



# Annual Report December 2021





## Our Mission

To enhance the lives of autistic people and their families in their own communities by:

- ❖ Providing holistic support to individuals and families
- ❖ Partnering, aligning and collaborating with existing organisations with similar values
- ❖ Sharing our success with other support networks, and pioneering positive change and improved regional services through these meaningful partnerships
- ❖ Empowering people to have choice and control in their lives
- ❖ Building community participation, inclusion and contribution for all people with disabilities, through improved understanding and acceptance



*Most of the SWAN crew, volunteering at the SWAN Family Christmas Party, November 2021 at Yallingup Maze*



## President's Report

As I write, we are not far away from our annual Christmas Party, which we are looking forward to greatly, especially as we had to forgo last year's. The final preparations are underway, and we can't wait!

Our groups were able to mostly return to normal this year, thanks again to our Groups Coordinator Kylie, our facilitators, and our many amazing volunteers.

Our offices have been a hive of activity as our members navigate their way around the NDIS in our new Covid-19 world. I am so proud of all our staff and the work that they do tirelessly to help our community. As always, our organisation exists due to the hard work of these individuals, and with financial assistance from grants, the community and in particular Greg and Kathy Walsh for their generous donations.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for another year supporting me at the helm. Special thanks, as always, to our Treasurer, Grant Avery and amazing SWAN volunteers and staff, who make sure SWAN's wheels keep turning.

Wishing you all an amazing summer.

**Ronnie Madge**  
SWAN President



*Ronnie at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



*Taking a break under the trees at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



*Making fidget toys with Janine at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



## Treasurer's Report

2020/21 has been a year of interesting changes for many organisations. From a finance perspective, the SWAN Board and its CEO have been diligent in consistently reviewing the financial position. Due to significant changes in funding, and government policy, SWAN has adopted a number of budgets for 2020/21 year, as these changes have occurred. Post July 2020, the Board has adopted two revised budgets due to changes in JobKeeper policy, and we will continue to review as needed.

SWAN has been a recipient of both JobKeeper and ATO Cashflow Boost, which has helped offset loss of income from the suspension of the groups and also allowed the further investment in staff and technology improvements to allow our staff to more efficient with their time, which is SWAN's greatest resource.

The philosophy of SWAN has always been an investment in people. To support this investment, much of the funding SWAN receives is dedicated to the employment of staff. This is SWAN's largest cost, but our staff are SWAN's greatest resource. The work they undertake in supporting people with disabilities and families, who have often been unable to find support elsewhere, is the core reason SWAN exists. The Board acknowledges the work by our staff, and the need to resource them to enable SWAN to be sustainable.

2020/21 has seen some good news for SWAN, with it continuing to be successful in obtaining grant funding for its services. SWAN has continued to operate offices in Bunbury and Busselton, to provide access for people requiring support, with Zoom, phone and email options available to people in other areas.

We have continued to receive support through donations from many parties, and as an organisation we are very grateful for those who donate money, resources or time.



*Grant cooking sausages at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2019*

In particular, I wish to thank Greg and Kathy Walsh for the continued generous support of SWAN. I would also like to thank Lions Club of Dunsborough, Felicity Adams and Busselton Lions Club for their donations.

SWAN has operated at a profit for 2020/21, in part from the receipt of Covid-19 support from the Government. The surplus generated this year, is funding that will be retained by SWAN, to continue to provide front line services for our community. All not for profits must look to maintain a buffer, to enable them to continue provide services during times of income interruptions. We must maintain strong financial performance, to facilitate a long-term commitment to our members.

**Grant Avery**  
SWAN Treasurer



*Santa and elves giving out gifts at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



## Staff Report

At our first AGM in 2013, SWAN had 57 families formally registered as members, with 176 people subscribed to our newsletter, 228 members of our closed Facebook group, and 236 people following the SWAN public Facebook page. Today we have 1704 registered SWAN members (up from 1637 registered SWAN members in 2020) living throughout the south west region, 916 members of our Facebook peer support group for individuals and families, and 2241 people following the SWAN public Facebook page. Such growth is a continuing testament to the efforts of the SWAN team and the need for support within our community.



*Coordinators Mel and Kylie, with Amber and Bluey, November 2021*

On behalf of SWAN members, we would like to sincerely thank our major sponsors, Greg and Kathy Walsh; and our incredible volunteers, without whom SWAN projects would simply not happen. Our sincere gratitude to Tina Williams, who has now been volunteering with SWAN two days per week for eight years. Tina manages the administration of the organisation, and looks after the whole team. A big thank you also to Genevieve Day, Veronica, Carl, James and Ewan Madge, Kylie Robinson, Kathryn Shackleton, William Joyce, Tony Guest, Blake Baruffi, Ant Pursell, Giselle Elson, Jasmine Geddes, Clare Gibellini, Evelyn McKay, Luke Robinson, Grant, Mitchell and Declan Avery, Annabel Jacobson Lara and Amber Cheeseman, and many more.

In 2021 SWAN are providing four YES Program groups for teens and young adults aged 13-25yrs, and two AutStars groups for kids in grades 1-7. Our staff are providing information, resources, referral and advocacy to individuals and families on an average of 120 occasions each week, via phone, email, Facebook, face to face and Zoom video conferencing.



While the majority of people supported by SWAN are either autistic or the family member of someone who is autistic, this support is available to anyone in the disability community in need.

SWAN continues to provide a high standard of Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) support to people with disability and their families throughout the south west. Our staff are able to provide practical information and support at all stages of the disability journey, including:

- Seeking diagnosis
- Recently diagnosed, what next?
- Accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- NDIS pre-planning, advocacy, plan implementation and reviews
- Accessing mainstream and disability services

We currently have two ILC Individual Capacity Building projects underway, focused on building individual capacity to self-advocate, engage with NDIS processes, access mainstream and disability services, and self-manage NDIS funding. We are planning workshops in the coming months, and are currently providing individualised support via phone, email, social media, face to face and Zoom video-conferencing. Our latest ILC project involves employing 12 young adults with disability to create information videos, so stay tuned for that in 2022.

<b>Nick Avery</b>	CEO
<b>Holly Wintle</b>	Coordinator
<b>Janine Slaven</b>	Coordinator
<b>Mel Jacobson</b>	Coordinator
<b>Kylie Robinson</b>	Groups Coordinator
<b>Tina Williams</b>	Admin Volunteer
<b>Caris Walsh</b>	Website & Admin
<b>Jodie McGuinness</b>	Finance & Payroll
<b>Ella Criddle</b>	Admin Assistant
<b>Corey Hann</b>	Groups Mentor





*Caris, Amber, Jodie and Ronnie at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



*Holly at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2019*



*Janine and Ella at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021*



*SWAN Family Christmas Party fun, November 2021*



*Youth Mental Health First Aid training, November 2021*

## Feedback from our members and community

“SWAN has been important in allowing me to gain confidence to be an advocate for my family to deal with NDIS.”

“I just wanted to email and say thank you again for the support with [son]'s planning meeting preparation. Thanks to your help, the LAC had all the information needed and it made things so much easier for me today.”

“Thank you for all that very valuable information it is extremely helpful and insightful. I appreciate the time you took to help me out yet again.”

“The support and knowledge offered by SWAN have been instrumental to our school community. I cannot thank [the] team enough for their time and expertise! This is a wonderful service and we are very grateful.”

“This was helpful in assisting us with what to ask in NDIS planning and getting in touch with other services we had no idea were there.”



“Thanks as usual great advice and you have helped confirm we are going down the right track with what we have tried so far. I realise Rome wasn't built in a day and it will take time.”

“I struggled myself, but the support you provided was invaluable and I would never have got through the meeting today without all the preparation support from [SWAN].”

“I spoke with [daughter] and she said thank you for the information as it is really helpful, and your information and advice was a lot more helpful than school and she is less stressed out now. Thank you.”



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## **South West Autism Network Inc**

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