



DIVERSITY AND
DISABILITY
BE THE CHANGE YOU
WANT

DnD NEWSLETTER



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QUOTES OF THE DAY:

"Doubt is a pain too lonely to know that faith is his brother."

~Kahlil Gibran

"It is good to have an end to journey towards, it is the journey that matters, in the end."

~Ursula Le Guin

"People with high self esteem have it because they have overcome their challenges. They have been put to the test of life, overcome the problems and grown."

~David Jansen

"There is little sense in attempting to change external conditions, you must first change inner beliefs then outer conditions will change accordingly."

~Brian Adams

Latest DnD Activities

Dear DnD members,

Welcome to our new edition of the DnD newsletter. Hope you enjoy the articles and that you find our new support groups interesting to join.

DnD has already started a yoga group that meets every second Monday of the month at 10.30am for an hour at the Migrant Resource Centre in St Albans, opposite St Albans train station. This group is open to people of all abilities coming from an ethnic background and it is about building up confidence, harmony and relaxation among participants. The next session is on the 2nd of May at 10.30am.

The Discover the Artist in You support group is starting again this year after the huge success and participation last year. We are starting on Tuesday 3rd of May at 10.30am to 12.30pm till November every second Tuesday with the best artworks to go to an exhibition to coincide with the International Day of People with a Disability at a venue here in Brimbank. We are also looking at opportunities to exhibit the artwork at the ADEC's Art Ability in early December.

DnD is also running an information session in partnership with the Brotherhood of Saint Laurence on saving power, gas and water at home. If we consider that generally people with a disability have higher expenses for home electricity, water and gas because of their circumstances and equipments they use at home for their independence, this is an important session to be involved. This session will be here at the Migrant Resource Centre in St Albans on Thursday 5th of May 10am to 11.30am.

Last but not least, DnD is also running a training for organisations staff on direct payment and how to best support this new type of payment for ethnic people with a disability and their families in using this option for purchasing services. This session will run at the Multicultural Hub in Elizabeth st, city on the 27th of May at 9am.

For more information on all the above, please contact me on 93676044 or email me on christian@mrcnorthwest.org.au

When Disaster Strikes– A Blog

PAGE 2

Stella Young ABC Disability 14 Jan 2011

The devastating floods in Queensland this week are undoubtedly going to have lasting effects for an enormous number of people. People have lost personal property, their homes and, in some cases, their lives. The efforts needed to help people rebuild will be tremendous.

At times like these I can't help but think of my own preparedness, or lack thereof, in times of crisis. My ability to head for the hills in a flood or other natural disaster would be severely compromised by my disability. I thought about this a lot in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday Bushfires in Victoria. For many people with disabilities, accessible taxis are their only mode of transport. Most wheelchair users know that accessible cabs can't even be relied upon to get us to work on time, let alone to safety in a life-threatening situation.



Disability organisations such as Queenslanders with Disabilities Network (QDN) have certainly been concerned about the safety of people with disabilities in the floods. In a statement issued yesterday, Manager Fran Vicary urged emergency services to ensure that people with disabilities were rescued and their needs taken care of. Ms Vicary said, "Many people with a disability live alone in the community and rely on support workers to visit them and assist with activities of daily living. Many of these people are vulnerable and cannot use communication technology or self-evacuate."

QND are working with Disability and Community care Service to conduct a phone-around to all people with disabilities for whom the two organisations have contact details. Ms Vicary also identified the likelihood that when the flood subsides and the water recedes, people may be faced with damaged equipment and technology that is uninsured and extremely difficult to replace.

My first instinct in any situation that poses a threat to me is always to protect my wheelchair first. Don't get me wrong, I understand that we're talking about life-threatening situations here and I do value my life. Quite a bit actually. However, being without my wheelchair severely compromises my quality of life. For me, and for many other wheelchair users, having no chair means more than just an inability to get to work or to get out and see mates. It means an inability to get out of bed and around our own houses. The thought of irreparable damage to my chair terrifies me in a way that no creepy crawly or scary snake has ever managed to.

The potential loss for people with disabilities in a flood is significant. A wheelchair user could lose their mobility. Someone who uses an electronic communication device could lose their means of communication with other people. Someone who uses a ventilator that runs on electricity could lose their ability to breathe. (continued..)

*“My first instinct
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..I mentioned this to a friend of mine earlier in the week. He uses a ventilator for breathing assistance while sleeping. He said that when Y2K predicted the end of power supply as we know it, he was advised to admit himself to hospital where they have backup generators. I was gob smacked, but I thought back to my own concerns when the year 1999 became 2000, and my biggest worry was indeed my chair. Without power, I wouldn't be able to charge the battery. It seems like a very simple problem, but it's one that would have an enormous impact on my life.

I'm hopeful that all people, regardless of ability, were provided with the assistance they needed to evacuate to safety. Certainly, the Queensland government has not forgotten the need for the state's Deaf community to be informed. A number of Premier Anna Bligh's press conferences have been Auslan interpreted in the interests of, in Premier Bligh's own words, "making sure that everyone gets the best information as quickly and as efficiently as possible".

A significant number of people on Twitter commented on this inclusion of sign language. Hopefully in the future this will be the rule rather than the exception and people might not find it so noteworthy, but for now, this kind of discussion can only be a good thing. Just for starters, it sets a precedent for other governments when communicating emergency information.

A quick search of the internet tells me that there has been quite a bit of work done in the area of emergency management and people with disabilities. Interestingly, in May last year Emergency Management Queensland teamed up with the Australia Red Cross to produce a booklet and worksheets designed for people with disabilities. The booklet aims to educate and inform people about the proper course of action in the event of a natural emergency. There are a number of resources such as this and it seems that there is information and assistance available to people with disabilities.

Perhaps what I should be more concerned about is that, until now, it has never occurred to me to look.

Stella Young is the editor of

Ramp U.

<http://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2011/01/14/3113130.htm>

Overview of the NDIS Brief

In April last year I chaired a *Disability Connections (Victoria)* bimonthly meeting at which guest speaker Frank Hall-Bentick, Disability Resources Centre Chairperson, gave an excellent power-point presentation on the proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). I am indebted to Frank for much of the content of this article.

The history of funding support for people with a disability in Australia spans from the 1880s–1970s institutional services setup on a charity basis to protect lives of the handicapped, through to the 2009 *Shut Out* Report that recommends improved disability support and services based on the experience of people with disabilities and their families. The NDIS Campaign was initiated and led by National Disability Services in 2008. According to the NDIS website, "***Australia's approach to disability services is crisis-driven and welfare-based. A National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) would change this. The Scheme would provide funding for essential care, support, therapy, aids, equipment, home modifications and access to the community, education and training.***"

By the start of 2010 the campaign had attracted almost 200 disability services, parent & carer organisations and disabled peoples organisations supporting national reform funded through a Medicare-type arrangement.

In February that year the Australian Government asked the Productivity Commission to undertake a public inquiry into a long-term disability care and support scheme. The Disability Resource Centre has expressed concern about the Commission's terms of reference, and development of an NDIS driven by disability service providers with key disabled peoples organisations not included as equal partners from the beginning.

The *Productivity Commission Draft Report on Disability Care & Support* is now available. The overview and recommendations summarises the arrangements proposed by the Commission and how they will impact on people with disabilities, their carers and service providers. The Commission will finalise its report following further public consultation and input.

Since DnD was holding its February 2011 committee meeting in Geelong the same day as an NDIS Public Rally on the city's waterfront during the annual Having a Say Conference, DnD's committee and staff decided to go along and hear speakers with a disability from the conference as well as NDIS Campaign Director John Della Bosca.

My only disappointments were I didn't arrive early enough to be issued with a red campaign t-shirt (they ran out,) and the anticipated street march did not take place. However, the V/Line train ride to and from Geelong, some retail therapy in between, and lots of laughs on the day more than made up for that.

DnD committee member, Christine Williams



DnD Steering Committee members enjoy a lunch together in Geelong.



Leukaemia sufferer Stepan Supin stays home, sends robot to school

A VERY special student is attending a lesson at Moscow's school number 166: Stepan, a plastic robot, is in the classroom to help a little boy with leukaemia to follow the lesson through his eyes.

In the meantime, the real Stepan, a 12-year-old boy, sits in front of a computer at his home and takes an active part in the lesson with help of his plastic friend. Stepan Supin has been suffering from leukaemia for two years and his immune system is too fragile to allow him to leave home.



Equipped with a webcam, a microphone and a loudspeaker, the robot broadcasts in real time what happens in the classroom to the computer at the boy's home.

A screen in front of the robot actually allows the human Stepan to intervene at any time to ask for the teacher's clarification or to answer a question, teacher Alla Gevak said. "We also call our robot Stepan. When the lesson begins, he starts working as an ordinary student and participates very actively," she added.

Since September, the robot has been helping the boy to follow history, geography, English, and French lessons. Other subjects, such as Russian and mathematics, still require a teacher's visits, Gevak said. Stepan said he feels like his is actually present in the classroom as he can fully control the robot's movements.

"I can change the robot's speed, to go slower or faster. I can move his head to look left or right. I really feel as if I am in the classroom," Stepan said. Gevak shares the feeling. "At first it was a bit strange, but we got used to it. During breaks between lessons, Stepan communicates very actively with other students. We treat him as if he is here with us," she said.

For the boy's mother, Nina Supina, this "presence" is really what matters. "Children have fun in the classroom, frolic and communicate. Stepan can take part. He lacks it - a little boy's normal life," she said.

Designed in 2008 at a Moscow institute, the robot which costs \$3000, can receive orders remotely via the internet from anywhere in the world, the project coordinator Vyacheslav Kravtsov said. "It can be used in many spheres of life. We intend to use it primarily in the social sphere - in education, healthcare, and for disabled people's remote work," he said. "There are many disabled people in our country and they need help." Stepan Supin's school received the robot for free as part of a pilot project launched by its designers.

But no matter how grateful he is to his robot, Stepan said he hopes though to get away from him one day and go back to school like every other boy of his age.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/lifestyle/the-other-side/leukaemia-sufferer-stepan-supin-stays-home-sends-robot-to-school/story-e6frfhk6-1225993384214> January 11th 2011

Supporting people with disability in retirement

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/employers/Documents/disAbility_e-news/2010/issue159.htm

Three pilot programs are currently underway to assist older employees with disability with education and retirement support options.

The pilots aim to test pathways for older employees with disability from Australian Disability Enterprises into mainstream retirement options within the community.

The Transition to Retirement Pilots are a response to findings from research commissioned by FaHCSIA into ageing and retirement in the Australian Disability Enterprise workforce.

Australian Disability Enterprises taking part in the pilots are Vantage in Warrnambool, Victoria, Tulgeen in Bega, New South Wales and Koomarri in Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

The pilots in Victoria and New South Wales will incorporate training for Australian Disability Enterprises to help educate older employees about retirement and planning for retirement. This training, to be delivered by CRS Australia, will provide Australian Disability Enterprise support staff with the skills and knowledge to undertake the six client education sessions covered in the *'When I'm at work: Retirement planning flip-chart'* with older employees.

After receiving retirement education and being assisted to make a retirement plan, older employees with disability will have an opportunity to trial retirement options in the local community. This may include a wide range of activities - from attending outings and events with the local senior citizens group, to playing sports, going shopping, having coffee with friends, arts and craft sessions, volunteering and more.

The pilot underway in the Australian Capital Territory will look at the benefits of social role valorisation training to assist mainstream community service providers understand the needs of older people with disability and include them in their activities.

ABC LAUNCHES WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

The ABC, with the support of FaHCSIA, has launched a new website to ramp up the conversation about disability in Australia. The ABC Ramp Up website is a place for people with disabilities to have a say, no matter what part of the country they are in.

The site will host plenty of discussion and debate on a range of disabilities and experiences, and visitors to the site are encouraged to join in. You can comment...

..the opinion pieces, follow the site on Twitter and keep up with the latest news in disability from across the ABC.

Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Carers, Senator Jan McLucas, and Mark Scott, ABC Managing Director, celebrated the launch of the website on the International Day of People with Disability, Friday 3 December 2010, at HELP Enterprises in Brisbane.

For more information visit www.abc.net.au/rampup/

STATEWIDE EQUIPMENT PROGRAM (SWEP)

<http://www.acd.org.au/noticeboard/newsinbrief.htm>

The State-wide Equipment Program (SWEP) provides people who have a permanent or long-term disability with subsidised aids, equipment, oxygen and continence and vehicle and home modifications.

The program aims to enhance the independence and safety of people with a disability in their own home, facilitate their participation in the community and support families and carers.

SWEP is a suite of programs funded by the Department of Human Services and administered by Ballarat Health Services. SWEP incorporates the following programs:

1. Aids and Equipment Program (A&EP)
2. Supported Accommodation Equipment Assistance Scheme (SAEAS)
3. Domiciliary Oxygen Program (DOP)
4. Continence Aids (CA)
5. Vehicle Modification Subsidy Scheme (VMSS)

Issuing centres will gradually transition across to the new statewide service between 6 December 2010 and 4 April 2011. The centres are scheduled to transition in six separate groups, which are aligned as much as possible to the DHS regions in Victoria.

The first transition group of five issuing centres involves the Grampians and Barwon South West Regions transitioned to the statewide service on 6 December 2010.

For more information visit phone 1800 995 009 or 5333 8100 or visit <http://swep.bhs.org.au/>