



# The Advocate



**Advocacy for Inclusion Newsletter**

**December 2009**

## **INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE...**

- **Transport**
- **Travelling to Melbourne by Peter Wymark**
- **Current Issues**
- **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Message from the General Manager**

It's been an exciting few months at Advocacy for Inclusion. Our Annual General Meeting saw a very interesting panel discussion on "what is inclusion", followed by the graduation ceremony for the Damsels in the Driver's Seat self advocacy course. Our two graduates are remarkable women who have taken leaps and bounds in their new lives. We are very proud of them.

The new Board is introduced in this newsletter. We welcome Vincent McCormick and Marcia Williams, and thank Kerrie Langford for all her hard work as she steps down.

Transport is the key issue this newsletter featured from our 2009-12 Strategic Plan – Peter Wymark tells us about his easy trip to Melbourne; there is a short piece about the Melbourne Skybus; and we focus on transport in our major article on systemic advocacy. Transport is still a major barrier for many people with disabilities.

We'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas and we look forward to working with you in 2010.

Christina Ryan  
General Manager

### **Transport**

Transport is one of the single biggest physical barriers to community inclusion for people with disabilities. Advocacy for Inclusion is focussed on reliable independent transport for people with disabilities so that they are able to engage with the community in the many ways that they would like to, or need to.

There are some obvious barriers in Canberra like a difficult taxi service, particularly a lack of availability of wheelchair taxis, but there are many other barriers to transport as well.

Many people with disabilities rely on public transport because they live on low incomes and have no capacity to own their own vehicle, or they are unable to drive.

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The bus system must be accessible to everyone so that all low income people, including people with disabilities, are able to work, study and socialise by relying on buses.

In our individual advocacy we have supported people, and heard stories of others, who are restricted or prevented from using buses. Often this is due to a fear of their behaviour, or a fear of duty of care if something goes wrong, rather than for specific reasons.

This very limited approach means that many people who could be using public transport are being forced to use more expensive options, or becoming isolated at home.

Advocacy for Inclusion is currently working towards a more inclusive transport system by:

1. Participating in the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Consortium – this group has been assisting the ACT Government with the terms of reference for the imminent inquiry into the ACT taxi system. The group has also met with the Minister for Transport (Jon Stanhope) and has pushed for changes to the taxi regulatory framework and for the inclusion of consumers on the inquiry reference group.
2. Participating in the sustainable transport consultation process – highlighting the needs of people with disabilities in using public transport, in mixing public and private transport, and in awareness of where community facilities are that people with disabilities use. A particular difficulty in the current plan is the reliance on proximity to rapid transit corridors. Many people with disabilities will be unable to afford the more expensive real estate that will result from such prime locations.
3. Writing a submission to the TAMS study into the feasibility of parking motorcycles on footpaths in Civic – this included consulting widely across other disability organisations who had been left out of the process, and also

included highlighting other barriers rather than physical ones.

When talking about accessibility people often think of ramps and the need for the built environment to be inclusive; however, there are other barriers which prevent people with disabilities from being included - a lack of predictability, difficult noises or lighting, cost, or the need for a medical certificate to prove you won't have difficulties on a particular bus. These are all ways in which the transport system creates a barrier for people with disabilities, and they must be considered by planners and policy makers when improving inclusion.

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### Consumer Story by Peter Wymark A Melbourne Trip

On Friday 27 August 2009 I waited for Maarten and he arrived at my place at 7:00am as it is a long trip to Melbourne by the coast road.

We travelled along a four lane highway all the way into Melbourne. The closer we got to Melbourne the heavier the traffic became and the slower we went. We arrived in Melbourne at 7:00pm and booked into our motel which had a room for wheelchair guests.

On Saturday Maarten and I woke up at 9.00am, had a shower and then went and picked up Tam, Maarten's daughter, and we then found a place to have breakfast.

We then went to the airport to pick up Maarten's wife, Ruth. That afternoon we went to the Crows v Carlton game at Ethaid Stadium.

The Stadium was very crowded as there were about 49,000 people there for the game.

The game started at 4.00pm and finished at around 7.00pm with a big win for the mighty Crows.

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We then went for a pizza and a beer. After that we went back to the Ibis and had an early night.

On Sunday morning I woke up early and had my shower. Maarten took me to the Airport. I arrived in Canberra Airport just before 10.30am and my friend Jim was waiting for me. I waited in the Security area until I saw Jim and we got into his car and when I got home I had a big cup of coffee.

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## Skybus

On a recent trip to Melbourne I used the Skybus from the airport to the City. The bus is fully accessible, easy to use and much cheaper than a taxi. When the Skybus arrives at Southern Cross Station there is a connecting minibus to hotels in the city area. This minibus is also fully accessible and easy to use. The cost for the minibus is part of your Skybus ticket. All the staff were very friendly and helpful.

Christina

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## Current Issues

People with disabilities are often not given the opportunity to make independent decisions. These independent decisions can range from not being able to choose who to live with, to not being able to choose what to have for dinner. Decisions that many of us take for granted and recognize as free will.

Many people with disabilities, living in group homes, do not have the opportunity to choose whom they live with. This is referred to as forced co-tenancy.

Forced tenancy is where:

- a person is denied the fundamental right to choose where and with whom they live
- a vacancy in a group home is the only option

- a person's basic needs will not be met unless they "agree" to another person with disability moving into their home to share support
- funding programs are distributed in ways that force people with disabilities to live in group situations, therefore not allowing them to access individual funding to move out of the group home situation.

Advocacy for Inclusion is supporting people to:

- live in the community with choice equal to others
- be included and participate in the community
- choose their place of residence on an equal basis with others and not be forced to live in a particular living arrangement

Jamelle Boettcher  
Individual Advocate

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## Consultation on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was ratified by Australia two years ago. Australia is now required to report to the United Nations on what it has done to implement the CRPD.

Alongside the Government reporting process a "shadow report" is put together by non-government organisations. This shadow report provides a broader view that the United Nations finds very useful in assessing how well implementation is working.

Advocacy for Inclusion attended a consultation session recently to start the process of writing the shadow report.

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Many other disability advocacy and consumer organisations are a part of this process right around Australia.

We raised many of the issues that we see regularly in our advocacy work. These issues have been mentioned in our newsletter, are what drives our systemic advocacy, and are linked to human rights under the CRPD.

The process of writing the shadow report will continue until mid-2010. We will continue to be a part of this work. If you would like more information contact the office.

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### The Annual General Meeting

Advocacy for Inclusion's annual general meeting was held at the ACT Legislative Assembly on 5 November 2009.

It was a great night for all, with a very interesting panel discussion on inclusion, followed by the graduation for our latest self advocacy course.

Our new constitution was approved along with the launching of the Strategic Plan 2009-12.

The Committee elected at the meeting is:

- Andrew Rowe – Chair
- Robert Altamore – Deputy Chair, Public Officer
- Alex Ramsey – Treasurer
- Margo Hodge
- Vincent McCormick
- Marcia Williams

If you would like a copy of the annual report or the financial statements, please contact the office.

*Our AGM venue was made possible by Greens MLA  
Amanda Bresnan*

### Damsels in Distress no longer... we are now 'Damsels in the Drivers' Seat'!

2009 has been an exciting year for Advocacy for Inclusion. In September we launched our brand new self advocacy course designed for women with intellectual disability.

The 8 week course taught how to stick up for your rights without hurting other people or letting others make decisions for you. We met once a week for 2 hours to work through different exercises and games together. It was lots of fun practicing our assertiveness skills with each other. We explored our feelings, took photos, and learnt about human rights and even how to check ourselves for breast cancer!

Every participant completed their own workbook and set their own goals. Some of our goals surprised our support workers (like seeing the real Melbourne Cup in Melbourne!) but they were *our* goals, not ones we were told to have. For some of us it was the first time we had truly decided our own goals.

We had a lovely graduation ceremony at the Legislative Assembly and received a framed 'Declaration of Independence' saying we will do things for ourselves whenever we can. It was a great experience for everyone. Now the Damsels want to know when the next course is. What do we do next? Go ladies!

Special congratulations to Marie Biar and Rena Burics for your outstanding achievement. Marie will be co-leading a course in 2010.

**Have you ever wanted to say what you think but you are not sure how? Do you get annoyed when your carer or support worker makes decisions for you without asking? Do you want to say NO and mean it?**

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Make 2010 your year! Come and join us for a self advocacy course and learn the skills to say what you want without upsetting others. We are running another women's course early next year, and we are looking for men too. Classes are kept small, up to 6 people, and very friendly.

Contact our office on 6286 9422 to register your interest today. All courses are free and held in accessible training rooms. What have you got to lose? Learn how to speak out!

Julia Bocking  
Trainer & Advocate



Above: Rena, Julia & Marie at Graduation Ceremony

**This project was made possible through the support of the ACT Government, Adult Community Education Grant**

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### ***'Links to Learning': Adult Literacy Program***

Southside Community Services Inc provides a trained-volunteer literacy tutoring program titled the ***'Links to Learning: Adult Literacy Program'***.

One hour a week of tuition time is available FREE to adults living in the ACT who would like to develop their literacy skills.

The students and tutors are supported through the 'Basic Education Skills' program run by the Queanbeyan campus of Illawarra TAFE NSW.

If you would like to receive literacy tuition please contact Alison on 6126 4717

### **Office Christmas closure**

Our office will be closed from midday Thursday 24 Dec 2009 to Friday 1 Jan 2010 inclusively.

Messages will be checked from Mon 4 Jan 2010.

There will be no individual advocacy service available from Thursday 24 December to Friday 8 January 2010.

From the team at Advocacy for Inclusion, we thank you for your continued support and hope you and yours have a safe and happy festive season!



## Membership Information

### Membership includes:

- Quarterly newsletter
- Policy consultation on key issues
- Representative opportunities
- Connection with local and national networks
- Right to nominate for our Board
- Membership rates for training

### Membership Categories:

- Individual
  - \$10
  - Free for people with a disability
- Organisations
  - \$25

If you would like to become a member, please fill in this form and return it to the address provided.

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## MEMBER APPLICATION FORM

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Person (Organisations only)

Please tick if you have a disability (free membership)

Donation            \$\_\_\_\_\_

All donations over \$2 are Tax Deductable

Please return this slip along with your payment to:

Please make your donation, cheque or money order payable to Advocacy for Inclusion Inc.

**Advocacy for Inclusion**  
**PO BOX 3653**  
**Weston Creek ACT 2611**

