

People Communities

Your Local Area Coordination magazine

Family, friends, community – a good life



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Disability
Services
Commission

Focused on the future –
Martin's story, page 4
Tiana's story, page 9

Spring 2011

About your magazine

People and Communities is produced by the Disability Services Commission's Local Area Coordination directorate. The magazine is published three times a year and we welcome your submissions. Please note the Commission reserves the right to edit submissions.

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This magazine is printed on 100 per cent recycled paper.

Front page: Martin Stevens (seated) with Andrew Talmage at the Edith Cowan University in the Perth suburb of Joondalup. Full story page 4.

Newslines

It's been fantastic to receive positive feedback on our first publication, with this spring edition featuring a number of personal submissions.

Last month, Local Area Coordination held the first state-wide forum for many years. In addition to providing information on key Commission agendas, the forum provided an opportunity for Local Area Coordinators (LACs) to meet their colleagues from across the State and share ideas, local initiatives, challenges and successes.

A number of people with disability and families also shared their stories at the forum. We are pleased to feature two personal stories in this edition of People and Communities.

Next year, we plan to hold smaller forums in a number of areas across the State and invite people with disability and families to join us. More information to come early in 2012!

As well as providing a way for people to share their personal stories, People and Communities provides readers with key disability-related information and items of interest. We look forward to your ongoing contributions.

Happy reading.

Robyn Massey

Executive Director

Local Area Coordination

Disability Services Commission

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Kununurra water garden a winner

Two years ago Odie Smith started planning her water garden. Working with her live-in carer Debbie Brown, Odie designed a garden that incorporates palms and fragrant climbing plants that attract frogs, lizards, birds and butterflies.

All their hard work paid off when Odie was awarded first prize for the best water garden in the East Kimberley area at the recent Kununurra Agriculture Show.

Forty-two year-old Odie has Huntington's disease, a neurological condition that has worsened significantly over the past few years. The garden has become a tranquil and relaxing place for Odie to gather with her extended family, friends and the two family dogs Herbert and Doris.

Odie and Debbie are busy planning their next project—a wheelchair accessible pathway around their home.

As part of the Kununurra community, Odie's LAC Deb Craigie shared in the excitement at hearing the news about the prize winning garden.



■ Odie Smith (seated) with Debbie Brown.

Fresh ideas and inspiration at forum

Information about local people and initiatives was the highlight of the State Local Area Coordination forum held in August.

With the theme 'moving forward together', the forum gave participants a chance to hear people's stories, find out more about local activities and programs and receive updates on international initiatives in the disability sector.

Forum participants had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of people and communities.

This magazine issue features stories by Martin Stevens (page 4) and Tiana Jones (page 9), both of whom gave presentations at the forum.

Forum sessions showcased initiatives that have led to greater opportunities for people with disability to be included in their local communities. 'Snapshots' of some of these initiatives are provided on page 17.

Paradigm, one of the United Kingdom's leading consultancy and training agencies, provided a number of workshops.

Covering topics such as building personalised and sustainable support systems, and developing support networks which are self-managed, Paradigm highlighted the importance of planning for the future.

Overall, forum participants gained a deeper understanding of people and communities. Forum discussion on the concept of 'real wealth' helped confirm the view that 'wealth' is more than financial resources.

Real wealth for people of all abilities is underpinned by networks of support and the power of valued relationships.

Real wealth helps people build better lives and feel connected and part of their local communities.

Self-belief helps achieve dreams

Martin Stevens has cerebral palsy, but that has not stopped him setting and achieving his goals. At the recent Local Area Coordination State forum Martin explained what drives his positive attitude.

“When I was much younger I had trouble believing in myself. I thought I would be put into a special needs school and not have the same opportunities as other kids my age. But my parents believed in me and taught me to believe in myself,” said Martin.

“Cerebral palsy has an impact on everything I do—everything takes longer and is more complicated. I accept that. However, with self-belief, and the right supports in place, I believe anything is possible. Some time ago I made an important decision, choosing to face and overcome obstacles by setting goals that would help me achieve my dreams for a full and happy life.

“People assumed that because I have a disability I would never attend a mainstream school, go to university, have a career, or participate in community activities. I have proven them wrong.

“For example, last year I wanted to film the City to Surf Fun Run. I needed supports for my video camera so I borrowed Dad’s crutches. Dad helped me cut down one of them and attach Mum’s tripod so we could mount the video camera.

“People assumed that because I have a disability I would never attend a mainstream school, go to university, have a career, or participate in community activities. I have proven them wrong.”



Andrew Talmage (left) with Martin Stevens who is enjoying university life.

“My support worker Andrew Talmage worked with me to attach the video mount to my wheelchair. I not only completed the fun run but I achieved my goal of filming the event and making a DVD. The only problem in solving the filming obstacle was that soon after Dad needed his crutches and he had to go out and buy another pair. However, I see an opportunity here—another two tripods ready to go.

“Today I am in the middle of achieving my dreams. I graduated from Year 12, have completed a Certificate III in Community Services and Youth Work and I am now



🗨️ Tony Shepherd (left), Martin Stevens and Andrew Talmage deep in discussion at Edith Cowan University.

studying at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup. I plan to transfer into multi-media and animation studies.

“I have also registered my own business—MindSPEAK— as a way to raise community awareness and advocate for people with disability” Martin said.

“I remember the first talk I gave in Easter 2008. I was surprised at people’s reactions—I liked it. People really understood my message—a lot of people don’t.

“Since then I have talked to school groups, people at graduation ceremonies and staff at Perth Home Care and the Commission.

“I want to make a difference and scrap limitations. Limitations are the biggest problem for people like me.

“Support comes from different places—like presenting at the LAC Forum.

“I recently added a new friend to my Facebook page. She contacted me after her

LAC in Karratha talked about my LAC forum presentation. Guess what—I have a new friend.

“I am fortunate that I have a very good support network around me—people who believe in me and keep me at the centre of planning.

“My family, my LAC Tony Shepherd and my support worker Andrew work together to help me realise my dreams.

“Getting to where I am today has meant facing and overcoming many challenges. Without a doubt—just like everyone else—I will face challenges in the future. That’s just part of life. However, if I can find ways to achieve my dreams, other people can as well.”

“I want to make a difference and scrap limitations. Limitations are the biggest problem for people like me.”

Bunbury artists share their passion



Art Partners participant Roslyn Burns (seated), Julie Jensen (left) and Billie Griffiths.

Artists and people with disability are pairing up to share their passion for painting and other art forms in a program launched in Bunbury in May.

The Art Partners program matches people with disability who are interested in art with a mentor who may be a practising artist or have a passion for the same artistic medium as the participants.

The mentor's role is to attend art classes at one of two Bunbury venues and work with their partners to help ensure their full participation in the program.

One of the program collaborators is DADAA, a Fremantle-based arts and disability organisation that has had a South West regional program operating from Bunbury for six years.

"The program's key objective is to create inclusive cultural and artistic opportunities for people with disability," DADAA's Regional Project Officer Wanda Ariano said.

"It's very much a collaborative effort—working with representatives from the Disability Services Commission, DADAA, Advocacy South West, Activ Foundation, Enable South West, Bunbury

Regional Art Galleries and Stirling Street Art Centre."

LAC Maureen Brearley is the Commission's representative.

"Program funding is broad-based and includes service organisations, corporations, small businesses and individuals. Our aim is to have a number of donors who each provide a small amount of funding," Maureen said.

"There was great interest in joining the program, with the result that we had more applicants than places in the pilot stage.

"However, we are hopeful that with ongoing donations and support, Art Partners can be expanded and become a permanent community-based program."

By the end of the project, it is hoped participants will have gained confidence in their art-making practice and will be producing valued works.

Participation also provides opportunities for people with disability to expand their networks and circle of friends through interaction with their mentor, teacher, classmates and people enrolled in other activities at the same venue.

Participant Roslyn Burns had been a passionate and creative painter for many years. However her physical condition has deteriorated to the point where she is no longer able to use her hands. For the past six months, Roslyn has been painting with her feet.

Roslyn's mentor Billie Griffiths said Roslyn's participation in the program has been an inspirational experience for everyone.

"I love being part of the program and I am very proud of my paintings," Roslyn said.

"I would really like to donate my bird painting to the Big Swamp Wildlife Park in Bunbury. My next art project involves sketching the different animals, and possibly a painting of the park at sunset."

For more information: contact your LAC, phone Maureen Brearley on 9722 3099 or email maureen.brearley@dsc.wa.gov.au or phone Wanda Ariano on 0429 918 711 or email wanda@dadaawa.asn.au.

Bowling champion lives life to the full



 Champion tenpin bowler Ryan Underwood in full swing.

An independent life suits Ryan Underwood—the 28-year-old is confident, adventurous, enthusiastic about life, and a keen sports enthusiast.

Ryan's mum Gail describes him as a generous person who values his independence and making his own decisions and choices.

Ryan has an intellectual disability and faces other challenges which include vision impairment and epilepsy.

Ten years ago, with significant ongoing support from his parents, Ryan moved out of home to live independently in his grandmother's unit.

Ryan also took over the care of his grandmother's dog Toby and later his own dog Phoebe.

With the assistance of LACs in the Perth suburb of Parkwood, three years ago Ryan and his parents and three other local families met to explore independent living options which involved less direct family support.

These planning meetings included discussions about the Commission's Community Living Plan.

The families decided to use the family governance model to guide their living plan. The model allowed the families to develop individual plans for their family members. Two coordinators assisted the four families to implement their plans

which were approved, funded and have been in operation for almost two years.

A coordinator visits Ryan regularly to help ensure his independent living plan is working well.

Ryan also has Post School Options funding and he is exploring employment opportunities.

Ryan enjoys getting out and about in the community—going to the movies, training at the gym, line dancing, playing basketball, swimming and, with support, taking day-long train trips into the country.

Tenpin bowling has been one of Ryan's interests since joining a Melville group when he was 11 years old. The group was open to children of all abilities and the family helped support the club's activities.

At 18, through the Association for the Blind, Ryan started playing competitively, and he has represented the State side in national championships since 2000.

Ryan also volunteers with the Association, supporting other players in both goalball and tenpin bowling.

Ryan is part of the Australian tenpin bowling team competing at the world championships in Kuala Lumpur in October 2011, where 16 countries are competing.

Home comforts for Derby siblings



Phil Flint (left) from Life Without Barriers, Simon Mowaljari, Ida Mowaljari, and Loretta Councillor at the housewarming.

Derby brother and sister Ida (52) and Simon (47) Mowaljari are now enjoying life in their own home, after living in a home for the aged since 2004.

Numbla Nunga Nursing Home in Derby had been the only accommodation option for the siblings because of a lack of local supported accommodation facilities for people with disability their age in the town.

Funding from the Commission's Young People in Residential Aged Care (YPRAC) project enabled the duo to move into their own home.

The Commission's Kimberley Local Area Coordination Area Manager Russell Smith, who is based in Broome, said the move was one of the many positive outcomes of the YPRAC project.

"The project aimed to give young people with disability living in aged care facilities the opportunity to live and participate within their communities," Russell said.

"Ida and Simon were too young to be living in a nursing home. Unfortunately this can be the only option for many younger people with disability when there isn't anything else available for them in their community.

"The YPRAC project aims to change this through identifying younger people with disability at risk of becoming permanent residents of aged care facilities and seeking alternative accommodation and support solutions for them."

Mr and Ms Mowaljari's Derby home has four bedrooms, two bathrooms and is fully wheelchair accessible.

Funding from the project also furnished the residence and provides Mr and Ms Mowaljari with the use of a wheelchair accessible vehicle.

Mr and Ms Mowaljari moved into their home in March 2011 and held a housewarming with friends, family and their local community on 5 May.

Community organisation Life Without Barriers supports Mr and Ms Mowaljari by providing two full-time carers, who possess a strong knowledge and awareness of the siblings' Aboriginal cultural and family needs.

The Kimberley Individual and Family Support Association also provides the pair with alternatives to employment support which will ensure their ongoing involvement within the Derby community.

"I am delighted that Ida and Simon have moved into their new home," Russell said.

"They are now living back where they belong, in the community and participating within their town attending cultural events and maintaining strong connections with their family, all with support provided through this initiative."

Learning inspires love of politics

An interest in politics identified by an LAC has led to a 17-year-old Joondalup girl with autism joining the Western Australian Youth Parliament.

Tiana Jones is proud of her achievement, especially after a journey through childhood that was sometimes challenging.

“When I was a baby, my mum told me that I kept mostly to myself and preferred to play with the family pets” Tiana said.

“My mum knew I wasn’t developing as well as the other children. After many years of visits to therapists and specialists, at the age of five, I was diagnosed with autism.”

Tiana’s mother Lee-Anne said the first few years of primary school were difficult and Tiana struggled to learn.

“When in Year 5, Tiana failed the Department of Education’s literacy and numeracy assessment tests, the WALNA tests,” Lee-Anne said.

“Tiana became what is referred to as an ‘at risk’ student. However, in conjunction with our LAC Caterina Fawcett, we persevered in getting Tiana to participate in activities that would help increase her social and learning skills.

“I read to Tiana every night and introduced her to the Harry Potter novels. Tiana became hooked on Harry, totally absorbed by the stories, and desperate to be in Slytherin. Eventually Tiana began reading.”

Tiana’s literacy and numeracy skills continued to develop and by Year 7 she achieved results in the top three per cent in the WALNA tests.

Teachers considered her reading and writing abilities to be outstanding and by high school Tiana was publishing stories online and entering writing competitions.

“I was more excited about the actual writing, than winning the prizes” Tiana said.

Reading became Tiana’s great passion, introducing her to the world of politics—one of her favourite topics.

“My LAC recognised this interest and earlier this year successfully nominated me for the Youth Parliament program,” she said.

“I am now the Youth Parliament Member for Joondalup and part of the Health Committee.

“Being part of the program has been an amazing experience. I hope to have an influence in the mental health area—in particular improving access to services and supports.

“My dream is to study at university, travel the world and have a career in history or political science.”



Tiana Jones (left) with disability advocate Peter Hall at Parliament House, Perth.

Make your health plan legal

People can now have their decisions about their future health care recorded in a legal document.

An Advance Health Directive (AHD) is a legal document that enables adults to make decisions now about the treatment they would want to receive if they ever became sick, injured or incapable of communicating their wishes.

In such circumstances, an AHD becomes the person's 'voice' for their specified situations and can be used to indicate if they want to accept or refuse consent to future treatment.

The term 'treatment' includes medical, surgical and dental treatments, including palliative care and life-sustaining measures.

An AHD comes into effect only if the person is unable to make reasoned judgements at the time treatment is required.

To order AHD resources: phone 9222 2300, email publicationordering@health.wa.gov.au or visit www.health.wa.gov.au > Advance Health Directives.

Commission website to receive total makeover

The Commission is embarking on a long-term project to redevelop its website www.disability.wa.gov.au .

"It's an exciting opportunity for people to put forward their ideas about what works on our websites, what needs to be improved and how we can use new web technology to better develop and deliver our services," Community Access and Information Manager Alison Blake said.

People will have a chance to participate through focus groups and an online survey to help guide the project.

Test groups will also be used to assess usability and accessibility.

Alison said she anticipated the consultation and involvement process would begin in the next few months.

"The project is in its infancy at the moment so we'd ask our stakeholders and customers to start putting their ideas down on paper," Alison said.

If you are interested in participating in a focus group or test group, send your name, contact information, stakeholder details and your area of interest to Web Redevelopment Officer Tim Trevenen, please phone 6104 9539 or email Tim.Trevenen@dsc.wa.gov.au .

Advocate supports your rights

The Public Advocate is an independent statutory officer appointed under the Guardianship and Administration Act 1990 to promote and protect the rights of adults with decision-making disabilities, to reduce their risk of neglect, exploitation and abuse.

In protecting people's rights and dignity, the Public Advocate provides a range of services including providing advice on Enduring Powers of Attorney (EPA) and Enduring Powers of Guardianship (EPG).

An EPA is a legal agreement that enables a person to appoint a trusted person—or people—to make financial and property decisions on their behalf.

This agreement is made by choice and can be executed by anyone over the age of 18 who has full legal capacity.

An EPG is a legal document that authorises a person of your choice, to make important personal, lifestyle and treatment decisions on your behalf should you ever become incapable of making such decisions yourself. This person is known as an enduring guardian.

For more information: phone the Office of the Public Advocate 9278 7300, 1300 858 455 or visit www.publicadvocate.wa.gov.au .



Network meeting participants, Flo Cloud (left), Kate Matthews, John Writer, Illana Stack, Deb Craigie, Jan Witney and Jean Writer.

Kununurra networking pays dividends

Monthly networking meetings held between government organisations, including the Commission, and other non-government agencies, has improved the outcomes for people with disability in the East Kimberley region.

Work experience placements for two Kununurra District High School students have been one of the outcomes of these meetings.

East Kimberley Region LAC Deborah Craigie said the placements came about after representatives said people with disability were having difficulty getting work experience placements and employment in regional areas.

The two students have begun work experience at the local recreation centre and at the Kununurra Shire Council.

One network representative is also advocating

for traineeships for people with disability in their organisation.

“The emphasis is on working collaboratively and supporting each other,” Deborah said.

“Distance and remoteness to services and facilities adds another level of complexity to achieving the best possible outcomes for people with disability.

“It’s not uncommon for representatives from out-of-town services to schedule their visits to coincide with our networking meetings.

“Between 10 to 20 agency representatives attend our network meetings at any given time.

“It’s also important to remember that meeting attendance is voluntary, that meetings are always held outside of normal business hours and that our common goal is sharing information.”

Agencies pool planning ideas

People with disability in the Belmont and Maddington areas are now able to better plan for their future thanks to information sessions organised by their LACs.

Thornlie LAC Sean Jones said staff were working in partnership with local, State and federal government agencies such as Centrelink, Citizens Advice Bureau, the Department of Health, the Public Trustee and the Office of the Public Advocate to help

inform people about future planning options.

“Everyone is busy and it takes a concerted effort to sit down and think about financial matters, about wills and estate planning. However, putting your affairs in order provides peace of mind to all concerned,” Sean said.

“The sessions are extremely well attended, with up to 30 people attending the last session.”



 Samala Ghosh working out at her gym.

Collaboration and communication helps build inclusive communities

Samala Ghosh is a fun-loving, energetic young woman who now lives in Denmark with her mother Andrea.

Having completed TAFE studies in Perth, Samala now attends the Great Southern Institute of Technology in Albany, fitting in other activities such as zumba, cooking and radio announcing whenever possible.

Samala (19) has also learnt—from personal experience—the power of advocacy, partnerships and communication.

The keen gym user who has Down syndrome had been disappointed and puzzled when an Albany gym would not allow her to attend without a support person, because she had independently accessed a gym when living in Perth.

As the Bodycare Health Club had established a reputation as an inclusive organisation that welcomes people with disability, the situation surprised Samala's LAC Gabrielle Rose.

However, the issue was resolved after Andrea, Gabrielle and BodyCare's manager Amber Cekerevac met to talk about the issue.

Through discussion, all parties gained a better understanding of each other's situation.

In addition, there was agreement that Gabrielle and Amber would work together to examine and discuss the implications of Bodycare's current gym use policies.

As a result of these discussions, Samala is now able to attend her gym sessions independently.

"It's wonderful to work with an organisation that demonstrates a strong commitment to inclusion and a willingness to accommodate people of all abilities in their day-to-day gym practice," Gabrielle said.

Today approximately 15 people with disability use the Bodycare gym in the south-west.

Gym program inspires adolescents

A mother's chance conversation at her local gym has resulted in the development of an inspirational physical fitness program for adolescents with challenging behaviours.

"Adolescence can be a particularly challenging time for children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their parents," Georgina Pitt said.

"A Perth gym devised a training program that provided an outlet for my son Tom's frustrations. While it took some time for Tom to become accustomed to the new environment, he now really enjoys his gym sessions with his trainer Caron Daly.

"The results exceeded our wildest expectations. We saw improvements in Tom's ability to concentrate and stay on track with tasks. His self-esteem and confidence also increased.

"Tom loved being part of a masculine environment—he loved doing blokey things with the guys in the gym—and his overall physical health improved enormously.

"While our LAC Lou Cunningham was not involved in Tom's gym journey, she is a big part of our support network.

"Because the gym program played an important part in Tom's successful participation in a community activity, we began to consider other families in similar situations.

"In 2007 we formed Care Through Fitness, a not-for-profit organisation focused on providing and promoting fitness and recreational

programs for adolescents with challenging behaviours, including those with ASDs.

"We received Lotterywest funding for a three-year project and developed a pilot gym program that involved 45 high school students aged from 11 to 18 from five participating Perth schools."

Caron said that results from the pilot program showed that students enjoyed working out at the gym, used the equipment properly and enjoyed the social aspects of being part of the gym community.

Georgina said there had been consistent reports that the students in the pilot program demonstrated increased verbal communication with the people around them.

There were also marked improvements in their language skills and abilities.

Caron said that Department of Sport and Recreation funding had enabled them to develop a train-the-trainer manual that could be distributed to participating community-based gyms around the State.

"Working in partnership with the YMCA, the project will be completed next year," Caron said.

"Everyone benefits from the program's training package—individuals with an ASD, their families and the community."

For more Care Through Fitness program information: contact Caron Daly on 9382 8177 or email carethroughfitnessinc@westnet.com.au .

Celebrate day for people with disability

Make sure you mark 3 December in your diary—it's the International Day of People with Disability.

This United Nations sanctioned day aims to promote an understanding of people with disability and encourage support for their dignity, rights and well-being.

The day also seeks to increase awareness of the benefits of the integration of people with disability in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

The day brings together individuals, businesses, community organisations, and governments from every corner of the world to celebrate and acknowledge the contributions, skills and achievements of people with disability.

For more information: phone 1800 440 385, TTY 1800 555 677 and ask for 1800 440 385, email idpwd@fahcsia.gov.au or visit www.idpwd.com.au .

Modified vehicle supports travel plans

Esperance woman Tammie Richards can now continue to realise her dream of travelling around Australia thanks to a recent modification to her car.

Tammie (38), has always enjoyed travelling by car and caravan but in recent years her deteriorating health has seen her require the use of a wheelchair.

Getting the wheelchair in and out of the car has been a struggle for Tammie and her family, a problem she discussed with her LAC Betty Shirras. Together they contacted the Independent Living Centre (ILC) to discuss vehicle modification options for transporting vehicles.

“The ILC staff were extremely helpful and assisted Tammie in choosing the type of carrier that would meet her needs,” Betty said.

“However, given the specific design of Tammie’s wheelchair, there were no existing carriers that were suitable.

“To solve the problem Tammie and her father Ben met with a local engineering company in Esperance, and together designed a carrier that would work with Tammie’s chair and suit their car.”

With LAC support Tammie was successful in receiving an ILC equipment grant to purchase



Tammie was in Alice Springs for the Beanie Festival.

the purpose-built carrier. Once the carrier was in place, it was not long before the next holiday was planned.

In June, Tammie and her mother Sue set off for Alice Springs, arriving in time for the Beanie Festival, where Tammie happened to purchase a beanie made by a woman in Esperance.

Currently the travellers are in Mataranka enjoying the thermal pool and plan to return home via Queensland.

Tammie said thanks to the support she received from ILC she was able to continue with her plans to travel around Australia and meet many interesting people along the way.

Check wheelchair insurance

If you use a car to transport a wheelchair, it might pay to check whether your vehicle insurance policy covers any damage to the wheelchair that occurs during transit.

The Independent Living Centre advises that many people use wheelchair hoists and carriers on cars to transport wheelchairs. However, the use of carriers requires a Department of Transport vehicle modification permit. This permit can be obtained after the modifications have been inspected.

For more information: phone 13 1156, TTY 9216 8484, fax 1300 669 995 or visit www.transport.wa.gov.au > Drive and Vehicle Services > Safety and standards > Modify or construct a vehicle > Modify a vehicle .

DVD aids wheelchair maintenance

The Commission’s Country Resource and Consultancy Team, part of the Statewide Specialist Services directorate, has developed a DVD about wheelchair maintenance.

The DVD aims to help WA Country Health Service therapists train local support people to complete minor wheelchair repairs and maintenance.

It is hoped this will reduce wheelchair breakdowns and the effect breakdowns have on the life of the person using the wheelchair.

For more information: contact the Commission’s Country Resource Team Leader Joanne Nodwell on 9426 9292.

Manjimup job-seekers explore pathways



■ Fran Karamfiles (left) with Telisha Beuglehole (centre) and her mother Annette O'Breeza.

Job-seekers in Manjimup are finding opportunities for local work are becoming limited with changes in activity by some local industries.

The area's long-time timber industry is winding down and the agricultural sector is diversifying into vegetable growing, winemaking and fish farming.

In addition, Federal Government incentives such as the two-year extension of travel visas in return for three months' work in agricultural areas, has attracted backpackers to the region, making the local job market more competitive.

While this is good news for farmers, it means young people in the area may lose seasonal employment opportunities—potential pathways to longer-term employment.

LAC Christine McCallum said the loss of employment opportunities for people with disability was worrying.

"After initial meetings with the Coordinator from the National Disability Coordination Office (NDCO), we agreed that promoting and encouraging 'local jobs for local people' was a priority," she said.

Discussions resulted in the formation of the Transition Pathways Group, with representatives from a variety of local organisations including the Commission's Local Area Coordination office in Manjimup, NDCO, STRIVE Warren Blackwood, Jobs South West, Forrest Personnel, Enable SW, Manjimup Shire and the Manjimup Education Support Centre.

To help raise community awareness, the group recently delivered a presentation to the Manjimup Chamber of Commerce.

A key speaker was Fran Karamfiles from a local building firm who spoke about the positive aspects of providing a traineeship to Telisha Beuglehole, a young local girl with disability.

"Telisha is experiencing first-hand the positives and negatives of working outdoors, dealing with subcontractors and other employees on the work site and generally picking up skills which will benefit her transition into an apprenticeship when she completes her traineeship," Fran said.

"The combination of school-based training and on-site workplace experience is an ideal mix for Telisha."

Telisha said she really liked the work she was doing during her traineeship and now knew the direction she wanted her life to take.

"At first I was nervous about being the only girl on-site but I got used to it," she said.

"I have gained my White Certificate which allows me access to the building site, and I can now use power tools such as nail guns, drop saws, belt sanders and laser levels."

Bronya Wickland from Jobs South West also spoke about the benefits and supports available to businesses that provided employment opportunities to people with disability.

NDCO's Dale Arthur discussed the positive impact of employment for people with disability.

"The evening was a great success, with more than 35 people attending. Post-presentation discussion was really positive, with people genuinely interested in improving employment prospects for local people with disability," Christine said.

"Further events are planned to help ensure this interest develops into an on-going local community commitment."

Port Hedland celebration promotes social inclusion



 Kids just want to have fun. Photo by Elise Batchelor, courtesy of Pilbara Echo.

The Hedland Community Living Association held Port Hedland's—and possibly Australia's—first Inclusion Week in August.

The event was held to celebrate diversity in the community and promote social inclusion.

Long-time community worker Joan Foley initiated the idea to realise her dream to hold an inclusive community forum.

Joan collected several thousand dollars from local businesses, agencies and State Government departments to support the week-long event.

“The Hedland Senior High School Principal also arranged for the group to give a lunch-time concert for the students—once again, Rudely Interrupted was a great success.”

Hedland LAC Leanne Beches played a key role in organising the week's events.

Community and music workshops, wheelchair sporting activities, a Variety Club car function,

and an open-air concert were among the week's highlights. The wheelchair events were open to people of all abilities—and proved extremely popular with the high school students.

Local resident Jeff Tighe from Spirit Radio was emcee at a concert at Marapikurrinya Park which included performances by two groups with people with disability: ‘Limpin’ Dave Foley and the Straight-legged Freaks, and Rudely Interrupted.

Leanne said that NSW-based rock band Rudely Interrupted was brilliant—“They also played at the Iron Clad Hotel in Marble Bar,” she said.

“The Hedland Senior High School Principal also arranged for the group to give a lunch-time concert for the students—once again, Rudely Interrupted was a great success.”

Dr Bob Jackson from Include conducted three days of workshops with Town of Port Hedland employees, carers, teachers and others interested in discussing ways communities could be more inclusive of people with disability.

In August, Local Area Coordination's Executive Director Robyn Massey presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Joan for her outstanding contribution to people with disability and the development of an inclusive, welcoming Port Hedland community.



Joan Foley (left) is presented with her Certificate of Appreciation from Robyn Massey.



LAC Leanne Beches (left) with Justin Lunn, Port Hedland resident and Count Me In Ambassador. Photo by Elise Batchelor, provided courtesy of Pilbara Echo.

Forum showcases local initiatives

Local Area Coordination Forum sessions showcased initiatives that have led to greater opportunities for people with disability to be included in their local communities.

A few snapshots of these initiatives are listed below.

Befriend Inc., founded in 2010 by Nick Maisey, addresses social isolation, promotes social inclusion and creates a space for 'belonging'. The organisation uses innovative ways to create opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to foster friendships and a sense of connection in their communities.

The **EveryBODY Fitness Inc.**, established in 2008 by Melody Henderson, is run with support from the City of Wanneroo and Local Area Coordination's North East District. Melody has a sister with disability and developed a fitness program that builds on people's abilities and strengths, and provides training environments that help foster friendships and community connections.

The **It's a Goal Project**, funded by the Department of Sport and Recreation, is the result of collaboration between the Western Australian Sports Federation and the Local Area Coordination program's Cockburn-Kwinana, and Kelmscott Districts. The purpose of the project is to encourage and support people with disability to participate in sporting and recreational activities.

The **Quad Dreamers Club**, founded in 2008 by Peter and Narelle Atkinson, provides opportunities for young people with disability to learn to ride off-road petrol powered bikes away from other traffic in a safe, controlled yet inclusive environments. Inspired by the couple's daughter Jessica who loves bike riding, this not-for-profit organisation plays an important role in the community.

For more information on any of these initiatives: contact your LAC.



Official opening of the gardens. Photo courtesy Crossroads Community Garden Committee.

Celebrating local community spirit

Community gardens—of all shapes and sizes—have become increasingly popular in cities and towns around Australia.

The Crossroads Community Garden, located in the northern Perth suburb of Gwelup, was established in February 2008. Stage Two of the garden was officially opened in June 2011. Over time, the project involved the Scarborough Church of Christ, the City of Stirling, local agencies and State government departments including the Commission. The garden has become a community asset that brings people of all ages and abilities together.

“Getting the garden up-and-running involved a lot of hard work and planning,” LAC Julie Shepherd said.

“But seeing the results—garden areas which include veggies and herbs, seating for people to sit and talk, and even a pizza oven—makes all the work worthwhile.”

Coastal District LACs Julie Shepherd and Liane Jones are working with colleagues in High Wycombe to set up a community garden in partnership with St Thomas Anglican Church. In addition, a community garden will soon be opened in Bentley.

The City of Subiaco has a Community Garden Management Committee and one project underway will benefit the residents of the Wandana units.

The Shire of Busselton also has an established community garden complete with composting areas, vegetables, fruit trees and chickens.

Recently the community garden concept was discussed with young job seekers at the Cockburn Job Club. Participants were provided with a better understanding of how volunteering

and engaging in community projects are valuable ways to gain work experience, which in turn, can lead to securing paid employment.

“According to a recent report, there are around 27 established community gardens in the State, 70 per cent of which are in metropolitan Perth. Six are under construction, and a further six are in development,” Julie said.

“There is a lot of information available about setting up a community garden, and in most cases the crucial component in the planning process is having the support of the shire council.

“The council may be able to help locate a garden site that is accessible to people of all abilities and in a location that is socially acceptable.

“If you would like a garden in your area, it’s a wonderful opportunity to become involved in a project that helps build community spirit.”

For more information: contact your LAC or visit www.communitygardenswa.org.au .



Raised garden beds at Gwelup. Photo courtesy of the City of Stirling.

Parents' support and good planning prepares son for independent living

Karrinyup parents Arthur and Sophia Bogoiias have been discussing independent living options with their son Michael for several years.

Michael (36) is working towards living in a self-contained unit at the back of his parent's home.

"Our planning focus at the moment is preparing Michael for the transition to his own home by building on his existing strengths and improving his life skills," Sophia said.

"This planning was accelerated when we obtained Community Living Plan funding.

"This enabled us to engage really fantastic support people who work with Michael in areas such as shopping, managing money, using an ATM and generally becoming more confident when out in the community—skills that most people just take for granted.

"The funding also helped widen Michael's support base, lessen his reliance on family assistance and encourage him to participate more fully in community activities."

Arthur and Sophia also participated in LAC-developed Looking Forward workshops where families in similar situations met to discuss planning issues.

"My advice to other families is to develop your networks and start planning early," Sophia said.

"It's also important to ensure that the foundations for independent living—life skills—are in place or being addressed."



Michael Bogoiias (right) with Julie Shepherd at the Crossroads Community Garden.

Michael works four days a week with Activ, goes to TAFE woodwork classes and on his days off attends life skills programs at Kira Independent Living Service. In addition, Michael occasionally attends Kira's weekend retreats for men.

Apart from his long-standing interest in woodwork, Michael has been an active participant in the Crossroads Community Garden project. The family attended the recent official opening of the gardens, where Michael helped LAC Julie Shepherd plant everlasting seeds.

Belmont and Maddington offices on the move

Leases for the Belmont and Maddington LAC offices expire this year, with a move to Cannington planned. This is a temporary move until more appropriate community-based premises are available.

The Cannington office meets all accessibility requirements, is conveniently situated alongside the railway station with ACROD and visitor parking bays outside the building.

People using the Local Area Coordination program will keep their current LACs. However, phone and fax numbers for LACs will change.

New numbers will be communicated as soon as numbers are confirmed.

For more information about the temporary move, contact Area Manager Clare Cheney on 0417 185 766.

Boston motivates teen's interest in community activities



 Nick Shaw with his dog Boston.

Person-centred planning is helping Perth 17-year-old Nick Shaw, his family and LAC Bronwyn Rivers look forward to the future.

“In a very real sense, Nick’s education is just beginning now,” his mother Michele Brown said of the planning process.

“Being diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder as an eight-year-old, Nick withdrew from people and felt uncomfortable engaging in school activities.

“Primary school was manageable and we were fortunate that Nick had the same teachers in

many of his classes. Knowing the teachers helped provide the stability that Nick required.

“However, high school was an extremely difficult time for Nick and the family.”

Nick left school earlier than planned in 2010. Because of Nick’s reluctance to try new things and participate in community-based activities, transition planning was accelerated to incorporate the person-centred approach.

“I held several planning sessions with Nick. We sat down on the lounge room floor, writing out words and gluing photos on cards as a way to

explore his interests and create a vision for his life after school,” Bronwyn said.

“I asked him questions such as ‘What do you enjoy doing?’ ‘What places and activities do you enjoy?’ ‘What activities make you feel relaxed?’ ‘What kind of work would you like to do?’

“Each session was fairly brief, approximately 15 minutes in duration, because Nick could only focus for short periods of time.”

Michelle said it was an interesting approach.

“It really opened our eyes to what might be possible for Nick. He identified that he would like a job working with animals. He also set goals to go canoeing and camping, earn his own money, and have greater independence,” she said.

“However, throughout the planning process, Nick was most animated when he spoke about his dog Boston.”

It soon became clear that Nick’s connection with Boston was the motivational key in the planning process.

Bronwyn encouraged Nick and Michele to brainstorm ways they could build on activities with Boston as a way to expand his circle of friends, increase his informal support network and encourage greater community participation.

These brainstorming sessions ultimately resulted in obtaining funding which ultimately enabled Nick to put in place strategies and supports to achieve his goals.

“The process of setting up supports took several months,” Bronwyn said.

“Alternatives to employment funding was also released early so Nick could be supported to engage in community activities. Nick now receives weekly, one-on-one support through an agency.”

Nick was supported to complete a dog grooming course at Polytechnic West which led him to set a goal to become a companion animal volunteer.

Nick and Boston have since attended a program that explained more fully the requirements to become a volunteer.

“Attending the course and becoming interested in volunteer work was an important turning point in Nick’s life”, Michele said.

“The planning was hard work and we have a long way to go.

“But it’s the first time, in quite a long time, that Nick is looking forward to joining in community activities.”

Group on track to provide training

A group of 10 West Australians has commenced a Certificate 1V in Training and Assessment. This nationally-accredited qualification enables people to develop the competencies required to become trainers, facilitators and assessors in the workplace, and to work in vocational education.

David Rogers from National Disability Services said he believed more people with disability should be involved in the delivery of training for support workers.

With advice and assistance from people with disability, David identified individuals interested in completing the Certificate 1V training, which was provided by Morley Training Centre.

The program has a flexible format with 10 training days over several months. Participants can complete the program at their own pace

and can access additional supports such as mentoring and coaching.

“While there are no age limits with this program, most of the participants are aged 25 years and over,” David said.

“Pilot program feedback—from the participants and the Morley Training Centre providers—has been overwhelmingly positive.

“The training component is now halfway through and participants have already completed their first major assessment—a half hour training presentation.

“The program will be reviewed and, subject to this review, it is hoped a similar program will run next year.”

For more information: phone 9208 9815 or email david.rogers@nds.org.au .

Information the key in autism journey



Heidi Brandis with her daughter Mia.

Heidi and Darrin Brandis' nine-year-old daughter Mia was formally diagnosed with autism three years ago.

"Virtually from Mia's toddler days, my husband and I sought advice regarding her difficulty interacting with people, her lack of interest in playing with other children and her sensitivity to noises and dislike of changes in routine," Heidi said.

"Looking back now, the diagnosis seems obvious. But at the time, perhaps because Mia is quite bright and articulate, no one ever mentioned autism as a possibility.

"However, when we finally received Mia's formal diagnosis, the psychologist told me in such an offhand manner that I was shocked. That was three years ago and I am still saddened by the experience.

"While getting your child's diagnosis is traumatic and life-changing, it's better to know as early as possible. An early diagnosis gives your child access to early intervention services and educational support—both of which have been shown to improve longer-term outcomes for children.

"Don't be put off by your doctor. If you have concerns about your child's behaviour in social

situations, insist that your child is referred to a developmental paediatrician or a clinical psychologist with autism experience.

"Once you have the formal diagnosis, it's important to build up your support base and network with other families in similar situations.

"From my experience, and from discussions with other parents, educating children with autism will always be a challenge. Ultimately, parents will make decisions based on their child's needs and the family's situation. At the start of this year we decided to home school Mia.



Mia Brandis at home.

“There is a fantastic home schooling community in Perth, with many families facing issues similar to ours. While it’s difficult just now, we are hopeful it will become more manageable over time.

“We now receive Family Living funding from the Commission which is helping with our support-based planning, as well as providing some respite.

“Our LAC Joan Cross is great. Her support during the application process and advice on managing the allocated funding was really appreciated”.

After seven years navigating what she calls an information minefield, Heidi has developed a resource document she gives to parents whose children have had an autism diagnosis. People can get a copy via their LAC.

Heidi also coordinates a northern suburbs support group for mothers of children with autism. Members catch up regularly to have a chat, a coffee and share information

“We also have events that include Dads and kids in our get-togethers,” Heidi said.

“It’s so important that families feel connected and supported on this long autism journey.

“I believe sharing resources and providing support helps make the journey easier.”



 Mia and Daniel Brandis at play.

Children can access a better start

Opportunities for funding for children with particular diagnoses are now available through the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative.

From 1 July 2011, eligible children diagnosed with Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, Fragile X syndrome, or a moderate or greater vision or hearing impairment, including deafblindness, have been able to access funding and new Medicare items under the Better Start.

This initiative includes:

- funding for early intervention services and treatments for eligible children under the age of six
- Medicare items for the development of a treatment and management plan for eligible children under the age of 13

- Medicare items for up to four allied health diagnostic services and for 20 relevant allied health services (in total) for eligible children up to the age of 15 (provided the treatment and management plan is in place before the age of 13).

To access the early intervention funding, parents or carers must register their child for the initiative before they turn six.

To register, phone the Registration and Information Service, operated by Carers Australia, on 1800 242 636.

For more information: phone the Better Start Helpline on 1800 989 530 or visit www.fahcsia.gov.au > Subject Areas > People with Disability > Programs & Services > For people with disability > Better Start for Children with Disability (Better Start) initiative.

Families gain from trusts

People concerned about the future of a relative with a severe disability or medical condition may consider looking into establishing a Special Disability Trust.

First introduced in 2006, the trusts are designed to help families make a private financial provision for the future care and accommodation needs of a relative with a severe disability or medical condition.

These trusts are established primarily as part of succession planning undertaken by parents and immediate family members. Changes introduced in January 2011 allowed for an expansion of current guidelines.

For more information: phone Centrelink's Special Disability Trust Team on 1800 734 750 or visit www.fahcsia.gov.au > Subject Areas > Carers > Programs & Services > Special Disability Trusts

Changes ahead for WA parking permits

National Disability Services (NDS) is currently experiencing problems issuing national disability parking permits to eligible holders in Western Australia.

NDS is working to rectify the problems and is aiming for new permits to be available in 2012.

The project to harmonise disability parking programs across Australia began in 2009.

NDS is continuing to look at including other areas such as a national eligibility criteria and a minimum standard for disability parking concessions.

As these concessions can only be introduced once each state and territory is able to make the necessary changes to its local laws and regulations, the current rules and criteria will continue to apply.

For more information: phone 9242 5544 or visit www.app.org.au .

Banking your will

The Wills Bank is a community service that safely stores West Australian's wills in the Public Trustee's purpose-built, fire-proof vault, keeping them safe from loss, theft and damage.

The service is free if you personally deposit your will, however if a third party deposits your will there may be a storage and processing fee.

The Public Trustee office can also prepare and give advice on making sound wills that nominate the Public Trustee as Executor or that nominate a private Executor.

For more information: phone 1300 746 116 or visit www.publictrustee.wa.gov.au >WA Will Bank or www.publictrustee.wa.gov.au > Wills

Calendar of events



The Commission's website provides information on a wide range of activities, including the following:

1 – 31 October 2011

Down Syndrome Awareness Month

1 – 30 November 2011

MOvember Changing the Face of Men's Health

4 November 2011

The Centre for Cerebral Palsy's charity golf day

6 November 2011

Autism West's Autism: The Whole Child Conference

2 December 2011

Dreamfit Foundation's community festival

3 December 2011

International Day of People with Disability

Website: www.disability.wa.gov.au > Events