

**VALID**

presents

# Having a Say Conference 2026

## Program Summary

27th – 29th January 2026

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus  
1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong

as of 14<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2026



### Platinum Sponsors



More Information available:

[www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)

T: 03 9416 4003 E: [havingasay@valid.org.au](mailto:havingasay@valid.org.au)



**Theme: '25 years: Strengthening our Voices for a better Future!'**

Having a Say (HaS) conference is celebrating 25 years of in-person conference that have promoted self-advocacy skills to strengthen the voices of people with disability.

That is thousands of people with disability who have:

- presented or performed at HaS
- had their voices heard and told their stories
- found inspiration from their peers
- gained information to help them with problems
- had their achievements celebrated
- learned about their rights

This is a time when everyone's voice matters. HaS will keep equipping people to speak up and promoting the talents, achievements and voices of people with disability.

## Tuesday 27th January 2026

Open at 9.30am	Grab your Registration Package, get a Coffee & start planning your day!							
10.30am – 12noon	<p>WELCOME</p> <p>Welcome to Country   Official Opening, Mel Martinelli, Executive Director, Equity &amp; Inclusion, Deakin University</p> <p>Welcome to Geelong by Stretch Kontelj, Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong TBC</p> <p>Keynote: Kate Maddern, Acting Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner (VDWC)</p> <p>Performance by 2025 Having a Say's Got Talent winner – Adam James</p> <p>Hon. Christine Couzens, State Member for Geelong</p> <p>Special Presentation for 25th HaS conference</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Microphone</p>							
Costa Hall (Auditorium)	 <p>Victorian Disability Worker Commission</p> 							
12noon - 1.30pm	 <p>Have lunch with friends at 'The Common' Café or in the Courtyard and check out the Our Choice Expo</p>							
1.30pm - 2.30pm	<p>Performance</p> <p>The Wizard of Scope (Scope Ballarat)</p> <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>My Health Matters Masterclass (Council for Intellectual Disability)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Promoting a safe and high-quality disability sector – with the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC) and the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>VALID Connect – Get Connected</p> <p>Green Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Supporting My Rights (Down Syndrome Australia)</p> <p>3 Different Self-Advocacy Journeys (New Wave Bass Coast South Gippsland)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try</p> <p>Gentle Tango</p> <p>Hair &amp; Make-Up</p> <p>Self-Advocacy Bingo</p> <p>Tie-dyeing</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p>	<p>ONLINE ONLY</p> <p>Trivia Quiz</p> <p>Pink Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Changing the Disability Discrimination Act (Inclusion Australia)</p> <p>What the Disability Dialogue Is and How You Can Get Involved (Disability Dialogue)</p> <p>zoom icon</p>
2.30 - 3.00pm	 <p>Afternoon Tea break</p>							

## Tuesday 27th January 2026

3.00pm - 4.00pm	Open Microphone 'On the Couch with Heather & Will' Including your stories of 25 years of HaS 	Workshop Let's Get Loud (Down Syndrome Australia & National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health)	Workshop Changes to Disability Employment Services: What it means for people with intellectual disability (Inclusion Australia)	VALID Stream International Self advocacy online get-together, including self-advocates online from Singapore (VALID)	Presentation Accessing VLA to strengthen your voice (Victoria Legal Aid - VLA)	Come & Try Art - Painting Badge-making Dream Catchers Hair & Make-up Craft with Wood <i>Meet in Courtyard</i>	Presentation Understanding what's the difference between SIL and SDA? (Scope)
	Costa Hall	Yellow Room	Moving Forward from Institutions in NSW (Hunter Circles)	Green Room 	ABI and the Criminal Justice System: Lived-Experience Training Made for Us, With Us (Voices for Change)	<i>Meet out front</i>	Tenant Voice - Putting the voice of people with disabilities first in SDA Housing (Young People In Nursing Homes)
			Blue Room		Grey Room	<b>ONLINE ONLY</b> Yoga	Pink Room 
6.30 - 10.00pm	<h3>Disco Event</h3> <p><i>Let's Party &amp; Sparkle</i> – celebrating 25-year silver anniversary of HaS, to the music of 'Unlimited'</p> <p>Croatian Community Centre</p>				<h3>Speakers</h3> <p>Guest speakers: 25 Years of HaS in the words of those who have been part of it.</p>		
							

**Thanks to our SILVER Sponsors:**

















**Thanks to our BRONZE Sponsors:**







 **Note: ONLINE Sessions**

All sessions that have the Zoom symbol will be available ONLINE via a Zoom link - which will be sent to people who have registered the week before.

## Wednesday 28th January 2026

Open at 8.30am	<p style="text-align: center;">Grab your Registration Package if it's your first day .....get a Coffee &amp; start planning your day!</p> 							
	<p><i>Foyer</i></p>							
9.30am - 10.30am	<p> <b>NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Special Keynote: Colleen Pearce, former Victorian Public Advocate</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sir Robert Martin Self-Advocacy Award</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Keynote: Louise Glanville, Commissioner and Natalie Wade, Associate Commissioner NDIS Quality &amp; Safety Commission</i></p> 							
	<p><i>Costa Hall</i></p>							
10.30am - 11 am	<p> <b>Morning Tea</b></p>							
11.00am - 12.00pm	<p><b>Performance</b> The Sugar Bells Live (Scope Ballarat)</p>	<p><b>Workshop</b> Introduction to friendship, relationships and intimacy workshop (Melba Support Services)</p>	<p><b>Workshop</b> Improve your public speaking skills! (Down Syndrome Victoria)</p> <p>How inclusive governance can build a better future for everyone (Our Voice)</p>	<p><b>VALID Stream</b> Driving Change (VALID Self Advocacy team)</p>	<p><b>Presentation</b> Easy English Family Violence Safety Planning (Safe Steps)</p>	<p><b>Come &amp; Try</b> </p> <p>Badge Making Colouring for Adults Karaoke Speed Friendship <i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <p><b>Harley Rides</b> <i>Meet out front</i></p> <p><b>ONLINE ONLY</b> Music Trivia</p>	<p><b>Presentation</b> People first: improving co-design of health professional education (Office of the Public Advocate)</p> <p>genU Using our Voices to Support others – R U OK Day – at genU</p> <p></p>	
	<p><i>Costa Hall</i></p>	<p><i>Yellow Room</i></p>	<p><i>Blue Room</i></p>	<p><i>Green Room</i> </p>	<p><i>Grey Room</i></p>		<p><i>Pink Room</i> </p>	
2.00pm - 1.30pm	<p>Have lunch with friends or look at the Our Choice Expo or join in the fun in the Courtyard</p> 							
12.15pm	<b>Courtyard</b>	<p> <b>Live entertainment by Genu Connections TV. Have your lunch and join in the fun!</b></p>						



indicates **ONLINE** sessions for people who have registered for online

## Wednesday 28th January 2026

1.30pm - 2.30pm	Open Microphone    'On the Couch with Will from VALID'	Workshop  Supporting family violence victim survivors (Safe Steps)	Presentation  Talking to your loved ones about friendships, relationships and intimacy (Melba Support Services)	VALID Stream  Empowering CALD Communities to overcome barriers to inclusion (VALID Community Development team)	Presentation  Food choice: why is it important and who helps? (Victoria University)	Come & Try  Art - painting Colouring with Adults Gentle Tango Craft -Wood & Mosaics Jewellery  <i>Meet in Courtyard</i>	Presentation  Stronger Together – Advocates Growing Self Advocates (Speak Out Tas.)
		You can be a researcher too – learn how! (Melbourne Uni)			Working Together: preventing everyday harm (Inclusion Group)	Harley Rides  <i>Meet out front</i>	Respecting Our Ability – inclusive governance project (Speak Out & SACID)
						<b>ONLINE ONLY</b>  Yoga	Pink Room 
2.30 - 3.00pm	 Afternoon Tea break						
3.00pm - 4.00pm	Open Microphone    25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos & Open Microphone	Workshop  Life Changes: speaking up and managing change with your brother or sister (siblings Australia)	Workshop  You should have a say in your behaviour support (Melbourne Uni)	VALID Stream  Employment Advocacy Project (VALID Advocacy Team)	Presentation  Life in Transition: Change, Choice and Confidence (Cerebral Palsy Support Network)	Come & Try  Karaoke Photography workshop Speed Friendship Smoothie Bike  <i>Meet in Courtyard</i>	Presentation  Community for Everyone (Side by Side Advocacy & Hunter Circles)
				VALID Q group and Rainbow Rights	Scambusters: Know it! Stop It! (Aust. Financial Complaints Authority)	Harley Rides  <i>Meet out front</i>	genU Client Leadership Teams – Big Voices, Big Ideas (genU)
						<b>ONLINE ONLY</b>  Self-Advocacy Bingo	Pink Room 
7pm - 10pm	<b>Having a Say's Got Talent (HGT) Auditions</b>						
	Contestants will sing, dance & entertain you as they audition (Note: finals on Thurs. 29th at 12.00pm)						
	The HGT competition is sponsored by InLife Independent Living						
	The Sphinx						

## Thursday 29th January 2026

8.45 – 9.30am	<b>Foyer</b> Grab your Registration Package if it's your first day.....get a coffee & start planning your day!							
9.30am – 10.15am	Open Microphone 25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos & Open Microphone  Costa Hall	Workshop Making Self-Advocacy groups stronger (Inclusion Australia)  Yellow Room	<b>VALID Stream</b> Confused about the changes to the NDIS – then we will talk about them in plain English and what you can do to self-advocate (VALID)  Green Room 	<b>VALID Stream</b> The Great Accessible Road Trip (Great Ocean Road Tourism)  Blue Room	Presentation Co-designing a research project: understanding obesity in people with intellectual disability (Deakin Uni)  Grey Room	Presentation Karaoke Colouring for Adults  <b>ONLINE</b> Self-Advocacy Bingo  Meet in Courtyard	Come & Try  BIG Events for BIG futures! (genU)  My Health Story – Leah Scott  Pink Room 	
10.15am	<b>Foyer</b> <b>Morning Tea</b> 							
10.45am – 11.30am	Performance 'Sing it out loud' (MusicSpace)  Bird is the Word – puppet (Ellie Blackney)  Costa Hall	Workshop 'Dreams & Aspirations' * come and write/tell/draw your dreams & goals for your life  Yellow Room	<b>VALID Stream</b> Innovation in Inclusion (VALID Community Development Team)  Green Room 	Presentation Supporting older people with intellectual disability living in SIL homes (Scope)  Blue Room	Presentation My journey from school to work (Council for Intellectual Disability)  Grey Room	Presentation Karaoke Craft -make a sign  <b>ONLINE</b> Yoga  Meet in Courtyard	Come & Try  Building Inclusive Communities Through Conversation and Choice (MINDS Singapore)  Pink Room 	
11.30am	<b>Foyer</b> <b>Brunch</b> 							
12.00pm – 1.00pm	  Costa Hall	<b>CLOSING CEREMONY</b> <b>HaS's Got Talent Competition Final</b>  Family Empowerment Award   'Pentland - Banfield' Self Advocacy Award and the <u>Art Competition Prizes</u> sponsored by the Victorian Senior Practitioner						