

BLITS E-Newsletter - November 2008

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the latest edition of BLITS E-News.

First of all, a reminder that the sixth annual ACT [Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards](#) presentation event is nearly upon us and will be held this **Friday 7 November at the Great Hall, Parliament House**. I do hope that you can join us. The deadline for reservations is 5pm Wednesday 5 November. There are a few tickets still available, so make your reservation now, (event and booking details available below).

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to our major sponsors **Koomarri** and **Maximus Solutions** who are enthusiastic supporters of this award program. Thanks also to our category sponsors - **Drake Medox**, **TADACT**, **Spotless** and **House with No Steps**.

There are a number of informative articles in this newsletter relating to state and territory, national and international issues affecting us all. Consistently seeking to identify and promote activities, events and partnerships that value and engage people with disability as customers, suppliers, employees and employers in business, the arts and sport is the main aim of BLITS. We understand that to achieve a sustainable improvement in this regard, these activities, events and partnerships also need to make good business sense. We appreciate your consideration and assistance in this pursuit. Please provide any comment, information or suggestion relating to this newsletter or subjects contained.

Lois Ford

Chair

BLITS

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2008 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards:

Date: Friday 7 November 2008

Time: 6.00pm - 9.30pm

Venue: Great Hall Parliament House Canberra

Bookings and tickets: Go to the [Inclusion Awards Website](#)

Australia ratifies the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Australia is leading the way on rights for people with disabilities after ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in New York on 18 July. The Convention is one the first major human rights treaty of the 21st century, and Australia is one of the first Western countries to ratify the Convention. The UK is yet to ratify the Convention, and a campaign is currently underway to present a petition, in November, to Prime Minister Gordon Brown, urging the UK to ratify the Convention without reservations.

In ratifying the convention, Australia joined 29 other countries around the world in a move that aims to promote a global community in which all people with disability are equal and active citizens.

The Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP said that, in ratifying the Convention, the Government demonstrated its international commitment to ensuring that people with a disability are treated equally and are not second-class citizens. 'This significant achievement is the result of substantial collaboration by Government and Non-Government stakeholders,' Mr McClelland said.

Australia's ratification came at the same time as an announcement by the Government that it will introduce legislative amendments to the Disability Discrimination Act in the Spring sittings of Parliament to implement recommendations made by the Productivity Commission in its 2004 review of the Act. Key amendments are proposed that will clarify the obligation of employers, service providers and others to remove discriminatory barriers for people with disabilities.

Australia's Paralympians punch above their weight in Beijing

Eight years after the unforgettable Sydney Paralympic Games, the Australian Paralympic Team continued the country's proud Paralympic tradition by winning 79 medals, (including 23 gold, 29 silver and 27 bronze), to claim fifth on the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games medal tally.

In all, 97 of Australia's 167 athletes landed back on home soil with at least one medal around their necks, an outstanding effort according to Darren Peters, Chef de Mission of the 2008 Australian Paralympic Team. 'Australia did a tremendous job at the Beijing Games in achieving its goal of rating in the Top 5 in what was the most competitive Games on record,' said Mr Peters at the closing of the Games last month. 'To have competed in 13 of the 20 sports, win medals in nine; and rank in the top five for six of those sports, is a record that speaks for itself.'

South Australian swimmer Matthew Cowdrey, who was the Australian team's leading performer in Beijing, picked up five gold and three silver medals and was given the honour of being the flag bearer at the spectacular closing ceremony. Fellow swimmer Peter Leek ensured his debut Games was also one to savour. The 19-year-old from St Mary's in Sydney's west also grabbed an eight medal haul (three gold, four silver, one bronze) to help highlight a brilliant performance from Australia's swimmers at the Beijing 'Water Cube'.

Both the men's and women's Wheelchair Basketball teams, known as the Gliders and the Rollers, also captured the spectators' imagination as they ascended the medal podium. The Gliders brought home the bronze medal while the men upset three-time reigning Paralympic champions Canada in the final, to secure their first men's Wheelchair Basketball gold medal since the Atlanta Paralympic Games in 1996.

Australia's impressive achievements in the pool and on the basketball court were more than matched by the Athletics team's performance which was capped by a fairytale finish by the men's 4x100m T35-38 relay team, who won gold in a world record time of 44.81 seconds. Veteran athlete Tim Sullivan ran into Australian sporting history books in that event by claiming his 10th Paralympic gold medal, making him Australia's most successful Paralympian ever.

While the 2008 Australian team was the largest sent to a Paralympic Games overseas, the Australian Paralympic Committee will aim to expand its talent search ahead of the 2010 Winter Paralympics and the London Games in 2012.

Strong Community response to the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

The inaugural edition of the BLITS e-News carried a story about the national consultations held by the Minister for Employment Participation, the Hon Brendan O'Connor MP and Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP into the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

We are pleased to report a very positive response to the National Consultations, with people all over Australia contributing their expertise and insights to help inform the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy. It is also heartening to note that the consultations not only aired the barriers people with disabilities and/or mental illness face when accessing employment, but highlighted the significant contribution people with a disability and/or mental illness made to workplaces all over the country.

The consultations, which sought input into the development the Strategy, were held in capital cities and regional centres across Australia during April and May.

The main issues highlighted during the consultations included the need for: better support for education and training of people with disability and/or mental illness; greater engagement with employers, explaining the benefits of employing people with disability and/or mental illness; and, improving coordination of services across local, state and federal governments.

More than 300 submissions were received, and Mr O'Connor and Mr Shorten chaired public consultations in 13 towns and cities across Australia, with more than 740 people attending.

The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy is due to be released by the end of the year.

BLITS Snap Shots....

ACT BLITS Inaugural Business Leaders Luncheon

Introducing the ACT BLITS Champions

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BLITS Champions are members of the business and general community who share the BLITS values, aims and objectives and generously support our efforts in a myriad of ways and in their daily life. This includes but is not limited to identifying mutually advantageous opportunities between businesses and people with disabilities, assisting the BLITS advisory board to make the connections which will deliver positive outcomes partnering business and people with disabilities.



Minister Gallagher and Champions*



David Heckendorf & Norm Fraser



Katy Gallagher, ACT Minister for Disability and Community Services



Kate Pickering,
Drake Medox



Minister Gallagher, Parliamentary Secretary
Bill Shorten and DHCS Chief Executive
Sandra Lambert



Mary Coustas and Virginia Haussenger

* In the photo (top left, listing L to R) are Champions:

Eoghan O'Byrne, Roger Buckley (representing Chris Peters), Cindy Young, Dr Colin Adrian, Christine Faulks, Jeremy Lasek, Fiona Wright and Minister Katy Gallagher

For more information on ACT BLITS Champions go to: [ACT BLITS Champions](#)

Contact BLITS at info@BLITS.com.au

We look forward to bringing you another edition of BLITS e-News soon!