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Southwest Advocacy

News

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CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Welcome to the first edition of *SWAA News* for 2009.

Lately SWAA has been particularly busy contributing to campaigns and consultations on systemic issues that affect people with disabilities. SWAA has endorsed the Position Statement of People With Disabilities Australia on the development of a National Disability Strategy. For further information on this visit the People with Disabilities Australia website - www.pwd.org.au. Copies of SWAA's submissions to the Victorian Government's respective reviews of the Mental Health Act and Supported Residential Services will be available on SWAA's website - www.southwestadvocacy.org.au. SWAA is also supporting the submission of the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations on the development of national Standards on Access to Premises. Further information can be found at - www.afdo.org.au.

SWAA has also been busy advocating on local access issues. These have included calls for improvements to the taxi booking system in Portland; gathering information on access issues for people with disabilities using V-Line services; requests for better signage and handrails at the Portland Courthouse; and advocacy for access to the Commonwealth and ANZ banks in Casterton. SWAA's campaign to try to make Post Offices more accessible to people with disabilities is also continuing. Regional post offices with particular issues that we are aware of include Terang, Hamilton and Casterton. Unfortunately Australia Post is refusing to agree to calls from disability advocacy organisations for the development of a comprehensive Disability Action Plan to systematically address issues that disadvantage people with a variety of disabilities. **If you are aware of issues at your local post office or other facilities that discriminate against people with disabilities, please contact us on 55 614 584.**

SWAA held its Annual General Meeting at the Warrnambool Football Club in November of last year. An informative address from guest speaker, Erica Smith of Deaf Access Victoria, was followed by an enjoyable meal. There are currently a few vacancies on SWAA's Committee of Management. If you are interested in supporting SWAA's work on behalf of people with disabilities by becoming a member or nominating for SWAA's Committee of Management, please contact us. People with disabilities are encouraged to apply.

As mentioned in previous editions of SWAA News, SWAA has obtained some funding from Rural Access to extend the Active Participa-

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tion Register project into the Southern Grampians and Glenelg Shires. People with disabilities and organisations who are interested in getting people with disabilities more involved in the community are encouraged to register an interest in this information-sharing and empowerment project. We are slowly receiving new registrations from individuals and organisations, but would like to see a lot more come in. **Please complete and return the enclosed registration form or contact SWAA via e-mail coord.swadvocacy@bigpond.com or phone 55 614 584 if you're interested.**

Robert Dick.
Co-ordinator

Conventions on the Rights of Persons with a Disability — Optional Protocol

Australia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability in July 2008. The Optional Protocol would allow Australians to lodge a complaint if they believe Australia has not complied with the Convention, providing all other options to resolve a complaint have been followed first.

The Australian Government is now considering whether it will ratify this Optional Protocol and a National Interest Analysis is being undertaken as the next step in making this decision.

For more information visit:-

www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/3december2008/tor.htm

(Taken from Family Voices magazine of the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability Vol 2, Issue 1, 2009)



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postage costs by receiving our newsletter via e-mail. Please
contact Margaret on 5561 4584 or just send us an e-mail
message notifying us of your email details to receive future
editions of SWAA News*

**Southwest Advocacy News is also now available at
www.southwestadvocacy.org.au**

Interested in an alternative treatment for the symptoms of schizophrenia?

The Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre (APRC) is currently seeking adult participants for a new research trial involving the use of an experimental treatment; transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS). We are interested in exploring whether tDCS may improve a range of symptoms of schizophrenia including low motivation, reduced energy, difficulties with concentration and remembering things, hearing voices and confused thoughts.

We are currently recruiting individuals with schizophrenia or schizoaffective disorder who experience these symptoms and who have not responded to medication. The research trial involves daily treatment sessions for a period of three to six weeks in addition to fortnightly interviews. Medication therapy is permitted to continue during the trial. Some financial assistance for transport will be provided.

If you want more information or are interested in participating please contact Sally Herring, Susan McQueen or Rebecca Pallot on (03) 9076 6595.

Principal Study Investigator: Professor Paul Fitzgerald

(Taken from V.M.I.A.C. Newsletter December 2008)

CONTRIBUTIONS To SWAA NEWS

We welcome any contributions to the newsletter in the form of letters, stories, articles and news items relevant to disability issues.

Items printed in SWAA News do not necessarily reflect the views of SWAA, staff or Committee of Management

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is a great way to support our work, and we are very keen for people who have used the service to become members. Members receive our quarterly newsletter and other mail outs about disability issues and can have a say in the running of Southwest Advocacy by voting at our Annual General Meetings.

Membership of Southwest Advocacy is free.

If you would like to become a member please contact Southwest Advocacy for a membership form.

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31 Princess Street
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Have your say on the Premises Standards

The Australian Human Rights Commission is urging people with a disability, advocacy organisations, people in the building sector, local government and community organisations concerned about access to buildings to make submissions on draft Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards (Premises Standards).

The Premises Standards will clarify the level of access to buildings required to meet responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

In December 2008 the Federal Government tabled draft Premises Standards and referred the draft to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs to conduct final consultations and to report to Parliament in the first half of 2009.

The draft contains significant proposals for improvements in access to new buildings and those undergoing renovation or new work. This includes: increased circulation space in new accessible toilets and around doorways; improvements in access to theatres and cinemas; increases in the number of accessible rooms in hotels and motels; improvements in signage and hearing augmentation systems in rooms with a PA system and significant increases in the number and location of unisex accessible toilets.

Once completed the intention is for changes to be made to the access provisions in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) so that the two laws are consistent. This would mean that in future someone meeting the requirements of the BCA would also be meeting the requirements of the DDA on those matters covered by the Premises Standards.

These proposed changes are significant and aim to ensure of people with a disability have equal access to buildings used for the social, cultural, health, employment, recreational and political life of our community. They are also significant for those involved in the design, construction, certification, development and management of buildings who will have to comply with them.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has asked for submissions on the draft by the 27 February 2009 and will hold a number of public hearings (yet to be announced) probably in late March.

All the documents released by Government are on the Committee's website at www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/laca/disabilitystandards/index.htm (the drafts can be found in the section which deals with Terms of Reference).

The Australian Human Rights Commission has produced some information to assist people to understand the content of the draft including a guide to the various documents www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/buildings/finding.htm and an FaQ www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/faq/Access/standards.html

Representatives from the disability community have also produced their own material that puts forward their views on the draft. This will be available soon at www.access.afdo.org.au or www.accesstopremisesstandards.afdo.org.au

The proposals, when finalised, will result in important changes to the way in which buildings are designed and constructed and will improve access to buildings for everyone so it is important to take this opportunity to have your say.

If you would like to be placed on an e mail list to keep you informed on the Premises Standards contact michael.small@humanrights.gov.au

(Taken from the Australian Human Rights Commission)

Insurance Models for funding disability

It is widely acknowledged that the disability service system is in crisis; there are simply not enough services to meet the increasing needs of people with a disability.

Finding and retaining good quality and well co-ordinated services are most people's primary goal. Common problems faced by families of children with a disability include significant inadequacies in service availability, insufficient service levels to meet basic needs (let alone to allow children opportunities to grow, learn and contribute to the community to their fullest potential) and service systems that are too complicated.

Two insurance schemes are currently being proposed as a means of addressing these issues: the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the No Fault Catastrophic Injury Insurance Scheme. Developed from the ideas of interested Australians affected by disability, the two proposed schemes share similar goals but have a different focus.

National Disability Insurance Scheme

Who would be eligible?

- All people with permanent disabilities acquired before the age of 65, without reference to cause or fault and treated equally based on needs.
- Needs to be assessed using functional (intellectual, physical and behavioural) impairment tests. It is expected that all people with profound or severe disabilities would qualify, while those with moderate or mild disabilities could also qualify depending on their specific needs.
- As people with disabilities age, assistance would link in with the aged care system.

How could it be funded?

- Fully funded or at least partially funded through a Medicare-type levy.
- Existing workers; compensation, motor vehicle accident and medical indemnity insurance all to continue as no-fault or to be converted to no-fault, with separation of compensation from legal actions for negligence or culpable actions.

What would be the benefits?

Care, accommodation, therapy, support and community access (not income support, which would continue to be provided through the pension system). Services would be based on functional impairment, individual needs and choice.

There would be case management to facilitate independence, maximise potential and plan transitions over the life course. The scheme would provide more timely access to aids, equipment and home modifications. Training, development and access to employment would build self-esteem and reduce long term costs.

No Fault Catastrophic Injury Insurance Scheme

Who would be eligible?

- People who acquire a disability which results in a 'catastrophic injury'.

How could it be funded?

- Through the pooling of premiums received from insurance schemes. It would involve all states and territories having no fault injury schemes in relation to medical indemnity, public liability, motor vehicle insurance and WorkCover.

What would be the benefits?

This initiative would build on existing insurance models to create uniform insurance schemes in every state and territory. These schemes would then be nationally co-ordinated.

Supporters of this scheme believe it should be established before the broader National Disability Insurance Scheme as it provides a single model for how a national disability services framework can be more effectively co-ordinated by the federal government. It is believed it would create momentum within the community for the development of the wider based National Disability Insurance Scheme.

AAFCD believes that every person with a disability should receive appropriate support regardless of the cause of disability. AAFCD supports the need for a funding structure that is consistent across all jurisdictions and therefore supports the national co-ordination of a disability funding model.

Appropriate support is viewed as the level of service and resources needed by a child with a disability to ensure they have equal opportunities to live, learn and contribute to the community and to realise their full potential.

Stephanie Gotlib
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Links
www.natdis.com.au

(Taken from Family Voices magazine of the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability Vol 2, Issue 1, 2009)

Helping children with autism

The Australian Government's Helping Children with Autism Package of \$190 million over four years recognises the considerable need for support and services for children with autism and their families.

Government departments delivering the package include: the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), and the Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA).

Eligibility

To be eligible for support, children must have a diagnosis of Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Retts Syndrome, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) according to criteria listed in (DSM) IV. There are age eligibility criteria for different parts of the package.

The diagnosis of ASD must have been made under the Medicare items or by a state of territory government assessment service or by a private paediatrician or psychiatrist.

What the package includes

Early intervention

- Up to \$12,000 over two years for children aged 0-6 diagnosed with an ASD to assist with the cost of early intervention.
- Autism Advisors to provide information, advice and practical help to families following diagnosis.
- An additional \$2,000 for families in rural or remote areas.

Medicare items

As of 1 July, 2008 new Medicare items were introduced for:

- Diagnosis and treatment plans for children under 13 years.
- Up to 4 services in total per child from psychologists, speech pathologists and occu-

pational therapists to collaborate with the psychiatrist or paediatrician on the assessment.

- Up to 20 services in total per child for early intervention services provided by psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists following diagnosis.

Professional development for teachers and other school staff

- Specialised training to support school students with ASD to achieve better educational outcomes.

- Funding for parents and carers to attend workshops and information sessions and to access online workshops and information.

For more information visit www.autismtrainging.com.au

Specialised play groups

- 150 playgroups for children aged 0-6 years with ASD or ASD like symptoms offering play based learning opportunities for children and social support networks for families and carers.

ASD website

- Development of an ASD website that will provide online resources and interactive functions to support parents, carers and professionals.

For more information phone 1800 289 177, TTY 133 677 or email asd@fahcsia.gov.au

Autism Advisor services for children aged 0-6

VIC
Autism Victoria Inc
Phone (03) 9885 0533
www.autismvictoria.org.au

(Taken from Family Voices magazine of the Australian Association for Families of Children with a Disability Vol 2, Issue 1, 2009)

You can help Southwest Advocacy by passing this newsletter on to someone else who might be interested in reading it after you.