



## Siblings Australia is moving ahead!

After a difficult 2008 and continued lobbying, we are excited to let you know about new projects for 2009 and how you can be involved. We welcome input from family members and service providers (from disability, mental health, education, community services etc).

As you are probably aware, Siblings Australia is the ONLY organisation in Australia to focus on siblings of children and adults with special needs. During the past 10 years (our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary is this month) our focus has been on support, education, training and advocacy about and for siblings. We have provided workshops to thousands of parents and providers around Australia and overseas, developed written and online information, and provided support to siblings of all ages.

Our Mission is Siblings: Acknowledged, Connected, Resilient. By that we mean that siblings can be overlooked, both within families and by the community. They can then become isolated and be at risk for a range of mental health problems. However, if we acknowledge their needs and connect them to each other and to other sources of support, they are likely to become more resilient. We have worked directly with siblings (both children and adults), with parents to help them support all their children, and with providers to help them support whole families more effectively.

Please consider how you can be involved in the following:

### Membership

We are announcing a new program of membership/support from the community, where you can carry out the registration process on-line. If you just want to receive email updates about our work you can register for free, although we do hope you will consider a tax deductible donation. If you would like to be a member of the organisation there are three different levels and we have special rates for the first 12 months. If you are a family member or a person with special needs, membership is only \$10; for individual providers, \$30; organisations or government departments, \$100. All options include email updates. Whilst there is much happening now, our future is not at all secure. We need organisations that support families to recognise the value of our organisation in



Services for brothers and sisters  
of children with special needs

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developing training and resources for sibling support. A co-ordinated approach benefits everyone – siblings, parents, service providers, and the community but, most of all, the person with special needs. Please go to <http://www.siblingsaustralia.onefireplace.com> in order to complete the registration process. This membership project has been supported by Community Benefit SA.

## Conference

The Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) has provided support to Siblings Australia to host its 2<sup>nd</sup> National Conference in late 2009. This conference will be of interest to families, providers, researchers and policy makers. Go to [www.sapmea.asn.au/siblings09](http://www.sapmea.asn.au/siblings09) to register your interest in this important event.

## Scoping Project

We have also been funded by FAHCSIA to carry out a scoping project of all sibling support programs running around Australia. We encourage all providers to complete this short survey, and are aiming to hear from anyone who is involved in specific sibling programs. Please go to [here](#) to complete the survey, it should only take approximately 20 minutes.

## Adult Sibling Project

This project, based in South Australia, and funded by the Julia Farr MS McLeod Benevolent Foundation, is continuing to develop resources and services for adult siblings of people living with disability, and to explore how to strengthen those sibling relationships. Information can be found at [http://www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/ps\\_cprojects.asp](http://www.siblingsaustralia.org.au/ps_cprojects.asp)

## Parent information booklet

DADHC (NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care) is supporting the development of a booklet for parents/carers of a child with special needs, on how they can support siblings.

## Parent workshop DVD

Woodend Foundation is supporting us to develop a DVD of our parent workshops which will be able to be used by parents or by providers in working with parents.

## Forums

Our website continues to host forums for young, teen and adult siblings and for providers who are involved in sibling support. The teen and adult sibling forums are quite active, but they all need development to increase membership and activity. We have applied to various funding bodies for support in this area, with no success. Please spread the word about the forums – they have much potential.

## Saturday Sibs/SibworkS

We are continuing to run programs for young siblings – recreational programs and the 6 week peer support program – in order for them to meet other siblings and share experiences. The number we are able to provide again depends on the funding we can access and we continue to submit grant applications for this work. Two SibworkS programs have been funded by Morialta Trust. And a recreational program for young siblings has been funded by Variety, the Children's Charity. Please remember that we have a SibworkS Facilitator Manual for sale for people wishing to run a sibling support program and, during May, we have a 2 for 1 sale on the participant booklets that go with the Manual! Contact the office for details.

## Future Directions

Depending on future funding, we hope to be able to evaluate the SibworkS program, develop shared policies and procedures for sibling programs, build our forums, contribute further to research directions, and also develop on-line training programs for people working with families. We will also continue to lobby for siblings to be included in policy. See

<http://www.auseinet.com/journal/vol7iss2/strohmeditorial.pdf>

As you can see from the above projects, 2009 will be busy. However in spite of various grants we still struggle with infrastructure costs, and nothing is certain beyond this year. We have taken a 12 month lease on an office at 23A King William Road, Unley. (If you are in Adelaide please drop in!)

Siblings will have the longest relationship of anyone with the person with special needs. Your support will ensure we can continue to provide programs for siblings and their families – stronger siblings mean stronger families!!

Many thanks and I look forward to contact with you in the future.

Kate

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