



# CJSN Newsletter

A Project of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc.

December 2004

**Seasons Greetings to all our CJSN volunteers and supporters.  
Wishing you all a peaceful and positive 2005**



CJSN training continues in all 3 regions. A recent group of CJSN Volunteer graduates are pictured from left: Leemay Saw (CJSN admin), Rebecca Dickinson, Sharon Marriner, Daniel Pirret, Christine Jones, Janene Cootes (CJSN Educator), James Condren (CJSN Educator). Seated: Phillipa Scott and Jillian McCarthy

## Comings and Goings

The CJSN team said a sad goodbye to Project Manager Anne Stringer in November who decided to make a 'sea change' to the central coast.

In the meantime Southern NSW Regional Coordinator Judy Harper will step in as Acting Project Manager until the position is filled in the new year.

Other changes see former CJSN Educator Janene Cootes job sharing a Co-Regional Coordinator role for the Sydney region with Jane Thomson and Visakesa Chandrasekeram (Vissa) taking over the CJSN educator role. Vissa and Jane come to the CJSN with heaps of experience and we welcome them to the team. ♦

## CJSN makes a novel partnership with Nova

CJSN volunteer numbers were boosted by 20 at one training session recently when Janene Cootes and new CJSN educator, Vissa Chandrasekaram delivered training to staff members of Nova Employment. Nova offers specialist job seeking assistance and post placement support to young people who have an Intellectual Disability.

Martin Wren CEO of Nova attended a CJSN orientation session and as a result arranged for interested staff to undergo training and be able to provide up to 16 hours of support per year during their working hours.

Employees benefit from the professional development opportunity and CJSN clients benefit from having experienced volunteers to support them at court or during Police interviews. A number of the staff who participated in the CJSN training, work from Nova's regional offices and will be able to provide support in their area.

This partnership with Nova is a significant and generous step for an employer to make and the CJSN hopes it may inspire other workplaces to consider the benefits of allowing even one or two staff to provide support as part of their work practice. ♦

## Becoming a CJSN Volunteer

Len Wilson from Newcastle recently retired as a store manager at David Jones and while he was looking forward to filling his time with entertaining guests at home and indulging his love for travelling, particularly local travel, he knew that he also wanted to do something to help other people. He decided to become a volunteer.

Len went to see the Hunter Volunteer Office who put him in touch with Kylie Gersbach, the Regional Coordinator at the Hunter Criminal Justice Support Network (CJSN).

Len was soon attending Court Support training and making plans to complete Police Interview training. He found he was keen to support someone from the Police interview right through to any court proceedings.

Working in management and human resources, Len was used to dealing face to face with people on a daily basis and found these skills useful for volunteer work, though he feels his people skills have developed in new directions as a result of the CJSN training.

Len admits he hadn't had much contact with people with an intellectual disability before becoming a CJSN volunteer and agrees the CJSN training program has given him some valuable insights. 'Lay people on the street don't know enough about the barriers faced by people with an intellectual disability' admitting he hadn't thought much about this himself before volunteering with CJSN, but asserts that it is a 'very real' issue.

When asked what advice he would give to someone considering becoming a CJSN volunteer he says 'If you have a genuine interest in caring for others CJSN is a good place to start'. ♦

## CJSN in the Hunter

The CJSN Hunter office has been very busy for Regional Coordinator Kylie Gersbach, organising training sessions for CJSN police interview volunteers resulting in 14 graduates and seeking expressions of interest from disability services for possible training with CJSN, resulting in a huge response. Two Tafe students on a 3-4 week placement were able to help Kylie during November.

In September Kylie joined other IDRS staff in Dubbo to attend the IDEAS Expo. Kylie and Peter McGhee (IDRS's Principal Solicitor) ran a very well attended workshop about people with intellectual disability and the criminal justice system. Kylie also managed to distribute 60 information packages about CJSN at the Expo.

Support for CJSN from the police in the Hunter has been overwhelming. Sessions aimed at training the police about CJSN have commenced at Waratah, Maitland and Cessnock police stations. CJSN has been encouraged by the positive feedback given on all police supports in the Hunter.

A special thanks from CJSN to the police Educational Development Officer (EDO) who volunteered to spend his day off work doing a presentation for CJSN police support training.

Another source of support for CJSN in the Hunter has been the Department of Juvenile Justice's Youth Justice Conferencing scheme. CJSN is grateful for the training that Youth Justice Conferencing has offered to our Hunter volunteers. ♦

## CJSN embraces Illawarra and the Shoalhaven

Judy Harper, CJSN's Regional Coordinator for the Southern Region, has been energetically establishing the CJSN network in Illawarra and the Shoalhaven.

Without any promotion or publicity there have been 3 police call outs overnight in the Illawarra since the CJSN 1300 phone line went into 24 hour mode in mid August. CJSN has also attended 12 court supports in September and October at Wollongong and Port Kembla courts.

A new group of volunteers based in Nowra have completed training and are ready to provide support to people with an intellectual disability attending Nowra Police Station. At present there are 18 trained volunteers in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven areas.

In addition to coordinating support work and training CJSN volunteers in Southern NSW, Judy has recently conducted two police training workshops at Wollongong Police Station, managed a stall at the Disabilities Expo in Wollongong where 40 information packages about CJSN were distributed, and ran two training sessions for people with an intellectual disability about their rights and how to access the CJSN service.

CJSN is pleased at the positive feedback that Judy has received about our service from the Wollongong Court User Forum, and as mentioned on page one, we are also pleased she has taken on the position of Acting CJSN Project Manager. ♦



## CJSN in Action

CJSN supported a client at Wollongong Court in September who had been served with an AVO notice by the police over a weekend. The client had no accommodation and was not initially provided with a support person. He didn't understand the contents of the AVO, and was arrested 4 hours after the AVO was served on him.

The client then spent two days in custody, bail being refused. He informed various people that he had an intellectual disability to no avail, until he spoke to the Mental Health Liaison nurse at Wollongong Court, who contacted CJSN.

Judy Harper, Regional Coordinator for the South, spoke to the client and canvassed some accommodation options for him. She briefed the Legal Aid solicitor acting for the client, about the client's level of intellectual disability.

The result of the client's court proceedings was that he was granted bail. The last time CJSN heard from the client, he had been provided with accommodation and was doing well. ♦



## CJSN After Hours Lawyers

Recruitment and training of volunteer lawyers to provide legal advice after hours via CJSN's 1300 line is well underway. CJSN thanks the Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales and the Lawyers Reform Association for their assistance in promoting the volunteer lawyers service to the legal community.

The first training seminar for volunteer lawyers took place on the 16 November and provided the lawyers who attended with background information about the of the CJSN service, the operation of the 1300 line and training about communicating, working and providing advice to people with an intellectual disability.

The provision of legal advice is essential for people with an intellectual disability being interviewed by Police about a serious offence. CJSN support workers can only attend a serious offence interview if the client has legal representation.

Without legal advice in such cases, CJSN support workers will be required to withdraw from providing support. If you are a lawyer with criminal law experience and would like to be part of CJSN's on call roster please fill in the form below and fax, email or post it to IDRS. ♦

### Interested In volunteering for the CJSN?

I'm a lawyer interested in volunteering for the CJSN

I am interested in training as a volunteer support worker for the CJSN

Put me on the mailing list so I can keep in touch

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Work phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Fax, mail or email to:**

**Criminal Justice Support Network**  
Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc.  
2C, 199 Regent Street, Redfern NSW 2016

**Fax: 02 9318 2887 Phone: 02 9318 0144**  
**email: [cjsn@idrs.org.au](mailto:cjsn@idrs.org.au)**