National Disability Insurance Scheme trial begins in the Territory

The two-year NDIS trial in the Barkly has the potential to be the most significant reform of disability services the NT has ever seen.

The Barkly trial will also be unlike any other currently underway in Australia - it is the only remote trial in the country. The trial will reveal some of the greatest difficulties the NDIS will have in delivering for remote communities.

It is very important that the NDIS trial shares this experience in the Barkly so that it can deliver for all remote Australians with a profound disability.

I am committed to ensuring that Territorians with a disability, their carers, families and service providers get the most out of the national scheme.

Under the current NDIS Agreement, the Territory Government is responsible for 60 percent of the funding required for the scheme, with the Commonwealth making up the balance.

Amy James (below) will be a participant of the NIDS. She is a student at Tennant Creek High and is looking forward to how the NDIS can help her to build opportunities after she finishes school next year.

Amy and her mother Coralie are working with the NDIS team to finalise how she would like her care and support package to be, but they're looking forward to the opportunities it will give them, and especially the help that it will provide to Coralie to care for her daughter.

With 17 year old Amy James and her mother Coralie James who live in Tennant Creek.

Bushmob’s new home helping more young Centralians

I had the great pleasure to visit Will MacGregor and the team at the new Bushmob premises at the former CAT site in Priest St.

The new space is safe and secure, but also has a great feel of the outdoors. Their new home now has 20 treatment beds for young people from Central Australia and across the Territory.

Bushmob caters for young people aged 12 to 25 years, who participate in a 12 to 16 week residential program.

The program aims to improve the life situation and outcomes for young people through therapy, capacity and resilience building activities with the theme of ‘back to country’.

When I visited, the team had just returned from one of their Bush Adventure Therapy trips, where young people challenge themselves while also spending time talking to their families and working with the youth workers to deal with their drug use.

Workers support the young person and their family through life skills development, as well as helping families to talk together.

Their resident media expert Keith, also showed me some fantastic video stories done by some of the young people in the program.

The stories used animation of plasticine figures to show the experience of living in Alice Springs, some of the hardships and some of the fun. This was a demonstration of the importance of using technology to encourage young people to express themselves.

It was also good to hear that through this expression, young people are also learning key skills that help them with employment opportunities and their continued education.

I was offered a chance to have a go on the “Pinnacle of Terror” (pictured in the photo). This is a mobile high ropes course comprised of a rock wall, wobbly ladder and a 9 metre high “Leap of Faith”. Luckily I ran out of ‘time’ so I didn’t have to decide to whether I would take the plunge.

I am really looking forward to visiting a new exhibition space in Alice Springs at our very own National Pioneer Women’s Hall of Fame.

I was delighted to handover a Community Benefit Fund grant of $4960 to the Hall of Fame, so organisers can upgrade the “old clinic” into a gallery space.

The Clinic is an amazing old building, and the transformation will involve new lighting, picture rails and air-conditioning.

The project is the joint brainchild of the Women’s Hall of Fame’s curator Amy James (below) will be a member of the project.

Three counsellors from Relationships Australia (RANT) will travel to the International Childhood Trauma Conference in Melbourne next month.

I visited the Alice Springs RANT team who told me they will also present a paper at the conference. The paper will outline the development and implementation of their unique program to deliver counselling to vulnerable children aged 5 to 12 years old, who have experienced complex trauma.

It has been well documented that early childhood intervention can be successful when carers, professionals and families work together, and RANT has worked hard to develop this into their network.

I am committed to ensuring that Australians with a profound disability are very successful in improving their lives.

The trial will reveal some of the greatest difficulties the NDIS will have in delivering for remote communities.

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Upgrade for training at Lifeline Central Australia

Lifeline Central Australia provides suicide prevention and crisis counselling training to hundreds of people each year. Participants include general community members, nurses, teachers, youth workers, domestic violence support workers and corrections staff to name but a few. I was delighted to have a catch up with Rob Loane from Lifeline Central Australia and present the organisation with a Community Benefit Fund Small Grant cheque for $4,400.

Mr Loane said Lifeline would use the grant to upgrade the layout of their Alice Springs training room to increase capacity for the number of workshop participants they can cater for. Mr Loane said it was important that Territorians and their families have access to suicide awareness and suicide first aid information, and he was happy the Country Liberals Government can provide this support so Lifeline Central Australia can continue its hard work.

Hydrotherapy pool boosting the wellbeing of young Centralians with a disability

As the Northern Territory’s first Minister for Disability Services, I am committed to creating opportunities for all Territorians with a disability to be able to engage with their community, and achieve their greatest potential.

On Friday 20 June I officially opened a new hydrotherapy pool for students at Alice Springs.

The $1.3 million pool at Acacia Hill School is making a huge difference in the development of the students’ communication and social skills, as well as enhancing their mobility.

The Acacia Hill School and its hardworking staff strive to be a centre of excellence for the special education of children in Central Australia.

Hydrotherapy makes a big difference to the way high sensory need students can settle back into the classroom, ready to engage in learning. Some students with high sensory needs have overcome sensory fears through safe and fun pool activities.

Others who have difficulty in communicating have improved their skills of interacting with others while they are in the pool. And of course being in the hydrotherapy pool is great fun, as students enjoy the freedom of moving independently in the water.

For children who have mobility challenges, the pool is wonderful for regular physiotherapy sessions, which can improve their posture and balance, and also help them to learn.

I look forward to hearing about the ongoing progress and opportunities the pool provides for Alice Springs students for many years to come.

New Emergency Department delivering results

The Alice Springs Hospital community has celebrated the one year anniversary of the new Emergency Department which has cut waiting times for patients and created an efficient working environment for staff.

The Emergency Department had recorded more than 43,000 attendances since the Country Liberals Government built the larger facility in mid-June last year. The new $25 million Emergency Department has 18 treatment bays, and has employed more staff, with 76 nurses and 8 ward clerks now working in the ED. Waiting times are already showing a great improvement, with category 2 cases (within 10 mins) at a high of 73%, category 3 (within 30 mins) at 76% and category 4 (within 60 mins) at 75%.

The new ED not only meets capacity but enhances care through its culturally appropriate design.

The ED has been equipped with state of the art technology and hospital staff say they feel in control, and that they have the room and facilities to treat patients in a personalised manner. They say working in this very busy ED is now both exciting and rewarding. This is a far cry from the previous ED where crowding made treatment difficult.

The Country Liberals Government has committed an extra $160,000 to the ED in 2014, bringing the total additional funding of the ED to $5.7 million in 2014-15.

Education through storytelling with a modern edge

I was delighted to visit Alice Springs’ Italk library studio and meet Mr Christopher Brocklebank who has been working with his team on this project for several years. The animated multimedia project has grown into a valuable source of education and storytelling for Territory people. Italk Library has produced a multitude of stories that can be watched in 14 different Indigenous Territory languages.

One story line titled “Lucky Girl” explains the story of addiction and gambling, and how one decision can have huge ramifications in a young person’s life. The stories are voiced by a variety of people from across the Territory, and are a powerful way of getting healthy messages through to our young people.

Other topics include mental health, alcohol abuse, helping people with disabilities, health issues such as Dementia, and the team is also now working on a petrol sniffer awareness campaign.

On behalf of the Country Liberals Government I was pleased to present Mr Brocklebank with a Community Benefit Fund Gambling Amelioration grant for $155,000 to expand the Italk Library program, so people can start to make their own stories.

I encourage everyone to visit italklibrary.com.

Flynn Lodge expands

I recently toured the newly constructed Ochre and Olive wings at Flynn Lodge which will provide a much needed boost to the aged care community.

The $4.4 million wings will expand the facility to include an additional 20 high care residents. In addition, front offices, activity room, chapel and nurses station have been built at the front of Old Timers.

The extension works will add to the two existing wings at Flynn Lodge (Mountview and Riverview), which accommodates 20 low care residents in single rooms. To improve the facilities further, these older wings are currently undergoing refurbishments to each of the en-suite bathrooms.

The 20 additional residential places will soon become available following the completion of these refurbishments. Flynn Lodge will then provide 24 hour care for 40 Alice Springs residents.

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