

Importance of having a say

In early February, our participants Rohan Fullwood, Tom Maxwell, Diana and Charlene Khoury attended the 'Having a Say' conference in Geelong.

'Having a Say' is an annual conference around self-advocacy, organised by the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with a Disability (VALID). It is a conference where people with disabilities can speak up, listen to each other, find their voice, respect each other's views and opinions and celebrate their common causes.

At the conference, Tom and Charlene had an opportunity to introduce themselves and share their experience as self-advocates in front of an audience. It was a great experience for them and gave them the confidence to speak in public and express themselves to others.

The participants also attended various self-advocacy workshops during the three day conference, including a leadership workshop and a workshop about partnering with local communities. These

workshops provided them with some tangible skills and valuable networking opportunities with other self-advocacy groups.

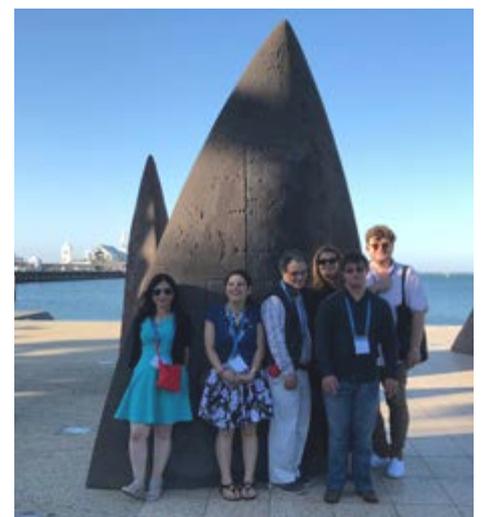
The environment at the conference is empowering and participants enjoy being with other, like-minded people. They were able to catch up with old friends, as well as making new ones. There were also social activities arranged by VALID, including a disco, karaoke and a sightseeing tour where delegates socialised and shared experiences.

Self-advocacy means 'speaking for yourself' or 'having a voice of your own'. It enables people to communicate with others about who they are, what they do and don't like. It is important as it means that people can make choices about their lives and about what is important to them. In the NDIS environment, people with intellectual disabilities are given the right to choice and control over the supports they require. Being a self-advocate empowers people to make such

choices. By being able to have a voice of their own, a person with a disability can define what kind of help they need and ensure that the supports they receive are aligned with their goals. It also gives them the opportunity to discuss their life and experiences with peers so that they can be validated by others, which is crucial for strong community participation.

The Participate Australia Self-Advocacy Group was established in 2014. Group members actively provide feedback and input from other participants about our programs. Self-Advocacy Group members regularly attend conferences, workshops and networking sessions to enhance their advocacy skills and knowledge.

If you are interested in being a self-advocate or joining the Participate Australia Self-Advocacy Group, please contact Thom Calma on 0421 744 708 or via email at tcalma@participateaustralia.com.au.



A Message from the CEO

In February five members of Participate Australia's Self-Advocacy group attended 'Having a Say', the largest annual conference in Australia specifically for people with disabilities, where self-advocates can find their voice, learn how to speak up and attend workshops to find out how to be heard and respected. The great strength of this conference lies in its active participation model, where self-advocates can share their experiences with peers and where it's not all about the speakers on stage. There is more information and some great pictures of our delegates at the conference in this newsletter.

'Having a Say' is convened by VALID, the Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with Disability. It has grown from a couple of hundred delegates in 2000 to well over a thousand this year.

VALID CEO, Kevin Stone, is also the President of Inclusion Australia, which convened a conference a day after 'Having a Say' to address the urgent need to create better employment opportunities for people with disability. Inclusion Australia is now a formal member of Inclusion International, the global peak body representing people with intellectual disability and their families. Its purpose, and by extension that of Inclusion Australia, is to advocate for the human rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Our involvement in establishing a member federation has a long history and I am delighted that Participate Australia is involved in Inclusion Australia.

We also had an opportunity to meet Klaus Lachwitz, President of Inclusion International, with whom we discussed some of the issues specific to people with disability in Australia. In May this year, I will be attending the Inclusion International World Congress in Birmingham with two members of our self-advocacy group, who are travelling at their own expense, in part made possible by a crowd-funding campaign to help raise sufficient funds to attend this important quadrennial event.

If you have been following our work for a few years, you may recall that a group of self-advocates had planned to attend the last world congress in Nairobi, Kenya, which was cancelled with mere days' notice owing to the volatile political environment and terrorist attacks on university students in Nairobi.

This year, some of that group who missed out on going to Nairobi will instead be attending the triennial World Down Syndrome Congress in Glasgow, Scotland, in June.

Both of these events are tremendous opportunities for people with disability to acquire skills to make them more effective and more accomplished self-advocates.

We wish all delegates every success with their participation and look forward to hearing their stories and what experiences they made when they return.



Jerry McNamara
Chief Executive Officer

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Participate Australia supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and our employees are bound by the principles for which it stands. The Convention's purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Meeting new friends during school holidays

When Tyrion (a Shih Tzu cross) and Chloe (a Labradoodle) arrived at our summer school holiday activity centre, our participants were very excited and curious to meet the new arrivals. Some participants kept their distance while observing; some tried to get closer to see what would happen next and others could not wait to play with their new friends. Whatever the initial reaction, the presence of Tyrion and Chloe brought a lot of joy and excitement to the participants.

Tyrion and Chloe are therapy dogs of Velma's Pets As Therapy. They are part of the Therapy Visiting Program, a program making visits to people in hospitals, nursing homes, schools, group homes or individuals, bringing the joy of interacting with dogs. In January, we invited Velma's Pets As Therapy to visit our participants, as one of our school holiday activities.

Tyrion and Chloe have been specially trained to interact with people including children of different cognitive development. They were assessed by a veterinarian to ensure that their health and temperament are suitable for therapy dogs. They were calm, cute and able to perform tricks to make our participants laugh. The volunteers from Velma's Pets As Therapy showed participants

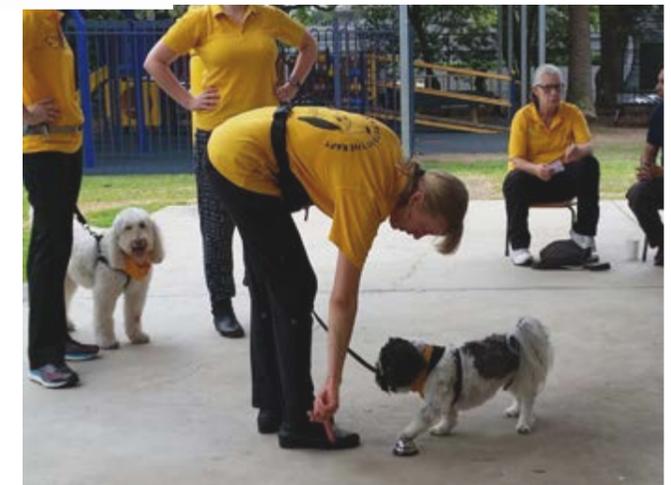
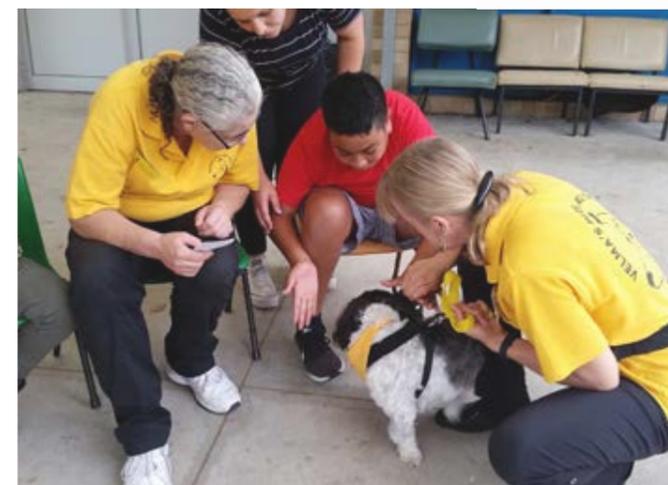
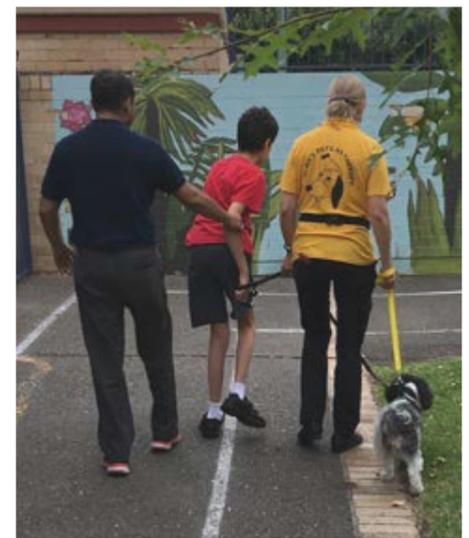
how to approach the dogs appropriately and how to interact with them. As our participants grew in confidence, they patted, talked and even walked with Tyrion and Chloe.

Every person with a four legged friend knows the benefits of the pet's unconditional love and loyalty. A loving and friendly dog can provide a lot of comfort and companionship to a child of any ability. Participate Australia organised this activity with a view to helping develop the social skills of participants, who had an enriching experience meeting a four-legged 'friend' during the activity. They learned to watch, listen and wait for the response of Tyrion and Chloe before taking any interaction further. This required them to be patient, respectful and understanding, which are crucial for social interaction in general.

Participate Australia organises a wide range of activities for participants during school holidays that promote social development, help build life skills and encourage different learning experiences.

We thank Wests Ashfield and Club Burwood RSL for their financial support that enabled us to provide over 50 activities to children with intellectual disabilities during last

summer school holidays, including excursions, workshops, sports and recreational activities.



Holistic life skills activities

Skills training builds the capacity of people with disability for community participation and independent living. Skills training is usually provided in a classroom setting or in a controlled environment with special content, for example a centre-based financial literacy program with role-play activities.

We have experienced firsthand that it is also very effective to acquire and practice skills through application in a real-life environment. As a result, we have developed a holistic way to introduce participants to different learning opportunities.

Amongst other things, this includes a new shopping skills program, delivered in combination with cooking classes. The new program focuses on engaging participants to convey learning not only through training materials, but also through applied practice in a relevant environment. The program encourages participants to perform roles, complete tasks and achieve specific objectives by applying different skills. This contributes to a sense of accomplishment and enhances self-worth and confidence.

Shopping skills activities are typically divided into three parts. The first part is group planning where participants discuss and prepare a shopping



list, based on the recipe they will be cooking the following day. This includes checking any available ingredients already in the pantry and to ensure they are not expired. After that, they set a budget by calculating the cost of shopping items and the size of the portions needed. The second part of the activities takes place at the supermarket. Getting there involves the practice of independent travel by public transport and safely navigating traffic. Participants then purchase items on their shopping list, check labels for expiry dates, calculate the right portions, compare prices, make payments and check receipts. Then they travel back to our centre at Croydon and correctly store the groceries either into the fridge or in the pantry. The following day, finally, they will use the purchased groceries in their cooking class to prepare a meal.



These activities teach participants the entire process of planning and preparing meals. They are able to use skills and resources through practical application in a meaningful, daily activity. At the same time, they further develop social skills by working with other participants on a team activity that is designed to build capacity. More importantly, they build their confidence by participating in the community and learning through personal experience.

We would like to acknowledge the greatly appreciated financial support from the Marian & E.H. Flack Trust for our current shopping and cooking skills programs, which run from February to April 2018.

THE MARIAN AND E.H. FLACK TRUST



My healthy life

A healthy life leads to a happy life. Promoting health and wellness to participants is one of Participate Australia's top priorities. For this reason, we run a 'My Healthy Life' program, using an integrated approach to addressing health issues. It extends to daily personal care, healthy eating and promoting a healthy body image. During this program, participants learn about general health through meaningful and fun activities, including personal grooming and hygiene, basic exercise that they can easily practise at

home and more. The program is designed with age-appropriate group activities based on the participants' needs.

If you would like to find out more about My Healthy Life program please contact your support facilitator.

My Healthy Life is one of the life skills programs generously sponsored through ClubGRANTS from Canada Bay Club and Five Dock RSL Club. We thank them very much for their support.



Participate
Australia

and the Self-Advocacy Group present our:

ANNUAL
TRIVIA
NIGHT

Trivia fun returns to Participate Australia this April, at Marrickville Bowling Club.

Hosted by Bridie Tanner (Mornings - FBi Radio) and the Participate Australia Self-Advocacy Group, our annual trivia night is on Thursday 12th April, from 7pm.

Tickets are \$20, and we'll have lots of bonus games to play throughout the evening! All proceeds go to benefit the Participate Australia Self-Advocacy Group. You can book your tickets by emailing rsvp@participateaustralia.com.au.

Participate Australia Trivia Night
When: Thursday 12th April - 7pm
Where: Marrickville Bowling Club
Tickets: \$20 per person

A fabulous disco night

Event: Participate Australia End of Year Disco
Date: 1st December 2017
Place: Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL
Guest DJ: George Doueih (with our special thanks)
Bring home gifts: Good memories and great photos



A road to world congress

Two founding members of the Participate Australia Self-Advocacy Group, Genny Haines and Rohan Fullwood, will travel to Birmingham, UK, in May this year, to attend the Inclusion International 17th World Congress. The Congress brings together self-advocates and disability organisations from all over the world to learn from and inspire each other, aiming to making inclusion a reality for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Genny is passionate about the rights and inclusion of people

with a disability and enjoys being able to share with others how to better speak up and advocate for themselves. Rohan has attended a number of self-advocacy conferences and these have given him a valuable chance to speak up about his rights, and the rights of other people with a disability.

It has always been a passion of Genny's to help advocate for the rights of others and being able to attend the World Congress has been a long-term dream of hers. "I have grown up in a mainstream society and I understand how hard someone could feel when their voices are not being heard," Genny said. "I really want to bring back some new skills that I will learn by being a self-advocate from the World Congress and share these skills with other participants."

Genny and Rohan are both attending the World Congress at their own expense, but have set up crowd-funding campaigns for people who are interested in helping out.



We encourage everybody to support both Genny and Rohan to attend this important conference. No donation is too small.

You can find Genny's crowd-funding campaign here mycause.com.au/page/167434.

You can find Rohan's crowd-funding campaign here mycause.com.au/page/172592/

We wish Genny and Rohan a successful trip and look forward to hearing from both about their experiences when they return.



Funding received

We would like to acknowledge the very generous funding we have received since our Summer newsletter in December.

Funder	Description	Amount
Community Building Partnership	Access ramp and entrance paving in Belmore house	\$13,684
Stronger Communities Programme	Purchase of vehicle for activities	\$15,000
Sydney Motorway Corporation's Community Grant	Setting up an activity room for children	\$2,000

Supporters

Commonwealth

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Department of Social Services

Government of NSW

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Family and Community Services
Transport for NSW

Local Government

City of Sydney
Burwood Council
City of Canada Bay
City of Canterbury Bankstown
Inner West Council
Strathfield Council

Other Program Funders

ANZ Staff Foundation
Atlassian
Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
Canada Bay Club
Carers NSW
Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club
Canterbury Leagues Club
Club Ashfield
Club Burwood RSL
Club Five Dock RSL
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Delhi'o'Delhi
Drummoyne Sailing Club
Executive Central
Financial Literacy Australia
Five Dock Leisure Centre
Future 2 Foundation
James N. Kirby Foundation
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Marian and E H Flack Trust
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The Raymond E Purves Foundation
Transurban
Town Hall Hotel, Newtown
West Ashfield

Support Participate Australia

Supporting Participate Australia with a donation is easy...

Visit participateaustralia.com.au, or complete and return this form.

Your donation helps us continue with services that nurture greater autonomy and help people with disability lead more fulfilled and engaged lives.

We guarantee that your donation goes towards these programs and that it will have a direct impact on the people who access our programs.

All donations of \$2 and more are tax deductible (CFN 14593; ABN 39 136 853 895, ACN 613 814 654)

YES, I would like to make a donation to Participate Australia.

Your support will provide:

\$50 — 1 hour of 1:1 support

\$120 — 1 day group outing

\$250 — 1 day of 1:1 support

Other: \$_____

I would prefer to give a regular gift of \$_____ to be automatically charged to my credit card every:

month quarter six months year.

Become a member

Members are eligible to vote at the Participate Australia AGM, join a subcommittee, and access and borrow books, DVDs and other resources free. Please apply now for 2018/2019.

\$20 Individual / Family membership

\$50 Organisational membership

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Card no

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