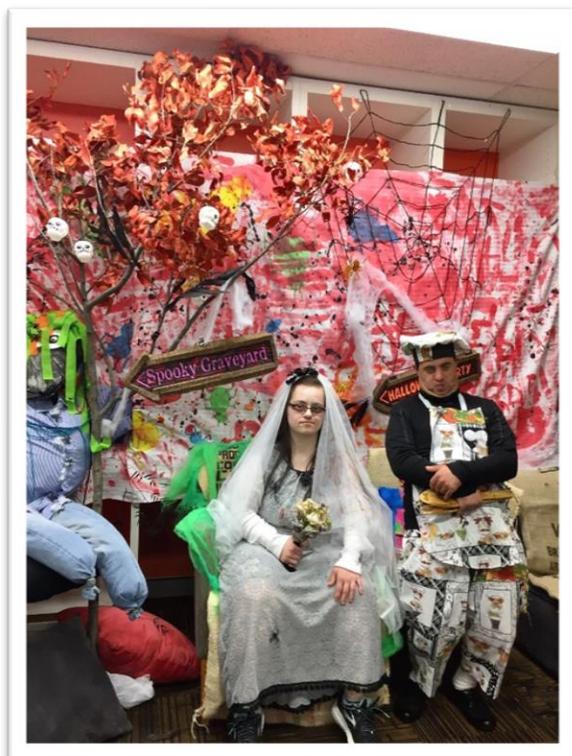


# Disability Services Newsletter

General Manager Update *Wendy Pettifer*

OCTOBER 2020



**So here we are – already letting you know all about what’s happened in October and what’s going to happen in November. Sometimes this year it’s seemed as if the year was never going to be over, and now – as always – it’s rushing up on us!**

## **HALLOWEEN!**

It’s become a tradition that at Woodville Alliance we go spook crazy in October with a fantastic, day long Halloween Party. This year was no exception, and the clients and staff did an amazing job of decorating the Earth Centre, organizing games and activities and eating spooky food. Everyone had a fabulous time, and we got some lovely photos – as you can see. It was fabulous to see the costumes, and thanks to the family members who helped clients with them. Great job!

We spent much of October working on activities related to this party – things like making decoration, preparing materials for games and planning food. The clients love being involved in this, and the excitement it generates about the party is lovely.

## **NEW STAFF AND CLIENTS**

During October, we had another crop of new staff join us – please give a warm welcome to Milly, Robbie, Isaac, Annastasia and Austin. In the coming weeks we are interviewing additional applicants for Disability Support Worker roles and for our Driver/DSW roles. We are hoping that successful candidates will be in place quickly, as our pipeline of new clients is so strong we are going to need them!

We also welcomed new client Andrew, and had a number of existing clients who have stayed away during the height of the COVID crisis rejoin us. We’ve been very pleased to see them return.



## ACTIVITIES

As well as all the Halloween shenanigans, as always, we've been working hard with the staff and clients to ensure that everyone has the best possible day at Woodville. At Chester Hill they had a 'Jersey Day' suggested by Kirsten who is a client at that centre. We also tried out a great new park at Villawood, admired the beautiful jacarandas (hello Summer!) and played board games.

As always, clients were also encouraged in activities to support their life skills – including money management activities, which are so important.

The focus for activities for the coming months now is going to be planning for our end of year parties. As these will be in house this year, we will be working hard to make sure clients have the best time possible!

The first of our evening sessions restarted in October and we were so glad to be able to support our clients around their health and wellbeing again. This month dance will start again, and I know that the clients who attend that group are super excited.

Additionally, now that things are settling down a bit COVID-wise, we have developed a plan for a staged return to including indoor venues in community access. This plan is still under discussion, but assuming that there are no further escalations of the restrictions, I would expect this to start during November. Once we have agreed an approach I will send all families a letter explaining how it will work. We are keen to be able to expand the activities available to our clients in the community, but we need to do it in as safe a way as possible.



## STAFF TRAINING

Training is a really important part of how we ensure our clients are well supported and that our staff are engaged and developing in their roles. This year training has been particularly challenging due to the impact of the pandemic, and we have not been able to have our usual all staff development day. However, staff have had infection control training, and training on how to support one another in terms of mental health during this difficult period. Some staff have also been on first aid refresher courses and we have increased the number of first aiders across our sites.

As part of our commitment to ensuring that we have a safe transport service, staff will be receiving Driver Safety Training over the coming weeks. This will be delivered in small groups, so it will take a while to get through everyone, but we are hopeful that as well as helping to keep everyone safe, this might bolster the confidence of our drivers, who have a tough job to do in driving those vans!



All staff will also be receiving new training on epilepsy support, again in small groups. Mentors and managers will attend more advanced training on the management of epilepsy in people with a disability. Epilepsy is one of the more common conditions we see in our services, so it is important that everyone is up to date with their training.

### NDIS EXTENSION TO SOME COVID RELATED MEASURES

In a prior newsletter I reminded everyone that under the NDIS' COVID temporary measures, clients were able to use existing core funding to purchase Assistive Technology products of a value below \$1500. This should have ended in September but has now been extended to February 2021. This means that if you have sufficient funding in your plan, you can buy equipment like iPads or other tablets if:

- The iPad or tablet costs less than \$600
- It will help to maintain funded NDIS supports like therapy or remote attendance at a program
- You have a letter of support from an NDIS provider about how you would benefit from this equipment
- You don't already have access to such an item
- The item hasn't been funded elsewhere – for example through a school

If you have the money available and would like support in requesting one, please let us know.

Similarly, the facility to move funding from capacity building to core supports has been extended, as has the ability to use core funding for support coordination. This might be useful if you are thinking about doing something like starting to prepare for independent living, and you need support around this. If you think you might want to do this, please talk to us so we can lend a hand if needed – our support coordinators are more than happy to help.

### SUPPORTED INDEPENDENT LIVING (SIL)

I'm sure all of you have been wondering when Jenna might be back. Well, wonder no longer – as she returned in October! However, until January, Toby will remain in his acting role as Disability Services Manager, so that Jenna can concentrate on our Supported Independent Living project. We are still aiming to have our first house live before Christmas, and Jenna is now working on participant profiles and rosters of care for interested clients. Michael and Jenna are working together to identify the right property and then things will really start to take shape. If you are interested in Supported Independent Living please speak to us.



## CASH PAYMENTS TO WOODVILLE

When clients are attending offsite or special activities like bowling, the cinema or other fun stuff, we let you know and ask you to send in cash to cover the cost of the activity. Similarly, when an activity will include a meal – like the lunch provided at the Halloween Party – we also ask for a cash payment. We try hard to keep these requests to a minimum, but whilst the majority of our families contribute there are a number of families who consistently do not. We don't want to be in the position of excluding clients from meals or activities on a financial basis, but it is unfair to clients who do pay if others do not. We understand that for some families there may be financial pressures which prevent you from contributing, so if that is the case, please do have a confidential chat with Toby or myself – otherwise we may have to reconsider our no exclusions approach. Of course, we are also aware that things get missed and forgotten, so Toby will be contacting you if we haven't yet received the \$5 payment from you for the Halloween Party.



## CLIENT HOLIDAY

In November we are taking a small group of clients to Dubbo for 2 nights, to experience the zoo and other local fun. I am excited about our first venture of this sort, and we intend to run holidays more regularly over the next year. Of course, when I say I'm excited about the trip, this is nothing compared to the level of excitement amongst the clients! I'm sure that in next month's newsletter there will be plenty of photographs.

If you're interested in holidays, you can use your core supports funding for this, and in particular the Short Term Accommodation funding used for respite. We think it's much more fun to take some of your respite on a holiday than to spend all your funding on staying in a house in the city, so we are actively looking for places to take clients on short holidays within a reasonable distance of Sydney.

Best wishes and stay safe!

*Wendy*

Email: [wpettifer@woodville.org.au](mailto:wpettifer@woodville.org.au)

Phone: 0448 976 271

