

# **STAR VICTORIA INC**

**Board of Management**

**2011 - 2012**

**President**

Gabrielle Dickinson

**Vice President**

James Henry

**Treasurer**

Cynthia Pilli

**Board Members**

Alex Rowsell

Philip Graves

Helen McFarlane

Emmy Elbaum

Fiona Rowsell

Loretta Krelle

David Banfield (deceased April 2012)

Jane Hauser

Norrie Blythman

**Executive Officer**

Esther Harris

**Administration Officer**

Pam Geoghegan

**Auditor**

Barco and Associates

**Public Officer**

Esther Harris

## 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*.**

*“Advocacy is never easy: it requires humility and anger and clarity of thoughts that can discern the long-term goals, the implications of accepted practices and attitudes. It requires a capacity to translate the anger and the decisions from thinking into effective change in the best interests of persons with disabilities – the best interests as seen from their perspective and no other”*

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 42 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.

*“Inclusion is  
belonging to one  
race,  
Include is a basic  
human right  
Inclusion is  
struggling to figure  
out how to live with  
one another  
Inclusion is the  
future”*

### **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 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011**

**Present:** Gabrielle Dickinson (Chair), Fay Richards, Loretta Krelle, Andrew Daly, James Henry, Emmy Elbaum, David Banfield Helen MacFarlane, Pauline Williams (AMIDA) Dr Philip Graves, Anna Leyden (DDLs) Janice Slattery, Amanda Hiscoe, Norrie Blythman, Dean Dadson (OFD) Shirana Nash (OFD) Jenny Stewart, Sue Smith(SARU) Jane Hauser, Sharon Granek (DARU)

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

**Apologies:** the Hon. Mary Wooldridge (Min.for Community Services), the Hon. Martin Dixon (Min. for Education), Danielle Green (Opposition spokesperson for Community Services) the Hon. Rob Hulls (Opposition spokesperson for Education) Arthur Rodgers (Exec. Director- Disability Services)Cynthia Pilli, John Slattery, Fofi Christou (OFD), Ethel Temby, Kelly Geoghegan, Viki Hain,Gail McHardy (Parents Victoria), Heather Forsyth & Kevin Stone (VALID), Marcia Hiatt, Carolyn Vimpani, Alex and Fiona Rowsell,Anthony Kolmus( Office of DSC), Heather Hindle, Loraine Rodrigues

1 .President Gabrielle Dickinson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She asked Esther to read the apologies.

*"That the apologies as read be accepted"*

**Moved: David Banfield                      Seconded: Fay Richards                      Carried**

**2. Allocation of Proxies**

Esther informed the meeting that two proxies had been received which was then allocated as directed to the Chair.

**3. Minutes of AGM 15th December, 2010** were tabled

*"That the Minutes as circulated be accepted"*

**Moved: Emmy Elbaum                      Seconded: James Henry                      Carried**

**4. Presentation of Annual Report**

Gabrielle tabled the Annual Report which had been circulated to those present She and Esther spoke briefly to this and responded to several questions from the floor.

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

**Moved: David Banfield      Seconded: Helen MacFarlane                      Carried**

**5. Treasurer's Report**

In the Treasurer's unavoidable absence, Esther referred to the meeting to the Cynthia's written report included in the Annual Report and the Audited Financial statements as circulated to those present.

*"That the Financial Report and audited statements for 2010/2011 be received and adopted.*

**Moved: Philip Graves    Seconded: James Henry                      Carried**

## **6. Appointment of Auditor**

*"That Barco and Associates be appointed as Auditor for 2011/12"*

**Moved: Emmy Elbaum    Seconded: Loretta Krelle                      Carried.**

## **5. Election of Board Members**

Gabrielle asked Esther as returning officer to present her report. A nomination to fill 1 of the 2 vacancies had been received by the due date and in accordance with the Constitution.

***David Banfield - nominated    Cynthia Pilli seconded Emmy Elbaum***

As the number of nominations did not exceed the number of vacancies there was no need for an election and David was declared elected.

Gabrielle then called for nominations from the floor to fill the remaining vacancy.

***Norrie Blythman - nom. Amanda Hiscoe    sec. Emmy Elbaum***

As there were no further nominations, Norrie was declared elected.

## **6. Presentation to Retiring Board members**

Gabrielle noted that Janice Slattery and Jenny Harrison were standing down from the Board after completing their terms. She thanked them both for their valued contributions to STAR, noting that Jenny had held the office of President for 2 years and Janice had been the Assistant Treasurer for 1 year. .

## **7. Close of Meeting.**

There being no other business Gabrielle declared the meeting closed at 2-00pm and invited those present to stay for refreshments

## President's Report, 2011-12

Once again individual advocacy on a range of issues has taken much of the time and energies of STAR.

Following STAR's work over the years on inclusive education, and the continued difficulty for people with a disability to participate in inclusive education with support they need, this year the STAR Board has set up an Inclusive Education Working Group which meets and reports to the Board meetings regularly. It has developed a set of goals to generate interest in an Inclusive Education Campaign with the aim of bringing together a range of committed people interested in making some inroads into this very important area which we recognise has become increasingly difficult over the years.

STAR representatives also worked on the Inquiry into the Criminal Justice System and people with a Cognitive impairment. STAR attended a discussion forum and made a submission to the Public Hearings.

National Disability Insurance Scheme continues to generate interest in the community. We met with Brian Woodford, Chair of the Premier's Taskforce on the Implementation of NDIS in Victoria several times to gain a better understanding of what is proposed and to provide input into the discussions STAR joined the 'Every Australian Counts' campaign to promote and strengthen knowledge and understanding of the NDIS in the community. STAR distributed information through the newsletter as it came to hand and we continue to watch with interest.

Having made a submission to the Law Reform Commission on its Review of Guardianship Legislation I in 2011, we welcomed the tabling of the Review's findings and its recommendations in Parliament in February this year. We are currently waiting for the Government's Response to the many recommendations. Of particular interest to STAR is the work and changes recommend on Guardianship and Supported decision making.

There were concerns during the year that the Victorian Human Rights Charter of Rights and Responsibilities 2006 may be watered down or even scrapped, but after lobbying by STAR and others, this did not eventuate, and in fact the government affirmed its commitment to both retaining and strengthening the Charter.

In addition STAR worked on supporting and promoting Self Advocacy by encouraging people with intellectual disability to join self advocacy organisations. STAR maintained our strong links to self advocacy organizations, such as Reinforce and provided opportunities for self advocate STAR members to represent STAR at Disability Advocacy Victoria, other forums, workshops and conferences.

This year we lost two long time friends and supporters of STAR's work, David Banfield, and Ethel Temby, founding member. All at STAR were sad at this news, and we extended our wishes to David's and to Ethel's families.

I would like to thank each Board member for their continued endeavours. The combined strength and consistency in their efforts enables STAR to pursue its goals of social justice and the best possible life for people with an intellectual disability and for their families. Each

individual situation requires different approaches and flexibility and I am confident that STAR offers the experience, wisdom and flexibility that is required.

I especially commend Esther Harris, Executive Officer, for her continued commitment and passion for STAR and its work, and for her management of the STAR office. I also thank Pam Geoghegan for her work.

Gabrielle Dickinson - President

## **Executive Officer's Report**

For STAR our 42<sup>nd</sup> year has certainly been no less busy than previous years with its share of both achievements and frustrations but it has been especially unforgettable for the sorrow we felt at the loss of two inspirational people and the impact of their passing on STAR.

In April this year we were deeply saddened by the death of self advocate David Banfield. David was a member of STAR for more than 20 years and served on the Board from 2005-2010 and again in early 2012 – during that time he held the position of Vice- President twice and that of Assistant Treasurer once. David was a founding member of Reinforce in 1981 but his association with STAR began even earlier than that.

David was a capable, reflective man with a wry and sometimes mischievous sense of humor and a good and compassionate friend, He had a prodigious memory for dates and could always be relied upon to recall significant times and events in STAR's history

He was a strong and vocal self advocate with an especially passionate and lifelong commitment to accessible public transport and the closure of all institutions (due no doubt to his own personal experiences), who will be remembered for his unceasing efforts in the fight for the rights of people with an intellectual disability.

In July we were again profoundly saddened by the death of STAR founder and mentor, Ethel Temby.

Ethel was a leader in the intellectual disability field for more than 40 years. During that time she almost single-handedly led a revolution in the way we think about people with a disability. She talked and acted about the rights of people with a disability to live everyday lives in everyday communities, and about the responsibilities of communities to be more inclusive, when no one else did, to the extent that many of these ideas have now become accepted throughout Victoria and indeed Australia.

Ethel was Honorary Secretary of STAR for 15 years. She maintained her active membership and involvement with STAR to the end and was a mentor for the organisation with her unstinting support and encouragement of the Board and staff.

Ethel was a formidable activist and lobbyist - well known and highly respected for her capacity to work on issues at a multiplicity of levels. In all of the many areas of Social Policy and Community Education to which she made great contributions she set the highest standards. Her exceptional qualities of leadership, her unique ability for organisation, her determination and indomitable capacity for plain hard work were unequalled. Ethel was always ahead of her time- her forward thinking, drive and commitment to the rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families, made her an outstanding and most effective advocate on behalf of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Victoria and beyond.

*Whilst we mourn the loss of David and Ethel we are inspired by their vision and commitment and extraordinary contributions – their legacy will continue to imbue our work in the years ahead.*

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Again this year the work of STAR has been directed and overseen by the STAR Board who bring their diverse and unique skills, experiences and perspective to this task. They undertake the overall management of the organisation within the framework of STAR's principles and policies and an annual planning process that identifies priorities for action

The Priority areas for STAR's work are determined by 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 February this year the Board developed its strategic plan to direct STAR's work in 2012-14- this will be evaluated, revised and enhanced where necessary early in 2013.

The office was again staffed 3 days a week, with the Executive Officer employed for 19hrs a week and the Administration Officer for 7hrs. The office was open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 9-30a.m. and 4pm with some capacity for flexibility outside of usual hours when required.

Individual advocacy and support is a key priority for our work and is firmly based on Human Rights principles- most importantly, from a strategic standpoint, it informs and focuses our systemic advocacy and action.

This year 65 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.

In addition we provided what we term “secondary” advocacy where information and advice was provided 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 services with the relevant expertise to provide the support to meet their needs within the local area or community. Workers from both generic and specialist services, in metro and rural areas have also been assisted with information and advice.

The issues for which we provided information and advocacy support included Accommodation and Housing, the Built Environment, Education, Family Matters, Recreation , Administration, Disability Support services, Respite, Transport and Centrelink

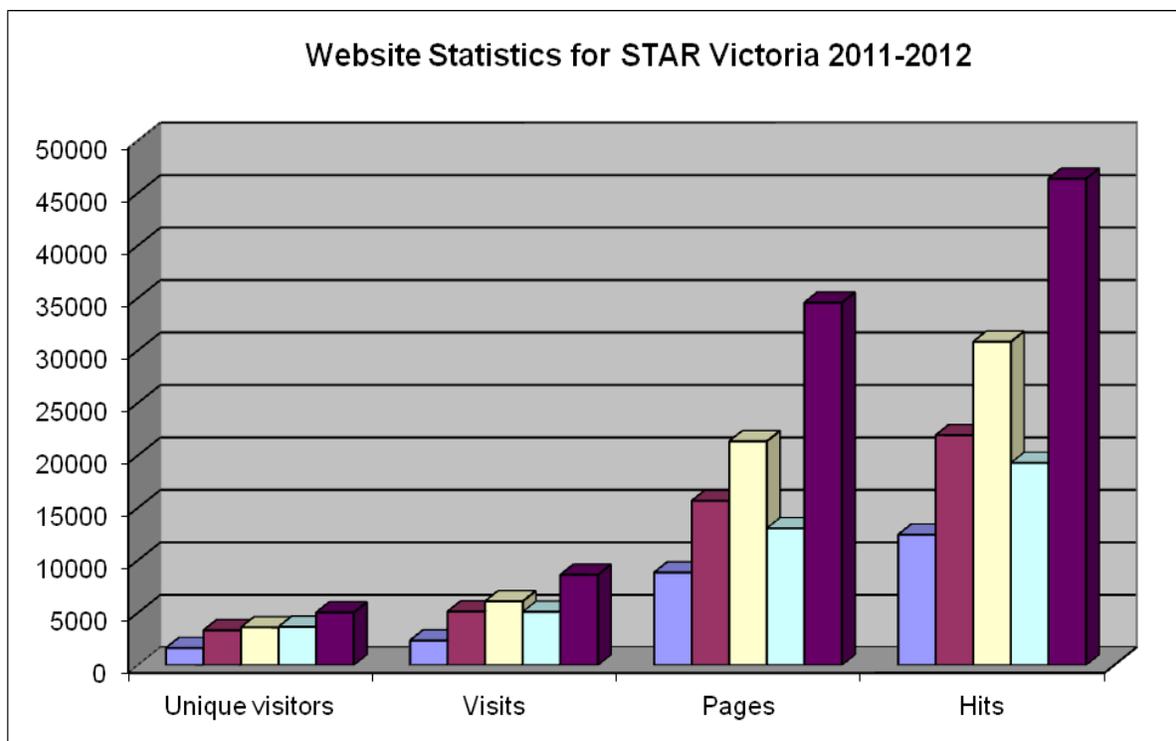
Students and researchers have access to our library and other resource materials. We again undertook presentations on various aspects of our work to a number of groups who visited Ross House during the year.

Information was also made available in print and other formats as requested, accessed via a range of community data bases and websites and provided at forums, Conferences and Expos.

Our Website provided new opportunities for finding out about STAR, seeking our assistance as well as enabling people to link with other listed sites relevant to their needs. Whilst most requests still come via telephone to the STAR office the use of the STAR website as a contact point showed a marked increase. This is reflected in the statistics provided by Rock: IT Consulting & Web3K as represented by the graph below.

**STAR WEBSITE STATISTICS**

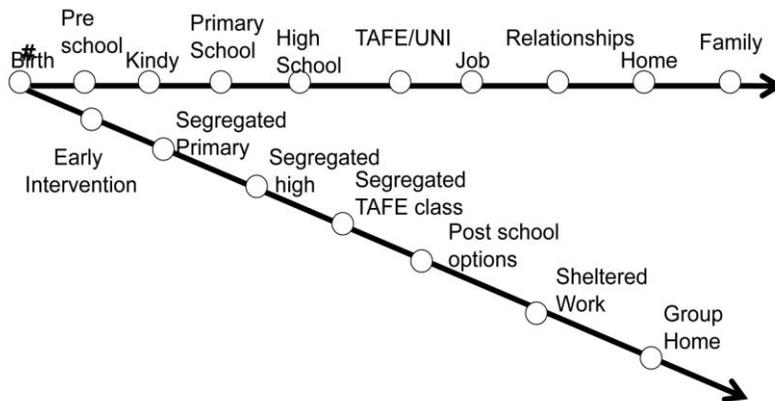
***Comparison of 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 & 2012***



This year we had 5,018 visitors to the site who visited the site 8,607 times, looked at 34,551 pages and made approximately 46,359 hits.

As reported in last year’s Annual Report the Board has identified “Inclusion for all in Education” as a major priority area. This was in response to our increasing concern about the status of Inclusive Education in Victoria. STAR is aware that the issues are complex and that achieving change will not be easy, but we are committed to a renewed and compelling focus on the benefits of Inclusive Education (as illustrated in the diagram that follows) and reversing current trends in segregation of children with disabilities.

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



© R Jackson 2000 -- Include

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In August this year STAR organised a "Round Table" on Inclusive Education in Victoria with interested parties from across the Education and Disability Advocacy Sectors. Our discussions and deliberations have been informed and focused by the release of 3 major reports in recent months. These include the Review of Disability Standards for Education, the Auditor General's Report on Education for children with special needs and the VHREOC Report "**Held Back**" -the Experiences of students with disabilities in Victorian Schools. Participants at the Round Table, now known as the Inclusive Education Alliance, are committed to meeting regularly and to individual and collective action in 2013.

In late March STAR, together with DARU, facilitated a Forum on Inclusive Education with U.K. and U.S. activist Johnny Crescendo,

In September several parent members of STAR participated in a Grand Round on "Inclusive Education at Monash Medical Centre with paediatricians which included Role plays, an Overview of the Legislation and Regulations and how this plays out in Victorian schools, a Review of the Professional and the Human Rights literature and an open discussion on what should the Paediatrician tell parents.

During the year Staff, Board members and general members participated in forums, workshops and the "Strengthening Disability Advocacy" Conference which brought together Advocates and Self Advocates to share information and network.

STAR was represented in consultations on key policy initiatives and issues, in particular the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Equal Rights Commission Research project on the provision of education to students with a disability, and the State Plan for 2013-15. Other areas included the Disability Standards, the State Housing Framework, the Inquiry into People with a Cognitive Impairment and the Criminal Justice System and Accessible Public Transport, including MYKI.

Our membership of Disability Advocacy Victoria, formerly known as the Victorian Disability Advocacy Network, has again enabled us to share information, develop agreed policy positions and take collective and effective action on current and emerging issues. This past year has seen DAV consolidate and enhance its role as the peak body representing independent disability advocacy groups in Victoria.

*Finally, I commend the Board members for the way they have again managed the affairs of STAR, steering its direction, facing up to the challenges and acknowledging the achievements - I thank you all for your encouragement and support -both professional and personal- Pam and I look forward to working with the new Board over the next 12 months to progress the work of STAR in its 43<sup>rd</sup> year.*

*To STAR President, Gabrielle Dickinson, my appreciation for her ever reliable, calm and practical support to the STAR office on a day to day basis.*

*The contribution of our regular volunteers Kelly Geoghegan, Norrie Blythman and Danielle Crawford, in particular, their assistance with Newsletter mail outs and the preparation and distribution of information brochures/materials for Conferences, Expos etc is much appreciated*

*Thanks also to Michael Cromie Chris Mathieson, and especially Shirana Nash from the OFD for their assistance during the year.*

Esther Harris  
Executive Officer

**Treasurer's Report**  
**Financial Year July 1<sup>st</sup> 2001 to June 30<sup>th</sup> 2012**

I would like to conclude my two terms on the Board and the past three years as Treasurer by thanking the people who have contributed in so many ways to the financial stability of STAR.

As always annual subscriptions and donations demonstrate the tangible support of our members and supporters.

In regard to STAR's financial position, a new funding agreement for 2012-2015 was signed with the Department of Human Services in July this year.

A Minor Works and Equipment Group of \$3,000 to upgrade our website, improve its look and to make it even more user-friendly was gratefully received.

The on-going day to day responsibilities have landed on the shoulders of Esther Harris, making my contribution and that of the Assistant Treasurer, Norrie Blythman, much less complex.

Sincere thanks Esther for yet another year of monitoring and general assistance.

Cynthia Pilli  
Treasurer