

ACTION ON DISABILITY WITHIN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

ADEC COMMUNITY NEWS, ISSUE 1, AUTUMN 2005



Special points of interest:

- A message from the Executive Director — recent changes at ADEC
- The Story of Effie — Meyer Eidelson's new book on one of ADEC's founding members

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This is the first newsletter to clients and users of ADEC since we shifted address in June 2004.

In September 2004 hundreds of people turned out as the new office was officially opened by the Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Sheryl Garbutt, MP.



Licia
Kokocinski,
Executive
Director

CHANGES AT ADEC

FEES AND CHARGES

Since January 2005, new fees and charges were introduced at ADEC. This has been necessary because funds from Government (which pay for the services provided to you) at the moment are just not enough to fully cover the costs involved in operating ADEC. Those clients affected have already been advised and a leaflet explaining the new costs is available at ADEC or from the staff member you are working with.

NEW ADEC WEBSITE NOT FAR AWAY

The ADEC website is going to be replaced very soon. I am sure those who try to access the website will probably be saying, "and about time too!" The staff and a consultant are now working on developing something that is up-to-date and interesting, as well as being disability accessible. The focus of the new website will be on larger policy issues and events.

STAFF CHANGES

Two of the Carer and Disability Support facilitators have left ADEC. We are very sorry to see Nam Doan (Vietnamese group) and Gianni Bonacina (Italian group) leave. We welcome Chau Tran as the new Vietnamese facilitator and Stephanie Nerazzi as the new Italian Facilitator .

Nancy Vanin and Hua Cao have also both left ADEC, replaced by Elizabeth Gardiner and Ben Ilsley respectively.

THE MULTICULTURAL FAMILY RESPITE SERVICE

Mary-Ann Liethof, who set up and ran this program wonderfully for its first two years, left ADEC in June 2004. I joined as Manager of Volunteers in late July. A change of staff is always a good opportunity to review a service.

What has become obvious during my review is that the Day Retreats for families and the Family Camps have been a great success. However, we are unable to meet the increasing demand for regular family respite activities. Families requesting one-on-one family respite have more than doubled since I joined and, unfortunately, recruitment of volunteers to provide this service has continued to be very low. This appears to be a trend across volunteer services, particularly in the Northern region.

In response, we are now widening our volunteer opportunities and plan

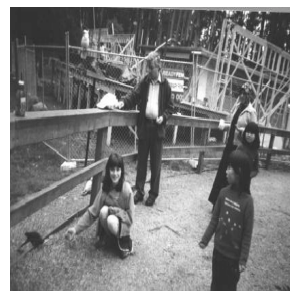
to begin a Community Access program to complement our existing services. This will involve pairs of volunteers facilitating small group activities. Activities will include such things as cinema trips, bowling, and going to the football. They will also be designed to increase access to a range of existing, specialist activities for people with disabilities.

This is still dependent on recruitment of volunteers, but the response to the new possibilities has been encouraging.

We are also extending the training for volunteers to ensure they are even better informed and more confident in their roles.

I am very positive about the future of the program.

Tracey Stewart
Manager of Volunteers



'A change of staff is always a good opportunity to review a service.'

TRAVELLING SKILLS PROJECT — A JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN ADEC AND TADAS (TRAVELLERS' AID DISABILITY ACCESS SERVICES)

ADEC and TADAS are currently cooperating on an exciting project centred on increasing the use of public transport by people with a disability.

The project aims to enable people with a disability to independently use trains, buses, and other forms of public transport to travel confidently whenever they feel the need to do so.

Many people with disabilities from ethnic backgrounds feel

isolated in their communities because of a reluctance to use the Victorian public transport system. This can come about for a number of reasons. For example, a person who wants to catch a bus may be unable to read a timetable; a person who wants to travel by tram may not know where low floor trams stop; or a person wishing to use a train may feel unsafe using a particular crossing.

ADEC and TADAS will be helping people to overcome these and other problems. For more information, contact Effie Meehan on 9480 1666.

'The project aims to enable people with a disability to independently use trains, buses, and other forms of public transport...'



INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY AT ADEC

People seeking support from our program may be individuals with a disability from a non-English speaking backgrounds or carers. They are from a range of ethnic backgrounds, ages, genders, and religions and may come from any part of Victoria. We work with people who have a range of disabilities.

The services provided by Individual Advocates include information provision, advice, support, and referrals to other community and government organisations.

The Individual Advocacy Program also works to persuade decision makers in government to improve the lives of our clients.

In 2003/04, Individual Advocates worked with 293 people from all over Victoria. The most common issues on which we worked were housing, legal and financial matters, information provision, case management, aids and equipment, respite care, and transport.

CLIENT INFORMATION KIT

A new client information kit has been developed. This kit aims to inform our clients about ADEC's policies and procedures. It includes information on entry and exit procedures, participation in decision making, and what to do if you want to make a complaint. The kit will be translated into a number of languages and given to clients accessing the Individual Advocacy Program.

CASE STUDY

The following case study demonstrate the types of issues faced by clients seeking assistance from ADEC.

An elderly man who had recently suffered a stroke contacted ADEC. He lives with his elderly wife and mature daughter who has multiple disabilities and requires constant care and attention. The man strongly believes that his daughter has an illness and that her ongoing condition is due to the lack of appropriate support from professionals. He also believes he is not being provided with good information in his own language. Adding to this man's feelings of inadequacy, (both as a father and as head of the family) is his distress at his own lack of independence due to the affect of the stroke. It appears that existing services are unable to deal with the complicated mixture of culturally held beliefs and he is distrustful of service providers.

The Individual Advocates were able to refer this gentleman on to an appropriate, culturally sensitive service provider, and followed up the case to make sure the client's needs had been properly addressed.

People wishing to learn more about the Individual Advocacy Program should phone 9480 1666. People should be aware that from time to time a waiting list may have to apply.



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FIGHTING FOR EQUALITY — THE STORY OF EFFIE

On 9 September 2004, Minister for Community Services Sheryl Garbutt launched a short book about the life of a founding member of ADEC.

Effie Meehan was born with cerebral palsy, a condition she says was often regarded with fear and anxiety by the Greek community. She entered Yooralla Special School at the age of eight:

'I wanted to learn, but was often left alone without the help I needed and frequently got into trouble because I was bored and sought attention.'

After school she participated in a sheltered workshop run by the Spastic Society but was very frustrated. *'I knew life should be more rewarding and stimulating, and I wanted greater independence.'*

The opportunity for independence came when she met her future husband, Patrick Meehan, at a disco for people with disabilities at Flinders Street.



Despite great opposition from concerned families they were married and eventually had two children.

Then, in 1977, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria formed a Committee On Disability and Ethnicity (ECC-CODE) and invited her to join. Being involved was an important turning point.

'I began to realise that ethnic people with disabling conditions have a double handicap. My own experience had shown me that people who have disabilities are best placed to understand the issues.'

Thus Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities (ADEC) was founded in 1981 as an independent organisation. For the next 11 years Effie supported ADEC as a member of the Committee of Management. Today she is still working to achieve justice in her role as facilitator of the Greek carers' group. She is also the coordinator of the VoiceHeard project and a multicultural disability worker for Northwest Migrant Resource Centre.

To obtain a copy of *The Story of Effie*, phone Meyer Eidelson on 9480 1666.

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DISABILITY LAW REVIEW

In December 2004, the State Government committed to improving the way government funded disability services respond to the needs of people from ethnic backgrounds. For several years ADEC has been strongly involved in developing this strategy. ADEC has recently helped to review the two main laws covering disability in Victoria. They are the Disability Services Act and the Intellectually Disabled Persons Act.

ADEC clients took part in several focus groups to discuss the good and bad things about these laws. A report about what you, our clients, said was developed and given to the Department of Human Services. Briefly, this report stated that:

- People were generally in favour of having only one piece of state disability legislation
- The relationship between legislation and other parts of the State and Federal Governments was confusing
- Mental illness should be included as a disability in any new legislation
- Agencies should improve the quality of their services and complaints should be easier to lodge
- People should be able to easily read and understand information put out by the Government
- Individualised planning should be standard for all people with a disability.

We will be sure to keep you updated about the State Government's response to this feedback.