

Games call has Cassy beaming

COURTNEY CRANE

GEELONG born gymnast Cassy Geffke, pictured, will mark her 25th year in the sport with her fourth Special Olympics World Games berth.

The Corio 33-year-old, coached by Kerry Woods at Aerosport All Stars, in Grovedale, is one of only three gymnasts chosen to represent Australia at the games, in Los Angeles in July.

Cassy, who has Down syndrome, started gymnastics at age seven and entered her first Special Olympics at 8. She has competed in all regional, state and national games since.

Her achievements include five gold medals and overall first at the 1999 Special Olympics World Games in North Carolina, second placing at the 2007 World Games in China and second at the 2011 event in Greece.

Despite all her success, Cassy says the most important thing has always been having fun.

"I love my gymnastics," she said. "I'm so excited and happy and thrilled to be going to America and I'm really proud of myself."

Cassy trains twice a week and is constantly busy. She works at Woolworths twice a week, volunteers in the canteen at Belmont High School, works at the Geelong Botanic Gardens teahouse and plays table tennis.

Mum Diane confessed she and Cassy's dad often got "a bit teary" watching their daughter compete on the world stage.

"We're very proud and we get quite emotional at big events seeing her do so well," she said.

"We thought perhaps she wouldn't do a lot in her life and it gives us immense pleasure to see her happy, doing the things she loves and contributing to the community."



Picture: GLENN FERGUSON

Ombudsman's priority Key is to protect disabled

DANNY LANNEN

VICTORIAN Ombudsman Deborah Glass hopes learning from her inquiry into the handling of abuse allegations in the disability sector will help build safeguards into the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Ms Glass told people with disability, family members and carers during Geelong's Having A Say disability conference that shaping the right and a strong framework for oversight of abuse reporting would be critical for the groundbreaking scheme.

Many Australian states, in future to be covered by the one scheme, now have different oversight arrangements.

Speaking after the conference, Ms Glass said many concerns remained over the effectiveness of existing arrangements, even in Victoria which has a disability services commissioner, Department of Human Services and the Office of the Public Advocate.

"It does lead to some big questions about what will happen when the arrangements move away from the states and are entirely federal. What will the safeguards then be?" Ms Glass said.

The Ombudsman launched an inquiry in December into the handling of reporting and investigation of allegations of abuse of people with disability.

"Part of what I am looking at in this investigation is oversight arrangements because if there are gaps in oversight we don't want that replicated in the national system," Ms Glass

said yesterday. "What I want to do with this is not only come up with the pattern of this is how oversight works in disability abuse reporting but also to say this is what's effective and here are some aspects that aren't which need to be fixed."

"The purpose of this would be to inform the NDIS."

A Department of Social Services spokesperson said yesterday considerable thought and effort had gone into planning for a national approach to safety and quality assurance for when the NDIS rolled out nationally.

"This work is being progressed by government officials, led at the commonwealth level and reporting to the COAG Disability Reform Council," the spokesperson said.

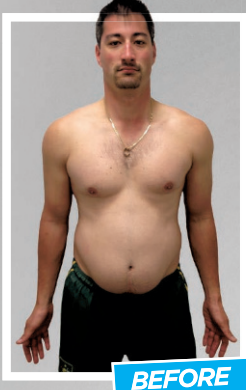
"There will be a consultation process and opportunity for interested parties to provide comment and the National Disability Insurance Agency will be working to ensure people are aware of these opportunities and can have their say."

Ms Glass outlined her investigation process for Having A Say conference delegates and emphasised she would be taking submissions until February 15.

She said people who had reported abuses should feel safe speaking up about their experiences and people with disability, family members or carers could call the National Disability Abuse and Neglect hotline on 1800 880 052.

Read more on the Having A Say conference in Weekend Extra, P33, 38-39

#excusefree2015



BEFORE



Daniel Ricardo
Goodlife Member and
12 Week Challenge Winner

TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE IN 2015

"My wife and I have 3 kids under 5 and I work full time. I understand what it is to be time poor, but it's just as important to make time for yourself. Did you know that 45 minutes of exercise is less than 4% of your day? It's your health and your choice. No excuses."

Challenge Starts Feb 14

Register Now!

Visit goodlife.com.au

Or visit your local Goodlife club

Geelong
5249 8444

