

## In This Edition

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Dear trainees, families, staff and friends of Compass

We have had a very busy start to the year to say the least. A new centre in Gympie, ongoing renovations at Caloundra, some renovations at Palmwoods, ongoing developments at the farm, then rain, rain and still more rain.... Some more great news is that from this week we have commenced a new service in Caboolture. This has come along sooner than anticipated, but something we have had in our plans for a number of years. Initially this will be a non-centre based program but focussing on all the same aspects of our regular Compass program. Keryn, our Palmwoods Centre Team Manager, is working in Caboolture over the next three to four weeks setting everything up and making sure all is in order for when we appoint a new staff member into this position very shortly.

All of our new trainees have settled in really well this year and already seem as if they have been with us for ages instead of just a few short weeks. This is a direct result of the wonderful support of our families and the extremely hard work and dedication of our great staff. Thanks everyone.

Another person I would like to acknowledge is our Office Manager, Wendy. Wendy is always a happy and positive person to have around, but at the same time one of our "quiet achievers". The start of the year is always a really busy time behind the scenes with preparing budgets, applying for funding, invoicing, receipts, staff wages and chasing up the endless payments etc.. Thanks Wendy for everything you do to keep our organisation running smoothly from a financial perspective.

During March we will be conducting our annual Service User Surveys. This is an opportunity for trainees and their families to give us valuable feedback on how we are going with the programs and services we provide to you. Amy will send the forms out in the near future. We would love to get as many surveys returned as possible as the information you provide us helps us with our planning immensely.

I would like to thank Aimee and Julina, our two fourth year Occupational Therapy students from the University of the Sunshine Coast for the amazing work they have done during their time with us. It is always a delight to have the OT students, as every one of them is always extremely enthusiastic and brings something new to our organisation. They still have a couple of weeks left in this prac and I would like to wish them all the best for the future.

We have our Easter break coming up at the end of the month. We are closed over the public holidays but the office will be open the remainder of the time. Trainees have a two week break and staff have one week followed by a week of intensive staff training.

Have a great month everyone.

Norm



**Heritage**  
Community Branch  
Palmwoods



## Date Claimers

**Thursday 28th March 2013**  
Break up Day

**Friday 29th March 2013**  
Good Friday

**Monday 1st April 2013**  
Easter Monday

**Thursday 25th April 2013**  
ANZAC Day

**Monday 29th April 2013**  
Market Week Prep

**Monday 6th May 2013**  
Labour Day

**Thursday 9th May 2013**  
Market Day

**Monday 12th May 2013**  
Mothers Day

**Friday 17th May 2013**  
Gympie Show

# SMARTENING UP...

The Caloundra Centre now has a fresh approach to their training days. With a brighter lighter centre, they are feeling great and training even harder. Originally designed to function as a soccer club, Compass is slowly customizing the building, to create an optimal learning environment for a growing number of trainees. To date it has acquired new paint, roof and ceiling and practical flooring. The trainees now have personal shelving and the parents and carers a place to relax at pick up. A new room divider system is providing the flexibility to change and re-group teaching areas and accommodate the individual needs of trainees. Members of staff are also delighted with their new administration and storage area. Congratulations to the Caloundra team who have 'done more with less' for so long and a huge thank you to all those who helped along the way.



## Surviving with a passion

Not much can stop our Palmwoods farmers. Like the rest of Queensland they are battling the waters with a brimming dam and soggy footprint, but they are surviving. Delicate passion fruits are leading the team, curling and budding; corn is standing high and the rosella bushes are thickening. Mango trees are finding new life and citrus trees are quietly biding their time. A welcome to the newest member of the farm training team, Amber, who has been happy to trade the shelter of the Palmwoods Centre for the wilds of the farm. She tells us she is flourishing too.

### Continuous Improvement Plan

At Compass we are committed to ongoing service improvement. If you have a suggestion about how we can improve our service, please write your suggestion on one of our **Service Improvement Suggestion Forms** available from the office, our centres or our website: [www.compassinc.org.au](http://www.compassinc.org.au) and we will consider every idea.

### Advocacy

Remember that you are able to bring along an advocate or support person to any meeting that you have with Compass. An advocate is someone who is there to support you or represent you and your interests in circumstances where you feel that this additional support is required. Please ask us if you need more information or assistance with organising for an advocate.

### COMPASS CALENDAR

Need to check dates for the holidays or a special event? Our Annual Planner Calendar is available 24/7 at [www.compassinc.org.au](http://www.compassinc.org.au)

# From David's Desk



There have been two recent events that I'd like to share with you. They highlight some of the issues that exist in our community around choices for families and young people with a disability.

The first concerns a family who approached a post-school service to assess possible support for their son. The family met with the service and looked at the programme which they felt was 'not too bad'. They were concerned however by the ratio of support staff to young people – 1 staff member for 12 young people. One of these young people also had significant care needs, requiring assistance with mobility, feeding and toileting. With the inclusion of their son, this ratio would become 1 : 13.

The real concerns for the family started when the service indicated that they would 'go for a walk each day' and on 'occasional outings'. Their son has limited road safety skills and they felt this level of supervision would expose him to danger... a concern any reasonable person would share.

The other event concerns another family looking for support for their daughter in a post school setting and their experience was the polar opposite to the above. They were offered a grand total of 7 hours service per week over 48 weeks per year – Total 336 hours per annum. Two and a half hours were at a ratio of 1 : 1 and the remainder at 1 : 2. For the equivalent funds, Compass can provide 19.5 hours per week over 43 weeks per year – Total 835 hours. The ratio in Compass would include greater 1 : 1 hours than above as well as a mixture of 1 : 2 and 1 : 3. In neither of the above scenarios is there any emphasis on developmental programmes that are age appropriate and have the potential to access a vocational stream.

If it was my son or daughter I couldn't be satisfied with either of the above options. In fact, having been involved in this sector since the early 1980's, I find it very difficult to believe that these two service models even exist anymore. They just so obviously don't meet the needs of the family or the young person.

At the same time we know that because government funding is so insufficient, Compass is not able to do everything for you and your sons and daughters that we would like to. Our goal is for Compass to become a completely flexible service where support can be spread over 7 days a week 52 weeks a year and include a mix of education, skills based training, vocational opportunities and social opportunities. We have the foundations of this programme now and I am very proud of the work that the support staff in particular put in every day to make sure every activity is lesson planned, assessed and reported back. Again the issue is one of funding – we want to provide programmes and support with a wider scope and you want to receive them... we just need one more group to become a partner in that – the government.

Last year I spoke with a parent who enquired about the potential for an after-hours service that might have the dual benefits of providing an interesting social opportunity for the young person while allowing the parents to do something simple like go out for dinner, attend a meeting or the myriad of other things most of us take for granted. As you may recall we surveyed all Compass families to establish the extent and nature of the need and did some costings to establish whether the service could be affordable. We then distributed that information back to you while also beginning an investigation into potential government support for the programme.

As with so many things 'government', that research was a like an episode of 'Yes Minister'. There is HACC funding and some of you may have received that. It has now been reorganised and only those over 65 years can now access it (though it may continue to those under 65 who already receive it). A 'new' funding stream (QCCS) was made available for people with disabilities between under age 65. The big issue is however, according to all our enquiries with HACC / QCCS / Dept. of Communities, "there is no funding available at this time". So it seems that the new category of funding exists but there are no funds to go into it. Our Disability Services Community Resource Office is looking into this for us at present and I will let you know more when I hear back from him.

On a positive note Compass has been approached by National Disability Services to participate in a project where our developmental and transitional service model will be assessed to provide some concrete figures on the Social Return on Investment (SROI) aspect. SROI has been factored into government decision making processes overseas for many years and it can assist with particularly with funding and grant requests. Essentially it measures a (social) return for each dollar invested in various government or NGO programmes. We are really proud to be selected for the project and I will also let you know more in the future about the outcomes.

David