



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER September – December 2008



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Wesołych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia

A Reflection of 2008

The NQ Autism Support Group has once again made significant progress in achieving goals for families with autism and in advocating for people with autism.

Strong advocacy on the part of some past members and present members saw the AEIOU school for early intervention of children with autism become a reality when it was officially opened in March by the Minister for Disability, Lindy Nelson-Carr. Recognition for the part the support group played was given by the founder of AEIOU, Dr James Morton.

Donna Williams, a person with autism who has published many books on ASD delivered a very informative seminar on 28th March. This event was organised by members of the NQ Autism Support Group.

A very successful movie evening was held at Birch, Carol and Coyle, when *The Black Balloon* was shown on 23rd April and the NQ Autism Support Group shared the proceeds with Community Connections.

On 26th May a member of the NQ Autism Support Group assisted three families to advocate strongly for much needed services at the Cabinet Meeting in Townsville. A letter to the Bulletin re the families not having access to the Minister at the Cabinet Meeting resulted in The Bulletin running a story and editorial on the poor state of Services for people with ASD in Townsville.

On 31st May, for Autism Awareness Month, members had a barbecue at Rotary Park, Mundingburra. James Loveday attended this event with a view to seeing if something can be done to encourage secondary students with ASD to meet socially. More work needs to be undertaken in this area to make this a reality.

Sue Robinson from the Defence Disability Support Group also included some children with ASD in a Tinkeraround Day where the children learnt to build a computer.

Kate Horstmann has successfully assisted in working with Cathy Contala to form a professional network of

people willing to receive training in autism and to deliver training. This has been one of the quiet achievements but one of the best outcomes for the continuing welfare of those with autism and for their families. Thank you to Kate and Cathy for their work.

Members of Autism Qld talked to the NQ Autism Support Group. They were Shannon O'Brien (30th April), Jayne Collins and Kathryn Fordyce spoke on bullying (6th August).

A big Thank You to Michael Cutler for arranging for the printing of 3000 NQ Autism Support Group pamphlets, which are being distributed widely; to Tric Cream for purchasing and selling bracelets and key rings to bring about an awareness in the public sector of autism. To Trish Henwood for the time she assisted with cataloguing books acquired by the NQ Autism Support Group which are available on loan to financial members of the Group. The NQ Autism Support Group was successful in achieving funding for the setting up of a website. This website is now functional. Thank you to Naked Egg Web Design.

The morning cuppa gatherings at McDonald's, The Lakes, have been very happy meetings.

The phone in number for people wishing to talk over Autism issues continues to be well used by the community. Every week there are calls. To all committee members thank you for your time as we work towards achieving an ASD Centre.

Gwentyth Cutler, President, NQASG.

NQASG would like to extend a warm welcome to the newly formed Burdekin Autism Group. This group is run by Anita Julyan. She can be contacted by emailing: anitajulyan@bigpond.com



Upcoming Events/Important Dates

National Disability Strategy Survey

The Commonwealth Government is committed to introducing a National Disability Strategy (NDS). The NDS will provide guidance to Government about what actions should be taken to ensure a more inclusive and universally accessible society for all people.

A discussion paper on the NDS can be downloaded from:

<http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/nds.htm>

All submissions to the NDS are due by 5pm AEST Monday December 1, 2008.

The vision of the NDS is to:

- Ensure social, economic and cultural participation of people with disability and their families;
- Provide timely and dignified support for people with disability, their families and carers;
- Eliminate discrimination experienced by people with disability and their families.

The Department of Families, Health, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) will be conducting consultations in all Australian Capital Cities about what should go into the NDS.

The dates for the Capital City consultations are

Darwin October 27, 9am to 12noon

Sydney November 5, 10am to 1pm

Brisbane November 6 10am to 1pm

Perth November 10, 10am to 1pm

Melbourne November 12, 1pm to 4pm

Hobart November 14, 11am to 2pm

Adelaide November 24, 10am to 1pm

Canberra November 26, 10am to 1pm

If you would like to attend one of these consultations you need to RSVP on 1800 077 765 or email nds@nationalmailing.com.au to find out where the venue is.

FaHCSIA has asked the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO) to undertake consultations in rural and remote Australia.

AFDO will be going around the country to meet with people during November. It may be possible to visit you and if you would like this opportunity please email lesley.hall@afdo.org.au or ring toll free

Voice: 1800 219 969 TTY: 1800 815 969

However if we can't come to your area we would still like to have your thoughts. All you have to do is fill in our on-line survey.

We will then collate all of the responses we get and forward them to the Commonwealth Government. Anything you tell us will be kept strictly confidential and you will not be able to be identified in our report to the Commonwealth Government.

The survey needs to be completed by 5pm AEST Monday December 1, 2008.

If you have any questions on the survey or need assistance please email office@afdo.org.au or ring toll free Voice: 1800 219 969 TTY: 1800 815 969

Mindd Foundation

Will be running the 3rd Mindd International Forum On Children 15-18 May, 2009 in Sydney.

MIFOC '09 is designed to train professionals and educate families, carers and educators in effective, Integrative Healthcare for ALL Australian children including those with ADHD, allergies, Asthma, Autism, digestive and sleep disorders and much more.

More information will be posted online in future at www.mindd.org

Upcoming Workshop in Townsville Unlock & Empower

9th March 2009. For people with Autism & Aspergers

10th March, 2009. For service providers, carers and people interested in ASD.

Venue and times to be advised. Contact Debbie Reid at North Queensland Competitive Employment Service on 47733988 or Gwenyth Cutler on 47740637.

Kerryn Burgoyne will be speaking on topics such as coping strategies for community, employment and conflict resolution for those who have an ASD or for those who are assisting people with an ASD. Kerryn Burgoyne is from Melbourne Victoria.

In her own words: "I am a 40 year old woman diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome at the age of 30. Prior to that, I did not know what I had and everything went over my head, and I was unaware of the world around me. Having not found successful employment in my dream occupation of Office Admin earlier on in my lifetime, I now run my own organisation called KTalk, and speak to groups, schools, forums, the community, anybody who needs training in Asperger's Syndrome from a personal perspective, not an academic perspective. I have spoken at forums, Living and Learning Centres, and an Autism School in May this year."

NQASG Christmas Function

**Where: The Victoria Park Hotel,
Boundary Street**

When: 12pm Sunday, 30th November 2008

RSVP: Monday 24th November,

as Santa needs to know how many children are likely to be there and how many parents.

Contact Melanie Hose by phone on 47552509 or email:

mellieglenn@bigpond.com.au

Workshops and information sessions for parents/carers. If you are a parent / carer of a school aged child with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), there is a national program of workshops and information sessions available to help you work in partnership with your child's school to improve their learning outcomes.

Autism Spectrum. By participating in the workshops and information sessions as parents or carers you will gain:

- the latest information on ASD and how this directly impacts on your child's learning at school;
- an understanding about the processes and strategies for effective parent, school and teacher partnerships;
- specific strategies on how to advocate to support your child's ongoing learning development, tailored to your child's current educational environment;
- information about your local school's processes to support learning at all stages of the educational pathway; and
- opportunities for you to network and share strategies with other parents and carers and local support personnel.

You can register and find details of upcoming workshops and information sessions at www.autismtraining.com.au

The workshops and information sessions are part of the Positive Partnerships: supporting school aged students on the autism spectrum which includes a national program of professional development for teachers and school staff who work with students with ASD. These initiatives are funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through the Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism package. The Professional Development for teachers and other school staff and the Workshops and Information sessions for parents/ carers will be developed and delivered by the Australian Autism Education & Training Consortium (AAETC).

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Australian Autism
Education &
Training Consortium

Autism Spectrum Australia
University of Canberra
Autism SA
Department of Education and Training, Western Australia
www.autismtraining.com.au

The AAETC includes Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect), University of Canberra, the Department of Education and Training, Western Australia and Autism South Australia. Aspect is the lead agency in this consortium.

Workshops will commence in October 2008
For more information: call 1300 881 971 or visit www.autismtraining.com.au

- Cairns 18 & 19 November 2008
- Brisbane (northern area) 10th & 11th February 2009 QLDPC3
- Mackay 28 & 29 April 2009
- Townsville 2 & 3 June 2009
- Mt Isa 23 & 24 June 2009

PLEASE NOTE REGISTRATION FOR THESE WORKSHOPS & INFORMATION SESSIONS WILL OPEN ONE MONTH BEFORE THE DATE OF THE WORKSHOP.

To register : www.autismtraining.com.au

Stable On the Strand

No Crowds, Free cup of tea or coffee
Free Entry.

Thursday, 18th December, 2008.

For more information phone:

Joy Piper 4779 2324 or Catherine
Stephens 4725 1429



Earlier this year The North Queensland Autism Support Group had a visit from Autism Queensland. During that visit Kathryn from AQ talked about bullying and strategies to help children with ASD cope in the school setting. The DVD by Nick Dubin (American man with ASD) called "Being Bullied" may be helpful and the following websites may be of interest to some:

<http://www.walkinmyshoes.com.au/>

A group of young people from Beenleigh have teamed up to work on a ground-breaking documentary about bullying.

"Our film follows the personal stories of those who have been traumatised by the cruelty of hurtful words and actions, and shows how these people not only survived but became stronger through the experience"

We launched the Walk In My Shoes documentary late August 07'.

<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/>

Bullying. No way! is developed and managed by all Australian education authorities, for use by Australia's Government, Catholic and Independent school communities.

<http://www.youcandoit.com.au/Home/>

Australia's leading school-home collaborative for promoting student achievement social-emotional well-being.

Autism-Reversing Drugs Show Promise

Posted Sep 24, 08 12:50 PM CDT in Science & Health

(Newser) – MIT scientists have discovered one of the mechanisms of Fragile X Syndrome, one cause of autism, and are developing drugs to treat it, NPR reports. The disorder, triggered by a genetic mutation, interferes with the normal links between brain cells, making those networks something like a car without a brakes. The new drugs limit acceleration, and have been successful in mice.

If the drugs prove to have a more widespread effect, this could mean a huge life change for those with Fragile X Syndrome. A more regulated neural system could allow their IQs to rise and symptoms of autism to wane. The scientists' work on obscure topics led them "from really basic science discovery to a potential treatment," says one of the scientists involved.

Scientists Find Switch to Turn On Brain Cells

Posted Aug 14, 07 3:21 AM CDT in US, Science & Health, Technology

(Newser) – Neuroscientists are experimenting with switching targeted groups of brain cells on and off using remote-controlled lasers, promising hope for treatment of mental disorders, reports the New York Times. The technique, using cells altered with a photo-sensitive protein called channelrhodopsin-2, could one day be used to treat a host of problems from autism to depression.

This light-switch technology will aid scientists in mapping roles for clusters of the brain's 100 billion neurons. One lead researcher compared the way

pockets of a brain are stimulated to play specific functions to a complex musical composition. The functions "arise from the orchestrated participation of the all the different cell types, like a symphony," he said.

Savage Defends Attack on Autistic 'Brats'

Posted Jul 22, 08 2:32 AM CDT in Business, Science & Health, Arts & Living

(Newser) – Right-wing mouth Michael Savage isn't backing down from his remarks characterizing autistic kids as nothing more than "brats," outraging thousands of parents, the New York Times reports. The radio host said in a broadcast last week that autism was a "fraud" and 99% of cases were created by poor parenting. Dozens of parents demonstrated outside his studio yesterday, and an insurance company has canceled advertising on his program.

"They don't have a father around to tell them, 'Don't act like a moron,'" Savage said in the broadcast. He advised that autistic children be told: "Act like a man. Don't sit there crying and screaming, idiot." Savage said his comments were meant to "boldly awaken parents to the misdiagnosis" of autism—although he conceded yesterday that his 99% figure may have been "a little high."

Study Yields More Clues About Autism

Posted Jul 10, 08 6:20 PM CDT in Science & Health

(Newser) – Scientists have found six new genes linked to autism, inching closer to a fuller understanding of the disorder and how to treat it, the AP reports. The genes in question are necessary for learning but are essentially stuck in the "off" position. The finding lends credence to the philosophy behind intensive education programs that seek to give the circuits an "extra push," said one expert.

"People think of genetic diseases as immutable and untreatable," said one of the lead researchers of the study, which focused on large Mideast families prone to autism. "Studies like ours and others give more hope we might not need to replace genes one by one, but find other ways of activating the genes that might be silent."

Black Balloon notches up another film win



The Black Balloon: 'A fabulous film'. (thecia.com.au)

The Black Balloon has scooped another award, taking out the prize for best children's feature film at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (APSA).

The coming-of-age story about a family dealing with an autistic son has already picked up a swag of trophies this year and is nominated for 10 IF awards and 11 AFI awards - both of which will be announced in the next month.

Director Elissa Down joked she was running out of room to keep all the film's awards.

"The trophy cabinet is getting a little full at the moment," Down laughed.

"I'm just really excited and it's a great way to end the year.

"It's fantastic to know the film is being received well, not only here but in other countries as well."

The low-budget feature, starring Toni Collette, Gemma Ward and Rhys Wakefield, was the only Australian film in contention at the awards, which represent 17 countries from the Asia Pacific region.

Down said she was happy to be representing the Australian film industry.

"You got to love that," she said.

"I feel like [I'm in] the Soccer World Cup - lucky there's no Italians here to pretend they're being fouled or something."

The awards were held at a ceremony on the Gold Coast, presented by a host of international stars including Australian actor Jack Thompson, Mao's Last Dancer author Li Cunxin and CNN presenter Myleene Klass.

Thompson, who is the patron of the APSA Academy, said it was a tough field to even be nominated in.

"The awards are inclusive of all of the filmmakers of a really extraordinary area of filmmaking," he said.

"Every one of these films is a filmmakers dream and an expression of that country's heart and cultural soul.

"It's a tough competition, it really is."

He said Australia is only represented by one feature in the competition because we have not been producing enough films recently.

"We haven't made a lot of films over the last few years - there's been a sad dearth of films made here in Australia for all sorts of reasons, and I think that's why," Thompson said. "But I think The Black Balloon is a fabulous film," he added.

Other winners at the awards included best animated feature for Israeli film *Waltz With Bashir*, while Kazakh film *Tulpan* was named the best feature.

The Black Balloon's trailer can be viewed at <http://au.youtube.com/watch?v=WxKE-tB1ya8>

The DVD was released in September 2008 and is now on sale.

Tric Cream, Vice President of North Queensland Autism Support Group (NQASG), would like to announce the birth of her 4th child, Amelie, born 29th October, 2008. Congratulations from NQASG.



The North Queensland Autism Support Group Inc. would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful new year in 2009. We would also like to remind everyone that all are welcome to join us. We meet every 2nd Monday of each month at 7.00pm at North Queensland Competitive Employment Service, Corner of Tavern and Toohy Streets, Kirwan.



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