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# Southwest Advocacy News

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Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

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## CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Welcome to another edition of the Southwest Advocacy Newsletter.

SWAA will be preparing over the next twelve months for a quality assurance audit. This quality assurance audit is conducted by an independent auditing firm who then hopefully assess us as being compliant with the disability standards, which then ensures our funding. This is the first time that we and all other disability advocacy services have undergone this comprehensive audit so it is a steep learning curve for us all and very busy. This audit ensures that we are working well with our consumers and continually improving our service. We feel confident that the way in which we work with the people who use our service definitely meets the standards, but sometimes it's about having the documentation to show it.

As part of this process Southwest Advocacy will be contacting some of the consumers that we have seen in the previous 3 months prior to the audit to ask them whether they are prepared to assist in the audit process. This will mean an interview either in person or over the phone with the auditors to answer some questions about our service and their experience. This is a non identifying process, but you have the option if you are contacted to say no. Southwest advocacy respects your decision either way. The consumers involved will simply be asked a range of basic questions about their involvement with Southwest Advocacy and how useful it was. SWAA's staff will not be present during the meeting and everything that is discussed in the meeting remains confidential, so consumers will be able to speak frankly about their experience as Southwest Advocacy service users.

Thankyou in advance for your patience and co-operation through this process.

Regards  
Adele Markwell,  
Co-ordinator

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*Would you like to receive Southwest Advocacy News  
via E-mail?*

*If you have an e-mail address you can help us save paper & 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 electronically.*

## Discrimination in the Private Rental Market

Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission is investigating difficulties in accessing private rental accommodation to inform its' work on discrimination in the private rental market. A survey has been conducted and a report on the Commission's findings will be published.

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* makes it against the law for a landlord or rental agent to discriminate against you based on your personal characteristics including:

- disability
- age
- race
- sex
- sexual orientation
- religion
- mental health
- marital status
- having children or being pregnant

A fact sheet on your rights under the Equal Opportunity Act when you are renting is also available to download:

[Discrimination and renting - Know your rights \(PDF, 180KB\)](#)

[http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=1537:discrimination-in-the-private-rental-market&Itemid=819](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=1537:discrimination-in-the-private-rental-market&Itemid=819)

## 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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## DISABILITY SUPPORT FUND

The Disability Support Fund (DSF) assists people with a psychiatric disability access community based health, social vocational and recreational options that would not otherwise be available.

Some examples of things that have been funded are: Art classes & equipment; Computer courses; Gym memberships; Music lessons; Bicycles and safety equipment; Cooking classes; Karate lessons; Driving lessons; Musical instruments, and Bus trips for groups.

The DSF also has Agency & Self Help Carer Group Initiative funding. This has been used in the past for speakers, to pilot program initiatives and specific short term projects with clear outcomes such as independent living skills or recreational and vocational options.

If you have a psychiatric illness, are a case manager, service provider or a carer of a person with a psychiatric illness and want to access the DSF or simply want to get some more information call Carmel on:

(03) 5221 8498  
041 732 3396 Mobile  
1800 626 724 Rural Toll Free  
(03) 5229 5665 Fax  
email: [dsf@bdrc.org.au](mailto:dsf@bdrc.org.au)  
[www.bdrc.org.au/dsf.html](http://www.bdrc.org.au/dsf.html)

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

## Daru – VCOSS Taxi forum

Taxi Users: Have your say on the draft taxi inquiry report

**Friday 13 July 2012**

**10:30am – 12:30pm**

RACV Club

Level 2 Conference Centre  
501 Bourke Street, Melbourne

### **Registration Essential Places are Limited**

Please Register by Monday 9 July  
2012

Due to limited places, registration is for people with disabilities, seniors, their carers, and the organisations who work and advocate with them

### **Register online**

[daruvcosstaxiforum.eventbrite.com](http://daruvcosstaxiforum.eventbrite.com)

**By phone:** Liza on 03 9654 5050

### **Additional needs:**

Services, equipment and materials (including Auslan interpreters or attendant carers) will be provided if listed at registration

For more information, please contact

Michelle Lane at VCOSS on:

Phone: 03 9235 1009

E-mail:

[michelle.lane@vcoss.org.au](mailto:michelle.lane@vcoss.org.au)

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

## Professor Allan Fels

### AO

VICTORIAN TAXI INDUSTRY INQUIRY  
The Disability Advocacy Resource Unit (DARU) and the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) are pleased to host a forum for taxi users to provide feedback to the Victorian Taxi Industry Inquiry on their draft report.

The forum will hear a presentation from Inquiry Chair Professor Allan Fels AO. There will be time for questions, followed by additional discussion allowing participants to provide feedback on the draft recommendations.

The Inquiry's industry-wide recommendations will provide significant benefits to all taxi users, including through major reforms to licencing to increase and improve supply, provide better pay and conditions for drivers, and less restrictive regulation to provide more choice and boost demand.

A range of targeted initiatives have also been recommended to provide a safer, more reliable and affordable service to people with a disability. This includes a central booking system for metropolitan Wheelchair Accessible Taxis, improvements to the Multi Purpose Taxi Program and better, more accessible vehicles. Detailed analysis of the accessibility of taxis can be found in chapter 15 of the report and in a fact sheet on the Inquiry's website [www.taxiindustryinquiry.vic.gov.au](http://www.taxiindustryinquiry.vic.gov.au).

*(Taken from : DARU – VCOSS TAXI FORUM  
Taxi Users: Have your say on the draft taxi inquiry report)*

**Are you receiving Active Participation Register  
Mail outs?**

**Don't miss out – contact SWAA on 5561 4584 &  
complete a registration form today.**

# Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples' Education Fund

Contact: Frank Hall-Bentick Chairperson

Unit 4, 65 York Street, Richmond Victoria 3121

Tel: 03 9429 4210

Email: [info@adipef.org.au](mailto:info@adipef.org.au)

[www.adipef.org.au](http://www.adipef.org.au)

The closing dates for the Education Fund are every six months at the end of March and September each year. Our next deadline is 30th September 2012. Enquiries Welcome.

For many people with disabilities from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds, education can go a long way to not only developing their skills but also their self esteem and the pride of their family, friends and community.

For many, a small financial grant will enable them to undertake a course. This education fund is about helping people complete or undertake courses and programs through providing small grants. Our fund is looking to distribute small six monthly grants of up to \$2,500 to assist people with disabilities to continue their learning.

Contact Frank at [info@adipef.org.au](mailto:info@adipef.org.au)

## **Eligibility**

People with disabilities of any age may apply for any assistance to help with both formal and informal education. While people may need assistance to complete the application, we would like a letter in the persons own words telling us why they want to learn.

## **Deadlines for Applications**

**September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012**

**March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013**

**September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

## **How to Apply**

Download the form below, complete it and send it back to us. Any questions please contact us.

Word [ADIPEF Application Form](#)

PDF [ADIPEF Application Form](#)

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the Land on which we live. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to all Indigenous people and recognise their continuing spiritual connection to the Land.

## **Big Boost for Hearing Impaired Students**

Sydney based technology company, Ai-Media has received \$1.7 million to help commercialise its Ai-Live technology, which delivers real time speech captioning to laptops, tablets, iPads and other web-enabled devices.

Ai-Live has already proved effective in pilot studies in New South Wales and Victorian schools and has now received an Australian Government grant to help commercialise the system.

Fast, accurate speech-to-text technology could make a crucial difference in schools and workplaces for people with hearing difficulties.

Ai-Live allows quick delivery of accurate text by relaying audio to a remote trained operator who re-speaks, with punctuation, into special speech recognition software.

*(Taken from Grampians disability Advocacy Newsletter-March 2012)*

## **Advocates Call for Inquiry into 'Profiteering' on Disability Equipment**

*Rachel Wells, The Age, June 11, 2012*

Disabled Australians are forced to pay thousands of dollars more than their overseas counterparts for equipment such as wheelchairs and walking aids because overseas websites, which sell the same products much cheaper, are being prevented from shipping them to Australia.

Disability advocacy groups and frustrated Australian families want an inquiry into why disability equipment vendors are charging up to five times more for some equipment, and whether they are breaching competition laws by trying to stop websites from shipping here.

They say millions of dollars in government funding are being wasted on overpriced equipment while disabled Australians wait a year or more for equipment because of funding shortages.

"If we were paying less for our equipment then we could afford more of it and the government subsidies such as that provided to SWEP [State-wide Equipment Program] in Victoria would be able to reach more people," says Women with Disabilities Victoria executive director Keran Howe. "I would like to see an inquiry into the large price discrepancies."

Calls for an inquiry were echoed by Youth Disability Advocacy Service manager George Taleporos, who advocates for young people with disabilities and is awaiting funding approval for a new wheelchair.

"I think there is a lot of profiteering that goes on and you can't help but feel the distributors here are taking advantage of people who have no choice but to buy this equipment."

The Age believes some local distributors are pressuring overseas suppliers to stop selling to Australians. Tony Mason, from Dejay Medical and Scientific, sells several overseas brands and admits trying to prevent international competition.

Chris Sparks, from Assistive Technology Suppliers Australasia, which represents local manufacturers and sellers, says Australian distributors are reaching agreements with international suppliers to stop shipping here to protect the brands' reputation. He said the main reason Australians were paying more for equipment was because distributors here had lower volumes and had to factor service fees into their margins.

Families argue that while fitting and servicing is required for some more complex equipment, it does not explain the huge mark-ups on equipment such as hoists, support seats, shower chairs, basic wheelchairs and wheelchair accessories, such as cushions and travel cases.

A Hippocampe beach wheelchair that cost \$3000 on a French website compared with \$6000 here; a Height Right chair for \$160 in the US compared with \$1200; and a walking aid that cost \$1700 in the US compared with \$3000.

"We're talking about differences of up to \$3000 ... It's appalling," says Donna Economidis, who uses forwarding companies that purchase products on behalf of consumers from overseas websites that don't ship to Australia so she can save money on her son's equipment.

Individuals who cannot wait months for funding and purchase equipment themselves are not eligible for government subsidies.

To read the full story visit <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/political-news/advocates-call-for-inquiry-into-profiteering-on-disability-equipment-20120610-204fv.html#ixzz1xSobK6nn>