



SWAN Annual Report 2023





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

Another busy year for SWAN on multiple fronts, leading the way for our members and their families. The numbers of people supported by our team continues to grow exponentially; face to face, online or over the phone.

We have welcomed Rikki and Sam on to the team and look forward to their knowledge and hard work helping SWAN to develop further. The SWAN team has been presenting Youth Mental Health First Aid training to large numbers and the recent Webinar 'Understanding Autism' presented in the last month received 197 registrations. There has also been a request to provide this workshop to TAFE students studying to become Education Assistants.

Our JumpStart film-making project is nearing completion, and we are looking forward to having an Opening Night when the films are finished. This has been a learning experience for both staff and our JumpStart Crew producing the short, educational films.

The four Autism-Go-To Guides produced by our staff in partnership with consultant Jackie Softly this year are brilliant. They are written in plain English and full of really usable information and practical ways to get help – well done.

We now have a purpose-built trailer for our Sensory Chill Out Zone, and to make it easier to transport SWAN. The trailer has been to the Collie Show, Play in the Bay Day in Busselton and Dalyellup Community Christmas Festival – a few more hooks and tie downs to be fitted.

Overall a busy world leading year by the SWAN team, they should all be proud of the difference they have and continue to make to so many individuals and their families.



Ant volunteering at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2022

Ant Pursell
SWAN President



Youth Mental Health First Aid training in partnership with Busselton-Dunsborough Alliance Against Depression (BDAAD) May 2023



Youth Mental Health First Aid training in partnership with Investing In Our Youth (IIOY) October 2023



Treasurer's Report

The 2022/23 operations of the South West Autism Network Inc. have been primarily funded by Information, Linkages and Capacity building (ILC) grants from the Commonwealth Government and community donations.

SWAN has received extensions to its two ILC grant projects (Regional Toolkit & JumpStart), which will allow the organisation to continue to provide services to the community until 30th June 2024. SWAN has recently applied for funding through the ILC Individual Capacity Building (ICB) program, due to commence 1st July 2024 if successful.

SWAN has continued to run YES Program and AutStars during the 2022/23 financial year, although in a reduced capacity to do staff and volunteer restraints.

Additionally, staff have sought other funding opportunities that match the values and objectives of SWAN. This has included Youth Mental Health First Aid training and contracting for Every Australian Counts to provide systemic advocacy on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

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.

We have continued to receive support through donations from many parties. 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



I would personally like to thank the efforts of the SWAN President Ant Pursell, for his significant investment in time, in raising \$35,150 in community donations, and Greg and Kathy Walsh for their ongoing investment in SWAN.

SWAN had an operating profit of \$44,262 in 2022/23. SWAN has cash assets of \$209,308 and minimal liabilities outstanding as at 30th June 2023. The Board will continue to ensure we can resource SWAN to support our community.

Grant Avery
SWAN Treasurer



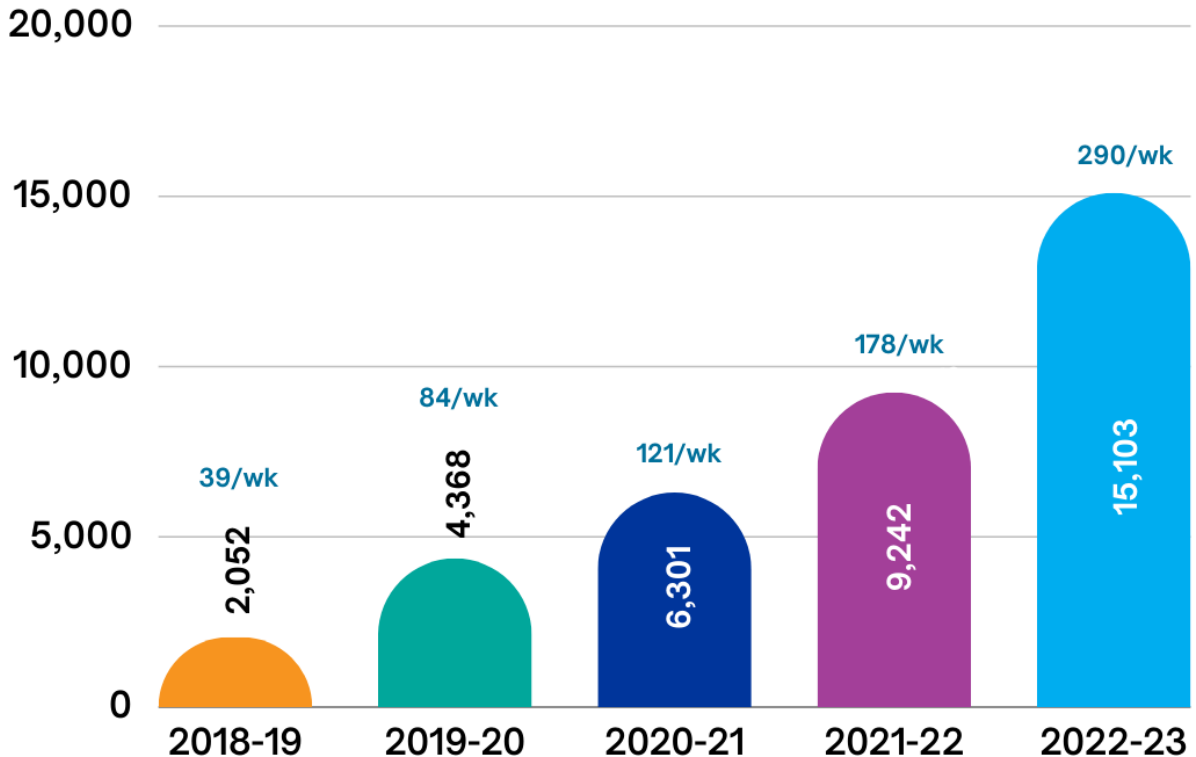
Santa and most of the SWAN elves at the SWAN Family Christmas Party 2022



Staff Report

At SWAN's first AGM in 2013, we 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 almost 1,900 registered SWAN members, 1,302 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 2022-23 financial year, we saw a 63% increase in [support provided by SWAN](#) to an average of 290 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 will continue until June 2024, enabling SWAN 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 16 young adults with disability to create 15 short educational films. This project is well under way with plans to celebrate the premiere of the films in the first half of 2024. Four Autism Go-To Guides have been developed as part of our [Regional Toolkit](#) project, in addition to many articles and fact sheets on our website.



The SWAN Sensory Chill Out Zone 2023



YES Program and AutStars have been on a break for most of the 2022-23 financial year due primarily to staffing and volunteer shortages and the need to focus our energies on the JumpStart film-making project. We have delivered workshops on, Understanding Autism and NDIS Report Writing for Therapists, and are planning further NDIS-related workshops in early 2024. SWAN is being contracted by Every Australian Counts to provide systemic advocacy and co-design engagement with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA), and partnered with Busselton-Dunsborough Alliance Against Depression (BDAAD) and Investing In Our Youth (IIOY) to provide Youth Mental Health First Aid training to the community.

Further, SWAN continued to undertake systemic advocacy with submissions to the Joint Standing Committee on NDIS Inquiry into Culture and Capability of the NDIA, the Independent NDIS Review, State Government Inquiries into Child Development Services and Support For Autistic Children in WA Schools, and gave testimony at public hearings for the various inquiries.

On behalf of SWAN members, we would like to sincerely thank our major sponsors, Greg and Kathy Walsh; and the community donors who enable SWAN to advocate for autistic people and people with disability living in the south west. Our gratitude to 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 nine years. Tina manages the administration of the organisation, and looks after the whole team.

Nick Avery	CEO
Mel Jacobson	Coordinator
Kylie Robinson	Coordinator
Ronnie Madge	Coordinator
Rikki McCabe	Coordinator
Tina Williams	Admin Volunteer
Sam Lynch	Admin Officer
Jodie McGuinness	Finance & Payroll



JumpStart Crew members working on the film-making project 2023.



Feedback from our members and community

“It was great to talk about everything with you, and knowing how much you understand. I really value your time and support.”

“I know we would still be fighting hard to receive the right plan for ***** if it weren't for [SWAN] & I could never have made it through this process without their help. I think I would have fallen in a heap somewhere along the journey.”

“I just wanted to let you know that the NDIS Access Request you helped me with has been successful!!!!!!!!!! THANK YOU SO MUCH for helping me with it, I honestly can't imagine how I would have managed to do this without your assistance and guidance, and especially your understanding and knowledge, both as a professional and as a late diagnosed autistic woman yourself.”

“It was awesome watching our young people in the conversation last night being so compassionate and supportive of each other. The way they encouraged each other and respected each other's answers was just beautiful to see. This is what this group is all about and all of the hard working people over the years should feel so proud! A lovely safe space where there is only support and no judgement. You guys are so appreciated and I just want you to know that. A massive huge thank you!”





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