



## Submitted ISAAC Chapter Reports July 2014

### ISAAC Australia

What a busy six months it has been for all of us at ISAAC Australia! One of our biggest jobs this year was writing a submission for Australia's senate inquiry into speech pathology service provision. Our submission focused on the issues surrounding AAC service delivery for both Australian children and adults, and the importance of having ongoing, accessible support available to people who use AAC and their communication partners. We also examined some of the current barriers to AAC service provision in Australia. You can view the submission on our website, here: <http://isaacaustralia.com/2014/08/23/141/>

We are now eagerly awaiting the Senate Committee's report and recommendations, which is due to be released in September.

ISAAC-Australia enjoyed excellent attendance at the conference this year, with about three-quarters of our membership making the 18,000 km trek to Lisbon. Traveling to this conference reminded me once again of ISAAC's size and spread, and highlighted how important initiatives like BUILD and LEAD are for strengthening ISAAC's international networks. As a Chapter, we look forward to ongoing collaboration with BUILD to continue supporting the growth of ISAAC membership in the Asia-Pacific region. This coming year, we will also be exploring new ways in which we can use social media to establish stronger member connections and facilitate engagement across Australia's own, expansive landscape.

As always, you can follow ISAAC Australia's activities on Twitter (@ISAACaus) or online at [www.isaacaustralia.com](http://www.isaacaustralia.com).

*Submitted by:*

*Kate Anderson, Representative to the ISAAC Council  
ISAAC Australia*



## ISAAC Denmark

This year the Danish ISAAC chapter celebrates our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At our national conference in March, our former President Sissel Madsen looked back at the multifarious developments in AAC. John Costello made several exciting presentations, which were much appreciated by the audience, and after dinner we danced (or tried to dance) to Jamaica rhythms. Several other fine presentations were given by Danish and Scandinavian professionals. Right after our conference we invited people working in the area of acute care and vulnerable communication in hospitals to meet with John Costello. This is an area of new knowledge of AAC.

In May we had a special arrangement: a two-day seminar with Linda Burkhart. We made it a kind of anniversary gift, where ISAAC members and non-members could attend for a very reasonable price. Everyone found the seminar very inspiring. After the summer we will contact people who are not ISAAC members and draw their attention to the existence of ISAAC and the benefits of membership.

We have 10 members on the Danish Board, and we all work full time in very different AAC areas in Denmark. Our spare time ISAAC jobs are voluntary; the only exception in our webmaster, an ISAAC member, to whom we pay a symbolic amount.

ISAAC Denmark has been active in several different fields:

- Follow-up on the report, "People with Complex Communication Needs: An analysis of possibilities and barriers to the effort in the field." ISAAC produced the report in 2013 together with representatives from other public and private organizations, and professionals. Even though the Ministry of Social Affairs had set up a working group to support this report, we have to make continuous efforts to remind the upper levels of government about the needs related to AAC. Therefore ISAAC chose to print the report and send it to a number of politicians and high officials in local authorities all over Denmark.
- As a result of the report work we were in contact with University College Copenhagen. Together with other relevant stakeholders, we have made statements to support a new module in AAC and complex communication needs at the College. This module is now



approved and will start next year. Our situation in Denmark is that we have no mandatory education in AAC. About 10 Danish professionals have attended the Norwegian ASK education in Tønsberg.

- ISAAC DK wants to support and encourage dialogue with and between AAC users. One day of our national conference was planned with meetings for AAC users, mediated by one of our active colleagues, and we have started a partnership with a society of users of communication devices. This autumn we will support a seminar for AAC users, focused on professional and social topics.
- Our national conference during the spring is always an important arrangement. We put a lot of effort into planning a conference that will attract as broad a group of participants as possible, including children, young people, adults, and people with major cognitive challenges and those without, on issues including education, social topics, theory, practice, devices and so on. Members of our Board also attend the ISAAC conference in Norway and Communication Carnival in Sweden to supplement our own practice-based ideas.
- Right now we try to get in contact with the Ministry of Social Affairs because of a significant translation error in UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We will probably have to go directly to the Minister.
- ISAAC Denmark has 150 members.

*Submitted by:*

*Birgitte Brandt, President*

*ISAAC Denmark*



## ISAAC Italy

First, let me first introduce myself and Gabriella Veruggio, the second member representing our Chapter, who has in the past been our first chair and has been elected twice. I am Cristina Cerantola, President of ISAAC Italy since July 2013.

ISAAC Italy has 92 members, of which 13 are families and 4 are people who use AAC (PWUAAC). Our members come from all parts of Italy, although the south is always not as well represented.

I am keen on the composition of our Chapter because we do have members from all professions. It is a multidisciplinary group composed of doctors, speech-language therapists, PhDs, psychologists, computer technicians with expertise in AAC, educators, students, vendors and researchers; we also have some nurses and a social worker.

We were not able to organize a national conference in 2013 for two reasons: economic and personal issues. After the national conference of 2011 we saw a drastic diminishing of membership numbers the following year. From an average of 150 over the previous seven years, the number of members fell to just 55. The first six months of life of the new Board were spent trying to promote awareness and membership. We were not able to work on this during October but did so from the last week of November through December. We created a Christmas card and two calendars using AAC. We continued promoting ISAAC during this year and organized a one-day conference in February, in Rome, on the theme of the importance of "building net" and the use of AAC. A second day was the next step in the "building net" program. This took place in Rome last June. ISAAC Italy sponsored a significant educational opportunity in May, in Verona, with an international day of study on AAC featuring presentations by John Costello and Dorothy Fraser. More than one hundred people were there, many of whom were not ISAAC members but had the chance to get to know the organization better. We have noticed a progressive increase in membership, from 48 members of last year, to about 70 members in February; now, in July, we have gained another 20 members. I consider it very positive that we are gaining more families and institutions as members. We have unfortunately only one corporate member due to current economic difficulties.



ISAAC Italy also approves other AAC educational programs, such as the Residential Course CBDI in Milan. This year, a PWUAAC and another member of our Board have been invited to speak about AAC as representatives of ISAAC for a university course on AAC.

In May a scientific committee was formed, which have started to work on the FC issue analyzing the ISAAC International's draft report.

We are also trying to create some regional groups to focus on local initiatives. ISAAC Italy is trying to gather information on local experiences as a sharing, inspiring, and synergizing starting point for national networking. With this spirit, ISAAC Italy has printed a little booklet, "Questa scuola parla con la CAA" (written by Nicoletta Luciani e Licia Terrone, Trieste), which describes the use of AAC in kindergarten classes as a means of creating inclusion in schools. These are all signs of an increasing awareness of the use of AAC around Italy.

ISAAC Italy's dream (which we hope won't remain a dream) can be summarized in the following goals:

- 1) AAC becomes widespread in Italy
- 2) AAC is acknowledged within institutions, free services and facilities
- 3) Multidisciplinary team work in AAC
- 4) Equal and constructive professional consideration for AAC
- 5) Serene and constructive dialogue with families and PWUAAC

Good work to all!

*Submitted by:*

*Cristina Cerantola, President*

*ISAAC Italy*



## [ISAAC Norway](#)

This [PowerPoint Presentation](#) summarizes ISAAC Norway's report to the ISAAC Council Meeting in July 2014.

*Submitted by:*

*Torunn Borgersen, President*

*ISAAC Norway*

## [ISAAC UK \(Communication Matters\)](#)

It has been another busy year for Communication Matters (CM)! We reviewed our Vision and Mission Statements in 2013/14 and we continue to work these out through the aims of CM.

**Vision:** A world where all individuals are able to communicate in all aspects of life.

**Mission:** Communication Matters promotes the awareness, understanding and use of all forms of communication so individuals can express their thoughts feelings, needs and desires using their chosen means.

Our aims are:

- To raise awareness about Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
- To raise service standards
- To encourage research
- To lobby government for change

Our main areas of activity are:

**Road Shows** – This is an opportunity to see current and new developments in AAC and there have been 10 Roadshows in different locations around the UK this year. It is recognised that this has been a particularly challenging year for our commercial members so we are grateful to them particularly for their ongoing support.



**Study Days** – There were three Study Days planned. The *Symbolisation to Literacy Day* was very well received, thanks to Janice Murray and Martine Smith for the preparation and presentations. We are planning to run another study day in Stirling in November and one in Manchester in 2015. We have sadly had to cancel two other study days due to lack of take up. This is perhaps symptomatic of the current economic situation and we are therefore reviewing our study day strategy.

**Conference** – The decision to move to Leeds University has given us the opportunity to increase capacity and offer better facilities. Our membership numbers are holding up despite problems in the economy and we had 380 delegates attend our Annual Conference in Leeds in September 2014 and 23 stands in our exhibition. This was encouraging especially with it being an ISAAC Conference year in Europe where we had 45 delegates from the UK in attendance, many of whom cannot get funding or be released from their jobs for both conferences.

**Website** – The website and e-news are important channels in our flow of information. The website is being redesigned to improve flow through the site and update and simplify the appearance.

**Events for People who use AAC** – CM have been committed to running Safe social networking workshops for people who use AAC and to date have funded a trainer to facilitate the workshops. We are reviewing the programme at the present time.

**Publications** – We have a number of publications including the the Communication Matters Journal and Other ways of speaking both of which are much valued by the membership.

**Funding and Awards** – CM are committed to supporting people who use AAC through various funding and award streams. We have sponsored places provided by commercial members to fund free membership of people who are new to using AAC. We have a small grant award to support people who use AAC including supporting membership of CM. Funds generated at last CM 2013 subsidised places for people who use AAC and their families/personal assistants to attend the 2014 conference.



**Research** – The *CM Research Matters Big Lottery Fund* project was launched in 2013 with the ‘Shining the Light’ publication. Following the conclusion of the funding CM are committed to ongoing funding to ensure the updating of the AAC knowledge website. We have also continued to support the Research involvement Network and the Independent Research Panel.

**Staffing** – We have major changes and challenges ahead as Patrick Poon and Peter Head have both decided to retire this coming year. This will be a huge loss to CM as they have both contributed so much over so many years. We have begun the challenging process of succession planning. We are pleased that we have appointed to the General Manager role and we have made the decision to relocate the CM office to Leeds. We are now in the process of advertising for the administrative/secretary role.

All in all, it has been a busy and productive year. Nationally we have seen changes in AAC being included in Specialised Commissioning. We hope this will result in better services and support for those who need and use AAC. We are grateful to all who have contributed to the AAC and CM agenda.

*Catherine Harris, Chair  
Communication Matters*