

Oasis Association



Annual Review

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Building — *The highs and lows of 2013/2014*



Oasis Association for intellectual disability has been built over 62 years. Its foundation is based on developing the potential of people with intellectual disability and the building blocks are the values that have been passed down over the years.

A version of The Oxford Dictionary states succinctly that the definition of **building** is one or all of three things: “a structure with a roof and walls; the action of constructing something; or the creation of something over a period of time.” All three of these have been really significant in the period under review.

The creation of something over a period of time

Building on all of what has gone before we continued to see the creation of projects and programmes that meet the needs of both adults and children with intellectual disability. This has been true of our work since the inception of the Association. Oasis has always tried to meet needs as they are identified or as they evolve. The adult service and inclusion of sick bays in housing are the most recent services to be developed over a period of time and finally brought to fruition. *(See adult service and homes)*

The action of constructing

A major undertaking was the extended construction and reconfiguration of an existing house in order to merge two Oasis households into one. Two infrastructures have been merged and now we are enabled to house up to 35 residents under one roof. Although commenced during the 2013/2014 financial year, building was only completed in July 2014. We look forward to reporting in the financial year ahead, when we can show you the completed house, but more especially report on the home life of those who will live in it. Aspects of interest will be the sustainability of the house, including robust finishes, green living and the cross subsidisation of residents; the increase in residency; and meeting the needs of aging residents. *(See homes)*

Other building and major repair work took place on the Claremont property where WBHO and their sub-contractors did extensive pro bono work. *(See workshops)*

A structure with roof and walls

The final month of the period under review was possibly the most devastating in our history.

During the early hours of Sunday 2 March, a fire devastated our Elsie's River Protective Workshop. The fire inspector described it as “an accidental fire” and the supposition is that it was caused by homeless people seeking warmth or by petty thieves. In the space of a few hours the building, together with its contents, was ravaged and five vehicles, essential for daily passenger transport and recycling collections, were smoke damaged and off the road.

The Oasis staff team were faced with a mountain of logistical challenges.

These included rehousing the work stations of 200 workers at other Oasis centres and providing them with commuter transport in the face of their passenger vehicles being out of use. We were acutely aware that this had to be done in the least disruptive way possible to the workers of the Elsie's River workshop, while ensuring that those, whose centres were being inundated, received careful consideration in terms of their being unsettled. The team worked cohesively and unstintingly to meet the challenge.

During an extremely difficult period we drew strength from the fact that the fire happened on a Sunday and that workers were not present to be distressed or harmed by it. The support of individuals, groups, the business sector and the Community Chest of the Western Cape was overwhelming, for which we are beyond grateful. Equally importantly, many of the Elsie's River and Claremont workers have become friends while working alongside each other for the first time, in rather cramped conditions.

Note: The assessment of the full financial loss to Oasis is not yet finalised. Reconstruction started in July and it is envisaged that the workers will be back in their building by end October 2014.



Core services

Day Centres

The 2010 court case victory for the Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability against the Provincial and National Departments of Education, in the matter of the right to education for children with severe and profound intellectual disability bore fruit for many, including Oasis, during the previous year.

As a result of the implementation policies which were drafted in 2012, we had a full year of extra services and assessments from departmental physiotherapists, educational psychologists and occupational therapists who worked alongside the Oasis team. A lot of time was spent assessing the Delft and Ravensmead children between the ages of 6 and 17 according to benchmarks for intellectual and social development. Fifty-seven of the 90 beneficiaries at the Day Centres fell into the relevant age group, so the assessments took a lot of time. Individual plans were developed for each child. These will be closely monitored by the programme implementer who was appointed in March 2014. Individual development programmes include gross and fine motor skills as well as communication and cognitive development.

With this in mind the compulsory three day annual training all Day Centre staff attended in June 2013, focussed on integrating the Department of Education's assessments into goal setting and class programmes. The training schedule included issues like preparing a child for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) schools and learning through play. Other staff training involved the use of fire equipment; fundraising principles and the critical components required for staging successful events; Oasis's leave procedures; and job descriptions. Staff members also attended external

training courses and seminars over the course of the year which included: practical ways of dealing with stress and burnout; sexuality and HIV/Aids; nurturing the carer; understanding adolescents with intellectual disability; social work; and parenting workshops.

As always, developmental programmes were supplemented by other services according to collective needs. These services included: social work; nutritious meals; daily transport; augmentative communication; primary health care checks; the toy library and snoozling room (a sensory room for one-on-one intervention) and physiotherapy. Oasis Association's physiotherapist had a busy year with individual assessments; training caregivers; and working in tandem with the Department of Education's physiotherapists. She was also tasked with arranging seating clinic appointments at provincial hospitals for children in buggies and their parents. This took up a considerable amount of her time.

Several meetings and events took place: four PTA's which were immediately

followed by a Parent Support Group meeting; four committee meetings; and the four successful fundraising events staff elected to hold to raise much needed funds for the Day Centres.

The heart of the Day Centres remains the beneficiaries and any child's or adult's achievement was greeted with joy by staff members. During the year, many of the children progressed. Some learnt to sit without support, or learnt to use a spoon so were able to eat unaided, became potty trained or completed puzzles without assistance. But it wasn't only the achievements that were celebrated during the course of the year. Oasis also celebrated the generosity that the community bestowed on the centres whether in the form of donations or assistance! And the Day Centres were blessed last year by so many people who willingly donated items or their time to improve the lives of the vulnerable people in Oasis's care. Oasis Association is grateful to all; especially the Department of Social Development which funded the programme implementers' and part of the caregivers' posts, as well as transport costs.



Adult Service

The Oasis beneficiaries who can't cope with a full day's productive work, depending on their abilities, have always been accommodated at either the two Day Centres or two Protective Workshops. After much thought and debate, Oasis Association decided to apply for funding to start an adult activity group for 60 people from our Northern Suburbs centres. The rationale for this decision was twofold. Firstly, the Department of Health only subsidises children under the age of 18, while some individual's needs remain the same, regardless of chronological age. Secondly, moving 60 people from the Day Centres and Elsie's River Protective Workshop into a service of their own, frees 60 places for people on the waiting list for these centres.

The Department of Social Development agreed to fund the Adult Service and a lot of planning went into setting it up, with staffing, transport needs and venues taking precedence.

The first group of nine adults at the Day Centre commenced their group and nine children were admitted from the waiting list into the Day Centre proper. A lot of work has gone into assessing candidates from the waiting list for spaces that will be created in the workshop and as soon as the building is re-instated the adult group to be accommodated at the workshop will be in full swing.

Homes

After years of working towards consolidating two Southern Suburbs group homes to provide a better level of service for residents, last year we started putting into action long laid ideas to turn the dream into a reality. As the existing Chukker Road house would be converted into a construction site, the first task was to turn the Claremont Protective Workshop canteen into a dormitory with bathroom facilities to accommodate some of the Chukker Road residents. Finally in August the Chukker Road residents moved to Claremont together with their house parent.

In September the serious matter of renovating and enlarging the Chukker Road house started. If it were not for the bequest we had received in 2010, which paid for all of it, none of this would have been possible. We are deeply grateful for this gift which allowed us to provide extra beds for wait-listed applicants, respite care facilities and sick bays for aging and unwell residents who require special attention.

The Oasis team and Board of Management recognise that housing is one of the most fundamental rights and needs of our beneficiaries and in keeping with this, the decision was taken to apply a fair percentage of the bequest to this end. The need for housing is absolutely vital as a number of our intellectually disabled workers have no family support or their family homes have become exploitative and abusive. In some cases, sadly, there are no families at all. Other admissions to Oasis Houses are made when parents are aging and unwell or when parents are laying plans for their child's future when they will no longer be able to provide the necessary care.

The house teams, services manager and social workers had to work hard to keep things as normal as possible to create a stable environment for existing Claremont residents as well as Chukker Road residents now housed on the Claremont property. The team was successful as life continued as before with all the usual day-to-day routine and outings.



The sub-contracted registered nursing sister continued to make her quarterly health checks of residents' at all three houses and was backed by a relief house parent, who due to the medical needs of an aging resident population accompanies residents to up to twenty appointments a month, excluding pharmaceutical needs. This aspect of residential care has become more and more time consuming.

Ruyterwacht houses remained fully subscribed during the period under review and continued to enjoy the support of a small local community. The house is ideally placed in proximity to the Elsie's River workshop as well as various neighbourhoods where residents visit their friends and family.



Social work

Social work is an essential service at Oasis. While we all busy ourselves with operational activity, they keep their fingers on the pulse regarding the welfare of all, under the able leadership of the services manager.

The three Oasis social workers were kept busy throughout the year with casework, group work, providing training for beneficiaries and staff as well as attending training workshops.

The bulk of the work was individual casework with the work load spanning up to 30 cases for each social worker per month excluding repeat sessions. Casework included relationship counselling regarding individual families, romantic relationships, friendships, group home living and working with colleagues. It involved practical matters such as conflict resolution and management of behaviours.

Unlike the social workers at the two Protective Workshops who deal directly with adult beneficiaries, the Day Centres' social worker dealt predominantly with parents given the beneficiaries ages and the delay in cognitive development. She was also called upon frequently to give professional advice to other social workers not familiar with intellectual disability.

The social workers also rendered support and advice to the beneficiaries' families. Family counselling involved: problem solving; conflict resolution; relationship issues; as well as arranging home visits and family re-unification for some living in our group homes who needed guidance and support to work through their feelings of rejection and loss of family contact.

The social workers' statistics for the previous financial year bear testament to the vital role they play in making Oasis a

stable environment for all intellectually disabled beneficiaries. Part of the role of ensuring this sort of environment is their work with Oasis staff members. They provided supportive counselling, assisted with recognising burnout and dealt with the sorts of individual and family issues which would be found in any staff team of a hundred people.

It is important that our social workers stay up to date in their knowledge and are given the opportunity to recharge their own batteries. They made time in the year for this, ranging from training in relevant Acts; to life skills; intellectual disability and challenging behaviour; physical health in people with intellectual disability; techniques and methods for teaching the visually impaired; psychiatric illness; the mental health of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN); and meeting the mental health needs of adolescents with neuro-developmental disorders.

Income generating projects



Workshops

The two Protective Workshops are well established and supported by many different people all of whom made a big difference to the 347 intellectually disabled adult workers during the course of the year. The majority of workers were bussed in and out of the centres on a daily basis to provide them with the opportunity of accessing meaningful work and supplementing their disability grants.

Like all Oasis services, the workshops focus on the Oasis Association mission statement which is "to enable people with intellectual disabilities to realise their fullest potential and become as independent and productive as possible within the community". Therefore the jobs created by the

workshops are in keeping with this. As always work was not the sole focus of the year's activity. The workers enjoyed several outings including visits to the Two Oceans Aquarium, kindly sponsored by a donor, a farm yard where they had the chance to swim and interact with the animals, One to One – an enjoyable day in August when 3 200 intellectually disabled adults are paired with volunteers for a day of social fun at the Good Hope Centre, a fundraising walk on the International Day for Persons with Disability and the annual Christmas party which is a highlight of the year. This was a bumper year as they enjoyed a feast and gifts on the day. Those in need received a food parcel made up from donations that hundreds of people contributed.

One of the delights of the year was the support we received on Mandela Day when senior members of the police, ranging from captains to brigadiers, donned their working clothes to paint and tile the Elsie's River Workshop's kitchen. Whilst they spent hours fixing the kitchen, multiple groups of students from the University of the Western Cape spent the day painting and decorating the canteen. The Claremont Protective Workshop also underwent alterations when WBHO brought a host of sub-contractors to the property to build, repair and paint. They spent months at the workshop doing wonderful work which was all pro bono.

During this time, one of our new donors organised and financed a "teacher" three times a week for art, dance and exercise classes at Oasis. Her arrival was always the signal for mass excitement especially when she started working on a concert to showcase the Claremont workers' talents to family members and friends.

But then reality hit when the Elsie's River Protective Workshop was gutted by fire in the early hours of Sunday, 2 March 2014. This robbed two hundred workers of their workplace and work stations and for months the vehicles in daily use at the workshops, were off the road for repair and reinstatement. We are justifiably proud of the fact that Oasis management sprang into action while the Elsie's River building was still smouldering and developed strategies to ensure continuity of service for all our workers. But we are especially proud of the resilience of the men and women of the Oasis Protective Workshops, who with minimal fuss adapted and kept working!

Recycling

The three recycling depots received a steady flow of recyclable "waste" over the 2013/2014 year. But even more importantly, they provided work for 374 intellectually disabled adults as every person at the workshops spends part, if not all of the day, helping with recycling tasks.

The projects are also not only the source of work and financial income they are also the source of "gently used" goods sold in the Oasis retail shops. Collectively the depots processed up to 200 tons of materials per month and collected from an average of 890 businesses on a weekly basis. More than 5 000 households also visited Oasis monthly to drop off their recyclable waste.

During the 2013/2014 financial year the recycling project received masses of support from many quarters for which we are extremely grateful. Organisations like MPact, Petco, Postwink and the Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa assisted in a variety of ways with donations of a compactor for baling material, bags and bins. Oasis Association has always



been able to provide the services we do for a vulnerable group of people because of the generous community support we receive. This was especially true last year.

Not only did we benefit from the personal time many volunteers willingly gave the recycling project, but individuals and businesses were incredibly supportive of the food appeal drive which is launched in October each year to ensure that the needy at Oasis receive a substantial food parcel when the workshops close for a four week break at the end of the year. We say thank you to one and all for the support we received over the course of a challenging year.

Bakery and Tea Garden

Good teams win! This is definitely the case with our bakery supervisor, her assistant and their team of intellectually disabled bakers. They have a pronounced sense of commitment and professionalism which is hard to match. Interestingly enough, the assistant baker started out at Oasis as a truck assistant but when Oasis discovered that he had worked in a restaurant kitchen prior to coming to Oasis, he was quickly invited to apply for the vacant bakery post. Under their supervisory leadership, the bakery took off and added a whole new range of baked confectionary to the already good repertoire ranging from iced cupcakes, lamington squares, savoury muffins, quiches to koeksusters. Not only have they increased their product lines but also their output. But still the products sell out daily as people drive from far to get their daily bread or fix. The tea garden has also performed remarkably well during the period under review and in summer it is often difficult to find an empty seat under the trees as people descend for their favourite meal.



Books & Bric-a-Brac

Our two shops specialise in quality used books, goods, clothes and collectibles, all at bargain prices. These items are generously donated by members of the public in support of holistic services to 450+ people with intellectual disability.

Donations of good quality books and goods may be dropped off at Oasis Recycling, corner of Lee and Imam Haron Roads (formerly Lansdowne Road), Claremont or at the Pinelands shop, Mutual Park, Jan Smuts Drive.

Our grateful thanks to all our supporters who donate stock and/or shop at Oasis Books & Bric-a-Brac!



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