



## Annual General Meeting

**Date:** Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013

**Attending:** Maggie Artingstall, Natalie Thompson, Annie Cohen, Vicki Peters, Ron Ng, Grant Avery, Giselle Elson, Amanda Major, Mark McAuliffe, Stephen Cohen, Teresa Pool, Trudi Ruane, Karen Collins, Deborah Cant, Nick Avery

**Apologies:** John Thomson, Miranda Richards, Jarrod Cant, Erin Yates, Tish Merifield, Carol Bogaers, Janine Slaven, Michelle Robins, Susan Lornie, Aaron Lornie

**Meeting Open:** 12.05pm

1. **Welcome Address** by Founder and President Deborah Cant. All motions and seconds may be made by any registered SWAN members present at the Annual General Meeting.
2. **President's Report** read by Deborah Cant (see attached)
3. **Treasurer's Report** read by Grant Avery on behalf of Miranda Richards (see attached)
4. **Coordinator's Report** and 'What is Autism?' read by Nick Avery (see attached)

### 5. General Business

#### 5 (a) Naming of the Auditor and acceptance of Auditor's Report

Audit to 30 June 2012 was completed by Marilyn Royer (CPA) of Harvey & Partners, Busselton. Audit Report is accepted (see attached)

**Motioned by:** Deborah Cant

**Seconded by:** Grant Avery

#### 5 (c) Recognition of RSM Bird Cameron

Our gratitude to Angus Smith and RSM Bird Cameron for sponsoring SWAN in the form of free office space within the RSM Bird Cameron Busselton building since September 2012

#### 5 (d) Banking procedure amendments

Incoming Treasurer to be granted immediate access to the SWAN Bank Accounts with Bendigo Bank. It is anticipated that this may take a few weeks to arrange. In the interim, to ensure security and transparency, the following procedure is to be effective for all required monetary transactions:

*Deborah Cant to email new Treasurer Grant Avery for written authorisation via return email on transaction. Deb will then set up the transaction, and contact previous Treasurer Miranda*

*Richards to authorise via her token-key code and advise Deb / Grant via email once completed.*

**Motioned by:** Deborah Cant

**Seconded by:** Annie Cohen

## **6. Standing down of 2012/13 Board of Management**

SWAN Coordinator Nick Avery thanked 2012 – 2013 Board of Management

Deborah Cant

Tish Merifield

Jarrold Cant

Miranda Richards

Annie Cohen

Nick Avery

Erin Yates

Rebecca Wallace

All Board positions are declared open.

**Motioned by:** Giselle Elson

**Seconded by:** Grant Avery

## **7. Nominations for 2013/14 Board of Management**

### **Office Bearers:**

**President:** Mark McAuliffe (Lawyer)

**Vice President:** Ron Ng (Deputy Principal, Geographe Education Support Centre)

**Treasurer:** Grant Avery (Accountant & Parent of two teenagers with ASD)

**Secretary:** Carol Bogaers (Retired LAC with Disability Services Commission)

### **General Board Members:**

Trudi Ruane (CEO of Waratah)

John Thomson (Area Manager, Lower South West Disability Services Commission)

Dr Stephen Cohen (GP and Parent of a young adult with ASD)

Giselle Elson (Education Assistant and Parent of a child with ASD)

Deborah Cant (Founder and Parent of a child with ASD)

## **8. Acceptance of 2013/14 Board of Management**

No objections recorded. 2013 – 2014 SWAN Board of Management officially accepted and recognised.

**Motioned by:** Teresa Pool

**Seconded by:** Natalie Thompson

## **9. Introduction of Incoming SWAN President**

Mark McAuliffe introduced himself and outlined his background and experience as a lawyer and Board of Management representative for other organisations. Mark thanked the outgoing Board for their considerable work to-date, and declared the AGM closed.

**Meeting Closed:** 12.50pm

See reports attached below.



## President's Report

In 2009 – two Mums & two LAC's from DSC met for a cold coffee at the newly opened Dome Cafe in Dunsborough, and the ball started rolling. Those LAC's were Teresa Jeffries and Carol Bogaers, and the Mums' were my dear friend Tish Merifield and yours-truly.

Thankfully, the coffee in Dunsborough has improved greatly and I think we can all see swan has come a long way in those 4 years.

In our first year -

We held monthly get-togethers in Dunsborough or Busselton and circulated information passed on through the Busselton DSC office, to our small but growing group. Families found us through their LAC or via the humble flyer pinned on notice boards around town.

But it soon became apparent just how much the families in the South West were crying out for information and support, so a Facebook group was started as a medium where people could meet and chat online to other like-minded parents, and information could be uploaded and shared easily and efficiently.

At this point we had around 30 members ~ And a couple of things happened that started the momentum.....

1st ~ We ran our first fundraiser ~ Cadbury Easter Eggs ~ which raised almost \$1000 and we started our resource library.

2nd ~ Enable South West funded a trip to Perth and Kalgoorlie ~ which lit a fire in my belly!

This trip gave me the opportunity to meet two inspiring ladies, both parents of children with Autism making a difference in their communities. Silvana Gaglia, from Autism West, and Jo Russell, from Full-Circle.

Full Circle began to meet the demand for Early Intervention in the Goldfields. Till then families had a 13hr round trip to Perth to access essential services for their children. They implemented a Fly-in / fly-out model, which worked well for their community. A Clinical Psychologist and Speech Pathologist are flown in from Perth to implement and oversee individualized programs, which are delivered locally by Therapy Assistants each week.

Jo Russell is an extremely energetic and driven disability advocate, Full Circle are a not-for-profit, volunteer run organization ~ both continue to provide invaluable support to Families in the Kalgoorlie area.

Autism West began like us, as an informal parent led support group in Perth in 2002.

Back then, they were known as F.O.C.A.S (Families Of Children with Autism Support)



### ***President's Report continued***

Autism West provides a unique program in Perth~ their aim is to fill the gap of school-aged-services and are a small, but passionate not-for-profit organization supporting many families who would otherwise be forgotten.....like us ~ they know that Autism doesn't mysteriously disappear when a child turns 7!

Silvana continues to drive this organization and together with her board, have wonderful things planned for the future of families living with ASD in Perth and throughout Western Australia.

After this whirlwind trip & with my head spinning I returned home with hope and optimism that community organizations CAN ~ DO ~ and ARE making a difference, and knew our little group had the vision and passion to start working towards BIG things..... things were about to get whole lot busier for a few already busy Mums!

Our name HAD to change! 'South West ASD Family Network' wasn't very sexy & certainly wasn't going to fit on a business card!

The call went out to our members and several ideas were bandied around – however it was Erin Yates who had the stroke of genius to suggest 'SWAN' South West Autism Network. Ironically as Erin's text came though I was driving past Dunsborough Lakes, and noticed all the black swans! Obviously it was a sign and clearly Erin is brilliant! (True story! Honestly!)

On 14th November 2011, SWAN became an incorporated body and registered Charity. Our founding board was established and it was down to business!

It was around this time Nick Avery stepped in to support me, just as burnout was approaching.....the first time ☺ Perhaps that 'fire-in-the-belly' was contagious, for this Nick, I apologize profusely!

Last Year –

Our link with Autism West once again took me to Perth, after a cryptic email from Silvana suggesting 'An interesting project that might be of interest'. This project is now known as the Lifespan Collaboration. A board was being formed to drive this project and I was humbled to be invited to join Silvana and Carl Paganin (Deputy Chair at Autism West) to be a part of this exciting new venture.

It is my privilege to sit on this board alongside Silvana, Carl and three other extraordinary individuals ~ Wendy Marshall (Speech Pathologist) Darrin Cairns (Clinical Psychologist) and the delightful Professor Andrew Whitehouse – Head of Developmental Disorder's Research Group at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research

Thanks to a generous private benefactor and in partnership with the Australian Children's Trust <http://australianchildrenstrust.org.au/> Wendy was appointed Project Manager and

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### ***President's Report continued***

has been working tirelessly researching the possibilities, gaps and opportunities that may lie ahead. The Lifespan board meet bi-Monthly in Perth and together with our solid collaboration with Autism West ~ SWAN are well placed to be a part of some exciting times ahead!

In September Last year SWAN took an unexpected Quantum Leap!

Angus Smith at RSM Bird Cameron offered us office space at no cost, and the Lifespan Board granted us funds to employ an Office Bearer part-time for 12mths. These two opportunities are extremely rare for Non-government Organizations and have contributed to our growth like never before.

Although by Nick's request, I 'job-shared' with her for 6mths, she is essentially a one man band and works tirelessly everyday ~ well beyond her minimal paid hours ~ surviving only on chocolate and a wicked sense of humour ~ she keeps SWAN moving forward. On top of this workload, Nick home-school's her two teenaged sons' ~ both with Autism ~ and together with her husband Grant, dedicates hundreds of hours every month to our cause. I'd like to take this opportunity to formally thank them both ~ for their dedication and support both professionally and as personal friends ~ for the difference they make in mine and many other's lives every day.

One important ethos has been with SWAN since its inception. That is, the importance of partnering with existing organizations, to ensure we aren't reinventing the wheel. Funding for NFP organisations IS out there, but we're all vying for the same funds, let's not dilute that funding and continue to build relationships with those who share our vision....or are at least keen to play nicely in the sandpit!

Of all the organizations we work with, one has been integral to our growth and a consistent support for swan since its inception. John Thompson and his team at the Lower South West office of DSC, have been our strongest advocates and we wouldn't be sitting here today without the countless calls, emails, meetings & coffees shared with him and his team over the years,

Right now, DSC throughout WA are marching strongly towards a new look model, the My Way project. And with the NDIS a hot potato in disability circles, change is certainly in the wind and SWAN are extremely fortunate to be a part of John's vision to strengthen delivery of support in the region, together with Marilyn Novak – area manager for the Upper South West Region, we look forward to the opportunity of supporting many more families into the future.

Unfortunately, John is unable to be here today, however please join with me to show our appreciation for his team, including Carol, Theresa, Jill, Jamie, Tracy, Christine and Marnie.



### ***President's Report continued***

Nick will give you a clear outline of projects to date and what we have planned for the immediate future. However, the time has come for another Quantum Leap! It's time to take that next step, towards running a professional, respected and sustainable organization into the future.....The time has come for a changing of the guards and I look forward to learning from the wealth of experience our new look board bring with them. The opportunity to work with such an amazing group of professionals, will surely be the point of difference we need to move forward.

To finish off with – I found a small verse on a website called 'Family Friend Poems' <http://www.familyfriendpoems.com/> ~ Author Unknown.....

*Life is a lot of work.*

*What is it that gives us the strength to continue, when we are tired and burned out?*

*Sometimes an inspirational idea can help us renew ourselves and be filled with strength to fulfil our life's purpose.*

*Inspiration comes in many forms. However, the root of all inspiration is the idea that our lives are meaningful.*

*Inspiration is knowing that what I do matters deeply to the universe.*

*When you have the feeling that your actions are meaningful, you w-ill become filled with strength and vigour to fulfil your life's purpose.*

Thank you

Deb Cant  
Founder & President



## Treasurer's Report : AGM May 2013

Initially the role of Treasurer was quite simple. However that all changed in three short years, with the growth of the organisation being phenomenal, thanks to the efforts of Deb Cant and Nick Avery and Swan members.

The total income to 30 June 2012 was \$16,552 and so far this financial year we have received \$70,055. Most of the funding has gone specifically towards setting up and running SWAN.

At the moment we have \$34,875.70 to be spent on specific projects. These funds are for both improving SWAN, providing support and services for SWAN families and the facilitation of projects for other regional providers.

We also have a solid bank balance, thanks to the fundraising efforts of SWAN members. The fundraising activities support events subsidised by SWAN, including carer retreats, family activities, the resource library and get togethers, as well as the SWAN Christmas party.

The books of SWAN have been audited to 30 June 2012, as per the constitution, and are available, or attached. The reports, for this financial year, to 12th May 2013, are attached.

Miranda Richards  
Treasurer



## Coordinator's Report

Thank you to all of you for being here to support SWAN in our first AGM. I am very honoured and proud to be a part of such an amazing organisation, and would like to express our gratitude to all retiring Board members. Miranda Richards, Annie Cohen, Erin Yates, Rebecca Wallace, Jarrod Cant and Tish Merifield have worked extremely hard to build SWAN to the inspiring support network it is today. Thank you for your commitment, hard work, and support. To our new incoming Board members, thank you for your commitment to growing SWAN into a sustainable organisation providing support and services to south west families living with Autism.

We would also like to thank our incredible volunteers, without whom SWAN projects would simply not happen. Our gratitude to Nicolette and Vaughan Ransley, Janine Slaven, Neal Newman, Sandy Winkle, Giselle Elson, Erin Yates, Susan Lornie, Michelle Robins, Teresa Pool, Ron Ng, Brad Nugent and Dr Felicity Adams. A very special thank you also goes to the following people for their fundraising efforts:

- Susan & Aaron Lornie
- Miranda Richards
- Annie Cohen
- Sue Maschette and family
- Asher Lindberg
- Erin Yates
- Olivia Hill

Additionally the following schools have arranged Autism Awareness Fundraiser events, and donated the proceeds to SWAN:

- Our Lady of the Cape Primary School
- St Brigids Primary School - \$100.00
- Kingston Primary School - \$600.00
- Australind Senior High School – \$999.32
- Parkfield Primary School - \$570.50
- Dardanup Primary School (Olivia Hill) - \$456.40
- Cowaramup Primary School – *funds to be presented*

In November last year, representatives from SWAN and Lower South West Disability Services Commission (DSC) met with Dr Ron Chalmers, the Director General of DSC. The meeting was extremely positive, and evidence of the strong relationship that SWAN Founder Deborah Cant has forged with Disability Services Commission. In preparing for the meeting, Deb and I came to the realisation that SWAN had grown from supporting 30 south west families to supporting more than 200 in only 18 months – an amazing achievement, and testament to efforts of SWAN volunteers and the need for support within our community. Strong friendships and have been forged because of the support of SWAN, and a great many families have experienced an end to the isolation they previously felt, and an acceptance they desperately needed.

Today SWAN have 57 officially registered families, with 176 people subscribed to our newsletter, 228 south west, WA, interstate and international members of our closed Facebook group, and 236 people following the SWAN public Facebook page. We



### *Coordinator's Report continued*

estimate that 220 to 250 families are currently accessing information, resources and support through SWAN. In March last year, the Center for Disease Control in America released updated Autism incidence statistics of 1 in 88, with 1 in 54 boys being diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Earlier statistics in Australia rate diagnosis of Autism at 1 in 100, so we know that there are hundreds more children, teenagers and adults living in the south west who have a diagnosis of ASD, and more are being diagnosed all the time. SWAN aims to work collaboratively with existing government and non-government organisations to improve access to information, resources, support and therapeutic services to individuals with ASD and their families, and the wider disability community.

In the past year, SWAN volunteers have organised numerous family and parent Catchups in Australind, Bunbury, Margaret River, Dunsborough and Busselton. We have hosted three Mums Escapes with funding from Carer's WA, presented an information seminar in collaboration with Disability Services Commission, Centrelink and RSM Bird Cameron, and held our first SWAN Christmas party for more than 30 families at Yallingup Maze, which was a raging success. Last year Annie Cohen built a relationship with the Val Lishman Health Research Foundation and the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research to develop a research project into Autism in the south west region. It is anticipated that the research project will commence in the next 12 to 18 months.

On Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2013, SWAN are pleased to introduce our first direct-service program for individuals with Autism, Kids Club for children aged 7 to 12yrs. Kids Club is facilitated by provisional psychologist Belinda Butler, and is provided with funding from Lifespan Collaboration and Disability Services Commission, in partnership with Autism West. On Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2013, we commence our second direct-service program for teenagers with Autism aged 13 to 17yrs, Youth Engaging Successfully. YES Program is facilitated by psychologist Brad Nugent, funded by Lifespan Collaboration and Disability Services Commission, and provided in partnership with Autism West and Intework Busselton.

Funding has been received from the Developmental Disability Council of WA (DDC) to revamp the SWAN website, and hold two vision board workshops for SWAN members, to support families' ability to plan for their future. Additionally, SWAN are auspicing a grant from DDC for Dr Wendy Lawson, world renowned psychologist, author and adult with High Functioning Autism to present seminars on behalf of regional Autism support groups in Geraldton, Bunbury, Albany, Kalgoorlie and Perth in August 2013.

SWAN are also negotiating with speech pathologist Dolly Bhargava and TOBY Playpad to present workshops in the south west, and with Autism West to present the Whole Child Conference in Busselton. We are planning an expansion of our resource library, and will be organising our regular SWAN Catchups and the SWAN Christmas party in December.



### *Coordinator's Report continued*

We also look forward to the contract employment of an Administrative Assistant through funding from the Lifespan Collaboration to assist in the running of SWAN services.

Through the generous support of Disability Services Commission, we were able to undertake the SWANtation planning workshop, facilitated by Jane Manning from Jack in the box. We look forward to working with our new Board of Management to achieve the goals set out in the SWANtation report.

SWAN has made incredible achievements in only a few short years, and we owe this to the immense work, time, money and passion that Founder and outgoing President Deb Cant has put into developing SWAN, and supporting south west families living with Autism. Thank you for all that you do and are, for everyone.

Nick Avery  
SWAN Coordinator