

## **Engaging people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities (PIMD) in the process of designing their garden space. (Part 3)**

*Mandy Williams and Erinn Miller*

The third part of this series of articles highlights some valuable lessons we learnt by **slowly** developing the Studio garden space.

**The garden was developed in stages.** This enabled people to be slowly introduced to changes in their immediate environment with assistance from their support staff, for example, to explore and learn to use the swing seat independently. Individuals who previously appeared to have little interest in accessing the garden or who wandered aimlessly are now self-initiating going into the garden, sitting down and swinging on the swing seat. People have also developed friendships with their peers. A couple of gentlemen who appeared apprehensive of each other in the confined space of the group room now initiate and share a gentle swing on the swing seat together.

**There are a few fixed items.** The rest of the equipment and activities are introduced into the garden as relevant. This ensures the space is not over stimulating or distracting. Screens assist divide the garden into activity spaces. This assists people to focus on the activity and interactions in which they are engaged. Concentration has improved.

**Resource storage.** A number of resources and activities will be stored in a small outdoor shed. Staff will select activities based on individual interest and provide relevant support to facilitate interaction and participation opportunities based on each person's Participation to the Max protocol (PTM). The PTM identifies the level of support required by the individual to ensure they have optimum opportunity to engage in activities in a way that is meaningful to them.

**The garden provides an extension to two group rooms.** Staff have already taken advantage of the warm weather and extended activities that have traditionally been held indoors into the garden. For example, lunch and tea breaks, art, and gross motor activities. There are now more opportunities for people to make new friends and share activities. We have observed people initiating new activities that they have observed their peers undertaking e.g. interacting using a large physiotherapy ball.

### **Maintenance**

Artificial turf replaces the grass that did not survive the summer weather and the natural wear and tear of everyday use. Although low maintenance, it requires an occasional vacuum to remove fallen leaves etc. We purchased an outdoor vacuum that both in appearance and use is the same as a typical household vacuum. Alternative outdoor vacuums require good balance and skills to operate. People really enjoy participating in the vacuuming activity (lots of vibration).



**Brendan and Gabi vacuum the turf**

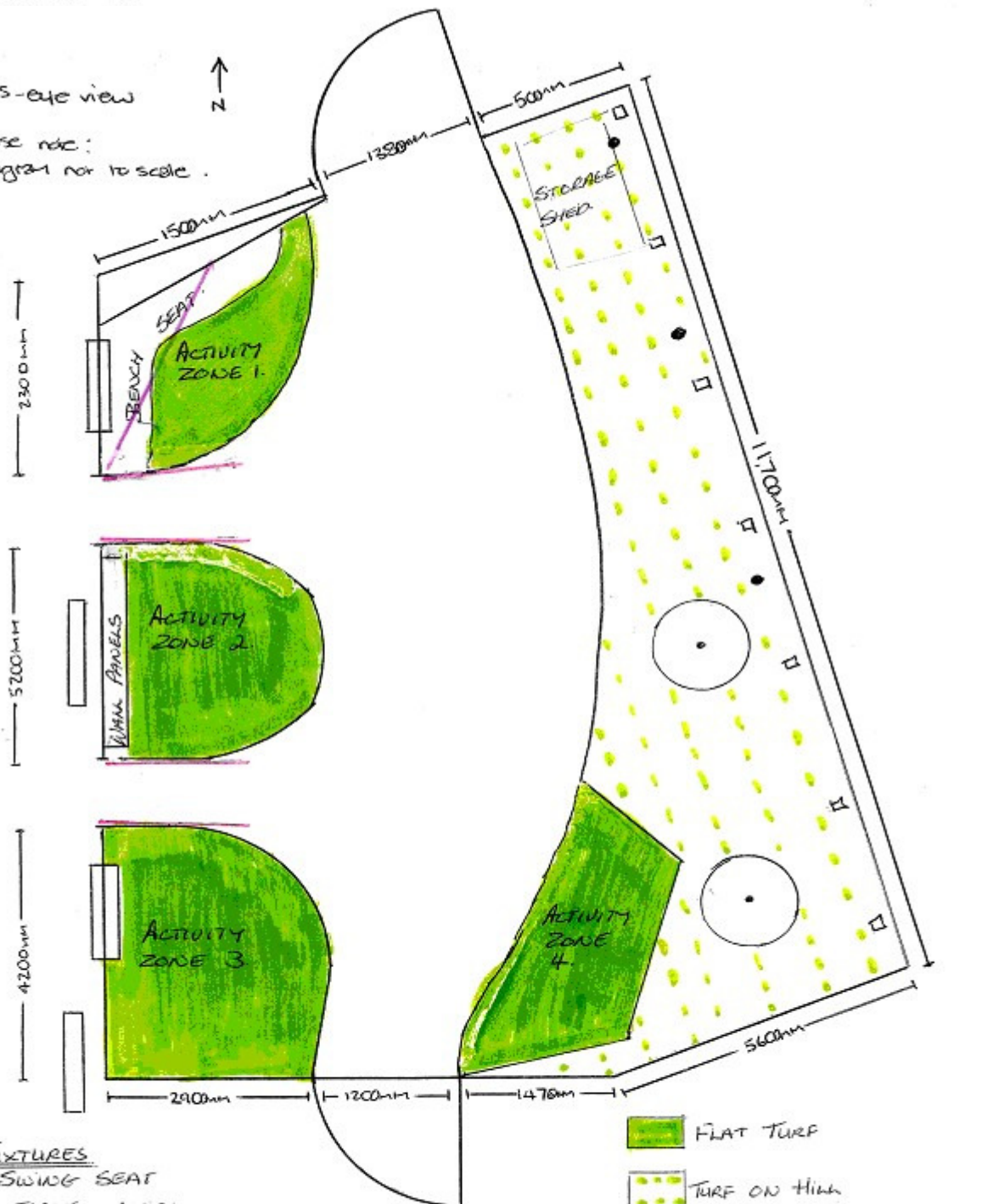
# Plan of Studio garden

MILPARINKA

Birds-eye view



\* Please note:  
- diagram not to scale.



## FIXTURES

- SWING SEAT
- TABLE + CHAIRS
- BENCH SEAT
- WALK ACTIVITIES
- MOBILE GARDEN BEDS
- SMALL STORAGE SHED

- FLAT TURF
- TURF ON HILL
- HAND RAILS/SCREENS
- OVERHEAD SUSPENSION WIRE

The Studio garden was designed in four zones. (Refer to Plan of Studio garden)

### **Activity zone 1 - A quiet space**

This is a quiet space for people to use when over stimulated by busy group settings. Comfortable bench cushions are currently being made to secure to the seat. The window has now been covered in a one-way film. This enables staff to see out into the garden to monitor people who may initiate some quiet time. People in the garden can not see into the room. An overhead suspension wire will enable mobiles (visual) chimes (auditory), balloons etc to be suspended for independent exploration. This is also a lovely space to share one-to-one interactions and activities. Individualised leisure packs will contain activities that can be shared or explored independently in this space.



**Activity Zone 1 – Quiet corner**



## Activity zone 2 – Two interactive panels

1. Interactive door panel module.
2. Interactive module – massage rollers (deep touch), vibrating panel (deep touch), mirror with beaded chain (visual and tactile) and an assorted textured panel (tactile, visual)

The interactive panels will be in a contrasting colour to the rest of the structure, providing a visual cue that something is there to interact with. The modules are positioned between 30 and 150 cm above ground level. At this position, people can access the panels either from a sitting or standing position. A set of blank panels have also been made for the interactive module. Other items will be attached to diversify interaction opportunities, for example, music chimes, a key board and further vibration, tactile and visual items.



Interactive module without attachments

Interactive modules  
Activity Zone 2

Interactive door  
module

### **Activity zone 3 and 4 – Flexible open space**

Together these zones provide a larger level space that can be used for gross motor and table activities. Mobile furniture is used to ensure this space remains open and accessible for a variety of activities. For example, folding tables are used and stored when not required. Mobile garden trolleys will bring garden related activities to this area. They can then be removed when the gardening activity is finished. Chairs can be stacked in a corner. A large interactive sculpture will be installed. The moving parts can be removed when not required and alternative activities installed over the sculpture frame, for example, sheets to create a tent experience, or a large canvas to paint.

Undertaking this project **SLOWLY** has enabled us to

- ensure we truly engage people in the decision making process of garden design.
- stand back and let people show us what they like and don't like to do in the garden and then select appropriate equipment.
- see that real interactions involve doing something with someone not to them and adjusting the levels of support required to ensure this happens.
- provide a period of transition of change in the environment. Changes within adult day services often occur abruptly e.g. change of staff causing anxiety and other behaviours of concern. With this project, staff have been able to slowly introduce new equipment and activities.
- observe the amazing things people can do when provided with an appropriately designed environment, specifically selected equipment and an individualised support plan.

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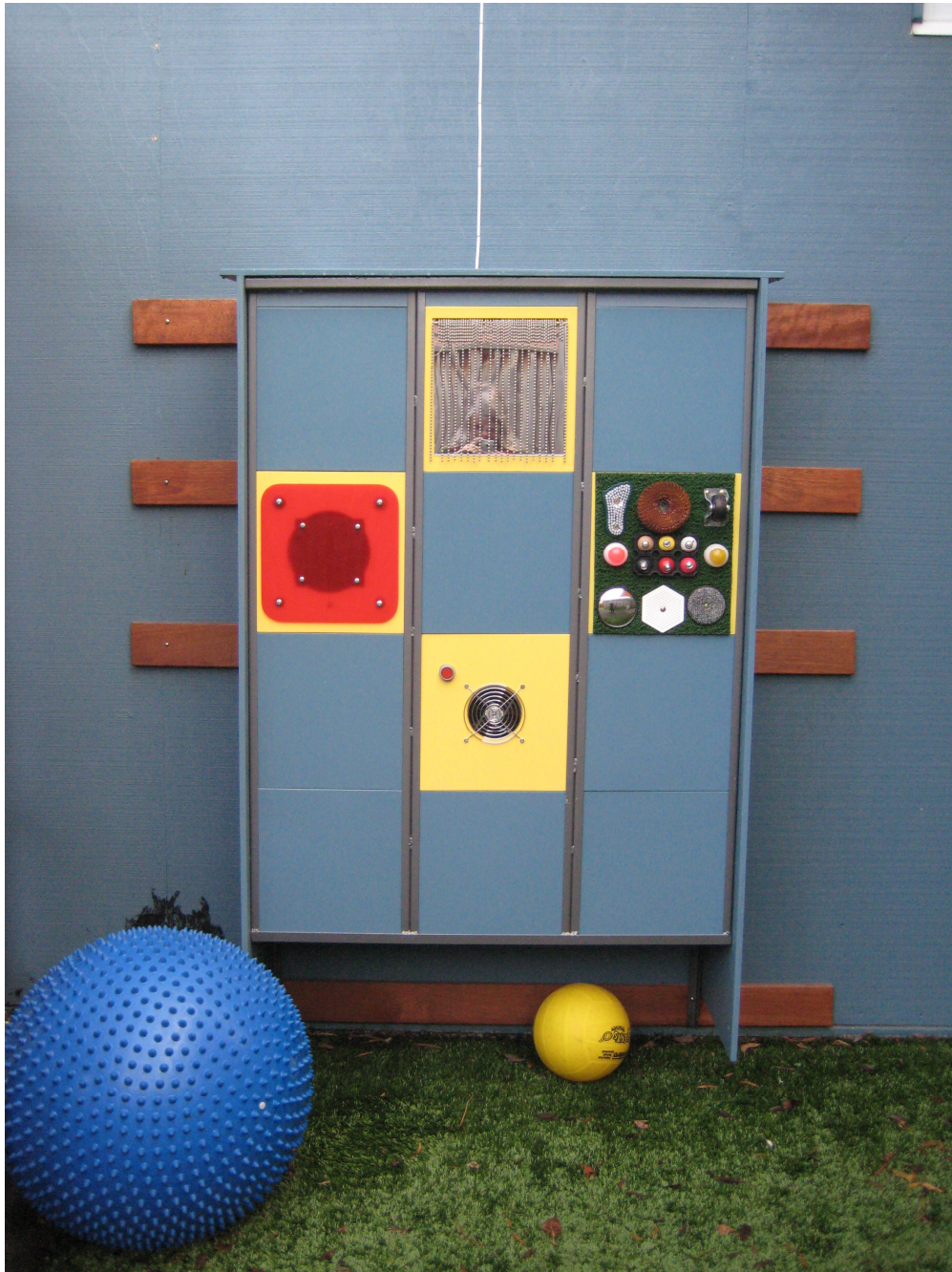
## Resources

Interactive Modules – Purpose built by Technical Solutions

[www.tecsol.com.au](http://www.tecsol.com.au)

Stop press!

Our first 4 Interactive module panels have finally arrived.



Note: This article was first published in ECAPSS April 2009