

Pave the Way Newsletter

July 2009

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".....people keep people safe."

Inviting people in: what's in an invitation?

An important part of planning for a good life for our sons and daughters with disability involves including others in their lives. Being involved with others is an ordinary thing. We call on friends to share ideas and to help make plans for the future. When we are involved with others we look out for each other and help keep each other safe, emotionally and physically. Based on the belief that it is people who keep people safe, Pave the Way encourages families to develop their own range of strategies aimed at inviting others to participate in the life of their family member over the longer term.

Many families struggle with the idea that we need to **invite** people to be involved. It **is difficult** to ask. However, people often need to be invited because they may not want to appear to be intruding on family business. They may feel unsure about how best to help and maybe, from the outside, your family may appear to others to be so confident and capable that they do not want to offend by offering. An invitation is an honour. It says you are important and that you are welcome. Invitations give people permission to be involved and involvement over time builds a sense of belonging and real trust.

We can invite people to be involved in the life of our family member with a disability, both formally and informally, by:

- Encouraging friendships and relationships that are built on mutual trust and understanding
- Building connections within our own families, neighbourhoods and local communities
- Sharing information with trusted others, verbally and in written form
- Choosing resource people, such as legal and financial advisors, who are willing to understand our family member and our vision for their life
- Building strong networks of people who support us in developing a "good life" for our family member
- Asking people to join us in planning and decision making
- Asking people to join a support circle - to meet regularly, get to know our family member, share time, conversations, and celebrate and plan with us for their present and future.

Inviting others is a proactive strategy that offers a positive opportunity for all involved as relationships grow and strengthen with time.

For further information on this article, please contact Pave the Way on (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402 or by email pavetheway@mamre.org.au

Department of Housing Update

In our December 2008 newsletter Pave the Way outlined concerns with the Department of Housing's revised eligibility for social/public housing, in particular the liquid assets test. This test originally meant that all assets of the person with a disability, including those held in trust for that person, are counted when assessing their eligibility for department housing. See the November update of the Housing Information sheet at www.pavetheway.org.au/resources/index.php.

The department, now known as the Department of Communities (Housing and Homelessness Services), has reviewed the liquid assets test and has made concessions for applicants, but only in regard to Special Disability Trusts. The Department will now match the concession provided by the Commonwealth. This means that if the value of the Special Disability Trust is up to or below the current concessionary limit of \$532,000 then it will not be counted as a liquid asset by the department. If the value of the Special Disability Trust is over \$532,000 then only the excess will be included in the assessment of liquid assets against the department's current limits. The Department will be amending its policy and procedures, and plans to update the necessary fact sheets and other related documents online in July 2009. These documents will include important details including information about property held in trust. It is important to realise, however, that the assets held in trusts other than Special Disability Trusts will still be counted as part of the liquid assets test.

Special Disability Trusts are now exempt from the liquid assets test. Other trusts are not.

New Resources

General Resources:

"A Document of Personal Information: Ideas & Strategies"

Sharing information is one of the strategies for inviting others described on page one of this newsletter. Pave the Way's new resource, "A Document of Personal Information: Ideas & Strategies" is designed to assist families to develop a document of detailed personal information about their family member with disability. Families who have produced a document like this have found it helpful as a way of sharing their vision with others and as a positive way for others to gain a deeper understanding of their family member. It can also help with record keeping and provide a means of keeping up-to-date factual information.

Articles:

Wendy Stroeve uses the analogy of a compass to talk about the importance of having a clear vision for a good life for her son.

Anita O'Brien writes of looking for a home for her son where he can live an independent, meaningful and 'typical' life.

Deb Rouget and **Dianne Mandeville** write about the importance of building relationships and being involved in the local community.

These new resources can be found on our website – www.pavetheway.org.au/resources/index.php

For further information, or to receive the new website resources by mail, please contact Catherine Raju on (07) 3291 5800

Contact us for copies of these new website resources if you are unable to access them online.

Response to Senate Inquiry into Special Disability Trusts

In previous newsletters, Pave the Way has written about the Commonwealth Government's Special Disability Trusts (SDTs). (See newsletters Dec 06; Dec 07; Sept 08; Dec 08 – all on our website.)

Following many complaints that SDTs are too restrictive, a Senate Inquiry was set up in 2008. The Commonwealth Government has now provided its response to the recommendations from that Inquiry. For the full response, visit the Senate website – www.aph.gov.au/Senate/Committee/clac_ctte/disability_trusts/government_response.pdf.

What the Government has agreed to change:

- Unexpended income of a SDT will now be taxed at the trust beneficiary's personal income tax rate, not the top personal rate
- Capital gains tax "main residence" exemption will apply to a property in a SDT so long as it is the beneficiary's main residence
- The list of examples of "reasonable care and accommodation" in government guidelines will be expanded (see also section below)
- The gifting concessions will be reviewed if there is still a low take up of SDTs after another 2 years.

What the Government has agreed to give "further consideration" to:

- Broadening the definition of "severe disability"
- Increasing the assets limit concession to \$1 million, indexed
- Expanding what is "reasonable care and accommodation"
- Providing additional assistance to families, including low cost legal and financial advice and planning services, and developing a training package for lawyers and financial advisers
- Requiring that Centrelink promote SDTs to families
- Considering a change of name, eg, to "disability support trusts"
- Limiting requests for external audits of SDTs to one per year.

What the Government has refused to agree to:

- Annually indexing the gifting concession (currently at \$500,000)
- Extending capital gains tax exemption to property transfers to SDTs
- Allowing SDTs to make "concessional contributions" to super funds
- Extending First Home Owners Scheme to SDTs
- Allowing more than one SDT per person.

Pave the Way is disappointed with the Government's response and hopes it will be prompt with its "further consideration" of issues. Further developments on SDTs will be covered in future newsletters.

"Pave the Way is disappointed with the Government's response and hopes it will be prompt with its 'further consideration' of issues."

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.

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Upcoming Events

Planning for Now, Tomorrow and the Future

Boonah 3 September 2009 (CRCC)
Roma 9 October 2009 (Spiritus)

From Visions to Action Through Planning – (Six day live-in)

Bargara 31 July – 2 Aug 09 & 13 Nov – 15 Nov 09 (PTW)

Regional Visits

Julie van Oosten

Bundaberg Late August – Early September
Rockhampton Late August – Early September

Sharon Bourke

Cairns 1 July – 5 July
Mackay 3 August
Cairns Late September



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To book into a workshop, please phone the relevant contact. For Pave the Way (PTW) phone 3291 5800, Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre (CRCC) phone 3800 9463, and for Spiritus phone 4620 4000. For regional visits please contact Julie van Oosten or Sharon Bourke on (07) 3291 5800 or 1300 554 402. You can also view the workshop and events calendar online at www.pavetheway.org.au/home/workshop-calendar.php.