

**VALID**

presents

# Having a Say Conference 2026

## Program Summary

as of 12th Dec. 2025

27th – 29th January 2026

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus  
1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong



### Platinum Sponsors



### Theme: '25 years: Strengthening our Voices for a better Future!'

Having a Say (HaS) conference is celebrating 25 years of in-person conference that have promoted 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 and told their stories
- found inspiration from their peers
- 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.

More Information available:







[www.valid.org.au](http://www.valid.org.au)

T: 03 9416 4003 E: [havingasay@valid.org.au](mailto:havingasay@valid.org.au)

## Tuesday 27th January 2026

Open at 9.30am	Grab your Registration Package, get a Coffee & start planning your day!							
10.30am – 12noon	<p>Welcome to Country   Official Opening, Mel Martinelli, Executive Director, Equity &amp; Inclusion, Deakin University</p> <p>Welcome to Geelong by Stretch Kontelj, Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong TBC</p> <p>Keynote: Kate Maddern, Acting Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner (VDWC)</p> <p>Performance by 2025 Having a Say's Got Talent winner – Adam James</p> <p>Special Presentation for 25th HaS conference</p> <p>Open Microphone</p>							
	 <small>Victorian Disability Worker Commission</small>							
12noon - 1.30pm	 Have lunch with friends at 'The Common' Café or in the Courtyard and check out the Our Choice Expo							
1.30pm - 2.30pm	<p>Performance</p> <p>The Wizard of Scope (Scope Ballarat)</p> <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>My Health Matters Masterclass (Council for Intellectual Disability)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Promoting a safe and high-quality disability sector – with the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC) and the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>VALID Connect – Get Connected</p> <p>Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Supporting My Rights (Down Syndrome Australia)</p> <p>3 Different Self-Advocacy Journeys (New Wave Bass Coast South Gippsland)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try </p> <p>Gentle Tango Hair &amp; Make-Up Self-Advocacy Bingo Tie-dyeing</p> <p><i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides</p> <p><i>Meet out front</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>ONLINE ONLY</b></p> <p>Trivia Quiz</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Changing the Disability Discrimination Act (Inclusion Australia)</p> <p>What the Disability Dialogue Is and How You Can Get Involved (Disability Dialogue)</p> <p>Pink Room </p>	
2.30 - 3.00pm	 Afternoon Tea break							
	<i>Foyer</i>							

## Tuesday 27th January 2026

3.00pm - 4.00pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>'On the Couch with Heather &amp; Luke'</p> <p>Including your stories of 25 years of HaS</p>  <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Let's Get Loud</p> <p>(Down Syndrome Australia &amp; National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Changes to Disability Employment Services: What it means for people with intellectual disability (Inclusion Australia)</p> <p>Moving Forward from Institutions in NSW (Hunter Circles)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>International Self advocacy online get-together, including a presentation by the MINDS group from Singapore (VALID)</p> <p>Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Accessing VLA to strengthen your voice (Victoria Legal Aid - VLA)</p> <p>ABI and the Criminal Justice System: Lived-Experience Training Made for Us, With Us (Voices for Change)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try </p> <p>Art - Painting Badge-making Dream Catchers Hair &amp; Make-up Craft with Wood</p> <p><i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>ONLINE ONLY</b> Yoga</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Understanding what's the difference between SIL and SDA? (Scope)</p> <p>Tenant Voice - Putting the voice of people with disabilities first in SDA Housing (Young People In Nursing Homes)</p> <p>Pink Room </p>	
6.30 - 10.00pm	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Disco Event</b></p> <p><i>Let's Party &amp; Sparkle</i> – celebrating 25-year silver anniversary of HaS, to the music of 'Unlimited'</p> <p><i>Croatian Community Centre</i></p>				<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Speakers</b></p> <p>Guest speakers: 25 Years of HaS in the words of those who have been part of it.</p>			

### Thanks to our SILVER Sponsors:



### Thanks to our BRONZE Sponsors:



### Note: ONLINE Sessions

All sessions that have the Zoom symbol will be available ONLINE via a Zoom link - which will be sent to people who have registered the week before.











## Wednesday 28th January 2026

Open at 8.30am	Grab your Registration Package if it's your first day .....get a Coffee & start planning your day!						
9.30am - 10.30am	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Special</i> Keynote: Colleen Pearce, former Victorian Public Advocate</p> <p>Sir Robert Martin Self-Advocacy Award</p> <p>Keynote: Louise Glanville, Commissioner and Natalie Wade, Associate Commissioner NDIS Quality &amp; Safety Commission</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: left; margin-top: 5px;"><i>Costa Hall</i></p>						
10.30am - 11 am	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> <span style="margin: 0 10px;">Morning Tea</span> </div> <p style="text-align: left; margin-top: 5px;"><i>Foyer</i></p>						
11.00am - 12.00pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Performance</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Sugar Bells Live (Scope Ballarat)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">Silent Voices (We are Vivid)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Costa Hall</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Workshop</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introduction to friendship, relationships and intimacy workshop  (Melba Support Services)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Yellow Room</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Workshop</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Improve your public speaking skills! (Down Syndrome Victoria)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">How inclusive governance can build a better future for everyone (Our Voice)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Blue Room</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">VALID Stream</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Driving Change (VALID Self Advocacy team )</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Green Room </p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Presentation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Easy English Family Violence Safety Planning (Safe Steps)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Grey Room</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Come &amp; Try </p> <p style="text-align: center;">Badge Making Colouring for Adults Karaoke Speed Friendship</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"><i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ONLINE ONLY</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Music Trivia</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Presentation</p> <p style="text-align: center;">People first: improving co-design of health professional education (Office of the Public Advocate)</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">genU Using our Voices to Support others – R U OK Day – at genU</p> <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">Pink Room </p>
2.00pm - 1.30pm	Have lunch with friends or look at the Our Choice Expo or join in the fun in the Courtyard						
12.15pm	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Live entertainment by Genu Connections TV. Have your lunch and join in the fun!</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: left; margin-top: 5px;"><i>Courtyard</i></p>						














indicates ONLINE sessions for people who have registered

## Wednesday 28th January 2026

1.30pm – 2.30pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>‘On the Couch with Luke’ (with Luke from VALID)</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Supporting family violence victim survivors (Safe Steps)</p> <p>You can be a researcher too – learn how! (Melbourne Uni)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yellow Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Talking to your loved ones about friendships, relationships and intimacy (Melba Support Services)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Empowering CALD Communities to overcome barriers to inclusion (VALID Community Development team)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Food choice: why is it important and who helps? (Victoria University)</p> <p>Working Together: preventing everyday harm (Inclusion Group)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try </p> <p>Art - painting Colouring with Adults Gentle Tango Craft -Wood &amp; Mosaics Jewellery</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ONLINE ONLY</b> Yoga</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Stronger Together – Advocates Growing Self Advocates (Speak Out Tas.)</p> <p>Respecting Our Ability – inclusive governance project (Speak Out &amp; SACID)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pink Room </p>	
2.30 - 3.00pm	<i>Foyer</i>	 <p>Afternoon Tea break</p>						
3.00pm - 4.00pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos &amp; Open Microphone</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Life Changes: speaking up and managing change with your brother or sister (Siblings Australia)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yellow Room</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>You should have a say in your behaviour support (Melbourne Uni)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Employment Advocacy Project (VALID Advocacy Team)</p> <p>VALID Q group and Rainbow Rights</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Life in Transition: Change, Choice and Confidence (Cerebral Palsy Support Network)</p> <p>Scambusters: Know it! Stop It! (Aust. Financial Complaints Authority)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try </p> <p>Karaoke Photography workshop Speed Friendship Smoothie Bike</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Meet in Courtyard</i></p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i></p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ONLINE ONLY</b> Self-Advocacy Bingo</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Community for Everyone (Side by Side Advocacy &amp; Hunter Circles)</p> <p>genU Client Leadership Teams – Big Voices, Big Ideas (genU)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Pink Room </p>	
7pm - 10pm	The Sphinx	<p><b>Having a Say’s Got Talent (HGT) Auditions</b></p> <p>Contestants will sing, dance &amp; entertain you as they audition (Note: finals on Thurs. 29th at 12.00pm)</p> <p>The HGT competition is sponsored by InLife Independent Living</p>						

## Thursday 29th January 2026

8.45 – 9.30am	Grab your Registration Package if it's your first day.....get a coffee & start planning your day!						
<i>Foyer</i>							
9.30am – 10.15am	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos &amp; Open Microphone</p>  <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Making Self-Advocacy groups stronger (Inclusion Australia)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Confused about the changes to the NDIS – then we will talk about them in plain English and what you can do to self-advocate (VALID)</p> <p>Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>The Great Accessible Road Trip (Great Ocean Road Tourism)</p> <p>My own house, and MY own business - Melinda Hewitt</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Deakin Uni TBC</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try</p> <p>Karaoke Colouring for Adults</p>  <p>ONLINE Self-Advocacy Bingo</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>BIG Events for BIG futures! (genU)</p> <p>My Health Story – Leah Scott</p> <p>Pink Room </p>
10.15am	Morning Tea 						
<i>Foyer</i>							
10.45am – 11.30am	<p>Performance</p> <p>'Sing it out loud' (MusicSpace)</p> <p>Bird is the Word – puppet (Ellie Blackney)</p> <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>'Dreams &amp; Aspirations'</p> <p>* come and write/tell/draw your dreams &amp; goals for your life</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Innovation in Inclusion (VALID Community Development Team)</p> <p>Green Room </p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Supporting older people with intellectual disability living in SIL homes (Scope)</p> <p>My own place to live! Stephanie Challis</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>My journey from school to work (Council for Intellectual Disability)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come &amp; Try</p> <p>Karaoke Craft – make a sign</p>  <p>ONLINE Yoga</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Building Inclusive Communities Through Conversation and Choice (MINDS Singapore)</p> <p>Pink Room </p>
11.30am	Brunch 						
12.00pm – 1.00pm	<p><b>CLOSING CEREMONY</b></p> <p>HaS's Got Talent Competition Final</p> <p>Family Empowerment Award   'Pentland - Banfield' Self Advocacy Award</p> <p>and the <u>Art Competition Prizes</u> sponsored by the Victorian Senior Practitioner</p>						
 							
<i>Costa Hall</i>							