

SOUTHWEST ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION INC.

Incorporation Registration A0025914Y



S . W . A . A .

ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012



SOUTHWEST ADVOCACY ASSOCIATION INC

MISSION STATEMENT

Southwest Advocacy Association Incorporated aims to provide an advocacy and information service that empowers and gives a voice to people with disabilities; that strives to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected; and that fosters the positive and full participation of people with disabilities in the community.

ADVOCACY

Action on behalf of the sincerely perceived interests of a person or group, without conflict of interest, in order to promote and protect their welfare, rights & interests.



COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2011/2012

PRESIDENT:	Graham Durston (Acting President)
VICE PRESIDENT:	Graham Durston
SECRETARY:	Camarita Sinclair
TREASURER:	Andrew Harman
MEMBERS:	Mark Powell Phillip Brown Cheryl Gould Lisa Vale Colin Vale
STAFF MEMBERS:	Adele Markwell (Co-ordinator/Advocate) Margaret Gottlewski (Administration Officer) Roz Rantall (Advocate)
AUDITOR:	Cameron Young Young's Chartered Accountants



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2011-2012

It is with great pleasure that I present the Annual Report this year for Southwest Advocacy Association (SWAA).

Once again SWAA has continued to manage a busy individual advocacy caseload across the south west region but with time constraints limiting the amount of systemic advocacy we can provide.

This year has seen changes in our Committee of Management with some resignations and some new members coming on board. We thank our past members and welcome our new ones.

While a small organisation like ours will always be presented with challenges in relation to funding constraints, we have survived another year and proceeded into the 2012/13 financial year looking OK.

On an organisational level SWAA is continuing with the Active Participation Register. This project aims to empower people with disabilities by informing them about opportunities to get involved in working groups, advisory committees and forums where consultation, planning and decision making takes place so that they are able to have an influence in a broad range of areas throughout the community. Unfortunately the very much appreciated funding from Rural Access has run out and we thank them for their past assistance so we will need to get assistance to continue with this very valued project.

We were successful in our annual opportunity to apply for a minor works grant through The Department of Human Services. We purchased some very useful equipment for the organisation.

The biggest challenge at the moment and possibly the biggest challenge SWAA has faced is the Quality Assurance audit which needs to be completed by November 2013.

In conclusion I would like to thank our hard-working and dedicated staff, Adele, Margaret, Roz and Judith, and my fellow volunteers on the Committee of Management. It has been a pleasure working with all of you and I look forward to another successful year for Southwest Advocacy Association.

Graham Durston
Acting President



CO-ORDINATOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

This year's Annual General Meeting marks the end of another successful but challenging year for Southwest Advocacy Association (SWAA). SWAA's core business of working to protect and promote the rights and interests of people with disabilities and helping to ensure that they have a voice, continues to keep us extremely busy. Unfortunately the high need for advocacy throughout the southwest and our limited resources to provide that advocacy will continue to ensure that SWAA is meeting time and priority challenges on a regular basis. Nevertheless SWAA remains committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are not discriminated against because of their disability and that they receive the essential and basic services that they are entitled to. We will continue to fight against discriminating socio-economic circumstances and remain committed to assisting people with disabilities to obtain their rights as valued members of our community.

For SWAA as an organisation and in fact for all FAHCSIA funded advocacy agencies, the biggest challenge over the past year and in the coming year is the National Disability Advocacy Program (NDAP) Quality Assurance audit, which has to be completed by November next year. This may sound like a long time off but it is a massive amount of work that has to be completed in that time. Our entire funding from FACHSIA depends on it. We are pleased to have been given a contract ensuring funding for the next 3 years, but that funding depends on a successful audit. This is the first time that advocacy agencies throughout Australia have had to meet these audit requirements so is a massive job the first time around. Although it is a lot of work, it ensures that advocacy is delivered to a consistently high standard, so can only be good for advocacy overall.

A significant change over the coming year will be the trial of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The Barwon area has been chosen for the trial in Victoria so it will be interesting to see how it rolls out and whether it offers all that we are hoping for. This has been a long fought and waited for huge commitment from government at both federal and state levels which, if successful, will have a huge beneficial impact on the lives of people with disability.

Although the NDIS hopefully will be a great move forward, people with disabilities remain disadvantaged in so many areas and unmet need for adequate services and supports is still consistently apparent.

In the meantime, SWAA continues its' work at the regional level through its own systemic advocacy efforts and through its' participation in state wide and national networks.

Through 2011-12 we have maintained a very high volume of work, some of which is listed below.

Individual Advocacy

In 2011-12 individual advocacy casework was provided to 149 clients throughout south west Victoria. In addition to this, SWAA responded to another 237 requests for information provision from people with disabilities, family members, friends and service providers and made over 90 referrals to service providers.

Major issues dealt with via casework were in relation to:

- the financial stress that people with disability are under, quite often due to their vulnerability and the commercial enterprises who are very keen to take advantage
- the policy and practice of service providers
- issues for families and children in schools
- access to services
- accommodation issues which have become massive due to there simply being nothing available both privately in the low income bracket and with the Department of Housing
- Guardianship and Administration board representation and issues
- Representation of clients at the Mental Health Review Board. This area is coming back to us due to there no longer being funded legal representation.
- Representation at the VCAT tenancy tribunal. An area which we have not been involved in in the past but have recently.

Southwest Advocacy Association provided advocacy to people with all types of disabilities throughout 2011/12 with no single area of disability being overly represented.

Systemic Advocacy and Community Development

Throughout 2011/12 Southwest Advocacy Association has not been able to devote the amount of time it has in the past to Systemic Advocacy and Community Development due to the lack of staff and having to concentrate most of our time on individual advocacy and the QA work.

The areas that SWAA has remained involved in are listed below.

- DHS Active Participation Strategy - SWAA has continued to manage and develop the Active Participation Register throughout the south west. This is becoming more difficult to maintain due to there being no further funding. One of our challenges over the coming year will be to attract further funding for this very important service.
- Warrnambool City Council Disability Advisory Committee - SWAA is represented on this Committee.
- Involvement in Peak Advocacy Organisations - SWAA has up until recently been a member of Disability Rights Victoria but this body is no longer in existence and discussions are underway for a replacement of this very important network , the Victorian Rural Advocacy Network, the Victorian Disability Advocacy network and the Disability Advocacy network of Australia. These state wide and national organisations are involved in a broad range of systemic issues.

Community Education

In the area of community education and awareness raising SWAA has also continued to be active. Major activities in community education were as follows.

- SWAA was interviewed on ABC Rural Radio in relation to a recently released research finding regarding children with disability in schools.
- SWAA supports and participates in the planning and delivery of major regional activities and events that are particularly relevant to people with disabilities, such as Mental Health Week, International Day of People with Disabilities, Access Awards, etc.
- SWAA participated in the Warrnambool Community Services Expo.
- SWAA regularly provides presentations on advocacy and SWAA's role to disability service providers and community organisations.
- SWAA regularly provides information to Deakin University and South West TAFE students studying in the social and community services and related fields.
- Production of SWAA quarterly newsletter, Southwest Advocacy News continued.

Supporting Disability Self-Help Groups

Providing support and assistance to self-help groups has always been a part of the activities of SWAA and we remain ready, willing and available to continue this assistance where the need exists and our resources allow.

Acknowledgments

Without the team that makes up SWAA, that of our staff and our voluntary Committee of Management, we would not be able to achieve what we do throughout Southwest Victoria. I therefore thank Margaret Gottlewski without whom as an organisation we would not function anywhere near as efficiently

as we do, Judith Harris, who does a great job of ensuring that our premises and therefore our work environment are kept beautifully, our newest staff member, Roz Rantall, who has only been with us for a few weeks but is already demonstrating a great flair for the very specific work of advocacy and last but definitely not least, our fantastic Committee of Management, who support and advise us and help to make SWAA the great organisation that I believe it is. I thank them all for their commitment and belief in our organisation and look forward to working with them all in the year ahead.

In the last 12 months SWAA has farewelled Liz Graham, Erica Smith & Lisa Downes from the Committee of Management. We thank these retiring members of the Committee of Management for their contribution and wish them all the best for the future. We have also welcomed Mark Powell, Phil Brown, Cheryl Gould, Lisa Vale and Col Vale. These new members are making very valuable contributions to our Committee of Management and we look into the future with great excitement and enthusiasm. At present there are 4 vacancies on the Committee, which we hope to see filled in the near future as we embark on another year advocating for the rights of people with disabilities.

Adele Markwell

Co-ordinator



TREASURER'S REPORT

(For the 2011-2012 Financial Year)

The financial statements for the 2010-2011 year have been drawn up on an accruals basis as per the requirement of our funding body.

Mr Cameron Young has audited the books and records of the Association and the report has been included in the annual report.

Because of very careful management, the Association finished the year with an operating surplus of \$1,494.39 and net Assets of \$61,992.57.

Overall our financial position remains healthy with provision made for depreciation on equipment, accrued expenses and creditors.

The Association must again remain conscious of operating within our funding limits in the year to come.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff, committee, clients and friends of the Association for their interest and involvement during the year. I would particularly like to thank Margaret Gottlewski for her diligent work throughout the year, and her accessibility and patience regarding the organisation's financial matters.

Andrew Harman
Treasurer