

your voice your choice

MAY 2016

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Welcome to Your Voice, Your Choice

Hi, and welcome to the Your Voice, Your Choice monthly newsletter from The Disability Trust.

This month you may have noticed that we have a new format. What do you think? Let us know at info@disabilitytrust.org.au.

This month we look at a poem by an amazing 10 year old boy with aspergers that has touched thousands of people; we discuss the numbers from the 2016

Federal Budget, we hear from the Armed Forces veterans returning from overseas deployment and some of the issues they face with mental health issues; we get excited by not one, not two, but THREE new Human Rights Commissioners, including a Disability Discrimination Commissioner, and we have the usual NDIS Update.

"Your Voice, Your Choice" aims to provide the questions, and hopefully most of the answers,

that will keep you informed and able to use your voice to achieve your choice.

If there is a topic, issue, program, funding, article, event, or anything for people with disabilities, their families and carers, and people working in the sector, that we should know about, then contact us at info@disabilitytrust.org.au.

Editor: Sean O'Neill

Disability Information Assistance Line (DIAL)

Illawarra and Shellharbour

Providing information for people with disabilities, carers, families and service providers. We are a central point of contact for information provision about disability services including:

Programs, aids and equipment

Referral to appropriate services

Self advocacy and support groups

Forums and Workshops

Your Choice, Your Voice - free monthly newsletter

Phone 4295 9806 or email info@disabilitytrust.org.au



Shoalhaven Information and Advocacy (SIA)

Kiama and Shoalhaven

Providing information and individual advocacy for people with disabilities, carers, families and service providers. We are a central point of contact for information provision about disability services including:

Programs, aids and equipment

Forums and workshops

Individual advocacy and support

Referral to appropriate services

Counselling - short term access to local counselling services

Phone 4428 9002 or email nfo@disabilitytrust.org.au

Would you like to receive the Newsletter?

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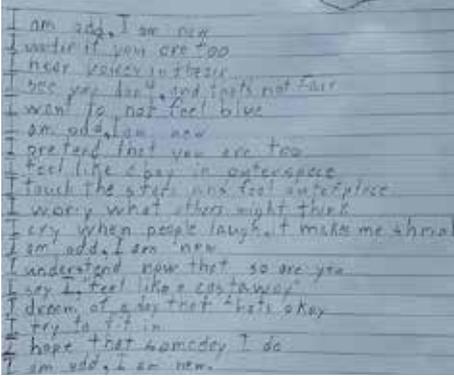
...creating an inclusive world

The newsletter is prepared by the Information and Advocacy Service and is aimed at covering a wide variety of services and issues across the disability sector. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of The Disability Trust. Should you have a story or information that you would like included in the newsletter please contact the Information and Advocacy Service.

10-Year-Old Boy's Moving Poem

"I am odd, I am new."

A class assignment turned into something more for one family after their son wrote a touching poem and gave a peek into life with autism.



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A 10-year-old New York boy who was given a school assignment ended up touching the hearts of thousands after writing a moving poem that gives an inside look into his life with autism.

Earlier this month, fifth-grader Benjamin Giroux and his fellow classmates at Cumberland Head Elementary were asked to write a poem about themselves to celebrate National Poetry Month.

Benjamin, who has Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism, was given the first two words of each sentence for his poem titled 'I am' - and his finished product left his parents choked up.

After sharing the touching poem on Facebook, the National Autism Association then posted it to their page where it has received more than 23,000 'likes' and an outpouring of praise.

His father, Sonny Giroux said that Benjamin is 'deeply touched by all the outpouring support.'

'We are trying to give him news of his poem in small amounts, as this entire thing can be very overwhelming for him.'

Benjamin's poem begins: 'I am odd, I am new.'

'I wonder if you are too. I hear

voices in the air. I see you don't, and that's not fair.'

He continues, writing about feeling 'out of place' and 'like a castaway.'

'I dream of day that that's okay,' Benjamin writes. 'I try to fit in. I hope that some day I do. I am odd, I am new.'

'I'm am so proud of Benjamin for the effort he put into this poem,' Mr Giroux said of his son's poem, noting when it comes to homework he is not exactly thrilled about doing it.

'But when he wrote down the first four lines, and had me read them, I told him that it was great and that he could really make something special if he continued to focus.'

After initially reading Benjamin's poem, Mr Giroux said that he and his wife, Kathryn, felt sad and hurt their son felt 'isolated, alone, misunderstood and odd at school.'

'As the poem went on, we realized that he understands that he's odd and that so is everyone else in their own way, which is what Ben wants everyone to embrace,' Mr Giroux said.

Benjamin was set to read his poem in front of his class the following day, on April 8, but after his anxiety took over that morning, he stayed at home

instead.

His father then posted his poem to Facebook in hopes of receiving some encouraging comments from relatives and friends that he could then read to Benjamin, who thought his poem was not good.

Shortly after sharing it on Facebook, the National Autism Association saw the poem and shared it with the caption: 'You did an excellent job, Benjamin! You fit right in with us because we're #oddtwo.'

Mr Giroux said he and his wife tried to read as many of the comments to Benjamin to show the impact he made on so many people with his poem.

The encouraging comments included kind words from strangers describing Benjamin as a 'genius', 'talented' and 'brilliant.'

'You are a talented, brilliant, young man. You wrote what was in your heart in a beautiful poem. Thank you for sharing,' Jane Ovaska wrote in the comment section.

Others encouraged him to keep writing and called him 'amazing' and a 'beautiful soul.'

'You are right, we are all odd in our own way. Everyone comes with a little "quirk!" Great job and keep writing,' Michael Gage commented.

When asked how he hopes his son's poem will impact others, Mr Giroux explained that their family's hope is that people will embrace being odd.

'We would love if Benjamin's poem could help start a social movement that people embrace who they are no matter what that may be,' he said.

'Be proud of yourself. As we have said to Benjamin, Odd is different and different is amazing.'

Budget 2016: Concerns NDIS savings fund announced in budget could become 'political football'

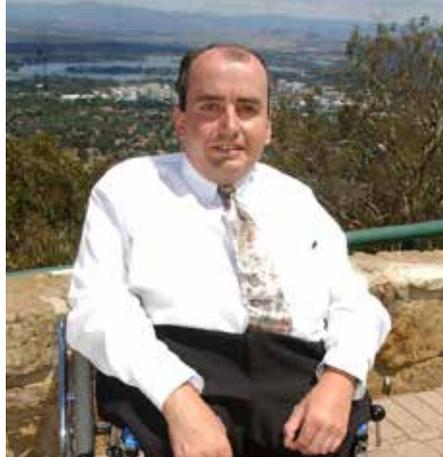
The 2016 Budget revealed the NDIS Savings Fund would be "quarantined" and used to help pay for a funding shortfall estimated to be at least \$5 billion a year once the scheme is fully rolled out in 2020.

The 2016 Federal Budget deposits \$2.1 billion in a special savings account to fund the future of the NDIS. This is a substantial amount and a welcome commitment, although it falls short of the additional money that will be needed when the Scheme is fully implemented. According to the Government's own calculations, an extra \$4.4 billion must be found in 2019-20 and more than \$5 billion each year after that. The \$2.1 billion secured in this year's Budget is based on adding up savings over five years.

But peak body People with Disability Australia said it had significant reservations about the methods outlined in the budget to secure money for the fund.

"We are very concerned that we see a creeping politicisation of

the scheme, and funding for the scheme is going to become a political football," Craig Wallace,



the president of People with Disability Australia, said.

The budget outlines a number of "efficiencies" that will contribute to the savings fund, including plans to review 90,000 recipients of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) over three years by submitting them to medical assessments to judge their capacity to work.

It is pleasing to see an additional \$118 million over 2016 and 2017

will be provided to support students with disability, targeted to schools and students with the highest need (based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability). A new funding distribution model will be implemented from 2018.

Also announced was the removal of compensation to welfare recipients for the impact of the carbon tax; and a new start date for Carer Allowance.

"We're concerned about using the savings fund as a device to fund the scheme," Mr Wallace said.

"It's clear the Government is seeking to make trade-offs between different kinds of spending, including cuts to DSP."

These are modest measures compared to what may be ahead in next year's post-election budget. This Budget backed away from changes anticipated to income support; next year's Budget may not.

Bringing the war home: the rising disability claims of Afghanistan war vets

The recent ABC TV series on the Afghanistan war recounts the deaths of 41 Australian soldiers on active service. Unfortunately, the impacts of wars do not end when soldiers return home. Almost 100 times that number have now claimed war-related disabilities, including for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), hearing loss and musculoskeletal diseases.

If past wars are a guide, the toll of disability will continue to rise for many decades to come.

Every few months, the Department of Veterans' Affairs releases updated information about accepted claims of veterans for war-related disability. Claims among Afghanistan veterans are rising rapidly:

Just over 10% of those who served in Afghanistan now have an accepted war-related

disability. Claimants are also more likely to claim for multiple conditions (currently around 2.85 conditions per veteran) than other recent conflicts.

Veterans with a war-related disability receive a pension proportional to their level of disability, as well as health-care benefits to pay for their treatment.

Those on higher rates of disability (which often occurs when they have multiple conditions) gain access to a pension at a special rate, which is currently A\$,1330 a fortnight, and access to a Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card to cover their health-care needs.

The pension cost for each of these veterans is likely to amount to more than A\$1.5 million over their remaining lifetimes.

What does the future hold?

The pattern of disability of Vietnam veterans, as well as more recent deployments such as in Timor, suggests claims will continue to rise.

A recent analysis of the disability claims of all Australian Vietnam veterans shows the most rapid period of rising claims was not in the immediate aftermath of war, but during the mid-1990s. This was more than 20 years after Australia's involvement in the conflict ended.

Now more than three-quarters of those who served in Vietnam have a war-related disability, with more than 21,000 deemed totally and permanently incapacitated.

For the rest of the article go to <http://theconversation.com/bringing-the-war-home-the-rising-disability-claims-of-afghanistan-war-vets-56021>.

BASIC MYTHS ABOUT DISABILITY I CAN'T BELIEVE WE STILL HAVE TO DEBUNK

From an article by Sarah Blahovec, read the full article at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sarah-blahovec/basic-myths-about-the-dis_b_9560556.html.

To be honest, I was really hoping that what I'm about to write was common knowledge by now. I really wish that society in general understood disability better, but in light of a number of concerning articles recently, from a USA Today article about people "faking" disability during travel, to a New York Times Magazine article about parents stunting the growth of disabled children through estrogen treatments, it seems necessary to counter the basic inaccurate beliefs people have about disability and those who live with it. Below are a few of the most popular myths, along with suggested reading on each topic.

Myth: If you're in a wheelchair, you can't walk

This week, a USA Today article called out "fakers" who allegedly make up a disability to get special privileges when traveling. In this

article, examples include people who are able to stand in a buffet line or in the airport, but are later seen in wheelchairs during priority boarding. The author seemed incredulous that somebody who used a wheelchair could also stand, and accused those who are able to stand of faking a disability.

Truth: You do not have to be paralyzed to need a wheelchair

There are millions of individuals with invisible disabilities in the United States. These disabilities are not immediately apparent, but the pain and other symptoms that come along with them can be extremely debilitating. Take, for example, Multiple Sclerosis. MS is a disease in which the immune system attacks the myelin that covers nerves, damaging the central nervous system. Symptoms include fatigue and mobility issues, and vary from day-to-day and severity. About 400,000 people in the United States and 2.5 million people worldwide have MS. Keep in mind that this is just one invisible disability that can cause someone to need a wheelchair without

being paralyzed. There are many other disabilities and diagnoses that can cause chronic pain, fatigue, mobility problems, and other symptoms that necessitate a wheelchair.

Suggested reading: Why Are You Questioning My Need for a Wheelchair? by Beth Griffiths

Myth: Only people with mobility disabilities have an accessible parking placard

On a similar note, we've all seen articles in which someone has left a rude note on the windshield of someone who "doesn't look disabled" but has parked in an accessible parking spot. The people who leave these notes probably think they are being good Samaritans, protecting those who are "truly in need" from those who borrow grandma's placard. However, they are neglecting, and possibly targeting, those with invisible disabilities.

Truth: There are many conditions beyond visible mobility impairments that necessitate a parking placard.

GoGet launches carshare vehicle for people with disability

GoGet carshare is planning to revolutionise transport for people with disability with the launch of the world's first fully accessible carsharing vehicle with the support of leading disability non-government organisation, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA).

Australia's first and largest carshare provider launched the vehicle at the Royal North Shore Hospital today with NSW Minister for Disability Services John Ajaka, representatives from the Hospital and the SCIA.

The vehicle, an eight-seater, Kia Carnival, is equipped with a single wheelchair rear entry with hydraulic floor and was converted by Right Priced Conversions, a specialist in accessible vehicles. The vehicle can accommodate a wide range of wheelchairs. According to SCIA, the vehicle is poised to revolutionise the provision of transport for people

with disability.

"Creating a truly inclusive and accessible community requires changing how we think about providing services, including transport. GoGet and SCIA should be commended for being at the forefront of that change," said Mr Ajaka.

"These vehicles can be extremely expensive to own and operate, but by sharing them among many people who need them, they become affordable and convenient" said Tristan Sender, CEO of GoGet carshare.

The new accessible vehicle represents a pilot for GoGet, and should it prove successful more accessible vehicles will be rolled out across NSW and eventually nationally.

For more information about GoGet, go to <https://www.goget.com.au>.

MY SANCTUARY

A Personality Disorder Support Group (for carers), this group is held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month (5.30 - 7.30pm) at South Coast Private Hospital in Burelli Street, Wollongong. If you would like to register for this support group you can contact them on 4254 1699. Carers do not need to attend all group meetings.

New \$5 Note Good for People with Vision Impairment

In September this year, the new five dollar note will begin circulating in Australia. What is different about it is the inclusion of a tactile device which will make it easy for people with vision impairment to tell which note is which. The old notes were only distinguishable by their length, and a couple of millimetres was hard to feel. The new note, whilst causing a stir with its controversial design, will make life just that bit easier for people with disability.

Alastair McEwin appointed as new full-time Disability Discrimination Commissioner

Deaf Society president Alastair McEwin will take up the role as Disability Discrimination Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission in late July, filling the vacancy left by Graeme Innes in mid-2014.

He takes the reins from Susan Ryan, who has been juggling the role along with that of Age Discrimination Commissioner since the departure of Mr Innes nearly two years ago.

While disability advocates have respected her work, they have wanted someone with a disability in the role as a full-time commissioner.

As well as his role at the Deaf Society, Mr McEwin is the chairman of the Disability Council of NSW. He is profoundly deaf.

He said the appointment was "an incredible honour."

"I've been born with a disability and I've lived with a disability all my life. So this is a humbling thing to be able to be the national advocate for all people with a disability," Mr McEwin said.

The successful implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be one of his key priorities over the coming years.

"My mandate is to make sure that it fulfils its aims of making sure that people with disability, no matter where they are, can be active members of the community.

"We still have a long way to go in recognising the human rights of



all people with disabilities, and I look forward to working with the government, the disability sector and the human rights commission to realise equity for all people with disability."

Mr McEwin is also a former chief executive officer of People with Disability Australia and a former manager of the Australian Centre for Disability Law.

His predecessor as Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Innes, is blind. He said he was excited by Mr McEwin's appointment.

"He is a very effective advocate, he is a strategic operator and has a real depth of understanding of the disability sector and he will do a great job in this role," Mr Innes said.

Attorney-General George Brandis announced two other new appointments to the Human Rights Commission on Thursday.

Former Victorian senator Dr Kaye Patterson is the new Age Discrimination Commissioner and Edward Santow has been appointed a Commissioner.

The new appointees will start their five-year terms in late July.

Would your organisation like to tap into the future workforce?

projectABLE is a program that inspires young people to consider a career in the disability sector. Our half-day workshops are fun, interactive and are delivered by people with disability in high schools across the NDIS early launch sites.

In the last half hour of our workshops we introduce students to local employers in their area. This is an opportunity

for members to connect with potential future employees, and an opportunity for students to find out more about working in the disability sector. NDS would like to hear from members who operate in various locations around Australia who are keen to participate.

To learn more about projectABLE, go to www.projectABLE.com.au, or call 9256 3157.

BITE SIZE

CONCURRENCY OF DES AND TTW CLARIFIED

Last year's Federal Budget announced that a student in their final sixth months of an eligible state or territory post-school employment or transition to work (TTW) program could access a Disability Employment Service.

However, the policy wording from DSS following the announcement remained unclear around when the final six months commenced. For example, did it start at the 18-month mark of TTW? (TTW is funded for two years in NSW) Or did it begin when the participant was ready to start job search? The confusion was exacerbated by conflicting messages from DSS contract managers.

DSS has now confirmed that people participating in TTW can be referred to DES prior to completing 18 months in TTW. If a job is not obtained in six months, the individual can either be exited from TTW or suspended in DES.

HIS 'DISABILITY' HELPS HIM EXCEL IN MATHS

He has Asperger's syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism. But he sees it as a blessing in disguise. Diagnosed at the age of three, Mr Lionel Lee always had problems interacting with others.

"I was always called 'weird' by my classmates and people often shunned me," Mr Lee, who is now 20, told The New Paper. He will be graduating from Singapore Polytechnic's (SP) Diploma in Aerospace Electronics later this month.

For the rest of the article go to <http://www.tnp.sg/news/singapore-news/his-disability-helps-him-excel-mathematics>.

Arafmi Carer Support Group

When - Thurs 6.30 - 8.30pm.

This group is open to all carers and family members. It has caring and sharing evenings, guest speakers and outings. This group gives carers the opportunity to unite together and receive support and make new friendships. The information evenings and community awareness sessions are open to all interested community members. The carer focused evenings including caring and sharing groups are for carers only.

Thurs 12 May -Community Awareness / Hearing Voices Network

On the 12 May there will be a guest speaker will talk to us

about current support for people who have paranoia and / or who hear voices.

Where - South Coast Private Hospital, 6.30pm

Registration: 4254 1699

Thurs 19 May - Navigating the Mental Health System

On the 19 May you will learn how best to navigate through the mental health system affectively, and changes to our local services.

Where - Group Venue, 6.30 to 8-30pm

Registration: 4254 1699

Thurs 26 May - Carer Outing at a venue to be confirmed, contact ARAFMI for details.

Ables Nightclub

A reminder that Ables is on at The Harp Hotel with the Rock Star karaoke party, starting at 7.30pm on Friday 13 May. Bring your biggest Air Guitar for a fun packed night rocking along to the classics, as well as modern songs.

The party continues at The Harp Hotel, 124 Corrimal st, Wollongong. Party with us as we karaoke the night away. We will have lots of fun, and prizes for best dressed 'rock star' on the night. As always we will have free pizza and other prizes.

Ables now has supporters T-shirts available for sale. Look good while you spread the word about Ables. Keep up to date with Ables at <https://www.facebook.com/AblesWollongong> including photos and videos from previous parties.



BITE SIZE

ADAPTOYS - TOYS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH PARALYSIS

Adaptoys are adapted versions of popular toys that allow people with physical disabilities to experience the joy of actively playing with their families.

For more information go to <http://www.disabled-world.com/entertainment/games/adaptoys.php>.

The Three C's Group for Carers

"Coffee - Cake n Chat"

A social group for carers who support a friend or family member living with a mental illness, who want to meet other carers for a coffee and chat.

This group is about friendship, peer support and understanding. This group is on the first Wednesday of every month. 10am - 12pm

To register your interest for these groups please contact us on 4254 1699, or email us at: arafmi_i@bigpond.com.au.

For inclusive employers

Do you want to maximise your market share by developing your workforce to better reflect your community and customer base?

Attend this free 3 hour seminar aimed to equip you with the knowledge and tools to confidently employ and manage individuals with autism in the workplace.

You will understand the strengths and skills employees with autism can possess and the value this brings to your business; identify appropriate roles within your organisation and learn best recruitment practices and learn practical strategies to effectively manage and work with employees on the autism spectrum, and steps to implementing these in your workplace

The seminar is on Fri 20 May at 11.30am at City Diggers Wollongong.

To register go to www.eventbrite.com.au/e/understanding-autism-a-valuable-business-proposition-wollongong-tickets-24336803033 or email elicia.ford@northcott.com.au.

Access2Express 2016

Access2Express is a program that allows students with special needs to experience a free and interactive tour of Wollongong Art Gallery's major exhibitions. This program is designed for students who have physical and intellectual disabilities. Access2Express will engage students with artworks through artmaking tasks, games and storytelling. Both Primary and Secondary students are welcome.

Cost: Free

When: Third Wednesday of every month, 10am - 11am.

Bookings essential: Places are limited to 15 students

For bookings and enquires phone our Education Officer, Julie Danilov on 4227 8506.

Awareness Day Resources

12 May is International ME / CFS (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome), FM (Fibromyalgia) and MCS (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity) Awareness Day.

The entire month of May is Awareness Month for these conditions and other related neuro-immune illnesses such as Lyme Disease.

The Wollongong ME / CFS / FM Support Group is holding their annual Library Display at the Wollongong City Library from 9 - 23 May. Posters are available from there and all Branch Libraries from Helensburgh to Kiama, as well as other Illawarra venues including The Disability Trust, 100 Jardine St, Fairy Meadow.

See the Wollongong ME/CFS/FM Support Group's website at www.mecsfmwollongong.org for local Support Group info and Emerge Australia's website at www.emerge.org.au for illness information and more. Email mecsfmwollongong@gmail.com or call 0431 481 451.

ART & DEMENTIA TOUR PROGRAM

This program allows individuals and groups of people who have dementia to have meaningful engagement with Wollongong Art Gallery's exhibitions and collection.

Cost - Free

When - First Friday of every month, 11am - 12pm

Bookings essential. Places are limited to 8 participants (excluding carers).

Carers are invited for tea and coffee while participants with dementia partake in the guided tour.

For bookings and enquires phone our Education Officer, Julie Danilov on 4227 8506.

Illawarra Soup

A small grants dinner celebrating & supporting community; a showcase of skills and abilities.

5.30pm - 7.30pm, Friday 27 May 2016 at The New Outlook, 3 Station St, Wollongong.

Have dinner, meet people, share ideas and resources. Hear from people working on community projects. Cast your vote for the community project you want to help fund. The project with the most votes goes home with all the money donated at the event. Winner comes back to a future SOUP event to report on how the project went.

Everyone is welcome - \$5 donation (per person) gets you dinner, a vote & a great time. To RSVP, pitch a project or idea at the event, donate food, volunteer to prepare food or help in any other way email newoutlook@richmondpra.org.au.

Stepping Stones

Free parenting seminar series for parents with children 2-12 years of age.

Seminar 1: Positive Parenting for Children with a Disability on Thursday the 9 June 2016, 9:30am-11am or 4pm-5:30pm

Seminar 2: Helping your Child reach their Potential on Thursday the 16 June 2016, 9:30am-11am or 4pm-5:30pm

Seminar 3: Changing Problem Behaviour into Positive Behaviour on Thursday the 23 June 2016, 9:30am-11am or 4pm-5:30pm

Where - Para Meadows School, 56 Porter St, North Wollongong

Phone - 9114 4060 or fhs.Steppingstones@sydney.edu.au.

Hearing Voices Network

Self Help Group for people who hear voices, see visions or have other unusual perceptions.

These are social support groups not therapy or clinical groups.

The group meets every 2 weeks, Wed 11am to 12.30pm on 25 May, 8 June and 22 June at Dunn Lewis Centre, 141 St Vincent St, Ulladulla.

Partners in Parenting Program

An educational / support / social group for women with intellectual disability / mental health or other needs. In this program we;

- * Provide Education including parenting skills, building family resilience, managing emotions, keeping healthy and looking after your mental health.

- * Teach Life Skills healthy eating, cooking and the importance of self care.

- * Teach New Skills eg computer skills, handiwork etc.

- * Participate in Social Activities eg coffee club, social outings etc.

Campbelltown

Where - CatholicCare, 35A Cordeaux Street Campbelltown

When - Friday mornings during school term, commencing 13 May

Time - 10.30am - 12.30pm

For more information call 4628 0044.

Wollongong

When - Once a week during school term, Tuesday mornings

For more information call 4227 1122.

Some childcare may be available, there are no program fees, however, participants pay for their own social activities.

Free workshop for Carers

Do you care for a family member or a friend who has a chronic or mental illness, disability or is frail aged? Come to our three day workshop and learn how to manage stress, meet other carers and find out about services that can help you. It will be at 9.30am to 2.30 pm, Wed 11, 18 & 25 May at The Disability Trust Level 1 11A/75 Cygnet Ave.

To register please phone the Wollongong Hospital Social Work Department on 4253 4501 or email evelyn.jelercic@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au.

Inclusion survey

Venues NSW, the NSW Government agency that manages the WIN Sports and Entertainment centres in Wollongong, are in the process of creating a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) for all NSW venues including the WIN Stadium and WIN Entertainment Centre.

The Disability Inclusion Act 2014 requires NSW public authorities to develop Disability Inclusion Action Plans. Action plans will outline how NSW public authorities will make mainstream services and community facilities more accessible to people with disability, helping to build more inclusive communities in NSW.

To ensure that people with disability have a strong voice in the development of the Plan for these venues, a WIN Stadium / WIN Entertainment Centre Reference Group (WSEC) was formed. The group included a number of community members representing a wide cross section of the community. This included several members with a disability who were able to share their experiences of attending events, especially some feedback that the facility will put into practice immediately.

Venues NSW are also running a survey so they can hear from the public as well. This survey will provide feedback on the things that affect how people with disability use and attend the WIN Stadium and WIN Entertainment Centre. It will help these venues to improve this access.

You are invited to complete this survey if you have a disability, know someone with a disability or have an interest in improving access for people with disability.

To complete the survey go to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9JQMHBN>.

Staying Connected When Emotions Run High

This free workshop will be extremely relevant if you support someone who experiences relationship difficulties or changing emotions and strong overwhelming feelings or Impulsive / destructive behaviour or has a diagnosis of Personality Disorder or other related conditions.

When – 9.30am to 3.30 pm, Fri 13 May

Where – Shoalhaven Ex-Serviceman Club, 131 Greenwell Point, Worrigeer

Contact – 4422 1547 or email maria.houben@aftercare.com.au

Train Your Brain

Improve memory & language abilities, while strengthening focus and concentration. iPads are provided, or bring your own.

Cost – \$7.50 per week for concession card holders, \$20 per week for non concession card holders. To register your interest or for more information, please call 4428 7300. Fridays 11.30-12.30.

Where – Community Hub Nowra
69 Berry Street Nowra Ph 4428 7300

Dealing With Trauma

Illawarra Suicide Prevention & Awareness Network Inc. invites you to a FREE WORKSHOP for professionals, their colleagues and families.

Presenter: Gary Raymond APM, OAM

When – 6pm Monday, May 16

Where – The Salvation Army, 11-13 Burelli Street, Wollongong

Contact – 4229 1079

Broadway Gala Night

Wests Illawarra presents The Best of Broadway Gala Night for The Disability Trust on Sat 16 July at Wests Illawarra. This year the theme is based on Broadway musicals and is sure to be another enjoyable night. This is the major fundraising event for Kids Fund and Sport & Recreation Services.

Cost – Individual tickets \$200 / table of 10 \$2000

Attendees will be treated to canapes on arrival, 3 course meal, beverages throughout the night, and performances from The Music Makers, a special "Best of Broadway" show and the catchy tunes from The Groove Academy.

When – 6pm, Sat 16 July

Dress – Black tie / formal

Tickets can be purchased from www.wollongongtickets.com.au/event/2468. For more information please email galanight@disabilitytrust.org.au or 4255 8000.

Talking Elder Abuse (TEA)

June 15 marks the annual, internationally recognised World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. WEAAD encourage you to participate by holding morning tea events. Use the occasion to celebrate positive ageing, and discuss ways to keep older family, friends and members of your community safe and connected.

Invite your friends around for tea, or perhaps your activity or social group, library or local council could act as host for a larger event. Be sure to engage as many people as possible. Ask businesses in your community to provide support and sponsorship of the event, e.g a local bakery provide cakes, and a supermarket provide the tea.

GOOD WOMEN GOOD LIVES

Fundraising Dinner

You are invited to the inaugural Fundraising Dinner in support of the Young Women's Mental Health and Well Being Program.

When – 6.30pm, Fri 10 June

Where – The Kiama Pavilion, 2 Bong Bong Street, Kiama

Cost – \$90

Book – www.trybooking.com/187740

Champagne cocktails on arrival, canapes and dinner included. Auctions, raffles and lots of fun.

Includes entertainment by Woody!

Tough new laws see 33,000 drop off disability support pension

New figures have revealed the number of people receiving welfare from the disability support pension (DSP) has fallen below 800 000 people for the first time since 2010.

According to figures obtained by News Ltd there are now 797, 212 people on the scheme, down from 832, 533 in March 2014.

This reduction is potentially saving the government up to \$680 million a year.

The crackdown on disability payments came following new legislation that required all applications for the DSP to be approved by a government-approved doctor.

Beforehand, it was believed some people receiving the disability pension were 'doctor shopping' medical centres until they found a willing doctor to sign off on payments.

Parents Views about Parenting Support Programs

Do you have concerns about your child's behaviour or emotional adjustment? Do you want to learn more about managing your child's behavioural or emotional problems?

Researchers from the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia are investigating perceptions of parenting support programs and what influences whether parents take part in such programs.

If your child is aged between 2 and 10 years, and you are worried about their behaviour or emotional adjustment, we encourage you to follow the link below and complete a short, 20 minute survey. Your support and participation in this project is invaluable and will benefit parents and children across the country.

For more information go to <https://exp.psy.uq.edu.au/parentviews>, or email alina@psy.uq.edu.au.

Lobbying efforts pay off for Prue: disability pension after several months of rejection

Prue McCarthy is grateful for support of the community and her friend Andrew Ryan for starting a social media campaign, after Centrelink finally granted her a disability support pension after months of rejection.

Orange resident Prue McCarthy has triumphed over government bureaucracy and been granted a disability support pension (DSP) after an intense lobby campaign by friends and the community.

Ms McCarthy, who has cerebral palsy, had previously been on a disability pension but transferred to a carer's pension to care for her grandmother.

However, when her grandmother entered a nursing home and died Ms McCarthy relinquished the carer's payment last August and was rejected in her application to go back to a DSP.

On Wednesday she received the call she thought would never come, saying she had been granted a DSP pension.

"I need to thank my wonderful friend Andrew Ryan, because none of this would have been possible without him," Ms McCarthy said.

"He was prepared to go on national television to support me and set up a social media page [I Support Prue McCarthy].

"I want to thank everyone for their support, messages and posts - it has been amazing."

UNSW launches new guide to improve mental health treatment for people with an intellectual disability

The Intellectual Disability Mental Health Core Competency Framework for Mental Health Professionals was launched earlier this year by UNSW's Chair in Intellectual Disability Mental Health, Professor Julian Trollor and the NSW Minister for Mental Health, Pru Goward.

The Intellectual Disability Mental Health Core Competencies Framework: A Manual for Mental Health Professionals is now available for free download at <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/idmh-core-competency-framework>.

Ms McCarthy first went public with her struggles with Centrelink last month saying she was emotionally exhausted after fearing she would lose her house, when she was told she had to cut back her working hours at a non-government community organisation to be eligible for a DSP.

Her plight was also recently broadcast in an SBS television program.

She said at the time she had been told she may have to wait months for another medical assessment but last Monday she underwent the assessment via telephone from a doctor in Victoria.

Mr Ryan initiated the I Support Prue McCarthy Facebook page to highlight the injustice of the government decision saying Ms McCarthy has spent much of her life working to champion the cause of those living with a disability.

Ms McCarthy said she wants her story to encourage people living with a disability to never give up and to make their voices heard "instead of wanting to shut the blinds and lock yourself out of this world," she said.



This Framework aims to improve the quality of mental health service delivery to people with an intellectual disability.

It outlines what is important from the point of view of people with intellectual disability and their carers. It provides a framework for the development of professional competence in the area, and includes a means of self assessment of current skills, a framework for professional development and relevant tools and resources.

'Communications Accessibility: 2016 and Beyond' Consultation paper

The Commonwealth Department of Communications and the Arts have released a consultation paper that sets out to discuss the potential options to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the National Relay Service, and the improvement of communications for people with disability.

The National Relay Service (NRS) is a long-standing initiative by the Australian Government in addressing communications accessibility issues for people who are deaf, hearing and/or speech-impaired. The introduction of a number of innovative improvements to the NRS in the last two and a half years has led to increased demand for the service.

Advances in technology have

improved the range of accessible services available in Australia, with smartphone and tablet devices now offering high levels of accessibility and text based communication options, such as live chat, messaging and email.

This consultation paper outlines a range of potential options to sustain the delivery of the National Relay Service in the short term. It also canvasses a range of options to greater support the use of mainstream technologies and services by Australians with a disability.

For more information go to <https://www.communications.gov.au/have-your-say/communications-accessibility-2016-and-beyond>.

DISABILITY INCLUSION ACTION PLAN (DIAP)

The NSW Department of Justice (DoJ) is strongly committed to protecting the rights of individuals with a disability. They are working to ensure that all their clients can access the services that the Department provides, including courts and tribunals in NSW, fairly and equitably. They have developed a range of resources and information for people with disability to assist them in accessing the services that the Department of Justice provides.

To demonstrate commitment to providing access for people with disability, the DoJ have developed a Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2015-18 (DIAP) (available at http://www.justice.nsw.gov.au/diversityservices/Pages/divserv/ds_aboutus.aspx).

New Integrated Carer support system.

The Australian Government is developing an Integrated Plan for Carer Support Services (the Plan) to better support and sustain the work of unpaid carers.

The first stage of the Plan included design and implementation of Carer Gateway (<https://www.carergateway.gov.au>). Established in December 2015, Carer Gateway is a national website and contact centre that provides carers with practical information and support and helps them connect with local support services. An important second stage of the Plan involves developing a new integrated carer support service system through a co-design process. The purpose of the new service system is to deliver supports that reduce carer strain, increase carer well-being and support them to continue in their caring role.

The Government has developed a discussion paper that sets out the types of services that could be delivered under a future service delivery model and they want to hear your views on the discussion paper. More information is at <https://engage.dss.gov.au/designing-the-new-integrated-carer-support-service>. Submissions are due by 5pm 2 June 2016.



COPMI: The role of early childhood services in helping families where a parent has a mental illness Latest evidence-based research summary

Some quick facts:

Between 21 - 23% of Australian children have at least one parent living with a mental illness.

These children have a greater likelihood than other children of developing their own mental health issues.

Early childhood services are an ideal setting for prevention and early intervention.

Various resources are available for early childhood educators and caregivers working in this area.

The latest 'GEMS' evidence-based research summary has been released. The summary focuses on evidence regarding the role of early childhood services in supporting families where a parent has a mental illness.

Read about how ECEC services can help parents and families by working in partnership with them (and other services) and by building staff capacity.

See the research summary at <http://www.copmi.net.au/professionals-organisations/what-works/research-summaries-gems/gems-edition22>.

The COPMI (Children of Parents with a Mental Illness) and KidsMatter webinar 'Supporting children of parents with a mental illness, in schools and early childhood services' is also available at <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/health-and-community/professional-development/webinars/webinar-5?cldee=c2VhbkbkXNhyYmlsaXR5dHJ1c3Qub3JnLmF1>.

FRIDAY ESSAY: ON TELLING THE STORIES OF CHARACTERS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

In 2014 I was asked, by my then university, to present in a jovial end of year debate. My partner, brother and a few of my close friends came to watch. The auditorium was packed. There were university bigwigs on both teams. I was pretty nervous. It went well, although many of the debaters thought they were presenting in a real debate and the rest (myself included) had only prepared jokes.

At the end there was a question and answer section. Some members of the audience asked jokey questions relating to our topic. The university bigwigs answered them. Everyone laughed.

Then my brother stood up and asked why there were no intellectually disabled people on the panel, or as students, or as lecturers. He asked why there were hardly any people with Down syndrome in books, or songs, or plays, or movies. All the art forms we taught and sought to understand at the university.

The auditorium fell silent. Maybe because of the question, but probably because my brother has Down syndrome.

One of the university bigwigs stood up, cleared his throat, and gave as sensitive a response as he could.

"Integration and representation are important issues but this is a forum for levity," he said, "and your question is not one to be laughed at."

My brother sat down. His question went unanswered.

When the debate was over my brother and I had the first real fight we'd ever had. I said he was a grandstander and an attention hog and that these were the people who could give me a job (or not) when I finished my PhD. Why did he have to ask that question, I asked. Why couldn't he just shut up. Why couldn't he just fit in? I said all the stuff I had never said before and had never even allowed myself to think.

Afterwards, I felt terrible and apologised. My brother said it was okay and that he was sorry too. We got over it.

But his question remained unanswered.

If integration and representation were important issues, like the university bigwig had said, why had no one tried to answer my brother's question?

Maybe because as Leonard Davis wrote in his 2002 book *Bending Over Backwards* there's, a strange and really unaccountable silence

when the issue of disability is raised (or, more to the point, never raised)... the concept of disability has been relegated to a sideshow, a freak show at that, far away from the academic midway of progressive ideas and concerns.

The thing is, I still can't answer all the questions my brother asked that day.

I don't know why there is such a culture of low expectation towards people with Down syndrome specifically. I don't know why those expectations feed into our cultural understanding of what people with Down syndrome achieve, especially when so many of us have lived experience that says otherwise.

I don't know why there were no students, or lecturers with Down syndrome at my university that day. But, after five years of research and study, I can answer why there are very few representations of Down syndrome in narrative fiction.

So, my brother Charlie, pretend I didn't yell at you that day after the debate. Pretend I said this instead...

For the rest of the excellent article go to <http://theconversation.com/friday-essay-on-telling-the-stories-of-characters-with-down-syndrome-56436>.

Reviewing the National Disability Advocacy Program

Ideas on what the National Disability Advocacy Program should look like under the NDIS are being sought. The Department of Social Services (DSS) has released a discussion paper, with submissions due by 7 June.

Under the program, 58 advocacy organisations currently receive a total of \$16.4 million to provide advocacy services across Australia. As they are currently structured, there are gaps in geographic coverage; some types of advocacy are not available to a large number of people with disability; and quality is uneven. There are five organisations funded for legal advocacy but they are all located in Victoria.

Last year, DSS consulted on the

Disability Advocacy Framework. A report on this has not yet been released.

This discussion paper seeks input on:

- * models of advocacy
- * how to improve access to advocacy
- * how to build a body of evidence on advocacy
- * how to improve coordination on systemic issues
- * the NDIS interface and managing conflict of interest

More information is at <https://engage.dss.gov.au/national-disability-advocacy-program>.

Commuters with disabilities ask why are their taxi vouchers on hold but Uber rules changed overnight

Last December, Transport Minister Andrew Constance promised that the \$30 cap on taxis fare subsidies paid under the scheme would be doubled to \$60. People with Disabilities groups say they can't understand how new rules for ride sharing services like Uber were approved overnight but the change in the taxi disability subsidy has to wait until 2017. Both changes were announced from the same review of the taxi industry. More at <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/disabled-commuters-ask-why-are-their-taxi-vouchers-on-hold-but-uber-rules-changed-overnight-20160416-go7ynk.html>.

What does sex-ed look like if you have a disability?

Jarrold McGrath teaches a student about private and public body parts during class.

For those with a disability, particularly an intellectual one, understanding the nuances of sex can be hard.

And it can be difficult for the teachers too. Insight looks at how they tackle the subject and the issues that come with it.

Nathan McGrath first became interested in sex the same way many other teenagers and young adults do: through porn.

His attraction to women soon found him looking for a partner of his own, and he took to dating sites and social media.

But his family noticed a worrying trend: conversations that Nathan thought were private were appearing publicly on his Facebook account, and there was some inappropriate interaction with women online.

With a mild intellectual disability, it has been difficult for him to fully understand the right way to express his attraction and sexual interests.

His experience is part of a significant knowledge gap in many communities about how to educate disabled people about what is already a complex human issue: sex.

In the past, Nathan hadn't had much luck with sex education. His father, Dennis, once took him to a class where the teaching was a little abstract.

"The guy came out with a big blackboard and he wrote a big 'V' and said that's the female part and he wrote a big 'P' and he put an arrow pointing to each other and that was it," Dennis tells Insight's

Jenny Brockie.

"It didn't enlighten anyone at all. With Nathan's disability, it's intellectual so you can't go to an open forum and explain it in this big open manner," says Dennis.

Luckily, Nathan's younger brother Jarrold was uniquely qualified to help: he is a pastoral care teacher at The Woden School in Canberra, a school for children with disabilities, and part of his teaching involves taking students through the ins and outs of sexuality.

"To start best is early," says Jarrold, explaining how every year group at the school is taught sexual safety as a core component in term one's curriculum.

"It's assessing that understanding of consent, putting it into different contexts and repeating it over the years in a variety of contexts," he says.

Alongside consent, he also teaches about private and public body parts, which he says is particularly important for intellectually disabled people who require personal care.

"They need a level of understanding around public and private parts of the body and the consent involved when people do provide that personal care ... because unfortunately they are vulnerable to abuse in some of those situations."

Jarrold says helping Nathan feel comfortable expressing his desires to his family, whether relationship or sexual, is also important.

In turn, Jarrold has been more open with his experiences - including the importance of contraception - to help Nathan understand normal sexual behaviour.

Liz Dore is a relationships counsellor who works with people with disabilities. She saw a void in sex education and started workshops and classes for her clients.

"It's important they understand and use these simple resources about what's good sex, what's bad sex, what's legal," she says.

"Some parents are very proactive, and that's wonderful, but then others are referred when something goes wrong."

Mary McMahon falls on the 'proactive' side of things. Her son, Charitha de Silva, is one of Dore's patients and also identifies as gay.

"We've always been an open family and he's always felt that he could talk about sex," says Mary, though notes his sessions with Dore and courses with FRANS Inc. have been immeasurably helpful.

She has also done her own bit, helping Charitha understand the realities of porn and managing his expectations about "the size of various bits and pieces."

Mary, too, though, sees a gap in general education around sex for people with disabilities.

"I think it's because there's so much else that [teachers] think they need to address ... I think a lot of people like to think that people with disabilities don't have any sex urges so it's not important," she says on Insight.

For the rest of the article about this episode of SBS Insight program, and to see the show, go to <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/insight/article/2016/04/08/what-does-sex-ed-look-if-you-have-disability>.

DESIGN OF ADE SOCIAL IMPACT MEASUREMENT TOOL NOW UNDERWAY

In December 2015, NDS proposed a campaign to promote the social and economic benefits of Australian Disability Enterprises. The campaign will develop a new brand; equip ADEs with materials to communicate with their local MPs and media; and promote procurement from ADEs among governments and commercial businesses.

A key feature of the campaign will be the provision of a Social

Impact Measurement Tool to participating ADEs. Following a recent Expression of Interest, management consultant firm Eziway has been selected to develop the tool, which will be used to provide evidence-based measures of the social and economic impact of ADEs including benefits provided by supported employment; value of the work provided for customers of ADEs; and total economic contribution made by the ADE

sector.

The tool will help ADEs accurately measure and communicate their social impact to a range of stakeholders including commercial customers, people with disability and their families, government, philanthropic and corporate entities. The tool will be launched at the NDS Disability at Work Conference, to be held at the National Convention Centre in Canberra on 30-31 May 2016.

NDIS Update



NDIA Housing Innovation Showcase

The NDIA recently held the first NDIS Housing Showcase event at Olympic Park in Sydney on Wednesday 6 April 2016. The showcase demonstrated and discussed nine different models of housing and support for people with disability, presented by not for profits, parent cooperatives, housing providers and support providers.

For more information go to <http://www.ndis.gov.au/ndis-housing-innovation-showcase>.



A NEW APPROACH FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

The NDIA has announced a new approach to early intervention services for young children. For the first time, a nationally-consistent approach to supporting children with developmental delay or disability will exist with the release of the National Disability Insurance Scheme's (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) Approach.

A key element, currently being trialled in the Nepean Blue Mountains area is the creation of 'access partners'.

Access partners will be experienced early childhood intervention service providers who work with a family to determine the appropriate supports for their child (0 to 6 years). This could include the provision of information,

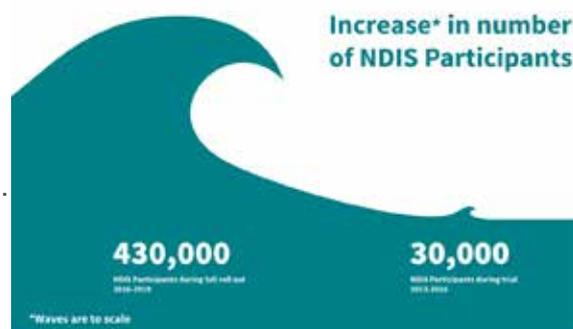
emotional support or referral to a mainstream service; or it could include short-to-medium-term supports or longer-term intensive supports. Where intensive supports are required, the access partner will complete a support plan and submit it to the NDIA for approval. Once approved, the family will select the early intervention provider with whom they wish to work.

A webinar was held in April on the NDIS approach to Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI). You can now watch the webinar at <http://livestream.ssc.gov.au/ndis/5april2016>.

For more information go to www.ndis.gov.au/news/ndia-announce-first-nationally-consistent.

Changes to the NDIS

Disability Loop has published an article explaining recent changes to the NDIS Board and what they could mean for people with disability, their families and carers. Go to http://www.disabilityloop.org.au/news/do_board_changes_matter.html for the full article.



Michael finds his voice

If you had asked Adelaide mum, Mary, three years ago, if her two-year-old son Michael would ever speak, attend a regular school or have friends, her answer would have been no.

"I really thought Michael was destined for a sad life but now, at age five, with all the supports we receive through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), he's started at our local primary school; he's never quiet and he's got parties and playdates galore. It's just incredible," she said. By age two, Michael still wasn't talking.

"At that point, we started seeing a speech pathologist. We received some government support, but it was limited so we had to pay the extra, which was costly. Thankfully three months later, Michael was part of the first NDIS intake."

Mary said National Disability Insurance

Agency (NDIA) staff were wonderful, they helped her, and her husband Kevin, understand what supports Michael would benefit from and together they developed a plan.

"We included weekly speech therapy, a psychologist and an occupational therapist (OT) who came out to the house to work with Michael. It was great," Mary said.

"It wasn't long after we started to see a real change. It was like the cogs in Michael's brain were finally ticking over in terms of how to get his sounds out. He started with around 20 words, like ma and da – not necessarily proper words but still they were sounds.

"Our goal was to get him to put two words together and it happened within six months. It may sound silly, a child at three saying two words, but it was a huge improvement and exciting for us."

Mary said the great thing about Michael's NDIS plan is they can adapt it to suit his changing needs.

"We've reintroduced the OT to focus on his fine motor skills because we've noticed he's struggling a bit," she said.

Now, two and a half years on, Michael continues to astound his parents with his development.

"Recently he spoke at the school assembly. It was one line but he had enough courage to get up in front of the entire school. I was terrified for him but he got up and did it. It was huge," Mary said.

"I attribute his success to the NDIS and being able to get the services and supports we need.

"We had struggled initially with what supports to get, and how to teach him to talk and play but now being able to access the right supports has been life changing for us," she said.

Confusion over definition of psychosocial disability

A survey conducted by the ACT Mental Health Consumer Network has found that a lot of people with a mental illness are not familiar with the term 'psychosocial disability', which is used by the NDIS for participants who are accessing support on the basis of a mental illness.

Terri Warner, chair of the network, said a psychosocial disability related to the way a person with a mental illness was able to interact with the world – something that could vary widely from

person to person.

"You may have a person with a generalised anxiety disorder who is able to work full-time, interact socially and have relationships with their friends and the community, and you can have someone with the same diagnosis who cannot leave their house," she said.

"So the person in that first example would not have a psychosocial disability, but the person in the second example certainly would."

Funding for 500-900 New Properties

"We finally have all the pieces of the NDIS Housing puzzle, no more large group homes and the financing arrangements we have waited so long to know."

In early April the NDIA released a Position Paper on Draft Pricing and Payments. The Position Paper sets out a draft position on key aspects of housing in the NDIS – including how much the NDIA will pay, how payments will be made and how organisations can register for NDIS housing payments. The NDIA's housing funding will begin to be released from 1 July 2016.

In an excellent article, Luke Bo'sher explains the complex detail in the Pricing & Payments Position Paper. For the full article go to www.disabilityservicesconsulting.com.au/funding-for-500-900-new-properties-every-year.

Transition to NDIS – Information available on the DSS website

The NDIS will change the way funding provided by a range of existing Commonwealth disability and carer programmes.

Some of the programs include Disability Employment Assistance, Better Start for Children with Disability, Mental Health Respite: Carer Support, Mobility Allowance, Continence Aids Payment Scheme and Partners in Recovery.

Information about the 17 Commonwealth programmes affected by the transition is available on the DSS website at <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programmes-services/for-people-with-disability/national-disability-insurance-scheme/transition-of-commonwealth-programmes-to-the-national-disability-insurance-scheme-ndis>.

NDIS PRICING DISCUSSION PAPER

The NDIA has released a discussion paper seeking input into price reviews on Supported Independent Living and Group-based community, social and recreational activities. The Agency is requesting advice on the definitions of these supports and how intensity and complexity can be measured and reflected in prices.

For more information, and to get a copy of the discussion paper, go to <http://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/pricing-and-payment/ndis-price-reviews-personal-care>.

ORGANISATION REGISTRATION KIT

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) has streamlined the provider or organisation registration process for new and existing applications for registration. There are a number of resources and guides on how to register as a provider for the NDIS. For more information go to <http://www.ndis.gov.au/document/provider-registration-kit>.

Transfer of NSW disability services to the non-government sector

To support the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the NSW Government is transferring all of its specialist disability services to the trusted and experienced non-government sector by July 2018.

Transferring disability services to the non-government sector will give people with disability greater choice, and support a strong and diverse disability services market in NSW.

To date, the NSW Government has consulted extensively with people with disability, their families, carers and providers about the process. More than 160 family/client forums and market soundings have been held right across NSW.

The NSW Government has announced the next stage of the transfer, with an Expression of Interest (EOI) opening in May.

The EOI process will allow non-government providers to give feedback about the services that interest them, their capability and capacity to deliver those services, and how they propose to deliver those services. Following the EOI, a formal procurement process will select new providers.

The EOI will open on 16 May 2016 and close on 24 June 2016 at 11am AEST. For more information go to <http://ndis.nsw.gov.au/about-ndis-nsw/transfer-of-nsw-disability-services/>.

When it's OK to use the C Word

It's pretty clear that the majority of the disability sector just doesn't relate to the language of business. We see it all the time in our consulting work – when we talk about things like cash flow and working capital, we're met with glassy eyes. The articles we write on marketing are always the least popular. And when we drop the C word into conversation with providers, it often goes down poorly.

But despite what people might say, Customer is not a dirty word. We reckon it's actually a pretty good one – and here's why.

Thinking (and talking) like a business does not make you the Wolf of Wall Street.

Marketing is a pretty alien concept to most in the disability sector. When people think of marketing, they think of fat cats smoking cigars, brainstorming ways of selling more Coca-Cola to children. Many disability staff see a shift from "person" to "customer" as part of a dehumanising process of exploiting people for profit, reducing it all down to focus on financial relationships.

There's two major problems with this perspective. The first is that it is built on the idea that doing good and doing well financially are mutually exclusive.....

For the rest of the excellent article by Evie Naufal go to <http://disabilityservicesconsulting.com.au/c-word>.

For Your Calendar...

65 Roses Challenge - May

65 Roses Day raises money for vital research and services that help extend the lives of Australians with Cystic Fibrosis. Over the last 30 years they have increased average life expectancy from 17 to 37. But it's still only 37. Your donation empowers them to do more. Contact 1800 635 008, website www.65rosesday.org.au.

International ME/CFS Awareness Day - 12 May

Awareness raising for Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a key activity of ME/CFS Australia (Victoria). The Wollongong ME/CFS/FM Support Group holds several meetings throughout the Illawarra. For more information see the Website www.mecfsfmwollongong.org, or call Support Line (03) 9791 2199.

International Nurses Day - 12 May

May 12 is the anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. You can find information about Florence Nightingale on the Florence Nightingale International Foundation web site. The International Council of Nurses commemorates this important day with the distribution of the International Nurses' Day (IND) Kit. More information www.icn.ch/publications/international-nurses-day/.

National Volunteer Week - 9 to 15 May

Volunteering Australia - This is the largest celebration for volunteers in Australia. It provides an opportunity to highlight the role of volunteers and to say thank you to the more than 5 million Australians who volunteer. Phone (03) 9820 4100, website www.volunteeringaustralia.org.

Schizophrenia Awareness Week - 15 to 21 May

Schizophrenia Awareness Week provides an opportunity for those who have Schizophrenia to share their experience and knowledge and help create a greater understanding of their needs and aspirations. Contact (08) 8221 5159, website www.sfnsw.org.au/Schizophrenia-Awareness-Week.

Australia's Biggest Morning Tea - 26 May

Your support will raise vital funds for cancer research, prevention and support services. Host a morning tea in your area. Website www.biggestmorningtea.com.au, phone 1300 65 65 85.

National Palliative Care Week - 22 to 28 May

Palliative Care Australia is the peak national organisation representing the interests and aspirations of all who share the ideal of quality care at the end of life for all. Phone 6232 4433, website www.palliativecare.org.au/default.aspx.

National Reconciliation Week - 27 May to 3 June

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) is celebrated across Australia each year between 27 May and 3 June. The dates commemorate two significant milestones in the reconciliation journey—the anniversaries of the successful 1967 referendum and the High Court Mabo decision. Contact 6273 9200, website www.reconciliation.org.au.

World MS Day - 25 May

Multiple sclerosis is one of the most common disabling neurological conditions amongst young adults in the northern hemisphere. Over two million people in the world have MS. The aims of World MS Day are to raise awareness and mobilise the global movement. Website www.worldmsday.org or contact 1800 177 591.

Macular Degeneration Awareness Week - 22 to 28 May

Promoting awareness of Macular Degeneration, Australia's leading cause of Blindness. Contact 1800 111 709, website www.mdfoundation.com.au.

White Wreath Day - 29 May

White Wreath Association - This day is held to remember loved ones who have taken their lives. Suicide is shockingly common, affecting almost every Australian family directly or indirectly. No community is unaffected. Contact phone 1300 766 177 or website www.whitewreath.com/id25.htm.