



community partners in disability

Summer 2003

Issue 2

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A message from the **Executive Director**

2003 has been a year of beginnings for us.

There has been some terrific progress in working towards change in the disability sector — laying the foundations for genuine partnerships between Disability ACT and the community — tackling the big issues — and taking some risks in raising the profile of the issues around disability in the wider community.

I want to thank those people, groups and organisations that have worked with us throughout the year to develop and progress these initiatives. We all have much to celebrate and I am confident that we have an excellent base to start a new year of consolidation.

Thank you to the Disability ACT team. I acknowledge the commitment, enthusiasm and creativity that you bring to achieving positive outcomes for our clients, their families and carers.

This issue of *Community Partners* reflects the spirit of celebration, rest and relaxation we should all be entering into over the next month. I also have great pleasure in profiling the first ever ACT Inclusion Awards.

I would like to make special thanks to the steering group who worked so hard to bring this event to fruition. Thank you too, to the sponsors who supported this very important initiative, and to DPI, our partners in the event. Congratulations to our winners and nominees for being part of such a wonderful occasion.

See you in the new year.

Lois Ford

Executive Director



The first-ever ACT Inclusion Awards were presented at a gala celebration dinner on 3 December 2003. Capital Careers—Jacqui Ryles and Ros Williams received the prestigious 'ACT Chief Minister's Excellence in Inclusion' Award.

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department of
disability, housing &
community services



building our city
building our community
ACT Government

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Kim Hancock representing major sponsor Canberra Cabs and Emma Dykes, Canberra Theatre.



John Meyer (ACTPLA) and Minister Wood.



Viola Kalokerinos from Curtin Milkbar and Minister Wood.



Leanne Alexander accepts the award on behalf of the Vikings Group—commendation for medium-large business.

‘Best day ever’

Celebrating International Day

Canberra celebrated the UN International Day of People with a Disability in style on 3 December 2003 with Awards, activities and free offers being enjoyed by people with disabilities around the city.

A highlight of the celebrations was a brand-new concept, the ACT Inclusion Awards. These Awards were presented at a Gala Celebration Dinner at the AIS Arena, with guests of honour including the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Bill Wood MLA.

The evening’s celebrations attracted more than 400 guests and were hosted by journalist and former Lateline presenter, Maxine

McKew. Guests were both thrilled and moved by the mountain climbing adventures of guest speaker Warren Macdonald—a double amputee—and by the music of pianist James Kearney, believed to be Australia’s first deaf music graduate. In the earlier part of the evening ‘Visions of International Day’ showcased events all around Canberra through a video collage.

The Awards recognised individuals, businesses and agencies that go the extra mile to make their services and activities more accessible to people with disabilities by improving access to their goods and services.

The most prestigious Award, the ACT Chief Minister’s Excellence in Inclusion Award, was presented by the Minister for Disability Services, Bill Wood MLA to Capital Careers.



Left to right: Maxine McKew (MC), Amanda Dolejsi (sign language interpreter), Craig Wallace (DPI President) and Minister Bill Wood.

Capital Careers demonstrated inclusion by providing a range of highly specialised equipment to facilitate access to training for people with disabilities, created work experience placements, established training and development initiatives, and had subsidised training for people with disabilities.

More than 30 nominations were received overall. Winners were selected by an independent panel, which included representatives from the business and disability communities.

The Awards are an initiative of the ACT Government, (Disability, Housing and Community Services) in partnership with community sector organisations including Disabled Peoples Initiative (DPI) ACT, who hosted the Awards.

Sponsors for the Awards included Canberra organisations, businesses and ACT Government, with Koomari Association, the ACT Children's ResourceLink, RPR Consulting; Canberra Cabs; Canberra City News; The Pavilion Hotel and Business ACT all showing their support.

The Day also saw around 450 'International Day ticket holders' with disabilities enjoy a host of discounts and offers from businesses and cultural attractions. These included 2 for 1 tickets from Hoyts Cinema's and free 'come and try' rides all day on ACTION buses for wheelchair users on wheelchair accessible buses. Thanks to the National Zoo and Aquarium, Hoyts, ACTION Buses and AMF Bowling for their generous support.

Winners in each category

Small business

Curtin Milkbar

Medium-large business

Commendation to Vikings Group

Access to Government

ACT Planning & Land Authority (ACTPLA)

Inclusion in Tourism

Canberra Theatre Centre

ACT Chief Minister's

Excellence in Inclusion

Capital Careers

Commendations

GoBush Tours

TenFit

Software

Improvements Pty Ltd

Carlos of Watson

Alison McGregor, Principal Weston Creek Primary School.

Workforce working group

The Workforce Working Group has a vision for the ACT: to have a flexible and skilled workforce with supportive infra-structures that meet the diverse needs of ACT citizens who have a disability.

The term 'workforce' is interpreted in a broad way and encompasses:

- paid direct disability specific care workers, their managers and associated policy and practice infrastructure
- unpaid carers and their support networks
- paid indirect workers (eg nurses, taxi drivers etc)
- advocacy groups, and
- volunteer agencies and their management.

The Group is working on a number of tasks to move forward. These include:

- providing input into an analysis of the existing paid workforce, for example, how big is it? how are people employed?
- developing a detailed inventory of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that would be required by

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the workforce to address the needs of ACT people who have a disability.

- investigating different strategies that have the potential to spread the message of the Visions and Values statement throughout the paid workforce, as well as looking at strategies that may have an impact on some employment such as taxi drivers or nurses.
- developing strategies that would assist the Disability

Sector to work together to better coordinate training opportunities and influence training bodies to provide appropriate resources and training opportunities for the disability workforce.

These are only a few of the tasks on the Group's 'to-do list' to tackle some of the big 'foundation' issues early in 2004. Sue Pedder has been employed to work with the Group. There are other issues that need to be addressed, but

these need to be informed by the outcomes of the foundation issues.

The people who make up the Workforce Working Group have worked steadily and productively to develop a sound momentum. The members have met each fortnight since February, and have demonstrated a great commitment in the pursuit of workforce reform strategies to meet its vision.

“to have a flexible and skilled workforce with supportive infrastructures that meet the diverse needs of ACT people who have a disability.”

Quality and standards working group

The Quality and Standards Working Group has developed a work plan that details the tasks that will need to be completed over the next 18 months.

There are three parts to the workplan:

- The development of a standards framework that will include examples of best practice to sit underneath the ACT Disability Services Act, and be compatible

with the Commonwealth Disability Standards.

- The development of a process which is consultative, and communicates the progress of the Quality and Standards Working Group.
- Development of a proposal on quality process for government approval.

A business case has been submitted to Disability ACT for the development, consultation and communication of the proposed Standards Framework.

Disability ACT has agreed-in-principle to the proposals in the Business Case. Kerry Fischbein will work with the Group on the Standards Framework, with input from the Quality and Standards Working Group.

The Working Group is currently looking at a number of different client feedback and complaints processes with a view to determining how to support good client feedback.

“This work will inform recommendations that will be made to Disability ACT in the near future.”

ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme — more than just a job...

For Marion Trezise being able to help is a reward and an inspiration. On the eve of her retirement after 15 years with the Scheme, Marion talks to *Community Partners* about her work.

The ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme was initiated by the Commonwealth Government Department of Territories in 1986. I began work with the Scheme two years later. I have enjoyed every minute of being part of a service that helps people when they most need it.

The sheer courage and fortitude of our many clients who simply get on with their life despite facing almost insurmountable problems, has been a constant source of inspiration to me. Being able to help such people has been both my reward and motivation.

I remember the time when there had been a raging storm. I had a call from a wonderful old lady who wanted to know if I could tell her who would be able to help her replant a lemon tree that the storm had uprooted!

Her very words were: "You've helped me with so many other things dear, that I am sure you can help me with this!" Of course, I did. It was all part of the service. Somehow, there was an expectation on the part of our callers that we would know whatever it was that they needed to know! And somehow, we mostly managed to meet their expectations!

I have received calls from people in tears on numerous occasions. Some had been diagnosed with a terminal illness, others experiencing transitions in life that meant a loss — not only of mobility — but of the way they had always seen themselves.

Some men felt the loss of their driver's licence very keenly, not because it limited their mobility, but because it changed the way they were able to assist their family.

At these times I would chat and listen to them and tell them to get themselves a 'cuppa' and that I would have one with them too. After a while, they would say "Thank you, I feel better now". And that meant so much to me.

Some of our older members came from times when taxis were considered a luxury, and so they use the vouchers that we issue very sparingly. They are unfailingly courteous, and often write a little thank you note or phone to thank us. With so many stories, it's no wonder that I am 'hooked' on the Taxi Subsidy Scheme!

I was recently asked what I loved most about my job. My reply was the satisfaction of actually being able to help people.

I absolutely believe in the Scheme. It has made such a difference to the lives of so many people. I want to thank those people that I have worked with over the years for their never-failing support.

Marion Trezise



Canberra Cabs... making it happen

Key partners in the Taxi Subsidy Scheme are Canberra Cabs. The professionalism of the company was acknowledged at the recent ACT Inclusion Awards with the nomination of two drivers, Rodney Mackintosh and Ernie Velstra. The drivers were nominated for their care and sensitivity when assisting passengers who have a disability. Canberra Cabs was also a major sponsor of the Awards.

It's holiday time!

Summer is holiday time! There is a lot of information out there, but it's not always available in one place. We've put together some tips and information for travelling and staying safe over the summer. Much of this is general common sense, but worth a reminder.

Planning: the key to a great trip

- Pre-plan the best route and obtain maps, use the accessible loo's list www.toiletmap.gov.au to work out possible places to take a break.
- Consider blankets, pillows or neck supports to make life comfortable for the passengers.
- Bring activities such as games, writing or drawing equipment, walkman etc. This helps to prevent boredom (not to mention keeping the driver happy).
- Take breaks, move about or rest regularly. This is particularly important when travelling by plane to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis! Regular breaks ensure concentration, physical comfort and refresh body and mind.
- If there is a need for bulky equipment, eg: shower chair, wheelchair, electric scooter etc. consider hiring rather than transporting it. Tourist information agencies in the local area may be able to assist with information regarding hire companies. The Carers Association may also be able to provide information on www.carersact.asn.au
- If you are planning to travel by aeroplane, train or bus, discuss your personal requirements with the organisation well in advance as they are able to accommodate a variety of specific requests and often will arrange for additional staff to assist where necessary.
- If continence is an issue consider options that may assist. This may involve arranging assistance to access facilities due to mobility or balance issues. Consider using products or devices to ensure comfort or personal safety — maybe discuss with your doctor.
- If behavioural issues are a possibility for a traveller, consider and plan for activities and breaks that may reduce the likelihood of problems. Be flexible and adapt as necessary.
- Recognisable identification, such as a Medic Alert bracelet may be advisable for those with chronic conditions such as diabetes and for those with potentially dangerous allergies. These types of identification are internationally recognised and may assist you are diagnosed and treated promptly, as well as overcoming any language difficulties.

Getting there..

Trains...

Cityrail provides rail transport within the Sydney rail network and staff can assist with individual requirements when possible. To discuss your particular needs phone **131 500** or talk to **Customer Relations** on **02 9379 4850**.

Countrylink provides long distance rail transport. Trains do have wheelchair access and facilities on board, such as disabled toilets and equipment to lock wheelchairs in place while in transit.

Pension card holders are entitled to four free trips per year within NSW and after this you can travel at half fare. If you require a carer to accompany you concessions can be requested. If the passenger is blind, they are entitled to have a carer travel with them free of charge. Staff are available to assist travellers by obtaining foods and snacks for them from the buffet carriage on request.

Both **Cityrail** and **Countrylink** staff are keen to discuss any specific requests on **132232** to ensure a safe and enjoyable rail travelling experience.

(or trains, planes and automobiles!)

Planes...

Airline travel is attractive because of the shorter travel times to get to your destination. However planning is necessary to ensure that the airline can meet your needs. People with some disabilities (such as mobility or chronic medical issues), may be required to complete a 'Fitness to Travel' form to ensure they can travel by air safely.

In some instances, a medical certificate may also be required, however the airline will advise if this is required.

Airlines generally do not have seating that offers additional torso restraints or harnesses, and passengers are unable to travel in their own wheelchairs due to the aisles being narrow.

Staff with most airlines will assist the traveller with transfers into the airline chair, boarding planes and transferring to seating on board. They can assist with check-in and mobility throughout the terminal, however a request must be made when making the booking to ensure that additional staff are able to assist at the times required.

Facilities are available to assist clients to board planes including tarmac boarding and disembarking. However, these can vary, so make sure you check how this happens when booking flights.

You will need to advise the airlines of any specific equipment or aides required by the traveller as these may not be included in the baggage or hand luggage limits.

Generally airline staff are unable to assist travellers with moving about the plane while in flight, or with toileting and some aspects of assisting people with meals and refreshments.

If assistance is likely to be required, a carer must travel with the passenger. This is available at a 50% discount through NICAN (see info below).

Contact the airlines several weeks prior to travel to discuss your individual needs.

Concession travel

NICAN administers the Carer Concession Card. The Card is issued to people with a disability and high level support needs who require the full-time assistance of a carer.

A person is eligible if they need to have one-on-one support when seated on the plane for assistance with meals and refreshments, transferring to the bathroom, orientation, communicating with the flight staff etc.

A person would not be eligible if they only need assistance boarding and departing the plane or terminal. The Card is a photo ID card which is valid for three years and has an administration fee of \$27.50 including GST.

**NICAN Freecall/TTY: 1800 806 769 or
02 6285 3713**
www.nican.com.au

There are conditions that apply when booking flights, so check what these are before you book.

Automobiles...

Not many companies specialise in modified vehicle rental. There are a few, and scanning the internet should locate something suitable. As a starting point try **www.wheelabout.com**.

NRMA can provide travel information including accommodation guides, roadside assistance, and information about disabled facilities available in various regions etc. Other states offer similar roadside assistance services.

NRMA **131111**
www.mynrma.com.au

Taxis — Ordering the taxi well in advance can avoid travel delays. This is particularly important when requiring a multicab. When booking accommodation, also enquire if taxis or other suitable transport is available in the area, so that you can get around to make the most of your holiday. Members of the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme can use their vouchers interstate.

Coach/buses — Again, contact the coach/bus company well in advance to discuss your individual requirements. Access and mobility can be an issue with bus transport, and carers should accompany the traveller if assistance is required for toileting, snacks, communication, etc during the trip.

Travelling with all those 'extras'

There are organisations that hire equipment for people with disabilities. Best advice is to contact the Tourist Information Service of your destination to find out what services are available.

If you need to hire equipment for your out-of-town visitors to Canberra, check out:

Mobility Matters and Surgical Orthopaedic Services of Canberra: hire wheelchairs, bathroom equipment, beds and hoists. A list of equipment available for hire is available. Contact **6280 7244**.

Equipment Loan Service: a loan and information service for short and long term equipment loans including wheelchairs, prothesis, continence aids, and walking aids. The service is only available to ACT residents receiving a Centrelink allowance. Contact **6205 9346**.

Help for planning holidays

Travel agencies are an obvious choice here. Most will research suitable places and ensure that the options suggested meet all of your individual requirements. You will probably be charged a fee for this (generally deducted from the total cost of the holiday once booked).

There are also a number of organisations and venues that provide supported holidays or services for people with disabilities. These can be found through the internet, but you could also consider the following:

Barrier Free Travel Consultants
(02 6655 1733)

mini@midroast.com.au

This is not a travel agency, but they assist people with a disability to plan their travel both in Australia and overseas. They have a large resource library and provide specialised information on

accessible accommodation, transport services, medical facilities and emergency contacts in the world's major cities.

Pipeline — Supported Holidays
(1800 243 065)

www.pipelineholidays.com.au.

Provides holidays for people with medium to low support requirements. They offer a variety of venues including Tasmania, Queensland, and America. Comprehensive brochure available upon request.

Travellers Aid Disability Access Service (03 9654 7690)

www.vicnet.net.au.

This group provides a help service (physical support) for visitors to Melbourne, eg wheelchair accessible-people can be met at the station, help with phones, booking and assistance with wheelchair taxis etc. Groups welcome.

Accommodation ideas

Accommodation for people with disabilities is often hard to find. The following websites may provide information on other holiday possibilities and general information that may be particularly suitable for people with disabilities.

Also, try NICAN for free information on discounts for air travel, and additional information on community groups, equipment hire, transport services, recreation options, tourism, sport and the arts for people with disabilities.

Victoria Holidays:
www.visitvictoria.com

DAISI: Accessible Accommodation and Holiday Ideas in NSW
www.daisi.asn.au

Accessible Queensland: A Travel Guide prepared by Tourism Queensland and includes information on accessible caravan parks.
www.accessiblequeensland.com

Outward Bound
info@outwardbound.com.au
1800 267 999

Aussiecare
www.aussiecare.com
03 58561 238

Includes a variety of information including links to other sites, travel tips and organisations.

Overseas travel

If you are travelling overseas, investigate if medications you may be taking are legal in other countries. This can be checked with www.smartraveller.gov.au. Also ensure that all prescriptions you may require filling are written as generic names, as trade names can differ among countries.

No matter where or how you travel, anyone with a pre-existing condition should consider carrying documentation stating basic health information such as blood type, current medication list, diagnosis of existing conditions and any allergies.

Summer: stay safe and healthy

Summer can bring extreme heat, and this can be one of the most underrated hazards. Each year, considerable numbers of people suffer from stress when the body absorbs more heat than it can dispel.

Some people are more at risk than others. This group includes the elderly and children, people with some disabilities; people who have alcohol or health problems, or are on medication or drugs that have a drying effect. Discuss how to best manage heat with your doctor, and plan ahead to reduce the effects that heat may have on you.

- If skin is likely to be exposed to the elements, apply sunscreen before leaving home as most

sunscreens don't take effect immediately. On the topic of sunscreens — lips, ears, tops of feet and scalps for those thin on top — are often forgotten.

- Remember, you can get sunburnt while travelling in a car, perhaps consider sun screen for anyone sitting for prolonged periods near a window especially if there is a risk of falling asleep during the trip.
- The slip, slop, slap message from a few decades ago still applies in the new millennium!
- Keep hydrated by drinking water regularly. Check with your doctor first if you are on a restricted fluid diet.

www.smartraveller.gov.au

www.visitvictoria.com

www.daisi.asn.au

www.accessiblequeensland.com

www.aussiecare.com

www.nican.com.au

www.mynrma.com.au

www.carersact.asn.au

Editors note: information is drawn from a variety of sources and is provided as a guide only. Readers should carefully consider whether any proposed activities are suitable. Details correct at time of publication.

Innovative planning workshop

Over the past few months the Client Guardian Forum (CGF) has begun introducing planning for the future, and is encouraging all service providers to understand the importance of planning.

To assist people with a disability and their families, a workshop called '**Do It Yourself (DIY): Planning for Alternative Tomorrows**' has been developed.

The 'DIY Planning' is focused on the family member with a disability. It is about planning for their needs, both current and into the future, taking into account the family unit and the extended network of people around them.

An on line 'Chat Room' provides an opportunity to network with people with a disability and their families, support organisations, and people with expertise and research knowledge both in Australia and across the world.

CGF looks forward to your continued support in the New Year and wish Christmas cheer to all. May the next 12 months be the beginning of new plans and creative ideas for the future.

For more information contact CGF on 6255 7855.

Personal experiences— a year of holiday adventures



The one that didn't get away: Des and Tony with staff member Ben Gough visit the aquarium.

Michael Cakalic who shares a group house with Des Geary, Ron Woodwell, Tony Aitken, gives a brief account of some of the fantastic holidays and short breaks that the group has been on over the last 12 months.

Melbourne madness

Des and Tony recently enjoyed a trip to Melbourne to attend a Rugby Union Football match, visits to the IMAX theatre and Irish Pub, markets and museums.

They commented on the exceptionally friendly nature of the Melbourne people, and were impressed to be offered discounts everywhere they went (without asking!), as well as getting fantastic friendly service at motels, football and all other venues. It was certainly a holiday to remember, and all look forward to their next trip to Melbourne!

Coastal journeys

The household have also been to Ulladulla where they enjoyed boating, beaches, the amusement venue Funland (for fun on the dodgem cars), dining out and sightseeing.

Another trip was a weekend at Batemans Bay visiting Michael's family. A trip to Sydney saw them enjoying a harbour cruise, sightseeing, and the aquarium.

Clarke Bay Farm at Narooma for a luxurious three week break was another highlight. During this trip they dined on a BBQ boat in the bay, and enjoyed visits to cheese factories, visiting local friends, daytrips to Tilba Tilba. Beaches, swimming, spas, bushwalking, sightseeing, bird watching, and visits to Batemans Bay, Birdland, and Mogo zoo were all part of the holiday menu.

Day trips around the local environs include Bowral to visit Tony's relatives, and a farm visit at Bungendore.

Michael says that holidays are something he thoroughly enjoys planning and participating in. The men are already organising future trips, including fishing trips to the coast, and a return trip to Melbourne. Day trips National Parks and additional trips to visit family members in various towns are also on the agenda!

“offered discounts everywhere they went (without asking!), as well as getting fantastic friendly service”

Access guidelines get green light

The ACT's long awaited Interim Guidelines for Access and Mobility have been signed by the ACT Planning Minister.

Craig Wallace, Chair of the ACT Access and Planning Advisory Committee which helped to develop the Guidelines congratulated the ACT Planning and Land Authority and ACT Planning Minister Simon Corbell.

According to Mr Wallace, the ACT Guidelines are a "reasonable response to a long wait for national action on aligning the Building Code and Australian Standards".

The Guidelines have involved a great deal of work and brought together experts and people with disabilities on many tricky technical questions.

"They also present an opportunity to plan our City's future better, especially as we begin to consider

the implications of the new Spatial Plan. Access is a classic case for intergenerational equity.

We need to recognise that we have no right to leave the communities of the future with a costly legacy of bad planning and bad design," Mr Wallace said.

The Guidelines were developed by ACTPLA and the ACT Access and Planning Advisory Committee. A copy of the guidelines is available at the web address below:

"an **opportunity** to plan our city's **future**"

www.actpla.act.gov.au/publications/disabilities/access_guidelines.pdf

Even more awards!

Disability ACT Individual Support Services recently received a commendation at the ACT OH&S Awards for its work on 'Audit of Cleaning Products' in DACT Individual Support Service houses.

This project generated several recommendations for the appropriate use of cleaning products and encourages a reduction in the range of products used.

In partnership with the ACT Dental Program, Disability ACT Individual Support Services was a finalist in the recent Quality First Awards for

its work on establishing a clinical pathway for clients when accessing dental services.

This clinical pathway was originally intended for clients with high and complex needs, but is now being implemented for all Disability ACT Individual Support Service clients.

"Disability ACT Individual Support Services was a **finalist** in the recent **Quality First Awards** for its work on establishing a clinical pathway for clients when accessing dental services."

Celebration...

images from the 2003 ACT Inclusion Awards



Left to Right: Amanda Dolesji, signing interpreter, Craig Wallace, president DPI and Matilda House welcoming guests to Ngunnawal country.



Warren Macdonald, climber and adventurer was the guest speaker.



Guests in the foyer of the AIS Visitors' Sports Centre.



Pianist James Kearney delighted the audience.

Photographs: Hotshots Photography, Peter Wymark
Visit www.hotshotsphotography for more images from the Awards evening.

Login is: inclusion awards and password: inclusion

Contact details

Disability ACT

Central Office

CFM Building	Telephone 6207 1086
12 Moore St	www.dhcs.act.gov.au
Canberra City	
GPO Box 158	
Canberra City 2601	

Your mailing details

Do we have your correct name and address details? Would you like an extra copy of the Newsletter? Do you want to stop receiving the newsletter?

Email: disability@act.gov.au