

# Annual Report 2015/2016

**Rights Information  
& Advocacy Centre Inc.**



# Chairperson's Report

This year 2015-16 has seen many challenges and changes for the RIAC Board. We welcome quite a few new Board Members who bring a wealth of knowledge, passion and skills set to the table and look forward to embarking on a new era for RIAC. I would also like to thank Julie Goodall who has been on the RIAC Board for 10 years and is now employed on a part time basis with RIAC. I am so very pleased that Julie still remains with the organisation.

With the further roll out of the NDIS, it has proven to have challenges for the Board and future strategic planning. Our aim at all times is to continue with the great work RIAC has done over the past 30 years and to grow the organisation into the future for people with disabilities. This year we have introduced a fundraising sub- committee and I would like to acknowledge the hard work to date in securing additional funding to enable RIAC to continue to provide advocacy and support for people with disabilities.

Lastly I would like to take this opportunity to thank Leah, our volunteers and all the staff who have helped make 2015-16 successful year.

Karryn Goode

## Our Board

Chairperson—Karryn Goode

Treasurer—Kathryn Harris

Secretary—Thomas Kilmartin

Deputy Chairperson— Adriano Pati

Director— Michael Curtis

Director— Chris Devling

Director— Rashidi Sumaili

## Our Staff

Chief Executive Officer

Leah Kateiva

Finance Manager

Julie Goodall

Quality Assurance Manager

Kerri Reardon

Fundraising, Self Advocacy Manager

And Media

Bronwyn Huggard

NDIS Appeals and Advocacy Manager

James Keith

CHSP and HACC Manager

Bridey Mildren

Advocacy Manager

Daryl Sloan

Administration

Sandra Boyd

### **Advocates**

Jill Myers

### **Self Advocacy**

Athena Papadopolous

### **Access and Support**

Pam Bibby

### **SPSP Program**

Christine Slattery

Tanya Harding

Mandy McKenna

Moya Phillips

Loretta Doran

Tanya Paynter

### **NDIS Appeals**

Mark Naughton

### **Indigenous Advocacy**

Nicole James

Nicole James

Terri Ann McGill

Narida Vella

Alyson Clements

Ros Watts

# What we are doing about supporting and Advocating for the Rights of People with a Disability their Families & Carers and Older People.

- We believe no one should have to face discrimination and have their Human Rights ignored because they have a disability.
- We're here for our clients, families and carers.
- We're here to help support and advocate for people with disabilities and people who are frail aged to improve their life outcomes by working with individuals and systemically with other professionals, organisations, businesses and the wider community to provide education, information and advocacy and to promote the rights of the people we serve.



## What this means?

- People with a disability, people who are frail aged, your family, your carers and your colleagues all have access to the very best support, information and advocacy at the time they need it most.
- We need to make sure we are here for the people who need us now and in the future.
- We aim to provide an excellent standard of support to every person who needs us and ensure they can access the support and information where they want it, when they need it whether that be in the home, work, school, hospitals, or in their local communities.

Our work is focused on the people we are here to serve.



## Our Vision

*Improving the lives of people by helping to build capacity and wellbeing of individuals, families, carers and communities.*

## Our Mission

*To encourage achievement and acceptance of all individuals irrespective of age, religion, race, sexual identity, culture or disability through the provision of quality support and service. To ensure an understanding of the life difficulties of all areas of disability.*

## Our Core Values

**Respect**  
**Independence**  
**Acceptance**  
**Collaboration**

Therefore we wanted our Annual report to focus on clients and what we are doing to ensure they get the very best support they need when they need it.

# Our Staff



# How we supported People with Disabilities and Older

## Advocacy

704 people

Including Australian Indigenous  
and Torres Strait Islanders

## External Merits NDIS Appeals

18

## Supporting

### Parents

15 Groups

## Home and

## Community Care

116

## Self –Advocacy

56

## Places and systems where we provided our services

Education

Disability Payments

Courts

Police

National Disability Insurance Agency Advocacy and  
Appeals

Administrative Appeals Tribunal

Provision of Information

Schools

Councils

Financial

Department Health and Human Services

Hospitals

Housing

Supported Accommodation

Doctors

Respite

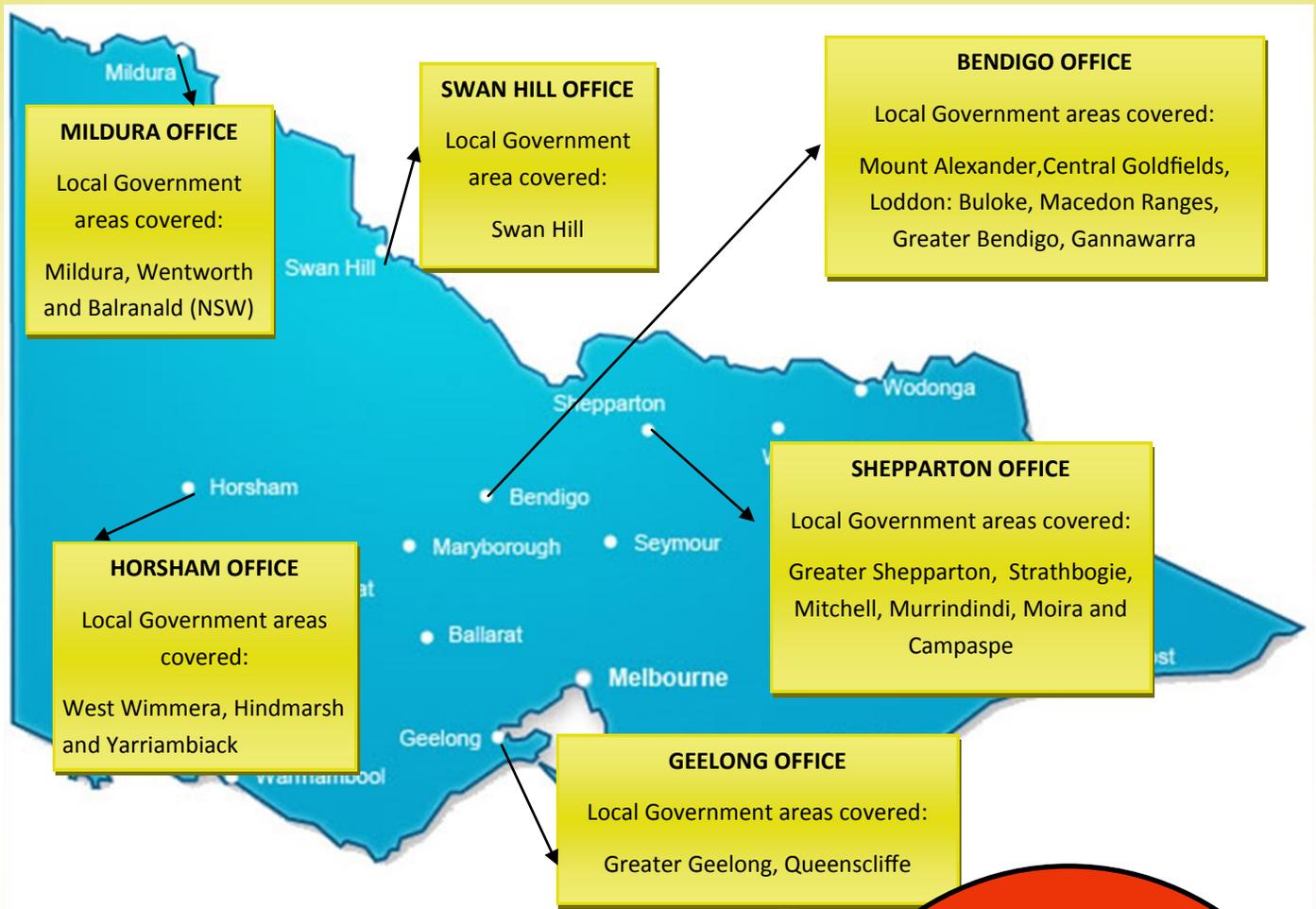
Service Providers

Businesses

Employment

Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal

# Where We Work



# What We Do

**RIAC is an independent and accredited Advocacy service.**

**ADVOCACY**  
All our offices provide advocacy support to people with disabilities.

**STRENGTHENING PARENTS SUPPORT PROGRAM**  
Bendigo Office

**INDIGENOUS ADVOCACY**  
Shepparton Office

**ACCESS AND SUPPORT**  
Swan Hill Office  
Mildura Office  
Bendigo Office

**NDIS APPEALS**  
Geelong Office



# Our income

**\$1,470,734**  
**Total Income**

Our work is only made possible thanks to the Australian and Victorian State Government and from the generosity of members donations and sponsor grants .

**69% of our expenses go towards our great staff.**



**98% of our income is from Grants.**

**One off Grants received this year.**  
**Go Digi \$500**  
**Volunteer Grants \$3,700**  
**Community Matching Grant COGS \$1,875**  
**Fairley Foundation \$5,000**

A big thankyou to everyone who has donated to RIAC



# Shout Out Shepparton & Speak up Alexandra Self Advocacy Groups 2015/2016



Arthur  
Rogers  
Forum

Having a say  
conference  
Geelong



Planning  
day for the  
Year



Writing our  
acknowledgement  
to County with  
help from Narida



International  
Day of people  
with a  
Disability

Arts Classes to  
develop logo  
for Facebook  
page



## Dorothy's Story

I never thought I would need help to represent myself, just like most people I have managed to get to 64 still working, driving and being a carer for my grandchildren; however both my grandchildren have lived with me since they were babies. Life changed very dramatically for me on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 when I had a massive brain haemorrhage due to a burst aneurysm. I was not expected to survive. I was very fortunate in that I could still walk, talk and remember who people were-I had survived! Over the next weeks, months and year I learned I could no longer work so I had to go to Centrelink for help. I can no longer drive due to blindness in one eye and super sensitivity to light in both eyes-so I had to apply for a taxi card and hand my licence in.

I welcomed the NDIS as my 14 year old granddaughter has ADHD a mild I.D and very low vision, who had become very anxious as she was the "little hero" that found me and called the ambulance and neighbours when I had collapsed due to my aneurysm and is so frightened of it happening again and that there would be no one to look after her.

I tried to get Centrelink payments to assist me however six months later I was still without payments. I was physically and emotionally spent, I had applied for new start, sickness benefit and the disability support pension, failing all of these I turned 65 in June and thought that applying for the aged pension would be easy, however even this had hurdles for me. I was now depressed and on medication, I had to go into hospital for a total knee replacement and now the NDIA was calling me for a plan review to take hours away from my granddaughters plan stating "they should never have been given in the first place" I had been invited on a cruise to help as I was not coping well at all, my brain was not functioning as it once was and everything seemed so overwhelming. I doubted my ability to care for my granddaughter. I need help but I by someone who knew how the system worked and could advocate for me and my granddaughter.

This is when I was told about RIAC. RIAC has helped me in many ways; attending meetings, helping me pen my feelings in letters of complaint, listening to me, advising me of my rights, supporting me with the NDIA and generally giving me the confidence again to voice my concerns.

I cannot thank them enough for their help and support at a time when I could not face Centrelink, the NDIA or any other stress. You have saved my sanity and have given us positive outcomes.



## Betty's Story

Betty is 92 years old, living alone on her own property with no family close by. She is provided with limited services by Veterans Affairs. She has home nursing for medication management, and home care and shopping assistance in place. Betty has significant memory loss but still had capacity to make decisions. She did however lack insight into her memory loss and capabilities.

HACC Access and Support received a referral from Home Nursing Support Services and with Betty's agreement, after concerns had been raised about the management of Betty's finances, and her capacity to pay bills.

During the initial meeting with Betty, we noticed that Betty appeared confused as to why we were there and was reluctant to accept additional services we were providing information on. We also noticed Betty had difficulties in remembering activities of daily living such as showering, changing clothing as well as bill payment.

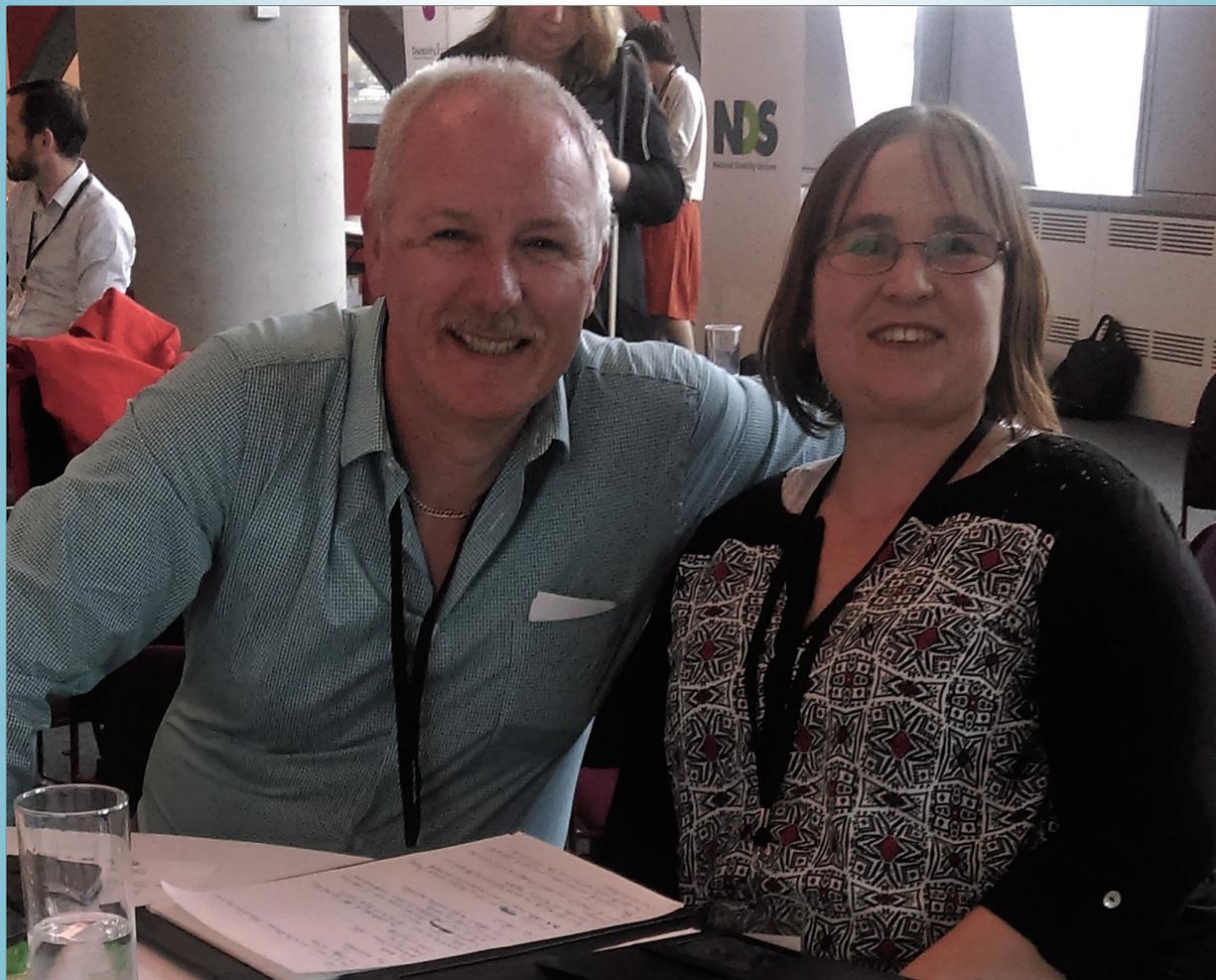
After several visits with Betty and contact with her sister (Dawn) who lives in South Australia and is Betty's Power of Attorney, we were able to build rapport and trust with Betty and this helped Betty to consider additional services.

Upon consultation with Home Nursing Support Services and Veteran Affairs we were able to provide information and options and Betty felt trusting of what we were trying to do for her and accepted personal care to be put in place.

When Dawn came to visit Betty we were able to sit down and discuss the concerns raised regarding Betty's finances and how vulnerable Betty is from Elder Abuse and whether they would consider the option of having State Trustees administer Betty's finances. After discussing benefits of State Trustee's both Betty and Dawn were happy to consider. Following consultations Betty and Dawn had with family and friends they decided not to go with this option.

We discussed with Betty and Dawn the option of having a Community Aged Care package (now known as Home Care Packages) which both Betty and Dawn decided was a good idea and an Aged Care assessment was organised with Betty and she was assessed for a level 3 or 4 package. These packages are hard to come by so it was decided that a level 2 package would suit Betty at this stage, then when needed Betty could go up to a level 3 or 4 package.

Further concerns were raised with Betty finances and bills not been paid, so after consultation with Betty's sister Dawn they decided State Trustee's would be a good option moving forward.



## Kylie's Story

I have a number of conditions. I was born with Spina Bifida and Scoliosis. I was also in renal failure at the time and awaiting a transplant. I have a bone disease in my hip and also looking at a hip replacement in the next few years. I am a single mum with a young daughter. I used to work while studying to become a Kindergarten teacher. I live in the Barwon region and have been a participant of the NDIA trial. Up until the transition to the NDIS I had an individual support package. That included chiropractic treatment. When I do my chiropractic care and other things I need to do to look after myself, I am able to walk with a limp for most of my mobility needs.

When I transitioned to the NDIS my plan did not include any physical therapies including Chiropractic treatment. Only home and garden maintenance assistance. When I asked why, they told me the NDIS does not fund physical therapies and I would have to fund them myself. I was stunned really. I was like 'what that's it?' They told me if I wasn't happy with their decision that I could ask for an internal review. I did this and my reviewer upheld the planners decision. I meanwhile used a lot of my savings but eventually my savings ran out. I had to stop working as my mobility decreased.

I hit a real low point and was starting to struggle with depression, I thought I can't do this by myself anymore so I called RIAC and James a RIAC advocate referred me to RIAC's External Merits support program and EMRS launched an appeal through the AAT. They were able to get funding for a solicitor and supported me through the whole process of Appeal through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. At the tribunal I presented my own 'lived experience' as evidence and that was the first time they had accepted 'lived experience' as evidence and I was successful with my appeal setting a precedent for future participants. Without RIAC and Legal Aid Solicitor it would have been almost impossible.

We want to thank every person who has shared their story for our Annual report 2015/2016.

The support of our stakeholders is critical to our success and the Board would like to thank everyone who plays a role in our work, from the supporter who contributes with gifts of time and money to the skilled professionals who maintain the high quality of our services, to the people who put their trust in us. We are determined to continue making a difference. With your continued support we can.

# Thank you

Please help RIAC be here for everyone who needs it.

To make a donation go to

[www.riac.org.au](http://www.riac.org.au) or call 03 5822 1944 or

email [admin@riac.org.au](mailto:admin@riac.org.au)