



# The Advocate



**Advocacy for Inclusion**

**March 2010**

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

- **Education Inquiry**
- **Current Systemic & Individual Advocacy Issues**
- **Nutrition Project**
- **Inclusion poster design competition!!**

### **General Manager's Report**

Christmas breaks all seem a long time ago now as we get on with a very busy case load. Individual advocacy is in high demand, which points to the real need for assistance for people with disabilities in our community.

Advocacy for Inclusion has been talking about the human right to housing, and about the need for greater support for consumer representation and consultation in the disability sector. We continue to raise awareness of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the need for a more human rights based approach to advocacy and service provision.

We've commenced a project examining the wellbeing and nutrition of people living in group homes and welcome Robyn James as project worker. We've also started delivering another course in self advocacy for women with disabilities.

Nationally we have endorsed the Women with Disabilities Australia position on sterilisation of young women and girls with disability, as part of their campaign to have uniform legislation banning the practice. We have also been participating in discussions about the proposed national disability insurance scheme.

Last month we had the pleasure of meeting our new ACT Minister, Joy Birch, and look forward to strengthening our relationship with her and her office.

Christina Ryan

### **Inquiry into the needs of students with disability in the ACT**

On Thursday 25 June 2009, the Legislative Assembly for the ACT asked the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs for an inquiry and report on the level of unmet need for educational services for all students with disabilities in ACT government and non-government schools, with particular reference to:

- community and parental experiences, satisfaction and attitudes;
- educational outcomes;
- the findings of the Special Education Review into leading international and Australian practice in curriculum and pedagogy for students with disabilities;
- the provision of services, such as therapy and transport, to support educational needs of students;

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- post-school options, transitions and later year pathways for students with a disability; and
- any other related matters.

The Committee asked to hear from groups and individuals about the experiences of students with disabilities in all ACT government and non-government schools.

Advocacy for Inclusion has undertaken a broad consultation process involving people with disabilities, parents and families, and teachers and education providers. We held several consultation sessions in November 2009 to inform our submission to the Legislative Assembly inquiry.

Our project worker, Genevieve Williamson, spoke to many individuals. We also developed a short survey and sent that to interested people who were unable to attend a consultation session.

Advocacy for Inclusion took a human rights based approach to our consultation and submission development with the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in mind. We were particularly concerned with Article 24 of the UN Convention which refers to education and the rights of people with disabilities to equal access to education.

We focused on four key areas:

1. Barriers to equal access to inclusive education in the ACT.
2. Supports needed to ensure full participation in education.
3. Barriers facing students moving between levels of education.
4. Barriers preventing people with disabilities from reaching their post school goals.

These four areas were identified through our regular advocacy work with individuals. We also sought advice from participants in the education system and our own membership and consumers.

Our submission to the Legislative Assembly inquiry has now been delivered. It makes twelve recommendations and identifies many common areas of concern to education stakeholders.

Areas covered by the recommendations are:

- Developing a more person centred approach to education, similar to service provision in other fields.
- The phasing out of special schools in favour of mainstreaming.
- Re-examining the definitions of disability used so that all students with disabilities are provided with the assistance that they need.
- Supporting adults with disabilities so that education does not result in undue financial hardship.

We also made recommendations about: training and support for educators so that inclusive education becomes a reality; enhancing reporting frameworks to increase transparency for funding use; and, recognising the ongoing need for awareness training to support diversity and inclusion.

The submission is now with the Legislative Assembly Committee and will become available following their deliberations.

Advocacy for Inclusion would like to thank everyone who attended a consultation session, returned a survey, or called us with ideas. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Genevieve Williamson who was a great addition to our team for the duration of this project.



## Current Systemic Issues

Advocacy for Inclusion has been working on several key issues over the last few months.

- Our education submission has been a major project and will provide us with direction for some time.
- We responded to the Disability ACT discussion paper on Disability and Ageing. This recognises that services are not currently in place to support people with disabilities as they grow older. Some people age prematurely due to the nature of their disability, others are older but find themselves being catered to by an aged care sector which doesn't necessarily support their independence as an older person with disability. Our community is still adjusting to people with disabilities actually becoming older, in the past this wasn't expected.
- Recently we commenced working on a nutrition project to improve the long term wellbeing outcomes for people living in group homes. This is a pilot and recognises the high incidence of "lifestyle diseases" amongst people with cognitive disabilities.
- Housing continues to take up a large proportion of our individual and systemic advocacy time. Our new position paper on housing for people with disabilities is now available. We discussed this with the new ACT Minister for Disability, Joy Birch, at a recent meeting.
- There are strong concerns in the disability advocacy sector about proposed amendments to the Mental Health (care and treatment) Act 1994. Some of the proposed changes could result in more restrictive guardianship provisions and treatment orders. We have been working with ADACAS to raise awareness of the need to consult people with disabilities before any changes are made. There has been a lengthy consultation with mental health consumers over some years, but as yet no real consultation with the disability community.

- Advocacy for Inclusion continues to raise awareness about the continuing removal of the children of parents with disabilities to long term care arrangements. Parents need support to be parents and are entitled to it under Australia's obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.
- We continue to participate in the Wheelchair Taxi Consortium, which is providing strong input to the ACT Government taxi inquiry on access to taxis by all people with disabilities.

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## Individual Advocacy Issues

People contact us with a diversity of issues they need individual advocacy support for. Many of these issues are centred on the lack of opportunities and choices for people with disabilities.

Some of the current issues that we are supporting people with include: public transport; decision making and accommodation.

Accommodation remains one of the main areas where people require our support. People with disabilities have the right to feel safe in their living environment, the right to choose where they live, and the right to choose who they live with.

The government and the community need to be aware of the lack of accommodation choices available to people with disabilities.

Advocacy for Inclusion also has a growing concern at the lack of appropriate accommodation for younger people who are faced with early onset ageing ailments such as dementia. Aged Care Facilities are not the answer to this growing problem.

Red tape and bureaucracy about a simple decision can result in a long hard battle for many people with disabilities who are only trying to have their voices heard, their rights acknowledged and to exercise the freedom of making personal choices.

Jamelle Boettcher

## Nutrition Project

This project is looking at the health and wellbeing of residents in group homes for people with disabilities.

This is in response to a nationally identified gap of about 20 years in life expectancy for many people with cognitive disabilities, and a high incidence of "lifestyle diseases".

The project will examine nutrition, diet, and sense of wellbeing through qualitative interviews.

Following this project, Advocacy for Inclusion is hoping to embark on a much larger project supporting group home residents to take a greater ownership role of their nutrition.

This second project will also provide support and resources to support workers.

If you are a person with disability who is a resident in a home with other people with disabilities and with support from an organisation, I would love to hear from you.

We would like to learn about what you eat, when you eat it, how you decide what to eat, how you feel and if you have a doctor or other person that helps you keep healthy.

Please contact Robyn at Advocacy for Inclusion on 6286 9422 if you would like to take part.

Robyn James

## Members Input

### Do you have a story to share?

If so, please contact our office on 6286 9422 and we can discuss including it in our newsletter.



Advocacy for Inclusion



## Art Competition

### Design our *inclusion* poster!

Do you enjoy drawing or painting? Have you got some Picasso in you?

Advocacy for Inclusion needs an *inclusion* poster design that will also be used for our Christmas card.

Let your imagination and creativity run wild!!

All artists with disabilities are invited to submit artworks.

### Art competition details include:

- Artwork must be in colour
- Your artwork can be on paper or computer
- You can send it, or email it, or drop it into the office

**Closing date:** Friday 21 May 2010

Please contact the office on 6286 9422 to register your interest



## World Down Syndrome Day 2010

Saturday 20 March 2010 is the day when the ACT Down Syndrome Association will be celebrating *World Down Syndrome Day 2010*, or T4321 (TEA FOR 3-21).

3-21 represents both the date of World Down Syndrome Day (March 21) and also symbolises the fact that Down syndrome is commonly caused by 3 copies of chromosome 21.

This year, the ACT DSA will be hosting two special events at Deeks Bakery and Café.

There will be a **morning tea in Dickson from 11.00am until 1.00pm**, and an **afternoon tea in Pearce from 12.00noon until 2.00pm**.

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Cost is \$10 per adult and \$6 per child and includes coffee and cake (adult) or milkshake and cake/slice (child).

Please note that a percentage of this cost will go directly to the ACT DSA for important fundraising purposes.

Plus:

- Giveaways for the children!
- Meet Robert de Castella!
- ACT DSA fundraising items for sale!
- Much more!

RSVP (for catering purposes) 6290 0656 or [admindsa@actdsa.asn.au](mailto:admindsa@actdsa.asn.au)

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### **Dealing with Government Online to become easier for Australians with Disabilities**

Australians with disabilities will soon find it easier to access government information online with the Rudd Government's new endorsed website accessibility standards, the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0.

The new standard replaces WCAG 1.0, a mandated requirement for agencies since 2000, and will be in line with internationally recognised best-practice and stipulated that all government websites adhere to these new standards by 2015.

The Rudd Government is developing a National Transition Strategy for the move to WCAG 2.0 which will form part of the National Disability Strategy to be released later this year.

Information about the guidelines and upcoming National Transition Strategy will be made available on the Web Publishing Guide: <http://webpublishing.agimo.gov.au/>

Australian Government Media Release 24 February 2010



### **The Smith Family's Government House Open Day**

Experience this rare opportunity to roam the magnificent 54 hectare gardens, glimpse inside the historic house and enjoy an eclectic line-up of local performers.

Sunday 14 March 10.00am – 4.00pm  
Government House, Dunrossil Drive, Yarralumla

Entry: \$10 adult, \$8 concession and \$20 families

Proceeds from the event will support the Smith Family's learning and education programs for financially disadvantaged children.

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### **Flick the switch for Earth Hour 2010**

At 8.30pm on Saturday, March 27 nearly 100 iconic landmarks in 1,000 cities and towns around the world will switch off their lights for Earth Hour 2010, joining hundreds of millions of people showing their commitment to the environment.

Show your support for Earth Hour by registering at <http://www.earthhour.org.au/>,

Australian Government Media Release 24 February 2010

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### **Volunteers Needed!!**

Volunteers are needed to support the "Get Out There" Youth Group - for teenagers with a physical disability

- Are you enthusiastic?
- A team player?
- Enjoy mentoring others?
- Want to have fun?
- Want to support young people with a physical disability participate in recreational activities?

Then come and be a mentor for the "Get Out There" youth group

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The Spastic Centre's "Get Out There" youth program is an opportunity for young people (12-18 years old) with a physical disability to participate in social and recreational activities designed to challenge and inspire.

The program provides a safe environment where young people can hang out, meet new people and talk about issues that are important to them.

Participating in the program provides an avenue for team building, creating social networks, personal development, enhancing self esteem and supporting your peers.

Get Out There meets on Wednesday nights 6pm-8pm during the school term.

If you are an energetic, enthusiastic young person who would like the opportunity to earn some community service hours for your year 12 certificate or become a mentor then call Alison (Youth Worker) at The Spastic Centre on 6258 8723 to find out more.

Some of the activities we are doing this year include:

- Movie and pizza nights
- Skiing
- Tenpin bowling
- Boccia
- Canoeing
- Wii Nights
- Meet the Raiders
- Guest Speakers
- Sports Workshops
- Master Chef night
- Skiing Camp

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### Learn to play Wheelchair Basketball

All beginners to intermediate players of all ages are welcome and you don't need to use a wheelchair everyday to be able to play.

Able-bodied people can play too so bring your family and friends along.

Learn to play with a professional coach.

Begins 8 March 2010.

When: Monday nights (except school holidays), 5.30 – 7pm

Where: Belconnen Stadium  
42 Oatley Ct, Belconnen

Cost: \$6 per session  
First session is FREE!

Contact Jan Spinks, WSNSW Regional Coordinator – ACT, to register on 0405 221 558 or email [jansp49@hotmail.com](mailto:jansp49@hotmail.com)

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### Yoga & Relaxation for Family Carers

The class will incorporate hatha yoga and relaxation, including stretching, strengthening and balance exercises.

Please bring a blanket and a yoga mat.

**Where? Southside**  
Weston Creek Community Centre  
Parkinson St, Weston  
  
5.30 – 7pm Tuesdays (8 sessions)  
2 March – 20 April 2010

**Where? Northside**  
Majura Community Centre  
Rosevear Place, Dickson  
  
6 - 7.30pm Fridays (8 sessions)  
5 March – 23 April 2010

**Cost:** \$5 registration fee

For more information and to register, contact Carers ACT Reception on 6296 9900.



## Recent publications and submissions

1. Submission to ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry into the Unmet Needs of Students with Disability
2. Submission to review of the ACT Mental Health Act
3. Submission to the Department of Education review of Access to Student Records
4. Response to the Disability ACT discussion paper on Disability and Ageing
5. Position paper on the Human Right to Housing

## 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 disability
- Organisations
  - \$25

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



## 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.

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