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This Issue

1. The Department of Human Services Active Participation Strategy - *Strengthening and Building Participatory Practice Project* update.
2. The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (SERMRC) Southern Region CALD Disability Plan
3. AQR (Australian Qualitative Research) 2005 Conference: *The Art and Craft of Qualitative Research: Creativity and Critiques*

DHS Disability Services: Active Participation Strategy - *Strengthening and Building Participatory Practice Project* Update

The objective of the Strengthening and Building Participatory Practice Project is to identify, strengthen and build the active participation of people with a disability and their families in the planning, delivery, monitoring and review of government and non-government disability support services. In particular the project has been:

- Encouraging people with a disability and support organisations in each DHS region to share ideas and information about ways to encourage participation
- Developing a 'Framework for Participation Practice' as a guide to organisations on ways to encourage and support the participation of people with a disability and their families.

We have consulted over 700 people with a disability and service providers across Victoria who have provided the following summarised feedback.

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What people with a disability have told us

People with a disability and their families have told us about how they actively participate in making decisions about services and how they would like to participate.

- **Many people with a disability make their own decisions** and want to continue to do this.
- **Some people said they can't make their own decisions** and are unhappy about this.
- **Other people with a disability get help to make their own decisions** from family, staff, a friend, or an advocate.
- **Some families make decisions** for their family member who does not understand choices or communicate their needs. Families were often frustrated that some services treated them as if they wanted too much and they were offered little or no choice about the service.
- **Some people with a disability are actively participating in services:** running organisations, making decisions about what a service is like, choosing staff, on committees, on Boards of disability support organisations, planning activities, organising and speaking at conferences, and planning their own services.

What assistance people want to actively participate

"Active participation is respecting individuals, their abilities and their needs, and acting upon what they say" Focus group participant.

- **Ask me and listen to what I say:** This includes asking more questions and offering more choices.

"Just by asking me what I want and supporting me in my decisions" Mail Reply No 156
- **More information:** Information about community activities, new services, opportunities, ways to be independent, and what options are available.
- **Things explained:** Help to understand how decisions will change my life, what the options are, and processes for making decisions.
- **Help to make my own decisions:** This includes having people who can help by explaining things, talking things through, ensuring there is time to think about things, and offering support and encouragement.
- **Empowerment and building my self-esteem:** Encouragement, training to be a self-advocate, confidence-building activities, being trusted.
- **More chances to do things and be seen in the community:** People want to do lots of different

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things like visit friends, improve reading, do a course, enroll to vote, be part of a sporting team, band or choir, go to Council meetings, go shopping, go to cafes, improve skills, be in TV programs, or use a computer and the internet. About a quarter of people said they are not involved in their community at all at the moment.

- **Getting involved in more organisation-wide and service decision-making groups:** more opportunities to become a member of the Board of the service, be involved in big decisions about major changes to the service, and plan programs.
- **Communication technology:** More ways to help people understand what is going on and be understood, what choices are available through pictures, Board-maker, Compic, individual communication boards, audio loops at meetings, captioning and note-takers.

"No more choices made for me without any effort of understanding my way of communicating" Mail Reply No 234

What service providers told us

Many service providers think supporting people with a disability to actively participate in organisational decision-making and feedback is essential.

Service providers involve people with a disability in decision-making in many ways:

- Self-advocacy programs
- An independent client council
- Service users on the Board
- A program to develop informed choices in community participation
- Participant-driven programs
Personalised planning processes
- Self-help and peer support groups
- Monthly forums with clients
- Exploration of self-governance for a household of people with a disability
- Support to be on community committees

Barriers to active participation that service providers see

- **Transport- accessible, reliable and affordable:** This is a big problem in rural areas.
- **Community attitudes:** Stereotyping of people with a disability by other people and organisations limits opportunities.
- **Funding and resources – time, support, people:** Enough staff time to support people to participate in their community regularly as individuals.
- **Organisational structure and culture:** Some organisations

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recognize they have a culture, structure and processes that do not currently support active participation and their staff need additional training.

Important things to improve

Service providers said that ways to increase active participation by people with a disability should focus on:

- **Community education**
"alerting community groups and organisations to the opportunities they could embrace".
- **Increasing opportunities for people with a disability** to build relationships, get out more, use community facilities, make friends, and participate in *"more consumer driven forums"*.
- **Increased accessibility** of transport, streets and buildings, and the community including *"breaking down attitudinal barriers that exist"*.

The main messages to service providers

People with a disability want:

- To make their own choices as much as possible.
- To be out in their community doing the same things everyone else does.
- Services to ask, ask, and ask and listen to the answers.

SERMRC Southern Region CALD Disability Plan

LDC has been commissioned by the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (SERMRC) to develop the Southern Region CALD Disability Plan that will guide specialist disability support services (SDSS) to deliver culturally appropriate disability supports, which will respond to the aspirations and meet the needs of people with a disability in the Southern Metropolitan Region. The Project is funded by the Department of Human Services and the Plan will assist and enhance Disability funded organisations in the region that provide:

- Shared supported accommodation
- Community residential units
- Day programs
- Case management
- Respite

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- Advocacy
- Information
- Flexible support packages
- Community inclusion

The Plan will:

- Include strategies to support Disability funded organisations to be more culturally and linguistically sensitive and appropriate
- Specifically benefit people with a disability in the Southern Region who identify themselves as having ethnically and linguistically diverse origins – whether as new arrivals, first generation migrants or members of successive generations.
- Highlight goals and strategies that are specific to men and women, which are responsive to different customs regarding gender.
- Address the language needs of people with a disability from CALD communities who are deaf.

A program of activities for developing the plan has been scheduled from August to

December 2005. Key dates include:

Tuesday 6 September:

9.30am-12.30pm

Workshop with Disability Support Providers in the region. The purpose of the workshop is to discuss good examples for developing and delivering services that are responsive to CALD clients and their families/carers.

Thursday 13 October:

9.30am – 12.30pm

Workshop with Disability Support direct care workers and managers in the Southern Metropolitan region. The purpose of the workshop is to discuss difficulties and solutions in providing services and programs that effectively meet the needs and aspirations of people with a disability from CALD backgrounds. The workshop is

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designed to consider the specific issues relevant to direct care workers and managers.

Thursday 17 November:

9.30am – 12.30pm

Workshop to develop the Southern Region CALD disability plan. The purpose of the workshop is to develop the SMR CALD Disability Plan. A discussion paper will be distributed prior to the workshop reporting the outcomes of previous workshops and research. The discussion paper will be used as a reference for developing the SMR CALD Disability Plan.

If you would like to find out more about the project please contact Liz Dimitriadis from LDC, or Jacob Lee, Aged & Disability Manager of the SERMRC, *Tel: 9706 8933*
Fax: 9706 8830,
Website: www.sermrc.org.au



2005 Conference: The Art and Craft of Qualitative Research: Creativity and Critiques

The Association for Qualitative Research is an international organisation which aims to further the practice and study of qualitative research. At the AQR's 2005 conference, Liz Dimitriadis presented a paper on *'Creative Databasing: Using Microsoft Access Databases to Analyse Data for Social Planning'*. The paper can be downloaded from the LDC website.

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