

Kew Cottages Parents' Association Inc.

NEWSLETTER

- MARCH 2008 -

*Representing
the concerns of
families of
Victorians with
profound and
severe
intellectual
disabilities
since 1957*

A 'first': A First Word from Louise . . .

I hope members will forgive me for placing my 'word' on page one this month. Don't fear. I have no intention of making this a regular occurrence. While I have received some very nice feedback on my little column (particularly the one featuring my good-looking beasts Otto and Belle) it generally doesn't warrant the position as 'lead story'.

This month, however, I felt an exception needed to be made in recognition of the significance of the couple of months ahead for the residents, families and staff at Kew Cottages - and also for the Association.

With the opening of the 20 on-site CRUs fast approaching (estimated residents' move date is 13 April!), the necessary changes within KCPA are also underway in preparation for our move off-site at the end of April.

Members will have already seen the notice about our new postal address in the February 2008 newsletter.

As yet, we can't tell you where our new office will be - though we have had very encouraging discussions with a local church that has historical links to Kew Cottages and our community; however we hope to be able to announce our new location in the April newsletter. Yes. Just by the skin of our teeth!

I am in a slight 'state of denial' about the move. The very thought of not having regular contact with a few of the residents at Kew who I now consider to be my dear friends, and the tremendous support of the care workers and administration staff, makes me terribly sad.

I need to qualify this moment of selfishness with a big balloon of optimism about the future. The move of the residents into their new houses and the gradual growth of the new community on this site are both to be celebrated. And, although the Association will not be sharing the same land, we will continue to be very much a part of this community, as

indeed I hope we continue to be for those individuals who have already moved into other suburbs.

An ending of sorts, but it is also a beginning, and I want to personally assure our members that the commitment of the Association will not waver. However, some of our operations may require some tweaking.

One of these is the reduction of the frequency of our general meetings to four per year, plus the AGM (*see diary dates page 2*). We are also in the final stages of planning another addition to our newsletter which will see the development of a new "information bulletin" (yet to receive a 'title') which will be issued to families twice per year.

This bulletin will contain information which, we hope, will help family members, advocates, friends and direct-care staff to better advocate and support their intellectually disabled relative or friend.

This document will contain many of the 'helpful hints' we traditionally include in our newsletter, plus a range of new articles about other aspects of service provision to people with intellectual disability. We hope that this bulletin will prove to be a useful aid for members to keep close at hand.

Having said this, however, I trust that members can be patient with us over the next 12 months as we put the first couple of editions together and forgiving of any 'improvements' that will inevitably be required. As always, the committee welcomes members' feedback, comments and criticism.

KCPA executive officer, Louise Godwin

Kew Cottages Parents' Association - Archival Collection

The Association has engaged the services of professional archivist, Mr **Bruce Smith**, to assist us to sort and catalogue our archives, and hopefully secure a long-term home for these important records in one of Victoria's main library collections. This investment of both time and money will ensure that the Association's long and important history is safely housed and fully accessible to interested individuals in the future.

Special insert this month: Victorian Government Inquiry into Waiting Lists for Disability Services

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Kew Cottages Parents' Association:

SUPPORTING CHOICE IN SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Farewell Pat Sheehy

Carmel Keogh contacted the Association recently to let friends know that her mother, **Pat Sheehy**, passed away on 1 January 2008 after enduring eleven months of chemotherapy. Carmel writes:

We had a lovely Christmas together with our extended Sheehy family. Mum was well enough to thoroughly enjoy Christmas but she suffered organ failure just before New Year and died quickly in the end. We are grateful that she didn't suffer after the fight she had already put up.

We gave Mum a great send-off in Hopetoun on 7 January 2008. Her funeral was huge and the support from the local community and from relatives and friends was of great benefit to the family.

Her daughters delivered the eulogy and we made it a celebration of her life and managed not to cry. The grandchildren put together a slide-show to show at the hall where all the mourners gathered for lunch after the burial.

James and his reaction was our big concern - his usual behaviour when someone dies is not to mention them again. But his Mum was such a big feature in his life that we wondered how he would process the information. He seems to be understanding and tells us that "Mum has gone to heaven". James has always loved the dark and the moon has a special significance for him now.

James celebrated his 50th birthday on 3 February, and we had a family/friends party at our house on Saturday 2 Feb and another party at his house on Sunday 3 Feb for family/housemates/staff and TAFE friends. James was delighted with it all. It was good for the family to gather in celebration.

Thanks for this chance to update you about James and his loss.

Regards to all

Carmel [Keogh]

Diary Dates

2008

General meeting dates
all 2pm-4pm

Sunday, 30 March (*note
change to 5th Sunday, due
to Easter*).
Venue: Old Pharmacy, KRS

.... to be followed by
meetings **every second
month**

**Venue for following meetings
to be confirmed:**

Sunday, 25 May

Sunday, 27 July

**Sunday, 28 September (also
AGM)**

Sunday, 23 November

Jim Scully writes ...

As many of you may recall, last year I wrote a series of columns that summarised some of the results from the KCPA membership survey that was conducted in 2006.

However, this month I want to raise an issue which is very important to the future of the KCPA.

If the KCPA is to continue representing the needs of people with intellectual disabilities **we need new members for our Committee**.

We need at least five Committee Members to be present at our monthly Committee Meetings so that we have a quorum and can enact decisions regarding the day-to-day operation of the Association.

It is also vital that we attract new Committee Members to provide us with fresh ideas about how best to represent the needs of the membership and enable the KCPA to enter this new phase of its life with confidence and vigour.

In the two years that I have been on the Committee I have learned more about intellectual disability than I had learned in my previous 30 years. This occurred because being on the committee allowed me to draw on the knowledge of KCPA members with years of experience in advocating for their

loved ones. Older members who have contributed so much over the years pass on their knowledge to the next generation.

Being on the Committee is not as big a commitment as you might imagine. What we really need from Committee Members is attendance at the monthly Committee meetings (which are currently held on the second Tuesday evening of every month) and at the quarterly general meetings and the Annual General Meeting. If unable to attend please let us know.

Committee Members respond to a small number of emails or phone calls from our President, Leo, and our Executive Officer, Louise, about how the KCPA should respond to issues as they arise. Other members of the Committee will always be there to provide guidance, so you shouldn't feel that being a Committee Member is too much responsibility to handle.

Being a Committee Member also opens up opportunities for getting involved in KCPA activities. For example, I joined the Tootgarook sub-committee which has been a great experience. Whether you want to be involved in such ancillary activities is entirely up to you.

Many KCPA members have already spent time as Committee Members, so while we welcome former committee members coming back for another stint,

we are particularly calling on the younger generation - ie, siblings, nieces, nephews or anybody with an interest in looking out for people with an intellectual disability.

Anyone is eligible to become a Committee Member - you don't even need to currently be a KCPA member of or have been involved in the KCPA previously.

If you're still undecided, let me tell you that being a Committee Member is a sure-fire way of learning a lot about how best to advocate for people with an intellectual disability. Alternatively, if you are planning or starting a career in disability services it is a great way of getting some experience. Being a Committee Member will give you an enhanced sense of self-worth from knowing that you are doing something to help people who need your help. It also will enable you to meet some truly wonderful and dedicated people who are already working behind the scenes at KCPA and in the disability field in general.

- Please send me an email at James.Scully@muarc.monash.edu.au if you are interested or if you want further information call **Leo Waterfall** at home on [03] 9570 3195.



A Eulogy for Hilda Logan

(Offered by her friend **Elsie Welchman** at the celebration of Hilda's life on Wednesday 20 February 2008.)

It is a privilege for me to speak about a friendship that began in September 1959 with Hilda and her son **Andrew**. How to do justice to nearly 50 years of a wonderful friendship in a few minutes is the difficult part.

Our Association began at a parents' meeting at the Oakleigh Centre when Andrew and **David** were accepted into their kindergarten. This centre was established in the early 1950s by a voluntary body to care for and train young boys and girls, adolescents and young adults.

In the early days Government help was negligible and so began years of raising funds to improve the lives of intellectually-disabled citizens so that they could grow up in a world which did not set them apart.

To this cause, Hilda put her shoulder to the wheel serving on general and mothers' club committees, making goods for various street stalls, conducting fashion parades, beauty quests and fete stalls, selling raffle tickets, and attending harness racing nights. Who could forget the dolls' stalls and those beautifully crafted dolls Hilda dressed in their finery. To cope with so much demand on fete days she worked on them all year round.

The companionship forged by the mothers all working for the same cause had to be seen to realise the happiness generated in the group. Yes, there were ups and down along the way. It wasn't all peaches and cream. Health wise, the strain of coping with a hyperactive runaway child with many pursuits over neighbouring fences and streets and calling on police to help in the search for the missing boy, had its toll. This happened almost on a daily basis. The trauma of the necessity to place her son Andrew in a boarding situation in Kew Cottages. The hardest thing for a mother to accept is that someone can care for your dearly-loved child better than you can yourself. Hilda again made herself available, serving in a voluntary way on every committee associated with Kew Cottages to provide programs etc for residents. She also worked with CIPAID and the Orphans' Trust Fund. If a program became non-negotiable, she started another. For example, Network Q. Many parents should feel very grateful for her dedication to the whole field of intellectual disability.

Hilda was always mindful of the work of the dedicated staff and her appreciation of their efforts led her to try so hard to improve their working conditions. Her appreciation knew no bounds, and she loved and respected them all.

Hilda's greatest achievement came, I believe, when the powers-that-be decided Kew Cottages would close and the residents moved out into the community.

To find a suitable block of land in Narre Warren for a home and then convince the Department of the viability of the project. This sounds so simple, but it took a great deal of time and effort on Hilda's part to achieve. But eventually with great satisfaction. Today, a beautiful homely place now stands on this site with five male residents, including Andrew and David, happily housed with very caring, dedicated staff and much-relieved parents seeing their sons so contented and settled.

The residents all attend day programs in Dandenong and Narre Warren areas, also as a result of Hilda's persistence in breaking down any barriers to the fellows being accepted into their centres.

The following words, I feel, describe Hilda's life:

*I shall pass through this world but once.
Any good thing that in that passing I can do,
or any kindness that I can show to any human being*

*Let me do it now.
Let me not defer it, nor neglect it.
For I shall not pass this way again.*

To Andrew, your lovely mother loved you dearly and respected you always. Her lifelong devotion to you is an example for us all to follow.

From Andrew, perhaps we should say thank you for your love and kindness and showing that you cared, but most of all I want to say thank you so much for being there.

Good bye Hilda, you have earned your rest.

So until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Christmas 2007 was a lovely time for me. I went to Holland and celebrated Christmas and New Year's Eve with my daughter and two granddaughters. We left Holland in 1954 and started a new life in Australia. My two daughters and our John were born here and grew up. Then the elder daughter met a Dutch migrant. After a while they became engaged and married. They now live in Holland with my two granddaughters. The visit was lovely but it is the goodbye which hurts; Holland is so far away. Goodbyes ... goodbyes ...

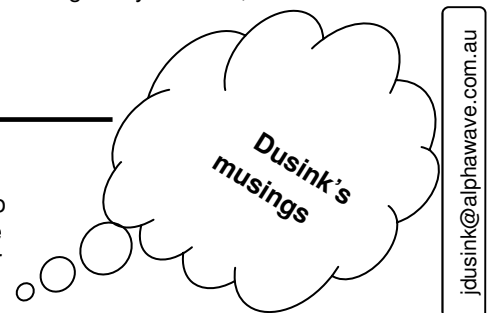
Dr **Corinne Manning** [oral historian, Kew Cottages History Project, LaTrobe University] talked at our last general meeting about her book, "Bye Bye Charlie".

This book is based on interviews with

parents who told Corinne about the birth of their child and what happened between the birth and the difficult road to bring their child to the Cottages because it became impossible to look after him or her at home.

All were, in a way, similar stories of parents struggling to accept that their child was different and in the end realising that it had become impossible to look after them at home. Then followed the sad moment of saying goodbye and leaving your child at Kew. A moment impossible to forget.

It brought back our own struggle to leave our John at the Cottages. How do you explain to your five-year-old daughter that her brother is to be looked after in that place? I remember her asking me if John would come back home again as soon as he could walk.



The book "Bye Bye Charlie" is a reminder of the struggle parents of children with intellectual disability have today under the present Government approach to services for people with intellectual disability.

There is a little bit of good news, however: last month, the Victorian Liberal Party moved a motion in the Legislative Council to set up a review of supported accommodation. Hopefully we will see some long overdue action on unmet need. [see this month's insert]

Time to heed cries for help

(Letter to the Editor, *Progress Leader*, 22 January 2008)

There is deep irony in a Kew family having to drive an hour and a half to access an early childhood intervention service for their son with Down Syndrome, when 100-or-so years ago Kew Children's Cottages was acknowledged as leading the world in services for children with disabilities: ["Young cry for help" (*Progress Leader*, January 1).]

Some 30 years ago, the Premier's Committee inquiry - which came about because of concerns about Kew services - made strong recommendations about the need for far more by way of early-years support.

Last year's Senate report into disability services recognised that the weight of responsibility on countless families is a crushing and unreasonable one.

It is time Mr Brumby faced up to his government's responsibilities and made decent funding available.

There should be no waiting lists for children with disabilities.

Margaret Ryan

Caulfield North

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KCPA OFFICE AND CONTACT DETAILS:

New office hours: Tue & Thu, 10am -3pm.

[NOTE: Office hours may change during school holidays.] All correspondence to
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KCPA Membership, Enquiries, Advice & Support:

Louise Godwin Tel: 9854 1388 [KCPA office] or Mobile: 0422 093832

COMMITTEE EXECUTIVES:

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE: <http://kewcottages.alphalink.com.au> [NOTE: Does **not** need **www.**]

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