



Southwest Advocacy News

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Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Welcome to another edition of *SWAA News*.

The staff at SWAA are looking forward to a well-deserved break over Xmas after another busy year. Our staff work hard to ensure that people with disabilities throughout south west Victoria have access to advocacy assistance that helps them to have a voice and that protects and promotes their rights. Sadly, however, for many people with disabilities and their carers there is no break. The struggle for a decent quality of life remains constant due to inadequate funding and an overly complex and confusing disability service system.

The gap between the rhetoric and spin around the service system and the reality faced by people with disabilities and carers is significant. However, SWAA remains hopeful that the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) may provide a way forward and we urge people with disabilities and their carers to take an active interest in this issue. The Australian Productivity Commission is due to release a draft report on the feasibility of an NDIS for public consultation in February 2011 and then a final report is due to be handed to the Federal Government in July 2011. For comprehensive information about the NDIS go to one of the following websites

- www.ndis.org.au
- www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/policy
- www.nds.org.au

SWAA's AGM was held at the Warrnambool Football Club once again this year and was followed by a celebratory dinner at Cramer's Bistro. One of the highlights of the AGM was the induction of John Furniss as

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DECEMBER 2010

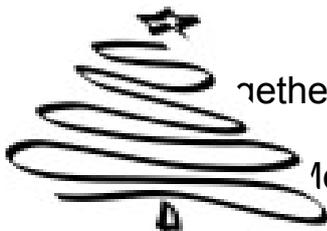
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The Committee of Management
together with Rob, Adele & Marg would like to take this
opportunity to wish you all a
Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

The SWAA office will be closed from Friday 24th December 2010 and will re-open
on Tuesday 4th January, 2011

SWAA's first Life Member. John was a foundation member of SWAA's Committee of Management and has continuously served on the Committee over a period of some 17 years – a magnificent achievement. We are also grateful to Legal Aid Victoria's Warrnambool office for providing Danielle Svede to act as our guest speaker.

Following the retirement of 4 volunteer Committee of Management members this year, there are a number of vacancies available and SWAA is looking to recruit some new talent. Under SWAA's Constitution SWAA must try to ensure that at least 50% of its' Committee of Management is made up of people with disabilities, so people with disabilities with an interest in disability rights are particularly encouraged to apply, but anyone who would like to support SWAA's advocacy work by volunteering to become part of our governance team should contact SWAA for further information.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend best wishes for Xmas & the New Year to all our members and supporters. We look forward to working with you all again in 2011.

Robert Dick
Co-ordinator

Season's Greetings



*Would you like to receive Southwest Advocacy News
via E-mail?*

*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*

**Southwest Advocacy News is also now available at
www.southwestadvocacy.org.au**

Victorian Carer Card

The Victorian Carer Card was launched in July 2010 to acknowledge providing ongoing support to an adult or child with a chronic condition, disability or who are frail aged.

What can you expect
from the Carer Card?



The Carer Card entitles the cardholder to discounted products, services or venue entry, free Sunday travel on all metropolitan and regional public transport, and two free return rail vouchers for travel anywhere within Victoria.

Carers can be parents, foster carers, partners, brothers, sisters, friends or children. To be eligible, carers must provide evidence they are a primary carer in receipt of carer income support from the Commonwealth Government through Centrelink. For carers not in receipt of a Centrelink carer benefit, a health professional can sign Carer Card application forms to confirm the applicant is an unpaid primary carer.

The plastic credit card-sized Carer Card will be issued to eligible primary and foster carers in Victoria and will display the cardholder's name, signature and a registration number.

For more information phone **1800 658 521** or visit www.carercard.vic.gov.au

[Taken from Association for Children with a Disability—NoticeBoard Magazine—Winter 2010]

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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**Are you receiving Active Participation Register Mail outs?
Don't miss out — contact SWAA on 5561 4584 &
complete a registration form today.**

'Tax in Australia—what you need to know' **Now available in Auslan**

The Australian Tax Office's *'Tax in Australia—what you need to know'* DVD and online presentation is now available in 16 different languages including Auslan.

Originally launched in August 2009 the DVD is designed to overcome language, communication and cultural barriers to inform new migrants about Australia's tax and superannuation systems.

The DVD explains why Australians pay tax, the need for a tax file number, what to do when starting employment and why people may need to complete a tax return. Captions were included to assist understanding with tax terminology and to aid comprehension for hard of hearing viewers.

The product was originally produced in ten languages and this year an additional 6 languages were included including Auslan after positive feedback from users, community leaders, organisations and government agencies.

More information

The *'Tax in Australia—what you need to know'* DVD is available from www.ato.gov.au

Australian Tax Office—Tax Information

It is tax time! Do you need help? The ATO offers Tax Help, a free and confidential service for low income earners. An ATO-trained volunteer can help you complete and lodge your tax return. Visit www.ato.gov.au or call the ATO on **13 28 61** through the National Relay Service for more information.

- TTY users phone **13 36 77**
- Speak and listen (speech-to-speech) relay users, phone **1300 555 727**
- Internet relay users connect to www.relayservice.com.au

You can lodge your tax return in a number of ways:

- Online through e-tax available for download from www.ato.gov.au/etax
- Paper using Tax Pack and TaxPack 2010 supplement from ATO shopfronts and newsagents

Remember to lodge your return by 31 October. If you are using a tax agent, you must contact them by 31 October. Always use a registered tax agent—you can check if they are registered at www.tpb.gov.au

Do you receive a government allowance? There have been some changes to income tests which may affect your eligibility for tax offsets. More information about these changes is available at www.ato.gov.au/incometests.

(Taken from Vicdeaf Communicate Issue 25 September/October 2010)

Worldwide travel: DeafPlanet style

By Hilary Fisher.

15 countries. That's how many places I've visited since I started a 12 month world wide journey. I've been to South East Asia, China, Mongolia, Russia and the Baltics and I still have five months to go!

There have been awesome times (99%) and some less awesome times (1%). I've walked the Great Wall of China, ridden elephants, traveled the Trans-Siberian Railway,

stayed in a Mongolian tent, and visited castles. I've caught overcrowded trains in China and travelled overnight. I've been saddened to see men who have stunted growth due to poverty, and I've made new friends everywhere.

I've met up with Deaf people and organisations to meet new people and learn about their culture. I've mixed Auslan, ASL, International Sign and mime together, and learnt a little Malaysian, Khmer (Cambodian), and Laos sign language. Sometimes communication has been unclear but we laugh and keep trying. Visiting other countries has taught me how important strong language skills and identity are to Deaf communities. For example, Mongolia is still working on getting their sign language vocabulary out there so that Deaf people, especially in regional areas, can communicate better with family, friends, teachers and employers.

Because I'm lucky enough to travel, I've started www.deafplanet.com.au, a website for intrepid deaf, hard of hearing and signing travellers. Check it out. It features myself and others talking about travelling using sign



Photo: In Moscow, Russia
Photo Source: Hilary Fisher.

language, pictures and plain English. If you are thinking of travelling, here is some useful travel advice:

- **Get in touch!** The World Federation of the Deaf is a handy starting place for reaching out to people overseas.
- **Think ahead!** Research the country you're visiting. If English is limited, learn to write 'the basics' in their language, so you can buy things without hassle.
- **Invest in locks!** Not all hostels provide lockers. My lock and cable allows me to lock my bag to a pole or bed, making it harder for someone to pinch my bag while I'm sleeping.
- **Read the fine print!** Your hearing aids or cochlear implant may not be covered by travel or home insurance, even if you mention them specially. Don't expect the call centre to know the fine print. Read it yourself.
- **Volunteer!** Organisations for deaf people can benefit from your help. Sometimes it's in an official volunteer capacity. Other times it's just by visiting as yourself to show how deaf people can, and do anything.
- **Submit a video for www.deafplanet.com.au!** Guidelines are available onsite, and if you've never made or edited a video before, don't worry. I'll help out!

Travel is fun and it helps you gain independence. So get out there. Explore!



Photo: The Mongolian ger (tent) I slept in.
Photo Source: Hilary Fisher.



Photo: Meeting signers in Thailand
Photo Source: Hilary Fisher.



Photo: Meeting with a Mongolian organisation to promote the role of Deaf and Young sign language interpreters.
Photo Source: Hilary Fisher.



Photo: Lake Baikal in the more rural parts of Russia
Photo Source: Hilary Fisher.

Through the Maze

An overview of services and support for parents of children with a disability in Victoria

The 6th edition of our Through the Maze booklet launched in September 2010 gives an overview of services and support for children with a disability and their families in Victoria. This new edition is designed as a basic introductory guide to help you identify services and support for your child and family. Topics covered include:

- Where to start
- 10 Key contacts
- Early childhood services
- Disability services
- Young adults
- Accessibility Aids & equipment
- Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- Behaviour
- Child care
- Communication & speech
- Counselling & support
- Disability-specific groups
- Education
- Financial assistance
- Health & medical

- Housing & accommodation
- Information & Advocacy
- Legal services
- Local government
- Making a complaint

Smoke Alarm

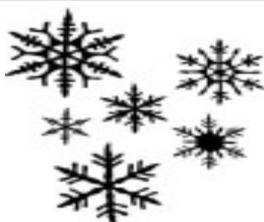
Are you eligible for the Smoke Alarm Subsidy Initiative?

The Smoke Alarm Subsidy is a scheme supported by the Victorian State Government for people who are profoundly deaf to acquire a visual and vibrating smoke alarm for \$50 (normally the Bellman Visit Flash, smoke alarm & vibrating pad retail



Eligibility requirements and application forms are available from the Vicdeaf website, under the smoke alarm subsidy link at: www.vicdeaf.com.au/smoke-alarm-subsidy

(Taken from Vicdeaf Communicate Issue 25 September/October 2010)



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