



Disability Advisory Forum (DAF) Meeting Report

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Thursday, 8 November 2015, 11.00am – 3.00pm

- PRESENT:** Johanna Plante, ACCAN Chair
Scott Hollier, Media Access Australia
Bruce Maguire, Vision Australia
Gunela Astbrink, ACCAN Member
Jessica Zammit, Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
Darryl Sellwood
Kyle Miers, Deaf Australia
Harold Hartfield, ACCAN Member
Dwayne Cranfeld, National Ethnic Disability Alliance
Roger Smith, Cochlear
- INTERPRETERS:** Kerrie Lakeman
Jasmine Rozsa
- APOLOGIES:** Dean Barton-Smith, ACCAN Board
Anne Bryce, Achieve Australia
- ACCAN STAFF:** Teresa Corbin, CEO
Una Lawrence, Director of Policy
Wayne Hawkins, Disability Policy Advisor
Kelly Lindsay, Small Business & Consumer Engagement Officer

The purpose of the Disability Advisory Forum (DAF) is to identify the most important telecommunications consumer issues from the perspective of key representative in the consumers with disability /community's environment and the people they represent, with a view to using this information to inform ACCAN's disability work priorities for the 2015-16 year.

The following meeting report provides an overview of the main issues raised and discussed. DAF participants are welcome to use this document in reporting back to their organisations. This report will also be sent to invited representatives who were unable to attend.

ACCAN disability focus 2015/16

Background to ACCAN's revised consumer consultation model

Until last year, ACCAN had two standing advisory Committees, one for general consumer issues and another for disability issues. While helpful in the early years of the organisation, ACCAN has found greater flexibility is needed to liaise with other groups in the community. In 2014 ACCAN developed a new model of consumer consultation forums, including a Disability Advisory Forum to be held annually.

The purpose of the Disability Advisory Forum is to advise ACCAN on priority issues for consumers with disability, and identify strategies that could be pursued to achieve successful outcomes. This may include identifying gaps in research where ACCAN could usefully contribute, and allow ACCAN to adjust its focus to assist with work that is already being undertaken by others.

ACCAN update on current projects

ACCAN current research projects specific for consumers with disability are:

- Accessing Video on Demand: A study of disability and streaming television- ACCAN Grants project with Curtin University
- Affordable and Accessible devices – ACCAN Grants project with Media Access Australia
- Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT) - ACCAN Grants project with Vision Australia

Environmental scan

The Environmental Scan circulated prior to the meeting aimed to capture the issues ACCAN is currently working on in the disability area, and to identify the known priorities of our stakeholders. It was the baseline document for discussion at the meeting. Attendees at the Disability Advisory Forum had also been asked to come prepared with suggestions of areas for future policy priorities.

ACCAN staff provided a brief outline of several major work areas outlined in the Environmental Scan. There are a number of known areas of work that ACCAN will continue to respond to over the next year. These include:

- Public procurement of accessible ICT. ACCAN will be Chairing a Standards Australia Mirror Committee in 2016 to fast track the adoption of the European Standard for public procurement of accessible ICT (EN 301 549) as an Australian Standard. This will assist in the ongoing action plan to have Australian governments - Federal, State and Territory, and Local to implement procurement policies that encourage accessible ICT in all requests for tender.

- Improved accessibility of websites (particularly government). ACCAN will be engaging with the Digital Transformation Office to help ensure that the DTO makes web accessibility a foundation in the Government's Digital First strategy.
- Mobile apps accessibility. ACCAN will continue to promote App accessibility through our Apps for All Challenge, continuing engagement with the DTO and industry.
- Broadcasting access features and online multimedia content. ACCAN is continuing to promote best-practice captioning for both broadcast television and online media. We are lobbying all Federal politicians, political parties and Government agencies to ensure that all video content is accurately captioned. ACCAN is supporting Vision Australia in the campaign to get Audio Description on broadcast television.

Other more general consumer issues are:

- Mobile network expansion
- Reliability of the legacy network for consumers who have not transferred to NBN
- Addressing the gap with the short term satellite (frustrations / intermittent service)
- Preparing for the long term satellite (dismantling / installation charges)
- A smooth transition from legacy broadband to NBN services
- Affordability of communications products and services
- Future consumer protections such as customer service guarantees, and universal services
- Fair access to online content through measures such as net neutrality and realistic copyright arrangements.

ACCAN is keen to engage more closely with consumers in our work on disability and accessible communications, and would like to use the Disability Advisory Forum as a means of building stronger networks in the community. Our work on accessible ICT devices and services will lead to greater opportunities for economic, social and community participation for people with disability.

We continue to engage with policy makers, regulators, industry and consumers to push for greater accessibility of all communications products and services. The ACCAN website has a disability portal at <http://accan.org.au/consumer-info/disability> that is a useful resource, and we welcome feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Feedback from Forum participants

After an open discussion, DAF attendees identified the following as issues of significance to their constituencies;

- A dedicated strategy needs to be developed in consultation with communities and aligned with the NDIS and NDIA; this is where the funding has been allocated. NDIS can play a critical role in providing useful information for consumers with disability about accessible communications

products and services. Information, Linkage and Capacity Building (ILC) formerly known as Tier 2 of the NDIS model is to provide information resources for all disability related services and products. There is potential for this to be a Centre of Excellence and first place of call for consumers with disability. Is there a role for ACCAN to partner with other organisations such as Independent living Centres to develop this resource?

- There is a need to ensure that all NDIS providers meet accessibility and usability standards. ACCAN could investigate ways to promote accessibility as a priority to smaller telco providers and suggest ways to overcome resource barriers i.e. technical, financial in making accessibility front and centre.
- There are concerns that those outside of NDIS funding do not get left behind i.e. people over 65. ACCAN could develop strategies and form alliances with Council for the Aging and similar organisations dealing with the ageing population and the consequential rise in the percentage of the population being PwD.
- There should be a positive message to accompany any work that ACCAN undertakes regarding communications consumers with disability who make up almost 20 per cent of the community. Real stories can help educate the ‘mainstream population’ about the history of disabilities, facilitating change through education!
- There are ongoing issues of reliable and equitable access to emergency services. This has been a longstanding area of concern for consumers who rely on the relay service to contact emergency services. The current Department of Communications and the Arts review of Australia’s 000 service, may result in positive outcomes in this area.
- A focus on affordability is essential as the majority of people with disabilities are not working. This will continue to be a priority in ACCAN’s broader work on the affordability issue across all communications products and services.
- There is a need for more accessible information from Telcos about products and services useful for people with disability, for example, plain English contracts and product disclosure statements (PDS) as well as Critical Information Summaries (CIS) and a better understanding of the technology needed by people with disability from telco customer service agents. ACCAN will continue to engage with telcos and manufacturers to encourage them to have customer service available to people with disability. Great example is Samsung using Auslan interpreters via skype to engage with customers.
- ACCAN needs to focus on other people with disability, in addition to those with sensory impairments. There are opportunities to use the experts on the DAF.
- There should be a greater focus on the needs of CALD consumers with disability. ACCAN should explore opportunities to partner with NEDA and FECCA.
- ACCAN should act as a “Champion of Change” and use influence to support other organisations campaigns i.e. Audio Description campaign being led by Vision Australia.
- While smartphones have accessible features, not everyone with a disability can afford to have one of these. There needs to be greater promotion of the necessity for affordable and accessible devices. A current ACCAN Grants funded project with Media Access Australia, will provide resources in this area which will be useful for all consumers with disability.
- ACCAN to advocate for new technologies, especially apps, to be available to all. ACCAN is continuing to work in this area with Government agencies and through our annual “Apps for All

Challenge” which promotes and acknowledges those Australian developed apps which are most accessible.

- ACCAN needs to follow-up on National Transition Strategy – what role has the DTO in monitoring Govt. website accessibility? Digital first for Government information and service delivery must ensure web accessibility and usability.

Strategies

- A feature on the ABC program *Gruen* was suggested as a way to raise the profile
- A CEO sleepout type event around communications technology accessibility.

Future research and project opportunities

Participants suggested research on the following topics;

- Repeat of the mystery shopping experience –expand to include smaller providers. Comparisons with initial research project would be invaluable.
- A survey of the accessibility of websites and an economic assessment of the impact of non-accessible websites- including cost to whole community as well as cost of excluding PWD.
- A project focusing on the issues around marketing to consumers with disability. What is the \$ spend of this community? Including NDIS funding packages. Leverage existing international research.

There are 2 known research companies located in Canberra that are highly skilled in the disability area of research. The Flinders University Disability Unit is also a possibility.

Suggested Outreach Opportunities

- ACCAN was encouraged to seek opportunities to align with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

Conclusion

The feedback and suggestions made at the Disability Advisory Forum will be used to inform ACCAN’s policy priorities, policy focus, operations plan and research activity plan. These will be circulated to members of the Forum when finalised.

It was also noted that a review of ACCAN’s Strategic Plan will be completed over the next 12 months. This includes a contract review conducted by the Department of Communications.

ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin, thanked the DAF participants for their time and valuable contributions.