

## Disability Action Plans-What you need to know and do.

As of August 2005 all education providers including ACE will need to have a Disability Action Plan (DAP). This is part of the State Governments commitment towards assisting learners with disabilities to access the same education and related opportunities that everyone else does. A DAP is a statement of intent as much as it is a useful and practical approach aimed at eliminating discrimination by ensuring people with a disability & their carers enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens. ACE providers that go through the process of constructing and implementing such a plan will enjoy a number of benefits including: Meeting funding & service agreement requirements, eliminating discrimination in a positive way, improving services to existing & future customers, enhancing the image of their centre in the local community, reducing the likelihood of a discrimination complaint & increasing the likelihood of a successful defence should a complaint be made to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). To start off the process of developing your DAP you can look up the HREOC website. This website has a number of DAP's that you can view to get some ideas as to how to go about developing one for your centre. While this may be a good starting point a word of caution. Each centre needs to develop its own DAP that suits its own unique environment. A good starting strategy could be to set up a DAP committee of key people including people with disabilities to undertake this. Each plan must contain policies, programs that promote inclusion and eliminate discrimination. This should also cover the use of centre facilities, equipment & governance roles at the centre.

A DAP **must involve** people with disabilities either on the committee or in a consultative role. Once the plan is completed, it along with the new approach to policies & procedures must be communicated to all people within the organisation and beyond.

Once endorsed by the Committee of Management or other body you should register your plan with HREOC. This is a simple process that just requires you ask for the Plan to be registered. No formal assessment of the plan is made by HREOC.

**Our Network is available to assist ACE providers to develop or implement DAP's. Just call the helpline on 9916 5821. We will be conducting awareness raising sessions and other training on DAP's in 2006.**

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### Did you know?

**Online tutorials are available on a myriad of topics especially Computer software programs. Just go to Google or other search engine and type:**

**tutorial+(whatever software program you need training on) eg: Microsoft access**

**You will be given a number of links to these. Just click to access. Online tutorials are downloadable free and are great aide to learning for tutors and students alike.**

# Disability Standards-what they are and what they mean for you..

*By Louise Oswald*

New Disability Standards in Education have come into force. The standards relate to (Section 31) of the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1992* and apply to all education providers. These Standards now require ACE providers to review the way they work with students with a disability with the purpose of clarifying and making more explicit their obligation to ensuring that education and training are made accessible to people with disabilities. The Standards cover the following areas:

- Enrolment;
- Participation;
- Curriculum development, accreditation and delivery;
- Student support services; and
- Elimination of harassment and victimisation

The Standards are intended to give students with disabilities the same rights as other students and are based on the position that all students should be treated with dignity and enjoy the benefits of education and training in an educationally supportive environment that values and encourages participation by all students. To achieve this, the effect of the Standards is to give students and prospective students with disabilities the right to education and training opportunities on the same basis as students without disabilities. This includes the right to comparable access, services and facilities, and the right to participate in education and training unimpeded by discrimination, including on the basis of stereotyped beliefs about the abilities and choices of students with disabilities.

## **Legal implications of the Standards**

Compliance with the Standards is mandated by law and are therefore as legally enforceable as the DDA. If a person acts in accordance with the Standards they will comply with the DDA. An education provider must comply with the Standards or it will be acting unlawfully. A breach of the Standards may generate a right of complaint to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC).

## **Ensuring Compliance**

Compliance with the Standards is the responsibility of providers. Enforcement is achieved through HREOC, the Federal Court or the Federal Magistrates Court. Any discrimination issues not covered by the Standards remain subject to the provisions of the DDA.

## **Professional development and awareness raising**

Good practice requires education providers to ensure that their staffs are proficient in interacting with students in ways that do not discriminate against people with disabilities. Attitude is one of the main barriers to non-discriminatory access to education and training for people with disabilities. To address any inherent discrimination in the provision of education and training, it is recommended that staff induction and professional development programs include components on the disability awareness and rights and on the obligations of education and training providers under the Standards. Such programs should enable staff to provide assistance that is helpful, for example during enrolment, without being patronising in language attitude or actions.

The ACE Dis**Ability** Network is available to offer advice, training or referral to your organisation on a range of disability related topics that will support you in meeting your obligations as an ACE provider. Contact Louise Oswald on 9916 5832 for more.



# Partnerships- How they can work for you.

By Toni Bentley

The ACE DisAbility Network is currently in consultation with a number of ACE and disability providers and planning is underway to conduct two pilot partnership projects around the inclusion of people with disabilities in adult community learning. Drawing upon previous research into the nature of partnerships, the Network is now aiming to pilot the findings so that consultation can become part of everyday practice between the two sectors.

Currently undergoing executive approval at OTTE, it is anticipated that the findings of the partnerships research will be disseminated across the ACE sector in late December. This will mean that ACE providers will have access to: (1) the findings of the research, including identification of key success criteria in relation to partnerships between the disability and ACE sectors, (2) a comprehensive guide and template to assist in the formation of structured partnership agreements, and (3) a disability specific resource and information support kit.

*So, why are partnerships between the ACE & Disability sectors important?*

Generally speaking, partnerships within this context are based on the idea that different types of services bring knowledge, expertise and influence to the development of creative responses to difficulties experienced by people with disabilities. Experience and research has shown that solutions and innovative approaches to providing inclusive educational opportunities to people with disabilities are not possible within the sphere of any one organisation. Disability and education based partnerships also allow an organisation to embrace the diversity of its community whilst being able to harness a structured approach that produces better outcomes for themselves and people with disabilities in terms of resource allocation and enhanced program delivery.

*What produces effective and sustainable partnerships between the two sectors?*

Most ACE providers have partnerships in place that are fairly loose and informal types of arrangements. Whilst this may work in some cases, those organisations that produced better outcomes for themselves and people with disabilities adopted a more structured approach. The Network sees this as being one critical success factor. Other success factors include: trust between partners, open and effective communication channels, good conflict resolution techniques, clear partnership and project objectives, adequate time, evaluation strategies and good management along with ongoing networking and funding.

If you are seeking more information of partnerships between the ACE and disability sectors please phone Toni Bentley on (03) 9916 5829 or you can email her at [toni.bentley@yooralla.com.au](mailto:toni.bentley@yooralla.com.au)

## **Key 2006 Diary Dates:**



**ANHCL Office opens January 9th**  
**Term 1 2006 Commences January 31<sup>st</sup>**  
**Commonwealth Games start March 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**Term 2 2006 Commences March 27<sup>th</sup>**

## Carolyn's Story- Words are powerful.

**Carolyn, pictured here is a young woman with a disability. She is also a student, a writer, a committee member, and hopes in the not too distant future to get employment in writing or literature.**



Words are powerful, and therefore more positive and respectful language needs to be used in society. The use of language should display a person first, rather than a person in terms of their disability. Our focus should be on conveying a sense of empowerment, rather than using words to promote a feeling of pity for people with a disability. Language should also uphold their individuality, equality and dignity. People who have a disability are “normal,” healthy human beings with feelings. Their human rights need to be upheld and people should make a conscious effort to treat them with respect and basic manners should also be exercised.

This should be no different in our education system. I believe that the accessibility of inclusive quality of adult education by some community centres, TAFE institutes, universities and the like for people with a wide range of disabilities is not being totally and efficiently catered for. First what needs to be done is to establish a vision of what could be achieved in the education process and outline expectations. Listing resources to help students with disabilities is a good starting point in the process of inclusion. More action and attention should be placed on increasing public awareness of the value of people with disabilities as contributing members of the workforce; building on what we have now in the workforce system to become more involved and effective in service for people with disabilities; and increasing the number of employment opportunities in various occupations for people with disabilities.

One need for people with disabilities in education include disability awareness, which goes beyond understanding the needs of the person and what purpose it serves, but also understanding the basis of the disability and adopting positive attitudes. This includes positive expectations of both the outcomes and processes of education and the achievements of the students. Other needs are easily accessible buildings, for example: having hand rails and ramps, large areas, the provision of handouts, a scribe if suitable and the tutor must be approachable, supportive and understanding of the pupil, regardless of the type of disability. There should be an easily accessible area to set up a computer if need be, with wires not obstructing the walkway. Co-ordinated partnerships between support workers, organisations and learning establishments must be a priority.

On the other hand, the responsibilities of people who are disabled are just as important. A person with a disability needs to do their part in learning and obtaining the necessary skills and having good personal qualities and values in life, education, and in turn, gain employment. In return, abled people should make a conscious effort to take any person who has a disability seriously and give them a good chance in life, in the field of education and employment. According to psychologists, “there is no reality, only perception in life”. Therefore, in order to make further substantial progress in society, we all need to value people with disabilities for who they are and take a more positive view....one might be surprised.

I am aware that the responsibility to display one's capabilities does not exclude people with disabilities, but sometimes the problem can be that we are judged on our image first. Since there is so much more to a person than their handicap, such as, their spirit, their self, their heart, opinions and personality, this would be very unfair.

Having a disability myself, my confidence in the progression of the view of disability in society is boosted when someone inquires about my handicap. The fact alone that they ask me, not only reflects a better perception in society, but a comfortable, respectful attitude towards myself. It shows that one is not afraid of disability and is prepared to be fair. My Cerebral Palsy is not a disease, or contagious and it is not and should not be a reflection of anyone's

image. Having said that, with respect of treating people disability, most people are doing well, but on a smaller scale there are still some people that think their image or status would be diminished in some way if they are seen in the company of such people. Some people need to see beyond the perception that disability itself is something to be ashamed of and that it automatically makes one a bad or unworthy person who does not have anything to offer. There is a need to acknowledge that people with disabilities are worth getting to know, deserve respect and are given equal opportunities.

Achieving greater equality through more positive language, understanding and inclusive strategies in education are attainable goals. Everyone should do their part to bring forth a positive perspective and view of disability, which in turn will inspire more positive action in education and in society.



# Stories sought

If you know of someone with a disability that has learnt to read, write, participate in your centre or the community please ask him or her to send in a story or e-mail with the details. We are compiling stories & pic's to place on our website to highlight the fact that people with disabilities can achieve a great deal with the right support. Tutors stories of working with people with disabilities are also sought. E-mail stories to: [olympiat@yooralla.com.au](mailto:olympiat@yooralla.com.au) or call 9916 5821

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## GRANTS

The Department of Victorian Communities is offering a number of community building grants:

- Modernising Neighbourhood Houses Program
- Community Bus Program
- Volunteer Supports Grants
- Community Enterprise Grants.

Councils, Neighbourhood Houses and Community Organisations can apply for a package of grants (i.e. more than one grant type can be applied for on the one application).

41 Local Government Areas have been identified as high priority and eligible to apply.

Closing date for applications for the Grants Package is 5pm on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

For more information, phone 1300 366 356 or go to [www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au](http://www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au)

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## Parents Return to Work Grants for Computer Training

Infoxchange is a provider of the State Government funded Parents Return to Work Program. The program assists parents to prepare for re-entry into the workforce. Parents who are planning to return to work after being at home caring for children, with a child under 12, may be eligible for a grant of training and related expenses up to the value of \$1,000.

Infoxchange offers a full range of training courses in the computer programs required to re-enter the workforce with confidence. They will work with you to design a customised program that builds on your current level of computer skills, no matter how basic or advanced! Their patient and experienced trainers will assist you to enhance your skills in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Grant Applications close in mid January. Contact Susie or Bronwyn on **9418 7400** to register your interest.

# Disability Information Online

There is a wealth of information on the Internet on Disability related topics. Key local sources are listed below.

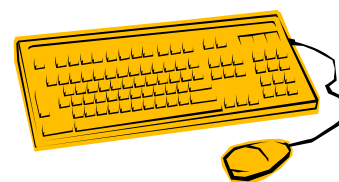
## Disability Information Online

[http://www.disability.vic.gov.au/dsonline/dssite.nsf/sectionone/about\\_disability?open](http://www.disability.vic.gov.au/dsonline/dssite.nsf/sectionone/about_disability?open)

Department of Human Services, Disability Services

<http://hnb.dhs.vic.gov.au/ds/disabilitysite.nsf/>

## Yooralla's COMTECH



COMTEC  Is a service of the Yooralla Society Of Victoria	Comtec provides advice, support & simple communication and technology solutions for people with disabilities of all ages. Appointments and advisory sessions are provided. <b>Disability cohort – multiple</b>	705 Geelong Rd, Brooklyn 3025 Ph: (03) 9362 6111 comtec@yooralla.com.au www.yooralla.com.au
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## The Partner Assisted Learning System (PALS)

The PALS system is an essential resource for work, educational and recreational settings. It is designed to enable people with disabilities to reach and to share their full potential.

PALS is a comprehensive guide to:

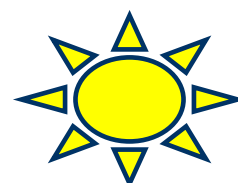
- ❑ Including, training, teaching or supporting people with disabilities.
- ❑ Choosing, training and assisting co-workers and learners
- ❑ Management best practise for employing people with disabilities.

PALS includes:

- ❑ Learning modules to be completed co-operatively by a person with a disability and a co-worker/co-learner.
- ❑ Tool kits that show managers, co-workers and co-learners how to gain the best possible results from the modules.
- ❑ Advice on obtaining accreditation towards the Certificate of Geberal Education for Adults.

PALS is a valuable resource for social groups, clubs and other community organisations-from suburban sports & recreation centre committees to adult education providers.

PALS shows community groups how to welcome and include people with disabilities-and ensure every person has an opportunity to participate and do their best. Learning areas include: Meeting procedures, health & safety and "fitting in"



**Seasons Greetings and Happy New Year 2006 to one and all from all of us from the ACE Disability Network Team.**