

The Advocate

Advocacy for Inclusion

September 2009

INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE...

- **A New Start at Advocacy for Inclusion**
 - **Meet the New Team!**
 - **The Annual General Meeting**
-

A New Start at Advocacy for Inclusion

Many of our friends may have heard that Advocacy for Inclusion experienced some difficulties earlier this year.

We now have a new team on board, are fully operational, and reinvigorated. We'd like to thank everyone who helped us get back on our feet.

I commenced as General Manager in May 2009. I'd like to particularly acknowledge the work of Julia Bocking (advocate) who managed our case load after her return from maternity leave in April, and a special thanks to our friends at ADACAS who also helped out.

We have also since recruited Jamelle Boettcher (Advocate) and Thao Walker (Administration and Communications) to round out the team.

Our year ahead looks exciting and challenging. We have a solid case load and are working on assisting several people to resolve very difficult issues, including care and protection matters, housing security, and appropriate service provision.

In early July the Board and staff held a planning session to consider our key priorities and direction for the next three years. Key areas that we will work on include community awareness, human rights, and access to services.

There have recently been some major advances in human rights cover for people with disabilities and our challenge now is to ensure that these are translated into actual practice in our daily lives.

I look forward to working with you all.

Christina Ryan
General Manager

Disability Awareness & Inclusion Training

A full day training workshop to explore the different experiences of people with disabilities.

Do you work with people with disabilities?

- Is there a new worker with disability in your workplace?
- Do you feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities?

Continue page 2

Continue from page 1

- Do you sometimes not know what to say?
- Would you like to be more inclusive but don't know how?

When: Tuesday 22 September
9.30 am - 4.30 pm

Where: Centre for Teaching and Learning
Fremantle Drive, Stirling

Cost: Community organisations \$75
Government / Corporate \$100

To register, please email
info@advocacyforinclusion.org or phone
02 6286 9422



Meet our new Team!!

Christina Ryan	General Manager
Julia Bocking	Advocate
Jamelle Boettcher	Advocate
Thao Walker	Admin & Comms Officer

Christina has worked in the community sector in many capacities and has particular expertise around small business, management, governance, and organisational structure. She has undertaken human rights work nationally and internationally on women and disability issues, and monitors rights advances on an ongoing basis. She has advocated systemically on public housing issues, disability rights, poverty and disadvantage.

Christina has assisted in writing political policy and was the first woman who uses a wheelchair

to run for any Australian parliament. She has delivered governance training to community organisations in the ACT and nationally and is noted as a key resource on non-profit governance.

Julia has worked extensively in the ACT community sector for 5 years. Her previous roles include being a systemic mental health advocate, blood borne virus educator and an adolescent drug and alcohol worker. She is completing a Bachelor of Community Education from the University of Canberra. Julia also has qualifications in mental health and suicide intervention.

Jamelle has been working as an individual advocate with Advocacy for Inclusion for two months after thirteen years working with Focus ACT as a disability support worker. Jamelle has been working in different areas of the community sector for 20 years. Jamelle is feeling her age after just realizing that!!!!

Thao was born in Vietnam but has lived in Canberra since the age of 6. Her first experience with the Community sector was as a volunteer for the YMCA. Through the Y, Thao worked on numerous programs, with a wide range of people and age groups and managed to make life time friends. Advocacy for Inclusion is Thao's return to the sector since the Y.

SHUT OUT – The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia is the report on the National Disability Strategy consultations.

The report was released on 7 August 2009 and is available in easy English, Braille or audio, please phone 1800 050 009 or email NDSMailbox@fahcsia.gov.au

TTY users phone 1800 555 677 and ask for 1800 050 009. Copies are also available to download on the FaHCSIA website at www.fahcsia.gov.au

Continue page 3

Continue from page 2

Advocacy for Inclusion has some hard copies of the report available for our members, if you would like one please call the office on 02 6286 9422.

Housing for people with disabilities

Advocacy for Inclusion has been working on several housing matters recently.

Housing continues to be one of our key areas of concern and the following issues highlight how it still remains a major difficulty for people with disabilities. Until people with disabilities have stable, secure, appropriate housing they will continue to struggle to be included in the community.

If you are having a housing problem you are welcome to call us at anytime to discuss it.

1. Disability ACT is conducting a consultation process about the future housing needs for people with high and complex needs. We attended a consultation session, and have raised the matter in several other forums including during our visits to members of the ACT Legislative Assembly.

If you would like to feedback to Disability ACT contact:

Josh Rynehart
Project Manager *From House to Home*
Department of Disability Housing and Community Services
ACT Government
Ph: (02) 6205 9982
email: josh.rynehart@act.gov.au

A key concern we have been raising is the continuing assumption that people with disabilities should live, or want to live, in group homes or purpose built complexes for most of their lives.

As we move into the 21st century we feel that our community can do better for people with disabilities. Group homes and complexes are a form of institution and they rely heavily on separate infrastructure and a large funding commitment in staffing.

Advocacy for Inclusion has been suggesting more inclusive ways forward, for example the entire government housing sector could be more holistic rather than divided into separate disability, homeless, and mental health housing. This might allow people with disabilities to become part of the community rather than continuing to be separated. There should also be a greater role for community housing providers.

2. Related issues are forced co tenancy and forced relocation. This is a national problem where a person with a disability is forced to live with other people that they don't want to live with.

We have also seen several people in group homes being forced to relocate for "cost effectiveness" reasons. The assumption that someone should be moved when it suits the housing provider, government or non-government, really devalues the person. We have been asked to assist people who are being moved to save their housing provider money or resources. When someone has settled into a community, has established community connections and got to understand the local geography, forced relocation can be devastating and cause real upheaval.

3. We have continued to provide individual advocacy services for people in supported accommodation or public housing who have had their privacy breached.

Continue page 4

Continue from page 3

Breaches have ranged from people in group homes not having a say on who enters their property, to public housing tenants having their personal information given to neighbours by their housing manager.

These are very serious matters and reflect a continuing assumption that privacy for people with disabilities isn't as important as it is for everyone else.

Disability and Community Services, ACT Human Rights Commission

The ACT Human Rights Commission was formed in November 2006.

The Disability and Community Services Commissioner:

- Promotes:
 - improvements in the provision of disability services.
 - the rights of users of disability services.
 - an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of users and providers of services.
- Provides an independent, fair and accessible process for the resolution of discrimination complaints and complaints between users and providers of disability services.
- Suggests and recommends systemic improvements in services when identified through complaints or other means, and
- Fosters community discussion, and the provision of community education and information about human rights, the commission and how it operates and the procedures for making complaints.

One of the primary ways the Disability and Community Services Commissioner becomes aware of issues in the disability sector is through

people lodging complaints about disability services in the ACT.

To contact the ACT Human Rights Commission Disability and Community Services:

- Phone (02) 6205 2222
- visit the Commission
 - 12 Moore St, Canberra City
- www.hrc.act.gov.au and download a 'Services Form'

The Annual General Meeting

Put it in your diary!

What is inclusion, what is good practice?

The Advocacy for Inclusion Annual General Meeting will be held on **Thursday 5 November at 5.30 pm at the Exhibition Room, upstairs at the ACT Legislative Assembly.**

The new Advocacy for Inclusion strategic plan 2009-12 will be launched.

- One of our new Strategic Themes is community awareness.
- Join us for a panel discussion about what community awareness means: what is inclusion and what is good practice?
- Hear from consumers, service providers, and advocates and bring your own opinion.

We will be holding elections for our Board, and voting on our new Constitution.

If you would like to nominate for the Board please contact Christina Ryan for more information. If you are a member, and would like a copy of the draft constitution, please contact Thao Walker.

Our AGM venue is made possible by Greens MLA Amanda Bresnan