



State network plans the route for future inclusive partnerships

Eleven disability service providers and 15 state sporting organisations came together on Tuesday 1 April for the Sports CONNECT Queensland Network Forum. The theme of the forum, 'The Way Forward', set the scene for discussions about collaborative partnerships that would drive greater participation of people with a disability in community sporting groups.

Six individuals with a disability (right) who are currently providing valuable contributions to mainstream sport shared their stories and provided ideas on ways their successful experiences could be replicated for others. This established a clear vision for the future work of the network in ensuring that more sport and recreation organisations are embracing the potential contribution of people with a disability to their communities.



Alex Baker, Peter Speaight, Danae Sweetapple, Sam Dickens, Josh Pople & Kobie Donovan

Guest speaker Lee-Anne Rogers, Director - NDIS Planning and Implementation (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services) was asked to address how the Queensland Disability Plan related to the sporting sector in the lead up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) rollout. Ms Rogers highlighted the Disability Service Plans that each state government department will write this year, outlining strategies which would assist that department in leading the readiness work in its sector over the next two years.

Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association's Community Engagement and Education Manager, Jenny Frowd, stated that the network should be proud of the work it had done so far in readying mainstream sporting communities for the inclusion of people with a disability. Pointing out the shift to a market economy under the NDIS, Ms Frowd stressed that the current supply-demand model of the Sports CONNECT framework would assist sporting groups to be well prepared for an increase in the demand for involvement in local communities by people with a disability.

Simon Wright, who represented the Brisbane region of the Queensland Disability Advisory Council, highlighted the value of the network in developing the readiness of the mainstream sporting community for involving people with a disability under the NDIS at a Council meeting later in the week. The Queensland Disability Advisory Council provides guidance and recommendations to state government on issues affecting people with a disability.

State sporting organisation and disability service provider representatives were asked to develop their organisation's sport inclusion 'roadmap', identifying times of high speed progress as well as any roadblocks along the way. Each organisation was encouraged to replicate this activity with its board and/or staff to ensure a common understanding of where the organisation is up to in its Sports CONNECT journey, what its next steps are and who it needs to bring along for the ride.



Sports CONNECT Queensland Network

Rugby in Queensland kicking goals in the field of inclusion



Queensland Rugby Union (QRU) is no stranger to strategic planning and direction. The sport has experienced constant growth in the past five years and has developed a Future Generation Plan to ensure its continued longevity. It is through one of the three pillars of this plan, 'One Rugby Community', that the organisation has shown its commitment to providing inclusive opportunities within the sport.

Signing a Sports CONNECT Charter in March this year, QRU will release a statement and develop a page on its website to promote opportunities to embrace people with a disability within the sport. This will be followed by training for Queensland Rugby staff to ensure the inclusive philosophy permeates all levels of the organisation.

Understanding the importance of partnerships, QRU Game Development Manager - Community and Stakeholder Engagement, Joel Johnston, attended the Sports CONNECT Queensland Network State Forum on Tuesday 1 April to seek out new relationships with disability service providers from the network. These organisations will be able to offer valuable input for a QRU Inclusion Advisory Group as well as providing a direct link to people with a disability who could contribute to the rugby community.

The organisation will also continue to develop its relationship with Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association in order to support wheelchair rugby in Queensland.

To find out more about getting involved in rugby, contact Joel Johnston on 0488 000 242 or email: joel.johnston@gru.com.au.

Gymnastics Queensland hits the floor with inclusive commitment



Through a long-standing affiliation with Special Olympics Queensland, Gymnastics Queensland (GQ) has demonstrated a willingness to be inclusive of people with an intellectual disability. Working from this base, the organisation will now encourage greater participation in gymnastics from people with a disability with little or no experience of the sport through the signing of its first Sports CONNECT Charter.

Currently providing extensive training for gymnastics instructors and a range of teachers and therapists in the new disciplines of Rebound Therapy and Gentle Gym, GQ will also promote inclusive educational opportunities through its annual Congresses.

The organisation has great support from Gymnastics Australia, whose inclusive *GymAbility* resources are embedded in GQ coach education and club strategies. These resources will be promoted widely to clubs and the public on the GQ website and through e-news articles.

Kate Wadkin, Youth Participation Coordinator, was active during the 'Hitching a Ride' connecting session at the Sports CONNECT Queensland Network Forum. Kate saw this as a great opportunity to encourage disability service providers to 'jump on board' with GQ's inclusive focus.

For more information about getting involved in gymnastics, contact Kate Wadkin on (07) 3036 5609 or email: kwadkin@gymqld.org.au.

Clinton Stanley: a champion in and out of the pool

A bit of a Sunshine Coast celebrity, if you search online there is no shortage of articles about Clinton Stanley's swimming triumphs. However, it is clear that the 'Superfish' of Cooroy is much more than just a great swimmer. It is, perhaps, these other qualities that led him to become the Queensland state finalist for Australian of the Year in 2013.



Although interested in sport from a very young age, Clinton didn't start swimming competitively until adulthood. His mother and manager, Sue, notes that participation in sport, and competitive swimming in particular, has improved Clinton's social skills, confidence and life skills. Clinton's swimming success has also helped raise awareness in the community of athletes with a disability. Sue says Clinton's motto is "never, never give up" and it's clear that he lives this every day.

One place where this hard working attitude is always on display is the Noosa Aquatic Centre. Several years ago the centre felt that offering a sponsorship including unlimited access to their pool for training was the least they could do for a local, record-breaking, international athlete. Clinton however didn't feel he deserved to get something for nothing so he gives back to the club, volunteering as a lifeguard several days a week. He balances this with another volunteer position at the Sunshine Beach Surf Lifesaving Club, a part time job at a local drinks manufacturer (which he has held for the last 19 years), swim training with the Noosa Challengers Masters Swim Club and, of course, breaking records in national and international competitions.

At the Aquatic Centre, Clinton's duties include water testing, patron counts, setting up the pool for classes and general housekeeping. Clinton's organisational skills, like his freestyle, can't be beaten. "He's a real stickler for procedures; he even followed a patron into the parking lot one day to make sure he signed an incident report form after he cut his finger at the pool," laughs Stephen James, Manager of the centre. Those organisational skills have also served him well in his role as the relay captain in the Noosa Challengers Masters Swim Club. "He prints out the team lists and gets everyone organised," comments teammate, Kerryn Spinks. "He's a pretty important part of the club. He's always in the newsletter for something."

Clinton's teammates and colleagues clearly have a lot of respect and admiration for the athlete. "He's a joy to be around. If Clint is on, everyone is in a good mood. He's so positive and always has a good vibe," says Stephen. Kerryn describes his work ethic at training: "Clinton is very focused - he knows what he's doing and he just gets in and does it." She also noted that because of Clinton's involvement with the mainstream club, other swimmers with Down syndrome have been encouraged to swim there and the club coaches have been assisting with Down syndrome swimming competitions and training camps.

Clinton is clearly a great ambassador for the sport of swimming as well as for athletes with a disability. Despite his recent retirement from international competition, there is no doubt he will continue to have an impact on his community through his other roles for a long time to come.

For more information about the Noosa Masters Swim Club, visit: www.noosaaussichallengers.com. The Noosa Aquatic Centre can be contacted on (07) 5448 0288.



State branch outlines its vision for increased sporting participation

The Vision Australia (VA) Queensland office is branching out to establish greater connections with the sport and recreation sector after signing its first Sports CONNECT Charter on 31 March.

Placing great value on the importance of working collaboratively with its clients, the organisation will incorporate sport and active recreation questions during the client planning process. This will help to identify areas of interest as well as skills that individuals who are blind or have low vision can contribute to sporting communities.



The organisation will provide mentoring of direct support staff to increase their awareness of potential sporting and social inclusion opportunities in local areas. It will also provide training for these staff to improve their skills in approaching clubs and facilitating relationships that encourage the development and maintenance of natural supports with people with shared interests.

In order to encourage interest and build awareness, VA will also plan and facilitate a range of new sporting experiences for its Community Services clients and young adults, as well as offering opportunities during school holiday periods for younger children. Sandra Anderson, Team Manager - Community and Gold Coast Services, and Jim Hopkins, Support Worker, made good use of the networking opportunity with sporting organisations at the Sports CONNECT Queensland Network Forum.

Both staff members were interested to listen to special guest Danae Sweetapple as she told her own story of participation in mainstream sport and recreational activities throughout her life as a person with vision impairment. Danae spoke of how she enjoyed working with individuals in community sport, recreation and fitness organisations to brainstorm and 'jump over' any hurdles she may have encountered with her involvement.

Understanding the organisation's role in advocating for accessible environments, VA will provide support and advice to clubs so they can benefit from the inclusion of people with vision impairment in their sporting communities.

For more information about Vision Australia's sport and recreation initiatives, contact Sandra Anderson on (07) 3727 2232 or email: sandra.anderson@visionaustralia.org.

The Sports CONNECT Queensland network is coordinated by Sporting Wheelies and Disabled Association

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