

## **Vela Microboards Australia – An Energetic Start has been Made**

Many people have attended the workshops, seminars and videoconferences with Linda Perry, Executive Director of the Vela Microboard Association of British Columbia, held over the past year that described the approach and shared the outcomes of Microboards.

A "microboard" describes a small group of people who know and care about a person with a disability who join together to eventually create a miniature not-for-profit organisation.

Those who were willing to be involved in putting the approach into action in WA have been meeting to determine a way forward. There was an opportunity in March 2007 for funding from the Disability Services Commission to assist the development of Microboards in WA. Perth Home Care Services made an application to take on the role of sponsoring organisation to work with the Steering Committee over a two year period to develop the concept and implement Microboards. This funding is now available.

One of the first steps was to invite Linda Perry back to WA where she joined 18 members of the core interest group at a retreat at Hillarys Boat Harbour at the end of July. Over the two days a lot of valuable work was done to develop the underlying values, framework and a work plan.

The Steering Committee has now held their first meeting. The agreed name for the new venture is Vela Microboards Australia. Marc Lema will be the Chairperson for the first six month period. There will be three Working Groups

- Investment in Core Values/ Beliefs
- Individual Microboards
- Community Development

and initial membership has been determined. These groups will report to the Steering Committee. There are a number of families involved who are very keen to move forward to develop an individual Microboard for their family member.

There are also a growing number of people who are interested in the concept and are keen to know more and be informed of developments. This group of **Microboard Allies** will receive written updates and there will be opportunities to become involved along the way. If you would like to add your name to this list please contact Sarah Nickson at Perth Home Care Services (9204 7800), [sarahn@phcs.org.au](mailto:sarahn@phcs.org.au) ).

Work is underway to recruit a Project Officer who will assist the Steering Committee and the Working groups to establish the support capacity and individual Microboards. This part time position will be advertised through newsletters, email and personal networks. A consultant will also be engaged to translate the technical aspects of Microboards from the British Columbia context to the WA environment.

In September the Steering Committee, including two members participating by video conference from Albany, will determine their Strategic Plan. This will be facilitated by Heather Simmons, who is well known for training in the Person Centred Approach, and Marita Walker, Chief Executive of Perth Home Care Services.

There is lots of excitement about the concept and the achievements so far to enable Microboards to be a reality in Western Australia. For further information contact Marita Walker ([maritaw@phcs.org.au](mailto:maritaw@phcs.org.au)) or Marc Lema ([Marc.Lema@dsc.wa.gov.au](mailto:Marc.Lema@dsc.wa.gov.au)).