



community partners in disability

Spring 2003

Issue 1

In this issue:

The Power of Partnership

Challenge 2013

Towards a Better Future

Report Follows ISP Consultation

Strengthening our partnering role

Meeting High Support Needs

Focus on Youth

International Day of People with a Disability

Travelling Well

A More Accessible Government

A Letter from the ACT Disability Advisory Council

Working Collaboratively with the Commonwealth

The Road to Reform

department of disability, housing & community services



A message from the Executive Director

Welcome to the first edition of Community Partners in Disability.

Disability ACT is part of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. As a Department, we are working to improve outcomes for people with a disability in the ACT.

The new management team in Disability ACT has now been in place for some eight months. During this time it has begun the crucial task of relationship building with the disability sector.

As you know, the Gallop Report, in particular, was concerned about many aspects of government service providers and what it saw as a lack of consideration for the viewpoint of disability clients, families and allies.

The Department's approach is squarely based on cooperation, partnership and respect.

We are involved in a cultural change, and as these things take time, initially, we may not always get it right. But we will not shy from our responsibility and will continue to work with you to revise our

communications based on the formal and informal feedback we receive from you.

Disability ACT is a small but committed team. And we want to work with you to effect real and sustainable change.

We are committed to prioritising the issues you have identified as important, working to achieve the *Vision* that you assiduously developed and supported.

The reforms must be enduring. Staff will come and go, and our priorities will evolve, however the systematic strategy we develop, as well as the goals to which we all aspire, will remain constant.

You have my assurance that we will continue to work with you to achieve best practice in everything we do.

Things may not always appear to be progressing as quickly as we would wish. However, together we have taken some giant leaps. Even the smallest initiatives and innovations will contribute over time to the development of more and better services and lifestyles for people with disability in the ACT and the families that care for them.

Lois Ford Executive Director

'We are committed to prioritising the issues you have identified as important, working to achieve the *Vision* that you assiduously developed and support.'

The Power of **Partnership**

Working Groups Submit Plans

The Disability Reform Working Groups are joint community/government bodies created under the ACT Government's disability reform agenda, Steps to Reform.

The Groups have submitted work plans to the Executive Director of Disability ACT, outlining projects that they recommend be undertaken over the next two years specific to their terms of reference.

The Working Groups—and the Disability Advisory Council—comprise around 60 individuals, including people with a disability, family members, carers and community organisations.

Members of the Groups give their time voluntarily, working along side staff from Disability ACT.

The work plans submitted include a discussion paper from the *Legislative Reform Working Group* on the role, functions and powers of the Disability Commissioner.

The *Quality and Standards Working Group* has presented a plan on a quality improvement framework for Disability ACT.

The *Workforce Reform Working Group* is proposing to undertake a series of preliminary planning projects, including:

- mapping the disability sector workforce;
- the identification of structural barriers to workforce reform; and

- an analysis of the human resource management requirements of the disability sector.

The *Housing and Tenancy Working Group* is preparing to investigate best practice housing models for people with a disability, as well as an assessment of housing needs.

The *Access, Eligibility and Funding Working Group* plans to examine the development of a framework for accessing disability services.

This is a significant agenda for the Working Groups and Disability ACT. To keep everyone up-to-date Disability ACT will produce regular bulletins on progress achieved.

If you are interested in becoming a member of any of the working groups please contact **Chris Bowen**—email: chris.bowen@act.gov.au or phone 6207 1409

Challenge 2013

Shifting Community Attitudes

Since the former Disability Reform Group presented the ACT community with its Vision and Values Statement in 2002, a number of workshops have been convened to discuss this Statement.

These have focussed on identifying what the *Vision* means in practical terms for people with a disability at different ages and stages of their lives.

More than 200 people—across government and the community—

have been involved in these workshops.

Attendees have included the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Bill Wood MLA, the Chief Executive of the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, Sandra Lambert, as well as members of the Disability Advisory Council.

The information gathered at these workshops is being documented, and will be published in December as **Challenge 2013**.

The objective of Challenge 2013 is to inspire the whole

community to make the shift in attitude and identify actions required to enable people with disabilities to live full and rewarding lives.

Challenge 2013 will build on the Disability Reform Group's *Vision and Values* and be released later on this year.

A companion report, *Taking on the Challenge 2003–2006*, will outline the activities that Disability ACT will be undertaking over the next three years to assist the community in achieving the vision and values.

This report will follow a broad consultation program. *Taking on the Challenge 2003–2006* will be released as a discussion paper later this year to provide an opportunity for further community input.

Towards a **Better Future**

Making a difference through Innovation

The ACT Government has established an Innovation Fund to encourage families, individuals and organisations to explore initiatives that will result in sustained improvements for people with disabilities in the ACT.

Funding of up to \$25,000 is available for approved projects. The following organisations have received project approval:

Disabled People's Initiative

This is a program to build the capacity of people with disabilities to have a voice in the running of the organisations that support and serve them.

Professor Anne Campbell (University of Canberra)

Research to evaluate viability and effectiveness of a micro-management model of disability support in the ACT.

'Disability ACT is actively working with each of these organisations to help them develop their projects.'

TAS Housing

Developing a new model of enhanced tenancy management for people with a disability.

Woden Community Service

Research the viability of the "Families in Transition" project.

Muscular Dystrophy Association

A Muscular Dystrophy seminar will be held towards the end of the year.

Centacare

Develop a "Living in Networked Communities" project.

Disability ACT is actively working with each of these organisations to help them develop their projects. A further 22 proposals will be assessed over the next six months with the view to developing further innovation projects.

For more information on the Innovation Fund please contact :

Donnita Medway

email: donnita.medway@act.gov.au or phone: 6205 1699.

Report Follows ISP Consultation

The Individual Support Package (ISP) program was introduced in 1994 to assist people with disabilities living in— or at risk of entering— institutional care, to enable them to develop more independent living opportunities in the community of their choice.

Whilst the eligibility for ISPs has expanded over the years to include a wider range of need, the method of allocation has remained the same.

Disability ACT has undertaken an evaluation of its current approach to funding individual support to ascertain whether ISPs are the most effective and efficient way to provide targeted person-centred support.

The evaluation included interviews with 41 of the 103 people who currently have an individual support package, three families who were unsuccessful in getting a support package, as well as approximately 43 agency and support staff.

The Evaluation Report was completed in July 2003 and the recommendations will be implemented over the next year.

The report on the 'Evaluation of Individual Support Package— A report on the Evaluation of the Individual Support Package (ISP) Program in the Australian Capital Territory July 2003' will be available at www.dhcs.act.gov.au/DisabilityACT/default.htm from 8 October 2003.

Meeting **High Support** Needs Panel To Reassess Applications

The ACT Government has allocated \$6.87 million over the next four years to better meet the needs of people with a disability.

Some \$3.9 million (\$600,000 in the first year) has been allocated to meet the high support needs of individuals for whom the current services are unable to respond.

A panel, chaired by the Director of Disability ACT, Ros Hayes—and including community representatives—has been appointed to reassess all applications for additional support, received in last year's funding round, and to consider new applications.

The Panel has met to consider the assessment process, as well as the criteria it will use to prioritise the applications.

Assessments against the criteria will be finalised in late October and a recommendation for funding forwarded to the Executive Director in early November.

Once approved, the process of purchasing support will commence.

Non-recurrent savings accrued from 1 July 2003 to the date of commencement of services will be utilised to meet emergent client needs and non-recurrent support costs.

All applicants will receive a letter in mid October 2003 advising them of the process.

For more information please contact **Donnita Medway**—email: donnita.medway@act.gov.au or phone 6025 1699.

A More Accessible Government

Disability Action Plans Rolled Out

The Department of Urban Services has enthusiastically undertaken the challenge of being the first ACT Government Department to develop a *Disability Access Action Plan*.

The plan was developed in parallel with the Access to Government Audit Kit that was recently launched by the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Bill Wood.

All Government Departments must now conduct audits and develop disability action plans within a twelve-month period. Departments are required to report on the implementation of their plans in their annual reports, commencing in the 2004–05 financial year.

The Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services is coordinating the Strategy across Government agencies.

The kit is being distributed across Government and is also available at www.urbanservices.act.gov.au

Strengthening our partnering role

Over the past four months, the Sector Development and Support team, under the guidance of Narelle Hill, has been busy consulting the community agencies with which Disability ACT has a funding agreement.

Importantly, to gain a better insight into the key issues affecting clients; the team has also been meeting with people who receive these services.

The consultations include meeting with:

- a small group of people who have an ISP and who would like to have more control over the management of their support and funding

- a small group of families with young people in transition from the post school options (PSO) programme to other support arrangements; and
- a number of smaller community organisations to better understand their client base and strengthen what they do.

If you would like more information about these initiatives please contact Margie Lambert of the Sector Development and Support Team on 6207 6096.

The Sector Development and Support Team has also completed a contract audit, and concluded funding agreements for 2003/04.

This will assist Disability ACT's awareness of 'on the ground' issues

and enable it—and its partner organisations—to find more practical solutions to existing problems.

This information will be incorporated in a *Service Development Framework* that will guide the funding arrangements between the Government and the community sector.

The *Sector Development and Support Team* is completing a report, as well as a brief discussion document for the community agencies on the audit and funding agreement findings and key issues.

This will be ready for circulation to agencies early October 2003. For more information contact **Narelle Hill**—email: narelle.hill@act.gov.au or phone: 6207 1041.



Taste, textures and colours delight the senses in the kitchen garden.

'Come to your senses': garden launch

A garden specifically designed for people with a disability is being featured at this year's Floriade.

Described by its designers as a *feast for the senses*, the garden was officially launched at the Robert Timms Café (Floriade) by Minister Simon Corbell.

MC Craig Wallace, as well as local gardening identity, Cedric Bryant, joined Mr Corbell, (who was representing the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community

Gardening expert Cedric Bryant and poet Kylie Scott (far right) at the launch.



Services Bill Wood, MLA). Guests Kylie Scott and Steve Grigor recited poems with a spring theme to a delighted audience.

The Sensory Garden incorporates three different designs, based around sensory themes. It features a variety of plants including herbs with fragrant scents, species that are pleasantly coarse or smooth in texture, plants that can be eaten and plants that create patterns of light and shade.

The challenge for the designers was to build a garden that was beneficial to the spectrum of disabilities where sensory impairment exists, and at the same time make the garden highly accessible to those who may have a physical disability.

Different paver colours have been used to contrast the gravel, making the paths easier to see. Planting beds are raised to various heights for those who cannot easily bend or kneel and there is a fully adjustable clothesline that can be used from a wheelchair.

The design of the Sensory Garden was a collaborative effort between Easycare Landscape Design, Yarralumla Nursery and accessADAPT, and was funded through the Urban Services' Community Partnerships Program.

The Royal Blind Society, Independent Living Centre and SHOUT/Disabled Peoples Initiative also deserve special recognition, having been instrumental in the development of the design brief for the garden.

Disaster Recovery Plan

Work is underway on the development of a Disability ACT Disaster Response Plan. The Disability ACT Plan will link with the Australian Capital Territory Community Recovery Plan (this is a sub-plan of the ACT Emergency Plan). The Community Recovery Sub-Plan is in the final stages of development and has been endorsed by the ACT Community Recovery Sub-Committee and ratified by the ACT Emergency Management Committee.

Disability ACT's Plan will focus on communication and training to assist people with a disability to prepare for a disaster. It will also ensure that providers of services for people with a disability are aware of emergency evacuation and preparation procedures. A reference group comprising members of non-government organisations and peak bodies has been established to consult on the Plan and to assist with its implementation.

The Plan is expected to be finalised by late October 2003 with a project officer being provided to assist with its implementation. For more information contact **Kerry Webb** on 6207 2323—email kerry.webb@act.gov.au.

Travelling Well

An enhanced ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme

The ACT Government has implemented new arrangements for the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme.

These include an increase in the subsidy level, as well as the number of vouchers available to people accessing the scheme. It also clarifies the existing eligibility arrangements.

The new arrangements were devised in consultation with consumers, their representatives, industry and other areas of government.

Specifically, individuals who are unable to use public transport because of their disability are now able to access fare subsidies of either 50% or 75%, depending on their type of disability.

The ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme has written to all current members, and are currently involved in exchanging the old \$2 vouchers for new percentage based vouchers.

How to Apply for the Taxi Subsidy

To be eligible for the Taxi Subsidy Scheme you must be:

- a permanent resident of the ACT and be aged 16 years or over; and
- have a severe disability that prevents you using public transport.

Application Forms may be obtained by ringing the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme Office on 6207 1108.

New Lift Fee for Wheelchair Accessible Taxis

July 1 2003 saw the introduction of a new lift fee for the drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis.

The fee is charged to the Department of Disability, Housing

and Community Services. It covers the time taken to load and unload a person travelling by wheelchair.

The lift fee should result in lower fares for people using a wheelchair, given that loading time will no longer be charged to the customer.

The \$7.50 lift fee is applicable if the passenger is a member of the ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme, is using their ACT Taxi Subsidy Scheme vouchers for the trip, and always

uses a wheelchair for travel outside the home.

The fee will be adjusted annually in line with the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission's (ICRC) determination of the waiting time rate for taxis.

Disability ACT is working closely with the Department of Urban Services and Canberra Cabs in the implementation of the new arrangements.

For more information please contact **Jillian Hall** or **Marion Trezise** on 6207 1108.

Focus on Youth

Graduation from school can be a difficult time for many people with disabilities and their families. This is especially the case for young people whose disabilities prevent them from seeking part or full time work.

The Department currently provides a Post School Options (PSO) program to assist people with disabilities in the transition from their life as a student to a vocational or 'life skills' activity.

Graduates are eligible for the PSO program if they:

- have a disability that prevents participation in full time work;
- have left school after 2000 with no possibility of continuing;
- are eligible to receive the Disability Support pension.

PSO provides graduates with funding, assisting them to develop a vocational or life skills activity through planning and referral.

Funds allocated to individuals participating in the program are allocated on a non-recurrent basis. Funds are available to assist

individuals to develop and explore their chosen activity for up to 3 years.

During this time the support agency works with the individual and their family to locate support through existing programs, innovative arrangements, or through additional funding.

Disability ACT is working with a number of families with young people who have completed the program this year.

The purpose of this consultation is to determine the merit or otherwise of the existing scheme and to scope different approaches.

Jackie Ford and Deanne Michaels have been involved with Disability ACT on this very important task. Over time invitations will be extended to other families—at different stages of the Post School Option program—to partake in further analysis.

Applications or inquiries for Post School Options 2004/07 may be made to the Post School Options Officer at Community Connections on 6296 1133 or email: admin@comcon.org.au

A letter from the ACT Disability Advisory Council

About us

As you will be aware, the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Bill Wood earlier this year appointed the new ACT Disability Advisory Council.

The Council has representation from a broad cross section of the disability community as well as Disability ACT and the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

The Council has wide terms of reference and is tasked with:

- advising the Minister on disability issues;
- working in partnership with Disability ACT on key activities;
- communicating the needs of people with disabilities and families; and
- establishing links with the national Disability Advisory Council.

Our Work

At its early meetings, the Council acquainted itself with the range of issues affecting people with disabilities and their families, including the:

- work of the previous Council and the Disability Reform Group; and
- work of the five working groups appointed by Government to identify key priority areas for reform.

The Council is currently identifying a number of key issues on which it will advise Government.

Initiatives being developed include:

- A *Vision and Values* project that will assist Disability ACT to construct a framework to instil the *Vision and Values* on a whole-of-Government basis.
- A *Welcoming Community Strategy* to encourage a more welcoming community for people with disabilities in Canberra. This was a key requirement identified by the former Disability Reform Group.

- A *performance indicator* project to enable the Council to better assess how well the Government is implementing its reform agenda *Steps to Reform*.
- A *national policy group* to support the Council in its provision of quality advice on a range of relevant Commonwealth Government policy matters.

More information on these initiatives, including ways the community can get involved, will be available in future editions of this newsletter.

The Council has recently provided important input into national issues, including the *Disability Standards on Education*.

The ACT was one of few jurisdictions to support the introduction of these standards which will enhance the ability of people with disabilities to access educational opportunities.

Council has also had input to the Productivity Commission Review of the Disability Discrimination ACT and a range of other issues through exchanges with other Disability Advisory Bodies and the National Disability Advisory Council.

The Bushfires and Disability

Few people in Canberra have emerged unscathed from the firestorm on 18 January.

The bushfires have been a cause of considerable review about how Government and service providers ensure the welfare of people with a disability in disaster situations.

The Council is encouraged that work is underway on a disability-specific disaster plan. The Council itself has provided input to the *Shaping our Territory* to make certain that the needs of people with disabilities are integrated in the redevelopment of fire-affected areas.

Safety and wellbeing

It should not be surprising that issues around the safety and wellbeing of people with disabilities in residential supported accommodation (group homes) are of very real interest to the Council.

We are very conscious of the needs and concerns of parents, in particular, as it works through these and related issues.

In this regard, Council has requested and received briefings on the changes underway to *Individualised Support Services* and the on-going work to manage and minimise safety risks to individuals.

This will continue to be an area of high interest to the Council—and to me personally—and people with a disability, their families and allies—are encouraged to make themselves heard in the various consultation processes.

Making our voices heard

International Day of People with a Disability will be celebrated on 3 December.

It is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that people with disabilities are important and valued members of the community.

It is also a chance to overcome some of the negative attitudes which all of us who have a disability—or a family member with one—know only too well.

For these reasons Council is involved in supporting efforts for this year's International Day. The day will culminate in a series of *ACT Inclusion Awards* for people, as well as businesses and agencies that have 'opened the doors' to people with disabilities.

This work complements Council's emerging focus on encouraging a welcoming Canberra community for people with disabilities.

I hope that people with disabilities, families and allies will get behind these new Awards and the International Day, as it's an important way to make our voices resound in the wider community.

CRAIG WALLACE

Chair, ACT Disability Advisory Council

The Road to Reform

Disability Services Commissioner

In response to the Recommendations of the Board of Inquiry into Disability Services, the Government has committed itself to create:

"... a statutory officer (the Disability Services Commissioner) with powers to undertake routine and random service performance audits, conduct inquiries and reviews, issue binding directives to improve and rectify services, administer a community visitor scheme, and provide education and support to services to assist service improvement.

The Commissioner will have these powers in relation to all government funded disability services, and will be independent, reporting directly to the Minister for Disability".

The Legislative Reform Working Group has been tasked with the provision of advice to Government on the role, functions and powers of the Disability Services Commissioner.

The Working Group has produced a draft Discussion Paper to enable broad consultation with the community, as well as to invite submissions, which will inform the Working Group's final proposals to Government.

For a copy of the Discussion Paper and details on how to provide a response, please contact **Kate Turner** on (02) 6207 5907—email kate.turner@act.gov.au or go to www.dhcs.act.gov.au

Let Kate know your preferred format for receiving information (printed, electronic, audio etc.). The closing date for submitting responses is **Friday 24 October 2003**. Please contact us if you are unable to meet this timeframe.

Note that the Discussion Paper does not purport to represent the concluded views of the, Department, ACT Government or the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services.

The paper has been developed and released as a facilitative document, rather than a prescriptive one.

It is anticipated that the issues raised will promote further community discussion as Disability ACT and its partners progress an agreed position.

International Day of People with a DisAbility

Inclusion Awards a highlight

On 3 December 2003 we celebrate the UN International Day of People with a DisAbility.

The day highlights the abilities of people with disabilities and promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community.

A highlight of this year's celebrations in the Territory will be the new ACT Inclusion Awards.

The Awards will seek to recognise the outstanding achievements of business, organisations and individuals who have demonstrated a commitment to include people with a disability in their activities.

There will be an *Award for Excellence in Inclusion* for the best applicant from any category and two awards focussed on Small/Medium and Large Business.

Disability ACT is working closely with a Steering Committee including representatives from the community, business and government, including ACROD, DPI, The Disability Advisory Council, Disability ACT, AccessADAPT, NICAN, the Access City Reference Group and the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

For a nomination booklet contact 6290 1984. For more information on the Awards contact **Briony Young** on 0407 939 413.

Contact Details

Disability ACT

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

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 Update?

Email: disability@act.gov.au

