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Until next edition....



Merry Christmas, and Best Wishes for 2010 to all our members and friends. Be safe and healthy until we are back next year...

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of PDA Board or staff.

Editorial – Continuing Change

In the last newsletter I wrote about a feeling of change in the air. This was something I felt strongly at the time as there was a relatively new government in Australia and after some hard times I had a feeling that perhaps life would have a few more rewards instead of hills to climb and bridges to cross.



Shortly after writing that article, I had the opportunity to meet a young man, called Chunlin, who lives and works in China. Chunlin has Cerebral Palsy and walks with his own unique style and a constant smile on his face. This young man travelled to Australia with a delegation of 19 other people from China, representing the China Disabled Persons Federation as part of a Disability Leadership Programme that PDA was fortunate enough to secure funding for, from AUSAID.

Chunlin could barely speak English when he arrived but he always had a smile on his face every time I looked his way. Chunlin was the adventurous one in the group. Stories were told of him going into the ocean on the Gold Coast and having to be rescued! He was seen going off shopping on his own using public transport, when he had never been to Australia before. The most wonderful of all, Chunlin climbed the Harbour Bridge, not with the 19 others in the group, but he had gone out quietly to do just that, and alone. He came back later that day with inevitable smile and a photo of himself on the bridge! How proud he was of that photo and how delighted and amazed we all were to see this young man taking on the world in a quiet way but always with a smile.

By the time the month was over, Chunlin was a hero to the entire group, and had learnt enough English to say goodbye and express hope to see me in China. Meeting the people in that group of 20 was a life changing event for me. The graciousness and politeness of every person, their ability to smile non stop and their gratitude at all that we did was inspiring and made me thirst for more. Their evaluations of the programme were brilliant and so overwhelming to read. They loved our way of life and Australia in general. They loved our animals, koala's, kangaroos and sunshine and lack of pollution, but most especially they loved the Water Dragons in Brisbane, who sunned themselves along the river banks each day.

This was part of a changing time, not just for me, but for the 20 people who came to see 'disability in Australia.' We didn't pull any punches either, we presented the system the way it is, with complications, frustrations and imperfections. We showed that it was not a perfect system. However the Chinese people were most impressed with our income support system and took away with them the intention of implementing a similar system in China along with instigating employment services similar to ours. This is a huge move forward for China and one that will have a major impact on the lives of people with disability who live there.

They learnt what 'Nothing about us without us' really means and quoted it back at us in their final evaluations as something important they had learned. They saw that we practice what we preach by having speakers and workers with disability present and participating at every opportunity and event. We had fun together, laughed and learnt from each other and shared a little bit of China and a little bit of Australia with one another.

When the China Project was completed and it was time to write all the reports and put the activities and outcomes down on paper, this somehow de-personalised something that was amazing to experience and to have been a part of. And change was still in the air!

Change means to make different, or to alter by substituting something else in its place. But is change always necessary, and what is the price we pay for change? Those who want change sometimes want it for change sake or so the saying goes, but does change need to be destructive or should change be something that is welcomed with open arms because it represents new opportunities and experiences?

Then along comes the announcement by Prime Minister Rudd at the recent National Disability Awards, that there is to be a Productivity Commission investigation into the 'approaches for funding and delivering long-term disability care and support.' The inquiry will examine the

feasibility, costs and benefits of replacing the current system of disability services with a new approach which provides long-term essential care and support for people with severe or profound disabilities however acquired. The inquiry will examine a range of options for long-term care and support including consideration of whether a no-fault social insurance approach to disability is appropriate in Australia. It will also examine if a scheme would fit with Australia's health, aged care, income support and injury insurance systems.

This is an enormous change for disability in itself. At last the focus is on disability and the opportunity is there for us, PDA and our members to tell government what our lives are really like and how we believe they should change!

Applying the theory of change to PDA and the work that we do, I asked myself, is PDA about the people we represent, and work for, those who have a physical disability. Are we making a difference or are we treading water! I like to think it's about what we do to make lives better for people, and how we do that.

Change can be wonderful, it can refresh, it can get rid of outdated thinking and ways of working and is certainly a time of questioning the old and the new. The old saying "A change is as good as a holiday" is an example of that, so I have been spending a great deal of time mulling over this issue.

So what does PDA (and therefore me as the EO) need to do from here? What is it that will make the most difference in people's lives? How can we, a small organisation with a budget of only \$160,000 to be a national peak organisation, initiate something that can make that difference? The small budget may seem huge to some, but when you think that we have a board of 8 (your representatives in each state, so make them work too) who only meet face to face once or twice a year, the overheads of running an office, wages for EO and other part time staff, then there isn't a great deal left.

Being a national peak organisation is an honour but it has it's drawbacks too! We aren't an advocacy service, although we undertake systemic advocacy, we don't offer a service, even information, (although we do that by our newsletters, emails, discussion lists and many other ways. Our primary role, which is to keep government informed on the needs and thoughts of people with physical disability and we need you to help us do that.

With a National Disability Strategy for example, being rolled out sometime in the future, we as a sector need to be ready to tell government whether we support this or object to it, and we need to be ready to do that as this is a big opportunity to influence the way government and Australia in general will treat and include people with disability in the future. Be ready and watchful.

So what will you do to make change? Will you support us when we ask for input? Will you keep us abreast of the issues out there? Will you let us know if you are discriminated against? You can help in many ways, and it doesn't require a lot of effort on your part.

We need you to tell us what it is that you want us to do and to be. So let's hear it from you, the most important people to PDA. Now its your turn, to inform us as members what you expect and want us to be in the future. Look forward to hearing from you...

Finally, have a safe and happy Christmas with those you love and who love you back!

Sue Egan - Executive Officer

Do you want to contact us?

Phone: 02 6567 1500 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday
1300 781 786 cost of local call

Email: pda@pda.org.au

Mail: PO Box 38, Willawarrin, NSW. 2440.

Website inquiry: www.pda.org.au





Call for Nominations and Elections to PDA Board and Annual General Meeting.

In October, we wrote to members, informing them of the Annual General Meeting which was to be held on October 10th in Sydney. The letter informed members of the short notice for the meeting, and asked if anyone had any objections. Some did, and these were noted. Consequently, the AGM was postponed and we are seeking legal advice on whether we can hold the AGM on **20th February** in Sydney, next year.

When we receive permission to go ahead with this, you will be informed by mail of the place, date and time along with voting forms for electing 4 new board members. In the meantime, in this newsletter you will find nomination papers for 3 Board Director positions. We need 1 Board member for each of the following states/territories, **Victoria, Western Australia and Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania.**

If you or someone you know, is interested in representing their state or territory, they must be over the age of 18, be a member of PDA, have a physical disability and be prepared to work for the betterment of all people with physical disability across Australia. Each nomination form must be seconded by another member of PDA and arrive in the office before closing date indicated on the nomination form.

Board members are elected for 2 years, with the option of stepping down and re-nominating again. This process allows for continuity of board members, and also means that new board members are given an opportunity to develop during this time.

We need enthusiastic and motivated people to be part of PDA, so let's hear it from anyone who is interested. Fill out the nomination form enclosed and return to our office by 5pm on December 31st 2009. Our address is: PDA, PO Box 38, Willawarrin. NSW 2440. If you prefer, you can email a scanned completed form to pda@pda.org.au. **A nomination form is in this newsletter.**

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PDA Annual General Meeting for 2009

Invitation to attend.

Mercure Sydney

818 – 820 George Street, Sydney.

20th February, 2010. 2.30pm

**To be followed by Afternoon tea and a presentation on China
Disabled Persons Federation programme**

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A Quote to consider!

"Thus, democracy's paradox is that the principle of equality implies sameness of condition, while the promise of freedom suggests the potential for uniqueness." Rosemarie Garland Thomson.
Source: *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*

Out now and available on our website under published papers!

1. Who Cares? Report on the inquiry into better support for Carers.
2. Body Image information paper
3. The *Shut Out report* – Response to National Disability Strategy consultations
4. National Disability Agreement
5. UN Convention on Rights of Disabled Persons

Christmas:



From the Grinch: "What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more." - Dr. Seuss

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MEDIA RELEASE- MONDAY 2ND NOVEMBER 2009



Australian Network for Universal Housing Design -

ANUHD applauds Parliamentary Secretary Bill Shorten's National Dialogue on Universal Housing Design.

Amelia Starr, National Convenor of the **Australian Network for Universal Housing Design** has applauded leaders of the housing industry and community sector for their commitment to developing a national strategy to improve the design and function of Australian homes for families, seniors and people with a disability.

The Dialogue was hosted at Kirribilli House on Tuesday 27th October 2009 by Ms Therese Rein and convened by Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, Bill Shorten. Critically, the Dialogue brought together 20 of Australia's national leaders from both housing design, development and construction industry and the community sector to discuss a nationally consistent way forward.

"We have agreed to work together to ensure that housing is designed and developed to be more accessible and responsive to the changing needs of Australians," Ms Starr said. "We thank Mr Shorten for leading this initiative and congratulate the Dialogues' participants for taking this necessary and courageous step towards ensuring that the homes we build today are fit for all of tomorrow's Australian's".

Ms Starr applauded the Dialogues' participant's for committing to participate in a high-level working group to develop the national strategy. The strategy will seek to codify basic universal design solutions through to more aspirational features for homes. Essential elements on which consensus was achieved include wider doorways and passages; wet areas, such as bathrooms, on an entry level; and reinforced bathroom walls to allow grab rails to be easily fitted in the future.

The dialogue saw consensus from industry leaders, advocates and government on an aspirational target that all new homes will be of agreed universal design standards by 2020, with interim targets and earlier completion dates to be determined for some standards.

Representatives at the forum included:

- Amelia Starr; National Convenor, Australian Network for Universal Housing Design
- Rhonda Galbally; Chair, National People with Disabilities and Carers Council
- Ivan Donaldson; General Manager, Australian Building Codes Board

- Graeme Innes; Race and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission.
- Michael Small; Senior Policy Officer, Disability Rights Unit, Australian Human Rights Commission
- David Waldren; General Manager-Carlton Brewery, GROCON
- Rod Fehring; CEO, Lend Lease Primelife
- Mike Zorbas; General Manager Government Relations, Stockland
- Ron Silberberg; Managing Director, Housing Industry Association
- Peter Verwer; Chief Executive, Property Council of Australia
- Wilhelm Harnisch; CEO, Master Builders Australia
- David Parken; CEO, Australian Institute of Architects
- Chris Lamont; Group Manager, FaHCSIA
- Dougie Herd; Executive Director, Office of the Disability Council of NSW
- Angela Jurjevic; Executive Director, Housing and Building Policy, DPCD (Victoria)

For further media enquiries, please contact Amelia Starr, ANUHD National Convenor, on 02 9211 2269 or amelia@dadhc.nsw.gov.au

The summary statement of the outcomes of the National Dialogue.

There was a clear consensus about the critical nature of the issue of universal design. 'Universal' means designing Australian homes to meet the changing needs of their occupants across their lifetimes.

We all agree that we need to provide Australians with choice about housing design and work harder to explain the benefits of universal design. In other words that universal design is about making life easier for young families, people who have short-term injuries, as well as senior Australians and people with disability.

We agreed on the need to codify a national approach. This would incorporate:

- 1) *The value of universal design to the community*
- 2) *A definition and a set of principles of 'universal design'*
- 3) *What its features are in relation to housing, of which, there is already a fair amount of recognised consensus.*

We agreed it is important to have a national approach, in other words the code should apply nationally to allow harmonisation across the country.

The code will deal with the minimal or basic solutions to design, through to more aspirational features for homes. Essential elements on which consensus was achieved are: wider doorways and passages; wet areas, such as bathrooms, on an entry level; and reinforced bathroom walls to allow grab rails to be easily fitted in the future.

More than 15,000 public and social housing dwellings are being built under the Rudd Government's economic stimulus plan that incorporates universal design features. This will provide important feedback about universal design and lessons for the future.

It was agreed that there is a need to work closely with industry and the community, including around education and training. It is understood that all participants need to be included and that change won't be instantaneous.

Everyone is committed to forming a high level working party to achieve substantial progress in the next six months. Part of the document to be developed by the group will be technical in nature and will be accessible to designers, builders and consumers.

As an aspirational target, all new homes will be of agreed universal design standards by 2020, with interim targets and earlier completion dates to be determined for some standards.

Did you know?

Musculoskeletal Disorders in the European Workforce - 30 September 2009.

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) account for nearly half (49%) of all absences from work and 60% of permanent work incapacity in the European Union. These and other socio-economic consequences of suffering from poor health due to muscle and joint pain represent an estimated cost to society in Europe of up to €240 billion. Download a copy from the following website if interested to learn more:

<http://www.fitforworkeurope.eu/default.aspx.locid-0afnew009.Lang-EN.htm>

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Christmas thought:

Christmas is a time when kids tell Santa what they want and adults pay for it. Deficits are when adults tell the government what they want and their kids pay for it.- Richard Lamm



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National Disability Strategy News



Earlier this year a consultation process for a National Disability Strategy took place across Australia. Workshops were held in many places, and submissions were sought and received by government on what people with disabilities want by way of the first National Disability Strategy.

The Strategy was one of the key recommendations from the 2007 Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth, State and Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA). It was also a 2007 election commitment of the Rudd Labor Government.

The Strategy aims to address the barriers that are faced by Australians with disability and promote social inclusion. The Strategy will be developed in close consultation with the Australian community, disability and carer peak bodies, employers, and industry experts.

Over 2,500 people attended capital city forums and focus groups in regional and remote areas and over 750 submissions to the discussion paper were received. As a result there is now a consultation feedback report from the National People with disabilities and Carer Council which reports to Government.

The feedback report, called 'Shut Out' details the experiences of people with disability in Australia and was launched on 5th August 2009. This report contains details about the barriers and issues facing people with disability, their families and support persons and highlights solutions offered from the submissions received.

If you would like a copy of the report (available in a variety of accessible formats) contact the following:

Phone: 1800 050 009 (Monday to Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm)

TTY: Phone 1800 555 677 and ask for 1800 050 009

Email: [National Disability Strategy](mailto:NationalDisabilityStrategy@fahcsia.gov.au) (NDSMailbox@fahcsia.gov.au)

Post:

National Disability Strategy

PO Box 7442

Canberra Business Centre

ACT, 2610

More information on the National Disability Strategy will be on our website or in our newsletter or PDA Facebook page as it comes to hand.

Did you know?

Physical Disability Australia has its own Facebook page. Just type in Physical Disability Australia into your search facility on Facebook and if you haven't joined the 112 people who have, then come and have a look at our site and make suggestions of what you want to see there.

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Christmas thought:

I do like Christmas on the whole.... In its clumsy way, it does approach Peace and Goodwill. But it is clumsier every year. - E.M. Forster



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Young People with disability speak out!

'The Youth Roundtable for the National Disability Strategy provided a range of views and a large amount of information about the issues and concerns of young people with disabilities in Australia... Young Australians with disabilities want access to an education, they want meaningful jobs, they want accessible and affordable housing and flexible, timely and self-directed support services.



Young people with disabilities want to be able to choose where and how they live and to have the freedom through accessible transport to move around. Overall, young people with disabilities want the many barriers that they face to be removed and the necessary supports put in place so that they can access the same opportunities as their peers.

In order for this to happen, we need the issue of disability and impairment to be addressed across the whole of government and we also need major policy reform to occur. Three major recommendations came from this Roundtable as follows:

Recommendation one: A National Disability Insurance Scheme

The introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme would provide support for all people who have a permanent disability, regardless of the origin or cause of the disability, and would allow for the provision of supports such as mobility aids, home modifications, and early intervention as they are needed. Such a scheme would provide far more equality in the provision of support for people with disabilities in comparison to the current system where the level of support that they receive is usually dependent on how their disability is acquired. It would alleviate the many difficulties voiced by young people with disabilities in this report especially in relation to access to education, support services and independent living.

Recommendation two: A Non-Means Tested Disability Allowance

Another policy reform that would address some of the concerns presented here is the introduction of a disability allowance. Such an allowance should be available to all people with a permanent disability based on individual needs. This should not be means tested or affected by the employment status of the person with the disability or members of their family. Entitlements within such a payment system should be determined individually, based on a persons level of impairment and the costs associated with their disability. This would allow for a more adequate and fairer provision of financial support, which acknowledges the additional costs of living with a disability and the wide variation in these for people with different types and levels of impairment. It would also address the many concerns with the disability support pension that were outlined earlier and would support more young people with disabilities to move into employment.

Recommendation three: Establishment of a National Advocacy Council for Young People with Disabilities

Finally, a very powerful message that emerged from the youth Roundtable is that young people with disabilities want their voices to be heard loud and clear by government. They also want a vehicle to network with one another to work together on issues that are important to them.

This could be achieved by the establishment of a national advocacy organisation by and for young people disabilities. This would facilitate a national approach to issues effecting young people with disabilities and it would follow a youth participation model where young people with disabilities would have a high level of control over all aspects of the organisation. Like the Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS), it would be an excellent vehicle for the development of young people with disabilities as leaders.

Source: http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/progserv/govtint/ydas_youth_Roundtable_rpt/Documents/conclusion.htm#1

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Christmas thought

May Peace be your gift at Christmas and your blessing all year through!



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Australia agrees to the UN Conventional Optional Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disability



The Hon Bill Shorten and the Federal Attorney General have agreed, on behalf of Australia, to the UN convention optional protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disability. The following is an article published on the 30th of July 2009 explaining the details of the current agreement.

“The Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children’s Services, Bill Shorten, today announced that Australia will accede to the Optional Protocol on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Protocol provides a mechanism for Australians to make complaints to the United Nations Disabilities Committee in the event that all domestic remedies have been exhausted.

“This demonstrates the Government’s real commitment to people with a disability as well as demonstrating our serious commitment to leadership in this area at an international level,” Mr McClelland said. This action follows the Rudd Government’s ratification of the Convention in July 2008 making it one of the first Western countries to do so.

In addition, the Attorney-General recently declared the Convention under the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act 1986 to enable the Australian Human Rights Commission to conciliate complaints based on breaches of the Convention. “Accession to the Protocol demonstrates Australia’s commitment to recognising both the rights and capacity of people with disabilities,” Mr Shorten said.

Australia joins more than 40 other nations around the world who have acceded to or ratified the Optional Protocol.

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Some light reading for the holidays?

1. Contours of Ableism: The Production of Disability and Aabledness.
By: Fiona Kumari Campbell.
2. Making the Journey: arts and disability in Australia. by Mary Hutchison
3. Building accessible homes for people with disabilities . by Bundaberg Regional Access Advisory Committee



4. Sweet FA - Living with Friedreich's Ataxia by Anne Patterson
5. Louise Sauvage - My story by Louise Sauvage with Ian Heads

Or a DVD instead:

6. "Inspire, Include, Increase" DVD - The result is a 30 minute long, inspirational and thought-provoking DVD that includes often moving interviews with Indigenous people with a disability, whose stories display their strength of character and belief in their own selves and their circumstance. Charles Darwin University



7. Just like you. A guide to etiquette and communication with people with a disability (DVD and booklet). <http://www.ideasthatwork.com.au/just.html>

National Arts and Disability Strategy

On October 9 the National Arts and Disability Strategy was agreed to by The Cultural Ministers Council. This strategy provides a framework of inclusive precedents for people with disability when it comes to art and culture. The ministers have agreed to four priority areas where action needs to be taken. These include:



1. addressing barriers to access and participation;
2. supporting artistic and cultural practice to those with a disability;
3. developing audiences for disability arts companies and individual artists; and
4. improving policy development and planning within the government.

The Strategy is the result of extensive consultation, including 115 submissions made in response to a discussion paper released in late 2008, targeted consultation with arts and disability peak bodies, and consultation with government agencies at all levels.

The ministers have agreed to monitor progress of the strategy every year and complete a review of this strategy every three years. This strategy can be found on the CMC website and is supported by the arts and disability sector in Australia and New Zealand.

The strategy itself can be found on the following website, in accessible formats:
http://www.cmc.gov.au/working_groups/national_arts_and_disability_strategy

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Christmas thought:

Nothing's as mean as giving a little child something useful for Christmas.

- Kin Hubbard



DDA Transport Standards Update



At the last meeting of the Aviation Access Working Group (AAWG) the update from the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government was that the 5 year Review Report with costing for its recommendations had been forwarded to the Attorney General and to the Minister of Infrastructure. It had taken since March 2009 to conduct an auditing process of the possible costs of the report's recommendations. The next meeting of the AAWG was held on 5th November 2009 where more information

will be available. In the meantime work is proceeding on the regulatory process of the aviation industry through the AAWG.

The recent announcement of Virgin Airlines that encourages people with disabilities to travel with them and to make their own decision about whether they need to be accompanied by a carer was only possible because of Maurice Corcoran's complaint that Virgin Airlines lost in the Federal Court. Complaints under the DDA 1992 are still the main regulation of the Transport Industry.

In the rail industry the regulatory process is taking the form of developing a Code of Practice to assist manufacturers, operators and providers to comply with the DSAPT. The Australian Rail Authority will release their Code of Practice for public consultation of 6 weeks at the end of November. It's not a good time for a consultation but there will be information about the Code of Practice that can be found on the AFDO website to assist groups and individuals with necessary submissions.

The CEO, Lesley Hall and the policy officer, Leah Hobson, of Australian Federation of Disability Organisations had been lobbying members of parliament about the release of the 5 year review of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport Standards.

Margo Hodge – Transport Representative to Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.
Nov 2009.

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ACT Taxi review to examine service levels, regulation

Published: August 3, 2009, 9:43 am
Section: Jon Stanhope, MLA



The ACT Government is about to start a comprehensive review of taxi services, which will recommend ways to improve service levels and regulation in the ACT, Chief Minister and Minister for Transport Jon Stanhope announced today.

Commencing in August 2009, the review will include an assessment of the supply of standard and wheelchair accessible taxi (WAT) licences; fare structures; and the level of industry regulation. "Canberrans and visitors to our city deserve to have reasonable access to taxi services that meet their needs," Mr Stanhope said. "This review will consider the difficulties faced by some operators and suggest a way forward to improve taxi services in the ACT."

Mr Stanhope said the ACT Government had already introduced incentives for drivers of WAT's and had extended these incentives most recently in May 2009. "We have already moved to introduce better incentives for drivers that operate wheelchair accessible taxis on significant family days such as Good Friday, Easter Sunday, ANZAC Day, Mother's and Father's Days and over the Christmas period.

"The ACT Government has continued to pay the WAT lift fee, which recently increased from \$12.40 to \$25 on the days the incentive payments apply. The \$25 lift fee also applies for all hirings between 9pm till 6am every night.

"The ACT Government is committed to exploring whether more can be done to improve taxi services in the ACT. I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this review as we move forward to develop a better public transport system for the ACT."

Key stakeholders including the taxi industry (Canberra Taxi Industry Association, taxi networks, operators and drivers); disabled users; the business sector and the Canberra International Airport Group will be invited to participate in the review.

The review is expected to be completed in early 2010. There are two accredited taxi networks in the ACT - Aerial and Cabxpress - and approximately 333 taxis. Of these, 26 taxis are wheelchair accessible.

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NSW Taxi Industry Inquiry. - Media Release - 11 November 2009 - Greens MP Lee Rhiannon
Greens win support for taxi industry inquiry. Greens MP and transport spokesperson says she hopes a NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the taxi industry, a Greens initiative which won the support of the NSW Upper House yesterday, will help clean up the industry and provide a better regulatory structure to improve services to the public and, in particular, people using wheelchairs.

"There is an overwhelming need to push reform of the taxi industry which for years has been the subject of poor regulation, backroom deals and rorting," Ms Rhiannon said. "This select parliamentary inquiry provides the opportunity to properly consult with key players and find a way forward. It will report in the first parliamentary sitting week of 2010.

"Key issues to be probed include the adequacy of government reporting standards and industry regulation, the practice of trading free 'Nexus' plates, the supply of unrestricted taxi licenses and anti-competitive behaviour. **"The performance of the wheelchair-accessible taxi fleet will also be a central focus.**

"The government claims that this inquiry is unnecessary because of recent initiatives around standards and its problematic taxi licensing bill, yet to be passed. "The reality is that these recent measures are not up to the task. "This new inquiry will provide a vehicle for genuine reform in the taxi industry through strategies which are considered, thought-through and effective," Ms Rhiannon said.

For more information: 9230 3551, 0427 861 568. Terms of reference and Hansard of yesterday's debate on the inquiry: <http://tiny.cc/GdXB0>

Lee Rhiannon, MLC. The Greens. Parliament of New South Wales

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National Human Rights Consultation.

The Government has just announced the results of its National Human Rights Consultation. Australians overwhelmingly demand we join the rest of the democratic world and protect our rights through a Human Rights Act: an instrument to prevent so many of the wrongs we've campaigned against together.

But just because the Consultation has recommended an Act doesn't make it a foregone conclusion - many in Government want to avoid greater scrutiny of laws they make that may curtail our rights.

The Attorney-General said this morning that, right now, the Government is deciding how they will respond to the recommendations. They asked for our opinion, and Australia has spoken up for human rights.

Over 35,000 Australians told the Consultation their views - with over 85% asking for a Human Rights Act. Now it's time for the rest of us to encourage the Government to adopt the community's recommendations. Click here to sign our petition calling on them to enact our Act:

www.getup.org.au/campaign/EnactOurAct is the website to join in.

Education, health, disability rights, Indigenous issues, climate change and our online freedoms - these are all human rights issues. Every issue we campaign on could come under the protective umbrella of a Human Rights Act - it's about improving everyday Australians' lives, and now the Government has the mandate to make it a reality.

But that won't happen without us showing we support the Committee's recommendations. When the Government first announced the Consultation, they never expected such a response - more submissions than any other consultation in Australian history. But now they need your help.

The Consultation has recommended a Human Rights Act, in accordance with the community's wishes. Now that recommendation sits on the Government's desk, awaiting a decision - can you tell the Government you support the call for human rights protection in Australia?

What rights might be protected by Australia's Human Rights Act?

The right to:

- * Education;
- * Freedom of expression;
- * Freedom from interference with privacy;
- * Freedom from discrimination;
- * Equality before the law;
- * Adequate living standards;
- * Freedom of association;
- * Just and favourable conditions of work;
- * Freedom of thought, belief and religion;
- * Protection from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and
- * Rights of children to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation.

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Conferences/Events in 2010 in 2010:

PDA Annual General Meeting - 20th February, Mecure Hotel, George Street, Sydney. See information elsewhere in this newsletter.

1. *From Strength to Strength* National Disability Services Victoria and Disability Professionals Victoria. Tuesday 2/3 March 2010. The Sebel, Albert Park, Victoria.
2. Arts Activated National Conference 2010. Arts, Access, Excellence. 25 - 26 March 2010 Powerhouse Museum Sydney
3. 8th National Deafblind Conference. 28-30 April 2010. Jasper Hotel, 489 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne,
4. Victorian Advocacy League for Individual with Disability Inc: "Having A Say" (10-12th February 2010)
5. Spectronics: Inclusive Learning Technologies 2010 Conference (25th-28th May 2010)
6. The Osteogenesis Imperfecta Society of Australia (Brittle Bone): 11th Bi-annual Osteogenesis Imperfecta Society of Australia Conference (9th-11th April, 2010)
7. National Council on Intellectual Disability Inc: Community Through Connections (11th-15th April 2010)
8. Deafness Forum of Australia: 6th National deafness Sector Summit (1st May 2010)

PDA is on Facebook

PDA has its own Facebook site and we now have over 116 members on-board and growing each day. We upload topics of interest and encourage you to have input and talk about issues of concern to you as people with disability.

Discussion List

Ever been a member of a discussion list? PDA has one with over 230 members across Australia. Basically a discussion list is online and by email for people who subscribe to the list by letting the office know you want to join. You can do this by emailing pda@pda.org.au and we can subscribe you. The list is closed to the public so no spam and other unwanted nuisances.

You can either have individual emails, or you can elect to have the Digest mode which is only 1 email per day and includes an overview and link to all of the comments of the day, so please let us know which method you would prefer. To find our discussion list visit www.pda.org.au and see Discussion List on the left hand list of contents. Click on this and it takes you to the page to subscribe.

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STOP PRESS !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We are happy to report that Kurt successfully completed his effort on the Kokoda Track after 10 days crawling over the track. To quote Kurt at the National Disability Awards our own Nicole O'Callaghan reports when asked about his experience, he replied: "Amazing, the best thing I've done." Well done Kurt.

Walking the Kakoda Track!

Earlier this year, the Sunday Telegraph newspaper reported on a 28-year-old man, Kurt Fearnley, who plans to crawl the Kokoda track to raise awareness for Beyond Blue and Movember.



Risking it all ... Kurt Fearnley wanted to be the first person to crawl the length of the Kakoda track, a 96k route through Papua New Guinea. Kurt is a well known and highly successful paralympian with a lifelong physical disability. Kurt said he was willing to risk his sporting career - even losing his arms - in a quest to crawl the Kokoda Trail.

Kurt climbed through a tropical jungle where temperatures rise to the high 30s and humidity exceeds 90 per cent, reaching a peak of 2195m.

Kurt is the world's leading wheelchair marathoner, aiming for a third consecutive gold medal at the 2012 Paralympics in London. He admitted at the Awards that it was tough, but nothing compared to what Australia's soldiers in WWII experienced. .

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Membership Application Form

free for people with disability. \$25.00 for organisations



Name:

Address:

State: NSW QLD VIC SA TAS NT WA ACT (please circle)

Postcode:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Mobile Number:

DOB:

Gender: Male/Female (please circle)

Please use the space below to describe your physical disability

Please describe the service you offer if you are an organisation

Please indicate if you would like to receive information via email or post or discussion list?

Y Hard Copy via mail

Y Email

Y Online E-Discussion list

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Office use only: membership accepted date:

Date entered into membership register

For the New Year

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in.

A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.

- B ill Vaughan.

See you next year!



PDA Christmas Closure

PDA office will be closed from 18th December 2009 until Monday 4th January 2010. The answering machine will be on during all of this time, so if you want to leave a message, please do so. Our email will also be checked during this time.....

Christmas and New Year Wishes....

The Board and staff of PDA wish every one of our members and readers a wonderful Christmas and New Year, and hope you return to us safe and well in 2010.



Newsletter by Nicole O'Callaghan

Sue Egan – Editor

Our contact details:

Physical Disability Australia Ltd
PO Box 38
Willawarrin NSW Australia 2440

Phone: 02 6567 1500
local call cost: 1300 781 786
email: pda@pda.org.au
web: www.pda.org.au