



Action on Disability with Ethnic Communities

Spring Edition 2003

# Community News

## Fun at Melbourne Museum - Sunday 10 August 2003

On a sunny Sunday in August, several carers and their families, who are matched to volunteers as part of ADEC's GreatBreak Programme, took off for a day to Melbourne's Museum. We were very lucky to have been granted money for entrance fees and lunch thanks to CarerLinks North, a bus for the day courtesy of Dyson's Bus Company, and a wonderfully patient volunteer bus driver, Manny Mizzi. We also had one volunteer companion for each of the nine families to help out when needed. All these contributions made for an enjoyable, trouble-free outing.

We were met at the entrance by the Museum's Group Tour Manager, Margaret, who had organised four separate tour guides for our 40 visitors. In a one hour tour, we had an introduction to the wonders of the rain forest; met the legendary horse Phar Lap in the Australia Gallery; touched a dinosaur bone in the Evolution Gallery; achieved a better understanding of how the human body works in the Mind & Body Gallery; and had parents and children playing games and having fun in the Children's Museum.



It was then time for lunch, and we all met at the cafeteria where we had a warm and sunny section all to ourselves. When we had our fill of gourmet sandwiches, fruit, chocolate brownies, tea, coffee, and cordial, the group had free time to go back for another look at the various exhibitions and galleries.

We were told we could watch eels being fed, and there was Aboriginal dancing in the Bunjilaka Aboriginal Centre. According to the Museum's literature, the name 'Bunjilaka' is derived from two words from the Woi Wurrung language of the Melbourne region and means 'the land of Bunjil,

the creator'. The children were invited to participate in the dancing and everyone enjoyed the entertainment. We even learned a couple of Aboriginal words, but I don't think we'll be able to have any long conversations.

A few people said they would have liked more time to explore all the Galleries and exhibitions the Melbourne Museum has to offer – it is really enormous!



Of course, seeing as the admission fee is only \$6.00 for adults, and carers and children under 16 are admitted for free, there's nothing stopping us from coming back on another day. The Melbourne Museum is an ideal place to visit time and time again. There's just so much information; you can never run out of new things to learn and new areas to explore. I hope the families that attended on Sunday will have many happy returns.

Mary-ann Liethof, Volunteer Co-ordinator,  
Multicultural Family Respite Service.



## Mental Health Provision at ADEC - A Case Study

The following story is based on a case I recently encountered. Many elements of the case are typical to the kinds of issues both I, and the groups I coordinate, routinely deal with. ADEC's mental health service provision is by no means limited to cases of depression. However, depression is a prevalent phenomenon among people with disabilities and carers alike, and, as such, I thought a brief example of the help ADEC can offer in this regard might be useful. For more information on ADEC's mental health services, please contact me on 9383 5566 – Hua Cao, Transcultural Mental Health Access Coordinator.

Ms L migrated to Australia some time ago. Recently, she found out that her husband had a girlfriend. Suddenly, she felt totally lost. She couldn't eat or sleep, and felt ashamed about herself. She couldn't understand why her husband would treat her so badly.

Later on, her husband moved out. Ms L's condition deteriorated. She spent most days alone at home crying. She lost all interest in the community. She began to believe that life was not worth living.

It was at this point that she attempted suicide. A friend, who had coincidentally dropped by to visit her, rushed Ms L to hospital. In hospital, Ms L was diagnosed as having depression. She was sent back home very shortly afterwards.

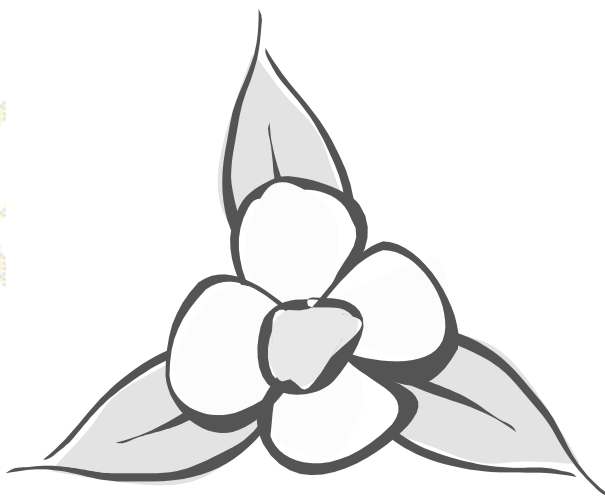
Some friends worried about Ms L living by herself, and asked her to live with them for a time. They found Ms L's behaviour disturbing. She talked much more slowly than she used to. She lost motivation and didn't want to do the things she had once enjoyed. She slept for long periods and began to put on weight. It became very hard for her to make even small decisions. When family members visited, she showed no emotional response. Her friends and family were not sure if Ms L's indifference was due to her medication or her illness.

Then her friend brought her to ADEC's Mental Health Self-Help Group. After listening to a few other group members talk about their experiences — especially an old lady who cares for her husband who has severe depression – Ms L began to relax and speak of her own illness to the other group members.

Time passed. Ms L was encouraged by a group member to participate in church activities. She gradually started to help other people in the church, and made some friends. She used her sewing skills to make costumes for the church's female choir members. She was very eager to participate in this way. She felt that she was still very useful. Her self-confidence boomed.

Today, she still participates in mental health mutual support and self-help group activities. She is also heavily involved in her church. Her enthusiasm for life and her laughter have returned to her.

With the help of medication, and nice, supportive people, it's possible for people with depression to start life again.



## Individual Advocacy

ADEC's individual advocates assist individuals with a disability from a non-English speaking background and/or the carers. Clients come from all regions of Victoria and are of diverse backgrounds. The people we work with may have physical, intellectual, psychiatric, or behavioural disabilities, may be hearing or vision impaired, or may suffer from acquired brain injury or developmental delay. Many of our clients have multiple disabilities. The Individual Advocacy programme aims, through partnership, to support our clients to achieve goals that meet their individual needs, and to ensure equity of their access and participation in the community.

In the interests of providing an insight into the difficulties people with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds often face, over the course of the next few ADEC community newsletters, we will be presenting a series of case studies. The problems confronting the people in these case studies exemplify the types of situations in which ADEC's individual advocates can be of assistance.

### Case study 1

Mrs. S is a 50 year old single parent suffering from mental illness. Mrs S resides with her 18 year old son, Jason, in a two-bedroom, Office of Housing high-rise flat. Her only income comes from a Disability Support Pension and she has no other means of financial support. This impacts on Jason's relationship with his mother, his development, and his ability to cope with and function in the community. As a result, Jason is gradually falling behind with his schoolwork, and has recently been caught gambling.

Mrs S's and Jason's feelings of grief and loss over the loss of a well functioning family unit have never been appropriately addressed in a culturally sensitive manner. Mrs S and her son continue to struggle, with no hope for immediate improvement.

ADEC's individual advocates routinely help with these and many other situations in which people's individual rights, for whatever reason, are being neglected. For more information, contact Bernarda or Elizabeth on 9383 5566.



## Congratulations



ADEC extends congratulations to one of our life-time members, Mr Kamal Ishak, who has been awarded the Australian Centenary Medal. The honourable award was presented to Mr Ishak by the Governor-General on 15 May 2003.

This distinctive Australian commemorative medal marks the achievements at the commencement of a new century of a broad cross-section of the Australian community, and focuses on contributions made to Australian society holistically.

Nominations for the Centenary medal were made by the commonwealth, state and territory governments and recommended by the independent council.



## Carers Week is Coming

The Multicultural Carers' and Disability Support Programme offers a unique social support opportunity for carers and care recipients. In October, each of the ADEC carers' groups that make up the programme will participate in Carers Week. Carers Week is an annual event that aims to acknowledge and celebrate the crucial, ongoing contribution carers make to society. This year, Carers' Week celebrations will be centred around Springvale Town Hall (Greater Dandenong Council). Carers Week will commence on Thursday 23 October 2003.

ADEC is planning two events for the week, one in the southern region, and one in the northern region. Further details about Carers' Week will be announced as the date draws nearer.

For a list of each carers' group for the remainder of the year, or for more information about Carers Week, contact Laurice on 9383 5566.

# Children with Juvenile Arthritis

You don't have to be old to have arthritis. It can, and does, affect people at any age. The Youth and Family Services section of Arthritis Victoria looks after the health and well being of children and adolescents with arthritis or other musculo-skeletal conditions, and their families.

Juvenile Arthritis occurs between birth and sixteen years of age. Juvenile Arthritis is found in 1 in every 1000 young people in Victoria. It is quite often an almost invisible chronic illness that can cause physical and emotional problems to the person involved, their siblings, and their extended families. Current figures show that there are approximately 900 young people within the state living and dealing with this chronic condition.

At Arthritis Victoria we offer:

- parent support group meetings around metropolitan Melbourne and, where appropriate, in regional communities

- social activity days throughout the year
- an annual weekend camp for all family members.
- information workshops for parents, carers, and interested health professionals
- school visits as teacher PD sessions and/or student information sessions, as requested by individual school communities
- information sheets on Juvenile Arthritis, associated complications, discrimination issues, available resources for members, and other topics
- a chatroom and forum for listed members.

Please contact Anne, the Youth and Family Services coordinator, on 85318021, or email [anne@arthritisvic.org.au](mailto:anne@arthritisvic.org.au) if you would like further information on the services offered.



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