

# Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

NOVEMBER 2019



**Welcome to the first of our new monthly newsletters for clients, their families and friends! We are working to ensure that all our client families and carers are kept informed about what is going on at Woodville and this newsletter forms just one part of a range of new initiatives to try to keep connected to you all.**

## KEEPING CONNECTED

WE'VE LISTENED TO your concerns about how, and how frequently, we communicate with you. Whilst this newsletter may help, we've also implemented a number of other things to keep you in the loop.

- We've asked everyone to complete a form confirming how you would like us to communicate with you, and this information is now in a register to help us ensure we send information out in the way you want to receive it. If you haven't completed this form yet, please speak to Mike or one of the mentors. Email is the most reliable way we can send things home, so if you use email, please let us know.
- All clients should now also have a communications book with information about their day. Let us know if you don't seem to have one!
- We've also subscribed to an SMS Broadcast service which allows us to send a text message really quickly and easily to a large group. You have probably received a few of these already, with information about events etc.
- Another initiative is to hold regular family events to give you the opportunity to speak to management in





an informal forum, over a cup of coffee or a sausage sizzle. We've held 3 of these events so far, and there will be more next year.

- Additionally, mentors are now making regular calls home to check in with you about clients, and we will be having more formal meetings to discuss services and to help you prepare for reviews etc.

Please let us know if you think there is more we can do – we're really open to your suggestions and keen to hear from you.

## ON THE BUSES

Please remember that we are not able to guarantee pick up or drop off times, but we will try our best to keep you informed about any delays. We have installed handsfree tablets in all our buses so that staff can use the GPS and keep us – and you – informed of any hold ups. If we are aware of a delay, you will now receive an SMS and you should have received a letter letting you know the number to call if you need to contact the bus driver. Please only use these numbers for issues relating to transport – all other enquiries should continue to go to Mike.

Unfortunately, if a client is not ready when the transport arrives, our staff are not able to make arrangements to come back to pick them up. Some clients will already have spent some time on the transport and going back on the route can make the bus late for others. If this happens to you, please give Mike a call and he will see what alternative arrangements can be made.

We are fitting a state-of-the-art system in some of our buses for clients who have occasionally released their seatbelts whilst the vehicle is in motion. These seatbelts cannot be undone whilst the vehicle is running but are released once it is stationary. The system also contains a crash sensor which will over-ride the system in the event of an accident. Over the coming weeks we will be having the system fitted to 6 seats across 3 buses, for use by identified high risk clients. This is all part of our commitment to providing as safe a service as possible.

## ACTIVITIES

We want to make sure that we are providing a range of enriching, interesting and exciting experiences for our clients. To support this, we are having monthly activity planning meetings, weekly catch ups to confirm the activities for the coming week and have put together a calendar of monthly special events. Hub meetings with clients will also be discussing what activities clients would like to take part in. Activities for the month will be themed and initially they will be based on a country or a geographical area of the world.



In October our big event was the Halloween Party – a great success with our clients who had a fabulous time (and so did the staff!). The event was project managed by our GeekAbility students and all our clients had the

opportunity to take part in activities leading up to the event like making decorations and decorating Halloween cupcakes. Other activities in October have been a trip to the city to see the Christmas windows at David Jones (we will be repeating this with other groups), cupcake baking and decorating, regular cooking (and then eating!) activities and groups visiting places like Fairfield Museum to make Christmas decorations. Some of our clients are being regularly accompanied to the gym, and Aquafit has started up again for the summer.

We've been able to attract a few fantastic volunteers to help us with activities as well. Stephanie is a therapeutic horticulturist with experience of working with people with disability and she is working with us at our community garden and on our deck at Earth Centre. Anna is a dance teacher who has been helping our clients put together a music video clip. The clients (and some staff!) have had fun learning the choreography and we're all looking forward to seeing the finished product. Jackie is also coming in to help some of our clients with their English skills.

In November, the theme for our activities will be AFRICA! We're thinking African food, dance and music and learning a bit about this fascinating continent. Our special event will be a Picnic Day on 15<sup>th</sup> November so watch out for further information coming soon!

We are also going to have more pop-up activities in the evenings, which we will let you know about as they happen. These will be things like trips to the theatre, Christmas shopping and dinner in the city. Watch this space!

## SERVICES

We are keen to expand our service delivery to meet more of our client's needs, so we've been working on some new services.

First off the block is that we are now able to provide 1:1 support to clients at the weekends and in the evenings. It's a great opportunity to get some really individualized support, and to do activities that are tailored to you rather than a group. We've got a number of clients taking advantage of this, and it's working really well. You can use capacity building or core support funds from your NDIS plan to support this, so please let us know if you are interested.

Next year we are also planning to start running holidays for clients. You can use respite (or short-term accommodation funding) for this, and we will initially be looking at somewhere within a couple of hours of Sydney – although we may venture further afield in the future. We should have information about the first holiday ready before Christmas.

We've got other exciting services planned which will be launched during next year and we'll be communicating about them soon!

## SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)

You may be aware that we are going to be offering our clients the opportunity to live in a SIL home managed by Woodville.



Supported Independent Living (SIL) is the funding category in the NDIS that supports participants to live independently in the community in a shared living environment, with a focus on the development of skills for individuals to live autonomously as possible. The most common form of SIL is the group home model where 4 or 5 people share a house with shared supports. We understand the compatibility of individuals living at the house is of utmost importance.

We are looking for a home in the Fairfield area and we aim to start operating our first SIL home by the middle of 2020.

If you are interested, come along on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019 5.30pm – 7pm to our consultation evening. We want to hear about your needs, wishes and expectations of a Woodville managed SIL home. We will be sending out a reminder closer to the time but in the meantime, please save the date.

## PARENTING A YOUNG ADULT WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY – SPECIAL EVENT

All parents know how challenging it can be when our children reach young adulthood. Navigating the world of relationships and of technology and pushing the boundaries to try to be as independent as possible is difficult for all young people, but for those with an intellectual disability there are additional challenges for both child and parent. Do you feel like you could benefit from some advice? We are holding a special information session to give you tips and strategies to help on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December from 5pm – 7.30pm. Pop the date in your diary and we will provide more information in the coming weeks.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Are you on Facebook? Why not follow us? You can find information about what is going on at Woodville, alongside photos of special events. Just put Woodville Alliance into the search bar and you'll find us.

More news next month!

# Wendy

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