



Executive Officer

Jennie Trigg



(With SWAA since December 2021)

I am pleased to present my 1st annual report and hopefully one of many.

For those of you who don't know me, let me begin by giving you some background information.

Prior to arriving at Southwest Advocacy Association (SWAA) in December of 2021, I spent approximately 20 years working in disability services with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, formerly known as the Department of Health and Human Services.

My first duty as Executive Officer was to complete funding submissions to secure our funding for the next three years. These were a requirement by the Department of Social Services and due January 11. It was a collaborative effort by all, with successful outcomes. I would like to thank Joe-Anne Nicholas who gave up her time to assist (including her weekends) it was very much appreciated.

My long-term mission is to improve SWAA's capability and capacity by growing our agency in a carefully measured approach. I have visions for SWAA, and it begins with a rebrand of our logo and website. SWAA is extremely busy, and yet, I have had many conversations with people who don't know who we are. Therefore, I am going to raise our profile by reaching out to our local communities to enlighten them and explain to them that we deliver services that can and will change people's lives.

SWAA values its networks and opportunities for partnerships, and when we work together, fantastic ideas, aspirations and beliefs can be achieved. We appreciate the support and applaud the spirit of Victorian

Rural Advocacy Network, Victorian Disability Advocacy Resource Unit and Disability Advocacy Network Australia. These networks provide professional partnerships, guidance, and inspiration so that we are able to continue our hard work in challenging times.

SWAA is such a small entity in this world of uncertainty, however, don't they say, from little things, big things grow? After a turbulent couple of covid years, we are emerging back into a somewhat different conventional existence.

As an agency we are committed and dedicated to empowering people to find their voice, affirm their human rights, and participate in society without exploitation, discrimination, abuse, or neglect.

Since my tenure, there has been some changes implemented. We now have a database that provides simple client and service management, and it is developed specifically for community organisations. It includes analysed data, statistical evidence for funding applications and it also eases the burden of funding reporting. The program is a web application which is flexible, and easily customised to suit our needs.

As well as individual advocacy, SWAA continues to work on systemic matters and is currently working on some concerning issues, one being - improved universal access at the Warrnambool train/bus station for everyone - people with a disability, seniors with mobility issues, families with small children or those toting heavy suitcases, all of which need an accessible way to travel without encountering permanent difficulties. We are supporting All Abilities Advocacy in this space.

SWAA is also working to resolve complaints received, regarding local facilities. The complaints received concern all residents residing there. Both systemic issues remain works in progress.

It's also important to mention the Disability Royal Commission which has been significant in the lives of people with a disability. People have been given the opportunity to have their voices heard and their stories told. This is a platform long overdue, and we will continue to support those who need to share their often-negative experiences with the hope they will end up with positive experiences. Advocacy be it individual or systemic will always be a necessary commodity and SWAA will continue to fight for and with our clients to overcome the adversities they face.

I would like to, on behalf of the SWAA Committee of Management and members, thank Richard Ziegeler for volunteering and committing

significant time and effort on the development of our new Constitution. This was a major piece of work, and the Committee of Management is proud to present this Constitution to the members for ratification this evening.

I would also like to thank Margaret Gottlewski, our Business Support Officer and admin extraordinaire for the support she has provided me. Also, for her expertise and her dedication and commitment to SWAA and for the wonderful work she does. Margaret is an integral part of our little agency and again, her support to me over the past 11 months has been immeasurable. Thank you, Marg.

Thank you to Erin Beasley (advocate) who has also welcomed me and shown support in my first year, it's not easy adjusting and adapting to change and working under new management. However, you still managed to deliver some outstanding results for our clients.

We said farewell to Kim Young who worked primarily in our NDIS appeals program. We wish Kim all the best with whatever adventures lies ahead.

Recruitment has taken place, and I would like to welcome Angelique Baker (Annie). I am sure Annie will be a welcome addition to our little team.

We said goodbye to Lou Hollis (Women with Disabilities Victoria) who retired from her position earlier this year, which halted our partnership with WDV for now.

However, I want to welcome aboard, All Abilities Advocacy – sponsored by SARU - (Self Advocacy Resource Unit) who approached me recently expressing interest in SWAA hosting their organisation in the New Year. They will rent space from SWAA, using our office as their base.

I would also like to acknowledge Liz Parker, our Community Services student. Liz is completing her final year of study and will be with us until the end of January, by which time she will have completed 250 hours.

A special thank you must go to the Committee of Management, who demonstrated extraordinary faith in me by offering me the role of Executive Officer. I cannot express just how much support and commitment they have exhibited this past year. It is a privilege to be associated with such a dedicated group of like-minded people.

Unfortunately, SWAA does not have a history of large attendances at our AGM. I hope to rectify this at our AGM next year. A heartfelt thank you to those of you who have taken the time to be here this evening.

Finally, to our members, clients, and supporters, thank you for your support and involvement this past year.