



Welcome to the autumn edition of our newsletter. Many of the articles in this edition focus on our ongoing efforts to build on the ways we engage with the people and organisations we work with, which is at the heart of and critical to our approaches.

As part of our efforts to further improve how we communicate with the diverse range of people we work with, we are producing a Plain English newsletter, the first of which will be released in April.

We are currently planning our second round of regional forums. The forums will provide an opportunity for sharing our learnings and we look forward to hearing of your experience with us.

The Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and I recently signed a revised protocol between my office and DHS. The protocol is aimed at further enhancing our working relationship and the effective resolution of complaints.

I hope that you find the information contained in the following pages of interest and value to you.

**Laurie Harkin**  
Disability Services Commissioner

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## Annual Complaints Reporting on-line Tool Update



Roll out of the new on-line Annual Complaints Reporting (ACR) tool commenced in November 2010.

Demonstration forums have been held in Traralgon, Warrnambool, Ballarat, Geelong,

Bendigo, Benalla, Horsham, Swan Hill, Bairnsdale, with 11 sessions in metropolitan Melbourne and a teleconference with Mildura.

Feedback about the reporting tool continues to be that it is very user friendly, informative and practical.

Over 200 disability service providers have now registered for access to the reporting tool.

## Regional forums to be held in May

see page 2 for more info

For access to the ACR tool phone us on 1300 728 187 or go to our web site [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au)

see menu item 'Information for Service Providers'

## Plans are underway for Regional Forums which will be held in each of the metropolitan and rural regions from May this year.

Our forums will be similar to those held in the first year of Disability Services Commissioner's (DSC) operation, and will focus on sharing our experiences and learning to date and identifying areas for further improvement.

The forums will provide the opportunity for people less familiar with our work to learn about our approaches and to meet some of our staff.

Further details will be provided in the near future via our website, emails and on twitter.

## Welcome to new staff



Katherine Berman commenced with us as Registrar on 24 January 2011.

Katherine comes to us from the Office of the Public Advocate and brings valuable experience and insight to her role with the office.

Welcome!

## Malcolm's story

Malcolm is a 25-year old man with an intellectual disability. He was not happy with his individual support plan, as he wanted to go swimming every week instead of once a fortnight as set out in his plan.

Malcolm's advocate Sarah made a complaint on his behalf on the basis that Malcolm's plan was not up to date. The plan had not been reviewed for three years and did not reflect his current interests.

When the service provider responded to the complaint, they acknowledged they had not reviewed Malcolm's individual support plan when they should have. As a result of this the service provider did not know that Malcolm wanted to go swimming more often.

The service provider apologised to Malcolm for failing to keep his support plan up to date. As a result of the complaint, the service provider reviewed Malcolm's support plan with him, where they planned individual support for two hours every week which enabled him to go swimming.

In addition to being pleased about the extra swimming session, Malcolm was also happy that the service provider had listened to his concerns.

## How do I respond to a complaint?

### Acknowledge...

how the situation has affected the person and their expectations of a quality service

### Answer...

why something has or has not happened or why a decision was made

### Action...

take steps to address the concern and then follow it up to see if the issue has been resolved

### Apologise...

a genuine apology may be all or part of what is sought

## Having a Say Conference 2011

The Disability Services Commissioner went to Geelong recently to attend the Having a Say Conference.

We presented a game called 'Who wants to make a complaint?' with multiple choice questions and prizes.

It was a session about people's

rights and making a complaint, using a format accessible to people with an intellectual disability.

We would like to thank self-advocates Luke Quinn from the E.W. Tipping Foundation and Lachlan Dodd from Distinctive Options who hosted the game for approximately 40 enthusiastic players.

Everyone enjoyed themselves and gained an increased awareness of their right to make a complaint and how to go about it.

For a copy of the game contact us on 1300 728 187.



## The Disability Services Commissioner is producing Plain English newsletters.

Our Plain English newsletter provides up to date information about the work of the Disability Services Commissioner in an accessible format for people with a disability.

The newsletter is in single page format to allow for easy printing and circulation.

The first newsletter will be emailed to you in April. We welcome your feedback and encourage you to circulate it as widely as possible.



If you have any questions you can contact Dina on 1300 728 187

We recently conducted a training session for Day Service staff from Carinya Society. Here's what they had to say in response to the question

*'What did you find most useful from today's presentation?'*

- (learning) 'where to direct clients if they have a complaint'
- 'Learning about the role of the DSC'
- (learning) 'the importance of complaints in bringing up the standards of a facility'
- 'Finding out what resources are available to get the message across to clients that 'It is OK to complain''
- (learning) 'how we can make complaints'
- 'Info on how to make a complaint and who to contact'
- Outline of Commissioner functions, role of the Commissioner emphasis on 'It's OK to complain'
- All of it 'It's OK to complain'



Anyone wanting DSC present to staff, service users or families can contact us on 1300 728 187.

## Disability Services Commissioner and Secretary of the Department of Human Services sign Protocol.

On 27 January 2011, a new protocol was signed by Laurie Harkin, Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) and Gill Callister, Secretary Department of Human Services (DHS).

The protocol sets out the roles and responsibilities of DHS and DSC in relation to promoting complaint resolution, organisational learning and service improvements for people with a disability consistent with the objectives and principles of the Disability Act 2006.

The protocol identifies pathways for contact and information sharing between DSC and DHS regional offices and the Disability Services division.

We look forward to the anticipated benefits of this new protocol in supporting the earliest possible and most effective resolution of complaints and promoting opportunities for improved service outcomes for people with a disability.



Laurie Harkin, Disability Services Commissioner and Gill Callister, Secretary Department of Human Services

## If you have a complaint relating to...

the Department of Human Services - Office of Housing

Anyone wishing to provide feedback or make complaints, comments and suggestions about the Office of Housing is encouraged to contact the Quality Assurance/Community Liaison Officer at their local housing office or their individual case worker.

Your local housing office can be found on the Office of Housing website

<http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/>

You can find more information about how to make a complaint and how it will be handled by using this link

<http://www.housing.vic.gov.au/about-us/contact-us/making-a-complaint>.

To ring and speak to someone or send a letter contact:

Housing Complaints Management Unit

Phone: 1800 155 743

Email: [cmu@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:cmu@dhs.vic.gov.au)

Mailing address:

Complaints Management Unit,  
Level 1, 50 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne 3000

For complaints relating to a social housing organisation contact:

Housing Registrar

Phone: (03) 90969835

Email: [housingregistrar@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:housingregistrar@dhs.vic.gov.au)

Mailing address:

Complaints officer,  
Housing Registrar,  
Level 24, 50 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne 3000

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[twitter.com/ODSCVictoria](https://twitter.com/ODSCVictoria)

For matters relating to the newsletter you can contact Dina Theodoropoulos at [dina.theodoropoulos@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:dina.theodoropoulos@odsc.vic.gov.au) or call on 1300 728 187

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