

# Advocacy for Inclusion Inc



Issue 17  
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Dear Reader...

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In this issue we have lots of articles and information, including a case study by our individual advocate Ian, an article from the Herald Sun by Alan Howe titled 'Our burden of shame', an extract from the New Zealand Disability Strategy, a copy of Advocacy for Inclusion's Australia 2020 Submission, and lots of other news and information on advocacy happenings.

On a sadder note, our individual advocate Sheryl is leaving us to move to Queensland, she will be sorely missed by the staff, committee and her clients. We wish Sheryl all the best!

If you have anything that you would like to see in our newsletter, for example, a personal story about advocacy, or any other ideas you have, drop us an email on [justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org) or give us a call on 6286 9422.

**Happy Reading!**

**Deborah, Ian, Justin A, Justin R, Sheryl and Stephanie**

There have been changes made to Medicare relating to coverage for services for people who have an intellectual disability. People who have an intellectual disability can now have a free annual health assessment by a GP under Medicare.

For more details, contact Advocacy for Inclusion either by phone on 6286 9422 or email Justin on [justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org) and we will send you an article by NCID (NSW Council for Intellectual Disability) outlining the changes.

**"providing individual and systemic advocacy to improve life for people who have a disability"**

Advocacy for Inclusion is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the ACT Department of Disability Housing and Community Services

# From The Executive Officer

We would like to have a regular feature in which we write an article on a person with a disability who has overcome barriers to live an inclusive life.

We would like to hear from you! If you would like to be interviewed or know of someone suitable, please call me (Deborah – 6286 9422) or email Justin ([justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org)). We hope that we get some 'inspirational people' stories out of this!

Stephanie has successfully concluded Advocacy for Inclusion's second semester on Self-Advocacy Training. The course was at Erindale Community College and was attended by eight people. Stephanie is a trainee teacher and works as our part-time Project Officer. I would like to thank Stephanie for her work and wish her well for next semester's course. She will be sending out written evaluation forms to those who attended to get feedback on how they felt about the course, contents and teaching to assist with 'fine tuning' future courses. We hope to get funding for Self-Advocacy Training in the future and run several courses within the ACT.

I would also like to thank Erindale Community Centre for providing the venue for the recent course and those who provided transport for the participants.

We are very sad at the imminent departure to Queensland of Sheryl Woolnough – who has been our Senior Individual Advocate at Advocacy for Inclusion for three years. Sheryl's patience and professionalism, broad knowledge and academic background have made her an outstanding asset to the office and an excellent advocate for people with disabilities. I would like on behalf of the staff and Governance Committee to thank Sheryl for her work with us and wish her every happiness and success in her (warm) Queensland future!

We are advertising for a new individual advocate to replace Sheryl. For those who may be interested please see our web page [www.advocacyforinclusion.org](http://www.advocacyforinclusion.org) for a copy of the position description.

Deborah Hamilton  
Executive Officer

## **ACT Human Rights Commission Training**

The ACT Human Rights Commission provides a range of training workshops. They are free and open to the public.

Workshops titles include:

- Introduction to the Human Rights Act
- Introduction to the Discrimination Act
- Discrimination in Employment
- Discriminatory Harassment & Bullying
- Disability Discrimination

For full details of Human Rights Commission training workshops, visit [http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/assets/docs/Workshops\\_jun\\_dec2007.doc](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au/assets/docs/Workshops_jun_dec2007.doc)

# Key Advocacy Issues in this Newsletter

Found below is an excerpt from the New Zealand Disability Strategy. This is the framework for all disability services and society in New Zealand to make a fully inclusive society. We could all learn a lesson from this insightful and relevant document.

## Summary

The New Zealand Disability Strategy presents a long term plan for changing New Zealand from a disabling to an inclusive society. It has been developed in consultation with disabled people and the wider disability sector, and reflects many individual's experiences of disability.

Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments. Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have.

Along with other New Zealanders, disabled people aspire to a good life. However, they also face huge barriers to achieving the life that so many take for granted. These barriers are created when we build a society that takes no account of the impairments other people have. Our society is built in a way that assumes we can all see signs, read directions, hear announcements, reach buttons, have the strength to open heavy doors and have stable moods and perceptions.

Underpinning the New Zealand Disability Strategy is a vision of a fully inclusive society. New Zealand will be inclusive when people with impairments can say they live in:

'A society that highly values our lives and continually enhances our full participation'

## BIPARTISAN APPROACH HOPES BOOSTED

The chances of a bipartisan approach to the provision and delivery of disability support for people living with disability and their carers being adopted have been boosted following a motion put to the House of Representatives which won backing from both sides of politics.

Liberal MP Joanne Gash moved that the Australian Parliament adopt a bipartisan approach to improving the provision and delivery of disability support and care to Australians living with severe and permanent disability, their families and/or carers and that Federal and State Governments should resolve the issue of funding and delivery. The motion also stated Federal Parliament must see that progress is continued beyond the term of any one government.

Mrs Gash said Australia's treatment of those living with severe and permanent disabilities and their families or carers is offensive and discriminatory.

Labor's Annette Ellis, Nicholas Champion and Julie Owens and Liberal Judy Moylan and Kay Hull of the National Party were the other MPs to speak in favour of the motion.

The debate was adjourned to the next sitting of Parliament in May.

Achieving this vision will involve ensuring that disabled people have a meaningful partnership with Government, communities and support agencies, based on respect and equality. Disabled people will be integrated into community life on their own terms, their abilities will be valued, their diversity and independence will be recognised, and their human rights will be protected. Achieving this vision will also involve recognising the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

To advance New Zealand towards a fully inclusive society, the strategy includes fifteen Objectives, underpinned by detailed Actions.

The Objectives are to:

1. Encourage and educate for a non-disabling society
2. Ensure rights for disabled people
3. Provide the best education for disabled people
4. Provide opportunities in employment and economic development for disabled people
5. Foster leadership by disabled people
6. Foster an aware and responsive public service
7. Create long-term support systems centred on the individual
8. Support quality living in the community for disabled people
9. Support lifestyle choices, recreation and culture for disabled people
10. Collect and use relevant information about disabled people and disability issues
11. Promote participation of disabled Maori
12. Promote participation of disabled Pacific peoples
13. Enable disabled children and youth to lead full and active lives
14. Promote participation of disabled women in order to improve their quality of life
15. Value families, whanau (family), and people providing ongoing support

**While Advocacy for Inclusion does not support the use of the words ‘disabled people’, we in principle agree with the theories and vision put forward by the New Zealand Disability Strategy.**

#### **Disability Accommodation in Victoria**

Further down on page 6, for your information, is an item, “Our burden of Shame” written by Alan Howe, that appeared in the Herald Sun on February 21.

On 28 February both houses of the Victorian Parliament voted for an Inquiry into supported accommodation for people with disability and/or mental illness. The Inquiry is due to report no later than 30 June 2009.

On March 12 the Australian published an item “Damning report into disability accommodation” about a Report by the Auditor General, Des Pearson, into disability accommodation in Victoria. The headline stated that “one in three people who need help from the state doesn’t receive it”. The item can be viewed on: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23362880-12377,00.html>

# Individual Advocacy

George is 42 years old. He has a mild intellectual disability and a physical disability confining him to a wheelchair. He works in an office for about 25 hours per week, studies at CIT every Wednesday afternoon and lives independently in his own home with some support from various services. He also has an active social life and likes to go to the movies at least once a week.

The office where George works is about twelve kilometres from his home and so he goes to work by Wheelchair Accessible Taxi four days a week. He had been having problems getting reliable service from the taxi company. The taxi would be very late or even not arrive to take him to work at all, which created problems for him at work. He was missing social outings because of the unreliable taxi service. He became quite depressed. He tried to organise the taxis better and asked friends to help, but nothing changed. He had been using the advocacy service to help with his support at home, so he asked the advocate to help.

Bona Fides Bulletin is a newsletter produced by the Free Legal Advice Forum

- containing information about free and low-cost legal services in the ACT
- featuring useful legal websites and resources

It aims to help the community access legal information, resources, and services.

To receive future editions, email: [martha.ibrahim@legalaid.canberra.n et.au](mailto:martha.ibrahim@legalaid.canberra.n et.au)

The advocate met with George and his employers and discussed his needs and access arrangements for the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi at work and home. The advocate then spoke to the taxi company and found that they had very few Wheelchair Accessible Taxis available for George and in peak business times it was almost impossible to supply George with a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi. The advocate discussed the options with George who said he didn't really need a Wheelchair Accessible Taxi at all. In fact, he liked to get out of his chair and sit in the front and talk to the driver on the way and the driver would load the empty wheelchair in the back. When George realised that his problem was really due to the lack of Wheelchair Accessible Taxis and that he would get a much better service by using the standard taxis because there were many more of them to help him, he was greatly encouraged.

With the advocate's assistance, George worked out a schedule to get to work, CIT and home using the standard taxis. His taxi service was immediately improved. He began to get to work on time every day, didn't miss any classes at CIT, kept his social appointments and didn't get wet by the rain waiting forever for the taxis. He now emails the taxi company with his requirements and only calls the advocate occasionally when there is a problem he cannot fix by email.

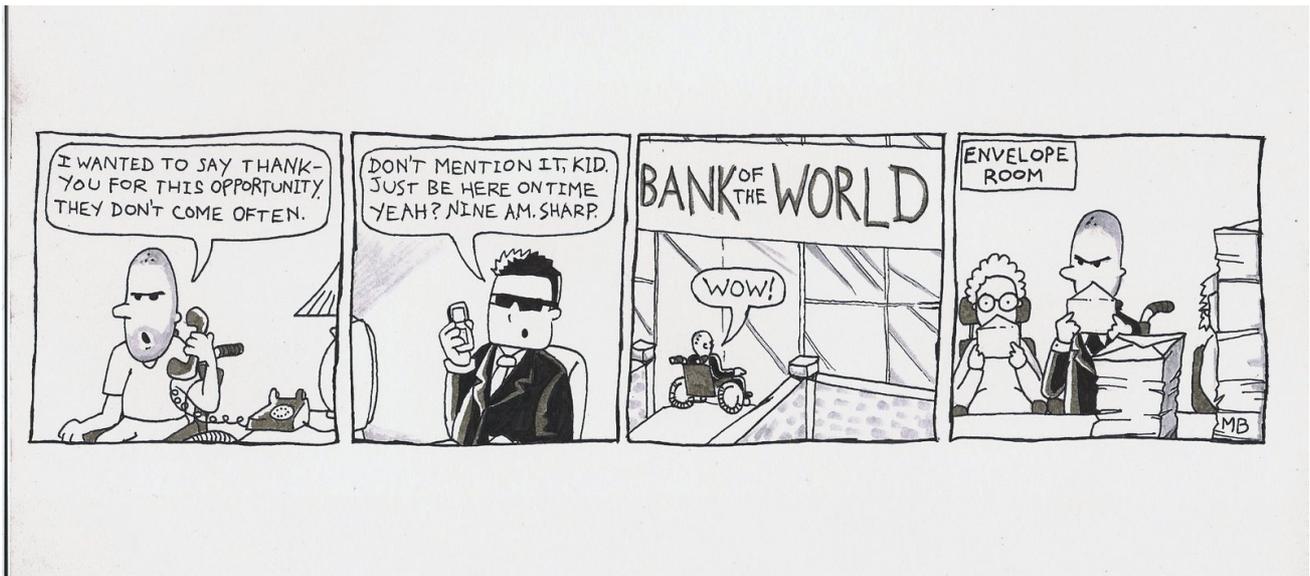
## **Carers Bonus**

The recent controversy about the Carer Bonuses demonstrated the importance to our community of government not being seen to be "doing the wrong thing" by carers and the people they are caring for. The media interest in the prospect that the Bonuses may be scrapped was swift and loud!

While it is good that the government has made a commitment not to *take benefits away* from carers and people with disability, we continue to wait for an indication that they are going to *put in the resources needed*, as identified in the Senate Report, the recent AIHW Report into Unmet Need and countless other Reports before them!

For this our eyes remain on the next CSTDA!

# Something to think about



## **Student, 18, sues for \$150,000 over limits of education**

**A Teenager with cerebral palsy is suing the State Government for \$150,000 for discrimination after allegedly being told to avoid certain subjects at a Brisbane high school due to his disability.**

Fairfield teenager William Beanland, 18, has fronted the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal alleging Corinda State High School discouraged him from taking German and English as senior subjects because of his disabilities.

Mr Beanland, who also has cortical vision impairment, is claiming teachers at the western suburbs school offered no solution to the problem during several meetings before he began Year 11 in 2006.

His disabilities make it hard for him to read, write or type because of being effectively blind during exams and being unable to control his arms.

While Mr Beanland received help in junior grades with measures such as a scribe, the senior grades were expected to be more difficult with the stringent Queensland Studies Authority syllabus.

Mr Beanland's mother, Helen, was allegedly told in a meeting with the QSA that her son's English was only at a Year 3 level and "to go home and bring him up to a grade 4 level".

However, her son had just received a B for English in Year 10.

In 2006, Mr Beanland switched to the more expensive and helpful Marist Brothers College at Ashgrove, where he has performed better in English and German in his final year than previously.

Every Child Matters – National Conference on Children and Young People with disability and their families.

14-15 May 2008

Melbourne Park Function Centre at Melbourne Olympic Park

If you would like more information, call Advocacy for Inclusion on 6286 9422 for a flyer, or email [justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org) and we will email it to you.

He said yesterday he would have preferred to stay at CSHS but the situation became impossible for him and his family.

"It's been very hard and I'm glad that I will now get my day in court," Mr Beanland said.

Barristers Jonathan Horton and Douglas Campbell, SC, will argue the actions of the school were discriminatory, leading to Mr Beanland switching to a more expensive school and incurring other expenses.

Mr Horton yesterday said the case had been very emotional for all involved.

"The real question is why William did so well at Marist when CSHS told him that these were subjects which he would most likely fail," Mr Horton said.

"There is a Special Considerations policy which clearly applies here. It is the state's failure to apply that policy in a way so as to make William competitive."

Education Minister Rod Welford declined to comment because the matter was still before the courts.



## DISABILITY RIGHTS FUND LAUNCHED

A new fund has been launched to provide financial support for human rights advocacy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Known as the Disability Rights Fund, its broad objective will be to empower disabled persons organisations around the world to effectively implement and monitor the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Open Society Institute, the Sigrid Rausing Trust, the United Kingdom Department of International Development and an anonymous donor are backing the fund.

## Advocacy for Inclusion's Australia 2020 Summit Submission

Advocacy for Inclusion believes that Australia needs a vision of a non-disabling society, which is a society that doesn't create barriers that cause disability.

An excellent example of a disability strategy/vision is the award winning New Zealand Disability Strategy, a copy of which can be found at:  
<http://www.odi.govt.nz/documents/publications/nz-disability-strategy.pdf>

Australia needs it's own disability strategy and as a highly developed nation we have a responsibility to ensure that EVERYONE can live fulfilling lives.

"A society is ultimately judged by how it treats its weakest and most vulnerable members."

How do we want to be judged?

We want to see a concerted effort to improve the lives of people who have a disability, by providing appropriate housing, the means for people who have a disability to live the lives they wish to live, and an ultimate aim for there to be no barriers to any person in Australia.

An important issue to consider is the fact that Australia has an aging population, and the Government has taken for granted for many years the role of carers. For people who have a disability who are being cared for by their parents, what supports are in place for them when their parents die?

An example of something that could be done is for the Government, in conjunction with the person who has a disability, to buy appropriate housing for said person, by providing interest free home loans for those who are on pensions and rent assistance. The money that would normally be given to the person in the form of rent assistance would instead be used to pay back the interest free loans. This would provide many people who have a disability with a basic form of security that most Australian home owners take for granted.

Australia is a highly prosperous nation, and we should use this opportunity to create a fully inclusive society that embraces the contribution made by every individual.

Human Rights Commission  
12 Moore St Civic  
Phone: 6205 2222  
E-mail: [human.rights@act.gov.au](mailto:human.rights@act.gov.au)  
Internet: [www.hrc.act.gov.au](http://www.hrc.act.gov.au)

Provides a fair and accessible process for dealing with complaints about discrimination, health services, disability services, services for older people, community services, and services for children & young people.

Promotes awareness of human rights.

## **Building Strong Self Advocacy**

*Advocacy for Inclusion* has recently graduated eight students from a six week workshop called 'Building Strong Self Advocacy', that teaches participants about the powers to build strong Self Advocacy.

*Advocacy for Inclusion's* Self-Advocacy course is about supporting participants to learn new skills to make informed decisions, which enable them be more confident to speak up for themselves.

Each person who enrolls in the workshop is given an exercise folder, that contains worksheets with information that discusses six powers of a Self-Advocate, ranging from Self-Expression to Self-Esteem.

Every week participants engage in a range of group and individual activities that looks at each of the powers in detail. On completion of the workshop, participants are able to take their folders home, and reflect on their work and the progress they have made to be better Self-Advocates.

For the latest graduates of the workshop, it was a very successful course where each person came away with a good understanding of how to use the powers of Self-Advocacy in their everyday lives.

*Advocacy for Inclusion* has now completed two terms of the course, and we are proud to offer people who have an intellectual disability to enrol in a new workshop beginning Wednesday 8 of May at Erindale College.

If you are interested in taking part for this next course, please contact Stephanie Soriano at the *Advocacy for Inclusion* office by either email on [Stephanie@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:Stephanie@advocacyforinclusion.org) or phoning 9286 9422

Disability Discrimination Legal Service  
Havelock House, Gould Street  
Turner  
Phone: 6247 2018  
Internet: [www.welfarerightsact.org](http://www.welfarerightsact.org)

The DDLS provides free legal advice & assistance for people who have been discriminated against based on their disability.

Open 9.30am to 1pm Thursdays,  
and 1.30pm to 4pm Fridays.

Welfare Rights and Legal Centre  
Havelock House, Gould St Turner  
Phone: 6247 2177  
E-mail: [wrlc@netspeed.com.au](mailto:wrlc@netspeed.com.au)  
Internet: [www.welfarerightsact.org](http://www.welfarerightsact.org)

The WRLC provides advice and assistance with a range of legal problems including income support (social security, student assistance & veterans assistance), tenancy (private tenancy and government housing), and Legal Aid appeals.

# Come and Join the Advisory Forum

## We are an Advisory Group to Advocacy for Inclusion

- Do you have an Intellectual disability?
- Contribute to our **vibrant** think tank
  - Voice your concerns
- Everything you say will be treated confidentially
- You have to be over the age of 16 to join
  - Improve your social life



Yes there is a level of **serious thought** but there is **FUN** to! So if you think this is a fantastic idea we **urge** you to join our group.

If you wish to contact us please contact **Stephanie Soriano** via E-mail:  
[stephanie@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:stephanie@advocacyforinclusion.org)

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*Registration: Please send this registration paper to the provided address*  
**Advocacy for Inclusion at PO Box 3653 Weston Creek Canberra ACT 2611**

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

**Phone No:** .....

**Mobile:** .....

**Email (if applicable):** .....