

TAD JOURNAL

October 2010 Vol 30 No 4

GROWING UP WITH TADNSW

Safe in bed

Bunking down

Eating with the family

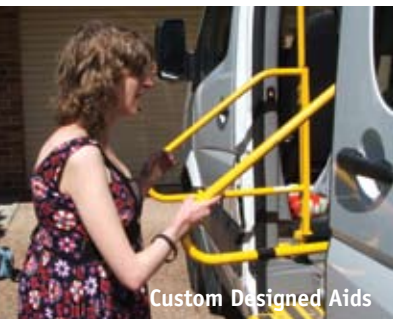
Customised cup

Wheelchair protection

Steps for therapy

**Building
strength**

About TADNSW



Custom Designed Aids



Computer Support Service



FREEDOM WHEELS



Volunteers

WHAT IS TAD?

Technical Aid to the Disabled (TAD) was initiated in 1973 by George Winston AM, an electrical engineer, and formally established in 1975. George recognised that customised devices could assist people with disabilities to maximise their opportunities and live their lives more fully and independently.

Thirty-five years later, TAD organisations operate in all states of Australia and the ACT. They coordinate the work of volunteers to design and construct devices for people with disabilities, and some also refurbish and supply recycled computers.

TADNSW'S MISSION

We provide personalised equipment and advice to people with disabilities and their carers, through the innovative services of skilled volunteers and staff.

TADNSW'S CORE BUSINESSES

Our core businesses are the supply of equipment, support in the use of equipment, and provision of advice and information about equipment to people with disabilities, their carers and the disability sector.

Custom Designed Aids Service

Designs and makes custom-designed devices for our clients where commercial equipment is not appropriate.

Computer Support Service

Refurbishes and customises donated computers, supplies them to clients and supports clients in their use.

FREEDOM WHEELS®

Modified Bike Service

Modifies bicycles to enable children with disabilities to ride them.

George Winston

Communication Service

Communicates "the TAD story" and supports services and fundraising by raising awareness about TADNSW.

TADNSW'S VALUES

- innovative and personalised services;
- assistance that is affordable and fit for the purpose;
- services that are responsive to the needs of our clients, within operational constraints.

TADNSW'S ORGANISATION

TADNSW is managed by a Board of 13 Directors and has 21 staff (17 FTE). Our offices are at Northmead in Sydney. We also have 13 branches and interest groups in regional NSW run by local volunteers with support from Northmead staff.

WHO DOES TADNSW HELP?

TADNSW helps anyone with a disability, including conditions associated with

ageing. There is no means test, and a referral is not always necessary.

Clients are charged for costs and materials for custom-designed equipment, and a small purchase fee for computers. Our volunteers donate their skills and labour.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP?

You can help TADNSW by becoming a volunteer. You can construct aids for clients, refurbish computers, or provide support for administration, management, fundraising and communications.

You can become a member of TADNSW, which brings various benefits including copies of the *TAD Journal*, or subscribe to the journal without becoming a member.

You can donate funds to support our services. TADNSW is a registered charity and contributions of \$2 or more are tax deductible. You can also donate computers and related equipment.

SPONSORS

Many generous organisations and individuals support our unique work for people with disabilities. We particularly recognise the support of two major sponsors: Amway of Australia supports the FREEDOM WHEELS® Modified Bike Service; and Holcim supports the Custom Designed Aids Service.

From the CEO



Although only recently appointed as CEO of TADNSW, I have had the pleasure of being part of the organisation for almost ten years. A career of 25 years of operations, planning, policy and management in the Army might not seem to fit well with the disability sector, but quite the opposite is true. I see the tremendous dedication of volunteers and staff to the mission of TADNSW, a willingness to go the extra yard to get results and a spirit of teamwork that parallels the attitude and culture I once experienced in the Army.

TADNSW's services reach people with disabilities of all age groups, and they and their carers all have the same goals – enhanced quality of life, opportunities for independence and participation in the community. We seek to provide them with personalised equipment and advice that can help make these goals a reality.

In 2010, TADNSW celebrates 35 years of service. In that time, more than a million hours of volunteer inspiration and labour have produced over 28,000 solutions for people with disabilities. In terms of dollars and cents the value of this contribution is enormous. In terms of the improvement in the independence and quality of life of people with disabilities, it is priceless.

TADNSW receives only 24% of its funding from government sources. The remainder comes from sponsors, fees and donations from the public. Each year TADNSW needs more than \$700,000 in donations to maintain its services.

Although the global financial crisis is officially over, its effects are ongoing. Most corporate and foundation supporters emerged from 2008-09 with reduced assets and a reticence to make ongoing commitments. While this situation remains, the financial capacity of organisations like TADNSW is under constant pressure. Your support, no matter how small, can make a real difference to people with disabilities.

Alan McGregor
Chief Executive Officer, TADNSW

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OUR COVER

A specially designed ladder from TADNSW enables Ashton to do exercises that build his strength.

COVER STORY

Exercise **ladder**



When Ashton Hayes was six months old, his parents Angela and Phil were told by a neurologist to “take him home and love him, that’s all that you can do”. But Angela and Phil were determined that their son would have the chance to live a happy and fulfilling life, and to be as independent as possible.

Ashton has a very rare genetic condition which has resulted in microcephaly (a smaller than average head circumference), developmental delay, cerebral palsy and low muscle strength. He is a happy little boy, and at four years old he is attending preschool, and can roll over, kneel, crawl and eat finger foods on his own – he particularly loves chocolate!

One of Angela and Phil’s dreams is to see Ashton walk “in whatever form that takes, and with whatever support

devices he needs”. “That means he can be so much more independent, and being upright is also good for his bone density and hip joints,” Angela said.

An important device to assist in this process is a customised A-frame ladder made by volunteer Allen Pidgeon from TADNSW’s Manning/ Great Lakes group. “This enables him to practice moving from sitting to standing, and to bear his own weight while holding on to the rungs,” Angela said.

The ladder’s rungs are made from 25mm dowel and the four sides from pine, angled off at the top to avoid a sharp edge and painted a cheerful yellow. Each set of two sides is hinged at the top and is locked open when in use by an aluminium strut which hooks over a bolt on the opposite side. When folded up in the normal way the

whole unit is compact and easy to store.

“We use the ladder every day,” Angela said. “We put a stool next to it, and he stands from there. When we first started, we had to help him along quite a bit, but now we put the Wiggles on behind the frame and he’ll pull himself up of his own accord so he can see the Wiggles over the top.”

“And initially he could only stand for a second or two, but now he can stay for over a minute. He can also take a couple of steps while hanging onto the ladder – he stands up and holds on, and we move his hands and legs along. So we can see a considerable improvement in his muscle tone from that exercise.”

“He really wants to be upright, and the ladder helps with that. We have

borrowed a standing frame at the moment, and he bangs on it because he likes it so much and wants to get into it. It gives him a whole different perspective on the world compared with lying down."

Angela and Phil have a fundraising web page which has more information about Ashton – go to www.developingfoundation.org.au/family/ashton.

SUMMARY

client profile

microcephaly, developmental delay, cerebral palsy, low muscle strength

description of project

A-frame ladder

age group

children

volunteer

Allen Pidgeon

project no

SO8-0230

Photo below: Ashton when he first started using the ladder – you can see that he has grown stronger in the photos above left.



Customised cup

Although she has multiple disabilities, nineteen-year-old "Aviva"’s parents were hopeful that she would be able to drink independently from a cup, rather than always having to be fed by another person.

With developmental delay, cerebral palsy and vision impairment, as well as some changes to her mouth structure following an accident, Aviva was coughing when she used most cups. She was not adequately swallowing the liquid and there was a danger that she would choke.

Her therapist experimented at length to find a cup from which Aviva could drink safely. The problem was when she got down to the liquid in the bottom of the cup – whereas most people just tip the cup up and tilt their head back so that the opposite side of the cup doesn't hit their nose, Aviva was not able to do this and started coughing.

Her therapist tried several options, including adding several types of handles to a flexible cup that Aviva had tried previously, and a Provale Cup, which has a lid insert that delivers a set amount of liquid each time the cup is tipped. None of these worked well for Aviva – the Provale was too cumbersome for her, and the flexible cup slipped out of the handles when squeezed.

Eventually the therapist settled on a Doidy cup, an angled plastic cup that is intended for teaching babies how to drink from a rim rather than a spout. The effect of the angle is to create a lower rim on the opposite



side, which solves the problem that occurs when the cup is tipped.

However, there was still another problem – the Doidy cup's handles are designed for baby fingers, not those of a nineteen-year old, and Aviva simply couldn't get her hands around them (see the inset above). Her therapist's colleague suggested that TADNSW may be able to help.

Enter TADNSW volunteer and long-time solver of the insoluble, Barry Lees. Barry's task was to create new handles that were 3cm away from the cup rather than the current 1cm, and 2cm in diameter.

"The existing handles were moulded as part of the cup," Barry said. "It was made of a thin, greasy plastic that I knew wouldn't glue well, so gluing on new handles wasn't a good option." ▶

Customised cup continued

“I decided that the best approach was to make a new holder for the cup, with the handles on the holder. But this needed to be well clear of the area where she would be putting her mouth, and also it needed to fit fairly closely so it didn’t wobble or rattle while she was trying to drink, but still be easy to get in and out of the holder for cleaning.”

After checking that it wouldn’t be too difficult to obtain another cup if this one didn’t survive his experiments, Barry took a deep breath and cut off the handles. “I tried several holders made out of different materials that didn’t work,” he said. “The first one was made from stainless steel wire, but I found I couldn’t weld it successfully, and then I tried stainless steel sheet, but that didn’t look very nice.”

After making a cardboard template, Barry eventually made a successful holder from scrap pieces of white PVC that he had in his workshop, which he heated and moulded to shape. The handles are solid acrylic tube which he cut to shape on his lathe and polished so they are smooth. (See the picture below.)

This was sent for Aviva to try. It worked very well for several weeks, but then the PVC broke at one of the



90° bends. “First I got a bit upset, and then I made yet another holder, this time out of thicker plastic,” Barry said. “But it looked awful!”

Barry’s final design, which survives to this day, went back to stainless steel plate but still uses the acrylic handles (picture on the previous page). “I followed the same design as the PVC one, and I made tiny rivets and took a lot of care to make everything smooth and as attractive as possible,” he said.

The final result is a testament to Barry’s ingenuity, patience and persistence, and a great example of the kind of commitment that TADNSW’s volunteers have to getting exactly the right outcome for our clients – and one that is aesthetically pleasing as well as functional.

“Just letting you know that the cup is going very well with Aviva,” her therapist wrote. “She is using it very easily with nil coughing. Please pass on my sincere thanks to Barry Lees who has done such an exceptional job modifying it!”

SUMMARY

client profile

developmental delay, cerebral palsy, vision impairment

description of project

customised cup

age group

young adult

volunteer

Barry Lees

project no

SO10-0113

Eating with the

Diane McManus has always been keen for her 11-year-old son Liam to sit at the table for family meals with his sister Hayley and brother Shaun.

Liam has global developmental delay and needs supportive seating to maintain correct posture for eating, so when he was younger he had a customised seat insert made by TADNSW. “Otherwise we have to sit and hold him, which is difficult now he is older and doesn’t make it so easy to eat yourself,” Diane said.

When Liam grew out of his previous insert, a new version was required. TADNSW staff met with Liam, Diane and Liam’s therapist and decided that a larger version of the previous insert design would work well.

Made by volunteer Walter Quinlan, the new insert has a plywood back set at a 10° recline, a plywood base and footrest, height-adjustable thoracic fins and cushions made from fabric-covered 25mm foam. There are also a range of harness mounting points, and Liam uses the chair with a waist harness in the position determined by his therapist.

The insert is attached to the dining chair using two 25mm buckled straps, one under the seat and one at the back. Walter also added a castored base to the dining chair itself, with lockable castors on the rear. This means the chair-and-insert unit is easy to move in and out from the table, and to other places in the house as needed.

Diane has found the chair also comes in handy when she is alone with Liam and is unable to supervise

family

him momentarily. "If I leave him on the lounge while I am cooking or something, he can climb off or fall off," she said. "I can put him in the chair and he can come into the kitchen with me and I know that he is safe."

Liam also has a bike from the FREEDOM WHEELS Modified Bike Service. This enables him to join in riding with his sister and brother on family outings, and provides an enjoyable and different way of moving which also improves his muscle strength.

As well as the standard outrigger wheels, Liam's bike has a number of supports including hip and thoracic fins and belts, a head rest and foot cups. It also has extended handlebars which are easier for him to reach, and a tow bar with a brake.

"He really loves the bike, and we try to go for a ride every day," Diane said. "I tow him initially, but if I let go after a while he keeps pedalling himself, which is really good exercise for him. He's a happy little boy, and we take him everywhere."

SUMMARY

client profile

global developmental delay, epilepsy

description of project

chair insert, modified bike

age group

children

volunteer

Walter Quinlan

project nos

SO8-0029, SO7000541



Photo top left: Liam in his chair with the seat insert, and his lap harness in place.

Top right: The seat insert, showing the height-adjustable fins, the attachment belts at the insert back and base, and the castored base for the dining chair.

Below: Liam on his bike with Diane, showing the headrest, thoracic and hip fins and belts mounted on the U-bar at the rear, the outrigger wheels, foot cups and braked tow bar.



Safe in bed

Five-year-old Margaux Tilly is now safe at night, thanks to the sturdy but attractive cot provided by TADNSW. Margaux has Angelman syndrome and frequently has insomnia, so it is very important that she is prevented from wandering around the house at night while her parents are asleep.

TADNSW previously modified an Ikea cot for Margaux by adding a door at one end (*TADJournal* October 2008). This enabled Margaux to independently access the cot, thus preventing her parents from straining their backs lifting her in and out.

However Margaux has outgrown this cot, and her mother, Estelle, wanted something that would fit her for quite a while, as well as withstanding the strenuous shaking she sometimes applies during her sleepless periods.

The answer was moving her to a single mattress, and building safety railings that are high enough so she can't climb over them (and spaced according to

the appropriate Australian standard). Volunteer Bill Phippen built a large, robust set of railings, with double gates at the front to allow easy access for Margaux and for changing the sheets.

Bill used large parliament hinges to keep the gates well away from the jamb and avoid creating a point where Margaux could pinch her fingers. "That's the challenge of custom-made cots, the need to keep fingers, wrists and heads safe," he said. The gates are secured by two large padbolts located at the base of the cot out of Margaux's reach.

Occupational Therapist Julianne Castle had initially suggested putting the mattress on the floor, but Bill improved on this idea. He built a 200mm-high wooden box base which sits inside the railings with the mattress on top of it.

The top of the mattress is now 540mm from the floor, and the rails are 1500mm from the floor. The wooden box can be removed in the future, making the rails effectively 200mm higher – so



Photos

Top: Margaux loves her new bed.

Centre: The padbolts that secure the gates.

Right: The closed cot with the extra bar in place.

Growing up with TADNSW

Margaux can continue using the setup as she grows older and taller.

Before beginning work, Bill checked the dimensions of Margaux's bedroom to see what space was available. The room is at the top of a narrow flight of stairs, so he designed the railings to be built in sections which would fit around the banisters and landing and into the room. He still needed a helper to carry the parts up to Margaux's bedroom, and fortunately TADNSW stalwart Malcolm Lye, who lives nearby, was able to assist.

Estelle was delighted with the look of the bed, which is finished in fresh white enamel paint, but she was concerned that the gates might not be strong enough. She asked Bill to come back and fit a deadlocked bar across the top of the cot to hold the gates doubly firm. "The important result is that she is safe from danger and her parents can get some rest knowing that she is safe," Bill said.

Estelle is very happy with the final result. "It is exactly what we had in mind and it looks fantastic," she said.

Five years ago, the *TAD Journal* featured a story about a number of devices made and modified for seven-year-old Grace Banks, including a raised bed that she is still using.

Grace has cerebral palsy, vision impairment, hearing impairment and developmental delay. She needed the raised bed so that her carers did not have to bend over when tending to her, and side railings to keep her safe at night.

Made by volunteer Jonas Kirk, the bed is 880mm above the floor. It has fixed railings on three sides, and the fourth side slides up and down. However, Grace's mother Allison needed a method to get her up into the bed without having to lift her.

Rather than use a hoist, the plan was to develop Grace's mobility as much as possible by building a set of stairs that she could walk up to access the bed. Made by volunteer Bruce Hattersley, the stairs consisted of

two sections: a set of three steps, and a platform 600mm above floor level which Grace used to access the bed. The two sections clipped together with suitcase catches.

These stairs have worked well, but Grace is now twelve and has grown considerably. The steps are no longer deep enough for her feet, and the structure is not strong enough to remain completely steady under her increased weight.

Also, the step section was designed for a carpeted floor: it rests on its wooden edges which sat firmly on the carpet. However, the family has since moved to a house with tiled floors, and the stairs are not quite so stable on this surface.

Bruce was therefore asked to make a new, larger set of stairs to the dimensions specified by Grace's therapist. In most ways the design of the new set is similar to the original: both sections have ▶

SUMMARY

client profile

Angelman syndrome

description of project

custom-made cot

age group

children

volunteer

Bill Phippen

project no

SO10-0013



The raised bed with the new steps in place.



Photos

Top: Grace didn't want to demonstrate how she uses the new stairs for a photograph, but she was happy to pose on her treadmill, which she loves.

Below: A much smaller Grace on her original stairs five years ago.

Growing up with TADNSW continued

height-adjustable handrails and an intermediate safety panel so that Grace can't slip under the handrails.

The steps have closed risers to prevent Grace from catching her feet as she goes up. There are non-slip strips on all the surfaces and black strips at the edges of the steps to make them easier for Grace to distinguish.

However, there are a few important changes. Firstly, the side panels on the old platform did not go all the way down to the floor, whereas on the new one they do, making this section steadier and more rigid.

"There is also more internal structure," Bruce said. "The previous wooden panels were fixed with small brad nails and glued, but all the joins in the new version are reinforced with a piece of 19x19mm pine which is screwed into place. This adds to the overall strength."

On the new version the steel tube uprights that support the handrails run all the way to the bottom of both sections, and are covered with rubber stoppers to create legs which rest firmly on the tiled floor. The handrails are also slightly wider than previously.

As each unit was now bigger and heavier, Bruce put castors on both sections rather than just on the step section as before. The castors could not go on the bottom because of the requirement for stability, so Bruce put them low on one side of each section, where they are not visible from the main part of the room.

It's easy to detach the two sections, tilt them onto the castors to move them to another room when required.

Grace can also use the stairs in other ways if needed – in the past she used them to reach the family's trampoline.

"It's actually a plaything for her," Allison said. "She likes to stand on the platform and declaim!"

Allison also requested a new, larger Kangaroo Corner Chair and Table for Grace. Generally made for younger children, the Kangaroo has a low-to-the-floor seat with an adjustable height table which latches onto the seat, and is very useful for stretching Grace's hamstrings.

"I use the seat with Grace all the time," Allison said. "She sits there to eat and play, and also uses it to play simple games on the computer. And when she is there I know she is safe and I can do something else like cooking or gardening. Otherwise it's just one-on-one and you never get anything done."

Grace will always need a lot of support, but TADNSW will still be there in another five years if Allison needs further help – it's all part of our ongoing and adaptable service!

SUMMARY

client profile

cerebral palsy, developmental delay, vision and hearing impairment

description of project

set of stairs to access bed

age group

children

volunteer

Bruce Hattersley

project no

SO10-0041-2

Bunking down

When three-year-old twins Ashlea and Audrey Austin outgrew their cots, their parents bought a set of attractive white-painted bunk beds for the girls. The beds were designed so they could be used as bunks or detached and used as separate beds.

Ashlea has diplegic cerebral palsy, some developmental delay and vision impairment, and she needed the protection of a side rail on her bed to be safe at night. The plan was to separate the beds and put Ashlea in the original top bunk, which had a railing, while Audrey slept in the bottom bunk.

Unfortunately, the railing wasn't high enough to stop Ashlea climbing out of bed. Her Occupational Therapist, Marion Adderley, felt she needed railings that were high enough to be safe even if she pulled herself up to a standing position. Marion also thought the bed should have an opening so Ashlea could climb in and out unaided.

TADNSW has now developed considerable expertise in bed modification, which involves a number of complex factors including safety standards, ergonomic issues for carers and aesthetics. The twins' parents had consulted the Custom Designed Aids Service before buying the beds, and had purchased a unit that had good potential for modification. It has a solid frame with clean sides which makes it easy to add attachments.

TADNSW President Bill Phippen, who also made the bed for Margaux Tilley described on pages 8-9, was asked to modify one of the beds for Ashlea. Matching the style of the bed, Bill added three new rails, with the fourth side fixed to the wall.

For the head and foot of the bed he made extensions to the existing railed pieces to raise them to 550mm above the mattress. For the third side he made a new set of rails, divided into three sections. One section at the lower end is fixed, and the other two are hinged to form a gate using strong steel parliament hinges.

"My concerns were that the hinge posts would be strong and that the openings be wide enough at the hinges and closing ends, so that little fingers would not be pinched," Bill said.

The other decision to be made was how to lock the gates – the girls' mother Alison wanted the mechanism silent so it would not wake Ashlea unnecessarily. Bill thought that "a simple rotating block placed out of Ashlea's reach would be good in this regard and also within the dexterity of a half-asleep parent."

Now aged four, Ashlea loves her bed. Alison is equally delighted, both with the look of the bed and with the relatively low cost of TADNSW's work.

SUMMARY

client profile

cerebral palsy, developmental delay, vision impairment

description of project

bed rails

age group

children

volunteer

Bill Phippen

project no

SO9-0234-1



Photos

Top: Ashlea on her bed.

Centre: The modified bed.

Below: The bed as it was originally.

Steps for therapy

A set of “physio steps” is a common tool used in early childhood intervention, enabling the children to experiment, exercise, develop balance and practice walking up and down, as well as providing a way for therapists to assess gait and level of ability. However, the steps need to fit into the building in which each service is housed, and suit their individual arrangements.

The Woodstock Early Childhood Intervention Service in Albury provides support services for children with a disability from 12 weeks old up to school age. It’s in a very old building, and when Manager Rachael Webb and her staff wanted to set up a new gross motor therapy room or “gym”, the garage looked like the best prospect.

A fundraising drive by parents enabled the service to fit out the room, including a set of steps, but the staff couldn’t find a commercially available option that met all their requirements. Fortunately Rachael and physiotherapist Cath White didn’t have to look very far for a solution: both their fathers (Les Webb and Dave Welch) are members of TADNSW’s

Albury/Wodonga Branch, and the group has provided devices for Woodstock for over 10 years.

The group had built a similar set of steps several years earlier for the local community health centre, so this formed the basis for the new design. One important factor was that the steps are generally used against a wall, so that it is safer for the children. Also, the whole unit is quite bulky, so putting it against the wall takes up the least amount of space.

The steps also needed to be wide enough for two people to walk on them side by side, and heavy enough to be stable but light enough to be moved around by two people. Les therefore drew up a design that has three separate sections, two step sections and a one-square-metre central platform which goes in between them.

The three-piece system means that the steps can be used in a corner as they are at present, but could also be set up against a straight wall if required. “This is very useful in case

we move to a different building in the future,” Rachael said.

One step section has five steps and the other has only four, so the steps in each section are different heights and provide different gradients for varying types of exercise. The lower steps may also be more suitable for younger children.

Each step section has railings on both sides, and the platform section also has a railing on one side – this goes against the wall in the current corner setup, but can be placed at the front when it’s against a straight wall (see picture below left).

While the design was being finalised, the group received another request for two similar sets of steps from the Occupational Therapy department at Charles Sturt University, for their clinics at Albury and Wagga Wagga. This turned the project into a reasonably major operation.

A team of six volunteers (including Brian Haynes, Eric Booth, Les Holmes and Geoff Permezel as well as Dave Welch and Les Webb) set up a workshop in Geoff’s garage. The 60 MDF panels required for the total of nine sections were generously cut to size free of charge by the supplier, Hutchinson Cabinets, and the team went to work on building one set at a time.

The rails are made from 38mm galvanised tubing, painted with cheerful quick-drying yellow enamel. Cutting, welding and painting all the rails was also a lengthy process, done in shifts by team members as they had free time and sustained by delicious refreshments supplied by Geoff’s wife June.



When the first set was ready for delivery, the team excitedly ferried them to Woodstock, only to discover that they wouldn't fit through the doorway! Fortunately, the problem was quickly solved by unbolting the railings and re-fitting them once inside. The empty garage was then waiting for the whole process to be repeated twice more.

The steps look beautiful and blend in perfectly with the wooden floor of the therapy room. "They are being used every day, and are working wonderfully," Rachael said. "They fit really well into the corner of the room and they are just the right size for a child and therapist to use them safely."

Brian reports that while it was lengthy and time-consuming, all the team members found it very enjoyable to work on the project together. "We are planning a lunch for all of the team and their partners, to continue sharing the sense of team spirit that comes from volunteering with TAD," he said.

SUMMARY

client profile

variety of conditions

description of project

sets of therapy steps

age group

children

volunteers

Eric Booth, Brian Haynes,
Les Holmes, Geoff Permezel,
Les Webb, Dave Welch

project nos

15/09, 16/0, 18/09



Photos

Top: Physiotherapist Cath White on the steps with young client Jordin Free.

Below: The steps set up in the corner of the gross motor therapy room, with the platform railing against the wall, the higher steps to the left and the lower ones to the right.

Left: The volunteer team members display their handiwork, from left: Brian Haynes, Dave Welch, Les Webb, Les Holmes and Geoff Permezel. The steps are set up as they would be against a straight wall, with the platform railing to the front.



Wheelchair prot

Thirteen-year-old Alexandria Payne had a brain tumour when she was four, and now she has right hemiplegia, vision impairment and developmental delay, as well as some behavioural issues. However, she happily attends Lucas Heights Community School and enjoys playing with her sisters Georgia and Stephanie in their beautiful home near the water in Sydney's south.

As sometimes occurs with a brain injury, Alexandria's stronger left arm is very strong indeed, and she likes to pull and fiddle with things. "People don't realise just how strong she is," said her mother Joanne. "She can pull anything off and get her hand in anywhere!"

The problem was that Alexandria was destroying the fittings on her valuable electric wheelchair. The Occupational Therapist from Alexandria's school therapy team suggested that TADNSW might be able to assist in protecting the chair from further damage.

Volunteer Kevin Everitt visited the Paynes and found that there were a number of fittings on the chair that needed attention. The first issue was the control panel for the joystick, which had a thin film over the membrane touch buttons that set the direction and mode.

The buttons didn't work unless they were covered by the film, but Alexandria was busily pulling it off! "It's not really a very practical design," Joanne said.

Kevin cut a piece of malleable aluminium to the exact shape of the panel, leaving three tabs at the top



Photos

Centre left: The aluminium cover for the joystick control panel. **Centre right:** The fuse box cover. **Below left:** The steel braid cable armoring. **Below right:** The new solid rubber armrest, with the strap visible on the purple fairing below.

ection

and sides. He punched holes out for the buttons and filed the whole piece smooth so it is safe for Alexandria's hands.

The cover fits neatly over the panel, leaving only the buttons exposed. It is held in place with screws which go through the tabs into the sides of the panel, and is thus impossible to remove without a screwdriver.

“He just went through all the problems and he fixed them all. The work he did was unbelievable!”

Alexandria had also pretty much destroyed the upholstery on the chair's left armrest. “I thought that the solution would be to use solid rubber, so there was nothing to pull or lift up,” Kevin said. He fashioned a piece of black industrial rubber to fit the metal casing and glued it firmly into place, and over two years down the track it survives, only a little worse for wear.

The next task was to cover the chair's fuse box, which was behind the footrests under the seat – and within Alexandria's reach. The cover needed to go over the existing case to maintain moisture and dirtproofing.

Kevin made an aluminium panel with loops at each corner on one side. The loops go around the pipe chassis of the chair and form a hinge, so the panel rests over the fuse box to cover it but can also be easily lifted out of the way to access the fuses. As a final touch, he painted the panel black so it matches the rest of the wheelchair.

Also under the seat behind the fuse box is the chair's rechargeable battery, covered by a fairing that Alexandria had been lifting and damaging. Kevin made a strap which goes around the fairing and underneath the chassis to hold the fairing in place, fastened with a belt-style buckle that Alexandria can't undo.

The final task was to shield the cabling, which runs from the attendant control at the back of the chair down to the battery and to the joystick at the front. Joanne says that in some spots Alexandria had stripped the cable's plastic casing off entirely, leaving the wires exposed and prone to damage.

To do this, Kevin used flexible stainless steel braid, which is generally used to armour outdoor cables and in plumbing. “When used for electrical cables it generally provides an

electrical shield, but in this case it makes a mechanical one,” he said. “There's no way Alexandria can get a fingernail through that!”

“Kevin was amazing,” said Joanne. “He just went through all the problems and he fixed them all. The work he did was unbelievable!”

SUMMARY

client profile

right hemiplegia, vision impairment, developmental delay

description of project

modifications to protect wheelchair

age group

children

volunteer

Kevin Everitt

project no

SO7000525



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From the archives

In celebration the 35th anniversary of the foundation of TAD, we bring you some interesting items from long-past issues of the TADJournal.



WHEEL CLEANER

Client Jacqueline, who had post-polio syndrome, was an inveterate gardener and wanted a way to clean the wheels of her wheelchair before she came back into the house.

As reported in December 1992, volunteer Bob May devised a cleaning tool consisting of a sponge mounted in a U-shaped aluminium piece on a one-metre handle. It used a sponge from a squeeze mop that was available at the time and could thus be easily replaced.

Jacqueline placed the tool over the wheel and braced against the frame of the chair, thus reducing the strength required to hold it in place. She then drove the chair backwards a short distance to force the wheel through the sponge.

MEAL MANAGER

In June 1994, the *TADJournal* reported Carl and Joanna's request for a meal manager to help their nine-year-old son James be more independent at mealtimes. James had cerebral palsy and had limited use of his arms.

Volunteer Graham Sharp made a device with an operating arm on the left, as this was James's strongest side. The arm was mounted on pivots so it could move vertically and horizontally, and was fitted with a detachable, specially shaped spoon. After trial a template was added to limit the range of movement of the arm.



The meal was placed in a lipped plate which rests on a heavy plastic turntable. James pushed the spoon down onto the plate and scooped up some food by pushing it against the lip. He then lifted the operating arm, and the template moves the spoon towards his mouth.

STAND UP STICK

Way back in December 1983, the *TADJournal* described a stand-up walking stick designed by volunteer Eric Ingman. The stick has three "legs" which open out so the stick can be rested on the floor, or closed when the user is walking. This ensures that the stick doesn't fall down onto the floor and become irretrievable. TADNSW made a number of the sticks for clients over the following five years, although it has not been produced for some time.



IRON GUARD

Kaye's deteriorating vision meant that she was burning herself when doing the ironing. She was burning her left hand while ironing and her right hand when trying to locate the handle.

As reported in September 1995, volunteer Stephen Plummer made a stainless steel guard which surrounds the iron's hot plate. This is supported by two stainless steel struts near the point of the iron, carefully positioned to minimise heat transmission, and two plastic bollards at the base.



CSS computers in Papua New Guinea

Computers from the Computer Support Service have travelled all the way to Papua New Guinea, thanks to a chance meeting between CSS volunteer Jack Lagerlow and obstetrician Ron Sommers.

Ron first went to New Guinea in 1996 when he accompanied a spinal patient back to the Brahman School in Madang Province after treatment in Australia. He was persuaded to stay on by his cousin Max David, who has lived in New Guinea for many years and built a school in the Ramu Valley.

“His idea of a holiday was to take me up into the highlands, and he took me to the Kundiawa District Hospital, where there was one Polish doctor looking after 268,000 people by himself,” Ron said. “He talked me into staying, and I have been going up there twice a year ever since.”

There are a number of people with disabilities living long-term at the hospital – some are not able to live at home because of the conditions in their remote villages, or they may need ongoing treatment. “I wanted to set up a school for them, and teach the older ones to use sewing machines and computers so they could get jobs,” Ron said.

The school was built up over the years. “The government provided

two teachers, and we’ve had them trained in special needs,” he said. “We built up an occupational therapy and physiotherapy department as well.”

When Ron met Jack back in Sydney, he thought that the Computer Support Service could be an ideal source of cheap but functional computers for the school. “I had got some old ones directly from businesses in Australia, but they weren’t working,” he said. “The good thing about the TAD ones is that they have been refurbished and are in really good working order.”

The CSS was able to provide refurbished Pentium 3 computers. They were ferried up to New Guinea by boat along with other goods and equipment, and then inland by truck to the hospital.

Before long, Ron was receiving requests for computers from other schools, and altogether 24 computers have been taken from the CSS to the area. “At the Brahman School they now have 18 computers for the 600 older children, which is a huge boost to their capability,” he said. “Now the Simbu provincial government’s education and health department is asking us to help them as well.”

“Of course, we can only bring computers to the schools that have electricity, and a road that enables us

to take them there,” Ron said. “We are hoping that with the income from the natural gas that has been discovered, there might be funds for a helicopter for each province, and that could take things to the more remote areas as well as transporting patients. The hospital has already built a helipad in the hope that it will be put to use.”

Repairing the computers is also an issue. “There is only one person who can fix them in the area – a German who works at the Catholic Mission at Madang,” Ron said. “They sent him to Australia for training so they had someone to look after the PCs in the college there.”

The CSS computers play a significant role, but Ron is all too aware that there is still so much to be done. “Sometimes you feel like you’re not making much difference,” he said. “Some of the remote schools have no teaching equipment at all, not even pens and pencils.”

“There is a massive need for childbirth education, and Aids-related education, and communications and transport are also such a problem. If we could just get that helicopter, it would make all the difference for everyone working to improve the welfare of people in the remote regions.”

Keeping us old b



“When you retire, it’s too easy to let your focus and social network come down to a single point,” says TADNSW volunteer and Board member Peter Bennett. “It was happening to me, and I didn’t want that so I got on the internet and I found TAD.”

Peter trained as an electrical engineer and moved into electronics, working in computers in their early days in the late 1960s. He then went into engineering management in other areas, including control systems, medical electronics and telecommunications.

However, he also had an abiding interest in aviation. “My wife got sick of me going on about planes all the time and being dragged to airports, so she bought me my first 10 flying lessons, and I got my pilot’s licence in 1979,” he said.

When he retired, Peter set about building his own plane. “I had had my pilot’s licence for a decade but barely used it,” he said. “Hiring aircraft is expensive, restrictive and

frustrating when equipment doesn’t work. Building one promised high performance at a price I could afford, and I could maintain it myself.”

The plane is a Vans RV6, built from a kit supplied by Vans Aircraft of Oregon. “Building an aircraft is not hard,” Peter said. “Anybody with a good set of handyman skills and the right attitude to learning can do it. The unique aspect is that the medium in which they operate is terribly unforgiving of errors! It’s therefore very important to work to professional standards.”

Peter was also keen to get back into more technical work, and he made several small devices for the plane using microprocessors. However he began to find that all his friends and activities were around aviation, and he thought it was time for a new focus.

“I joined TAD and thoroughly enjoyed it,” he said. “I thought, here is a bunch of people who are really community-minded and good-hearted. And based on my first few projects, I realised they were working in an area

that is just crying out for innovation. I was just absolutely chuffed that I could use my engineering background to provide some solutions.”

One project that Peter found particularly interesting was to make a sensor for a boy with autism who was being toilet-trained. His parents had a sensor to identify when he needed to go to the toilet, but the boy was chewing the cable.

“I ended up making a little radio transmitter that clipped onto the back of his pants, out of reach,” Peter said. “It can alert the child himself or the parents, so they can decide how much responsibility the carer takes and how much the child takes.”

He has also just finished another interesting project to make a set of pneumatic cushions which will be used to provide greater comfort during the night for a man with muscular dystrophy, by changing the position of his legs. “I got to the seventh prototype before the cushions did exactly what was needed, but it’s worth it if he is not in pain,” Peter said.

Peter has also become a member of TADNSW’s Board. “I think I was invited because I was quite outspoken at the branch conference about the role of volunteers,” he said.

“I feel very strongly that volunteers should be used as widely and effectively as possible. They are the strength of TAD, and critical to our business model. We need to educate and involve them to develop the service where possible, and use paid staff positions very judiciously.”

okes young

“TAD provides services for people with a disability, but it also provides marvellous opportunities for volunteers to use their abilities, make a contribution and develop their self-esteem. TAD keeps us old blokes young! We need to recognise that, identify the skills we need and recruit people who are prepared to make a commitment.”

Being on the Board has changed Peter’s understanding of TADNSW. “I can see it from the inside now, the core problems that we wrestle with,” he said. “What is our role, and how do we interact with the other players in the sector? But I keep coming back to the unique way we bring volunteers and people with a disability together. I just want to see us do more of it and be even more effective.”

When not working of TADNSW projects, Peter’s plane still brings him great pleasure. Flying at almost 300 km per hour, he and his wife Judith have made numerous trips around Australia, including to Birdsville, Uluru, Thursday Island and the Kimberleys.

“Little did I realise what a world it would open up,” he said. “It has been a continuous learning experience, and has introduced me to many new like-minded friends right around the country.”



My own computer

Thirteen-year-old Adriana Gattelari is never wanting for company in her lively family, living with four brothers and sisters on a semi-rural property on Sydney’s outskirts.

Adriana has Apert syndrome, a congenital disorder characterised by malformations of the skull, face hands and feet. This affects her mobility and although she can walk unaided she can’t run well, and has to miss out on most sport at school. She also has some developmental delay and is a little shy, but she has a lovely smile.

“Her fingers are fused, so her manual dexterity is limited as well,” said her mother, Josephine. She has trouble doing up buttons and opening jars, and she finds it hard to write using a pen or pencil.”

Josephine thought that a computer might provide entertainment for Adriana and help her development.

“She gets frustrated not being able to do very much,” she said. “A computer is easy for her, just the touch of a button to operate it, and we thought it might get her more interested in things.”

The Northcott Society told Josephine about TADNSW’s Computer Support Service, and before long they received a computer for Adriana. It helps that it is hers alone, and she doesn’t have to share with her more boisterous brothers and sisters.

“She mainly uses it for games at this stage,” Josephine said. “But even that provides all sorts of benefits in terms of increasing her skills and confidence. As she gets older she will probably use it to do some of her schoolwork as well.”

With a big family and a child with a disability, every little bit helps. “It’s a great service,” Josephine said.



JAPANESE VISIT

In August a group of 17 physiotherapy and occupational therapy students from the Shijo Nawate University in Japan visited TADNSW to find out about our services. The group is spending three days in Sydney to tour a number of health service organisations.

TADNSW physiotherapists Weh Yeoh and Brendan Worne spoke about

their roles and how they interact with referring therapists. The students were particularly interested in the FREEDOM WHEELS modified bikes and the ingenuity of our custom-designed equipment.

We always welcome visitors to our office. If you're interested in coming to see what we do at TADNSW, just give Elva a call on (02) 9912 3400.

FREEDOM WHEELS AT ARATA

TADNSW physiotherapists Weh Yeoh and Brendan Worne recently travelled to Hobart for the Australian Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Association (ARATA) National Conference, where they gave a presentation on the evolution of the FREEDOM WHEELS Modified Bike Service.

The audience of therapists, service providers rehabilitation engineers, equipment suppliers were very enthusiastic, and it was a valuable exercise to raise awareness about the service and extend contact networks.



Weh Yeoh at the podium.

The next ARATA conference will be in Sydney, and hopefully this will provide the opportunity for even greater involvement for TADNSW.



SUPPORT FROM CLUBS

Clubs from across the state support TADNSW through the Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme (CDSE), and TADNSW representatives have travelled near and far to collect their cheques. The Clubs are always very generous and supportive, and we always appreciate the chance to promote TADNSW's services.

FAREWELL TO JOY BARRETT

TADNSW said farewell to CEO Joy Barrett in July. Joy was CEO of TADNSW for the last five years, and has overseen some major changes in the organisation. The largest of these was searching for suitable premises for the new TADHouse and moving from the Royal Rehabilitation Centre, Sydney to our new home at Northmead. Joy also led TADNSW ably into the world of increased regulation in which we now operate.

Former Director of Services Alan McGregor has stepped into Joy's



One recent presentation was at Canada Bay Club in Five Dock. Pictured (L-R) are Canada Bay Club Chief Financial Officer Ann Hay, TADNSW Fundraising Manager Melanie Gibbons, Canada Bay Club Marketing and Functions Manager David Raiti, TADNSW Marketing and Communications Manager Natalie Peterson and Canada Bay Club Acting CEO Adam Lewis.



shoes. Having worked at TADNSW for nearly ten years, Alan has a deep understanding of our services, clients and operating environment, and is very well placed to lead us as we move forward in the years ahead.

Photo: Joy Barrett, long-time volunteer Richard Bosanquet and TADNSW President Bill Phippen at Joy's farewell.

GILLY'S SIXES FUND MORE BIKES

Amway's Brand Ambassador Adam Gilchrist presented a cheque to TADNSW in July to support the FREEDOM WHEELS Modified Bike Service. Amway has sponsored the service since 2008 through the One By One Foundation.

As last year, Amway donated funds for modified bikes for every six Adam hit in the 2010 Indian Premier League. The presentation at Amway's Castle Hill headquarters was a great opportunity for families with FREEDOM WHEELS bikes to meet the famous cricketer. It was also a chance for the kids to show off their bikes!

Photo top right: Adam (second from left) with FREEDOM WHEELS rider Daniel Weaver and (L-R, back) Daniel's father Sam McIlveen, Suzanne Cooney, TADNSW physiotherapist Brendan Worne, and Daniel's sister Madison and brother Ben. **Right:** Adam presenting the symbolic cheque with Amway Business Centre Manager Michael McLaughlin (L) and TADNSW CEO Alan McGregor.



FINANCIAL PLANNERS TAKE AN INTEREST

TADNSW President Bill Phippen recently went to Canberra to give a presentation to the AMP Financial Planners Annual Conference. The participants wanted to take the opportunity to fundraise for a charity, and we were thrilled they chose TADNSW!

Colin Dransfield, the NSW President of the AMP Financial Planners Association visited TADNSW's head office at Northmead to find out more about TADNSW and see the difference that the planners' donation will make. He presented Bill with the funds



raised on the night, and the resulting photo will be used in their marketing material.

CWA HELPS PORT MACQUARIE GROUP

TADNSW's Port Macquarie interest group has received support from the Port Macquarie CWA. This followed a submission by CWA member Phillipa Reiss, assisted by TADNSW volunteer Mike Atkinson. Volunteer John Brumby attended the presentation evening and gave Branch President Patricia Godfrey a certificate of appreciation (right).

Appropriately, the group has used the donation to purchase a tool called a biscuit cutter. The group are currently making several sets of bed rails for young children, and the cutter facilitates the butt joining of the rails. "Due to the



CWA's generosity, there will be three children who will sleep much safer at night, blissfully unaware they are surrounded by biscuits!" John said. It's great to see TADNSW's regional groups making links with their communities and receiving support in return.

TADNSW CALENDAR

The 2011 TADNSW calendar is now on sale!



Launched at the anniversary dinner on October 15, the calendar contains striking and colourful artworks from the competition run earlier this year among TADNSW clients to celebrate our 35th anniversary. They are a great Christmas gift idea and also a great way to celebrate our milestone of 35 years.

The calendars cost \$15 + postage. To order, use the form at www.tadnsw.org.au/35years or contact Leanne on (02) 9912 3405.

Have you considered workplace giving?

WHAT IS WORKPLACE GIVING?

- A simple and effective way to regularly donate to TADNSW through automated payroll deductions.
- Your tax deductible pledge is sent directly to TADNSW each month by your payroll office.
- Regular flow of income enables TADNSW to better plan activities, goals and budgets.
- A better alternative to expensive fundraising campaigns.
- Each company can opt to match their employee's donation dollar for dollar.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- Your income tax is calculated on your lower "net" amount after your donation = an immediate tax reduction benefit to you.
- And your donation is received free of cost by TADNSW.

WHAT HAPPENS AT TAX TIME?

- Your employer provides you with a statement along with your group certificate for the amount you have donated.
- In a pre-tax workplace giving system you will only need to record the amount on your tax return, rather than keeping receipts and claiming for that amount. It's an easy way to give!

HOW IT WORKS

Traditional donations

Donation	\$10.00
Administration costs	- \$1.70
Receipting costs	- \$3.60
Total donation to TADNSW	\$4.70

Workplace giving

Donation	\$10.00
Administration costs	Nil
Receipting costs	Nil
Total donation to TADNSW	\$10.00

If you would like TADNSW to talk to your management about a Workplace Giving Program in your workplace, call Mark Lees on his direct line (02) 9912 3406 or email mlees@tadnsw.org.au.

Contribute to TADNSW

MEMBERSHIP

As well as the opportunity to support TADNSW's services, benefits of membership include voting rights at meetings of the company, eligibility for election to the TADNSW Board and branch committees, issues of the *TADJournal* and invitations to seminars and functions.

DONATION

We have over 300 volunteers who donate their labour to make around 1,000 custom-designed aids and maintain around 1,000 computer clients per year. However, we do need funds to support and deliver these services, and for this we rely on the generous support of our donors. For more information refer to www.tadnsw.org.au/Support/donate.php.

TADJOURNAL SUBSCRIPTION

You can subscribe to the *TADJournal* without becoming a member or volunteering. For more information refer to www.tadnsw.org.au/Services/Communications/subscribe.php.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers have the opportunity to use their skills to support people with disabilities and their families. Volunteers can receive the *TADJournal* and invitations to seminars and functions, and are covered by insurance while doing authorised voluntary work. Reduced-rate membership is available to volunteers who wish to have voting rights and be eligible for election. For more information refer to www.tadnsw.org.au/Support/volunteer.php.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

The information collected by TADNSW is for the purposes of processing your enquiry, request, registration, donation and/or for promotional purposes. TADNSW only discloses personal and sensitive information to the TADNSW employee or volunteer involved in the provision of the service you have requested.

If you are giving personal information about another person, e.g. next of kin, you should seek their permission beforehand and advise why you are disclosing their details to TADNSW. For a copy of our Privacy Policy visit www.tadnsw.org.au or telephone 1300 663 243 or (02) 9912 3400.

MEMBERSHIP

I wish to become a member of TADNSW and enclose payment for:

- Member** \$50.00 per year
 Volunteer member \$10.00 per year
(available to registered volunteers only)
 Corporate \$250.00

Overseas members please add \$AUS 15.00 per year for postage.

DONATION

I would like to:

- Join the TAD1000 Club to help fundraise**

Please send me a TAD1000 Club sign-up kit

- Become a regular donor**

I authorise TADNSW to deduct regular monthly payments from my credit card until further written notice in the amount of:

- \$2 \$5 \$10 \$20
 Other _____

- Make a single donation**

Please deduct from my credit card/my cheque or money order is enclosed for the amount of: \$25 \$50 \$100 \$200
 Other \$ _____

- Make an in-kind donation**

Details _____

- Leave a bequest**

Please send me more information on leaving a bequest to TADNSW

All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible (CFN 10944)

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- I wish to subscribe to the *TADJournal* \$45.00 per year including GST
Overseas subscribers please add \$AUS 15.00 for airmail postage

VOLUNTEERING

- Please send me more information on volunteering

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Please send to Locked Bag 2008, Wentworthville NSW 2145



Ensuring your legacy with TADNSW

Technical Aid to the Disabled (TADNSW) is a unique charity that uses technology and the creativity of our volunteers to provide solutions that improve the lives of people with disabilities. If you would like to leave a lasting reminder of your support for TADNSW's services, please consider leaving a gift to TADNSW in your will. This will help to ensure that these invaluable services continue and develop in the future.

A gift to TADNSW will help ensure a long-lasting legacy. To leave a gift for TADNSW, you should nominate the TAD Foundation as your beneficiary.

When you decide to make a gift to TADNSW, please let us know. This will allow us to thank you personally for your generosity. It will also allow us to plan for the future knowing that we will have the financial resources to continue helping people with disabilities and develop our services.

There is no need to tell us the amount if you do not want to, and we will treat any information you give us in the strictest confidence.

You could also leave a memorial gift to TADNSW by including in your will a request to family and friends to give a donation to the TAD Foundation in lieu of flowers.

For more information on bequests and wills, please see your solicitor

or estate planner. You can also access information online at www.pt.nsw.gov.au.

For more information on leaving a bequest or memorial gift to the TAD Foundation, please phone Mark Lees on his direct line at (02) 9912 3406 or mobile 0407 253 136, or email bequests@tadnsw.org.au. You can also find information at www.tadnsw.org.au/support/bequest.html



DIRECTORY

TECHNICAL AID TO THE DISABLED NSW (TADNSW)

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Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC CVO
Governor of New South Wales

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Computer Support Service:
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Development: fundraising@tadnsw.org.au

BRANCHES AND INTEREST GROUPS

(phone 1300 663 243 for details of your nearest group)
Albury/Wodonga, Central Coast, Central West, Clarence Valley, Coffs Harbour, Hunter, Illawarra, Manning/Great Lakes, Northern Rivers, Port Macquarie, Shoalhaven, Southern Area, Southern Highlands

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