

This large format photobook documents the circumstances and social interactions of a group of families living with disabilities.

It was produced as part of the FRANS Families Project to raise awareness of disabilities and much needed funds from its sale by FRANS.

The introduction and one of the twelve sections of the photobook are shown in the following pages of this flipbook.

FRANS *FAMILIES*

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FAMILIES



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Lorraine MacLarty is fascinated with people and has a genuine desire to understand them deeply. She is inspired to make positive images of socially disadvantaged people from sectors of society that are often discriminated against or ignored. Her aim is to improve community perceptions by presenting difficult issues with sensitivity, dignity and respect using the genres of portraiture and social concern documentary.

Little attention has been paid to photographing people with disabilities. In the early 1970s Diane Arbus's images of people with intellectual disabilities were made at a time when institutions were closing and implementing programs to return patients to the community. Disability became more visible in society. Attitudes to people with disabilities have slowly improved since then. They are now represented as part of society.

This book documents the circumstances and social interactions of a group of families living with disabilities. Lorraine wishes to encourage changes to societal norms by showing the achievements and challenges faced by the people in her photographs.

This publication, a companion book to FRANS Burwood Coffee Club, combines her love of photography and her desire to bring positive community attention to the disability sector. Lorraine is a past director of the FRANS Board, serving as its Treasurer for three years.

Lorraine MacLarty can be contacted [here](#).

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Some thoughts, once sown, grow into something quite beautiful and unimaginable. This project was one such thought. It started from my desire to photograph a family caring for a child with disabilities as an act of generosity; but it evolved to so much more.

The aim of this project was to record the circumstances and social interactions over a number of months, of a group of FRANS families living with disabilities, using documentary photography as the medium and resulting in a photobook and exhibition of images from the project.

FRANS extended an invitation to all families who access services to participate in the project. Each of the twelve families who eventually came to the project was asked to allow me into their daily lives, with the understanding that they would continue their normal routine and that I would be as unobtrusive as possible.

The diversity amongst those families was broad, across all ages and care needs, as well as disparate socio-economic circumstances and family support structures. From childhood to middle age and from low support needs, where care is given to enable independent living, to high needs, where assistance is required for even the most basic tasks most ordinary people take for granted.

The images show achievements and challenges. They capture people engaging in physical activities, close friendships, studying and employment; birthday celebrations, family relationships and family rituals are recorded. Most images were made in the documentary genre without being posed or the environment manipulated; however, each participant was also photographed for a portrait, which was often posed.

One family's documentation shows the daily routine of caring for a person with complex needs, from early morning to mid-afternoon, to highlight the constant demand placed on families in such situations. In contrast are the remarkable achievements of those who lead full and active lives.

Living with disabilities is different for every person and their family. The text accompanying the photo essays reflects on issues raised during interviews with the participants and their parents. This is their story. It shines a light on their journey and on important achievements or concerns that they wish to share with others.

I express my deepest appreciation to each family who allowed me into their lives. It was often a joyous and uplifting experience; at times emotional and heart wrenching, as families provide care, love and dignity to their children who depend on them beyond what is typically the case. My aim was to embark on a simple act of generosity, but the open-heartedness of the people in this project was overwhelming. I thank each person for their acceptance and friendship. This project has been demanding but far more rewarding than I could have imagined.

Special appreciation goes to FRANS and its CEO, Jerry McNamara, who fully embraced the concept and supported this project enthusiastically. Many people have quietly assisted in bringing this project to print. I thank you all but my deepest gratitude goes to Peter Schneider, FRANS Executive Manager, Marketing and Fundraising, whose contribution polished the final copy.

I encourage you to purchase this photobook to support FRANS. All proceeds go directly to FRANS to provide support to people living with disabilities. I also encourage you to share your copy with friends and family who may have limited or no contact with people living with disabilities. In this way, the perception they have of people with disabilities will be improved with each small change in individual attitudes. I could not ask for more.

Lorraine MacLarty

LUKE | Born to Shop

Luke is very enthusiastic about his exercise program at the local gym, where personal trainer, James, and gym owner, Scott, have guided his exercise regime for more than 2 years. The cross trainer is his favourite machine and he has made good progress building up his strength after a knee injury and time out with rehabilitation. Luke says “working with James is good because he listens to you”. James is also very friendly, encourages Luke, helping him along with his exercise regime, gives advice about his diet for weight maintenance and makes him smile. James has a brother with a disability so he really understands the challenges faced by Luke. Midnight snacks, for example, can be a problem for anybody, not just those with a disability. Some families lock the kitchen cupboards, but Luke suggested the approach taken by his family friends to prevent their father’s midnight snack habit—“when you open the pantry there is a note to Dad . . . ‘No fatty snacks. Go to bed. Go straight to bed’”.

Food is important to Luke who enjoys cooking. He plans menus most days by discussing with his mother, Rosemary, what they will prepare for dinner and what shopping needs to be done before preparations begin. He always helps with preparing and cooking the evening meal, but he can also prepare his own without any help. Carrots and sweet potato are his favourite vegetables, finding their way into most meals. Recently, Luke worked on a project with one of his support workers to produce a cookbook of his favourite recipes. Chicken risotto is high on his list. Cooking classes at FRANS help boost his confidence and give Luke practice with new recipes. He also has more chance to be fully involved, as Rosemary admits to often being in a hurry or taking over—as so many mothers tend to do. Linked to his love of cooking are the gardening club and the garden he maintains with the help of a couple of FRANS support workers, Ella and Clayton. Harvesting corn for Christmas was a highlight; however, he was not too keen on the cherry tomatoes.

The local shops are within walking distance of home, and Luke is an experienced and welcomed shopper at the fruit and vegetable market and the local butcher. When the time comes for him to live more independently, his parents are confident that he will be in a good position to manage on a day to day basis with his menu planning, shopping and food preparation skills. He is confident using an iPad and calculator, and manages his emails independently. Rosemary realises that Luke needs further training if he is to ultimately live independently to better manage his finances and budgeting.

Being part of this project has made Luke feel special, but it has also made Rosemary and John, Luke’s father, think about what they have actually achieved and what still lies ahead of them. Despite having achieved great independence, the big issue for Luke is loneliness. Even with support workers calling in regularly, there would be large tracts of time during which Luke would be alone. His parents are very conscious of keeping him in his local environment and have worked hard to develop contacts in their neighbourhood. As with many people with disabilities who are well known in their local area, Luke can walk down the main street of his suburb, stopping to chat to people he knows, like shopkeepers and those at the gym. Having such personal contacts in the local community is important for someone who might someday be living by themselves.

For Rosemary, the prospect of relocating to an area where a residential placement might be available is a frightening thought. It takes time to get to know people and to build new relationships.

Rosemary and a group of parents with children with similar needs are exploring supported living options in the Inner West for their children. They are particularly interested in the Abbeyfield residences for people with disabilities in Canberra, Goulburn and Wagga Wagga. The Abbeyfield model was originally developed in Britain for the elderly to combat loneliness. It is a purpose built house for ten residents with a professional, live-in housekeeper. It is ideally suited for residents with mild intellectual disabilities who have a high level of independence. This would be a perfect solution for Luke if one was established in his local area. Luke is a very social person and likes to have people around; especially family, as it is family he knows best and with whom he spends the most time.

Planning for the future is a constant and ongoing task. Rosemary says they have come a long way over the years but she feels that they are getting tired. “One thing I have to say, having a child with a disability means that you get to meet some pretty amazing people. It brings out the best in some and the worst in others.”





LEFT Personal trainer, James, oversees Luke's technique and body form on the cable pulley machine

BELOW Luke chats with gym owner, Scott, after a training session



UPPER RIGHT **Tending the vegetable garden at home with guidance from FRANS support worker, Clayton**

CENTRE RIGHT **Luke washing the freshly harvested baby parsnips from the garden**

LOWER RIGHT AND BELOW **Shopping is one of Luke's daily pleasures and the fruit and vegetable market is a favourite haunt**



Luke is passionate about cooking and is happy when he is in the kitchen preparing a meal, cooking it and finally eating it.

He has lots of experience making sushi, which is one of his favourite meals. Luke knows that food needs to be both healthy and taste good. Sushi satisfies both of those requirements.

Luke cooks regularly with support workers, Ella and Clayton, who oversee the process, teach new skills and introduce new recipes.





ABOVE Luke and Rosemary reminisce over the family photo album

ABOVE Walking with 'the Aunts' most Sunday mornings

BELOW Luke uses his iPad to capture images at the FRANS Photo Club with FRANS Support Coordinator, Damon



An active social life is integral to maintaining a healthy wellbeing. Luke is a very social person who has a diverse range of interests and pursues many regular activities.

FRANS programs add variety to the social life of the participants and provide opportunities for skills development. Luke enjoys the newly formed FRANS Photo Club, which meets fortnightly and visits different locations for photographic sessions and social interaction. Luke uses his iPad to take pictures during these group activities.

Family is very important to Luke, especially his aunts with whom he bushwalks most Sunday mornings at a regional park in Sydney's southern suburbs. Walking is one of Luke's favourite things to do.

Most days he calls one of his aunt on his mobile phone, stays in touch with both of them by email and frequently organises outings independently, often before Rosemary, his mother, is even aware of the plan.

RIGHT Those who know Luke well are familiar with his hat collection. He is rarely seen out without a hat or a cap!

BELOW Travelling by train with the FRANS Photo Club





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All proceeds from the sale of this book will be used to enhance the programs with which FRANS supports people living with a disability

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