NDIS and Me Update

By Jackie Softly

NDIS and Me peer support projects were funded by the federal government to help people with Down syndrome and their families prepare for and get the best from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS and Me projects in NSW, Victoria and WA are taking shape, with information forums, surveys, planning and some of the first peer support groups now established.

Down Syndrome WA's (DSWA's) project staff travelled to the state's southwest recently to meet with people with Down syndrome and their families to discuss setting up NDIS and Me local peer support groups in their areas. Similar meetings were also held in the Perth Hills NDIS trial site, and in the Cockburn-Kwinana My Way site, and groups are being set up in those areas. DSWA is also running NDIS and Me groups for new parents, its playgroup members and adults with Down syndrome, via the Aim High Club. The DSWA project manager is Julie Ireland and you can find out more about NDIS and Me in WA by emailing admin@dsawa.asn.au

In addition, DSWA has set up the NDIS and Me Facebook group, which has proved to be very successful in its first month of operation, with over 250 members. While DSWA runs the group, it is open to people with Down syndrome and their families, anywhere in Australia. It’s a place for discussion about anything related to the NDIS and NDIS My Way (in some parts of WA), sharing information on experiences and news about events and resources to help with the NDIS. It’s a closed group and service providers and government representatives are not admitted to the group in order to make it comfortable for people to discuss issues freely. When you ask to join, the group administrators will ask some short questions to check that you are eligible and help with their evaluation of the group. If you are waiting for a reply to your request, please check your inbox including the ‘Others’ inbox for messages from the group administrators. Here’s the link to the Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/NDISandMe/

Down Syndrome NSW (DSNSW) has so far established three local Up Club groups for adults with Down syndrome, living in Sydney’s Inner West, South and North. The three groups have been designed to give group members choice and control over the activities that they do together and each group has now held its first planning meeting – with great success. The local Up Club groups provide a fun and social environment for group members and families to make new friends and to share their knowledge and experiences of the NDIS.

Over the next few months DSNSW will be setting its sights on rolling the project out to other areas – both in Sydney and elsewhere around the State. First up, and in response to the recent rollout of the NDIS in the Nepean Blue Mountains area, the team will be setting up a closed Facebook group for families of children with an intellectual disability, living in that area. For more information about Up Club groups or the soon to be established Facebook group, contact DSNSW’s Project Coordinator, Lyb Makin: lyb.makin@dsansw.org.au

Down Syndrome Victoria (DSV) has been consulting with families in the Victorian NDIS launch site to gain an understanding of what kinds of groups would work best for them, and planning for these is well under way. Elizabeth McGarry, the Victorian NDIS and ME Project Coordinator has met with young families and with Club 21 members and their families living in the Geelong area. Clearly people are keen to have access to and share information about, the steps they can take to enhance their NDIS experience so that the best opportunities are open to them. Organising catch-ups that have this particular focus, is emerging as the preferred option. Elizabeth is also speaking with families in other regions of Victoria to begin the establishment of groups that will be shaped by what people believe will best suit their circumstances and their interests. Plans to catch up with Club 21ers in the metro area is also on the ‘to do list’. Elizabeth can be contacted via email – elizabethm@dsav.asn.au or by calling the DSV office.

The three states running the NDIS and Me projects, which are funded by NDIS until the end of 2016, have been working together to develop their projects more efficiently, and to look for ways that people in all states and territories can benefit from the projects. The Facebook group is one way and sharing information and resources is another. There are now several websites that contain really useful and practical information to help you understand and get the most from the NDIS, and they are being updated all the time, so it’s worth having a regular look. Some also send you updates if you sign up for their email newsletters.

These websites include:

NDIS
www.ndis.gov.au

Peer Connect
www.peerconnect.org.au

Disability Loop
www.disabilityloop.org.au

My Choice Matters
www.mychoicematters.org.au

If you would like to read the latest NDIS newsletter, here’s the link:

Club 21 members from Geelong