

# Ability Links NSW Newsletter



Issue # 4, February 2015

## The Inaugural Ability Links NSW Linker Gathering, Rydges World Square – 17 to 18 November 2014

The Inaugural Ability Links NSW Linker Gathering was held at Rydges World Square, Sydney, 17-18 November 2014.



A Visual Representation of Day 1 at the Linker Gathering

The event was a huge success with 310 people attending the event, including 246 Linkers from all 16 Ability Links NSW providers and joint working arrangements, who came from across the state.

Also participating in the event were provider program and management representatives, Ability Links NSW Advisory Committee representatives (past and present) and a range of other people who have assisted in the evolution of the program.



The Hon. John Ajaka MLC

The Linker Gathering was facilitated by Waleed Aly and Laura (Mole) Chapman, with guest speakers including the Hon. John Ajaka MLC; Deputy Secretary ADHC Jim Longley; Nick Gleeson (Ability Links NSW Ambassador), Nathan Basha (Living Life My Way Ambassador); Pino Migliorino (Cultural Perspectives); Susan Moylan-Coombs (social justice advocate); Aaron Pederson (*My Brother Vinnie*), Wayne Griffiths (Winanga-Li) and other distinguished guests from across the state.

The Linker Gathering had a fantastic energy from start to finish and gave Linkers from all of the state the chance to meet their colleagues and network to build opportunities for supporting a statewide team approach.

One of the key aims of the Linker Gathering 2014 was to establish a statewide network of Linkers, irrespective of which provider they are employed with or where they are located across the state. This is particularly important for Linkers in rural and remote communities.



The Linker Gathering

A key outcome of the Linker Gathering has been the significant increase in the percentage of Linkers who have now made connections with more than 20 Linkers outside their own organisation. In addition 88.3% report they have plans to collaborate or follow up with Linkers they have met at the Linker Gathering.

## How Ability Links NSW Works: an Analogy

A Linker is like a Global Positioning Service (GPS) device. They are a source of a great amount of information; they know where to go; and they can

suggest a great number of different paths to get there, depending on where someone is on their journey. People with disability, their families and carers are like drivers. They are always in control of the path they are taking and are listening to their GPS device (Linker) for useful information.

## Ability Links NSW in ACTION

Sarah was the full-time carer for her mother, who had recently passed away from a terminal illness. Sarah's local Linker had connected her to the local Neighbour Aid Volunteer Program in November 2014. Since then the Linker has noticed Sarah's self-confidence has grown. Sarah is now so confident she has taken the initiative and begun looking for paid employment with the support of her Linker. This is a goal Sarah has been working towards for the past 18 months.

Sarah recently informed her local Linker she has been successful in an application and been offered a full-time assistant nursing position at a local nursing home. The position will continue to support her nursing studies. Sarah is ecstatic and nervous about her new job. Sarah reports she feels great support from her Linker who continues to encourage and work with her so that she can remain employed and expand her nursing qualifications.

*\*Names have been changed*

## Local Launch Events



*Ability Links NSW Community Artwork – Kempsey.*

In late 2014, the North West Alliance held a local launch event at the Macleay River Festival on the Mid North Coast. The Ability Links NSW team invited members of the community to contribute a tile to a community artwork. Kempsey based artist Francesca O'Donnell coordinated the creation of

the inclusive community art-piece. Three hundred community members contributed a tile or had a chat to a Linker. The completed artwork is being installed at the Kempsey Library.

Ability Links NSW providers are continuing to host local launch events in their local communities. The local launches have proven to be successful in promoting their organisation and the Ability Links NSW program.



*Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Incorporated - Ability Links NSW local launch event (Gunnedah).*

## A Co-design Approach

Ability Links NSW is built on partnerships and collaboration. This approach has supported the on-going development and operation of Ability Links NSW program. An example of this is through provider driven working groups.

Ability Links NSW ADHC staff and providers have been active in the data and reporting, communications and promotions, and learning and development working groups.

## The Aboriginal Advisory Committee

The Ability Links NSW Aboriginal Advisory Committee is continuing to influence and make recommendations around best practice of Ability Links NSW within Aboriginal communities.

All committee members bring a range of expertise

# Ability Links NSW Newsletter



*Issue # 4, February 2015*

to the program, as well as a strong voice from their local communities. The committee will continue to support Ability Links NSW and the Aboriginal providers now they are all established within communities across NSW.

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee has plans to expand in the near future.

## Ability Links NSW Evaluation Nominated as Finalist for Social Impact Measurement Awards

The Ability Links NSW Evaluation is a finalist for a 2015 Impact Measurement Network Award in the category of 'Achievement in Impact Measurement by a Government, Corporate or Philanthropic Organisation'.

The winners will be announced at an Awards Dinner in February, 2015.

## District Senior Project Officers

FACS District Senior Project Officers (SPOs) have done a fantastic job in supporting Ability Links NSW providers. SPOs have contributed to the development and implementation of a range of components of the Ability Links NSW program.

SPOs have been valuable in providing local level knowledge and expertise. Their contributions include, coordination of local briefings, facilitating local connections for Linkers, whilst also being active members of state-wide working groups and the Linker Gathering.

## NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout

Ability Links NSW hosted a stall at the NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout Carnival 2014 in Raymond Terrace. This was a great event for Linkers and ADHC staff to connect with the Aboriginal Community and share the information that Linkers are now working in their local

communities.

The program was well received and Linkers are continuing to attend other events to connect with their communities.



*NSW Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout*

## Ability Links NSW and the National Disability Insurance Agency Partnership

Ability Links NSW in the Hunter is working alongside the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). The providers, Barkuma Neighbourhood Centre and The St Vincent de Paul Society, support individuals who may be in receipt of an individualised package for services, but also wish to make stronger connections with their community through the Ability Links NSW program.

## Branding Guidelines

Ability Links NSW is built on partnerships. With the support and input of the Ability Links NSW providers, the branding guideline is now finalised.

The Ability Links NSW branding guideline provides clear communication to providers on the proper use, consistent application of the Ability Links NSW brand and ensures that the Ability Links NSW program is readily recognised in communities throughout NSW.

# Ability Links NSW Newsletter

Issue # 4, February 2015



## Ability Links NSW Hunter Update

Ability Links NSW launched in the Hunter region in July 2013 with 35 enthusiastic and wide eyed Linkers. In just 19 months, Ability Links NSW has created a well established identity within the communities across the Hunter and Central Coast. The word "Linker" is well known and the Linkers themselves have created strong connections within the communities they work.

life. We are all very proud to be associated with a program that is ground breaking and truly committed to creating social change.



*The School Leavers Program*



*NAIDOC Week*



*A walk in the park 2013*

The team in the Hunter and Central Coast have provided information and linkages to more than 1800 people. The teams have watched as the people they work alongside reach their goals in the areas of education, training and employment, social connection and participation in community

## For more information

If you'd like to find out more information about accessing Ability Links NSW, you can contact the Ability Links NSW provider within your local community.

Additional program information is also available on the ADHC website at:

[www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/abilitylinksnsw](http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/abilitylinksnsw).