

# The Newsletter of IDEAS



Welcome to this edition

We had a huge month leading up to Christmas, with our first AGM being held in Sydney and the launch of our Access Aware Pilot project. You can read about this inside.

Our AGM was an opportunity for us to display our new image and promotional material to all those who were there and a time for the staff from both offices come together and celebrate the work of the last year. The Committee have worked hard over that time as well to develop a sound governance principle from which their work is done. Our Chairman Bob Gilholme was re-elected for another term, as was our Secretary Jan Hatch. Ms Wendy Mason has taken on the role of Treasurer and others have stayed on for another term as ordinary members. These include: Jacki Campisi, Kim Meddows, Col Johnstone and Chris Fallon. This year saw the return of Teresa McMullen to the Committee.

As the year unfolds it will be with interest that we watch the new federal government settle into its role and observe policy changes that may occur. In NSW we are still waiting for the outcome of the Advocacy & Information reform. We will continue to strive to meet our goals and continue to improve our services where we can.

I wish you all the best for the new year.

Regards Diana



**ideas** | Information on Disability  
& Education Awareness Services

*Getting information has never been easier*

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2008

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**IDEAS INC. accepts selected advertisements and articles for the Newsletter of IDEAS, although this does not provide an endorsement of these actual services or products.**

*IDEAS Inc. gratefully acknowledges funding from Department of Ageing and Disability and Home Care, Disability Services Program and Home and Community Care program.*



## INNOVATIVE PROJECT LAUNCH



Cr Ingrid Strewe, the Mayor of Waverley, officially launched the “Access Aware Pilot Project” at an event held after the IDEAS Annual General Meeting on the 20 November 2007 at the Waverley Library Theatrette in Bondi Junction. Access Aware



The Mayor of Waverley, Cr Ingrid Strewe officially launching the Access Aware pilot project.

is an exciting new project and is the initiative of IDEAS and their “Community Business Partner”, software developer Data Diction Pty Ltd.

Whether meeting friends for a coffee, going to the bank or doing supermarket shopping. A trip to a local business is a regular event for most people.

Accessibility of the physical environment influences the extent to which people with disability, including people with age related disability can participate in community activities. Barriers to access and mobility are common and can have a significant impact on the independence of people with disability or limited mobility attempting to go about their daily life.

The Access Aware project will make mobility in the community that much easier for people with access difficulties by providing them with an information source of businesses and facilities that have some form of accessibility. The project also proposes to help educate business owners and managers to become more aware of their obligations to ensure ease of access for all people to their premises.

Access Aware will be a comprehensive online database of accessible businesses and facilities. Marketed to people with access difficulties, it will be an opportunity for businesses in the Waverley local government area to increase their customer base at no cost, while assisting people with age related disability and people with disability to participate in their local community.

Waverley Council has generously supported this innovative project from its inception several years ago and along with Wagga Wagga City Council, they have agreed to participate in the pilot project until June 2008 with testing before the project is extended to other NSW local government areas.

Guest speaker at the Access Aware launch, founding member of DIRC NSW and now a member of IDEAS, Greg Killeen spoke with eloquence about his first hand experience of poor access to the built environment, discrimination and the changing attitudes towards access. Greg is employed by SCIA (Spinal Cord Injury Australia) as an Information Officer and is the author of a very informative article called "Access All Areas" for The Winter 2007 Issue of Accord Magazine. It can be downloaded from: [http://www.scia.org.au/publications/accord/accord/Accord\\_2007\\_Winter\\_bw.pdf](http://www.scia.org.au/publications/accord/accord/Accord_2007_Winter_bw.pdf) and the article is on pages 24 and 25.



Guest speaker, Greg Killeen addressing guests at the

### **WHY IS IDEAS DOING THIS?**

As a not-for-profit organisation that provides free disability information and resources to people with disability and people with age related disability, their families and carers across NSW we believe in an inclusive society where all people have the opportunity to participate. We also understand that community development is most sustainable when accompanied by economic development.

### **WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE**

We are encouraging people with access difficulties to become involved in the project by becoming Access Aware Ambassadors, a voluntary role that notifies us of local businesses in Waverley area that have some degree of accessibility.

Business owners in Waverley area also stand to benefit greatly from this project and we ask that they come forward and nominate their business if they believe it is accessible to people with access difficulties. We can be contacted on:

**1800 029 904**

**accessaware@ideas.org.au**



# From The Services Desk

**The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program** is an initiative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011 to assist people who have a severe functional limitation resulting from a mental illness to better manage their daily activities and to access a range of appropriate services/supports when they need them

## **Why is there a need for a program like Personal Helpers and Mentors?**

Mental health is a serious problem for the Australian community. Some people who have been affected by mental illness can be greatly helped by having a support person who can help them manage their daily lives and become more integrated into the community. This type of support can be provided in conjunction with clinical support or on its own.

## **What will the Personal Helpers and Mentors do?**

The role of the Personal Helper and Mentor can be broadly described under three main types of activities:

- Direct involvement - including assessment of needs, developing Individual Recovery Plans and linking with clinical case management, advocacy, peer support, personal development, supporting family relationships, mediation, supporting people to manage their daily activities
- Referrals to relevant services - including to housing support, employment and education, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, independent living skills programs, clinical services, allied and other mental health services as required
- Monitoring and reporting - (non face to face) including monitoring participant referrals, monitoring progress against Individual Recovery Plans and reporting.

## **Program eligibility**

The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program will assist people aged 16 years and over whose ability to manage their daily activities and to live independently in the community is severely impacted as a result of a severe mental illness.

A person does not need to have a formalised clinical diagnosis of a severe mental illness to initially access the program. Participants will be offered a clinician as part of the program and will be helped to connect to appropriate medical and health supports for assessment and treatment.

## **Participation in the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program**

Participation in the Personal Helpers and Mentors Program will require a functional assessment. This assessment will determine an individual's level of functioning in managing their daily activities and living independently in the community.

This assessment process is intended to assist both the Personal Helper and Mentor and the participant to develop an Individual Recovery Plan. This Recovery Plan will be regularly reviewed by the service provider and the participant, using the functional assessment instrument, to see if there has been a positive change in the participant's level of functioning and progress in their recovery journey.

## **For further information contact:**

**Email: [mentalhealth@facsia.gov.au](mailto:mentalhealth@facsia.gov.au)**

**visit [www.facsia.gov.au/](http://www.facsia.gov.au/)**

**call FACSIA on 1300 653 227**

# Personal Alarms

Needing reassurance while living alone, scared of having a fall and no-one being there to help you?

Or do you have a family member that you worry about who is living home alone? Having a personal alarm can give you and your family peace of mind. It is as simple as wearing a pendant or bracelet, you can then press the button and assistance will be organised.

There are a variety of different suppliers and the following 2 are national services. If you would like to contact a supplier of personal alarms in your area give the staff at the IDEAS office a call.



**INS LifeGuard** provides Medical Emergency Alarms, Personal Alarm Systems and Emergency Call Centre Technologies. INS Life Guard have a personal monitoring alarm service, Nurse Call Systems and a Call Centre. They also have the Buddy Micro Pendant, Help Phone and emergency System - The talking Phone.

LifeGuard Blue Phone is not just a phone, it has over 100 special features, from reminding you of important tasks, helping you stay in contact with the people you need even when you can't reach the phone and can even monitor the safety of your home.



For more information contact  
Toll free: 1800 676 336  
Email: [ins@theinsgroup.com.au](mailto:ins@theinsgroup.com.au)  
Web: [www.theinsgroup.com.au](http://www.theinsgroup.com.au)

**VitalCall** provides the assurance, peace of mind and commitment that in a medical emergency at home, you can call for help, without the need to get to your phone - 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year.

### *How does it work?*

You have a neck or wrist pendant and in the event of an emergency, you press the button on the pendant. VitalCall will do the rest. A two-way voice link is established between you and the Response Centre staff. The staff will assess the situation and call the most appropriate contact. It may be a neighbor, a family member, an Ambulance, the Police or Fire Brigade. The pendant can be used in the shower and will still work if you are outside in the garden.

For general enquiries or to request a no obligation, free home demonstration contact VitalCall on 1300 360 808.  
Web: [www.vitalcall.com.au](http://www.vitalcall.com.au)

**For more information on personal alarms  
contact IDEAS NSW  
on Toll Free 1800 029 904.**

# The Equipment Corner

A flashcard library system designed for

## Autism & language difficulties

\*Free Delivery within Australia



Inekards flashcards are effective picture cues in the form of photographic images on individual laminated cards.

The cards provide a method to teach by presenting a consistent resource that will reinforce language and communication skills by allowing many categories and subjects to be represented. They are clear representations of a range of subjects that involve actions, places, and people and associated interrelated activities between them.

The cards provide versatility to allow you to teach subjects through repetition that would be hard or impractical to teach using the actual item or a book in educational environments.

There are two different types of cards, the Language Learners (flashcards without words) and Reading Readiness (flashcards with words).

The Inekards Library is a progressive learning series of flashcards that have been created carefully to cover different levels of language.

The flashcards can be used by all ages from toddler right through to adults with language and communication difficulties in the home environment and also educational settings including: ABA Therapy, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Special Education, Schools and Preschools.



For more information contact  
Therese Potma on:  
Phone: 02 9428 1882  
Email: [inekards@bigpond.com](mailto:inekards@bigpond.com)  
Web: [www.inekards.com](http://www.inekards.com)



# Travellers Aid

**Melbourne Southern Cross Station**  
*Assisting travellers at the point of need.*

Travellers Aid provides assistance to frail, infirm, elderly, disabled, visually or movement impaired customers to ensure swift, confident and safe passage throughout Southern Cross Station.

To assist people with their journey, Travellers Aid offers buggy transport, manual wheelchair access and personal guidance. To access this service, bookings are essential on **03 9670 2072**. 24 hours notice is required to book the buggy service. This service is provided free of charge.

They offer free advice on transport within Melbourne, public transport advice and can suggest accommodation and tourism options throughout Melbourne and Victoria.

Additionally, Travellers Aid offers all travellers in Southern Cross Station clean and accessible rest rooms, baby change facilities, showers and a family friendly resting space. The facilities are affordable, hygienic and offer comfortable relief during long journeys. Stroller hire is also available.

For travellers in crisis, Travellers Aid can assist with recommendations to affordable accommodation, relief agencies and limited emergency welfare assistance.

Travellers Aid is located under the Bourke Street Bridge near platforms 1 & 2, just a short distance from the bus terminal. Travellers Aid is open from 7:00am to 11:00pm.

# Melbourne Mobility Centre

The Melbourne Mobility Centre is dedicated to improving access for everyone in the heart of Melbourne. It loans equipment and has services for people with disabilities, older persons, and those with temporary disabilities.

The centre is located on the first floor of the Federation Square Car Park (ground level adjacent to the ArtPlay playground).

## Services include:

- equipment for hire including motorised wheelchairs, manual wheelchairs, scooters, walking frames, crutches and canes for the vision impaired
- two fully accessible toilets
- proximity to available accessible car parking and/or a drop-off point
- information for people with mobility and sensory disabilities
- information about city attractions, events, facilities
- TTY telephone and accessible web access
- scooter battery re-charge facilities;
- accessible tea, coffee and refreshment facilities
- volunteer-driven commissionaire services including companion services, transfer services and 'meet and greet' services

## Hours of operation

Monday to Saturday - 9am to 6pm  
Sunday and public holidays - 10am to 4pm

For more information please contact:

**Phone:** 03 9650 6499 or 1800 735 266

**Fax:** 9650 9491

**TTY:** 9650 9316

**Web:**

[www.melbournemobilitycentre.com.au](http://www.melbournemobilitycentre.com.au)

# The Travel Desk

*Hello Travelers,*

*While I was updating the Travel Database, I came across the 'Uki Guesthouse'; I clicked into their website & into one of the best accessible accommodation sites I've seen. For those of you who have web access click on to their website and see for your self. For everyone else read on.*

*Happy Holidays, Helen Abric*

The **Uki Guesthouse** is a fully renovated, wheelchair accessible, spacious old Queenslander, located in the heart of Uki village on the banks of the Tweed River (Far North Coast, NSW).

Everyone is welcome to stay at the Guesthouse but they extend an especially warm welcome to people with disability.



There have several independence aids and facilities, and trained nursing staff can provide light support with

activities of daily living. The atmosphere is casual, friendly and relaxed.

Uki is the ideal "base camp" from which to explore Mt Warning (the highest, most easterly point in Australia), the beautiful Tweed Valley and Byron Bay hinterland. Uki is surrounded by World Heritage-listed National Parks yet only 40 minutes from Coolangatta Airport and the Gold Coast.

Principles of universal design have been adapted to make the Guesthouse as guest-friendly as possible, and in many cases they exceed access requirements with

- Ramps and walkways: 1 in 14 gradient or better and a clear width of at least 1000mm

- Clear width of doorways: at least 800mm
- Accessible parking at rear

## **Bedrooms**

The four large bedrooms are easily reconfigured to suit individual preferences. They contain premium quality latex mattresses which are hypoallergenic & queen sized. Bed height from floor is 600mm, with a clear space of at least 800mm to the side. There are mobile, open, adjustable hanging space and easy-glide wire baskets

## **Bathroom**

Level entry, open showers with easy-grip, adjustable shower heads. Doors open inwards and have removable hinges. There are non-slip floor tiles & Wall-mounted pull-down slotted shower seats, which comply with AS 1428.1 1998



## **Pool**

A 24V motorized pool gate operated by remote control or keypad. There is a 24V motorized pool transfer chair operated independently or with the help of an attendant.



There are wide-tread, narrow riser pool steps and central stainless steel handrail. There are horizontal stainless steel handrails on two sides of the pool and just below the surface of the water. Flotation belts are also available (S - XL).

# The Access File

## Other services available.....

### Mobility Scooters

Uki currently have two electric mobility scooters for hire. One scooter is mid-size (Bolwell Delux) and great for exploring the village and going for a picnic at one of the many nearby accessible sites, while the other scooter (Rio 4+) is smaller, easily transportable and better suited for indoor use. A wheelchair and walker are freely available for use by guests.

### Pendant Alarm

Pendant transmitters, about the size of a matchbox, are available for guests who require supported independence. When the button is pressed, a central command station is activated; notifying management that assistance is required. The transmitters work throughout the entire Guesthouse property.

*Supported independence and accommodation packages are individually assessed.*

### Entertainment

Large print books  
Low vision playing cards & card holders  
Braille Scrabble®  
Tactile dice  
Large print menu available

### Transport

Within the next few months they hope to have their own wheelchair-friendly transport vehicle for day excursions and airport transfers. In the meantime a taxi fare from Coolangatta Airport is approximately \$100.

For more information please contact

**UKI Guesthouse**

Phone: 6679 5777

Email: [info@ukiguesthouse.com.au](mailto:info@ukiguesthouse.com.au)

Web: [www.ukiguesthouse.com.au](http://www.ukiguesthouse.com.au)

## Tweed Shire Profile

Tweed Shire covers 1303 square kilometres and adjoins the NSW shires of Byron, Lismore and Kyogle, with the NSW/QLD border to its north where it divides the twin towns of Tweed Heads and Coolangatta.

With 37 kms of natural coastline, wetlands and estuarine forests, lush pastoral and farm land, the entire basin of the Tweed River, and mountainous regions containing three world-heritage listed national parks, Tweed boasts a unique and diverse environment.

The two main shopping centres now include a movie complex and a multitude of major national stores as well as local specialty shops.

In the new industrial area off Greenway Drive, there are a group of large homewares stores as well as other local industries.

The town itself revolves around tourism and the retail and service sector, and with Murwillumbah, is the central focus for the many smaller towns and villages in the shire. Recent on-going streetscaping is making the central areas more comfortable and shaded.

Tweed Heads is one hour by air from Sydney and is one hour's driving time from Brisbane.

### Tweed Heads Visitor Information Centre

7/1 Wharf Street, Tweed Heads NSW 2485

07 5536 6737

Operating Hours:

9.00am - 5.00pm Mon - Fri

9.30am - 3.30pm Sat

10.00am - 2.00pm Sun

# ATOD - Summer Drama Camp

**Are you looking for something different to do during your school holidays? Then join ATOD for a dramatically different holiday experience.**

*Explore the world of acting and performance, dance and movement. Get into the rhythm with bongos and drumming, juggling and circus skills.*

Run by professional and highly skilled tutors, ATOD's Drama Camp is tailored to stimulate each age group, engage all levels of experience, develop life skills, make new friends and have LOTS of fun!

**Australian Theatre of the Deaf** is one of the most exciting and highly regarded Theatre in Education companies in the country, touring for over 28 years. Over and over again their talented Deaf actors have touched young people's lives through their school performances. The shows are not only known for the quality of performance but also for breaking down stereotypes of Deaf people.

Local government council, **City of Sydney** has chosen to fund ATOD's drama camp due to the consistently high quality and excellent reputation of their actors, tutors, performances and school shows. Bookings essential.

**Ages:** 15-17 years

**Dates:** Monday, 21st January - Friday, 25th January 2008

**Venue:** Alexandria Town Hall  
73 Garden Street, Alexandria  
(10 minute walk from Redfern train station)

**Time:** 9.30am - 4.00pm

**Total Fee:** \$30.00 per person  
(morning & afternoon tea provided)

For more information please contact:  
Australian Theatre of the Deaf  
4/245 Chalmers Street, Redfern NSW 2016  
p: 02 9310 1255  
tty: 02 9310 1205  
email: [info@atod.org.au](mailto:info@atod.org.au)  
web: [www.atod.org.au](http://www.atod.org.au)

## Violence Against Women with Disabilities Resource Manual

Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), the national peak organization for women with disabilities, has recently published a Resource Manual on **Violence Against Women With Disabilities**.

**This Manual is made up of four booklets:**

- [A Life Like Mine!](#) - Narratives from women with disabilities who experience violence
- [Forgotten Sisters](#) - A global review of violence against women with disabilities
- [It's Not Ok It's Violence](#) - Information about domestic violence and women with disabilities
- [More Than Just A Ramp](#) - A guide for women's refuges to develop disability discrimination act action plans

Audio, e-text & Large Print PDF versions of the Booklets are included on a CD-ROM which accompanies the Manual. The cost of the Manual is \$22 which covers postage and handling costs.

Contact Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) on Ph: 03 6244 8288 or

# Communications Desk

## Australian Competition and Consumer Commission services now more accessible

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), working in partnership with Vision Australia, is now providing a range of initiatives to assist consumers with disabilities to access their services.

"In recognition of the importance of communicating information in a manner that ensures access to all Australians, the ACCC's consumer guide 'Know how to complain: stand up for your consumer rights' is now available in large print, audio and Braille versions.

"This initiative will help to ensure that people with print disabilities are able to protect themselves in the marketplace," says ACCC Chairman, Mr Graeme Samuel.

"The guide sets out the main rights and protections that consumers have under the Trade Practices Act 1974 and the steps consumers can take to enforce their consumer rights. It also explains what the ACCC can and cannot do for consumers and other agencies that can also assist in resolving a complaint," says Mr Samuel.

Vision Australia staff member Tricia Cooney worked with the ACCC on this project. "This is a great initiative which will help all people with a print disability to pursue and enforce their rights in the Australian marketplace," she says.

Large print and audio versions of the "Know how to complain" guide can be downloaded free of charge from the ACCC website [www.accc.gov.au/](http://www.accc.gov.au/) or those as well as a Braille version can be requested by calling the ACCC Infocentre on 1300 302 502.

Source: Vision Australia

# Community Education

How fast 2007 has come and gone, it has been a hectic year for my role as Community Education Officer, as I endeavour to attend as many functions as possible. I have tried to cover regions within our funded area at least every second year and if this has been impossible it would be 3 years.

Planning events and prioritising expos/conferences etc is usually planned at the beginning of the year and other appointments meetings are planned to coincide with this particular area.

We have recently received non recurrent funds from DADHC to develop individual advocacy in the Southern Highlands area, which you probably have heard or read about. The service is called DABS (Disability, Advocacy Brokerage Service) and my plan is to attend meetings, inter agencies, forums or local support meetings within the first couple of months of 2008, if you would like me to address your meeting on IDEAS NSW or if you live in the Southern Highlands area the DABS programme please call me on our toll free number **1800 02 99 04**.

We launched our new revamped website [www.ideas.org.au](http://www.ideas.org.au) in November, 2007 and you will now be able to visit our website and enter events in the events diary. I will list where I will be in the coming months, and it will also list coming events, conferences, expos and meetings.

IDEAS will also be attending the NDS Conference from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February in Sydney. In February I am planning to attend the Broken Hill Expo . IDEAS has helped with the early planning stages of the event. This expo runs from 19—20 February & there will be a full day tour of Broken Hill including lunch on Thursday 21 February.

Sue Gorman



# Reader Contribution

## DISABILITY TRAVEL ACCOMMODATION

By Kay Boreham

Having travelled a fair amount over 30-40 years, thirty of them as a person with a medical condition which would be under the physical disability label, I've taken particular interest in travel accommodation which is offered as "disability access".

Although not in a wheelchair full time, I've had occasion to be wheelchair bound several times. Many people with my neurological condition, or similar condition, are in wheelchairs. So it is from this point of view that I write.

*Please note: I have used the word 'disabled' instead of 'mobility challenged' for ease of writing.*

### Observations

- Many operators of hotels, motels, guest houses and other accommodation providers have little idea of the needs of providing for disabled travelers.
- The government guidelines for provision of basic disability needs are sadly lacking.
- There appears to be no overall disability body which currently advises government, or accommodation providers (and for that matter various transport providers) with the necessary information.
- As our population grows, so do the numbers of 'disabled' people who may wish to travel, grows. This also applies to many older and some not so mobile people. The population of Australia is 'greying'.

### Have you noticed?

How many people do you know who have difficulties in getting out and about?

Think of your own parents or grandparents, cousins, uncles and aunts. If not family, do you know someone who has a disability, perhaps a friend's child or family member?

Have you ever tried to imagine what it is like to be in their situation? If you have ever broken a leg or arm, had some surgery, or been in an accident you may know just a little of the *awkwardness and fear that confronts many disabled people on a daily basis*.

Having to ask for assistance can be a major stumbling block for many disabled people. They already have to ask for assistance in necessary instances. People with disabilities, more often than not, do not wish to appear troublesome and may wish to seem independent and able to cope. This does not necessarily mean that they are able to cope.

Parents with disabled children also look for a holiday that can be safe and relaxing for the whole family. Good facilities relieve the stress they have in caring for their child, whether young or teenage.

### Some Changes

Being able to move about in the community has been a big plus in the last 20-30 years. Government transport is getting better. Access to public buildings is being continually upgraded.

More disabled people are now working and able to move about within the community generally. Having said that, there are still some businesses that deny disabled people access by way of stairs (instead of ramps) and cluttered aisles.

## **Feeling Safe**

Disabled people usually rely on their home to provide the 'safe' place to be. They know their way around to various rooms in their home. They have their bathroom and bedroom set up or adapted a certain way. ***In deciding to travel, they then have to accept that all this is going to change.***

That 'change' in itself can be a scary concept. Even if they have a partner, parent or carer, the logistics of travel to a destination, getting used to a different bed and room layout, and then new bathroom facilities can be monumental. More often than not there is also a certain amount of equipment required which has to travel with them and be located. It is a wonder then that any mobility challenged people travel at all.

No longer wanting to be seen as second class citizens, some are strong willed and travel as a matter of course. Others travel because their family wants or needs a holiday and may want to explore the travel options open to more able bodied people, even though they are somewhat nervous of how it will pan out. Young adults with disabilities now want to share in the challenging activities of the more able bodied.

## **What can be done?**

The most obvious statement is that there is a definite need to get a better understanding of the needs of 'mobility challenged' people out to the public and business sectors in general. This will probably always present as somewhat of a problem as able people, more often than not, do not appear to notice disability in others.

There is, however, good reason to notice the problems of the disabled traveler. If you look at the situation from a 'dollar' perspective, there is quite an amount of travel dollars in the community waiting to be used, as more disabled people are working and

looking to travel. Also, as stated above, the population of Australia is 'greying', and retirees may now look to smaller homes and taking up the option of travel of one sort or another. Some of their needs are similar to those of the disabled.

## **Hotels and Motels and other Accommodation Providers**

There are undoubtedly more 'disability access rooms' being provided in hotels and motels. But what kind of disability access is offered? The government minimum standard seems only to apply to bathrooms. This amounts often to a wider door, a lowered hand basin, a rail near the toilet and possibly the shower.

As technology advances and as the population grows, the need to upgrade accommodation also grows. People, whether able bodied or not, generally expect good quality accommodation. Internet access, conference facilities, etc are offered in many hotels and yet for a disabled staff member attending a conference the facilities can be sadly lacking.

## **Rooms**

I have been in 'disabled access' rooms where the door to the actual room was normal width, however the door to the bathroom was wider! This left me wondering what the architect or builder was thinking?

Other rooms have had so much large furniture in the room it would be difficult even for an able bodied person to negotiate. 'Access' means, at the very least, having the room to move a wheelchair about the room.

*Continued page 14*

## Other problems encountered:

- Doors to rooms that are heavy and difficult to manage. Door handles that are smooth round are difficult to grasp hold of and turn.
- Kettle, cups and saucers etc placed in unreachable positions. Refrigerator doors covered by outer doors making access difficult.
- Not one comfortable chair (with arms for support) to sit in when in room. Wheelchairs are not the most comfortable seat to sit in all the time.
- Beds that are too hard (not firm, but hard). Painful bodies appreciate a comfortable bed, perhaps more than healthier ones.
- Bed configuration. When a part of the body becomes less usable, other parts have to take over. This can be painful and tiring. The option of two beds is desirable for parent or 'carer'. Single beds or, better still, the luxury of two double beds which can allow for a partner to share a bed for some of the time.

## Bathrooms

A few hotels and motels offer some of the basics listed below, however, sadly most do not. Bathroom safety is one reason many disabled people hesitate to travel.

I have been offered a disability access room where the shower was over a bath? Or the shower area was fully enclosed, with no rails and no seat.

### *Other encounters and basic necessities:*

- More often than not the support rails near the toilet are in the wrong position or inadequate.
- Most often the cross rails in the bathroom are in the wrong position and offer no support or lift ability to a person in a wheelchair.

- Properly positioned, moveable, flexible shower head is a necessity. Wall mounted fixed shower seat is ideal.
- Towel rails are often flimsy when a good support rail would not only hold towels, but support an unstable person.
- Tiles that are smooth and slippery instead of non-slip.
- Lowered basin clear underneath. Also needed is adequate shelf space near basin for toiletries, and a lowered mirror. Disability does not preclude the disabled from shaving, doing makeup and hair.
- Emergency buzzers placed in bathroom in case of a fall. One near toilet and shower should be required.
- Extra towels, as it is difficult to dry oneself sitting on a wet shower seat or chair.
- Rubber mats for shower area. This is because feet with little no feeling or muscles cannot grip the floor and can act like skates in the wet.

## Summarising

All the above may seem a lot to think about, let alone install in some hotels and motels. All new accommodation buildings could have much of the above provided at the planning stage. However, much of this could also be done when renovating or upgrading the rooms. Consideration could be given to making many more rooms '(dis)ability friendly', even if just for the aging population. Safety rails in bathrooms could be an absolute minimum. It surprises me that hotels and motels will go to the expense of putting in spa baths, but are unwilling to provide disability bathrooms with safety rails. It appears that a number of architects and builders have little understanding of disability requirements.

If you require information about accessible holiday accommodation or accessible tour options, please call IDEAS on 1800 029 904.

## Making Music Being Well

**May 12 - 18 2008**

Registrations of Interest are now open for Making Music Being Well 2008. The Australian Music Therapy Association and Music.

Play for Life are calling on all music educators, community musicians, music therapists and supporters to plan an event for the week of May 12<sup>th</sup> – May 18<sup>th</sup> 2008 to promote active music making for wellbeing.

Last year they celebrated with over 50 events in 6 states. In 2008 they are hoping build on this great start to celebrate in all states and territories.

Being part of this national event is a great opportunity to promote your workplace or practice, as well as contributing to community awareness about the links between active musicmaking and wellbeing.

If you would like to receive an official registration pack please complete and return a registration of interest form by **February 1<sup>st</sup> 2008**. Registration forms are available on the AMTA website at [www.austmta.org.au](http://www.austmta.org.au).

For more information please contact:  
Catherine Threlfall  
Making Music Being Well 2008  
Ph: 08 8931 4324  
Email: [paulandcath@iinet.net.au](mailto:paulandcath@iinet.net.au)



## Support Group

### **AUTISM & ASPERGER'S PARENT SUPPORT GROUP**

For parents, carers & friends of children of all ages with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome.

**19 February at 7pm  
Henrietta Rose Room, Bowral.**

First meeting will feature guest speaker paediatrician, Dr Richard Hart.

Meeting together to:

- Exchange information
- Understand difficulties faced by carers
- Helps carers build new skills for everyday life
- Work together for change
- Provide atmosphere of empathy, strength & support.

For more information please contact:  
Shivawn Davis 02 4861 4054  
Jillian Langford 02 4872 3183

## Support Group

Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) have fact sheets on a variety of mental illnesses.

The fact sheets are available in the following languages: English, Assyrian, Chinese, Croatian, Greek, Italian, Korean, Macedonian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, Turkish, Vietnamese, Dari, Dinka, Krio, Amharic, Khmer

These fact sheets are available on the MMHA website at <http://mmha.org.au> or by calling 02 9840 3333.

# Coming Events

**18 – 19 February 2008.** NDS NSW 2008 Conference. The Menzies Hotel, Sydney. For more information, contact Gabrielle on Ph: 02 9256 3103 or email: [gabrielle.jones@nds.org.au](mailto:gabrielle.jones@nds.org.au)

**19 – 20 February 2008.** Outback Disability Expo 2008. Broken Hill, NSW. For more information contact Grant at Outback Ability Tours on 08 8088 7123.

**17-18 March 2008.** Parents, Families & Carers: Our Place in the Human Services, Our Agenda for Change. Sydney. For more information please contact Vern Hughes, Conference Convenor, by email [vern@civilsociety.org.au](mailto:vern@civilsociety.org.au), or hard copy to PO Box 159 Yarraville VIC 3013 or phone 0425 722 890.

**12—18 May 2008.** Making Music Being Well. To receive an official registration pack please contact Catherine Threlfall Co-ordinator Making Music Being Well 2008 on 08 8931 4324 or email: [paulandcath@iinet.net.au](mailto:paulandcath@iinet.net.au)

**12–15 May 2008.** Every Child Matters. Olympic Park, Sydney. For more information: contact Margaret Verick on 02 6283 3214, email: [margaret.verick@nds.org.au](mailto:margaret.verick@nds.org.au) or visit [www.nds.org.au](http://www.nds.org.au)

**12–15 May 2008.** Inclusive Learning Technologies Conference. Marriot Hotel, Surfers Paradise. For more information please visit: [www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference/2008/](http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference/2008/)

**14—16 May 2008.** 2008 ACSA National Community Care Conference, Magic & Myths: The reality and the potential. Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour Sydney. For more information please contact 02 8754 0400.

**14—15 May 2008.** National Conference on Children & Young People with Disability & Their Families. Melbourne Park Function Centre at Melbourne Olympic Park. For more information please contact 02 6283 3217 or email: [margaret.verick@nds.org.au](mailto:margaret.verick@nds.org.au)

**24 - 25 May 2008.** 5th National Deafness Sector Summit. Rydges Lakeside, Canberra. For more information: please visit [www.deafnessforum.org.au](http://www.deafnessforum.org.au)

**29 - 30 September 2008.** Disability, Disadvantage and Development Conference. National Muesum of Australia, Canberra. For more information: [www.addc.org.au](http://www.addc.org.au) or contact Paul Deany, email: [pdeany@cbmi.org.au](mailto:pdeany@cbmi.org.au) or phone 1800 678 069.

# Happy New Year