

January 2019



## Newsletter

### From the CEO

It's been a while since our last newsletter and there have been a few changes in the office.

Eddy Syme stepped down from his role as Service Manager in May 2018. His contribution was greatly valued and his excellent efforts to assist with the implementation of our new IT system, SupportAbility, will provide a strong foundation as we move forward. Eddy is fondly missed by all and we wish him well with his new endeavors.

John and I celebrated our 10 years with Connections Plus this year. The 10 years have been very interesting and we have worked through many industry changes and challenges. We have been able to guide the organisation onto a path of success while continually building on our team of quality staff in the office and out in the field.

We welcomed back a familiar face for many, Sharyn Robertson, this time as Service Manager. We have confidence that Sharyn will lead the organisation's care team both competently and professionally. After a stint with the ADHC Community Support Team and 2 years as an NDIS Planner, Sharyn brings with her a passion for organisational transformation and strategy, a fresh set of eyes and a desire to make a real impact in the sectors we serve.

We welcome Louise Yeoman to our administration team. Louise is currently working on updating our SupportAbility client management system and is assisting with the implementation of the new day program activities.

Our Beach Street team has hit the ground running, we are well positioned to meet the challenges ahead to thrive as an organisation.

Thanks also goes out to our support workers who commit tirelessly to the wellbeing, community participation and skills development of the people we support. They also ensure participants have the support they need to release their NDIS goals and reach their individual potential.



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## Music program

We are looking at introducing new group activities as part of our community access program.

Over the past 4 weeks, we have trialled a music program with Ricky Bloomfield and we are looking to run this program on a fortnightly basis during school terms in 2019 and will be held at the Merimbula RSL Club.

Please submit your interest in this program so we can lock in a date and time.



*Special thanks to the Merimbula RSL Club for supporting our music program*



*Expressions of Interest are being sought for two new programs commencing in 2019, music with Ricky Bloomfield and Basketball skills. Interested? Please let us know via email [connections@connectionsplus.com.au](mailto:connections@connectionsplus.com.au) or phone 6495 3797*

## Merimbula Basketball needs your support

Merimbula Basketball are getting very close to a decision in relation to their dream of a new surface and roof for their courts.

Having a roof over the courts would mean that we would be able to run our new all abilities basketball skills program rain, hail or shine.

The Hon Andrew Constance MP has requested letters of support be sent to him at [bega@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bega@parliament.nsw.gov.au) to strengthen his push for funding to support this project.

## Basketball skills program

Also trialled over the past couple weeks has been an all abilities basketball skills program with Merimbula Basketball. This program is aimed at people who are interested in building their skills to a level where they can participate in team games. The program has been developed by Merimbula Basketball and is run by volunteer coaches with the assistance of our support workers.

From the onset, we could see this program will be a great success. The enthusiasm and skill of the volunteer coach, Sarah McGuire, saw our participants bouncing, catching, passing and shooting goals on their first day!

This program will run predominately in school terms. All you need are sports shoes, sunscreen, a hat and a water bottle. We are always looking for more players so please contact the office if you would like to be a part of this program.



## Dane Waites receives ASPECT's Inspiration Award for Individual Achievement

*Pictured - Host John Doyle and award recipient Dane Waites (photo credit: Adrian Koch)*



Congratulations to our local legend Dane Waites for receiving the Inspiration Award for Individual Achievement (Adult) at ASPECT's 2018 Recognition Awards.

*"The 2018 Recognition Awards aim to celebrate the incredible achievements happening within our autism community," Aspect's CEO, Adrian Ford, said. "Whether it's providing inspiration, support or addressing significant issues, the awards celebrate our diversity, creativity and resilience."*

*"This year we saw extraordinary people overcoming incredibly personal hurdles to become advocates for themselves and others."*

*"Dane Waites, who competed in the Dublin 2003 Special Olympics winning a Bronze medal, who recently completed a run across Australia from Perth to Pambula to raise awareness and funds for people on the autism spectrum."*

*"Running the equivalent of a marathon every day, Dane shared his message of awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism from Perth to Pambula, meeting every challenge with his huge, contagious smile and raising over \$120,000."*

<https://www.autismspectrum.org.au/news>

It's fantastic to see Dane being formally recognised as the inspirational individual we all know him to be. Dane has also been recognised locally as the Citizen of the Year for the Bega Valley 2018.

Dane's contributions have continued since his Perth to Pambula Run with recent achievements including carrying the Commonwealth Relay Baton and travelling nationally to promote awareness of Autism and Mental Health. Dane has also been invited to present the ASPECT Inspirational Award 2019.

Thank you Dane. You are a truly amazing person. Your contributions to community are greatly appreciated.

### Your feedback is important

Thank you to those who completed our recent customer survey. Your feedback is important for us to know what we are doing well and what we need to work on to improve our services.

We received some feedback about our pricing so thought this was a good opportunity to explain how we cost our services.

Our hourly rate is based on the NDIS price Guide: <https://www.ndis.gov.au/medias/documents/price-guide-nsw-201819-pdf/201819-Price-Guide-VIC-NSW-QLD-TAS.pdf>. We differ from other service providers in that we only charge the daytime rate even when your service is early morning or in the evening. This allows us to be more cost effective.

We work out Short Term Accommodation prices based on what it costs us to deliver the service. When you request a service, you will be provided with a quote and we will seek your agreement before we put services in place. The vast majority are charged at a considerable discount to the rate that the NDIS allows us to charge.

If you have any questions about our charges, please come into the office and discuss them so we can work with you to address any concerns.

## Welcome to Louise Yeoman



Connections Plus welcomes Louise to our office team.

Louise will be working on updating our new database, SupportAbility.

SupportAbility incorporates a Client Information Form which replaces our Client Profile. The Client Information Form will need to be updated and signed by the participant, or their representative, on an annual basis. It's important that the information we have on our system is accurate and current, as this is the information our support workers use to ensure they provide a quality, person centred service.

At present, we are coinciding updating our system with the commencement of your next NDIS Plan. When you receive your new plan, we will be asking you to update and sign your Client Information Form and also negotiate a new service agreement with us.

If you have a review meeting with the NDIS coming up and would like assistance to prepare for your review, please contact the office on 6495 3797.

## NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is an independent agency established to improve the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services. They regulate the NDIS market and handle complaints about the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services.

### What are the benefits for participants?

For NDIS participants, The Quality and Safeguards Commission will:

- help you, and your families and carers, by responding to your concerns or complaints
- require providers to uphold your right to be free from harm
- promote safety and quality services
- oversee a new NDIS Code of Conduct and Practice Standards for providers and workers
- require registered NDIS providers to report incidents, including abuse and neglect, to the NDIS Commission
- provide national oversight of, and leadership in relation to, behaviour support
- identify areas for improvement across the NDIS market, and provide information and advice to improve future services.

The Commission's service is independent and confidential.

### Speaking up can help to improve supports and services

It's OK to complain—speaking up can help to improve services for you and other people. You have the right to raise a concern about NDIS supports if you are not happy. The Commission will work with you, and with providers and workers, to resolve problems and improve the quality and safety of NDIS supports—for you and other participants.

If you have a concern, you may wish to talk to your provider first. You can ask someone you trust, or an independent advocate, to help you. If you're not sure who to contact, the Commission will help to connect you with the right organisation.

### What about the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)?

The NDIA will continue to:

- deliver the NDIS—providing individualised plans and support to people with disability, and coordinating service bookings, payments and access to plans for providers
- handle complaints about the NDIA and participant plans.

You can contact the NDIS Commission on 1800 035 544 or via their website <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au>



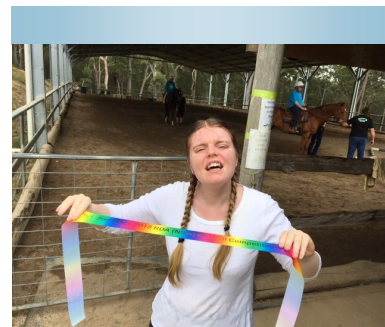
## Congratulations to Mikaela

Horse riding is both a passion and a challenge for Mikaela who is living with Autism. The trip to Moruya alone, presented a challenge at times. She was determined to participate and with the support of Riding for the Disabled (RDA) Eurobodalla and her support workers, Mikaela has managed to build her skills to a point where she is able to ride independently.

Mikaela participated in a group ride to music where the ride told the story of the Three Billy Goats.

Mikaela rode RDA's brown stock horse, Harry, who she has been riding since she started RDA earlier in the year. Mikaela and Harry were the middle Billy Goat Gruff and she was able to steer Harry over the bridge and stop when the Troll jumped onto the bridge! It was very amusing when the poor troll got told to jump off the bridge.

The Musical ride is a worldwide competition run by RDA and they videoed the ride then sent it to RDANSW for judging. Mikaela's group came 2<sup>nd</sup> in NSW in the led walk section which is an outstanding effort and a great achievement for the riders.

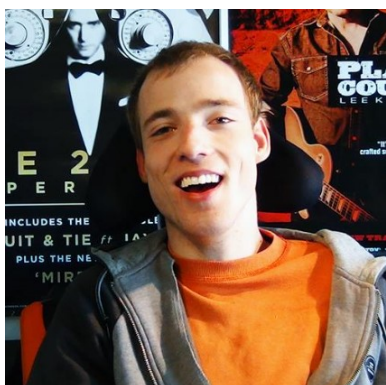


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*“Mikaela’s group came second in NSW in the led walk section which is an outstanding effort and great achievement for the riders”*

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## Nathan Johnston Music Streaming Website



Music has always been an important part of producer Nathan Johnston's life. Born with cerebral palsy, Nathan began his musical journey writing songs on his laptop and after graduating high school was ready to release his work online. He wanted independence from the major corporate players of the music streaming industry and DME3 was born.

Through DME3 Nathan has created an online home for independent artists. It is a place where listeners can discover, enjoy and share, and artists can remain independent and in complete control of their creativity.

Nathan has put the finishing touches to his local music streaming website and he needs music to populate the site before he can go live!

Nathan would like you to visit the site and upload any tracks you have on file. It's FREE!!

So let's get behind this awesome local initiative and make it happen for Nathan.

Nathan has put a lot of work and energy into this project over the past 5 years, so let's help him out.

Go to: <https://dme3.com.au>

### Our Vision

*To ensure that our service is well positioned to play a significant role in providing a broad range of support services to the community that empower people of all abilities to pursue their goals and actively participate in the community.*

*We will be a provider of choice for a range of community support programs including community access, skill building and supported independent living.*

## Annual General Meeting

Our annual general meeting was held on the 24th of October. The meeting was well attended and the information we presented was well received. If you would like to obtain a copy of our annual report, please contact the office on 02 6495 3797.

Our success is attributed to our supportive committee, dedicated office staff and skilled workforce on the ground. This meeting saw Connections Plus, again, secure the expertise and support of an excellent committee for the coming year.

We still have positions to be filled, Secretary and Client Representative. If you are interested in either of these positions, please contact the office on 6495 3797 or via email [connections@connectionsplus.com.au](mailto:connections@connectionsplus.com.au)



### Connections Plus has new office hours

Our office will now be open from 8:30am to 5:00pm

#### Connections Plus Australia Inc.

Established by local families in 1988 and formerly known as Respite Care Bega Valley. Although we have grown considerably from 1988, Connections Plus Australia still maintains the personalised approach of a small service in its delivery of disability services in our community.

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## Jordan Spindler

Jordan Spindler is busy in the kitchen making one of his favourite meals, shepherd's pie.



Let's get **cooking**

