



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 1 2008

## Spina Bifida Awareness Week 2007

Promoting ability, achievement and inclusion

SPINA Bifida Awareness Week is held across NSW each year from September 1-7.

The Northcott Spina Bifida Group, a division of Northcott Disability Services, uses the week to highlight the achievements of people living with spina bifida. Spinasaurus, the official mascot of The Northcott Spina Bifida Group, visited hospitals and schools across NSW to promote the week and educate the community about the disability.

Spina bifida is a neural tube defect (NTD) and means "split or divided" spine.

It occurs when a baby's spine does not close properly during the first month of pregnancy.

Dr Carolyn West, Staff Specialist at the Spina Bifida Rehabilitation Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, indicates that in Australia each year, one in 1000 pregnancies is affected by a NTD such as spina bifida.

Julie Charlton, eight-year-old Middle Harbour Public School student, and her mother Jane Charlton, who were Northcott Ambassadors for 2007 Spina Bifida Awareness Week, toured schools and hospitals across NSW to educate students about the disability.

The Northcott Spina Bifida Group provides support and information to individuals living with spina bifida and their families across NSW and the ACT. **For more information, contact Kayleen Flood on (02) 9890 0990 or email [sbgroup@northcott.com.au](mailto:sbgroup@northcott.com.au).**



Spinasaurus spreads the word... (L-R) Northcott's Spina Bifida Awareness Week Ambassador Julie Charlton, Amy-Lea Attard and Spinasaurus.

## Message from the CEO



NORTHCOTT Disability Services is witnessing an exciting stage of history and growth thanks to new funding, both recurrent and one-off, that we have received from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC).

The new funding has allowed for the expansion of services across the state, including the first Aboriginal Play Links Group in Macarthur and additional flexible respite for ageing carers in nine locations across NSW.

In this issue of Northcott News, read about the launch of our new office in Penrith. Northcott's Board and Management, in consultation with various stakeholders and most importantly clients, identified a need to provide services in the Nepean Region. This office is significant not only for Northcott but for the people of Penrith and greater Western Sydney, who now have access to dedicated disability services closer to home.

Thank you to those who supported Northcott's inaugural Gumnut Baby Badge charity pins, which last year raised \$140,000 for Northcott. Show your continued support by purchasing the second series pin (details on back page).

Sadly, Glenn Gardner recently announced his resignation as CEO of Northcott Disability Services, which took effect in December 2007. Glenn will not be far away, accepting the role of CEO of Ability First Australia, of which Northcott is a founding member. Glenn would like to sincerely thank the dedicated Northcott staff, volunteers, Board and Management, donors, corporate supporters and most importantly, our clients, who have played such an important role throughout his 19 years with Northcott. I am sure that with your ongoing support, Northcott will continue to get even better at providing opportunities and choices for people with disabilities across NSW and the ACT.

The Board has appointed Ms Kerry Stubbs as Northcott's next CEO. For the past five years Kerry has been the Executive Director of St Vincent's Hospital and Sacred Heart Hospice. I have taken up the position of Acting Chief Executive Officer until Kerry Stubbs officially begins as CEO on 25 February 2008.

Acting Chief Executive Officer and  
Director Operations

## Broadening services across the west



A new era... (L to R) Northcott client Joel Smith with Karyn Paluzzano MP and Kristina Keneally MP.

NORTHCOTT Disability Services' clients and their families in the Nepean area now have access to programs and resources locally with the launch of a new office in Penrith on June 13, 2007.

The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP, Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, officially opened the premises on Coombes Avenue that will be available for use by clients from a number of programs including Northcott's Individual Community Participation Program, Western Sydney Therapy Team, Jobmatch and Intensive Family Support.

Master of ceremonies, Northcott's CEO Glenn Gardner, acknowledged dignitaries including Penrith State MP Karyn Paluzzano, Director General of the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care Brendan O'Reilly and Chairman of Northcott's Board Phillip Cave AM.

Minister Keneally said the new facility would provide a range of programs for adults and children with a disability living in the Penrith, Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury regions.

## Fun-loving Kaitlyn



Playful... Kaitlyn Bromley enjoys a giggle at Northcott's Christmas Party in Wagga Wagga.

KAITLYN Bromley of Tarcutta near Wagga Wagga is a cheeky and outgoing three-year-old.

Being the youngest of five siblings allows her to get up to mischief. Kaitlyn, who is of indigenous background, has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair for mobility. She has been supported by Northcott Disability Services for two years. Along with her mother Jacqui, Kaitlyn attends the regular spina bifida clinics held at Northcott's office in Wagga Wagga.

"The clinics are great as it saves me a trip to Sydney and makes it much easier on the whole family," Jacqui said.

Kaitlyn also uses Northcott's Flexible Respite service in Wagga Wagga, which provides a broad range of respite services to meet the needs of the individuals with a disability and their families/carers.

"I've been able to take Kaitlyn to various outings through the Respite service, including the circus," Jacqui said. "Being able to bring her siblings along makes the outings particularly special."

Kaitlyn currently attends preschool one day a week, enjoys drawing and painting and adores her two dogs, a chihuahua and fox terrier.

"She loves getting in her wheelchair and getting out and about," Jacqui said. "She's such a social butterfly and gets on really well with everyone at her preschool, and more than often she has them in hysterics."

## In the regions

### Coffs Harbour

CHILDREN with disabilities who use Northcott's services in Coffs Harbour were recently treated to a day of respite on Friday July 13, 2007 thanks to funding provided by the Department of Sport and Recreation. Children experienced a sense of freedom by participating in a number of gymnastic style activities and routines provided by instructors at the Lynks gym.

### Dubbo

NORTHCOTT'S Dubbo Office worked with other services in the region to plan a Carers Week Expo, held in Dubbo on Thursday October 18, 2007. The expo provided carers from across the Orana region with a great opportunity to meet with other carers and find out about which services are available in the community. The expo attracted over 100 carers from towns across Dubbo.

### Tamworth

TAMWORTH Respite House recently celebrated its 20th birthday celebrations. Over 70 people attended the day, including Northcott's local fundraising committee, Northcott staff, clients and their families, external service providers and business supporters, including regular supporters Good As New.

### Wagga Wagga

THE 30th anniversary of the Narrandera Northcott Auxiliary was celebrated at an enjoyable luncheon at the Narrandera Bowling Club on Wednesday August 1, 2007. In the time that the auxiliary has been carrying out its fundraising activities, more than \$55,000 has been raised to support services for children and adults with disabilities living in the Riverina.

# Jobmatch Employer of the Year Awards

NORTHCOTT Disability Services' employment service Jobmatch held the inaugural Jobmatch Employer of the Year Award at the Northcott Conference and Function Centre, North Parramatta on Tuesday July 17, 2007.

These awards were created to recognise the valuable contribution that employers have made by providing Northcott clients with the opportunity to maintain sustainable employment. Nominations were based on three categories: small employers with 10 or less full-time employees; medium employers with between 11 and 200 full-time employees; and large employers with more than 200 full-time employees. To be considered as a finalist, applicants were judged on the following: the number of employees with a disability, integration of employees with a disability and career planning for employees with a disability.

The overall winner on the night was ParaQuad who received the prestigious Employer of the Year Award. Post-Polio Network, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia and the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing were winners of the Small, Medium and Large Business of the Year awards respectively.

Northcott's Jobmatch service is a free, specialised employment service which assists people with disabilities to find employment opportunities in the open labour market. **For more information on Jobmatch, contact (02) 9890 0970.**



Winners are grinners... Back row (L-R) Paraquad staff Kris Hume, Renata Consiglio, David Sinclair and Julie Watson. Front row (L-R) - Northcott clients Ron Gibson and Peter Simpson.

## New Look Northcott website

Northcott Disability Services has launched a new and accessible website, complete with a calendar of events and recent news updates. Please visit [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au)

## Northcott and SWD smooth sailing

NORTHCOTT Disability Services has established a partnership with Sailors with disabilities (SWD), an organisation that offers programs for children and carers, providing them the opportunity to experience sailing. SWD have generously offered to continue providing further sailing opportunities for Northcott clients, carers and staff. A number of events, such as carers sailing days, recreation sailing days and the NRL Rookie Regatta will directly benefit Northcott carers by providing them with the opportunity to have time off from their support role and will also allow Northcott clients to experience the joy of sailing, through steering the boat or just taking in the feeling of freedom on the water. **Please contact Mitch Taylor on (02) 9890 0166 for more details.**



Smooth sailing... Northcott client Ralph Hasna enjoys a sail on the harbour at the 2007 NRL Rookie Regatta in January.

# Chris cycles for charity

FOR Chris Pomirski, embarking on a 500km bike ride across Vietnam as part of Northcott Disability Services' 2007 Charity Cycling Challenge was an adventure he will never forget.

Northcott invited adventurous Australians to take part in its Vietnam Cycling Challenge in March 2007 in an effort to raise much-needed funds for the organisation. Chris, a 38-year-old Estimating Manager at Mainbrace Constructions, answered the call.

As part of the Cycling Challenge, Chris was required to raise a minimum of \$5000 through sponsorship and fundraising events. Chris and his work colleague Toh Luu raised a total of \$11,500, with Mainbrace generously donating \$6000 to the two employees.

For Chris, participating in the challenge was a decision close to his heart. Chris's 10-year-old daughter Mia has congenital muscular dystrophy, more specifically merosin deficient 1A, a rare subtype of the condition, and is currently supported by Northcott Equipment Solutions.

"Participating in the challenge was a great opportunity to support not only Mia, but other families who also have a child with a disability," Chris said.

Chris, who undertook three months of intensive training in the lead up to the trek, says it was well worth the hard work and encourages others to take part in the challenge.

"It was an incredible and rewarding experience to be involved in; a once in a lifetime opportunity to see Vietnam, meet some amazing people and raise funds for children and adults with disabilities," Chris said.

To register for Northcott's 2008 Charity Cycling Challenge to Vietnam and China, please contact Jamie on (02) 9907 7088 or visit [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au)



All in the family... (L-R) Max, Chris, Mia and Sandy Pomirski.

## Northcott Disability Services VIETNAM BY BIKE 2008



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WEDNESDAY 19/03/2008 – TUESDAY 01/04/2008

After the great success of the first Northcott Disability Services inspired adventure to Vietnam in 2007, we are getting back on our bikes to do it all over again.

**A fundraising adventure like no other, this ride will be the highlight of your year!**

Riding a mountain bike along the highways and byways of Vietnam is without doubt the most rewarding way to experience this rich and varied destination. Travelling by the same mode as the local people enables one to interact and gain a mutual respect that one would not normally encounter by alternate means.

We are able to better absorb the long and complex history of the country as well as enjoy the beautiful scenery of the coast, plains and highlands that have drawn so many travellers.

Most of all is the warmth and hospitality of the many, many Vietnamese people we meet in our travels. Along our route you will be in contact with the real Vietnam – an experience you will find hard to forget.

“What a trip! Vietnam is a fabulous country with beautiful people, wonderful scenery and great food.”

Don Johnstone Northcott Vietnam Cyclist 2007



To find out more or register [CLICK HERE](#) or call Jamie now on 02 9907 7088 or email him [jamie@inspiredadventures.com.au](mailto:jamie@inspiredadventures.com.au)

# Celebrity



# Auction



Come and support Northcott's Celebrity Doodle Auction. Celebrities from around Australia have autographed their drawings to support children and adults with a disability. For your chance to bid on a celebrity doodle and to rub shoulders with some of the artists at the event, purchase a ticket for only \$65.

**When:** Wednesday February 20, 2008

**Where:** The Arthouse Hotel -  
275 Pitt Street, Sydney

**Details:** Carol Hanna on (02) 9890 0954 or visit  
[www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au)

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## Snugglepot and Cuddlepie

\$5 Gumnut Baby Badge  
Supporting Children  
with Disabilities

Available nationally until  
8th February 2008



An initiative of  northcott  
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NORTHCOTT Disability Services receives some Government funding. However, Northcott relies on the generosity of the community through bequests and other donations which help provide support to over 6000 children and adults with disabilities and their families across NSW and the ACT. To find out how you can help, or to donate, please call (Freecall) 1800 818 286 or visit [www.northcott.com.au](http://www.northcott.com.au)

## Feedback

WE welcome your feedback. If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please email [pr@northcott.com.au](mailto:pr@northcott.com.au). If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please contact Roxanne Martinenko on (02) 9890 0170 or email the above with your details and we will remove you from our mailing list.