

No. 1, 2006

April 2006

NZ Sign Language Set To Become Official Language

As Disability Issues News went to print, the New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) Bill was scheduled to have its third reading in Parliament on 6 April, setting in train the establishment of a new

official New Zealand language.

The process in Parliament was led by the Minister for Disability Issues, the Hon. Ruth Dyson. It now becomes law following the Governor General's Royal Assent.

The date for the third reading was set in advance, which is not usual practice. This allowed for NZSL interpreters to be in Parliament to interpret proceedings for members of the Deaf community.

It was expected that many Deaf people from around the country would travel to Wellington to witness the debate, with many more watching via a live web-broadcast.

Film About Beauty

A short film highlighting a disabled teenager's dream to be a dancer has been well received.

'Beauty' is produced and danced by Bronwyn Hayward of Kanikani Productions.

The film portrays a teenager's dream of being a dancer and how this dream is shattered. The fact that the dancer is disabled is not revealed until late in the film.

Beauty premiered in Wellington in late 2005 to people from the dance, film and disability sectors.

Since the launch it has been shown on television and at dance festivals.

Bronwyn is also using the film to develop a teaching resource for secondary schools, in association with the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind.

Office Director Jan Scown says the Office was pleased to contribute some funding to the film. "It will make a valuable contribution to public disability awareness. It also promotes the artistic abilities of the disabled," she says.

Director of the Beauty film
Damian Tossman
with producer and dancer Bronwyn Hayward.



Copies on DVD and video are available by contacting Bronwyn Hayward at bhayward@paradise.net.nz

Disability Supports Review

The Office for Disability Issues has formed a new project team to progress work on the Review of Long-Term Disability Support Services.

The review seeks to develop a coherent disability support system which helps disabled people be independent and participate in community life.

The project team will build on work resulting from consultation with disabled people and their families in 2005. It will identify areas where improvements to the system can be made immediately as well as look at wider issues affecting the coherent and equitable delivery of supports. This will include the availability of services, flexibility in use of support

funding and adopting a life-time perspective to the delivery of disability supports.

The review is led by the Office but also involves the Ministries of Health and Education, Work and Income and other government agencies involved in the delivery of disability supports.

More information on the history of this work is available at www.odi.govt.nz/what-we-do/review-dss.html

Accessible Website Rewarded

The Office for Disability Issues has received an Accessibility Accreditation Award recognising excellence in making websites accessible and barrier free.

The other two award winners were the Department of Internal Affairs (www.community.net.nz) and the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind (www.rnzfb.org.nz).

The awards are bestowed by AccEase Ltd, a website consultancy company specialising in website design.

Office Director Jan Scown accepted the award on behalf of the Office.

She says development of the Office website has been a co-operative effort involving Office staff and the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) communications and web teams.

"We have learned together how to make it easier for people to access our information. MSD will now be progressively improving the accessibility of its other websites.



AccEase Ltd grants a quality mark to winning websites. The mark is attached to the website for a period of time, or until it undergoes significant change.



At the awards ceremony from left to right: Colin Jackson (Internet NZ), Office Director Jan Scown, Robyn Hunt and Judy Knighton (AccEase Ltd).

"The Office is also working in partnership with the State Services Commission to promote an increased emphasis on website accessibility throughout government agencies. Our survey last year of 150 government websites showed that while many are doing good work, more can be done to make all of government fully accessible," Jan says.

Co-Director of AccEase Robyn Hunt says accessibility concerns everyone, not just those who are disabled. "Commitment to good communication deserves every encouragement. We are delighted to reward people and organisations who have gone beyond compliance to focus on the user," she says.

AccEase has a register of accessible sites on its own website. More information is available at: www.accease.com/services/accessibilitytick.html

New Council Members

Three new members have joined the Disability Advisory Council.

The Council provides the Office for Disability Issues with advice and feedback on its work plan.

The three new members are Maaka Tibble, appointed to represent disabled Māori by blind Māori consumer group Ngatai Kapo; Tanu Toso, appointed to represent disabled Pacific people by PIASS (Pacific Island Advocacy Service and Support Trust); and Maggie Bailey, appointed to represent Deaf people by the Auckland Deaf Society.

Six of the 13 Council members will complete their terms after the June meeting. The appointment process for the upcoming vacant position has already begun.

For a summary of the recent meeting or information about the appointment process go to www.odi.govt.nz

Five Year Milestone For Disability Strategy

This month marks five years since the New Zealand Disability Strategy was released with the vision of changing New Zealand to an inclusive, enabling society for disabled people.

At that time it was acknowledged by Government that changes needed to implement the vision would take many years. As part of measuring these changes in society, the Government called for a review of progress after five and ten years.

Over the next year, the Office for Disability Issues will work with disabled people and their families, and representative organisations, to review the Strategy's progress.

For more information about the Strategy visit www.odi.govt.nz/nzds