

The Abbeyfield Observer

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A note from the new Editors

Greetings to everyone. The Communications subcommittee is now publishing the Abbeyfield Observer, and not without some trepidation. The previous Editor, Jill Parker, has very big shoes to fill. Many thanks, Jill, for the great work you have done; I hope we prove up to the task!

Report from the Chairman, David Kay, on the outcomes of the Abbeyfield Australia Board meeting and planning development weekend July 2013

Dear Abbeyfield members and friends,

Over the weekend of 6 and 7 July, Board members gathered in Melbourne for a weekend of meetings and workshops which included further development of the Strategic Plan, adoption of the 2013 budget, fund raising, risk management, and a submission on challenges facing our Abbeyfield House operating model in today's economic conditions.

Strategic Plan

Abbeyfield Australia Ltd has a business model with predominantly fixed operating costs matched against a very variable income. This means that we continually operate on 'a shoe-string', sometimes struggling to deliver the increasing services expected of us, and perpetually fight from year to year to develop beyond our current limited capacity.

Simultaneously we are operating:

- in an increasingly regulated community housing sector which places additional compliance and service standard obligations on Abbeyfield Australia and all our local societies
- in an environment where Government does not see itself as a wholesale capital funding provider for community housing development.

The company's income stream needs to improve and fund raising will be a major part of the solution. For example:

- our business would be much more secure and successful if we could increase the corpus within the Abbeyfield Australia Investment Fund so that the interest income thereon could significantly support the operations of the national body. This would allow Abbeyfield Australia to provide greater service to all Abbeyfield Local Societies without the need for an increased financial burden on Local Societies

- our development would be enhanced if we had access to capital to assist the development of further Abbeyfield Housing.

The 2013-14 Budget has a substantial deficit, which can only be sustained for a short period, and with increasing regulatory demands we are currently understaffed. The board explored a number of options to reduce the heavy reliance on annual Affiliation levy income and is developing alternative strategies to fund the national body.

It had been the intention of the Board to circulate the draft Strategic Plan to local Societies following its Planning and Development Forum weekend but to enable the inclusion of this financial strategy and some other items the Board will now consider the amended version in September prior to its circulation to Societies.

Abbeyfield Australia Budget 2013 / 2014

Having adopted a proposal to potentially restructure our finances the Board resolved to adopt a deficit budget for 2013 / 2014 financial year. The projected \$50,000 deficit can only be relied upon as a short term remedy and cannot be sustained indefinitely. These difficulties are compounded by the fact that the office is currently understaffed to provide all the required services. However, we are confident that we have a plan that will see these issues resolved without the need to raise additional funds internally.

Challenges facing the Abbeyfield model

Marion Harriden, Chairman of the Dingley Village Abbeyfield Society presented a discussion paper to the Board outlining the challenges which that Society sees with the current Abbeyfield operating model. A number of suggestions were made and these will be discussed at the various Abbeyfield Australia state conferences later this year.

Risk Management

Risk Management is an integral aspect of our housing, hostel and people based environment. As such we are addressing the need for comprehensive risk management policies and procedures at both national and local society levels and together with our insurer broker, the Insurance House Group, developing a user-friendly yet comprehensive risk management tool for local societies and Abbeyfield Australia.

A workshop was held at the Waverley Abbeyfield House on 18 June this year at which volunteers from six Melbourne Abbeyfield Houses completed a three hour session to test the work done to date. The test group's feedback was very positive and it recommended the drafted Risk Management Framework now be trialed at four or five (volunteer) Melbourne Abbeyfield Houses before being implemented nationally. (The use of Melbourne metro local societies as test sites is for convenience as our Insurance broker is also based in Melbourne.)

The Abbeyfield House Management Manual

Copies of the draft Abbeyfield House Management Manual were made available to members at the 2012 conference in November and an undertaking given that they would be circulated early in 2013. With additional regulatory demands we now have another six draft policies being considered by the Board's Governance Sub Committee, to which we can add Risk Management and Bullying which are in development or legal approval stages.

To wait for these policies to be finalised, adopted and included in the Manual will delay its issue until the end of this year, and based on current procedures we will then have additional matters to consider for inclusion. In an effort to overcome this hiatus the Manual will be issued to all Societies in a hard copy format and also made available on the members section of the Abbeyfield Australia website.

The Manual was always envisaged to be a living document and so any subsequent changes / inclusions will be made to the subsequent 2014 edition of the Manual. This will make the document accessible to Societies as the guide to their operations.

Kind regards,

David Kay
Chairman, Abbeyfield Australia

A Few Highlights from 2013

Abbeyfield Curtin

Abbeyfield Curtin, in conjunction with Nutrition Australia, produced a booklet, *Healthy Lifestyle Choices*, to help and encourage its residents in healthy eating and activity. The ACT Government funded the project under one of its HealthPact Grants. The booklet has since been distributed to every Abbeyfield house in Australia. If you don't have a copy or would like an additional copy, please contact the Abbeyfield Australia office.

Bill Wood, an important link in the establishing of the Curtin house, was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2012 Australia Day's Honours List, for services to children and young people with a disability. Bill's philosophy is "Be useful, don't just sit there."

Bill originally came to Canberra as a teacher of children with disabilities. Along with a lot of people, Bill and his wife, Beverley, hadn't intended to stay long. But then he entered politics. Bill served on the first ACT Assembly in 1989 and his portfolios included education, disability, housing, community services, police, the arts and urban services.

Bill was the guiding minister when Abbeyfield Curtin was being mooted and built. It is fair to say that without Bill, there would not be a Curtin house. He retired in 2004 and stayed active by becoming, amongst other things, Patron for Abbeyfield Curtin.

He said the award was an honour that could be bestowed upon many people in the community who work so hard. "There are literally thousands of groups out there, tens of thousands of people doing great things. I'm just one of those tens of thousands."



News from Wagga Wagga

The local Abbeyfield disability house working group, led by Lyn Quigley, has been working together for the past twelve months to bring a second Abbeyfield House to Wagga – this time to provide a contemporary and affordable community housing option for our community members with an intellectual disability.

In July, ADHC granted \$1,500,000 towards building a new Abbeyfield House in Wagga Wagga. Looking forward, in the next five months the group will be working in partnership with the local community and the State Government to secure the additional \$1.5M funding necessary to bring the project to fruition.

Lyn Quigley

Abbeyfield St Joseph's Malvern - Christmas in July

And a wonderful time was had by all.....



A new house in Narrabri!

The NSW town of Narrabri will soon have its own Abbeyfield house for people with intellectual disabilities. The Chair of Abbeyfield Narrabri, Marion Pike, provides this update.

Having been told there would be no more ongoing funding for housing for people with disabilities in Narrabri, we needed to find a model that would not only compliment what existed in Narrabri but would fit into the government guidelines. After considerable research and effort to try to establish more housing in Narrabri for younger adults with disabilities, Narrabri Parent Support Group for Accommodation, formed in 2003, became a branch of Abbeyfield Australia in 2006.

Our aims were based on the fundamental principal of the rights of people with disabilities to have a choice of accommodation; to maintain contact with their families; to be able to access and participate in the community; and to have the opportunity to reach their full potential through a safe and gradual process of development.

We needed to overcome the lack of accommodation options other than the family home for adults with disabilities. A number of factors either individually or together can cause significant hardship for all parties. This can be exaggerated in smaller towns with rural, remote and isolated areas. These factors include:

- The unmet need for a level of independence for the adult person with a disability;
- Limited opportunities to participate in the community; and
- Social isolation for the person with a disability and their carer/s.

We chose the Abbeyfield model because it is a housing model. Support services for people already exist. The model is cost effective and run by a local committee for local people. Chris Reside from Abbeyfield Australia has organized and coordinated so much paper work to allow Abbeyfield houses to be accepted as a housing model for young adults with disabilities in NSW. I wonder if government agencies will ever comprehend how much voluntary work has gone into this area of Abbeyfield by dedicated parents and friends of Abbeyfield.

After much lobbying, capital funding were received in July 2011 from the State Government. Construction is expected to be completed very soon. The house is really looking fantastic. We are very pleased and excited. Everything is now going so fast. I hope we manage to keep up!

Marion Pike



The Narrabri Abbeyfield house under construction.



Left to right: Kevin Humphries MP, State Member for Barwon, Chris Reside, CEO of Abbeyfield Australia, Helen Scaysbrook, Kim Scaysbrook, Chris Pike, Robyn Faber, Mark Coulton MP, Federal Member for Parkes, and Marion Pike.

State conference dates 2013 for your diary:

Tasmania	5 October
NSW/ ACT	26 October
Victoria / SA	9 November