



Advance

Summer
2017

From the EO

2017 will see big changes for DAIS and the way disability services are delivered in North East Victoria and Southern NSW.

In the last newsletter it was announced that DAIS is intending to merge with Disability Advocacy Network, based in Wagga. This will create an organisation that will be in a position to provide advocacy type activities with the introduction of the NDIS. In this edition there will be more information regarding the merger.

The long awaited National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

It is less than 5 months before the NDIS is rolled out in Southern NSW, and 8 months before it is in Northeast Victoria. Despite the closeness of the rollout, there still seems to be little information about the NDIS available to people with disability and their families. DAIS will be running a series of free workshops to provide useful information about the NDIS.

Class Action results in Compensation

Have you worked in an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) (formally known as a sheltered workshop)? You may be able to receive compensation for underpayment of wages due to a productivity tool used to assess your capacity to do tasks was found to be discriminatory.

Read the David and Goliath story of how Tyson Duval-Comrie, a man with intellectual disability, took on the Commonwealth government and won. This win will benefit over 10,000 people who have worked in employment enterprises as they will be able to claim compensation.

Martin Butcher
Executive Officer

THE NDIS IS COMING!

Southern NSW
July 2017

Northeast Victoria
October 2017

Are you going to be an NDIS participant?
Is your organisation going to provide a service to participants?
Do you know a person or organisation who requires information regarding the NDIS?

Dave our NDIA trained Advocate has all the up to date NDIS information and can provide this to you or your organisation.

To speak with Dave contact DAIS on (02) 6056 2420.



DAVE from DAIS Presents

Understanding the NDIS
Tuesdays in March - 3pm to 4pm
DAIS Wodonga
132 Melbourne Road

Session 1:

March 7 What is the NDIS & how is it intended to work?

Session 2:

March 14 What is Reasonable & Necessary?

Session 3:

March 21 The Planning Phase & Plan Management Options.

Sessions are free for people with disability and families. You can attend one or all the sessions.

Please book on: (02) 6056 2420

If this time or location does not suit you, contact Dave to arrange another session.

In the last newsletter it was announced that Disability Advocacy and Information Service (DAIS) was going to merge with Disability Advocacy Network, (DAN) based in Wagga Wagga, to create a new organisation.

The merger can only happen with the support of members of both organisations. The proposal to merge was presented to members of both organisations at their Annual General Meetings and it was well supported.

These are some of the questions we were asked, and their answers:

Why merge? What is wrong with the way things are?

In a changing world the government is changing the way they do business. It is different from what it was 25 years ago where they funded local organisations to provide services that met local needs, resulting in every organisation doing things differently.

Now government wants to work with a smaller number, but larger, organisations who can deliver a similar service across Australia in a cost effective way. We are in a competitive environment. We need to adjust the way we do things.

What will the name of the organisation be called?

After we held a naming competition it was decided to call the new organisation **Regional Disability Advocacy Service (RDAS)**. The name reflects that the focus of the organisation is to advocate for people with disability in regional and rural areas including regional centres like Wangaratta, Wodonga, Wagga Wagga and Albury.

What region will be covered by RDAS?

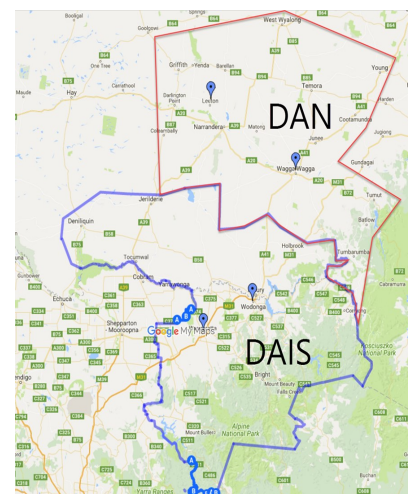
RDAS will still cover Northeast Victoria and Southern NSW, the region currently covered by DAIS, plus the Riverina region covered by DAN.

Will their still be an office in Wodonga?

Yes: The office in Wodonga will be the head office for the organisation, with offices in Wangaratta, Wagga and Leeton.

Do you have any other questions about the merger?

If you have any questions or want to make comments about the merger, please contact Martin Butcher, Executive Officer, on (02) 6056 2420.





EMPLOYMENT CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

THE PROJECT

ECOS was a pilot project funded for 12 months by a Seed Challenge Grant from Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. It was run by Disability Advocacy and Information Service (DAIS).

The purpose of the Seed Challenge was to further develop the idea of ECOS and establish whether or not it worked. At the end of 12 months a 'How To Guide' was developed to guide and empower families to create their own ECOS and share their experiences with others so they too can use the methodology.

ECOS is an option outside of traditional services. There are no contracts to sign and support is freely given. It gives choice and control to the individual as they choose their path, how they are going to get there and the people who are going to help them.

The aim is for individuals with a disability to gain sustainable, socially valued roles in the community, lead more inclusive and economic lives whilst having a naturally occurring, organic support circle behind them to assist them to achieve that.

About the How to Guide

A Workbook and Guide to Creating Your Own Employment Circles of Support was produced to empower families to do it for themselves and then share their learnings with others.

The first section of the guide outlines ECOS and its background, how it came about, the methodology behind it and who was involved.

The second section is a step by step guide with all the work sheets and templates for families to use to assist them to create their own ECOS, and lastly is a section dedicated to the five young participants in the project celebrating their success stories.

An audio version of the Guide is available on the DAIS website. Copies will be available in Braille on request.

For more information and to download the Guide:

www.dais.org.au/ecos
Phone: 02 6056 2420

Transport and the NDIS

Will you be worse off?

Transport is a key to having a good life in the community. It enables you to get to work, to shops or attend a social event.

When the NDIS was first discussed, it promised to cover the full additional cost of transport needed as a result of having a disability. There was also a promise that no one would be worse off as a result of participating in the NDIS.

The experience of people with disabilities in an NDIS trial site, indicates funding of transport may not be as straight forward as first promised.

In the first year of the trial, NDIS participants were asked to estimate how much they would spend each week on transport, including going to work or day activity, shopping or attending a social activity in the community. This amount would be included in the persons' plan and paid to the transport provider, including taxi or community transport. It all went well.

In the second year of the trial, participants could only include in their plans the cost to attend their main activity like going to day program, work or study.

Going shopping or community participation was no longer being covered by the NDIS. It seems that community inclusion and participation was once again seen as a benefit and not important.

By year three NDIS was making a contribution towards the cost of transport. Most people were offered one of 3 levels of subsidies based on a person's activity, regardless of the actual cost of transport.

The lowest level of transport funding provides up to \$1,539 a year for participants who are not working, studying or attending day programs, but who want to access people and places in the community.

The highest level provides up to \$3,326 a year for participants who are working, looking for work, or studying at least 15 hours a week and are unable to use public transport because of their disability.

The NDIS will fund higher level of packages

and assess them on a case-by-case basis.

The changes to funding arrangement came as a shock to some Geelong families. One mother said, "We only found out about the changes to transport when the community transport provider who takes my daughter to school every day contacted me to say her transport package was almost used up. They wanted to know how we were going to pay for the rest of the year."

"Current transport subsidies may go"

The **Mobility Allowance** is currently paid to people over 16 who cannot use public transport without substantial assistance and who participate in approved activities — paid work, voluntary work, study or training, or who look for work for at least 8 hours per week.

The Australian Government is changing the rule to align mobility allowance with the NDIS which will restrict access to essential transport funding to only participants of the NDIS. During the process to change the rules, people with disability gave extensive evidence about the problems with new rules, which was not accepted by the Government.

The new rules will impact thousands of people with disability who will not have access to the NDIS, including people over 65. These rules are against broader government policy encouraging people to remain in the workforce beyond 65 and continue to be productive.

The current mobility allowance can be used to fund the running cost of a private car. It is unclear if this is the same under the NDIS.

Ms Samantha French, Advocacy Projects Manager: Employment and Social Inclusion, People with Disability Australia said, "Many people with disability find that a lack of accessible public transport can be a major



barrier to employment. The Mobility Allowance goes some way to addressing the additional expense of private transport to work for many people with disability, which can often result in them actually being worse off financially."

Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS)

The Scheme is a state-based program that provides half fares to people with disability who are unable to access public transport due to their disability.

Some states, including Tasmania, have started winding back the scheme for people who are receiving an NDIS package.

Families in Tasmania were caught off guard last November when the Tasmanian Government forced them to give up their taxi subsidy card as they had transitioned to the NDIS. The Tasmanian Government has included the funding from the TSS as part of their commitment to the NDIS. The transport minister said the state has handed its responsibility for funding transport to the NDIS.

One parent said it costs him \$700 per month to transport his 2 children with disabilities to school. He is reliant on the subsidy to cover some of the shortfall in cost by the NDIS.

A Launceston lady reported that she was unable to attend a friends birthday party one night as she could not afford the return taxi fare using her disability support pension. She said she missed a rare opportunity to socialise.

The Tasmanian Government have reissued temporary cards to people who have used their NDIS allocation until June 2017. This is to give participants time to find an alternative funding arrangement.

The Victorian Government is currently finalising arrangements with the

NDIA regarding its eligibility for the TSS. They will make announcements later this year.

There appears to be no changes to the NSW Taxi Subsidy Scheme.

Impact on country people

The Maitland Mercury newspaper in the Hunter Valley reported issues with NDIS funding is having an impact on people in rural areas where public transport is not an option, because the NDIS funding does not cover the full cost of accessing transport, and disability service providers are the ones hit with the extra costs.

They are seeing the impact locally where in the past Community Transport providers were creative and provided additional transport to people living in rural towns by transporting several people from one persons package.

Over the past year people with disabilities living in Greater Hume and Towong Shires have reported a reduction in access to community transport. They are no longer able to attend day programs or medical appointments in Albury or Wodonga as the community transport provider has cut it's services.

The community transport providers say they need to significantly reduce the number of trips they do each year to make the organisation more sustainable. They need to be more accountable to the NDIS for an individual's package and can no longer transport other people at the same time.

What you need to do

If you are going to apply for transport as part of an NDIS package, you need to **plan now**.

Calculate how much you spend each week on transport. Consider the total costs without mobility allowance or taxi subsidy as they may not be available.

Do not forget shopping, going to the movies or seeing friends.



People with disability to receive back pay

The courts have ruled that over 10,000 people with disability who were underpaid at government-funded workshops across the country will be able to claim compensation from the Government.

The decision came after 2 men took the government to court arguing that the system used to calculate their wage, based on their ability to do their job, discriminated against them.

Tyson Duval-Comrie is a young man who works in an ADE (Australian Disability Enterprises - previously known as Business Services, and before that as sheltered workshops). Tyson was earning \$1.79 an hour and felt his wage was unfair. He became the lead applicant in a class action on behalf of more than 10,000 workers with intellectual disability whose wages had been assessed using the BSWAT (Business Services Wage Assessment Tool).

Tyson's fight for compensation started 12 years ago when he approached a local disability advocacy service to help him to fight for more money for his work. The advocacy agency referred him on to a Legal Centre for employees with a disability, AED, in Melbourne, and Morris Blackburn lawyers took on the case for free as a class action, meaning that the decision of the court would affect everyone who was assessed the same way.

During one of the many court hearings relating to the issue Tyson asked the Judge "Your Honour, would you work for \$1.75 per hour?"

The court decision means that people with intellectual disability will be assessed using a fairer system.



Claiming compensation

The court's approval of the multimillion-dollar settlement opens the door for thousands of workers to register with the Department of Social Services before April 30, to have their eligibility determined and receive their compensation.

The Government has established a Payment Scheme to process applications.

Eligibility

You must have worked in a ADE for at least one day per week during the period 1 January 2004 ending 28 May 2014, and:

- have an intellectual impairment, which includes an intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, dementia, or impaired intellectual function as a consequence of an acquired brain injury; and
- been employed and provided with employment support by an ADE; and
- received a wage based on a BSWAT assessment, or received a training wage while waiting for a BSWAT assessment.

Register

You must register by 30 April 2017 to take part in the scheme.

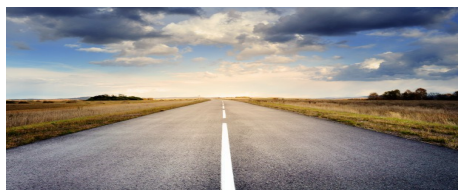
You can register for the BSWAT Payment Scheme in one of the following ways:

- online at: <https://bswat.dss.gov.au/>;
- call the hotline: 1800 799 515;
- email: bswatpayments@dss.gov.au

Contact DAIS if you need more information and help

DAIS provides individual advocacy and information to people with disability, their carers and families in Northeast Victoria and Southwestern NSW.

**THIS
IS
A
FREE
SERVICE**



An advocate will be visiting **Corowa, Finley and Deniliquin** on the dates below. If you wish to speak with an advocate, please phone 1300 886 388 and make an appointment.

Outreach Locations	
HOLBROOK	Library Meeting Room, Bowler Street
CORRYONG	Community Neighbourhood House, 39 Hanson Street
MYRTLEFORD	Gateway Community Health, 32 Smith Street
BRIGHT	Library, 14 Ireland Street
MANSFIELD	Library, Collopy Street
COROWA	28 February, 11 April, 27 June, 22 August, 24 October, 12 December 2017 Corowa Community Hub, Shop 18-20 Corowa Arcade, 113 Sanger Street
FINLEY	10 May, 9 August, 8 November 2017 Intereach Community Hub Shop 1, Central Arcade, Murray Street
DENILIQUIN	2 March, 4 May, 3 August, 2 November 2017 Neighborhood Centre, Cnr Trickett & Napier Sts
BENALLA	Library, Fawckner Drive
WANGARATTA	15-17 Ely Street

Farewell to some members of the DAIS team ...

Jason ~ Justice Support Coordinator

Jason joined the DAIS team in September 2015 as a social work student on placement, predominately learning the Intake process. Jason undertook Justice Support volunteer training and this is where his interest lay. When funding became available at DAIS, Jason successfully applied for the position of Justice Support Coordinator. Jason's strategies significantly increased the number of people with disabilities being supported at court, particularly with Onsite Support at Wodonga and Wangaratta Courts.

Unfortunately the funding only covered 12 months. However Jason succeeded in obtaining a Graduate Program position with the Victorian Department of Justice and has recently commenced his new role.

We will miss his enthusiasm, innovative ideas and his caring attitude, and wish him all the very best with this new and exciting chapter.

Narelle ~ HACC Access and Support

In early 2013, Narelle met with the DAIS EO asking for any kind of volunteer work with us, and commenced learning the Intake process. In August of that year, Narelle began full time employment with DAIS as the HACC Access and Support Worker, a position re-designed and funded by Dept of Health at the time.

Narelle successfully assisted frail, older people, and people from diverse backgrounds to find and access services, particularly in Upper Hume Region. This was achieved due to Narelle having the patience, understanding and empathy required of this role.

We wish Narelle all the best with her future ventures.

Do you live out of town?

Would you like someone to come and talk to you about support services to enable you to stay living at home?

An Access and Support Worker can come and talk to you about some of the services available to you, and assist you to access the services.

Make an appointment on 02 6056 2420.

A HACC funded service for people living in North East Victoria



Contact DAIS

Phone (02) 6056 2420

Toll free 1300 886 388

Email admin@dais.org.au

Offices 132 Melbourne Road Wodonga
15-17 Ely Street Wangaratta

Mail PO Box 982 Wodonga VIC 3689

Web www.dais.org.au

Have you checked out infoTree yet ! www.dais.org.au/infotree

It is continually being updated with new information

■ Events ■ Conferences ■ News ■ NDIS ■ HACC ■ Disability
■ Meetings ■ Activities ■ Training opportunities ■ Transport issues

Alternate formats: This newsletter is available in audio and in electronic format.
If you would prefer to listen to it or have it emailed to you please contact DAIS.



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