

BLITS E-Newsletter - June 2008

Welcome to another edition of BLITS E-News. On behalf of the BLITS Advisory Board I am delighted to announce the new [BLITS website](#).

The BLITS website offers a useful business information directory, business profiles, events and award dates and of course an expanded version of this newsletter.

Research and development of the BLITS information directory is an on-going process and feedback and suggestions for this information tool and any other part of this website is encouraged. Feel free to email the BLITS manager or use the online contact form.

We also welcome your input to our newsletter - do you know of a business that is effectively engaging with people with disabilities as customers, suppliers, employees and employers? If so we would love to hear from you. Respond to this email or go to the [Contact Us](#) section of the BLITS website.

Lois Ford

Chair

BLITS

ACT Business Leaders - Innovative Thoughts and Solutions

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At 83 Tony Stevens Skates to Canberra for Children with Disabilities

Tony Stevens created the Olympia Roller-skating Rink in Sydney in 1960 to provide healthy and safe entertainment activities for children. From this enterprise and experience, he developed a deep interest in the challenges facing children with disabilities.

Tony, now 83, but more committed than ever, created the Discovery Program, a program to establish links all around Australia and use the profits to help children with disabilities. This month Tony will skate to Canberra, clinging to the back of a van, to raise awareness of the Discovery Program and to promote the program to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

Federal Government invites community to contribute ideas for a National Mental Health and Employment Strategy

In April this year the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP, Minister for Employment Participation - and the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, released a discussion paper seeking input from stakeholders to develop a National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

A series of national consultations were also announced, to be held in every capital city and in many regional centres across Australia during April and May.

The discussion paper seeks input from a wide range of stakeholders about how to address the barriers faced by people with disability and/or mental illness in finding and retaining a job, how to influence attitudinal change, what changes to welfare rules can be made to encourage participation in employment and what innovative and creative ways can be engaged to help people with disability and mental illness gain and retain work.

The Federal Government is seeking submissions from interested groups and individuals to the strategy, and is accepting written submissions until 30 June 2008.

The discussion paper and further information on the strategy can be found at:

www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Publications/PolicyReviews/EmploymentStrategy/

Disability Investment Group

On 23 April the Hon Bill Shorten MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, announced the establishment of a Disability Investment Group, charged with exploring innovative funding ideas from the private sector that will help people with disability and their families access greater support and plan for the future.

"The Disability Investment Group will look closely at identifying and developing options for private investment in housing, education, employment, equipment and other support for people with disability," Mr Shorten said.

"There is a real role the private sector can play here, and it is the Disability Investment Group's job to find out what barriers are stopping private investment, and what can be done to remove them."

The Group is chaired by Mr Ian Silk, Chief Executive, AustralianSuper. Members of the Group have a wealth of experience and knowledge in philanthropic investment, as well as personal involvement in issues involving people with disability, their families and carers. It is seeking advice and ideas, relevant to its terms of reference, from people with disability, their families and carers, and from organisations involved in any aspect of disability.

Further information about the Group, its members and terms of reference can be found at the following link:

www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/policy-dig.htm

Budget 2008-2009 What's new, what's different

New initiatives announced in the 2008-2009 ACT Budget to assist people with disabilities, their carers and families

- \$608,000 to establish an Equipment Loan Service for children with development delays and disabilities aged 0-16 years.

This initiative is aimed at providing equipment to maximise the independence of children and young people. The equipment includes a variety of powered wheelchairs, complex mobility aids such as walking frames, seating systems and hoists.

- \$94,000 for a feasibility study to investigate on the accommodation needs of people with disabilities who have highly challenging behaviours.

A feasibility study for establishing facilities design for the accommodation needs of people with challenging violent behaviours, young people with chronic progressive neurological disabilities and people with long-term chronic disabilities.

- \$5.3 million for a number of equity initiatives over four years including \$3.5 million for students with a disability

This support will enable students with specific needs to reach their potential.

- \$8.5 million over four years for expanded and enhanced mental health services.

This initiative aims to address the identified mental health needs in the ACT including community non-government services, enhanced ability for carer and consumer participation, enhanced access to community mental health care across the continuum with qualified and skilled staff.

Source: ACT Budget papers, 2008-2009 Budget

www.treasury.act.gov.au/budget/index.shtml

New initiatives to assist people with disabilities, their carers and families

The National Disability Strategy (NDS) is a commitment by the Australian Government to work cooperatively with state and territory governments and disability and carer stakeholders in addressing the complex needs of people with disability and their carers.

The NDS will provide an overarching policy statement and action framework, setting out the national view, directions and priorities for the development of legislation and policy. The NDS will be developed from within existing departmental resources.

Measures for carers and people with disabilities:

In the 2008-2009 Budget the Federal Government has allocated \$1.8 billion to provide one-off lump-sum payments of \$500 to eligible senior Australians, \$1,000 to Carer Payment recipients and \$600 to Carer Allowance recipients, by 30 June 2008. This measure is designed to assist seniors and carers to meet rising costs.

The Government has also extended eligibility for the Utilities Allowance to Carer Payment and Disability Support Pension recipients.

Changes to the assessment of the Carer Payment (child) have also been introduced, effective 1 July 2009, and costing \$274 million over five years. This will result in access to the Carer Payment in 2009-10 for an additional 19,000 carers of children with a severe disability.

A further \$20 million has been allocated to help families when a child has experienced a catastrophic event, such as a severe illness, a major disability or an injury due to an accident.

People with disabilities will benefit from \$100 million to be provided to the States by June 2008 for additional supported housing.

A number of existing programs to assist people with disabilities access employment and employment support, and employer incentives, have received continuing support in the Budget.

Source: Australian Government: Budget 2008-2009

Excellence in Business services to be recognised

On 15 May 2008 the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, announced the inaugural Business Services Excellence Awards. There are five award categories to recognise excellence in the provision of business services.

Award Categories

Business Service Innovation Award: Business services demonstrating new and innovative business practices supportive of the development of high-quality, sustainable employment for people with disability.

Business Services Business Partnership Award: Business services working in partnerships with other businesses and their communities to offer high-quality, sustainable employment opportunities for people with disability.

Business Services Achievement Award: Business services that encourage the full participation of people with disability in work through high-quality employment conditions.

Supported Employees Team Award: A team of employees with disability who have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to their organisation's success.

Support Workers Team Award: A team of support workers who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to supporting, developing and encouraging employees with disability in the workplace.

Business services are a disability service type that supports people in employment through small businesses that are owned and operated by the service.

According to Mr Shorten, there are 215 organisations across Australia operating up to 365 businesses, making significant contribution to the employment of more than 22,000 people with disabilities.

While there are a number of events and awards acknowledging the contribution employers and services make to providing opportunities for people with disabilities, such as the Prime Minister's Employer of the Year Award, and the ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards, this award is the first national, Federally sponsored award that recognises business services.

Nominations close on 20 June 2008. Further information about the awards can be found on the Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs website, at the following link:

www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-bis_services_excellence_awards.htm

About BLITS

Business Disability = Smart Thinking

Business Leaders, Innovative Thoughts and Solutions - BLITS promotes initiatives that value and engage people with disabilities as customers, suppliers, employees and employers in business, the arts and sport.

BLITS is an ACT Government initiative managed through the BLITS steering group. The group includes people from local businesses and government and family members of people with a disability - who all share a strong interest in improving outcomes for people with disabilities in the ACT community.