

Issue 1/08
Newsletter
April 2008

disability justice advocacy

The Broadcaster

Executive Officers Report By Kerry Potter

Quite a lot has happened since our last edition of the Broadcaster.

DJA has moved offices for the first time since the organisation was originally set up in 1990.

Our Landlord had continued to increase our rent over the years with few offers to improve the property where we were located.

After the troubled times in relation to our funding for last two years we felt that we were unable to sign a 3 year lease as requested by the Landlord. We were forced to move on.

Fortunately for us we were able to find space sharing with Action for Community Living and Disability Resources Centre at High Street in Northcote.

Although we're not as close to the station as we were in Abbotsford, we still have reasonably close access to Merri train station and the tram stops outside our door.

High Street won't be the last stop in our move but we will probably be here for the most part of 2008. Hopefully the three agencies will be able to secure premises close by with more space for our activities than we have now.

We have had to store some of our archives in a facility as the space at High Street is not available.

All of the staff offered time during the Christmas/ New Year period to assist with packing and moving and it could not have happened without their committed support.

The great part about sharing with other agencies is that there is a wealth of expertise in the staff at our doorstep. We can easily check the capacity of the other agencies to take on individual advocacy cases and they can easily refer to us. Our discussions are sometimes around common advocacy issues and common themes as well.

Meredith Mayes the Project Worker with the Aides and Equipment Alliance has included an article in the Broadcaster for your interest, and DJA will continue to support the project into the future.

As a result of discussions with our members last year we have decided to increase our input into the ongoing issues of inappropriate attendant care for people and the crisis being experienced in this area. Action for Community Living have been working on this issue for some time and we will offer support where needed into the future.

David Brant and Sue Whiting will be making a number of visits to Employment Services and Day Centres to talk to people about DJA and our Advocacy and they are especially interested in hearing about what may be happening in your life in relation to problems with support and services, or the good things about your attendant care. We are also interested in hearing from you if

there is or has been lack of available funds for appropriate aides and equipment for your needs and also to hear how this impacts on your lives .

Keep your eyes open for information about these visits as David and Sue may be coming to you soon.

If you or your friends and colleagues would like someone from DJA to come and talk to you about advocacy please give us a call or email us with your request and we'll endeavour to get out and see you.

Enjoy the beautiful Autumn weather.

Regards,

Kerry Potter

**Advocates Report
By
Richard Sherman**

Hi to all.

I'd like to able to report that the last few months have been quieter in regards to new referrals and the needs of existing service users. But this hasn't been the case. I say this not just because there are still a few boxes to be unpacked after our move to Northcote in January, but because we all still dream of the day when the need for advocacy services in the disability sector declines.

What's particularly frustrating is that the same old issues continue to present. Inadequate attendant care provision, limited appropriate accommodation options, grievances about service delivery in community residential units, to name a few. Equally frustrating is that it often till seems that the inquirer/complainant is seen as a "problem" asking for something special, rather than something that is often a basic right.

On a positive note, I believe the rights of most people with a disability have been enhanced with the enactment in the Victorian Parliament of the Disability Act 2006. The Act has finally given people living in CRUs significant residential rights. Eviction is no longer a simple process but one that requires service providers to satisfy a number of conditions in the Act. This includes reporting to and checking by the Department of Human Services and an appeal process for service users to VCAT. I certainly know of at least one service user for whom I believe we achieved an outcome that would have been unlikely a few years ago.

Two other recent examples of where I have had experience of the Act impacting on outcomes for service users of DJA are

1, increased guidelines and reporting requirements for service users in the use of seclusion and restraint in CRUs. And

2, using the newly established Office of the Disability Services Commissioner to make a complaint with a DJA service user about their residential service provider. Whilst the outcome of the complaint is as yet undetermined, the existence of the office and it's power to conduct an independent investigation, strengthens the rights of people with a disability - and that is always welcome.

In closing I would like to acknowledge and thank Junelle Rhodes for the work she has done over the past 6 months, whilst working as an advocate with DJA. Junelle is leaving DJA to increase her work as a teacher in the welfare sector. The students gain is DJA's loss. Thanks Junelle and good luck. I'd also like to welcome Paul Hume who is to join the staff team on April 22nd on a 6 month contract. I look forward to working with him and I'm sure he'll be a valuable addition to the team.

Best wishes and regards to all,

Richard Sherman.

**The Aids and Equipment
Project
By
Meredith Mayes**

Many of you will now be aware of the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance due to the commitment and passion of its growing membership. The Alliance was formed in October 2006 and I came on board as Project Worker in July 2007. My position is auspiced by Disability Justice Advocacy however, this arrangement continues to be so much more than giving me a workspace and some pens. DJA has been a key driver of the Alliance since its inception and continues its involvement not only as an active member, but as a strong support for me in my role. Thanks Kerry, Richard, Chris, Michelle and Junelle!

2008 is shaping up to be a big year for the Alliance and we have already celebrated a number of successes. In January the Alliance held a well attended Action outside the State Treasury building to highlight the inadequate funding of the Victorian Aids and Equipment Program. A number of media representatives came along which led to a page 5 article in "The Age" the next day.

This Action followed the success of two philanthropic grants which will greatly help the Alliance to progress its work; a grant from the Reichstein Foundation funding my position and a grant from the William Buckland Foundation

funding a collaborative research project over the next 2 years.

Following the public release of the KPMG review of the state aids and equipment program, the Alliance met with the Community Services Minister, Lisa Neville to introduce us and our objectives. We are looking forward to a positive working relationship with the Minister and the Government, particularly as our research project progresses and we can provide a strong evidence base for the need for change and increased funding in the system.

Our membership continues to grow and we are now proud to say that we have 29 organisations and individuals signed up and involved. For those of you involved in advocating for, using or accessing aids and equipment, you will truly appreciate that the road ahead for the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance is a challenging one. As we continue to work towards increased investment and greater choice and equity for people with a disability, I look forward to meeting many more of you and sharing our skills, commitment and passion to reach these critical goals.

If you would like to know more about the Aids and Equipment Action Alliance, please contact Meredith Mayes, Project Worker at Meredith@justadvocacy.com or on 0458 361 497 (please note I work Wednesdays and Thursdays).



Improving leisure centre access for people with a disability in Victoria

Background

The project is based on an English program called the "Inclusive Fitness Initiative" (IFI), which works strategically to set consistent standards in the leisure industry, assisting leisure centres to become inclusive of people with a disability. The initiative has led to the development of a quality mark for centres to work towards achieving, which in turn advertises to people with a disability the centres have considered their needs.

The Inclusive Leisure Initiative (ILI) aims to assist centres by making it easy for centre managers, and professionals who support centres to cater for people with a disability. The ILI will develop consistent standards for the industry, creating a one stop shop for information, guidelines and good practice. This will provide Victorian centres and associated professionals with tools and resources to develop inclusive sites, which meet the needs of people with a disability. Over the 4 years, the ILI will work towards developing an Inclusive Standard for Leisure centres.

Aim:

Increase opportunities for people with a disability to become

physically active, through the development of inclusive leisure centre environments.

Objectives:

To build capacity within the Leisure Industry to become inclusive of people with disability, through increasing the understanding of barriers and enablers.

To increase participation in physical activity, among people with a disability, by increasing their knowledge and confidence in the leisure opportunities available.

To establish new benchmarks and inclusive standards for the industry.

To advocate and lobby within the Leisure industry for the needs of people with a disability.

Who are we working with:

1. YMCA.
2. Sport Education Victoria.
3. Municipal Association Victoria.
4. Kinect Australia.
5. Scope's Communication and Resource Unit.
7. Access for All Abilities Officers.
8. Leisure Centre Managers
9. VicsRapid.

For Further Information

If you would like more information concerning the project or would like to be involved in the project please contact: Emma Highwood Inclusive

Leisure Project Manager Email

e.highwood@advocacyhouse.org

Phone: (03) 9489 2999

TTY: (03) 9489 1179

DJA TRAINING UNIT

This year the DJA Training Unit will be going on the road throughout Victoria. We aim to meet members to learn *their* issues. Some of the topics we will be discussing cover;

Transport

Attendant Care

Housing

Work issues and

Day Programs

Everyone is invited to come along and have a say. The dates and venues will be distributed to the members soon.

Sue Whiting and David Brant

**DJA HAS MOVED
To
179 High Street
Northcote 3070**

We can still be contacted on
9416 3488

**Our new telephone
number is 9481 5070
Toll free 1800 808 126**

In Memory of Dennis De Pianto

It is with sad regret that we advise our members of the death of Mr. Dennis De Pianto.

Disability Justice Advocacy Inc were shocked and saddened to hear that Dennis De Pianto had passed away in February 2008.

Dennis was a much loved and valued Board member here at DJA he will be missed by all of the staff and board members.

DJA BOARD MAMBERS

Michael Crockford

Stavros Kalomiris

Glenn Lott

Pat Meehan

Sue Whiting

Robert Williams

Margaret Vandoros

NDAP funding

DJA Funding will now extend to June 2009. there will be ongoing discussions with the FaHACCSIA in relation to funding into the future.

A new quality assurance system will be implemented for all National Disability Advocacy Programs with the possibility of funding well into the future.

If undeliverable please return to:
disability justice advocacy inc
179 High Street
Northcote Vic 3070



To:

The Broadcaster
Print Post Publication No: 330038 / 00023

disability justice advocacy inc, 179 High Street Northcote Vic 3070
phone: (03) 9481 5070 freecall: 1800 808 126

If you no longer want to be on the disability justice advocacy inc mailing list, please let us know.

Your new phone number:

Your new address: P/code:

Name:

Are you moving house? We need to know your new address.

