant while they develop their plan for the future. Some of the services we visited have included:



- Encompass, Geelong
- St Laurence, Colac
- Mambourin, Braybrook
- Wallara, Dandenong
- Jesuit Social Services, Reservoir
- Whittlesea District ATSS, Thomastown
- Gateways Self Advocacy Group in Glen Waverley
- Northern Support Services
- Bayley House
- French Street Mount Waverley
- We also provided staff training with staff at Wallara in Dandenong.

A modified version of the program was delivered to 7 SUFY (Speaking Up For Yourself) groups in the Eastern Region and we also worked with two groups of participants from Yooralla during our involvement in the Yooralla project.

During the year the Keys to Success Self Advocacy team have worked with Cadeyrn Gaskin a Senior Research Fellow from Deakin University on the Deakin/ TAC/VALID project of modifying the KSP program for people with an ABI.

We have worked with management and staff at Northern Support Services (NSS) in Northcote and Bayley House in Brighton to arrange their involvement in the NDIS Peer Group project. These groups are currently establishing themselves as NDIS Peer Action Groups with support from the VALID KSP Self Advocacy Team.

The Self Advocacy Team were asked to add pictures in order to provide a better understanding by people with intellectual disability of the content of the proposed NDIS Outcomes Framework documents. We organized a review of the proposed NDIA Service Charter with members of the Self Advocacy Forum and conducted a consultation with participants of Yooralla on a response to the NDIS Quality & Safeguarding Framework.

Prepared a presentation for the NDS ACT Conference in Canberra on the VALID My Rights Training program and the NDS online Human Rights Staff Training Program Forums that were conducted jointly by VALID and NDS during 2014.

We conducted a series of presentations on Bullying at the Melbourne Self Advocacy Networks which led into the development of a resource on abuse and neglect. This presentation will be the main resource that will be used during the upcoming Abuse and Neglect Project which will be rolled out across Victoria during 2016.

In February Heather joined other advocates in Canberra to support a motion that the Commonwealth Senate hold an inquiry into the abuse, violence and neglect of people with disabilities.

In July Heather and Jon attended the NSW-CID (Council for Intellectual Disability) conference in Sydney. Heather joined other members of the Inclusion Australia, Our Voice Committee to do a presentation about the NDIS.



Keys to Success Program - Self Advocacy



Heather spoke about the six people from the Geelong trial site that she had interviewed about the NDIS.

When Heather first spoke with them in August 2014 they were just starting NDIS funding. In July 2015 she visited them again to get a progress report on the past twelve months. This progress report was what Heather talked about at the conference. Heather said that "It was good to touch base with self advocates in New South Wales and it was good that Our Voice had the opportunity to speak about the NDIS".

Once again thanks to my colleague Heather for your support during the past year.

Jon Slingsby

KSP Self Advocacy
Coordinator



"VALID were visited by members from FRANS (Family Resource and Network Support) NSW, on the 6th Aug 2014. It was great to meet with Tom, Diana, Rohan, Genny, Margaret and Thom who were in Melbourne to attend the DARU conference and find out more about what VALID does."

SELF ADVOCACY FORUM REPORT

The VALID Self Advocacy Forum continues to meet on the last Tuesday of every second month. Once again the Forum members proved to be a strong group of people who have firm opinions about the changes that are happening across Victoria. They continue to be an important source of advice and information on the issues that affect the lives of people living with disability.

Meeting with Arthur Rogers

On the 20th of June, members of the Self Advocacy Forum joined with other self advocates to meet with Arthur Rogers from DHHS.



Arthur is there to talk about issues and ask some questions that had been raised through the Melbourne Self Advocacy Networks. Forum members who attended the meeting included Lisa, Ashley Luke, Gary and Bobby.

Guest speakers who have attended the forum during the past 12 months have included:

Nick Hartnell, Assistant Director Quality Barwon, from the National Disability Insurance Agency who wanted feedback about the proposed NDIS Quality & Safeguarding Framework.

Andy Calder who spoke to the Forum about his ongoing research project into spirituality.

Pam Marshall from Art Access Victoria who spoke about the programs that Art Access plans to have available to people as they prepare for the rollout of the NDIS.

Thank to all the Forum members for all your support during the last 12 months.

Keys to Success Program - Families

In the last year the Keys to Success Program (KSP) Families program has changed tracks both due to demand and funding. Given the number of requests for basic info on the NDIS and how it different to ISP's, we have moved away from running „courses“ and are instead running standalone Information Sessions and workshops.

To conduct the sessions VALID has partnered with Metro Access Workers and organisations who have provided venues and catering. This has been beneficial in a range of ways including enabling far more sessions to be delivered and extending the reach of the sessions to individuals, families and community groups that are not in the usual 'disability' circles.

Preparing for Transition to the NDIS

- a non-jargon explanation of what is the NDIS and how it works
- sorting out 'myths' from the facts
- a constructive look at the concerns about the scheme
- basic and more comprehensive tips for preparing for transition to the NDIS

Planning Workshops

- what is person-centred planning
- the outcomes that are expected from good person centred planning
- the differences in planning for the NDIS eg. it is not planning for 9am - 3pm but about goals for your life
- getting started on developing information for the 'core' sections of a person-centred plan

Attendance

This table sets out the number of attendees at sessions that have been conducted over the last year by category.

Session	Family members	Workers	People with disability
Preparing for Transition to the NDIS Information Session	746	234	34
Planning workshops	68	4	
Other eg. tips on selecting services	51	18	9

Issues

I found it alarming that the vast majority of families who attended reported that they knew very little about even the basics of the NDIS. This along with the many fears that were expressed is of concern, given that to get the best for their family member from these changes, being confident and understanding the process will be key.

There were many questions and issues raised about the impending NDIS and I can only include a few here.

The concern of families about "who will assist my family member when I die with decisions about NDIS supports and make sure that they get the right things and not the cheapest or just the bare minimum?"

There were also some concerns about the differences from ISP's, such as:

- the NDIS pays in arrears not in advance
- the NDIS at present doesn't assist with support (eg. gift card as a thank you) for informal friends/ volunteers
- the NDIS at the moment provides limited amount and types of support with fees involved with community activities, which for people living in group homes in particular is already a difficulty with almost all their pension gone to pay for their accommodation and Day Services

Resources & Support

Updated or new resources to complement the sessions were developed. Follow-up where requested was provided to families who for example, wanted to review or change their current supports or ISP and to those wanting to develop a person-centred plan.

A thank you goes to all the Metro Access Workers and organisations who have partnered with us over the last year.

Chris Scott

Keys to Success Families Coordinator



Public Advocate's Award 2015

Awarded to VALID at the Having a Say Conference.

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

I would like to thank you for inviting me to the Having a Say Conference. I am very impressed with the good ideas and the passion of everyone here today. I am also here today to present a very special award, called the Public Advocate's Award.

Once a year I give this award to a group or a person who has done really great work promoting the rights of people with disability. This year I want to give the award to VALID and to its members, because I think you do an amazing job.

VALID has been working hard for more than 25 years to make life better for people with disability. They have done a lot of very important work standing up for people with disability, and telling the government about things that need to change. One of the first things VALID did was to tell the government to close institutions including Caloola, Pleasant Creek, Mayday Hills, Kingsbury, Janefield and Kew Cottages. They did this because people living at the institutions were not being treated fairly, and did not have a say in their lives. VALID told the government that people with disability should be able to have houses and support services in the community, instead of in institutions. It has taken a long time but thanks to the work VALID and other places like OPA nearly all the institutions are closed and people with disability are living better lives in the community.

VALID has done a great job of speaking up about the times when people with disability have been abused or neglected. They encourage other people and groups to speak up too and called on the governments to investigate how the abuse and neglect is happening and how we can stop it. Last year the government and the Ombudsman both said they would investigate abuse and neglect of people with disability, which is something OPA and VALID are glad to hear.

Another really important thing VALID has done is to help change the way people think about supporting people with disability. They have helped people understand that support for people with disability should be about human rights and what the person wants and needs.



Colleen Pearce presented the award to VALID President, Dot Leigh.

For 25 years, VALID has kept trying to make support services better and to make the laws and rule about support services fairer for people with disability. One of the biggest ways they have helped has been to campaign for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the NDIS, which we all hope will make it easier for people with disability to get the support they need.

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

Last week, VALID's executive officer, Kevin Stone described the Having a Say Conference as absolutely the best conference for people with disability in the universe, and I think we all agree with him. I would like to congratulate VALID and all its members for 25 years of amazing work. The award that I am presenting today is a small way of recognizing the enormous contribution VALID has made to the live of people with disability. I would like to invite VALID President, Dot Leigh to accept this award, as someone who has been a big part of VALID and a board member for more than 20 years.



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

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