



Illawarra & Shoalhaven *DISABILITY NEWS*

Information about Disability and Services for People with Disabilities, their Families and Disability Service Providers

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Dec 2011



Never Judge a
Book by Its
Cover

2011 National
Disability Award
Winners

ABC Open: The
Moment Behind
the Photo Project

Tara-Jade Brown writes on the judgement that families can face from their communities. Photo: Tara-Jade's six-year-old son, Isaiah Muldoon-Brown, who has autism, extends his skills. Her story is on page 2.

A new name and a fresh look for this newsletter in 2012

The Illawarra and Shoalhaven Disability News will be called **Your Voice, Your Choice Newsletter** from Feb 2012.

We aim to provide information about a wide variety of services, issues and events for people with a disability, carers and service providers including local, state and national issues.

Feedback and Contributions are always welcome on 4295 9806 or at info@disabilitytrust.org.au

Season's Greetings

The staff and management would like to wish our readers a merry Christmas and a new year filled with well-being and prosperity.



Disability Information Assistance Line (DIAL)

Illawarra and Shellharbour

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

- Programs, aids and equipment
- Referral
- Self advocacy and support groups
- Forums and Workshops
- Illawarra and Shoalhaven Disability News - free monthly newsletter



Human Services
Ageing, Disability & Home Care

Phone 4255 8000 or email info@disabilitytrust.org.au.

Shoalhaven Information and Advocacy (SIA)

Kiama and Shoalhaven

Providing services for people with a disability, frail older people and their carers. Our services include:

- Information - We are a central point of contact for information provision about all programs and services
- Forums and workshops
- Individual advocacy and support
- Referral
- Counselling - short term access to local counselling services



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

Would you like to receive this newsletter in printed form or by email?



THE DISABILITY TRUST

Contact: The Disability Trust on info@disabilitytrust.org.au

100-102 Jardine Street Fairy Meadow NSW 2519

Postal: PO Box 395 Fairy Meadow NSW 2519

Phone: 4255 8000 or Fax: 4255 8088 Website:

www.disabilitytrust.org.au

The newsletter is prepared by the Information and Advocacy Service 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.

From page 1: Everyday things which people take for granted, can be difficult

Today is the day I have officially had enough. I am tired of constantly apologizing for my children's behaviour, of constantly explaining to people that my children have a disability, of being upset by other people every time I leave the house with my kids.

Raising children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is difficult, as is living with my own compounded self-judgement over my ability to parent them and give them what they need. I simply don't have enough room to carry your judgement as well.

I am writing this to the people who were in the waiting room at the doctor's surgery today, the parents at the park, the people eating out at restaurants, the people in the shopping centre. I am writing this to everyone who has, and ever will, come into contact with myself and my children.

My boys are NOT little brats, they are not "weird", they do not need stricter discipline and they do not need to "toughen up". I am not a bad mother and I do not need to give my boys a "good smack". My boys have a "hidden disability"; my boys have autism. What myself and my children need from you is understanding, not judgement. No more glares, no more whispering loudly about us, no more exaggerated sighs, no more openly hostile comments directed at us.

An Autism Spectrum Disorder is called a "hidden disability" because there is no physical sign that the person is "different" from the mainstream in any way. They have no wheelchair or physical characteristics that distinguish them, like those seen in Down Syndrome and various other disabilities. My boys just look like everyone else.

But the fact is that they are not like everyone else. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a developmental disorder, which affects the person in three key ways: communication, social interaction and restrictive and repetitive interests and activities. It's called a spectrum disorder, because autism can affect people in a myriad of different ways and its manifestations vary in severity from person to person.

Everyday things which people take for granted, can be difficult for ASD families and individuals. An activity which most children love like going to the park or the movie theatre, is never straightforward for us. We have to contend with sensory issues (sad fact: swings are not fun for everyone), impulse control, social challenges with other children, breaks in routine (routine is of the utmost importance to many ASD individuals), lack of understanding of social rules (you should not constantly squeal loudly in delight during a movie session) and the list goes on.

And this difficulty is compounded by the ignorance and constant judgement of other people. As a result, many ASD families feel isolated and many parents lose many of their friends due to lack of understanding and acceptance of their children.

Depression and anxiety among parents of ASD children has been found to be significantly higher than the rate experienced by both the general community and other parents of children with disabilities (Osslen et al, 2001, Singer GH, 2006).

Similarly depression is common in individuals with ASD, which can present itself in childhood (Stewart et al, 2006). Depression is often furthered by the isolation in which many ASD families live and the ignorant judgement of both strangers and other family members alike. And so, it is not unwarranted to find that the main friends of many ASD families are other ASD families. I myself are one of these lucky people, and our quality of life as a family has greatly benefited from forming strong friendships with other ASD families.

When we get together with our children no one bats an eyelid when one of the kids launches into a full-blown meltdown, and for a change someone will try to help you settle your little one down! We don't have a fear of rejection if one of our kids bites another or even if they covertly manage to smear poo over the surfaces of a friend's bathroom. These are just the realities of our lives, and we are able to laugh together, or cry together, as we clean up the mess.

I don't expect strangers on the street to offer such support but I do expect them to use their humanity. I want everyone who reads

this to re-evaluate how they react to a screaming five-year-old in a crowded shopping centre; to not automatically assume that this is the behaviour of a “naughty” child or the result of poor parenting. Maybe this child had ASD or some other form of disability. I want you to give that mother or father an understanding look and a friendly smile.

And for the love of all that is holy, if you see a parent running and screaming after a child, who has gotten out of their grasp and is sprinting towards traffic, stop that child! Be aware of “hidden disabilities”, and like the old adage says, never judge a book by its cover.

Source - Link Disability Magazine Oct 2011. Author, Tara-Jade. Subscriptions to Link can be done at www.linkonline.com.au or by phoning (08) 8210 3223.

Charge Syndrome Resource

“Why I Am Me” is a story about a boy called Sam who has Charge Syndrome. Written by Carry Ward and Marie Patterson with illustrations by Penny Levett, “Why I Am Me” is a must read for those whose lives are touched by a person with Charge.

Charge Syndrome is a recognizable (genetic) pattern of birth defects and an extremely complex syndrome, involving extensive medical and physical difficulties. More information can be found at this website www.chargesyndrome.org.au or contact Nicole Tebble Email: austcharge@gmail.com or ph 4956 8843.



Independent Living Support Initiative

Do you have a disability with low to moderate support needs? Do you have ageing parents/carers?

The NSW Government, through Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) has recognized a need to provide a more flexible approach to accommodation support options for people living in the Shoalhaven or wanting to live in the Shoalhaven.

If you are a person with a disability who wishes to live more independently, and you

live with ageing parents or carers, then the “Independent Living Support Initiative” could be for you.

House With No Steps will provide up to 35hours/week support to assist you to move from family-based living arrangements to more independent living arrangements through person centred planning, intensive living skills development and the development of effective support networks, including a circle of support.

Contact Mark de Jong on 0478 493 899 or mdejong@hwns.com.au for an information kit. This will need to be completed and returned to House With No Steps. There are limited places available for this program.

New Transition to Retirement Resource

NSW Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, was joined by the Member for Penrith Stuart Ayres to launch a new resource to help older people with a disability make the transition from work to retirement.

The Transition to Retirement DVD, produced by the Australian Foundation for Disability (AFFORD) with the University of Sydney and funded by the NSW Government, has been designed to help people with a disability and service providers meet the challenges of this important life change.

The DVD will be distributed by AFFORD and will also be available through its website and that of the University of Sydney.

Men4Life

A support group for men with any problems relating to personal problems, relationship breakdown, separation, child contact, loneliness, workplace issues or money hassles. A place where you can share experiences and find ways to get help. Always confidential and free pizzas first Monday of the month!

Final meeting is 12th Dec. First meeting of next year is 17th Jan 2012 (Tuesday nights)
Where – Nowra Youth Centre, Cnr Kinghorne and Plunkett St, Nowra
Contacts: Ian 0422 692 233, Dave 0431 549 593, email: Men4LifeHelp@gmail.com

CatholicCare Family Support Program

Wollongong Workshops Term 1, 2012

- Parenting Children with a Disability
- Keeping Kids in Mind - post separation
- Rollercoaster - post separation
- My kids and me - for parents who have had children removed from their care
- 123 Magic & Emotion Coaching
- Grassroots Parenting
- Lift - for adults with anxiety / depression

Nowra Workshops Term 1, 2012

- My kids and me - for parents who have had children removed from their care
- Grassroots Parenting
- Poppy Playgroup - for mothers with mental health issues

For bookings or information call:

Wollongong 4227 1122

Nowra 4421 8248



New Research Project



autism spectrum AUSTRALIA

Are you aged 18 or over with a diagnosis of High Functioning Autism or Asperger's Disorder? You are invited to take part in an exciting new

research project.

Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) is conducting a research project about the life experiences and support needs of adults with high functioning autism and Asperger's Disorder. The goal of the project is to raise awareness and improve the kinds of services and supports offered to people with autism spectrum disorders in Australia.

We would like to invite you to contribute to this research by completing an anonymous questionnaire.

The questionnaire will cover a range of topics

including your health, your experiences of education and work, your friendships, and aspects of your daily life. You will have an opportunity to tell us about your hopes and plans for the future, and about the supports that you need to achieve your goals. With your help, we can make a difference.

If you would like to take part in this research please respond by 31st Dec. Visit either www.autismspectrum.org.au to download the questionnaire or contact Susanna Baldwin, Aspect Research Officer, on 8868 8510 or sbaldwin@autismspectrum.org.au to request a paper copy of the questionnaire.

If you are not sure whether you have high functioning autism, please contact Anthony Warren, ASD Consultant at Aspect, on 8977 8302 or awarren@autismspectrum.org.au for further advice.

Report card damns disabled quality of life

Australians living with a disability have the worst quality of life in the developed world and their employment opportunities have hit rock bottom, according to a report issued today.

Almost half of Australians with a disability live in or near a state of poverty. Globally, Australia is at the bottom of the heap, ranked last out of 27 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Those with a disability are 2.7 times more likely to be poor. The nation fares little better in employment opportunities, 21st out of 29 OECD countries.

The report, Disability Expectations - Investing In A Better Life: A Stronger Australia, showed there was an employment rate of 39.8 per cent for people with disabilities compared with 79.4 per cent for those without a disability.

The former NSW health minister and national campaign director for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Every Australian Counts, John Della Bosca, said: "We should aim to leapfrog our way to the top of those rankings.

Fairness is part of our national character, and if we adopt the positions in this report, there is no reason why we can't."

The report, produced by PricewaterhouseCoopers, carried a message of support from the Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, who said it highlighted the need for "a cultural shift in attitudes towards Australians living with a disability; from passive sympathy and understanding, to actively encouraging and championing a better quality of life."

The findings bolstered the need for a crystallised commitment from the federal, state and territory governments for the National Disability Insurance Scheme with clear funding outlines, Mr Della Bosca said.

A PricewaterhouseCoopers partner, John Walsh - who is quadriplegic - said it was clear the disability network was broken. "To bring about change, we need more than a funding solution. Change needs to occur at every level of the system - from people with disability and their families to specialist disability support organisations, to mainstream service providers."

Source - Jessica Wright, Nov 30, 2011, Sydney Morning Herald.

Work and Development Orders scheme (WDOs)

Are you / your clients struggling to pay off their fines?

Unpaid fines can result in increasing debt. Now there is a simple way to support people struggling with fines debt. WDOs allows eligible people, such as people in severe economic hardship, people who have a mental illness, intellectual disability or people who are homeless to work off unpaid fines through training, voluntary work or treatment.

Legal Aid NSW provides legal help to assist clients and organisations to get signed up to WDOs. If your organisation would like more information about becoming an 'approved provider' for WDOs call Francesca Ciantar on 9219 6328 or email WDO@legalaid.nsw.gov.au. Free legal advice on fines is available at your nearest Legal Aid NSW.

Qantas Carer Concession



Nican administers the Qantas Carer Concession Card on behalf of Qantas.

The Qantas Carer Concession Card is issued to people with a disability and high level support needs who require the full-time assistance of a carer whilst they are on the plane. A person is eligible if they need to have one-on-one support when seated on the plane for assistance with meals/drinks, transferring to the bathroom, orientation, communicating with the flight staff, etc. A person would not be eligible if they only need assistance boarding the plane, or when they arrive at their destination.

Qantas Carer Concession cardholders and their nominated carer will receive the following discounts for Qantas domestic travel within Australia.

For Qantas Carer Concession Cardholders, 10% discount on domestic Economy Class fares. For Nominated Carers, 50% discount on domestic Economy Class fares.

Business Class Travel for Qantas Carer Concession Cardholders: 50% off J class Business Class Fares when D class are available. For Nominated Carers, 50% off J class Business Class Fares when D class are available.

Please call 6241 1220 for more information or refer to Nican website www.nican.com.au.

Mental Health Carer Survey

The online Mental Health Carer Survey 2011-12 is available now to all mental health carers and will remain open until Christmas Day. If you are a mental health carer please complete the survey or if you work with carers please pass on this link:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/569049/Mental-Health-Carers-Survey-2011-12>

The survey is part of a cumulative research project by the Mental Health Council of Australia into the lives of mental health carers. Each year mental health carers are asked how their life has been affected by

being a mental health carer during the previous 12 months. The findings are published and widely distributed to politicians, government departments, carers, consumers, workers, clinicians and bureaucrats. Mental health policy and projects are influenced by what the collective voice of carers has to say about their life and the life of the person they care for. The survey takes 23 minutes to complete.

If you would prefer to enter details on a paper survey please contact Carolyn.Conaghan@MHCA.org.au who will be happy to email a printable version.

Source - NSW CAG Issue 27 2011

Information Sessions for Carers in 2012

Do you care for someone who has an illness, disability or is frail aged? Do you realize that this makes you a CARER?

Learn about:

- The impacts of caring and how this can affect your life
- Services and supports including respite, practical help at home, entitlements and self care
- Carer support networks
- Financial and legal information

When: 3rd Tuesday each month. 17 Jan, 21 Feb, 20 Mar, 17 April, 15 May 19 June, 17 July, 21 Aug, 18 Sept, 16 Oct and 20 Nov

Where: Block C, Level 8, Seminar Room 1NB (17 Jan and 15 May will be held in Block C, Level 5, Allied Health Department)

Time: 10.00am to 11.00am

Cost: Free

If you would like more information or require an interpreter to attend the information session, contact the Wollongong Hospital Social Work department on 4253 4501. Interpreters need to be booked in advance.

There is no need to book for these sessions.



Mental Health Services these Holidays

These are the Mental Health Services in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District that can be accessed for assistance over the Christmas and New Year holidays:

24 Hour Assistance Line Phone Number: 1300 552 289

Clients can also be seen at the Emergency Departments at the Wollongong Hospital, Shellharbour Hospital, Shoalhaven Hospital and Milton Ulladulla Hospital at any time.

ILLAWARRA:

AATT (Acute Assertive Treatment Team) – Ph: 4223 8001 (after Hours follow the prompts) This service is based at Port Kembla Hospital and operates 24 hours / 7 days a week (including public holidays) although no home visits after 4pm.

In an emergency ring 000. This is NOT an “Immediate Response Crisis Team”. The Team covers Helensburgh to Gerroa for assessment / assertive follow-up or referral as appropriate. (Separate service covers the Shoalhaven). All new referrals now go through AATT. You can always contact them for advice.

SCCT (Shellharbour Care Coordination Team) – Ph: 4252 0700. This service is based at 14 Churchill Ave, Warrawong. It runs Monday to Friday but will be closed all Public Holidays. It covers Port Kembla to Gerroa.

WCCT (Wollongong Care Coordination Team) – Ph: 4254 1500. This service is based at 1-5 Atchison St, Wollongong. It runs Monday to Friday but will be closed all Public Holidays. It covers Helensburgh to Farmborough Heights.

SHOALHAVEN:

Shoalhaven Community Mental Health Team – Ph: 4424 6430

Ulladulla Community Mental Health Team – Ph: 4455 1840

These services run Monday to Friday but will be closed all Public Holidays.

2011 National Disability Awards Winners



Nine outstanding individuals and organisations were honoured in Late November for

their work to improve the lives of people with disability at the annual National Disability Awards.

Speaking at a special gala dinner in Canberra, the Prime Minister said the awards recognised outstanding Australians who have made a real difference to the lives of people with disabilities.

The calibre of both the finalists and winners highlights just how hard Australians are working to raise awareness and support for people with disability.

Nominations for the awards more than doubled this year, with more than 400 received from community and not-for-profit organisations, businesses and local governments and disability advocates across the country.

The National Disability Awards form part of the Australian Government's celebration of the United Nations' International Day of People with Disability which is held each year on 3 December. For more information on the Awards go to www.idpwd.com.au/awards/national-disability-awards-ceremony-2011/.

The Award winners were:

Prime Minister's Outstanding Achievement Award — Mr John Walsh AM: John served as Associate Commissioner to the Productivity Commission in its Inquiry into long-term care and support for people with disability in Australia.

Minister's Lifelong Achievement Award — Frank Hall-Bentick, Richmond, Vic: A tireless, grassroots campaigner for the rights of people with disability, Frank has contributed to improving human rights for people with disability for more than thirty years.

Young Disability Challenge Award — Katrina Lancaster, Parramatta, NSW: Katrina

was the recipient of the 2011 Parramatta Lord Mayor's Youth Award, completed a Bachelor of Community Welfare, and was named Deaf Australia's 2009 Deaf Youth of the Year for her work and volunteer commitments with the deaf community.

Business Award — Alcoa Aluminium Smelter, Geelong, Vic: Partnering with Kommercial, a local Australian Disability Enterprise, Alcoa Point Henry provides supported employment for more than 30 people with disability.

Local Government Award — City of Mandurah, WA: The City of Mandurah is working closely with Intework to create exciting and rewarding jobs for 44 young people with intellectual disability.

Social Inclusion Award — Technical Aid to the Disabled Incorporated, ACT: TADACT is a not-for-profit organisation, which specialises in creating or modifying equipment for people with disability.

Inclusive and Accessible Communities Award — Housing Choices Australia, Melbourne, Vic: Housing Choices Australia has delivered more social housing over the past two years than any other community housing provider in Victoria.

Health and Wellbeing Award — Parks Victoria, Melbourne, Vic: Parks Victoria has actively embraced universal design and access principles, including introducing all-terrain wheelchair equipment in some parks and a Sailability program.

Yooralla Media Award for Excellence — Nance Haxton, Ethelton, SA: Nance is seen as one of Australia's most lauded radio journalists and works for the ABC in South Australia.

PricewaterhouseCoopers Report on the NDIS

PricewaterhouseCoopers have released a Report into "What needs to Change if the NDIS needs to make a meaningful difference" called "Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia".

In order to realise reform, the NDIS will need to be implemented in conjunction with strong

policy, whole-of-government accountability, and culture change. In their report PricewaterhouseCoopers propose four key principles that should underpin the future development of disability support in Australia – fairness by way of equal rights; facilitation and choice in exercising rights; and inclusion through the removal of obstacles to access and participation.

The report demonstrates the interest from outside the not for profit disability services sector in being involved with the NDIS when it is established. For more information and to download a copy go to www.pwc.com.au/industry/government/publications/disability-in-australia.htm.

Wheelchair Rugby League Development Camp



Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, has today opened the 1st NSW Wheelchair Rugby League (NSWWRL) Development Camp.

The 2011/12 Wheelchair Rugby League competition has grown to include two new teams, 40 new players and sponsorship support from six NRL clubs.

For further information about Don't DIS My ABILITY partner events and activities, visit www.dontdismyability.com.au.

Should we care about International Day of People with a Disability?

With so many days on our calendars dedicated to one cause or another, do we really need to pay attention to International Day of People with a Disability? Craig Wallace thinks so.

I wonder how many Australians - or even Ramp Up readers - realise that 3 December is the International Day of People with a Disability? That it's a UN Day mandated around the world and that it's the only day officially dedicated to all people with disability, even though we make up around one fifth of the world's population.... Article continues at www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/11/30/3379778.htm.

Source: ABC Ramp Up website, 30 Nov 2011.

Economic benefit of NDIS estimated at more than \$9 Billion

The National Disability Insurance Scheme could have a positive impact on the economy to the tune of more than \$9 billion if it helped a small percentage of people with a disability into work, a new report has found.

And that could be just the beginning - the report argues that if a small number (7%) of carers returned to work the impact would increase by a further 8%. A report released by National Disability Services supports the conclusions of the Productivity Commission which found the economic benefits of the NDIS exceeded its annual cost.

Source: NDS News Update, 24 November 2011.

Senate Report supports changes to the ESS tender

The Senate Committee report into Disability Employment Services (see it here www.apf.gov.au/senate/committee/eet_ctte/disability_employment/report/index.htm) was released in late November. The report recognises the costly and disruptive impact of the proposed DES-ESS tender process.

The Senate Committee accepts that the tender process is premature and likely to be disruptive and recommends that it be delayed for 12 months, the DES contract be extended from three to five years and recommended limiting the tender to ESS providers with Star Ratings below the national median.

Source: NDS News Update, 28 Nov 2011

ABC Open: The Moment Behind the Photo



For this year's International Day regional people with disability were invited to share stories through a

project offered through ABC Open and supported by Nican for IDPwD called The Moment Behind the Photo.

The idea is simple-people are invited to find a personal photo which means something to and share it online, with a text description, or with audio. Maybe they vividly remember the moment the photo was taken, or what was happening outside the frame, or maybe the photo speaks volumes about a particular time in your life. ABC Open producers work in regional centres around Australia to help people learn the skills to get involved.

More than 50 IDPwD ABC Open projects, see them at <http://open.abc.net.au/projects/moment-behind-the-photo-53jq3ls/contributions/tags/idpwd>, have been produced as part of ABC Open for IDPwD and these projects are being showcased as part of events for International Day in 2011.

The Disability Trust Oak Flats Transition to Work group, in conjunction with the ABC Open project and as part of their computer course at Kiama Community College, has produced an excellent short video called "Life without boundaries". They took portraits and interviewed each other about their lives. The result is a heart-warming insight into each person. They want to show everyone that young Australians with disabilities are like young Australians everywhere - they like sport, music, social media, films, working, having fun, and they love their families. a copy of "Life Without Boundaries" is at <http://youtu.be/sx6NjZa6mQ>.

The video was selected to be screened in Canberra on Monday 28th for the launch of International Day of People with Disabilities and was broadcast that week on the ABC News 24 Channel next week.

Disability: the year in review

Disability: the year in review. Disability Discrimination Commissioner Graeme Innes hands out the bouquets and brickbats for 2011.

Disability is the reality for one in five Australians. But despite those numbers, it flies under the radar. So let's look at the best and the worst in disability for 2011..... Article continues at www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/12/05/3383197.htm.

Source: ABC Ramp Up website, 5 December 2011.

Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability

The Australian Tertiary Education Network on Disability - ATEND, is the peak body for regional groups of service providers and consumers concerned with the education and employment needs of people with disabilities in post-secondary education throughout Australia. For further information please visit www.adcet.edu.au/AdcetResources/ATEND.chpx.

Disability Employment Australia

Disability Employment Australia is the peak industry body for Australia's Disability Employment Services (DES). Disability Employment Australia exists to represent the interests of our members at a national level to government and other stakeholders. They have a range of functions designed to support their members to achieve best practice service provision in their role to find employment outcomes for people with disability. For more information go to <http://disabilityemployment.org.au/about-us/>.

FaHCSIA staff phone numbers have changed

All staff from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) are now using VOiP phones and have new phone numbers. If you need to contact someone in FaHCSIA please call the switchboard on 1300 653 227.

Auslan included in Australian Curriculum

For the first time, Auslan will be included in the Australian Curriculum. The Federal Minister for School Education, Peter Garrett MP, has announced that all Australian students will be entitled to learn a language other than English in primary and secondary school, including Auslan. See here for the Media Release <http://ministers.deewr.gov.au/garrett/new-focus-languages-under-australian-curriculum>.

It is a great step forward that the Australian Government has recognised the value of Auslan (Australian Sign Language) in the school curriculum. Auslan is the official language in the Deaf community in Australia.

Many bilingual Deaf Australians have Auslan as their first language, with English as their second language. It may also encourage students to study Auslan and perhaps be a pathway to working with Auslan when they enter the workforce.

Bad to the bone; the new breed of advocate



Gary Kerridge thinks it's time for disability advocates to forget the "softly, softly" approach to social change and go hard,

or go home.

After a while, positive people, sick of being talked about, decided to intervene with an unambiguous message: these are our lives, our bodies, and our choices. So talk to us as if we matter. We are the reason you are here. In many ways, this approach has been the enduring hallmark of our response as HIV positive advocates. That it should be we, the people living with HIV and AIDS, who, where possible, represent ourselves, and speak for ourselves to government, in clinical research, or around any other table where significant decisions affecting our lives and health are likely to be taken. (Peter Cannavan, writing in *The Australian Health Consumer*)..... Article continues at www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/11/04/3355547.htm.

Source: ABC Ramp Up website, 4 November 2011.

Family and Community Services Annual Report 2010-11

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) Annual Report 2010-11 is now available at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/publications.

The FACS Annual Report has information about the department's performance across the portfolio, which includes the Aboriginal Housing Office, Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Businesslink, Community Services and Housing NSW, as well as summary information for Aboriginal Affairs, Juvenile Justice and the Office for Women's Policy.

The report outlines key information about our services and programs and achievements for the reporting period. Also published online are the FACS financial statements and details about funding to non-government organisations in 2010-11.

How a Professor Gave a Blind Student a New Outlook on Science

Amanda Lacy was frustrated with her physics class and ready to drop it. Ms. Lacy, a blind student, is a computer-science major who loves her classes but often struggles in them, not because she doesn't understand the material, but because she doesn't have access to adequate textbooks. The college provides blind students with digital copies of textbooks so they can listen to them on the computer or read them using an electronic Braille display. But the figures and graphs in Ms. Lacy's physics book don't easily translate the same way that text does.

When Ms. Lacy showed her digital textbook to her computer-science professor, Richard Baldwin, he was shocked, she said. He told her if someone didn't take her problem seriously there was no way she would make it through the course.

Full article at www.adcet.edu.au/View.aspx?id=8046.

For Your Calendar...

World AIDS Day - 1st Dec

World AIDS Day is one of the most globally recognised event of the year. World AIDS Day is celebrated across Australia to raise awareness in the community about the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. For more information go to www.worldaidsday.org.au

Opening of the Shellharbour office of The Disability Trust - 19th Dec

New site address— 11a/75 Cygnet Ave, Shellharbour City Centre.

Christmas Day - 25th Dec — Public Holiday

Boxing Day - 26th Dec— Public Holiday

New Year's Day - 1st Jan 2012 — Public Holiday

Australia Day - 26th Jan 2012 — Public Holiday

VALID Having A Say Conference - 8th to 10th Feb 2012

A Self Advocacy conference at Deakin University, VIC. For more information call 03 9416 4003 or go to www.valid.org.au

NDS Annual State Conference – 13th to 14th Feb 2012

At Swissotel, Sydney. We've asked Government to make NSW NDIS ready by 2014 and to support NGO services to be the provider of choice for people with disability and carers. Contact Miriam on 9256 3133.

New Resource – Meet Arabella

This is a story of Arabella's journey when she was diagnosed with eosinophilic oesophagitis.



It is based on a true story and written to bring understanding and comfort to anyone touched by eosinophilic disorders. Written by Sarah Gray, Illustrated by Peter Carnavas.

Meet Arabella



written by Sarah Gray illustrated by Peter Carnavas

Books are only \$10 and available from <http://www.ausee.org/apps/webstore/>

Inexpensive Christmas Gift Ideas

Here are just a few quick and inexpensive Christmas gift suggestions.

1. For a person who likes their cup of tea, why not see if you can buy a pretty, cheap, China cup and saucer. Wrap it in cellophane with a few Twining tea-bags in different flavours.
2. Check out the glassware. You can often buy a pair of beautiful crystal wine glasses (or even just one pretty glass, if shopping for a single person) for just a few dollars. Add a bottle of wine (or even a half bottle of wine) and you can have the whole lot for under \$10. Similarly, you can often pick up 'shot' glasses for \$1 each and then team these with a mini bottle of fancy liqueur like Bailey's Irish Cream.
3. Look out for a pretty platter, casserole dish or vase. Team them with a fresh fruit selection (for the platter); frozen homemade meal (for the casserole dish); or fresh flowers from your garden (for the vase).
4. Check out the scarves, belts and hats.
5. Another inexpensive idea is to make up a cookbook of your top 10 recipes. Type up the recipes – or even photocopy them, and put them in a presentation folder. You can choose a variety of recipes, or stick to one theme – such as Divine Cakes; Wicked Chocolate; One-pot Dinners; Easy Dinner Bakes; Desserts to Die For; Splendid Soups; and so on.

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