

Supported by

## This issue

### Contents

DisabilityCare Australia	1
Working with Volunteers with Disability	2-4

One topic we get asked a lot is for information about Disability Care Australia. We will give a more detailed response in the next newsletter but have provided some basic information about the new system below.

As society becomes more inclusive, people with disability are seeking ways to be better included in our community in a variety of ways. **A growing area of interest for them is in becoming volunteers.** Can we afford not to include people who may provide us with a valuable source of voluntary labour and skills?

There are times however, when people with disability may need special arrangements to be made to ensure the workplace offers satisfactory outcomes both for them and their employers. (See pages 2-4 for full details).

### Affordable Video Production & Duplication Services

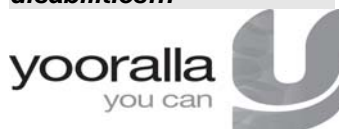
Challenge Multimedia provides low cost professional

video production & editing duplication and associated services

Give your application, website or function the edge by showing film or digital pictures to tell a story.

Ph: 9916 5834 or email [michael.christofas@yooralla.com.au](mailto:michael.christofas@yooralla.com.au)

**Challenge Multimedia is a Yooralla enterprise that supports people with disabilities...**



## DisabilityCare Australia or (NDIS)

DisabilityCare Australia is a new way of providing services, community linkages and individual support for people with permanent and significant disability. The aim of DCA is to provide support funding based on needs and to give the person with the disability greater control in choosing their care services. Once a person is assessed as eligible they are allocated an annual amount of funds to purchase the services and supports they require and to help them achieve their goals. They can either opt to manage their own funds and services or appoint a paid planner/broker.

Allocated funds must be spent according to their plan and are to be annually accounted for. One of the main differences between this and the current system is that this is a national scheme whereas currently disability support is state based, which makes portability easier also. In Victoria the scheme is currently only running in the Barwon area for the next three years while they seek to address any problems that may arise. For more information go to the website:

[www.disabilitycareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.disabilitycareaustralia.gov.au)

## **Working with Volunteers with Disability**

In many ways working with volunteers with disability should be no different to working with any other volunteer and in some cases (such as where the volunteer has a mental illness) the disability might never be disclosed or evident. The following is aimed to provide information for those who may work alongside or supervise volunteers with any type of disability.

### **Rights and responsibilities**

**All** volunteers have the right:

- To be respected and valued irrespective of the work done
- To be free from harassment (volunteers are now included under sexual harassment in the [Victorian Government Equal Opportunity Act, 2010](#))
- To information about the organisation – its policies, personnel, programs and services
- To a job description
- To know to whom they are accountable
- To be included in social functions along with other staff
- To have a safe and healthy environment
- To be covered by insurance
- To say “NO” if they feel exploited
- To terminate or change their involvement
- To be informed and consulted on matters which directly or indirectly affect them and their work
- To be made aware of the organisation’s Grievance Policies
- To orientation and appropriate training
- To be able to negotiate hours and place of work.

**And have a responsibility to:**

- Be reliable, enthusiastic and loyal
- Respect confidentiality
- Carry out the specified job description
- Be accountable
- Be committed to the organisation
- Undertake appropriate training if requested
- Ask for support when needed
- Give a clear indication of the extent of commitment
- Honour that commitment
- Give notice before changing that commitment or leaving the organisation
- Value and support paid staff and other volunteers
- Carry out the work agreed on responsibly and ethically.

These will not change whether a volunteer has a disability or not, however some volunteers with disability may need clearer explanation of their role, rights and responsibilities, particularly if they have acquired brain injury or intellectual disability. These may need to be reinforced and written in plain English.

An employer of a person with disability may have to take some additional factors into consideration such as access.

## Access

The key to successful access is preparation and the person who is the expert is the person with disability. Ask them what adjustments or support they might need. Consideration might need to be given to:

- Ramps
- Desk heights
- Door widths
- Passage and path widths and/or clutter
- Toilets
- Door weights – can they be easily pushed open?
- Computer accessibility – there is a lot of good assistive technology around from screen reading software (for people with visual impairment), to track balls, large key boards and so on
- Colour coding for easier filing
- Access to photocopier, fax and phones
- Access to kitchen, recreation and other areas
- Access to appropriate parking.

## Recruitment

1. Assess what volunteer work needs to be done and what skills are required to do the work. The volunteer needs to feel that they are doing a real job, not just filling in time, irrespective of disability.
2. Discuss with the volunteer what they can offer. Concentrate on what they can do rather than what they can't and what they are willing to learn.

***Janet had low literacy skills but could recognise letters and numbers and was eager to learn, so that when dealing with the mail, she learned that any mail with numbers listed should go to the bookkeeper.***

3. Develop a job description. This can be quite simple and be concerned with small jobs as long it is clear what the job entails. For instance "Dealing with the mail" could include: Collecting mail from the post box; disposing of junk mail; sorting personal mail from bills and receipts; distributing mail to the correct recipients; storing reusable envelopes and discarding others and so forth.
4. Specify tasks and roles and identify those that are not their responsibility to avoid role confusion.
5. Discuss with the volunteer what adjustments need to be made to the work place and/or the job description and make these adjustments as soon as possible prior to their commencement.
6. Detail and discuss any mentoring or support arrangements.
7. Induct in the same way as paid staff making sure they know who they report to and what the grievance and emergency procedures are.

## First Day

- Go through job description and any other paper work making sure they understand what the job requires
- Introduce to others as you would any other member of staff

- Don't make assumptions about what they can do, but don't underestimate – focus on competence. If they make a mistake, tell them and show how it should be done correctly. Then let them try again. Don't wait until they have gone and then correct work. This will inhibit learning and does not respect the person as a worker
- Model good practice to others who may be nervous
- Begin orientation and induction.

## Mentoring

Some organisations offer mentoring to volunteers. This requires a paid staff member or a volunteer to **work alongside** the new recruit. Ideally a mentor guides a person through a job subtly. The mentor is not there to do the person's job for them or to run behind to correct every mistake – they are there to offer support when and if it is needed.

A mentor should provide:

- Constructive feedback
- Affirmation
- Social interaction and introduction to others in the workplace
- Introduction to the workplace culture
- Ongoing support and role modelling.

They may also conduct:

- Training in OH&S
- Training on how to do the job.

## Other things to consider when employing volunteers with disability

- Have clear expectations and say what they are
- Don't expect too much too soon, some people learn more slowly than others, but given encouragement and constructive feedback most people will learn some tasks
- Give precise, clear instructions. One instruction at a time is better than a string of requests. Ask the person to repeat the instruction back to you if you think they may have problems remembering
- Don't react negatively – even when you are tired and/or frustrated try to be positive. If this is difficult – take a break or go and talk to someone
- Let people know it's OK to make mistakes and how to correct them
- Don't over protect as everyone needs to be challenged to some degree
- Don't give up. Instead seek expert advice from a disability service or other professionals.