



Wise Words for a Back Bending Life

Brain Injury Matters Newsletter

September 2009

Issue 1

Welcome to the NEW Brain Injury Matter's first newsletter. Each quarterly edition will have interesting items, tantalizing tit-bits and bits of information which could be very useful. There's also a quarterly calendar of upcoming events which you should write in your diary, straightaway. It's been a long time coming but ENJOY!!!

We hope this newsletter will be enticing, encouraging you the reader to keep coming back for more. One way to ensure it's got things that interest you is by you contributing anything you wish; it could be photos, poems, drawings or articles. (e.g. your personal story). The only catch - it'll have to get past the tough editing staff, who incidentally all have ABI themselves, so it's a consumer-driven venture. For all contributions please contact: lbrumtis@hotmail.com or pfergs@optusnet.com.au or larissalice@gmail.com or ph: 9687 3231

Finally, any feedback is welcome, positive or negative, though hopefully more of the former. Also check out the new logo for our newsletter. This image comes from artist and BIM member Larissa MacFarlane. It is an etching that was shown at the recent Connection 09 exhibition at the Arts Centre, during August. To see more of the art work at the exhibition, go to www.statetrustees



THIS MONTH'S EDITOR...

For those who don't already know I'll tell you a bit of the 'Peta Ferguson story'. I did two years of law at Melbourne University, dropped out, hitched round Australia, then in 1983 I had a brain haemorrhage, which left me unable to walk or talk. I spent five years in the Brain Trauma Unit at Mont Park (hell on earth - classified unfit for human habitation ten years before I was admitted). During my time there I underwent intensive rehabilitation and in 1989 I walked out saying bye-bye! I then saved my medication for a year and took a massive overdose. I went back to Mont Park, this time a purely psych ward. I met my husband there, three months later we moved in together, then his three children came 24/7 (including one son with Asperger's). Two years on we decided to get married, then had a biological child. Then ten years later I decided I wanted some space, so we got divorced. Since then I've done a Cert IV in Disability and become very involved in the disability field, not surprising really.

Brain Injury Matters facilitates self-advocacy and community education for people living with an Acquired Brain Injury. Our aim is to help people living with ABI to realise potential for a full life within a supportive community and increase community awareness about ABI.

<http://www.bim.org.au/> Ph:(03) 9639 7222

ABI in the Media

Earlier this year there was an interesting radio program on ABC Radio National, 'The Silent Disability, ABI and the Justice System'. It covered issues such as the over representation of people with ABI in our prisons. I think the statistic was as high as 60% of prisoners had some ABI. This is compared to the general population where people with ABI represent 20%. It also talked about the lack of diagnosis and treatment and understanding of ABI in legal courts, which keeps many people with ABI in and out of the prison system.

The program was first aired on *All in the Mind* on a Saturday in May.....

If you would like to listen to this program, and you have Internet access, simply go to this link and you can download or pod cast.

www.abc.net.au/rn/allinthemind/stories/2009/2561220.htm

If you can't access the Internet then SARU can make a copy for you on a CD. Phone Sue on 9639-6856

Larissa MacFarlane

Disability Support Pension vs the Old Age Pension

Which pension should I choose? Should I be old or disabled? Not a great choice but one we have to make. That is one question you need to ask yourself at 'that' certain point of your life. Or more correctly, 'which pension is more worthwhile? The differences are obvious, for an Old Age pension one must be of a certain age - if you are a male, you must be at least 65 years old, if you are a female, that all depends on when you were born - see the table in the next column.

BORN BETWEEN	AGE
If born before 1 st July, 1935	60
1/7/1935 and 31/12/1936	60.5
1/1/1937 and 30/6/1938	61
1/7/1938 and 31/12/1939	61.5
1/1/1940 and 30/6/1941	62
1/7/1941 and 31/12/1942	62.5
1/1/1943 and 30/6/1944	63
1/7/1944 and 31/12/1945	63.5
1/1/1946 and 30/6/1947	64
1/7/1947 and 31/12/1948	64.5
After 1/1/1949	65

If you are on DSP (Disability Support Pension), you may qualify for extra payments/benefits, which include: PES (Pensioner Education Supplement) If you are of the Old Age Pension age and are receiving a Disability Support Pension, you may choose to receive either one, depending on your circumstances. For example, the Old Age Pension does not have the regular review requirements of the Disability Support Pension, because once you're old, you are old. There is no reason to review it.

If you are disabled though, so are receiving a Disability Support Pension, you may, all of a sudden, once you reach 65, if you are a man, 60-65 depending, if you are a woman, all of a sudden be 'cured' of everything that may ail you!

For more information or to discuss your own personal circumstances, you can ring Centrelink's Financial Service on 132300. So, at this point you can choose to be disabled or you can choose to be old. The choice is yours.

Lisa Brumtis



Meet our EI Presidente!

Peta Ferguson interviews Neil Cameron, President of Brain Injury Matters

Peta: How long have you been involved with BIM?

Neil: I have been involved with BIM since 1995-6

Peta: How did you get involved in the first place?

Neil: I learnt about BIM after the Peninsula ABI Support Group started in early 1995. We invited John Wakefield to talk to us demonstrating the BIM presentation. At that time Lea Kewish was instrumental in reforming BIM and developing self advocacy with very good speaker training. I was fortunate enough to be one of the early members in the establishment of BIM.

Peta: Why is BIM important to you and the broader ABI Community?

Neil: BIM is vital to the community as it demonstrates the effectiveness of self advocacy following ABI. BIM has an ABI member base, particularly with committee members needing to have an ABI before they can represent, which strongly demonstrates the needs and support required by the larger community to re-establish their abilities following ABI. BIM is important to me to allow me to provide a service to individuals so that they can re-establish themselves as I have learnt to do.

Peta: What are the plans for BIM into the future?

Neil: BIM has plans to lead the way in self advocacy, self development through forming Speaker groups educate governments, local, state and federal. Pass on information to industry as to the needs of people with ABI and explain to the general community.

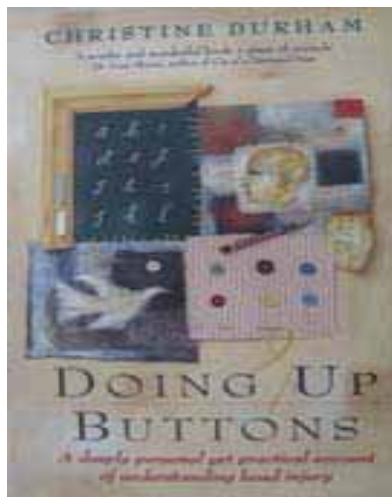
Peta: Where does your passion for BIM come from?

Neil: I developed a passion for BIM when I first became involved with the group. The passion grew from a range of people with ABI of all professions who developed the ability to explain their needs to the community, something that wasn't available until that time. When I first had my injury I was unaware of anyone else having similar difficulties I was experiencing.

Peta: What are your hobbies or interests?

Neil: I have a lot of different interests probably the most significant is Australian plants as prior to my accident I was managing a large wholesale /retail nursery business. I also have an interest in cars, mainly veteran and vintage as I was a collector.

These interests take a back seat now as I am not able to pursue them and my priority is earning income, as Centrelink do not believe my injury is of significant status to qualify for assistance. I might add, my earning capacity is low in the spectrum of existence lower than survival as I still prefer to be self employed.



Lisa Brumtis interviews Chris Durham, author of '*Doing Up Buttons*'

What has helped you on your journey with A.B.I.?

One major thing that has helped me is DETERMINATION. Whatever it's called, whether it be 'determination' or 'stubbornness', it's the very useful quality to have, because regardless of what you're told, you *know* you can achieve it, regardless of what the 'it' is. HOPE also is vital and Christine hopes this research will bring HOPE (Help Other Possibilities Emerge) for people with ABI.

Can you describe the research you are doing?

The research aims to find out from people who **have** an ABI things that have helped them cope with ABI – their insight into their difficulties and feelings and things they have discovered that have helped them. This 'information' will then be made available to people who have an ABI. I would describe the research as 'informative', because the very few people who *know* about brain injury, seem to actually know very little about it. So, this research will be from the 'experts', the people with ABI.

The last thing that people with ABI want, or need, is another test, so instead, the research uses 'The Cage of ABI' and 'talk-about' cards, to help the 'experts' (the people with ABI) explain what ABI is like for them. So doing this research, with people who actually have ABI (the 'experts'), will, hopefully, be informative in that it will consist of information that will be helpful to others with ABI, so that they can help themselves and it won't be just *guessing* what it is like, its negative parts, as well as the more positive counterparts.

Why do you think the research is important?

I would say, the research is important because people who actually *have* ABI, will be sharing information with others who *have* ABI, people who actually understand, so it will be a true account of what it's like to have ABI, not just a thoughtful/educated guess. The insights gained will be made available to people who can learn from the insights and experience of others. For more information email: christine.durham@student.rmit.edu.au or phone: 9925 7376

Now, this part is my personal take on Christine Durham and her research/work. I believe Christine has achieved quite a bit with her book '*Doing Up Buttons*', which is a wonderful explanation of ABI and its effects. With her research, when finished and released, it's bound to offer wonderful, and precise, information on A.B.I. (Acquired Brain Injury), and not only to people with ABI, but also to professionals.



WESABI UPDATE

WESABI is a self-advocacy group for people with ABI that meets monthly in Footscray for lunch, discussion, special workshops and speakers. Recent speakers have included ABI author, Christine Durham, Jackie Ward from SARU, and Vanessa from Brainlink.

We had a mini writing workshop leading up to Brain Injury Awareness Week 08, and collected some great quotes about ABI that were distributed widely. In January, we also had a photography workshop and many of us entered our photos in the local community photo exhibition. We have also learnt about practical ways of dealing with depression and about advocacy.

The WESABI office has recently been temporarily relocated to the SARU offices at Ross House. This will make it easier for people to get more involved. Stay tuned for an upcoming meeting to plan WESABI's future! Otherwise, come along to a monthly WESABI lunch and meeting. We meet 12-2pm, at the Maribyrnong City Council, on the 3rd Friday of the month. **Ring Ria 93293039 for more info**

Larissa MacFarlane

Calendar of Events

25th September 2009 - The Victorian Women with Disabilities Network will be holding their Annual General Meeting. This will be held in conjunction with a forum on "Women, Disability and Leadership", co-facilitated by *Leadership Victoria*. 12:00 AGM / 2:00 Leadership Forum. A light lunch will be served between events. The Jasper Hotel, Ground Floor, 489 Elizabeth Street

24th – 27th September - Triplicity by Weave Movement Theatre. Weave is a Melbourne company of performers with and without disability. Triplicity is part of Melbourne Fringe Festival. Ph:

23rd September - *The Great Debate 2009 - 'Has Life Improved For People with Disabilities?'* We know that people with disabilities are living longer and that the services have almost doubled over the past 10 years – but has life improved for people with disabilities? This provocative debate aims to explore the gains experienced by people with disabilities as well as identifying areas needing improvement. Wednesday 23 September 2009, 1pm to 4pm. Hume Global Learning Centre, 1093 Pascoe Vale Road, Broadmeadows. Book online at the [Field website](#). For more information, contact Josie Prioletti on 0438 846 584 or Marie Ireland at Maree.Ireland@field.org.au.

30th September (Closing) - 3CR Community Radio is now calling for proposals from people with disabilities to share their own stories, record their music and arts or record other material for broadcast on 3rd of December 2009. This event coincides with International Day of Persons with a Disability celebrations. Proposals Due by 30th September Ph: 03 9419 8377 or email currentaffairs@3cr.org.au

21 – 25 October - The Awakenings Festival 2009 Australia's only regional disability arts festival is set up to do it again. For information phone (03) 5382 1919 or (03) 5382 1905

30th October (Closing) - *The future is a foreign country: they do things differently there.* Imagining the lives of people with disability in the world of tomorrow **CALL FOR WORKS** for an exhibition of art by people with and without disability to be held at Gasworks Arts Park in December 2009. Entries are due by 5pm on Friday 30 October, 2009. To enter, please download the Entry Form from www.field.org.au.

3rd October – Mad Hatter Music Festival. An event for Mental Health Week Saturday 3rd October 1-5pm Federation

8th October - Songlines a musical performance by OMABI . This event is part of Mental Health Week.

17th -18th November - 2nd Strengthening Disability Advocacy Conference presented by DARU, SARU and VDAN. For information contact the SARU on 9639-6856 or email saru@rosshouse.org.au

