

## Dyslexia SA Annual President's Report 2020

As a registered charity, Dyslexia SA is a volunteer organisation dedicated to improving literacy outcomes for students with dyslexia. As our inspiring mentor, expert Neil MacKay says if you 'Get it right for dyslexia, you get it right for all!' The initial campaign of DAGBAGS (Dyslexia Action Group Barossa And Gawler Surrounds) to assist students with dyslexia and support families snowballed into Dyslexia SA to improve literacy and education outcomes for all via support for education staff, students, and families.

Literacy is a tool of empowerment. Literacy transforms lives, it can improve health and income for individuals and families. Literacy is a fundamental human right and an essential foundation for lifelong learning. Dyslexia SA believes that early intervention and training for educators is essential.

Run solely by volunteers our Dyslexia SA slogan is 'Advocating for the 1 in 5'. Dyslexia is the most common of all neuro-cognitive disorders.' (The Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity website 2019.) <https://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/dyslexia-faq/> 'Dyslexia affects 20 % of the population and represents 80 to 90 % of all those with learning disabilities.'

Dyslexia SA believes that it is essential to have research-based training for educators and good quality instruction at all three tiers of intervention (Tier 1 - Classroom; Tier 2 - Small group and Tier 3 - Individual instruction).

*"Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (International Dyslexia Association 2002)'*

Dyslexia SA has achieved a significant number of its objectives of its *Six Point Plan* over the years.

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### The Dyslexia SA Six Point Plan

1. Early Identification and Intervention: *'Today we possess sufficient knowledge regarding the components of reading to diagnose almost every child in kindergarten (Reception) at risk of learning difficulties.'* Maryanne Wolf 2008  
The single most important factor and predictor of successful literacy acquisition is phonological awareness. Earliest screening of phonological awareness and identification of students at risk by teachers in their first term at school Tier 1 (Prevention) Quality, multi-sensory, explicit classroom instruction at all year levels, Tier 2 (Targeted intervention with a trained literacy teacher) Excellent, multi-sensory explicit small group instruction.
2. Dyslexia Aware Schools - (Neil MacKay's Model - An international authority on dyslexia) Whole school training - Focusing on changing attitudes and perceptions to improve literacy outcomes for all learners. Presenting Dyslexia as a preferred way of learning rather than a disability. Schools who meet the criteria are awarded the DAS Quality Mark.
3. Severe Dyslexia - Tier 3 - Intensive Intervention *A percentage of children who have received early intervention and high-quality classroom programs will experience persistent and severe difficulties with the literacy demands of the regular classroom. These students will be at a high risk of non-school completion.* Principles of Tier 3 specialist teaching must include: An integrated program of phonology, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax & semantics; direct thorough instruction; structured and sequential learning; multi-sensory activities and meta-cognitive strategies.
4. Special Provisions in SACE Examinations for those with Learning Disabilities  
Changes to be made: Recognition by the SACE board of the processing difficulties of all students with Dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities and the need for SACE to allow extra time and accommodations in alignment with the recommendations from current research. Dyslexia and Specific Learning Disabilities do not 'go away' they impact on a person for life. The SACE board needs to be prompt in its response to applications for accommodations.
5. **Mandatory Pre-service teacher training and ongoing professional development in regard to learning disabilities, including Dyslexia** *Currently, knowledge of learning disabilities varies greatly across Australia.*

### The Dyslexia SA Six Point Plan continued

*Many teachers complete their pre-service training with little or no understanding of learning disabilities, their symptoms, and effective strategies to assist students (Louden et al, 2000). All pre-service and practicing teachers must receive compulsory training in evidence-based reading instruction, on how to teach reading to students of any age.*

- 6. The effects of Dyslexia on Mental Health** *The Melbourne Declaration of Educational Goals 2008 outlined two goals - 1. Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence. 2. All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens. Literacy under-achievement has high hidden social and economic costs. The connection between under-achievement in literacy (especially in reading), poor behaviour, reduced health and well-being and crime is a major community health issue (DeWalt et al, 2004). Governments need to recognise Dyslexia and provide funding to schools so students with Dyslexia have equitable access to education.*

### Dyslexia Support SA - Facebook Page

The Dyslexia SA Facebook Page now has 8,000 followers, 175 more than last year.

7,200 - 91% of our Facebook followers are women and 660 - 8% are men.

The Dyslexia Support SA page has 3,600 followers in Adelaide South Australia, 91 in Port Lincoln, 53 in Mount Gambier, and 50 in Whyalla, the rest are mainly from other parts of Australia and there are a low number of overseas followers.

Our post announcing the DIBELS training reached 6,5000 people; 'Google for struggling readers' reached 3,8000; 'Peter's story' 3,500 followers; 'What makes a great teacher' 2,900 followers; ' A workshop by Tony Attwood in the Barossa' reached 2,500 followers; 'A great guide for teachers from the IDA' 2,200 followers; An article by Professor Pamela Snow 2,200 followers; 'Dyslexia is thought to be caused by the phonological core deficit...' reached 2,100 followers; Phonemic awareness activities are crucial..' reached 2, 100 followers.

Thank you to Tracey Bradley for helping me administer this page as it enables our outreach to be far and wide through our online social media presence.

### **Dyslexia Aware Schools Quality Mark (DASQM)**

Students with dyslexic-like learning needs, special education needs and the educational needs of all students are assisted through the DASQM process as dyslexia aware teaching and learning benefits all students. Awareness of dyslexia and fostering the development of dyslexia aware educational services are supported through 'Dyslexia Aware' training.

Currently, the Dyslexia Aware Schools program is on hold as we are following up the progress monitoring issues, doing both the student monitoring and following up the DASQM is beyond the current capacity of our volunteers.

### **DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition**

We were extremely excited to have organised DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition training from the University of Oregon for September 2020. Arrangements were well underway, and it was a huge task for our voluntary organisation but we were inspired and motivated and our wonderful schedule planned to get 'assessment to drive instruction' in schools. However, we have had to cancel the training with the overseas presenters from the University of Oregon unable to enter Australia due to travel restrictions from the USA being in place. Our schedule was as follows:

***Thursday and Friday, 17-18 September 2020: Trainers' Training Two full days training \$395.00 -***

***Friday, 11 September 2020: 12 to 2.30 pm: Principals and School Leaders' Day - Two and a half hours - Dr Sarah McDonagh and Marissa Pilger Suhr - Free event***

***Saturday & Sunday, 12-13 September 2020: Option 1 – Weekend -Basic Training 1 Two full days training - Dr Sarah McDonagh and Marissa Pilger Suhr - DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition administration training \$395.00***

***Tuesday & Wednesday, 15-16 September 2020: Option 2 – Weekday - Basic Training 2 Two full days training \$395.00 -Dr Nancy J. Nelson and Marissa Pilger Suhr DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition administration training \$395.00***

***DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition administration training DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition administration training Dr Nancy J. Nelson and Marissa Pilger Suhr***

Unfortunately, the State Committee and the branches both felt it was best to cancel the events whilst we could close them without too much financial loss. Tickets were refunded and plans for the training put on hold whilst COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Hopefully, these events can take place in the future

### COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the next year is full of uncertainty as with the current health regulations conducting workshops and holding public events may be difficult. Currently, the committee does not have any events scheduled as the DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> edition training has been cancelled.

### Thank you

As the retiring President I would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the running of Dyslexia SA throughout the 2019-2020 financial year. It is incredible that a small band of volunteers can achieve so much to support students with dyslexia, their families, and schools. I am impressed that we have been able to pull Dyslexia SA up from a negative bank balance to a healthy bank balance in the short time frame of three years. Thank you to all the people that so willingly gave their time and energy to help the community, your generosity is incredible.

My sincere thanks to our treasurer, Sue de Biasi, who was to retire last year but as no one had 'put their hand up' to take over you continued to support our charity by doing the finances for DSA. Sue, we are extremely thankful for your support, it has been crucial for our team. We thank you for the countless hours you have contributed to our charity throughout all our projects.

Secondly, I would also like to thank our secretary Tracey Bradley for all her hard work. Tracey has contributed so much over the past few years attending every meeting and typing the minutes, keeping the member register 'up-to-date'. Thank you for your commitment, Tracey, your voluntary work will have changed the outcomes for many families and students with dyslexia.

In addition, I would like to thank Gail Darby for her work with DSA, she has contributed many years of service to our charity through DAGBAGS (Dyslexia Action Group Barossa And Gawler Surrounds) and in-particular on the DSA State committee. Gail played a huge role in the development and implementation of the Dyslexia Aware Schools project and she has worked hard at workshops for families and school staff.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Chantal Diener. Chantal was a member of the DASLD (Dyslexia And Specific Learning Difficulties) team and has worked tirelessly to run the LMNL branch of Dyslexia SA. Chantal worked incredibly hard to get the Dyslexia Aware Schools project 'up and running' in her geographical area and to provide workshops and resources to schools. Chantal inspired her small team to achieve so much to help so many. Thank you, Chantal!

Finally, I would like to thank everyone that has contributed to Dyslexia SA in a voluntary capacity during my time as the President of Dyslexia SA, I have enjoyed your inspiration, enthusiasm and learning from you and I wish the next President of Dyslexia SA well in their role.

Janice McPhail  
President Dyslexia SA

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**Dyslexia SA**  
Advocating for the 1 in 5

**Branch Chairperson's reports:**

**NAAB Chairperson's Report Annual General Meeting 2020**

In our Northern Adelaide and Barossa Region there are approximately 5,250 students with dyslexia or dyslexia-type learning needs. As a voluntary group, DSA NAAB has worked extremely hard over many years to help and support families, staff and students in our geographical area through workshops for families and students, professional development training for school staff, the provision of evidence-based information and various other community work over many years.

To directly combat the negative mental health consequences that dyslexia can cause, our branch aims to provide positive assistance to cut the spiraling negative cycle that failure creates. It is crucial for our branch to provide workshops and community assistance services at the 'top of the cliff' rather than ambulance services at the fall-out-accident site below to support the Dyslexia SA Six Point Plan.

Many families and educators have responded positively to our branch strategies to directly support our community over the years.

## DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition

Organising the DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition training involved a considerable amount of work and I confirmed all the training with The University of Oregon in 2019. Our Secretary Tracey Bradley set up Sticky Tickets for bookings and Andrew McPhail booked 'The Education Development Centre' at Hindmarsh for the Principals and School Leaders' Day and the Basic Training days, and booked 'The Precinct' at Thebarton for the Trainers' Training Days. The flyers were sent to members and schools and the information put on our webpage and Facebook page. The workshop schedule was:

*Friday, 11 September 2020: 12 to 2.30 pm: Principals and School Leaders' Day - Two and a half hours - Dr Sarah McDonagh and Marissa Pilger Suhr - Free event*

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With international travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in place until at least 2021; workshop capacity sizes limited to 17 people, and as if the booking was cancelled in May there would be no costs, at our last DSA NAAB meeting and DSA State meeting on Tuesday 12 May it was decided that the workshops were not viable to go ahead as we are unable to predict what health restrictions will be in place in September.

Our Secretary, Tracey Bradley worked hard to ensure all registered participants were given a refund through Sticky Tickets and I would like to sincerely thank Tracey for all her work in this regard. Andrew McPhail cancelled all the venue bookings and I would also like to thank Andrew for his help.

## COVID 19 Pandemic

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the future is uncertain, and our branch has not been able to conduct any workshops to provide training and support nor been able to

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fundraise to achieve the Six Point Plan objectives. With the uncertainty ahead caused by COVID-19 we have not planned any further activities for 2020.

## Our Committee

As this is my last report as the NAAB Chairperson I would like to extend my thanks to some specific people.

Firstly, I would like to thank our secretary Tracey Bradley for all her work, during her time as our DSA NAAB secretary. Tracey, your enthusiasm has enabled our branch to achieve so much over the past few years, particularly your work in organising the Sticky Tickets website for NAAB events, your work each meeting with minuting and emailing, and your hard work to ensure events such as 'The Gawler Show', parent workshops and professional development workshops ran smoothly. Your voluntary work will have changed the outcomes for many students with dyslexia, thank you!

Additionally, I would like to thank Sue de Biasi, who although she stepped down as treasurer was kind enough to prepare the 2019/2020 financial information for the auditor. Sue, thank you once again for your continuing work for our branch, it is sincerely appreciated, your dedication to DSA NAAB is truly commendable.

Furthermore, I would also like to sincerely thank Gail Darby for your work on the DSA NAAB committee and for your work as our NAAB representative on the DSA State Committee. As a member of the DAGBAGS team and then later as a member of our NAAB team, you have continued with your voluntary work over a significant number of years. Gail your work with helping with the development of the Dyslexia Aware Schools Program, then later your work on the accreditation teams was tremendous and it has positively impacted on so many students, families, and staff. In addition, your commitment to the organisation of the venue for our branch meetings over so many years has meant additional time to open and close, thank you for so willingly doing this for us all. Assisting with countless fundraising and training events, Gail you are always willing to lend a hand on the day and I sincerely thank you for all the impact your work has made on the community.

Likewise, I would like to thank Kathryn Keley for your work on the NAAB Committee and for all your support for the many NAAB events you have attended over the past few years. We appreciate the way you always 'jump-in to lend a hand' at workshops and at events such as 'The Gawler Show' and the Expo. Thank you, Kathryn!

I would heartfully like to extend my special thanks to the wonderful NAAB members who have continued to support our branch through attending meetings and volunteering their valuable time to assist our community. I appreciate all the time and effort you gave so selflessly for the good of the community. Thank you for the kindness, care, and

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compassion you have shown to the students, families, staff, and general members of our community!

I hope all our members are well and managing during these turbulent times and I wish my successor and the new committee well in their endeavours to uphold the Dyslexia SA Six Point Plan.

*Janice McPhail*

Janice McPhail  
DSA NAAB Chairperson

**Dyslexia SA Branch Chairperson's reports continued:**

*The LMNL AGM was held on Monday 3 August 2020 and the minutes are not yet available due to extenuating circumstances.*

**Amendment below:**

**2020 Annual General Meeting Lower Mid-North and Light Chairperson's Report**

*This report was unavailable to be presented at the Dyslexia SA AGM due to a medical emergency.*

Chairperson's Report  
3<sup>rd</sup> August 2020

This year again has been very quiet for our branch. It was the third year our branch activity has been minimal due to our branch only has three active committee members. The decision was made to put workshops on hold until we were able to grow our numbers.

Unfortunately, we were unable to increase our team and it remains just us three. But, even though LMNL didn't run any of its own events this year, we still contributed to our cause by donating over \$2500 worth of dyslexia friendly resources to the Mid North libraries in an effort to reach families, schools and teachers further north.

While LMNL has been inactive, COVID19 has still had an effect on all of us and all aspects of running a committee, fundraising opportunities, possible events and meetings.

Chantal Diener