

VALID presents the

Having a Say Conference 2026

**25 Years: Strengthening Our Voices For a
Better Future!**

27th - 29th January 2026

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus
1 Gheringhap Street Geelong



INFORMATION BOOKLET

VALiD

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Aims of the Having a Say Conference

The Having a Say Conference aims to empower people with disability through:

- The opportunity to 'have a say' about issues that affect their lives
- Participation in an annual conference in a rural location of Victoria
- Opportunities to celebrate ability and achievement
- Being part of the planning and running of the conference
- Opportunities to be heard by politicians, government and service providers
- The opportunity to meet people from around Victoria, Australia and overseas
- Support to be part of developing strategies to address issues and recommendations made at the conference



Geelong

Geelong is a popular tourist destination, with beautiful beaches and the Great Ocean Road on its doorstep.

There are many great attractions around Geelong that make lovely afternoon or day trips.



If your group is coming up early or staying on after the Conference, you can get information about accessible tourist activities from the Tourism Greater Geelong & Bellarine Visitor Information Centre on 1800 620 888 or website: www.visitgeelongbellarine.com.au



Sponsors of the Having a Say Conference



About Having a Say



VALID is a not for profit organisation run by people with disabilities and family members.



VALID is funded by the State Government to provide advocacy support to adults who have an intellectual disability, but also undertakes other activities to empower people with disabilities, such as self-advocacy training and the Having a Say Conference.



The Having a Say Conference helps people to find their voice, to speak up, to be heard and to be respected.

This is the conference where people listen to each other, not just to the speakers on stage. This is the conference where people respect each other's views and opinions, and celebrate their common cause.

The conference gets fantastic support from local disability services, the Local Reference Committee, City of Greater Geelong, Tourism Greater Geelong and Bellarine and local Geelong businesses.



The first Having a Say Conference was held in Maryborough in the year 2000. There were almost 190 people involved in the conference and the enthusiasm generated inspired those involved to do it again the next year. Since then the conference has grown each year, with over 1000 participants being involved in the 2020 conference.



People enjoy coming to the conference for a range of reasons. Some are keen advocates for people with disability and want to debate about issues, others find the whole environment empowering and some just want to have fun!

Many people come to the conference to have a say, such as open microphone to present or perform. We often get comments on the Evaluation Forms saying things like *"It was great I felt important because everyone listened to what I said"*.



The Having a Say Conference has been around for long time, because there is nothing else like it in Australia! As services change we need to get together to lobby about issues - until the 'system' is perfect out there!!! Apart from that there will always be a need for people to get together to share experiences and to celebrate our achievements. People also tell us that they want to keep getting together with other people from across Australia and now from overseas to network and learn different ways of doing things.

Conference Theme:

25 Years: Strengthening Our Voices for a Better Future!

Having a Say (HaS) conference is celebrating 25 years of in-person conferences. That's 25 years of promoting self-advocacy skills to strengthen the voices of people with disability.

That is thousands of people with disability who have:

- presented or performed at HaS
- had their voices heard
- found inspiration from their peers
- told their stories
- gained information to help them with problems
- had their achievements celebrated
- learned about their rights

This is a time when everyone's voice matters. HaS will keep equipping people to speak up and promoting the talents, achievements and voices of people with disability.

So, come and present, perform, volunteer or get involved so that your voice and your skills can be part of building a better future for people with disability.

Our Choice Expo

Part of the
Having a Say Conference 2026

9.30am - 4.00pm

**Tuesday 27th & Wednesday 28th
January 2026**



Take the opportunity to browse around 80 exhibits and see what is available to support you to get the best out of the NDIS and be involved in your community. **Free entry** to the public.

More Information - www.valid.org.au
Christine Scott M: 0475 698 884
E: havingasay@valid.org.au

 **melba**
support services
Expo Sponsor


www.valid.org.au

Welcome from the Local Reference Committee

HaS 2026 will be the twenty fifth in-person Having a Say Conference and marks 20 years being held in Geelong.

The workshops, presentations, performances, dreams and aspirations and the Come & Try activities provide fun and interactive ways to put the theme of the conference into practice. The Having a Say's Got Talent auditions and the Dinner Disco are both fun and a great place to let your hair down, and celebrate the conference.

The Local Reference Committee would like to invite you to attend the Having a Say Conference and join in the celebrations and look forward to seeing you in Geelong, in 2026.



Conference Venue

Deakin University's Waterfront Campus in the centre of Geelong will again be the main venue for the conference.

The campus has many lovely places to sit and also has a full 'Changing Places' facility.

Deakin University is located at the bottom of Gheringhap Street opposite the beautiful Corio Bay. The Campus offers a welcoming and accessible venue for delegates to get together and have a say!

Parking is usually available in the Deakin Uni car park but due to building works this may not be available. Info on parking will be sent out the week before the conference and on [council website](#)



The VALID Stream

The Having a Say conference is not just about self advocacy, it is also about current advocacy issues and building skills for people to be effective representatives for other people.

The VALID Stream will bring together families, advocates, workers and other interested people who share the VALID Advocacy Mission.

There are a number of presentations at the conference with a focus on providing information to families / carers and workers in the disability sector.



Disco & Conference Dinner

Disco

The dinner disco will be held from 6.30 - 10.00pm at 'Croatian Community Centre', located on Cnr. Anakie & Cox Rds, Corio. The conference Dinner Disco gives people the chance to get to know new people, let their hair down and enjoy a night filled with fun, good food and dancing!



'Let's Party & Sparkle' is the disco theme, so get on you best sparkly outfit and

The band 'Un-Limited' will be playing party anthems by the truckload including rock n' roll, funky hits and rarities of the 80's.

'Speakers

This year the Guest Speakers will speak during the disco for a short time, as everyone will be having dinner together.

A quieter area will be available in another room.

Important things to remember:

- The Dinner Disco is a very popular event which usually sells out quickly. To make sure that you don't miss out register early!
- Please make sure you let us any allergies or medical dietary needs
- Drinks are not included in the registration fee, but are available at bar prices



For how to get to see the **map on page 18**, there is also a map included in the Conference Program Booklet in your registration bag.

Parking

Parking is free at the venue. You can drop to people off at the front of the venue and then find a parking spot.



Thanks to our Disco sponsor Victorian Disability Worker Commission



What's on at the conference?

Day 1 Tuesday 27th January 2026

Opening Ceremony including Open Microphone Presentations, Workshops and Performances
Come & Try Activities (C&T)

Evening: Dinner Disco (*see page 7*)

Day 2 Wednesday 28th January

Keynote Presentations
Presentations, Workshops and Performances
Our Choice Expo on all day
Come & Try Activities (C&T)

Evening: HaS's Got Talent show Auditions (*see page 10*)

Day 3 Thursday 29th January

Presentations
Dreams and Aspirations
Come & Try Activities (C&T)
Closing Ceremony including

- Awards
- Art Competition Prizes
- HaS's Got Talent finals



Don't forget to check out:



Sponsors Expo is in the foyer and the **Our Choice expo** is held in the gallery area near the coffee cart

Art Competition display opposite Registration Desk
the Costa Hall foyer (*see map*)



Come & Try Activities



Come & Try Activities (C&T's) are a popular feature of the conference, providing delegates with the chance to relax and have some fun and try something new.

Some people think the C&T's are what the conference is about, but they are really 'an added extra'.

C&T activities **should be seen as:**

- An alternative to workshops and presentations
- Providing an opportunity for social interaction and networking
- An opportunity to try new activities and learn new skills



How do I book my Come & Try Activities?

- Make sure you choose your Come & Try activities before registering
- This is because you select your C&T activities when you 'register' on Humanitix
- You can download the Come & Try choices from the VALID website: www.valid.org.au/having-a-say/ or email: havingasay@valid.org.au



How do I know what activities I have booked in to?

- Don't forget that your Come & Try bookings will be printed on the back of your name badge

1

How many Come & Try activities can I do?

- Delegates (*people with disability*) can do one activity each day
- Delegates attending for one day only can choose **one** come & try activity

What if I forget to book my Come & Try activities?

- You can book your Come & Try activities at the conference at the Come & Try desk next to registration
- Many of the Come & Try activities book out before the conference so your choices may be limited

Registration Desk



Please note: *Activities may be cancelled by the Organisers due to unforeseen circumstances e.g. bad weather.*

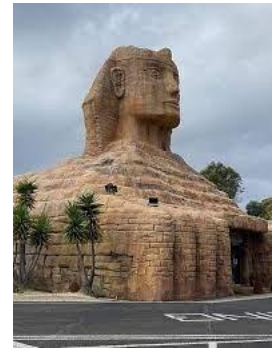
Having a Say's Got Talent (HGT)

The Having a Say's Got Talent (HGT) is an optional event. Auditions will be held in the Luxor Lounge at the Sphinx Hotel, 2 Thompson St, North Geelong on Wednesday 28th January 2026 from 7pm.

You can have dinner before coming, or choose something from the Bain-Marie in the Luxor Lounge. If you want a quieter meal book in the Bistro, (ph: 03 5278 2911) which is in the next room.

The HGT **Auditions** is a great night out, full of fun and laughter. The audience are entertained by the many talented artists who sing, dance and sometimes do magic tricks. The acts are judged and the 3 finalists from the auditions will perform in the **Finals** in the closing ceremony at 12.00pm on Thursday, 30th January in Costa Hall.

If you would like to perform in HGT, you can download a form from the VALID website or call the office ask for Jon (03) 9416 4003



Having a Say's Got Talent

Auditions at 7pm Wednesday, 28th January 2026



**Book
early as
places are
limited**



**All performers must sign up to
audition by
Friday, 16th January 2026**

To sign up, fill in the HGT Entry
Form on website
or
Email: havingasay@valid.org.au



Finalists from the Auditions will perform **at the Having a Say's Got Talent Finals**
during the conference Closing Ceremony in Costa Hall
Thursday, 29th January 2026

Barbara Donovan & Sarah Guilfoil Art Competition



The art competition has been named the Barbara Donovan Art Competition in honour of Barbara's 50 years of service to people with disability and ten years of volunteering at the HaS conference. Sadly Barbara's daughter Sarah Guilfoil passed away in May 2020. Sarah has won the Art Competition several times. The HaS Art Competition is now named in memory of both Barbara and Sarah.



5is the thirteenth year of the Having a Say Art Competition sponsored by the Office for Professional Practice, Senior Practitioner. Experienced and budding artists are invited to enter their artwork.



The Art Competition is open to all delegates (*people with disability*) of the Having a Say Conference & for the first time, two non-delegate prizes will also be awarded. The top 20 artworks will be on display in the Costa Hall foyer during the conference with the winners announced at the Closing Ceremony on Wednesday. The winning artworks are awarded cash prizes and certificates.

The artwork is to be based on the conference theme: **'25 Years: Strengthening Our Voices for a Better Future!'**

Entry forms and artwork must be handed in or sent to VALID by **29th Nov. 2025** For



Conference Souvenir T-Shirts

Would you like to take home a souvenir from the 25th Having a Say Conference?

Ordinary HaS T-Shirts with the conference logo on the front **\$15**, & the *special 25th t-shirt* with both 25th logo on front and special self-advocacy back **\$25** are available.

Both t-shirts can be ordered when you Register for the conference on Humanitix and you can pick them up at the conference.

A small number of the special t-shirts will be available at the conference



Volunteering

The Having a Say Conference needs your help. We are looking for volunteers to assist us with a variety of tasks. There is something to suit everyone's interests. You can volunteer for a day or the whole conference, it's a lot of fun and you will meet a great group of people.



What is the conference about? It provides opportunities for people with disabilities to experience new things, to participate, learn, present, perform and celebrate achievement. Being part of this conference is a wonderful experience for all involved.

It's Australia's largest conference for people with disabilities, so why not volunteer?

- *It's fun*
- *It's unique*
- *It's inspirational*

All volunteers receive morning and afternoon tea and lunch. People volunteering for all 2 days of the conference have the opportunity to attend the dinner disco at a discounted rate, providing there are places available.



Volunteers will also receive a complementary souvenir t-shirt.

For more information about volunteering at the Having a Say Conference look at the Volunteers Info booklet or phone 0475 698 884 or email: havingasay@valid.org.au

Feedback from volunteers:

"Sharing this time with both staff from VALID and the participants was a fantastic education and it has only reinforced to me that all people can contribute greatly including people with a disability!"

"Being a volunteer was a great way to be fully involved with the Conference and it gave me an opportunity to share a lot of great experiences."

"My volunteer experience for the Having a Say Conference was not only rewarding but gave me a much better understanding of people who have an intellectual and/or physical disability."



Program Timetable



Tuesday 27th Jan. 2026	Activity	Venue
9.30am - 10.30am	Registration open	Deakin University
10.30am - 12 noon	Opening Ceremony	Costa Hall, Deakin Uni
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
3pm - 4pm	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
6.30pm - 10pm	Conference Dinner Disco Conference 'Dinner & Chat'	Club Italia



Weds. 28th Jan. 2026		
9.30am - 10.30am	Plenary (everyone together)	Costa Hall, Deakin Uni
11am - 12 noon	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
3.00pm - 4.00pm	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
7.00pm - 10.00pm	Having a Say's Got Talent Auditions	The Sphinx Hotel
Thurs. 29th Jan. 2026		
9.30 - 10.15am	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
10.45 - 11.30am	Conference Sessions	Deakin University
12noon - 1.00pm	Closing Ceremony	Costa Hall, Deakin Uni

Conference DVD

All groups will receive a copy of the Having a Say Conference DVD.

The DVD has memorable footage from all the main conference events and activities including the Dinner Disco, Presentations & Workshops, Having a Say's Got Talent, Opening Ceremony and Come & Try activities. See if you can spot yourself or friends in the conference footage.

Please note: It takes about 3 months for the DVD to be completed.

*VALID members and groups of three or more people who attend the conference will receive one **free copy** of the conference DVD.*



Registration

NOTE: It is important that you read the information on the booking system as it explains the prices and the conditions, and what is included or not included with your registration.

Sponsorship

We are pleased to advise that there will be a limited number of subsidies to assist people who are not able to pay their registration fees through their NDIS Plan. We also would like to thank the Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner, for subsidising the Dinner and Disco for all delegates with disability.

For more information about sponsorship please email Christine about Sponsorship.



Registration Payment Methods

This year Registration is through an online Booking service called Humanitix.

Humanitix is a not for profit organisation, whose profits go to children's charities.



To register, [use this link](#) to register yourself or your group online. NOTE: if you need an **individual invoice** to send to a Plan Manager, you will need to register as an individual not as part of a group.

Humanitix will provide you an Invoice to send to your accounts dept/Plan Manager.

OR

you can either pay Humanitix at the time using credit card or PayPal

If you choose to pay VALID directly, please quote your Humanitix Invoice number and use these bank details:

Make payment to:



Payee: Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc
Bank: Bendigo Bank
BSB: 633 000
Account: 202 064 762

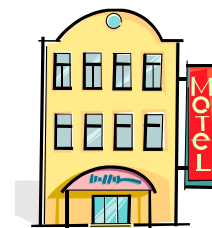


If you make a direct payment please email the remittance advice to havingasay@valid.org.au

Accommodation

For information on a large range of accommodation please contact the Visitor Information Centre on 03 5223 2588

Websites: www.tourismgeelongbellerine.com.au
www.visitvictoria.com/geelong



Accessible Accommodation

Some accessible accommodation can be located through the Tourism Greater Geelong and the Bellarine service, contact details above.



Catering

Please note this important information about catering.

- Morning and afternoon teas **are** included in the registration fee
- Lunch **is not** provided on any day, but there are food carts and a on site where you can buy a range of take-away and sit down meals
- Remember to list any special dietary needs on your registration form



Support Worker / Attendant Care

Attendant Care support is available for people who are attending the conference independently (i.e. without staff or family support). This support is **ONLY for short-term** personal care and meal assistance during the conference and conference dinner.



It is **important** for you to be aware that this support cannot be provided to people on a 1 to 1 basis for long periods of time during the conference.

If you are planning on attending the conference independently and have a higher need for support (i.e. require one to one attendant care support) please talk about your needs with your supporters/family or Support Coordinator or NDIS planner and the services that you use.

If you need more information about this, then please contact the HaS Coordinator Christine Scott, email HavingaSay@valid.org.au to discuss how we can assist you.



Transport

Trains

There are frequent train services between Melbourne & Geelong through V/line. The trip takes about an hour. V/Line buses also operate from other towns (e.g. Ballarat) directly to Geelong. People who require mobility assistance need to book with V/Line in advance. Timetables & more details are available at www.vline.com.au or call **1800 800 007**.



Airport Transfers

Gull Bus service operates regular buses from Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport to Geelong. This currently (Jul 24) costs \$39 one way/\$72 return, per person. For **Bookings & Info** ph: **03 5222 4966** or www.gull.com.au



Avalon Airport is only 15 minutes from Geelong. There are buses that will take you door to door to any motel/hotel in Geelong and costs around \$40 one way per person. For **Bookings and Info** phone: 1300 169 287.



Taxi

Geelong Taxi Network provides both a general and multi-purpose taxi service in the Geelong Region. **Phone: 131 008**

Maxi Taxi: We would **strongly advise** that you book in advance for a Maxi taxi (especially for Dinner Disco) up to 2 weeks prior to the conference. **Maxi Taxi Phone: 03 5278 5785**



Queenscliff-Sorrento Ferry

Peninsula Searoad Transport operate the car/passenger ferry service 7 days a week, departing each hour on the hour between 7am and 7pm.

Bookings and Info phone: **03 5257 4500** or www.searoad.com.au



Parking

Parking is **not** likely to be available in the Deakin University car park due to new building works. So, you will have to look for parking on the street or go up to the Westfield Carpark for the day. The parking inspectors are very active so make sure you obey the signs to avoid parking fines.



There are also metered car parking spaces at the conference venue. There are also many private car parks within walking distance from both venues. Mini Buses can park in the above mentioned car parks however we will negotiate with the Council and the Uni for access to Bus Parking for Mini Buses with Disabled Parking Stickers. We will send info on this.



Maps



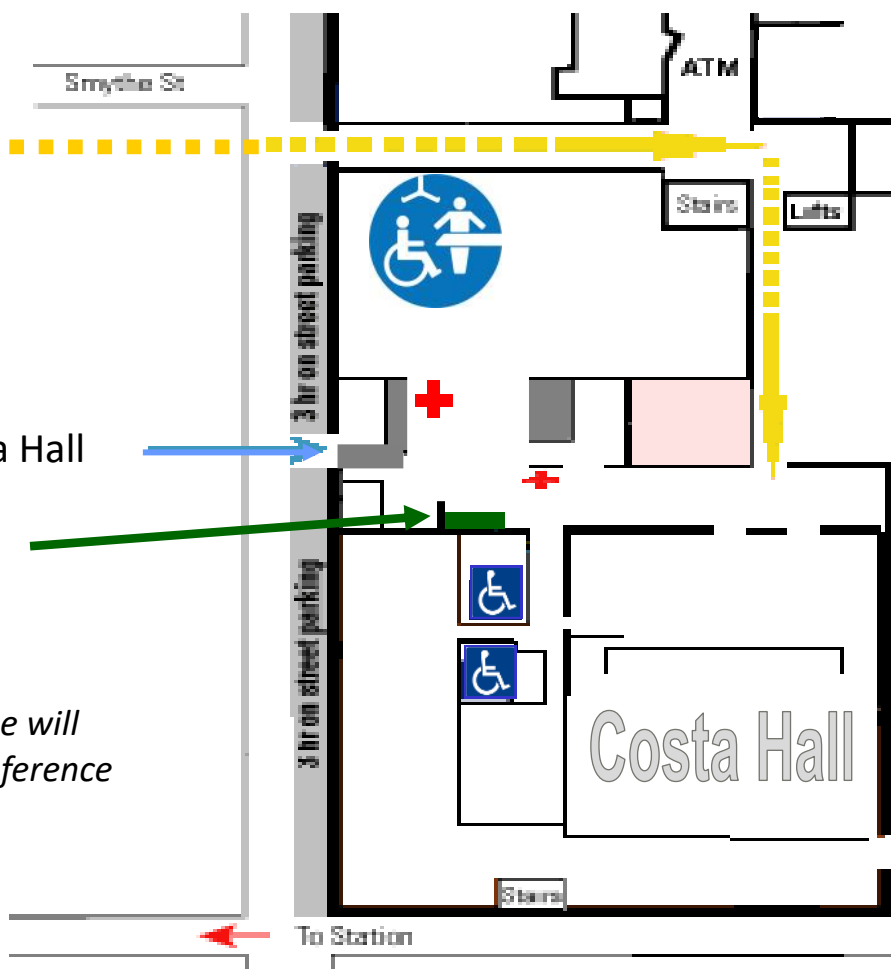
Deakin University Waterfront Campus

Accessible Entry

Main Entry to Costa Hall

Registration Desk

*A full map of the venue will
be included in the Conference
Program Booklet*



Conference Dinner Disco Venue

Croatian Community Centre

172 Cox Road, Corio

Transport

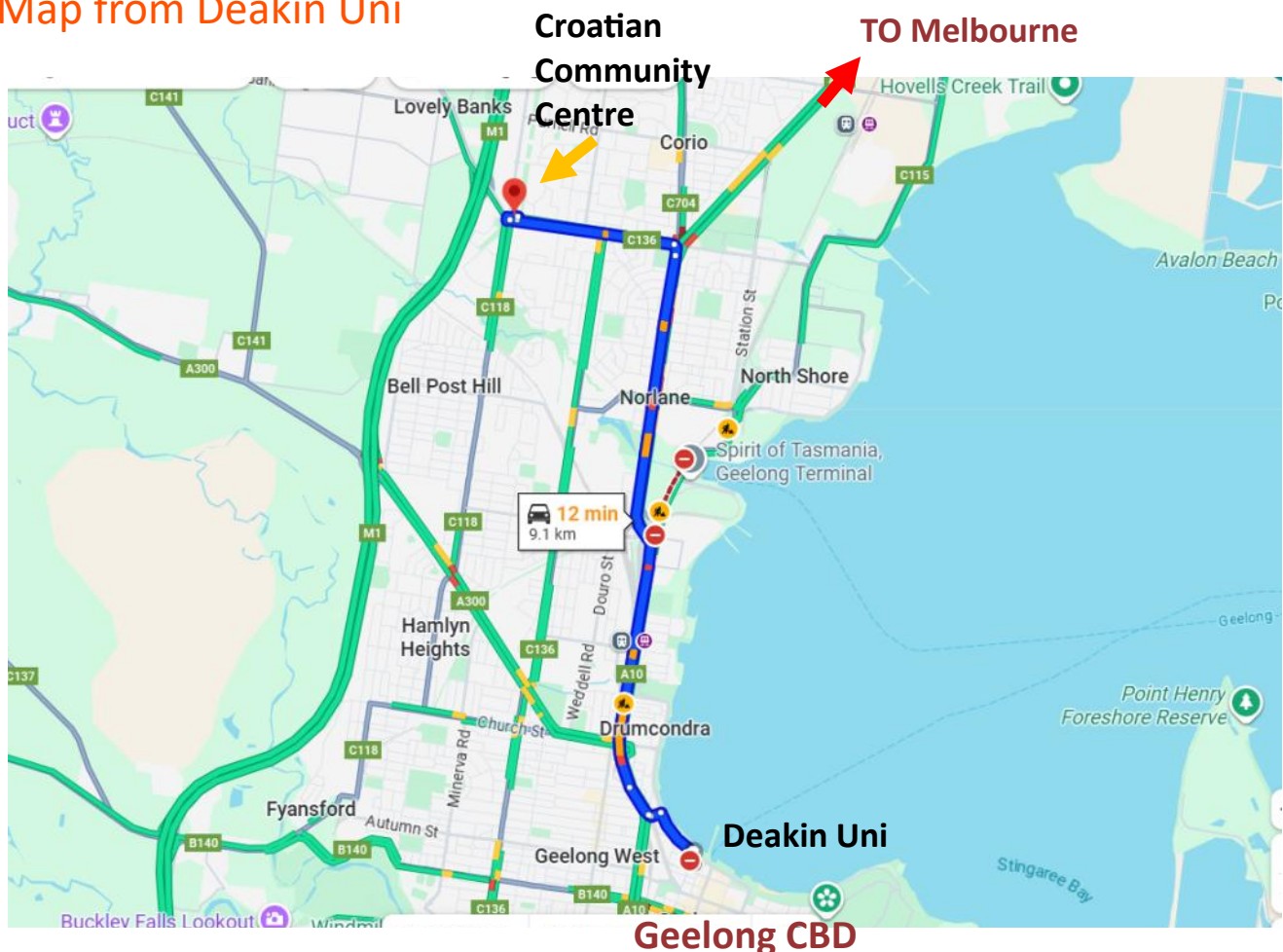
** It is about 9 kms from Deakin Uni.

There are buses that stop right next the venue.

If you need a lift because you are from interstate and have no vehicle, please go to the **Registration Desk** and we will see if we can get you a ride out.



Map from Deakin Uni



There is free parking available at the venue. You can **drop people off at the front** of the venue and then park your vehicle.



For more information, contact:



VALID (Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability Inc.)



OFFICE CONTACTS

144-152 Langridge Street, Collingwood Vic 3066



Telephone: 03 9416 4003

Overseas + 61 3 9416 4003



Website: www.valid.org.au



CONFERENCE CONTACTS



Mobile: 0475 698 884

Email: havingasay@valid.org.au



Conference website: <https://valid.org.au/having-a-say/>



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