

**SOUTHWEST
ADVOCACY
ASSOCIATION INC.**

Incorporation Registration A0025914Y



S . W . A . A .

ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013



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 2012/2013

PRESIDENT:	Graham Durston
VICE PRESIDENT:	Phillip Brown
SECRETARY:	Camarita Sinclair
TREASURER:	Andrew Harman
MEMBERS:	Mark Powell Cheryl Gould Lisa Vale Colin Vale
STAFF MEMBERS:	Adele Markwell (Executive Officer/Advocate) Roz Rantall (Advocate) Margaret Gottlewski (Administration Officer)
AUDITOR:	Kayser Accounting Margaret Barrow



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

2012-2013

Once again, it is with great pleasure that I present this year's and my final Annual Report as President of Southwest Advocacy Association (SWAA). Regrettably, due to continuing ill health I have tendered my resignation as I feel that I am unable to continue with the commitment necessary to do this very important position justice.

As has been the case for the 20 years that Southwest Advocacy has been in existence, we continue to manage despite being challenged by severe funding constraints. As an organisation I believe we manage exceedingly well and this can be put down to the dedicated work of our Executive Officer Adele, our Administrative Officer Margaret, our part time Advocate Roz, and my fellow Committee of Management members Phil, Camarita, Andrew, Mark, Cheryl, Lisa and Colin.

We are very pleased to have gone through our first quality assurance audit with flying colours and do not look on the follow up audits with such trepidation. We in fact look forward to them as we recognize that they are only there to improve our organisation and this can only be positive.

Unfortunately Southwest Advocacy has not been successful in attracting further funding to manage the Active Participation Register but continues to distribute this information as we see it as very important for people with disability to be given the opportunity to be involved in their community. We will continue to endeavor to attract some funding for this.

Possibly the biggest challenge this year has been the relocation of our organisation to 4/50 Kepler St., Warrnambool. This was a massive job after ten years at Princess St. but necessary due to the impending sale of that property. It was a huge challenge and took several months to find a suitable location within the central business district that we could afford. Happily we were able to find a very helpful agent in David Turner who understood our financial limitations and went out of his way to find us our present location. There were some initial problems with disability access, which was sorted out with accessible ramp and toilets being installed at the rear of the building. The staff are very happy with the relocation and, although it is significantly smaller, are settling in very well. We were also successful in applying for funding to assist us with the move. This was a big relief as we found that relocating is a very expensive operation.

Wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and new year.

Graham Durston

SWAA President



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT

2012-2013

This year's Annual General Meeting sees us celebrating twenty years of Southwest Advocacy. This is an event that should have created great fanfare but we have been so busy throughout this last year that it got away on us and before we knew it we were looking at organising this AGM and hadn't done anything to celebrate our twentieth birthday. So I hope everyone will raise their glass tonight at our dinner and celebrate this great accomplishment.

The last 20 years has seen some changes in the way that people with disability are recognised in community, education, care and work life but still sees them being the most disadvantaged members of our society. Most people with disability are totally dependent on a Disability Support Pension or, the people supporting them, a Carer's Pension, with all the demands on those payments that having a disability brings, and no likelihood of ever improving their life style. People with disabilities are still stigmatised, stereotyped and discriminated against, sometimes unintentionally and subtly and sometimes quite overtly by governments and a community that just don't appear to care enough.

Despite the fact that Australia has been growing and prospering greatly over the last 45 years, people with disabilities are still more likely to live alone in poor quality and expensive rented accommodation, be socially and geographically isolated, less connected to their communities, suffer more avoidable health problems, are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system and be incarcerated, and tend to die at younger ages than those non-disabled people in our society.

I don't feel that the hard work of this agency for the last 20 years has been in vain though. I believe that as advocates we and all those other advocacy agencies in Australia do our utmost to improve the lives of people with disability but, I feel that there are not enough citizens who recognise the disgrace in the way that people with disability are having to live their lives. They are not standing up and saying, we want a better life for them. The politicians recognise it, but they don't have to do anything because it has never become an election winner. While voters take no notice, politicians can do nothing. While voters do not become a squeaky wheel, politicians can do nothing. While voters think it is not their problem, politicians can do nothing. We need the 20% of people in our society effected by disability to stand together and make a difference to an election, that I believe is when politicians will do something.

It follows on of course that while not enough people care, advocacy will not be funded to the degree that is required to make it available to all people with disability and be out there making a greater difference. If you think about the population of southwest Victoria and think about 20% of those people being affected by disability and think of the 150 people that we are able to see each year, you will realise that there are an enormous number of people not receiving advocacy support. This is not good enough but we are not resourced to be able to change this. Obviously governments who fund us are not going to decide to fund us adequately because the work we do more often than not costs them money so they are not going to say let's give advocacy more funding so they can cost us more. It is up to a caring society and people with disability to make that happen.

There have been many reasons to celebrate Southwest Advocacy over the last 20 years and plenty of places where we have made a difference. These include:-

- Involvement in the development of Local Government Disability Action Plans throughout the southwest;
- Involvement in the development of the Department of Human Services Disability Services Strategic Plan for the Barwon South West region;
- Active participation in a state-wide campaign being conducted by Advocacy Victoria aimed at highlighting the crisis of unmet need in the area of disability as a result of inadequate funding in the service system.
- Participation in the *“Young People in Nursing Homes?-You’ve got to be Kidding!”* and the *“No More Band Aids – Fix the TAC!”* campaigns initiated by Headway Victoria;
- Successfully lobbying the Office of the Public Advocate to provide more trained *“Community Visitors”* in south west Victoria;
- Assistance with the establishment and ongoing development of services for people with disabilities, like the Richmond Fellowship Residential Rehabilitation Service and the Association for the Support of Psychiatric Services (ASPS) now ASPIRE;
- Lobbying Vic Roads to improve public transport accessibility and road safety for people with disabilities;
- A submission to the Victoria Law Reform Committee Review of Legal Services in Regional Victoria;
- Involvement in the implementation of the recommendations of the Review of Commonwealth Advocacy Program.
- Input into the development of the Warrnambool City Council’s Urban Design Framework planning process;
- Input into the Australian Services Union Disability Action Plan;
- Development of a protocol agreement with Psychiatric Services Division, South West Healthcare;
- Lobbying Moyne Shire Council and Warrnambool City Council in regard to parking, pedestrian safety and access issues for people with disabilities;
- Raising concerns with some regional service providers in regards to the effect of their service policies and practices on people with disabilities.
- Involvement in the Community Connections Victoria *“Public Housing Community Development Project”*;
- Involvement in the DHS *“Aspirations”* Project;
- An extended advocacy campaign for better wages and conditions for employees with disabilities in Business Services (sheltered workshops) in south west Victoria.
- Advocacy for enhanced rights for people with psychiatric disabilities and particularly those who are detained and treated as involuntary patients.
- Participation in DHS Office of Housing Segmented Waiting List Review.
- Advocacy for better services for children with disabilities and high support needs in relation to the Education Department Review of Programs for Students with Disabilities.
- Advocacy for better access to School Holiday Programs for families with children with disabilities.
- Participation in community consultations in regard to the proposed Warrnambool Courthouse.
- Advocacy for enhanced physical access to a wide range of public and private buildings and facilities for people with disabilities.
- Provision of support for the *“Getting Heard, Getting Change”* Project.
- DHS Review of Standards for Disability Services

- SW Community Transport Disabled Persons' Parking Scheme – SWAA made a submission to the MAV Review.
- Framework for the CBD and followed up with letters to Council and the local media.
- Physical Access to Hamilton Post Office
- Compulsory Care for People with Disabilities - SWAA made a major submission to the Law Reform Commission.
- DDA Education Standards -SWAA made a submission advocating for the adoption of Standards.
- Primary Mental Health Service – SWAA provided consultancy in relation to the development of consumer information.
- Access Issues at South West Healthcare – SWAA assisted SWH to develop a mobility map and identify access issues at its Warrnambool Campus.
- Glenelg Disability Action Group – SWAA participated in the development of this Portland based group.
- Warrnambool City Council Disability Advisory Committee – SWAA was represented on this now defunct Committee.
- Future State Government Funding of Disability Rights Victoria – SWAA helped DRV develop a submission to DHS.
- Involvement in Peak Advocacy Organisations – A representative of SWAA is on the Board of Disability Rights Victoria and the Victorian Rural Advocacy Network. These state-wide organisations are regularly involved in a broad range of systemic issues.
- DHS Review of Disability Legislation in Victoria - SWAA participated in regional consultations and made a detailed written submission to the Review.
- DHS Review of Standards for Disability Services – SWAA was represented on the original Steering Group for this Review.
- Legal Issues Affecting People with Disabilities – SWAA responded to a call for submissions from the Department of Justice.
- DHS Child Protection Protocol Agreement
- Multi Purpose Taxi Program - SWAA lobbied the State Government to reconsider changes that disadvantaged people with disabilities.
- Psychiatric Services - SWAA has continued to advocate and lobby for enhanced rights for people with psychiatric disabilities and particularly those who are detained and treated as involuntary patients.
- "Drop-In" Centre for People with Psychiatric Disabilities – SWAA provided support for a funding submission put together by local self-help group, DASH.
- DHS Active Participation Strategy – SWAA has taken part in consultations and provided input into this project and has continued even after funding ran out.
- Warrnambool City Council Aged and Disability Strategic Planning Forum
- South West Healthcare Aged Care Policy – SWAA provided input into this policy.
- Koroit Adult Day Centre – SWAA provided advice on how to make advocacy more accessible to clients.
- Warrnambool Youth Centre – SWAA provided support for Brophy Family & Youth Services submission for State Government funding for this project.
- Access to several Post Offices in the Southwest
- Accessible Children's Playgrounds – SWAA worked with other community organisations to persuade Warrnambool City Council to adopt an accessibility policy.
- Access to Tenant and Consumer Advice Services – SWAA wrote to the Victorian Government to express concerns about the withdrawal of funding for local services.

These issues are only a tiny sample of the systemic work that Southwest Advocacy has been involved in over the last 20 years and we do believe that we have made a huge difference to many people in the southwest and beyond.

2012/13 has seen us undergo our first quality assurance audit and pass it with flying colours. As an organisation we put an enormous amount of time into preparing for the audit and it was a big relief when it was over. We now will have an annual audit with each alternate year being half what we did for the first one and the other year being the other half. Hopefully it will never be as big as that first one and we now know what is expected of us so that makes it easier. Overall the audit has improved our service and we continue to encourage feedback so that we continue to improve.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] pilot has been launched with mixed reactions. Some people feel that it is a great success while others are disappointed. We can't judge it yet as we are not in a pilot launch site. The name has changed to Disability Care Australia and then this new government has returned to the original name so just in case anyone was confused, it is once again the NDIS. The new federal government say they are committed to funding it so we will see what happens into the future and when more sites become involved.

Southwest Advocacy has also for the last 18 months been involved with Food Share with myself being the vice president. As an organisation we felt that due to so many of our clients being so disadvantaged, it was important for us to be involved in something that would be so vital to their standard of living.

We are also coordinating Advocacy Southwest, a self-advocacy program. This program is extremely beneficial to clients with intellectual disability as it gives them an opportunity and platform to speak up, sometimes for the first time in their lives. By encouraging people to speak up in a protected environment of our meetings, they will hopefully feel empowered to speak up when they are unhappy about an aspect of their lives which they may have in the past felt they had no control over.

As stated in my report last year, we were able to employ another advocate, Roz Rantall for two days per week while I was preparing for the audit. Unfortunately we have not been able to maintain those hours for Roz but she is still with us one day per week. I feel she is a great asset to the organisation and the people that she advocates for are very grateful for the very professional assistance that she provides.

Marg is still looking after the administration of the organisation and continues to do an excellent job. Thank you for that Marg.

Judy continues to maintain our clean and tidy environment. Thank you for that Judy.

And our wonderful Committee of Management continue to support us in our work and take time out of their precious free time to come to meetings, even in the dead of winter, and ensure that Southwest Advocacy continues to operate for the benefit of people with disability and their families. Thank you all very much for your commitment.

It is with much sadness that we say goodbye to Graham Durston as he steps down from his position as President of Southwest Advocacy due to ill health. Graham has made a great contribution to us over the years and we will miss his efforts. Thank you Graham for your commitment over many years.

As usual we have room for a few committee of management members so will be recruiting strongly in the near future.

Adele Markwell

Executive Officer



TREASURER'S REPORT

(For the 2012-2013 Financial Year)

The financial statements for the 2012-2013 year have been drawn up on an accruals basis as per the requirement of our funding body.

Ms Margaret Barrow from Kaysera Accounting 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 \$14,144.00 and net Assets of \$75,709.00.

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