

No. 2, 2007

June 2007

Chinese delegation visits Office for Disability Issues

A delegation of representatives of China's Internal Affairs Department and the China Disabled Persons' Federation met with the Office. The group was part of a study tour looking at New Zealand's legislation and its implementation. There are an estimated 60 million disabled people in China.



Left to right at the back: Owen Hughes, Paul Dickey, Juliet Elworthy (Office for Disability Issues) Chu Shi Tong (Director General of National People's Congress) Left to right at the front: Bob Hillier (Office for Disability Issues), Ma Yu'e Deputy Director-General, Rights Protection Department, China Disabled Persons' Federation, Yang Hongming, Director, China Disabled Persons' Federation, Bi Yingda, Director of State Council Legal Affairs Office.

Housing and Disability: Future Proofing New Zealand's Housing Stock for an Inclusive Society

The research report, *Housing and Disability: Future Proofing New Zealand's Housing Stock for an Inclusive Society* was launched on 18 May 2007.

The Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ) and the Office for Disability Issues commissioned research which focused on:

- the current housing experiences of physically disabled people, both young and old
- the capacity of the housing market to respond to the rising demand for 'lifetime homes'
- the opportunities to establish a housing stock that's future proofed for those affected by challenges to their mobility and agility through moderate to severe physical disability and ageing.

The research has shown that:

- disabled people's housing needs are not being met by New Zealand's current housing stock despite

considerable investment through the Health Vote and Accident Compensation Corporation funding

- many of the modifications would be functionally effective and more cost effective if they were integrated into the design of newly built or renovated houses
- the impact of inaccessible and inadequate housing has personal and profound consequences for disabled people and their families
- accessible design stabilises people and assists them to stay in their homes and communities.

Copies of the research report are available from the CHRANZ website at www.chranz.co.nz.

For further information contact Terrence Aschoff, Manager, Centre for Housing Research Aotearoa New Zealand, email terrence.aschoff@chranz.co.nz.

Development of a Carers Strategy

On 12 April 2007 Hon Ruth Dyson announced that the government will be working with the Carers Alliance to develop a national Carers Strategy by 2008.

Speaking at the Carers New Zealand national summit in Wellington, the Minister for Disability Issues, Ruth Dyson, acknowledged that,

“carers devote large parts of their lives to others and need to be supported. We value the contribution made by carers and recognise that support for family and other informal carers needs to be assessed, and a national strategy put in place.”

The Ministry of Social Development and the Carers Alliance, a network of 39 non-profit organisations, will work together with other government agencies over the coming year to look at the current situation, and to look at ways of addressing the problems.

“Widespread public consultation will be held later

this year to seek the views of carers, those they care for, employers and wider society,” Ms Dyson said.

Particular issues identified by New Zealand carers as needing attention include improving support for carers, improving information about caring and helping carers to combine employment and caring responsibilities, and to make the transition to paid employment once their family circumstances allow.

The Strategy will be launched in 2008 and will set the strategic direction for the development of policies and service for carers for the next decade. There will be a five-year action plan to support implementation.

*For more information contact:
Laurie Hilsgen, secretariat to the Carers Alliance, email carers@inspire.net, phone 09 4060 412.
Charlotte Salathiel, Ministry of Social Development, email charlotte.salathiel002@msd.govt.nz.*



Overseas keynote speakers at the summit from left to right: Gail Hunt, President and CEO National Alliance for Caregiving (USA); Jenny Frank, Programme Manager Young Carers Initiative (UK); Baroness Jill Pitkeathley, Inaugural Chair of Euro Carers, Vice President Carers (UK); Joan Hughes, CEO Carers Australia.

Government websites improving

A recent survey has shown that disabled people are generally finding it easier to access and use government websites. However, there remain many access barriers experienced by disabled people, and improving the accessibility of online information needs to be an ongoing priority.

The results of the second survey of website accessibility, conducted in late 2006 by AccEase Ltd, on behalf of the Office for Disability Issues and the State Services Commission, have shown an increase in government websites' compliance against the Web Guidelines since the first survey in 2005.

The survey involved two stages of testing. The first stage involved a combination of automatic and visual checking of key accessibility

checkpoints from the Web Guidelines.

The second stage involved a test panel of disabled people, with a range of impairments, performing various tasks related to finding information on a website. Testers rated websites on the ease and satisfaction in completing the tasks.

An interesting result was the relationship between a website's accessibility and the time taken for task completion. Websites that were more accessible were rated higher, because testers were able to complete the tasks faster and encountered fewer access barriers.

Another result was that people with different impairments experience different kinds of access barriers, and this range of needs should be considered when designing and building websites.

Results from the survey will be used by the State Services Commission as part of their monitoring of departments against the Web Guidelines, and by the Office in monitoring implementation of the New Zealand Disability Strategy.

Jan Scown, Director, Office for Disability Issues, says “I'm pleased to see progress being made by departments. With more and more public information being put on the internet, making sure websites are accessible to disabled people is critical. We're happy that the State Services Commission has joined with us to promote accessible government information. We look forward to the time when all government communications, whether online or in other formats, are accessible.”

The survey report, 'Going Beyond Compliance', is available on the Office website: www.odi.govt.nz/publications/