

December 2003

News From Office Director

The Office for Disability Issues recently moved into new premises on the ground floor of the Charles Ferguson West Block behind the Beehive and Parliament. We share the building and reception with the Office for Senior Citizens and the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector. It is very useful having all three offices in the one place, as we have many similar roles.

Last month the Office gave its first public lecture which focused on the NZ Disability Strategy and the challenges and importance of creating long-term support systems centred on the individual. It was delivered by Dr John O'Brien, who is affiliated with centres in Canada, USA, UK and the European Union.

His work focuses on building inclusive communities for people with disabilities and their families.

We intend to host as many as 10 lectures a year and will have advance information on our website. The lectures will create opportunities to hear ideas that make people think harder about the Disability Strategy, what it means, and what actions they can take to assist with its implementation. If you know of anyone you think would be good to present a lecture, let us know.

I have continued to speak to a range of groups about the Disability Strategy and its implementation, including to some district health boards and councils.

During the next year the Office intends to maintain its focus on educating and encouraging people to implement the Disability

Strategy. We will be extending our focus beyond government departments to also cover local government.

Let us know about the things you are doing to implement the Strategy so that we can tell others. Contact details are listed over the page.



Director Jan Scown.

Office Encourages More Responsive Public Service

The Office is required to identify priority objectives within the Disability Strategy.

For the last year the focus has been on Objective 6 – fostering an aware and responsive public service – as it is at this level that system changes can be achieved.

The Office asked every government department chief executive to name the member of their organisation's executive management responsible for implementing the Disability Strategy, and the person co-ordinating the action planning and reporting.

We then met with each department and outlined the

actions in the Disability Strategy for which they were responsible and actions they needed to take.

The challenge to departments is that their actions focus not only on internal processes and disability awareness but also on external service delivery making a measurable difference in the lives of disabled people.

We are seeing significant shifts in thinking, and although it takes time for change to occur at a service delivery level, we are confident it will happen.

We intend meeting with each department at least quarterly, doing all we can to assist them as they implement their plans.

Progress On Sign Language

Cabinet has approved a Bill to be drawn up and presented to Parliament to recognise New Zealand Sign Language as an official New Zealand Language. This will mean it can be used in court and during other legal processes. It is hoped that the Bill will be introduced before Christmas and then sent through the Select Committee process in 2004.

Disability Survey

Statistics NZ has agreed to retain the disability question in the next census. However, this is conditional on funding being secured for the Disability Survey to be carried out after the census.

Welcome To The Team

The Office for Disability Issues has six permanent staff, as well as its director Jan Scown, Executive Assistant Catherine Donaghie and sign language interpreter Rosie Henley. It also has several contracted staff who focus on specialist areas.

- Juliet Elworthy is a senior policy analyst. In addition to managing the Office's comments on work of other departments, and the Office's input into Ministerial correspondence, Juliet is managing one of the big policy projects being led by the Office – looking at the support required by family caregivers.
- Tessa Thompson is a policy analyst working on another major 'whole of government' policy project being led by the Office. This project aims to provide the Government with options on how to achieve seamless and equitable provision of supports for disabled people – which are simple to access – within the New Zealand Disability Strategy framework. Tessa also contributes to a range of policy issues about housing and maintains an overview of issues relating to people who experience mental health problems.
- Judy Small is a policy analyst who has been working on the implementation of the Disability Strategy by government departments. Judy also works on access issues, including the review of the Building Act, which is being led by the Ministry of Economic Development. Judy's guide dog Winston is also regarded as a member of the Office.
- Owen Hughes is a policy analyst with particular responsibility for the wider monitoring of the implementation of the Disability



Some Office staff pictured with the Minister for Disability Issues when she recently visited the Office. Left to right: Owen Hughes, Office Director Jan Scown, Minister Ruth Dyson, Juliet Elworthy, Tessa Thompson, Stephnie Roberts, Judy Small, Paul Dickey and Catherine Donaghie. Judy's guide dog Winston is partially obscured at front.

Strategy. He has been contributing to the Ministry of Health's analysis of the 2001 NZ Disability Survey and working with Statistics NZ to ensure that the survey is repeated in 2006. Owen has also been working with the Ministry of Social Development on income issues and contributing a disability perspective to Ministry of Justice policy work.

- Victoria Manning is a graduate policy analyst who has focused on the work led by the Office to gain official recognition of the NZ Sign Language and the consultation with the Deaf community. She also keeps an

overview of policy regarding education for disabled people, particularly at a tertiary level.

- Paul Dickey is on secondment as private secretary to the Minister for Disability Issues. Paul has been involved in the development of the Office's website and databases.
- Stephnie Roberts is working on contract to the Office. She has managed the Office's work in implementing the Disability Strategy across the 37 government departments and some key crown agencies. She is responsible for developing the Office's infrastructure, processes and skills necessary for effective communication.

NZ On UN Working Party

In recognition of New Zealand's contribution to the development of a United Nations convention on the rights of disabled people, two New Zealanders will be on the working group to produce a draft text of the convention.

Thanks to the efforts of New Zealand diplomats, Office Director Jan Scown will be one of 27 government representatives chosen from 191 countries in the United Nations. Robert Martin will be attending the working party representing Inclusion International as one of the 12 chosen non-government organisations (NGOs) representing disabled people.

The working group will meet in January 2004 and the draft text will be discussed at the next full ad hoc committee meeting expected in June 2004.