



AUTISM NEWS

From the President

This year Autism Tasmania reached its tenth birthday and continues to develop and grow to try to meet the changing needs of our members. As knowledge and awareness of autism continues to grow Autism Tasmania is continually presented with new challenges and requests.

We maintain representation on a variety of government bodies where we have the opportunity to present views and opinions that are autism specific.

Involvement continues in the Parents Reference Group (PRG) and the pilot project for early intervention, First Links. Initial comments on the pilot project are promising and the development of the project across the state a welcome move. We also maintain representation on the Vocational Educational Post Schools Disability Working Party.

Representatives from Autism Tasmania have been asked throughout the year to talk to a variety of clubs and organisations.

We retain membership on the Giant Steps board and 2001/2002 has seen the continued development of close links between the two organisations. We retain somewhat tenuous ties with ABI and it is hoped that the future direction of Autism Tasmania will involve actively seeking to develop stronger links with all autism groups, service providers and businesses. Strong ties with all like minded groups will allow the united front required to effect positive change. Autism Tasmania must acknowledge our responsibility as the umbrella body to work towards this.

2001 /2002 saw a number of successful and specific workshops and presentations in which we were directly or indirectly involved, particularly, Jane Cotter, Wendy Lawson, Dinah Murray, Bruce Tonge, Avril Brereton and June Waites. A forum was held in June and included the topics of post school options, equity, and mental health issues. The Autism Library has

Inside this issue:

From the President	1
Our future focus	3
AGM & New Committee	4
Forum & Post School Options	5
Reports: Giant Steps, IEP PRG, ABI	6 7 8
Article - Waiting	9
Article - Transitions	10
What to do After the Initial Diagnosis	12
Sleep survey	14
What's On	15

DEADLINE

The deadline for the December issue of Autism Tasmania will be November 15th

Please forward your copy to Cheryl Scott on cscott1@vtown.com.au or phone 63448015 a.h. to make alternative arrangements

From the President cont.

(continued from page 1)

Been consolidated into three manageable and transportable regional sections, however, still remains a much underused resource.

The web site is continually being upgraded and the addition of a chat room will have the added benefit of allowing for information sharing and the development of personal support networks. Autism Tasmania will also shortly have an individual email address. The newsletter continues to be well received and an effective means of communication.

Our membership of paid up members stands at approximately 100 at this time, with a target of 130 by the end of the year. Three Autism Tasmania members were funded to attend the Biennial National Conference in September last year and three more members will be funded for the registration costs of the World Congress to be held in Melbourne in November. The funding of members to attend significant personal learning events is part of our commitment to continue supporting members from funds obtained from the profit of the 1999 National Conference.

Strategic planning has been central to committee business this year. The committee has been lead through a series of fact finding and goal setting missions. To a point where we are better able to see direction and purpose. This came about through the realisation by the committee that the organisation had outgrown its capacity to function efficiently given the volunteer status and personal time restraints of committee members. We are still in the process of clarifying goals and prioritising directions but with a clearer understanding that are fundamental to the long term sustainability of Autism Tasmania is the development of a clear strategic plan that clarifies purpose and direction to meet needs within our resource framework.

The most significant development of the year has been the contractual employment of the company 'Brand New Day' to assist us towards effective management and governance. On a practical basis the employment of a company on a contractual basis has allowed us to focus on tasks without the added concerns of wages, insurance, travel etc. The company has been employed on a short term contract to fulfil two definite roles.

Support Worker

- To provide grass root support to members when requested
- To identify specific need of members and develop models of support provision that can be duplicated throughout the state.
- Act as an advocate for individuals with ASD and /or their families.
- Provide balanced advice and support as requested.

Executive Officer

- To finalise the development of the strategic plan outlining short and long term goals and an attainable action plan
- To provide a financial plan to ensure financial stability
- To develop an effective governance plan
- To develop links and networks with like minded organisation for mutual benefit.

As the roles develop we will be in a position to be clear and precise about the position criteria, roles and responsibilities of future employees. It is anticipated that the position/s will be advertised in the new year on the open market. The ability of Autism Tasmania to employ a person to undertake tasks and responsibilities lies in our financial stability. Every avenue will have to be explored both in terms

of fundraising and seeking government/ non-government funding to ensure long term viability. This will need to be priority of the in-coming committee.

2002/2003 promises to be an exciting productive year and continued effort by the new committee to ensure sustainability will allow Autism Tasmania to be able to continue to support the needs of the community in the years to come.

Regards,

Rachel Hodge President

Autism Tasmania **Our Future Focus**

In any job or organisation it's easy to be flooded by the wide range of requests, detail and information that comes along. This is just as true for the committee of a voluntary organisation – only less time is usually available. Late last year the committee set out to clarify, then prioritise the activities and areas of interest that it felt should Autism Tasmania's focus. Four key areas were identified, with agreement that these covered about 90% of all enquiries and concerns:

- **Diagnosis and Assessment**
- **Education and accountability (for autism appropriate education)**
- **Family support**
- **Post-school options**

Several actions – some immediate, others longer term have already been identified and taken for Education Resources, Family Support Information and Post School Options. The remaining priorities will be examined in detail over the coming months.

The Actions Taken.

A. Education Resources (a long term issue)

A clearly stated policy to guide Autism Tasmania is under development. Statistical information and comparative data is being compiled and the pathway for indi-

vidual legal action is being clarified.

B. Family Support Information

Initially Rose Clark has been appointed on a part time basis to develop a support role that can:

- Identify the specific needs of members and develop models to support service provision that can be replicated and sustained throughout the state
- Provide 'grass-roots' support for members through the development of sustainable support groups and networks
- Provide balanced and appropriate advice to members in response to requests
- Act as an advocate for individuals and/or the families of individuals who have an ASD, in response to member requests or committee directive.

This role will be expanded, as money becomes available.

C. Post-School Options.

In the short term Autism Tasmania is responding politically with other representative organisations to recent post-school options funding cuts.

For longer term improvements, Autism Tasmania is joining the ACD (Association of Children with Disabilities) push for public policy changes and the Giant Steps project team working on post school services.

Rachel Hodge President

(Also see article re Post School Options on page 5).

BOOKLET AVAILABLE **"No Joke Asperger Syndrome"**

96 page booklet compiled by members of Autism Platform.

Personal stories of adults with Asperger Syndrome plus stories and poems.

Available from: Autism Platform,
C/o 6 Cohen Place, Rutherglen, Hadspen.
Cost \$6.00 includes postage

Annual General Meeting:

Corus Hotel, Hobart 30/8/02

Sixteen members attended our AGM at the Corus Hotel on Saturday 31st August. A minibus load from Launceston rounded out the numbers for a healthy turnout. Returning President, Rachel Hodge presented her Annual Report and also spoke to members about the exhausting and exhaustive strategic planning which has been done this year to set goals and priorities to ensure the long-term survival of Autism Tasmania. Returning Treasurer, John Christie presented the audited accounts and also talked about the need for us to better utilise Commonwealth Respite for Carers funds or face losing the funding.

The election of Office Bearers saw several committee members standing again for office, but it was also good to see some new faces joining the committee.

As this is the first year of the new constitution with half of the committee were appointed for one year and the remainder ap-

Carers Week
20 -26th October 2002

Invitation to family carers

Launceston Launch
A cocktail style affair at the Albert Hall
Tuesday 22nd October

Southern Luncheon
Friday 25th October

For more information phone
1800 242 636

pointed for two years. Future elections will see two year terms and half committee elections each year.

After the one hour meeting, about a dozen members enjoyed a very pleasant luncheon at the hotel. Thanks go to Rosemary Rush for organising the venue and lunch.

Cheryl Scott Secretary

Autism Tasmania Inc Committee – 2003/04

President	Rachel Hodge	6344 3261	molly@microtech.com.au
Vice-Presidents	Amelia Bishop	6275 0656	akenny1@vtown.com.au
	Ros Ward	6343 2308	rosnmark@iprimus.com.au
Secretary	Cheryl Scott	6344 8015	cscott@vtown.com.au
Treasurer	John Christie	0418 657 492	jandme@qctas.net
Ordinary Committee	Rose Clark	6423 1086	micknrose@vision.net.au
Members	Penny Cromarty	6334 1119	penny.c@wacco.com.au
	Steve Ecob	6231 2977W or 6231 5500H	stephene@ccaust.com.au
	Peter Hatters	6334 4988 or 0438 523 015	phatters@hotkey.net.au
	Rosemary Rush	6229 5760	rushm@netspace.net.au

Forum: June 29th 2002

Autism Tasmania hosted a Forum in Launceston on Saturday 29th June featuring various service providers. The feedback from those members who attended was very positive. Below are some of the comments made in the feedback forms which were completed on the day.

- "great to hear about services that we hadn't heard about before"
- "personal stories both emotionally uplifting and sad too. Thank-you to those sharing such personal information for our benefit."
- "Funding, funding, funding!!!! And understanding!! The never ending fight for equity and inclusion."
- "I didn't know a position as Discrimination Solicitor even existed!"

Many people who attended the Forum were very positive in their comments in relation to the presentation by Linda Glover in her position in the Post School Options Program. Since the forum we have learned that this position will cease to exist after the end of this year due to lack of funding!

Post School Options Program (PSO)

The Post School Options Program (PSO) which has been conducted by Disability Services in collaboration with the Dept. of Education was funded through one-off funds made available through the Bi-lateral Commonwealth State Disability Agreement (CSDA) over the three year period 1st July 1999 to June 30th 2002, to provide assistance in the post school period for young people with disabilities. \$250,000 was allocated per year for the past three years to the PSO Program. The aims of the PSO Program have been to develop flexible and innovative post school options addressing the individual needs of people with disabilities, including transi-

tion from school to work and to tertiary training, to focus on individuals to maximise their potential through further education, training and pre-vocational program options and to assist with disability related support costs.

Disability Services informed members of the PSO Interagency Working Party and current recipients of PSO support by letter (30th July 2002) that funding for the PSO ceased when the Bi-lateral CSDA expired on 30th June 2002.

There are enough funds to support individuals who are enrolled in the program this year, to be continued until the end of this year. However at the time of writing, there is no indication that the Post School Options Program will continue next year regardless of whether a new Bi-lateral CSDA agreement is signed between the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments. To date no such agreement has been signed.

Application forms for the funding round this year (for students wishing to enrol in the program for next year) were due to be sent out in early August. Many students, parents, school transition staff and support organisations have already worked with the PSO Project Officer with the expectation that PSO support would be available in 2003 to help students to fulfil their transition goals.

Although the Minister responsible for this program has been approached and lobbied there has still been no change on the position of the PSO Program. If you or your family would like more information regarding this issue contact AT. If you want to make personal contact with the Minister responsible the details are as follows:

Hon. David Llewellyn
Minister for Health and Human Services
1st Floor, Franklin Square Offices
Hobart Tas 7000
Rose Clark

Report: Giant Steps

Now that we are seven years old, the Giant Steps Board has decided it is time to look at our future and consider some options for our development. Do we stay in Deloraine and continue to operate as a small specialist school, or do we move in other directions? Should we attempt to formalise our role as a source of information and advice about Autism? Is there a need for an Outreach service to support teachers in other schools?

The decision to stay in Deloraine is relatively easy. The Deloraine community has been extraordinarily supportive of Giant Steps and it is clear the people of the town share a pride in our being here. It is not only that we are a significant employer in the town, but also that everyone in the community feels a sense of ownership, knowing that they have in some way contributed to keeping us there. In the past fortnight alone we've had donations from the Line Dancing Club, the Recycling Unit at the Tip, and the Meander Valley Choral Society. This is not to say that we may not in the future have Giant Steps Centres elsewhere, but Deloraine is our hear.

Our present site has become cramped and limited. Most rooms are too small, storage is a problem and maintenance is a constant concern. When we have visitors, we fall over each other trying to cope (and we love having visitors)> We have looked at other sites in town but it seems a better proposition to say where we are and develop it appropriately.

At the moment we are attempting to draw up a site plan to show potential future development. Once that is in place, we can seek funding. Like other organisations in our situation we will look to the usual sources: Community Funds, Foundations, large corporations, governments, etc. It is impossible to assume we will be successful but it is certainly necessary to make the application.

Part of the development will be to build a more suitable Adolescent Centre. Some of you may have seen the article in the Women's Weekly about the funding by Nestle of an Adolescent Centre at Giant Steps in Sydney and that is just the sort of development we are looking at too. Whether we are as successful as Giant Steps Sydney in gaining funding is another matter but we are always hopeful.

We also want to provide better for visitors, and make space available for the organisation of an Outreach Program. The Asperger Program, funded by the Tasmanian Community Levy is showing us just what support is needed in schools.

Giant Steps is keen to establish a solid foundation for the future and respond to the growing needs of the Autism community. If you would like to know more about our plans, please contact us at the Deloraine Centre. We are sure to invite you to visit.

John Christie
Principal

IEP (Individual Education Plan) Working Group Report for Parents, August 28th 2002.

The IEP Working Group was established in August 2001 by the *Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)* in response to recommendations *16 and **17 of the Review of the Policy on Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in regular Schools. Parent representatives on this group are from the Parent Reference Group also attached to SEAC, Deb Chick and Rosemary Rush Deb Chick is from Down Syndrome Association and Rosemary Rush is from Autism Behavioural Intervention. The IEP Working Group has been one of the largest with a good cross section of members from across the state.

At this time the working group has nearly

completed work on a draft document containing:

- Guiding principles
- Definition
- Necessary core components
- A visual representation of an IEP as both a process and a working document
- Examples of IEP's

The group envisages that in its entirety the document will remain in draft for a period of time in order to include examples of good current practice from those IEP teams working under the recently introduced ELS (Essential Learnings) curriculum.

The IEP document is a supportive tool through which a student is assisted to access the curriculum. It will inform planning by describing strategies and identifying a range of additional supports and responsibilities required to meet the individual needs of a student.

From the outset members of the IEP Working Group raised concerns about support for the IEP process in terms of time allocation. Within a supportive school environment the IEP process values and respects the diversity of students and their families and ensures a curriculum inclusive of all students. Time allocation for planning assists the IEP process.

*Recommendation 16

That the Department of Education develops guidelines for the developments of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) for students with disabilities. These guidelines should identify essential components to be included in the IEP but should allow for local flexibility to reflect individual students and contextual considerations. Development of IEP's within the published guidelines should be mandated. Increased emphasis should be given to addressing, monitoring and reporting on the learning outcomes of students with disabilities. Students outcomes, as detailed in IEP's

should be reported annually at school and system level.

**Recommendation 17

That existing curriculum documents and guidelines are used to develop appropriate learning outcomes for students with disabilities, and these form the basis of learning outcomes in IEP's.

Rosemary Rush

PRG parent representative on IEP Working Group.

rushm@netspace.net.au

Parent Reference Group Report- August 2nd 2002.

This brief report was prepared from the minutes of the meeting and contains two of the more important items on the agenda. Unfortunately due to other commitments I was unable to attend.

Revised Special Education Allocation Model.

This model of allocation resulted from the work, over the past year of the Resources Working Group. Kerry McMinn explained to the meeting that the "the proposed funding model is an attempt to arrive at a clear, transparent and equitable mechanism whereby funding for Category A students in regular schools can be allocated to support services." The aim of the per capita model, according to the Department is to "remove competition between support services to access the available resource. Once the support services have their allocation, based on the number of students in the Category A Register, they will continue to allocate resources to individual students on the basis of identified educational need.....Profiling will be introduced as a mechanism to 'moderate' the support needs of students across the state to ensure consistency of support across districts. It is hoped that the PRG and the Teacher Reference Groups will

assist in the development of the Tasmanian version of a Profiling document." It is expecting that Profiling will be a major agenda item for the next meeting which is to be held on October 4th 2002.

The recent meeting of SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) met on September 3rd positively received the Revised Special Education Allocation Model.

Inclusive Classrooms - Online Support Materials.

Two speakers - Sonja Vanderaa and Kirsten O'Halloran spoke to the group regarding progress of the Inclusive Classroom web-site. The site will be a working site and it is hoped that it will be live in the very near future. The site is constantly reviewed, added to and developed. PRG members agreed to provide Sonja and Kirsten with information about useful web-sites and support materials which could be useful additions to the Online Support site.

Rose Clark

Report: ABI - Autism Behavioural Intervention (Tas Inc) - Supporting Families Teaching ABA

Since our last report we have held a series of well-attended monthly support nights, with many members braving the winter cold to come along.

We have been busy distributing our new colourful brochures and wallet cards - "Please understand my child's behaviour..." We wish to thank TADPAC printing for their help with the new brochures.

The Hobart Ionians recently held their annual luncheon and AGM, at which we were presented with a very generous cheque. The Ionians had chosen us as their charity for the 2001-2 year and we are most grateful for their support and for the friendships and goodwill generated by their involvement with ABA. Our September meet-

ing was a night of information on toilet training issues and was held at Tascare in Derwent Park. The night was open to any parent of a child with additional needs.

Our 2001-2 AGM was held on 21st August with a new incoming President, Rosemary Rush who previously has capably managed our affairs as secretary. We look forward to another successful year.

Lisa Minchin

Autism and Aspergers Advocacy Australia.

The much awaited launch of Autism & Aspergers Advocacy Australia, the new national lobby group, will be held at 5 pm on Tuesday 12th November 2002 at the Melbourne Exhibition and Conference Centre in conjunction with the International Autism Congress. The launch will include a comprehensive briefing about the role and aims of the new organisation, and all are welcome to attend this session, where Congress registration is not required.

Autism & Aspergers Advocacy Australia has been formed in response to the growing demand from people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families to have a more direct involvement in raising the profile of Autism-related issues to the government and to the media at the national level.

The group hopes to be working in close co-operation with Autism Council of Australia and to operate as a network of all ASD groups in Australia. Its aims are to enhance communication at the grass roots level, and to work in a united and co-ordinated way to further the policy of priorities of the autism community.

If you want to know more, be there on November 12th or email: aaadvocacy@bigpond.com

The web-site is: http://autism.anu.edu.au/A4_Home.html

WAITING reprinted with permission from the **Autism Assoc. of Western Australia Inc.**

None of us like waiting, but it can be particularly difficult for people with autism who may not understand why they have to wait or how to behave while they are waiting. The following are a few ideas to help reduce the stress of waiting.

1. Avoid unnecessary waiting.

Although it is not always possible, the simplest way to avoid difficulties with waiting is to try and arrange situations so that they involve the shortest possible waiting period. For example, if it is necessary to make an appointment with a doctor or dentist, explain that the patient has autism and has difficulty with waiting. Ask for the first or last appointment of the day. Similarly, if it is necessary to take the person with autism shopping, choose a quiet time when there are not likely to be long lines at the check-out.

2. Develop a supportive routine to help the person understand and manage the situation.

One way of coping with waiting is to develop a routine for the situation that incorporates waiting. Once the person has learned the routine, waiting becomes simply part of the process.

A routine is a set of actions that we have internalised as a "package." For example, making a cup of tea actually involves a number of different activities, but we don't think of it as "getting out the tea-bag", "getting out the cup", etc, we think of it as, "making tea." We have learned that whole set of actions as one package or routine. The person with autism can also learn a variety of routines for different situations, such as, going shopping, catching a bus etc. Doing activities in a predictable way each time and using some phrases every

time, helps the person to turn a group of actions into a unified routine for a particular situation.

To use the supermarket as an example:

Firstly, go at a quiet time when you only need a few items, secondly, on the way to the check-out, use phrases that the child can learn to associate with different parts of the process, eg. "We're going to pay now." Once through the check-out use a simple phrase like "finished shopping now." Having gone through this process a number of times, the person with autism will have learned a routine for the supermarket that involves not only selecting the items they want, but also waiting at the check-out. Your use of similar phrases every time helps the person to remember the routine and keep track of where they are in the process and when it is finished.

3. Provide something enjoyable to do.

Most of us find waiting boring, that's why waiting rooms are usually full of magazines. People with autism are no different: they too may like something to occupy themselves. Carrying some fun activities that the person enjoys can make waiting much easier. If possible choose activities that can be put aside when the waiting period is over. Be aware that the individual may want to finish an activity they begin and may be upset if asked to leave it incomplete. Therefore, it may be more effective to take a number of activities that can be completed fairly quickly rather than one, long lasting activity.

4. Use a concrete event to define the waiting period.

For example, saying "we'll go out, after lunch," is much clearer than saying "we'll go out later" Expressions like "later" are too vague to be meaningful to many people with autism and may increase anxiety. Using specific events to signal the end of waiting is much clearer.

5. Don't make assumptions.

The obvious strategy that all parents use in situations where waiting is required is simply to explain to their child. Clearly, for children with autism who are able to profit from such explanations, parents will naturally use this same strategy. However, because children with autism have difficulty in learning information indirectly, it may be necessary to explain more explicitly and concretely than one normally would. For example, a child with autism may not understand why professionals run late for appointments. People with autism as we know are very literal. When an appointment is made for ten o'clock the person with autism expects the appointment to be at ten o'clock exactly. A simple explanation of why appointments can run overtime and why people run late may help.

First appeared in Autism News (WA) , January 2002 Issue.

TRANSITIONS reprinted with permission from the Autism Assoc. of Western Australia Inc.

In the previous article, we discussed strategies for dealing with waiting which is often difficult for people with autism. In this article, the focus is on transitions. Periods of transition, whether or not they entail waiting, can be difficult times for the child or adult with autism. There are strategies, however, that can make transition times easier.

1. Make it clear when an activity will be finished.

Provide warnings that an activity is about to end. Obviously these warnings must be at a communicative level that the individual can understand and may be conveyed in a variety of ways. With people who have adequate receptive language, telling them verbally, eg. "You have 5 more minutes" may be sufficient. Other people may find

timers helpful, as they not only tell them when the activity is over, but also allow the individual to see how much time they have left as they are doing the activity. Another way of helping people with autism to prepare for changes in activity is to set out tasks so that the person can see how much they have left. For example, if they love colouring, rather than giving them the whole colouring book, photo-copy 3 pages and put those on the table. The person can see that when all three pages have been coloured, the activity is over and it will be time to move on. A symbol system can also be used to help the person to see when an activity is going to end. To use another example, if the person is allowed to play 2 computer games before going back to work, this can be clearly communicated as follows. Place a Velcro strip on each side of the computer and choose a symbol to indicate the game. Place two game symbols, followed by a work symbol on the left hand strip. As the person completes a game, they move a symbol from left to right. When both game symbols are on the right, it is time to go back to work. The third symbol on the left of the screen is a work symbol that directs the person to the next activity

2. Use a timetable to show the sequence of activities.

Using a timetable helps the person see clearly the sequence of activities. For example, a person using a written list as a timetable can cross off an activity when it is complete. This helps make it clear that it is over and also gives them a real sense of achievement when they can mark an activity as completed. For the individual using Compic or photos, taking down the next symbol from the timetable, clearly shows a new activity is about to start. Locating timetables in a transition area also helps to create a clear division between activities. The person learns to go to that area at the end of each activity. There, they check their timetable and

move on to the next activity. This routine, in itself, helps them to “unhook” from the first activity and switch their attention to the next.

3. Model appropriate behaviour for transitions.

The session is over and it is time to clear away: an interlude of fun for many children, but for the child with autism it can be difficult. The previously quiet and orderly classroom is buzzing with activity and all the non-autistic students seem to know what is expected of them. The child with autism, however often does not know what to do and may also be distressed by all the noise and movement. Several strategies may help the student survive these moments with minimum distress. Reducing the noise level, if possible, is likely to reduce the stress for the individual with autism (and probably for the teacher). Ensuring that the child knows what is expected of them will also help. This can be achieved through teaching them a “pack away” routine, or providing instructions or a model for what they are supposed to do. For example, putting some crayons back in the box to demonstrate what is required. As soon as the individual has undertaken what is required, it may be helpful to provide them with a book or a favourite object with which to occupy themselves while the rest of the group is finishing up. It is important that these activities can be put down after a short period. Don't give the person an activity that they will want to complete prior to joining fellow students in class activities.

4. Visual Organisation.

At home, getting the child or adult organised before going out, can be facilitated by using a schedule of activities to complete before departure. (This schedule can be written, pictograms or objects.) If the sequence of activities is always presented in the same order, eg. breakfast, clean teeth, get dressed, brush hair, etc, the routine is

soon established enabling comfortable “moving on.” When the final scheduled instruction is “car” or “bus stop”, “school” or “work”, leaving the house becomes a natural occurrence. The intrinsic authority of a visual timetable should not be under-estimated. If prior advice can be given that a change is about to take place (and for many a visual representation will greatly aid comprehension) and if the person can be provided with a way of understanding what they need to do during transitions, the process of transition will be easier. We all tend to cope better when we know what is to happen next and what is expected of us. Without this knowledge, transitions can be confusing and distressing. Providing suitable “props” empowers the individual to cope and to gain independence.

First appeared in Autism News – Western Australia, March 2002 Issue.

STUDY – WANTED PARENTS!

A study investigating parents' and educators' knowledge of autism and their satisfaction with the education of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders is to be conducted by the Department of Psychology & Disability Studies at RMIT in Melbourne.

Participation requires completing 4 questionnaires addressing (1) Your knowledge of autism, (2) Your satisfaction with your child's current educational placement, (3) Background information and resource use and (4) Information regarding your child. No personal information is required and all responses will remain confidential. If you are interested contact:

Mickaela Aitken 03 99257376 or :
Dr Amanda Richdale 03 99257366 at the Department of Psychology & Disability Studies.

What To Do After the Initial Diagnosis.....

- * Don't panic and rush into things
- * Read selectively
- * Give yourself a chance to cry if you need to
- * Don't test your child to death
- * Make sure you have your emotional and respite support system in place
- * Stop talking to anyone that blames you
- * Find a team leader
- * Make a plan
- * Become an expert on your child
- * Don't feel you have to do every type of treatment
- * Don't fight every battle at the same time
- * Development does not happen all at once and can't be forced
- * Develop some way of talking to well-meaning people about your child
- * Be hopeful about the future

Newsletter of Autism Tasmania Inc.

Postal Address
PO Box 1552
Launceston
Tasmania 7250

We're on the web!
autismtas.org.au

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.

Employees Shave Their Heads For Autism.

Recently two Aurora employees submitted their heads to the razor in a fundraising event for the families of children with Autism.

"The fundraising idea started at a private barbecue attended by Garry Laycock and Leon Bennett," Geoff Aylmer one of those who had their head shaved said.

One of the men confided that he desperately needed a haircut and another produced \$50 and a challenge to have his head shaved instead.

The challenge snowballed when Geoff Aylmer and Bronwyn Martin (both Aurora employees) came on board and it was decided to nominate Autism Tasmania as the beneficiary of the donation as friends of one of the workers at Aurora have a three year old child with autism.

Aurora's premises at Rocherlea converted into a temporary barbershop as both Geoff and Bronwyn had their heads completely shaved in front of a substantial number of their workmates.

I attended the "head-shaving" as a guest and to receive Aurora's generous donation and then attended the barbecue that followed.

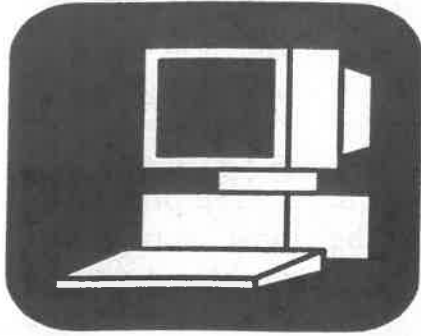
Both of the "shavees" did themselves proud in front of their co-workers and Autism Tasmania has expressed their appreciation to Aurora for their generosity.

Geoff and Bronwyn subsequently visited West Ulverstone Primary School which has three children with autism in the Prep - 1 class.

Each student was presented with an Aurora pen and magnet, with a special gift to each of the mothers who came to meet the "stars" with the bald heads.

Rose Clark.

The Present



Click on.....

www.inclusive-solutions.com

Information and resources on inclusion.

www.nican.com.au

A free information service to people with disabilities, families, service providers and the community throughout Australia.

www.teacch.com

US website for TEACCH program for teaching students with autism.

www.tased.edu.au/tasonline/caretas

Carers Tasmania

www.birthdefects.org/

For parents of children with any disorder

www.dircsa.org.au/pub/docs/ppermits.htm

Information on disability parking schemes in Australia, including the Tasmanian transport access scheme.

www.quantech.com.au

Technology for people with vision impairment.

<http://www/nas.org.uk>

The UK National Autistic Society has a lot of information and links to other sites.

Imagine life as a game in which you are juggling some five balls in the air. You name them – work, family, health, friends and spirit and you're keeping all of these in the air. You will soon understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. But the other four balls – family, health, friends and spirit – are made of glass. If you drop one of these, they will be irrevocably scuffed, marked, nicked, damaged or even shattered. They will never be the same. You must understand that and strive for balance in your life. How?

Don't undermine your worth by comparing yourself with others. It is because we are different that each of us is special.

Don't set your goals by what other people deem important. Only you know what is best for you. Don't take for granted the things closest to your heart. Cling to them as they were your life, for without them, life is meaningless.

Don't let your life slip through your fingers by living the past or for the future. By living your life one day at a time you live ALL the days of your life. Don't give up when you still have something to give. Nothing is really over until the moment you stop trying.

Don't be afraid to admit that you are less than perfect. It is this fragile thread that binds us to each other. Don't be afraid to encounter risks. It is by taking chances that we learn how to be brave.

Don't shut love out of your life by saying it's impossible to find. The quickest way to receive love is to hold it too tightly, and the best way to keep love is to give it wings.

The Present (cont'd)

Don't run through life so fast that you forget not only where you've been, but also where you are going. Don't forget, a person's greatest emotional need is to feel appreciated.

Don't be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can always carry easily. Don't use time or words carelessly. Neither can be retrieved. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored each step of the way.

Yesterday is History, Tomorrow is a Mystery and Today is a gift.....that's why we call it The Present.

Brian Dyson, CEO of Coca Cola Enterprises.

Sleep Survey Results.

Last year RMIT University conducted a sleep survey. The aim of the survey was to investigate sleep problems in children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Over 40 parents responded to the sleep survey. Below is a summary of the information obtained so far:

- The most common diagnosis co-occurring with Autism Spectrum Disorders was Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- The most common sleep problems were settling difficulties, night waking, and early morning waking. Children with Asperger Syndrome had significantly higher severity ratings of sleep problems than children with Autism.
- Children with Autism were more likely to have other sleep problems.
- The average amount of sleep children

(aged 2 - 12 years) were having each night was 8.3 hours. This is less than the typical amount of sleep a child of this age group usually requires (9.5 - 12 hours per night).

- In 70% of cases, parents had their sleep disrupted as a result of their child's sleep problem
- The most common treatments for sleep problems were medication and behavioural interventions.
- Behavioural intervention was reported to be more successful for children with Autism.
- More sleep medication was used in children with Asperger Syndrome, but the Autism group reported higher medication success ratings.
- The results so far suggest that the Asperger Syndrome group may have more severe sleep problems than children with autism.

These are preliminary results obtained from a small sample of parents. The sleep survey is continuing, so please contact me if you are interested in completing the survey (which takes about 3 minutes.)

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact:
Melinda Polimeni at the
Department of Psychology and Disability Studies
RMIT University
Phone: 03 9925 7524 or
Email: melinda_polimeni@hotmail.com

*** Our family participated in such a research project about six year ago and found the questionnaires very straight forward and easy to complete.

Rose Clark.

Something to Say

AGOSCI National Conference 2003

Sydney 20 -23 March 2003

Clinical research, policy and quality of life issues for people who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication, signing etc.

www.agosci2003.org
Phone: (02) 9972 8125

PECS workshops

Picture Exchange Communication System Training.

Launceston

October 16 and 17 2002

Crucial information and hands-on practice for those who work and/or live with individuals with limited communication skills (including autism).

Phone 08 8331 7727
www.pecs-australia.com

Pathways 6 Conference

Inclusive Education through Universal Access

The Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre
1-4 December 2002.

Focussing on issues of access, participation and outcomes for students with disabilities in education and training settings

www.usyd.edu.au/disability/pathways

ASSID Conference

Developing and Enriching Communities

13 - 16 November 2002

Wrest Point Casino Hobart

Themes include: education, advocacy, autism, inclusion & sexuality

Phone ASSID 0408 951 686

(Virginia Downtown)

www.rmit.edu.au/department/ps/assid

Inaugural World Autism Congress 2002

Unity Through Diversity

10 -14 November 2002
Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre

Enquiries: enquiries@autismcongress.com

Phone: (03) 9417 0888
www.autismcongress.com

Carers Week

20 - 26 October 2002

Invitation to family carers

Launceston Launch

A cocktail style affair at Albert Hall
Tuesday 22 October

Southern Luncheon

Friday 25 October
Phone 1800 242 636
For more information.