

Pave the Way Newsletter

September 2008

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"By seeking to control the future we can become blind to the opportunities in the now, because we are not relaxed enough to recognise them."

Being in charge of letting go

"The only way to be safe is never to be secure!" Upon reading that quote one's stomach may well turn over, and the mind go into panic mode, as mine did. Then as you calm down and allow the paradoxical truth to emerge it has the potential to change the way one approaches the constantly changing circumstances of life and the many worries and anxieties that overwhelm and stymie us, especially with regard to our family members with disability. We all **know** we live in a less than perfect world, where watertight and permanent solutions are rare and where disappointments, mistakes, imperfect service responses and dare I say it, bad things happen to our loved ones, yet we **act** as if that were not the case.

There is no suggestion here of not doing everything we can to minimise the potential dangers and threats to our family members and to create meaningful, rich lives for our loved ones through visioning, planning and action: Pave the Way is built on that premise. What is being suggested is that so much time and energy can be spent on trying to control what happens, trying to create a safe and predictable future. In our well meaning attempts to take charge, fear, tightness and exhaustion can creep into our thinking which stifles creativity and bricks and mortar issues can become the focus to the exclusion, or at least the narrowing, of other important aspects. By seeking to control the future we can become blind to the opportunities in the now, because we are not relaxed enough to recognise them. In bidding primarily for safety and security we can become fixed and locked into certain solutions where there is no room to move and even less room for others to move in and out with new ideas. We in fact add to the stress and complexity that already exists.

If we can live and act with the belief that everything changes, that nothing is permanent or secure, and that that is okay, one is actually better able to deal with uncertainty. Instead of immediately reacting to what happens, the capacity to stand back, reflect and then respond, is strengthened. We discover that inviting others in with other points of view brings energy, not more work or increased anxiety. That letting go means opening up not giving up. What might first appear as a scary idea may carry within it the seeds of important change and growth. It may be more in keeping with our vision for a good life if we allow it the time and space to unfold.

This article was written by Christine Douglas, if you would like to discuss these ideas further please contact Pave the Way on (07) 3291 5800

Senate Inquiry into Special Disability Trusts

“The amount attracting the concession has now risen to \$538,000 following a recent indexation increase in July 2008.”

In previous newsletters we have written about the Special Disability Trust provisions introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 2006. The aim of Special Disability Trusts was to allow concessions to Centrelink’s policy of taking trust funds into account when assessing eligibility for certain pensions, including the disability support pension.

Where a Special Disability Trust (SDT) is set up for the benefit of someone with a “severe disability”, the first \$500,000 (indexed annually) is not taken into account by Centrelink when applying its assets test to that person’s disability support pension and the income from that amount also is not taken into account. The amount attracting the concession has now risen to \$538,000 following a recent indexation increase in July 2008. A similar concession allows someone in receipt of a pension (eg, aged) to make a gift of up to \$500,000 (not indexed) to someone with a “severe disability” into a SDT and still receive their pension, without being affected by Centrelink “gifting rules”. These rules also apply to Veterans pensions.

As we have written in previous newsletters, there are a number of limitations to SDTs. For example, the definition of “severe disability” is restrictive, trust funds can only be used for “care and accommodation”, unused trust income is taxed at the highest tax rate and, for some families, the maximum of \$500,000 will be too low. Given these limitations, it is hardly surprising that by December 2007 only 22 Special Disability Trusts had been established throughout Australia, though it is likely that more will have been included in parents’ and other family members’ wills.

Following widespread concern expressed to the Commonwealth Government about the limitations of Special Disability Trusts, and some vigorous lobbying by families particularly in Western Australia, the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs held an inquiry into SDTs during May - June 2008.

Pave the Way wrote a submission and Jeremy Ward spoke by phone to a Committee Hearing in late July. Pave the Way’s submission was one of few which raised issues beyond the technical limitations of SDTs, such as the need for the Commonwealth Government to fund additional succession planning initiatives for families throughout Australia.

Given the widespread criticisms of the current SDT provisions, it is likely that the Senate Committee will recommend changes. If you are interested in reading the submissions to the Inquiry, or the transcript of the Committee hearings, visit the Committee’s website at www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/disability_trusts.

The Committee is to report to Parliament by 18 September 2008.

“Given the widespread criticisms of the current SDT provisions, it is likely that the Senate Committee will recommend changes.”

**For further information on Special Disability Trusts, please contact
Jeremy Ward on (07) 3291 5800**

Resources and information to help with planning

Information on the website – www.pavetheway.org.au

The “Working with Families” section of the website now includes information about planning. There are ideas about how to plan, both formally and in an informal way, and how to involve others in your planning. There are also some examples from a facilitated planning session based on real life experiences. In the “Stories” section you can read two new stories from Queensland families who write about their experience of planning.

Pave the Way Planning workshop

The two day live-in workshop, “*Developing a Vision and a Plan*”, offers families an opportunity to spend time on working through their vision for the future and how to plan to put this in place. In 2009 this workshop will be held in March and June. Locations have not yet been finalised but it is hoped to have one outside the Brisbane area. The dates and venues will be posted on the Workshop Calendar on the website and will be included in the December newsletter. You can also ring or email the office for more information. A Six Day “From Visions to Action through Planning” workshop is also being planned for 2009.

New planning resource - “Launch into Life”

This booklet produced for Queensland Parents of People with a Disability (QPPD) is a useful list of handy hints for parents of students with disability who are leaving school. It includes ideas about planning, a helpful timeline for transition, and information about work experience, employment and funding options. Copies will be on their website www.qppd.org from the end of September.

Applying for employment assistance

Good news for people planning to apply for employment assistance. From September 8th 2008, people who receive Disability Support Pension (DSP), and who volunteer for employment assistance, will not have to worry about losing their pension. The new “service referral” Job Capacity Assessment will no longer collect information for determining income support and will not review pension entitlements. The Assessment will only collect information required for determining the most appropriate employment support service for the job seeker. The details of the new Assessment are not yet clear but this is an important change for people wanting to explore the possibilities of working.

Inclusive Futures workshop

Qld Disability Housing Coalition is conducting a workshop to provide information about housing and support issues and to link people with local service providers and key people of interest. Workshops are planned for Cairns on 15th September and Emerald on 30th October. For more information and registration forms contact QDHC on 07 3391 3433, or gdhc@gdhc.org.au.

Pave the Way can also assist families with planning through individual conversations or by facilitating one or more planning sessions

“Launch into Life”- new resource from QPPD

Planning for employment and finding a place to live

For further information on resources and information to help with planning, please contact Catherine Raju on (07) 3291 5800

Pave the Way

Pave the Way assists families throughout Queensland to clarify their vision for their family member with a disability and to plan to implement that vision. We encourage planning which is vision driven, 'whole of life', developmental, outside service planning and which safeguards family members in the long term. We believe it is other people who keep people safe and support the development of personal networks, including Support Circles.

Contact us

Please contact us if you would like to be on our mailing list, or would like information or assistance developing a vision and plan or developing a support circle or similar network. If you are part of a group of families and would like us to come and talk about these issues, let us know.

Pave the Way
Level 1
1428 Logan Road
MT GRAVATT QLD 4122

Ph: (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402

Postal Address:
Pave the Way
PO Box 949
MT GRAVATT QLD 4122

www.pavetheway.org.au
pavetheway@mamre.org.au

Jeremy Ward
Sharon Bourke
Catherine Raju
Julie van Oosten
Michelle Schneider

jeremy.ward@mamre.org.au
sharon.bourke@mamre.org.au
catherine.raju@mamre.org.au
julie.vanoosten@mamre.org.au
michelle.schneider@mamre.org.au

We want to hear from you

Those on our mailing list should have received a Pave the Way evaluation survey by now. We value your feedback and would like to hear from as many people as possible. Please send us your completed survey by 26th September. If you are yet to receive a survey, or would like an additional copy, please phone the office on (07) 3291 5800. Just a reminder that all responses will be kept confidential and no survey responses will be disclosed to the Pave the Way team.

Upcoming events

Planning for Now, Tomorrow and the Future – Jeremy Ward

Gold Coast 1 October 2008 (CRCC)
Bundaberg 25 November 2008 (Carinbundi)

Building Lifelong Supports & Safeguards – Exploring Support Circles & Networks

Rockhampton 18 September 2008 (PTW)
Caboolture 8 October 2008 (PTW)

Developing a Vision and a Plan – Two day live-in workshops

Location TBA March and June 2009 (PTW)



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Regional visits

Goondiwindi

Julie van Oosten 11-14 Sept 08

Stanthorpe

Julie van Oosten 27 Sept 08 & TBA Nov 08

Cairns

Sharon Bourke 13-16 Nov 08

Rockhampton

Julie van Oosten 17-19 Sept 08

To book into a workshop, please phone the relevant contact. For Pave the Way (PTW) phone (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402, for CRCC phone 1800 059 059, or for Carinbundi please phone (07) 4151 3510. The workshop calendar can now be viewed on our website www.pavetheway.org.au. For all regional visits please contact Julie van Oosten or Sharon Bourke on (07) 3291 5800