

# BLITS E-Newsletter - September 2008

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## Message from the Chair

Welcome to the latest edition of BLITS E-News. This month, we include the ACT Chief Minister's call for nominations for one of the major events on our calendar - the 2008 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards.

The event is held annually and recognizes business, organisations and individuals who have 'gone the extra mile' to encourage to welcome and support people with a disability in their workplace, business and community. The awards program is now in its sixth year and has been growing steadily each year.

I'm delighted that the **BLITS Champions program**, business people of Canberra and National Celebrities who commit to assisting BLITS achieve its aims and objectives has taken off - Katy Gallagher, ACT Minister for Disability and Community Services and Bill Shorten, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services will welcomed our first champions during a business lunch in late August. If you would like to know more about our 9 ACT and 3 National Champions, visit [www.blits.org.au/blits-champions.php](http://www.blits.org.au/blits-champions.php)

Thanks to our readers who have given us positive feedback on BLITS initiatives to date. The newsletter is about sharing information as much as updating you about the work of BLITS.

We welcome your thoughts, suggestions and articles - email [info@blits.org.au](mailto:info@blits.org.au)

Lois Ford  
Chair

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## Message from the ACT Chief Minister

I am delighted to announce the opening of nominations for the 2008 ACT Chief Minister's Inclusion Awards.

The Inclusion Awards acknowledge the outstanding achievements of business, organisations and individuals who have clearly demonstrated their commitment to encourage, welcome and support people with a disability in their workplace, business and community.

This award program plays a vital role in both recognising businesses and individuals who actively contribute to creating a more inclusive and balanced society, but it also assists us to raise awareness in the broader community of the benefits of doing so. Simply put, each of us benefits from a fully inclusive society where everyone has equal access to each of the fundamental components necessary for genuine quality of life.

I know that there are businesses and individuals who are already taking an active role in making their business or organization more inclusive and accessible. Let's make sure this good work is recognized and promoted through the Awards program. I encourage Canberrans to be involved in the Inclusion Awards program by finding out more about the program, making a nomination or by spreading the word about the objectives of the program.

My sincere thanks to our major sponsors **Koomarri** and **Maximus Solutions** who have been enthusiastic supporters for the last couple of years - and to our category sponsors - **Drake Medox**, **TADACT** and **Spotless** who have all been integral to growing the Awards.

**ACT Chief Minister  
Jon Stanhope, MLA**

### Make an Award Nomination:

For more information including award categories, registration and nomination forms go to: [www.inclusionawards.com.au/](http://www.inclusionawards.com.au/)

## Chief Ministers Inclusion Awards - Diary Dates

<b><u>Award Event</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>
Awards Open	Friday 8 August 2008
Award <i>Submissions closes</i>	Friday 3 October
Awards Presentation:	Friday 7 November 2008

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## Chief Minister's 2008 Inclusion Awards - Categories

Categories for the Awards include:

1. Inclusion in **Small Business**
2. Inclusion in **Medium-Large Business**
3. Inclusion in **Medium-Large Government Department/Agency**
4. Inclusion in **ACT Government Departments/Agencies**
5. Inclusion in **the Community - Individual or Team**
6. Inclusion in **the Community - Organisation**
7. Inclusion in **Marketing**
8. Inclusion in **ACT Tourism**
9. Chief Minister's ACT Award for Excellence in Inclusion (overall winner)

For more information including *registration* and *nomination forms* go to: [www.inclusionawards.com.au](http://www.inclusionawards.com.au)

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

In the inaugural edition of the BLITS e-News we carried a story about a series of 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.

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.

Mr O'Connor said that submissions and public consultations identified positive and practical ways to help address barriers to gaining and retaining employment, and that there was recognition of the enormous contribution people with disability and/or mental illness make to a workplace. Mr O'Connor added that there was a need to dispel the myths that some employers have about difficulties or costs associated with employing a person with a disability.

Mr Shorten said the strategy will provide a national approach to helping more people with a disability or mental illness get and keep a job.

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. The discussion paper is available at [www.deewr.gov.au/employmentstrategy](http://www.deewr.gov.au/employmentstrategy)

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## Appointment of Disability Discrimination Commissioner

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008 the Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP announced the appointment of Mr Graeme Innes AM to the position of Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner.

Mr Innes is the current Human Rights Commissioner and had been acting as the Disability Discrimination Commissioner since December 2005.

In announcing the appointment, the Attorney-General said that Mr Innes had made a significant contribution to the public debate on disability discrimination.

Commenting on the appointment, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's services, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, said "Mr Innes is an extremely effective representative of the disability sector, campaigning for equal treatment and access for people with disabilities."

Active in the disability field for thirty years, Mr Innes was Chair of the Disability Advisory Council of Australia for four and a half years. He was the first blind President of Royal Blind Society of NSW, and the first Chair of Vision Australia, Australia's largest national blindness agency.

Mr Innes has been one of Australia's delegates to the World Blind Union, and the President of that Union's Asia-Pacific region. He has been a consultant to organisations such as Westpac, Qantas, and Sydney Water, on disability issues, and in 1995 was admitted as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his contribution to the development of Commonwealth disability discrimination legislation. He was a finalist for Australian of the year in 2003.

Disability support groups such as Vision Australia have welcomed the appointment of Mr Innes.

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## Beijing 2008-Inclusion in sport for all

As we go to press with BLITS e-News, the Beijing Olympics are well underway, with Australia punching above its weight in the medal tally. Many will also know that China is the host nation for the 13th Paralympic Summer Games, to be held from 6-17

September 2008. The Paralympic Games commence 12 days after the close of the Olympic Summer Games.

The Paralympic Games use the same sports facilities and athlete village used for the Olympic Games. Athletes from every Australian state and territory have been selected to compete at Beijing.

Set to compete in 13 sports when the Games begin, Australia will be represented by 95 first-time Paralympians, 75 returning athletes, who collectively have a total of 156 Games and 180 medals to their credit.

Australia has sent a team to every Paralympic Games since the first summer Games in Rome 1960, and the record is impressive. The highlight for the Paralympic team would have to go the team's number one ranking on the medal tally at the Sydney Games in 2000.

With Beijing in its sights and with 908 medals from previous Paralympic competition, the 2008 Team could be on the verge of earning Australia its 1000th Paralympic medal.

The Australian Paralympic Team will depart for Beijing on 1 September ahead of the Beijing Paralympic Games opening ceremony on 6 September. In all, there will be 472 medals on offer.

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Contact BLITS at [info@BLITS.com.au](mailto:info@BLITS.com.au)

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