

Western Region
Disability Network

Network News

Newsletter of the Western Region Disability Network

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Volume 56

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LETTER TO MEMBERS FROM **CHRISTINE WILLIAMS,** **CHAIRPERSON OF THE WRDN**

Dear Members,

Thank you for your wonderful support of our previous bimonthly meeting. I really enjoyed seeing so many new people and catching up with some old friends of the WRDN as well.

My thanks also to those who gave feedback, both encouraging and constructively critical. We have revamped the agenda to allow more time for informal networking over a cuppa. There will also be more room for wheelchair users to circulate and chat with others.

As I will be away for the next two weeks, I am hoping that our Vice Chairperson Alba Gatto will be available to chair the August bimonthly meeting. If you need any assistance to attend or to participate, please remember to contact either Tina or Helen.

Lastly, there will be dynamic and exciting meetings coming up before Christmas:

- August 24 – "Planning for the Future"
Guest speakers will be Melissa Garfi from the Department of Human Services, Matina Tsatouhas from the Office of the Public Advocate, Chris Glennen from the Disability Housing Trust and Alex Auletta from the Migrant Resource Centre.
- October 19 – State Election 2006
We have invited Labour, Liberal, People Power and the Greens to be on a panel.
- December 7 – Formal launch of the Model Document and the Strategic Plan.

With warm regards to all,
Christine Williams.

DISCLAIMER

The information contained in *Network News* may not reflect the opinion of the WRDN or its auspice, nor does the WRDN guarantee the accuracy of the information.

WRDN PROJECT UPDATE

In previous editions we have talked about the 2 grants that the WRDN has received.

- \$20,000 from the Reichstein Foundation to document what the WRDN does (the Model)
- \$20,000 from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to develop a strategic plan to help the WRDN move forward, grow and secure funding.

A Plan of Action about exactly how these projects will happen is now finished. Shelly (Michelle) has started as the WRDN student and the WRDN is looking for a consultant to help us.

What's next?

The WRDN wants to know how people really feel about the WRDN. We want to know the good things and also the gaps and things we don't do or could do better. There is nothing that you can't say to us. It is all very important. You can say lots of things or you can just talk about what you think is most important.

What does the WRDN want to know?

Project 1 the WRDN model -

- What does the WRDN do/doesn't do?
- Who is involved/excluded? Why?
- What does the WRDN do for you? Why are you a member?
- What do you do for the WRDN? How are you involved? If not why not?

Project 2 the Strategic Plan

- How do we make the WRDN bigger, better and stronger? How do we use the WRDN to make sure the voice of disability is heard in the West?
- How can we encourage you and others to be more involved?
- What do we want to be and achieve in the next 3-5 years?
- How can we get there? What are the priorities?

Who will be involved?

- Members with disabilities
- Members who are carers/family
- Members who are disability service providers
- Members who are universal service providers i.e. the people who use the service may or may not have a disability such as Centrelink or a Neighbourhood house.

- annecto (as the WRDNs auspice agency)
- DHS (as the WRDNs funding body)
- Support groups
- Other networks
- People/agencies that the WRDN works with
- Other advocacy and information services

How can you be part of this process?

- Come to our open forums (we hope to have one in Footscray and one in Wyndham – dates will come out soon)
- Go to a meeting organised by your support group, agency or network
- Organise a meeting for the WRDN for your support group, agency or network. You can run this yourself or ask the WRDN to find someone to run the meeting for you. (Contact Helen asap if you would like to host a forum or have any suggestions about who might hold a forum)
- Answer the survey (which will come out to you soon by email or mail)
- Email or write to the WRDN. You don't need to answer the survey questions exactly - just tell us what you think
- Ring Helen, Tina or Shelly at the WRDN.
- Join the Reference Group and help read the drafts and/or organise the launch event.
- Encourage everyone you know (family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues, clients) to be a member of the WRDN
- Encourage and support other people to be involved and have their say too.

The WRDN wants as many people to be involved as possible. Helen and Tina cannot do it on their own. They need the support of every member.

The WRDN membership is very diverse so we need to make sure that we develop a plan that is inclusive of all members' needs, all disability 'types' and ages, consider people with different backgrounds, who live in all parts of the Region and those who don't speak English as their first language.

What will the WRDN do with the information collected?

- Document the model of the WRDN
- Write a comprehensive Strategic Plan
- Use these documents to get funding for the WRDN and help us achieve the goals identified.

How long will this take?

The WRDN is planning to launch both documents at the **December 7th** bi-monthly meeting. Keep this date free in your diary. It should be a great day.

This is not much time but it is important that these documents are ready to support any applications for funding. There are several funding grants in December and January each year that the WRDN will apply for.

COMPUTER PROJECT UPDATE.

The computers are almost ready to be sent out.

A really big thank you to Bill and his team from Mission Australia who are putting the computers together.

Also thanks to Paul and Brendan who will help install the computers in the homes of people who don't have anyone to help them.

- Do you or your family need a free computer?
- Would a computer help your support group?
- Would a computer help one of your clients?

We still have a few left to give away. Remember that you must agree to go onto the internet so you can get the newsletter and other information electronically. Contact Tina or Helen at the WRDN for an application form (or download one from the website).

VICTORIAN ELECTORAL COMMISSION (VEC) UPDATE

Liz Williams and Peta McCammon from the VEC came to the last bi-monthly meeting and presented the WRDN with a cheque for (almost) \$800. This was a donation to thank the WRDN for our involvement in the VEC Advisory Board and the filming of the training video for people working on Election Day. The video will be launched on 15th September.

The VEC is still interested in hearing from WRDN members who would like to work on the election. There are a number of roles to be filled. People with disabilities are encouraged to apply. You need to complete an Expression of Interest form and return it via Helen at the WRDN.



Liz Williams on behalf of the VEC presenting cheque to Christine Williams for the WRDN.

WRDN LETTER TO ROB HULLS, MINISTER FOR PLANNING

On the 25th July the WRDN held a forum about the barriers that prevent people with disabilities (the elderly and others) from accessing houses, shops and buildings. Thank you to Bernd Bartl from Disability Support and Housing Alliance for an excellent presentation. Thank you to all members who attended or sent comments via email or phone.

The WRDN then wrote a letter to Mr. Hulls as State Planning Minister to express WRDN members' concerns about this issue. The letter also asked Mr. Hulls to approve some amendments to local planning laws proposed by certain Councils.

The WRDN wrote to Moonee Valley Council as one of the Councils which wants to have local planning laws that will mean all new buildings (and renovations that need a Council planning permit) will have to be built so they are accessible or easily adaptable for people with disabilities. The WRDN believes this is a good way of improving access to the community for all people.

The WRDN also wrote to the other 6 Councils of the West encouraging them to change their planning laws to make all buildings fully accessible.

A copy of the letter to Mr. Hulls is on the WRDN website www.disabilityconnections.org.au

**WRDN BI-MONTHLY MEETING 24TH
AUGUST**

The WRDN has some exciting guest speakers coming to talk at the bi-monthly meeting.

The theme of this meeting is “Planning for the Future”.

Melissa Garfi and Carly Heath from DHS will be talking about the new Disability Support Register. DHS has changed the way that DHS records support needs and the urgency of those needs. They will explain how the Register will help DHS plan for the future and what the changes could mean to individuals and their families who are planning for the future.

Matina Tsatouhas from the Office of the Public Advocate will be giving a brief overview of some of the things individuals and families might need to consider when planning for the future e.g. Guardianship.

Chris Glennen is coming to speak about the Disability Housing Trust. This is a very new initiative that the State Government has established to help people with disabilities find affordable housing. This is a very important part of planning for the future – especially as DHS is not building any new residential units. The Trust may be one way some families could provide housing for their person with a disability.

Alex Auletta will be talking about the Migrant Resource Centre and how it supports people with disabilities and their families who are from CALD backgrounds (they don't speak English as their main language or come from other countries).

The WRDN hopes you will be able to come and hear what these speakers have to say. All speakers are going to be taking questions and comments from the audience.

If you have a question and cannot come to the bi-monthly please contact Helen or Tina at the WRDN and we will make sure your question is raised. All questions and answers will be in the Minutes.

Please remember to contact Helen or Tina if you need a taxi voucher, attendant care or an interpreter.

Thank you to Steven Bell from Metro Access and Wyndham Council for hosting this meeting and for the light lunch.

It is a very full agenda. We will be starting at 10.30 “on the dot” and will finish at 1pm.

See you there.

Helen.

Hello there!

My name is Michelle (Shelly) Gonsalvez. I am currently a student at Victoria University and in the final year of my Human Services Degree. For the next couple of months I will be around the office helping on the WRDN Projects as a part of my student placement.



Michelle (Shelly) Gonsalvez

I will be helping people run the meetings, general discussions regarding the research process and membership.

If you have any questions regarding my studies please do not hesitate to ring me. I am an extremely approachable person and look forward to joining the team at the WRDN.

Thanks for having me.

Michelle.

MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

-LUPUS-
A GIFT I LEARNED FROM

**(an edited version of the story of
Jenny Wallace)**

When they started dating back when Andrew was 24 and Jenny 27, Jenny already had crooked hands and toes. She didn't beat about the bush with regards to her condition. She just said outright to Andrew, "I've got Lupus, this is it." Her outlook on life was to focus on what she could do..."I can do this, I can do this and I can't do that. So what?" Jenny seemed to cope and wasn't ashamed of her illness. In fact, strangely, she was rather proud of herself and her relationship to it. It encouraged and even inspired Andrew to hear her say, "Lupus may have destroyed my body but it has made my mind stronger than I could ever have imagined". She appeared so joyous.

Andrew did not take much convincing that this was a woman with an amazing outlook on life and he admired the way she handled herself. So, he was prepared to accept her as she was. He just had to convince his parents in Tasmania. Jenny passed the test with Andrew's adopted father but then Jenny vomited all over her mother-in-law to be. Andrew's wisdom told

him that she was a woman of faith and was following the right path.



Jenny Wallace

And so they began their lives together. Jenny may not have been able to join Andrew in a game of cricket or water skiing, but she was able to laugh herself silly from the sidelines.

Even before she became ill Jenny experienced bullying from her brother and other children at school. But at age 12 ½ Jenny got sick. It started when the arch in her foot became extremely painful. A week later the other foot swelled up. Over the next four to six weeks her knees swelled and she began to shiver and shake. Jenny was told to "stop being childish" when she complained about the pain.

But the symptoms persisted and her mother took her to the Doctor. After blood tests, x-rays etc. she was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. During this time Jenny was in so much pain she shut down. She couldn't move much. Her Mum had to comb Jenny's hair, feed and dress her.

Jenny was then put on aspirin. The hope that she might grow out of it was shattered when as a result of the symptoms worsening six months later, further tests were done. And then the bombshell! They discovered Lupus. This would be a life sentence for Jenny. Jenny was then put on cortisone.

Not a lot was known about this disease at the time. By 17 Jenny had spent more times in hospital than she had spent with her family. At one point she collapsed. The Doctors discovered that all the aspirin Jenny had consumed at home over time had eaten into the base of her stomach and through an artery under the stomach. Jenny lost six pints of blood.

One week after release from hospital she was rushed back. They removed her appendix but also found that there had been an air pocket on the large intestine. This pocket, they discovered, would fill with fluid until it burst and this was the cause of the diarrhoea and vomiting.

Jenny missed a lot of school as a result of more than 20 hospitalisations. She stayed down in year 9 and didn't succeed her first attempt of year 11 and was only 21 when she

successfully completed high school. The hardest part of all these admissions for Jenny, though, was not knowing if she would be in and out of hospital for the rest of her life.

As she got older Jenny began to realise that her mother was smothering and controlling her. She decided she needed to stand on her own two feet. Her sense of self and her joy in life was awakened. Jenny loved music, so she learned the piano. She learned to waltz, took up disco dancing and proved to be so good at ballroom dancing that she won medals.

Jenny's Mum figured Jenny would have to forget about "the house with the white picket fence and the two kids in the front yard playing with the dog"! Infertility was a side effect of her daily medication. Anyway who would want to marry her?! But miracle of miracles, what everyone said wouldn't happen actually happened. She met Andrew.

Now, Andrew thought he would be the last person who wanted to settle down in his family and get married. His brother and sister who were younger would marry before he ever did, he thought. But now he was with Jenny, and things were different. He'd got to know her in a way he had never known another woman.

He suggested they start to live together. Jenny moved in, got the flu, went on antibiotics and horror of horrors, fell pregnant. This definitely was not supposed to happen. Now here was Jenny, with an amazing guy, but pregnant! All her fears were dispelled. Andrew was delighted.

This baby had to be special, because he was conceived out of extreme love. Jenny knew her first born would be a boy because she had a dream of a six year old boy named Nathaniel, who came to her after school and, putting his arms around her, said, "You are my mum and I love you". Nathan as he was named means "gift from God". The Lupus factor meant that Jenny could have a miscarriage at any stage of her pregnancy. But he was carried almost to term and arrived safely.

Nathan was almost two when another baby (Ben) was conceived. Andrew made it clear to Jenny that it would be a team effort as it always was. So they decided to go ahead even though the doctor was concerned that the Lupus might worsen. Ben was born five weeks premature, but Jenny was a lot more relaxed because she had been through it with Nathan.

The occasional hospital stay was inevitable. Jenny missed her boys and worried about how they and Andrew were coping. She wondered if the longer she stayed away the more obsolete she would become in the boys' lives. But they adjusted to and accommodated the Lupus.

There are things that Jenny regrets and which have interfered with her preferred way of being a parent. But she continues to overcome the everyday obstacles that challenge her. She lost 27kgs at Weight Watchers (weight gain caused by the medication) and holds down a part time job. She drives a car and manages her household.

Getting Lupus may have been a 'bum's rap' but Jenny has come a long way. She can't imagine what sort of person she might have become if Lupus had not come along. Jenny got in touch with the ability of sheer determination.

Without Lupus:

- she would never have met Andrew
- would never have had two beautiful boys.
- would not have developed courage and selflessness.
- would not have learned to speak out and make herself known.
- would not have had a mission in her life to prevent others from going through what she had to go through because of ignorance and misdiagnosis.
- would not have had the objective to make Lupus well known, as she has done with this story which you are now reading!!

(The full version of Jenny's story can be read on the WRDN website).



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Brief: RMULTIPLES

Getting into the swim

By Jessica Hogan

IAN Gray doesn't let anything get in the way of what he wants, not even a chronic disease such as multiple sclerosis.

The 58-year-old Werribee South resident was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 16 years ago, less than a year after moving from England to live and work in Australia with his wife Anne.

Ian could easily be forgiven for being disheartened about his body gradually becoming weaker and being confined to a wheelchair for the past six years, a trait of the disease that randomly attacks the central nervous system.

But not Ian.

"You've got to get over it. You have to get into a can-do mentality and find ways to overcome any difficulties," he said, talking about his inability to walk.

"Of course it's extremely

frustrating. When you've been able to walk and then you can't - I can't imagine anything more frustrating than that.

"(But) I've been living with it for a long time and it's just something you have to get used to."

Ian's upbeat attitude has just been rewarded with a \$2000 Go for Gold Scholarship.

presented by MS Australia to Victorian multiple sclerosis sufferers so they can follow an education, sport, music, travel or arts dream.

The scholarships can be given thanks to the 24-hour Mega Swim, in which teams of people swim for a whole day.

No longer able to do some of his old hobbies like bushwalking, mountain climbing or bike riding, Ian was resigned to the thought he wouldn't be able to compete in sports

"I thought I could only do swimming, which I do a few times a week to keep my fitness level reasonable and get the heart beat going.

"But then I had a go at a kayak and I thought hey, this is something I can do."

Ian said his \$2000 will go towards a sit-on-top kayak, paddle and a car roof-rack.

"Obviously I will need some assistance to get the kayak from the car to the water, it's a major hassle and

I try to be as independent as I can. But once I'm on the water, I'm the same as everyone else.

"Once you get me on the water I'll be getting into wild places again. I'll be getting away from everything and paddling for exercise and peace."

A keen fisherman, Ian plans to use the kayak in the river and at the beach.

"Once I'm really confident I'd like to start fishing (from the kayak). There's a whole new sport called yak-fishing I can't wait to be a part of.

Ian also has entering the annual Murray Marathon in his sights.

You get the feeling that anywhere there is water, Ian is always close-by.

"We lived in Hoppers Crossing for 12 years, and when I had to retire I was going stir crazy with nothing but houses around.

"We moved to Werribee South a few years ago and I absolutely love it, I can push down and fish off the jetty, and there's a guy that takes me out in his boat. It's fantastic."

Not wanting to rush into buying his kayak, Ian should be paddling by Christmas.

"With every dream there's an obstacle. I know there will be a lot with the kayak, but I'll just have to find the ways to overcome them."

'But once I'm on the water, I'm the same as everyone else'



Ian Gray loves the water. Picture: Adam Dineoff

Ian Gray is a member of the WRDN and is also on the Coordinating Group

Apologies for the lack of clarity but I was not able to enlarge the fine print. Tina.

Walk a Mile in My Shoes

Carers' Forum Who's listening to us?

Sunday August 20, 2006 from 1pm – 5pm

**Cardinal Knox Lecture Theatre
383 Albert Street, East Melbourne
(enter via carpark in Lansdowne Street)**

Proudly supported by
Walk a Mile National Carers Coalition

www.carers.net.au

PO Box 937, Moe 3825

Phone: 5127 1904 Fax: 5127 1904

Email: gippscarer@vic.australis.com.au

Keynote Speaker – Jean L. Tops
President Gippsland Carers Association

**Political Candidates Panel
State Elections November 25, 2006
Why Carers should vote for me**

For Enquiries call Christine on 0438 134 955 or George on 0417 653 241

Entry by Gold Coin **Donation** to help to cover costs.

The Disability Housing Trust Expression of Interest

The Disability Housing Trust is pleased to announce an Expression of Interest round in which it is calling for proposals to utilise up to \$10 million of Trust funds plus other community contributions to develop 100 or more accommodation outcomes for eligible people with disabilities.

The EOI round closes on 25 August 2006

It is seeking proposals from individuals and families as well as community, government, commercial, philanthropic and other sources to develop housing for people with disabilities across Victoria.

For more information please contact:
Chris Glennen, A/Executive Officer,
PO Box 121, Carlton South. 3053
Phone: 9620 3999
Email: dht@dht.org.au

Or visit the website at: www.dht.org.au

Please note that Chris will be a guest speaker at our bimonthly meeting on Thursday 24th August 2006 being held at Wyndham City Council.

Physical Disability Council of Australia (PDCA)

PDCA has a new national number. It is **1300 781 786** which comes directly to the office of PDCA. Please note that calls are not free, but are at a reduced rate.

In August the office is moving to NSW and this new number will remain the number of PDCA no matter where the office is housed in the future.

Disability Sports Victoria
(VDSAC) is now located at Suite 10,
Level 15, 470 Collins St. Melbourne.

Phone: 9614 6215

Email: disabilitysports@gmail.com

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vdsac/>



MLAK

Master Locksmith Access Key Scheme

The MLAK is a new and innovative scheme that uses a universal lock and key to allow people with disabilities 24 hours a day access to public facilities e.g. accessible toilets.

Eligible people can purchase a key that opens all accessible toilets displaying the MLAK symbol.

The MLAK locks have been installed in disabled toilets in Melbourne's parks. They are located at:

- Birrarung Marr – ArtPlay Building
- Carlton Gardens North – Rathdowne St
- Carlton Gardens South – Rathdowne St
- Flagstaff Gardens – Cnr. William & Dudley St
- Powlett Reserve – Albert St East Melbourne
- Levers Reserve – Flemington Rd
- Fitzroy Gardens – Lansdowne St
- Fitzroy Gardens – Clarendon St

MLAK keys are available for purchase or hire through the Melbourne Mobility Centre – please call 1800 732 266.

Further details about buying an MLAK key can be obtained from the Spinal Cord Injuries Australia

Wyndham City Council Disability Forum

Date: Tuesday 31st October 2006
Time: 7.30pm – 9.00pm
Where: Central Park Community Centre
 80 Lonsdale Circuit
 Hoppers Crossing

RSVP: Sue Wild by 15th October 2006
Phone: 9742 0863
Email: Sue.wild@wyndham.vic.gov.au

A light supper will be provided



MOVE 'N' GROOVE AN ADDITIONAL NEEDS FREEZA EVENT

Laverton Community Centre
in conjunction with
Hobsons Bay Youth Services
present

An 'all ages' band and dance party event
for people with additional needs.

When: Friday the 8th of September

Where: Laverton Civic Complex
Cnr Railway Ave and Crown St
Laverton. (Mel.Ref.53 C10)

Times: Doors open at 6.30pm.
Event from 7pm – 10pm

Cost: \$5 with a pass and \$7 without.
One carer per patron will be
admitted free of charge.

Entertainment by '**The Hacketts**'
DJ services by '**Mindblowing
Entertainment**'

Canteen will be selling soft drinks and
chips at \$1.

Laverton Community Centre is equipped
with wheelchair access and toilets for
people with special needs.

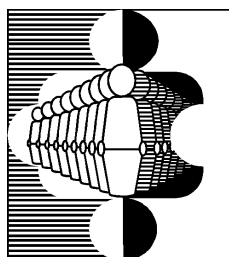
For more information please phone:

Daniel or Leslee at Hobsons Bay Youth
Services on 9932 3000

or

Maureen at Laverton Community Centre
on 9369 4866.

**Dr. Richard Eisenmajer
Information Night
Monday 28th August 2006**



**Asperger
Syndrome
Support**
Network Vic Inc.
ABN: 47 066 180 983
Assoc. No. A0043862N

Email: assnvc@mssociety.com.au

Phone (03) 9845 2766

Web: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~asperger/>

**An introduction to Asperger Syndrome
and Understanding Autistic Behaviour**

Time: 7.45pm for an 8.00pm start

Venue: Derrimut Heath Primary School, 31 Sycamore Street, Hoppers Crossing (Mel.Ref. 202 F8)

Cost: ASSN Financial Members - \$25.00 per single, \$35.00 per couple. Non-members - \$30.00

Please contact ASSN for registration form – registration and payment are due by 21st August 2006.
This is a prepaid event and bookings are essential. It is expected that it will fill early and there will be
no ticket sales at the door.

**Let the Good Times Roll
With LAWN BOWLS**

'Let the Goods Times Roll' aims to introduce
people with a disability to the sport of lawn
bowls.

Participants must register to attend the lawn
bowls session by contacting the Broadmeadows
Sports Club on 9309 6550.

When: Third Thursday of the month

Upcoming dates – 17th Aug. and 21 Sept.

**YOUTH DISABILITY
ADVOCACY SERVICE**

**A voice for young people with a
disability**

Provides systemic and individual advocacy
for young people with a disability aged between
12 - 25.

The service is directed by a Steering Committee
of young people with disabilities from across
Victoria.

YDAS is a partnership between the Youth
Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic), Youthlaw
and Disability Discrimination Legal Service
(DDLDS).

For more information please ring George
Taleporos on 9267 3755.

'Moving on to your Future' Forum

Students and their families have the opportunity to hear guest speakers from various service areas such as TAFE, Open Employment Agency, Supported Business Service, local government, Centrelink and the Department of Human Services, and have the chance to speak with local service providers over light refreshments.

When: 4pm to 7pm, Monday 28 August 2006.

Where: Hume Global Learning Centre (1093 Pascoe Vale Road, Broadmeadows).

Cost: Free.

RSVP: Wednesday August 16th to Janet Bailie. An RSVP is essential for catering purposes

Contact: Janet Bailie

Phone: 9309 7448

Email: janet@bds.org.au

CONFERENCES

- One Person at a Time Conference 2006 - This conference will be held on Thursday 17 and Friday 18 August 2006 at Rydges Hotel, 186 Exhibition Street, Melbourne. For further details contact Delia Fisher on 9569 2089.
- Community Transport - Making It Work - The 2nd Annual Conference of the Victorian Community Transport Association will be held on 21 and 22 August 2006 at Rydges Riverwalk, Richmond. For more information contact Phil Whiting on 9533 1955.
- State Lifestyle Conference - "Positive Lifestyle Programs for People with Special Needs". This conference for planned activity groups, lifestyle activities & community care staff will be held on 30th August 2006 at the South Quality Care Training Centre, 134 Canterbury Road, Blackburn South. Contact Judy on 9485 1955 for more information.
- Our Social Rights and Responsibilities: the New Politics of Welfare - This conference will be held on Wednesday 30 August 2006 at the Dallas Brooks Hall, 300 Albert Street, East Melbourne. For further details phone 9483 1364.
- Association of Competitive Employment (ACE) 2006 Conference - The ACE Conference 2006 will be held in Perth, Western Australia from September 6th - 8th 2006. View the ACE website at www.acenational.org.au
- From Tolerance to Respect; Cultural Competence in Practice - The Multicultural Disability and Advocacy Association (MDAA) and the National Disability Ethnic Alliance (NEDA) are holding a two day conference that will examine current ideas and practices in cultural competence which will focus on practical approaches to working with people from diverse backgrounds. The conference will be held at the Novotel Hotel at Homebush Bay on 7 and 8 September 2006. Contact Teresa Clark on (03) 9891 6400 for more details.
- Connecting People and Community Through Technology - The 2006 Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association (ARATA) conference will be held from Wednesday 18 to Friday 20 October 2006 in Fremantle, Western Australia. This conference will explore the use of technology to enable people with disabilities to participate in their community – at home, school, work and leisure. For more information phone Aghi Di Maio on 9372 7182.
- 'Turning the Tide' - International Muscular Dystrophy Conference - This conference is aimed at 'Turning the Tide' for people with Muscular Dystrophy and all who are part of their lives by providing them with knowledge and ultimately, hope. Brisbane, Friday 27 and Saturday 28 October. Contact Helene Frayne on 07 3717 1178 or email <info@parentproject.org.au>
- Disability Support Workers Conference - Call for Submissions - Applications are now being sought to present at the 2006 Disability Support Workers Conference, 'Meeting the Challenge' to be held at Melbourne University, Economics and Commerce Building, Parkville, VICTORIA on Thursday 16 and Friday 17 November. Submissions close Friday 8 September.
- 'Toward 2020: what we do now will make the difference' - Hosted by the University of Tasmania in Hobart, Pathways8 is the biennial disability in higher education and training conference. It will be held from 28 November to 1 December 2006 at Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart, Tasmania. For further details please phone Jane Barrett on (03) 6234 7844.

