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Committee Secretariat  
The Victorian Parliamentary  
Family & Community Development Committee  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

By email: [fcde@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:fcde@parliament.vic.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretariat,

Yooralla submission to Stage 1 of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into abuse in disability services

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to Stage 1 of the Inquiry.

Yooralla has made significant changes over recent years in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of its customers and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry.

Documented evidence of these improvements can be found in the attached document, '*Embedding safeguarding rights using the NDS Framework*'. In addition, a copy of Yooralla's submission to the NDIS consultation paper on Quality & Safeguards Framework is also attached, providing further evidence of the changes that have been implemented.

Yooralla welcomes any opportunity to contribute to improving the systems and safeguards to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people with disability; as such, the Board and Staff at Yooralla fully support the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry.

Yooralla is prepared to attend to give verbal evidence to the Committee, if formally requested to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Adjunct Professor Jeffrey Chan  
Chief Practitioner  
On behalf of,  
Dr Sherene Devanesen  
Chief Executive Officer  
Yooralla.

Att.

1. *Yooralla's submission to Stage 1 of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry*
2. *Embedding Safeguarding Rights using the NDS framework*
3. *Yooralla's submission to the NDIS consultation paper on Quality and Safeguards Framework*

8. Yooralla has learned much, about abuse prevention, from people with disabilities, their families and a range of partners in abuse prevention. Yooralla's strategic plan begins with upholding the dignity and equality of the person with disability.

## BACKGROUND

9. Yooralla has committed a significant level of investment in implementing the recommendations of the Joyce Review Report following the initial disclosure. The Action Plan of the Joyce Review Report and its recommendations are available on the Yooralla website.
10. The Action Plan was then known as the Client Well-being and Safeguards Action Plan (the Action Plan). The action plan resulted in a total of 147 action items (106 action items from the original Joyce Report and 49 observation action items further requested of the independent auditors by Yooralla).
11. The Action Plan was subjected to oversight by a Yooralla Board Governance Committee. The Committee consisted of a Board Director, a representative from Women with Disabilities Victoria, representatives from the Department of Human Services and Yooralla senior management.
12. Two independent surveillance audits were completed in August 2013 and February 2014 by Health and Disability Audit Australia (HDAA). The audit results showed that Yooralla had achieved 100% implementation of the 147 action items, and that these were been noted, by the auditors, to be functioning well and providing further opportunities that could give effect to the embedding of Yooralla's client wellbeing and safeguards action plan.
13. In addition, a confidential staff survey was undertaken by HDAA, a total of 519 staff completed the survey. Briefly, the results showed that majority of staff (about 80%) were aware of, understood and knew what to do to prevent and report abuse.
14. Today, Yooralla's Embedding Safeguarding Rights framework is an enhancement to the extensive and comprehensive work already done within Yooralla, post the Joyce Review.
15. At this stage, Yooralla has crafted the Embedding Safeguarding Rights against the NDS Zero Tolerance Framework<sup>1</sup>. Yooralla will adhere to the NDIS safeguarding rights framework when it is proposed and rolled out.
16. Several activities or initiatives cut across the categories of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention; resulting in some initiatives being repeated within the framework.

## A SUMMARY OF YOORALLA'S APPROACH INTO DISABILITY ABUSE PREVENTION

17. International and national research reiterates the evidence that people with disabilities are at higher risk of abuse than people without disabilities. Abuse ranges from the most overt forms such sexual and physical assaults and financial abuse to the less overt forms, such as emotional and psychological abuse. Abuse is often perpetrated by individuals familiar with the person with a disability and is most likely to occur in closed environments.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yooralla instigated the NDS Zero Tolerance Project and played a key role in the project steering group.

<sup>2</sup> A 'closed environment' is usually defined as institutions, detention centres or congregate care living. In this context, a 'closed environment' is extended to include any environment where isolation, a lack of social inclusion and avoidance of external scrutiny is a prevailing culture.

27. For example, building and strengthening self-advocacy within an organisation is a critical primary level of disability abuse prevention as evidenced in the research literature. It is important that people with disabilities are empowered to be aware of, know how to exercise their human rights, and to speak up against abuse and/or make a complaint. Yooralla has implemented a Lifeskills Speaking Up program delivered to more than 200 participants across the organisation where people with disabilities are empowered to exercise their rights, learn self-protective behaviours, know how to make complaints and form support network. The training has also led to the establishment of a self-advocacy group called YES Group (Your Enquiries Solved), this group is led by individuals with intellectual disability.
28. In addition, Yooralla has partnered with VALID, an advocacy organisation to trial a “My Rights Training” program to people with disabilities, staff and parents. Recently, Yooralla partnered with VALID and Deakin University on a successful grant application to develop a train-the-trainer program on “My Rights Training” targeted at people with acquired brain injury. This program is in development.
29. A Customer Rights and Empowerment team was established to provide peer support and leadership mentoring to people with disabilities, internal advocacy, resource and information support, occasional counseling and case management to people with disabilities.
30. At an organizational level, Yooralla established an Independent Advocacy Advisory Committee to provide systemic advocacy advice on organisational initiatives, policies, processes and procedures; and how Yooralla can further improve on its policies. The committee is made up of people with disabilities, parents and advocacy organisations. The group has provided advice that led to a change of the organization’s medication policy to focus on people who can self-manage their own medication, for example.
31. Yooralla has established the position of Director of Health & Well-being. Disability abuse prevention also begins with health and social equity. The Health and Well-being team comprises of allied health, nursing, psychology and positive behaviour support, and has oversight of all clinical risks. The risk includes assessing and monitoring risks, such as unexplained bruising.
32. In addition to external reviews, Yooralla has established an independent investigator position reporting directly to the General Manager, People & Culture.
33. At the level of organisational systems, Yooralla has invested in and implemented the RiskMan data system to record, track and monitor the management of incidents. The system has the capacity to create a unique identifier number, send alerts to various key personnel, assist with root cause analysis and assist in the development of an action plan for Category 1 and Category 2 incidents. Furthermore, there is continuous learning, by way of analysis and the provision of data, to inform practice and planning by such groups as the Clinical Risk Working Group and the Practice Excellence Group.
34. Yooralla’s experience of the enhanced RiskMan management of incidents has been positive and suggests that it is as an important organisational incident management tool and is an additional safeguard. Yooralla has recently extended the RiskMan system to include the reporting and management of feedback and complaints. A Customer Relations Officer position has been established to respond to, analyse and report on all feedback and complaints. The Chief Practitioner has oversight of all feedback and complaints, and a monthly report is provided to the Board.