

Annual General Meeting 2018-2019 Report



Contents

Reports

1. Chief Executive Officer’s Report	4
2. President’s Report	6
3. Committee Members	9
4. Staff	14
5. Keys to Success Program Report	15
6. Advocacy Report	19
7. Families as Planning Partners Report	21
8. Self Advocacy Report	23
9. Community Development Report	29
10. Inclusion Point	40
11. Having a Say 2019 Conference Report	42
12. Our Choice Expos Report	45
13. Financial Reports (separate report)	

1

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Kevin Stone

As VALID celebrates its 30th anniversary as an organisation it is timely that we come together at the AGM to reflect not only on the past year but to celebrate the achievements of the last 30 years. We can all be rightfully proud of the work that VALID has done and the thousands of people we have helped since 1989.

There have been a number of highlights in 2018 - 2019 and further details are provided in the Program Reports on the following pages.

They include:

- The 20th Having a Say Conference in February 2019 was very well attended by just over 1,100 people. Planning is well underway for the next Having a Say Conference on 24th - 26th February 2020 at Deakin Waterfront in Geelong.
- The Third Annual Dulcie Stone Writers Competition Award Ceremony was co-hosted by

VALID and Writers Victoria at the Wheeler Centre in July. The Ceremony was very well attended by about 80 people and the quality of the writing was outstanding.

- A successful staff retreat in October 2018 to create a shared vision about how we should go about our work over the next 5 - 10 years.
- The VALID8 Project has been recognised and funded by DHHS as part of their quality monitoring process for residential settings.
- A successful Growing Employer Demand project grant to support us to promote and develop employment opportunities for people with intellectual disability.
- VALID was accepted as a member on Inclusion International in our own right.
- Heather Forsyth was nominated to the Inclusion International Empower Us Committee after attending the Birmingham World

Congress of Inclusion International along with other members of the Inclusion Australia Our Voice Committee in July 2018.

I want to also extend our heartfelt thanks to our staff and volunteers for all of their hard work and commitment during the year. Our work is critically important and rewarding but it can also be emotionally challenging. We can all be proud of the way our people continue to pull together to support each other in our work.

We also extend our sincere thanks to Brian and Lee Johnstone for their ongoing support and commitment to our important systemic advocacy work.

Thank you also to Laurie Harkin, the former Disability Services Commissioner, for his work in forming a Friends of VALID group to provide occasional advice and guidance for our work.

After almost 20 years at our Fitzroy office we ran out of space and in April we moved to our new home at 130 Cremorne St, Richmond. This can be a difficult and disruptive process but our staff and volunteers responded magnificently to ensure that the move was a success.

It is with some sadness and also with much gratitude that I tell you that after 26 years of involvement with VALID, Dot Leigh is stepping down from the Committee of Management. Dot was our inaugural President in 1993 and has been on the Committee ever since as either President or Vice President.

On behalf of VALID and also from my personal perspective I want to thank Dot for her tireless work and for her steadfast support for me as the CEO and for the work VALID does.

During the past year we have lost family and friends of VALID. Paul Cain who was a champion of employment for people with disability to earn a fair wage, Arch McDonald who volunteered at the Having a Say Conference and supported his wife Tony, who was a member of the VALID Committee of Management for many years. Barbara Donovan who was a founding and life member and great friend of VALID, who volunteered her time to assist delegates of the conference to find accessible accommodation and finally my mum, Dulcie Stone MBE who was also a founding member and responsible for coming up with the name VALID. She was the driving force behind the writing competition, acclaimed as an Author, Educator and Campaigner for people with Intellectual Disabilities.

2

President's Report

Dot Leigh

Reminiscing

Tonight we celebrate VALID's 30th Anniversary. We also celebrate Kevin becoming a member of the Order of Australia. He received his AM (Australia Medal) for significant service to people with a disability. This award recognizes his long term, tireless contribution in supporting, empowering and securing rights for people with a disability in Australia.

"Life is what happens when we are busy making other plans".

I was catapulted into the disability world 44 years ago when my son Greg was diagnosed at birth with Down Syndrome. The first few weeks are a bit of a blur but I do remember a friend asking if I was going to bring him home, this was never considered as an option.

I also remember being referred to St Nicholas Hospital to have him registered. We came up against our first brick wall when our application for what was then the handicapped child allowance was knocked back.



To appeal we were required to have Greg assessed by two independent doctors at the Children's Hospital. Our appeal was successful but little did I know appeals, submissions, political activism etc. would become part of our daily lives. Fundraising, committee's, workshops etc. would also become a lifetime commitment along with learning how to decipher acronyms, GSP's, ISP's, ATTS's etc.

Because I was so unprepared and had little or no knowledge of Down Syndrome I had a lot to learn about the best way to cope and what to expect. The urge to meet other parents was really strong, and as we were living in Heidelberg at the time we joined Kalparrin, which was then a playgroup for children from 0-6 years. Sharing the experience and knowledge of other parents was a real comfort and my first taste of parents supporting parents which I still value to this day.

We moved to Kinglake in early 1979 and Rosie, who has Down Syndrome, joined our family in May 1979. She spent the first 3 months of her life in St Joseph's Home in Ballarat. Much to my horror I'd become aware that babies with disabilities were being made "Wards of the State" (often on doctor's advice) even as late as the 1970's.

Both Greg and Rosie attended the local kindergarten with me in tow. Greg started school at the Whittlesea Day Training Centre (later Merriang SDS), which seemed the most appropriate setting for him at the time. Rosie attended the local primary school for 3 1/2 years. The first two years were really positive with a great teacher, full time aide, a top notch Principal and an accepting school community. Staff changes and a reduction in aide time led to Rosie being unhappy, me being stressed and anxious and eventually to the breakdown of the program.

I was asked to keep Rosie home at times when the aide wasn't there, which I wasn't prepared to do. One parent said "if Rosie comes to school tomorrow I am keeping my children home" and a teacher said to me "wouldn't she be better with her own kind". Despite how the school attitude had changed, people were somewhat surprised when I decided to look for other education options for Rosie.

"What can you expect from parents of children like these!" stated a Special School Principal. Parents are often judged as being non accepting, over protective, over demanding, too emotional, or too ambitious. Fortunately attitudes are changing and parents are being recognised as life long carers, with much more to offer than just raising funds. It was during the 1950's & 60's that concerned parents banded together to establish services when there was nothing available for their children.

I was among the parents invited to be part of the VALID Monitoring Scheme which was state funded, to play a positive role in ensuring group homes were real homes. From there I moved on to attend VALID state-wide Network Meetings providing a forum to share information and gather feedback on systemic issues affecting adults with intellectual disability, their families and advocates.

This agenda ticked all the boxes for me and I am still here 29 years later.

I've seen many policy and attitude changes over the years. VALID has been a major player and a positive influence in many areas:

1. Putting intellectual disability on the agenda and raising community awareness
2. Recognizing the significant role of parents
3. Promoting the growth of self advocacy
4. Supporting or rather demanding the closure of institutions
5. Engaging constructively with allies e.g. seeking commitment from parties at election time
6. Organising and promoting the annual Having a Say Conference and a number of expos
7. Providing information and support for people navigating through the NDIS

The time has come for me to stand down from the VALID Committee. I feel very proud and privileged to be part of such a forward thinking, hands on organisation. I have cherished my time working with intelligent, courageous and resourceful people. While I am suffering withdrawal symptoms I am confident that VALID will continue to build on what has already

been achieved. I will stay in touch and continue to be part of the Geelong Parent Network which is one of the VALID Peer Action Group. Thank you to the people who have placed their trust in me over many years.



Dot getting into the spirit of the Having a Say Conference, dressing up for the Dinner Disco (2010). The theme was "Crazy Hair"



Dot at the dinner held at Ripples on the Bay to launch Inclusion Australia in 2012

Committee of Management

Dot Leigh, President (retiring)

Dot is a life member of VALID, inaugural President of VALID from 1993 - 1998 Vice President 1998 -2005 and current President since 2005. She is also an Associate member of GenU (Karingal, Barwon Region) and Convenor of the Geelong Parent Network. Dot is the mother of Greg (deceased 1975 - 1993) and foster mother to Rosie since 1979. Dot resigned after 23 years with the State Education Department to take full time care of Greg who was born with Down Syndrome and later Rosie who also has Down Syndrome.

Dot was active in the Northern Metro Region from 1975 - 2000 through her membership of the School Councils - Middle Kinglake Primary School, Merriang Special Developmental School and a Committee of Management of the Whittlesea District Adult Training and Support Services. Dots other interests are gardening, politics, news, current events, Scandinavian crime thrillers and cryptic crosswords (the easy ones!).



Peter Dibbs, Treasurer

Former TAFE Accounting and Business teacher (20 plus years!). Peter also ran his own Tax Practice from home in Mentone until 2014 when he decided it was time to go to full time fun mode. A dedicated traveller and since 2015 has added Alaska, Lithuania Latvia, Russia, Poland and Estonia to the beautiful spots visited since first leaving Australia over 40 years ago. Hopeful of becoming a Grey Nomad but currently not in possession of a caravan. A disappointed but hopeful Demons follower. Enthusiasms: Good food, red wine, red sports cars, jazz and group exercise classes.



John Handley

John was a solicitor in Melbourne and Shepparton for 11 years until he accepted an appointment to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal as a senior member in 1989. Prior to retirement in 2015, he additionally had responsibilities for the Tribunals mediation practice, case management and was responsible for the NDIA list in the Victorian registry. He has subsequently completed a Cert. IV in Disability, volunteers one day pw at the Lower Plenty site of Araluen and provides monthly summaries of AAT and Federal Court decisions of NDIA appeals to the advocacy team at VALID.



Deb Johnson

Debs is a married mum of four and a retired SRN/midwife. Her eldest two sons, Will and Andrew, have autism and multiple disabilities and are in residential care, yet still needing frequent assistance from their mum. Daughter, Holly, is now a fully qualified OT and youngest son, Lachie, is doing final year VCE. Hubby, David, spends retirement working on his Land Rovers in the garage and going 4WDing. Debs was part of the VALID Fight the Fee Hike campaign and loves being on the VALID committee and is also with AFSA. She has lobbied on disability-related issues and is passionate about the impact of privatization of housing within the disability sector. In her spare hours, Deb loves photography, gardening/ watching Costa on the telly, barracking for the Geelong Cats and completing Sudoku puzzles without cheating.



John Leatherland

John re-joined the Committee of Management earlier this year, having previously been a committee member between 2010 and 2014. He is also a volunteer of VALID's Choice Mentor program.

John trained as a social worker and worked for many years in the then Department of Human Services. He was regional director for the Eastern Metropolitan Region for eight years (which included responsibility for a large range of programs including disability services) before leaving DHS in 2009. His responsibilities in this position included playing a key role in the closure of the Kew Cottages institution and placing over 400 residents in group homes in the community where they could enjoy a far better quality of life. In 2007, he was awarded the Public Service Medal in recognition for his work with people with disabilities. Since 2009, John has worked as a consultant in the human services field and is a member of the Mental Health Tribunal.

John describes himself as "semi-retired" and is making the transition from paid work to volunteering. He is a strong advocate for independent choice and the rights and inclusion of people with a disability so that they can have opportunities to live a good life.

He lives with his wife Chris in Croydon and has three adult children and five grandchildren.



Peter Currotte (retiring)

My name is Peter. When I was young I liked to make houses and fix cars and visit wild places. I became an Engineer and learned how machines work and how to make them go better. Later I started working alongside people living with disability – I tried to get them good homes, took them on fun holidays, and helped them tell their stories. Then I joined VALID doing some of that stuff. We did some big stories. Now I am old, over 70. And I am leaving the VALID Committee of Management. It has been an honour.



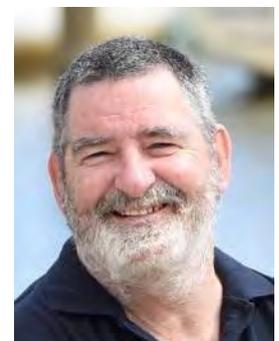
Janice Castledine, Vice-President

During the course of her career Janice has lived and worked overseas in many countries which has given her 'the wander lust' and really enjoys travelling. Being a Melbourne girl, footy is always on the menu, along with live theatre, movies, horse racing, and catching up with family and friends. Janice advocates for many families and especially families who may have a family member with behaviours of concern. Janice co-facilitates a Peer Action Group for VALID for families who have a family member who displays behaviours of concern. Janice is currently holding the position of Second Vice President of VALID. Janice is a mother of two men, one of whom has profound Autism. He is the reason why Janice is passionate for social justice for all people with a disability.



Mark Thompson

Mark was always interested in sailing big yachts. In 1995 while bringing back a yacht across Bass Strait, he was involved in a drowning accident. Later on whilst in the Nursing home, Mark recognised the need for supporting the elderly, disadvantaged, and those without a voice. This was the beginning of his journey. He have been involved in the past as a Board Member on VRD, VICNORD, Pinarc and now volunteer for OPA , GDA and enjoys his role as a Peer Action Group leader in Ballarat. Marks strengths are governance and Policymaking and in his spare time enjoys ocean swimming and gardening.



Elaine Robb (Retired in May 2019)

Elaine Robb is an experienced executive with a history of achieving maximum results through the development of high performing teams. The CEO of Encompass Community Services, Elaine shares VALID's vision of working within the international community to change the world for all people with intellectual disability.



Robert Usas

Bobby has a long history with VALID. Over the years, Bobby has shown that he is highly motivated in developing his self-advocacy skills and to lead his own life. In 1997, he strongly advocated to move out of his 'living arrangements' at Kew Residential Services (Kew Cottages) and now lives independently in Pascoe Vale. He was also instrumental in advocating for other residents at Kew Cottages with his work with the Kew Self Advocacy group.



Bobby enjoys travelling everyday by train to his day service Gen U in Thornbury. Bobby is a long-standing member of VALID's Self Advocacy Forum and was elected by his peers to represent them on VALID's Committee of Management in 2019. Bobby was previously elected to be a member of VALID's Committee of Management in 2007 and 2011.

He has also been a member of VALID's Northern Self Advocacy Network since its establishment in 2007. Over the years Bobby has attended numerous Having a Say Conferences and participated in other VALID events and projects, including:

KSP training

- Presenting to groups on independent living
- Consulting with government bodies on policy
- Providing feedback to disability services and mainstream services on how to make their services accessible and better meet the needs of their clients.

Bobby is a well-liked and respected member of VALID and is known for his positive attitude and friendly manner.

Margaret Quinn

Margaret has followed in her parent's footsteps to become a formidable self-advocate. Over the years she has sought opportunities to develop her advocacy skills so that she can stand up for the rights of others.

Margaret was one of the founding members of VALID's Self Advocacy Forum and VALID's Southern Self Advocacy Network meeting. She is currently on VALID's Committee of Management and has represented VALID members previously on the Committee of Management in 2007 and 2011.

Margaret has represented self-advocates on many committees and projects. Some of these projects include:

- ISP Peer Support Network (2012) – The project's aim was to provide resources to improve the knowledge about the disability support system.
- My Rights Training Project – develop a rights training project tailored for people who are subject to restrictive practices.
- Providing feedback to service providers, community groups and government bodies on how they can best support people with disabilities

Margaret is a thoughtful woman with a great sense of humour, who has shown commitment to VALID's vision of people with disabilities being empowered to exercise their rights.



Thea Calzoni (Retired in December 2018)

Mother of Julian, a vibrant young man with an intellectual disability, Thea Calzoni is an independent writer and parent support facilitator at Melbourne City Mission.



VALID Staff



Kevin Stone
CEO



David Petherick
Deputy CEO

Admin

Derek Scriven, Office Manager
Brenda Tranter
Melanie Watson
Lynne Forman

Keys to Success Program

Jon Slingsby, Coordinator
Zoe Broadway

VALID Self Advocacy

Rick Ruiu, Coordinator
Sara De Grandis
Anthony Risoli

Family Team

Christine Scott, Coordinator
Maree Hewitt
Donna Shaw

Advocacy

Sarah Forbes, Manager
Emily Piggott, Coordinator
Lisa White
Dariane McLean
Sosefu Teu
Kim Batson
Miia Tolvanen

Community Development

David Craig, Manager
Paul Dunn, Coordinator
Michelle Wilcox
Annette Axen
Ann Hutchinsen
Mark Thompson

Inclusion Point

Linda Studena, Coordinator
Tully Zygier
Heather Forsyth

Growing Employment

Liz Collier

Former Employees

Alan Blackwood
Nicole Maher
Malcolm Ross
Simone Stevens
Dom Moollan
Jake Lewis
Kevin Taylor
Caroline Pearce
John McKenna

2

Keys to Success Program Report

Jon Slingsby

This year has been another busy and productive year for the KSP team. We have again completed over thirty training courses and have travelled far and wide across Victoria. Some of the locations that the KSP has been delivered include Blackburn, Cheltenham, Cobram, Ferntree Gully, Geelong, Kerang, Maryborough, Scoresby, Warragul and Werribee.

Once again, we have been updating the KSP resources this time in preparation for the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Grants application. Last year we combined the six workbooks into one workbook which made the workbook easier to produce and more user friendly. This year we have reviewed the content and updated the NDIS information and included information about the new NDIS Quality and Safeguarding commission as the rollout of the NDIS is finalised. We have also added the 'Staying Safe' information session to the Keys to Success program as part of the course. This is helpful in

encouraging people who have done the course to speak up when they are feeling unsafe or they see other people in unsafe situations.

A good indicator that the program is being successful is the feedback provided by participants and support staff. We provide a feedback sheet to both the participants and staff on completion of the course. Staff often provide separate feedback on their own experience of doing the course and how they feel the course has changed or affected individual participants within the group they are supporting, below are two examples of this feedback

Staff Feedback:

To Jon

We would like to thank you for presenting a very interesting and informative 'Keys to Success' program.

Each and every one of us learnt a great deal and it has been fantastic to be able to 'Have A Say' and be respected and listened to.

Thank you



Another successful KSP training session. Knoxbrooke Achieve clients with their certificates.



Hi Zoe,

Thank you very much for spending time with us here at Achieve delivering the Keys to Success and Staying Safe programs.

As requested, Bec and I sat down with the group this morning and had a chat to gain participant feedback.

Everyone was very positive in their comments, I'll put in some dot points:

- "The way the program was delivered was empowering"
- "They covered all aspects of bullying, like in person and online and I related to it"
- One person said that the video of bullying was confronting and brought back bad memories. She did say that you provided a warning about what the video would be but she wanted to walk out of the room but pushed through it.
- Highlights were identified as the batteries activity and the "5 things that people admire about me" activity
- Discussion of barriers to independence was relatable to many
- Participants said that you were respectful and approachable (my words but they agreed)
- Use of real people in videos and case studies was inspiring.
- Seeing Luke's achievements gave one participant "a boost" and

others agreed that they enjoyed seeing his progress.

Staff feedback was along the same lines. You're very respectful, patient and empowering in the way you deliver the content and interact with the group, they loved you and were clearly comfortable to participate and share.

Thank you!

One of the great things about the course is that it is delivered through a conversation that includes all participants.

Participant feedback

What was the best part of the training?

- The way things were explained
- Being able to speak up, being listened to
- The battery concept
- Hearing things that people like about me
- Very easy to understand
- Learning
- Talking about my dreams. I felt safe to talk

How did you feel after the training?

- Happy about myself because people like me



Alex, Sarah, David and Ethan from Outlook, Narre Warren pictured with Jon

- Good, it helped me learn about advocacy and the NDIS
- Good!! Because we were talking together
- I feel happy. Learning how to make friends
- Great Knowledge and skills achieved
- Feel good about myself
- I liked talking about my feelings because sometimes I feel angry and worried, it was good to talk
- I've accomplished something

Finally, this feedback from Bernadette who did the course in Cobram.

I really enjoyed the atmosphere of

the classroom and the company of everyone. The teaching wasn't pushy and it was very interesting.

The information was easy to understand, it was taught in a simple context that we could understand.

The highlights were, everyone in the group got to have their own say however they did it. The food was nice and we all listened to each other and no one judged other people. I would strongly recommend this training course to others it was worth doing and was very interesting. I learnt lots about myself that I didn't know before. The teacher was excellent.

3

Advocacy Report

Sarah Forbes

VALID's Advocacy Team have been working really hard, and we have plenty to show for it!

We have completed:

- 300 NDIS planning meetings with people who do not have family support
- 275 complex individual advocacy cases
- 225 advice inquiries and referrals

We welcomed new team members Sosefo Teu (advocate), Miia Tolvanen (advocate) and Katy Gagliardi (communications), and farewelled Alan Blackwood, Kylie Fisher, Nicole Maher, Malcolm Ross, and Kevin Taylor. We also appointed Emily Piggott as our new Advocacy Coordinator! Emily is leading big changes to our client IT systems while managing huge demand for advocacy.

The Advocacy Team is working with more complex cases than ever before. The main reason that people are requesting advocacy is to help with the NDIS – there are five times as many NDIS advocacy cases than any other issue. We have also seen a significant and concerning increase in the number of people who need assistance for justice and legal matters, often related to poor experiences with the NDIS and service providers who are unwilling to work with people with complex needs. Due to overwhelming demand on the team, we have closed intake for all new cases multiple times in the past six months, as have most disability advocacy services across Victoria. More funding is urgently needed.

VALID advocates are also providing regular representation on priority issues on systemic advocacy committees and working groups, particularly on NDIS issues, housing, justice, health, disability workforce, and more.



We are working hard to make sure that governments know what is happening for people with intellectual disabilities, and we regularly support self-advocates to present their own stories of the problems they are having using support systems.

The team were also successful in receiving funding from the Victorian state government for two major projects, 'Justice For All' to research and map out the problems people are having in coordinating between the NDIS and legal systems and recommending changes to governments, and a project in partnership with Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service to train regional and metropolitan Community Legal Centre lawyers to work with people with intellectual disability.

Over the next 12 months, the team will focus on providing strong advocacy representation for people with the most complex issues, increasing our systemic advocacy work, and supporting people to make submissions to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

Finally, a big thankyou to everyone at VALID for your generous support for the advocacy team. VALID staff often jump in to help with cases, take intake calls, debrief advocates, and bring us tea and cake and laughs. We value your unwavering commitment to advocacy, and we couldn't do it without you.

Sarah Forbes, Advocacy Manager

4

Families as Planning Partners Report

Christine Scott

With the roll out of the NDIS in Victoria in its last stages the Family Team focus has in part shifted from supporting with initial transition to the NDIS, to assisting people understand their plans and how to use the funding package to get a good life for their family member or themselves if they are a participant attending the session. This was done by revising the course and a set of new workshops.

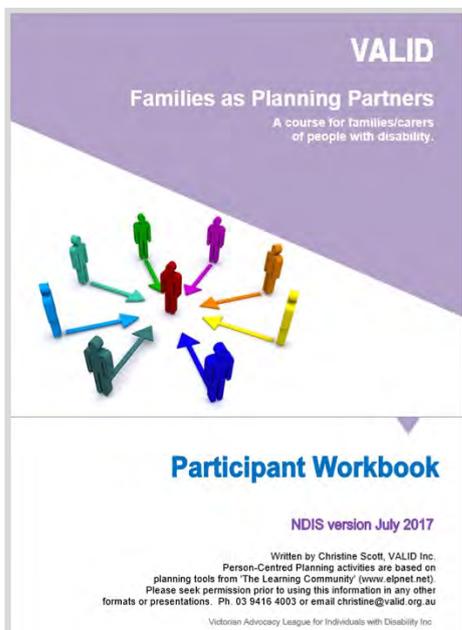
The suite of one - off 2 hour workshops topics include:

- a. Understanding your NDIS Plan
- b. Preparing for Plan Review – tips & developing a clear outline of your ideal NDIS plan
- c. Planning - developing your Person-Centred Plan
- d. Choosing the right NDIS funds management option(s)
- e. Understanding the NDIS funding - the Price Guide; flexibility; budgeting etc.

- f. How to get your Plan into action i.e. 'Implementing your Plan'
- g. Learning how to 'self-manage' your NDIS package?

'Isolated' groups

We have been pleased to provide support to more isolated groups. Firstly, by having a part-time Project Worker (Annette) based in the Outer Gippsland region in order to support these remote areas. This has enabled over 10 courses to be conducted in seven communities, including remote towns of Benambra, Cann River and Mallacoota. Annette has also needed to provide a more holistic support, that is, in addition to providing training to groups, assisting with individual information, support with pre-planning, attending first plan meetings where required and assisting with connecting to community.



Secondly, we have continued to conduct a significant number of courses using interpreters for families who are isolated through having English as a second language or little English at all. These have mainly been in Western metro area for Chinese and Vietnamese groups.

Family Team NDIS Information Sessions

41 information sessions that averaged 2 hour in length were conducted across nine DHHS areas, including Bayside, Eastern metro, Southern metro, Brimbank, Western metro, Wimmera, Loddon, Goulburn and Barwon.

Attendance at Information Sessions has decreased in proportion to the roll out populations, with 308 family members, 87 workers and 30 people with disabilities attending these sessions.

Family Team Courses

Over the 2018 -19 year we've completed thirty-six five week courses across the state. Thirty-six courses equates to 180 sessions or 720 hours of training delivered.

Attendance at courses was 624 family members, 21 workers and 11 people with disability. Courses were conducted across the state in roll out areas of Mallee, Southern Mallee, Goulburn and East Gippsland and in Western Metro. Feedback continues to be very positive and we regularly receive follow up emails letting us know that the pre-planning they did in the course resulted in a good and appropriate NDIS Plan for their family member. e.g. a mum from western metro recently said "wanted to say a huge thanks for doing such an excellent job. My daughter got exactly what we asked for and a lot more!"



5

Self-Advocacy Report

Rick Ruiu

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. Choice and Control are key pillars of the NDIS and are reflected in VALID's mission and aims, which are the driving force behind VALID Self Advocacy's work.

VALID's Self Advocacy programs have been funded by the Office for Disability and provide support to the Eastern, Southern, Northern and Western Divisions, primarily in the Metropolitan area. All targets were met in the 2018-19 period.

2018-19 marks the end of this phase in VALID's partnership with DHHS and the Office for Disability. The Strengthening Client/ Participant Voice program stretches back over a 20-year period and has supported countless people with intellectual disability to 'Speak Up' about the services they receive and develop

their self advocacy skills. VALID looks forward to an exciting new partnership with DHHS over the coming years (this will be covered later in this report).

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

- Supporting the VALID Self Advocacy Networks
- Supporting CSO's with consolidating, enhancing or establishing Client Committees or Representative Groups

Supporting CSO's and Government Disability Accommodation Services

- with developing and/or building capacity within Resident Meetings
- Supporting CSO's and Government services (DAS) with the implementation of Quality Initiatives and accessible resources



Margaret Quinn is a member of the Self Advocacy Forum and was voted to represent the members on the Committee of Management for 2018 - 2019.

- Supporting a number of Resident Representative groups (Resident Focus Groups and SUFY groups) in the North, West & Eastern Metropolitan Areas
- Ongoing support to members of the Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Self Advocacy Networks to attend forums and events in a representative role.

VALID Self Advocacy would like to acknowledge the achievements of self advocates that participated in the ‘Strengthening Client/ Participant Voice’ program over many years. These self advocates provide encouragement and motivation that life can be fulfilling and exciting when you practice your right to ‘Speak Up’.

Mainstream and Government Consultations

The 2018-19 period has seen consultations between mainstream and government organisations and self advocates grow at a furious pace. This has proved to be a positive shift into acknowledging people with a disability’s views into service delivery, mainstream strategic planning and co-production of resources.

Below is a snapshot of organisations that provided opportunities for consultation with self advocates.

- Ambulance Victoria – disability action plan
- City of Yarra- Accessibility and Disability Action Plan
- CPPV – Consultations on accessibility action plan
- Deakin University – consultation on gambling attitudes and behaviours
- DHHS - EE consultation on providing personal supports to people with a disability
- Department of Social Services – videoed interviews with self-advocates via Screencraft Media
- ESafety Commissioner – consultation on accessibility of ESafety Commissioner resources
- Future Social Services Institute (FSSI)/RMIT -co-design for the curriculum for students studying courses to be support worker
- La Trobe University/VEC- on encouraging people to vote and why people are not enrolled to vote

- Legal Aid – consultation on easy English legal resources required by people with disability
- NDIS- consult on their new Pilot project looking at skills and training needs of the NDIS workforce.
- Public Transport Ombudsman - consultation on the public transport system and access for people with a disability and PTO's handling of complaints.
- 1800Respect- Consultation on various resources

Cancer Council & Breast Screen Victoria

In October 2018 VALID was approached by both Breast Screen Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria to join in a project to build partnerships between cancer screening programs and the disability sector. The main aim of this project was to increase awareness of bowel, breast and cervical cancer screening for people with disabilities.

In consultation with self advocates, Breast Screen Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria discussed ways of communicating the following information to

people with disabilities:

- Eligibility for bowel, breast and cervical cancer screening
- How to access breast screening through Breast Screen Victoria
- How to access cervical screening
- What occurs during a breast and cervical screening procedure?
- How to access and complete the at-home bowel cancer screening test
- What the next steps are after participating in screening (i.e. Results and the cancer screening pathway)

After consulting with self advocates a 5-step plan was developed that included:

Co-designing and creating posters in Easy English about the main eligibility criteria for the three screening programs

Distributing posters to a range of places which people with disabilities frequently access e.g. day centres, group homes.

Developing a PowerPoint presentation that includes key cancer screening messages in Easy English, supported by images and video content



Training 5 people with disabilities to deliver the key messages of the three cancer screening programs. Having these individuals deliver this content at VALID network meetings and to other community self advocacy groups.

Self advocates expressed their enjoyment and pride in their contribution to this project. They all took part in the development of posters, the PowerPoint presentation and delivery of the presentation. They were all successful in presenting the key messages in a clear, concise and confident way.

The contributions from people with disabilities in the audience was unexpected, with a lot of people making insightful comments, and saying they would talk to their family members about their (family members) need for cancer screening. It was also the first time many people with disabilities had

heard or had the opportunity to speak about cancer and cancer screening.

VALID8

As one chapter in the partnership between DHHS and VALID closes, another exciting chapter begins in the form of the VALID8.

The VALID8 tool began as a self-audit of service user empowerment practice in Disability Services, a means by which services were able to define and develop best practice measures for the empowerment of their participants.

VALID proposed to DHHS that the VALID8 tool be adapted and refined into the 'VALID8 Service User Review of Empowerment Practice Tool', a mechanism to enhance and help assure the quality of self-advocacy and empowerment practices within disability residential service agencies.

The VALID8 framework is consistent with the National Disability Standards and requires evidence of achievement in all aspect of service user empowerment, including:

- Person-centred planning
- Support for decision-making
- Participation in organisational governance

- Involvement in service decision-making
- Skill development opportunities
- Input into quality processes
- Wellbeing
- Community participation outcomes

What makes the VALID8 truly exciting is that the reviews will be conducted by self-advocates. Self-advocates will be recruited and trained to deliver the VALID8 and participate in the development of the tool. We are looking forward to working with the self-advocates who will be an integral part of the VALID Self Advocacy team.

All targets were met in 2018-2019 for Self Advocacy programs delivered to provide support throughout the Eastern, Southern, Western and Northern divisions of metropolitan Melbourne.

NDIS Information Sessions

The Victorian Government, through the NDIS Transition Support Package, funded the delivery of information sessions for people with a disability to prepare for transition to the NDIS.

This funding ceased at the end of the 2018-19 period. The NDIS101 participant sessions were delivered by VALID to 3746 people with disability over Victoria between 20 April 2016 and the 30th June 2019. VALID conducted just over 200 sessions with an average of 19 (18.73) people in each session

Finally, I would like to make particular mention of Sara De Grandis, Anthony Risoli and Heather Forsyth for their dedication & hard work throughout the year. They are an invaluable part of the VALID Self Advocacy team.

6

Community Development Report

David Craig

The Community Development work at VALID continued to build on the platform of Peer Action Groups operating across the state and ongoing development of the Choice Mentor program.

Volunteers have continued to be the lifeblood for our programs providing valuable time, skills and knowledge to support our work. Our volunteer program provides the organisation with an extended capacity to do good work and to create a resource base that is less vulnerable to changes in funding. This has been particularly important at a time of significant uncertainty and volatility of the funding streams VALID has relied on for its work in recent years. We have also been blessed with a staff team of experienced leaders in community development in Paul Dunn, Annette Axen and Michelle Wilcox who have enabled us to sustain and support the work of our volunteers.

The prospect of Information, Linkages and Capacity Building funding through the NDIS offers some significant opportunities to see our community development work grow with the capacity to invest in the creation of strong place-based work across a number of locations where we have active Peer Action Groups.

Peer Action Groups

Across this reporting period, we supported 22 active groups operating across both rural and metropolitan areas. The majority of these groups are attended by people with disabilities in local place-based settings with between 5 to 20 participants involved on a monthly basis. There was a good spread of groups across rural (10 groups) and metro areas (8 groups) with another 4 groups that gathered around a special interest or with an issue based focus.



Peer Action Leader
Luke Nelson

The four areas included, families supporting a family member with 'behaviours of concern', parents with disability (2 groups in partnership with Family Inclusion Network) and an LGBTIQ group (partnership with GALFA).

- *Volunteer Leadership*

This program is supported by some very committed volunteers who have been the backbone of this program. We have 18 volunteers who have played a leadership role in our PAGs and 70% of these are people with disabilities. This year we have seen 6 adults with disability step up from being participants to taking up voluntary leadership roles in their own groups.

- *Individual Capacity Building*

Peer Action Groups (PAGs) have provided many opportunities for individuals to share goals and aspirations with their peers and use peer support to begin to take personal responsibility for making progress towards achieving good outcomes. For some this has been possible without using NDIS supports but for many it has been a process of learning how to experiment and use NDIS supports to provide one-to-one

support workers to be more adventurous in accessing opportunities in their communities.

- *Increased Community Engagement*

All our groups meet in community settings and facilities that are used by the whole community such as neighbourhood houses, community centres, libraries, pubs, etc. This enables participants to become familiar with the wider opportunities available to them in these settings and for the community to see people with disabilities in an active community leadership role as they discuss and develop plans to make aspects of their local community more inclusive and welcoming to people with disability.

- *A Platform for Local Community Development Projects*

The Peer Action Groups have provided a network of local place-based groups that have been able to provide leadership and support for community projects that are a response to the barriers and challenges group members face when they try to engage more

fully in their local community. Our PAGs have played an important role in developing a range of different community projects that aim to promote a more inclusive society. Much of this work has built on the excellent work of the Mainstream and Me – 7 People, 7 Places, 7 Projects work undertaken in the previous reporting period.

These include:

- * A grant to create a permanent public sculpture in Geelong that will be created in response to ideas that emerged from the ‘Bollards Project’ to promote a message of inclusion and participation by residents of Geelong with a lived experience of disability. Our partnership with a disability arts group, Arts Gusto and Geelong Baptist College has played an important role the development of this work.
- * An expanded rollout of the Easy Access Report Card in Ballarat will again engage people with disabilities in Ballarat in completing a simple audit of their experience

attending a range of facilities, venues and businesses as they go about their daily life.

Collated results of this audit will lead to an awards event on International Day of People with Disability that acknowledges businesses and community venues that have been inclusive, accessible and welcoming. A partnership with Ballarat City Council, Melbourne University and SPIRE has been formed to develop an online access mapping project that could see this work extended more widely to other areas.

- * Moe Peer Action Group organised a forum with regional advocacy and self-advocacy groups in Gippsland called “Having Our Say”. This work has set a strong platform for further collaboration as we seek to engage local communities in creating



- participation opportunities across recreation, work, housing, health within existing mainstream community programs and services.
- * Bairnsdale Peer Action Group is a new group that emerged out of the work by Families as Planning Partners preparing families for the NDIS rollout. Family support of many participants with intellectual disability is crucially valuable in building independence and increased choice and control.
 - * A photographic arts project with the Monash Gallery of Art led by the Clayton Peer Action Group has opened up new avenues for artistic expression for the group members as well as inspiring the art gallery to seek further engagement of people with disability in their programs.
 - * Further development of the Frankston Friendship Project with a working group established and philanthropic grant application developed to fund the implementation of a program to create inclusive leisure options led by local citizens around shared interests.
 - * A Disability Services Expo initiated by one of our PAG leaders in Benalla in partnership with Rural Access Worker at Rural City of Benalla to raise awareness of the choice of disability supports available since NDIS rollout in this area.
 - * Presentation of a film event called 'Fantastic Flicks' that features a number of short films about disability and by people with disability in Moe and Watsonia.
 - * Community forums jointly conducted by Watsonia Neighbourhood House and Banyule PAG to raise awareness about the impact of straw bans on people with disability in the context of addressing environmental issues. Through this relationship, one of our leaders, Luke Nelson, has been invited on to the committee of management of the Neighbourhood House.
 - * Installation of an important pedestrian crossing in Pakenham that links transport hub and major shopping centre benefitting not only people with disability but many other pedestrians who travel by public transport.

- *Resource Development*
VALID has developed an individual workbook/diary which enables individual PAG members to use our group discussions to identify their goals and dreams across a range of life areas. The workbook provides a basis for people to talk about their ideas for the good life and to identify the full range of possibilities that exist for them in their communities. People have talked about wanting to get married; to become a writer; to start a screen printing business; find a job in aged care; start up a car vacuuming micro business; join a car racing club; etc.
- The aim is for the PAG members to realise that there a range of ways to spend their funding that may include their current services and any one of a number of alternatives in the community.

Partnership Development

Creating partnerships and collaboration are an essential pathway to opening up more opportunities for people with disabilities to find their place in the community and to increase their choices of where they can play, work and live. The approaching opportunities that funding under the

NDIS's Information Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) program will require strong partnerships with key community organisations and better collaboration across the disability sector. VALID's Community Development team have worked to establish partnerships with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria as well as local neighbourhood houses, Local Government, disability sport and recreation organisations, Local Area Coordinators and some disability support providers. A growing collaboration with other Victorian consumer advocacy organisations that are in engaged in peer support programs is also an important development for the future.

As Disability Support Organisation funding that has sustained our Peer Action Groups is transitioning to ILC funding we have developed closer working relationship with the five other agencies that were funded under this program – VMIAC, Carer's Victoria, Association for Children with a Disability, AMAZE and Downs Syndrome. We are looking forward to future collaboration that enables us to have greater impact in creating more inclusive communities across the state.

Choice Mentor Program

This program was funded for a 12-month period with an ambitious objective to create 75 matched volunteer mentors with a mentee who wanted assistance with decision-making and had limited or no access to family or other informal supports for this purpose. Starting up a volunteer program at VALID from scratch without an established volunteer base made the task of recruiting volunteers challenging but surprisingly it was much harder to get access to the people with disability who would benefit from a voluntary Choice Mentor in their life.

Expected support from government agencies was not forthcoming in the process of identifying suitable candidates for the program, despite a shared belief that there were many who could use this support. Lack of continuity of program coordination and ongoing challenges finding participants has slowed the program in its early developments with the program currently supporting 24 active matches.

We have had the good fortune of seeing volunteer numbers for this program climbing in the last 12 months with current number of registered volunteers at 46. It has been surprising to see volunteer numbers at double the number of people with disability recruited for the program which was 22 at the end of this reporting period.

The program is currently being run on the back of the existing Community Development work while we seek new ways to continue funding for the program. The emerging stories about the benefits this program is making in the lives of both individuals with disabilities and their Choice Mentor places on obligation on us to continue to develop this program and find creative ways of sustaining the administration, support and program development necessary to create a strong program that builds strength, skills, confidence and social connection for individuals who need this support to step up in their lives.



A number of the Choice Mentors have now attended NDIS planning meetings and have been able to encourage greater choice and more individualised resourcing to increase choice and flexibility of choice.

The relationships formed and trust built between mentors and mentees is the foundation for building individual capacity of each participant to take more control of key decisions in their own life.

Programs of this type take longer to mature into strong resilient programs. We are looking to build the program around a strong emphasis on co-design with volunteers and participants having a bigger say in the design and re-development of the program.



cade watkins
its
about cats and
dogs I had over
the years



Watsonia Writing
Workshop participant,
Cade Watkins

Dulcie Stone Writer's Award

Dulcie Stone Writing Awards

The 3rd Annual Dulcie Stone Writers Award which VALID hosts in partnership with Writers Victoria was again held at the Wheeler Centre. Once again this year's ceremony showcased the voices of people with an intellectual disability and honoured the life of Dulcie Stone who passed away in July at the grand age of 95

Dulcie was not only an acclaimed writer but and also a strong advocate for people with an intellectual disability. VALID CEO, and son of Dulcie, Kevin, shared with the audience memories of his mother yelling over the phone at bureaucrats that a school for people with intellectual disabilities needed books, paper, pencils – some of the essential tools that facilitate learning and an ability to tell your story.

Dulcie Stone was an early champion of the enrichment that follows when people with intellectual disabilities are

empowered and given the opportunity to talk about what matters to them. As a writer who published over 30 books, Dulcie understood the power of writing as a vehicle for transforming lives and changing communities.

The Dulcie Stone Award is bearing witness to the transformative power of writing by people with intellectual disability. Those who have attended the Dulcie Stone Writers Award have gone away inspired and captivated by the stories they have heard. This year's event was our largest by far. Dulcie would be proud of the tradition that the Award is starting to create in the world of writing.

For this to be fully realised we are dependent on our partners, Writers Victoria, and in particular, Writability Coordinator, Lyndell Caffrey who helped us with judging and did a wonderful job providing feedback to our winners on the day. A big thank you to Lyndel, Writers Victoria and the Wheeler Centre – it is a wonderful opportunity for us to be able to host the event each year in one of the key centres for writing in Australia.

There were six winners this year and two encouragement awards in 2019.

The winners were Buffy Dee Lasun, Timothy Jong, Ivan Estebeth, Teagan Connor, Matt Robertson – Story Board and Grace-Rose Turner – Story Board. Our Encouragement Awards went to Adam Thrussel and Eliza Brodie.

One of our winners, Buffy Dee Lasun, in a powerful piece, bordering on political polemic, compared writing her story with the feeling of morphing from a cocoon and giving her wings to fly. Similarly, Teagan Connor’s story reminded us of the potential to realise our true selves when we have the courage to shed the mask of conformity and bravely face the world, no matter what the consequences.

Congratulations to all of our winning writers and all those who entered the 2019 Dulcie Stone Awards.



Sector Development

Limited resources has meant that we have not sustained the regular meetings of the Inclusive Community Development Network across this period but intend to re-establish our commitment to nurture and encourage skill and knowledge building activity in the coming year. We did, however, conduct 3 workshops with the Latrobe Community Health Local Area Coordinators team in the West Gippsland area and hope that this will lead to more opportunities for collaboration with Local Area Coordinators across the state. We have been fortunate to have some connections with Community Engagement Officers in a couple of other regions that have supported some collaborative work.

Paul Dunn has also played a vital role in the development and writing of submissions for both internal VALID submissions as well as external collaborative partnership grants. This work will grow significantly as we move towards a major round of funding submissions when ILC Grants from the NDIS open later in 2019.

7

Inclusion Point

Linda Studena

Inclusion Point is funded through the ILC National Readiness Grants – Information Linkages and Referrals. The project is a 2 year collaboration between NSW CID and VALID (lead by CID) and we have successfully completed year 1 of this 2 year project.

Inclusion Point explores how people with intellectual disability receive information and the various issues affecting access to information, choice and involvement in their community through 3 key areas – Information Services, Resource Development, and Information sessions and events.

In Stage 1 Information Services VALID conducted an organisation-wide audit of existing resources. We reported over 925 phone calls to VALID where we provided information on topics relevant to people with intellectual disability.

We identified information requests related to NDIS, abuse, disability accommodation, family violence, leadership, living independently, Royal Commission and mainstream participation. We also reported a growing e-news audience of 8400 recipients, with most read stories centred on Supported Independent Living and tips on How to use your Support Coordinator.

Through this audit we identified priority resources for updating and development for Stage 2 Resource Development. The updating of resources included a refresh of the VALID brand from the black and orange logo to the new blue and orange logo with accompanying style guide to increase accessibility for people with intellectual disability.

We identified over 200 resources, and highlighted timeline for production including some updates into accessible formats such as Easy Read. The next step was to produce new resources, booklets, manuals and factsheets in collaboration with teams across VALID. We have almost completed updating VALID printed resources and are shifting our focus to video as an information format.

A web portal will be established in year 2 of Inclusion Point, that will showcase information resources for people with intellectual disability living in Victoria and New South Wales. This portal will link to the VALID website, which will undergo significant updates to style and content by mid-2020. We are employing co-design principles and processes with people with intellectual disability as consultants to build individual capacity.

Inclusion Point have recruited and trained people with intellectual disability to co-design and facilitate information resources and sessions. The Inclusion Point team presented at the Having a Say conference 2019, surveyed conference delegates at an information booth, at the Bendigo Disability Expo and at several Peer Action Group meetings in regional areas and participated in VALID Self Advocacy Networks. Year 2 of Inclusion Point will see further development of resources and a focus on Information sessions and events, involving training mainstream services in accessible practice.

In April 2019 the Inclusion Point team absorbed staff members from the communications area to form the Communications Team. There have been several staff changes as the team settles into a productive unit focussing on information delivery and promotions for VALID.

Having a Say 2019 Conference Report

Christine Scott

We celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the Having a Say Conference (HaS). That's twenty years of speaking up, making friends, working together to influence change and having loads of fun! Delegates of the conference received a souvenir badge in their conference bags and all delegates attending the dinner disco received a conference keep cup (sponsored by the Disability Services Commissioner).



Several special sessions were conducted including performances by Red Faces competition winners from over the years and a special Open Microphone session to 'Have a Say' about what HaS conference

has meant to you. An Art Exhibition was conducted as part of the 20th celebrations. It featured winners of the HaS annual art competition which were kindly loaned to us by the sponsor of the Art Competition since it commenced, the Office of the Senior Practitioner. This was a fitting farewell to the Senior Practitioner's involvement in the conference as their office is subsumed into the new NDIS Quality & Safeguards Commission (QSC).

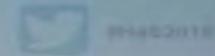
We also said goodbye to another big supporter of the conference, Laurie Harkin AM who resigned as the Disability Services Commissioner, but not before he introduced both the new DSC, Arthur Rogers and the new NDIS QSC, Graeme Head.

Having a Say Conference 2019

Sarah Henderson MP

Member for Corangamite
Assistant Minister for Social Services,
Housing and Disability Services

VALID



Robert Martin MNZM and Sarah Henderson MP presented the Robert Martin Self Advocacy Leadership Award to the members of Our Voice

This year's Having a Say conference included delegates from every state and territory and New Zealand. In addition with the support of a grant from Deakin Uni self advocates from the Pacific Forum attended from Fiji and Samoa. Pictured is VALID's Jon Slingsby, the Local Reference Committee chairperson Peter Abbey and VALID CEO Kevin Stone with representatives from Fiji and Samoa who presented them with gifts as a thank you.



The Program included a wide range of presentations, from the Launch of the City of Greater Geelong's Street Face Project; individual stories of achievement; an international call to action by the national Our Voice committee and special sessions, 'Standing by my Brother' the story behind the Trace Podcasts and

Robert Martin, United Nations Committee on the Convention for Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD).

This year the Robert Martin Self Advocacy Award was presented to the national Our Voice committee (Inclusion Australia) for their role in representing people with intellectual disability in national and international issues.

Of course there was fun, so we can't miss out on the 'Roaring Twenties' disco on The Pier.



9

Our Choice Expos

Christine Scott

Continuing with the focus on providing information to participants and their families leading up to the NDIS rollout in their area, we conducted expo's in Goulburn. Featuring both a wide range of exhibitors and information sessions, we hit Shepparton firstly in September and then Seymour at the end of November 2018.

In 2019 the Our Choice Expo returned to the Having a Say Conference. This was a great success with both conference participants and the public keeping the expo buzzing on Monday and Tuesday of the conference.

In response to requests from the local Peer Groups and the Wimmera Parent Support Network we conducted an expo in Horsham on the 4th April 2019.

In May we returned to run a second expo in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo at the Bendigo Exhibition Centre on the 7th of May.

In September 2019 we conducted an expo in the outer Gippsland area in Bairnsdale, both to support those transitioning to the NDIS and to support the work of Annette from VALID's family and community teams



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