

BOARD MEMBER PROFILES

Meet Ruth Firstbrook

Ruth has worked in the intellectual disability services sector since 1970 in a career that has progressed from disability nursing to nurse education, staff training and management. The Ruth was involved with AGSOMD, a very early predecessor to ASID and has regularly attended conferences both nationally and IASSID internationally.

Ruth is now self-employed and provides training to support workers, developmental educators and organisations in best practice support for people with intellectual disability.

Ruth has a particular interest in supporting people with intellectual disability who demonstrate behaviours of concern. She commenced an organisation in the Riverland of South Australia in 1986. The expanded service continues today providing quality support to individuals in their rural region and Ruth remains on the Board.

Ruth has a specific interest in support services and staff training in rural regions and the development of best practice models that serve the individuals and their communities.

Like many people who live in rural areas, Ruth is a member of several community boards ranging from health to hospitality. Ruth is a passionate 'quizzer' and a regular at local quiz nights she enjoys cooking, reading, some gardening and is always interested in learning something new!



Meet Sharon Brandford

Kia ora tatou. I'm one of two NZ Directors on the ASID Board. My roots are in the far south of NZ (Invercargill), with its chill southerly winds, open spaces and warm hearts. I now live happily in Wellington with my partner Paul. We are often tramping. I like sharing my tramping pictures and stories!.

I can be a rowdy person, so the silence of the mountains helps me get anchored again. Currently I volunteer some of my time to a group managing traplines to eradicate rodents that threaten our native birds.

Most of my work involves strengthening services for people with intellectual disability and families supported by non-government providers. I used to work as a clinical psychologist. Now I'm self-employed, I do project work with service providers needing a hand to



respond better to the needs of people.

I have a longstanding regard for elders with intellectual disability, especially those facing re-institutionalisation due to dementia and health concerns. I am interested in how we investigate the deaths of people with intellectual disability in NZ; I think this indicates how much we care about their lives.

With all the transformations of how we support people with learning disabilities and their families, its more important than ever that ASID promotes the value of good practice being informed by solid research and lived experiences.

Meet Paul O’Dea

Hi my name is Paul O’Dea. I have lived on my own for 21 years in a unit in Woolloowin. I have 3 younger brothers and my dad who lives in Brisbane. My mum lives permanently in Spain but comes over every couple of years to see us. I work 3 days a week at an ADE and have been doing that for 18 years. I do volunteer work at Community Living Association as treasurer and have been doing that for 21 years also, I am treasurer for Independent Youth Housing Group which is a not for profit company that is run and managed by people with a disability.

My role at Queenslanders with Disability Network is NDIS on the grid project and that is about talking to hard to reach people that might be eligible but don’t know that they are and to give them information about the NDIS. That finishes at the end of June. I have been connected with QDN or a few years now. People can ring the NDIA to see if they are eligible or not.

People are supporting each other by getting the necessary documents together for example they may need a letter from their doctor to confirm what disability they have or they may need to go for a IQ test as well.

My proudest moment is coming 1st in my bowling league last year. My personal motto is say no to bullying as I have been bullied myself.

What motivates me is that I want to make sure people with disabilities are heard round the country

The government needs to listen to people with a disability more in relation to

- Housing
- How they want to live their own lives
- To help people with disability to be more socially active

