

# AMIDA NEWS

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August, 2016



AMIDA (Action for More Independence & Dignity in Accommodation) is a disability advocacy group that works on housing issues. This means we speak up for people with a disability or help them to speak up for themselves about problems they have with their housing.

## **AMIDA Annual General Meeting - 2016**

**Tuesday, 11th October  
10.00am - 2.00pm  
Hayden Raysmith Room  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Ross House  
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne**

**Launch of 'Voice at the Table' Project**

**Guest Speaker  
Sue Smith, SARU**

**Light lunch will be served**

**Please let us know if you are coming**

**Phone: 9650 2722**

**Email: [amida@amida.org.au](mailto:amida@amida.org.au)**

## New AMIDA Committee members wanted

Are you interested in becoming involved in AMIDA's work? We are looking for people to join our Management Committee. You will need to be committed to our work, have experience and/or expertise in disability, housing, or committee management. We have monthly meetings on Tuesdays from 10.00am - 1.00pm. Please contact us to discuss what is involved, and what you can contribute - 9650 2722. **We support and encourage people with disabilities to be involved in our work.**

## The AMIDA Committee for 2015/2016:

Chair	-	Peter Waters
Assistant Chair	-	Norrie Blythman & Luke Stone
Treasurer	-	Brenda Lacey
Assistant Treasurer	-	James Teeken
Secretary	-	Norrie Blythman
Ordinary Member	-	Trudy Ryall, Simon Chong, Amanda Millear, Lincoln Humphries

**If you would prefer to receive your AMIDA NEWS by email, please let us know.**

## Raising Our Voices Radio show on 3CR

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 6.00 – 6.30pm

**Raising Our Voices is now podcast - Go to:**

[www.3cr.org.au/raisingourvoices](http://www.3cr.org.au/raisingourvoices) and download Raising Our Voices to your computer. *Copies of the radio shows are available from AMIDA on CD or audio tape, website [www.amida.org.au](http://www.amida.org.au)*



## Radiothon

Each year AMIDA participates in the 3CR Radiothon to raise funds for the continued existence of the independent voice that is 3CR. At the Radiothon held in June this year, AMIDA reached its target of \$600. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

## John Serong - Farewell



This year we lost a long-standing member and contributor to the work of AMIDA. Below is a tribute to John written by Sue Smith from SARU. This was read at the Memorial afternoon that was held for John at Ross House on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> July.

AMIDA members and staff and others who had known John paid their respects, and supported John's sister Daisy, in her sadness.

"I am sorry I can't be there today with everyone to remember John. John was a gracious, gentle and truly decent human being. He was also an activist, a self-advocate and a caring and loving brother. John bore witness to the brutality, the indifference and the denial of humanity experienced by those that the community thought should be locked away in

institutions. I know if I had experienced what John had experienced I would have emerged from the institution full of rage. John, along with his compatriots Doug and Graeme, had every right to feel embittered and resentful of a society that allowed this to happen. However, while they were angry about the treatment they and others received, they also emerged with dignity and a passion to help others, including speaking up for the human rights of those who were still incarcerated. John actively campaigned for the closure of institutions and was passionate about the self-advocacy movement as a way of giving people with an intellectual disability a united voice. John worked with Michael Buckley to make the film 'Witness' which enabled him to inform others about the brutal and devastating impact institutionalisation had on both his and his sisters' lives.

In 2014 John returned to Sunbury along with Colin Hiscoe, Michael Buckley and I to make the film 'Windy Day' for the 'Dangerous Deeds Exhibition'. It was a day filled with tears, laughter and most of all memories - memories of pain and loss, memories of defiance and activism, and memories of friendships and good times. The memory I will hold dearest of John, is that of listening to John and Colin - two old comrades - sharing stories of battles fought over a meal in a café in Sunbury.

I would also like to pass on my condolences to Daisy - I know how close you both were and I know you will miss him very much - we all will. Thanks for listening - Sue."

## Parliamentary Report - Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services

In May 2016 the Parliament of Victoria released the final report of the Family and Community Development Committee into its Inquiry into abuse in disability services. AMIDA made several submissions to the inquiry and consider this matter to be of the highest priority.

The Family and Community Development Committee heard undeniable evidence of widespread abuse and neglect. It found that for too long the lived experience of people with a disability, their families and carers has been ignored. Witnesses consistently linked the abuse of people with a disability to the failure to uphold the rights of people with disability.

8 chapters of the report detail the experiences of people with disability within a service sector marked by lack of safeguarding and oversight. Much evidence was confronting. The committee heard that violence is seen to be normal in the sector and that the workforce is often ill-equipped and untrained or undertrained and poorly supervised.

There was overwhelming support for an independent statutory body to oversee reports of abuse and neglect. The Committee believes that a renewed Disability Services Commissioner should be that body with key responsibilities for handling complaints and receiving reports of abuse, monitoring service quality, providing leadership and resources on best practice approaches to preventing, identifying, and responding to abuse. The Committee also recommends the DSC be empowered to initiate investigations itself and employ authorized officers to perform inspections and investigations and have a central role in zero tolerance training for all disability support services. A renewed DSC will also possess powers to penalize disability service employers that are found to have taken adverse action against employees for reporting abuse. It will be renamed the Disability Commissioner.

The main recommendation of the recent Senate Inquiry into abuse of people with disability was for a Royal Commission. The Committee supports this call for a Royal Commission.

In Victoria there is no process to systematically review deaths in disability services. The Committee recommends comprehensive and regular reviews and that the Coroner reports all deaths that occur in disability services to the Disability Commissioner.

The Committee said dedicated funding is needed for independent organisations to deliver human rights education programs to people with a disability, their families and carers on identifying and reporting abuse. The Committee also said the Independent Third Person program run by Office of the Public Advocate needs to be expanded

and that Victoria Police be adequately funded to implement their Accessibility Action Plan.

The Committee found that reporting abuse is not done well or consistently and recommended on line reporting and tracking of abuse reports and the use of terminology that clearly describes the impact of abuse on people rather than just calling this “incidents”. The Committee recommends Victoria immediately implement its own mandatory reporting scheme with a renewed DSC as the most appropriate body to manage this. Penalties would apply for services or staff that fail to report abuse.

The Committee found an urgent need for reform of the disability workforce including training on zero tolerance of abuse, a Working with Vulnerable People check, the extension of the Disability Worker Exclusion Scheme to all disability services, a revised Certificate IV in Disability to become the national minimum standard qualification, measures to address casualization and workforce culture.

The Committee recommended the expansion of programs aimed at prevention of violence against women with disability as they are more likely to experience abuse compared to men with a disability. Further they recommend the development of healthy and respectful relationships education in order to prevent abuse of people with intellectual disabilities using services. They also saw a need for better data collection on people with disability and crime.

The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government continues to fund advocacy services at the state level and review the demand for different types of advocacy. They also recommended dedicated advocacy services to support families of people with a disability to continue their important advocacy on behalf of family members, particularly in regional and rural areas.

The Committee also recommended the quality and accessibility of information about the NDIS be improved.

They recommended work be done by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Victorian Ombudsman on how to preserve the protections of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities for people with disability. They also recommended the protections of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities be incorporated into the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act.

The Parliament of Victoria is required to respond to these recommendations within 6 months.

AMIDA urges all its members to call or write to your local member to insist they accept all the recommendations as a matter of urgency.

August, 2016



The AMIDA office is usually open:

Monday 9.30 - 5.00  
 Tuesday 9.30 – 5.00  
 Wednesday 9.30 - 5.00  
 Thursday 9.30 - 5.00

Please phone AMIDA for an appointment: 9650 2722

Email: [amida@amida.org.au](mailto:amida@amida.org.au)

Web: [www.amida.org.au](http://www.amida.org.au)



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AMIDA receives funding from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, and the Victorian Department of Health & Human Services

You can offer any comments you have on AMIDA Policy or Newsletter by phone, email or writing:

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