

**Department of Disability, Housing and Community
Services**

Imagining better together

**A report on disability reform vision and values
workshops held in March 2003**

May 2003



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1 Introduction

Context of the vision and values workshops

The energy and drive of all people in the disability sector will be a major factor in the success of the disability reform agenda. In this sense a vision and values statement, which articulates our assumptions about the way life should be for people with disabilities and their families, is not an optional extra - it is an essential guiding framework for the changes that so many stakeholders want to see in the disability area in the ACT.

A powerful vision and values statement grows from real experiences, reflective thinking, passion and debate. The ACT statement was developed in this way over several months by the Disability Reform Group.¹ A draft was tested during consultations with stakeholders in late 2002, adjusted to take account of feedback and released at the end of 2002. An effective vision and values statement also becomes part of the everyday life of people affected by it and, in the ACT, the emerging vision and values have become closely linked with key aspects of disability reform. For example:

- The wide ranging recommendations of the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services in the ACT (The Gallop Report) could only be addressed in a coherent way if a commonly agreed vision and a set of values provided a framework for the approach to reform.
- The Disability Reform Group (DRG), which comprised government and community members, was set up to provide advice on the government's response to the Gallop Report, recognised this and one of its key deliverables was the vision and values statement.
- The five disability working groups, which comprise government and community members and were set up in 2003 to address issues related to access, eligibility and funding, legislative reform, housing and tenancy, quality standards and workforce reform use the vision and values as the guiding framework for their work.
- The actions outlined in the government's response to Gallop – Steps to Reform – also use the statement as a guiding framework.
- The next consultations with people with disability and their carers will aim to develop a written statement on the practical meaning of the vision and values for a people at a range of life stages eg children, youth, adults and older people.

The vision and values workshops held with people from the government and the community in March 2003 were designed to encourage the conversations about the meaning and practical relevance of the vision and values which are essential if the vision and values are to become embedded in the way we think about and respond to disability in the ACT.

¹ More details on the DRG and aspects of the reform process are provided in Appendix 1.

About the vision and values statement

The vision and values statement, (see Attachment 1) starts from the assumption of full citizenship of people with disabilities. Building on this base, its purpose is to:

- inspire and guide strategic planning across the sector
- identify behaviours and attitudes asked of those involved in the delivery of services
- describe the kind of community environment to which we aspire.

It is easy to put words on paper but much more difficult to face honestly the implications of making the vision and values real. Disability is a community issue involving many stakeholders. It evokes many different emotions and is seen through many different frames. If the model we adopt is flawed or we have not engaged with it fully, our attempts at making changes to allow a better quality of life for people with disabilities and their families may be simply well-meaning activities rather than real change. In these circumstances it is possible to do harm even when we think that what we are doing is right.²

Much of what our communities will permit or enable people to do with their lives is held in the actual vision of what is deemed possible. For example, to start from the unassailable premise that people with disabilities are full citizens leads to very different community attitudes and approaches to relationships and service design than to start from the premise that people with disabilities are poor unfortunate people who would be hurt by engagement with the real world and should therefore be protected from it.

Purpose of the workshops

Living the vision and values is not easy. Pressure for politically correct speech and thought is all around and this compounds the difficulty of undertaking a more genuine search for the authenticity of our actual lived values. The workshops held in March 2003 were an attempt to begin this search by allowing people the opportunity to imagine what the world could be like if the vision and values were woven into the fabric of our community. The workshops aimed to explore the application of the vision and values in greater depth and to begin to identify new strategies and practical approaches which could help to make the vision and values a reality.

Three workshops attended by a total of about 75 people were held. Participants in the first workshop were the co-chairs of the disability reform working parties and senior managers in Disability ACT. Participants in the next workshops were mainly service providers from the non-government and government sectors with some representation from people with disabilities and their families.

Participants explored what it would mean if the vision and values were put into practice. They allowed themselves to imagine a world where the vision and values statements were a true reflection of the way people with disabilities lived in our community. They were asked what this would mean for mainstream services, specialised disability services, corrective and protective services and for government roles. They were also asked how the

² The ideas in this whole section are largely drawn from "The Empowering Value of Life-giving Assumptions about People" by Michael J Kendrick http://socialrolevalorization.com/resource/MK_Articles/Enduring%20Values.htm

disability sector could be strengthened by application of the vision and values and how the vision and values might guide their personal contribution to the reforms.

Structure of this report

Feedback from the workshops has been divided into three areas in this report:

- the use of the vision and values statement as a driver of broader cultural change across the sector.
- impact of the vision and values on service design and delivery
- using the vision and values as a framework for sector development, including what the vision and values can mean on a personal level.

The report has been derived from notes taken at all three workshops and is written from the participant perspective. The ideas in the sentences in italics are taken directly from notes taken at the meetings. For ease of reading, linking words have been added to convert the notes into sentence form. While the vision and values are best seen as a coherent whole, relevant parts of the statement have been added in the side-columns to show the way in which they can also have practical application to particular issues.

2 The vision and values as a driver of change

The majority of views expressed at the workshops were very positive about the direction and coherence of the vision and values. Some people said they felt re-energised and inspired by the values.

I love them. They are like a golden thread linking the sector together and leading us in a common direction.

I hadn't realised how practical they are. You could use them as a guide for reviewing your service or establishing a new one.

Vision

All people with disabilities achieve what they want to achieve, live how they choose to live, and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community.

Others recognised the challenges inherent in the statement:

It is a 180 degree change.

What this means is that we must divest ourselves of previous assumptions about what disability means and what service delivery means.

We will need to break our dependence on particular service arrangements. The emphasis will be on choice. New funding models will be required.

We must rethink the power balance – in decision making, feedback, information, involvement.

Relationships across the whole sector and in the community are going to be very important if this is going to work.

Our organisations will need to be flexible to enable growth and change to meet the expectation set up by the values.

We need to look for input, feedback, and new learning on how services could be delivered differently and better. We need to try new ways.

In noting this support it must be remembered that subtle censorship of dissent can occur at consultations of this sort, yet without honest dialogue the reform agenda will not achieve deep change in the system. The habit of critical analysis is an essential component of a vibrant and progressive sector and willingness to name issues causing disquiet is a sign of growing maturity of any relationship.

In this context it was encouraging that some concerns were raised. While few people would be willing to openly challenge the worth of the values in a public workshop, it was noted that there could be dynamic tensions between some of the values, such as safety and self determination, in the real world. The need to develop greater trust between government and non-government parts of the sector was also raised and discussed openly at one of the workshops. Another small group, not involved in previous consultations about the statement, seemed as if they would have liked to go back to basics and debate the relevance and meaning of the values. While this was not possible within the time available at the workshops, the questioning attitude is a positive thing.

Generally however, people gave the impression that they left the workshops feeling positive. They had identified many powerful enablers of change including:

We have a common vision now.

There is a strong government mandate and a commitment to greater transparency

The issues have been thoroughly and thoughtfully named and there is a broad consensus about a general way forward.

There is a sense that the power balance is shifting and a feeling of being listened to, respected, invited in.

We have skills in the sector and there is a capacity to give greater support to each other. We can also access national and international expertise.

There is more energy from the community and greater involvement of people with disabilities and their families.

There is new blood and new direction and we have permission to be innovative.

There is broad participation and more people to spread the word.

There is a passion for change that you can feel.

3 Impact of the vision and values on the service system

Community

All people with disabilities have opportunities for personal relationships and for meaningful involvement in the ACT community in positive and creative ways, building on their individual abilities. This in turn enhances the skills, perspectives and diversity of the ACT community as more people have the opportunities to be involved in the lives of people with disabilities

Access to information

All people with disabilities and/or their representatives give and receive accurate and timely and understandable information and are supported in that process to enable appropriate decisions to be made

Creativity and Development

All people with disabilities have the opportunity to enrich the community through their own growth and development. Research and recognition of the unique life experiences and skills of people with disabilities, their families, friend and carers, provide ongoing opportunities for learning.

People with disabilities and their families seek the security that good support services will be available when they need them. However, physical structures and commitment to longevity of a program format do not necessarily guarantee that. Increasingly, in all areas of human service design, focus on the needs of the person is leading to investment in much greater fluidity and flexibility. In this setting, the sense of security around service provision would be derived from:

- an ongoing and imbedded community commitment to good outcomes for people with disabilities which also enables greater participation in mainstream services.
- a focus on individual service design creates a range of support options which provides much greater choice of specialist services where these are required.

In this more flexible form of service design, commitment to a strongly held vision and values becomes not an optional extra but a fundamental driver of quality.

The greatest leverage for improved quality is not within the individual worker's performance or within the manager's efforts to deal with the stream of daily problems, but in the careful design and redesign of the service system itself. (O'Brien, undated) Changes in the way services are designed and delivered may be unsettling for some people – particularly those who have fought hard to gain certain services. It will take time for them to trust that the new approach will deliver what they need. Realistically this trust will not come through the rhetoric of a vision and values statement. It will only come from the vision and values in action. It will emerge as a result of consistent and reliable good service over a long period of time.

We need to demonstrate that this new way is possible. This will give families confidence that support will be available when they need it. We should plan reform in transitional phases to build trust and we should not remove services before we implement new ones.

If service is developed around the person there are potentially many service choices possible and the fear of loss of service should be reduced.

Assessing the extent to which service design and delivery is consistent with the vision and values is often thought to be too hard. However, one person at the workshops raised the idea of using model coherency (Wolfensberger and Glenn, 1975 in Cocks 2001) as a means of analysing how well a

service reflects the vision and values.³ Even well meaning services may congregate, segregate and control using a service model designed for organisational convenience rather than for people. Openness to this form of review is a healthy way to raise awareness about hidden inconsistencies between the way programs are designed and the goals they espouse.

Mainstream services based on the vision and values

Equality

All people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities with the rest of society. Equality is promoted by people with disabilities, their advocates and supporters.

‘People with disabilities have had a long struggle to get their rights recognised and respected.... This occurs best when there is only one rule or law for everyone and people with disabilities are seen as falling under its strictures and protections as much as anyone else. Justice of this kind is not solely imbedded in law it is also very dependent on the incorruptibility of people to place as much worth on the claims and interests of people with disabilities as are expected by all people.’ (Kendrick, 2001 p5). People with disabilities have continuously found themselves at the edges of community life more than in the main flow of it. This has been helped by our pattern of assistance organised around segregation. “Special” can mean living apart from the heart of community with access to far fewer choices than other members of the community in a range of areas.

Freedom of Access

All people with disabilities have full and direct access to all public places in the ACT

In the context of long waiting lists and the limited availability of specialist services, people’s choice of a service is a not necessarily a vindication of its quality, but an indication of a lack of other options. Access to mainstream services would give people with disabilities and their families wider choices in the same way that wider choices are generally available to other members of the community. Participants at the workshops felt that real access would not happen easily.

We need to challenge the barriers, challenge the assumptions. We need to ask ourselves whether is it ignorance or deliberate exclusion that prevents people with disabilities from being involved with mainstream services. In either case, community education strategies are required if we are to avoid the apartheid of separate systems that further marginalise.

³ This view of program design and delivery looks at the harmony between the most important needs of people and program elements including

- the overall model of service that the program embodies and the physical characteristics of the service
- the goals it pursues
- the way the service groups its clients
- the activities in which the service engages and the processes it adopts
- miscellaneous use of language, symbols and images.

Sources of inconsistency in human services may come from a mismatch between the assumptions underpinning the service, the identity and needs of the clients what the service chooses as its purpose and or any aspect of the processes adopted by the service. A model coherency analysis is likely to bring such anomalies to the fore

Inclusion

All people with disabilities are recognised and respected as valued and contributing members of society. Community education is an important means of achieving this outcome.

Greater visibility is a first step to getting real discussion happening about the rights of people with disabilities to access mainstream services. Having greater visibility does not dissolve concerns, but it raises awareness about the barriers to their doing so. The lived experience of people with disabilities needs to be recognised as an important contribution to community learning.

Many participants acknowledged that changed community attitudes were one prerequisite for greater access. They also acknowledged the strong role of government policy in this (see p12). Other suggestions included the following.

The mainstream system should also start with the person – it should make no difference whether they have a disability or not. Information should be freely available in a form that every person can understand and access easily.

We could start from the assumption that a person with a disability is mainstream. Then all housing would be accessible, all public and private transport would be accessible, all children would have the choice to participate in mainstream education. Services would adjust to fit the individual rather than the other way round. It is not only ‘services’, what about rights to participate in sport, recreation and entertainment like everyone else?

Mainstream professional education eg in medicine and in teaching - would include training in disability in the way that cultural awareness is now.

Specialist disability services based on the vision and values⁴

For many years providers have worked to learn their place in a service continuum that classifies every client according to disability related needs and provides a service that matches the needs common to that class of disability. Based on this logic we have built buildings, developed assessment methods, defined entry and exit criteria, written curricula, delineated staff roles and structures negotiated methods of fiscal and programmatic accountability, formed associations and built a constituency among people with disabilities and their families, employers and politicians. (O’Brien)

If the vision and values were in place, disability services wouldn’t look like a service system at all. The role of the services would be to make ‘life’ happen – this wouldn’t necessarily just be through funded services but through utilising the whole community.

⁴ The following terminology has been adopted in the ACT reform process: Specialist disability services are services requiring specialist/professional qualification and training eg therapy and nursing. Generic disability services are all other disability services ie those not requiring professional qualifications. At the time of the workshops, the term specialist was used to cover both.

Self determination

All people with disabilities, and/or their guardians are free to make or influence the decisions and choices that affect the course of their lives. This empowers them to realise their self-worth in every aspect of life

Family involvement

The roles of families, guardians, friends, carers and significant others in the lives of people with disabilities are supported valued and promoted

People with disabilities would be much more visible in the community so that in fact the role of specialist services would diminish over time – although there will always be a need for some specialist advice and skilled support. However, we don't like the term 'case manager'- lives are not cases to be managed - but we do need 'linkers'. Linkers would develop the relationship with the person with a disability and will help them build a flexible system of support drawn from mainstream and specialist services according to their need and choice.

The start would be in getting to know the person – who they are and what is important for them. The person's individuality would be preserved throughout and they would have greater opportunity to develop their skills and to exercise choice. It is important to also to be constantly challenging our own assumptions and the assumptions of people with disabilities and of their families about what is possible.

We have to recognise that the transition from no power to a partnership may not be achieved in one step for some people. We need to demonstrate that it is possible and give families confidence that support will be available. It could be done in transitional phases - particularly with older parents who may fear the withdrawal of services. Services should not be removed before new ones have been created.

There would be a network of relationships - government, non-government, service providers, community members- which supported people with disabilities. Expertise and resources would be maximised through cooperation and sharing good practice. Technology would be used to streamline information sharing (with client permission) and to access good ideas nationally and internationally.

Planning is important, but it would be flexible planning covering transition points and age appropriate responses across a range of life roles. It would relate to education, employment, home life, independence, relationships, recreation and social life as in the mainstream community. It would be allow for choice and for changes to be made. There would be a balance between flexibility and confidence that future needs can be met.

There would be broader planning too so that the population which may need support from specialist services is known and there is an idea of their needs now and in the future.

There need to be pathways to mainstream services and people should have choices about where they obtain the services they need. Funds need to be unbundled and individualised to enable this to happen.

Quality in specialist services

Quality improvement was not discussed in great detail at the workshops, but was implicit in many comments about reform in the service system area. The spirit of the conversation was in line with previous work produced by the DRG which described a close relationship between quality and the vision and values. They said that quality in the disability area should be assessed according to 'the outcomes for each and every person who relies on the service for support and whether these outcomes are sustained over time'. The vision and values are fundamental to quality because they describe the sorts of personal outcomes that should be used as goals for service quality. (DRG Discussion Paper No3, p 5)

Culture of excellence

Services that support people with disabilities, their families and friends are flexible and innovative and aim for and continue to be at world best practice levels

The lack of specific comment on quality may be for several reasons. Many participants are aware that one of the disability reform working parties is looking specifically at the development of a quality improvement framework for disability and they may have assumed the detailed work will be done there. As well, while 'quality issues' are mentioned under specialist service delivery in the system design diagram used at the workshop (see Attachment 2) 'standards' are placed under corrective and protective services. This may have sent people's thinking down the compliance track although most would recognise that a service improvement model is more productive. For others, the vision and values statement itself was seen as a broad structure for quality improvement. There was interest - perhaps because of perceptions of past failures of quality in the ACT - in ensuring that the vision and values are made real through some form of external monitoring.

Audits are necessary!

Organisations could use model coherency to review their approach against the values. (See p8).

How will we know organisations are working within the vision and values framework? Monitoring is part of supporting improvement.

Corrective and protective services based on the vision and values

Representation

All people with disabilities are empowered through advocacy support and representation of their needs and rights where necessary

Consumer Power

When obtaining supports and services all people with disabilities enjoy protection, choice, information and redress, and can define their own needs to the same extent as other consumers

Safety

Optimal levels of safety for people with disabilities are determined in consultation with all stakeholders

People involved in this conversation recognised that if the vision and values were implemented it would have an impact on corrective and protective services.

If all service systems were based on the vision and values there would be little need for specialised corrective and protective services.

Grievances would be handled within mainstream services.

Funding would be individualised and portable so people would have real choice. They could go somewhere else if they were not satisfied.

The community would protect people.

They talked also about other desirable changes at the informal level.

It'd be safe to make complaints. We'd have a culture of feedback – both positive and negative. Many things would be handled as 'concerns' rather than complaints.

The role of advocates might shift to a higher level – looking at systemic issues.

Government roles to support the vision and values

People at the workshops acknowledged that government is a powerful player in the disability sector – not only through Disability ACT but also through the other government departments which undertake activities affecting the lives of citizens.

Start reform inside government departments. Government is a major provider and funder of mainstream services. It is ideally placed to influence them towards a more inclusive approach.

Partnership

All people with disabilities have the opportunity to work collaboratively with government and the community to set agendas where appropriate and to be leaders and decision makers, particularly in the development and reform of relevant services. All parties have a clear understanding of their relationship and share relevant information with each other.

Why couldn't people with disabilities have the opportunity to be included in policy development over a wide range of areas – not just disability - the same as any other member of the community?

However, the major focus of this conversation about the role of government was on the specialised areas involved with disability. Participants recognised that some tasks such as legislative reform are clearly government responsibility (with community input).

We want them to challenge legislation that permits discrimination.

Some other roles where government is best equipped to provide leadership or to undertake the task itself (again with community advice) include overall strategic planning for the sector including identifying broad areas of unmet need, policy development, broad community education programs, and support for sector development.

Government could facilitate a broader range of partnerships across the sector, with mainstream services and with business. We want less competition, more cooperation.

Participants accepted these roles and will look to government for strong and informed leadership in these areas and possibly, as a consequence of these workshops, for a living demonstration of the vision and values in action. They acknowledged also that there are some freedoms available to the community sector which are denied government.

We could adopt a politician and – as part of community awareness raising - make it our business to help them to fully understand the issues.

As well, some people felt that current government roles warrant critical examination.

Government should re-examine its role in service delivery.

We'd like to see agencies and government working together to incorporate the vision and values into contracts and contract management arrangements.⁵

People attending the workshops appeared to be open to working closely with government and, at the same time, the possible need for some confidence building around relations between government and community organisations was acknowledged.

Transparency

Principles, priorities and processes for people with disabilities and their families are public and clear.

Equity

Sufficient resources for people with disabilities are distributed strategically to best meet their overall needs taking a holistic view of the community

⁵ The whole of government approach set out in the recent draft policy paper "From Purchaser/Provider to Partnerships" and in the "Compact", which was released in 2001 and is a statement of understanding about the relationship between government and the community sector, provide generic frameworks for assisting this relationship building.

4 Strengthening the sector

Networks and support

The challenge for all in the sector is to move beyond slogans and to engage in the real work necessary to change ourselves and our own roles and relationships so that we can meet the demands and realise the new possibilities inherent in these reforms.

Fear, anger, anxiety and envy are as much a part of changing ways of working as are rational planning, creative problem solving, skilled performance and thoughtful negotiation. (O'Brien) Shifts in the fundamental dimensions of life do create stress as well as excitement and we need to recognise this. Our ability to navigate through this depends on our recognising this stress and supporting one another to work effectively. In order to help people develop the cohesion and esprit necessary to face the challenges of reform, those involved in the change will need opportunities to meet person to person, to offer one another practical help and encouragement, to talk about their hopes and frustrations, and to make enough sense of things to allow movement forward.

Self-confidence will build as people work together on the challenge of expanding the real opportunities available to people with disabilities.

Networks empower people to work towards change

We could encourage the sector to build relationships around shared clients and shared issues..

We could set up formal structures for communication, support and sharing experience and good practice. We could network with other sectors and the mainstream.

We could acknowledge when someone does something good and celebrate achievements.

The vision and values can provide a framework for sector development.

We should have more forums on the vision and values to 'concretise' them. Could there be an information paper explaining the reforms and the vision and values to others?

Workforce development

There was strong agreement in this and previous consultations that developing the workforce is a critical determinant of the success of the reforms. On the basis of these consultations it would seem that the workforce is keen to see development activities happen - and soon.

Let's pool the professional development dollars across the sector and arrange some special activities such as special speakers, best practice forums, cross sector training.

Organisations could actively explore how to enable people with disabilities and their families to participate in training and staff development activities as trainers.

The selection, recruitment and retention of staff is critical. We need cross sector intensive training and development and secondments between the government and non-government sector would be useful.

There should be more training for staff and carers, especially young carers.

Employ people with disabilities as trainers in mainstream and specialist areas.

Staff should be trained in implementing the vision and values.

Contributing at a person level

The comments below recognise that the sector is made up of individuals and that each individual can make a difference. While it could be argued that this ‘personal stuff’ has no place in a report such as this, it is impossible to understand the nature of the consultations undertaken around the disability reform process without them

We should ask ourselves whether we believe in the vision and values. If we do, let’s walk the talk. Our actions can inspire others.

We can go back to our groups and talk about these things and encourage others to be part of the process.

There is a great emphasis on the people aspect of change. We all need to model the values.

Model good ways – help others do the right thing without being preachy.

Let’s recognise our own expertise. We can speak up about disability. We can give a positive and committed message to family and friends.

Question things – ask why? Maybe you will shift someone’s thinking.

Raise your own public profile to influence decision making.

We could get our organisations to make a statement about how they can meet the vision and values. We can incorporate them into our policies, practices and procedures.

Notice and act on issues of accessibility. We can challenge segregation in daily living wherever we come across it. We can be assertive we can be courageous.

Resist artificial barriers – we are all people.

5 Conclusions and next steps

Conclusions

These workshops were one part of the reform process, but they are not the last opportunity for involvement. Nevertheless, recording the combined views of participants allows us to note where we are in our thinking at this stage. It is hoped that by reporting these views that further conversations will be stimulated which move us closer to where we want to be.

The following general conclusions are provided in this spirit to provide a trigger for those future conversations. There appears to be:

In relation to the vision and values

- general support for the content of the vision and values and a strong interest in seeing them in action across the sector.
- a growing realisation of the need to re-examine our view of what disability is because assumptions about disability have a major impact on access to full citizenship and on how services to support people with disabilities to achieve this are designed and delivered.

In relation to service delivery:

- an assumption by many that the person should be at the centre of service delivery and a deepening understanding of what this means
- a commitment to quality improvement and an interest in a range of different assessment processes to ensure quality.
- a desire for more learning across the sector – both from experts with lived experience (people with disabilities and their families), from experts who can contribute to theoretical and practical learning and from the good practice of colleagues from the ACT and elsewhere.
- strongly articulated commitment to inclusion of people with disabilities and their families in the community and as partners in service design and deliver.

In relation to strengthening the sector:

- a wish for stronger relationships across the sector and for sharing of resources for professional development activities.
- identification of workforce development as critical to the success of the reforms.

In relation to government:

- acknowledgement of the important role of government policy on community attitudes and the hope that government will show strong leadership here.
- an expectation that government will review its own roles as service provider and contract manager.
- a willingness to work closely with government while acknowledging the need for confidence-building in the relationship.

In relation to individuals:

- recognition that the courage and energy of individuals is needed for reform process to succeed.

Next steps

One clear message from these workshops was the need to integrate the vision and values into policy, planning and service design and delivery. A second message - from this and other consultations - is that the person should be at the centre of all that we do. Another message related to the need to keep people informed of what is happening.

In response to these messages, the next steps in the vision and values component of the reform process aim to keep people informed and to make some explicit links between the vision and values and the person centred approach by taking the following actions.

- This paper will be distributed to stakeholders for comment and to stimulate the conversations necessary to fully understand the implications of the vision and values – a first step to building them into attitudes and practice.
- The disability reform working parties will be briefed on the outcomes of the workshops so that they can incorporate the views expressed here in their work.
- As an expression of the person centred approach, focus groups will be held in late June early July with people with disabilities and their families to link the vision and values to the real lives of real people rather than to categories of disability. The outcome of the focus groups will be the development of a statement describing what people with disabilities and their families can expect at each stage of life from a service system based on the vision and values. Future service planning and priorities will be structured around these views.
- Key influencers such as members of the Disability Advisory Council, senior members of the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services, relevant Commonwealth officers and other key players will be invited to participate in workshops on the importance of the vision and values as a framework for all aspects of the ACT approach to disability and disability reform.
- All of this work will also be used to inform priorities in the 2003-2005 strategic plan for disability in the ACT which is currently being developed.

6 References

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Government response to the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services*

Steps to Reform*

*These papers are available at
<http://dhcs.act.gov.au/disability/Publications/Publications.htm>

The vision and values statement and key aspects of reform

The Board of Inquiry into Disability Services in the ACT

The recommendations of this inquiry (colloquially known as the Gallop Report) strongly endorsed a person centred approach to planning and delivery of services and noted that in the ACT context this would involve "reforming the service system from a limited range of fixed options to an open menu of supports designed person by person".

In order to achieve this a range of recommendations were made relating to:

- amendments to the disability legislation
- government structures and arrangements
- government policy for purchasing and delivery of services and contracting between government and non-government service providers
- allocating resources including increasing resources to non-government providers
- engaging people with disabilities and their families in decision making about the services and individualised service approaches and models that promote integration in the community
- good practice guidelines pertaining to the disability standards and external evaluation or auditing processes to assess quality
- strengthening complaints and appeals mechanisms.

Such wide ranging recommendations can only be addressed in a coherent way if there is a commonly agreed endpoint or vision, and approaches to reform are guided by commonly held values based on clear assumptions about what disability means in our community.

The Disability Reform Group

The Disability Reform Group which comprised government and non-government members working in partnership, was set up in February 2002 to provide advice on the government's response to the recommendations of the Gallop Report and on other areas identified by the community as in need of reform. The group completed its work and reported to government at the end of 2002. In a media release at that time it stated:

The cornerstone of reform is the recognition that people with disabilities are full citizens of the ACT and as such deserve choices to assist them to lead full and worthwhile lives.

In a previous work they had identified that one of the key questions was whether services offered to people with disabilities are 'potent and relevant' (in assisting them to access full citizenship). They recognised that many people were satisfied with the services already provided and were concerned that services not be reduced or changed. However they also recognised that many people were interested in considering a wider range of services which would provide more possibilities for people with disabilities and their families in the ACT.⁶ To support this approach, one of the group's key deliverables was the vision

⁶ DRG Discussion Paper No 1 July 2002

and values statement. It has been designed to provide a picture of how life should be for people with disabilities and their families and to provide a framework for reform.

The next stages of reform

Work aimed at developing the right infrastructure to support reform is continuing. Five disability reform working groups, each comprising government and community members and co-chaired by a community and a government representative, have been set up. Their task is to provide advice and guidance to government on the following particular issues identified as being critical to improved options for people with disabilities and their families in the Gallop Report:

- Access eligibility and funding
- Legislative reform
- Housing and tenancy
- Quality and standards
- Workforce reform.

The guiding framework for their work and for other reform work being undertaken by government is the vision and values statement.

Disability Reform Group: Vision & Values Statement

Vision

All people with disabilities achieve what they want to achieve, live how they choose to live, and are valued as full and equal members of the ACT community.

Values

Community

All people with disabilities have opportunities for personal relationships and for meaningful involvement in the ACT community in positive and creative ways, building on their individual abilities. This in turn enhances the skills, perspectives and diversity of the ACT community as more people have the opportunity to be involved in the lives of people with disabilities.

Inclusion

All people with disabilities are recognised and respected as valued and contributing members of society. Community education is an important means of achieving this outcome

Self-determination

All people with disabilities and/or their guardians are free to make or influence the decisions and choices that affect the course of their lives. This empowers them to realise their self-worth in every aspect of life.

Equality

All people with disabilities enjoy equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities with the rest of society. Equality is promoted by people with disabilities, their advocates and supporters.

Family Involvement

The roles of families, guardians, friends, carers and significant others in the lives of people with disabilities are supported, valued and promoted.

Equity

Sufficient resources for people with disabilities are distributed strategically to best meet their overall needs, taking a holistic view of the community.

Freedom of Access

All people with disabilities have full and direct access to all public places in the ACT.

Access to Information

All people with disabilities and/or their representatives give and receive accurate, timely and understandable information, and are supported in that process to enable appropriate decisions to be made.

Transparency

Principles, priorities and processes for service provision for people with disabilities are public and clear.

Partnership

All people with disabilities have the opportunity to work collaboratively with government and the community to set agendas where appropriate and to be leaders and decision makers, particularly in the development and reform of relevant services. All parties have a clear understanding of their relationship and share relevant information with each other.

Consumer Power

When obtaining supports and services, all people with disabilities enjoy protection, choice, information and redress, and can define their own needs, to the same extent as other consumers.

Culture of Excellence

Services that support people with disabilities, their families and friends are flexible and innovative, and aim for, and continue to be at world best practice levels.

Creativity and Development

All people with disabilities have the opportunity to enrich the community through their own growth and development. Research and recognition of the unique life experiences and skills of people with disabilities, their families, friends and carers, provide ongoing opportunities for learning.

Safety

Optimal levels of safety for people with disabilities are determined in consultation with all stakeholders.

Representation

All people with disabilities are empowered through advocacy support and representation of their needs and rights where necessary.

System Design – Conceptualising the ‘system’

Main (primary) System of Support (Private Domain)



Individuals



Families



Community

Mainstream Generic Systems

- *Education*
- *Health*
- *Housing*
- *Transport*
- *Justice*
- *Etc*

*Issues: Access
Adaptation*

‘Formal’ Disability Systems

- *DSP - \$34m*
- *HACC*
- *FACS – employment, etc*

*Issues: Moving from ‘fixed’ models to more open menu
Quality issues*

*Waiting Lists/capacity
Etc, etc.*

Formal Corrective & protective Safeguards

- *Complaints,*
- *Advocacy services*
- *Service monitoring and evaluation*
- *Guardianship*
- *Standards*
- *Community visitors, etc*

Government Roles

Legislation, Planning, Funding Priorities, Workforce planning, Cross – govt negotiations, Monitoring gaps in service delivery, Care & protection of very vulnerable people, Ensuring adequate safeguards

Shared Responsibilities (Shared Business)

Vision, Values, Public Policy, Very vulnerable people, Capacity building, Qualities of the system, Service development & Innovation, Priorities