



# History of EBL



Like many of the Not for Profit services operating in the disability sector in South Australia today, EBL Disability Services began as the result of people, usually those having personal contact with friends or family with disability, wanting to secure a better life for the disabled.

On 18th August 1981, during the International Year of the Disabled Person, 64 people attended a meeting at the Salisbury Council to discuss the formation of a steering committee to develop a respite centre for children with intellectual disability to be based somewhere in Salisbury. The organiser of that meeting was a special education teacher named Margaret Walshe. Another of those present was Elizabeth Bowey, the wife of the then Mayor of Salisbury.

The proposal was unanimously agreed upon.

On 23rd September 1981, Marg Walshe, and about 10 others from that original group of 64 held their first meeting. The inaugural Chairman was Mr Paul Nikkerud. Also in attendance were other interested parties including representatives from the Housing Trust and the Salisbury Council.

They decided upon the name of Elizabeth Bowey Lodge Inc. Its inaugural constitution stated that its aim was “to provide community based respite for children and young adults with an intellectual disability thereby providing family support”.

Half of a duplex property owned by the Housing Trust in Milford Road, Salisbury North was made available. Elizabeth Bowey Lodge came into being. That first property could offer respite to 5 children.

While initially, the other half was occupied by a woman who had a disabled child, within a short time she was offered other premises by the Housing Trust, so that EBL could occupy the whole property – but that woman’s child was one of EBL’s first respite clients.

The entire premises, after some alteration and improvements, could offer respite for a total of 10 children.

To make this all happen, the state government provided a one-off grant of \$25,000. The Salisbury Council, who were very supportive, provided funds to pay the first 3 years’ rent. They also provided a further grant to allow for kitchen

renovations, and procurement of play equipment for the yard.

Many community organisations gave tremendous support, both financially and in the provision of goods and services – Apex, Kiro, Zonta, The Soroptomists Club, the Pooraka Lionesses, Beta Kappa, Weight Watchers, students of the Salisbury High School, the local church – even the local cake shop.

The demand for respite services was enormous, and by 1982 EBL was already responsible for caring for some children with intellectual disability on a semi-permanent basis.

In 1982, the IDSC made Colton Cottage available to EBL, and also provided funding for its operation, so more respite places could be offered. Thereafter IDSC worked informally and co-operatively with EBL to ensure that both organisations were providing necessary services to those with intellectual disability in the northern region, and IDSC offered advice on a consultancy basis where required.

But funding for EBL’s ex-Housing Trust premises was not secure. Application to the Federal Government was made, and although initially not successful, after 8 months of submissions and lobbying, in late 1982 South Australian Senator Baden Teague successfully obtained the consent of the then Federal Minister of Social Security, Fred Chaney, for some permanent funding, albeit only fully funded for 12 months and thereafter reducing to a base of 50% within a further 2 years.

EBL was operating with only part-time paid administrative and book-keeping staff. There was a





huge reliance on its Board and other people volunteering their time to help run the organisation.

At the Annual General Meeting in 1983, an amendment to EBL's Constitution was made to reflect that its aim would now be "to provide temporary and permanent care to handicapped children...", reflecting the level of demand in the northern region.

Whilst EBL was by now receiving some permanent funding, it was not sufficient to meet all of its costs, and by the end of 1986 they had a shortfall of \$14,000. There was frantic fundraising to try and cover the gap. But without some last-minute additional funding, and the substantial donation of \$6,000 from the American company, Levi Strauss, things would have been perilous indeed.

By 1988, EBL had added a rumpus room at the Milford Road property.

The demand for respite remained stronger than ever. Records of this period show that the service was often fully booked over weekends, and particularly long weekends.

Around this time, it was discovered by the State Government and the local Council that this was not a licensed service, and the Milford Road premises were non-

compliant with various fire and health regulations. They wanted to shut it down. But there was nowhere else for these children and their families to go for support.

So, finally, with the help of a local councilor, the powers that be agreed that for the time being, EBL could continue with their invaluable work, with IDSC offering a more hands-on management oversight by way of a full-time paid manager to run EBL.

In early 1989, through the auspices of the S.A. Housing Trust, a property at Ventura Street, Parafield Gardens was purchased for \$100,000 for use as a 4-bed respite centre.

It needed a fire sprinkler system, new water mains to the premises, fencing, and paving. And local residents were initially a bit worried about the impact a respite centre for children with intellectual disability would have on the neighbourhood, but in April 1989 the Ventura Street house commenced accepting clients aged between 7 and 16 years.

Later that year a transportable building was added to the site as offices for the manager, and a meeting/lunchroom for staff. The Milford Road premises were vacated.

The concerns of the locals were obviously resolved, because the Ventura Street facility still offers respite today, and the transportable building is now a sensory room, with climbing walls for the clients.

In 1991/92 EBL's funding was again stretched to breaking point, in large part due to the new Interim Disability Services Award which introduced new pay rates for workers in this sector. This had a huge impact on EBL's bottom line, and extra funding was provided by IDSC and the then DCS&H.

In the late 1980's EBL also introduced a Day Options program. But the organisation was still delivering services to clients from primarily the northern suburbs.

In the early 1990's, the Yarnbrook Terrace, Davoren Park property was acquired from the Housing Trust, allowing for more respite and other services to clients (including adult clients).

In 1994 EBL was part of a wide-ranging state-wide review of all services in the disability sector. Recommendations resulting from that review were that EBL should expand its respite places from 8 to 12, establish separate units for children and adults, including continuing to offer a bed for emergency crisis clients in both units, but cease to offer a Day Options program.

Accordingly, various alterations, both structural and some of a more minor nature were made to the Davoren Park property so that children under 16 were in a physically separate area from older clients.

EBL was now providing services to some clients with very complex intellectual and mental health issues, and clients were now from a much wider geographical area than just the northern suburbs.

Over the next few years, the financial situation was improved and services were expanded into other geographical locations. And it resumed offering a Day Options program.

The offices were moved to Parafield Gardens in 2004 (still in a transportable building).

In 2005, the EBL Foundation was established to ensure the long-term sustainability of services offered by the organisation that started out as Elizabeth Bowey Lodge.

In 2010, the Foundation purchased its first home in Munno Para, for EBL to provide emergency respite for 4 adult residents. After lobbying the state government in 2011 the home was eventually approved for permanent group home accommodation in 2012.

In 2016, the Foundation purchased the Davoren Park premises from the Housing Trust.

Until about 2012, EBL 's core business was really planned and emergency respite services for those with intellectual disability.

Early in 2012 EBL won the contract to manage two of the first South Australian purpose build transitional homes located in Prospect and Paralowie designed specifically for people with complex support needs.

In the second half of 2012 it won the tender for a set of 6 homes known as Tregenza. They provide a variety of supported accommodation, including two which are gender specific homes

for vulnerable young women with intellectual disability and Autism (one of the first of their kind in the Northern Suburbs).

In 2013, it won the contract to provide supported accommodation for 4 young women in a new Julia Farr purpose built duplex home in Campbelltown.

In 2014, it won the contract to provide services to a unique supported residential facility for 12 young adults with intellectual disability at Harrow House, in the eastern suburbs.

In 2016, EBL won the tender for two purpose built high dependency homes in Wallaroo and established its Day Options service in Davoren Park.

In 2017, it won the contract to provide permanent accommodation in 4 cluster homes at Blair Athol which won a social housing award in 2018.

In 2018, a Day Options program commenced at the Harrow House site.

To cope with the expansion of services, since 2012 the

administration side of things also had to grow - the office has moved 4 times from its original site in a portable at Parafield, to a duplex home in Elizabeth, then from a small office at Mawson Lakes into the lovely offices we currently occupy.

EBL has gone from offering respite for 5 children in one small house in Salisbury North in late 1981, to providing regular respite, emergency respite, permanent accommodation, day options and other supports, in a variety of locations, to over 3,000 individuals living with intellectual disability, and their families.

While we will always remember that Elizabeth Bowey Lodge was where we started, we are now a much bigger organisation and offer many more services than simply respite. Now we are known as EBL Disability Services, and the initials, while originally coming from that 1985 Lady Mayoress, now stand for Enable Better Lifestyles. Because that's what we're about.

