

Advocacy for Inclusion Inc



Issue 12
June 2007

Dear Reader...



Here at Advocacy for Inclusion we have had a few staff changes; Erin Emerson is no longer working as our systems advocate and Liz Blakey has also left us. We would like to thank Erin and Liz for all their hard work and the many changes that they have been able to implement in the disability sector and wish them the best of luck for the future.

Justin Asciak has commenced as our new systems advocate and we would like to welcome Justin to our team. If you would like to contact Justin please email him on justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org. We are in the process of employing a new Executive Officer and will let you know more in the next newsletter. Sheryl Woolnough (Individual Advocate), Stephanie Soriano (Advisory Forum Project Officer) and Justin Ray (Administration Officer) are all working hard in the office so feel free to make contact with one of them for more information.

In this issue we have an update from our outgoing Executive Officer, Liz Blakey on the Commonwealth, State and Territories Disability Agreement, with some information on how you might be able to get involved. We also have an outline of a pressing issue in the ACT, which is emergency accommodation for people who have a disability, we have a summary of our latest position paper which is on post school options, and we have an update on our Advisory Forum and what they have been up to.

If you would like further information on anything in this issues or about the work of Advocacy for Inclusion please feel free to contact us on 6286 9422.

Happy Reading

Liz, Erin, Justin A, Justin R, Sheryl and Stephanie

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

PO Box 3653 ♦ Weston Creek ♦ ACT 2611
Room 17 & 18, Building 3 ♦ Pearce Community Centre ♦ Collett PI ♦ Pearce ACT 2607
Phone: 6286 9422 ♦ 6286 4489 ♦ Fax: 6286 9424
Email: info@advocacyforinclusion.org
Web: www.advocacyforinclusion.org

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

From The Executive Officer

The Commonwealth, State and Territories Disability Agreement (CSTDA) negotiations still continue!

In the last newsletter I wrote about the CSTDA agreement, which is due to expire at the end of June 2007. A fourth Agreement is being negotiated however negotiations are not moving ahead very quickly. It is important that the next agreement provide the support services that people who have a disability and their families need, as currently there is a desperate shortfall of funding for disability services across the nation. It is of critical importance to people who have a disability and their families, friends and supporters that this is addressed in the next CSTDA. Below is an update from the CSTDA Alliance from the meeting held on 3 April 2007 in Brisbane:

The Australian Government's position is that the States/Territories must produce good data on unmet need for accommodation support and state how much they are prepared to fund. The Australian Government has committed to match, dollar for dollar, the funding required to address unmet need for accommodation support. The Australian Government also stated that it was prepared to negotiate with individual States and Territories if it could not get a combined Agreement.

The States were unanimous in their concern that this would see the demise of the CSTDA. They were also strongly of the view that the Australian Government should specify what money they are prepared to contribute. The States concluded the meeting and asked for another meeting within three to four weeks.

The next meeting is yet to occur but Advocacy for Inclusion will keep you up to date on any information we receive. I would strongly encourage you to join the Alliance and contact your local members, both local and Federal to highlight the unmet need for people who have a disability.

Below you will find the contact details of the National CSTDA Community Alliance and an invitation for both individuals as well as organisations to join. Alternatively you can contact Advocacy for inclusion if you would like further information.

To join the National CSTDA Community Alliance, email the convenor at convenor@cstdaalliance.org.au or go to the website www.cstdaalliance.org.au The CSTDA Alliance Secretariat is located at DDC, City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi St, West Perth WA 6005. Co-convenors: Sue Harris and Su-Hsien Lee. Ph: (08) 9420 7203.

On a personal note I wish to inform you that by the time you read this newsletter I will have left Advocacy for Inclusion. I feel it is time for me to step out of the disability sector for a while, as I have been both working and living it for some time now. I believe that I need a change in direction and allow myself more time to assist my son Daniel, who has autism, to create a valued life. I have made this decision with much thought and although I will greatly miss my role here I believe this is the right step forward. I would like to thank those of you I have worked alongside for the contributions that you have made to create positive changes for people who have a disability. For those I haven't had the opportunity to meet I wish you the best in your journey and would strongly encourage you to continue to inform Advocacy for Inclusion about the issues facing people who have a disability in the ACT. I have enjoyed my journey with such an inspirational organisation and wish Advocacy for Inclusion much success for the future.

Kind regards

Liz Blakey
Executive Officer

Key Advocacy Issues in this Newsletter

Advocacy for Inclusion Post School Options Position Paper

Advocacy for Inclusion has just published its Post School Options Position Paper. This paper outlines our belief that people who have a disability have the right to make informed decisions on what they wish to do when they finish school. It complements our earlier publication of information sheets on the issue of Post School Options.

Some essential statements from the paper include:

- The ACT and Australian governments, employers and the community need to support students who have a disability in their chosen direction when they finish their school life.
- Employers need to take advantage of supports available for employing a person who has a disability, and be aware that people who have a disability fill valued and unique roles in the workplace.
- People who have a disability have the right to make their own choices about how they live their life. More support must be provided to people who have a disability to assist them in making their own informed choices regarding post school options.
- Post school options should focus on giving people who have a disability valued roles in society instead of segregating them from the community. Post school options organisations should ensure they find out what valued role the person desires and then target their resources to make that happen.

Advocacy for Inclusion will

- Assist individuals to access the post school option they desire
- Work with various organisations to promote an inclusive life after school for people who have a disability
- Research post school options that have worked in other areas to see if we can use these in the ACT.

If you would like more information or a copy of the Advocacy for Inclusion Post School Options Position Paper please contact the office on 6286 9422 or by email on info@advocacyforinclusion.org. In addition to the position paper, we also have a Post School Options *Leaving School and Beyond* Information sheet available.

Post School Options Expo

Advocacy for Inclusion took part in the Post School Options Expo, an initiative of the ACT Interagency Transition Committee. The event was a great success and provided students who have a disability an opportunity to seek information about what post school options are available. If you missed out this year there is always next year. General information about the Expo is also available on the Disability Coordination Office website www.disabilitycoordinationoffice.com.au There is also a plain text version of the Future Pathways Guide which was provided on the evening this can be browsed online at: www.disabilitycoordinationoffice.com.au/content/view/624/287/ or phone Rebecca Ryan on 02 6207 4900 or email dco@disabilitycoordinationoffice.com.au

Individual Advocacy

The lack of appropriate emergency accommodation options in the ACT for people who have a disability has become a pressing issue for Advocacy for Inclusion in recent weeks. Our Individual Advocate, Sheryl Woolnough, is providing advocacy support to a few young people who have found themselves unable to remain living in their homes. She has approached the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services who are working collaboratively with Sheryl and her clients.

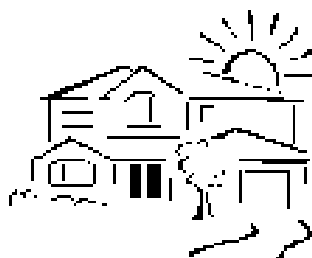
There are two issues here:

1. The lack of accommodation options for people who have a disability who find themselves in a crisis. There could be a number of reasons why a person who has a disability may find themselves in this situation including:
 - The primary carer is unable to continue in this role, either temporarily or permanently,
 - The person has been, or is about to be, evicted from their home,
 - The existing accommodation no longer meets the person's needs or
 - There is violence in the home.
2. The lack of access to respite services because places may have to be used to respond to accommodation crises. This, in turn, limits the ability of service providers to provide respite to others.

Whilst Sheryl is supporting the individuals there is also a systemic need and this has been referred to our Systemic Advocate, Justin Ascik. Justin is researching how other States and Territories provide emergency accommodation to people who have a disability. His research will be used to inform systemic advocacy to improve emergency accommodation options for people who have a disability.

If you have enquiries about systemic advocacy, please email Justin at justin.a@advocacyforinclusion.org

If you have enquiries about individual advocacy please call Sheryl on 6286 9422 or email her at sheryl@advocacyforinclusion.org



Advisory Forum Update

The Advocacy for Inclusion Advisory Forum is a group of people who have an intellectual disability who get together regularly to share stories, look at issues that impact their everyday life and discuss topics that are related to the experiences of people who have an intellectual disability in the community.

For members of the Advisory Forum, participating at meetings is a rewarding experience because it is an opportunity for people who have an intellectual disability to interact with people who share similar experiences in a safe and supportive environment. Through the discussions at meetings Advocacy for Inclusion supports members of the Advisory Forum to build the skills necessary to become a Self-Advocate. Self-Advocacy is the about the person who has a disability having the skills and confidence to be able to speak up themselves about issues that influence their lives.

In past meetings members have identified the skills they believe are necessary for people who have an intellectual disability to have in order to become Self-Advocates; so during meetings, members participate in exercises that practices these skills. For members this is a valuable and unique aspect of the meetings because it is an opportunity to practice those skills, which build on their knowledge and confidence to make the best decisions about their life.

With the topics for discussion, members of the Advisory Forum are open to discuss anything from housing to membership to clubs and other sport activities; but since meetings have begun Advisory Forum members have identified employment as the biggest area of concern for people who have an intellectual disability at present. Therefore the previous three meetings have been dedicated to discussion on this topic.

At the last meeting Advisory Forum members agreed to send a letter on behalf of the members of the Advisory Forum, with assistance from Stephanie, to the Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations outlining the issues members have raised about employment. This letter will reflect the importance of members' contributions in increasing awareness of the issues that affect people who have an intellectual disability, and the progress members have made in regards to speaking up for themselves and for people who have an intellectual disability.

On the following page is a list of the issues that was identified by the members regarding employment that will be included in the letter to the Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations the Hon Joe Hockey.



Advisory Forum Update

Advisory Forum Employment Issues:

- Members want more time with their contact at the Employment Agency with more time spent preparing people who have an intellectual disability find employment.
- Members want to know that if they enrol in a course at CIT or at another school that they will be able to use the skills they learn to be able to find and also maintain employment, otherwise the course just becomes a waste of time.
- Members feel that Employment Agencies lift their expectations about finding employment. Advisory Forum members are concerned that they are told by the employment agency that they are ready to go out into the workforce and employable, but become disappointed when they can not find work- despite doing everything that the employment agency has directed members to do, in order to find employment.
- Advisory Forum members do not feel that Employment Agencies are flexible enough to meet the needs of people who have an intellectual disability. Members feel like they are being churned out for employment, but if they do not find suitable or sustainable employment, the employment agency is no longer interested/equipped in carrying out further support.
- Members of the Advisory Forum have all experienced discrimination in their workplace. Advisory Forum members are concerned that their employers and the other employees have a negative attitude towards people who have a disability.
- Advisory Forum members want to feel like they are a welcome part of the organization. Members of the Advisory Forum feel that people who have an intellectual disability should expect to be able to come into work and experience the satisfaction of working, and being part of team, just like their work colleagues who don't have an intellectual disability.
- Members of the Advisory Forum also feel that employers and their fellow employees do not know how to communicate with people who have an intellectual disability. This in turn makes it difficult for people who have an intellectual disability to take the initiative to approach their supervisors or foster meaningful working relationships at their place of employment.

Membership to Advocacy for Inclusion's Advisory Forum is always welcome. The Forum has just had their June meeting and the next one will be in August. If you or someone you know would be interested in more information about the Advisory Forum or are interested in becoming and member, please contact:

Stephanie Soriano, Project Officer for the Advisory Forum on 6286 9422 on Tuesday or Friday between 9.30am – 2.30pm.



Something to think about...



Everybody has his or her own skills and abilities.

Instead of assessing what people can't do, why not assess what people CAN do

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”
Martin Luther King Jr

“If you start treating equally people who have been treated unequally, you capture them forever in their inequality”
Martin Luther King Jr

News...Information...News...Information

Carer Adjustment Payment

An Introduction to Carer Adjustment Payment

The Carer Adjustment Payment (CAP) is an ex gratia scheme that the Government is offering to assist families, on a case by case basis, to adjust to a catastrophic event or diagnosis relating to a child aged 0 to 6 years.

The CAP is a non-taxable payment available to families depending on their individual circumstances. The maximum amount available to any family is \$10,000.

The CAP will be available as a form of interim assistance while the Review of Carer Payment (child) is underway, and the report is being considered by Government.

Who is Eligible?

Families will be able to access the CAP if they are able to demonstrate a need for financial support in the adjustment period following a catastrophic event where:

- the child, aged 0-6 years, is diagnosed with a major disability due to accidental injury, or a severe illness;
- the child has significant care requirements – i.e. requires full-time care for a minimum of 2-3 months following the incident;
- the child's carer qualifies for Carer Allowance in respect of the child;
- the carer is not eligible for Carer Payment;
- the carer is able to demonstrate a clear need for financial support during the adjustment period immediately after the event.

Making a Case

Families will need to present their case by setting out their circumstances, and the ways in which the family's life has been disrupted that result in them needing extra support.

This may include disruptions to things like the carers capacity to work and/or care arrangements for other children in the family.

Guidelines are currently being prepared to assist families with their application.

How to Apply

To register your interest in applying for the CAP, or find out more about eligibility, visit your local Centrelink office or telephone 13 27 17.

News...Information...News...Information

Would you like to be kept informed about new funding processes or services by Disability ACT?

You can email Disability ACT mailbox at DisabilityACT@act.gov.au or phone the *Disability ACT Information Service* on 6207 1086.

“What Information Do I need to Provide?” Simply advise Disability ACT of

- (1) Your name, email address or postal address,
- (2) Type of information you are interested in;
 - recreational, daytime or community access services
 - supported accommodation services
 - in home support
 - equipment or modification
 - respite options
 - individual funding opportunities
- (3) Information relevant to the following age groups
 - 0 – 13 years
 - 14 – 18 years
 - 19 – 24 years
 - 25 – 44 years
 - 45 – 64 years
 - 65 – 70 years

CIT course for students who have a disability, Semester 2 2007

In Semester II 2007 Canberra Institute of Technology will deliver a Statement of Attainment in Practical Office Skills course for students who have a disability. The course is funded by Training and Tertiary Education, ACT Department of Education.

The course contains 5 modules from the Certificate II in Business. The class number is a maximum of 10 students.

Entry to the course is by interview selection process. Prospective students should have reasonable literacy skills in order to tackle the theory required.

The delivery time is across 17 weeks at 2 sessions per week. This is longer than the usual delivery time and is designed to allow students who have a disability to practice and reinforce the skills they learn. This sort of delivery style may suit students who have a learning disability, or other disability types where a supportive learning environment would be beneficial.

Contact Disability Coordinator Margaret Thompson on 62073329 or email margaret.thompson@cit.act.edu.au for an application of interest

News...Information...News...Information

Inclusive e-Learning Projects announced

Four training organisations have received funding to trial new technologies to improve employment and training opportunities for learners with disabilities. Mobile-learning, virtual classrooms and e-counselling sessions are just some of the e-learning strategies that will assist learners with autism spectrum disorder, hearing impairments and learning disabilities. Each trial has received \$25,000 from the Inclusive e-Learning (learners with disabilities) Project - part of the National Training System's e-learning strategy, the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. The successful training organisations are:

- CY O'Conner College of TAFE, Western Australia - This trial will use e-learning technologies such as interactive multimedia CDs, virtual classrooms and e-counselling to support learners with autism spectrum disorder.
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, Victoria - This trial will use mobile devices, such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs) to enhance social and communication skills of learners with intellectual disabilities.
- GOAL Training and Development, Victoria - This trial will support learners with hearing impairments in the catering industry through the use of smart phones.
- Disability Training Australia (Barkuma), South Australia - This trial will use e-portfolios and digital story telling to assist job seekers with intellectual disabilities.

For more information about the Inclusive e-Learning Project visit:

www.flexiblelearning.net.au/inclusive

Source: Flex e-News - Australian Flexible Learning Framework 15/04/2007



Welcome to MyTime

MyTime groups provide local support for mums, dads, grandparents and anyone caring for a young child under school age who has a disability or chronic medical condition.

MyTime gives parents the chance to socialise and share ideas with others who understand the rewards and intensity of the caring role. Parents can meet with people in similar circumstances to have fun, hear from others and find out about available community support. Research-based parenting information will also be available at group meetings.

Each group has a play helper who can lead children in activities such as singing, drawing, playing with toys, blocks or sand so parents can spend time focusing on catching up with others.

For more information go to the website at: www.mytime.net.au