

# THE HORSE'S MOUTH

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P O Box 413, TE AWAMUTU, New Zealand, Ph: (07) 871 6410, Fax (07) 871 6703 Website: [www.gracelands.org.nz](http://www.gracelands.org.nz)

## FROM OUR CEO - DISABLED PEOPLE STILL EXCLUDED FROM WORK

In October I had the opportunity to attend the Workability International Annual Conference in Stockholm, Sweden. It was also the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary since Workability International (WI) commenced in Sweden.

I also spent three weeks in London during this time confronting what is one of the most access unfriendly places I have ever come across. (people in wheelchairs and people pushing prams not to mention the aging, have the same needs.

It gave me the opportunity to read up on what is happening in the United Kingdom. Like the move here in New Zealand the UK Government has created a commission of carers (not paid staff) and this appears to fit with the move for home based support. The UK disability rights commissioner has long been a fierce advocate for independent living for people with intellectual disabilities, shaped by her first hand experience of raising her son now 43. He lives independently **supported by day care services and key workers**. You get the impression that under such models as supported living that day services becomes more important.

Vocational training again is highlighted especially for well qualified disabled people who to this day struggle to get career enhancing jobs. A key opportunity has been found in Britain with public / social housing companies. Mentoring programmes are being used to support people going into new jobs. These are areas we in New Zealand have not picked up on.

My shopping was restricted to Ikea in London – a major home supplies shop. (I have discovered that such stores offer a greater range of handyman items than we have here. It is not unknown for me to bring home packets of hooks and screws and shelving brackets.) Ikea is of interest for several reasons firstly the organization 'Samhall' which hosted the Workability International conference used to operate 60 factories for Ikea but now only operate two. The rest of the work has been taken to other countries not only Asia but Eastern Europe.

Samhall is a government owned organization that covers the whole country and works with some 2200 people and has a turnover of US\$1 billion.

The whole of Europe has a buoyant economy (Sweden now has a right of centre Government for the first time in many years and has just reduced benefits which are high compared to here in NZ) but still disabled people find it difficult to get jobs in the mainstream.

The World Bank representative, Charlotte Maclaine spoke at the WI Annual Conference said that workforce participation is the no 1 issue generally. This is a global trend and despite major innovations with supported employment and other employment models globally there are no more disabled people employed than there were 10 years ago. Even here in NZ the Mental Health Commission report the same situation. I feel that this is a real wake up call for all of our organizations and we need to look at how we are operating and come up with ways to achieve real successes. Some countries and member organizations see this is a justification to preserve subsidies for sheltered workshops.

There are issues that need to be addressed which include equitable inclusion in the general labour force beyond putting the legislation in place. Only in the last month I have been involved in supporting a person who has been excluded from a teachers training college (despite impeccable credentials) because of a visual impairment. Transport continues to be a major impediment in New Zealand beyond the larger cities. A major survey was completed a couple of years ago but there has been no follow up to address this issue. Access to timely vocational training and a preparedness by employers to offer appropriate accommodations. Those of us who are involved in supporting disabled people into employment need to lift our performance both professionally and innovatively".

*Robyn Klos*

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## ‘STAYING RELEVANT’

The environment that we operate in keeps changing and we as an organization need to continue to change as well. There is no chance that we can afford to get comfortable with what we are doing but need to constantly look to make things better including ourselves. Over the next few months Gracelands are undertaking changes to not only ‘stay relevant’ but to provide enhancing opportunities not only for staff but for the clients we work with.

### Client Management

Gracelands is strengthening this area of our organisation. Conny Scholten has been contracted to oversee all individual client plans and programmes and ensure appropriate funding is in place. Conny will be based in Cambridge and will work three days a week. She will work closely with Pam Maniopoto our Client Co-ordinator who facilitates all referrals except for ACC clients.

### Executive Leader Day Services

We are pleased to welcome Jeanette Horan to Gracelands who has taken up this role. She will be responsible for all MOH funded day services with a special interest in the organisation’s marketing and the strategic development of Insight Learning Academy. Jeanette comes to us from a senior role with Te Wananga O Aotearoa.

**Leadership roles** in the larger programmes are to be enhanced with the appointment of programme co-ordinators who will take the senior role and the current “seniors” will share the supervision of staff and taking responsibility for some key tasks.

### Portfolios

There are a number of organizational activities which require more attention that is currently available. It is our intention to develop seven portfolios to which current staff will be invited to take responsibility for. 20 hours a month will be allocated to these areas of responsibility and relief staff will be brought in to relieve these staff. Along with the current Health & Safety portfolio the other portfolios will include:

Supervision process; “Active Support” Curriculum Framework; Risk Management, Creativity, Total Quality Management and Behavior Management

## STRATEGIES THAT WORK! – From a global perspective

Last month Gracelands facilitated a visit to New Zealand on behalf of the national umbrella Group VASS of Dr Susan Daniels, a former deputy commissioner for Disability and Income security programmes for the USA administration who initiated the country’s “ticket to work and work incentive improvement act”. A disabled woman herself Daniels has a reputation as a commanding speaker able to deliver a serious message in a simple and memorable way. She undertook a number of speaking engagements from Dunedin to Hamilton addressing the issue of the under employment of a significant section of our adult population. Her final speaking engagements ended in Hamilton with a seminar and Gracelands Public Annual Forum. Dr Daniels gave some very poignant and thought provoking messages which the audiences were able to grasp and remember. These evidence based strategies included:

- “Work works” especially for students while still in secondary education to gain jobs afterwards.
- Support to stay at work given more emphasis
- Work is therapy
- Disabled people with computer skills are 3 times more likely to get jobs.
- Business to Business Approach- It is time for providers to step back and let the business community lead the way

### Service Delivery Outcomes 2006 - 07

- A total of 1721 received a service from Gracelands in the last 12 months, an increase of 60% over the previous year.
- Hamilton is the largest area for service provision at 35%, Te Awamutu next with 19%. Other client groups evenly distributed across the greater Waikato and King Country
- 87% all Gracelands clientele experienced a positive employment outcome.
- There were 934 referrals to Rehabilitation Services “Work Outcomes” an increase of 65% on the previous year.
- Clients spent 83,951 hours engaged in community activities compared to 72,265 in the previous year.
- Gracelands clients have provided 2138 of voluntary hours to local charities such as meals on wheels, Cancer Society, Blind Foundation, Kidney Kids foundation, Save the children Fund, Vege Co-op, SPCA, HCC Gardens.
- The Mental Health Worx employment programme supported 55 clients into paid work.
- Gracelands continues to add value to the Disability Industry by:
  - Contributing to the development of Hamilton City Council Disability Strategy.
  - Participating in the Waikato Disability Expo
  - Representation on three key industry bodies both nationally and internationally
  - Kaumatua support for VASS (Federation of Vocational & Support Services Inc).
  - Providing internal and external disability training through Insight Learning Academy.
- Gracelands vehicles travelled 535,190 Kilometers over the last 12 months.
- The Kauri Krew collected and recycled 405 Tonnes of paper and cardboard from the Waikato Hospital.