

ANNUAL REPORT 2022 - 2023



VALID

Acknowledgement of Country



VALID acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We extend the same respect to all First Nations people we're in contact with.

VALID's work is carried out on sovereign Aboriginal land that was never ceded. Our main office is on the land of the Wurundjeri, a people of the Kulin nation.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Vision, purposes, aims and values | P1 |
| Board members | P2 |
| Staff members | P3 |
| Chair Report | P5 |
| CEO Report | P6 |
| Self Advocacy Report | P7 |
| Self Advocacy Highlight | P8 |
| Training and Consultations Report | P9 |
| Training and Consultations Highlight | P11 |
| Community Development Report | P12 |
| Community Development Highlight | P14 |
| Individual Advocacy Report | P15 |
| Having A Say Conference 2023 | P17 |
| Inclusion Australia Report | P18 |
| Financial Report | P19 |



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Vision

A society where everyone is empowered to exercise their rights in line with:

- The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR)
- Other human rights standards.

Purposes

Strengthen and promote the human rights of people with intellectual disability, including:

- Inclusion
- Access
- Employment
- Health
- Education
- Housing

Support family and carer networks of people with intellectual disability towards these pursuits.

Aims

VALID aims to empower people with intellectual disability to:

Exert control and influence over the decisions and choices which affect their lives.

People will have a say about what happens in their own lives.

Inform and influence the policies, processes and practices of disability service agencies, governments and other authorities

People will have a say about what organisations connected to disability do.

Exercise their human rights and citizenship status within their local communities.

People with intellectual disability will be able to do the same things as anyone else.

Values

Respect

This means we accept and value people for who they are.

Collaboration

Working together.

Courage

Being brave and strong.

Humility

Understanding that we do not know everything.

Passion

Caring a lot about what we do.

Dedication

Not stopping until we live in a society where the human rights of people with intellectual disability are happening in practice.

Integrity

Doing what we say we will.

Being honest when we make mistakes.

Board Members

Current members

Arthur Rogers

Chair

Stephanie Gunn

Deputy Chair

Georgina Frost

Member

Graeme Russell

Member

Nicole Spehar

Member

William Ward-Boas

Member

Previous members

Deb Johnson

President and member

Janice Castledine

Member

Staff Members

Current staff

Fionn Skiotis

Chief Executive Officer

Melanie Watson

Administration Manager

Kimberlee Pearce

Administration Assistant

Tully Zygyer

Communications Coordinator

Frederikke Jensen

Advocacy Manager

Andrew Minge

Senior Advocate

Sidonie Zagoda

Individual Advocate

Jon Slingsby

Training and Consultations Manager

Zoe Broadway

Training and Consultations Senior Project Officer

Michele Semmens

Community Development Manager

Ann Hutchinson

Community Development Team Leader (South Metro and Gippsland Area)

Jana Hand

Community Development Team Leader (Western Victoria Area)

David Hansen

Community Development Team Leader (Northern Metro and Gippsland Area)

Mark Thompson

Leader, Self Advocacy, Community Development

Candace Bates

Community Development Worker

Liam Doyle

Community Development Worker and VALID8 Project Worker

Heather Forsyth

Senior Self Advocate

Katy Gagliardi

Advocacy Writer

Rick Ruiu

Self Advocacy Manager

Sara De Grandis

Self Advocacy Project Officer

Anthony Risoli

Self Advocacy Project Officer

Omar Muhammad

VALID8 Project Worker

Uli Cartwright

VALID8 Project Worker

Lucy Moore

VALID8 Project Worker

David West

VALID8 Project Worker

Jason Toppin

VALID8 Project Worker

Jordan McCormick

VALID8 Project Worker

Josh Burns

VALID8 Project Worker

Celeste Rattray-Wood

VALID8 Project Worker

Marcus Plush

VALID8 Project Worker

Declan McAllister

VALID8 Project Worker

Mimari Hartono

VALID8 Project Worker

Cathy Townsend

VALID8 Project Worker

Barry Robinson

VALID8 Project Worker

Cindy Rhodes

VALID8 Project Worker

Tobias Ward-Boas

VALID8 Project Worker

Chair's Report

My name is Arthur Rogers, and I was very pleased to be appointed to the VALID Board in December 2022.

VALID is an organisation I have admired over many years for its work supporting people with an intellectual disability and their families.

I was subsequently elected Chair of the Board – a position I was honoured to accept. I would like to thank my fellow Board members for electing me Chair and for their continuing diligence and commitment to the effective governance of VALID.

During the year Stephanie Gunn was elected Deputy Chair and two long-standing members ceased to be Board members having completed three terms, and as per our Constitution were ineligible to continue. On behalf of the Board, I want to thank both Deb Johnson and Janice Castledine for their outstanding contribution to VALID over many years. I also want to thank Deb as previous Chair, for the invaluable contribution she made in that role.

During the year the Board was pleased to award a Life Membership to Kevin Stone OAM,

in recognition of his long, outstanding and dedicated service to VALID and its work and to advocacy and self-advocacy more broadly.

This year the Board focussed on continuing to improve governance, comprehensive risk identification and management, sound strategic planning and prudent financial management along with policy and compliance oversight.

We do this so VALID can continue its important work, defending the human rights of people with an intellectual disability and supporting them to live lives of their choosing and to be empowered to speak up and, as much as possible, be the decision makers about their own lives.

Finally, on behalf of the Board I want to thank our CEO, Fionn Skiotis for his significant contribution to VALID. Fionn was appointed a little over a year ago and has had a huge positive impact on VALID and its work. Fionn leads a dedicated team of staff who work tirelessly to contribute to VALID's important work, and I also want to thank them for their contribution. I also want to thank the many people and organisations who support VALID.

Arthur Rogers
Chair



CEO's report

I was delighted to be appointed as VALID's CEO in August 2022. The presence of former CEO Kevin Stone OAM is everywhere at VALID and I must begin by acknowledging his amazing record in this organisation and his huge influence on the disability advocacy sector. Kevin was very fittingly made a VALID Life Member on 23 June this year, the thirtieth anniversary of VALID's registration.

The Board's brief when I started was to ensure VALID's internal systems were in good order and to build morale after a period of instability. Some parts of this work were achieved quickly, others have taken most of the past year. I can report that VALID is now in great shape and ready to contribute strongly on advocacy. This is good timing as people with disability are likely looking at big changes and some challenges with both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review completing their work.

VALID is a busy and productive organisation on an everyday basis, with four main program areas of Individual Advocacy, Self Advocacy, Community Development and Training & Consultations. I encourage you to read the reports on each of these areas prepared by the program managers.

A priority for VALID is to boost the capacity to do high-quality systemic advocacy in our staff team.

In November 2022 VALID's members agreed to a new Constitution, which among other changes means the former Committee is now VALID's Board. More recently we adopted a new Strategic Plan for 2023-26, which sets some ambitious goals. Please see the report of our Chair Arthur Rogers for more detail on VALID's governance in 2022-23.

I want to thank my colleagues for their hard work, resilience and obvious passion for VALID's mission and work – qualities essential to our success. My thanks also to all members of VALID's Board, particularly departing members 'Debs' Johnston and Janice Castledine. Finally, I must record my gratitude to all VALID's members, partners, funders and other stakeholders, whose loyalty and support have meant a great deal to our organisation in recent years.

Fionn Skiotis
CEO



Self Advocacy Report

VALID supports people with intellectual disability to become strong self-advocates. Self advocacy empowers people to have control and influence over the decisions and choices that affect their lives. Choice and Control are key pillars of the NDIS and are reflected in VALID's mission and aims, which are the driving force behind VALID Self Advocacy's work.

Through the 2022-23 period the VALID Self Advocacy team has been involved in a number of programs and initiatives. The Self Advocacy team continues to facilitate Network meetings even though they are not funded, the Networks are an integral part of VALID's aims and mission and provide a pathway for people into other VALID programs and activities. The VALID Self Advocacy team completed projects focused on Resident Meetings with both Possability and Life Without Barriers and also supports the VALID Self Advocacy Forum. VALID continues to support a number of SUFY (Speaking Up For Yourself) and Resident Focus groups in partnership with Life Without Barriers.

VALID8

Going into the 2022-23 period proved to be challenging but also exciting. The VALID8 team were coming off two years of COVID-19 restrictions, extended lockdowns, and the disappointment of not being able to visit disability group homes to conduct reviews. The VALID8 team still maintained a positive attitude and a determination to achieve our goals despite the setbacks of previous years.

Our priorities were to complete the development of the VALID8 Companion App, recruit additional self-advocates and begin the collaborative process with DFFH and the participating services of identifying disability group homes for review.

Self Advocacy Highlight

OPA Initiatives

A highlight of the year for the VALID8 and Self Advocacy team members was an opportunity to present at the OPA 'Better Together' Volunteer Conference. The VALID8 Team did a great job at presenting on the VALID8 Program and the feedback from the Community Visitors that attended was fantastic.

Here are some quotes that VALID received.

"VALID 8 presentation was brilliant."

"The VALID8 session was exceptional."

"Fabulous hearing from the VALID 8 team!"

"Great to hear about the program from a range of people actually involved and it's always great to see and hear people with disabilities attending and speaking at such sessions."



The VALID8 team were also involved in a consultation with the OPA on a report that is being written about the past, present, and future of the Community Visitors program. Feedback gathered will be used to inform some of OPA's thinking about how they can involve people that live in group homes more in the Community Visitors Program.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of both the Self Advocacy team and the VALID8 team for their dedication, enthusiasm & hard work throughout the year. Both teams are an invaluable part of VALID and its mission to empower people through Self Advocacy.

Rick Ruiu

Self Advocacy Manager



VALID8 Project Workers standing on a stage presenting to a group of people

Training and Consultations Report

VALID's Training and Consultation Team (T&C Team) provides training and consultations to people with disabilities, disability organisations, and public companies. We charge a fee for the services we provide, and our Easy English service includes converting complex documents to an accessible format and training staff in Easy English.

VALID re-hired Zoe Broadway in November 2022 due to a rise in requests. She had previously worked with VALID, offering training and other services. She was able to help the team from the start. Zoe has improved the company's ability to complete work and will be an important part of VALID's development.

Training

VALID provides training in Victoria, including Your Service, Your Rights (YSYR). YSYR teaches people with disability about their rights when using services, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission's code of conduct for support workers, and how to make a complaint. The course is co-facilitated by people with lived experience. VALID also offers other courses like Keys to Success Program (KSP) and Staying Safe sessions. Zoe recently ran a KSP course for three people who paid through their NDIS funding.

Consultations

We have held more consultations this year than in the past. Consultations give people with disability a chance to make their voices heard and share their opinions about services, groups, and organisations. They usually involve eight people giving their ideas on different topics and take place online.

This year, we've had consultations about the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, Yooralla's Guiding Principles, Life Without Barriers client rights statement, Social Ventures Australia's 'Learning about your outcomes' project, and Yarra Valley Water's 'Future Customer Experience Program – Accessibility and Inclusion' project.



*Zoe Broadway,
Training and Consultations
Senior Project Officer, sitting in
front of projector with the words
Self Advocacy and a picture of a
man*

Easy English

Easy English is a way of communicating that uses simple words and pictures to tell a story, explain ideas, or convey information. VALID works with organizations to create documents that use Easy English. This includes the National Disability Agency, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the Department of Social Services, National Disability Services, the eSafety Commissioner, Children and Young People with Disability Australia, Kids First Australia, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission. These documents are written in clear and concise language that is easy to read and understand, while still conveying the original message.

VALID provides training to staff from services and organisations so they can write in Easy English. The training teaches guidelines and methods to write or convert documents. We've trained staff from DFFH, Arts Project Australia, Think HQ, and the Public Transport Ombudsman. This work is important because it can help people with intellectual disability understand important things. Furthermore, VALID's Training and Consultation Team is busy and often has to meet deadlines.

Training and Consultations Highlight

A highlight for me was the project we did with the eSafety Commissioner. VALID was approached in December 2022 by Ramon from the eSafety Commissioners Office to provide a quote for a project to develop a workshop to help people with intellectual disability to be safer when they are online. I didn't know what it would look like at the beginning, but I was sure that VALID would be able to come up with a plan that would fit the purpose.

What we ended up doing was three consultations with five people in each group, from the consultations we developed the content of the workshop. we did surveys with the participants before and after the workshops and then over four weeks we sent each participant a short text message about what had been the main points of the workshop, each text sent had a different message from the training. at the end of four weeks we did another consultation and a survey to find out what people had remembered for the workshops and if the text messages had helped people to be safer when online.

The whole project had a really positive feeling to it, all the participants were involved from the start. The workshops were interesting, and we all learned about things like Catfishing, Trolling and Doxing. We also learned about how to make a complaint about online abuse and how not to get ripped off.

At the end people said that they knew how to be safer online. The whole project had a great feel to it, to be doing something positive about an area of people's lives that all the participants were involved in, and that is being online.

Jon Slingsby

Training and Consultations Manager



Community Development Report

2022- 2023 was a continued time of change for the Community Development team.

There were several changes in the management of the Community Development team from David Craig to Paul Dunn in late 2022, with Paul supporting the CD team on a part time basis. Many thanks to David and Paul for their wonderful leadership during their time at VALID. Michele Semmens commenced as Manager with the Community Development Team in February 2023 with extensive experience across the disability, community, education and youth and family sectors.

The latter of 2022 and early 2023 saw the Community development team emerging from online scheduling of meetings, networks, and social interaction groups, to again face to face, Peer Action Groups, and other projects. A strong online presence in the COVID environment had allowed the CD team, including voluntary peer leaders, to maintain regular relationships with participants across Victoria, to connect with a range of experts on disability and community development and to increase the use and understanding of digital and social media to codesign projects locally and statewide.

During 2023 relationship building and leading change in local communities has continued to be a core focus.

Peer Action groups have operated across eight metro and regional areas with both online and face to face meetings in local Neighbourhood houses and local council facilities, providing flexibility but also the challenge of rebuilding strong relationships and engaging with people with disability and involvement at a local level. Many people with disability, their families and carers have been cautious about returning to a face-to-face environment and slow to re-engage.

Peer Action Groups are operating in the Banyule/Darebin; Geelong/Bellarine; Western Victoria; Ringwood; Ballarat; Frankston and in 2023, Greater Dandenong, local communities. Collaboration and supportive partnerships developed with the Neighbourhood Houses in the PAG areas have been another positive focus of the work of Community Development.

Projects in 2023 include:

- Inclusive Early Learning Disability Awareness project – extended to include more early learning centres and kindergartens in the Geelong/Bellarine area with collaboration from City of Greater Geelong Early Learning
- Continuation of the 'I am project' (Inclusive Public Sculpture Project), with the sculpture moving across Geelong locations such as libraries with education sessions on disability awareness.
- Several PAGs held successful Disability Pride Month celebrations in their local areas, to celebrate disability.
- Fantastic Flicks, a Disability and Inclusion short film Festival was hosted by VALID and Jika Jika and Watsonia Neighbourhood houses with an online package that can be conducted by any of our Peer Action Groups with minimum effort or specialized knowledge.
- Frankston PAG and Orwil St Neighbourhood house hosted a Morning Tea session with Peta Murphy, Federal member for Dunkley on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament Referendum.
- Western Vic PAG members were part of the Stellar Young Committee in Stawell to honour Stella's work as an advocate and person with disability, with a permanent local sculpture and were also involved in mental health consultations with the Grampians Community Health Centre.
- Airwaves Access project – radio program and podcast - interviews with community leaders and government representatives Broadcast on Gippsland FM and Plenty Valley FM
- Development of a video resource about enhancing the relationship between the person with a disability and their support worker. This has been a collaboration between VALID CD team and Advocacy WA.
- International Day of People with Disability was also celebrated by Peer Action groups across Victoria.

Community Development Highlight

A significant highlight for the Community Development team is the collaboration and partnership with a range of Neighbourhood Houses across Victoria. Neighbourhood Houses, while varied in their location, design, programs, and operation, are flexible, local based community organizations which are open to a range of community members and participants. Neighbourhood Houses provide a safe and welcoming environment to all communities but particularly to more vulnerable communities such as those with disability. NHs have been involved and supportive of the Peer Action Groups codesigning projects and leading change in the community.

Watsonia and Jaka Jaka Neighbourhood Houses, have enthusiastically and successfully partnered in hosting Banyule/Darebin PAG and The Fantastic Flicks Disability and Inclusion Short Film Festival; Orwil St Frankston is the venue for the Frankston PAG and the Powerhouse (NH) in Stawell hosted the Disability Pride event for the Western Vic PAG. While this is not an exhaustive list of all the CD/Neighbourhood House partnered and codesigned activities and events, it does showcase the positive relationships that exist and can be further strengthened into the future.

Michele Semmens

Community Development Manager



VALID staff, Candace and Liam presenting at an event for Disability Pride Month

Individual Advocacy Report

| | |
|---|---------|
| 1. NDIS | 20.47% |
| 2. Abuse & Neglect (excluding family violence) | 15.2% |
| 3. Justice/legal system and statutory bodies like Child Protection | 14.62 % |
| 4. Family Violence | 12.28% |
| 5. Access to housing/homelessness and built environment (accessibility of housing) | 9.36% |

Top five advocacy issues 2022 - 2023

Systemic failures in the NDIS

For Individual Advocacy, the many problems heard at the Disability Royal Commission manifested in our casework for the 22-23 financial year. NDIS was the number one issue for people reaching out to Individual Advocacy. There were systemic failures of NDIS ranging across a wide variety of issues, such as people losing their funding due to arbitrary cuts with devastating impacts on their health and well-being. There was poor service delivery and communication, fraud or breakdown in services as NDIS service providers relinquished support labelling the person too 'resource intensive'. Further, NDIS or NDIS service providers did not always recognise the person with a disability as the decision maker in their own life despite the person being able to articulate their wishes with advocacy support.

In some cases, this had a devastating effect on the person with a disability. Particularly, where family violence was also harming the person.

Abuse and neglect

Working at the pointy end of advocacy cases, the second largest category was Abuse and neglect (excluding family violence) involving NDIS service providers as well as other institutionalised settings. Part of the abuse and neglect category were also cases where restrictive practices violated human rights and restrictions were used as a result of a poor physical and social environment imposed on the person with a disability.

Justice and child protection systems discriminating

In the category of people involved with the justice system and other statutory services was also a proportion of parents with Intellectual Disability having their rights to parent violated by discriminatory and biased practices in the Child Protection system. Advocates also found that justice failed people in 'treatment facilities' and those on civil or community orders.

Staff

Individual Advocacy operated in the first quarters of 2022 with Advocacy Manager Frederikke Jensen, Senior Advocate Andrew Minge and Sidonie Zagoda started in the team as Individual Advocate 16 December 2022.

Frederikke Jensen
Advocacy Manager



Having a Say Conference 2023

After a three year break for COVID, Having a Say conference was back in February 2023. With a theme of 'We're Still Here!' celebrating the fact we all got through the difficult few years prior.

Around 850 people participated in the conference, including lots of our regular attendees and over 100 from other states across Australia. All the regular activities such as Red Faces, Come & Try activities, expo and the Art Competition were embraced by participants.

One of the highlights was Sir Robert Martin speaking about his life as an advocate for people with disability in New Zealand and over several decades at an international level. The standout and the aim of HaS conference is to provide the opportunity for people with disability to self-advocate and build skills. This year 120 people with disability presented or performed over the two days, and the queues for Open Microphone were as long as ever!

The feedback was great and we thank all the sponsors of HaS 2023 and especially the VDWC (Vic. Disability Workers Commission) for continuing to support people with disability build their self-advocacy skills through attending.

Christine Scott



Eight people standing in a group, smiling at the camera

Inclusion Australia Report

2022-2023 was another big year for Inclusion Australia.

Working in partnerships with VALID and our other national members, some of our highlights this year included:

- Providing information to the Disability Royal Commission before it closed on 31 December, including findings from our huge report on inclusive employment. This important project – led by people with disability – was about creating more choices and opportunities for people with an intellectual disability to work in open employment with better wages.
- Making sure the experiences of people with an intellectual disability were heard by the NDIS Review, including workshops and dedicated sessions with panel members at the VALID and SACID conferences.
- A big win with the establishment of the new National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health following many years campaigning by our community.
- The opening of our Inclusion Australia Northern Territory office in Darwin
- Advocating the importance of supported decision making with the launch of our Make Decisions Real resources and working with the NDIA to inform the new NDIS Supported Decision Making policy.
- Promoting better inclusion of people with an intellectual disability by government and big organisations through our Towards Inclusive Practice project, website and resources.
- Working with members to promote the rights of people who use NDIS services through our Your Service, Your Rights project and workshops.
- Growing our team with more people with disabilities and family members in important policy, inclusion, and communications roles across Inclusion Australia.
- Supporting the Our Voice Committee to do their work across the country including speaking at conferences.

We look forward to working with people across our community next year to keep advocating for a more inclusive Australia for everyone.

Catherine McAlpine, CEO
Inclusion Australia.

Catherine McAlpine
Inclusion Australia CEO



VALID's Financials in 2022 - 2023

Information on VALID's financial position on 30 June 2023, and our financial performance during the 2022-23 financial year, is summarised below.

VALID's accounts are audited by Ashfords Audit and Assurance Pty Ltd and all figures below are taken from the 2022-23 audited financial statements.

Financial position at 30 June 2023:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Assets | |
| Current assets | \$1,431,468 |
| Non-current assets | <u>\$324,899</u> |
| Total assets | \$1,756,367 |
| Liabilities | |
| Current liabilities | \$768,876 |
| Non-current liabilities | <u>\$201,076</u> |
| Total liabilities | \$969,952 |
| Net assets (Equity) | \$786,415 |

Financial position at 30 June 2022:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Assets | |
| Current assets | \$1,715,129 |
| Non-current assets | <u>\$413,802</u> |
| Total assets | \$2,128,931 |
| Liabilities | |
| Current liabilities | \$1,071,179 |
| Non-current liabilities | <u>\$271,099</u> |
| Total liabilities | \$1,342,278 |
| Net assets (Equity) | \$786,653 |

Financial performance during 2022-23:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Income | |
| Grant income | \$1,731,183 |
| Donations | \$4,531 |
| Consultancy income | \$89,260 |
| Conference & events | \$250,501 |
| Other revenue | <u>\$421,552</u> |
| Total income | \$2,497,027 |
| Expenses | |
| Employee expenses | \$1,755,887 |
| Administration expenses | \$398,090 |
| Depreciation expenses | \$93,934 |
| Occupancy expenses | \$677 |
| Project expenses | \$61,146 |
| Finance expenses | \$17,293 |
| Other expenses | <u>\$170,238</u> |
| Total expenses | \$2,497,265 |
| Total loss for the year | \$238 |

Financial performance during 2021-22:

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Income | |
| Grant income | \$2,119,732 |
| Donations | \$10,330 |
| Consultancy income | \$7,042 |
| Conference & events | \$0 |
| Other revenue | <u>\$202,501</u> |
| Total income | \$2,339,605 |
| Expenses | |
| Employee expenses | \$2,050,507 |
| Administration expenses | \$476,653 |
| Depreciation expenses | \$92,482 |
| Occupancy expenses | \$70,046 |
| Project expenses | \$66,014 |
| Finance expenses | \$11,843 |
| Other expenses | <u>\$4,912</u> |
| Total expenses | \$2,772,457 |
| Total loss for the year | \$432,852 |