



Standing Advisory Committee Disability Issues Meeting Report

Wednesday 2 May 2012, 10.30am – 3.30 pm

PRESENT: Cathy Clark – Deaf Australia
Kim Curtis – Aboriginal Disability Network
Lachlan Hazelton – Physical Disability Council of NSW
Scott Hollier – Media Access Australia (Vice-chair)
Andrew Stewart – Deafness Forum of Australia
Denise Wood – University of South Australia
Hank Wylie

Apologies:

Kyle Miers – ACCAN Board (Chair of SACDI)

Kim Curtis acknowledged the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and brought greetings from her people.

Briefings

Members were provided with a briefing on the ACCAN mid-term review conducted by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. The Committee was also informed of the upcoming review of the Strategic Plan by ACCAN's Board. The committee was updated on staffing changes at ACCAN and the recruitment for the vacancy on the committee as a result of Nick Rushworth's (Brain Injury Australia) resignation. There were also briefings on the new area of work for ACCAN concerning copyright, the progress of the South Australian Web Access Professional Program and the Media Access Australia and ACCAN Social media grant.

Web Accessibility

Members discussed the web accessibility guidelines and the implications for people with disability. There was also discussion about how captions on web content and how the quality of these captions need to be monitored and improved.

Grants and Research Update

Members were given an overview of the ACCAN 2012 Grants scheme. There was discussion about the number of applicants, the amount of funding for the program, how applicants are notified of outcome and the process of guiding applicants in the initial process of submitting applications. Members requested further detail about the information given to unsuccessful applicants.

Presentation - Katrina Harrison, Customer Focused Design Manager, NBN Co.

Katrina gave the committee an update on NBN matters. NBN Co is responding to the feedback from the committee on its equipment design. The long-term plan is to re-design the

user equipment, working closely with ACCAN to understand universal design principles. Prototype equipment will be available in the next few months. Members discussed issues with the NBN, stressing the importance of testing accessible devices and disability equipment. NBN Co has partnered with IBES to test equipment. NBN Co will provide the committee with access information to enable testing of disability equipment over the fibre network. At this stage it is not possible for testing over the wireless or satellite network at the IBES centre.

NBN discussion

Members discussed the need for greater access to and consultation with NBN Co. in the roll-out process. Avenues for community advisory by specific consumer groups such as disability and indigenous advocacy groups were discussed.

Inclusive Communications

Member's discussed priorities and next steps for Inclusive Communications campaigning. There was discussion about the status of the SMS emergency calls service announced by the Minister two years ago. The members discussed ways of progressing this as a high priority item. There was discussion about the status of the emergency calls application that has been developed for smartphones and how to advance the adoption of the app for both Apple and Android operating systems.

Audio description/Household Assistance Scheme

There was discussion of the announcement from the Minister on BCA radio that the Household Assistance Scheme (HAS) will begin providing talking set top boxes to eligible HAS consumers beginning June 2012. The members noted that this was a positive outcome for blind or vision impaired consumers however there was concern that consumers in regions which have already switched to digital broadcasting will need to be provided with the same access.

ACMA closed-caption committee

Members discussed the release of the Exposure draft: Broadcasting Services Amendment (Improved Access to Television Services) Bill 2012. There was discussion regarding captioning of emergency service announcements and the lack of changes to digital multi-channel caption quotas.

Affordability Issues

Members raised concerns that affordability of telecommunications services for many disabled and indigenous consumers was a real concern. There was discussion of ways that ACCAN and the committee can address this issue. It was noted that affordability is one of ACCANs key areas of campaigning.

Disability Equipment

There was discussion about progress in the area of access to disability equipment. The members discussed access to the captioned telephony handset that is currently being used in the Australian Communications Exchange trial of Captel service. ACCAN recently requested the Governments report on the Feasibility Study into an Independent Disability Equipment Program via Freedom of Information law. Access to equipment is a key aspect of ACCANs Inclusive Communications campaigning.