



ASID 2018 QUEENSLAND

Let's shake it up: Human Rights for everyone

We invite everyone to attend the 2018 National Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability Conference to be held at the Gold Coast Convention Centre, 14 – 16 November 2018. The title of the conference is **'Let's Shake It Up: Human Rights for Everyone'**. The title has been chosen by a group of self-advocates who came together for the purpose of talking about the key issues that affect their lives. These issues include bullying and abuse, dual disability, NDIS, and employment. The conference looks to attract a diverse range of people including self-advocates, families, academics, service providers, policy makers. ASID welcomes and encourages this diversity.

Currently the QLD Division is supporting a group of local self-advocates to plan on the involvement of self-advocates in the conference. The Conference will also welcome a range of international speakers (see below) who have expertise across a wide range of issues impacting on people with an intellectual disability.

When thinking about the theme of the conference the self-advocate group identified that in Australasia people with an intellectual disability are still pushed around and this has to end.

Paul O'Dea

Paul O'Dea has been leading change and self-advocating since the mid 1990's with a keen interest in helping others with intellectual disability around important issues like housing, bullying, roles in the governance of organisations and more recently the NDIS. Paul has been part of Community Living Association for twenty years and been involved in various allied groups including Independent Youth Housing Group, shaking things up to ensure the rights of people with disability. He is now Treasurer of both CLA and IYHG, and is also the first person with intellectual disability on the National Board of Australasian Society for Intellectual Disability (ASID). Paul has worked with HELP enterprises for the last 16 years.



2018 Conference Speakers



Ann Fudge Schormans

Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at McMaster University (Ontario, Canada)

■ fschorm@mcmaster.ca

I am not sure I know what led to my involvement with people with intellectual disabilities. I have been the parent of two (wonderful) daughters with intellectual disabilities, and while this has led some to think becoming a parent was the impetus, I met my daughters (both adopted) through my work. Although there was no single moment or event, after obtaining an undergraduate degree, I began looking for work in this area. This was in the mid 1980's and, in Canada, de-institutionalization had taken hold. I accepted a job with an agency that was moving people from large-scale institutions into smaller community-based group homes – exciting but also difficult work as we learned what being institutionalized included. After several years of working in the community living sector, I moved into child welfare/protection, working with children and youth with intellectual disabilities. It was eye-opening (to say the least) to learn that, despite de-institutionalization, so many children and youth with disabilities were growing up in other forms of institutionalized 'care'. Both of these experiences spurred my involvement in emerging (self)advocacy efforts. After completing my Ph.D. and starting work at McMaster University, I became more involved in participatory and collaborative research with people with intellectual disabilities.

Each step has brought its own challenges and highlights, meeting my daughters being the most significant. A recent highlight has been the opportunity to work with a group of adults with intellectual disabilities (members of a research project on living in the city with a disability) to make a documentary. With assistance from an artist facilitator, film director and crew, they determined the important messages they felt non-disabled others should now about what it means to live in the city with a disability, the challenges they face, how they make a life for themselves, and what they believe needs to change. This was a collaboration – everyone involved brought their own skills and knowledge to the making of the film, however, the adults with disabilities were very much in charge and had full editorial control over the final documentary. For similar reasons, working with different groups of self-advocates in two other projects (one on re-imagining parenting possibilities, the second on experiences of homelessness) to create forum theatre scenes that we then show to numerous academic, professional, and community-based audiences has been a highlight. Seeing the multiple ways that audiences are impacted by both the work and their conversations with the self-advocates, has been particularly powerful. It can be challenging to know how one's work is taken up by others, and how it may affect how people live, work, and engage with people with disabilities. I do know that my work is used in post-secondary

programs, to prepare social workers and others who will be working with people with disabilities in different capacities. I (along with others) have been quite active at the university where I work to bring greater attention to disability, access, and rights for disabled students and, while there is still much work to do, change is happening. Students consistently report that the disability course I teach disrupts what they thought they knew about 'disability'. The documentary has been screened at international film festivals and academic conferences; been part of a curated exhibit on accessible cities; adopted as a curriculum material for secondary students in a large Canadian city; and is being used in a number of post-secondary courses. It is also starting to be used in service organizations, to make staff aware of the importance of attending to engagement in one's community as part of person-centred planning.

In my keynote presentation, I will be sharing my thoughts, experiences and learning about the use of the arts when engaging with people with intellectual disabilities in collaborative research. While it has much to offer, one must tread carefully as well. I hope that by pointing to the benefits and tensions of such, as well as thinking through audience responses, we can consider too the implications and questions that get raised for inclusion and collaboration more broadly. I will also be conducting a workshop, with the assistance of people with intellectual disabilities and others who support them. While this workshop will address similar questions and concerns, the interactive nature of forum theatre affords attendees a different way to experience and thus consider the use of the arts in collaborative work with people with intellectual disabilities.