



# Southwest Advocacy News

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MARCH 2008

## CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

A new report by the Victorian Auditor-General on Accommodation for People with a Disability has criticised the Government for failing to meet the needs of vulnerable Victorians and their families. Amongst other things the Auditor-General found that:

- 1370 people with disabilities currently need supported accommodation but cannot get it - on current projections this will increase to 2,500 people by 2016.
- The number of people with disabilities needing a bed is growing at a rate of 4 to 5 per cent annually.
- The Government has not quantified future support needs and has not put a plan in place.
- 200 properties accommodating people with disabilities did not meet basic access, health and safety standards.
- There is considerable variation in staff skills and qualifications and there is no plan in place to address this.

Disability advocacy groups have long argued that there are very significant unmet needs in relation to accommodation and support and this report now confirms this. A Parliamentary review of supported accommodation for people with a disability or mental illness will now be conducted.

SWAA's campaign to try to make Post Offices more accessible to people with disabilities is continuing. Last month Australia Post sent one of its' managers to the region to inspect problems that SWAA has identified at Post Offices in Warrnambool, Hamilton and Terang. We are

*(Continued on page 2)*

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### Inside this issue:

Co-Ordinator's Report 1

Your Basic Human Rights 2

VicDeaf Community Fund 3

There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question 4

Auditor General's Damning Report 5



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*If you have an e-mail address you can help us save paper & postage costs by receiving our newsletter via e-mail. Please contact Margaret on 5561 4584 or just send us an e-mail message notifying us of your email details to receive future editions of SWAA News electronically.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

waiting for a formal written response from Australia Post. On a promising note, it looks as though the Hamilton Post Office may be subject to major renovations, which will make all its services accessible, and SWAA understands that Australia Post is currently reviewing its policy on the display of merchandise with a view to enhancing accessibility. In addition to this, SWAA and the Disability Discrimination Legal Service are continuing to lobby for the development of a comprehensive Disability Action Plan to systematically address issues that disadvantage people with a variety of disabilities. Australia Post is yet to formally inform us of their intentions in regard to this issue.

SWAA is currently seeking funding to enable it to extend the Active Participation Register project into the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires. Upon registering their interest in the project, people with disabilities and organisational representatives are placed on a mailing list and provided with information on opportunities to get involved in community consultations, conferences, advisory bodies, committees and boards of management. The broad aim is to give people with disabilities more of an opportunity to be heard and to exercise some influence in their community. If you would like to register an interest in the project, please complete and return the enclosed registration form or contact SWAA for further information.

**Robert Dick.**  
Co-ordinator

## **Your Basic Human Rights**

1. The right to be treated with dignity.
2. The right to be treated with respect.
3. The right to self-determination.
4. The right to be safe.
5. The right to make choices.
6. The right to be heard.
7. The right to receive information to make the best decision.
8. The right to participate in all things that affect you.
9. The right to say no.
10. The right to privacy.

11. The right to learn.
12. The rights to work.
13. The right to complain against injustice.
14. The right to live without harassment or discrimination.
15. The right to quality of life.

Adapted from UN High Commission of Human Rights by PMHCCN (Australia)

*(Taken from V.M.I.A.C. March 2008)*





## Vicdeaf Community Fund

If you were amongst the more than 500 people who attended the Christmas Rally at Bundoora Park back in December you will remember that Graeme Kelly, Vicdeaf CEO mentioned that the Vicdeaf Community Fund details would be provided early in 2008.

The Vicdeaf Community Fund was established to provide one-off grants and funding assistance to support deaf and hard of hearing people achieve or contribute to any one of the following priority areas:

Leadership, Business Development, Health & Well Being, Art & Culture, International Development, Support to empower people to tell their stories through media for the benefit of the deaf community and to build understanding in the broader community

Projects should contribute to the individual's positive growth and personal development and provide inspiration for other deaf people to achieve and show leadership.

### Who can apply to the Fund?

Deaf and hard of hearing people living in Victoria are able to apply to the Fund. Recognised deaf clubs and groups are also able to apply.

**For further details please contact Melissa Lowrie on: [mlowrie@vicdeaf.com.au](mailto:mlowrie@vicdeaf.com.au)  
TTY 9473 1199 or phone 9473 1111**

4

### CONTRIBUTIONS To SWAA NEWS

We welcome any contributions to the newsletter in the form of letters, stories, articles and news items relevant to disability issues.

Items printed in SWAA News do not necessarily reflect the views of SWAA, staff or Committee of Management

### MEMBERSHIP

*Membership is a great way to support our work, and we are very keen for people who have used the service to become members. Members receive our quarterly newsletter and other mail outs about disability issues and can have a say in the running of Southwest Advocacy by voting at our Annual General Meetings.*

***Membership of Southwest Advocacy is free.***

*If you would like to become a member please contact Southwest Advocacy for a membership form.*

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## There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question

A practical guide for families living with a child with chronic illness disability, mental illness or a life-threatening condition

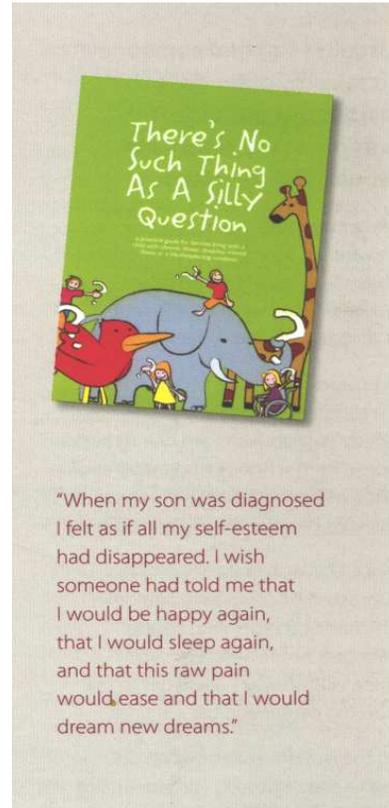
There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question blends real-life tips from families who have 'been there' with comprehensive information about where to find further support. The book has a particular focus on assisting parents of children with chronic illness, disability, mental illness or life-threatening condition to find their way around the medical and community support systems.

There are sections such as 'Where do I begin?', 'Going into Hospital', 'Who will help us in the community', and 'How to give life balance'. There is also a glossary and lists of publications, resources and services in the back of the book.

The book's authors are from interAct, a group of parents and health professionals committed to helping parents, caregivers and service providers to work together for the benefit of children with additional needs and their families.

There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question is published by Very Special Kids in partnership with the Gandel Charitable Trust. The Victorian Government has provided financial assistance for a second print run of the book.

**Copies of There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question are Available free of charge from interAct by email [secretary.interact@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.interact@gmail.com) or phone Very Special Kids on 9804 62022 or 1800 888 875.**



*"There's No Such Thing As A Silly Question is a collection of all things I wish I had known back in the early days."*

You can help Southwest Advocacy by passing this newsletter on to someone else who might be interested in reading it after you.

## Auditor General's Damning Report

The Auditor General has released a report on the state of SSA (Shared Support Accommodation) in Victoria. It paints a harsh picture and exposes the lack of capacity and competency across the sector.

The report states:

“... Due to the significant issues identified in this audit, there remains a disconnect between the new support model and the actual delivery of the model by service providers ...

Of particular concern to audit is that the three issues of capacity and expertise of service providers, block funding for SSA, and individual support plans were raised by us in 2000 ...

DHS is poorly placed to plan for and manage the full extent of its future resourcing requirements. This may perpetuate a service system that is reactive and crisis driven ...

Significant issues remain which, unless addressed, will continue to impede the transition from a medical to a social model of support.

### **Capacity and expertise of service providers**

DHS has not yet conclusively assessed whether the disability sector has the capacity and expertise to adopt the changes (though DHS has identified the need for such an assessment). Nor has it established a strategy to address gaps in capacity or expertise.

Service providers are struggling to meet their existing obligations for supporting residents, particularly in regard to the time required to provide additional individualised support is limited ...

There is considerable variation in staff skills and qualifications, which results in variability in service provision ...

### **Unmet demand for support**

DHS is unable to provide support for all those requesting it (unmet demand is around 1370 people or 30 per cent), yet demand is increasing by around 4 to 5 per cent annually and DHS has not accurately quantified future support needs or the associated need for resources. The reactive nature of DHS's response to accommodation needs, combined with the stringent prioritisation criteria, is likely to continue, and therefore perpetuate a crisis-driven system ...

### **Block funding for SSA**

Funding for SSA is delivered to each service provider (per House) in a block based on the level of support a particular house provides. As funding is tied to the service provider rather than the individual, it reinforces a 'group approach' to service provision rather than a system that services the needs of the individual ...

Some houses operate from an 'institution' mindset, catering for residents' physical needs rather than operating like a home where residents are encouraged to develop an independence limited only by their own capacity. DHS has not assessed the suitability of its houses in regard to the goals of the State Disability Plan and the Disability Act 2006. Likewise, operators of CSO houses have not assessed the suitability of their houses ...

Over the past four years, DHS has created 77 new facilities to replace unsuitable facilities but has not increased SSA bed capacity.

### **Individual support plans**

... approaches to planning by DHS and CSOs lack consistency and coordination.”

The full report is available at the Victorian Auditor General's Office  
[Http://www.audit.vic.gov.au](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au)

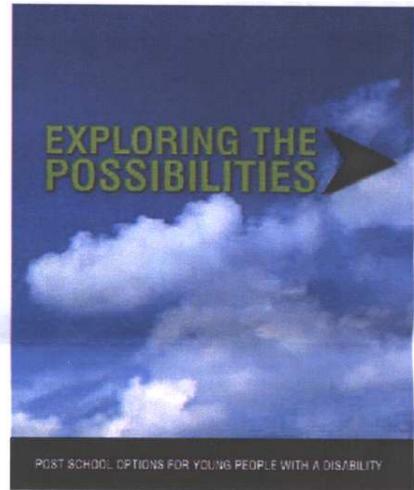
(Taken from Valid News, March 2008)

## ‘Exploring the Possibilities: Post School Options for Young People with a Disability’

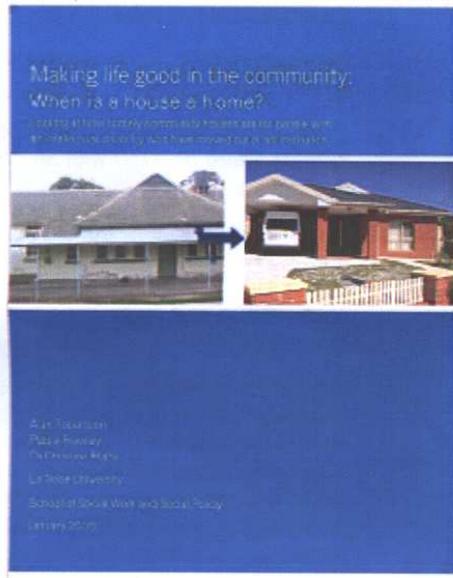
This handy Resource Guide provides young people with a disability and their families with information and advice on the transition from school to the world of higher education, training & employment and specialist & community-based options.

Published by VALID and supported by Disability Services, DHS.

Available for download in pdf format from [www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au) (under publications/books)



## ‘When is a House a Home?’



This landmark report by Alan Robertson, Patsie Frawley & Chris Bigby talks about how residential services can make ‘homes’ rather than ‘facilities’ and ‘mini-institutions’.

This report is an important part of the Making Life Good in the Community Project being conducted by La Trobe University to support the community inclusion of former Kew Residential Services residents.

Copies are available of Exploring the Possibilities and When is a House a Home from the VALID office  
Phone: 03 9416 4003,  
Email: [office@valid.org.au](mailto:office@valid.org.au)