

# **STAR VICTORIA INC**

**Board of Management**

**2013 - 2014**

**President**

James Henry

**Vice President**

Helen McFarlane

**Secretary/Public Officer**

Cynthia Pilli

**Treasurer**

Norrie Blythman

**Assistant Treasurer**

Gabrielle Dickinson

**Board Members**

Philip Graves

Emmy Elbaum

Loretta Krelle

Jane Rosengrave

**Executive Officer**

Esther Harris

**Administration Officer**

Pam Geoghegan

**Auditor**

Barco and Associates

## STAR VICTORIA INC.

**STAR is unique in Victoria in that it brings together people concerned with *all aspects* of intellectual disability, and works to support the interests and rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families throughout *all their lives*.**

STAR was formed in 1970 when parents of people with an intellectual disability recognised that, whilst trying to improve the circumstances of their own sons and daughters, it was essential to change the community attitudes intellectual disability. Considerable change has been achieved and momentum maintained through consistent and targeted social action inherent in STAR's work. In later years other organisations have been formed and have joined with STAR in strengthening the momentum.

*STAR was then and remains today, the only statewide advocacy organisation with a specific focus on the rights of individuals with an intellectual disability, to participate in the community as an equal from birth throughout their entire life.*

STAR works to achieve greater community awareness, attitude change and government and systemic responsiveness to the needs of people with an intellectual disability, to enable inclusion, equity, and participation.

STAR Victoria is valued in Victoria and nationally, and its assistance, views and input are sought from a diverse range of individuals, and organisations both government and non-government.

**STAR has a proud 44 year history of empowering and resourcing people with an intellectual disability, their families and supporters, to speak up, be heard and make change.**

## **STAR VICTORIA INC.**

### **VISION STATEMENT**

*STAR believes in a society that lives by the principles of equity and social justice by*

- Ensuring people with an intellectual disability have rights and access to the services in our community they need to participate fully in society.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*STAR as a community organisation, advocates on a statewide basis for the rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families by*

- changing community attitudes
- informing, assisting, advocating for and empowering people with an intellectual disability and their families
- working individually and collectively to influence the decision makers to bring about real inclusion and lasting change for people with intellectual disability

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
STAR Victoria Inc.  
November 27th, 2013**

**Present:** James Henry (chair) Gabrielle Dickinson, Jonathan Dickinson. Cynthia Pilli Helen MacFarlane Jane Rosengrave, Carolyn Vimpani Janice Slattery, Norrie Blythman, Colin Hiscoe, Loretta Krelle, Susan Arthur (Reinforce) Jan Coles (Reinforce ,BIM) Lyn Macdonald ( Lotus Group) Mark Feigan (OPA) Andrew Daly, Felix Neighbour (OFD) Dean Dadson (SARU) Anthony Kolmus(ODSC)

**Apologies:** The Hon. Martin Dixon (Min. for Education), The Hon. Andrea Coote (Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Services) the Hon. James Merlino (Oppositions Spokesperson for Education), Hon Wendy Lovell (Minister for Children & Early Childhood Development), Jenny Mikos ( ), James O'Brien (National Disability Services), Patty Crowley, John Slattery, Kelly Geoghegan, Loraine Rodrigues, Heather Hindle. Gillian Armstrong ,MichaelCromie(OFD) Emmy Elbaum , Philip Graves Amanda Hiscoe

**In attendance:** Esther Harris and Pam Geoghegan

President James Henry opened the meeting with the acknowledgement of the Traditional owners and Custodians of the Land

The AGM was preceded by a insightful and engaging presentation by Guest Speaker,Anthony Kolmus from the Office of the Disability Services Commissioner who spoke about the background and progress to date in relation to their Family Engagement Project . He noted that a discussion paper “Families and Service Providers Working Together” which would explore policy principles and strategies to support families of adults with a disability and disability service providers to work more effectively together would be released in early 2014 and urged STAR to participate in providing feedback re this. Anthony then responded to questions about the Project and the work of the DSC.

James thanked Anthony for his contribution as Guest speaker, noting his long association with and support and encouragement for STAR and its work and indicated our ongoing interest in participating in the Project's future work.

1 .James welcomed everyone to STAR's 43rdAGM and asked Esther to read the apologies.

*"That the apologies as read be accepted"*

**Moved: Norrie Blythman, Seconded: Helen McFarlane Carried**

**2. Allocation of Proxies**

Esther informed the meeting that one proxy had been received from Emmy Elbaum which was then allocated ,as directed, to Gabrielle Dickinson.

**3. Minutes of the 42<sup>nd</sup> AGM 5<sup>th</sup> December 2012** were tabled

*"That the Minutes as circulated be accepted"*

**Moved: Cynthia Pilli      Seconded: Gabrielle Dickinson      Carried**

**4. Presentation of Annual Report**

James tabled the Annual Report which had been circulated to those present

He and Esther spoke briefly to this and responded to several questions from the floor.

*"That the Annual Report be received and accepted."*

**Moved: Janice Slattery      Seconded: Colin Hiscoe      Carried**

**5. Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer, Norrie Blythman spoke to his written report and tabled the audited financial statements which had been circulated to those present

*"That the Financial Report and audited statements for 12-13 be received and adopted."*

**Moved: Norrie Blythman      Seconded: Helen McFarlane      Carried**

**6. Appointment of Auditor**

*"That Barco and Associates be appointed as Auditor for 2013/14"*

**Moved: Janice Slattery      Seconded: Cynthi Pilli      Carried.**

**5. Election of Board Members**

James asked Esther as returning officer to present her report. Nominations had been received to fill 7 of the 10 vacancies on the Board

**Helen McFarlane - nominated      Colin Hiscoe      seconded Jane Rosengrave**

**James Henry - nom. Helen McFarlane      sec. Emmy Elbaum**

**Cynthia Pilli- nom. Philip Graves      sec. Emmy Elbaum**

**Emmy Elbaum – nom. Helen McFarlane      sec. James Henry**

**Gabrielle Dickinson – nom. Philip Graves      sec. Emmy Elbaum**

**Philip Graves – nom. Cynthia Pilli      sec. Gabrielle Dickinson**

**Loretta Krelle – nom. Janice Slattery      sec. Amanda Hiscoe**

As the number of nominations did not exceed the number of vacancies there was no need for an election and Helen, James, Cynthia, Emmy, Gabrielle, Philip and Loretta declared elected.

Esther then called for nominations from the floor to fill the 3 remaining vacancies. As there were no further nominations James resumed the Chair and

noted that the Constitution provided for these vacancies to be filled by co-option and that the Board would be considering this at future meetings

**7. Close of Meeting.**

James thanked those present for their attendance and participation and declared the meeting closed at 2-45pm

## **President's Report**

It's been an interesting and rewarding experience for me being on the Board of STAR for another year, my second as President. As a parent of a child with autism, I've enjoyed and appreciated the supportive relationships, and learning from the wealth of experience of the other Board members and of course Esther and Pam. Being involved with STAR in this way has enriched my life and enhanced my understandings across a range of issues and I thank all those involved for their support and contributions to STAR's work.

It's been a successful year for STAR, continuing to provide the much needed individual advocacy for people with intellectual disabilities and their families, while also being active in a number of systematic advocacy issues, as outlined in the Executive Officer's report.

Special thanks to Esther for her unceasing dedication and hard work, notwithstanding some difficult family issues, and specific thanks to Pam for her efforts especially in driving and managing the website upgrade and its ongoing maintenance. With its improved accessibility, the website provides new opportunities for finding out about STAR, seeking our assistance as well as enabling people to link with other listed sites, activities, and information relevant to their needs.

Special thanks to retiring Board member Helen McFarlane, who regrettably resigned from the Board earlier this month for personal reasons, for being such a wise and passionate member of the Board. We know that she will keep in touch and that her insights and expertise can be called on in the future if needed.

Finally, thanks again to all my fellow Board members for their support, for working together as a team and for their diverse contributions, vast experience and unrelenting commitment to working towards STAR's goals of ensuring people with an intellectual disability have rights and access to the services in our community they need to participate fully in an inclusive society.

James Henry  
President.

## **Executive Officer's Report**

2014 has been no less busy than in past years with both our achievements and challenges characterized by the same steadfast commitment to realize the vision that has driven STAR and all those involved throughout its 44years.

Again this year our efforts have been overseen and led by the STAR Board which directs and monitors STAR's work within the framework of its principles and policies, the available resources (both human and financial), an Annual plan and an itemized and regularly monitored budget whilst providing support and encouragement throughout the year for the staff and volunteers. Our Board members, who are all voluntary, bring a diverse and much valued range of skills, knowledge and perspectives to discussions and deliberations either through their own personal and lived experience or in a professional capacity through their work or their participation in the wider community. The office was again staffed 3 days a week, with the Executive Officer employed for 19 hrs a week and the Administration Officer for 7hrs. Office hours were Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9-30a.m. and 4pm with the capacity for flexibility outside of usual hours as required.

To achieve our aims STAR concentrates its work in the following areas:

- Provision of information, advice and individual advocacy
- System advocacy to achieve real change and policy reform on disability related issues
- Networking
- Community Education and Development

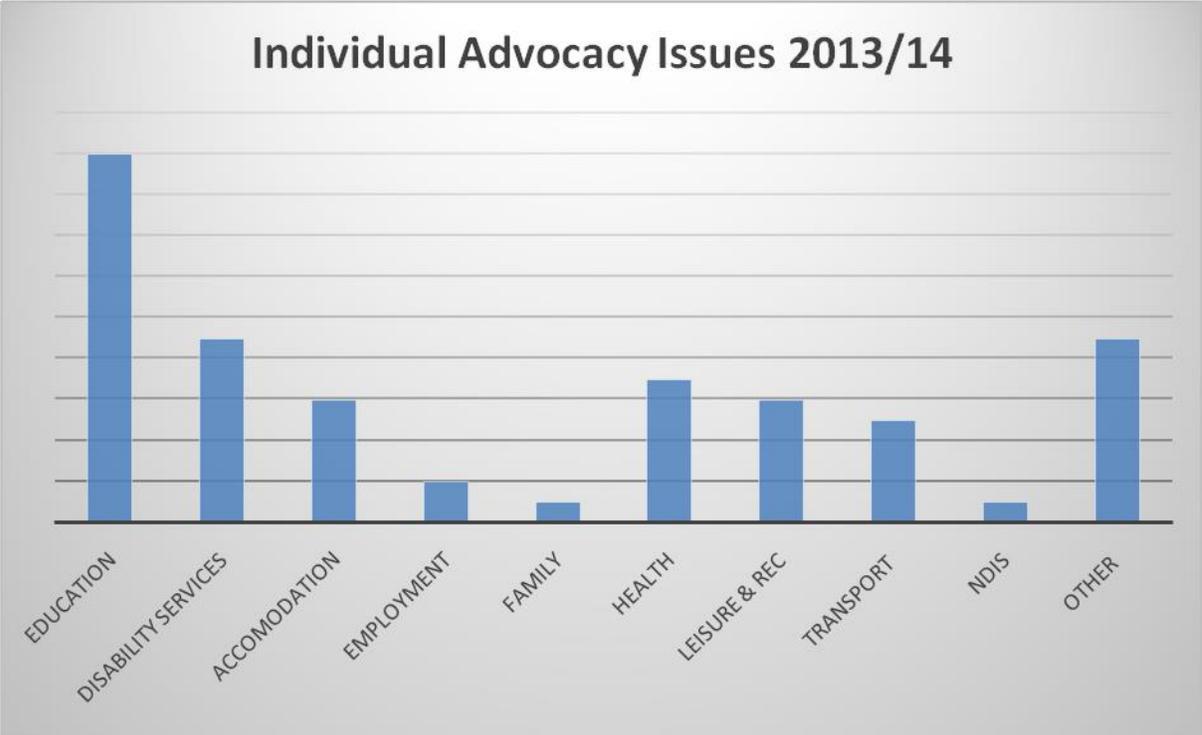
Each year Priority issues are determined at a Planning day using the following criteria

- the issues and strategies must reflect STAR's Vision and key principles
- there must be the potential to change the lives of people with intellectual disability and to make a difference on the issues
- the work must be informed by the experiences of people with an intellectual disability and their families
- it must be empowering and serve to strengthen the voice of people with intellectual disability
- resources must be available to do it

At the Annual Planning day in March it was agreed to continue working on the priorities identified in 2013-Inclusive Education, Promoting, enabling and sustaining Self Advocacy, Strengthening and supporting Families, Monitoring and supporting the successful and positive implementation of the NDIS for people with disabilities and the Closure of all remaining Institutions in Victoria. These will be evaluated, and revised and adjusted where necessary early in 2015.

Our individual advocacy and support is firmly based on Human Rights principles and from a strategic standpoint informs and focuses our systemic advocacy and action.

This year 59 people, including 50 new service users, received direct advocacy support either in a short term situation or ongoing over weeks or sometimes months until a satisfactory outcome for the person concerned was achieved.



We also provided “secondary” advocacy where information and advice was given to people with an intellectual disability and/or family members on a range of issues to enable them to advocate on their own behalf or with or for a family member or friend. This includes connecting people to the appropriate services to provide the support to meet their needs within their local area or community. We also assisted workers from generic or specialist services in metro and rural areas with information and advice

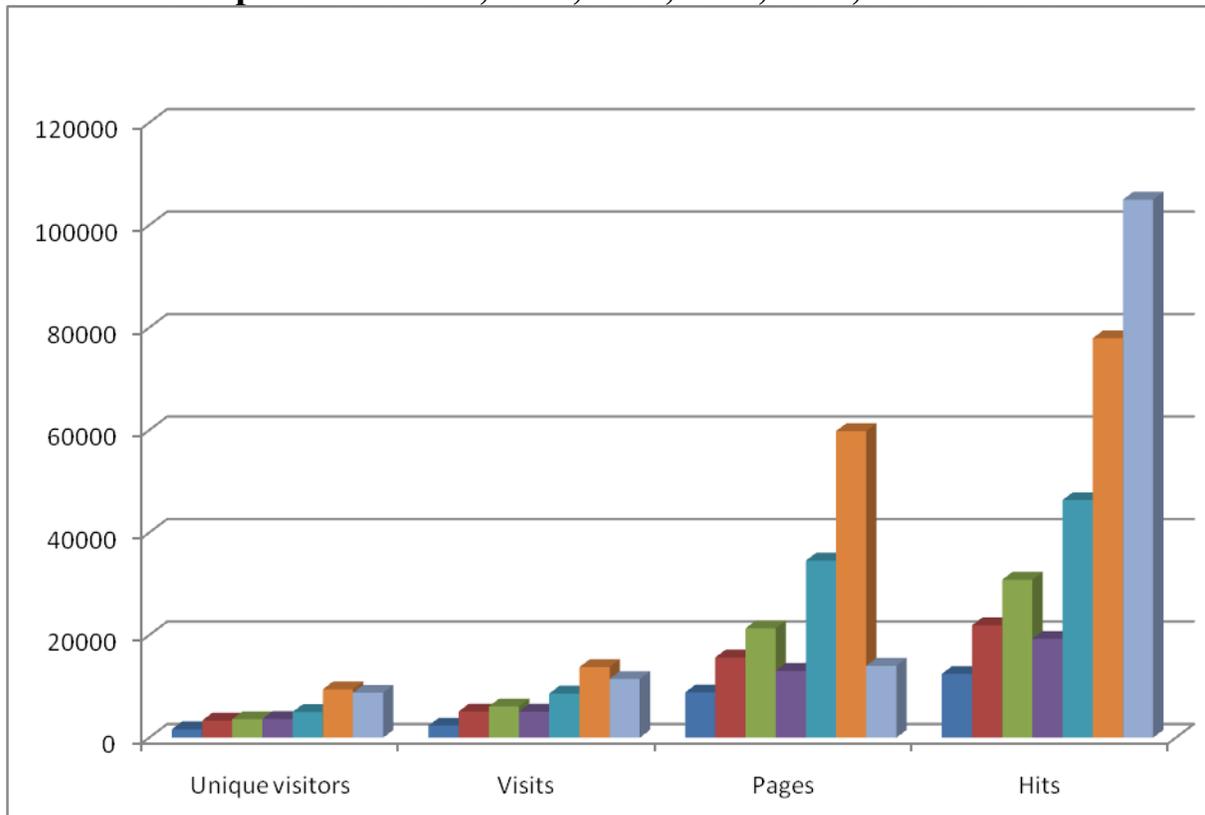
We again undertook presentations to several groups who visited Ross House during the year, including a study group from Indonesia who were looking at service provision in accommodation services. Students have used our library and other resource materials.

This year we upgraded our website, including changing the software which has made it easier to make changes in house, for which Pam undertook the necessary training. The new look website has many more accessibility options - people are now able to easily email articles or documents on our site, to print the content of

any page, and via an audio option, to hear the words on the page. The text and background colour can also be changed, for those with vision impairments.

Whilst most requests still come via telephone to the STAR office the use of the STAR website continues to be an important contact point. This is reflected in the statistics provided by Web3K as represented by the graph below.

***STAR WEBSITE STATISTICS***  
**Comparison of 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013& 2014**

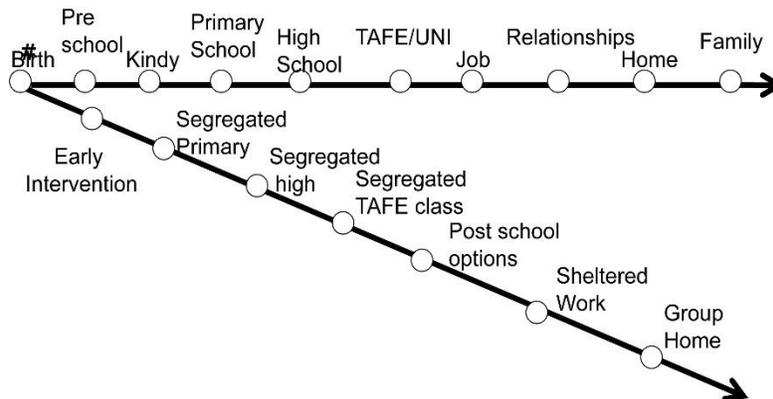


This year we had 8,766 visitors to the site who visited the site 11,444 times, looked at 14,021 pages and made approximately 104,995 hits.

Mindful of the fact that accessing information via the website is not always an option or a choice for some we have continued to provide information in print and other formats as requested.

Our systemic advocacy included a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Social Inclusion which was followed up by a presentation at a public hearing of the Committee. Both our submission and presentation focused on Inclusive education for all young people being the foundation of and the fundamental and critical pathway to lifelong social, economic, and civic inclusion. This is graphically illustrated in the diagram below.

## TWO VISIONS OF THE FUTURE An ordinary Life, or A Parallel Life



© R Jackson 2000 -- Include

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Again we facilitated the Inclusive Education Alliance which is a group of individuals and organisations from the education and disability advocacy fields committed to the promotion and achievement of “Inclusion for all” in Education.

STAR representatives participated in meetings, consultations, Conferences and Forums across a range of areas. These included the NDIS, consultations with the Disability Services Commissioner’s office in regard to their Family Engagement project, participation in the review of Residential Charges in Group Homes by the Victorian Public Sector Commission, “Beyond Doubt – the experiences of people with disabilities reporting crime” by the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, the Strengthening Disability Advocacy - Champions of Change Conference, VUT Disability Studies in Education Conference, meetings with Politicians/local MPs including Colin Brooks, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Education, and the launch of Reinforce’s history of Self Advocacy ‘Speaking Up Over the Years”.

Our membership of Disability Advocacy Victoria, the peak body for independent advocacy organisations in Victoria has again enabled us to share information,

develop agreed policy positions and take collective action. This will provide key and strategic opportunities to impact on government policy, both prior to and after the upcoming State Election as well as on the ongoing implementation of the NDIS currently at the launch site in Barwon and progressively in the Rollout across Victoria and Australia. We will continue to closely monitor this, identify and share issues and concerns as well as examples of good practice and, most crucially, to work to ensure that access to independent advocacy is safeguarded and available to people with an intellectual disability and their families at all stages of the NDIS process.

*Finally, on behalf of Pam and myself, thank you to all the members of the STAR Board for your encouragement and support throughout the year, both personal and professional. We look forward to working with the new Board over the next 12 months to enhance the work of STAR in its 45<sup>th</sup> year.*

*The contribution of our volunteers, in particular Kelly Geoghegan and Danielle Crawford, for their assistance with mail outs, the preparation and distribution of information brochures/materials and general help in the office is acknowledged and much valued.*

*Thanks also to Alison Tunks and Matthew Parker from the Office for Disability for their assistance during the year.*

*And, most importantly, thank you to our members, supporters and allies of STAR for the interest and encouragement you have shown throughout the year.*

Esther Harris  
Executive Officer

## **Treasurer's Report**

### **Financial Year July 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2014**

I am pleased to present the Financial Statements in my second year as Treasurer and to report that we have again managed our very limited resources both responsibly and effectively.

We received funding through the Advocacy Program for which the Office for Disability has responsibility in the Department of Human Services. A Minor Works and Equipment Grant of \$863.00 assisted with the upgrade of one of our computers and we were also successful with our submission for a Data Management Grant of \$3,000 .

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for their support during the year in my role as Treasurer. Special thanks to assistant Treasurer Gabrielle Dickinson and Esther and Pam for helping me keep things running smoothly and efficiently.

Norrie Blythman  
Treasurer



STAR Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.