



community partners in disability

Autumn 2005

Issue 7

In this issue:

Overseas experience:
Early intervention

New Autism Assessment
and Family Support
Service

Behind the scenes at
Disability ACT

Training for disability
work

SPECIAL PULLOUT
SECTION: Reform
Working Group updates

Disability Advisory
Council—Notes from
the Chair

Getting a life

Improving Post
Schools Options

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department of
disability, housing &
community services



building our city
building our community
ACT Government



A message from the **Executive Director**

Welcome to the autumn edition of **Community Partners**

Many of you would be aware of recent media, highlighting disability issues. This has put the sector firmly on the agenda.

This publicity, I believe, has a positive side. It creates awareness for the many people who are blissfully unaware that disability exists.

Much of the discussion has been around the demand for services and the availability of these services. This debate will (and should be) ongoing.

The issue of demand versus available resources, is a reality that all governments grapple with constantly — and there is no simple solution.

This debate, however, should not detract from the need to continue working with the community, and with the Disability Advisory

Council — towards the visions stated in the ACT Government's *Social Plan*, and *Challenge 2014*.

These blueprints will guide the work of Disability ACT, not only inspirationally — but practically. Alongside these guiding policies, we must recognise the ACT Government's commitment of \$22m for 2003–07 towards disability initiatives. Council's update on pages 9 and 10 has more information here.

This amount is on top of funding that was already in place.

This significant amount of funding contributes to the provision of more and better services delivered in innovative ways, and also assists in improving the quality of life for people with disabilities and for those who care for them.

[Continued on page 2](#) ►



Teddies galore!

Over 100 teddy bears of all sizes and colours were donated by residents in group homes and staff in Disability ACT.

The bears will have a new home with the children at the Rambukkana Children's Village orphanage in Sri Lanka.

Continued from page 1

For example, we will see more community support to enable people with disabilities, and their carers, more choice and options. Again, more funding for innovation grants to create different ways of providing services, and strategies such as ACT Government Access to Government and the Disability Employment Strategy.

In future editions of Community Partners, I'll be introducing the four strategies from Future Directions, and look at some of the work that is happening around these. The strategies are:

- influencing policy and culture to promote an inclusive society
- strengthening the capacity of people with disabilities, their families and carers to maximise control over their lives
- improving planning and use of available funding to meet the needs of people requiring ongoing support
- in partnership with the community sector, strengthening the sustainability and responsiveness of the service delivery sector.

Finally, I encourage you—our readers—to give us your feedback, thoughts and ideas. We value our role in partnering with the community to effect real change—large and small. Email lois.ford@act.gov.au

Lois Ford
Executive Director

Overseas experience— Early intervention:

In mid 2004, Pauline Brown, Senior Manager of the Child & Family Centres and (former Senior Manager of Therapy ACT), spent two weeks visiting the UK and France to look at what was happening in the management of autism. The focus was very much on best-practice and evidence-based approaches.

Pauline's trip took her to Sunfield School, the Monroe Centre at Guys Hospital in London, and University of Bristol. The IASSID (International Association for the Study of Intellectual Disabilities) conference in Montpellier, France was an opportunity to hear the latest in early intervention and autism research findings.

The good news is that the ACT approach does in many ways, compare favourably with the overseas experience.

"It's always inspiring to see who's at the forefront of programs and services. It's even better to come home and feel heartened by the work that we are doing here," Pauline said.

"We've got some very good programs and principles, with the right philosophical base".

Sunfield is an independent residential school, open all year for students with severe and complex learning needs, including those with significant behavioural problems and autism spectrum disorders.

There are around 80 students between the ages of 6 and 19, supported by a staff of more than 300. For a large number of the students, their exclusion from all other educational experiences—means that Sunfield is the only option left.

Professor Barry Carpenter has been heading up the school since the mid-1990s, although the school has been around for decades. His vision is very much about inclusion of students in an educational system. This philosophy, along with staff that has an understanding of the culture around autism, filters out across all areas of Sunfield. The residential aspect of the school means that a school curriculum and broader life skills are combined.

Pauline adds, "Because students participate in all aspects of education, including activities like the Student Council, and live-in at the school, it means that they experience broader life learning as well."

The school is geared to the individual and family, and the school collaborates with families to support students. There is a recognition of the family as 'self

ACT on track for success

defining', so the notion that people who are significant in a child's life, for example, a neighbour or family friend—can play a strong role in continuing important connections with a child.

Family members can stay on site for short periods of time at the school and be involved in daily life of the school. This approach means that students are better able to manage the huge change between care and school environments.

There is a recognition that more needs to be done as far as post-school options so that students do not lose their newfound skills and confidence. This issue exists in most communities, including the ACT.

The TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic Children and related Communication-handicapped Children) discipline has been in use at Sunfield since 1998. TEACCH aims to provide an holistic approach to the education of young people, and there is a focus on the development of communication skills. Key elements for success of TEACCH include small numbers of children for each teacher, who is assisted in the classroom by teacher assistants. This holistic approach also involves a wider multidisciplinary team that includes therapists.

There is also a research being conducted at the school, and many of the findings have been implemented.

"There has been a lot of work done around colour and the impact on children—and again with building design. For example it is known that long corridors and hard straight lines can interfere with sensory perceptions.

At Sunfield I saw curved hallways with small alcove seats that allow kids to have 'time out'. It was very exciting and inspiring", Pauline said.

During the trip, Pauline also visited the University of Bristol, where the Department of Education's Southwest Autism Project is based. Again, it was an opportunity to compare different approaches of managing children with autism.

The Monroe Centre at Guys Hospital in London was where Pauline met Professor Hilton Davis, who talked about the internationally successful Parent-Advisor Model. This is a strength-based, goal-directed approach to working with families. Pauline explained.

"This model is about helping parents and carers to use their strengths and to develop additional skills to get better outcomes for clients.



Pauline Brown, Senior Manager of the Child and Family Centres.

"This approach is already happening in a number of states around Australia" Pauline said.

"For the first time in the ACT, Disability, Housing and Community Services will be implementing this approach later this year through the *Family Partnerships Model*."

Trainers will train frontline staff in the areas of therapy, early intervention, child and family centres, child protection, disability, and, some areas of housing. The training will enable staff to become more skilled in identifying and responding to clients' needs, and clients will be empowered to support themselves in achieving goals.

A final stop was participation in the IASSID conference in Montpellier, France.

Continued on page 4 ►

the ACT approach does in many ways,
compare favourably with the overseas experience.

Continued from page 1

Almost a year later, Pauline reflected: "My overseas experiences confirmed for me that a lot of the work around autism in the ACT is evidence-based. There's a recognition and commitment to early intervention.

"The new Autism Assessment and Family Support Service recently introduced by Therapy ACT is a good example here".

The trip also highlighted areas where more effort needs to be made, particularly around support for adolescents and young people with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities.

"In DHCS, we are always reviewing the way we deliver services so that we can be sure we're doing things in the right way. We're looking at how we can better meet the needs of clients and the demand for our services.

But, overall, I'm really heartened—we're on the right track".

Postscript

Family partnership training for staff across DHCS will begin in May 2005.

Steve Hartwig and Phillipa Spooner from the Centre for Parenting, Child and Youth Health in South Australia.



Providing practical information and support for children and their families in the ACT.

Child and Family Centres

Healthy children, supportive families, strong communities

The Gungahlin Child and Family Centre is a new outreach service for children and families living in Gungahlin. A centre will open in Tuggeranong in late 2005. The centres provide a range of support services and community activities to improve the health and well being of children and families in their community.

Gungahlin Child and Family Centre: **6207 0120**

Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre: **6207 8228**

www.childandfamilycentres.act.gov.au



Therapy ACT

Working in partnership with families and communities to assist children's development and enhance the lives of people with disabilities

Therapy ACT provides therapy and support services for ACT residents from birth to age 65.

Therapy and support services can be accessed by children at risk of, or who have, developmental delays, and people with developmental disabilities. Services are available in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social work and psychology.

For referrals or inquiries about Therapy ACT, call the Intake Service between

9am–3.30pm Mon-Fri on **6205 1246**

www.dhcs.act.gov.au/TherapyACT



New Autism Assessment and Family Support Service

Therapy ACT, a division of Disability, Housing & Community Services, has been providing autism assessment since 2002, when this function was transferred from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Since then, approximately 170 assessments have been conducted.

The new Autism Assessment and Family Support Service, which is now operational, expands on the current assessment process by providing additional parent support and training.



From left to right: Elise Jordaan (Occupational Therapist), Lyndall Ellis (Social Worker), Bruce Hogbin (Clinical Psychologist), Jacinta Evans (Speech Pathologist), Elena Bristot (Administrative Officer), Jude Griffiths (Speech Pathologist). Not pictured: Nedra Playford (Occupational Therapist)

A multi-disciplinary team consisting of psychology, social work, occupational therapy and speech pathology will conduct assessments and provide support and training. The team will provide group-training and information sessions for clients, their families and members of the community.

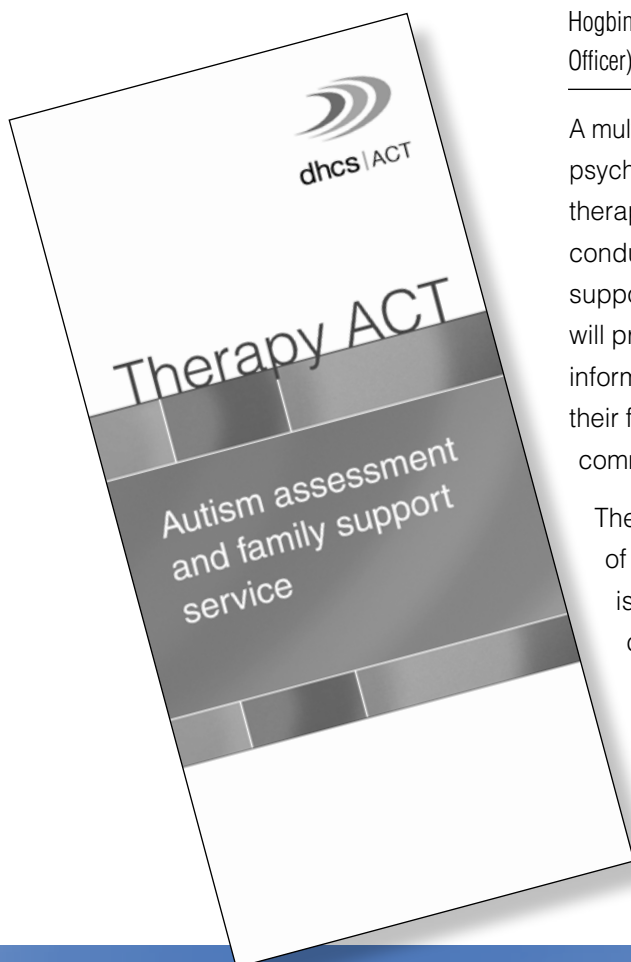
The team will cover a range of topics, including: 'what is autism?' as well as communication, play, behaviour management, social stories and sensory processing.

In addition to a program of training activities, the team will provide home visits, community-based training, support and guidance for families of newly diagnosed, young children with autism.

Another key aspect of the service will be working alongside other Therapy ACT staff to assist in the transition to the regional multi-disciplinary team that will provide ongoing support and intervention following the initial assessment and training period.

For more information contact 6205 1246.

home visits, community-based training, support and guidance



Behind the scenes at Disability ACT

Disability ACT is committed to working with our partners in the sector, but readers might like an insight into 'who's who, and what they do'—behind the scenes. In this first in a series of articles, Community Partners presents a snapshot of the teams in Disability ACT, Moore Street offices.

Disability ACT's stated aims of developing and providing a range of high quality, sustainable support options for people with disabilities, their families and carers is the absolute focus of all the teams within Disability ACT.

A guiding question for all work in Disability ACT is:

“What difference will this make? Will it improve the choices and quality of life of people with disabilities?”

Simple questions that often have far-reaching implications and impacts on the lives of a group of people often ignored by the larger community.

Lois Ford, Executive Director and Ros Hayes, Director, along with the team members from Policy and Planning, Sector Development and Support, and Individual Support Services are working together to make a difference. Collectively the whole team share responsibility for implementing *Future Directions*.

So who are these people and what do they do?

Pam Jenkins, Manager of the Policy and Planning team has extensive experience in the public service, having previously worked as senior conciliator for the Office of Human Rights. Pam's guidance and expertise assists Fia Norton, Trish Dinnerville, Chris Bowen, Gerry McKeon and Sarah Burrows to develop policies, give high level advice on policy and strategic planning issues, and a host of

governance and inter-government activities. Policy and Planning are much pre-occupied with consulting on a variety of initiatives that have come out of *Future Directions*.

“We are really looking forward continuing to work closely with people with disabilities, their families and the whole sector to make sure that the policy that comes out of Disability ACT is highly relevant to the people we serve.” —Pam Jenkins

The Sector Development and Support (SD&S) team is managed by Sally Gibson. Sally also has extensive experience working in both the public sector and in the community. The SD&S team, works in partnership with community organisations to fund and improve services to people with disabilities in the ACT.

The work of the team contributes to the provision of individual funding, supporting the development of initiatives in the disability sector, and collecting data from sector organisations to inform future planning.

Assisting Sally in this mission, are Margie Lambert, Ian Ross, Richard Basnett, Jessica Gallagher, Donnita Medway, Larissa Cowlshaw and Susan Diane White. They are backed up by Business and Financial Support provided by Norm Fraser. John Koutsellis and Nigel Berry.

“The whole team has shown a real commitment to working alongside the non-government organisations and the broader disability community in discovering the partnership between government and community.” — Sally Gibson



Training for disability work

Individual Support Services (ISS) provides individualised and flexible support arrangements for people with disabilities. Ros Hayes is the Director of ISS with Wendy Dek, Jason Hitchick, Louise Cooper-Finch and Narelle Hill providing a very able cross service management. The ISS team is our largest team and we shall profile them in our next issue.

Kylie Buck is the human resource officer for Disability ACT. Kylie provides a point of contact for people who would like to work in the disability field. Nadine Stephens coordinates the training for ISS staff and Dave Scully provides direct training.

“The ISS continues to refine its programs delivery and to support both clients and staff in line with Disability ACT’s Vision and Values statement” — Ros Hayes

Last but certainly not least, is the executive team that supports Disability ACT. When you contact us you are likely to get any one of the following: Margaret Jones, Christina Towns, Rebecca Kearns, Lyn Bottles, Peter Wymark, Charlie Martin or Beth Gardner. They provide support and assistance to the executive staff. This group manages the day-to-day business of the Moore Street offices, and ensures the smooth flow of work generated by the teams.

The magic of teamwork is that the whole becomes immeasurably larger and stronger than the sum of its original parts.

Beth Gardner

In 2004, Disability ACT advertised a request for proposal for the delivery of a Certificate IV in Disability Work to Government and non-government employees.

The outcome of this was a contract between Disability ACT and CIT in November 2004.

The idea behind the Certificate IV course is to increase the number of workers who demonstrate the skills, knowledge, behaviour and attitudes that give an understanding of, and commitment to the *ACT Vision and Values Statement* in working effectively with people with a disability and their families in the ACT.

The contract negotiated with CIT and the partnership approach that has been established will ensure that the training remains innovative and includes ‘real work’ projects and assessment in line with adult education principles.

The training is different from other public offerings of the Certificate IV in Disability Work in that:

- there is a focus on a partnership approach between Disability ACT and the CIT, ensuring the training is delivered in a flexible way that is appropriate for existing staff

- there is a strong focus on the *ACT Vision and Values*, demonstrated through ‘real work’ learning and assessment
- the cost of the training delivery and backfill will be minimised by the use of Australian Government ‘User Choice’ funding
- Disability ACT will provide additional funds to non-government organisations to reimburse backfill costs.

The contract commenced in November 2004 with the first group of 15 students participating in a recognition of current competence process. Training delivery for this group commenced in February 2005. The second group of 15 students will commence their recognition process in October 2005. The students are drawn from both non-government organisations and Individual Support Services.

Lois Ford and Kay O’Hara (Dean of Faculty — Faculty of Communication and Community Services) at the information session.



Update from ISS

The focus for Individual Support Services (ISS) over the last three months has been the development of its business plan for 2005–2008 and addressing staffing issues.

In developing our plan we have taken into account complementary planning documents such as the *Future Directions* framework, results from reviews and audits undertaken in 2004.

Our five key priority areas were identified through our planning days, which align with the four strategic directions outlined in *Future Directions 2004–2008*.

The key areas include developing:

- a valued, informed and stable staff
- better policies, processes and procedures
- active community inclusion for clients
- greater flexibility in service models
- improved financial management.

Achieving stability around staffing is an ongoing priority for Disability ACT. It is an issue that cannot be addressed through one definitive process. It requires attention on an ongoing basis. A review into rostering practices has been undertaken, while a working party and project plan to implement new practices have all been established.

A number of recruitment actions have been completed or are in the process of finalisation for disability support officers Levels 1 and 2 as well as for two network managers.

The ISS training calendar for 2005 was released in January. Our major priority for training will ensure that the core skills required by workers in the disability field such as senior first aid, epilepsy management, medication competency and manual handling, are maintained.

We will also continue to roll out the Active Support model to the group homes. Ongoing improvements to the model will also be incorporated into the homes already reaping the benefits of Active Support.

In addition ten Disability ACT support officers have enrolled in the Certificate IV in Disability Work (see article page 7).

ensuring that the **core skills** required by workers in the disability field **are maintained**

Reform Working Group updates

This special four-page pullout summarises the progress of the Reform Working Groups

Housing and Tenancy

Quality and standards

Workforce reform

Access, eligibility and funding (AEF)

Legislative reform

Future directions and the implementation process



Reform Working Group updates



Since my last report, a number of projects have come to fruition. As well as updating readers on where the working groups are up to, I'll report on an interview with Pam Jenkins, manager, Policy and Planning, Disability ACT on the implementation process for *Future Directions: A Framework for the ACT 2004–2008*. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or areas you would like covered in the next report. My contact details are: mareewright@optusnet.com.au, 6247 1746

Maree Wright

Housing and tenancy

Members of the group come from a wide range of backgrounds—people with disabilities, organisations who provide services to people with disabilities, parents of people with a disability, the tenants union, case workers and people with an expertise or interest in people with disabilities.

The group has developed five key principles that should be considered in the provision of any housing for people with disabilities. Over the next few months, we will be consulting with community members and service providers about these principles before they are finalised.

The purpose of these principles is to ensure that the Government has a guideline to use to evaluate proposals for disability housing. If a proposal meets these principles—then it will be worth considering further—if it does not meet these principles, then it would be sent 'back to the drawing board'. These principles, once agreed to and published, will contribute towards

increasing the quality of proposals, which are brought forward.

The five principles are:

- Housing and support services should be provided by separate organisations.
- All people living in a house have the right to a tenancy agreement of their own.
- When people are sharing a house and there is a dispute, there needs to be a system in place to resolve it rather than having one of the tenants lose their home.
- A person living in a house should have access to support services from their family and from other service providers in the community.
- A tenant needs to have control and choice over the environment in which they live.

Other issues the working group is considering include:

- the separation of tenancy management and personal

support. The group is looking at housing and tenancy models and recognise that management of housing should be distinct and separate from management of support and other services.

- issues between housing and support providers—and how these relationships can be managed. Examples include the need to develop shared waiting lists between community and public housing, and differentiating between the role of the housing provider and the support provider. This can be a complex area, and the group is still discussing where the differentiation between these two areas lies.
- the need for an interrelationship between housing and support provision—where tenants need to have support to be able to move into a home—and a need to find ways that both a home and the support can be available at the same time.
- What makes a house a good home?

NEWSFLASH: A new website to help people with disabilities arrange a house swap for a holiday—visit www.matchinghouses.com for more information.

Quality and standards

This group is looking at implementing service standards and how they can be used to evaluate how organisations are going. “Raising the Standard”—a set of standards developed by the ACT Government for community organisations has been adopted to assist the work of the group.

All agencies are already using some standards—and the group is keen to avoid another layer of bureaucracy to these. There has been a mapping process, to see where the gaps are, and where there is overlap between the different sets of standards. In the majority of cases, the standards service providers are already using match well with both the disability and community standards.

The next step is to do a baseline assessment of where organisations are up to in implementing the standards. The group have access to a tool that is being used in Western Australia, which will initially be used to allow organisations to do the baseline assessment. There will be a workshop to introduce people to how to use this tool.

The group is also proposing further workshops to assist the disability sector, and working with Lyla Rogan, from RPR Consulting, to develop the best content for these workshops.

For now, the group will work with the community, encouraging and supporting them and introducing them to what the quality framework is about.

Workforce reform

The *Workforce Report* is now on the internet and will be distributed in hard copy soon. The report is at dhcs.act.gov.au/DisabilityACT/default.htm. The key findings of this report are that:

- a large proportion of non-permanent staff and part-time staff, especially amongst workers in less senior positions.
- a large proportion of women employed in the disability sector compared to the workforce in general.
- casual employment was more prevalent amongst direct support workforce.
- much of the workforce works outside ‘standard’ hours and work is carried out in shifts of varying lengths.
- disability support workers make up 78 per cent of the disability workforce.

The information in this report will contribute to the development of the Workforce Strategic Plan, which should be finalised by the end of June. A discussion paper has been developed, and consultations will happen with the community in March and April 2005.

The Certificate IV course in disability studies commenced at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) in February—with 15 students participating. This course will increase the skills of both government and community workers, and also foster

networking and communication between the sectors.

An event is planned for 6 April 2005. This is a one-day event for Disability Support Workers and provides an opportunity for workers to come together for networking and information sharing. Fifty workers attended the previous event, and it is anticipated that there will be an even broader representation at the next one.

Access, eligibility and funding (AEF)

The AEF Group has provided advice and advocated strongly on the issues of unmet need for both individuals and for the sector. The group is developing a set of principles to underpin individual needs assessment processes

When completed, the funding framework will include:

- recommended funding models
- processes for allocation of funds
- process for the acquittal of funds
- funding guidelines.

The Disability ACT Funding Framework will:

- determine the way that disability funds are distributed across the ACT
- affect the delivery and availability of supports and services.
- influence the outcomes for individuals, service providers, and government.

The funding framework should be: transparent, easily understood, explained and defended; fair; trustworthy and credible.

The group will work with the community, encouraging and supporting them and introducing them to what the quality framework is about.



Confidence and trust: Pegasus Riding School

The framework should allow for methods that are: accessible; administratively simple; negotiable; cost effective and give value for money; relevant to different service types; clearly accountable; continuously improving; innovative, creative, flexible and fosters person-centred practice.

The funding framework will be evaluated and modified in accordance with individual, community, sector and government expectations.

Legislative reform

A good proportion of this group's work plan for 2005 will be dedicated to the review of the *Disability Services Act 1991* (ACT). The group's work will recommence in March with a workshop looking at Victoria's experience with the review of its Disability Services Act. The workshop will assist the Group's consideration of the Act and help us to consider the processes, which we will use to review it.

Future directions and the implementation process

The following is a report on an interview with Pam Jenkins, Manager, Policy and Planning, Disability ACT

Over the last couple of years, Disability ACT has been working in a reform framework in response to the Gallop enquiry that made a number of suggestions about how disability services should be reformed.

In September 2004, the ACT Government launched a document called *Future Directions a framework for the ACT 2004–2008*. The Chair of the Disability Advisory Council has also released *Challenge 2014* which is an aspirational statement based on a vision of what people with disabilities should be able to achieve in our community.

Future Directions outlines four strategic directions that will benefit all people with a disability, their families and carers who live in the ACT. These are:

- promoting an inclusive society
- strengthening the capacity of people with disabilities to maximise control over their lives
- improving planning and the use of available funding
- developing a sustainable service delivery sector.

It provides a framework through which Disability ACT can support people with disabilities to realise their vision and their rights to self determination, respect, dignity and participation at all levels in the community.

In moving from the reform agenda and framework to working within the framework in *Future Directions*, it is now necessary for Disability ACT to have a look at the structures in place to support the work which is to be done under future directions.

Under the reform structure there are five working groups to advise government on key areas of disability services.

Disability ACT has now proposed that reference groups be set up under each of the strategic directions in *Future Directions*, and that projects which are identified to be undertaken will be done on a project basis and overseen by each of the reference groups.

There will also be a steering group structure at a high level to oversee

Our pin-up girl: Kylie Scott



Future directions and the implementation process—*continued*

the strategic directions and the implementation of *Future Directions*.

Disability ACT has had discussions with all members of existing working groups, the Disability Advisory Council, peak bodies, parents and service providers about the proposed structure.

A consultant has been engaged to conduct focus groups during March with members of the working groups and peak provider bodies about the new proposed structure.

An Implementation paper will be available on the web and comments will be sought to inform the final model.

At the end of April, Disability ACT will be consulting with people with disabilities, families, carers, peak bodies, service providers and

Unique friendships: Pegasus Riding School



the broader community about key priorities and actions for 2005–2006.

Working groups that exist at the moment will not necessarily cease. There will be a transition period where working groups will continue in their current form while working

on present projects, which have been identified by the working groups.

The implementation process will not abolish existing working groups—but will transition working groups to sit within the new structure.

The *Future Directions* and *Challenge 2014* documents can be found on the Internet at www.dhcs.act.gov.au/DisabilityACT/default.htm

Freedom on the water: Sailability



Opening doors for creativity: Hands on Studio



Disability Advisory Council:

Notes from the Chair

Listening to families

One of the most important tasks for the Disability Advisory Council is being reflective of the concerns of ACT families living with disability.

Most people with a disability live within families and so families are most often called on to do the long term planning and support.

The council has a number of members with direct experience of parenting roles with children with disabilities. Council was pleased to see this experience bolstered through the recent appointments of Cheryl Patrick and Terry Millar, who have strong direct knowledge of the needs and experiences of families.

Council recognises that families affected by disability are doing it tough and that there is a need for assistance and support.

This is one reason that council's 2005–06 budget submission contains a direct focus on addressing the needs of families in a number of important areas.

Council's budget submission supports the ACT Government's commitment to fund the Local Area Co-ordinator model. This funding provides community support workers whose role it will be to link individuals and families with the resources in their community and develop new

support options where resources may be limited

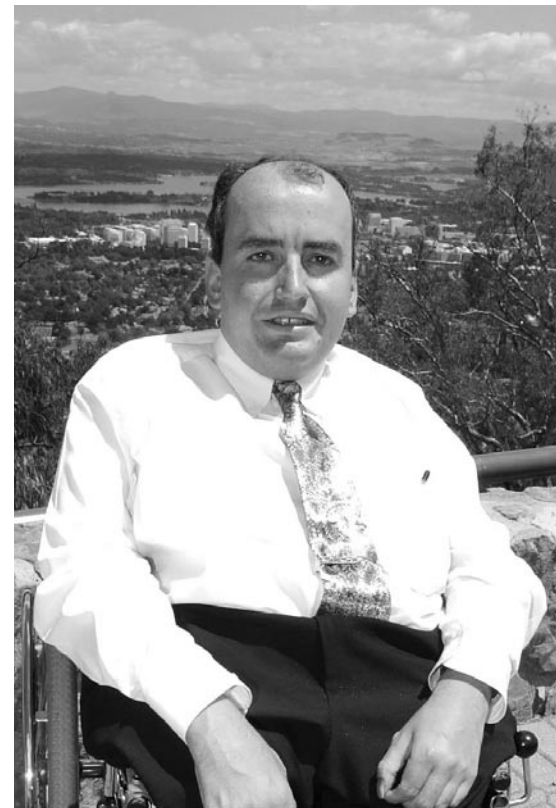
Council is also pushing for the implementation of the Carers Recognition Grants Program announced in the 2004–05 budget of \$830 000 over four years.

Council is aware of significant unmet need for individual support especially for people with high and complex needs. These supports are critical to enable people with disabilities to live in the community and preventing inappropriate entry to nursing homes and other negative outcomes for individuals and families.

More funding on a recurrent basis is needed to provide individualised support through Individual Support Packages (ISPs) especially for people with high and complex needs.

One of the things we often hear is the stress that the experience of disability places on families. While books have been written on family strength, not enough is known about the whole picture of why some families touched by disability in a child prove resilient while others are not.

However what we do know, is that families who receive information early, are empowered self advocates, and in touch with support networks are more likely to remain strong. We also know that some life transitions represent key stress points in families, and



Craig Wallace, Chair,
Disability Advisory Council

the concept of early intervention is receiving a lot of attention.

Council's budget submission also suggests some long term strategies to provide better early support to new and expectant parents of young children with disabilities. It also suggests more support for young people undergoing important life transitions.

It is important to also acknowledge areas where additional funding and support have been achieved and since the appointment of the Disability Advisory Council in May 2003 the ACT Government has implemented a number of

important initiatives, which directly benefit families affected by disabilities.

These are featured in *Future Directions: A Framework for the ACT 2004–08* and some highlights with relevance to families include:

- 1 The 2003–2004 round of innovation grants for small pilot projects
- 2 Development of family governed and consumer governed models
- 3 Implementation of the Caring for Carers Policy enhanced funding for disability information, education and peer support
- 4 Introduced pilots for self-governed support models
- 5 Piloting of a Disability ACT Information Phonenumber

I am often asked about the level of additional resources by people in the community and council is closely monitoring commitments, especially at budget time.

For the record, council is informed that for the period 2003–07, the ACT Government has committed an additional \$22 million towards disability initiatives. This includes recurrent funding of

- \$4.5 million to support people with high and complex needs
- \$1.93 million to the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme
- \$4.25 million for unmet need including the establishment of a Local Area Co-ordination Service to encourage people with disabilities to become active participants in the planning of their services

- \$2.3 million for single therapy services
- \$1.68 million for respite services
- \$2.69 million for special needs support for clients with complex behaviours
- \$4.43 million in government infrastructure funding.

The ACT Government has also committed further recurrent funding of \$3.23 million for the establishment of an intensive care and treatment program for people with dual disabilities and complex behavioural problems from 2005–06 to 2007–08 and \$1.63 million to expand the autism assessment and support services over 2005–06 – 2007–08.

Of the above, there is \$100 000 for one-off grants to assist families and individuals to fund small initiatives or to get pieces of equipment that will make a real difference to their quality of life.

Many of these family-friendly initiatives align with programs and options suggested by the council to ACT Government since our appointment.

A family focus is woven throughout the long term vision which has been developed as a partnership between government and the disability community over several years. *Challenge 2014*, launched by Council in 2004, places families strongly within the framework at each stage of vision-lead change.

Council will continue to listen to families and provide strong reflective advice to government, which values the vital role that families play, and will continue

to let the ACT community and families know what is happening in these important areas through *Community Partners* and other mechanisms.

We will continue to push for disability to gain a high profile in the ACT Budget process and for other service improvements. It is important in our responses on these issues that we do not lose the gains of the last few years through hasty responses and finger pointing. There is a continuing need for 'busyness' by government—well administered and supported programs, consultation and other processes, including within Disability ACT, need to be retained if we are to improve the long term picture for families.

This year, for the first time ever, council is planning to release an annual report as part of its accountability to the community. The report will include a report card on key initiatives taken over the life of council's term. Information on outcomes from the council's representations on the ACT Budget process as they come to hand will be available on:

www.dhcs.act.gov.au/DisabilityACT/AdvisoryCouncil/Council.htm

Craig Wallace

Chair

ACT Disability Advisory Council

Getting a Life: A family governed project

Jackson West, Ben Patrick and Daniel Connaughton are the focus of a family governed project, *Getting A Life*.



Jackson West



Ben Patrick



Daniel Connaughton

Getting a Life is based on principles and beliefs that value each person with a disability as a unique individual and an integral part of their family, social support networks and community.

Getting a Life will assist Jackson, Ben and Daniel to develop friendships, build networks, have a job, become involved in leisure activities and build a community, that includes them and sees them as valuable community members. Their lives will grow outwards from their families developing the kinds of supports and relationships that will sustain them through all of the challenges and opportunities they will face in their full adult lives.

Getting a Life will allow these young men to make decisions about the *what, when, how, where* and *who with* of support. This will include, but is not limited to, what they do in for recreation, where they work, where they live, how

they live and who they share their homes and lives with.

There are three distinct groups which need to partner for the successful birth, development and maintenance of a project like this. The first is the **Governance Group**, which in this case consists of all members of the three families and some community members. This group has the authority to make all decisions that relate directly to their sons' lives, activities and supports.

The second is the **Host agency**, which must be an existing incorporated body. The project becomes a semi-autonomous satellite of the Host. The Host organisation will support the guiding principles, values and philosophy of the project, provide administrative, fiscal and legal support and advice to the project, delegate authority to the Governance Group to direct *Getting a Life*, process workers'

salaries and associated costs and manage departmental reporting obligations. Negotiations are underway for *Getting a Life* to partner with a non-government organisation in the ACT.

The third vital arm of this project is **Disability ACT** which has given 'in principle' support.

This is a wonderful opportunity for a successful three-way partnership between the community, a non-government organisation and Disability ACT. In establishing a partnership like this everyone can consider themselves a winner, but particularly Jackson, Ben and Daniel.

Note: The Governance Group of the *Getting a Life* project expect to submit a project proposal to Disability ACT by the middle of 2005. In the meantime, if you would like to know more contact Sally Richards 6281 0974 sally@jacksonwest.org; Cheryl Patrick 6296 3600 or Karen Connaughton 6294 4098).

value each person with a disability as **a unique individual** and **an integral part** of their family, social support networks and **community**.

Dedicated to the **support of people with disabilities** and the aged

TADACT (Technical Aid to the Disabled) provides services to people with disabilities and the aging to improve their independence and quality of life.

It does this through the design and manufacturing of innovative aids that are otherwise not available. TADACT also provides specialist technical advice to clients and those concerned with their welfare, and modifies commercially available aids and equipment.

"The organisation was originally established in the ACT in 1979 as a branch of TADNSW and was independently incorporated in 1991," according to Bob Sawyer, Chair of TADACT.

"It forms part of a national network of TAD organisations.

"We are a unique professional provider of customised aid to people with disabilities and older people. We not only maintain that position, but to grow to meet the unmet need in the Canberra Region.

"TADACT's services are provided for the cost of materials only. The design, manufacture and installation of aids are done entirely

by volunteers, who do not charge for their time. All people with a disability are eligible to access our services."

Recent ABS figures show that approximately 53 100 (17.2%) of the ACT's population are identified as having a disability. By 2021 that figure is estimated to grow to 91 200, or some 25 per cent of the population.

"TADACT's partnership with Disability ACT provides for the facilitation and coordination of the delivery of the three elements of its service, aids and devices, special technical advice and referral.

"We have never refused to respond to a request for assistance provided the request falls within the organisation's stated mission and objectives.

"Our unique contribution to the ACT community, conservatively estimated at \$500 000–\$600 000, represents a return of at least five to six times on the Disability ACT funds invested in this service provision," Mr Sawyer said.

The TADACT office is located at The Grant Cameron Community Centre, 27 Mulley Street, Holder ACT 2611, phone: 6287 4290.

a unique professional provider of customised aid to people with disabilities

Improving **Post**

The ACT Department of Disability Housing and Community Services and Australian Department of Family and Community Services will jointly sponsor a new project looking at enhancing the post school options arrangements for young people with disabilities.

Promoting **ongoing**

Disability ACT is implementing a program of events for the disability sector workforce. The purpose of the events is to create networking opportunities through supporting sector workforce development and to foster a culture of continuous learning in best practice.

School Options:

Achieving the Vision of 2014

This project, which has just begun, will involve extensive consultation with young people with disabilities, their families and carers. Schools, universities, post school options services, employment services and other community groups, as well as relevant government departments will be included in the consultation.

The consultations will focus on options for responding to the issues raised in previous consultations.

S&S Consultants, led by Emily Schindeler, has been selected to undertake this work after an open

tender process, which attracted submissions on a national basis. The S&S Consultants team will bring to the project extensive experience working with community, with services and in disability related initiatives.

All stakeholders were invited to participate in group workshops held across the ACT. People can contribute individually by contacting the project facilitators, S & S Consultants.

Workshops were held at Belconnen 11 April, Canberra City 13 April and Tuggeranong 15 April.

We will provide a report on the workshops in the next edition of *Community Partners*.

If you would like to contribute individually, contact Emily Schindeler at S & S Consultants (07) 3202 7314, or email sscpl@gil.com.au.

For more information visit www.dhcs.act.gov.au or contact 6207 1086.

learning in the sector

The events are targeted at workers whose primary role is to provide daily direct support to people with a disability.

A steering group, comprising government and non-government members, was formed to provide Disability ACT with cross-sector advice on future workforce events that would be most relevant to the disability sector workforce.

The first event '*Into the Future*' was held in December 2004 at Olim's Hotel. Fifty people attended.

The aim of the program was to familiarise participants with the recently released documents, *Challenge 2014* and *Future Directions*, that underpin and point to the way ahead for those people working in the disability sector in the ACT.

The second event '*Working Together*' was held on 6 April 2005.

The aim of the even was to use Strategies 1 and 2 from *Future Directions* and focus on person

centredness, inclusion and networking.

Guest speakers presented their personal experiences about what is important to them as consumers, what had been difficult, what had worked. There was also an opportunity to share ideas for the future.

For more information visit www.dhcs.act.gov.au or contact Bryan Myers 6207 2323, brian.myers@act.gov.au.

Tapping into creativity: mixed ability theatre

PWD ACT has appointed an Arts Development officer, Adam Moynihan, to explore and develop opportunities for home-grown mixed ability theatre in the ACT.

This exciting project follows last year's first ever Canberra DisAbility Arts Festival.

The project is about creating an opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in the arts—either as performers or behind the scenes.

"This landmark project will aim to set a new standard in mixed ability theatre" Adam said.

"It will reflect the talent and quality of the arts community in Canberra, and will be a model that could be picked up across Australia".

While only in the development stage, PWD is keen to hear from performers, writers, directors and artists as well as arts organisations that might be willing to contribute or partner with us.

PWD will convene a planning meeting in the near future. If you are interested please get in touch with Adam Moynihan on 0413 767 600.

creating an opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in the arts

Garema Place comes alive during the 2004 Canberra DisAbility Arts Festival.



Discerning actual

Michael Kendrick is an international expert in disability. In this article, he writes about the notion of 'empowerment'.

There is often a desire upon the part of people involved in services to take steps to ensure that the recipients of services are 'empowered'. Being able to translate this into practical action, that makes a difference at the level of substance, is often more difficult than many might expect. This is because there is often a lack of precision as to what something like 'empowerment' should mean. This is why it is helpful to start with measures of empowerment that are relatively straightforward.

One way to achieve this is to start with the simple test of whether a person who is assisted by services is actually being enabled to make a significant difference, through their own actions, on the character of the service they are receiving. More precisely, of the many important decisions taken that result in the actual design and operation of the services they ultimately receive, how many of these were made by the person, and how many were made by others, on behalf of the person.

In order to evaluate this question, one would need to be able to identify what the major decisions are that most affect the actual substance of what the person ultimately receives i.e. their service. For instance, given that staff

levels of substantive empowerment

account for as much as 85 per cent of the total costs of service, the degree to which a given service user has decisive 'say so' over who are the staff that enter their life in service roles, might be one of these 'key' decisions that should be focused on.

By paying a good deal of attention to who is making the actual decisions about services, it becomes possible to distinguish, to an illuminating degree, who is actually empowered on matters of substance, and who is not.

This is not all there is to empowerment, but it is central enough a vantage point on the exercise of authority and power, that it could certainly not be dismissed as being trivial, immaterial or irrelevant.

It is useful to take this question and convert this standard of 'the degree of authoritative decision-making carried by the person' into a continuum from low to high, as this helps clarify the extent to which 'empowerment' could be considered a matter of degree, rather than to have it be a simple 'yes' or 'no' variable.

This then requires that there be some manner of scaling of the levels of authoritative personal decision-making into a spectrum from low to high. If the scale is too refined, it would potentially become a matter of hair splitting about increments of empowerment, whereas if it were too simple it might be much too blunt in capturing the nuances. So, it may be useful to start with a simple six-level scale, with each level adding a

greater degree of empowerment, at least as measured by the authoritative decision-making standard. What follows is an easy to use version of this.

Level one: This is a level where the person does not make any substantive decisions about their service.

Level two: This is a level where the person does not make any substantive decisions about their service, but where the person is routinely informed about the decisions others will be making on their behalf.

Level three: This is the level at which the person is routinely asked to give advice, (i.e. is consulted), by the actual decision-makers, about his/her personal service decisions.

Level four: This is the level at which the person begins to routinely personally make a significant minority of the substantive decisions that constitute their personal service. A significant minority, in statistical terms, might range from 25–45 per cent of key decisions.

Level five: This is the level at which the person routinely begins to personally make a significant majority of the substantive decisions that constitute their personal service. A significant majority, in statistical terms, might range from 55–90 per cent of key decisions.

Level six: This is the level at which the person is so routinely making the vast majority of key decisions that they simply do not any longer

believe that they have a meaningful empowerment issue.

It is all too common that most people will never see services, or service systems, that rise much above a level two or three. In fact, most people have never seen a level four or higher service, though these do exist, and are relatively easy to establish and maintain, despite the suggestion that such routine levels of empowerment would be utopian.

What makes many people confused is that the empowerment rhetoric used by services makes it seem as if people have much more authority and power than they actually do. This is most obvious in the case of user involvement efforts, where 'involvement' or 'participation' is largely in regard to comparatively trivial issues, whereas the really authoritative decision-making still remains with people other than the person.

This simple exercise can do much to clarify what is the actual relationship of service users to the substantive decision-making that affects their lives and services. It can also be helpful for the formation of alternative models of service design and operation decision-making that can leave service users more empowered, in both a practical and substantive way. So, even as a speculative exercise, it can be beneficial in giving more concreteness to aspirations about 'empowerment'

Visit www.kendrickconsulting.org for more information.

For your **diary**

Community Strengthening Project

Training Workshop May 2005

As part of this project designed to equip people with disabilities with the skills to become community leaders, PWD ACT will be conducting a training workshop in late May (dates to be advised).

The workshop will include keynote speakers and interactive sessions. Topics include:

Skills for consumer representatives on committees, including discussion with a panel of experienced representatives.

Negotiation skills

Managing the media

Building effective and influential relationships with key politicians

Inspiring experiences of current community leaders

If you would like to attend:

please register your interest with the SHOUT office by calling Beth Micklethwaite (02) 6290 1984 or by email to: pwdact@shout.org.au.

Learn to belly dance

Thursday 7 April 9.30-11.30am

(until mid November 2005)

Belconnen Community Centre (Gym)

Facilitator & teacher:

Morgan Jai-Morincome

An opportunity to learn to belly dance, meet other women and create a performance. Belly dancing promotes fitness and self-expression, encourages an understanding of other cultures and offers a welcoming place to meet and dance with other women.

Women in the Canberra community including women with disabilities are welcome.

Costs: No fee (extra costume supplies at participant's expense)

Travel: costs associated with getting to and from classes may be subsidised by the project.

For more information or to enrol contact:

Morgan Jai-Morincome on (02) 6161 1192 or 0400 455 965 or email: urbangoddess@bellydancingaustralia.com.au

News **clips**

Young people online

Visit www.yconnection.org.au. This is a great website for young people with disabilities to connect with each other.

YConnection is targeted to 17–30 year olds. The site is a mix of information, events, and online discussion.

Auslan Sign-sharing for kids

Perfect for the younger online devotee, www.bilby.net/signlinks.asp taps into the ever evolving language of Auslan. This child-focused site is a way for kids to find out who's doing what in the world of signing. The Sign Swap site allows users to browse, search, view and save images—and you can even trade signs!

Free font style for easy reading

A new easy-to-read font designed especially for people with vision impairment can be downloaded FREE at www.aph.org/products/aphont The font is called APfont, and it was created by the American Printing House for the Blind. (Note, use by or for a person with a vision impairment must be certified before downloading).

Accessibility

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues, accessible to as many people as possible.

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an **alternative format**—such as large print or audio—please telephone **(02) 6205 0619**.

If English is not your first language and you require the **translating and interpreting service**—please telephone **131 450**.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the **TTY typewriter service**—please telephone **(02) 6205 0888**.

Contact details

Disability ACT

Central Office

12 Moore St
Canberra City 2601

GPO Box 158
Canberra City 2601

Telephone 6207 1086
www.dhcs.act.gov.au