

 Victorian Autism Conference 2010

# Program Guide & Abstract Booklet



**AUTISM**  
**VICTORIA**



# Welcome

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

With the theme of 'Promoting Positive Practice Across the Spectrum', I am proud to welcome you to the Victorian Autism Conference 2010, a truly state-wide conference with live streaming to regional satellite centres across Victoria.

The Victorian Autism Conference (VAC) is being hosted by Autism Victoria, with the kind support of the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA). In addition, colleagues and volunteers from partner organisations - ASPECT, Bendigo Health, Gateways Support Services, Kalparrin Early Childhood Intervention Services, M-Power, Pinarc Support Services, Traralgon SCOPE, Shepparton Family Care, RISE, Sunraysia Autism Spectrum Support Group and Wimmera Uniting Care join us in presenting this exciting and comprehensive program.

VAC 2010 provides interest for families, carers, individuals and professionals alike. We have included presentations from across the lifespan by some of the best national speakers in a comprehensive range of topics designed to promote positive strategies whilst ensuring maximum interest and value for all delegates.

Presentations will encompass panel discussions and age-stream specific sessions feature presentations on aspects of Autism Spectrum Disorders, are combined with state-of-the-art plenary presentations given by nationally recognised speakers such as Dr Richard Eisenmajer, Dr Wendy Lawson, Ian McLean, Patricia Cameron-Hill and Shayne

Yates. Featured subjects will cover a wide range of issues, including 'The Changing Face of Autism' and 'An Insight into Asperger Syndrome'.

This conference will provide you with an opportunity to connect with the Autism Spectrum Disorder community, whilst learning of innovative and effective strategies relating to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Armed with knowledge of these new, exciting and sustainable strategies, we trust that you will continue to join us in facilitating positive ASD practice throughout Victoria. In doing so, we hope that you will ensure that the individuals we share our lives with, support, educate, encourage and celebrate, enjoy the best possible quality of life with the best possible outcomes.

On behalf of the Victorian Autism Conference Committee, I would like to deliver my warmest welcome to guests from both Victoria and interstate and look forward to your participation in a truly exciting and informative conference.



Siska L. Frederick  
Victorian Autism Conference Chairperson

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# General Information

The following information is provided to make your experience at the Victorian Autism Conference as enjoyable as possible. If you require assistance throughout the conference, please visit the Registration Desk and we will do everything we can to help you.

## Badges

Each delegate registered for the Conference will receive a name badge at the Registration Desk. This badge will be your official pass and must be worn to obtain entry to all sessions and conference catering. Thank you for your cooperation.

## Mobile Phones

Please respect the speakers and other delegates by ensuring that your mobile phone is switched off or on silent whilst you are in sessions.

## Parking

All venues provide limited complimentary parking.

## Catering

All morning, afternoon teas and lunch will be served as per the times in your program. Directions as to where these will be served in each venue will be made clear by the facilitator in each location.

At the closing of proceedings on Thursday 5th August, 2010 we invite you to join us for light refreshments from 5.00pm-6.00pm. This is an opportunity to widen your network and reacquaint yourselves with colleagues and peers.

## Conference Recording

Recordings of all the sessions at VAC 2010 will be made available for purchase on DVD. Please see our website for details in the coming weeks: [www.autismvictoria.org.au](http://www.autismvictoria.org.au)

## Entertainment

Entertainment will be provided by 'Donna and The Aspinauts' who will perform songs from their debut album, 'Broken Biscuit'. The Aspinauts will perform live from Rydges on Thursday from 5.00pm and their performance will also be streamed to the regional venues. We are also pleased to welcome the Aspinauts Children's Choir. More information can be found at Donna's website: <http://www.donnawilliams.net>

## Autism Victoria Membership

There will be an Autism Victoria membership form in every Conference Delegate Bag. If you have not already taken advantage of AV membership, there will be a box located at the Autism Victoria stand for you to return completed forms.

## Acknowledgements

The VAC committee would like to extend their gratitude to the supporters who have generously donated to the Conference.

*All Seasons Bendigo  
Latrobe Convention Centre, Traralgon  
Kidscontact  
Viva Photography  
Knox Basketball  
Organ  
Merrimu Services  
Chiangmai Thai Cuisine and,  
KMart  
Linda Holloway  
South West Tafe  
My Computer Help  
Cricket Australia  
PlayConnect Playgroups*

# Organising Committee

## The Victorian Autism Conference Organising Committee

- Stacey Aroutzidis
- Kate Byrne
- Lia Castorina
- Nicole Comerford
- Gene-Anne Curtin
- Murray Dawson-Smith
- Siska Frederick
- Emma Godsil
- Grace Miano
- Susanne Meier
- Mary O'Sullivan
- Kym Phillips
- Katrina Sheppard
- Caetlyn Twentyman



*From left: Mary O'Sullivan, Kate Byrne, Grace Miano, Nicole Comerford, Lia Castorina, Siska Frederick, Emma Godsil, Murray Dawson-Smith.*

Absent from photo:



Stacey  
Aroutzidis



Susanne  
Meier



Gene-Anne  
Curtin



Caetlyn  
Twentyman



Katrina  
Sheppard

# Key Note Speakers

## Richard Eisenmajor



Dr. Richard Eisenmajor (PhD) studied Psychology at LaTrobe University during which time Autism grabbed his attention. This interest extended to Asperger's Syndrome and his doctorate research focused on Theory of Mind abilities and diagnostic differentiation of subgroups along the Autism Spectrum. Since then Richard has worked in a variety of positions as a Clinical Psychologist and he has worked with many people with Autism or Asperger's Syndrome and their families.

Richard specialises in the assessment of Autism and Asperger's Syndrome and the provision of counselling and behavioural interventions for clients and their families, as well as providing professional development and training for education services and professional organisations.

## Dr. Wendy Lawson



Dr. Wendy Lawson (PhD) is an adult with high functioning Autism. As well as presenting internationally and publishing many journal articles, Wendy has written nine books varying from her autobiography to an everyday text on Autism. Wendy's work explores the influence of neurological development in individuals with autism with reference to impact upon learning styles.

Wendy was awarded fourth place as 'Australian of the year' in 2008. As a writer, poet and adult educator, Wendy is well known both in the across the globe. Becoming a psychologist and sharing her knowledge, understanding and experience of life encounters, including autism and Asperger's 'diff-abilities', is an ongoing journey that Wendy welcomes.

## Ian McLean



Ian McLean is Chief Executive Officer of Golden City Support Services, an association whose members provide accommodation and community support to individuals across Central Victoria, Australia. He has been involved in the delivery of community-based disability services for over 17 years. Ian has 28 years experience in the Human Services field, including 4 years with government services and the balance working with community based not-for-profit organisations.

For the last 10 years Ian has been involved in implementing support practice that strives to provide outcomes of Wellbeing, Independence/ Self Determination, Engagement/ Involvement and Lifelong Learning for people who require support in their day to day lives. This includes individuals who are seen to have high support needs due to the potential of challenging behaviour.

## Patricia Cameron-Hill & Shayne Yates



Patricia and Shayne are pioneers in the field of stress and humour. With their extensive background in health care as a nurse and doctor respectively, they have a thorough understanding of stress, which they combine with the latest research to recommend relief, especially through laughter.

Their humour is relevant, appropriate and enlightening. Laughter medicine is what they prescribe in their books 'Doctor, I feel funny' and 'You won't die laughing!' and laughter medicine is what they dispense their audiences. Be prepared for their laugh-out-loud sessions with quiet messages of hope, optimism and joy.

# Conference Program

## Session locations

Plenary sessions will be held in the Bell room

All early childhood sessions will be held in the Dubai and Beijing room

All primary age sessions to be held in Bell room 1

All adolescent sessions to be held in Bell room 2

All adult sessions to be held in Bell room 3

Please refer to venue maps on pages 16 - 17.

## Thursday 5 A

TIME		SESSION IN
9.00am		<b>Welcome and</b> Siska F <i>Victorian Autism Conf</i>
9.15am		<b>An Insight into As</b> Dr Richard
10.30am	<b>Morning Tea</b>	
11.00am		<b>The Changing</b> Dr Wend
12.30pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
	<b>Early Childhood</b>	<b>Primary Age</b>
1.30pm	<b>Coping with a diagnosis</b>  Melinda Polimeni and Derek McCormack <i>Parenting Research Centre</i>	<b>Supporting a positive transition to school: Day to day</b>  Susan Wade <i>Parent</i>

Conference program correct at time time of printing. May be subject to change.

## August 2010

### INFORMATION

Official Open  
Frederick  
*Reference Committee Chair*

Asperger's Syndrome  
Eisenmajor

Face of Autism  
Ly Lawson

Adolescents	Adults
<p>Relationships and Private Stuff</p> <p>Liz Dore</p> <p><i>Relationships and Sexuality Counsellor/ Educator</i></p>	<p>When should doctors diagnose high- functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder in Adults?</p> <p>Sarah Abrahamson <i>Monash University</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>A Life-Changing Diagnosis</i></p> <p><i>One Woman's Post-Diagnosis Story</i></p>

# Conference Program

Thursday 5 Aug

2.15pm	<p><b>Making an informed choice on treatments</b></p> <p>Prof. Margot Prior <i>Melbourne University</i></p>	<p>Transitions to school and choosing the right school for your child</p> <p>Val Spence <i>Spence Consulting and Program Management</i></p>
3.00pm <b>Afternoon Tea</b>		
<b>Early Childhood</b>		<b>Primary Age</b>
3.30pm	<p><b>Communication and the use of Symbol Modelling for children with ASD</b></p> <p>Tamara Klein &amp; Sarah Gibbs <i>Yooralla</i></p>	<p>The non verbal high needs inclusive classroom</p> <p>Gabriella Vascotto &amp; Mercia Nelson <i>Autism Teaching Institute</i></p> <hr/> <p>Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Communication Overview</p> <p>Sophie Kerr <i>Pyramid Educational Consultants of Australia Pty Ltd</i></p>
4.15pm	<p><b>Early Intervention Funding: How to make the system work for you</b></p> <p>Lia Castorina &amp; Val Spence <i>Autism Victoria</i></p>	<p>The importance of looking after yourself</p> <p>Serena Griffin <i>Carers Victoria</i></p>
5.00pm <b>End of day drinks and entertainment from the Aspinauts</b>		

## Just 2010 Cont.

<p><b>'Bodysuits': Identifying other ways of managing behavioural difficulties associated with toileting and sexuality</b></p> <p>Brent Hayward <i>Office of the Senior Practitioner, Department of Human Services</i></p>	<p><b>Relationships and Marriage</b></p> <p>Donna Williams</p>
<p><b>Adolescents</b></p>	<p><b>Adults</b></p>
<p><b>Young Adults with Autism: How can parents be helped to meet the challenges of this stage in family life</b></p> <p>Prof. Bruce Tonge <i>Monash University</i></p>	<p><b>A Home of Your Choice: What Options Do You Have?</b></p> <p>Margaret Ryan <i>Partner Jackson Ryan Partners</i></p> <hr/> <p><b>Accommodation Options</b></p> <p>Chris Glenn <i>APSM</i></p>
<p><b>Best Practice Positive Behaviour Support for Adolescents with ASD</b></p> <p>Dr. Tom Tutton &amp; Steve Davies <i>Autism Spectrum Australia</i></p>	<p><b>Employment and Adult Training</b></p> <p>Jason White <i>Alpha Autism</i></p>

# Conference Program

Friday 6 Au

TIME	SESSION IN	
9.00am		Qualit Ian M
9.30am	You won't die laughing: Laught Patricia Cameron-H Stress an	
10.30am	Morning Tea	
	Early Childhood	Primary Age
11.00am	Supporting Siblings in the Early years  Kirsty Kerr <i>Outside the Square Psychology</i>	Sibling issues and supports in the primary years  Judy Bennet <i>Mansfield Autism Statewide Services</i>
11.45am	Toilet Training for Children with ASD  Kirsty Kerr <i>Outside the Square Psychology</i>	Parents and schools in Positive Partnerships  Jacqui Borland <i>Autism Spectrum Australia</i>
12.30pm	Lunch	
	Early Childhood	Primary Age
1.30pm	Strategies for Feeding Difficulties  Simone Reeves <i>Mansfield Autism Statewide Services</i>	Food for thought  John Pietryka <i>All Natural Advantage</i>
2.15pm	Keeping the Relationship Alive  Helena Deacon-Wood Gayle Vermont <i>Relationships Australia</i>	Managing feelings in the Young Child with an ASD  Dr Louise Ford <i>Minds and Hearts Clinic</i>
3.00pm	Close of conference and afternoon tea	



## August 2010

### INFORMATION

Quality of Life  
Ian McLean

Center for life, health and wellbeing.  
Patricia Cameron-Hill and Shayne Yates  
*Stress and Humour*

Adolescents	Adults
<p><b>Anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorder</b></p> <p>Dr. Patrice Friars <i>Child and Adolescent Psychologist</i></p>	<p><b>Managing Challenging Behaviour</b></p> <p>Judith Moyle <i>Monash University</i></p>
<p><b>Laughing at Stress: How to have less stress in your life and more fun</b></p> <p>Patricia Cameron-Hill and Shayne Yates <i>Stress and Humour</i></p>	<p><b>Forensic Implications of ASDs- Identifying and Understanding Individuals with ASD's within the Legal System</b></p> <p>Vicki Gibbs <i>Autism Spectrum Australia</i></p>

Adolescents	Adults
<p><b>ASD inclusive schools- Primary and Secondary Question and Answer Session</b></p> <p>Paige Davey &amp; Panel <i>Autism Teaching Institute</i></p>	<p><b>Supporting my child when I'm gone</b></p> <p>David Barker &amp; Luke Wright <i>State Trustees</i></p>
<p><b>A Sibling Survival Guide</b></p> <p>Meg Moorhouse <i>TIME OUT Sibling Program, Melbourne Citymission</i></p>	<p><b>Quality of life</b></p> <p>Ian McLean <i>Golden City Support services</i></p>

# Regional Partners & Venues

The Victorian Autism Conference 2010 is a state-wide conference and will be streamed live to the nine regional centres below. Autism Victoria acknowledges all of the Regional Partners who are co-hosting the conference in each location.

## Albury Wodonga Partner - ASPECT



Venue: Commercial Club  
618 Dean St  
Albury NSW 2640

autism spectrum  
AUSTRALIA

## Ballarat Partner - Pinarc Support Services



Venue: Mercure Hotel  
613 Main Road  
Ballarat VIC 3350

## Bendigo Partner - Bendigo Health



Venue: All Seasons Hotel  
171-183 Mclvor Road  
Bendigo, VIC 3550

## Geelong Partner - Gateways Support Services



Venue: Mercure Hotel  
Gheringhap St  
Geelong VIC 3220

## Horsham Partner - Wimmera Uniting Care



Venue: TAFE  
Baillie St  
Horsham VIC 3402

## Shepparton Partner - Family Care



Venue: Eastbank Centre  
70 Welsford St  
Shepparton VIC 3630

## Traralgon Partner - Scope



Venue: Latrobe Convention  
Centre  
5601 Princes Highway  
Traralgon VIC 3844

## Warrnambool Partner - M-Power



Venue: South West TAFE  
Timor St  
Warrnambool VIC 3280

## Mildura Partner: Sunraysia Autism Spectrum Support Group



Venue: The Settlers Club  
110-114 Eighth Street  
Mildura VIC 3500

# Exhibitors

The following exhibitors will be present at the conference. Visit their display tables in the Exhibition Area (see map on Page 16) for more information on their services and products.

**ACER- Australian Council for Educational Resources**

**All Natural Advantage**

**Autism Action**

**Autism Behavioural Intervention Association**

**Autism Partnership**

**Autism Victoria**

**Bedguard**

**Book in Hand**

**Carers Victoria**

**Chew Chew Chatter**

**Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre/ CarerLinks North**

**Donna Williams**

**Educational Experience**

**Footprint Books**

**Inekards**

**Kalparrin**

**Kids Therapy Network**

**Kimochis**

**Learn Fast Australia**

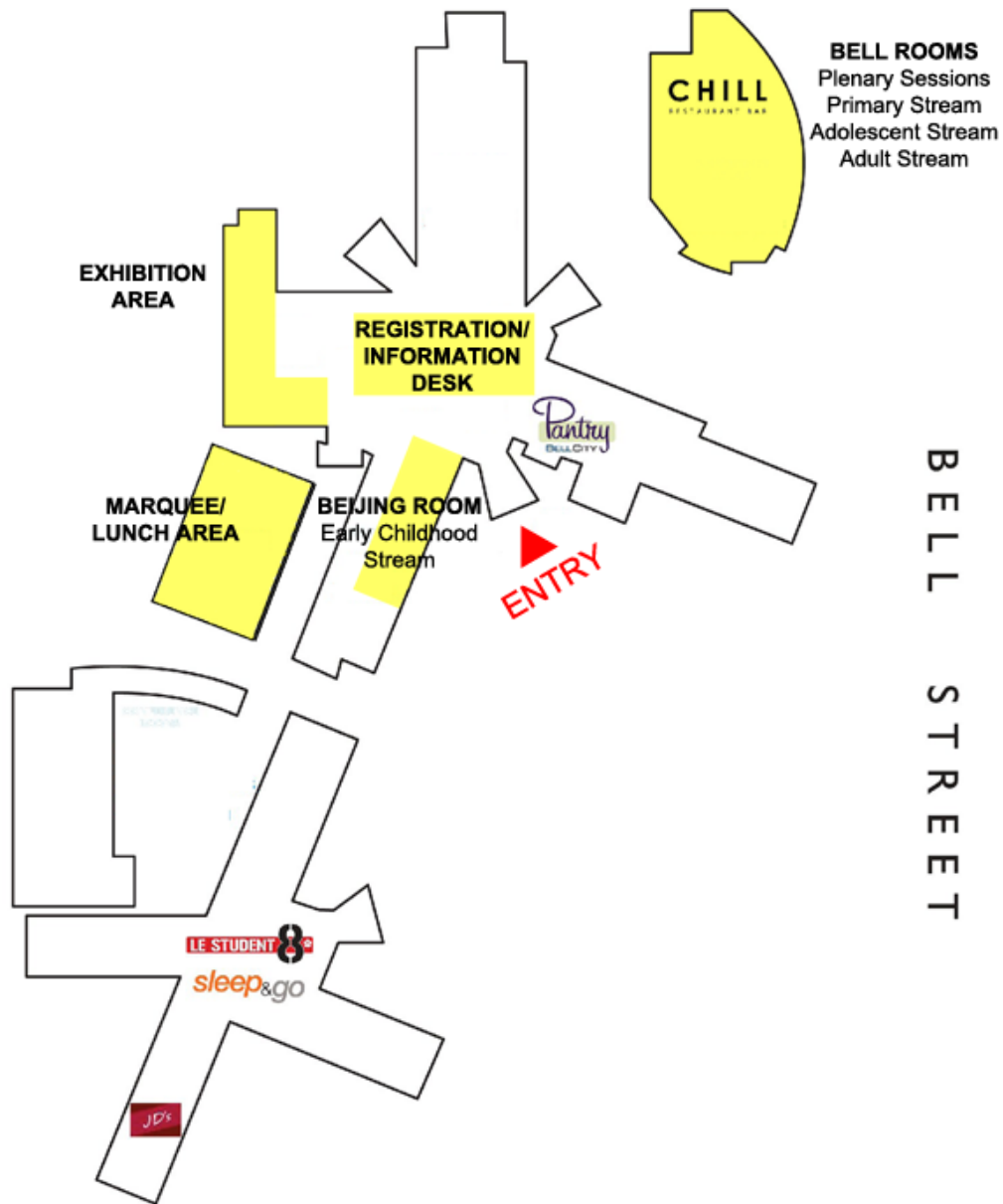
**Learning for Life**

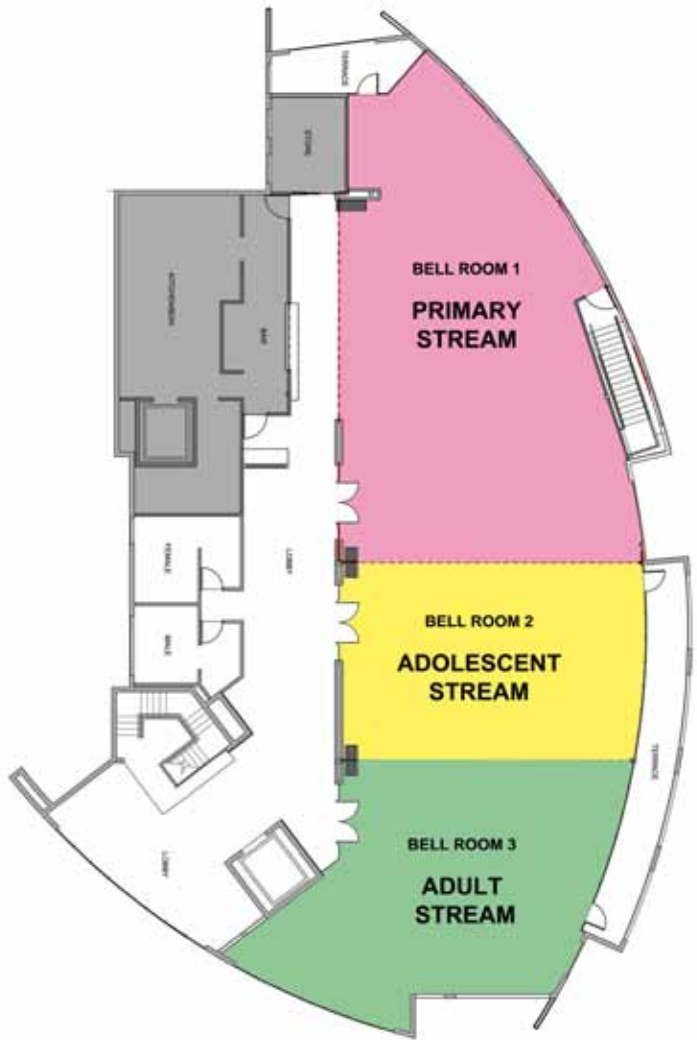
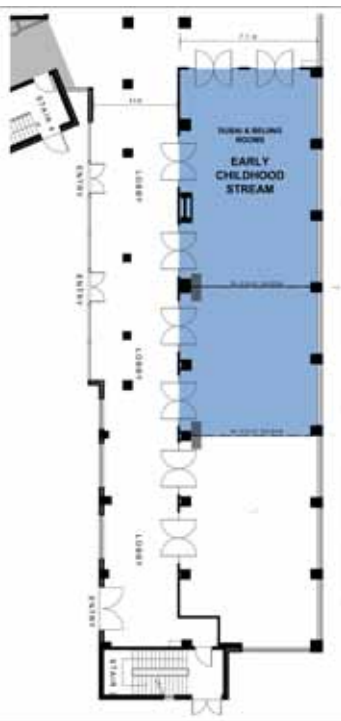
**Pyramid Educational Consultants of Australia**

**Swinburne University of Technology**

**Voice and Movement**

# Venue Maps





# Abstracts

## Early Childhood Stream

**Thursday 1.30pm**

**Coping with a diagnosis**

**Melinda Polimeni and Derek McCormack, Parenting Research Centre**

Supporting parents raising young children with Autism: An overview of the Raising Children with Autism Website and the Early Days National Workshops program.

The Parenting Research Centre is Australia's only independent national parenting research centre and provides two programs funded under the Federal Government's Helping Children with Autism Package. Both programs focus on providing parents with evidence-based information about ASD and helping parents connect with each other for mutual support and the sharing of advice and information based on their experiences.

The Raising Children with Autism website provides parents with reliable information about ASD. This presentation will provide a tour of the website including the Parent Guide to Therapies, Service Pathfinder and the Parent forum. The Early Days Program provides parents with access to free workshops designed to equip them with information and skills to promote their child's development at home. An overview of the workshop topics and how parents can access workshops will be provided.

**Thursday 2.15pm**

**Making an informed choice on treatments and interventions**

**Professor Margot Prior, Melbourne University**

With a disorder as puzzling and as disabling as ASD, and with no 'cure' appearing as yet, it is not surprising that a myriad of treatment offerings abound. Parents want to do their very best in helping their children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) to achieve their best potential. How are they to know what intervention will be of most benefit to their individual child?

In any medical or disability field we want to have evidence for the effectiveness of a treatment. After all, you expect that when your doctor gives you a particular medication for your illness, that he/she has good evidence that it will make you better, not worse, or be of no benefit.

In this talk I first discuss the question of what is trustworthy evidence for the value of an intervention; how you go about finding the evidence; what standards you should use to make a judgement about the credibility of information you find; what to do if there seems to be no evidence, and what are the indicators which help you to make good choices. Then I offer some examples of treatments and their evidence base, and the pathways you can follow to make the most of your resources and bring about the most positive outcomes for your child.

**Thursday 3.30pm**

**Communication and the use of Symbol Modelling for children with ASD**

**Yooralla**

Yooralla's Autism and Therapy Service staff commonly use symbol modelling strategies with children with ASD. So what are, symbol modelling interventions? In short, these interventions involve the speaking communication partner using symbols and speech in order to provide a

model for language comprehension and expression. Many people supporting children with ASDs are using some type of symbol modelling, however this is commonly only within a limited context. In this very practical paper we will outline and demonstrate the symbol modelling techniques used by Yooralla's Autism and Therapy team that are designed to:

- promote language comprehension
- promote expressive language
- expand understand and response to a range of communication functions, and
- promote social interactions

We will highlight some do's and don'ts in using symbols with children with ASD. We will discuss the range of potential benefits and limitations of using symbols displays. Participants will be encouraged to practice using the displays. Future steps and research directions will be discussed.

#### **Thursday 4.15pm**

##### **Early intervention funding: How to make the system work for you**

**Lia Castorina, Autism Advisor Program Autism Victoria & Val Spence, Spence Consulting and Program Management**

The post-diagnosis period can be a very difficult and confusing time for families as they begin to navigate their way through the system of early intervention funding. With so many different schemes and initiatives on offer, it is not surprising that some families can become overwhelmed by all of the supports and options available to assist their child's development. This presentation aims to clarify this process for families, and to outline some options for funding assistance for young children with an ASD

The session will explore two major options of support to access funding for services and resources to assist their child with ASD. The first is the federally-funded Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package, for children aged 0-6. The first section will outline the eligibility criteria for the HCWA package, provide a step-by-step process of how to apply, give current information about entitlements for children in receipt of the funding, and clarify some common misconceptions about the package.

The second part of this presentation will provide information on the state-funded Early Childhood Intervention Service (ECIS), explain what to expect from this service, and outline how to apply for additional resources through Flexible Support Packages.

#### **Friday 11.00am**

##### **Supporting siblings in the early years**

**Kirsty Kerr, Outside the Square Psychology**

This session explores the world of the pre-school aged sibling. Having a brother or sister with an ASD is one factor in shaping the person they will grow to be. Desirable and undesirable impacts will be discussed, along with resources to help the pre-schooler understand their brother or sister. Strategies will be presented for supporting the well-being of siblings by addressing the challenges posed when their brother or sister has an ASD.

# Abstracts

**Friday 11.45am**

## **Toilet training for children with ASD**

**Kirsty Kerr, Outside the Square Psychology**

Becoming toilet-trained is a stage, rather than an age for children with ASD. This session will help you to determine readiness for toilet training (for both you and your child!) Participants will learn techniques for teaching skills related to toileting, and decide whether to begin with toilet timing or toilet training. Setting up the environment for success, using visual supports, and dealing with accidents; the session is filled with many practical ideas. Suggested services and resources for further help will also be covered.

**Friday 1.30pm**

## **Strategies for feeding difficulties**

**Simone Reeves, Mansfield Autism Statewide Services**

This presentation will focus on two major reasons for feeding difficulties in individuals with ASDs: sensory difficulties and cognitive inflexibility. Sensory issues include sucking difficulties, problems chewing solids, refusal of foods with lumpy consistency, an aversion to the feel of food in the mouth, and textural fussiness. The cognitive inflexibility that often occurs in individuals with ASDs can also lead to difficulties in feeding, and children might refuse food or drinks in unfamiliar settings, may be reluctant to try new foods, or might have set rituals around eating and drinking.

It can be important to intervene for a number of reasons. Many parents have concerns about malnutrition and vitamin deficiency, and fussy eating can sometimes lead to further restriction of social activities. The correct use of the lip, tongue and palate is also an important developmental stage for children, and limited diet can affect this area of development.

This presentation will outline a number of strategies for feeding difficulties, including the use of a food diary, the importance of seeking input from relevant professionals, and the development of an eating program with clear goals. Practical ideas such as using a favourite food as a reward, allowing the child to help cook and prepare, and the use of social stories will also be covered, as will some important considerations for implementation.

**Friday 2.15pm**

## **Keeping the relationship alive**

**Helena Deacon-Wood & Gayle Vermont, Relationships Australia**

A 'Sound Relationship House' was established to provide couples with a guide to maintaining a positive, long-lasting relationships which incorporates:

1. Friendship
2. A positive or negative couple lens
3. Regulation of conflict
4. Supporting dreams and having a shared understanding of the meaning of the relationship

The foundation of a relationship was found to be the most important factor for couples to effectively deal with conflict and develop shared goals and life dreams. Having a child with an

ASD has an impact on the life dreams that were made entering the relationship and the shared meaning of their relationship.

The presentation will also discuss the importance of rituals and shared goals and values and how these may be affected by your child's diagnosis. Practical strategies will be provided to assist couples keep the relationship alive post-diagnosis of an ASD.

Gayle's presentation will provide an underlying framework for maintaining, re-establishing or developing a successful relationship with particular focus on couples where one partner is confirmed or suspected of being on the Autism Spectrum.

Gayle will discuss three basic factors which are central to a successful relationship.

1. Respect.

Respect must be appreciated that there are two people in the relationship, two people receiving a diagnosis and two people responsible for parenting.

2. Understanding.

Understanding needs to be framed constructively and with reasoning for individuals with an ASD. This is imperative in developing a positive approach to the relationship.

3. Communication

Communication encompasses the ability to listen, hear, read body language and check in with someone if what was communicated was understood. Effective communication is a critical aspect of any relationship and must be implemented by couples to achieve a successful relationship. The essential elements of a successful relationship are respect, understanding and communication. It is also important that each partner has a clear understanding of their own issues, assumptions and role in the relationship.

## Primary Age Stream

**Thursday 1.30pm**

**Supporting a positive transition to school: Day to day**  
**Susan Wade, Parent**

This presentation gives a family perspective in relation to effective strategies for supporting a child with Asperger's syndrome during transition to a mainstream Victorian primary school. The presentation will illustrate a variety of practical strategies used by the family, in conjunction with Early Intervention and the school, to facilitate inclusion and a positive transition. Planning for transition will be discussed in terms of the transition timeline, individualised transition plan and communication with professionals.

Strategies for providing information to the school will be outlined, including providing a letter to teachers introducing the child, an information folder with examples of strategies which have been previously successful, and a one-page summary sheet about the child to provide to replacement teachers. Family support of transition additionally includes strategies such as filming a video in conjunction with the Prep teacher to represent a 'tour' of the school routines, expectations and physical boundaries to be replayed over the holidays, alleviating anxiety. Further strategies over the school holidays period can include exposure to crowds in preparation for the school setting,

# Abstracts

visiting the school grounds, and role playing to learn appropriate hand raising and interrupting skills.

Visual supports in the form of a 'countdown' and school week schedule can also be useful. Problems associated with getting dressed and choosing food for breakfast can also be addressed with visual supports, including a visual self-monitoring strategy to track progress through the morning routine. Family support of inclusion included a letter to parents, supported play dates, and hyperlinked Social Stories™ created in PowerPoint™ about social situations such as attending birthday parties.

Strategies for staying positive, celebrating successes and dealing with problems collaboratively will be outlined and the presentation will conclude with reflections on effective strategies used by the school to support this positive transition.

**Thursday 2.15pm**

**Transitions to school and choosing the right school for your child**  
**Val Spence, Spence Consulting and Program Management**

The 5Q considerations of transition:

What? What is a transition? It is defined as a 'change of state'

When? When is ongoing and suggests that a 'whole of life' system of support can be planned with specific attention to major transition points such as going to school.

Who? While the child maybe the central focus of the transition to school, the child's family, pre-school, potential schools of choice, doctors and bureaucratic systems etc are all involved. This works best if the system can be simple, fair, easily, understood, and dependable.

Why? During transition a series of procedures are followed and decisions made. Are these decisions always made in the best interests of the child and family? Do the questions asked in the process meet the human rights criteria or are they designed to meet minimal funding requirements? Supporting children with additional needs of any kind is expensive, individual and difficult. This brings us to the most challenging of the 5Q questions.

How? How do we identify the difficulties inherent in the current system, look at it as only part of a 'whole of life' support plan, closely linked to all elements of the social, educational and employment journey that we all follow?

**Thursday 3.30pm**

**The non-verbal high needs inclusive classroom**  
**Gabriella Vascotto and Mercia Nelson, Autism Teaching Institute**

This presentation will focus on a range of considerations to support the learning and wellbeing of students with ASD in special developmental school classrooms. The presenters will draw on TEACCH principles, Pivotal Response Training principles, Functional Behavioural Analysis as well as video footage, practical examples and PWPT slides to demonstrate the impact of these interventions on successful learning outcomes for high needs non verbal students with ASD.

**Thursday 3.50pm**

**Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) Communication Overview**

**Sophie Kerr, Pyramid Educational Consultants of Australia Pty Ltd**

PECS was developed in 1985 as a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with ASDs and related developmental disabilities. First used at the Delaware Autistic Program, PECS has received worldwide recognition for focusing on the initiation component of communication. PECS does not require complex or expensive materials. It was created with families, educators and resident care providers in mind, and is readily used in a range of settings.

PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a 'communicative partner', who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.

The PECS teaching protocol is based on B.F. Skinner's book, Verbal Behavior, such that functional verbal operants are systematically taught using prompting and reinforcement strategies that can lead to independent communication. Verbal prompts are not used, thus building immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency.

PECS has been successful with individuals of all ages assisting a variety of communicative, cognitive and physical difficulties. Some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a speech generating device. The body of research supporting the effectiveness of PECS continues to expand, with research from countries around the world. The overview will provide information regarding each of the skills taught within the PECS protocol and the teaching strategies used.

**Thursday 4.15pm**

**The importance of looking after yourself**

**Serena Griffin, Carers Victoria**

Carers Victoria is the state-wide voice for family carers, representing and providing support to approximately 70,000 carers in Victoria. Our research indicates that carers have the lowest health and wellbeing of any group in the community. Carers are more likely than normal to experience psychological and physical pain and one of the reasons they do not receive treatment is due to a lack of time. It is important that carers start taking regular, planned breaks early into their caring role to maintain good health and wellbeing which assists carers to provide ongoing care.

Respite can help carers feel healthier mentally and physically by providing time for them to re-energise and enjoy other activities and relationships. Respite can be as little as five minutes in duration at home or as long as two weeks using formal residential respite services. We will discuss strategies for carers to look after themselves, such as planning and using informal and formal respite. We will also consider the emotional and practical issues when deciding to use respite. We will look at the benefits of respite for both the carer and the person cared for.

# Abstracts

**Friday 11.00am**

## **Sibling issues and supports in the primary years**

**Judy Bennet, Mansfield Autism Statewide Services**

The journey for siblings of children with ASDs can often be a difficult one. Many siblings experience a mixture of feelings, including anger, resentment and jealousy towards their sibling who they feel gets most of their family's attention. They may also experience embarrassment, guilt and shame and a sense of loneliness and isolation. Just like adult family members, siblings can also feel a sense of loss and sadness once a diagnosis is received.

This presentation will give an overview of some strategies that families can implement to help support siblings, foster positive sibling relationships, and encourage resilience. The presentation will touch on a number of suggestions for enhancing the sibling relationship:

- Give honest and simple explanations to siblings regarding the disability.
- Reassure siblings that they did not cause the disability, nor will they catch it.
- Explain the reasons for differential treatment and for the different rules and expectations that may be applied to the child with a disability.
- Encourage children and adolescents to participate in interests outside of the family.
- Acknowledge siblings for their efforts in being a 'good' brother or sister.
- Discuss your future plans for the care of the child with the disability to help to allay any concerns siblings may have regarding their role in their sibling's future care needs.
- Provide siblings with an opportunity to explore and express their feelings, both positive and negative.
- Reassure siblings that their needs, experiences, feelings and concerns are valid.
- Give siblings simple strategies to help them cope with difficult situations.

**Friday 11.45am**

## **Parents and schools in Positive Partnerships**

**Jacqui Borland, Autism Spectrum Australia**

Positive Partnerships is part of the Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism initiative funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). Positive Partnerships workshops for parents and carers are being conducted throughout Australia, and provide an opportunity for parents to share ideas and develop skills to enable them to work more effectively with their child's school. Positive Partnerships Professional Development workshops provide a similar opportunity for teachers and school leaders.

This presentation will showcase one of the key elements of a Positive Partnerships workshop. The Planning Matrix is a powerful, one-page tool through which parents can share their knowledge of their child with the school. Through the use of this tool and the ensuing discussions, parents and school staff work cooperatively to develop successful strategies to maximise their child's success at school.

The Planning Matrix is a practical tool for teachers and schools. Parents and teachers who have attended Positive Partnerships workshops have adopted the Planning Matrix with enthusiasm.

Outline of the presentation:

- Introduction of the Planning Matrix as a tool for parents and schools to use together
- Practical demonstration of how the Planning Matrix can be completed by parents and schools focussing on:
  - Identifying the characteristics of autism and the impact of these on the child/student in the classroom and playground.
  - Developing strategies to minimise the identified impact of autism and assist the child/student in the classroom and playground.
- Stories and practical examples of the successful use of the Planning Matrix by Australian parents and schools.
- Video from a Victorian education region telling the story of that region's adoption of the Planning Matrix by schools and parents.
- Links for parents for further information via [www.autismtraining.com.au](http://www.autismtraining.com.au).

**Friday 1.30pm**

**Food for thought**

**John Pietryka, All Natural Advantage**

There is evidence that certain diets are beneficial to help improve the behaviour of children with ASDs. However, concern has been raised in the medical community that these diets are restrictive and may do more harm than good. In January 2010, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a Consensus Report<sup>1</sup> in which they state "anecdotal reports have suggested that there may be a subgroup of individuals with ASDs who respond to dietary intervention". There is recognition that more research is needed before paediatricians and other professionals can recommend specific dietary modifications. However, many parents feel that they cannot wait for these studies to be designed and published as their children need help now. Consequently, they are willing to consider a range of dietary interventions for their child, especially as they approach the school years, to help improve their child's nutritional status and behaviour.

Many dietary modifications have anecdotal evidence of being beneficial. The biggest challenge for parents is to make sense of the available diets, decide which one to choose and how to go about initiating a diet. Is it possible to predict which children will respond? What if my child refuses to eat? Will they be getting sufficient nutrients? How to deal with school lunches and eating out? These are all common questions and legitimate concerns of parents.

This presentation will review some commonly accepted dietary considerations that have benefited children with behavioural disorders such as ADHD. Other dietary interventions and why they may benefit children on the autism spectrum will also be discussed. Practical advice as to how to plan and implement a diet for your child and what to expect will be covered as well as where to get additional help and support.

1. Evaluation, Diagnosis, and Treatment of Gastrointestinal Disorders in Individuals with ASDs: A Consensus Report. *Pediatrics* 2010;125:S1-S18

**Friday 2.15pm**

**Managing feelings in the young child with an ASD**

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## Dr Louise Ford, Minds and Hearts Clinic

Children on the autism spectrum are prone to high levels of anxiety and anger and often have difficulties with recognising when they are feeling anxious or angry, knowing how to communicate such feelings to others, and managing these feelings effectively. High levels of anxiety and avoidance and frequent temper tantrums are often the result. This presentation will discuss how to assist children to better understand and manage their feelings. The important treatment components of a cognitive behaviour therapy program for treating anger and anxiety in young children with Asperger's Syndrome will be presented. Louise will make reference to her practice at Minds and Hearts, a specialist clinic for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome and Autism. Key resources and practical tips that may assist parents and professionals working in the area will be included.

This presentation will include information on:

- Basic emotional education which includes an exploration of happiness, relaxation, sadness, anxiety and anger
- Recognising the different levels of intensity of these feelings
- Recognising the bodily sensations associated with anxiety and anger
- Strategies to burn up the emotional energy associated with high levels of these feelings
- Strategies to calm down when the child experiences lower levels of these feelings
- The important role a child's thoughts play in how the child is feeling
- Ways that parents can assist their child to better manage their feelings

## Adolescent Stream

**Thursday 1.30pm**

**Relationships and private stuff**

**Liz Dore, Relationships and Sexuality Counsellor/Educator**

Individuals with an autism spectrum disorder, regardless of where they are on the spectrum, want the same as other people when it comes to relationships. Friendship and the desire to love and be liked as a friend, or an intimate companion, is a drive that no disability can diminish. Children and adults on the autism spectrum can benefit from a structured learning environment that presents them with the practical knowledge, skills and support to make friends and develop positive awareness of their sexuality.

Sex education is covered in personal development subjects at school. However, for most people, the principal source of sexuality knowledge, and the major influence on their behaviour, comes from significant people in their lives, such as siblings, carers, and peers, as well as through images and 'role models' on television and the Internet. These observations provide a necessarily partial, and often a deceptively simple impression of personal relationships and intimacy. It can therefore be valuable to provide information about the subjects of friendships, relationships and sexuality in a structured and supportive environment. This is especially important where the people engaged in observation are less likely to pick up on the complex but subtle conventions and rules guiding these interactions. The use of resources such as cartoon guides, anatomically correct dolls, social

stories, relationship photos and DVDs is an engaging, effective way to facilitate learning about these often sensitive and hard to broach topics.

Individuals are more likely to reach their relationships goals and to develop to their full potential when plans are in place to promote sexuality education and age appropriate social experiences. It is empowering to understand the spoken, and unspoken rules associated with relating to friends, housemates, partners and colleagues. Learning simple friendship skills, such as turn taking and empathy, can help a person to maximise their opportunities to form and maintain rewarding friendships, and to develop close personal relationships. Listening, then talking (rather than dominating a conversation) and realising the other person doesn't necessarily share the same feelings, are important skills. Once an individual learns how to be more comfortable with others, their confidence and self-esteem grows.

It is easier to make friends in structured settings, where people have common interests. Simple acts of sharing interests with others in 'side by side' activities can increase the chance of a successful social encounter. Being focused alongside others on engaging tasks at school, work and community hobby groups can help form bonds. And social activities such as singing in a choir, walking a dog or watching a sporting game with a friend are examples of activities that can break down barriers and present valuable opportunities to communicate.

Relationships, whether personal or at work, are risky. Some flourish whilst others fade and failure can be difficult to cope with. Individuals on the autism spectrum can benefit from extra support to help them to understand and endure disappointments, and to prepare them to enjoy and take full advantage of opportunities for long-term relationships.

#### **Thursday 2.15pm**

#### **'Bodysuits': Identifying other ways of managing behavioural difficulties associated with toileting and sexuality**

**Brent Hayward, Office of the Senior Practitioner, Department of Human Services**

This presentation highlights the ever-increasing use of bodysuits to manage behavioural problems for some clients with ASD, such as removal of clothing or tampering with an incontinence or sanitary device.

A bodysuit is an encompassing term describing clothing that is applied and/or modified to restrict a person with a disability to access parts of their body for a behavioural reason. These behaviours may include a person removing their clothes or incontinence device, smearing faeces, masturbating or touching their genitals in inappropriate environments or interfering with their sanitary product. The Disability Act 2006 considers bodysuits as mechanical restraint and disability service providers (such as respite services for example) are required by the Act to reduce the use of restraints, including bodysuits. Bodysuits are 'band-aid' solutions to the original behavioural problem they are used for and they do not address the underlying reason why the behaviour is occurring.

Principles of clothing for people with disabilities, including ASD are discussed whilst reasons for disrobing and ways of managing this are provided. An overview of bowel and bladder related problems and the characteristics associated with these behaviours is provided before

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discussing the assessment of toileting-related behaviours and determining the motivation and reinforcement of these behaviours through basic behavioural recording. A number of general strategies to improve toileting are provided based on research evidence.

The focus of this presentation is on intervening in the behaviour through teaching the person with an ASD new skills to enhance their independence and improve social skills so that a bodysuit is not required. Reducing the use of a bodysuit directly improves quality of life and reduces the intensity of support required for the person in the long-term.

**Thursday 3.30pm**

**Young adults with Autism: How can parents be helped to meet the challenges of this stage in family life?**

**Professor Bruce Tonge, Monash University**

There is evidence that parent education and skills training helps to improve the mental health of parents and the adaptive behaviour of their young child or young teenager with ASD.

New challenges arise as young people with ASD move into adult life. Details of a new 20-week education program for parents of young adults with autism will be described as part of a project that aims to demonstrate that this type of support is as helpful as it is for parents with younger children with ASD.

**Thursday 4.15pm**

**Best practice positive behaviour support for adolescents with ASD**

**Dr Tom Tutton and Steve Davies, Autism Spectrum Australia**

Aspect's Adolescent Support team works with families and services who support adolescents with low levels of independent adaptive behaviours, significant challenging behaviours and extreme levels of parenting stress.

Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) has been shown to effectively reduce challenging behaviour, particularly when preceded by a functional analysis & as part of a multi-element plan (Harvey et al, 2009). Despite this, data suggests that many families and services struggle to manage adolescents with high support needs and challenging behaviour (Grey & McLean, 2007). Some adolescents leave school without the most basic skills such as the ability to request or to communicate 'yes' or 'no' spontaneously.

The key to supporting these individuals is to translate PBS best practice into consistent everyday practice of families and services.

A number of studies have described an alternative approach to delivering PBS that provides consistent on-going client centred training interactions rather than crisis services as needed (e.g., Anderson et al, 1996; Becker-Cottrill, McFarland & Anderson; 2003 & McClean et al, 2005).

This approach involves regular goal-driven 'team' meetings that include the development of a collaborative comprehensive person-centred PBS plan. The aim of this approach is to:

- develop coordinated consistent service delivery

- to build the capacity of all those involved in the direct care of the individual
- to focus on building durable and generalised functional skills necessary for life as an adult (e.g. Neef, Walters & Egel, 1984).

This presentation will highlight some of the key features of this approach implemented by Aspect's Adolescent Support team, including web based innovations and evaluation information.

**Friday 11.00am**

**Anxiety and Autism Spectrum Disorder**

**Dr Patrice Friars, Child and Adolescent Psychologist**

This presentation will discuss the differences between worry and anxiety, how anxiety presents itself physically, what we do in response to anxiety and what kind of thinking increases or reduces anxiety. The specific differences between anxiety in people with and without an ASD will also be discussed in terms of those elements specific to ASD such as need for sameness and routine, narrower focus, poorer understanding of the social world, language difficulties and learning difficulties. Practical strategies for managing anxiety will also be discussed. This covers social options such as social skills prompting and groups; management at school in terms of structure of the school, assistance to be advocated for and communication with a child or adolescent with an ASD; talking about feelings using different types of media and developing new ways to regulate feelings; and planning for change. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy will be discussed specifically to elucidate the manner in which individuals with ASDs is managed in a therapeutic setting, with a view to identifying specific strategies to practice at home.

**Friday 11.45am**

**Laughing at stress: How to have less stress in your life and more fun**

**Patricia Cameron-Hill and Shayne Yates, Stress and Humour**

As complex as stress can be to understand and manage, some of the remedies are quite simple. Laughter is one of these. On the days you feel you've lost your sense of humour however, you need back up strategies. These include using the power of mind to transcend your circumstances so you feel more in control. This means learning to think in happier ways by choosing more helpful thoughts, beliefs and words. Health is important too. It is hard to be happy if you are sick and tired.

The session includes down-to-earth health ideas that you can use immediately to live well, longer and with more energy. Laughter is a celebration of the human spirit.

**Friday 1.30pm**

**ASD inclusive schools: Primary and secondary Question and Answer session**

**Paige Davey and Teacher Panel, Autism Teaching Institute**

In this session a panel of experienced teachers will facilitate a discussion with the audience about the application of structured teaching environments, drawing on the range of programs and principles covered in the sessions: "The ASD inclusive classroom". The panel will take questions from the floor.

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Friday 2.15pm

**“My Brother Strangled the Budgie”:** Experiences from the teen sibling program at Melbourne Citymission

**Meg Moorhouse, TIME OUT Sibling Program, Melbourne Citymission**

When there is a child who has a disability or special need, there are often siblings who are very challenged, both positively and negatively, by the experience (even their pets are challenged!) The sibling relationship is a very special one – siblings play important roles in the care, play and development of their brother or sister. They are likely to have the longest relationship of all family members with their sibling.

For the sibling of a child who is living with an ASD, there are certainly some unique issues compared to other siblings. At the teens sibling group run by Melbourne Citymission, about 50% of the participants have a sibling with an ASD. These young people regularly report problems such as a lack of privacy, social stigma at school and in the community, hormonal fluctuations and aggression in the home, the exhaustion and worries of parents, rigid routines and their restrictions, and the changeable nature of their siblings’ condition and uncertain future. They also report a natural increase in their caregiving responsibilities, in their concerns regarding the family’s stress levels, and a broader awareness of the struggles of those living with disabilities in our community. Most siblings are very proud of their brothers or sisters, and are advocates, carers and friends for them, as well as being independent, insightful, patient and empathic. Particularly during adolescence, however, siblings can be at risk of anxiety, strain, falling behind at school and having difficulties with peers, and withdrawing from family life.

This workshop will look at:

- The issues faced by siblings, particularly during adolescence including excerpts from ‘Is Everything OK At the OK Corral?’ a film made by the teens sibling group for National Youth Week in April 2010.
- Practical considerations and strategies for families, and for service providers who are interacting with the sibling.
- Resources – supports, web sites, stories, reference materials, agencies, groups.

## Adult Stream

Thursday 1.30pm

**When should doctors diagnose high-functioning autism spectrum disorder in adults?**

**Sarah Abrahamson, Monash University**

As a doctor working within general disability, I have encountered many patients with other disabilities who also appear to have undiagnosed high-functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders. They are often psychologically uninterested, unlike many of the population who actively seek a diagnosis, and the concept of ASDs is likely to be very difficult to introduce to them. However, current medical training suggests that patients should always be fully informed, which doctors currently aim to do as part of achieving high standards of practice, so this dilemma is a new one to my practice. Further complicating the situation is the fact that on occasion, patients have been treated for many years by psychiatric services under other labels, so introducing an ASD diagnosis

has the potential to introduce animosity between the patient and the existing clinicians. This is also complicated by an inadequate quantity of adult ASD disability services who can currently take on patients outside standard psychiatric care.

Several patient examples will be discussed, including adults for whom I made decisions to either discuss a diagnosis or avoid investigating this diagnosis further. A set of principles regarding when to diagnose are suggested:

- A diagnosis should be given when a person has specifically presented with primarily psychiatric or long-term neurological problems which may be explained by the diagnosis of an ASD.
- A diagnosis should be given whenever a patient or relative specifically asks about the possibility of an ASD or developmental disability.
- A diagnosis should not routinely be offered if the patient has little interest in psychological issues and no specific active psychological complaint. In this case, where there are existing services, the possibility of adding the diagnosis for use by staff should be discussed with the existing team.

#### **Thursday 2.15pm**

##### **Relationships and marriage**

**Donna Williams**

As the author of 4 books in an autobiographical series, my best known book is 'Nobody Nowhere' published in 1991. This addressed emergence from my own world, attempts at friendships and surviving exploitative relationships and was the first English language autobiography of a person with autism to write about navigating sexual relationships. However, it was my second book, 'Somebody Somewhere', in 1994, which introduced readers to autism spectrum relationships and my third book, 'Like Colour to the Blind' and fourth book, 'Everyday Heaven', which explored autistic marriage. I spoke in the USA in 1995 about autistic marriage and by 2000 also knew about autistic divorce! As an autism consultant I counselled teens and adults on the spectrum about friendships, relationships and their hopes and anxieties about and struggles with marriage and have counselled non-spectrum partners about same-sex and heterosexual relationships with those on the spectrum. I will outline some of the clashing normalities between not only spectrum and non-spectrum partners but also some of the differences between partners with autism and those with Asperger's. I will illuminate the differences between ideals about relationships and their daily realities and present novel solutions and strategies.

#### **Thursday 3.30pm**

##### **A home of your choice: What options do you have?**

**Margaret Ryan, Partner Jackson Ryan Partners**

##### **Topic Objectives**

- Describe the policy context in the Victorian disability sector for accommodation options.
- Provide information about housing models and funding.
- Give practical advice on planning for a home of your choice.

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This presentation is based on research and analysis of policy in the Victorian disability sector for the provision of accommodation options. It gives an analysis of the consequences of new directions in public policy for families and persons living with an autism spectrum disorder, and highlights some of the pitfalls and some of the opportunities that come with choice, self-determination and being in control of one's destiny. The session will provide information about housing models and funding. The presentation will take participants through the process of planning for a housing choice, and identify the linkages to the Access Policy, the Disability Support Register and Individual Support Packages.

**Thursday 3.50pm**

**Accommodation options**

**Chris Glenn, APSM**

I am pleased to meet with parents, families and professionals at the Victorian Autism Conference and to share with you all some of the challenges and how we can approach achieving appropriate community housing and support for family members with autism or indeed people with disabilities generally.

In 2010 it is estimated there are 18% or 188,025 Victorians aged 65 or under with a severe or profound core activity limitation. People with disabilities suffer almost complete housing market failure often due to their low income combined with their requirement for sufficient ongoing personal care and support to be available and linked to their accommodation. The market does not respond well to the housing and support needs of this group. Parents, community organisations and housing agencies like my own are constantly faced with the challenge of how can we do better.

The challenge is for families, community agencies, housing organisations and DHS etc. to bring together a package including secure affordable housing, care and support, and family and community involvement to support people with autism and other disabling conditions to achieve independent community living.

Housing is a building block for stable lives and individual freedoms. In the few minutes available I would like to discuss a couple of solutions. They are not for everyone but in considering these solutions, hopefully we can develop solutions more suitable for our own circumstance:

- Support and care: the most important part of the package.
- Community housing through housing companies such as Active, as the Commonwealth and State governments want these non-profit housing companies to provide greater amounts of secure, affordable, long-term accommodation.
- Mixed equity approaches where families, agencies and government funding is combined to provide housing.
- Self-funded approaches.

**Thursday 4.15pm**

**Empowering adults on the spectrum to job search more effectively & independently**

**Jason White, Alpha Autism**

Many clients who are in the process of looking for work do so by using one of the many on-line job search sites available. Although most sites are relatively user friendly, giving you a set of rules and parameters in which to search for jobs, sometimes the results that come from the searches don't quite match the skills set of the individual. Alpha set about quizzing a focus group of clients as to how they were using the various job search websites available. Many clients were searching for roles based upon pre-selecting a generalist job category, or industry, followed by a regional location relevant to them. They would then qualify 'at a glance' as to what jobs may be relevant or worthy of applying for.

In surveying 20 Alpha clients using the seek.com.au website, we found that around only 5% of clients managed to find advertised positions that they were actually suited to, using the standard category pre-selection available on the website.

We then asked those clients to think about their actual skills and competent tasks that they had performed in previous roles, including those completed during work experience programs. We then used those specific tasks and competent skills and added these into the 'key word' space on the website. We did not pre-select any specific industry type or category. The results that we received were very interesting. Not only did we find positions advertised that we hadn't in previous searches, but we found that clients who in the past had become disenchanted with the process, had a sudden rejuvenation, and a real motivation to use this new method and approach to online job searching.

**Friday 11.00am**

**Managing challenging behaviour**

**Judith Moyle, Monash University**

Because of the nature of the condition, people with Autism Spectrum Disorders regularly behave in ways that challenge carers and service providers. This workshop aims to address (a) how to recognise behaviours that have arisen from the way the person responds to their physical and social environment, and (b), how to recognise those behaviours that are intentional and directed towards obtaining something that is desired or deemed imperative for their satisfaction or wellbeing. The presentation will focus on recognising how obsessions and/or compulsions can drive aggressive behaviours. A common area of concern for adults, particularly for young men with ASDs, is that of inappropriate sexualised behaviours. When presenting strategies for management, acknowledgement will be given to the unique patterns of learning and behaviour common to ASD, and for the need to ensure interventions or responses are tailored to individual circumstances and settings. Interventions, particularly for behaviours that might have legal consequence, should be intentional and consistent across all settings.

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**Friday 11.45am**

## **Forensic implications of ASDs: Identifying and understanding individuals with ASDs within the legal system**

**Vicki Gibbs, Autism Spectrum Australia**

Most people with autism spectrum disorders are law abiding and do not engage in aggressive or violent behaviour. However, there is some evidence that the unique characteristics of these individuals may in some cases predispose them to engage in offending behaviour e.g. poor perspective taking or Theory of Mind deficits, deficient empathy, deficits in social awareness and a tendency to have intense interests.

The research that has been conducted in this area suggests that people with ASDs who do commit crimes have very different profiles from non-ASD offenders in terms of motivations, criminal history and offence behaviour. It is essential that they are correctly identified and understood in order for appropriate legal decisions to be made and interventions put into place.

This session aims to build participant's knowledge in relation to:

- the underlying deficits of individuals with ASDs that may increase their likelihood of engaging in offending behaviours
- the behavioural profile of ASD offenders and how this differs to the behavioural profile of neurotypical offenders
- strategies and treatment approaches that can be put into place within the legal system to support individuals with ASDs and reduce the likelihood of re-offending.

This session will be most suitable for health and allied professionals with some knowledge of ASD, particularly those working within mental health or forensic settings who would like to extend their knowledge regarding adult presentations, forensic implications and/or treatment approaches.

**Friday 1.30pm**

## **Supporting my child when I'm gone**

**David Barker & Luke Wright, State Trustees**

This presentation will offer practical advice and strategies for families around how they can support their child when they are no longer able to do so. Luke will explain in simple terms how Enduring Powers of Attorney and Administration Orders work, as well as outline the various strengths and weaknesses attributed to both. David will address the subject of Trusts, explaining how they work, what types are available and outlining the pros and cons of each.

The aim of the talk is to reassure families that legal and financial options are available which will help ensure their child is adequately cared for and supported after they have passed, while giving them peace of mind now.

State Trustees core services include providing administrative services for persons with a disability, Will preparation, acting under Enduring Powers of Attorney, acting as executor or administrator for estates and the provision of general Trustee and related services for the Victorian community

**Friday 2.15pm**

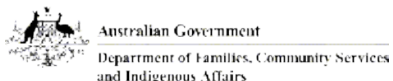
**Quality of life**

**Ian McLean, Golden City Support Services**

Within a Quality of Life framework, support provided by staff should enable people to be self determining, to experience productivity, a sense of purposefulness and be fully functional in their chosen community environments and endeavours. The research into support provided by staff to people living in the community indicates a wide range of staff practice and outcomes, with a norm that falls short of these Quality of Life aspirations.

This paper will present and critically reflect on one organisation's capacity to skill and motivate staff practice in the day to day support for people to be the active participant in their own lives.

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