

# Advocacy for Inclusion Inc



**Issue 13**  
**August 2007**

## Dear Reader...



In this issue, we have information and updates about the CSTDA and some of the recent happenings at Advocacy for Inclusion, profiles of our newly appointed Executive Officer, Deborah Hamilton, our new Systems Advocate, Justin Asciak, and the new Disability Services Commissioner of DHCS, Linda Crebbin. There is also a report on the National Disability Advocacy Conference which Sheryl and Deborah attended.

There is also a report on the speaking up workshop which the Disability and Community Services Commissioner, Linda Crebbin attended.

The staff and Governance Committee of Advocacy for Inclusion would like to thank Liz and Erin for their dedication to the Organisation and to people who have a disability. Their efforts over the years have ensured that people who have a disability living in the ACT are able to give voice to their concerns as well as expressing their wishes and aspirations.

## Happy Reading

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

The next Advocacy for Inclusion Advisory Forum meeting will be held on Saturday the 4<sup>th</sup> of August.

The following meeting will be on the last Saturday in September, if you are interested in attending or require more information, please contact Advocacy for Inclusion on 6286 9422 or 6286 4489

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

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# From The Executive Officer

I was appointed to the position of Executive Officer and commenced work in June.

It has been an interesting time and demanding time for me trying to build on the work of Liz Blakey who had been here for so long, and who was well established and respected in the sector.

There are presently five staff at Advocacy for Inclusion. Next week Ian Goodacre will be commencing work as a second individual advocate. Ian will help Sheryl with the heavy workload Sheryl has been carrying and addressing unmet needs in individual advocacy.

Recently Sheryl and I attended the National Disability Advocacy Conference in Melbourne, the first one held for many years. A gathering of two hundred people from all over Australia, it provided a timely and excellent learning opportunity for me to get a national overview of disability advocacy, funding, current issues and the changes currently going on. The challenges in the future will include the restructuring of the National Disability Advocacy Programme and Federal funding to the states and Territories. The Federal Government are calling for changes on a wide scale and we will need to address this restructuring in a way that provides the greatest benefits to our clients. It should be an interesting time to be the Executive Officer at Advocacy for Inclusion.

I would like to thank the staff and Governance Committee for their support and particularly our Chairperson Ann Procter and Sheryl Woolnough for their thoughtful advice and guidance during my settling in.

Deborah Hamilton  
Executive Officer

## Deborah's profile

Deborah Hamilton has recently been appointed to the position of Executive Officer at Advocacy for Inclusion. Deborah replaces Liz Blakey who left in June.

Deborah's background is in public relations and lobbying. She also was the Executive Officer of The Australian National Council of and for the Blind. More recently Deborah spent seven years working for the independence movement of East Timor, particularly as the advocate and organiser in Canberra for Dr Jose Ramos Horta who has recently been elected president.

In 2002 Deborah did a post graduate diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Deborah has two grown up children who live in Melbourne.



# Key Advocacy Issues in this Newsletter

## The CSTDA

*The CSTDA (Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement) is an Agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the State and Territory Governments which defines the administrative and funding responsibilities of the different levels of government for providing the support services that people with disabilities and their families need.*

## Update-

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July the Australian Government withdrew its bilateral CSTDA funding offer to most of the states. However, they will continue negotiations with Western Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory who had made substantive responses to the Government's offer.

The offer from the Government was for additional funding to assist people who have a disability and their families in the area of supported accommodation and respite care and was on a dollar for dollar basis. The Federal Government offer, came however with many strings attached some of which appear to have been non negotiable with some states.

The offer that the ACT has responded to is:

- The funding for the term of the next five-year arrangement will be held at the current level (i.e. the final year's level of funding of the current agreement)
- Offer is indexed at 1.9%
- Provisos to getting funding:
  - o Reporting on unmet need
  - o Establishing a third party accreditation system
  - o Conducting consumer survey
- Extra funding is available for new projects focusing on accommodation and respite – but each state/territory needs to engage in separate negotiations with the Federal Government

### Disability assistance package

On 28<sup>th</sup> June 2007, the Prime Minister announced details of the Disability Assistance Package delivering \$1.8 billion in new funding over five years.

The Disability Assistance Package gives practical support and peace of mind to older carers of people who have a disability, delivers assistance to families of children who have a disability and provides further assistance to disability business services.

More information is available from the Disability Assistance Inquiry Line on 1800 101 888 (8am-9pm mon-fri 9am-5pm weekends). A TTY number is available on 1800 260 402.

From an ACT perspective, some issues worthy of note are:

- **Indexation: The Federal Government is offering 1.9% when the actual cost to cover inflation is 3.8%**
- **ACT government receives 17 cents in federal funding for every dollar spent. There is inequity in the way that funds are distributed. ACT position is that equity needs to be addressed but not at the expense of individual States/Territories. Only Victoria receives less than ACT at 16c for every dollar.**
- **Over the past five years the ACT has increased funding by 25%. At the same time the Commonwealth Government has increased funding by 1%. NSW delegates at the meeting did a quick calculation using their own budgetary figures and found that the new offer represented a 10% drop in funding to the State over the 5 year agreement period (from 18% currently to 8% by the end of the 5 years).**

**The ACT Government are to be commended for keeping the negotiations open. We will have to wait further developments in this matter. Let's hope the upcoming election does not cause further breakdowns in the delivery of this much needed and overdue funding package.**

# Individual Advocacy

In this issue, Sheryl will report on the National Disability Advocacy Conference which she attended in Melbourne.

## The National Disability Advocacy Conference

The National Disability Advocacy Conference was hosted by the Victorian Disability Advocacy Network. There were 200 participants from all around Australia so it was an excellent networking opportunity.

Sheryl attended two workshops during the Conference:

### *Specialist and Self Advocacy:*

Representatives from two self-advocacy organisations spoke about their experiences in becoming self advocates, and in supporting and mentoring other people who have an Intellectual Disability who wished to become self advocates.

The main points of the presentation and discussion were:

- The importance of ensuring people who have a disability were supported to be self advocates.
- Self advocacy is an important tool for giving voice to people who have an Intellectual Disability.
- The skills of self advocacy can be adapted so that the voices of all people who have a disability are heard.
- Agencies need to start reflecting on how to encourage young people who have a disability to become involved in learning self advocacy skills and in mentoring and supporting others.

### **Family advocacy conference 'the odyssey'**

**Family Advocacy is holding their first national conference, called *The Odyssey*.**

***The Odyssey* is a two day advocacy conference to be held in Sydney on the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of October. For more information or to register, call Family Advocacy on (02) 9869 0866 or visit their website - [www.family-advocacy.com](http://www.family-advocacy.com)**

### *Professional Development and Training for advocates:*

As many of our readers would be aware, the National Disability Advocacy Program Review, instigated by the Federal Government, has made some recommendations requiring training and professional development for advocates.

This particular Workshop was included as a result of the recommendation and generated some very interesting and, at times, fiery discussion amongst the participants. The main points of the presentation and discussion were:

- Advocacy training must be values-based.
- There is a need to review current training to ensure it is appropriate and relevant to the role of advocacy.
- There was concern that professionalising advocacy would impact negatively on Citizens Advocacy.

# Something to think about...

Nick Marsh in 'The All Star Company' (Inclusion Press 1994) argues thus "We believe that we **never** have enough finance, technology, experience or whatever to 'ideally' achieve our dreams, but that is precisely the paradox of how intent works. It's not **the scale of resources** that count, it's the **scale of the passion**. But passion needs to be applied to the right things or else it is **wasted**. We visualise a **community** of *learning teams* – always advancing, its people always **growing**."



ULTIMATELY:-

It's about:-  
Human rights  
Social justice  
**Not**  
Welfare  
Charity  
Largess  
Budgetary restraints  
And on and on and on

## **The universality of families visions include:-**

*"Valued roles - ties, connections and relationships."*

*"Finding ways that sons and daughters can contribute."*

*"Participation in the picnic - not just a visitor."*

We are **ALL** active in creating circumstances which can lead to:-

A family isolated with a *secret vision*

or

A family imbedded in community, leading to  
partnerships – shared visions – fulfilled lives.

\* This information is from a two day CIT 'Skills for Carer's' / Parent Advocacy workshop in Canberra by Deborah Fullwood called 'together on a journey'. Some parts are direct quotes from parents at the workshop.

### **Raising the bar - Helping people who have a disability move into work**

Minister for workforce participation Dr Sharman Stone told delegates at the Association of Competitive Employment Conference in Melbourne that for the first time in generations, the number of working age Australians on welfare is declining. "Since the Welfare to Work reforms were introduced there has been a 3.5 per cent drop in the number of working age people on welfare which is a great result," Minister Stone said. "Disability Employment Network members play a key role in helping move people with disability into work"

# News...Information...News...Information

## Speaking up workshop

The disability services commissioner, Linda Crebbin, ACT Health, and the Department of Housing and Community Services combined forces with the New Zealand Health and Disability Commission (HDC) to bring Dr Elizabeth Finn, from the HDC, and Grant Cleland of Creative Solutions, to Canberra in early May. The visitors met with disability advocates, consumers and funders. On Wednesday 2 May they demonstrated their training program 'Speaking Up', which is aimed at promoting self-advocacy for the disability sector. It was run as a train-the-trainer session, empowering participants to self-advocate, and to deliver the workshop to others. About 21 people participated from a variety of sectors including service providers, people who have a disability, and consumer network groups. The Commissioner Linda Crebbin is engaging a consultant to adapt the program for local use. There will be consultation about program content and the most effective way to roll it out in the ACT.

## New definition of carer in the discrimination act, and new right for young carers

The definition of 'carer' in the dictionary to the *discrimination act 1991* was amended by the *carer's recognition legislation amendment bill 2006*, which was passed on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The new definition makes it clear that a person may have more than one carer, and that commercial care arrangements are not covered. The HRC Act has also been amended to allow children and young people who are carers to lodge a complaint. The amendments follow a report commissioned by the Department of Disability Housing and Community Services in 2004, which found that there was no need for a stand-alone carers act in the ACT, but proposed other changes.

## Survey for people who support people who have an intellectual disability

An Honours student from the University of New England is conducting a study into the effects of workplace stress on people who work supporting people who have an intellectual disability. If you are interested in participating or want more information, please contact Justin at [justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org](mailto:justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org)



### Justin Asciak's profile

Justin A was appointed to the Systems Advocate position in April and replaces Erin Emerson.

Justin was studying a Bachelor of Education at the University of Canberra before being offered a position as a Special Teacher's Assistant. Justin worked with students from a large number of settings in public schools all over Canberra while studying his Diploma of Disability work at CIT.

Justin worked mostly with students who have Hearing Impairments and enjoyed using Auslan sign language.

He is enjoying his new job as the Systems Advocate and also enjoys learning about the disability sector.

## Profile of the New Commissioner, Linda Crebbin

Linda Crebbin was appointed to the newly created position of Commissioner for Disability and Community Services on 29 January 2007. . The position fits within the Human Rights Commission, which commenced operation on the first of November 2006.

The Commissioner's role includes considering and dealing with complaints about disability services. She also has responsibility for the promotion of improvements to services and complaint mechanisms. The Commissioner can conduct reviews or enquiries into services and has a general role relating to community education about the Human Rights Commission and the rights of people who have disabilities. In that context, in the next few months she will be focussing on promoting awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Linda is a lawyer and previously worked at Legal Aid in the ACT for 17 years. She has two nearly grown up children as well as the challenge of her new position!

Staff and committee members at Advocacy for Inclusion recently had the privilege of meeting with Linda in our offices. She was particularly interested in hearing about the work we do and the things we have identified as being of most concern to our clients. She invited people to contact her to tell her about "hot issues" or to ask about the work of the Commission.

**For further information please contact:**

**Ms Linda Crebbin: Disability & Community Services Commissioner  
Human Rights Commission**

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