

# Autism Tasmania Bulletin

## Volume 1, Issue 10

*The bulletin of Autism Tasmania Inc.*



Merry Christmas from the  
Committee of  
Autism Tasmania

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Your last TWO (2) Autism Tas  
Bulletins were sent by email,  
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### **"Where I've been and what I've seen"**

**from Rose Clark; Family Support Coordinator**

Since the last Bulletin, there have been many activities involving the Parent Support groups in each region of the state. Social events were organised for the end of the year - in the North West sixteen family members enjoyed a night out in Penguin (the same night as the World Cup rugby semi-final!) and in Launceston eighteen parents enjoyed lunch at the Watergarden at the Casino. The East Coast group gathered for a lunch in Scamander on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> and the Southern parents had a family picnic on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

Each group has been very active in the activities they have chosen for their regional meetings with a variety of guest speakers - topics have included: wills and trust funds, speech therapy and communication systems, social stories, information regarding care and respite and a visit from Kathy Wilson; the Autism Consultant with the Department of Education. Many of the speakers have prompted members of groups to then organise a follow-up speaker for a future meeting.

As the school holidays approach there will be a 'lull' in activities, while families enjoy Christmas and the New Year. However, dates for upcoming activities have been finalised in the

South and members in other regions will be notified during January.

The issue of suspensions and exclusion of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder remains of critical importance. This subject was on the agenda of the last Parent Reference Group meeting in Hobart in mid-November. The Department of Education has recognised the significance of suspension and exclusion of students with an ASD and is currently putting in place strategies to deal with it 'in house.'. The aim is to disseminate information to their staff, from superintendents down. I hope that these strategies do have a positive impact on how our children are viewed in some school settings.

There have also been some good news stories of schools implementing wonderful programs and strategies for children with ASD and I hope we can feature some of these in the near future.

Another important issue is the lack of specialised services for older children. Many services, (eg: some holiday programs) do not cater for older children even if the child has difficulties which make accessing generic services impractical. As the

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Your committee at work...



### **PAT HOWLIN is coming to Launceston in March 2004**

*Dr Pat Howlin is a Professor of Clinical Psychology at St George's Hospital Medical School, London.*

She is a **Consultant Chartered Clinical Psychologist.**

Her research and clinical work has been predominantly with people with autism and their families.

Her research has involved:

- home-based treatment,
- follow-up into adult life,
- the teaching of Theory of Mind
- and the effectiveness of supported employment schemes.

She will be presenting a one day seminar in Launceston (venue yet to be advised) on both the 12th and 13th March. So put those dates into your diary now!

It promises to be a valuable seminar for parents and

### **Meeting in Cyberspace!**

At our last committee meeting, we met in cyberspace! By using the Telehealth facilities at both the Launceston General and the Royal Hobart Hospitals, our regular statewide meeting was conducted in just 2 and a bit hours on a Sunday afternoon! Naturally the main advantage of having our meeting via TV and phone connection, was the HUGE reduction in travelling time.

Thanks to the efforts of Cheryl in the North and Ro in the South, the few teething problems encountered were quickly sorted out and people soon adapted to the system for a very productive meeting

Simply put, Telehealth is a facility used by the Health Department to enable people around the state (and the nation) to have face to face contact by using sophisticated web cams, microphones and document cameras.

We were able to access this facility for a very reasonable cost and we are looking at ways of reducing costs even further.

After the meeting, the consensus was that Telehealth was a *VERY* useful tool and one which the Autism Tas Committee plans to use again.

If you would like to attend a committee meeting and to see first hand what goes on, please feel free to contact the Secretary for details of the next meeting. Who knows if we have enough interest we may be able to conduct a meeting with multiple sites! Cheryl Scott (Secretary)

<b>President</b>	
<b>Vice Presidents</b>	Ros Ward
<b>Secretary</b>	Cheryl Scott
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Christie
<b>Committee</b>	Rosemary Rush, Peter Hatters, Eileen Prunster
<b>Website</b>	Geraldine Robertson

## ABIT -Catching Up

**Autism Behavioural Intervention Tasmania Inc Supporting Families Teaching ABA.** Hello to Bulletin Readers,

*It's been a while since our last update. I'm here to wish you all a happy time at Christmas. Fitting in with family and/or friends on Christmas Day can be stressful with the social demands on our children to conform to the niceties of the day. From experience it can turn what's meant to be a wonderful day into a very sad one with Mum / Dad wondering why they suffer the pressure. Well...there's a thought here if you wish to consider it, not everyone will need to. If you have an understanding family you can be supported with your decision. It's all about taking a second look at you and your family and what would make your Christmas Day a success. It might mean saying to some family members that you'll drop by on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas Day or that you've decided to have one of the Christmas meals at home instead of rushing out to one venue and then another and another. Can some of the family or friends come to your house where you know your children will be the most comfortable? The kids would love it as they would get more time with their new toys. Perhaps it might even mean "pulling down the shutters" for the whole day and contemplating*

*visits on Boxing Day or catching up later. Building in timeslots when there will be no demands on the family member with ASD will probably be appreciated by the whole family and you can go to the next event refreshed. When all said and done one might ask "What is the measure for a happy Christmas Day?" To me...happy kids (big and small) and a chance to spend time with family! What does a happy Christmas mean for YOU? I wish you all peace at Christmas time and relaxation over the holidays...free from timetables.*

**Rosemary Rush – President ABIT**

Ph 6229 5760 [rushm@netspace.net.au](mailto:rushm@netspace.net.au)

If you would like to get a lift to any of our functions, please contact us and we can arrange something for you. Over the Christmas holidays we often find an increase in contact from families who have recently been through diagnosis. If you meet someone in this situation, please invite them along with you to the next event. When places close down over the break it can be a very lonely time and a long wait for services to resume business.

## GIANT STEPS

We look at third term each year as the time for the Shows. Giant Steps is very involved in fundraising at the Launceston and Hobart Shows and at the Tasmanian Craft Fair, all of which fall within this final term. We man a number of sites at each of these events, selling and promoting the products of Pura Milk and, in the process, make a very worthwhile contribution to our income. One of the highlights is always the appearance of Cassie the Cow, who attracts the attention of the children and hands out stickers and milk samples.

Unfortunately, this year the success of the Tasmanian Craft Fair was marred for us by a blatant robbery at our Centre. A neighbour on her morning walk saw the culprits leaving by the front door, carrying a computer. By the time the police arrived, the burglars were long gone, taking with them some

very valuable equipment which has been gained over the years through the generosity of our supporters.

The good news is that our insurance company, Guild Insurance, has responded well and everything has been replaced. However, we are now in the process of installing a monitored alarm to give us a little more security. I suppose we have felt that we are immune as we can't imagine any local people taking advantage of us in this way, but the police believe the thieves were from out-of-town, taking the opportunity of the Craft Fair weekend to make a few raids.

**John Christie**





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**Providing lifelong support to people with  
Autism and related disorders.**

**We're on the Web!**  
[autismtas.org.au](http://autismtas.org.au)

*(Continued from page 1)*

parent of an older teenager this 'gap' is becoming a reality for our family also.

Finishing on a positive note, however:- one of the greatest things about being with parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder is hearing news of the wonderful new skill a child has just mastered! I recently read a wonderful two liner that really summed up well the jubilation at our children's achievements. It said: **"Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away."**

I wish you all a happy, peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the new year

**Rose Clark.**

## Statewide Autism Diary at a glance

### Northern Dates

Picnic in mid to late January. Notice will be emailed or mailed

### North Western Dates

Outing for families late January/early February. Notice will be emailed or mailed

### Southern Dates

**January 13<sup>th</sup>** at Tascare, 231 Main Road Derwent Park beginning at 7.30pm. This meeting will be a planning session for 2004.

**January 15<sup>th</sup>** - Family day at the Tahune Air Walk. Special concessions have been granted - members accompanying a child will have free entry. Child entry fee is \$6. For further information and times, phone Nigel or

Carolyn on 62 681104 or Debbra on 62 736969.

**January 21<sup>st</sup> 2004 HAPPY NEW YEAR!!** **ABIT** Family Picnic at Caldew Park in Hill St, West Hobart. 12 - 2pm. RSVP by 19<sup>th</sup> Jan to Rosemary - leave a message please. Ph 6229 5760 or [rushm@netspace.net.au](mailto:rushm@netspace.net.au)

**February 18<sup>th</sup> ABIT Support Night** - counter meal at Cascade Hotel 22 Cascade Rd, South Hobart 7pm Note the earlier start !! The average cost of a main meal is \$15. RSVP by Feb 16<sup>th</sup> to Rosemary Ph 6229 5760 or [rushm@netspace.net.au](mailto:rushm@netspace.net.au)

**March 17<sup>th</sup> ABIT Support Night** - Merry & Ian McQueen's 12 Norfolk Cres, Sandy Bay Ph 6225 0663. 7:30pm. Bring a little supper if you can!