



Inside this issue

Getting to Know Patricia (Tricia) Malowney	p2
Ants Pantz delivers a great performance at the recent Having a Say Conference in Geelong	p3
The Commissioner continues his visits to Disability Service Providers	p3
What to do if you have a complaint about your phone or internet services	p4
Are you getting our information?	p4

Welcome to the Autumn edition of our newsletter.

It has been a particularly busy and exciting time at the office with a great performance by Ants Pantz at the Having a Say Conference in Geelong and the recent launch of the *Good Practice Guide and Self Audit Tool: Developing an effective person centred complaints management culture and system* (the Guide).

The development of the Guide is a direct result of feedback from disability services for a resource that assists them in developing and reviewing their approach to complaints.

We have an important role in working with disability services to achieve an effective person centred complaints management system and culture. This Guide is intended to be a useful resource to help disability services achieve this. The use of cartoons, thoughts and tips throughout the Guide help to make it interesting and engaging.

The Guide makes it easy for disability services to assess and regularly review their own performance and inform the development of plans to improve their approach to complaints.

Whilst the Guide outlines the importance of good policies and procedures, a positive complaints culture requires disability services to



Commissioner Laurie Harkin and Dr. David Sykes (Principal Officer — Capacity Development, Office of the Disability Services Commissioner) at the Launch of the Good Practice Guide and Self Audit Tool —18th February 2009 at Arts Project in Northcote.

acknowledge that *It's OK to complain!* and indeed, that it is OK to be complained about.

Particular emphasis is given to the value of taking a person centred approach to ensure that service users are at the heart of our approach to complaints.

The development of the Guide has been enriched by the contributions made by disability services, advocacy groups and other complaint bodies from various jurisdictions from across Australia. I take this opportunity to thank those individuals and organisations for their generous support and assistance.

I commend this Guide to you as a useful reference in helping to ensure that an environment exists where service users feel that *It's OK to complain!*

Laurie Harkin, Commissioner



Copies of the guide and self audit tool are available from the office or can be downloaded from the website www.odsc.vic.gov.au/publications.htm



All I wanted was someone to sit down and talk to me, and to really listen to what I was trying to say

Robert Martin

Robert Martin — advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. Key note Speaker at the Having A Say Conference February '09

Getting to Know Patricia (Tricia) Malowney

A behind the scenes look at the work of a Disability Services Board President

Tricia was kind enough to participate in this interview question and answer series and provide her invaluable input.

Tricia has extensive experience working within both government and non government community service organisations. On the Board, a President holds a very important place. In this interview with Tricia, we get a glimpse of what being on the Board means both as a member and the President. Tricia's answers to the interview questions provide an insight into the workings of the Disability Services Board.

What led you to apply to become a member of the Disability Services Board?

I saw it as an opportunity to work closely with the other Board members, with the Commissioner and with Government to improve the life for some of the most vulnerable in our community.

What does your work as the President of the Disability Services Board involve?

The work is about improvement and a constant search for new and better ways to be able to guide services and get a message across to a wider audience. I see it as an opportunity to influence change.

Can you tell us a bit about the Board?

The Board consists of 11 members who were appointed by the Hon. Lisa Neville Minister for Community Service, according to the Disability Act 2006. It consists of members who have experience and knowledge as users of services, providers of services, the Department of Human Services, the Health Services Commissioner and others who have expertise which will enhance the Board's ability to improve the life of people with disabilities. The Board is inclusive and has members with disabilities as well as parents of children with disabilities.

What does the board do?

Under the Act the Board provides advice on matters of concern which the Board believes should be brought to the attention of the Minister. We liaise closely with Commissioner Laurie Harkin, providing advice and support as needed and seeking his advice where appropriate.

What challenges do you face in your job as the President of the Disability Services Board?

Each member of the Board has a particular area of expertise and commitment to improving the life people with disabilities, who are reliant on services funded or provided by the Disability Services Division of the Department of Human Services. It is vital that we leave our own agenda



Tricia Malowney, President DSB

behind, and work collectively to ensure that we are able to work as a Board. I believe that an integral part of my role is to provide an opportunity for all Board members to have their say, and to be comfortable to raise and discuss issues as required.

In relation to complaints management, what do you see the future holds for disability services in Victoria?

Some people with a disability raise issues of concern to me on trains and in coffee shops – some people are fearful of raising complaints because they fear being penalised. For those disability services who understand that all people have a right to live with dignity, a complaint is not seen as threatening, but rather as an opportunity to improve services.

I look forward to the day when all disability services will understand that *It's OK to Complain!*

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view.

Harper Lee

'No Title' Artist – Miles Howard-Wilks
Pencil & Gouache 350 x 500
Appearing in the Exhibition Location,
Location, Location 19 March to 24 April
Arts Project Australia – Northcote



Ants Pantz delivers a great performance at the recent Having a Say Conference in Geelong

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, we engaged Ants Pantz theatre troupe from the Meeting Place in Colac to deliver the message *It's OK to complain!* to the participants at the Having a Say conference in Geelong.

The performance was engaging with a series of stories based upon complaints received by the office being brought to life through the dramatic performances of the actors concluding with a toe tapping tune.

The performance was filmed and we will be exploring ways of using this to continue conveying the message to service users that *It's OK to complain!* The performance had an immediate impact with some of the audience talking to us afterwards about issues they had.



Ants Pantz performing their play 'It's OK to complain!' at the Having a Say Conference — February 2009

The Commissioner continues to visit Disability Service Providers

Over the last 3 months, the Commissioner has visited a number of services in the Eastern, North-West and Gippsland regions. The Commissioner has met with disability service leaders and has been encouraged to hear about service's practices and how complaints have helped shape their services today. Visits to the Loddon Mallee, Hume, Southern, Grampians, Eastern (again), North West (again) and Barwon South Western Regions are scheduled for the next quarter.

In addition the Commissioner was pleased to be able to visit the Western

Region Disability Network and had a fulsome exchange of views about his role and about disability services more generally.

The Commissioner was also invited to launch annecto' Feedback Project titled Speak, Listen, Learn about, Grow. This project aims to improve support for people with a disability, older people and carers through collecting, providing and acting on both positive and negative feedback throughout the organisation leading to a culture of continuous quality improvement.



Pictured at the launch of the annecto Feedback Project. Left to right: Ed Still, President, annecto; Laurie Harkin, Commissioner; Estelle Fyffe, CEO annecto; and Rosie Chiavaro, Principal Officer, Strategic Development, Office of the Disability Services Commissioner.



Left to right: Lynne Coulson Barr (Principal Officer Conciliation Office of the Disability Services Commissioner), Dr. Helen Szoke (CEO, Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission), Jeff Chan (Senior Practitioner, Department of Human Services) and Julian Gardner (Chair, Independent Community Consultation Panel, Mental Health Act Review) at the launch of the Guide.

The secret of life is not to do what you like but to like what you do
Anonymous

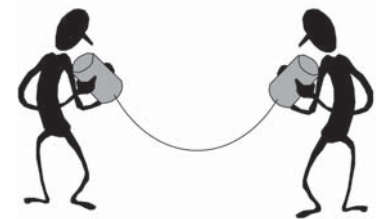
What to do if you have a complaint about your phone or internet services

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) is a free and independent alternative dispute resolution scheme for small business and residential consumers in Australia with unresolved complaints about their telephone or internet services.

Before taking your complaint to the TIO you need to:

1. Have already contacted your telephone or internet service provider and told them about your complaint OR you have tried to contact the company without success, AND
2. You think the provider did not resolve your complaint in a fair or reasonable way.

For more information contact 1800 062 058 (Free from a fixed line; standard mobile call rates from a mobile) Alternatively Contact us via interpreter, TTY machine or the National Relay Service



Attention Service Providers! Are you getting our information?

We want to be able to communicate effectively with you. So that we can provide you with our information and publications, we need your correct contact details.

If you are not currently receiving information from us, please email your organisation and contact details to, complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au.

The recent tragedy of the bushfires has had a profound affect on us all. Our thoughts are with those affected by the fires and all those assisting in the relief efforts currently underway.

For any matters relating to the newsletter you can contact Dina Theodoropoulos at dina.theodoropoulos@odsc.vic.gov.au or call on 1300 728 187

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