



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to start my report with a special call out to the ASID community in Victoria, who are living through the worst outbreak of COVID-19 in Australasia to date. The heartbreaking death toll and continued life under level 3 or 4 restrictions for regional and metro residents retrospectively is simply horrible, our thoughts are with you all.

As I write this report, the news breaks on my phone about new community transmission cases in Sydney and Auckland. I am hopeful that we have learnt from previous mistakes and will manage to prevent another large-scale outbreak in either Australia or Aotearoa New Zealand.

Many within the ASID community have closely watched or contributed witness statements to the recent public hearings on the experiences of people with disability during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic for the Australian Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Across the 4 days, witnesses spoke to the broad range of issues and challenges experienced by people with intellectual disability ranging from personal issues such as impact on mental health and the loss of in-person connection with family and friends through to systemic issues associated with staffing, adequate and accurate information and access to resources.

Access to information for people with intellectual disability has been an ongoing challenge across the pandemic. I am aware that many different groups across Australasia have been working on ways of addressing these gaps. In Aotearoa New Zealand, ASID Board Director and Director of the Donald Besley Institute, Dr Brigit Mirfin-Veitch contributed to the development of the clinical guidelines for responding to patients with an intellectual (learning) disability during COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand. Last week, NSW Health in collaboration with NSW Council for Intellectual Disability published a new website for people with disability to access information about COVID-19. Although NSW centric, the site provides important preventative health information and a range of easy read resources.

Over the past few months, I've been proud of how the ASID community through our Divisions has come together to keep information flowing. In addition to our journals, IDA and podcasts, we now have a vibrant schedule of webinars on a range of topics. Thanks to Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Western Australia Divisions for your contributions to the webinar schedule to date. I'm also aware that the Aotearoa New Zealand committee are busy working on webinars to add to the calendar of events.

ASID continues to work through how continue to provide you with platforms to connect, share and learn. We are in the process of scoping a new website and developing an alternative model of annual conferences in response to COVID-19 restrictions. I look forward to sharing more about this with you soon.



Laura Hogan

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