



northcott  
disability services

A newsletter for clients and supporters of Northcott Disability Services, an organisation that provides support to over 6000 children and adults with disabilities and their families across NSW and the ACT.

# Northcott NEWS

Edition 2 2008

## ABORIGINAL PLAY LINKS LAUNCHED

ABORIGINAL families in south-west Sydney with children up to 6 years of age now have access to a supported playgroup run by Northcott Disability Services in partnership with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal medical service based in Airds Campbelltown.

Aboriginal Play Links was officially launched on Wednesday April 2, 2008. The Aboriginal Play Links group will run each week thanks to Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and funding provided by the NSW Department of Community Services under the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy.

The primary focus of the playgroup is to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in South West Sydney access to a community based playgroup; however, all children and families are able to participate in the group's activities.

The funding has allowed for the employment of Aboriginal Family Workers, who will support parents and carers by providing resources and information regarding appropriate services and agencies available in the community. Family Workers at the playgroup will also provide a variety of developmentally and culturally appropriate play activities designed to support the child's growth and development, as well as promoting cultural pride within the community.

Northcott Disability Services CEO, Kerry Stubbs, is thrilled with the funding and is excited to work in partnership with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation.

"This is the first time Northcott has received funding that is specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and we look forward to

working with Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation and other services and agencies in south-west Sydney," Ms Stubbs said.

**For further information please contact Leanne Charles on (02) 4640 8704 or Pam Simon on (02) 4628 4837.**



**The beginning...** [Back row: L to R] Team Leader of Northcott's Family Resource Links, Leanne Charles, and Aboriginal Family Workers Christine Dargin and Kelly Hampton. [Front row: L to R] CEO of Northcott Disability Services, Kerry Stubbs, Playgroup participant Jemma Hampton and CEO of Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation, Daryl Wright.

## Message from the CEO



Dear Friends,

I have now been at Northcott Disability Services as the Chief Executive Officer since late February, and I am finding each day more interesting and exciting.

I have been fortunate to meet many staff, clients, carers and supporters of Northcott as I have been moving around the state to rural and regional offices and also visiting programs held in the Sydney area. During the April school holidays I was able to attend some of the programs for children and young people held at Northcott's Central Office.

Everywhere I go I am overwhelmed by the passion and dedication of the families of clients, the supporters of Northcott and by the competence and caring nature of the staff members I have met. May I take this opportunity to thank you all.

Northcott can only continue to advance its purpose of building a more inclusive society and giving people with disabilities every opportunity to participate in that society with the support of clients themselves, their families and friends, donors, governments and staff. We need you all to work with us and I hope to meet as many of you as possible and hear your ideas. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if there is an opportunity for me to meet with a group of people and talk about what Northcott can do to improve or extend its services.

Next year, Northcott will be celebrating its 80th birthday and we are already beginning to plan how we might best do that. I hope you will all be celebrating with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kerry Stubbs'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a large, faint orange number '8'.

Kerry Stubbs  
Chief Executive Officer

## National Disability Coordination Office

NORTHCOTT has been successful in securing funding for the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program, thanks to an initiative of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

The NDCO program assists people with disabilities to make transitional arrangements between school, vocational and technical education, higher education and employment by providing information, coordination and referral services for people with a disability.

The program will service the Illawarra, South Coast, Southern Highlands, ACT and Riverina areas.

## Respite for Older Carers

NORTHCOTT Disability Services will now be able to provide respite to people with disabilities and their older carers in nine metropolitan and regional areas throughout NSW, thanks to an initiative of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

This respite service will offer a range of flexible options for families, including in-home respite, community access and centre-based respite. Northcott is in the process of establishing these services, which will be operating in the coming months.

## ECAT

NORTHCOTT's new Early Childhood Assistive Technology (ECAT) project, funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Cares' early childhood initiative, is a service that provides information, advice and support regarding technology options specifically for children aged 0-6 years, their families, carers, teachers and therapists.

The ECAT project provides training, small group screening assessments and a technology loan pool for early childhood intervention services, centres and their clients across NSW.

**For further information on any of Northcott's Services please call 1800 818 286 or visit [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au).**

## Breaking boundaries

JO Ragen is a lot more than meets the eye – and that's exactly what she is determined to share with the world.

At 38 Jo has completed both a Bachelor and Masters Degree from the University of Technology, Sydney and has been a lecturer and Course Coordinator with the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Sydney for the past five years. She is currently undertaking her PHD focusing on risk-taking and play for children with disabilities, in particular osteogenesis imperfecta (OI).



*Achieving goals... Jo Ragen after meeting with parents at Northcott's Metropolitan Family Support Service playgroup.*

OI is a brittle bone disease where bone density is low and the risk of fracture is high. Jo herself has OI and would like to work with organisations and families to communicate how important it is for children with OI to have the opportunity to enjoy and experience their childhood by participating in everyday activities with less focus placed on the risks they might face.

"Let your kid make choices, let your kid be a kid, despite OI," Jo said. "Parents need to understand that a disability becomes more than a diagnosis, due to the attitudes of people."

Growing up with OI, Jo utilised the support provided by Northcott's Respite and Recreation Service, which provided her with the opportunity to take part in sports programs and camps. Her positive attitude coupled with the support of services provided by Northcott has seen her develop into a happy, independent and self-sufficient adult.

Along with her teaching and studies, Jo volunteers her time to talk to parents of children with OI at support groups, including one recently held by Northcott's Metropolitan Family Support Service. Jo offers these parents support and understanding on how they can ensure their children gain the most out of their childhood.

Jo is fully independent and encourages others to "know who you are and discover your own limitations, by setting goals and going for them. Do the things you want to do and don't let things get in the way."

## In the regions

### Southern NSW

NORTHCOTT has established a new regional base in Queanbeyan to manage a number of additional programs in Southern NSW. Two new programs have commenced, consisting of the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program and a Respite for Older Carers program, with staff based at offices in Dapto and Queanbeyan.

### Dubbo (Western NSW)

MOTHERS of children with disabilities in the Dubbo region escaped to the Turon Gates Retreat (featured on *Getaway*) for a slow-paced, stress-free Mothers Weekend. Mothers participated in bushwalking, a trivia night and art therapy.

### Wagga Wagga (Riverina)

A new centre-based respite house at Wagga Wagga is being established thanks to funding from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC). This respite centre will provide servicesto individuals aged 6-65 with physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as high support needs and challenging behaviours.

### Tamworth (New England)

THE Tamworth office is running some new activities for the fathers and siblings of people with disabilities including recreational camps and movie and pizza nights. Mothers were pampered as the Mothers Weekend in May took 20 mothers to see the stage production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* along with some shopping therapy in Sydney.

### Coffs Harbour (Northern NSW)

STRONGER relationships are being established with clients across the Northern NSW region thanks to 'Meet 'n Greet' afternoons held at the Coffs Harbour office. Three camps for children with a disability, along with a Fathers' and Mothers' weekend, are also scheduled for later this year.

# Super Skills for Living

NORTHCOTT Disability Services recently hosted Super Skills for Living, a workshop designed for Northcott clients aged 5 - 18 years of age who have a range of disabilities impacting on their ability to complete daily living activities, such as showering and dressing.

Occupational therapists guided participants through a number of fun activities involving the use of zippers and buttons, pulling up trousers and socks, tying shoe laces and using long-handled aids for dressing and showering. Individual workstations were used to allow one-on-one therapy input.

Dale Carn, Occupational Therapist and organiser of Super Skills for Living, said that an important part of the workshop is children learning new techniques from one another.

"Each child was asked to bring his or her most difficult piece of clothing. We then worked

together to establish the best technique to put that item of clothing on," Dale said. "Our goal is to help the children establish the best technique for their individual abilities so they can become more independent as they move towards adulthood."

**The next scheduled Super Skills for Living workshop will focus on techniques for eating and drinking. For further information please contact Dale Carn on (02) 9890 0103.**



All tied up... [L to R] Occupational Therapist Melanie Hughes guides Cooper in tying his shoelaces independently.

## Valued volunteers



Dedicated volunteers... [L to R] Pam and Tom in the Northcott Library.

*Pamela Mudford and Thomas Lennox are two of Northcott's most valued volunteers. Pamela and Thomas began volunteering together at Northcott in 1996. Twelve years on Pamela, 64, and Tom, 79, don't plan on stopping any time soon.*

### What sort of work do you do?

Pam: I originally started in fundraising, helping to mail appeal letters and pamphlets. We then helped in the Northcott Library, which is where we are now. Since 1999 we have also worked at the Goodwill Charity Card Shop, which opens from October – December each year, where we help sell Northcott Christmas cards. In addition to this we are both heavily involved in the Thomas Hepburn Lennox tertiary education scholarship program that Northcott offers.

Tom: We have also had the opportunity to attend some very enjoyable events with Northcott clients, including the Sydney Royal Easter Show

on Northcott's 70th anniversary, the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games in 2000 and one of Northcott's Interschool Sports Carnivals.

### Why did you choose to volunteer for Northcott?

Pam: I have a personal affinity for Northcott's Computer Assistive Technology Services (CATS). My mother had motor neurone disease and I think services like CATS are invaluable.

Tom: Originally I came only because I had to drive Pam. I was invited to stay for a cup of tea and then I just never left! I found the work that Northcott does so inspiring that I wanted to be part of it.

### What do you enjoy about volunteering?

Pam: My volunteer work at Northcott is a very rewarding experience. I love seeing my efforts directly benefit people.

Tom: It is always a pleasure to volunteer at Northcott. We have made lots of wonderful friends among the staff. However, what I enjoy most is seeing the results of our work, especially when I hear about the advances and achievements of the Thomas Hepburn Lennox scholarship recipients.

**There are a variety of volunteer positions available at Northcott Disability Services to suit all ages. For further information please contact Kelly Burton on (02) 9890 0505 or visit [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au).**

## Northcott makes a splash

SCHOOL students with disabilities across Sydney competed at Ryde Aquatic Leisure Centre as part of Northcott Disability Services Interschool Swimming Carnivals held in March, 2008.

Two separate carnivals were held for high school and primary school students.

A variety of races were run, including freestyle, backstroke, open stroke 12m through to 50m races, relays and novelty events. Prize ribbons and carnival shields were awarded with the Balmain Campus of Sydney Secondary College winning the senior division and a combined schools team taking out the junior division.

Northcott Disability Services organises a variety of Interschool Sport Carnivals for school-aged children with a physical disability once a school term every year, including swimming, football, athletics and soccer carnivals.

Claire Garside, organiser of Northcott Disability Services Interschool Sports Carnivals, said that the sports carnivals allow children with disabilities the opportunity to compete against children who have similar abilities to their own.

"There are not many opportunities for children with disabilities to play sport in an accessible environment," Claire said. "Many schools rely on Northcott to assist in providing sporting opportunities and activities for their students with disabilities."

**Northcott's Athletics and Soccer Carnivals will be held in the months of August and October, 2008. For further information please contact Claire Garside on (02) 9890 0143.**



*Fun in the water... [L to R] Northcott client Reyna Pineda is supported by Occupational Therapist Michelle Sain.*

## Northcott opens its doors

NORTHCOTT Disability Services opened its doors to the local community for a Family Fun Open Day at its central office in North Parramatta on Sunday March 16, 2008.

Up to 150 people from all walks of life attended the inaugural event which raised awareness and educated the community on the services and support that Northcott Disability Services provide. Guests enjoyed a free BBQ and children were entertained with face painting, balloons, temporary tattoo artists and a variety of games, including the opportunity to experience activities in a sports wheelchair.

The Parramatta Eels offered their support by providing giveaways and a visit from their mascot Sparky, who was joined by Northcott's Spina Bifida Group mascot Spinasaurus. Northcott also received outstanding support from a range of local businesses, with an overwhelming number of prize donations for the raffle draw.

Visitors also had the opportunity to tour Northcott's Computer Assistive Technology Service (CATS) and Northcott Equipment Solutions (NES) workshop.



*A day of fun... Northcott clients Travis Welsh (bottom left) and Jade Askin (bottom right) join in the festivities with the Northcott Spina Bifida Group mascot Spinasaurus and the Parramatta Eels mascot Sparky.*

# Doodling to make a difference

DOODLES drawn exclusively for Northcott Disability Services by over 50 Australian celebrities were put under the hammer for auction at Northcott's inaugural Celebrity Doodle Auction, held on Wednesday February 20, 2008 at the Arthouse Hotel, Sydney.

The event raised more than \$12,000 for Northcott's Recreation Service, with Ken Done's doodle the highest earner on the night raising \$800.

Julie Charlton, Northcott's 2007 Spina Bifida Awareness Week Ambassador, was the star of the night, sharing with guests her experiences of growing up with spina bifida.

The event would not have been possible without the generous support of celebrities and the

community, in particular from major sponsors the Arthouse Hotel and Eckersleys.

**If you are interested in organising a fundraising event in support of Northcott Disability Services, please contact Carol Hanna on (02) 9890 0954.**



*Picture perfect... [L to R] Comedian Darren Sanders with Julie Charlton who uses Northcott's Recreation Service.*

# Driven to success

A motivated group of four-wheel drive enthusiasts from across Australia conquered the remote wilderness of the Victorian High Country on April 20 – 25, 2008 to raise \$100,000 for Northcott Disability Services.

One hundred participants took part in the charity 4WD tour run by Drive4Life, an Australian not-for-profit organisation set up by a group of 4WD enthusiasts to raise funds for children and adults with a disability.

The idea was the brainchild of Drive4Life founders Mick Whitehead and Chris Bates after they realised the costs and support required by a friend's son Ben Keyte, who uses a wheelchair for mobility with the support of Northcott Disability Services.

"When we learned about Ben's unique situation and how much Northcott has helped, we knew we had to do this fundraiser for Northcott," Mr Whitehead said.

All proceeds raised help to support Northcott Equipment Solutions' (NES) equipment loan pool. NES is a unique service that provides equipment and support to people with disabilities across NSW and the ACT.

**For more information or to register for the 2009 Drive4Life event visit [www.drive4life.com.au](http://www.drive4life.com.au).**



*Leading the way... Drive4Life founders Chris Bates (left), and Mick Whitehead (right) with Northcott client Corey Webster.*

# Support Northcott

**Run for Northcott at the City2Surf:** To fundraise for Northcott Disability Services at this year's City2Surf on Sunday August 10, visit [city2surf.sunherald.com.au](http://city2surf.sunherald.com.au) and select Northcott as your charity of choice.

**Support Northcott and treat yourself:** Northcott is now selling The Entertainment Book, a restaurant and activity guide that provides special 25 - 50% off and 2-for-1 offers from many of the best

restaurants, hotels and attractions. The books are available for three areas including The Hills, Blue Mountains and Macarthur regions, Sydney North and Sydney.

Up to \$13 from every book purchased will go to Northcott Disability Services. **Order your book today by calling Dianne Pawlak on (02) 9890 0509.**

**FEEDBACK** To share your opinions or suggestions for improvement or if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Roxanne Martinenko on (02) 9890 0170 or email [pr@northcott.com.au](mailto:pr@northcott.com.au).