

ADEC community seeks input into new disability laws

The State Plan for Disability Services seeks to create the structure around which future services for people with disabilities living within Victoria will be built. The state government recently requested that ADEC hold a series of community consultations with the aim of gaining insights into how well the current system is functioning.

Consultations were conducted in both the metropolitan and rural area, and with both language specific focus groups and with individuals.

A number of common concerns quickly emerged. For instance, people from ethnically marginalised groups were regularly worried about free access to information. Lack of translated materials, too few interpreters, and cultural insensitivity were regularly cited as some of the causes for this shortcoming.

Participants also expressed anxiety about making

complaints regarding the conduct of specific personnel or the general quality of a service. Not only does there appear to be a pervasive ignorance about how to pursue a complaint, but also a fear that some kind of retaliation will be pursued once a complaint is lodged.

Participants believed significant improvements could be made in both regards by increasing the number of bi-lingual and multicultural staff working in the disability sector.

Importantly, the nature of the consultations might have strongly influenced this project's findings. Feedback was solicited from people who already access services, and, therefore, are already within the system. However, for others left out of the study, the system may be a fragmented, largely illogical labyrinth.



Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities Inc
13 Munro Street, Coburg VIC 3058

Our Contact Details

13 Munro Street Coburg 3058

Phone: 9383 5566

Facsimile: 9383 5185

Toll Free: 1800 626 078

Email: info@adec.org.au

All donations above \$2.00 are tax deductible

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities Inc.



English

Community Newsletter

Autumn Edition

ADEC's women leaders at parliament

Last year, two 'Women in Leadership' workshops were held. Nine people attended the first workshop and eight attended the second. Participants made great efforts to attend the group. For some it meant leaving their homes without a family member for the first time.



Workshop activities were designed to enhance participants' understanding, in a safe and comfortable environment, of the issues surrounding the concepts of leadership, empowerment, and self-determination.

The workshops sought to facilitate change in the way women with disabilities from ethnic communities view themselves. The aim was to demonstrate to the group that, by drawing on skills attained through their own experiences, and through exchanges with other women, women may become – and, often without realising it, already are – capable leaders.

The women were encouraged to express their opinions and dreams. Their contributions in brainstorming sessions were extremely creative. As the workshops proceeded, participation became increasingly enthusiastic. The women began to see themselves as people who could initiate change.

The workshops also provided opportunities for people to make connections. For instance, one participant expressed her desire to begin a craft group for people with a disability. She described

clear goals that could be achieved by such a group, but was unsure how to begin. She and Effie Meehan, who is very experienced in this area, have as a result developed a mentoring relationship in order to support this participant's efforts to realise her goals, and to become a leader.

Licia Kokocinski, ADEC's Executive Director, spoke to the group on the topics of state parliament and politicians. After the talk, the group agreed to take Licia up on her invitation to tour The Victorian Parliament.

The tour of parliament proved a very memorable occasion for all in attendance. Sheryl Garbutt, Victorian Minister for Community Services, and Mary Gillett, Parliamentary Secretary for Volunteers and Women's Affairs, presented ADEC's women leaders with certificates of achievement for their outstanding contribution to women's issues and the disability sector. The group then toured both houses of parliament. Effie Meehan and Annette Sassano were the first people to use the Legislative Assembly's new lifts to allow people with disabilities the opportunity to observe political proceedings. The entire day was a valuable, practical insight into the workings of democracy.



Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities Inc.

Individual Advocacy at ADEC

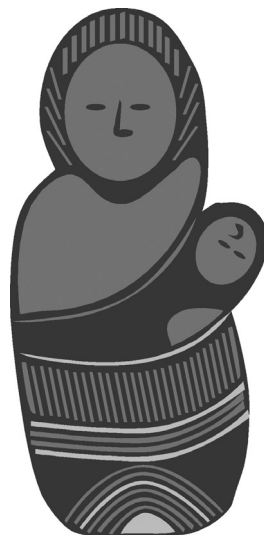
ADEC's individual advocates assist individuals with a disability from a non-English speaking background and/or their carers. Clients come from all regions of Victoria and are of diverse backgrounds. The people we work with may have physical, intellectual, psychiatric, or behavioural disabilities, may be hearing or vision impaired, or may suffer from acquired brain injury or developmental delay. Many of our clients have multiple disabilities.

The Individual Advocacy Programme aims, through partnership, to support our clients to achieve goals that meet their individual needs, and to ensure equal access to and participation within the community.

With the aim of providing an insight into the difficulties people with disabilities from non-English speaking backgrounds often face, over the course of the next few ADEC community newsletters, we will be presenting a series of case studies. The problems confronting the people in these case studies exemplify the types of situations in which ADEC's individual advocates can be of assistance.

CASE STUDY: Mrs V is a refugee from South America and a survivor of torture and trauma. She suffers from both physical and mental impairments. Most of Mrs V's family members were either tortured or murdered, or both. Mrs V came to Australia as a refugee accompanied by her only surviving child under the Humanitarian Programme. Mrs V's feelings of grief and loss in relation to her past experiences are so intense that no services have been able to address them in a culturally sensitive manner. Mrs V's mental and physical health continues to deteriorate.

Unable to work through her feelings, she feels angry, depressed, and helpless. She has become distrustful and difficult to work with. This, in turn, isolates her from the community, depriving her of invaluable formal and informal supports. ADEC can help.



ADEC makes the most of Carers Week

This year, the Multicultural Carer and Disability Support Programme celebrated Carers Week by taking part in 3 major events in 3 metropolitan regions (Western, Northern, and Southern).

The first event, a multicultural river cruise, was organised on 21 October. 10 groups from 6 ethno-specific communities in the Northern and Western region – Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek, and Italian – participated. The wet weather didn't deter members from enjoying a two-hour trip by boat from the exhibition building to Williamstown and back again. In total, about 120 carers participated in what was a very exciting trip.

The next day, 22 October, programme members participated in Parents' Exposure, an event

organised by Glenroy Special School in Broadmeadows. The event provided a good opportunity to communicate with families, and listen to their ideas and suggestions. Moreover, it was an excellent environment in which to promote ADEC'S programmes!

Then, on 23 October, with the contribution of Greater Dandenong Council and Centrelink Springvale, another celebration was organised. More than 160 people attended the celebration in The City of Greater Dandenong Town Hall. Carers from five ethno-specific groups spoke about their experiences and caring matters. The celebration encouraged attendees to appreciate the valuable role of carers and to promote the concept of 'carers' among ethnic communities.

Great Break Programme: Hepburn Springs / Daylesford day trip

GreatBreak participants were greeted with a rather cool morning on Sunday 12 October, as 42 carers and care recipients set out on a journey to Hepburn Springs and Daylesford. We were a very multicultural group, with attendees born in Italy, Greece, China, Thailand, Macedonia, Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, and Spain.

Our first stop was at the quaint little town of Woodend, where a few people enjoyed some early morning sunshine in the town square and took the opportunity for a bit of morning tea. We then continued travelling through some picturesque state forest, where we saw farmhouses, complete with cows, horses, and sheep.

By the time we reached the Hepburn Springs Centre, the weather had warmed up and it was turning out to be a beautiful, sunny day. After exploring the area and tasting some of the mineral water running from the taps, we headed off for lunch at the Old Hepburn Hotel. We had the whole dining room to ourselves and enjoyed a roast lunch, dessert, tea, and coffee.

After lunch, we had a coach tour of Daylesford,



which included the scenic lookout, where the children and some of the more adventurous adults climbed to the top of the viewing tower. Unfortunately, the weekend market was closing as we drove back into the town, but we made up for it by visiting the beautiful Jubilee Lake, before leaving for home with plenty of memories of a wonderful day in the country.

Two new ADEC mental health groups

A Turkish Mental Health Mutual Support and Self-help Group was established at ADEC in October 2003. The group meet once a month at Dianella Community Health Centre. Halime Duzen, one of ADEC's social support group facilitators, will be running this new group.

The creation of this group is important for a number of reasons. Not least among these is that, within the Turkish community, a degree of stigmatisation continues to be directed towards people with mental illnesses. The development of this group, then, is an indication that attitudes within the Turkish community to the topic of mental health are shifting and becoming more accepting. The formation of this group also

demonstrates that both ADEC's community visibility and our capacity to operate in diverse fields is increasing.

Furthermore, in the 2003-2004 financial year, a Vietnamese Mental Health Mutual Support and Self-help Group will be founded in The City of Yarra.

The Vietnamese mental health mutual support and self-help group was established in December 2003. The group will meet monthly within The City of Yarra at The Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association. A bilingual facilitator, Uyen Carrington, works with the group.