

Celebrating  
**40 years**  
1975 - 2015

**mpower** inc.

*"A community inspired and empowered by people of all ages, abilities and differences"*

# The Evolution of Our Organisation



***South West Support Group for the Handicapped***

***South West Region Disability Service Inc.***

***South West Access Network Inc.***

***Mpower Inc.***

## Our History

***It seems almost inconceivable that just 40 years ago there were no formal support services in Warrnambool for people with disabilities and their families.***

A small group of local families concerned about this lack of support decided to do something about it, and proved that where there's a need there's a community ready to help.

Forty years later their vision and commitment has evolved into Mpower, a leader across south-west Victoria in providing quality aged and disability services that enable people to have meaningful connections to their communities.

Initially known as South West Region Support Group for the Handicapped and later South West ACCESS Network (SWAN), Mpower has grown and diversified but has remained true to its roots.

Despite the name changes and mammoth growth from a one-person operation to an agency employing 64 qualified and experienced staff providing a wide range of services to more than 800 clients and families across the region, Mpower is still committed to helping children and adults to lead the best possible lives and achieve their goals.

Like many community-minded organisations, Mpower sprung from the hearts of local people. In early 1975 West Warrnambool Kindergarten director Sue Henry became aware of three families in the area who had young children with Spina Bifida and thought they could benefit from meeting each other.

A meeting was arranged in August 1975 at the Warrnambool home of Jean and Bryan O'Keeffe. The parents had two things in common - a child with a disability and a concern about the lack of support services in the region.



They believed that other families would be in a similar situation and decided to hold a public meeting.

The meeting was called by then Warrnambool Mayor Cr Jack Daffy and the first local self-help group was launched. A steering committee was elected to draw up a constitution and the objectives of the group. After another public meeting a 12-member committee was elected, with Ruth Symons as the first president and included people with disabilities, their carers and other interested people.

The strength of Mpower and its predecessors has been built around the expertise and dedication of the volunteer committee of management. From the early years until today, Mpower has grown under the guidance of these community-minded people who continue to pursue the vision to create 'a community inspired and empowered by people of all ages, abilities and differences'.

***From humble beginnings Mpower has evolved and expanded into a broad-based service that continues to make a positive difference in the lives of people across south-west Victoria.***



## Life Members

Cath Lourey  
Glynis Purcell  
Judy Jongeblood  
Gail Horne  
Phyllis McLeish  
Sue Henry

## Committee of Management

David Beggs  
Neil Ballard  
Helen Bayne  
David Beard  
Adam Kempton  
Brad O'Connor  
Vern Robson

## Kerry Nelson - CEO

*Mpower is about making a positive difference in the lives of people and striving for a community that allows everyone to participate.*

That's what it was about in 1975 and that's what it's about today.

After 14+ years it continues to give me great pleasure to lead an organisation that offers such value to community. In many respects our founders will hardly recognise today's organisation. We've grown and changed, adjusted to the needs of our community and moved with the times with new programs, buildings, technology and methods. Along with the strong growth Mpower has matured as an organisation in the last years of the journey into a vibrant and passionate organisation.

However, I'm sure those founders would recognise that Mpower remains committed at its core to the same values that shaped our existence.

Like the volunteer-based organisation that started in 1975, Mpower in 2015 embraces 'a community inspired and empowered by people of all ages, abilities and differences' with its vision. We are proud of these ambitions that we continue to live every day.

Our name Mpower reflects one of our core values – empowerment.

We aim to support people to build their capacity and make their own informed choices, and we bring quality and respect to everything we do. As CEO I am proud of these values and the culture that shines strongly though all that we do.

This would not be possible without dedicated staff, committee members, caregivers and volunteers who have always been at the heart of Mpower and its predecessors.

While we reflect on our history, we're also embracing the challenges of the future.

This period of significant change with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is something we wholeheartedly support and welcome. Mpower has the heritage, the experience and the dedication to embrace the new system which promises to be life changing for people with disabilities.

These are challenging and exciting times that we will rise to as we maintain our commitment to support each person and their family.





## Cath Lourey - Past Director

*Back in the 1970s there was nothing for people with disabilities. They were encouraging us to send Gerard to Yooralla but we were having none of that for a little five-year-old.*

I got involved to do something for Gerard but then realised other people had the same needs.

The more people you met, the more you realised how bad it was. There was absolutely nothing.

I remember hand writing a letter to Malcom Fraser before an election and we got \$5000 for a toy library for people with disabilities. That was a lot of money in those days. That was the first money we got and the toy library became our first service and it's still going today.

The other thing we had at the start was a set of tyres donated by John McGrath for us to raffle. We had people from Lyndoch sell tickets for us. That was significant as the community became involved.

It was really driven by the community; there were a lot of amazing people involved.

It was interesting how it grew. We started to help people with physical disabilities but then we included older people with dementia. We said it was from nought to 99.

I had different roles. I was the chairperson, the secretary and then the coordinator and the CEO.

They were all love jobs at the start. I was the first paid employee but it wasn't much in those days. There simply wasn't much money, but I was driven, right to the day I finished.



Some of the big achievements included introducing early intervention support, the Dunkeld holiday home and getting our office in Koroit Street.

It was important to develop services and make them known in the local community.

We're well catered for now. I'm interested to see what the NDIS does. It's a good thing but I know there won't be enough money.

Mpower seems to have stayed true to our original intentions. It's still a very important service for our community. I'm pleased when I see the newsletter and see the good things they are doing for people.

With pride I can say I was part of the start of the organisation and I hope it has many more years of success in the future.

**Cath, now aged 83, is retired and living in Warrnambool.**

## Julie Chilton - Parent of Pagan

When Pagan started Early Childhood Intervention Services with Mpower she had difficulty communicating her needs with family or friends. To see the changes in Pagan was amazing to me and I could finally see my child's voice, even though I couldn't hear her voice. As the mum of a child who can't talk, it's beautiful to see an interaction.

I know with all non-verbal autistic kids PECS cards don't come as fast, but for Pagan it's been a fantastic transition and to realise in a world of her own silence, Pagan can now be heard. I'm so proud of how far Pagan has come and look forward to future development in her communications.





## Avis Patten - Volunteer Driver

I get a lot of pleasure from meeting new people. They are all very interesting people with stories to tell and they are very appreciative of the service. They appreciate being taken to their appointments but they also just like to have a chat and if we get time to go out for a coffee.

We form nice friendships. I find my role very rewarding and always try to help out when I can.

They often say the worst thing was having to give up their

licence, so it's nice to be able to help them to get around.

***Avis joined the Mpower volunteer team about 13 years ago after retiring from running Dorothy Boyle's Boutique in Warrnambool.***



## David and Serina Skinner Parents of Aaron

We got involved about 20 years ago when Aaron was in kinder and the service was known as SWAN at the time. They offered early intervention for Aaron and meetings for parents who had kids with the same sorts of disabilities. We started a support group for parents of autistic children.

Early intervention is very important with autistic kids. Julie Pech in particular was marvellous.

It paved a good way for Aaron.

It helped Aaron as a youngster and was beneficial for us as a family because we got a lot of information about what other services are available and what benefits we could claim.

Aaron stayed with Mpower until he was 18.

He also used the toy library and Active Oceans which was a great program which involved fishing, surfing and rowing. Aaron really got into rowing through Active Oceans and now competes on a national level. He's a dual national championship holder and also holds state medals.



We've been to Sydney, Tasmania, Perth and Adelaide and it all started at Active Oceans.

He also learned to surf and go snorkelling.

It's great because he's active in his local community. A lot of people know Aaron.

Mpower is an incredibly important service to have in the community.

***Aaron is now 24 and living in Warrnambool with his parents.***

## Barb Pickett - Carer

My husband John has Parkinson's disease and we both needed some help and understanding.

About 10 years ago John saw Peter McMahon at Sage Hill and he referred me to the Mpower Carer Support Program.

We started having meetings at Mpower, just informal get-togethers of women who care for people with a range of conditions.

We'd have guest speakers who would provide interesting information but for me it was the little things that stood out, like getting a 15-minute shoulder massage. The main thing for me was getting together with people and having a chat. Everyone would give different hints about things and it helped me to realise I'm not the only one in this situation.

John's condition has deteriorated and he's moved into permanent care so I no longer qualify under the funding system to be part of the carer group, which is a pity as I made good friends and found it very valuable.

Mpower also helped with respite for John and support so he could attend appointments and for aids and equipment to make life easier around the house.

We stuck with Mpower the whole way through. They were all very nice and the program was very helpful."



## Betty Dwyer - Parent of Justin

Twenty two years ago we attended our first Down syndrome support group meeting when Justin was just one week old. Another parent visited us in hospital and told us about the group so it was straight out of hospital and the next day to our first meeting.

We have benefited from many services throughout the years from Early Intervention with South West Access Network to respite care at Mpower and he still goes to the gym and swims with a carer every Friday night.

I get a lot of information from many people who go to the gym and they say how Justin has a fantastic time, which is really great to hear.

I now co-ordinate the Warrnambool and District Down

Syndrome Support Group. We have 44 families in the group and we meet often for family outings, Carer's Week parent nights and other activities. All this is serviced by Mpower. My role has changed over the years: once we looked for advice; now parents are looking to us for advice.

***Betty is the organiser of Warrnambool and District Down Syndrome Support Group.***



## Leanne Haberfield Parent of Grace

Our daughter Grace takes a lot of musical toys from the library and gets a lot of enjoyment from using them.

There are a variety of toys that she can enjoy. You can usually find something that suits the needs of the family and appeals to the child. There is such a variety...books, games, toys, puzzles, DVDs and more and they are all very good quality.

We also enjoyed the use of speech and physiotherapy services from Mpower, along with respite programs.

It was nice to use the respite services, especially when it allowed me to do the Christmas shopping.

***Grace has a chromosomal abnormality and glaucoma which has left her without sight.***

## Roy Clarke Volunteer Driver

"My sister Coral Fry used to be a volunteer and they were looking for drivers so after I retired from work I thought it would be a good thing to do.

It's been about seven years now. Coral was involved for even longer. I just take people wherever they want to go, mainly for medical works. Geelong would be about the furthest trip. I love it; it's a good job.

I'm just involved in the driving side of it but I think it's a good thing to have something like Mpower to help people who might need a bit of extra support."

***Roy worked at the Warrnambool Woollen Mill for 24 years and is now retired.***





## Michael Neoh

### *Warrnambool Mayor and Former Committee of Management Member*

As the Mayor of the City of Warrnambool, I would like to congratulate Mpower on its 40th anniversary of providing services to Warrnambool and the region.

Since its inception Mpower has had passionate people as the backbone to the organisation and the services that it provides.

As a former Board Member I have seen first-hand the dedication of the personnel of the organisation, whether they be board members, staff or volunteers.

Since its first day to the current time, Mpower has always focused on providing quality individualised support for service users and their families/carers.

I look forward to following the continued progress of this vital service for our community.

***Cr Neoh was on the Mpower Committee of Management from 2004-2012, including several terms as president.***



## Paul Lougheed

### *Former Staff Member*

I worked in a variety of roles at Mpower including direct care, respite coordination and program management between 1998 and 2011.

The highlights of my time at Mpower include seeing the growth of the agency and the positive impact it had on children and their families. It's not a bad day's work when you see the sense of achievement from an Active Oceans participant when they stand up on a surfboard for the first time.

***Paul is now CEO at Southern way Direct Care and attributes much of his learnings for this position to his time at Mpower.***

## John McGrath - *Former Warrnambool MLA*

I donated a set of tyres for a raffle to get them started. It didn't give them a lot but it gave a sense of having a base to build on. It was more significant than I ever imagined; it said we're here and have community support and we can make this work.

I was never on the committee but was involved in different activities at various times. The most memorable was the acquisition and development of the Dunkeld holiday home which received a significant contribution from the then Warrnambool city engineer Don Cooper.

I also had interaction with people using the service. In all my time there was never a criticism and I think that says volumes.

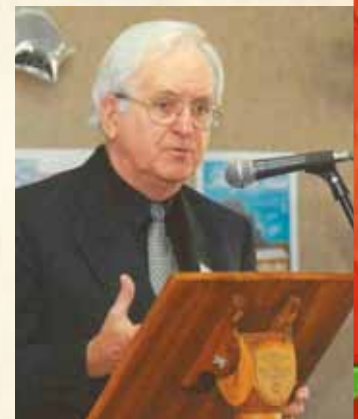
It had a modest budget and mostly volunteers in the early days but it developed into a professional state-of-the-art service. It's expanded and the services it provides are amazing but at the same time it has retained its strong

community base, which remains its great strength.

- It is a local service employing people who understand the local community and therefore those who need to use it feel more at home and understood so they can maximise the opportunity Mpower provides.

Mpower has got to be one of the best of its kind in Australia. It's just a great local story that deserves every success for the future.

***John is a former Warrnambool businessman and National Party Member for Warrnambool. He is now retired in Melbourne but remains active in voluntary roles in the mental health field.***



## Tania and David Hardy - Parents of Kahlia

The people at Mpower know so much about autism.

Having a daughter with such complex behaviours is hard work and we struggle a lot.

Mpower has been so encouraging. Communication is the biggest challenge and they help Kahlia express what she wants and doesn't want, and reinforce the communication techniques taught by her school.

***Tania and David have linked to Mpower for more than four years and also access respite and school holiday programs for Kahlia.***



## Kay Riordon - Former Carer and Committee Member

I will always appreciate the support and understanding I received from Mpower when I was caring for my mother.

I really enjoyed looking after mum and felt privileged to be in a position that made it possible, but sometimes I felt overwhelmed and exhausted.

My case manager understood this and I was packed off to the movies or an occasional weekend away. This respite saved my sanity and I was able to enjoy being with mum so much more.

In appreciation of this support, I later did some volunteer work in the toy library. My time with the toy library resulted in an invitation to join the committee.

It was during this time that I came to understand the enormous challenge Cath Lourey and Sue Henry faced in forming a support network for people with a disability.

Could they ever imagine the legacy they were to leave us?

## Jennifer Mitchell - Former Specialist Children's Services Team Leader

Initially as an occupational therapist, then as team leader for Specialist Children's Services, I enjoyed a positive and productive relationship with Mpower, particularly the Early Intervention programs, over my 25-year career.

I always valued the cooperative way in which our agencies worked together in conjunction with other area services, to achieve positive outcomes for the children we worked with and their families. It was an exciting journey to watch both our services grow, developing new, innovative and

collaborative programs that made the best use of resources and were in many ways unique in the state.

I particularly appreciated the support the SCS team received from Mpower after fire destroyed our office in 2004, when space and equipment was generously and immediately provided so we could continue our work

***Jennifer was team leader of Specialist Children's Services in Warrnambool from 1990 to 2009.***

## Creators of 40th Mural

***Mpower thanks the following children involved in creating the 40th celebration mural under the artistic direction of Rachel Peters:***

Georgia Barling, Maddison Benson, James Clisby, Ryan Crispe, Clinton Eden, Isobell Everall, William Fairhall-Price, Xavier Fazakerley, Jordan Grant, Noah Harrison, Madilyn Hunt, Lily Knowles, Hugh Knowles, Nathan Lamb, Emilee Mulready, Menuga Renasinghe, Sebastian Sarra and Esther Short.











## David Beggs - President, Committee of Management

This collage represents just a small sample of the many carers, volunteers and staff who have been part of Mpower. On behalf of the current Committee of Management, I would like to thank every one for the part they played in the rich tapestry that we are today.

Today's Committee of Management proudly carries the torch of the small group of community minded people with the vision to establish the original support group. Forty years later, a 'Community inspired and empowered by people of all differences' embraces the hopes and dreams of the group.



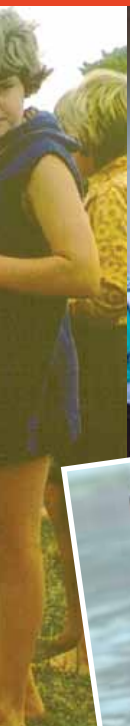




## of Management

individuals, families,  
Mpower's 40 year journey.  
would like to thank each and  
that has become Mpower

values and aspirations  
the initiative and foresight  
for Mpower's vision of  
ages, abilities and  
up.









## Judy & Nicole Jongebloed

### *Life Member & Committee Member*

We started meeting in the front room of Dorothy Francis' place and we'd talk about how we could raise money to get ahead and see if anyone wanted any help. We'd been there and done a lot of it on our own, so we could help people.

When you've got a child with a disability you've got to stick to your guns and be there for them. I always joined every committee. If someone didn't want your child there because they had a disability, you'd be there to speak up for them.

It's good to have support for new born babies with Down syndrome or any disabilities.

I hope people appreciate that Mpower has done a lot for everyone in the community.



*Judy Jongebloed was on the first committee and later was awarded life membership.*

## Tom Bertrand

### *Active Oceans Dis Row volunteer*

We first saw it when we went to Queensland for our daughter Kirsty to row in her first national titles. There was a boat set for people with disabilities to the point that it was un-tippable. I had a talk to my sister Val and a few others and thought we could do this; we could make it work in Warrnambool.

It was a great success. It's just a program that works. When they go up the river it's freedom.

We've had six Australian championships from two rowers, Chris Murray and Aaron Skinner.

It's really rewarding to be involved. If they don't like it they tell you, but when there's a smile and a twinkle in the eye you know that it's good.

I'm still involved in helping the program but not to the extent I was.

We still run it right through the summer with Active Oceans.

You couldn't imagine life without Mpower being there.

Everyone should be on an equal footing and that's what Mpower helps to achieve.



## Oceania Henry - *High Flyer Youth Group Participant*

As everybody is in the same boat with their Asperger/Autism-ness, I was never made to feel like the odd one out, like what can happen at school.

High Flyers has been a great social outlet from school, as year 12 can be very stressful, and I didn't have any respite. As I have a very small network of friends, having a place to go every two weeks to do fun activities with has been amazing-I felt like a normal person with no limitations!

Each fortnight, we either go out for dinner, get take away or cook, as well as doing a fun activity such as bowling, go karting, going

to the park/playground, going to the movies and gaming.

I love board games, so I very much enjoy having someone to play them with...even Monopoly!!

Even though the group is small, a lot of us have similar interests, so there is always something to talk about.

I have especially loved the many conversations about Harry Potter!

I am very appreciative of High Flyers, as it's given me a place where I can just be me and enjoy myself.

## Jenny Gleeson

### *Parent of Tom and Mpower Early Intervention Teacher*

Tom started attending playgroup when he was three. At that stage the playgroup was based at East Warrnambool Kinder so Julie Pech had to pack everything and take it there and pack up at the end. My background was as a kindergarten teacher and she was after someone to run the playgroup and so I started about 18 years ago. My hours increased from there to my current role as Early Intervention teacher.

It was beneficial for Tom because he got to go to a playgroup and there was a lot of help and advice for parents as well.

I went from being a parent to being the provider of the same service. The service I received was very personalised and I try to do that for my parents.

Our role is to work with the children but the support you can give the families is really important.

It's rewarding to see the children develop and also rewarding to know that you've helped a parent.

Tom still uses Mpower respite and community access services twice a week, which he thoroughly enjoys and looks forward to.

The program has good staff that Tom is happy to go out with and that's good for me to know.

***Tom is now 23 and continues to use Mpower services.***



## Neil Ballard - *Committee of Management*

Mpower has always had a very good reputation in the community. You only have to read the monthly newsletters and the personal feature stories of parents and young children with disabilities to see the difference Mpower has been able to make with its information, support and advice. It's a very well regarded part of the community and I hear a lot of positive feedback about the service it provides.

***Neil joined the Committee of Management in 2011 and played a role in facilitating the organisation's first***

***funding in the 1980s when he worked for what is now the Department of Health and Human Services and oversaw local community support and development funding rounds.***



## Julie Pech

### *Former Staff Member*

I became involved with Mpower 22 years ago when I moved to Warrnambool from Adelaide. The opportunity to work with children and their families in a play-centred environment really appealed to me. My first role was coordinating a play-based program in a local kindergarten. It was wonderful to work collaboratively with other agencies and preschool staff who were incredibly generous and supportive with their resources. This has been a feature of the Early Intervention service for many years.

At Mpower I was given many opportunities to grow and learn personally and professionally and my role changed with the growth of the program. A highlight was working with a team of professionals who were highly skilled and totally committed to working with families.

There were many changes, but one thing that remained constant was the importance of families; listening to them, taking time to respond to their needs and respecting the choices they make.

Mpower is an organisation that has grown and developed and responded to needs within the local community and will continue to do so into the future.

***Julie is Mpower's former Early Intervention Manager.***



## Gary Ryan - Volunteer Driver

I'm caring for my wife Betty who is living at Mercy Place but I have time on my hands to give something back to the community. I don't mind driving and I enjoy having the opportunity to help people. Sometime there's no other way for them to get around. The care shown for Betty at Mercy Place inspired me to look at doing some community work in a similar caring organisation and Mpower was a perfect fit.

"I enjoy it. I look forward to it every week. They are mostly older people and have health or mobility issues and they are very appreciative of the service.

I'm mainly with the same three or four clients and you get to know them; they become your friends. They like a bit of a chat. They might be just going to the hairdresser but they have a chat with me and with the hairdresser and it gets them out of the house.

***Gary is the former manager of the Ryan's furniture division and now cares for his wife Betty.***

## Heather and Ray Mulready Grandparent Carers of Emilee

We have strong support from other agencies, which includes assistance with daily living needs, respite and financial assistance. We really like the type of care provided by Mpower.

They do the stuff that we can't physically do, like social and recreational outings. It gives us a rest and allows us to spend time with the other kids. All the different supports we've accessed have helped Emilee become more independent. She can now do things for herself. She gets out into the community more and spends time with her school friends after hours.

***Heather and Ray became full-time carers of their granddaughter Emilee after the tragic death of her parents.***



## Sue Henry - Co-founder and Life Member

I go back to the very beginning around 1975. I was the teacher at West Warrnambool Kindergarten and two years running I had children with spina bifida. Both families were from dairy farms but didn't know each other and I thought they would benefit by getting in contact. We got those two families together along with a family from Warrnambool that had a younger child with spina bifida and some other interested people and had a get together in someone's home. Out of that Mpower was born.

There was nothing at all back then; children with physical disabilities were shunted off to Yooralla in Melbourne. These families decided that they wanted their children educated locally.

A number of young people were coming back into the Warrnambool community from Melbourne and they weren't fitting into our local community. These families saw that and wanted something better for their children. There was a bit of a fight to get them into the local education system but it was worth it.

I was part of the initial group and remained on the committee until about two years ago.

Mpower grew out of parent support, which is still part of it,

and volunteers working to support families and became the professional organisation that it is now.

Some of the initial things we did, such as the toy library, are still a core part of the organisation.

■ It still means so much for so many people, not just in Warrnambool but throughout the south-west.

I think support at the local level for families and helping them to develop and to keep young people as part of the local community is just as important today.

Mpower has continued to grow and provide such a wonderful service to so many people and it still retains the same ideals that we had at the start.

***Sue is a retired kindergarten teacher in Warrnambool and spent 38 years on the Mpower committee.***



# Timeline

- 1975: The first meeting is held of parents concerned about the lack of local support services for children with disabilities.
- 1975: The South West Support Group for the Handicapped is formally established.
- 1975: The first community function is held – a family picnic in Port Fairy.
- 1976: The Yooralla Society for Crippled Children and Adults proposes the Warrnambool support group affiliate with them. The group unanimously rejects the idea.
- 1976: An education committee is formed and newsletter started.
- 1977: A \$2 membership fee per family is introduced.
- 1977: A youth group is formed.
- 1978: The South West Region Support Group for the Handicapped makes its first application for funding from Family and Community Services.
- 1978: Warrnambool City Council makes available a parking bay for people with a disability, and Warrnambool Swimming Club introduces a program to teach children with disabilities to swim.
- 1978: Possum's Nest Toy Library is opened after receiving a \$5000 Federal Government grant.
- 1979: The group approached the Hospital and Charities Commission for exemption from sales tax.
- 1979: The voluntary position of support coordinator is created. Cath Lourey carries out the role for 12 years.
- 1981: The International Year for the Disabled is seen as a turning point for people with disabilities and their families.
- 1983: The first information night is held for families with Down syndrome children.
- 1985: Land for the Dunkeld Holiday House is purchased.
- 1986: The South West Support Group for the Handicapped is incorporated.
- 1986: A total of \$1100 is received for clerical assistance.
- 1987: The Dunkeld Holiday House is officially opened.
- 1989: \$7500 is received for coordinating the group and \$2000 for the toy library.
- 1989: Membership increases to \$5 for families and \$20 for groups.
- 1990: The name is changed to South West Region Disability Service Inc.
- 1990: Four sub-committees are formed covering Early Intervention, the Dunkeld Holiday House, Possum Toy Library, and information.
- 1990: The Community Support and Development Grant is increased to \$10,000 and the toy library funding to \$3000.
- 1991: The Early Intervention program starts.
- 1992: Play programs starts.
- 1997: The office at 179 Koroit Street is now opened five days a week.
- 1997: Funding for information services is lost, prompting an appeal for community support.
- 1997: Due to a shortage of space and lack of funds for renting property, it is suggested that the Florence Collins Child Care Centre at 71 Koroit Street be purchased for \$340,000.
- 1997: South West CarerLink program starts.
- 1998: The service moves to the Florence Collins building on July 1.
- 1998: The DeafLink program is launched.
- 1998: The name South West ACCESS Network Inc (SWAN) is adopted on November 3.



1999: SWAN decides to introduce fees for program delivery.

2000: The State Government provides \$392,000 for refurbishing 71 Koroit Street.

2000: SWAN now employs 14 staff members and has a nine-member committee.

2000: A 25-year history booklet is produced.

2001: Original CEO Cath Lourey retires. Kerry Nelson is appointed as the new CEO.

2002: Community transport, weekend getaways, family counselling, music therapy and centre-based services at Camperdown are introduced.

2002: The new name Mpower is adopted, a stylised version of the word empower, reflecting a commitment to empower people to achieve the best they can in everything they do.

2003: Mpower embraces a 'learning culture'.

2004: Mpower now employs 25 people offering services to more than 500 clients.

2004: Mpower becomes fully accredited by QICSA .

2004: Mpower becomes a founding member of Community South West.

2005: There is a major refurbishment of the Dunkeld disability-specific holiday house.

2005: New Children's First Policy - Every Child Every Chance.

2006: The new Signposts program aims to help parents understand their child's behaviour.

2006: Consortium formed with Brophy Family and Youth Services, Warrnambool City Council, Community Connections to provide a new Family Support Innovations program.

2007: Mpower receives \$217,000 Government funding to expand a respite for older carers program adding to Mpower's range of respite programs.

2007: High Flyers started- respite youth group for teenagers with high functioning autism.

2008: Mpower is selected as a member of the Commonwealth Helping Children with Autism program.

2008: Bus purchased.

2009: A new sibling support program is introduced.

2009: A consumer reference group is developed to provide feedback.

2009: A feasibility study by the Victorian Government identified a need to seek new larger premises.

2009: All managers completed six month leadership training.

2010: Geoff Handbury, AO, becomes Mpower's patron.

2010: Mpower employs 56 staff, and provides 16 programs to 400 families, 2744 hours day respite to 100 carers, 15699 hours of disability respite to 160 families.

2012: Mpower's Totally Awesome Parents wins the Community Southwest category of the WDEA Social Inclusion and Collaboration Awards. Minister Mary Wooldridge visits the agency to meet participants in the program.

2012: CEO Kerry Nelson elected to National Disability Services State Committee.

2013: Mpower now provides support to more than 800 families.

2013: A youth group for young people with a disability is established.

2013: Mpower starts strategic planning for the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

2013: Mpower's longest serving committee member, Sue Henry, retires after 38 years.

2014: A building opposite the Mpower head office is purchased to be developed as a new respite and therapy centre. A public fund-raising appeal is launched.

2014: Mpower is approved as a registered provider of supports for National Disability Insurance Scheme.

2015: Mpower now employs 64 staff.

2015: Mpower celebrates its 40th anniversary.

# Services

**Mpower offers a wide range of services for people from birth to senior years requiring assistance with their daily activities.**

## COMMUNITY INCLUSION & SUPPORT

Mpower provides a range of programs and supports in the community for families of children, young people and adults with disabilities. The programs enable participants to take part in both Mpower activities based in the community and other community activities of choice including:- school holiday programs, weekend getaways and Active Oceans.

### ***Personal Support:***

Mpower has a team of qualified and caring personal support workers who can provide support to individuals in their home or in the community.

### ***Deaf Access Victoria:***

The deaf access program assists community organisations and services to work more effectively with deaf and hard of hearing people by raising awareness about the problems they experience and their needs.

Information relating to deafness or hearing loss is provided for deaf and hard of hearing people, their families or carers, services that work with deaf and hard of hearing people and for the general community.

### ***Sturgeon View Holiday House:***

A special needs holiday facility in Dunkeld is available for rent to people with special needs and their families/carers

### ***Community Transport:***

Provides flexible transport arrangements for those with disabilities to allow them to attend health or community support services.

### ***Family Services:***

The Integrated Family Services program aims to enhance children's and adolescents' safety, stability and development by focusing on building the capacity of parents, carers and families to meet those needs. A suite of services is offered including:

- Family counselling
- Support and advice with parenting
- Managing children's behaviour
- Group work
- Mediation
- Case management for families with higher needs

### ***Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS):***

ECIS aims to improve the lives of young children with a disability or developmental delay and their families through the provision of specialist support. A range of services include specialised therapy interventions, family support, co-ordination and support to early childhood education and care settings to promote access and meaningful participation of children with a disability.

### ***National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)***

For registered individuals/families





## TOY LIBRARY

The special needs toy library provides information for parents and lends play materials and educational toys and equipment to facilitate the growth and development of infants and children with disabilities.

Borrowing is available for people of all ages.

## THERAPY SERVICES

Mpower provides therapy services to children 0-7 years with specific developmental delays or disabilities

- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Developmental assessments

## SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Mpower provides a range of supports for carers:

- of any age of older people who are frail aged 65+
- of people of any age who have dementia
- Over the age of 65 caring for a person with a disability

- Parents of a child 0-18 with a disability

Other supports include:

- Carer/parent support groups
- Carer activities
- Respite aids and equipment
- Workshops and information forums
- Individual parent support

## SUPPORT PACKAGES

Mpower provides a range of support packages consisting of different levels of funding to purchase services to meet the individual needs of the client/ family.

The packages include:

- Helping Children with Autism (HCWA)
- Better Start

These are available for:

- children 0-6 years with an assessed developmental delay
- people of any age with an assessed disability.

***Mpower proudly maintains its history of quality services  
by focusing on what we do best.***



**OCTOBER 1975**

**SOUTH WEST SUPPORT GROUP  
FOR THE HANDICAPPED INC  
POSSUM'S NEST TOY LIBRARY  
1987 STURGEON VIEW HOLIDAY HOUSE OPENED**

**1990 THREE STAFF**

**SOUTH WEST REGION  
DISABILITY SERVICE INC**

**EARLY INTERVENTION PLAYGROUP  
SOUTH WEST CARELINK**

**71 KOROIT STREET PURCHASED  
LAUNCH OF DEAF LINK**

**SOUTH WEST ACCESS NETWORK INC  
CELEBRATE 25 YEARS**

**2001 CATH LOUREY RETIRES**

**2001 KERRY NELSON APPOINTED CEO  
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT WEEKEND GETAWAY**

**CENTRE BASED SERVICES**

**MPOWER INC**

**FULLY ACCREDITED**

**2004 25 STAFF 500+ CLIENTS**

**FOUNDING MEMBER COMMUNITY SOUTHWEST**

**FAMILY SUPPORT INNOVATIONS**

**HIGH FLYERS YOUTH GROUP**

**HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM / BETTER START**

**SIBLING SUPPORT PROGRAM**

**GEOFF HANDBURY AO MPOWER'S PATRON**

**2010 56 STAFF**

**TOTALLY AWESOME PARENTS GROUP**

**YOUTH GROUP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY**

**REGISTERED TO PROVIDE NDIS SERVICES**

**2014 PUBLIC APPEAL LAUNCHED FOR RESPITE AND THERAPY HUB**

**OCTOBER 2015**

**65 STAFF 800 FAMILIES**

**CELEBRATING 40 YEARS**

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