



## Inside this issue

Launch of the It's OK to complain DVD	p2
Thank you to disability service providers	p3
Goodbye David Sykes	p3
Launch of the online CALD brochures	p4
If you have a complaint relating to a health service or health professional	p4

Welcome to the Summer edition of our newsletter. Since the last edition we have produced our second Annual report (2009).

In this second year of our operation more people with disabilities raised their concerns and the number of matters brought to us has increased by around 35 percent above the first year of operation. Services have also reported a 15 percent increase in complaints they have received. We believe this indicates an increasing awareness among people with disabilities of their rights and a willingness to voice their concerns.

We continue to develop a number of resources in recognition of the diverse needs of people with a disability. These include a DVD with a performance made by people with a disability, an Auslan information clip that is also available in Audio and online CALD DL brochures.

More information on these resources and details about how to obtain copies are outlined within this newsletter.

We would like to wish you a safe and peaceful 2010. We look forward to continuing to create an environment where people with a disability, their family, friends and carers understand and exercise their right to speak up.

Laurie Harkin  
Disability Services Commissioner

## DSC's Annual Report provided in Parliament

Each year the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) provides an Annual Report to the Parliament of Victoria. This year our report was provided on 15 October 2009.

Our 2009 Annual Report reflects the second year of the Commissioner's operation. There are a range of images, graphs, quotes and reflections that we have used to capture the stories of service users, service providers and our team over the past 12 months.

The report highlights many key activities and achievements and how we plan to build on these in the future. It also provides details about the type of complaints we handle as well as information from service providers about complaints they receive. Thank you to those providers who contributed to the development of our understanding of the sector's complaints experience.

All of this information helps to inform the education and training



work we do and has provided insight into the work that has been achieved and that still to be undertaken.

If you have not received your copy or would like additional copies of the DSC 2009 Annual Report please call us 1300 728 187 or visit our website [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au).



# Launch of the It's OK to complain! DVD

As part of the week long celebrations of International Day of People with Disabilities the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) launched the 'It's OK to complain!' DVD at the State Library on the 30th November 2009.

The DVD is a recording of a performance by Ants Pantz who are an all-abilities amateur theatre troupe. With coordinator Cherise Jettner, they developed the 'It's OK to complain' script and delivered their performance live at the 2009 Having a Say conference (HAS).

'It's OK to complain' presents a number of short stories (based on cases that the office has received) that show how the people who were unhappy with their disability service spoke up. As part of the launch Ants Pantz performed their song 'It's OK to complain!' and answered questions from the audience about the experience.

This project recognises that a meaningful way of conveying the message 'It's OK to complain' is to have people with a disability deliver it.

We have used the DVD in VALID client networks where it has been valuable as a resource to prompt discussions and deliver the message that It's OK to complain.

The DVD includes captions and audio options. There are four

stories that run from five to ten minutes and one song 'It's OK to complain'. The DVD is set up so that you can play each story separately without having to view the whole DVD. There is also a documentary segment which is a behind the scenes look at how the script was developed and the rehearsals leading up to the performance at the HAS conference.

The DVD can be useful for advocacy groups and service providers to help promote discussion with service users about the importance of speaking up if you are unhappy with your service.

Copies of the DVD are available by contacting Dina Theodoropoulos

This project recognises that a meaningful way of conveying the message 'It's OK to complain' is to have people with a disability deliver it

on 1800 677 342 or dina.theodoropoulos@odsc.vic.gov.au. We would like to thank Ants Pantz for the performance at the launch. Thank you to Catherine, Cherise, Brenda, Lorraine, Tell, Andrew, Matthew, Greg and Robert.



**"If the person with a disability is not at the heart of how issues are dealt with by service providers then there's something wrong."**

Commissioner Laurie Harkin

Laurie was interviewed by David Banfield for the Raising Our Voices radio show – on 3CR 12 Aug 2009. You can hear the entire interview by going to <http://www.3cr.org.au/aggregator/sources/786>





## FAIRNESS

The Disability Services Commissioner seeks to resolve complaints by having a fair process. All staff will communicate openly and honestly and listen carefully to what all parties have to say about the complaints that are made to us. We will remain objective and unbiased in our approach, making sure that we have no conflict of interests. The decisions that we make about complaints will be based on verified information, rather than on speculation or suspicion.

Part of the DSC Values and Principles - as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2008-2010 [http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/publications.htm#s\\_plan](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/publications.htm#s_plan)

## Thank you to Disability Service Providers from the Commissioner

This season's newsletter marks the end of the current program of planned disability service provider visits, by the Commissioner.

We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to meet with so many providers who have welcomed and openly shared with us their experiences and informed the development of our own practice and perspectives. We take this time to acknowledge you for your support and collaboration.

The Commissioner's office has gained much over the past 2 years from our visits to over 150 services across the state. We are very pleased to have experienced such willingness to exchange and receive policy and procedural materials and to learn from your commentaries and discussions.

We thank you one and all.

## Farewell David Sykes



At this time we farewell David Sykes who has after some two and a half years decided to move on to take up the role of General Manager Education Services with Alzheimer's Association Victoria.

We congratulate David on this appointment and wish him well in the future.

David has made an important contribution to the work of this office producing significant, creative and practical products. David's initiatives which particularly value people with a disability have focussed on recognising and seeking to improve their circumstances. We have greatly appreciated David's work over the past two and a half years.

*From David Sykes*

It is with mixed feelings that I leave the office after having joined soon after it commenced operation in July 2007.

It has been particularly exciting being part of something new working with a small team of committed individuals in a strong rights based organisation.

The position provided a fantastic opportunity to work with a diverse range of disability providers in order to develop resources such as the Good practice guide and self

audit tool and promote cultures in organisations where it is OK to be complained about.

I am also grateful for the assistance service users have afforded us to help ensure that service users understand what it means to complain and that it is in fact OK to complain. The work with Ants Pantz is a good example of this.

As chair of Disability Professionals Victoria I also appreciated the opportunity to contribute to continuing to improve the ongoing professional development opportunities for disability professionals.

In thinking about the work of the office and indeed those committed to the principles of the office I am reminded of the quote by Margaret Mead "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever does"

David Sykes

# Launch of the online CALD Brochures



Our office launched the 'It's OK to complain!' DL Brochures as part of the Advocacy Disability Ethnicity Community (ADEC) ArtAbility art exhibition held at Federation Square on December 2009.

Brochures are available in Amharic, Turkish, Spanish, Somali, Serbian, Russian, Greek, Macedonian, Khmer, Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Italian, Polish and Croatian and can be accessed on our website in both RTF and PDF formats.

If you would like copies of any of these brochures, please contact us [complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au](mailto:complaints@odsc.vic.gov.au) or 1800 677 342 – TTY: 1300 726 563.



## What is ADEC's ArtAbility 2009?

ADEC ArtAbility is an annual exhibition of artworks created by people with a disability from diverse cultural backgrounds.

This year the exhibition was held over seven days from 25 November to 1 December 2009 at The Atrium, Federation Square. The theme for this exhibition was 'Home'.

The Disability Services Commissioner proudly sponsored this event which provides the opportunity to people with a disability to participate in a public event which recognises and celebrates their achievements as artists.

## If you have a complaint relating to a health service or health professional...

The Health Services Commissioner receives and resolves complaints about health service providers with a view to improving the quality of health services for everybody.

If you are, or know of, a patient who wishes to make a complaint about a health service, health professional or hospital, you should contact the Health Services Commissioner.

A complaint can be about the level of health care received, privacy rights, denial of respect or dignity, poor communication or any other issues about your health service provider. For further information or assistance, contact the Health Services Commissioner on:

Ph: (03) 8601 5200

Toll Free: 1800 136 066

TTY: 1300 550 275

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

Web: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc/>



Do you have a culture in your organisation where it is OK to complain? To find this out you can complete one of the series of culture questionnaires we have just produced. The questionnaires consider the different perspectives of organisations, staff, service users and family on the culture that exists in relation to complaints

Visit <http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au/publications.htm#cultural> or contact us on 1800 677 342 to take the culture challenge.

For any 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

Disability Services Commissioner  
Level 30, 570 Bourke Street,  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Phone: 1300 728 187  
Fax: 03 8608 5765  
Web: [www.odsc.vic.gov.au](http://www.odsc.vic.gov.au)

