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Southwest Advocacy News

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Address:
31 Princess Street
Warrnambool 3280

Postal Address:
P O Box 480
Warrnambool 3280

Phone: [03] 5561 4584
Fax: [03] 5561 4371
People with hearing or communication
impairments may dial 133 677 (National
Relay Service) & quote [03] 5561 4584
Email: swadvocacy@bigpond.com
Web: www.southwestadvocacy.org.au

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Welcome to another edition of *SWAA News*. The following is a brief update on a few things.

Readers of *SWAA News* may recall that in the last edition, it was flagged that, in the face of dwindling funding, future Active Participation Register (APR) mailouts would be via e-mail only. This change would have meant that a number of people with disabilities and carers who currently receive APR mailouts in the post would no longer receive this information. Fortunately, however, following receipt of a generous donation from Rural Access, we have been able to delay taking this step until at least the end of this year. This is great news for people who receive APR mailouts by post, but the reality is that it may not be sustainable unless SWAA is able to obtain further funding in the future, so if you have an e-mail address that you can provide us with, please pass it on to us to ensure you continue to receive APR mailouts in future. Additionally, if you know of other people who may like to receive APR mailouts, please ask them to contact SWAA.

In this edition of *SWAA News*, you will find a couple of articles about the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The campaign for the introduction of a NDIS is certainly gathering some momentum and there are high hopes that a NDIS will result in enhanced funding to meet the huge level of unmet needs that currently exists. SWAA would certainly support anything that goes some way towards achieving this outcome, but the extent to which a NDIS can or will do this will depend on how it is structured and whether it is adequately funded.

The National Disability Strategy was also unveiled recently and there will be some consultations conducted shortly to determine how the vi-

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**HAVE YOU VISITED SWAA'S WEBSITE:-
www.southwestadvocacy.org.au**

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sion will be put into practice. The Strategy is full of commendable ideas and sentiments, but again, it is how it is resourced that will determine its capacity to change the lives of people with disabilities. Information on the National Disability Strategy is available at www.fahcsia.gov.au

There are still 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.

Robert Dick
Co-ordinator

Disability Access to Premises—Buildings Standards 2010

Important information for local government designers, architects, building professional, facility managers and developers - As you will be aware the Disability (Access to Premises—buildings) Standards 2010 Commonwealth (Premises Standards) commence on 1 May 2011. Any application for a building approval for a new building or upgrade of an existing building on or after that date will trigger the application of the Premises Standards.

The purpose of the Premises Standards is to ensure that dignified, equitable, cost-effective and reasonably achievable access to buildings, and facilities and services within buildings, is provided for people with disability, and to give certainty to building certifiers, developers and managers that is the Standards are complied with they cannot be subject to a successful complaint under the DDA in relation to those matters covered by the Premises Standards.

There is no doubt that the introduction of the Premises Standards will lead to widespread and important improvements in the accessibility and safety of all new and upgraded buildings that it covers throughout Australia.

These changes will improve the opportunities for people with disability to participate in and contribute to the economic, cultural, social and political life of our community as equal citizens.

They will also help in creating a more sustainable built environment capable of responding to our changing circumstances and family and community needs.

All of us will benefit from these changes as our individual needs change over time.

The changes will also require the development of new skills, knowledge and approaches from those in the building industry including developers, designers and architects, builders, project managers, certifiers and building operators.

The Australian Human Rights Commission has issued a *Guideline on the application of the Premises Standards* to assist in their application.

(Taken from AMIDA News , June 2011)

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION'S INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY CARE AND SUPPORT

The Productivity Commission's Draft Report, released on February 28, recognises that current disability support arrangements are broken and in need of significant reform and increased funding. It recommends some significant reforms of how disability support is funded and proposes doubling current expenditure on the program.

Disability advocacy organisations and organisations of people with disabilities came together in 2010 to discuss a set of agreed outcomes that they wanted the Productivity Commission to include in its recommendations. This framework formed the basis of a joint submission and was used by many disability advocacy groups in their separate submissions.

In reviewing the Draft Report at a joint meeting of the same groups in Canberra on March 9th, it was agreed that the Productivity Commission Draft Report had heard many of the key messages we had put forward. In particular, the Draft Report supported:

- The notion of entitlement to disability support for all those deemed eligible.
- An increase of \$6.3B to address current identified unmet need
- A national system that supports portability of disability supports.
- Maintenance of existing obligations of government under DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) and Social Inclusion Agenda as a separate program.
- Commitment to empowerment of people with disabilities.

Some matters that need further work by the Productivity Commission:

- There is reference to the UN Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as a guiding framework, yet the report fails to address closure of institutions, ignoring Article 19 of the UNCRPD.
- The role and position of independent advocacy to support and protect people with disabilities was not understood.
- While the Report supports self-determination, it shows poor understanding of supported decision-making and reference to this in Article 12 of the UNCRPD.
- Self-Assessment models that work overseas were not supported.
- Need for greater emphasis on service development & promotion of good practice – market model will not drive this alone.
- Need to ensure that people with disabilities, families and their organisations have a strong voice through proposed Advisory Council.
- Need for more clarity around interface between mental health, health and disability support systems.

While the overall report was good on many critical issues, advocacy groups will need to ensure that some of the gaps and unaddressed issues are prominent in the next phase of consultation leading up to a final report in the middle of the year.

**IN THE MEANTIME
VALID URGES
EVERYONE TO GET
BEHIND THE NDIS
CAMPAIGN BY
REGISTERING YOUR SUPPORT ONLINE
WITH THE EVERY AUSTRALIAN COUNTS
PETITION <http://everyaustraliancounts.com.au>**



HOW LONG DO WE HAVE TO WAIT?

The NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) can't come soon enough for families in desperate need.

Distressed families are asking: 'What is wrong with our Governments that they continue to ignore us?'

"Teena", the mother of Kristie Raftis, has been on the ISP (Individual Support Package) waiting list for three intensely stressful years. Suffering significant health issues, she is medicated for high blood pressure, joint damage to a knee and deteriorating discs in her back. In the mornings her disabled daughter is being lifted by her sister into her wheelchair.

Teena says she could cope with looking after her daughter if that was all she had to do. But if the ISP systems were in place it would make an enormous difference to the family's quality of life.

In July 2010 she was also told by DHS that their application was top of the list, that they should never have been on the waiting list, and that they should already have their package. As yet nothing has happened.

Present emergency hours (four hours per fortnight) allow for three baths a week, and bed lifts Monday to Thursday. Social outings are minimal.

The ISP, when put in place, will allow three personal care hours a day for a bath etc.

The ISP will also allow for someone to get Kristie up on Saturday mornings, Saturday nights and Sunday mornings every second weekend, and will mean more respite for the family.

"Teena's" calls to DHS are usually greeted by an answering machine. She feels she is being avoided.

Meanwhile they wait.

(Taken from Valid News March 2011)

Disclaimer

All information contained within SWAA News is as accurate as possible and is provided in good faith, however it is not guaranteed.

SWAA does not recommend any product, activity, organisation, service or item—such details are provided within SWAA News for general information and interest only.

SHUT IN — Campaign to Close Institutions

"I have many friends now: people I can talk to, go to dinner with, and call on for support. I am in charge of my life now, I make my own decisions and I am free" - Kim Walker

Kim lived in institutions for 17 years. She is now a passionate advocate for the closure of all institutions in Australia. To hear her speak out on why she supports the Shut In campaign, watch her video

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ShutInAustralia>

Shut In is the campaign to take action against the ongoing congregation, segregation and isolation of people with disability in institutions.

Some facts:

People with disability are still in institutions in Australia. These institutions are still being funded and have not closed regardless of promises that have been made to do so. People with disability are still being placed in institutions regardless of government policies and stipulate that this should not occur.

Some institutions are not being closed but are being redeveloped into 'contemporary' institutions that continue to congregate people with disability are in breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Shut In aims to raise awareness about this human rights abuse, take action to close institutions, and advocate for housing and supports that enable people with disability to live in the community in the same way as everyone else.

Visit the Shut In Campaign website at: <http://www.shutin.org.au/>

(Taken from Valid News—March 2011)



Assistance for regional travellers attending medical appointments in Melbourne.

A new pilot project to help regional and rural Victorian travellers get to their medical appointments in Melbourne safely and confidently commenced from 8 March 2011.

It is estimated 50,000 people from rural and regional Victoria travel into Melbourne each year to seek medical treatment. Many of these travellers are frail, aged, or people living with a disability. They otherwise rely on family members, friends, or community transport services to drive or accompany them to Melbourne.

When this assistance is not available many people risk their health, delay their appointments, or don't come at all.

The service offers a dedicated team of Melbourne volunteers who will assist rural and regional Victorians in need, who are travelling to Melbourne for medical appointment. Medical companions will meet travellers at Southern Cross Station or Flinders Street Station and then accompany them to and from their appointment in central Melbourne. Metropolitan people can also take advantage of this service.

The service is free. People wishing to use the service can call 1300 700 399. Booking are essential with 24 hours notice required.

The Project is a joint initiative between Travellers Aid Australia and the Victorian Government's Transport Connections Program. V/Line has also assisted in delivering this new service.

(Taken from DAIS—Advance—Winter 2011)



SWAA

Southwest Advocacy Association
Are you interested in becoming a part
of SWAA's Board of Management?

SWAA is an independent community organisation that helps people with disabilities to have their say and use their rights.

SWAA is directed and managed by a volunteer Board of Management which currently has a number of vacancies.

SWAA's Board of Management Members -

Play a key role in the maintenance and direction of SWAA

Help make a difference to people with disabilities in south west Victoria by ensuring that they have access to a strong advocacy service.

Gain valuable insight and experience into the disability and community service sector through their involvement on the Board.

If you think you might be interested in becoming a member of SWAA's Board of Management, please telephone SWAA on 55 614 584 or email – swadvocay@bigpond.com.au

SWAA Board meetings are currently held at the offices of SWAA at 31 Princess St Warrnambool at 5.15 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month.

People with disabilities are particularly encouraged to nominate for positions on SWAA's Board.

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