

AMIDA NEWS

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December, 2015



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.

The AMIDA AGM was held on 13th October, 2015, and at the November meeting the following Committee positions were decided:

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 Milllear, Lincoln Humphries

2015 Chairpersons Report - Peter Waters

For 34 years AMIDA has been providing people with disabilities with advocacy assistance and help with accommodation and other issues in their lives.

I thank the committee members, staff and other supporters for their input and support throughout the last year. I would also like to thank the other organisations we work closely with managing the SARU (Self Advocacy Resource Unit) such as, Reinforce, Brain Injury Matters and Start Community Art for their on-going support and collaboration throughout the year.

The biggest highlight for me was attending the Victorian Disability Sector Awards. SARU was nominated in the category of Excellence in Advocacy and Rights Promotion, were Highly Commended and received an award. Congratulations to Sue Smith, Jacqui Ward, Dean Dadson and Jan Coles. Thanks to Michael Buckley, our fantastic filmmaker who has moved onto newer things. Congratulations to the SARU Project Management Group for their diligent work over the year.

AMIDA continues to get stronger. In May this year we were independently audited against the National Standards by SAI Global. I am proud to be the chairperson of AMIDA as our report was simply fantastic. We continue to get better every audit.

I congratulate our workers Pauline Williams, Gabrielle Dickinson, Koula Sarimichaelidis and Pam Geoghegan on their hard work and preparation for the audit. Without you none of it would have been possible.

Raising Our Voices radio shows cover a wide range of topics concerning living well in the community. Our team grows every year and we welcome all new presenters.

During the year we lost 2 of our long term members, Des McIntosh and Graeme Williams. They were both characters in their own way but most of all they were great self-advocates and great activists. May their legacies live on in our hearts and may we all remember the example they gave us. Three words spring to mind: gutsy, courageous, and inspirational. May you both rest in peace.

AMIDA is funded to July next year and our biggest goal has to be obtaining more funding. I am sure if we band together we can achieve something very special in the next year.

In closing, I have been on the committee for over 15 years and I love it. I encourage new people to get on board and ride that roller coaster with us. There are challenges ahead but new ideas always go a long way to make the organisation better. I will leave you with my two mottos in life; never give up and always do your best. If AMIDA can live by these mottos we will be here advocating for many years to come.



AMIDA Committee members and staff wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

AMIDA has recently made the following submission:

To the Family and Community Development Committee (FCDC),
Parliament of Victoria
Stage two of the Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services

Some of AMIDA's recommendations are:

- That the Victorian Government increases the supported accommodation options available for people with dual and multiple disabilities.
- That the Victorian Government develops a strategy for the provision of
 - supported accommodation for older people with a disability to avoid premature and inappropriate admission to residential aged care.
- That the Victorian Government pursues and funds alternative models of
 - supported accommodation to increase the range of options available
- That the Victorian Government assigns a minimum quota of places to housing associations to be allocated to individuals with a mental illness and/or disability.
- That any attempt to utilise reconfigure existing group homes is transparently explored with current tenants given a choice about these changes and a right to veto them.
- There is a need for access to a low cost, accessible tribunal which can make orders to ensure people have their right to an abuse free environment respected.
- In the interim period before the NDIS is fully rolled out the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act could be modified to allow application to the Equal Opportunity Commission for conciliation and arbitration of matters related to the Charter.
- Improve the integration of existing bodies to fill gaps and address overlaps on the boundaries including access to a low cost, tribunal which can make orders to ensure people have their rights, including to an abuse free environment, are respected and upheld.
- Until a national framework is in place Victoria must maintain responsibility for the safeguarding system but even after the roll out, if the National system is not as comprehensive, Victoria must maintain the level and diversity of safeguards it currently has.

- We see no pressing need to shift the responsibility for advocacy funding provision to another body. State and Federal governments should both be responsible advocacy funding.
- Screening and registration should have the capacity to cover private disability support arrangements as well as employment of workers in disability services.
- A National independent standards, accreditation and registration body should be established. All registered disability support workers in Australia should be minimally qualified with Certificate IV in Disability.
- All inspectors, paid and unpaid should be independent of government and service provision. Volunteer Community Visitors should continue to be part of the safeguarding framework in Victoria and they should during the transition to the NDIS continue to be located at OPA.
- Senior Practitioners office should ideally be independent of DHHS, be separate from the complaints body and be subject to complaints itself. Authorised Program Officers should have minimum qualifications designed and delivered by the Senior Practitioners Office.

Complete submissions are available at www.amida.org.au

Raising Our Voices Radio show on 3CR

2nd Wednesday of each month at 6.00 – 6.30pm

Raising Our Voices is now podcast - Go to: www.3cr.org.au 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*



AMIDA's 'Statement of Support for 3CR'

Together with Reinforce, AMIDA has supported the Raising Our Voices radio program to have an on air presence for the past 28 years. We have raised issues of self-advocacy and inclusion and advocated to stop abuses of the rights of people with disabilities. None of this advocacy would have been possible, and nor could it continue, without community radio 3CR.

3CR has recently come under attack from elements in the community who would like to intimidate and silence its' many and diverse voices.

AMIDA is an affiliate of 3CR and we wish to re-state our strong support for 3CR, which has been a beacon of inclusion and solidarity with people with a disability. We will not be silenced and we commit to supporting both 3CR and Raising Our Voices to continue to be heard.

On Wednesday 25th November 2015 Raising Our Voices radio team and the SARU hosted

Q&A: 'Self Advocacy.....on the Map?'



The Q&A: 'Self Advocacy.....on the Map?' was based on the ABC's award winning Q&A program and it was an exciting event. Peter Waters, a strong self-advocate, member of Raising Our Voices self-advocacy group and committee member of AMIDA, facilitated the Q&A, and said the experience was "Fantastic. I loved facilitating and all the panel members and

audience were wonderful"

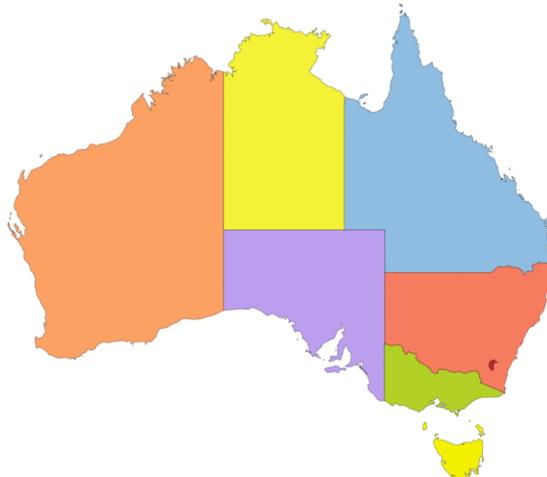
Our map makers (panel members) included Liz Cairns from the NDIA, Peta Ferguson from Brain Injury Matters, Tricia Malowney, comedian, Sue Smith from the SARU and Chloe Stuart from the I CAN Network.

The Q&A looked at whether self-advocacy and self-advocacy groups are 'on the map' as part of the big policy, program and other changes that are happening across Australia because of the NDIS.

It looked at how and why self-advocacy groups are important and how we can all work together to get self-advocacy groups 'on the map'.

Audience member Luke said "It was a bit of fun and interesting". James thought "there were very good questions but we didn't find out if self-advocacy is on the map. We only got half answers".

So, well done to all; but more work is needed to get on the map. You can listen to the show from our podcast on amida.org.au or tune in to 3CR 855am for a two part special at 6pm on January 13th and Feb 10th 2016.



The Senate Inquiry into Violence, abuse and neglect against people with disability in institutional and residential settings.

The committee tabled its report of the inquiry in the Senate on 25 November 2015. Some important recommendations are:

Royal Commission

Recommendation 1

10.10 The committee recommends that a Royal Commission into violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability be called, with terms of reference to be determined in consultation with people with disability, their families and supporters, and disability organisations.

National disability complaints mechanism

Recommendation 2

10.16 The committee recommends the Australian Government consider the establishment of a national system for reporting and investigating and eliminating violence, abuse and neglect of people with a disability, which should, at a minimum:

- be required to work in collaboration with existing state and territory oversight mechanisms;
- cover all disability workers, organisations and people with disability, without being restricted to NDIS participants;
- include a mandatory incident reporting scheme; and
- include a national worker registration scheme with pre-employment screening and an excluded worker register.

10.17 These elements are best implemented through the establishment of a national, independent, statutory protection watchdog that has broad functions and powers to protect, investigate and enforce findings related to situations of violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability.

Advocacy

Recommendation 15

10.52 The committee recommends all levels of government acknowledge the vital role that formal and informal advocacy plays in addressing violence, abuse and neglect of people with disability, by considering:

- increased training for people with disability to recognise violence, abuse and neglect so they can self-report;

- government service contracts to include provisions to enforce access to facilities for advocates, requirement for self-advocacy programs;
- further consideration of the Victorian Self Advocacy Resource Unit, with a view to roll out across other states and territories;
- funded advocacy programs to include training for informal advocates;
- States and Territories not to reduce advocacy funding with the rollout of the NDIS.

Recommendation 16

10.53 The committee recommends the National Disability Advocacy Program implement the following recommendations:

- significant investment to National Disability Advocacy Program funded advocates, to deliver equitable access and representation of issues and to match the increased demand for advocacy anticipated under the NDIS;
- undertake a review to ensure delivered advocacy is appropriately spread across service types and complaint types, to ensure the most vulnerable are receiving advocacy;
- increase funding for self-advocacy programs;
- ensure that current model of funding peak bodies does not inadvertently result in the closure of smaller specialist or local advocacy organisations.
- Improved coordination between the National Disability Advocacy Program and the National Aged Care Advocacy Program.

You can write to your local member of parliament to encourage them to see that these recommendations accepted by the government.





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

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

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