

The Bridge News

June 2016

The Bridge has an exciting year planned and is ready to deliver!

After winning the 2015 Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation Seed Challenge, The Bridge will partner with Springvale Park Special Developmental School to deliver INteractive Work Experience, a parent engagement and research project, which will lead to improved work experience opportunities for young people with a disability.



A grant from State Trustees Grassroots Grants Program will enable The Bridge to host NDIS Readiness Workshops in 2016 targeting parents and carers in the South East region of Melbourne.

AND funding from RACV Community Foundation and the Flora & Frank Leith Charitable Trust will assist The Bridge Works to deliver public transport training as part of the work experience component facilitated by the Next Step Program resulting in increased independence, access to work opportunities and mobility of program participants.



A heartfelt THANKYOU to the funding bodies and donors who have supported these projects. Your insight and contribution will make a lasting impact on people with a disability, their family and community.

Debby Maziraz - Business Development Manager

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Message from our CEO

On behalf of myself and the Board, I want to acknowledge a number of developments over recent months.

Connects Survey

Completed early this year, we obtained excellent feedback from the latest participant and family/carer surveys for people involved in The Bridge Connects. These surveys are conducted each year and provide an opportunity for us to evaluate our services and identify any opportunities for improvement. This year we had 54 Family/Carer respondents and 66 Participant respondents. Results showed very good feedback across most areas and across all Connects services, which is terrific!

You can read more of the highlights below.

The Bridge Connects 2015 Survey Results

Highlights from family/carer responses included:

- Very high degrees of satisfaction across all services in terms of communication, responsiveness and treating participants with respect & dignity (between 85% - 100%).
- Confidence in the skills and knowledge of staff & management at Connects (98%).
- A good awareness of ways to provide feedback about our services (89%) and being comfortable to raise a complaint if necessary (96%).
- High levels of involvement in the planning process (73%) and those who were involved agreed that planning meetings have been conducted well.
- 93% would recommend The Bridge Connects to others.

Participants told us that the staff at our services:

- talk to them about their wants/needs (85%)
- are helpful and friendly (97%)
- keep information private (87%)
- treat them with respect and dignity (97%)
- do their jobs well and know how to help them (96%)

In terms of outcomes from the activities undertaken at Connects, the highest responses were in regards to having fun, making friends, accessing the community, improving health/wellbeing and increasing independence. These align closely to the responses from family/carers. Compared to 2014, we have seen improvement in communication between service staff and family/carers, more satisfaction with the planning process and fewer issues raised regarding activities and programs.

Although feedback from the 2015 survey was overwhelmingly positive some areas for improvement have been identified including around the areas of planning, awareness of the feedback and complaint processes and awareness of privacy procedures.



Phillip Toovey
The Bridge CEO

This feedback is very important to us as we are constantly trying to improve our services across all areas. Families/carers and participants have suggested several ways services could be improved, including:

- more family/carer awareness of the NDIS as it nears roll-out
- better technology at sites
- improved communication regarding funding/hours
- several activity/program ideas

These areas have been noted on our continuous improvement register for follow up in 2016.

Quality Review

In April we had an intense and thorough two week quality audit of all our services, conducted by independent monitoring body, Global-Mark.

The review involves assessing our policies, procedures and staff practices, as well as interviews with a selection of participants involved with Connects, Employment and Works services.

The outcome of the review was overall very positive, though areas for improvement were identified in our management systems and processes, which is something that we have been aware of and are working on improving.

Well done to all involved and a particular mention goes to The Bridge Works and transition to work program, Next Step, who were commended on their quality processes and practices.

Walkfest Award

And speaking of good outcomes, I must also mention the partnership between The Bridge and City of Greater Dandenong Youth Services, with their involvement in the all abilities 'Walkfest'.

This partnership was nominated for an award sponsored by the Department of Social Services in the category of Disability Access and Inclusion and pleasingly this 'Walkfest' Project achieved a Highly Commended award (*see page 7 for more on this*). Well done to all involved!

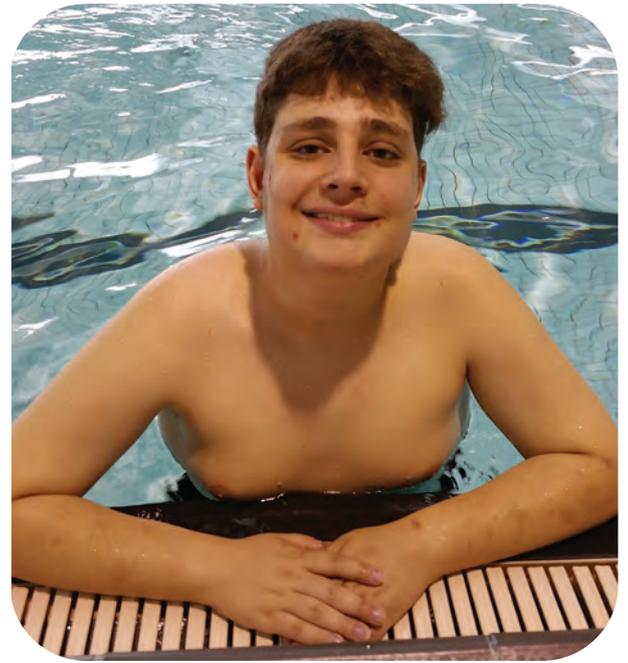
Project Grants Success

As outlined on the cover page, we are delighted to be granted funding for various projects and very recently we have been advised that we have been successful with an application to the Ian Potter Foundation, which will enable us to expand the Interactive Work Experience, a parent engagement and research project, which aims to improve work experience opportunities for young people with a disability in Special schools.

Participants find an Oasis

In partnership with Oasis Swimming Pool Dandenong and The Hub Connects we have developed a great Gym/Swim program meeting the various needs and wants of our participants. On a weekly basis, 16 participants attend the Oasis Swimming Pool supported by 3 staff, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the group have built the confidence to travel to the pools via public transport, while Connects transports the remainder.

11 participants join in group fitness sessions which utilizes both the gym and individualized program rooms, so that there is a variety of activities our participants can choose from, supported by a Connects staff member and personal Trainer, David. While the gym session is running, 5 participants are supported by 2 Connects staff to enjoy a swim.



There are so many positives to this initiative; "I would rate this easily as the 'preferred' program of the week" Tania, Community Facilitator says, "with many participant interest in health and well-being steadily growing." The Gym/Swim program motivates participants to take responsibility for their health. During this program everyone gets an opportunity to support and motivate others in the team. Encouragement and persistence is at the forefront, a skill that can be transferred to many other aspects of daily life. With an environment that truly encapsulates that different abilities DO NOT pose a challenge that cannot be overcome.

Participants have steadily built relationships and rapport with not only each other, but the trainer, café staff and office staff at Oasis and the genuinely positive reception received encompasses the height of social inclusion and unity in our local community. The 5 participants that use the pool have a more interpersonal opportunity to slow down, using this time connect with staff and practice skills of conversation, the calming water seeming to encourage this. Tania and Phil, Community Facilitators, whom support the participants in the pool, all males at this stage, use this opportunity to play games that encourage fun, fair play and thinking. There is not a Friday morning that is not full of laughter. "2 weeks ago we were in the pool, this particular day we were using balls and diving objects, throwing back and forth, participants doing 'tricks' and really enjoying the carefree energy. A family of 6 entered the pool nearby, 5 children all of different ages quickly attracted by our game. It wasn't too long before they were on our 'teams', and a rather large and exciting game of catch was happening. It was so very wonderful to experience that togetherness. In this instance disability had no real impact. It was about a game between strangers, equal people. Our guys were stoked." Tania recalls.



"We have seen measurable skills developed with travel training, the groups confidence and abilities are always growing. Attitudes are swaying from I can't to I did as we move closer to hearing more I will."

Tiffany is kicking goals!

Until recently, Tiffany felt uncomfortable to leave her home and if she did, would only venture a short walk to her local park with La La, her dog, by her side. Tiffany would also go out with her father, but nobody else.

Recently, Tiffany, although reluctant, agreed to go visit Tooradin Foreshore, with Connects Facilitator, Sonja and her trusty dog, La La. "I told Tiffany that she would be in full control and if, at any time she wanted to go home, that's what would happen." After a successful trip to the foreshore, Tiffany, with the support of Sonja have visited various places, "We have been to Berwick Springs Lake, shopping at Cranbourne Centro, taken walks in different parks and Tiffany recently commented to me that going out is better than staying home and looking at four walls."



Tiffany loves animals of any kind and has identified 3 specific goals that she wishes to achieve with our support, one; join an art & craft group, two; volunteer work with animals and three; apply for her driver learners permit.

To date, Tiffany has achieved two of her three goals. She now volunteers every Monday at The Australian Animal Rescue in Devon Meadows and she participates in art and craft every Wednesday at The Bridge Connects Webb Street, and later this year Tiffany will apply for her learners permit.

Sonja has observed Tiffany's confidence grow, she now interacts with others with confidence, commenting freely about various topics and her sense of humour shinning through. Tiffany shares photos of her outings with her parents who are enjoying their daughter's excitement and new found sense of freedom.

"What warmed my heart was what Tiffany shared with me. She stated she is going to buy overalls and gumboots for her work at the Animal Shelter. The very next Monday when I arrived at her home, she proudly showed me her brand new navy blue overalls, and black gumboots." Sonja says.

Congratulations Tiffany on you many achievements and best of luck with your learners permit later this year!

Scott Linn, job seeker

Congratulations to our job seeker, Scott Linn who started work with the help of Anna from our Frankston office.

“Now I can pay my house mortgage.”

Well done to Corey Cairns who has been six months as a labourer. “I like working and I get paid good.”

Since December 16th, the Bridge Employment has been focused on increasing employment placements in response to the Government’s announcement of a DES business reallocation.

Following on from Phillip’s email back in January, I wish to give anyone an update.

January and February have been extremely busy and productive months with a great deal of activity. March is a particularly big and important month as all in The Bridge Employment know. We need to have a really big month of Employment placements so we know everyone will keep their eyes and ears open and keep new leads coming in.

One of our KPIs that help us avoid business reallocation is a participant maintaining employment for 13 weeks (3 months). Therefore any placement that is made this month will assist us for 13 weeks in June.

We have had a number of job leads coming in from staff at Head Office, Connects and Works – all of which have been greatly appreciated.

Also a big thank you to Wayne Broomhall (The Bridge Works), who gave his time to share his expertise with marketing to manufacturers and Derica Coley (Risk & OH&S Manager) who has assisted our staff with participants who are self-employed with her knowledge of running her own business. Thank you!!



Scott Linn with Anna

Ausra Wells

General Manager

The Bridge Employment

Next Step congratulates City of Greater Dandenong Council

Back in February this year Next Step participants were inspired to present a certificate recognising:

Albert Osei-Tutu Community Inclusion Officer

City of Greater Dandenong

For the promotion of disability awareness and inclusion through the Walkfest event



And

Nick Karlas

Youth Programs & Events Worker

City of Greater Dandenong

Youth and Family Services

For his contribution to providing Walkfest Peer Leader Training to young people with disability

Brendan Rourke (Next Step participant) said: "I really liked going to Noble Park Secondary College and meeting the students there.

The peer leadership training helped me to develop my confidence to help MC on the day of the event. Next Step got certificates from the council and it felt good to recognise the work of others."



Positive feedback from Council RE: Walkfest & Award Nomination

Following this presentation, Next Step received some exciting news that the Walkfest event would be nominated in the National Local Government Awards.

Dandenong Council received a terrific result, Highly Commended in the Disability Access and Inclusion Category.

This model has pioneered the positive ways schools and the disability sector can work together to promote disability inclusion and awareness in the community via the annual Walkfest festival. This is an amazing outcome and we want to sincerely thank all the services who have invested many hours to support the project and young people who have been a part of the event management model over the last 3 years.

The Bridge Inc. would also like to acknowledge the following who have made this project possible:

- Noble Park Secondary College VCAL/VCE Program
- Dandenong High School VCAL Program
- Emerson School VCAL Program
- FReeZA Victorian State Government funding Initiative - Office for Youth, Department of Health and Human Services
- CGD Quality and Inclusion unit
- CGD Youth Services FReeZA Project

Please refer to the below link for all the listing of categories.

http://minister.infrastructure.gov.au/pf/releases/2016/april/pf054_2016.aspx



BACK ROW L-R

Travis Bourke (Next Step Coordinator)

Brendan Rourke, Nicole Berthelot

Aleks Pavasovic

Front row = Connie Letelier,

Albert Osei-Tutu (GCD) and Nick Karlas (GCD)



BACK ROW L-R

Travis Bourke (Next Step Coordinator)

Brendan Rourke, Aleks Pavasovic

Nicole Berthelot

Centre row Albert Osei-Tutu (GCD)

Lisa Williams (HUB Coordinator)

Front row Nick Karlas (GCD)

