



International Society for
Augmentative and Alternative Communication

ISAAC-AUSTRALIA Inc.
The Australian Chapter of ISAAC

ISAAC AUSTRALIA PRESIDENT REPORT AGM 2007

I am glad to be able to say that I now feel that I have my head thoroughly around the various issues for the Chapter. Huge thanks to the current executive and other knowledgeable members for all of their support and efforts to help me get there, and to the members whose thoughtful questions acted as such a useful prompt for me to get to this point.

- One of the big successes for this year has been the Chapter representation at ISAAC – Building Bridges conference in Dusseldorf. We had over 60% of our total membership attending, and were also very highly represented amongst the presenters of papers and workshops. What an amazing, thriving, powerful and dynamic AAC group we have here down- under, and how exciting to see us continuing to make our presence felt through ISAAC as part of the international community.
- Another success was the raffle, which has proven a great way to raise funds. Thanks need to go to Katie Lyon for her efforts to procure the prizes, Denise West for her support with organisation around the tickets, to Meredith for all of her amazing efforts with managing the postage out and return of the tickets, and to our sponsors and those who procured them. And thanks of course to all of our members who swallowed any reticence and got out there and sold those tickets.
- There has been some significant movement towards getting Deductible Gift Recipients status, with David Trembath working with Meredith to sort through the hoops required to be jumped through to achieve this. Achieving this status will make the Chapter eligible to apply for grants that we are currently excluded from – which will in turn make it easier for us to fit with the tax guidelines requiring us to spend 50% of any 'surplus' received in Australia.
- We have now also managed to get all of our accounts on MYOB which, as well as making the Treasurer's role a little easier, will reduce the audit costs for us. Thanks to Karen Bloomberg and her sister for tackling this task!
- Many of our Chapter members continue to have a very high profile within ISAAC international, including Melinda Smith's leadership role on the Consumer Participation project and Hilary Johnson's role as the Chair of the ISAAC board. And of course, Meredith's receipt of the President's Award at the Building Bridges conference was a fantastic highlight. It is great to see Meredith's contribution to

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- the community and to the dialogue about AAC culture being appreciated and recognised.
- The working group looking at the relationship between AGOSCI and ISAAC Australia continue to meet. There are a number of barriers to the two organizations becoming one, and these are being looked at and potential solutions considered. In the interim, the aim of the two organisations acting more cooperatively and collaboratively is being progressed. The feedback from the group is to expect the process to take up to five years to reach fruition.
 - Congratulations to the recipients of the ISAAC-Australia Awards for Achievement, to be announced publicly at the Closing ceremony. Nominations were only received in one category this year, and the decision was made to award to the two nominees in that category. I am sure that this doesn't mean that there are no deserving recipients out there, so please start thinking right now about nominations for next year – it is sad to see an opportunity lost to reward great efforts to promote awareness or use of AAC lost.

Coming opportunities

- ISAAC is planning an international awareness event, scheduled to occur on October 6th, which is the day that ISAAC was registered as an organisation in 1983. There are a number of creative ideas coming in about what to do, with the focus at this time on running events in schools to promote awareness. A number of members have indicated their interest in being involved. If you would like to know more or be involved, please let Hilary Johnson or Cathy Olsson know.
- The momentum on progressing a more cooperative and collaborative relationship between ISAAC Australia and AGOSCI needs to be maintained. From an ISAAC perspective, finding a way to be able to access some fund-raising opportunities with AGOSCI is, I believe, a high priority.
- I am hopeful that we won't be required to organise any further fund-raising events for this year, but, with my newly gained knowledge of the financial intricacies, am aware that it is always a possibility, dependent on the fate of the Australian dollar. If more events are required, we are now in the happy position of having people experienced in organising raffles and wine tastings that can be drawn upon to offer their knowledge, skills and paper tools – so if it needs to happen, it will be so much easier.

The executive committee have met regularly to address those nitty-gritty issues involved in keeping the Chapter going, maintaining the connections with ISAAC international and responding to the opportunities and issues that come along. I am enormously indebted to them all and would like to add, on a personal note, that being the Chapter President has offered a wonderful opportunity to come to know and appreciate the hard work, dedication and commitment of the Executive members. They have all been very supportive, including tolerating my ignorance on matters ISAAC, and helping me to learn and understand how things work. Thanks to Melinda Smith and Hilary Johnson for their fantastic support. Special thanks to Meredith Allan, who represents a huge chunk of the 'corporate memory' of ISAAC Australia, as well as being the person whose role I think is the most onerous, time consuming and thankless.

Special thanks also to Katie Lyons who is stepping down as Secretary. Katie has been superbly organised and filled the gap for me often, doing things that needed to be done

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before I knew that they needed to be. Katie decided she needed a break, and then went about the business of encouraging a potential successor – typically thorough and thoughtful.

I have really enjoyed the opportunity this year to get to know the Executive and some of our members better, as well as becoming more involved with the work of ISAAC international, and look forward to the year to come.

Regards,

Cathy Olsson, Chapter President ISAAC-Australia.