

COMMUNICATION ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES

Denise West and Barbara Solarsh



‘A communication disability does not just belong to the individual. It belongs to the entire environment of which the person is the focal point’ (Sandwell Communication Aids Centre, UK).

Successful communication is critical for people with communication difficulties to be included and participate in community life as indicated by current government policy. The concept of ‘communication accessibility’ is new. Historically, accessibility has focussed on physical access, hearing access and visual access. There is a well recognised international symbol for physical access, as well as numerous other symbols related to disability. At this time, there is no symbol in Australia which represents whether a service is communication accessible for a person with communication difficulties.

For the past three years, the Communication Resource Centre, in partnership with Regional Communication Services, has worked with communities and services to make them communication accessible for people with communication difficulties.

Some of the outcomes include

1. A symbol to represent communication access
2. Forums to develop the criteria to define communication access involving people with communication difficulties
3. A draft Communication Access Checklist
4. Piloting of the Communication Access Checklist by people with communication difficulties. These checklists are used to rate communication access in services and businesses in the community
5. An audit of the level of communication access at the Langham Hotel, Melbourne.

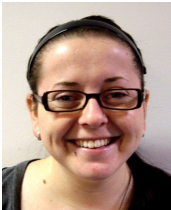
In late April 2010, six people with communication difficulties will be trained on how to use the Communication Access Checklist. At the completion of this training, the six trainers will then be employed to conduct audits of local community services and businesses.

Please contact Denise West for more information dwest.crc@scopevic.org.au

COMMUNICATION ACCESS NETWORK (CAN) UPDATE

2010 has seen a number of staffing changes at both the Communication Resource Centre and Regional Communication Services.

- **Communication Resource Centre (CRC)**



Chelsea Thorne – Communication Technology Aide - Chelsea has joined our team. Chelsea recently completed her Bachelor of Applied Science – Disability Studies at RMIT and previously worked as an instructor with children and adults at Villa Maria and Interact Learning services. Chelsea's role is to make non-electronic communication aids and provide information and advice in this area.

Merrin Hurse - Merrin commenced work with us in March on a 12 month contract. Merrin previously worked at the CRC, then in Kensington, UK for the Department of Health and Community Services and Adult Learning Disability team. Merrin will be working on accessible information and projects.

Hilary Johnson - Hilary will be working one day a week for the CRC for the next 12 months while she takes some leave to complete her PhD. Hilary will continue as a consultant at Royal Children's Hospital Saliva Clinic, lecturing at La Trobe University and will be involved in project management.

Denise West - Denise will manage the CRC full time from March 2010 for 12 months.

Teresa Iacono – Teresa will be taking up a full time position as Head of the Department of Allied Health, La Trobe Rural Health School. Professor Iacono is currently Director of Research at the Centre for Developmental Disability Health Victoria, and has a seconded position as Senior Researcher to the CRC. Teresa worked as a consultant at the CRC since 2002 heading up the CRC research agenda. Thank you Teresa for all your input over the past eight years.

Meg Irwin – Meg has taken on the role of Regional Communication Services advisor.

Naomi Rezzani – Naomi will take on the role of NECAS co-ordinator

Katie Lyon – Katie will be involved in NECAS research and will provide support to two Regional Communication Services for a 12 month period.

- **Regional Communication Services**

East Hume Regional Communication Service welcomes **Alys Cummings** to the Wodonga office. Alys will work one day a week in this position.

Grampians Regional Communication Service welcomes **Carrie Dunkley** who will be based at the Horsham site, one day a week.

SINGAPORE SIGNS ON

In February, Karen Bloomberg from the Communication Resource Centre at Scope had the opportunity to go to Singapore. Karen was sponsored by the University of Newcastle and Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS). Karen went to supervise Eva Loh in her successful bid to become Singapore's first qualified Key Word Sign Presenter (Key Word Sign was formerly known as Makaton). Karen was also invited to train health professionals and support staff in using the new revised Triple C (Checklist of Communication Competencies). Karen ran two well-attended workshops. The Triple C is a screening assessment that is designed for use by family and support staff of people who have high support needs.

To purchase the Triple C go to:

<http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/yiiCart/frontend/product/category/path/1>

For more information about workshops that are offered by the Communication Resource Centre go to:

<http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre/educationtraining/trainingworkshops>

Key Word Sign Australia (formerly Makaton) go to: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/kwsa>



INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

INTERAACTION KITS – NOW AVAILABLE!

- **The InterAAction Kit** provides over 20 examples of different communication aids and resources. It also has handouts which describe each communication aid and how to make them.

A CD-ROM is included, which contains templates of some communication aids. The CD enables you to reproduce the resources in this kit.

Communication aids in the kit include:

- Timetables
- Shopping list
- Chat book
- Community request cards
- Talking mats
- Personal communication dictionary



And many more. For full list on how to order, please click on

<http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/yiiCart/frontend/product/category/path/1>

- **Flip Video Cameras**



You may have heard about the Flip Video Cameras that are taking the world by storm. They are a small, lightweight and easy to use cameras that take up to 2 hours of video. They are now available in Australia - check Spectronics

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/product/flip-ultrahd> and local digital equipment stores. For example, Dick Smith and Ted's Cameras.

- **FIELD – Furthering Inclusive Learning and Development**

Field is trying to set up an information page on their website. The page will be about the experiences and stories (good or bad) of people with disabilities setting

up their own self directed approaches. Field wants to do this to show people what is really happening with self directed approaches and maybe encourage more people to want to try it. Field is willing to go and meet people and record their stories either by taking notes or videoing them as they tell their stories.



If you are interested, please contact Maree Ireland on maree.ireland@field.org.au

- **Key Word Sign Australia – the change from Makaton**

Makaton is a brand name that is synonymous with Key Word Sign.

The Makaton Vocabulary began in 1972 in Surrey, England, as a project to teach sign language to deaf adults with severe intellectual disabilities living in an institution.

In 2010 a national meeting with representatives from Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales decided not to renew the licensing agreement with the UK. Instead, Key Word Sign Australia was constituted. The principles underlying the use of key word sign remain.

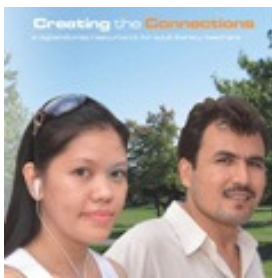
The creation of the new Australian vocabulary has been a collaborative venture. The underlying principles have been that the vocabulary is based on current research and evidence based practice. It reflects an Australian context. And finally, it encourages communicative interactions and supports developing language skills. Key word signing was developed for use by children, adolescents or adults who have developmental or intellectual disabilities. It is a basic means of communication targeting the “here and now”. It was never designed for sophisticated language users. Approximately 400 words that were selected for the Australian Key Word Sign vocabulary aim to support comprehension and the development of a simplified means of communication.

For more information, contact Karen Bloomberg or Key Word Sign Australia

kbloomberg.crc@scopevic.org.au

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/kwsa>

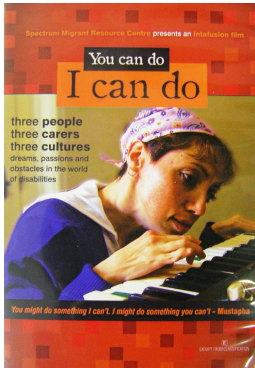
- **Creating the Connections**



A digital stories resource kit for adult literacy teachers. This is produced by the Australian Government, Department of Education, Science and Training, AMES and Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE. The CD was developed for adults who are learning literacy skills. The practical applications for people with communication difficulties include story telling, planning, learning story telling/scripting skills, producing digital “about me” books or presentations. The CD provides session plans for the teacher or facilitator, details of how to download and use the free download software (PhotoStory 3 with Microsoft MediaPlayer 10), example stories and free images.

To purchase, go to: www.ames.net.au. Cost \$35.

- **You can do I can do**



On 12 February 2010 Meg Irwin attended the launch of the new half hour film, *You can do I can do*.

It was made by Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (North West metro area) and Intafusion. The film was unscripted with (luminous at times) opportunistic documentation of moments of achievement, reflection and connection in the lives of three families. The families were all there at the launch.

It was unflinching, particularly when the mothers spoke. One woman with Downs Syndrome used signing as her only formal means of communication. Another woman with a degenerative condition (which began at the age of 7) uses a Lightwriter. The other person with a disability is a man whose speech was difficult to understand. In the film, there is a focus on peer support between families, on support workers doing great work, on independence and interdependence. Communication is at the heart of it all and will be a useful tool in training. It has a great participation focus and shows AAC as an ordinary part of life.

Bill Shorten spoke at the launch. Some of the things he said were: “disability is a state of mind”, “our job is to empower people with a disability”, “politics exists everywhere”. When a woman signed “thankyou” to him for her trophy, he signed “thankyou” back to her.

Christine Matthieson from DHS told just one story in her response to the film. When working on the Disability Plan 12 years ago, a person with complex communication needs said to her, “Don’t ask me a question if you haven’t got time to hear my answer.”

The DVD is \$30. Email disability@spectrumvic.org.au to order.

By Meg Irwin

UPDATE FROM OUR ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION SERVICE

- The “**National Compact - *working together***” has been launched. This document talks about the Australian Government and the Third Sector, such as not-for-profit groups working together. <http://www.nationalcompact.gov.au/>
- There is currently a **review of Guardianship Laws in Victoria**. Submissions close May 14, 2010. <http://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/justlib/law+reform/home/current+projects/guardianship/lawreform++guardianship+-+information+paper+-+easy+english>

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Name of Workshop	Dates	Venue	Cost (incl. GST)
<p>MEALTIME ASSISTANCE – THROUGH A TUBE (9.30am – 1.00pm) This workshop is suitable for anyone who needs to know how to assist someone with a meal through a tube. It includes an overview of gastrostomies, equipment, nutrition and trouble shooting.</p>	Thursday 22 nd July	Scope Glenroy 177 Glenroy Rd Glenroy	\$110.00
	Thursday 27 th May 24 th June	Scope Glenallen 669 Waverley Rd Glen Waverley	\$93.50
	19 th August 16 th Sept. 25 th Nov.	Glen Waverley	\$110.00
<p>EASY ENGLISH WRITING COURSE (2 DAYS) (10.00am – 4.30pm) This two day workshop will teach you how to write documents in Easy English. It includes information on writing in Easy English, including use of images, websites and the value of usability testing.</p>	Tuesday 15 th & Wednesday 16 th June	Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre Cnr Bell St & St Georges Rd Preston	\$550
<p>WHY DOESN'T HE DO WHAT I ASK HIM TO? (9.30am – 12.30pm) This workshop is suitable for anyone who wants to know how to assess the communication skills in adults who have little or no speech and are early communicators. The workshop will focus on using the new Triple C - Checklist of Communication Competencies. It will also teach you how to adapt your communication to ensure meaningful interactions with people who have a significant intellectual disability.</p>	Tuesday 25 th May	Scope Box Hill 830 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill	\$93.50
<p>COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES (9.30am – 4.00pm) This workshop will provide practical information on the many different types of communications aids and strategies available to help someone with communication difficulties. You will learn how these can be used to benefit communication, social interaction, self determination and community inclusion. You will be given ideas for adapting communication aids to meet the needs of a variety of users. It is an excellent workshop for people already familiar with the Triple C assessment.</p>	Friday 25 th June	Box Hill Library – 1040 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill	\$187.00

<p>EVERYONE CAN SHARE STORIES (9.30am – 4.00pm) This one day workshop will show you how to develop individualised sensory-focused story experiences for people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities.</p>	Monday 17 th May	Box Hill Library – 1040 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill	\$187.00
<p>BOARDMAKER Version 6 BASIC (9.30am – 12.30pm) This is a PRACTICAL half day workshop that will get you on your way to creating picture based communication aids and resources. The training covers the basics of the Boardmaker program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up pages - Creating your own picture symbols - How to manipulate your photos/web images - Storing your picture/symbols in your library 	Wednesday 5 th May Monday 7 th June		\$93.50
	Friday 16 th July Tuesday 10 th August Thursday 9 th Sept. Monday 11 th Oct	Scope Box Hill 830 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill	\$110.00
<p>BOARDMAKER Version 6 + (9.30am – 12.30pm) This is a PRACTICAL half day workshop that will allow you to create interactive communication aids and resources. You will have the chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make a talking book, - Learn how to use movable buttons - Create a sequencing display - Learn tips and ideas for making better communication resources <p>A pre-requisite is a basic understanding of the Boardmaker software.</p>	Wednesday 19 th May Monday 21 st June		\$93.50
	Friday 30 th July Tuesday 24 th August Thursday 23 rd Sept. Monday 25 th October	Scope Box Hill 830 Whitehorse Rd Box Hill	\$110.00

Communication Aids & Resource Materials (CARM) - OPEN DAYS 2010

Tuesday 11th May, Thursday 1st July & Monday 13th September 2010

10am to 11.30am

Places are limited, so please call early to reserve your place! Phone 9843 2013

Scope, Communication Resource Centre, 830 Whitehorse Road, Box Hill, 3128

Free of charge

DISCLAIMER. The views expressed in the Communication Resource Centre Newsletter are those of the individual contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial team. Please note that neither the individual contributors or editorial team can be held responsible for any consequences resulting from the purchase or use of training / resources / information, etc.

COPYRIGHT. Please note that any requests to reprint any articles in other journals need to be referred to the individual contributor.

Contact details: Communication Resource Centre, Scope, 830 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill, 3128

Telephone: 03 9843 2000 Fax: 03 9843 2033 OR email crc@scopevic.org.au