

Cape Town Visit

In early December 2004, David Felce, Glynis Murphy and Matt Janicki flew to Cape Town for four days. The aim of the visit was to meet with the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and the conference managing centre representatives, and to inspect the conference site for the IASSID 2008 World Congress. Interestingly we discovered that Cape Town is becoming an extremely popular conference site. There was a big conference for the visually impaired while we were there and there are major conferences planned for the next few years (in medicine, disability and other topics). We were not planning too far ahead!

LOC

At present, the LOC consists of Dr Jennifer Cartwright, John Cruikshank and Prof Chris Molteno. Jennifer and John are based in Johannesburg; Chris is based in Cape Town. All three have lengthy experience working in intellectual disabilities in South Africa. The LOC is an informal group who will liaise with the professional community in South Africa and the government there (they will not have financial responsibilities for the conference). The LOC are very committed to making the World Congress a success and they gave us a great deal of their time over the four days. They attended all the site visits with us. They also helped us to see as much of Cape Town and the surrounding area as we could manage in our time there.

They will be expanding their LOC group over the next few months and working to attract participants from South Africa and further afield to the conference, both as speakers and as delegates.

Conference Management Centre

The CTICC (see below) is the venue for the conference but like many such venues, the building is what you get and just about everything else (registration, hotel booking, powerpoint, poster displays, coffee/tea, lunches, catering for the reception, flowers for the stage, banners, etc) is extra and done by a separate organisation. The Cape Town University Conference Management Centre is going to be the organisation providing all this for us. They will run registration and hotel arrangements for us, plus organising the other items. During our visit a number of CMC staff attended our meetings with CTICC (our main contacts were Alana James and Debra). They will of course charge us a fee (not yet agreed). The CMC also arranged visits to a variety of hotels for us and arranged a trip to Table Mountain and the surrounding areas for our last day. They seem to us to be well-organised and helpful.

Cape Town International Conference Centre (CTICC)

The conference centre is where the conference will be based. It is centrally located in Cape Town, near some good hotels and not far from the waterfront, a vibrant restaurant and tourist area. The building is very large and beautiful, with pale wooden floors and plenty of light (the architect was Swedish). The main auditorium is excellent for our purposes and the ballrooms just nearby will be well-suited to us for the welcome reception, for poster displays and tea/coffees/lunches during the conference. The venue has a number of very large rooms. Our only problem was the number of smaller rooms with a capacity for 50-60 people, for the parallel sessions. In Montpellier we ran 20 parallel sessions for most of the conference but it would be

difficult to do that in Cape Town, except by using some very large rooms (expensive and not very suitable for parallel sessions).

We therefore propose:

- Having plenary sessions much as Montpellier
- Running 16 parallel sessions, throughout the conference
- Having proportionately more posters
- Making the final half day a plenary day (rather than running parallel sessions that day).

To achieve this we would use the auditorium and ballrooms in CTICC, plus 13 rooms for parallel sessions in CTICC and 3 good rooms in the hotel (Arabella Sheraton) next door.

We are undecided as yet about whether we should provide (some) lunches on site. If we provide lunches, this will add to the cost for participants. On the other hand, if we do not provide lunches this means people will need to arrange lunches elsewhere (eg in their hotels or walk to the Waterfront, about 15 minutes away - we could provide buses but again this adds to costs).

The dates of the conference will be: 25th – 30th August 2008. These dates are now booked with CTICC. We felt this was as late in the year as we could manage (given school start dates especially in USA) and we understand that this is the beginning of spring in South Africa. The weather will not be very hot and can sometimes be showery..

We have done initial costings for the venue. They are somewhat higher than those in Montpellier, but given that we will not need the translation facilities this time we think the costs will end up comparable.

Cape Town

The CTICC is well placed for the city centre, close to the up-market hotels and is near the waterfront (15 minutes walk), where there are plenty more hotels, restaurants and tourist shops. We walked to the waterfront at various times of the day and debated whether it was as safe as the centre of many cities (it is well policed). Colleagues from CMC said that, as women alone, they would not walk there or back at night, but that is true for many big cities. Personally, I do not feel safety there is a big issue but we will need to give some advice to people on safety, much as we would for lots of cities.

Outside the city there are an enormous number of possible activities, including climbing Table Mountain (cable car available), visiting numerous beaches, wine growing areas and so on. We plan to make these kinds of leisure tours separately bookable. Study tours are still to be decided.