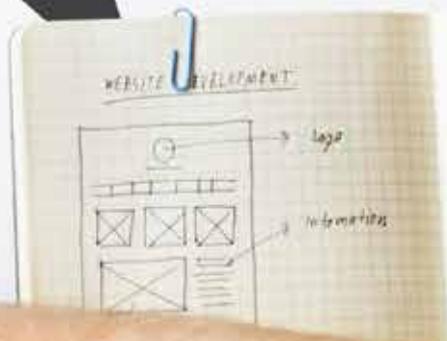




RESEARCH &
INNOVATION
2020

INNOVATION



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PREFACE



Able Australia supports research and innovation as a way to invest in the lives of people with a disability, both in our organisation and the sector as a whole. It has been bolstered by our appointment of Dr Meredith Prain as National Head of Research and Centre of Excellence - Deafblind in July 2020.

Our focus is on developing partnerships with experts in the field of disability and creating intersections with academia and industry. Like all partnerships, Able's role in each differs. In some we

are the lead agency and in others, we play the supporting role.

Neil Armstrong once said, 'Research is creating new knowledge'. At Able Australia, we seek to create this 'new knowledge' together with our clients and partners so that we can all enjoy better days, every day.

KATE MACRAE, CEO
Able Australia

ABOUT ABLE AUSTRALIA



Able Australia is a leading provider of high quality, person-centred disability services and community supports. Over the last 50 years, we have grown to become a diverse not-for-profit organisation offering a broad range of services to adults with deafblindness and those with multiple disabilities. We also provide community supports to seniors. Able currently employs over 600 passionate staff and engages with over 200 dedicated volunteers who are committed to our strong community and people-focused values.

TOGETHER WE ARE ABLE

RESEARCH & EDUCATION PROJECTS

Able Australia is involved in a number of research and education projects which will both significantly contribute to the disability sector and inform the way we deliver services to our clients. We thank all the organisations with whom we work alongside for their collaboration and contribution.

DEAFBLIND INFORMATION AUSTRALIA - DEAFBLIND TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

Evaluating mainstream technology use and outcomes for adults with deafblindness.

Academic lead: Professor Rachael MacDonald, Chair - Department of Nursing and Allied Health Swinburne University

Funding: \$2.4m over 3 years across 3 agencies

Communication poses a major barrier for people with deafblindness and access to information is challenging. People with deafblindness require a systematic approach to receiving new information and learn best from those they know and trust.

The aim of this project is to educate people with deafblindness about technologies that can benefit them and evaluate the utility and adaptability of mainstream technologies to support people who are deafblind.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Face-to-face training sessions on the use of mainstream technologies for those who are deafblind and content on the Deafblind Information Australia website - the pre-eminent information portal for those who are deafblind.
- A better understanding of which mainstream technologies facilitate communications - the giving and receiving of information - best for those with deafblindness.

INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORTED LIVING (ISL) TOOL TRAINING EVALUATION

Researching how best to train staff facilitating Individual Supported Living evaluations.

Academic lead: Keith R. McVilly PhD MAPS MCCIP Professor of Disability & Inclusion - School of Social & Political Sciences University of Melbourne

Funding: \$15k per year towards project evaluation

This is a one-year, national project being completed by Able in partnership with the University of Melbourne and another disability service provider, Araluen.

The research group will establish online modules that could be delivered in a COVID environment or used as an adjunct to face-to-face professional development post-COVID. The professional development module will give students the tools to develop a comprehensive Individual Support Living plan for a person with a disability.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- A training methodology that can be used to educate staff on how to deliver independent supported living evaluations.



DEAFBLIND EMPLOYABILITY

Training four people with deafblindness in South Australia and four people with deafblindness in Queensland to undertake training in conducting Deafblind Awareness training.

Academic lead: N/A
Funding: \$264,360

The first stage of the project will focus on training deafblind participants to deliver Deafblind Awareness Workshops to local businesses and organisations.

In the second stage, participants will be developing professional networks with local businesses, organisations and mainstream services through the delivery of free deafblind awareness workshops.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Capacity building deafblind people to deliver training by giving them the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to set and achieve their employment goals
- Increased deafblind awareness in the community and with potential employers.

WORKFORCE GRANT FOR ALLIED HEALTH STUDENTS IN TASMANIA

Supporting and growing our next generation of allied health professionals by facilitating Monash University Allied Health student placements in Tasmania.

Academic lead: Associate Professor Prue Morgan - Head of Department, Physiotherapy, School of Primary Health Care Monash University
Funding: \$250,000

Able Australia and the NDIS participants they work with have been collaborating with an interdisciplinary team across the Monash School of Primary and Allied Health Care at Monash University. This project is trialing the use of telepractice by allied health students connecting with NDIS participants supported by Able Australia in Tasmania.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Establish the effectiveness of studies provided via telepractice.
- Assess satisfaction for those who received health care via telepractice.
- Create a suite of learnings that will be available as a future resource for workplace development and support for NDIS participants.





MANAGING DETERIORATING CLIENTS IN DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION: IN-REACH MODEL

Piloting an in-reach model into disability accommodation to manage COVID (phase 1) and deteriorating clients (phase 2).

Academic lead: Reece Adams - Head of Centre Developmental Disability Health Victoria Monash Health

Funding: In-kind

The aim of the project being conducted in partnership with Monash Health, Bayley House and OC Connections is to provide medical and nursing services in a client's home to reduce the need for Emergency Department visits and hospital admissions. Many clients with a disability find the hospital environment unfamiliar and confusing. This can cause clients to become unsettled and even exhibit behaviours of concern.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Reduced stress to clients by providing medical and nursing services in the client's home
- Reduced avoidable hospital admissions and Emergency Department visits.

DEAFBLIND COMMUNICATION: BUILDING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES

Researching best practice in tactile communication for adults with deafblindness

Academic lead: Dr Louisa Willoughby, Deputy Head of School of Research and Engagement Monash University

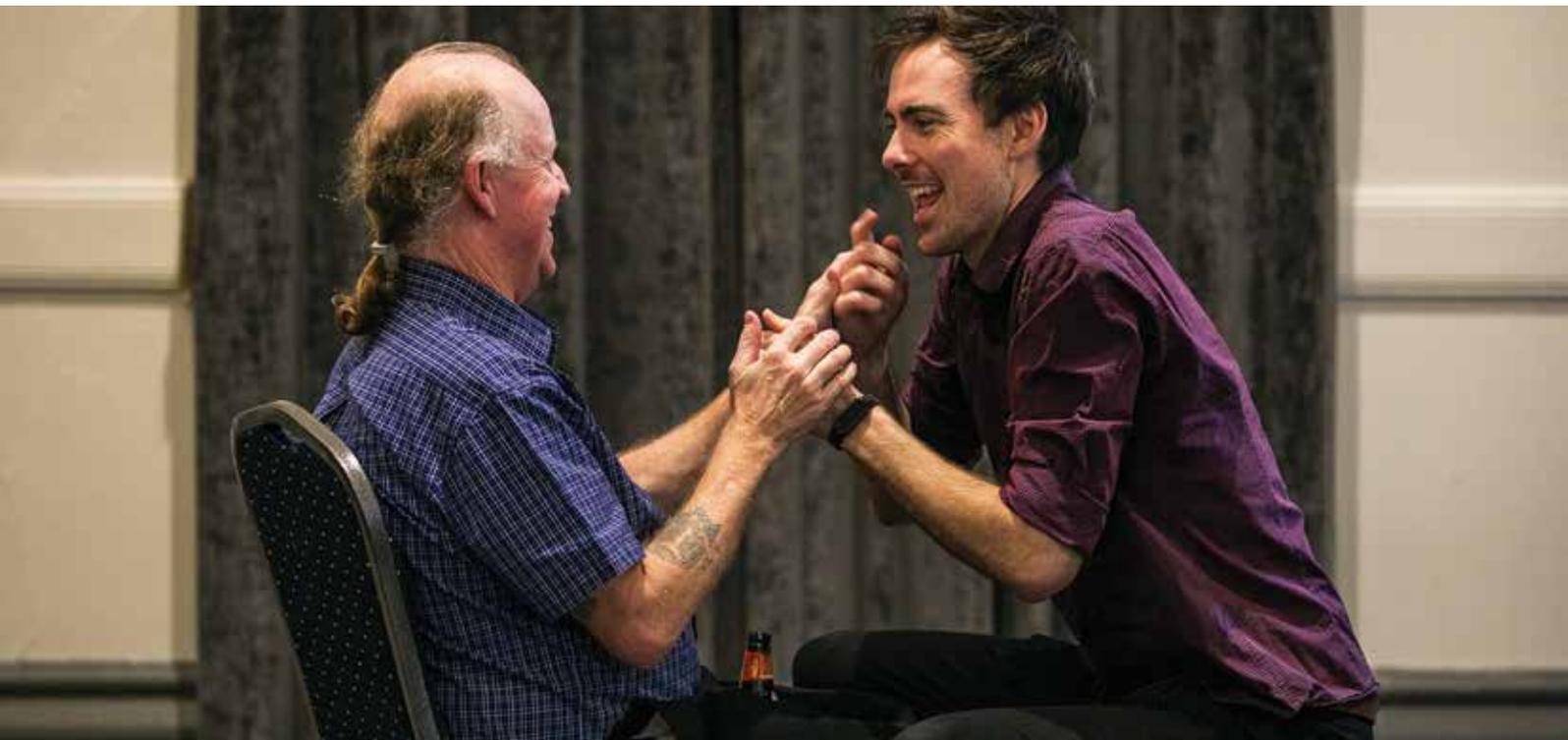
Funding: \$279,000

This project, funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant is being undertaken with Monash University and the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

Many deafblind people use a modified form of Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to communicate, yet little is known about how interpreters or support workers should adapt their signing when working with deafblind clients to ensure effective communication. This project aims to analyse the communication strategies used by deafblind sign language users.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Improve the quality of interpreting/support services provided to deafblind Australians
- Evidence-based training and resources for interpreting/support professionals.



COMMUNICATION GUIDES SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Training deafblind communication guides in metropolitan and regional South Australia.

Academic lead: NIL

Funding: \$76,887 over two years

With funding from the National Disability Information Agency's Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant, this project is being undertaken in partnership with Monash University and the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. The program aims to train a pool of Communication Guides in South Australia.

The training covers a broad range of deafblindness-related topics including deafblind awareness, strategies in guiding a deafblind person, deafblind communication methods, adaptive and assistive technology as well as understanding the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Build a pool of 40-50 Communication Guides in South Australia who will support deafblind South Australians to access their communities, attend activities, catch up with friends, manage daily tasks and most importantly, maintain their independence.

MY ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK FOR PEOPLE WITH DEAFBLINDNESS IN AFRICA

Researching the validity of the 'My Assistive Technology Outcomes Framework' for use with people with deafblindness in the Southern African Development Community.

Academic lead: Dr Diane Bell,
Cape Town University

Funding: €500

Able's Dr Meredith Prain, Dr Diane Bell and Dr Natasha Layton were successful in receiving a Deafblind International African Research Initiative grant to undertake research in Africa.

This project is a partnership involving researchers from Monash University and Cape Town University, South Africa. The group are researching the outcomes of using the My Rights Tool for a person with deafblindness. The tool was developed for people with disabilities in Australia.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- Validate the use of the My Rights Tool which is part of the My Assistive Technology Outcomes Framework for people with deafblindness in Africa.

INNOVATION PROJECTS

Innovation has not typically been associated with disability service provision. As an organisation supporting some of our community's most vulnerable constituents, Able Australia values innovation. By developing the Innovation arm in our organisation we will improve, enhance and reshape our practices and service delivery. This means improved outcomes for our clients and ongoing professional development for our workforce.

BETTER DAYS, EVERY DAY FRAMEWORK

What can we do to make this day a better day for clients and staff?

Better Days, Every Day is a flagship approach which brings together a range of smaller projects under a single banner. The framework is based on a simple question – 'what can we do to make this day a better day for clients and staff?'

The Better Days, Every Day framework serves two main purposes:

- To provide the client voice by ensuring each client's aspirations and experiences inform the way Able provides support for the client now and into the future.
- To optimise the primary relationship between client and support worker which works to promote growth and wellbeing.

Better Days, Every Day is used to direct actions in the following areas:

- Hear the client voice
- Develop skilled, attuned staff
- Provide best practice active support
- Maximise communication opportunities for all clients
- Provide flexible programming options
- Implement a "Good to Great Homes" approach
- Provide clients with therapy interventions where possible
- Commence a leading practice behaviour support service
- Regularly review and improve our physical environment and the resources we have within it.

At its heart, Better Days, Every Day is about the client and family experience. It is an ambitious program of work that touches every aspect of the work we do and will reshape Able Australia going forward.

GOAL FOCUSED PROGRAMMING

Flexible goal setting for clients

To ensure more choice and a wider range in the client's activities we established a number of new options within the broader field of goal setting. Larger goals were broken down into smaller subset goals. For example while the client's broad objective may have been to go swimming, the sub-goal within this would have been to have them pack their own swim bag.

We also timetabled activities to include flexi activities - mini activities of approximately 10 minutes duration that would otherwise have not been spent doing anything in particular. For example a client may spend time watching a movie as well as a mini activity, such as a quick hand massage.

While simple in practice, these changes have driven better outcomes for clients.



EVIDENCED BASED ROOM DESIGN

Setting up a technology space for people with disability

Able Australia invested heavily to establish a technology space within its new Day Service in Northcote, Melbourne. The aim was to create a warm, safe environment where Able clients would feel welcome to engage and explore how modern inclusive technology may improve their general quality of life.

To ensure the technology space lived up to its full potential, an Occupational Therapist was engaged to research environmental design in healthcare, current best practice and the use of mood boards and the Danish concept of hygge - a feeling of cozy contentment and well-being through enjoying the simple things in life - to guide design principles. This resulted in the trial of several layouts and designs using CAD software to determine how the environment would look. The resulting layout made appropriate use of the floor space available while also meeting clients' needs.

While the closure of Day Services in Victoria as a result of COVID-19 in February 2020 meant the facility in Northcote has been largely unused, the intelligence gathered through this process provides Able with a template that will be applied to other facilities.

ABLE ONLINE

When life gives you lemons...

Able Online was born out of necessity. As a result of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent physical distancing restrictions placed by Government, Able Australia's activity based programs such as our Day Services had to close. It meant many clients were asked to change their routines and confine themselves to their homes to minimise their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Able Online was created as a way for Able clients to connect with one another and take part in fun, interactive activities. Being online, the activities are all conducted from the safety of home with support staff on hand as required. Activities that have been conducted online include cooking sessions, music and show and tell. The program has proved so successful it will become part of our core offering.



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