

STAR NEWSLETTER

From the Board.

STAR's 39th AGM was held on 2nd December 2009 – Guest speakers Ian Parsons (Victorian Law Reform Commission) and John Chesterman (Office of Public Advocate) did not disappoint with their presentations and insights into the review of the Guardianship legislation, established to advise the Victorian Government on how well the Legislation safeguards the interests of the most vulnerable in Victoria and where and how things need to be done differently.

We were reminded that it was Ethel Temby (a founding member of STAR) who brought the Guardianship legislation model to Australia having seen it in action on a Churchill Fellowship overseas study. The Law Reform Commission has released this week the Guardianship information Paper which describes the current law in Victoria and asks questions about its operation. Responses are now sought to those questions to assist the Commission in understanding of people's experiences of the law. Later in the year a Consultation Paper will be published containing draft options for reform at which stage there will be further opportunity for community input. Copies of the information paper, summary and Easy English documents are available from the Commission's website: www.lawreform.vic.gov.au or by calling them on **86198619**. The paper is also available in various languages and an audio CD.

The experiences of people with an intellectual disability and/or their families in regard to guardianship issues will greatly assist in informing and developing STAR's response to the questions posed in the information paper .

The first Board meeting this year saw the following persons elected as office bearers for 2010

President – Gabrielle Dickenson

Vice President - Jane Hauser

Treasurer – Cynthia Pilli

Assist. Treasurer - David Banfield

Other Board Members are Alex Rowsell, Emmy Elbaum , Janice Slattery, Jenny Harrison and John Slattery.

There are 3 remaining vacancies which the Board is currently looking to fill by co-option. If you would like to hear more about joining the Board, please call the office on **9650 2730**. STAR needs a strong and active Board so that we can continue to be effective in advocating for a better deal for people with an intellectual disability and their families.

This year will see STAR reach its 40th birthday. Plans are already underway to celebrate this remarkable achievement. This is a time not only to look back at the successes over those many years but also to focus on some of the major challenges that remain including:

- the entitlement for people with disability and their families to the supports that enable them 'to live with freedom, respect, equality and dignity'
- closure of all remaining institutions in Victoria
- achieving inclusion in mainstream education at all levels for all students .

Copies of the Annual Report are available on the STAR website www.starvictoria.org.au or by contacting the office.



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Inquiry into Supported Accommodation

The report from the joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Supported Accommodation for Victorians with a Disability or Mental Illness was released in December 2009.

Amongst the findings contained in this 400+page report was that 4700 Victorians are living in shared supported accommodation while 1300 are on the waiting list. STAR agrees with other disability groups that the demand could be up to 3 times higher as the Government register only indicates people at crisis point and in immediate need of care.

Much of the content of the combined submission to the Inquiry from VALID, STAR, AMIDA and REINFORCE, was reflected in the Inquiry's report and recommendations. The submission (available on the STAR website or from the office) also detailed the need for a range of models and support options.

STAR has written to the Minister about follow up processes regarding the Inquiry findings and recommendations, including the Government's response.

With a State election to be held in November this year it is both timely and strategic to seek, from each of the political parties aspiring to govern Victoria for the next 4 years, not just a commitment but the allocation of sufficient resources to implement the recommendations of the Inquiry .

It is not too early to start lobbying the Premier and the Minister Lisa Neville as well as local MPs. As the election draws nearer we will be looking at ways to do this in future newsletters. As a starter in this issue we have provided an insert with some tips to assist when visiting your local MP.

Disclaimer

All information contained within the STAR newsletter is as accurate as possible and is provided in good faith, however it is not guaranteed. STAR does not recommend any product, activity, organisation, service or item – such details are provided with the STAR news for general information and interest only.

Parents Wanted! To complete a survey about speech pathology availability

The survey will help speech pathologists plan services for children around Australia To find out more go to the survey Website

[http://www2.fhs.usyd.edu.au/csd/research_participants_required .htm](http://www2.fhs.usyd.edu.au/csd/research_participants_required.htm)

Or contact Dr Tricia McCabe at tricia.mccabe@sydney.edu.au

This survey has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sydney (ref 12280)

QUALITY OF SERVICE SURVEY TAXI PASSENGERS WITH DISABILITIES

The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is undertaking research into the experiences of people with disability using taxi services in Victoria.

The survey which is being conducted by Market Solutions on behalf of the Commission examines a range of issues relating to the quality of taxi services and is a follow up to a similar survey conducted in 2006. Three years on they are very keen to find out if things are getting better (or worse) on the ground and are interested in learning about your experiences using taxis over the past 6 months.

How to complete the survey

Online at

www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au.

Or for a printed copy contact STAR office for a copy of the survey.

AMIDA MYKI forum

AMIDA is hosting an information forum. Come and learn about the system, and ask any questions you may have.

10am-1pm 24th March 2010

Hayden Raysmith Meeting room, 4th floor, Ross House 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
RSVP 9650 2722

Just Like Everybody Else

This personal story was recently rediscovered during a tidying session in the office. It is reprinted here because we believe it will still resonate with and have relevance for families who are currently looking at options and making decisions about their child's education. (For editorial purposes we have omitted references to specific individuals and places.)

My son Brendan is proud to be a student at... It's his first experience of regular school and that means a lot to a 16 year old. For the first 11 years of his life Brendan was educated in segregated settings. This was not what I wanted for him but all my previous attempts to integrate him into regular school were received negatively and only resulted in brief tokenism in primary school – e.g. singing songs with 40 other children for one hour a week. Because Brendan is multiply disabled his chances of being integrated in early childhood were very slim. I used to watch him play with his cousins and friends' children and could see the real benefits for him to learn by watching and listening to them. Like all parents I wanted my child to live and learn with his peers – a right which parents of most other children take for granted. Now Brendan has that opportunity. This first year has had its highs and lows- but even the lows have a positive aspect. – Brendon now knows all about school rules and that he must abide by them 'just like anybody else.' As a result he is learning new ways of handling negative feelings. Being treated like 'anybody else' makes him feel better about himself too. The change from Special School has been enormous and something we needed to stop and think about, to really appreciate – the classes are bigger, the school is bigger, there is twice the number of classes to attend, he is expected to find his own way around the school, to concentrate for longer periods and to conform to normal behaviour expectations.

Naturally he misses his friends from his old school- however, he now has the opportunity to learn from watching how regular

teenagers form friendships, converse with each other and handle relationships with teacher and peers. With the help of supportive and committed staff we have worked together through regular Support Group Meetings, sometimes involving Brendan, to set an educational program designed to meet his needs. Class teachers have been working with his teacher aide and the Visiting teacher for the visually impaired to achieve this. The creative thinking of individual staff has resulted in positive learning for Brendan – for example, he is drawing people for the first time and expressing his ideas more clearly through his first experience of typing stories into a computer keyboard. Most importantly he is participating 'just like anybody else.' The benefits for other students are accepting differences and knowing Brendan as a person. For teachers, awareness of Brendan's educational needs has seen them develop teaching strategies from which all students can benefit. Some people might say 'But what is he learning?' and I say 'Heaps!' We are looking at individual differences in learning and the adaptation of class materials accordingly – e.g. while other students may turn out finished products in woodwork, Brendan is getting the hang of basic sanding techniques – same materials but different levels of learning and both equally important. He is also learning (like other students) coping mechanisms which help him deal with life – e.g. he has been trained by the guide dog people (though he doesn't use a dog), to travel to and from school independently – rather than being picked up by a special school bus and carted miles across Melbourne to the Special School as previously. Even though he did have one mishap, it is important to recognize that learning to become independent will involve risks (as it does for all young adults) and that like them, Brendan has a right to the dignity of risk taking. What all this has meant and what Brendan likes, is that he is now a local boy going to his local school 'just like anybody else.'

YOU ARE INVITED!

To a Double Celebration

Reinforce has been around for 30 years so they are having a birthday celebration to mark the occasion and also unveiling a Memorial Wall as a tribute to Doug Pentland, one of their founding members, who passed away last year

When: Wednesday 7th of April.

Where: Reinforce Office, 2nd floor, Ross House, 247-251 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

Time: 12.00pm

R.S.V.P: .

Please RSVP by Thursday 1st of April and for catering purpose:

(Phone): 9650 7855. **(Fax):** 9369 4004.

(Email): reinforce@rosshouse.org.au

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Know Your Rights Training

Belgrave South Community House

Tuesdays 13th April to 22nd June 10.30am – 12.30pm

A group for people with disabilities run by people with disabilities to learn about decision making, human rights and advocacy! Come by yourself or bring friends, but be quick to book, places are limited.

Call Leanne 9754 2274 or email bsch-extend@netspace.net.au

SARU, Reinforce & Belgrave Community House

1p36 Deletion Syndrome

Patricia Tandy is the mother of 23 year old with 1p36 deletion syndrome and would very much like to hear from parents/carers of children or adults diagnosed with this rare chromosome as she feels they could assist each other a great deal. You can contact Patricia on 0404 619 275 or 96994494, by email at gilleytimit@yahoo.com.au or by mail at PO Box 106

Albert Park 320