The Australian Chapter of
ISAAC

Newsletter- February 2013

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Barbara Solarsh is the president of ISAAC Australia based in Victoria. She works both at the Communication Resource Centre, Scope and in the Regional Communication Service, Bendigo Health as part of the Communication Access Network. Her hopes for her term as president are that in partnership with AGOSCI, AAC will achieve growing prominence and recognition, that AAC users will increasingly take leadership roles in ISAAC Australia, that members across Australia will become active during ISAAC AAC Awareness Month and that the membership of ISAAC Australia continues to grow. She also hopes that ISAAC members will contribute to making communication access a reality across Australia through promoting the symbol for communication access.

Gemma Holleran is the new secretary for ISAAC Australia. Gemma works as a speech pathologist for Scope in Victoria, spreading her time across children’s services and the Communication Resource Centre. She is passionate about AAC and attended her first ISAAC conference in 2012 in Pittsburgh.
Meredith Allan has been the treasurer since ISAAC Australia started almost 10 years ago. Meredith is one of the few AAC users in Australia working in full time open employment. She was a member of the Ethics Committee of Speech Pathology Australia 2002-2008. She is the author of numerous articles about the experience and issues related to AAC, and makes regular presentations at conferences both nationally and internationally.

Bronwyn Hemsley is the Australian representative to the ISAAC Board of Directors. She is also currently president elect for ISAAC international. She works in a post-doctoral position at the University of Newcastle on research into communication in hospitals. Bronwyn has a special interest in engaging people with complex communication needs, their families, clinicians, industry partners, and researchers. Bronwyn’s role is to be another bridging link between ISAAC and ISAAC AUSTRALIA for mutual benefit in furthering the mission of ISAAC in Australia and the world. Bronwyn is also the contact point for AAC Awareness activities in Australia during October in any year.

Celebrating AAC Awareness Month 2013

Silent Morning Tea with the CRC!

Scope’s Communication Resource Centre celebrated ISAAC awareness month by having a silent morning tea at the Scope head office in Box Hill. Over 45 people enjoyed sharing a cuppa while getting to know other Scope staff. They chatted using picture boards, communication devices, iPads, texting on mobile phones, writing with a pen and paper, some simple signs and lots of facial expression. Everyone had lots of fun trying to get answers from each other to complete their bingo cards, with prizes being awarded to winners of the Silent Bingo Competition.

In 2012, Scope promoted Silent Morning Teas as a national event and over 65 people across Victoria hosted their own AAC awareness morning teas. Over 2000 people experienced what it was like not to be able to talk. Some of the feedback included comments such as “It was lots of fun and we all found it quite challenging not being able to "talk". Scope is hoping to do this again next year with more free resources, reaching out to new people. Communication should be for everyone, not just people who can talk.

Hilary Johnson (Communication Resource Centre (CRC), Scope) Re-printed with permission from ImpAACt – the Dec 2012 CRC newsletter.

All ISAAC-Australia members received the invitation to hold a silent morning tea in 2012. If you would like to host one in 2013, please respond to the invitation from Scope that we will send you towards October 2013. They will send you a free downloadable pack of resources- couldn’t be easier!

Help to spread the word about AAC!
ISAAC- Australia Awards 2013.

Every two years, ISAAC-Australia recognizes those people who are making a difference in the world of AAC, and the places that are supporting them to do so. Do you know someone you would like us to recognise? Please put in a nomination for the 2013 ISAAC-Australia Awards.

ISAAC-Australia is calling for nominations in 4 categories. You can nominate anyone - not only ISAAC members.

1. **The Foundation Award** – This award is for someone who has shown improvement in the use of AAC in any way at all.
   
   Prize – Framed Certificate + Free membership ISAAC-AUSTRALIA for 1 year + $50

2. **The Community Award** – This award is for someone who actively uses AAC in the community. This contributes to advancing the use and acceptance of AAC in the community.

   Prize – Framed Certificate + Free membership ISAAC-AUSTRALIA for 1 year + $50

3. **The School/Organisation Award** – This award is for a school or organization that has shown outstanding recognition and acceptance of AAC for someone who learns, works or participates there.

   Prize – Framed Certificate + a copy of "Beneath the Surface" - an ISAAC Publication + Free membership ISAAC-AUSTRALIA for 1 year

4. **The Information Award** – This award is for work that raises awareness of AAC. It includes articles, lectures, public appearances, radio interviews or public work of art

   Prize – Framed Certificate + Free membership ISAAC AUSTRALIA for 1 year + $50

**Please complete the nomination form attached.**

**Criteria for judging the awards:**

The awards committee of ISAAC-AUSTRALIA (presently the Executive Committee) will judge nominations for awards. The judgement is made on two criteria:

(i) How has the use of AAC had a positive effect for the person.

(ii) How has the use of AAC as you describe it helped to advance AAC in the person’s community, State, or Australia?

The winners will be announced at the AGOSCI conference in Sydney 1-4 May 2013. The winners will be announced even if they are not present.

**All nominations must be in by March 28th 2013**

These must be sent to the secretary of ISAAC Australia by email (see page 1) or by mail: Gemma Holleran:
17 Ormonde Road
Ferntree Gully 3156 VIC

isaacaustralia@gmail.com
Tweet 'call out' to ISAAC Australia!

Follow us on Twitter! @ISAACaus

If you are not yet a 'tweeter', give it a try. Make @ISAACaus one of your first 'follows' and you will learn from there. To do this, log in to twitter, search for ISAACaus in the search bar, then click on 'people' and you should find us. You can tweet to us by using the @ symbol e.g., '@ISAACaus nice to see you on twitter', would get to us as we are mentioned in the tweet. You will need to read the instructions available in twitter but if you need help, let Bronwyn know on b.hemsley@uq.edu.au or a direct message in twitter @ISAACaus.

There are many people interested in AAC using twitter and tweeting information, links, opinions, messages, and generally discovering one another around the world.

ISAAC-AUSTRALIA have just begun using Twitter and will soon link it to a Facebook page specifically set up for us to provide larger amounts of information as we need to, about ISAAC projects we are involved in, local events, and other updates.

Social media networks help to strengthen relationships and create a movement - let's harness our @ISAACaus twitter presence to further the mission of ISAAC in Australia and overseas.

Having just booked my flights and completing my registration to attend ISAAC 2012, I was very shocked, surprised, and honored to receive an email from John Costello advising me I had been selected as the words+ outstanding consumer lecture award recipient. Having only been a member of ISAAC for a few years, I wasn't sure what to expect from the conference, I sure wasn't expecting to be chosen for this award having never attended an ISAAC event. Nevertheless I squealed with delight, half scaring my son, till he realized it was a happy squeal!!

I must say, after arriving in Pittsburgh I was overwhelmed with the world of AAC I was entering into, I didn't realize how much
attending this conference and networking in the world of AAC was going to impact on the rest of my year. Having attended and presented at many conferences all over Australia I thought 'oh yeah, a keynote address... I can do that' little did I realize how prestigious it is to be chosen as the consumer lecture recipient. My submission highlighted my lifetime experiences of engaging in real and meaningful relationships, and how this has led to me realising my career goals of establishing mainstream social opportunities for people with different levels of human needs to develop real and meaningful relationships, and exploring their own sexuality and intimacy needs. Having naturally advocating for myself and others most of my life, my achievements to date have primarily been in systemic and individual advocacy.

The experience is one I will never forget, and having shared so much of myself and my business goals in my lecture on 'intimacy as a human need' the response was again overwhelmingly positive, and has led to many more connections from word of mouth of the networks made. I guess you could now call me a converted 'ISAACIAN'. I am making plans and saving up to now attend the next conference announced to be held in Lisbon.

Through attending ISAAC I have as I mentioned made further contacts in my field of interest, and also hope to attend another conference on sexuality and disability held yearly in the United States; so whilst 2013 is gearing up to be a big year maintaining and growing networks through attending AGOSCI this year. 2014 is going to be even bigger, with me planning to attend the above mentioned conference in the states, and also ISAAC 2014, I also hope to finish my university studies by the end of 2014, to begin establishing my business, and reaching my career goals.

It was such an honour and wonderful experience to work with John Costello in the lead up to presenting my lecture, and Geoff from WORDS+, their wisdom and knowledge of AAC has certainly rubbed off. This has allowed me to share further knowledge with others in my networks (new and old) on suitable communication methods for individual situations, and public speaking tips that I picked up from the experience with others entering and continuing their public speaking roles.

I can only encourage others to submit an abstract of their chosen field of interest, the experience is one I will never forget, and has given me the incentive to become more involved and develop my knowledge of AAC; prior to joining ISAAC - Australia I didn't identify as being an AAC user, I merely described myself as being non verbal. I now know there's so much more to AAC than technical words and devices. I really look forward to seeing and meeting many more members throughout 2013 and 2014.
Reporting back from ISAAC 2012

Thomas Banks

After receiving a travel scholarship from ISAAC Australia to attend ISAAC 2012 in Pittsburgh, Thomas Banks has returned to the country with a new attitude, new energy and a new outlook on the world. Throughout the five days of the conference, he was taking advantage of his networking abilities and meeting with several different people, organisations and communities. He reconnected with old friends. He was having dinner with other delegates from the conference, learning about the disability sector in their countries while making connections with them. He takes time out of his busy working schedule to reflect on his time at ISAAC 2012.

I gave a breath of relief as I watched the opening ceremony of ISAAC 2012. It was finally all happening. It took 7 months for me to plan the trip and now I was here. It was the best feeling in the world knowing that my hard work had paid off. It took just over 7 months to organise my 5 week professional development trip and doing tasks such as fundraising, working hard to save up for the trip, contacting potential sponsors, planning my schedule and contacting people in the USA & Canada who I could meet and network with and putting together my presentation for the conference.

There were over 1500 delegates with communication difficulties and although people had all different types of disabilities, there was a sense of being proud of individuality in the air. Everyone had various ways to communicate with each other, but we understood that we had to have patience with each other because there was a shared experience. I have made some great friends at this conference and I’m looking forward to catching up with them at ISAAC 2014 in Lisbon. I might travel to see some of them next year if I can find a time in my schedule to go overseas again, but I have a few new friends in Australia which I speak to regularly on Facebook. We are all connected on Facebook.

After the ISAAC conference finished, I travelled to New York, Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver for 2 weeks to meet with other people and communities. I visited the Cerebral Palsy Alliance of New York, which was a world class centre in the Bronx which was dedicated for people with disabilities. There were the same services like we have in Australia such as day programs, speech therapy and physiotherapy, but the thing which sets this disability centre apart from anywhere else which I have visited in the world is they have a health clinic and counselling service in the building itself. It was really interesting and modern, but it was difficult to find.

When I visited Toronto, I attended a dare night event with an interesting theatre
group called Mammalian Diving Reflex who believes in social practice methodologies to engage audiences, but the dare night was run by a group of teenagers. It was a really crazy experience. I was dared to eat a spoon of butter and eat chocolate off a dyper. I had another interesting experience when I performed a short monologue which had the audience in tears where I told a story about my disability, but I had people coming up to me with questions about it. They thought that it was a true story and maybe it was, but my acting paid off because it got them thinking about the world in a different light.

When I wasn’t working and networking with people, I was experiencing the nightlife in both countries. I noticed that there was no access to any of the clubs for people in wheelchairs, which is a significant issue. There was wheelchair access in one of the clubs in Montreal to get into the venue, but then there was no access to the rooftop bar, which was a shame because it was beautiful up there.

Well, I’m back in Australia now with a fresh attitude and I’m keen to travel again in the future when the opportunity presents itself. I travelled throughout both countries on my own, which was a significant achievement for 2012 because I worked really hard to make it happen, but I would like to thank the support of ISAAC Australia and everyone else who contributed to the success of this trip.

Karen Bloomberg

Kangaroo, Beer and Vegemite.

The ISAAC biennial conference is always an exciting event. And, as usual, Australia was very well represented. There were at least 10 AAC users from Oz among the delegates. And, once again an Australian, Lisa Lehman, won the Words + award. Past award winners have included Meredith Allan and Heather Rose.

Libby Brownlie presented one of the few papers that addressed the area of unaided communication. The paper was called Vegemite, beer and kangaroo – Key Word Sign in Australia.

The focus of the paper was on the development of an evidence based Key Word Sign vocabulary being used in Australia. In 2010 a meeting with representatives from across Australia decided not to renew the licensing agreement with Makaton. Instead, Key Word Sign Australia was constituted and a collaborative approach was used to create a uniquely Australian vocabulary. The new 700 word vocabulary is based on current research, evidence based practice and expert opinion. The vocabulary aims to support comprehension and provide simple communication for people with limited communication skills and their communication partners.

This paper gave an overview of the steps involved in developing the Australian vocabulary, the development of resources to support the package and the process of disseminating the new content.
Dear ISAAC – Australia,

I went to the ISAAC 2012 conference; I had an excellent time over there in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I had a great experience with the conference. I went to some talks at ISAAC 2012. I went to a town hall meeting too; to see how it went down. It was good to see communication device users conducting a meeting with no help from support staff. To see it was fantastic, to be part of it was cool. I went to talks. I think it is great to see so many people in one place at once. Thank you for the opportunity to go to ISAAC 2012 it was fun and I am enjoying every minute of it. I did see the opportunity of going to an American ISAAC as a great thing because I get to meet some new people this year. Fantastic to see so many people going to one spot to find it empowering to me. The best thing was seeing “My musical voice” presentation by Julie Burns. It so cool the way she has written her song then putting it to music. I want to give it a try.

The two day camp before the conference was interesting because I have a real out of place challenge, like was talking to my group and different words mean same thing for example game we playing like they say tic tac toe, I call it naughts and crosses, they say elevator and I say lift. It was fun. My supporters, Lisa and I have forgotten the other girl, we had great chats, and I enjoyed learning how they live in United States.

At ISAAC2012 I presented a poster about Wow Moments from Australia, I asked people and families to tell me their stories. A Wow moment is like magic the first time you do something you not think you can do it. It gives you a wow to keep going on, trying to learn more. It was fun sharing my stories.

Thankyou everyone on ISAAC – Australia for supporting me to go to an ISAAC conference, it was fantastic. I had many many adventures in the United States and am writing about them also. I hope to share them soon.

Goodbye

Dale Gonelli

P.S. Hey is it true that the toilet flush in different direction in USA. I forgot to check. I’ll have to do that on my next trip overseas.
I was lucky enough to attend my first ISAAC conference in Pittsburgh. I presented a paper on how students of LaTrobe University created two communication accessible café’s in Melbourne.

Here are some of my highlights.

**AAC camp:**

I volunteered at camp and worked with a young AAC user. The AAC camp is a fabulous way for young AAC users to meet and grow their skills. Activities encouraged a wide range of communicative functions such as questions, commands, comments and of course social conversations.

**Trade hall displays:**

An overwhelming number of exhibitors showing new and exciting products. I enjoyed talking about apps, devices, symbols and more throughout the conference. A highlight was trying out an eye gaze controlled computer.

**Range of presentations:**

Organising the program each day was a carefully planned task. There were so many excellent topics to choose from, the challenge was how to balance them all. It was a great opportunity to see presentations from well known professionals such as Janice Light, Barbara Collier and our own Gayle Porter and Bronwyn Hemsley. Presentations from people who use AAC and their families reminded me again of the reason why I became a speech pathologist.

**The people:**

By far what I enjoyed most about ISAAC 2012 was being surrounded by enthusiastic, inspiring, innovative, informative and engaging people from around the world. I met Speech Pathologists from Finland interested in accessible information, parents learning as much as they can to help their young child, app developers, supporters of communication access, people who use AAC sharing their story and more.

I have come away from my first ISAAC conference with new ideas, inspiration to try new things and connections all over the world.
GREAT APPS INFORMATION

The Spectronics website has lots of information and excellent blogs.

If you are interested in this area check out these items:

Feature matching blog with the collection of online resources

There are more and more apps being released that are suitable for people with communication difficulties every week. Being presented with new apps all the time it can be very overwhelming to feel confident in making the right decision and supporting your clients with the many features that they offer

To assist you to select the most appropriate app (or software) -

Apps suitable for AAC in healthcare settings

The Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) apps appropriate for people in healthcare settings are released frequently and are constantly changing. As with apps suitable for any of the people we support, it can be overwhelming trying to stay on top of what is out there and the changes being made in updates

http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/blog/apps-and-mobile-learning/aac-apps-for-

adults-in-healthcare-settings-what-is-out-there/

You will also find this useful article on the Scope website:

“Apps feature matching checklist” developed by Katie Lyon


Katie Lyon- AAC Consultant Spectronics
Re-printed with permission

ISAAC-Australia in partnership with Thailand

In 2013 ISAAC-Australia will support Thailand to develop their local chapter of ISAAC. The ISAAC BUILD committee has developed the 5 + 5 Membership Scheme in which a developed country partners with an emerging country.

When ISAAC-Australia sponsors five ISAAC members from Thailand, ISAAC International will sponsor a further 5 members for 2 years. In this way Thailand can start to develop its local chapter.

We look forward to working together!
What's happening with the Communication Access Symbol?

2012 has been a busy year for communication access. Ten places in Victoria have been awarded the symbol after undergoing a process of putting communication strategies in place and having a Communication Access Assessment. These places have shown that they comply with the 12 minimum criteria for communication access. The places include café’s, local government offices, libraries, banks, hospitals, leisure centres. There are over 60 places that have committed themselves to becoming communication accessible in 2013, and the year has just begun.

We also now have endorsement of the communication access symbol from 10 organisations nationally and internationally, including ISAAC, AGOSCI, Australian Aphasia Association, DHS Victoria and the NDS.

In October 2013, Hank Wyllie presented a paper in South Korea at the 22nd World Congress of Rehabilitation International, entitled Communication Access - from vision to action.

Rehabilitation International, is a comprehensive world-wide disability organisation inclusive of all disabilities with a strong human rights focus. This is the organisation that led the development of the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability in which AAC is formally recognised a system of communication.

Rehabilitation International who gave the symbol for physical access to the world in 1969, is now in the process of endorsing the symbol for communication access. This is a very important achievement for us.

If you would like to find out more about communication access and the symbol please go to the Scope website: [http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre/communicationaccess](http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre/communicationaccess)

Barbara Solarsh (Communication Resource Centre, Scope)

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**MEMBERS! MEMBERS! MEMBERS!**

Have you renewed your ISAAC Membership for 2013? Subscriptions help ISAAC- Australia to be more active and support more AAC users to attend ISAAC conferences. So- don’t delay- every membership counts! If you wish to be included in the 2013 membership directory – you need to **act fast!**
What's happening in the ISAAC Research Committee?

The Research Committee of ISAAC has grown to a relatively large committee of 15 in 2012-14. As Chair of the committee, Bronwyn Hemsley has approached ISAAC to request an increased limit in the maximum number of members specifically for the research committee. Currently, the committee includes as many Countries and Chapters as possible, so as to represent diverse research interests and to build research networks at a local level. As the funding of research grants is affected by the track record of researchers, having a larger membership base on the committee might just help with having some successful grant applications made to help local Chapters in their research agenda building. The members have a range of expertise, including those with several decades experience in research and pioneering in the field of AAC, and also early career researchers and those with an interest in research in AAC. Like all committees of ISAAC, it includes members who use AAC. The current research committee is working on the following projects in 2013:

- Holding a virtual meeting of committee members using the ‘GoToMeeting’ feature of ISAAC in February across several time zones and countries.
- At the meeting, we will begin discussions on how the committee can help to inform a vibrant, research active, and successful Research Symposium at the next ISAAC International Conference, to be held in Lisbon in 2014 (Dates to be announced soon!).
- We will also be discussing what local research networks each member of the Research Committee might be able to foster, with a view to providing support on development of regional research networks that will lead to locally-informed Research Streams at the Research Symposium.
- Finding ways that the committee can support local Chapters to host research symposia, meetings, or ‘think tanks’ so as to ‘road test’ research networking strategies and strengthen collaborations at a local and regional level.

So when it comes to research in AAC, what do you think needs to be on the agenda?

What problem areas in everyday life would you like to see addressed by a greater knowledge or understanding of the factors related to those areas?

What would you like to see happening in the Research Committee, to ensure that people who use AAC and their families have a voice in what research streams appear in the research symposium?

If members of ISAAC-Australia have any comments or points that they wish to add to a discussion about research in AAC, please forward these to Bronwyn Hemsley Bronwyn.hemsley@newcastle.edu.au so that as Chair of the Committee she can see that those issues and considerations are included in the February discussion as the Research Committee begin their work together in 2013.

Bronwyn Hemsley- ISAAC-Australia
Meet our members:

Louisa Jensen

My name is Louisa Jensen and I am a 23-year-old non-verbal woman with many skills and roles. I enjoy writing poetry and other forms of written expression, and I love travelling and meeting people. I am a daughter, sister, friend, employee, community member, and I live with Autism. I completed my education through mainstream schooling with the support of a facilitator, and graduated from a Brisbane high school.

I have started my own business, doing presentations which give insight into what life is like with Autism and Dyspraxia, from a uniquely personal perspective. I believe there is one ‘me’ as seen from the outside, and another ‘me’ who is trapped inside. The real me is hidden from the world until I am given the opportunity to communicate. My presentations encourage others to look beyond the exterior in those they meet with Autism (or other disabilities), to enable a real connection to be made and give hope for them to reach toward their amazing potential.

When you work really hard, you can kind of lose your way. Sometimes hard work can cause you to lose sight of your purpose, especially for those of us who have to fight for success in even the simple things in life. However, with perseverance we can achieve just about anything. It is exciting to have the chance to help others to persevere towards success in life by sharing my story while also enabling other people to see behind the communication & social barriers that may exist for many people with disabilities.

I would love to hear from anyone who is interested, or just curious about what I may have to offer. Please, look me up! www.louisajensen.com.au.

Silent Auction at AGOSCI conference

2nd - 4th May 2013

ISAAC-Australia will be hosting its traditional silent auction at the AGOSCI conference in Sydney this year.

Members are asked to donate items to be auctioned during the conference.

Please bring items with you to AGOSCI or send them along with a friend or colleague who is attending.

If you have something you would like to donate but no way of getting it to Sydney please contact ISAAC secretary Gemma Holleran at isaacaustralia@gmail.com

Proceeds from the silent auction will allow ISAAC to sponsor member who use AAC to attend the ISAAC international conference in Lisbon, Portugal in 2014.
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS BY SOME ISAAC-AUSTRALIA MEMBERS (underlined)

The following authors responded to an invitation to list their publications for 2012 in this newsletter: Iacono, Johnson, Hemsley, Sellwood, Trembath, Raghavendra, Olson.

This is a good way to help disseminate the research that is coming out of Australia, in the field of AAC. Please send your 2013 publication lists to Bronwyn Hemsley for inclusion in the next newsletter in 2013:

Bronwyn.hemsley@newcastle.edu.au


Disabilities. Vol. 37, No. 4. Published book review.


