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Nominations Service goes live

A nominations service for disabled people has been launched by the Minister for Disability Issues, Hon Ruth Dyson.

This service aims to increase the numbers of appropriately skilled disabled people appointed to government boards and committees.

Speaking at the DPA national conference, 'Leading Change Together', the Minister said having a Nominations Service go live was a real milestone.

"It means that Action 5.5 of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, the establishment of a register of disabled people for government appointments, has been achieved. The Nominations Service gives us the opportunity to show the world that disabled people can be leaders and decision-makers across all areas of society."

The Office for Disability Issues has worked on establishing a Nominations Service for disabled people since 2005. The service's

database is custom-built to store information about disabled people and nominations requests from government agencies. It can match the skills of disabled people with the skills required by the agency making the request for nominations.

The database has been developed with input from the disability sector and from nominating and appointing agencies to government boards and committees.

There are several hundred boards and committees across government ranging from State Owned Enterprises to statutory subcommittees of the District Health Boards. Sometimes up to 300 people can put themselves forward for nomination.

Convenor of the Nominations Service, Judy Small, says the service allows the voices of disabled people to be heard at a high level where they can influence decisions.

"Greater representation of disabled people means boards will become



Minister Ruth Dyson has heralded the launch of the Nominations Service as a milestone.

more representative of New Zealand society. Serving on boards and committees will provide disabled people with an opportunity to use and broaden their professional and leadership skills.

"Disabled people on boards are also likely to become positive role models for other disabled people, showing that disabled people can expect to be in leadership positions," Judy says.

For more information and application forms go to www.odi.govt.nz or ph 04 916 3300, fax 04 918 0075, email odi@msd.govt.nz

Reporting on the NZ Disability Strategy

Every government agency is required to have an annual work plan, with goals and actions, setting out how it will implement the Disability Strategy over the coming year.

They are then required to report annually on how they are progressing their work plans.

The Office for Disability Issues has provided agencies with a template to structure their work plans. It sets



Government agencies report annually on how they are implementing the NZ Disability Strategy and supporting disabled people.

out what measures are needed to ensure that all government agencies are accessible. These include: increasing the accessibility of public information, including websites; accessible buildings, employment practices and services; and collecting information on disability.

Detailed plans can be viewed at www.odi.govt.nz/nzds/work-plans/2006-07/index.html

UK expert calls for acceptance

The UK Chairman of the Disability Rights Commission Bert Massie recently visited New Zealand.

While here he met with the Office for Disability Issues, Mental Health Commission, Human Rights Commission and DPA. He was also interviewed for Radio New Zealand's 'One in Five' programme. His interview can be accessed at www.radionz.co.nz/nr/programmes/oneinfive

At his meeting with the Office for Disability Issues, also attended by other government agencies, Bert talked about changing the perception in the UK of people receiving benefits – from the stigma of incapacity to one of getting support to find a job or to further their learning. He said a flexible approach to employment policy was also necessary and that it was all right for a person to work part-time. "For some disabled people working full-time is not an option," he said.

He also talked about shifting the focus to what a person can do rather than on what they can't do.

He said he looked forward to a "future in which we finally accept that discrimination and disadvantage in relation to a person's impairment or long-term health condition is as absurd as for gender or race –



From left to right: Kylie Clode (Ministry of Health), Justin Strang, Jan Scown and Tessa Thompson (Office for Disability Issues), Valerie Smith (Ministry of Health), Charmaine Monteiro and Bert Massie (front).

a society in which we accept that it is not our differences that make us unequal but our failure to acknowledge and accept them."

Office Director Jan Scown said it was a good opportunity to meet him and for all attending organisations to share ideas on their work.

Bert was in New Zealand en route to the 3rd International Forum on Disability Management in Brisbane where he presented a paper on *Applying Human Rights Principles to Disability Management*. His paper is online at www.drc.org.uk/library/drc_speeches.aspx

Building leadership capability in the disability sector

The Office for Disability Issues is helping fund organisations to build leadership capability in the disability sector.

Throughout 2006 the Office has funded:

- DPA to run regional leadership workshops

"Several people said to me that attending the conference had given them hope and a new perspective on the future their disabled son or daughter could have."

- People First – to help it develop a regional structure to strengthen the organisation from the grass roots to its national committee office
- New Zealand Association for the Study of Intellectual Disability (NZASSID) to sponsor people to attend its conference, and
- sponsorship for disabled people and their families to attend and be present at Imagine Better's conference – Building Inclusive Communities.

One participant at the Building Inclusive Communities conference in October was Peter O'Flaherty. He says the conference's workshops provided him with fresh information and a different perspective on how people with disabilities can organise a very independent life regardless of their level of disability.

"Speaking to others attending the conference made it clear just how important conferences are to both disabled people and their families. Several people said to me that attending the conference had given them hope and a new perspective on the future their disabled son or daughter could have."