



# *AUTISM NEWS*

**Newsletter of Autism Tasmania Inc.**

*Postal Address*

PO Box 1552  
Launceston  
Tasmania 7250  
Australia

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## BRANCH BUSINESS

### FROM THE PRESIDENT

We're half way through the year and another winter is upon us. I trust you will find a warm place to read this current newsletter.

Recently in the State Budget bought down in Hobart funding was set aside specifically for children with autism. Additional funding of \$80,000 for autistic children was allocated: including a three-year pilot, research-based, early intervention program. How this is to be administered is unclear at the present time, however we will keep you informed. Although the amount allocated is relatively small in relation to other budget matters it is a positive step to see the needs of those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder being recognised.

As a result of the Autism Forum held in Launceston late last year the role of the Education Departments Autism Consultant, Kathy Gill is to change. These changes mean there will be less emphasis on the individual consultation and more on professional development particularly in regard to District Support Services.

This is in contrast to what was presented at the forum with a large number of speakers in fact calling for a consultant in each region. Autism Tasmania has written to the Education Department, expressing concern and seeking clarification regarding the needs of children, families and schools and how they are to be met. If any of you experience problems in your child's school we would like to hear from you. This will enable us to monitor the situation and have accurate information for future discussions.

It is a pleasure to be able to showcase the work of one of our local artists: Michael Baxter-Barnes, his sketches done with black biro show the level of his skill. We thank him for his contribution and welcome both Michael's and others submissions of work for future editions. I would draw your attention to the article on the AGM. We need more committee members to make sure Autism Tasmania continues. Please give it some serious consideration - we need people!

We hope you find this newsletter informative and welcome you contributions for our next issue.  
Rose Clark

### Committee Members for 2000

<b>President</b> micknrose@vision.net.au	Rose Clark	6423 1086
<b>Vice President</b> Kathy.Gill@central.tased.edu.au	Kathy Gill	62 237175
<b>Secretary</b> molly@microtech.au.com	Rachel Hodge	6393 7183
<b>Treasurer</b> a_bishop@postoffice.utas.edu.au	Amelia Bishop	62736515
<b>Committee Members</b> cscott1@vtown.net.au N/A N/A	Cheryl Scott Rosanne Lay - - Eileen Prunster	6344 8015 62442540 64 425405

### COMMITTEE REPORT

The Autism Tasmania Committee met again in Ross on May 6th to finalise plans for Autism Awareness Week and to make arrangements for our next two seminars. "The Picture Exchange and Beyond" and the Sexuality workshops are well under way and we still hope to be able to bring Vicki Bitsika over at some stage.

There was discussion about pricing structure at future seminars. There was general agreement that fees should be based on membership rather than parent/professional basis. The difference between member/non-members should be \$20.00 which is consistent with the membership fee. Organisations joining will be charged a higher rate eg \$40.00 which then gives them rights to send as many delegates as they choose to, at member rates. Changes will be made to Membership forms next year.  
Cheryl Scott

### NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS WEEK

This year we had a multi-faceted approach to raising community awareness. All school and colleges in the state were contacted at the beginning of the year and again in late April. We were a little disappointed that

only a few contacted us directly, however those that did were sent packages containing information and posters for their school.

Displays on Autism Spectrum Disorder were located in various areas and feedback from the general public was very positive.. Southern Cross Television showed the new Public Services Announcement which focussed on the year's phrase, "Autism a World of Difference" during the week of May 14th - 20th. The committee would welcome any feedback on this ad, so if you did see it , what was your reaction to it, did it get the message across? Please give any of the committee members a call or write to P.O. Box 1552. Launceston.

On Friday 19th and 20th May we held two seminars on Communication and Behaviour Management for Children with High Needs. These were presented in Launceston by Margaret Hill and Shirley Roberts both teachers at Irabina Special Development School in Victoria. There were very positive comments from those who attended these sessions.

Also on Friday 19th was our Charitable Collection Day. As mentioned in our Thank-you column we had a number of dedicated collectors who employed a variety of ways of adorning the public's lapels with our stickers and badges. The money raised - approximately \$1000 will be allocated to libraries. Thank-you to all of you who were involved in any way at all during the week. Any ideas for next year would be very welcome. Rose

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Our thanks and appreciation go to the people listed below, who worked enthusiastically on Button Day collecting donations:

- Yvonne Hawkins and her team of "helpers"- Paula Barnes, Pam Archer, Camilla Veale and Jane Kirk who had a spot in the Mall in Launceston.
- Tammy Bird and Lisa Tavner , who collected in both Ulverstone and Devonport.
- Janet Smith from Kempton distributed buttons in her area.
- Both Cressy and Deloraine High School had students who also distributed buttons.

Also thanks go to Paula Barnes for her hard work in preparing the information on Support Services for Children with Disabilities in the North of the state.

You can read more about both of these topics in this

issue. Rose

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Its coming up to that time again and this year the Annual general Meeting will be held in Hobart in early September – after the AFL season finishes and before the Olympics begin.

**Please Note** As all committee positions will be declared vacant and at least two of the present committee are not re-nominating **WE NEED NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS.** Please don't dismiss the idea that YOU could be part of the team that steers the organisation, shapes the next 12 months and introduces new ideas! The Committee meets every 6-8 weeks in the midlands village of Ross for approximately 4 hours. GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT – then ring a committee member (their phone numbers are on the inside cover).. If you'd like to experience a committee meeting, our next one is July 15th in Ross. Phone a committee member for further details. Rose

## **OFFICE PREMISES FOR AUTISM TASMANIA**

Autism Tasmania has taken up the opportunity to share office space with two other organisations; the Epilepsy Association and Huntingdon's Disease Association. Our office address is 1st Floor, 15 Wilmot St in Burnie (above de Jonge's Manchester). We will notify you of our phone number in our next newsletter. The office will house the North West library books, articles and videos, allowing members to browse before they borrow. It will also be used as a meeting place especially by the active North West Asperger Support Group which meets regularly.

For a substantial period of time, Autism Tasmania has been working towards having a public face rather than operating from members' homes; the opportunity to do this has been timely and one where do not have to bear the expense of rent alone. We hope that in the future we can have 'premises' in both the North and South . We view this venture as a trial and will monitor it on a regular basis.

**North West Members:** a couple of people have already indicated that they would be prepared to give a couple of hours a week to "person" the office – if you're interested, please phone Rose on 64 231086

## FEATURE ARTICLES

### DENTAL CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH AN AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

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*This item by Mary W Strang, General Dental Practitioner, Lenzie, UK is reproduced (with some Australian factors added) with kind permission of the National Autistic Society (UK), from their magazine "Communication" Summer 1999, pp 9-10*

*The NAS also has an excellent website [www.oneworld.org/autism\\_uk/](http://www.oneworld.org/autism_uk/). We would be happy receive personal recommendations from families so we can commence compiling such a list.*

Providing dental treatment for a child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder can be challenging and difficult. If a child attends school a regular dental screening will be carried out by the School Dental Service.

Unfortunately, many children are not brought to the dentists' attention until the situation is forced by toothache.

This first dental experience then becomes an ordeal for all the family. Parents and child can be in an anxious, fearful and tired state. because of sleep loss caused by severe pain and, understandably, the child being uncooperative. For all concerned this situation is best avoided as it is the worst possible introduction for the child to the concept of dental treatment.

Parents should, therefore, seek dental advice/care for their child at as early an age as possible. The advantage is then that by training the child from as young as possible in tooth brushing (with or without toothpaste) and familiarising the child with visits to the dentist, the child will gradually come to accept this as part of normal living and therefore disruption due to change is minimised. It cannot be emphasised enough that it is better to care for every child's teeth and particularly a child with special needs, from the moment of tooth eruption (when teeth start to appear through the gums or teething)

rather than wait until the inevitable toothache strikes.

The first problem for a parent may be finding a dentist, taking into consideration the location of the surgery and suitability in terms of transport and parking. The gender of the dentist can also be important many children have a gender preference and can be put off by such things as beards, spectacles or uniforms. Within the surgery itself absolutely every source of the child's sensory perception has to be considered: bright lights, equipment, noise, clinical smell, texture of rubber gloves, face masks, and other unusual items, may frighten the child. It might be worth taking favourite toys along especially if there is any chance of waiting before an appointment.

Also, siblings and parents should be encouraged to act as positive role models, helping to remove any fear of equipment and familiarise children with it. The time of day is also an important factor. Some children, for example, may find it easier at the beginning of the day, others at the end and this often affects the number of other people in the surgery. It is important to find a dentist who can accommodate the child at a particular time to minimise a change in routine.

The best way to find a suitable dentist is usually by word of mouth, especially if you are a member of an organised group. If one person has found a suitable dentist for their child, then the likelihood is that one dentist may suit other families in the group. However, only those children at the higher end of the autistic spectrum may be amenable to the provision of dental treatment in the normal dental surgery situation. The majority of children with autism will require hospitalisation for routine dental care provided under general anaesthetic. Usually the patient is admitted to hospital 24 hours beforehand in order that any radiographs and other tests can be carried

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

out. It is essential that the child is starved from bedtime the night before the operation and obviously this is best controlled in the hospital environment. Parents can stay with their child in order to ease anxiety, but if the trauma or change proves too distressing the child may require some sedation. All necessary dental treatment should be provided under general anaesthetic in order to minimise the need for future anaesthetic. The whole process can clearly be extremely traumatic for both the child and parents involved. Prevention of tooth decay can help minimise the risk of having to undergo such an experience. If parents understand how decay starts, appropriate measures can be implemented to prevent it.

The outer hard covering of the tooth crown is the enamel. This enamel protects the root and gives the teeth strength for biting and chewing food. Every time we eat or drink, especially foods with high sugar content, small particles are left behind. These particles are gelled together by saliva and stick to tooth surfaces especially around the edge of gums forming plaque. Plaque, which has a creamy appearance, provides a home for the micro-organism naturally present in the mouth. These then start to breakdown the sugars present and acid is produced as an end product. This acid then attacks tooth enamel causing tooth decay and cavities to form, resulting in fillings or extractions and gum inflammation. Plaque and the rotting food between teeth also contribute to bad breath (also called halitosis).

All dentists work on the basis that 'prevention is better than cure'. There is a number of ways to help prevent tooth decay:

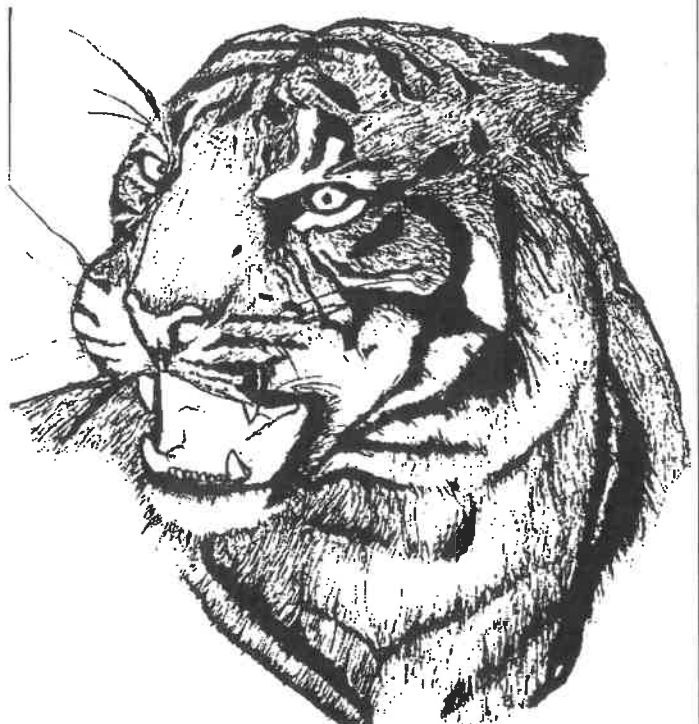
- 1 Regular daily tooth brushes with a fluoride toothpaste (fluoride toothpaste is recommended by the British Dental Association). Parents should assist children with tooth brushing for safety reasons. Children with autism may resist tooth brushing and strongly flavoured toothpaste may be rejected. In each circumstances a flavourless bland homoeopathic toothpaste may be used - or no toothpaste at all - if the child will at least accept a toothbrush. A soft small toothbrush is best. Perhaps a small amount of pleasant flavoured mouth rinse applied to a brush may help to introduce

flavours to the child,

- 2 A healthy sensible diet with limited consumption of sugary foods and fizzy drinks or juices. Diluted juice with plenty of water is best.
- 3 Regular, perhaps as often as monthly, dental visits with preventable oral health advice.
- 4 From infancy, fluoride supplements in drop or tablet form, where appropriate are advisable. These strengthen tooth enamel before tooth eruption and beyond.

Another tooth decay prevention method is fissure sealants. These are coatings painted onto the biting surface of second teeth. Decay usually starts deep in the surface grooves of molar teeth so the theory is that by sealing those fissures, decay will be prevented and the new smooth biting surface of the tooth will be easier to clean.

However decay can still start on the non-coated tooth surface, so oral hygiene still has to be maintained. Parents should also be aware of when to expect the eruption of second teeth (usually at 6-8 years and then 10-14 years).



**Pen drawing by Michael Baxter Barnes May 2000**

## ***CHOOSING THE RIGHT JOB FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM OR ASPERGER'S SYNDROME by Temple Grandin, Ph D.***

Jobs need to be chosen that make use of the strengths of people with autism or Asperger's syndrome.

Both high and low functioning people have very poor short-term working memory but they often have a better long term memory than most normal people. I have great difficulty with tasks that put high demands on short-term working memory. I cannot handle multiple tasks at the same time. Table 1 is a list of BAD jobs that I would have great difficulty doing. Table 2 is a list of easy jobs for a visual thinker like me. I have difficulty doing abstract math such as algebra and most of the jobs on Table 2 do not require complex math. Many of the visual thinking jobs would also be good for people with dyslexia.

The visual thinking jobs on Table 2 put very little demand or fast processing of information in short-term working memory. They would fully utilise my visual thinking and large long-term memory.

Table 3 is a list of jobs that non-visual thinkers who are good with numbers, facts and music could do easily. They also put low demands on short-term working memory and utilise an excellent long-term memory. Table 4 shows jobs that lower functioning people with autism could do well.

For all types of autism and Asperger's syndrome demands on short-term working memory must be kept low. If I were a computer, I would have a huge hard drive that could hold 10 times as much information as an ordinary computer but my processor chip would be small. To use 1999 computer terminology, I have a 1000 gigabyte hard drive and a little 286 processor. Normal people may have only 10 gigabytes of disc space on their hard drive and a Pentium for a processor, I cannot do two or three things at once,

Some job tips for people with autism or Asperger's syndrome:

- Jobs should have a well-defined goal or end point.
- Sell your work, not your personality. Make a portfolio of your work.

- The boss must recognise your social limitations.

It is important that high functioning autistics and Asperger's syndrome people pick a college major in an area where they can get jobs. Computer science is a good choice because it is very likely that many of the best programmers have either Asperger's syndrome or some of its traits, Other good majors are accounting, engineering, library science and art with an emphasis on commercial art and drafting.

Majors in history, political science, business, english or pure math should be avoided. However, one could major in library science with a minor in history, but the library science degree makes it easier to get a good job.

Some individuals, while they are still in high school should be encouraged to take courses at a local college in drafting, computer programming or commercial art. This will help keep them motivated and serve as a refuge from teasing. Families with low income may be wondering how they can afford computers for their child to learn programming or computer aided drafting. Used computers can often be obtained for free or at a very low cost when a business or an engineering company upgrades their equipment. Many people do not realise that there are many useable older computers sitting in storerooms at schools, banks, factories and other businesses- it will not be the latest new thing, but it is more than adequate for a student to learn on.

In conclusion; a person with Asperger's syndrome or autism has to compensate for poor social skills by making themselves so good in a specialised field that people will be willing to "buy" their skill even though social skills are poor. This is why making a portfolio of your work is so important. You need to learn a few social survival skills, but you will make friends at work by sharing your shared interest with the other people who work in your specialty. My social life is almost all work related. I am friends with people I do interesting work with.

Table I

**Bad Jobs for People with High Functioning Autism or Asperger's syndrome; that require high demands on short-term working memory**

- Cashier—Making change quickly puts too much demand on short-term working memory
- Short order cook—Have to keep track of many orders and cook many different things at the same time
- Waitress — Especially difficult if have to keep track of many different tables.
- Casino dealer—Too many things to keep track of
- Taxi dispatcher—Too many things to keep track of
- Taking oral dictation—Difficult due to auditory processing problems
- Airline ticket agent—Deal with angry people when flights are cancelled.
- Future market trader—Totally impossible
- Air traffic controller— Information overload and stress
- Receptionist and telephone operator—would have problems when the switch board gets busy.

Table 2

**Good Jobs for Visual Thinkers**

- Computer programming wide-open field with many jobs available especially in industrial automation, software design business computers communications and network systems.
- Drafting - Engineering drawings and computer aided drafting. This job can offer many opportunities. Drafting is an excellent portal of entry for many interesting technical jobs. I know people who started out at a company doing drafting and then moved into designing and laying out entire factories. To become really skilled at drafting, one needs to learn how to draw by hand first. I have observed that most of the people who draw beautiful drawings on a computer learned to

draw by hand first. People who never learn to draw by hand first tend to leave important details out of their drawings.

- Commercial art-- Advertising and magazine layout can be done as freelance work
- Photography - Still and video, TV cameraman can be done as freelance work
- Equipment designing - Many industries, often a person starts as a draftsman and then moves into designing factory equipment.
- Animal trainer or veterinary technician--Dog obedience trainer; behaviour problem consultant
- Automobile mechanic-- Can visualise how the entire car works
- Computer troubleshooter and repair --Can visualise problems in computers and networks
- Small appliance and lawn mower repair-- Can make a nice local business
- Handcrafts of many different types such as wood carving jewellery, making, ceramics etc
- Laboratory technician-- Who modifies and builds specialised lab equipment
- Web page design--Find a good niche market can be done as freelance work
- Building trades - Carpenter or welder. These jobs make good use of visual skills but some people will not be able to do them well due to motor and coordination problems.
- Video game designer--Stay out of this field – Jobs are scarce and the field is overcrowded
- There are many more jobs in industrial, communications business and software design computer programming. Another bad thing about this job is exposure to violent images.
- Computer animation --Visual thinkers would be very good at this field! But there is more competition in this field than in business or industrial computer programming, Businesses are recruiting immigrants from overseas because there is a shortage of good programmers in business and industrial fields.
- Building maintenance -- Fixes broken pipes, windows and other things in an apartment complex, hotel or office building.
- Factory maintenance -- Repairs and fixes factory equipment.



Table 3

**Good Jobs for Non-Visual Thinkers:  
Those who are good at math, music or facts**

- Accounting - Get very good in a specialised field such as income taxes.
- Library science-- reference librarian. Help people find information in the library or on the Internet.
- Computer programming --Less visual types can be done as freelance work.
- Engineering-- Electrical, electronic and chemical engineering.
- Journalist - Very accurate facts, can be done as freelance.
- Copy editor -- Corrects manuscripts. Many people freelance for larger publishers.
- Taxi driver--Knows where every street is.
- Inventory control--Keeps track of merchandise stocked in a store.
- Tuning pianos and other musical instruments, can be done as freelance work.
- Laboratory technician - Running laboratory equipment.
- Bank Teller-- Very accurate money counting. much less demand on short-term working memory than a busy cashier who mostly makes change quickly.
- Clerk and filing jobs-- knows where every tile is.
- Tele-marketing --Get to repeat the same thing over and over, selling on the telephone. Noisy environment may be a problem. Telephone sales avoids many social problems.
- Statistician-- Work in many different fields such as research, census bureau, industrial quality control U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, etc.
- Physicist or mathematician--There are very few jobs in these fields. Only the very brilliant can get and keep jobs. Jobs are much more plentiful in computer programming and accounting.

Table 4

**Jobs for Nonverbal People with Autism or People with Poor verbal Skills**

- Re-shelving library books-- Can memorise the entire numbering system and shelf locations.
- Factory assembly work --Especially if the environment is quiet.
- Copy shop-- Running photocopies. Printing jobs should be lined up by somebody else.
- Janitor jobs -- Cleaning floors, toilets, windows and offices.
- Restocking shelves--In many types of stores.
- Recycling plant--Sorting jobs.
- Warehouse-- loading trucks, stacking boxes.
- Lawn and garden work-- Mowing lawns and landscaping work.
- Data entry-- If the person has fine motor problems. this would be a bad job.
- Fast food restaurant --Cleaning and cooking jobs with little demand on short-term memory.
- Plant care-- water plants in a large office building.



**Pen drawing by Michael  
Baxter Barnes May 2000**

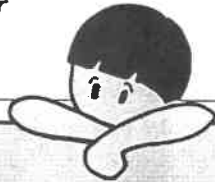


## ASPERGER'S SUPPORT GROUPS IN YOUR REGION

**Asperger's Southern Support Group**  
 Contact Roseanne Lay on ph. 6244 2540

**Asperger's Northern Support Group**  
 Meetings are held at 1:30pm at Walker House, Newnham on the last Saturday of each month Phone Rachel Hodge 6393 7183 for details

**Asperger's North Western Support Group**  
 Meetings are held at Leighland's Christian School, Leighland's Ave, Ulverstone on Contact Eileen Prunster 64 425405



## AUTISM WEB SITES

- ∞ Autism message board (international boards in UK)  
<http://www.insidethe web.com/messageboard/mbs.cgi?acct=mb50148>
- ∞ Dr Michael J Goldberg, MD, FAAP (neurologist)  
<http://www.neuroimmunedr.com>
- ∞ Autism workshop (conferences)  
<http://www.lrp.com/Conferences/autism.htm>
- ∞ Autism Australia Forum  
<http://members.boardhost.com/AutismAustralia/>
- ∞ Autism Research Institute  
[www.autism.com/ari/](http://www.autism.com/ari/)
- ∞ Centre for study of Autism  
<http://www.autism.org>

## AUTISM TASMANIA YEAR PLANNER

<b>JUNE 27th</b>	Peta Kelty and Amelia Bishop <u>Beyond Picture Exchange</u> at the Hobart Vista Hotel
<b>JULY 21st &amp; 22nd</b> <i>(Details to be mailed)</i>	Seminar for parents and professionals: <u>Sexuality and Autism</u> presented by Jenny Butler from the Centre for Disability, Health Victoria; to be held at the Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre at the University of Tasmania
<b>AUGUST</b>	Wendy Lawson visiting for seminars, workshops and parent get togethers.

We're on the Net!

**Autism Tas**

**AUTISM TAS IS ON THE NET**

Our address is

[www.autismtas.org.au](http://www.autismtas.org.au)

## Disability Awareness Short Course

24 July – 11 August 2000

Facilitated by Disability Services, Information & Education Unit, this course will run over 3 weeks in Burnie.

It is available to government and non-government employees, parents, families and carers who support people with disabilities. You can attend for the full course or for selected individual sessions.

Further information and registration forms are available from the Community Liaison Officer, Disability Services.

~ 6434 4103 ~

## LAW ENFORCEMENT AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS - AVOIDING UNFORTUNATE SITUATIONS

This item has been prompted by an article in *The Advocate*, Vol 31 No 3, 1998, the newsletter of the Autism Society of America. It contains some sober but sage advice.

The very nature of Autism Spectrum Disorders means that situations between law enforcement officers and adults with autism will occur. Most of us have an amusing story - the young person with Asperger's Syndrome who alerts the police with every instance of law breaking (or bending) or my own son who desperately wants to get into trouble with the police.

He once kicked a tram because he was angry and then asked the city police to take him to jail - now! However, these amusing stories do not detract from the serious scenarios that can develop due to misunderstanding - by the police and by the person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

We can demand better understanding, and do whatever is possible to educate the public and the police. Realistically we cannot expect this understanding to happen. It is those of us with the regular contact who best understand the behaviours, perceptions and communication abilities of the adult with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The police do not regularly interview autistic people and even if they have interviewed a few, you can be sure each person interviewed presented very differently.

Here are some suggestions for strategies to take now to minimise the possibility of a negative situation with law enforcement officers.

- Prepare a personal information and alert card with input from your young person if at all possible. Put it in their wallet and teach them to use it. Outline the situations where producing this card will help others to help them. For example when the transit police request to see their travel pass, when asked for an ID, when a security guard asks what they are doing, and when interviewed by the police. Include contact detail so you can be alerted quickly if a situation does arise

- Prepare an information sheet, including a recent photo about your young person to have available to give key people and organisations in your local community - shopkeepers, shopping centre, security staff, neigh-

bours, local schools etc.

- Make an appointment to meet with the Community Policing Squad in your district. Take your information sheet with you, and anything else you think may help explain your young person's behaviour and communication abilities. Make sure they record these details, so that whenever any police officer scans the database looking for details about your young person, they will find an appropriate note about their autism - anti communication difficulties. **This is not the same as a police record.** It would be best if you could include your young person in this meeting. Another good idea is to arrange for the local police to visit your home and meet with the family - this will help in their understanding of your issues. Such a visit will also enable your young person to more easily generalise the positive role of the police

- Organise a meeting of your family and key professionals in your young person's life with a view to exploring the possible 'trouble' scenarios that their particular interests and behaviours may generate. By discussing the possibilities, you will be surprised at the number of strategies that naturally emerge to help minimise the likelihood of them actually occurring. Of course you should also discuss ways of working through a crisis if it does happen. Compile lists of people to contact - solicitor, local community policing squad, office of the Public Advocate, advocacy agencies... and decide who will handle what, especially who will liaise directly with the police.

There is a new video called *WORKING FOR JUSTICE - People with mental impairment and the police interview process - the roles of the independent third person*. This video updates 'Justice for all' and details the latest development in protocols and outlines the rights of people with decision-making disability.

The video was made in Melbourne and is used as a training video by the Victoria Police. It is available from the Office of the Public Advocate who can be contacted on (03) 9660 1444. The cost is \$55.00 although a reduced price applies to community groups and unfunded agencies.

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## **AUTISTIC ASSOCIATION OF NZ INC 2000 NATIONAL CONFERENCE— WELLINGTON**

The 2000 National Autism Conference will be held at the Plaza International Hotel in Wellington from 20-22 October.

Guest speakers include:

- Dr William Shaw (Biochemist from the US)
- Dr Mohammad Ghaziuddin (Child Psychiatrist from the US)
- Carol Gray
- Dr Judith Gould (clinical Psychologist from the UK)
- Dr Tony Attwood
- Wendy Lawson
- Jane Remington-Gurney (Speech Pathologist from Queensland)

Registration is \$340.00 for professionals if paid before 31st August (\$395.00 if paid after that date). For Family members, registration is \$280.00 (early bird) and \$340.00 (after 31st August).

The organizers plan to have workshops each day with the aim of giving delegates practical strategies to 'take away' with them. Another focus area is the needs of adolescents and adults with Autism and Asperger Syndrome

If any Tasmanian members are interested in attending this conference, more information is available from Rose Clark.

## **2000 ASSID STATE CONFERENCE**

The Australian Society for the Study of Intellectual Disability is holding its State Conference at the Country Club Casino, Launceston from July 26– 28 2000.

The title is "Maximising Opportunities – Working Together in the 21st Century."

- There will be keynote speakers, focus groups and a Trade Fair.

- An opportunity for clients, parents, carers, advocates, professionals, academics, service providers to share information, innovations and their experiences.

If you want more information contact Steve Bristow, PO Box 1023, Launceston

Fax 63364200 email: bristow@tafe.edu.tas.au

## **INAUGURAL WORLD AUTISM CONGRESS Melbourne 2002— Preliminary Information**

The Inaugural World Autism Conference will be held at the Melbourne Convention Centre from November 10th –14th 2002.

The program will include Keynote addresses translated into several languages, as well as a diverse program of presentations, seminars, workshops and posters. There will also be a trade and services exhibition, social events, tourist activities and the opportunity for parents and professionals to visit autism services around Australia after the Congress. It will be held in conjunction with the Autism Council of Australia of Australia Biennial National Conference.

The inaugural World Autism Congress will seek to meet the needs of service, family, policy and scientific perspectives. The Congress will be held over four working days and will cater for 1500 delegates per day. The organizers expect 60% of those registering to be interstate and international delegates, and for delegates to represent a mix of families and professionals.

A World Autism Congress website will keep the world autism community up to date with details about the program, registration and other activities. The organizers will be pro-active in seeking a broad range of presentation proposals from autism interest groups, services and practitioners world wide. However, presenters will have to abide by a World Autism Congress set of standards designed to ensure quality, fair treatment and credibility of content. Promotion of a purely commercial nature will be confined to the Congress trade area.

Fees will be kept to a minimum, and a range of accommodation types will be available. Sponsorship will be sought from government departments and the corporate sector to assist with the funding of the Congress. The Convenors will do all possible to enable families to attend with a flexible Family Registration format, and child care of a limited nature will be arranged. Registration will be possible up to 12 months prior to the Congress, with attractive Early Bird rates. Registration protocols will be established for the World Autism Organisation and Autism Council of Australia members.

*Autism Tasmania will keep members up to date with more details of the Congress as they become available.*  
Ed

## **PICTURE EXCHANGE AND BEYOND WORKSHOP in HOBART**

Amelia Bishop and Peta Kelty are both therapists working with children with autism and developmental delay. They are case managers registered with ISADD (Intervention Services for Autism and Developmental Delay).\* In this role they are responsible for writing and updating individual teaching programs for children involved in their Applied Behavioural Analysis home programs, providing therapy services and training.

Amelia has worked in the disability area for a number of years as a support worker for adults with intellectual, physical and psychiatric disabilities and for nearly four years as a therapist working with children with autism spectrum disorders on ABA home programs. Some of these children are now able to have their home program therapist work with them at school either individually or doing small group work. Amelia has majored in psychology and hopes to soon finish her Masters degree in Clinical Psychology, which will enable her to register and work as a psychologist in this area.

Peta has a seven year old son with autism and has been working with him on an ABA program for nearly four years. When he began, he had no measurable receptive language (ie understanding or language) but he now uses a Compic system for communication at both home and school and is successfully included full-time in a grade one class. Peta also works as a therapist on other children's programs and is employed as a Teacher's Aide for a boy with developmental delay at a Hobart school, as well as undertaking a university degree with a view to attaining a qualification in psychology.

Peta and Amelia will be presenting a workshop at the Hobart Vista on Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> June entitled Visual Communication for Children with Autism and Developmental Delay: Picture exchange and Beyond covering such issues as communication difficulties in children with autism or other developmental delay, the rationale for visual communication

as an augmentative or alternative communication system and practical ideas and demonstrations for making activities *more* visual. The progression from basic picture exchange and Keyword (single word) communication to using Compic sentences to teach grammar and reading to the student will be covered. Also the use of visual schedules to teach task completion & transition between activities, and social stories to prepare children for change, to teach social rules and routines and circumvent challenging behaviours. Enquiries to Kathy Gill Ph. 62 33 7175.

\*ISADD is based in Perth and is one of four Early Intervention service providers funded and recommended by the W.A. Disability Services Commission. ISADD has been providing therapy and Applied Behavioural Analysis consultancy services to families in Tasmania since 1996. Jura Tender, a clinical psychologist with over twenty years experience in the autism and developmental disability field, regularly visits Tasmania to assess children and consult with families undertaking home teaching programs or seeking behavioural intervention strategies. ISADD also provides training and workshops for parents, therapists and other professionals working with individuals with ASD. Information about ISADD services obtained from Jura Tender herself on Ph. (08) 9397 5970 or from Peta Kelty (03) 62 659008 or Amelia Bishop (03)62 736515.

### **Available from Autism Tasmania**

#### **Autism Tasmania Information Kit**

\$12.00 includes postage for Parents

\$17.00 includes postage for Professionals

**Alert Cards** \$2.00 for 12

**Gold Lapel Pins** \$3.00 + \$1.50pp

Don't forget our library – Available in the:

North 6334 2843

North West 6442 5405

South 6244 2540

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### **YOUNG AUTISM SUPPORT TASMANIA, Supporting families using behavioural intervention.**

As there hasn't been a report from YAST since last December's Autism News, there are several things to report. A decision to move our meeting place from Albuera Street Primary School to the Carers' Centre in "Westella", Elizabeth Street was made at the start of this year. However, when it became clear that members prefer to meet in the informal settings of members' homes, we decided that most meetings will be held in homes with perhaps an outing to a coffee-house, pub or restaurant every few months. We still meet on the third Wednesday of the month. The (open) committee meeting starts at 7pm. Members can choose to attend the committee meeting or arrive a little later. We are endeavouring to be able to offer lifts to people who have difficulty travelling at night. We welcome people who are using behavioural intervention as well as any other interested parents and professionals. As our membership has expanded to include more children who are either older or have a "milder" diagnosis, we all benefit from the discussions and ideas from our mixed group. The schedule for this year is now:

*Wednesday 21 June* at Rosemary's, 48 Drysdale Avenue, Kingston

*Wednesday 19 July* at Tracy's, 36 Merindah Street, Howrah  
*Wednesday 16 August* at Meredith's, 12 Norfolk Crescent, Sandy Bay

*Wednesday 20 September* at Julie's, 21 Taylor Court, Rosetta

*Wednesday 18 October* at Grace's, 56 Hiern Street, Blackman's Bay

*Wednesday 15 November* at Lisa's, 4 Lasswade Avenue, Sandy Bay.

The December meeting will probably be held in a restaurant - to be advised.

On Wednesday 29 March YAST hosted a very successful seminar entitled "Autism in the Classroom - Practical Strategies for Effective Teaching and Behav-

our Management" presented by Nicole Kingston, a Director of ABA Kidz.. Over 30 schools or Education centres were represented with participants coming from as far away as the North-West coast. The feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive, with many comments focusing on how much more empowered those attending felt after Nicole had outlined some practical strategies. It was also clear that a follow-up seminar would be welcomed by many where different age-groups, ability-levels and degrees of severity could be targeted in a workshop manner. **WATCH THIS SPACE!**

Nicole Kingston has already been booked by Mersey Heights to run a presentation in late June.

YAST has read the Recommendations presented from the Inclusion Review with interest and, as a committee, we worked hard to comment on them in as much depth as possible.

We were encouraged to read of the announcement in last Thursday's State Budget, that funding will be increased to assist students with additional needs and that Students with ASD have been targeted in particular. We look forward to hearing more about the process by which the pilot study of early intervention for children with ASD will be conducted and are looking forward to contributing to this end.

I hope everyone will enjoy the school holidays and look forward with excitement to the implementation of these new initiatives to help children with ASD.

Keep warm!

Lisa Minchin (President - 62 232317)

Enquiries -Secretary, Rosemary Rush,

## Deadline 31st August

The deadline for the next issue of  
*Autism Tasmania* will be **31st August**  
Please forward your copy to Cheryl Scott  
on [cscott1@vtown.net.au](mailto:cscott1@vtown.net.au) **NB. New address**  
or phone 63448015 a.h. to make alternative  
arrangements

## **GIANT STEPS TASMANIA**

Giant Steps Tasmania celebrates its fifth birthday this year. Any birthday is a time for celebration but this one is particularly special for us. We see it as a very exciting milestone and enjoy a feeling of achievement as we look back on the challenging and often difficult infancy we have experienced.

There have been many wonderful supporters of Giant Steps during the past five years and we acknowledge all those efforts which have brought us to this point today. We are grateful for those who never lost their trust, nor their optimism, nor their goodwill. Without this "never-say-die" attitude, the doors of Giant Steps may have closed several times.

However, birthdays are not just a time to look back. At five years of age, it is today that is important, and tomorrow. Giant Steps enters its sixth year in fine shape. Enrolments are good, the program maintains its special nature and plans for the future are taking shape in a very exciting way.

Successful organisations must constantly re-invent themselves to meet the demands of a changing society and to take advantage of new opportunities which arise. Without losing the special attributes of what Giant Steps provides we must look at how we can function most effectively in the next decade. Many of the children currently enrolled, have been at Giant Steps since the beginning. The seven and eight-years olds who were in the first intake are now teenagers, many of them included in mainstream schools for two or three days each week. With our new registration, it is conceivable they could be with us for another five years. Our program must meet their needs in adolescence and prepare the foundation for their step into young adulthood.

Should Giant Steps be moving in to the area of post-school options for those with autism? What provision is their for autism-specific accommodation for our young people when they leave us? What work opportunities might there be? ... or leisure opportunities?

On the other hand, there are other, younger children joining the Giant Steps community. What can we do about those of pre-school age who need an intensive program at this important time? How can we best lobby governments to see the benefits of providing a

more effective early intervention program? How can we best provide, under the Giant Steps umbrella and at a reasonable cost, a program for these children?

The Giant Steps Centre at Deloraine has been a wonderful resource for the first five years of our development. It is clear, though, that more is needed. Adolescents, for example, might benefit from being closer to the resources of a larger population centre. Pre-school children may not cope with travel each day to and from Launceston or the North-West Coast. Perhaps we need to be looking at the establishment of other centres.

Training is another interesting area we need to explore. Over the years we have built up a pool of expertise at Giant Steps which we now need to share more effectively with others working in the field. We already welcome visitors and are open-handed in giving what help and advice we can, but that help is piecemeal and depends on which therapists happen to be available when the visit takes place.

Recently we launched a consultancy service through which our therapists, for a fee, will help to set up programs for parents looking after their children at home, or for teachers trying to cope with an autistic child in their class. The next logical step is to arrange workshops at Giant Steps to demonstrate appropriate strategies and to set up lines of communication among those who are trying to assist children in our region. We will be setting out details soon of this program.

Giant Steps, too, is looking at ways to be more flexible in our enrolment pattern. For some, five days full enrolment at Giant Steps may not be the best option. We would be delighted to hear from parents who would like to discuss the possibility of part-time enrolment.

One of the great strengths of Giant Steps is its philosophy of "many therapists under one roof". Even as financial constraints have made us tighten our belt, we maintain that key element of what we offer. It is heartening that we can look forward to the future with confidence and in the knowledge that we have not compromised the essential value of the Giant Steps vision: giving children with autism every hope and every opportunity. John Christie (Principal – Giant Steps)

## WHAT'S ON!

### **FUTURE SERVICES IN THE NORTH OF TASMANIA. - WHO IS INTERESTED?**

Last year in September, Corry Vakintis and the Northern Integration Support Team (NIST) organised a workshop which was held in Launceston. This workshop was a great success. Speakers from ABA Kidz and Peta Kelty and Amelia Bishop contributed to the day.

Participants indicated that they were interested in a follow up. That is why we thought it was a good idea to start with finding out WHAT people would like to see happening in the North (roughly from Devonport to Launceston). In order to find out the needs and interests of people, we developed a questionnaire. It would be greatly appreciated if people from the North would fill out this questionnaire, so future services can be tailored to your needs. This might include support groups, presentations, workshops... Your feedback is important, because, depending on the responses we receive, we would be happy to organise events and speakers.

A questionnaire can be obtained (by sending a self addressed, stamped envelope) from Els Scheepers

PO Box 399 Deloraine Tas 7304 or by email :  
scheepers @tassie.net.au

The questionnaire can be emailed back as an attachment.

Thanks Corry Vakintis and Els Scheepers.

#### Adult Insight

A young Tasmanian adult with autism spoke recently about his difficulties with communication:

*"I can talk to some people and not others. It's difficult. I have to put on an act and I don't always know if what I am saying is okay - you know appropriate. People say, "Just be yourself", but I don't know who I'm supposed to be or what exactly that is"*

### **SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

Autism Tasmania member, Paula Barnes has been investigating services for children and adults with disabilities in the Northern region. In this newsletter, you will find an insert with many service providers and their phone numbers. You may wish to keep this on your fridge door for easy reference.

Paula also found the following information:

- The Information and Education Unit are working on a new Services Directory – we will keep you informed of its progress, subsequent release and availability.
- Disability services have a number of programs for adults but they can only be accessed through John L Grove Centre to access eligibility ph 6336 4130.
- Intowork run courses and assists people with disabilities who seek to enter the work force. Phone Marcia Harvey on 6334 4988 for information.
- Studentworks – formerly the Launceston Student Workshop – now located at Rocherlea. Contact on 6326 3877
- Disability Services publishes a directory of services and this can be accessed by phoning 6336 4130
- CRS Australia works alongside organisations such as Studentworks and offers employment options to people with a disability. Phone Stephanie Thorne or Wayne Frost on 6334 3888
- St Michael's Association offers accommodation and day programs Monday to Friday. A variety of day and evening programs are aimed at independent living. Further details our available by phoning Donald Richards on 63317651.

Note: Details of similar services in each of the South and North West regions will be included in later issues.



## **PLAY TOOL MAY UNVEIL EARLY AUTISM by Sophie Morris reprinted from the Weekend Australian June 3-4 2000**

When tiny tots visit child psychologist Robyn Young to play with toy cars and bouncing balls, its about more than fun and games.

Dr Young and Associate professor Neil Brewer from Adelaide's Flinders University have devised a diagnostic tool, the Flinders Observation Schedule for Pre-verbal Autistic Children (FOSPAC).

The tool, which is being trialled, aims to identify autism in children as young as one year old. Autism is usually diagnosed in children around four years of age.

"A lot of behavioural indicators of autism are not apparent until children are about four years old, but we have identified 17 specific behaviours which can be observed at a very young stage," Dr Young said.

With FOSPAC, the child performs specific tasks in a 10-to 15-minute session. Most of the tasks involve play and allow the psychologist to observe if the child engages with toys in a functionally appropriate way.

There is no neurological or biological method to diagnose autism. Dr Young said, until now doctors have had to rely on retrospective parental reports and wait until the child develops language skills. She said there is a window of opportunity when a child has not yet been trained to disguise the indicators of autism, such as avoidance of eye-contact. The test cannot identify conclusively all autistic cases, because in 25 percent of autistic children there is a period of normal development up to 18 months.

Dr Young said FOSPAC is not a diagnostic test but a tool to identify at-risk groups and encourage and encourage helpful behaviours. Autism Council of Australia President, Imelda Dodds said the earlier autism is detected the better the prognosis.

"Autism is a condition that, if it is picked up early enough, you can put in place a range of support and programs that will help the child make sense of their environment and ameliorate the difficult situations they are experiencing," she said.

Some problems autistic children experience stem from the heightened development of one sense at the expense of others. Early intervention can allow sensori-integration which will equip children to cope with social situations.

Early identification also can aid the families of autistic children by educating them about the behaviours they can expect and the procedures available to them. Dr young said if families were unaware of the condition, they could inadvertently encourage ritualistic behaviours apparent in autistic children.

FOSPAC is being trialled with 200 children to determine if it can successfully differentiate between normally developing children, autistic children, at-risk children and children with language delays.

Dr Young is seeking home videos of children at 12 months who have subsequently been diagnosed with autism as a validation for the behaviours identified in FOSPAC. She can be contacted on (08)8201 5104

## **LIBRARY NEWS**

Please note the change to the NW Library contact  
Books can be borrowed by ringing

North	Tricia Bourke	6334 2843
South	Roseanne Lay	6244 2540
North West	Eileen Prunster	6442 5405

An upgraded library list will be sent to members soon

## **Disclaimer**

*The opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of Autism Tasmania Inc.*

*Any mention of products or treatments does not constitute an endorsement.*

*The Editor reserves the right to follow normal sub-editing procedure.*