Sailing into life –
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Tom’s story, page 4
About your magazine

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Please note the Commission reserves the right to edit submissions.

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Front page: Tom Rae (front row, wearing a blue shirt) with the Leeuwin sailing ship community. Full story page 4.

Newslines

Welcome to the first edition of Local Area Coordination’s People and Communities magazine.

This magazine replaces the newsletters previously produced by Local Area Coordinators (LACs) working in offices throughout Western Australia.

People and Communities will continue to provide a way for people to share their personal stories—to talk about the challenges, the successes and the lessons learned along the way.

The magazine is also a way to keep readers informed about key disability issues and items of interest.

I would like to thank the people who shared their stories in this edition and encourage others to contribute to future magazines.

We welcome your feedback on our new magazine.

Happy reading.

Robyn Massey
Executive Director
Local Area Coordination
Disability Services Commission

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Front page: Tom Rae (front row, wearing a blue shirt) with the Leeuwin sailing ship community. Full story page 4.
Bunbury woman Susan Wood knows what she wants in life and sets goals and works hard to achieve them.

Early in life Susan, who is now in her late 20s, developed a philosophy that has served her well. “I was not going to be sidelined by my disabilities. I was not going to be told that you can’t do this and you can’t do that,” Susan said.

“I was utterly determined to take charge of my life.”

In 2003 Susan took part in a Rotary Handicamp sailing event in Esperance. This experience whetted her appetite for sailing and when she returned to Bunbury she was determined to set up a similar program.

Through hard work and perseverance, she became the driving force for a Rotary Clubs of Bunbury sailing program for people with disability. “Rotary had some very generous corporate sponsors in the fundraising exercise,” Susan said.

“Apart from purchasing dinghies, we needed funding for equipment and modifications that included access ramps on the jetty, a pontoon and a hoist for sailors in wheelchairs.”

Funding was also received from local and state governments.

“I think the most important aspect of the project involved educating people about social inclusion and the fact that people with disability want the opportunities to participate in community recreational activities that most people just take for granted,” she said.

The sailing project was another way Susan could help break down barriers and open doors for people with disability.

“The Rotary Clubs were extremely supportive and so many people worked extremely hard to make my sailing dream a reality,” she said.

“But it wasn’t just for me, it was important for the Bunbury community to see people with disability as part of the community, joining in recreational activities and experiencing the pleasures of sailing.

“It’s also important for people with disability to broaden their horizons, to see what’s possible and have a go.”

For the past three years Susan has worked in supported part-time employment at the South Western Times newspaper.

“After working in volunteer positions at a number of disability sector organisations, I achieved my goal of working in the publishing area,” she said.

“It took me a while but I got there. The work is challenging and I really enjoy it.”

In 2009 the South Western Times was a Count Me In Award winner, receiving the Barry McKinnon Award for Employment.

Susan still maintains her links to the Rotary Clubs. With a specially-designed computer system and a screen reader software program, Susan helps manage Rotary’s Sail into Life website.

“I try to sail as much as possible,” she said.

“It’s such a wonderful experience being out on the bay. It keeps me focused.”
Leeuwin adventure kick starts planning

Tom Rae is a very capable 17-year-old, always willing to give things a go and work hard.

Living on a farming property 43kms west of Esperance, parents Sue and John are clearly proud of their son’s achievements and his positive attitude when dealing with challenging situations. In 2010, during Tom’s Year 12 studies, the family began planning for his smooth transition from school to employment.

In September 2010 the family’s LAC Shaun Beros suggested applying for a scholarship that would enable Tom to participate in a week-long Leeuwin Sail Training Ship voyage. The application was successful. However, given Tom’s age, it was a Leeuwin Foundation requirement that a ‘buddy’
accompany him on the voyage. In mid November 2010 Tom and his ‘buddy’ Kyle departed from Bunbury for the week-long voyage to Fremantle. As part of his sailing duties, Tom took the helm during night watch, climbed the main mast, and watched whales lunging out of the water. Tom also danced the macarena on top of the square sail as the Leeuwin sailed into Fremantle Harbour. 

Tom said he will never forget his week on the Leeuwin. “I guess you could say it was inspiring. I met new people, made new friends and had a really great time learning new things. It was a lot of fun,” he said.

Tom’s father John says the Leeuwin experience had a big impact on his son. “It certainly broadened Tom’s horizons in more ways than one. I think the experience taught him that you can do anything if you stick with it and persevere. Tom has greater confidence in dealing with people around him and the whole Leeuwin experience has encouraged him to pursue his goals.”

As part of the transition planning, Tom started part-time work with a local ice works company and later with Woolworths. While Tom was kept busy applying for full-time positions, he still found time to train for a local marathon and pass his learner driver’s permit.

In early January this year Tom was successful in applying for a full-time position in the meat section at Woolworths. Currently nearing the end of his trial period, Tom may secure a butcher’s apprenticeship with the company.

If successful, the three year apprenticeship will provide fresh challenges for Tom when he undertakes TAFE training in Perth several times a year.

A local Esperance employment agency will help Tom by putting support measures in place that assist him during the TAFE exams. “Shaun has been our LAC for nearly five years now” said John. “He’s always been there for the family—attending Tom’s school planning meetings, helping out with paperwork and resolving issues that we were having problems dealing with. Shaun’s worth his weight in gold to our family.”

When Tom was asked about his future, he was optimistic. “I have a job I love and I’m looking forward to getting my driver’s licence so I can drive to work. I know my family is always there for me so that’s good. I’m looking forward to the future,” he said.

The Disability Services Commission is one of five State Government agencies that have signed a three-year commitment to fund places on the Leeuwin sailing program for young people with disability. Other partners are the departments for Communities, Indigenous Affairs, Child Protection, and Sport and Recreation. The Commission’s Leeuwin scholarships are being offered in 2011 and 2012.

For more information: email teressa.andrews@dsc.wa.gov.au.
Cadets WA welcomes young Bush Rangers of all abilities

Young people with disability now have more opportunities to enjoy the bush, thanks to collaboration between the Disability Services Commission’s Count Me In: Disability Future Directions team and the Office of Youth.

As part of the Count Me In youth strategy, the team and the Office of Youth explored how to encourage more young people with disability to join the Cadets WA Bush Ranger program.

The Count Me In team met unit leaders at a recent Bush Ranger conference and discussed how more young people with disability could be encouraged into cadets.

Some positive stories were shared about how young people with disability have successfully participated in mainstream cadet units and some strategies were explored to see how more could take part.

Some Bush Ranger units operate within educational support settings and discussions with unit leaders focused on some of the challenges of ensuring inclusion and participation.

Some innovative solutions were proposed to ensure young people in these units felt involved and part of the wider cadet community.

A popular suggestion was that joint regional camps take place where cadet units from mainstream and educational support units attend together.

The Bush Rangers are keen to include more young people with disability in their program and will make adjustments or modifications where possible to ensure the young person can participate in all the activities. The program is a great way for young people to make friends with people with similar interests and passions about the environment.

Young people in Years 8–12 who are passionate about the natural environment who may be interested in becoming a Bush Ranger cadet can find out more from local cadet units.

Find out which schools run Bush Ranger cadet units and their contact details by visiting www.dec.wa.gov.au > Units in WA.

If there is no unit running at a specific school the young person may be able to join a unit at a nearby school. Contact the unit leader and school principal to discuss.


Community supports local family

A garden makeover project has shown how business, community and government can work together to benefit people with disability, their families and carers.

South Perth LAC Kim Proctor helped coordinate the project which improved the quality of life for a local woman and her daughter who has an intellectual disability.

Kim thanked everyone involved in the project, saying that local projects such as this one demonstrated a strong community spirit and a willingness to make positive contributions.

Kim Proctor (left) was one of the volunteers in the garden makeover project.
Community garden brings people together

Local Area Coordination’s Coastal District has been working with the City of Stirling and local organisations over the past two years to establish the Crossways Community Garden in Gwelup.

LAC Julie Shepherd said recent Health Department funding had enabled the City of Stirling’s sustainability office to get involved in building circular gardens.

“This further work will include building wide pathways and paving central community meeting areas. In addition, wooden bench seating and a covered gazebo area will be installed so that people can sit for a while to enjoy the garden,” she said.

“The Gwelup community gardens provide a place where all members of the local community can come together to share their experiences and their passion for gardening.”

Community gardens date back to the early 19th century in Europe and the United Kingdom. With today’s increasing concern over environmental conditions and changing social and recreational activities, community gardens of all shapes and sizes have been established in Australian cities.

Minister opens Rockingham LAC office

The Rockingham Local Area Coordination office was officially opened by Disability Services Minister Helen Morton on 30 March 2011. The office is located at 25B Chalgrove Avenue, near the Rockingham City shopping centre.

Given the area’s growing popularity with families and retirees, it is likely the number of people living in the region will double over the next 10 years.

With this growth, the demand for disability services will also grow, with the Rockingham office becoming a regional centre for disability services.

The office has a team of seven LACs serving an area which includes most suburbs in the City of Rockingham and the Town of Kwinana.

“The Commission has a long-standing record of working collaboratively with local government, businesses, and community groups in support of people with disability, their families and carers,” acting Area Manager for Rockingham Kristen Laird said.

“This relationship will continue as we work hard to ensure fair and equitable access to everything that contributes to a ‘good life’ in this region.”
Five-year-old Dale lives in Kalgoorlie and loves his custom-made bicycle. For his mother Angela Smith, the bicycle gives her son increased mobility and the opportunity to get out and about in the community—just like all his friends.

Because Dale has a disorder that causes muscle weakness, a modified bicycle that supported his bodyweight was needed.

“My LAC Roger McDonald provided the information we needed and helped coordinate our planning in getting a bicycle for Dale,” Angela said.

This coordination involved working with the occupational therapist, ensuring Dale’s specific requirements were provided to Technology Assisting Disability WA (TADWA), investigating funding options and submitting an application to Variety WA on behalf of the family.

“TADWA was fantastic, as was Variety WA in funding the bicycle’s construction and purchase,” Angela said. When the bicycle was ready, the family drove to Perth to collect it.

“Dale absolutely loves riding his bicycle,” Angela said.

“When he is older we would like to explore four-wheeler motorbike customisation options that would mean Dale can be part of family riding activities.”

Variety WA supports children

Western Australian children who are sick, disadvantaged or have complex needs have the opportunity to receive assistance from Variety WA’s Variety Freedom Program.

The Variety Freedom Program provides funding to individuals and organisations for mobility equipment for children that includes wheelchairs, walking frames and customises tricycles.

Variety WA also has a Variety Future Kids Program which helps children with intellectual or physical disability reach their potential by providing funding to individuals and organisations for computers and specialist software packages.

Variety WA is supported by volunteers and individual and corporate sponsors.

For more information: phone 9355 3655, fax 9355 5122, email varwa@varietywa.org.au or visit www.variety.org.au.
Board member visits Fremantle

The Fremantle Local Area Coordination office recently had the chance to discuss local issues with Commission Board vice chairperson Jim McKiernan. The visit was one of the regular Board member visits to offices around the State to keep up-to-date with Commission work.

Mr McKiernan met families who use the Local Area Coordination program, learning first hand about community living initiatives and planning. Todd Kaya and his parents Robert and Joyce, discussed planning that enables Todd to live in his own home, Community Living Initiative support, and the challenges the family might face along the way.

Arthur Tam discussed his experiences planning for his son Jonathon’s future and the positive support the family had received from their LAC. There was also general discussion about people’s inclusive education experiences and what they hoped to achieve through this pathway.

Fremantle District Area Manager Jo Jahn said representatives from State and local government and local disability sector organisations also attended the gathering. “Local government representatives highlighted the importance of LAC leadership, collaboration and partnerships, in particular the strengths-based and person-centred approaches in developing community initiatives,” Jo said.

Draft report outlines national insurance scheme

The Productivity Commission released its draft report on a proposed national disability care and support scheme for Australia on 28 February. The Productivity Commission’s final report is not due till the end of July 2011 but the draft report identifies issues from the Commission’s inquiry and puts forward two schemes for consideration.

The first is the National Disability Insurance Scheme which offers support to all Australians with disability who require long-term care and support. The second scheme covers people’s lifetime care and support if they acquire a severe injury from an accident.

For more information:

Companion Cards counter discrimination

The Companion Card program is improving access to services and events for people with disability. The West Australian Companion Card is a wallet-sized card issued to eligible people who have a severe and permanent disability (including disabilities relating to ageing and psychiatric illness).

The card can be used when buying a ticket at an affiliated business or organisation within Australia if the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion or carer to participate at that venue or event.

Affiliates recognise the Companion Card and issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no extra charge.

The initiative is funded by the Western Australian Government (through the Disability Services Commission) and implemented by National Disability Services WA.

For more information and application forms: phone freecall 1800 617 337 or visit www.wa.companioncard.com.au.
A mother's journey with autism has led to a new study that may be useful to other parents in similar situations.

Jasmine McDonald has three children. When her eldest child Kieran was four-years-old, he displayed behaviours thought to be consistent with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). As a teacher, Jasmine recognised quite early that Kieran was not meeting his developmental milestones. However, getting a formal diagnosis was a protracted process and it was not until Kieran was 15-years-old that a formal diagnosis of autism was made.

The initial diagnosis marked the beginning of Jasmine's voyage of discovery—both personally and academically. In 2001 Jasmine completed a Masters degree that involved research into the ‘lived experience’ of a parent advocating for a child with disability, including the difficulties in accessing appropriate early intervention programs and inclusive education for her son.

“Kieran was in two mainstream schools during pre-primary. However, his needs were not appropriately understood or accommodated,” Jasmine said.

“We were fortunate Kieran also attended a child care centre that was recommended by his speech therapist. This centre had a special needs teacher who helped Kieran feel welcomed and his needs were accommodated appropriately.”

Primary school education was more welcoming and Kieran had wonderful principals and teachers who were well versed in educating children with complex needs.

“Kieran attended a Catholic primary school for seven years and no teacher aides were...
necessary,” Jasmine said. “From time-to-time there were difficulties but we worked through these with Kieran’s teachers and intervention team. We assumed this was a ‘normal’ experience. It is only since then that we have realised how lucky we were.”

High school was a nightmare.

“Kieran attended two different schools, one private and one public, but both were untenable. Kieran’s educational needs were not adequately met and he was the victim of successive incidents of bullying,” Jasmine said.

“We removed Kieran from mainstream schooling and with the support of the School of Isolated and Distance Education, home schooled him for four and a half years. Kieran gained secondary graduation and completed a TAFE traineeship in library studies.”

Kieran has completed TAFE courses in media, computer game design, and animation and recently gained entry to a TAFE engineering course to improve his employment prospects.

With the assistance of their LAC, planning is well underway for Kieran’s employment and independent living options.

“Our LAC has been excellent, providing support and information when we needed it. By using the Circle of Friends approach, we also set up social networks for Kieran and set goals for his future,” Jasmine said.

When asked for advice for parents in similar situations, Jasmine was clear about important issues.

“Maintaining a sense of balance in the family situation is absolutely essential to ensure the overall health of the family unit over time,” she said.

“Research informs us that it is vitally important to ensure the needs of all of the family members are eventually met. Achieving this balance can be extremely difficult, especially in the early days, post-diagnosis, when the push to have younger children with ASD involved in early intervention programs is at its greatest.

“At this time it’s so easy to forget about the needs of other family members. In my situation, I found my research studies eventually enabled me to reclaim some of my own identity,” she said.

“As many other parents would know, when you have a child with complex needs, employment can be difficult to sustain. Studying offered flexible hours—working mostly from home—as well as a way to keep abreast of the latest ASD developments that I could use to help Kieran.

“Parents also need to realise there is only so much they can do as parents and they shouldn’t feel guilty about this reality. To help achieve balance in the family, it is very important to make use of respite and other support services available to families.”

“At this time it’s so easy to forget about the needs of other family members. In my situation, I found my research studies eventually enabled me to reclaim some of my own identity.”

Jasmine recently completed a PhD study that investigated how parents from six diverse West Australian families dealt with the education of their child with an ASD from pre-diagnosis to the end of their formal schooling and the years immediately beyond.

Jasmine hopes to disseminate her findings and publish her results in the near future.

Perth to host international autism conference

The Asia Pacific Autism Conference will be held in Perth 8 - 10 September this year. The conference will bring together a wide range of leading international speakers, educators, service providers, practitioners, families and carers. Pension cardholders, family members of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders and full-time students are eligible to receive the concession registration rate.

For more information: phone 9389 1488, fax 9389 1499, email info@eecw.com.au or visit www.apac11.org.
John Verjans has discovered a passion for painting.

Zest for challenges reaps rewards

Exploring and developing your abilities can reap rewards in all areas of life, as one young man with disability and his family have discovered.

John Verjans’ mother Sue said she has always encouraged him to explore options and try new things.

“Since finishing high school John has completed a number of courses,” Sue said.

In 2009, John, now 25, started art classes at Leederville TAFE.

It didn’t take the family long to realise he had a great knack for using a variety of mediums to create a range of unique and vibrant artworks.

To the delight of his family, especially his Auntie Margy who shares his interest in art and encourages his studies, John discovered his artistic talents.

John likes to focus on his abilities rather than his disability and because of that painting quickly became an all absorbing pastime.

As the number of paintings around the family home continued to grow, every available space was used to house John’s artworks.

“I started talking to my family about how great it would be to share my paintings with other people—not just with family and friends. It was my dream to hold an art exhibition,” John said.

John’s mother has always been incredibly supportive of her son.

“If John wants something to happen, I am going to make sure I do everything I can to make it happen,” Sue said.

While John works part-time in supported employment, the awakening of his artistic talents helped open doors for him.

“People around him started to appreciate his range of abilities—they started to see John in an entirely different light,” Sue said.

As planning for the exhibition began, John and his family were overwhelmed by the support they received.

“It was a lot of hard work but it was well worth it,” Sue said.

“John’s cousin Clare created a stunning exhibition invitation using one of John’s original art works and his friend Debbie designed the catalogue.”
The youth group John attends each week at a local personal advocacy centre also became involved and his LAC Brenda Smith helped out by promoting the event.

More than 150 people attended the exhibition and of the 84 paintings on display, 66 were sold.

One of the many satisfied art buyers that day was Colin, John’s mentor. As well as providing John with guidance, Colin has also been involved in organising life skills programs for him.

Colin told an artist friend Ken about John’s paintings and arranged for the two artists to meet.

Ken and John discovered they had a lot in common and chatted for quite a while about their interest in art.

“Sadly Ken died earlier this year,” Sue said.

“One of Ken’s sons had heard about his father’s meeting with John. He decided it would be appropriate to bequeath his father’s collection of oils, acrylics, pastels, brushes and easel to John. This was a lovely gesture that was greatly appreciated by John and all the family.”

John can still remember Ken’s parting words to him: “Stick with your painting John—don’t give up.”

“I won’t give up,” John said.

“One day I will have another exhibition. Ken would have liked that.”

Rotary International’s Australia-wide Shine on Awards 2011 have recognised the work of two West Australians, Doreen Osborne and Paula-Kaye Johnston.

The awards, which were presented in February, recognise and acknowledge the work of people with serious health problems and disability who are actively involved in community service.

Despite chronic health problems, Doreen has devoted her life to supporting others by volunteering at church groups and community organisations and fostering children.

Doreen and her family have fostered more than 30 children over the past 30 years and now foster two teenage girls with intellectual disability.

Doreen her husband Bill also have guardianship of Jodie (30), who has significant physical and intellectual disabilities.

Paula-Kaye has an intellectual disability and epilepsy after having meningitis when six months old.

She lives as independently as possible and enjoys getting out and about in the community.

She was part of the State netball team for 12 years and won gold and bronze medals for swimming at the Special Olympics in 1994.

Paula-Kaye has volunteered for both Radio Lollipop and the WA Disabled Sports Association, where she coached children in swimming and netball.

She also assisted student teachers from Edith Cowan University in their inclusive education studies and currently volunteers at Carers WA.

Since neither woman has been acknowledged formally for their ongoing commitment to the community, LAC Trish Carton, in consultation with Doreen and Paula-Kaye, nominated them for the awards.
Inclusive sport and recreation enriches communities

Inclusion WA, formerly the Recreation and Sport Network, has been working since 1989 to create opportunities for people with disability for inclusion in sport, recreation and community life. Inclusion WA tackles social exclusion on three fronts: capacity building, mentoring, and community education.

Inclusion WA’s Sport Development service is the capacity-building part of the organisation. The team works with State sporting associations, local clubs and local governments to develop inclusive programs and to ensure everyone has an opportunity to participate at their own ability level within a mainstream sport environment.

The Recreation Access Program, the Community Inclusion Program, and social clubs mentor adults with disability and community group members to build meaningful and lasting social relationships.


“The program works through a one-to-one approach, pairing up individuals with their own recreation officer, creating an individualised recreation plan, connecting with a local community group, and phasing out Inclusion WA’s involvement over time,” he said.

“We are currently looking for people who want to connect to their local community through sporting or recreational interests.

“In addition, the Recreation Access Program is now accepting new applications.”

Film competition inspires young film makers

Tell your children, family, friends and school about a new short film competition focusing on school students with disability. The Disability Services Commission invites Year 8, 9 and 10 students to create a film which captures the high school experience from the perspective of a student with disability.

The winning school will receive $5,000 and the winning student (or student group) will receive a total of $1,000.

There will be two student runner-up prizes of $500 each.

The competition opened in May and closes in October 2011 with the winner to be announced during Disability Awareness Week 28 November - 3 December 2011.

For more information: visit www.count-me-in.com.au or contact Megan Jones on 9426 9264.
Just outcomes the aim for all people

Disability Services Commission Justice Coordinator Jody Waite says that for many people the justice system is quite complex and often confusing and confronting.

“People with disability, especially those with an intellectual disability, are particularly vulnerable because they may not have a good understanding of the law,” Jody said.

“If questioned in court or by the police, they may not understand the questions being asked and the implications of their answers.

“In addition, just like everyone else, people with disability may also be witnesses, victims of crime or perpetrators.”

Jody works with people with disability, their families and carers, and the Commission’s LACs, other government departments and non-government agencies to provide advice, support and consultancy services on justice issues.

She also provides disability awareness sessions for police recruits in the WA Police Academy’s Diversity Training Program, which is coordinated by Umile Gwakuba from Western Australia Police.

“The academy’s diversity program has been very successful,” Umile said.

Jody uses her experience as an LAC to tell recruits about disability and human rights discrimination legislation, the nature of disability, the importance of developing more inclusive communities and the Commission’s services and programs.

This enables recruits to be more responsive to the needs of people with disability.

Umile believes the program helps foster a greater understanding of the diversity and complexity of the West Australian community, and strengthens graduates’ capacity to value and appreciate difference.

“It is important to remember that disability is a part of life and can be experienced by anyone at any stage of their lifetime,” Jody said.

“In upholding the rights of people with disability, the Commission works hard to ensure their inclusion and participation in their local community.

“My role as Justice Coordinator is to help ensure people with disability who come into contact with the justice system receive the support they require to deal with the situation more effectively.

“Disability—either directly or indirectly—.touches everyone. This makes disability everyone’s business.”
Kyal Fairbairn is a young man with a plan that's changed his life.

Three years ago, the 20-year-old from Perth’s northern suburbs invited people who were important to him—family, friends, fellow air force cadets and his flight sergeant, people from his church and the owners of the café where he worked—to a planning meeting.

The aim of the meeting was to form a group that could develop plans for Kyal’s future based on his interests, strengths, capacities and dreams. Like most people his age, Kyal wanted to make a successful transition from school to the workplace, and ultimately, achieve greater independence.

“The people in my group really care about me. They enjoy my company and they know what is important to me. They help me set goals and plan for my future,” Kyal said.

Area manager Anne Livingston said person-centred planning was about looking at the individual’s goals and aspirations.

“This type of planning identifies the support needed to achieve goals rather than setting goals according to what services or supports can typically deliver,” she said.

Anne initiated the planning approach and has maintained her involvement with Kyal and his family several years later.

Kyal’s mother Kaye said young people needed meaningful activities, supports and opportunities to help develop their individual skills and abilities.

“Looking back over the past 20 years, there have been several significant parenting events,” Kaye said.

“Kyal only received a diagnosis of intellectual disability when he was in pre-primary. Up until that time Kyal was treated just the same as his twin sister.

“He had the same rules at home, at play and was encouraged to participate in community activities, like go to church and join clubs.
“Getting a diagnosis of a disability can be extremely tough for parents. It’s normal to go through a period of grieving and mourning for the loss of certain expectations that you held,” she said.

“My advice is not to be paralysed by the diagnosis. Get as much information as you can and start planning as soon as possible. That’s where your LAC can really help.

“Listen to the people who can help you support your child. Attend seminars and workshops and don’t be afraid to ask questions—getting relevant information when you need it is the key to effective decision-making.

“We worked hard to provide Kyal with a wide range of life experiences, encouraged him to try new things and develop new interests. Having good social skills was an important focus in parenting our children.

“Every family situation is different and it’s important to take advantage of support from family, friends and community organisations—don’t think you’re alone or you have to do it by yourself,” Kaye said.

At primary school, Kyal attended some classes with his peers and others in the school’s educational support unit. As part of the important transition from Year 7 to Year 8, Kaye and her husband Andrew chose a mixture of educational options for Kyal’s secondary schooling.

“We felt that the specialist skills provided in some classes were a better fit with Kyal’s needs, and he attended cooking, music, media and woodwork classes with his peers,” she said.

“In Year 9 we started planning for Kyal’s transition to employment and started to discuss independent living options with our LAC.

“Kyal celebrated his 20th birthday in his own home in August last year. It was a fantastic occasion.”

“We also discussed personal support measures in terms of building on Kyal’s life skills in the areas of budgeting, shopping wisely and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We explored TAFE study options,” she said.

The family also looked at the Commission’s Community Living Initiatives and other available support options.

“Once we started planning, things happened quite quickly really. To cut a long story short, Kyal celebrated his 20th birthday in his own home in August last year. It was a fantastic occasion”.

When Kyal was asked about his next steps, he was quick to answer.

“Now that I have completed a barista training course, I would really like to get my driver’s licence so I can have my own mobile coffee van business,” Kyal said.

“Mum and Dad will be part of the business as well. I want to want to live as independently as possible and I would like to travel overseas.”

Family and community living

For more information: contact your LAC, phone 9426 9680, freecall 1800 998 214 or visit www.disabilitywa.gov.au > For Individuals, Families and Carers > Community Living Initiative.
Planning prepares people for the future

Person-centred planning is an individualised approach which takes into account a person’s unique circumstances and ideas for the future. It can help young people transition from school to work and adult life.

The planning involves building on natural support systems within the family and community by gathering together people who are keen to have an on-going involvement in helping a person with disability plan for the future.

The benefits of person-centred planning include an approach which:

- is directed by the person
- focuses on an individual’s capacities, strengths, abilities and goals rather than limitations and obstacles
- determines priorities, sets goals and plans for the future
- produces actions about the person’s life, not just services
- creates a supportive and confidence-building environment
- fosters independence as well as relationship building
- develops collaborative relationships
- improves communication between the person with disability and family members, friends, community members and personal support workers
- allows participants to learn more about the person with disability
- provides the person with more choice and control
- acknowledges uncertainty, setbacks and false starts in planning for the future.

For more information: contact your LAC.

The Big Plan supports youth with disability

The Big Plan aims to assist school leavers or young adults with disability who have recently left school to map out their future. This approach is similar to person-centred planning.

Family and friends participate, provide support, plan activities, and contribute to discussion sessions which address the following question:

“What would it take for this young person to have an interesting, fulfilling life in which they make new friends and make a contribution in their local community?”

Planning is usually held over a number of weeks, covering topics which include:

- Who I am and what matters to me?
- What are my resources, talents and gifts, goals and dreams?
- Where in the local community might my talents and gifts be welcomed?
- How do I put together a plan to achieve my goals and dreams?

For more information: contact your LAC.

Publications aid transition

The Disability Services Commission has produced a range of publications to support transition planning.

All in a life’s design – planning independent living

A handbook for parents of young adults with disability who are planning to leave home.

School’s out 4 ever

A handbook for young people leaving school and making a life in their community.

Spread your wings

A handbook for young people moving into their own home in the Busselton to Augusta Capes region.

Please ask your LAC if you would like a copy of any of these Commission publications.

The Mitchell family moved to Mandurah in 2004 to explore a different lifestyle and new opportunities for their son Michael.

“The move has changed Michael’s life in many ways as he is now on his way to living more independently,” said his mother Helen.

Previously Michael had lived in a group home for people with intellectual disability. Helen, LACs Ewa Neal and later Stephanie Backhouse, worked with Michael using person-centred planning to explore his expectations and dreams, strengths and abilities, likes and dislikes, and the people involved in his life.

As a result of this approach, strategies to achieve Michael’s goals were identified.

An initial goal focused on improving Michael’s life skills and confidence when he was out and about in his local community. This was an identified stepping stone in planning for Michael to live more independently.

Strategies to achieve this goal included Michael completing courses which covered areas such as personal safety, preparing shopping lists, shopping, budgeting, cooking, and home safety. Through these activities Michael became more confident in his ability to handle different situations and less reliant on his family for support.

Michael (36) now stays alone at home for long weekends, with people calling by to help prepare meals.

He also travels to work and the local shopping centre independently on public transport.

Michael works three days a week, does voluntary work, is an active member of a social club for walkers and runners, and enjoys watching movies and catching up with friends.

“Last year we incorporated the Community Living Initiative in our planning process” Helen said.

“Our LAC took a lead role in helping the family identify how the plan could assist Michael achieve his goals and dreams.”

Stephanie said elements of the plan would enable Michael to strengthen existing relationships and develop new ones independently.

“It will enable Michael to develop an identity outside of the family, and to strengthen and develop relationships with work mates, friends and neighbours in his own right,” she said.

With family support, Michael’s expectations have changed dramatically.

He plans to move into a granny flat and is optimistic about his future.

The family feels their capacity to support each other will be strengthened and enhanced as Michael achieves greater independence and control in his life.

“My perfect life would be to live by myself, do my own cooking, go to work, ride my bike and invite Mum and Dad around to my place,” Michael said.

Activ library services
Activ manages the Commission’s library services. Country-based parents, families and carers can access library resources by contacting their LAC who can borrow items on their behalf.

Metropolitan-based parents are encouraged to take out individual library membership which costs $22 a year.

For more information: phone 9387 0458, email library@activ.asn.au or visit www.activ.asn.au/parentportal or www.activ.asn.au/library.
Commission ready to hear your concerns

With 15 years experience working in the disability sector, Fran Tyler has a good understanding of the issues that are important to people with disability. As the Disability Services Commission’s Consumer Liaison Officer, Fran spends a lot of time in the community, meeting people who have concerns or complaints about Commission services.

Fran and a network of local consumer liaison officers working in Accommodation Services, Local Area Coordination and Statewide Specialist Services, work collaboratively to provide this complaint resolution service.

“A lot of people are reluctant to make a complaint in case it adversely affects the level of support they are currently receiving,” Fran said.

“One of the key principles of the Commission’s complaint process is that people are free to raise concerns without fear of retribution.”

Fran acknowledged it could be extremely stressful for people to formally make a complaint. She said it was important people knew they had a right to complain if they felt the services they were receiving were not meeting their needs, or if they were having difficulty accessing a service.

“The complaints process is flexible in meeting the needs of people from all cultural and linguistic backgrounds,” Fran said.

Brochures outlining the complaints process are available from all Commission offices and can be translated into other languages on request.

Contact:
Consumer Liaison Officer
Disability Services Commission
146-160 Colin Street
West Perth WA 6005
Phone: 9426 9244
Freecall: 1800 998 214
Fax: 9226 2313
TTY: 9426 9315
Email: clo@dsc.wa.gov.au
Visit: www.disability.wa.gov.au
> Contact us.

Rotary inspires youth to Sail into Life

People with disability have the opportunity to sail in Bunbury’s Koombana Bay, thanks to the Sail into Life program.

The collaborative project between Bunbury’s four Rotary Clubs has been running since 2005. Matt Granger from the Rotary Club of Bunbury-Leschenault said the dinghies could be sailed by people of all abilities.

He said interest in the program had grown and the age of participants varied from teenagers to people in their 60s.

Register your interest in sailing in the Koombana Bay by phoning Enable Southwest Inc. on 9792 7500.

Sail into Life activities are usually held every second Sunday from October to May.

The program is fully accessible for people using wheelchairs.


Local Area Coordination manager Paul Larkin (left) with Fran Tyler.