

Bringing creativity to life

At Participate Australia we celebrate participants' abilities in new and sometimes ground-breaking ways. We provide assistance to families and support people with a disability through a variety of activities.

Our participants learn valuable life skills in a supported environment, with an emphasis on fun and challenging activities. While this is taking place, carers enjoy essential respite.

We have options for everyone, with activities specifically designed for children, teenagers, younger and older adults and for ageing participants. We also run a range of social activities throughout the year. Our participants play an active role in shaping our social activities calendar through planning meetings and other opportunities to shape the future direction of activities.



Our social activities aim to increase community participation and provide opportunities to realise aspirations and achieve goals. Our Saturday Art Social Club combines

creative expression and social engagement with others who share an interest in the arts.

Recently, participants learnt to tie dye and made a number of great T-shirts in what was a fun and inspiring activity.

In fact, there are many creative participants at Participate Australia. In November, Sophie Cotsis MP, Member for Canterbury and Shadow Minister for Disability, invited participants to submit artworks for her inaugural Christmas card competition. She selected artworks by Daniel Kordy and Edward Jang from a large number of entries.

We are thrilled for Daniel and Edward and proud of their achievement – as they should be.

Congratulations!



Jerry McNamara, Daniel Kordy, Sophie Cotsis, Edward Jang

A Message from the CEO

In the half year since people with disability in the Sydney region have been transitioning to the NDIS, almost two thirds of our participants have received an NDIS plan. The process with which this has taken place has been confusing for many families, adding unnecessary stress during a period of transformation in the disability sector.

The fifteen residents of RASAIID – located in the North Sydney Region – had all transitioned a year earlier and their plans are now undergoing the first annual review. This too is causing them and their families some anxiety, as no experience from past annual reviews exists of course.

We acknowledge that this is a difficult time for everybody affected and thank our participants and their families for engaging with our staff to make their personal transition as smooth as possible.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our participants and families for their support during this period of change. We are delighted that the vast majority have decided to continue accessing our programs and activities with their NDIS funding and we acknowledge and welcome this expression of confidence and trust.

It was great to see so many of them at the end-of-year celebrations at Croydon Park Public School earlier this month. If you have missed out on it this time, you can see some pictures on page 5.

The Productivity Commission released a report into the NDIS in October. It contains recommendations that reflect what participants, advocates

and providers have been calling for, including slowing down the transition so that the quality of plans can be improved. If you're interested in the report, we've placed a link to it on our website at participateaustralia.com.au/ndis-reports.

Earlier this week we received notification from Financial Literacy Australia that Participate Australia won a significant grant to convert our entire flagship financial literacy program into an online learning management system that is more accessible and which will allow participants to practice at home what they learn during our activities. The program, aptly called 'Money Made Easy', has already drawn the interest of other parties. Earlier this year, we undertook a proof of concept with funding from the Public Guardian, who see benefits of this application for many of their clients too.

This is a great outcome and will produce a state of the art learning tool for people with disability right across Australia. We are grateful for this support from Financial Literacy Australia, who – in 2014 – already generously funded the development of our existing, paper-based program.

On behalf of the Board and staff of Participate Australia I wish you and your families peaceful holidays. We look forward to working with you again in the New Year.



Jerry McNamara
Chief Executive Officer

Participate Australia Ltd

111 Edwin St North
Croydon NSW 2132
PO Box 210 Croydon NSW 2132
ABN 39 136 853 895
ACN 613 814 654
NDIS Provider 4050002920
Telephone 02 9799 4333
Facsimile 02 9798 5115

Email

enquiries@participateaustralia.com.au

Web

participateaustralia.com.au

Twitter

@ParticipateAUS

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Staff Contacts

Chief Executive Officer

Jerry McNamara 02 9797 5397

Executive Manager, Community Liaison

Erika Aravena 0481 720 056

Chief Financial Officer

Susan Woodhouse 0402 069 310

Executive Manager, Strategy and Communications

Peter Schneider 0401 039 022

Manager, Corporate Services

Lorraine Baldacchino 02 9797 5304

Executive Manager, Support

Thom Calma 0421 744 708

NDIS Support Coordination

Jade Magaling 0432 910 661

Intake

Tandip Bunait 0412 993 705

Assistant Manager, Finance

Eric Hong 02 9797 5309

Participate Australia supports the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and our employees are bound by the principles for which it stands. The Convention's purpose is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

Annual General Meeting 2017

Respected Sydney Elder, Charles 'Chicka' Madden welcomed Members, guests and staff to Country and opened our 34th Annual General Meeting – the first as Participate Australia – in October this year.

Chair of the Board of Directors, Glenn Ball presided over the formal proceedings, which were conducted efficiently and to the complete satisfaction of Members. Members present accepted the Directors' Report, the audited Financials and who re-elected – unopposed – all Directors for another year.

The second part of the AGM was dedicated to some of the people who have achieved great personal and professional goals worth celebrating. Participate Australia's CEO, Jerry McNamara presented awards for long service and for outstanding contributions to the

success of our organisation to employees and collectively to Directors as a group of invaluable volunteers.

Our MC for the evening, Jenny Bray continued the tradition of conversations with guests, speaking with the parents of a resident at RASAIID, the supported living complex with which we have been involved since 2014. Jenny also spoke with a promising young artist and participant, and with the winner of the Dick Conroy Memorial Award.

You can read up on all of the detail in our Annual Report here: <http://goo.gl/kuc9Zd>.



Board of Directors



Glenn Ball represented the Board to receive the Ray Garden Memorial Award



Joanne Amodeo and Carol Sakellariou, winners of The Rising Star Award



Joanna Kazzi, winner of the Dick Conroy Memorial Award



Gabiella Antelmi, winner of the Moore Brothers Award

Season's Greetings

The Board, management and staff of Participate Australia wish you and your family peaceful holidays and a happy New Year.

Please note that our activities and office will be closed from 23 December 2017 to 1 January 2018. If you are a service user and experience an emergency during that period, please call the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222 first. If that fails, please call Participate Australia on-call coordinator on 0434 126 294.

We look forward to working with you again next year.



New skills for vocational training

In responding to the ever changing needs of our participants we design new programs to encourage active participation in goal-oriented activities. Recently we have developed a Transition to Higher Education Course, specifically designed for school leavers to prepare them with the skills to further their vocational education and training.

Feedback received from parents indicated that their children miss out on the chance of access vocational education and training due to their difficulties in adapting to the

new learning environments, and classroom etiquette, both of which require significant adaptation.

Thanks to very generous funding from the ANZ Staff Foundation we have designed a course to help develop skills that are not taught in high school but which are vitally important for a successful transition to vocational training.

The course teaches skills in stress management, resilience building, improving self-confidence, note-taking, memorising, time management, organising, simple budgeting, personal care and

workplace introduction.

Our Transition to Higher Education course aims to bridge gaps experienced by participants transitioning from high school to vocational training, and will increase their chance at finding meaningful employment.

Since a successful pilot in August, the course has become one of our most popular life skills activities.

If you want to find out more please contact your support facilitator.



Let's get physical!

Exercise helps you get fit and we all know it's more fun in a group. That is why we brought active participants together for some structured workouts every Wednesday afternoon from October to December.

The program was funded by the City of Canada Bay Community Grants Program and held at Five Dock Leisure Centre. It included different activities for participants, from body stretch to workouts, from cardio to dance, Zumba, and strength-training. Led by the amazing instructors at Five Dock Leisure Centre, the fitness program combined community access, energy and motivation to create an incredible experience, which delivers real fitness results to participants.

Contact your support facilitator for information about the program in the new year.



Our annual celebration for families

It was another joyful party for our participants and their families on 9 December. The day was filled with music, dance, fun activities and yummy food. This year we set up a photo booth for participants to dress up and take fun photos with each other, that they could take home and share with their friends.

If you weren't able to join us on the day you can relive some great moments below and we hope to see you there next year!



Recently we won a three-year grant from the Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Fund to run a social skills development program for children with special needs. In October, staff representatives from the Commonwealth Bank visited our cooking class and presented us with the cheque for the first year of this three year program. We thank the employees of the Commonwealth Bank for their generous assistance.

Donations ensure our participants have access to programs, regardless of their personal financial circumstances. This is necessary as government funding through the NDIS does not cover the cost of development or coordination of programs, or the costs associated with the creation of resources. With the support of donors, like the Commonwealth Bank we can continue to develop and improve innovative programs to benefit all our participants.



Fun filled holidays

School holiday activities at Participate Australia are always popular. During the September/October school holiday period we organised a range of sport and recreational activities for our young participants, including swimming, salsa dancing, bowling, sailing and a 'Mini Olympics'. Through these activities, participants discovered new passions, had new experiences and made new friends. It was awesome!

Thanks to the City of Canterbury Bankstown, the activities were funded through its Community Grants and Event Sponsorship Program.



New staff, new roles

Jiani Hou

Jiani is a new member in the finance team. She was working at a recruitment company, after graduating with a Master of Professional Accounting from University of Newcastle. Jiani enjoys working for a non-profit organisation and likes to share her love and care with those who are in need in the community. In her spare time, Jiani loves bushwalking, going to the beach, and visiting events and markets with her family and friends.

Yani Then

Our new Activities Coordinator Yani joined Participate Australia in January 2014 as a support worker and was involved in various activities, including life skills, community engagement, school holiday activities, and day programs.

Yani has a degree in Psychology and Social Work and would like to utilise her knowledge and experience to support participants in achieving their goals. Yani enjoys meeting new people, going for walks, cooking, baking, yoga and meditation.

Gabriella Antelmi

Gabriella is a new coordinator in activities and rostering of individual supports. She started as a support worker in 2016 after the completion of a Certificate IV in Community Services, and quickly became a Team Leader.

Gabriella's vision is to give back to local communities, whether it is setting up a community garden with a fellow support worker, or volunteering at her local garden - Street Growth.

In her spare time she loves spending time with friends, going to dog parks

(even though she doesn't own a dog!) and indulging in pasta.

Michael Collins

Michael joined us recently as an NDIS Support Coordinator. Previously he worked as a local area coordinator for the NDIA. Michael has more than eight years' experience working with people with intellectual disabilities. He believes in the value of the NDIS and he is passionate about empowering people to access the supports they need, to improve their quality of life and to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

Michael wants to make sure every participant exercises choice and control over the services they use. Outside work, Michael loves taking his Jeep off road, camping or anything out of the city.



Jiani



Yani



Gabriella



Michael

Kelly Grasso

A big welcome back to Kelly Grasso (née Rodrigues). Kelly went on maternity leave after having a baby boy – Anthony – in February 2017. She has recently returned to a new role at Participate Australia, as Manager, Community Engagement.

Kelly's main responsibility is to ensure Participate Australia meets the requirements of the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework. Kelly is also overseeing our compliance as a Child Safe Organisation, and is managing the new restrictive practices policy at Participate Australia.

Kelly also oversees complaints and feedback and ensures we are providing quality customer service.

If you have any questions or would like to speak to Kelly directly please feel free to call her on 0402 668 469 or via email kgrasso@participateaustralia.com.au



Funding received

We would like to acknowledge the very generous funding we have received since our Spring newsletter in September.

Funder	Amount
Australian Chinese Charity Foundation	\$2,350
City of Canada Bay Council	\$500
Club Ashfield	\$500
Club Burwood RSL	\$500
Commonwealth Bank Staff Community Grant	\$7,180
Inner West Council Community Grant	\$5,000
Inner West Council Recreation Grant	\$5,000
The Marian & E.H. Flack Trust	\$10,884
Transport NSW Community Road Safety Grant	\$4,675
Financial Literacy Australia	\$153,120

Meet our ambassadors

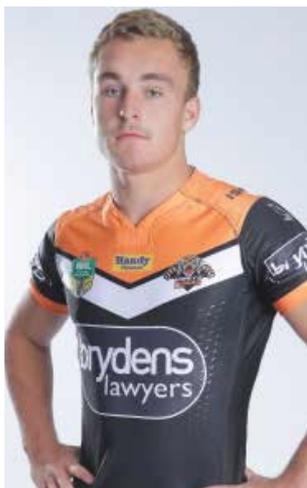
In addition to professional cricketer Alex Blackwell, and actor and director Tim Ferguson, who we introduced in our last newsletter, we are delighted to introduce two new ambassadors, Jacob Liddle and Ellen Fanning.

Jacob Liddle

Jacob is a professional NRL player who has had a stellar season for Wests Tigers in 2016, sharing his time between Holden Cup and Intrust Super Premiership duties, while also making his NRL debut.

Jacob has a strong history of performing sports at an elite level as he played representative football in the 2014 Australian Schoolboys team.

He went on to win the Player's Player award in the 2015 Holden Cup and successfully finished the year by being crowned the Wests Tigers 2017 Rookie of The Year.



He is passionate about community and is delighted to join Participate Australia as one of our ambassadors. Earlier in the year he came to our offices in Croydon and met with some of our participants. The visit was a great success and was pivotal in his decision to become an ambassador with Participate Australia. He hopes to play a part in removing barriers and promote inclusion for all.

He is recovering from a shoulder injury so we will be working with Jacob and Wests Tigers Club in 2018 on how we can provide greater support for people with a disability.

Ellen Fanning

Ellen has interviewed every Australian Prime Minister from Sir John Grey Gorton to Malcolm Turnbull in her 20 years as an award winning public affairs journalist.

She has reported politics from Canberra to the White House and broadcast from the North Pole to an airliner refuelling fighter jets over Bosnia and a Collins Class submarine deep in the Indian Ocean.

She presented both the AM and PM current affairs radio programs at the ABC for ten years and served as the ABC's Washington correspondent before joining the Nine Network's 60 Minutes and Sunday programs.

Ellen now co-presents ABC TV's The Drum and is a regular presence on ABC Radio.

Ellen has a significant interest and involvement in disability for many years. She has reported extensively on various disabilities and advocated on behalf of children and people with a disability. She says she is honoured to be invited to be an ambassador with Participate Australia and we look forward to working with her in 2018.



Supporters

Commonwealth

Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development
Department of Social Services

Government of NSW

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Family and Community Services
Transport for NSW

Local Government

City of Sydney
Burwood Council
City of Canada Bay
City of Canterbury Bankstown
Inner West Council
Strathfield Council

Other Program Funders

ANZ Staff Foundation
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Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
Canada Bay Club
Carers NSW
Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club
Canterbury Leagues Club
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Financial Literacy Australia
Five Dock Leisure Centre
Future 2 Foundation
James N. Kirby Foundation
JUST Printing & Design
Marian and E H Flack Trust
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Sydney Motorway Corporation
The Raymond E Purves Foundation
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Town Hall Hotel, Newtown
West Ashfield

Support Participate Australia

Supporting Participate Australia with a donation is easy...

Visit participateaustralia.com.au, or complete and return this form.

Your donation helps us continue with services that nurture greater autonomy and help people with disability lead more fulfilled and engaged lives.

We guarantee that your donation goes towards these programs and that it will have a direct impact on the people who access our programs.

All donations of \$2 and more are tax deductible (CFN 14593; ABN 39 136 853 895, ACN 613 814 654)

YES, I would like to make a donation to Participate Australia.

Your support will provide:

\$50 — 1 hour of 1:1 support

\$120 — 1 day group outing

\$250 — 1 day of 1:1 support

Other: \$_____

I would prefer to give a regular gift of \$_____ to be automatically charged to my credit card every:

month quarter six months year.

Become a member

Members are eligible to vote at the Participate Australia AGM, join a subcommittee, and access and borrow books, DVDs and other resources free. Please apply now for 2017/2018.

\$20 Individual / Family membership

\$50 Organisational membership

Dr Mr Mrs Ms Miss

Name

Organisation

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Donation / Membership Payment Details

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Please debit my credit card. VISA Mastercard Amex

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Return to: Participate Australia, PO Box 210, Croydon NSW 2132