

2022



ANNUAL REPORT

South West Autism Network Inc (SWAN)

A community where every autistic person is able to live the life they choose.

www.swanautism.org.au



Our Vision

A community where every autistic person is able to live the life they choose.

Our Mission

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

- Providing holistic support to individuals and their families through peer support, information, linkages, and advocacy
- Working together with autistic people and their families to build their capacity to make choices and have control in their own lives
- Working together with organisations and networks with similar values to share strategies and resources to bring about positive change and improve regional services
- Building the understanding, awareness, and capacity of the community, to enable participation, inclusion, and contribution of all people with disabilities.

Our Philosophy and Values

SWAN operates from a philosophy that all people have the right to live in inclusive and supportive communities.

Our work with individuals and families strives to uphold and promote the values of inclusion in line with our vision and mission statement.



Neurodiverse swan created by SWAN member, Samantha Connor



President's Report

Thank you to Ronnie Madge for her time as President, and how for her work as an employee. All our staff and volunteers continue to do amazing work and show real care to our members and families.

We finished our strategic plan and risk management framework with the help of Jackie Softly. Thank you – it would have been a much harder task without your knowledge. Special thanks to Nick, our CEO, the type of leader who makes it easy to follow and work hard. Her workload and ethics are at a level that we all find incredible. Thank you.

Our funded projects have been able to really get going with the easing of Covid restrictions. I am looking forward to the opening night of the JumpStart Crew's films – roll on the red carpet.

In November we had a meeting with the Hon. Don Punch, WA Minister for Disability, to put forward the case for further funding for SWAN. The requested funding would be to cover the time spent on advocacy, which as I'm sure you're aware is lacking in the regions. Hopefully the State will see the value of this investment. I am also in the process of trying to raise \$100,000 per annum from the community to help with our long-term financial viability. Please let me know if you have suggestions for people I can approach.

A busy year for all and increasing exponentially. Interesting and exciting times ahead. Well done to the SWAN team – keep up the great work. It is appreciated by many.

Ant Pursell
SWAN President



Ant presenting outgoing president, Ronnie Madge a thank you gift April 2022



Youth Mental Health First Aid training attendees March 2022



Youth Mental Health First Aid training in partnership with Busselton-Dunsborough Alliance Against Depression (BDAAD) June 2022



Treasurer's Report

2021-22 has been another year of change for SWAN. From a finance perspective, the SWAN Board and its CEO have been diligent in consistently reviewing the financial position. There has been no significant charges that directly impact the financial position of SWAN during the year, there are challenges looming, especially around the sourcing of funding long term for an advocacy body.

In the two previous years, SWAN had been a recipient of funding through the JobKeeper and ATO COVID Cashflow boost. These programs allowed the organisation to be able to bank savings during these years, to allow it a buffer, while sourcing income streams into the future.

SWAN has recently been advised of extensions to its two Information, Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) grants, which will enable the organisation to continue to provide support to the community until 30th June 2024. It remains to be seen whether the Federal Government will commit to ILC funding beyond this period.

The SWAN Board and staff met in October 2022 to consider the funding options of the organisation. SWAN's objective is to provide information, build capacity, advocate for people with disability and to fill the gaps - providing services where others are not. While many organisations have looked to fund their operations by becoming NDIS registered providers, this has often meant they have been unable to maintain support for their founding goals. The Board has been consistent in its desire to ensure the objectives of SWAN, are not compromised by how funding is sourced.

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.



Grant cooking sausages at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2019

This is SWAN's largest cost, but our staff are also 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.

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 their valuable time.

SWAN incurred an operating loss of \$35,517 for the 2021-22 financial year. The significant reasons for the loss incurred is the expenditure of carried forward grants as required under the grant agreements. SWAN has also used some of the COVID grant funding to carry out its ongoing advocacy work. As at the 30th June 2022, SWAN had a net asset position of \$236,667, with \$365,741 being held in cash assets.

The Board will continue to ensure we can resource SWAN to support our community.

Grant Avery

SWAN Treasurer



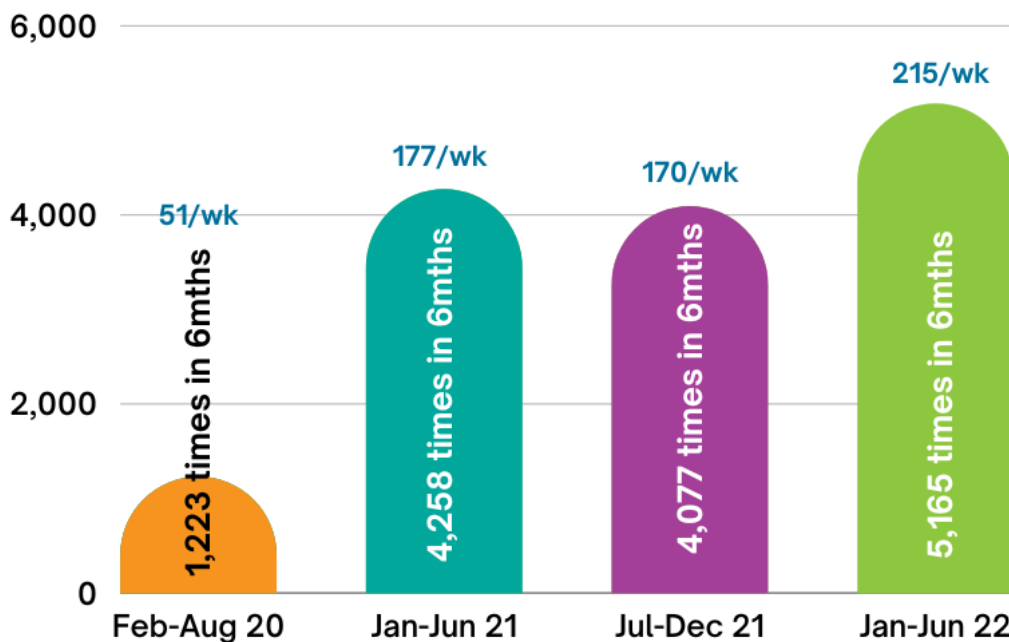
Santa and elves giving out gifts at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2021



Staff Report

At our first AGM in 2013, SWAN had 57 families registered as members, with 176 people subscribed to our e-Newsletter, 228 members of our Facebook peer support group, and 236 people following the SWAN public Facebook page. Today we have 1,772 registered SWAN members, 1,102 members of our Facebook peer support group for individuals and families, and 2,610 people following the SWAN public Facebook page. Such growth is a continuing testament to the need for support within our community and the efforts of the SWAN team. Over the course of the 2021-22 Financial year, we saw a 26% increase in [support provided by SWAN](#) to an average of 215 people engaged per week, with no additional funding.

Number of Supports Provided by SWAN



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.



Our two ILC projects have recently been extended until June 2024, enabling SWAN to continue to focus on building individual capacity to self-advocate, engage with NDIS processes, access mainstream and disability services, and self-manage NDIS funding. Our [JumpStart](#) project enabled SWAN to employ 12 young adults with disability to create 10 short educational films. This project is well under way with plans to celebrate the premiere of the films in the first half of 2023. Four Go-To Guides have been developed as part of our [Regional Toolkit](#) project, in addition to many articles and fact sheets on our website.

In 2021-22 SWAN provided four YES Program groups for teens and young adults aged 13-25yrs, and two AutStars groups for kids in grades 1-7. We have delivered workshops on Guardianship and Supported Decision-Making, Understanding Autism, NDIS Report Writing for Therapists and Youth Mental Health First Aid, and are planning further NDIS-related workshops in early 2023. We partnered with Developmental Disability WA (DDWA), People With Disability Australia (PWDA), Every Australian Counts, NDIS Grassroots Discussion Group, author Josh Langley and Busselton-Dunsborough Alliance Against Depression (BDAAD) to provide webinars and workshops to people with disability throughout the southwest, WA and nationally. Further, SWAN continued to undertake [systemic advocacy](#) with submissions to the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and the Joint Standing Committee on NDIS Inquiry into Independent Assessments, with our CEO giving testimony at public hearings.



The SWAN Crew and volunteers at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 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 Kathryn Shackleton, William Joyce, Dale Hodson, Dave Ritchie, Blake Baruffi, Ant Pursell, Neal Newman, Clare and Nathan Gibellini, Luke Robinson, Joel Cocks, Amber Donnelly, Grant, Mitchell and Cailyn Avery, Carl, James and Ewan Madge, Annabel Jacobson, Lara and Amber Cheeseman, and many more.

Nick Avery	CEO
Mel Jacobson	Coordinator
Janine Slaven	Coordinator
Kylie Robinson	Groups Coordinator
Ronnie Madge	Coordinator
Tina Williams	Admin Volunteer
Caris Walsh	On Maternity Leave
Jodie McGuinness	Finance & Payroll



Some of the JumpStart Crew rehearsing 2022



Families enjoying the SWAN Family Christmas Party, November 2021





Feedback from our members and community

“SWAN helped me a lot with NDIS. No one explained anything. I didn't know who to go to for help. I'm in the SWAN Facebook groups, and contacted them for help. ***** knows so much so much about NDIS and about what things there are to help. She told me about Carer's Allowance too! I didn't know this stuff. No one told me. I was really lost before SWAN. Thank you.”

“I wanted to touch base to say hi and also thanks - after our discussion about Autism and my son a few months ago I decided to find a Neurodivergent affirming team which did assessments. We got in on a cancellation (which was far quicker than I think we were thinking it would be) and he received his Autism diagnosis last week. We had a party to celebrate his neurodiversity and finding out another piece of the puzzle for who he is and hopefully get some strategies and supports to reduce the downfall for the masking he is having to do :) It was a lot to do with your encouragement and also experience as an autistic adult who made me realise how big a difference knowing who he is in this world and why his brain works differently is so important.”



“SWAN staff know so much about what's available in the southwest. They helped me with information about lots of problems we have, and now I know where I can get help. Thank you.”

“Being able to talk to another autistic adult who understands what my challenges are, and knows what supports are here in my town made me cry with relief. I've been so lost.”

“For the first time in ten years I have felt heard and supported. My son felt validated and came away with many helpful resources. My understanding of how to support people with ASD has increased and I will now be able to help others. A brilliant service.”



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