



Quick Links

[Vale - Robyn Blundell](#)
[Join our Facebook Network](#)
[Fiona McBurney Match Day Experience](#)
[School Holiday Movie Day](#)
[Family Support](#)
[Events](#)
[Open Employment](#)
[Workshops and Co-design Opportunities](#)
[Research Opportunities](#)
[CEOs Corner](#)

Vale - Robyn Blundell

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the sudden passing of our dear friend, Robyn Blundell (21.7.1970 – 1.7.2026).

Robyn was a deeply valued, passionate and supportive member of the Down Syndrome Community of South Australia Association.

As an inaugural Board Member and Office Bearer, she was a fierce advocate whose many years of dedicated service will leave a lasting legacy within our community.

Robyn will be remembered with immense fondness and missed profoundly by all who knew her.

Our sincere condolences, thoughts and love go out to Marc, Jarrod and her family at this difficult time.



Join our Facebook Network

Have you joined our Down Syndrome Community South Australia Family Network on Facebook?

Our private Facebook group is a welcoming, supportive space for people with Down syndrome and their families across South Australia. It's a place to ask questions, share experiences, connect with other families, learn from one another and stay up to date with events and opportunities happening across Adelaide and regional South Australia.

If you haven't joined yet, we'd love to welcome you!

Join our Facebook Family Network:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/9703993126306906>

Fiona McBurney Match Day Experience

The Fiona McBurney program is named after the sister of retired AFL Umpire Steve McBurney who passed away in 2009, had Down syndrome and loved football.

Since we last shared Imogen, Jake, Morgan, Courtney, Isaac, Mitchell, and Hugo have all enjoyed the opportunity to be the Umpires Assistant at an SA AFL match.

The feedback has been sensational ie: 'it was the best day of my life' and 'I loved meeting my idols'. This is a terrific opportunity, and we are very grateful to the SANFL, AFL and AFL Umpires Association for supporting this program.

We have been working with DSV and DSWA to ensure this very valuable program continues – watch this space for the opportunity to participate in 2027.



School Holiday Movie Day



Twenty-one families joined us for a fantastic School Holiday Movie Day at the Capri Theatre to enjoy Minions and Monsters.

It was a wonderful opportunity for families to relax, share plenty of popcorn, and connect with others in our community.



The day was filled with laughter, friendship and fun, providing an inclusive school holiday outing where families could create lasting memories together.



Family Support

It's been a busy couple of months for our community!

We've had lots of chances to get together, promote awareness, have some fun, share experiences and connect with each other. From a movie day packed with popcorn and laughter, to talking with future health professionals about real-life experiences of Down syndrome, there's been plenty happening. Here's a little look at what we've been up to and what's coming up over the next few months.

University Forums

We had an incredible opportunity to be part of the Flinders University Medical Forums and connect with 220 medical, nursing and allied health students across the Adelaide, Renmark and Mount Gambier campuses throughout July and August.

Through lived experience presentations and panel discussions, families and people with Down syndrome have shared their stories, answering questions and talking openly about pregnancy, diagnosis, health, education, inclusion, family life and the experiences of navigating healthcare.



These conversations are so important. They give future health professionals the opportunity to learn directly from people with Down syndrome and their families — helping build understanding beyond textbooks and medical diagnoses.

We are incredibly proud to partner with Flinders University to help shape a future healthcare workforce that sees the person first and values respectful, inclusive and person-centred care.

A huge thank you to all the families who generously share their stories and experiences to help educate the next generation of health professionals.

Adelaide: Louise & Hugo, Mitch, Jane & Luca, Corrie & Scott, Jen, Owen & Kira
Mt Gambier: Amy, Sam, Sonny and Maisie, Jen, Owen, Macy & Kira, Louise and Hugo.

Renmark: Brittney & Eddie, Jen, Owen & Anna

And Stephen, Sandra and Patrick from Flinders University



Educational Setting Support

Over recent months, we have continued to strengthen our support for children and families across the education journey. Jennifer and Louise recently had the opportunity to meet with Inclusion Leaders for the Department for Education to have a conversation around inclusive practices and future collaborations.

We've been providing families with information, resources and guidance to help navigate their child's educational journey, while also working directly with schools, preschools and childcare services. This has included supporting Team Around the Child meetings, individual care plans and positive behaviour support strategies, helping families and educators work together to understand each child's strengths, needs and goals.

Our aim is to build understanding, encourage collaboration between families and professionals, and ensure our children are well supported to participate, learn and thrive in their educational settings.

If you have questions about your child's education, are preparing for a transition, or feel you need some extra support to work with your child's education team, please reach out to us. We're here to listen, help you navigate the next steps and connect you with the right information and support.

Looking Ahead

There's lots more to look forward to between now and the end of the year, and we'd love to see as many families as possible getting involved. Whether it's a big event, a Christmas celebration or simply a chance to catch up with other families, these opportunities to connect are what make our community so special. Thanks to everyone who continues to get involved, share, support and make our community what it is. We'll see you at the next one!

Jennifer McCullough
jennifer@downsyndrome.org.au

Events

We have lots of upcoming events before the end of the year.

Registrations are currently open for :

Variety Zoo Picnic

All school age children
Tuesday 15th September
[2026 Variety Kids Zoo Picnic –
Fill out form](#)



Variety Christmas Party

Primary school age

Thursday 5th November

[2026 Variety Kids Christmas Party – Fill out form](#)



Variety Kid's Christmas Party
(Primary School Students)

Date: Thursday, 5th November 2026
Time: 10:30am - 1pm
Where: Adelaide Showgrounds Goyder Pavilion
Event Information: Primary School Student and a carer only, Lunch provided

Variety Christmas Disco

Secondary school age

Friday 6th November

[2026 Variety Kids Christmas Disco – Fill out form](#)

Variety Kid's Christmas Disco

(Secondary School Students)

Date: Friday, 6th November 2026

Time: 10:30am - 1:00pm

Where: Adelaide Showgrounds Goyder Pavilion

Event Information: Secondary Student and a carer only, Lunch provided



The Children's Christmas Party

0-12 years

Saturday 21st November

[The Children's Christmas Party 2026 – Fill out form](#)



Christmas Pageant

Saturday November 14th

EXCITING things are coming –
WATCH THIS SPACE!



[Open Employment](#)

This year I have been working collaboratively with Employment Connectors from around Australia to support individuals from our community to gain opportunities to work in open employment in South Australia.

If you or someone you know is interested in finding a job, please contact me on the email address below. Similarly, if you or someone you know would be interested in having a conversation about potentially employing someone with Down syndrome from our community, please let me know. I am enjoying actively supporting individuals and families to seek employment opportunities. If this is you or someone you care for, please reach out. We are currently able to offer support to individuals in both regional and metropolitan areas.

I hope to be able to offer a five week 'Right to Work/Work Readiness' program that supports people with Down syndrome to build their skills and to get ready for work and that helps to connect employers to new job seekers looking for work in open employment. To gauge an idea of who might be interested in this opportunity please let me know if this is something that you might like to be involved in by emailing me.

We have a several opportunities that we are working together with South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability (SACID) please contact me if you are interested in finding out more information about any of the information / workshops below.

Respect Our Ability Advisory Group

This year I have also had the opportunity to work collaboratively with Speak Out Tasmania and SACID on a 'Respect Our Ability Advisory Group' which is doing important work around supporting people with disability to be more involved in decision making and having a greater say on Boards and Committees – and importantly to have a voice! This work has been incredibly valuable and rewarding.

SACID Forum

I was fortunate to attend the recent South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability Forum along with many of our community members. It was terrific to see many individuals engaging, presenting, participating and learning at the Forum which focused on Leading Through Inclusion – Skills for Life!



Growing Space – Self Management session

An enormous 'Thank you' to our fabulous community member and Founder of The Growing Space – Sam Paor. Sam recently generously shared her time and expertise with a group from our community members presenting an online workshop about Self-Management. As always Sam went above and beyond to share her wisdom with individuals and took time to answer our many and varied questions and to explain processes and next steps so that we can support our loved ones – thank you Sam!

Temple Christian College – Inclusion Presentation

Recently I was asked to share a presentation to the Middle School students at Temple Christian College. The brief was to share the importance of inclusion, create awareness about disability and valuing everyone in society as a contributing member. The feedback from this presentation was

invaluable. I was able to use and share examples of lived experience with the help of Hugo Taheny to share the importance of inclusion in today's society.

Louise Taheny

louise@downsyndrome.org.au

Workshops and Co-design Opportunities

IEA – Inclusive Employment Australia Workshop (1-2 hours)

This workshop teaches you about Inclusive Employment Australia.

Delivered by the South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability

We will talk about:

- What is Inclusive Employment Australia
- Who can use Inclusive Employment is Australia
- Participation Requirements
- Choosing an Inclusive Employment is Australia provider
- Starting with an Inclusive Employment is Australia provider
- Job Plans
- Ongoing Support
- Your rights in Inclusive Employment Australia

This workshop has lots of fun and practical activities to help you build your skills for

the workplace. If you would like to register for a workshop, please contact Louise@downsyndrome.org.au

Supported Employment and Advocacy Project Workshop– SEA (1-2 hours)

SACID and Inclusion Australia are collaborating in The Supported Employment & Advocacy Project. We are offering workshops for people with intellectual disabilities, their families and supporters. The workshops are designed to give accessible information to make informed decisions and have a better understanding.

We are now offering 5 workshops to help in the Employment Journey:

- My Rights at Work
- Inclusive Employment Australia
- Work and the NDIS (NEW)
- DSP (NEW)
- Service Awards (NEW)

More information about the Supported Employment and Advocacy Project (SEA): The Supported Employment Advocacy Project is about informed employment choices and access to individual advocacy.

The project runs from June 2024 to June 2027. It is funded by the Australian Department of Social Services (DSS).

It is led by Inclusion Australia and Disability Advocacy Network Australia (DANA). IA's national network of member organisations are key partners in the project.

The project will help people with high support needs to make informed decisions about employment.

The project is for:

- People currently working in supported employment
- Young people with high support needs transitioning from school
- Families and carers
- People living in cities, regional, and remote areas.
- What the project will do?
- The project will help people

Understand their employment options, Learn about their rights at work.
Access the right support and advocacy to make informed decisions about employment.

If you would like to register for a workshop, please contact Louise@downsyndrome.org.au

Our Future - Parent / Family Focus Group – South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability SACID

SACID wants to hear from young people with intellectual disability and the people who support them about finishing school and becoming an adult.

What is Our Future?

Our Future is a new project that aims to support young people with intellectual disability to feel prepared and confident about big life transitions, like finishing school and becoming an adult.

We will be co-designing and developing resources and workshops for young people with intellectual disability, and for their families and carers.

We want young people with intellectual disability and their supporters to share their wisdom of lived experience, and tell us what is important to include and talk about.

We are seeking people to join our co-design groups including:

- Young people with intellectual disability.
- Parents, carers, kinship carers or family members of young people with intellectual disability.
- Anyone else who has lived experience and is interested in contributing to the project.

What will co-designers be doing?

There will be multiple co-design opportunities, both online and in person, starting in May 2026. Participants will be paid for their time. We can support different ways of having input and participating for different kinds of communication needs and styles – contact us to discuss.

Who is SACID?

SACID is the peak body for people with intellectual disability in South Australia. SACID works towards achieving a community in which people with

intellectual disability are involved and accepted as equal participating members.

Contact the project team: tessa@sacid.org.au or 8352 4416

Research Opportunities

Paid Research opportunity with The National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health (NCEIDH)

Are you looking for work? This is a fabulous way to start!

Researchers from the National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health at UNSW Sydney are looking for people with intellectual disability to take part in a research study.

The study is testing whether virtual reality (VR) can help people prepare for their yearly health check, also known as a Comprehensive Health Assessment Program (CHAP).

What does the study involve?

Participants will take part in two sessions:

- In one session, they will wear a VR headset and experience what a health check is like.
- In another session, they will read an Easy Read factsheet about health checks.
- Each session takes about one hour and the sessions are held on separate days.
- Participants will answer some short questions before and after each activity.
- **Participants receive a \$120 gift card in total for taking part.**

Who can take part?

Participants need to:

- Be 18 years or older
- Have an intellectual disability
- Speak English
- Be able to wear a VR headset

People cannot take part if they have epilepsy, have a vision impairment that is not corrected by glasses, or have previously taken part in other VR research with our Centre.

If anyone would like more information or is interested in taking part, they can contact Louise - louise@downsyndrome.org.au

Professor Stefan Michalski and I will be running an information session about this opportunity at SACID - South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability 359 Regency road, Prospect SA 5082 on Friday September 25th from 9am – 12noon. This is a drop in session but if you would like to attend please RSVP to louise@downsyndrome.org.au

Research Opportunity - Smart Phone App

Researchers from UNSW Sydney's National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health (the Centre) are looking for people with

intellectual disability to take part in a research study. **You will receive a \$50 voucher for each interview you complete.**

A research study is a way to find out new information from people who take part.

This study is about a smartphone app called Make it Easy. The app uses artificial intelligence (AI) to help people understand written information.

The app works by taking a photo of written information such as letters, forms, signs, or instructions. The app then shows the information in simpler language.

The study wants to understand whether this app helps people with intellectual disability understand written information in everyday life.

What does the study involve?

You will be asked to:

- Take part in a short interview about your experiences with reading and understanding written information (approximately 30–60 minutes).
- Take part in session to learn how to use the Make it Easy app (approximately 30–45 minutes).
- Use the Make it Easy app in your everyday life for about 4–8 weeks.
- Some participants may be invited to take part in a second interview about their experience using the app (approximately 30–60 minutes).

You can take part if you:

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Are a person with intellectual disability
- Have trouble reading and understanding information
- Have your own smartphone
- Can provide informed consent
- Are willing to use the Make It Easy app for 4-8 weeks

This project is funded by the UNSW Disability Innovation Institute.

You can find more information about the study in the information sheet attached.

If you would like more information or would like to take part, contact Claudia Ng at claudia.ng@unsw.edu.au or on (02) 9348 3569. You can reach Claudia between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

CEOs Corner

On behalf of all the team at Down Syndrome WA, our thoughts have been with our team, the new DSCSA committee and Robyns family. She was an incredible advocate.

I want to thank the SA team, Louise and Jennifer, for their outstanding work with limited hours each week. You are both having a fantastic impact in SA. The work achieved from the Scrapheap grant was fantastic, and it is wonderful to keep seeing the increase in numbers of new members on the data base.

Shortly we will be advertising two part time roles in SA. This will come out via a separate email. We look forward to sharing that with you. It would be great if you could share the position information widely.

It was lovely to see Louise and Hugo Taheny and Sam Paor in Perth recently at a meeting of the Independent Reference Group.

Cassandra Hughes
CEO, Down Syndrome WA
ceo@downsyndromewa.org.au



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