

# DISABILITY ACT

## ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT SERVICES

# Information Meeting

## Meeting Report

8 December 2009

**T**his report is a summary of the major issues that were discussed at the last quarterly *Meet the Director* meeting which was held on 8 December 2009.

**Address and Discussion – Senior Disability Advisor to the Disability and Community Services Commissioner – ACT Human Rights Commission**

Ms Elizabeth Cusack, acting Senior Disability Advisor to the Disability and Community Services Commissioner from the ACT Human Rights Commission addressed the meeting.

In the end of 2006 the Human Rights Commission added the positions of 'Disability and Community Services Commissioner' and 'Children and Young Person Commissioner'.

The current Disability and Community Services Commissioner is Ms Mary Durkin.

The main function of the Disability and Community Services Commissioner is to investigate and resolve complaints about disability services in the ACT, including:

- Residential care
- Respite care
- Home based care
- Support & advocacy services
- Rehabilitation services
- Equipment services
- Services for carers

A complaint must be made in writing. A complaint form is available from the Commission or from the Commission website. Commission staff can assist people

to put their concerns in writing, and can arrange for assistance to be provided by interpreters and advocates whenever this would be helpful.

Many complaints are resolved through the provision of an explanation, detailed information or an apology where needed.

Another role of the Disability and Community Services Commissioner is the ability to initiate an inquiry.

In addition the Commissioner engages the community promoting awareness of the rights and responsibilities of users and providers of disability services.

Conciliation is an option and part of the role of the Human Rights Commission Disability and Community Services Commissioner.

### Questions and Answers

A number of questions were put to Ms Cusack.

For more information see website for the Disability and Community Services Commissioner at the ACT Human Rights Commission at:

<http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/disability/content.php/category.view/id/4>

### Address and Discussion – Disability ACT Client Feedback System

Mr Whale introduced Ms Narelle Hill, Policy Officer to talk about the recently upgraded Disability ACT Client Feedback System.

The Disability ACT Client Feedback System is managed through a component of the Riskman electronic system. It was trialled

and introduced across Disability ACT early June 2009.

The system captures all feedback, compliments and complaints made to Disability ACT. This is not just from clients and their families / guardians but also from and about funded non-government sector agencies.

Office based staff have been trained in the feedback system and it is being rolled out to house level staff.

Once feedback is received, acknowledgement would be made in 5 working days with a response after 30 days.

Since the system came online there has been 78 pieces of feedback received. The system is not about assigning blame but solving issues.

Anyone can make raise feedback. Feedback can be made using Client Feedback Form, Email address (DACT ACT Complaints - [DACT@act.gov.au](mailto:DACT@act.gov.au)), Phone: 62055122.

Mr Whale indicated that the Department also had a central complaints area, the number being on the pamphlet. This is overseen by DHCS Consumer Advocacy and Quality Services (CAQS). This may be another option for making a complaint.

### **Information – Bushfires and Planning in relation to Ember Zone**

The ACT Emergency Services (ESA) have identified 15 Disability ACT group homes in the new Ember Zones areas and have initially recommended evacuation of those houses in event of catastrophic fire safety rating. For information on the Ember Zone look on the ESA website at [http://www.esa.act.gov.au/ESAWebsite/content\\_esbushfires/bushfires\\_home\\_page.html](http://www.esa.act.gov.au/ESAWebsite/content_esbushfires/bushfires_home_page.html).

From information received there had apparently only been 6 days in the ACT in the last 50 years that would come under the catastrophic category but 3 days in Australia in the last month.

Mr Whale advised Disability ACT has contacted families of clients living in the Ember Zone and planning in event of required evacuation. These arrangements are being made in consultation with families

and guardians on an individual basis. In event of any evacuation some of the clients property would go with them to make them feel more comfortable and supported.

These new plans are being incorporated into the existing Disability ACT Business Continuity Plan. A plan A and B is being set up for all clients living at the 15 locations.

### **Discussion – Housing issues**

A parent raised the issue of the heat and asked about the installation of insulation. This may be identified as a systemic issue. Ms Starick informed the group that Accommodation Support Services were looking at all its houses with Housing ACT in relation to annual inspections of bushfire hazards, fire and safety issues.

A parent raised the issue of energy audits. Ms Starick will make inquiries with Housing ACT if this is a process it does with all its houses.

Issues were raised about staff ensuring they were being energy efficient where possible. Mr Whale advised he would put something out to staff about energy saving suggestions.

### **Issues from Previous Meetings**

A query was raised about 2 commitments given at the September 2009 meeting.

Tender information relating to accommodation support was not finalised and is now available on the ACT Procurement Solutions website. The tender closes on the 16 March 2010 at 2.00pm. Additional information including the tender specifications are available at [http://www.procurement.act.gov.au/tenders\\_advertised/tender\\_download/open\\_tenders/11750.110\\_T09233](http://www.procurement.act.gov.au/tenders_advertised/tender_download/open_tenders/11750.110_T09233). The contact officer is available on 6205 3894.

A request of financial examples was made at the September meeting. This information was included in the minutes following the June meeting. Previous minutes are available at [http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disability\\_act/publications](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disability_act/publications).

### **Future Meeting Topics**

Ideas or comments should be forwarded to [andrew.whale@act.gov.au](mailto:andrew.whale@act.gov.au).