



Criminal Justice  
Support Network

# Newsletter

A service of the Intellectual Disability Rights Service Inc.

## Intellectual disability and mental illness

It is known that a significant number of people with an intellectual disability also experience mental health problems. Now that the CJSN database is established, we will have an opportunity to produce some accurate statistics on this, and other areas of interest.

A study by the Australian Psychological Society (APS), 'Bridging Project: Physical Disability and Mental Health'<sup>1</sup> gives some insight; although it focuses on the interplay between physical disability and mental illness, 70% of the research participants also had an intellectual disability.

According to Jenkins & Gulbenkoglou, 1998 (cited in the 'Bridging Project: Physical Disability and Mental Health'), some reasons for the under-identification of mental illness in people with either a physical or intellectual disability may include:

- Accurate diagnosis of mental illness in people with disabilities is made difficult by communication difficulties, which makes information about symptoms, feelings and thoughts difficult to elicit
- Symptoms related to mental illness, are sometimes attributed in a person with an intellectual disability as being a

behavioural manifestation of disability or 'challenging behaviour'

- Poor early detection of emerging mental health condition and mild-to-moderate cases being overlooked entirely
- Attitudinal barriers in recognising symptoms, based on the belief that people with disabilities do not possess the intellectual or personal capacity to be affected by everyday psychosocial stressors and, therefore, are protected from mental illness.

The NSW health system, in common with the other States, has largely grown up with the notion that intellectual disability and mental illness are separate, almost mutually-exclusive issues. The same can be said for drug and alcohol problems – these have historically been seen as being a separate entity to mental illness. It is only in more recent years that the powerful links between intellectual disability, mental health and drug and alcohol have been recognised and services begun to recognise the need for integrated services.

So, the outcome of all this is that people with an intellectual disability may not have symptoms of mental illness responded to in the most appropriate ways, meaning that the mental illness is likely to become a problem in some way – whether through service criteria exclusion, lack of

recognition of symptoms arising from the mental illness and subsequent lack of treatment, reduced understanding of their lived experience, issues and needs, etc. Also, behavioural problems stemming from abuse, domestic violence, bullying or other trauma can be misdiagnosed as being caused by the intellectual disability or mental illness.

In an ideal world, an individual's symptoms would be assessed and treated regardless of cause – the needs of the individual would be looked at in a holistic way, rather than in terms of what symptoms 'fit' into each service sector – we have a way to go.

## References

The Bridging Project: Physical Disability and Mental Health, InPsych Bulletin, Australian Psychological Society, August 2005  
<http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/inpsych/bridging/>

By Alex Faraguna, Manager – CJSN



## Report from the 3rd Forensic Disabilities Conference: Who's In Who's Out and What to do About It

In September, Corinna Nolan, Southern Region Co-ordinator and Alex Faraguna, CJSN manager attended the 3rd Forensic Disabilities conference in Melbourne. The conference focused on three main areas:

- Supporting the inclusion of people with disabilities within generalist criminal justice services
- Promoting collaborative ways of working together to achieve outcomes that meet the needs of people with disabilities
- Assisting clients and their broader support networks to navigate the often-complex service system

The keynote speaker was Professor William Lindsay, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, The State Hospital, NHS Scotland; Head of Clinical Psychology Services (Intellectual Disabilities) NHS Tayside; Chair of Learning Disabilities and Forensic Psychology; University of Abertay, Dundee, and Visiting Chair University of Northumberland, Newcastle. Professor Lindsay's clinical/research interests are in the areas of cognitive therapies, alternative therapies, offenders, and sex offenders.

The workshop presented by Prof Lindsay on anger management programs in correctional facilities was very useful, not only in understanding more about how anger management counselling works; but also because much of the information discussed would be of practical assistance to CJSN volunteers in recognising the early signs of angry behaviour and in dealing with individual incidents of anger and/or aggression.

The presentation given by Prof Lindsay can be viewed online at  
[http://www.cdds.med.usyd.edu.au/html/Flash/Bill%20Lindsay/Bill\\_Evidencebasehandout11\\_07\\_05.swf](http://www.cdds.med.usyd.edu.au/html/Flash/Bill%20Lindsay/Bill_Evidencebasehandout11_07_05.swf)

Reg Marron, a Magistrate from Shepparton in Victoria and Dr Bill Glasser, a consultant psychiatrist from Melbourne presented a very useful seminar on 'special lists' in local courts for people with an intellectual disability, mental illness or acquired brain injury. The session enabled Alex to compare and contrast the Shepparton program with how CJSN works in the Hunter; where informal 'special lists' have been developed. 'Special courts' are sometimes controversial but have many benefits – this seminar was invaluable in considering the possible limitations, concerns and cautions involved in this approach. Alex is in the process of contacting others in Australia who are running such programs, with an aim to establishing networks and developing a sound theoretical model to base the program on.

Other areas covered during the conference included sex offender risk assessment, brain injury, mental health, young and indigenous people, policing and service systems. One of the highlights for Alex and Corinna was winning the prize for our conference poster, based on the Getting Arrested kit. Our 120 X 180 cm poster visually demonstrated how CJSN helps clients at police stations and attracted lots of interest and questions from delegates.



## Spotlight on the Southern Region

Happily, we can report that CJSN continues to receive a variety of referrals from across both the legal and community sectors.

These include Legal Aid, Justice Health, disability service providers, courts and police in the southern region, as we continue to further establish ourselves as a key support provider to people with intellectual disabilities, under the direction of Corinna Nolan, Regional Co-ordinator and the CJSN NSW Team.

## Out and about...

Corinna met with Nowra Local court Magistrate Doug Dick and Justice Health Clinical Nurse Consultant recently at the courts invitation. We continue to be impressed by the openness of this Magistrate and willingness to assist CJSN and people with intellectual disabilities before Nowra court wherever possible. There are many cases where this support has had a direct and ongoing positive outcome for the client – not just in terms of their immediate legal situation but in life-changing terms.

His Honour's flexibility, interest and encouragement towards individual clients has resulted in access to services that have, in turn, provided clients access to housing, counselling, therapy and disability services that many have never accessed before. These services often act as a "circuit breaker" for repeat offenders with intellectual disabilities who often offend only as a result of lack of support, understanding and protection from external influences. Thankyou very much to all Nowra Court staff who make it (almost!) a pleasure for our support workers to support clients at court – co-operative staff make all the difference.

Corinna has been busy introducing herself to agencies across the region since taking up the Regional Co-ordinator role in February and has attended the Disability Interagency at Nowra, the Court User Forum in Wollongong and the Education Disability Expo in Wollongong in just the last few months. Corinna also attended Nowra DADHC meeting where she was invited to attend a team meeting to discuss how we can work more effectively together. We are looking forward to the opportunity and the invitation with eager optimism.

### Ask us over ....

We would love to attend any meetings or forums from Wollongong to Ulladulla (and the Southern Highlands) to discuss issues or present information about our service wherever possible. CJSN often presents information to police, disability providers, court staff, legal services, TAFE and any organisation with an interest in people with intellectual disabilities in the criminal justice system.

We are happy to provide information about legal, court and Police issues with the community sector and disability issues with people who work in the criminal justice system. One of the most effective and important functions we consider, is talking to groups of people with intellectual disabilities directly. CJSN has developed appropriate resources for presentations such as DVDs and for clients to keep such as 24-hour help cards. We are always looking for opportunities to visit group homes and workplaces etc, so please give

Corinna a call on (02) 4236 0044 if you'd like to arrange a visit.

### Our amazing Volunteers...

Sexual assault training was provided for about 20 volunteers in August and was a huge success - Karen Willis from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre reported positive feedback from our volunteers. We also received lots of positive feedback from volunteers about the refresher get-together arranged as an opportunity for volunteers to meet Corinna. We welcome any requests from volunteers for future training opportunities and topics of interest.

### Training provided...

Corinna also presented a two hour training session to the Illawarra Self Advocacy Group and to Flag Staff Illawarra which was enjoyed and much appreciated by everyone. Integral to this training is the CJSN "Train the Trainer" package called "Getting arrested - what to do ". This package includes a DVD and resources for discussing police processes with people with intellectual disabilities. For more information about the kit or CJSN, please contact us in the Southern Office on 4236 0044.

**By Corinna Nolan  
Regional Coordinator – South**



## Admin Volunteer Needed!

CJSN keeps getting bigger and better! As we educate more people in the community such as disability service providers and police, we receive more referrals. This is great – we can see a gradual and steady increase in our profile and standing within the legal community, which allows us to support more people and move towards our aim of reducing the number of people with an intellectual disability in jail.

Every police and court support that CJSN provides generates paperwork. We need to keep track of what is happening for each client so we can provide them with the best possible service and maintain records that help demonstrate to funding bodies that our service is necessary and produces positive outcomes for clients. So, increased client numbers = more paperwork!

We are at the stage where we need a volunteer or two to come in for a few hours a week to help us keep up with record-keeping and administrative tasks. This involved various office-based tasks, including maintaining case files and supplies of new client and volunteer files, photocopying, data entry and other admin work.

You might be a trained CJSN volunteer; have not been able to do many supports, and want to make sure your skills don't get rusty. You might have a couple of hours free one day per week and feel that you'd like to volunteer in our friendly office and keep learning more about what we do and how it all works. We're happy to chat to anyone who'd like to come in and help on a regular basis.

If you're interested, please contact Alex, CJSN manager on (02) 9318 0144 or at [Alex@idrs.org.au](mailto:Alex@idrs.org.au)



## Sydney Update

It's been a busy few months for us in Sydney, particularly as Jane, one of the Sydney Coordinators left us in June. We've been receiving regular referrals from police, correctional centres, disability workers carers and clients, and we're proud to say that we have been able to fulfil almost all requests for support. Some of these supports were extremely time-consuming as we supported clients in two trials in the last month; both of them continuing over a number of days. To our great relief and celebration Joanne Karcz has commenced this month as our new Sydney Co-ordinator in job share with Mitch. You can read more about Joanne below.

One of the most exciting events in the last month has been the recent acceptance of the first Sydney CJSN client into a rehabilitative program run by the Department of Aging Disability and Home Care (DADHC) under their newly created Criminal Justice Program. This program is only available for people with intellectual disabilities who have criminal histories that warrant rehabilitative assistance. In this instance our client has had a tough life and would not be able to break the cycle of imprisonment and then re-offending without some intensive assistance. We are delighted after supporting this client for 6 months of court appearances that the courts have decided to give him a go and

have bailed him into this program. Only 40 people have been accepted into the program in six months.

We are currently in negotiations with corrections at Long Bay to have volunteers trained to assist inmates with the Audio Visual Link (AVL) with courts for bail applications and other such matters. This process is in its early stages however we are looking for indications of interest now from our existing volunteers. Please contact the Sydney CJSN if this sounds like something you would like to be involved in and we will keep you posted.

By Mitch Fraser  
Regional Co-coordinator – Sydney



## A Message from Joanne

After only a few days in the role, and my first court support, I can see that it will be both challenging and stimulating. I have always been interested in things 'legal', and while I briefly volunteered at the Shopfront Youth Legal Centre before starting in this role, I have a lot to learn.

My career since qualifying in South Africa as an Occupational Therapist has taken a few different directions. I have worked in psychiatry, drug and alcohol and aged care. I moved to Australia many years ago and have been in Sydney for most of that time. While my two daughters were growing up I worked part time advising clients with

disabilities on equipment that would enable them to become more independent. I completed a Masters in Health Promotion at Newcastle Uni, and used that knowledge in my work in the Tobacco Control and Injury Prevention Areas. I then changed tack again and for the last four years have been working as an Assistant Coordinator at the House of Welcome, assisting refugees with their transition from Immigration Detention into the community.

I enjoy a challenge and working with people and look forward to meeting many of you either in person or over the phone in the coming months.

By Joanne Karcz  
Regional Co-coordinator – Sydney



## News from the Central Coast

My name is Stephen Buddeke and I am currently working for Central Coast Disability Network (CCDN), which is based in East Gosford. I have been part of the CCDN team since March 2007, which started off on a voluntary basis. My role with CCDN is twofold; to continue to establish the Central Coast Justice Support Network (which was initially set up by Tracey Williams, who has done a superb job), and to provide individual advocacy to people with disabilities, family members and carers. I share the Advocacy position with Donna Thomas, who has been and continues to be very helpful and understanding during my initiation period.

Prior to CCDN I had spent 20 years in the NSW Police.

When I started in the role of the CCJSN project worker, the Police Support roster was running during weekends, commencing from 5pm Fri to 5pm Sun and there were about 8 committed volunteers who filled those hours. The roster would run on a six to eight week cycle and one volunteer would cover the whole weekend period. Recently we were fortunate enough to have trained 5 more volunteers and this has allowed us to expand the roster to include week nights as well. Although still a little light on during the week, we try to run the weekly roster for about two weeks straight, with a week break, then it starts again.

Like some of the other Police Support projects we are hampered only by the education of the Police, or lack of it, in making this project reach the potential it deserves. We have one Sergeant at Gosford who has supported the project for many years and continues to do so, but up until now it continues to be a hit and miss situation. When Sergeant Mortel (or Fabulous Frank as I am led to believe he is better known) is working the requests for support come through thick and fast, but when he is not, we are very light on referrals, which is frustrating to all concerned. Hopefully this may be all changing in the very near future, with the implementation of disability awareness training at both Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water Commands. This training has been developed by Jim Thompson, who works with CCDN and Katie Sewell of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. This is a huge step forward towards acceptance.

The Court Support role is a different story. This just continues to grow every week. At this stage Donna and I offer Court support. The goal of CCDN is to have this role filled by corporate volunteers from other Disability Services. At this stage I have managed to secure two Service Providers, being Life without Barriers and Fairhaven Services Ltd. They have committed to allowing their staff to perform the role of Court Supporter for eight hours a month. This means that these two organisations will release their staff from their normal duties to attend Local Courts in Gosford and Woy Woy for up to eight hours a month, while still being paid by their respective employers. This has been signed off by a Memorandum of Understanding, which is in place for a period of two years. CCDN would like to publicly acknowledge these two organisations for their commitment to this worthwhile and extremely necessary role. We are now hoping to secure further organisations in a similar commitment.

So far this year we have given support to over 20 clients, with a number of clients having return visits to the court. One of the most rewarding results was when a client's charge was dealt with by way of Section 32, after numerous convictions for similar offences, over a period of time. The Magistrate finally realised the man was unable to understand any orders placed against him and no matter how many times he was charged with the same offence and no matter how many bonds, etc. he was going to be placed on, he did not understand the concept of the order, so how could he understand that he breached it. I don't know if our support assisted in this decision, but we were certainly

recognised by the Magistrate, who thanked us for our support.

We have a long way to go, but we also have a committed team at Gosford. I would like to thank the tireless volunteers, who make this type of support possible. I would also like to mention Shirley Bye, Manager of CCDN and Donna Thomas, my work partner in the Individual Advocacy, for their patience and support.

By Stephen Buddeke – Central Coast Disability Network (CCDN)



## Newcastle Update

Court days at Newcastle are going well with Peter McGhee continuing to represent clients on a fixed day per month. Clients clearly benefit from his expertise around Section 32 applications and the local Magistrate appreciates Peter's knowledge and skills in this area. CJSN volunteers are present and do a fantastic job of supporting large numbers of clients on these days, in addition to all the supports they provide during the rest of the month. Many referrals are made to the Salvation Army Positive Lifestyle Program and workers from DADHC also attend to lend their assistance where appropriate.

In October, our Newcastle volunteers participated in training from Karen Willis,

Manager of the NSW Rape Crisis Centre on supporting victims of sexual assault. Karen provided an insightful and thought provoking seminar on the prevalence of sexual assault and the myths surrounding this crime which often make the legal process much harder for victims. The group discussed practical strategies to help victims at the police station and at court. Feedback indicated that although sexual assault is an emotive and difficult subject, the seminar was presented sensitively and the practical skills learned would be useful.

By Sally Chopping  
CJSN- NSW Outreach



## Outreach

Leonie Kirwan has been busy planning the next six months' training and networking schedule; identifying several regional trips with the aim of talking to local service providers about setting up police and court support schemes.



## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES...

The CJSN volunteer information session is an opportunity to learn about CJSN and how we operate as a volunteer network. It's also a chance to see if volunteering with us is really for you. Those who go on to

complete the training will participate in a free two day court and/or Police support training program. Please contact the regional coordinator in your area if you would like more info about volunteering with CJSN.

## Contact CJSN

### SYDNEY Office

2C/199 Regent Street  
Redfern NSW 2016  
Ph: 02 9318 0144  
Fax: 02 9318 2887

### HUNTER & Outreach Office

Level 1, University House,  
300 King Street,  
Newcastle NSW 2300  
Ph: 02 4921 8826  
Fax: 02 4921 8866

### SOUTHERN Office

P.O. Box 127,  
Jamberoo NSW 2535  
Ph: 02 4236 0044  
Fax: 02 4236 1729

**State-wide 24/7 Support Line**  
**1300 665 908**

## Getting Arrested – What to do!

Getting Arrested – What to do is a package of training resources designed to teach people with learning, intellectual or other cognitive disabilities what it means to break the law and what to do if they get arrested. The resources are also suitable for other groups, e.g. young people.

The package includes:

**Mini movie DVD/Video "Getting Arrested – What to do!"**- Mini-movie with the experiences of a young man, Tim, when he was arrested. Tim tells the audience what to remember and shows what to do.

**Photo book**- reflects the information in the DVD/Video.

**Animated DVD/Video**- animated bail conditions: "Don't break them – It's just not worth it". This was funded by the Law and Justice Foundation and explains what bail conditions are; what can happen if someone breaks them and possible need, and how to change some routines to satisfy them.

**Training notes**- background legal information, lesson plans and training activities.

To enquire, order the package or to ask about the free training please call Criminal Justice Support Network 7 02 9318 0144 or 1300 665 908. You can also use the order form on the Intellectual Disability Rights Service website: [www.idrs.org.au](http://www.idrs.org.au)

The package costs 60.00AUD; you may apply to have the cost waived.

