



Newsletter

Regional workers boost support for services sector

The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) and the Queensland Government have joined forces to boost on-the-ground support for community and disability organisations throughout the state.

Using funding supplied through the government's Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy, QCOSS has employed 12 community sector development workers in regions across Queensland to help service organisations strengthen their capacity to meet local needs.

QCOSS Community Sector Development Manager Lyndall Hulme said a key role of the workers was to assist organisations take up opportunities for capacity building offered through the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

"They will raise awareness of the strategy, provide information about its initiatives and encourage organisations to take advantage of activities aimed at helping them improve services," said Ms Hulme.

"For example, activities undertaken through the workforce development initiatives will help to ensure staff are skilled and valued, which will lead to improved service delivery.

"The QCOSS workers will also act as points of contact for organisations and facilitate feedback to the government."

Ms Hulme said disseminating information about the Standards for Community Services component of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy was another important part of their role.

"The model QCOSS is using to support implementation of the strategy — including the standards — is similar to the one ACROD used to help organisations implement the Disability Service Standards," she said.

"We've followed the ACROD approach of basing workers in regions to provide practical local support."

.....
"They will raise awareness of the strategy..." *Lyndall Hulme*

According to Ms Hulme, collaboration between organisations is essential to enhancing services and meeting community needs.

"The QCOSS workers will be encouraging cooperative approaches throughout the community and disability sectors," she said.



From left: Regional workers Sandra Hobbs and Tina Lathouras discuss their role with QCOSS Community Sector Development Manager Lyndall Hulme during an induction session.

Sunshine Coast Community Sector Development Worker Tina Lathouras said she was liaising with local service organisations to support the strong networks that already existed in her region and to identify opportunities for establishing new ones.

"There are common stories and themes that emerge when these organisations talk about their work — about where they're at and where they need to head," she said.

"My role is to facilitate sharing and collaboration around common themes, needs and activities.

"This kind of combined effort is a very effective way of meeting the needs of people using community and disability services." ●●

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Message from the Director-General



Welcome to this first issue of the newsletter we will be publishing regularly to keep you informed about developments in the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

The launch of this strategy in August 2005 marked the introduction of the broadest range of initiatives ever undertaken to build the capacity of Queensland's non-government organisations.

These initiatives are now well underway across the community and disability sectors. They are creating many opportunities for recognising the important work

non-government organisations do in providing vital services to communities, for giving them practical support, and for developing strong working relationships between the government and non-government sectors.

Many of the activities during the past year have focused on increasing the resources available to assist non-government organisations strengthen their operations and services. These have included the production of *VOICE — Valuing Organisational Improvement and Community Excellence*, a CD-ROM of management and administration resources for Indigenous organisations; the roll-out of a new streamlined accounting system for community and disability organisations; and the distribution of Building Links grants to organisations working on collaborative projects.

There has also been a major focus on developing and supporting the most valued resource of all — the people who work in the community and disability services sectors. A statewide training program is underway to recognise and broaden

the skills of these workers and to help them keep pace with the growing scope and complexity of their role at the frontline of service delivery. Another workforce development project — Education Pathways for Community Services Careers — will commence later this month to promote careers in the community, disability and child safety sectors.

As you will see from the stories in this newsletter, the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy is providing concrete support for building robust, vibrant service organisations and ensuring the continued wellbeing of communities across Queensland.

I encourage you to keep informed about the strategy's initiatives and to share the benefits it offers you and your clients.

Linda A. Apelt
Director-General
Department of Communities and
Disability Services Queensland

All your social security questions answered

My social security payments have been cancelled — what should I do? What benefits am I entitled to? Why can't I get paid now?

A user-friendly handbook is now available on the Queensland Community Organisations Online Resources website to help community and disability workers answer these kinds of questions and advise clients how to resolve problems with social security payments and procedures.

Produced by the Welfare Rights Centre, *The Independent Social Security Handbook* is specifically designed to give people working in the community and disability services sectors a basic understanding of the national social security system.

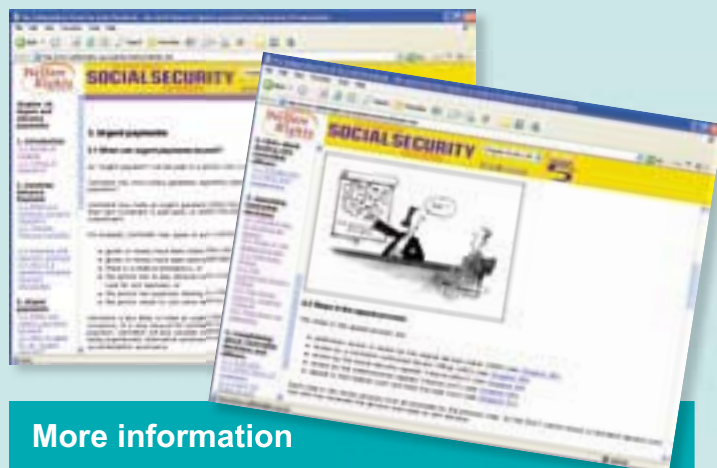
It is a practical reference guide that includes information about all major types of social security payments, as well as details of people's legal rights and appeal rights, and Freedom of Information provisions.

The online version of the handbook is updated every three months to ensure all information reflects the latest changes to social security law and policy.

Access to the handbook is provided free of charge for all Queensland community and disability organisations as part of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

How to access the handbook

Visit www.qld.gov.au/qcoor and follow the steps to register your organisation to use the handbook. ●●



More information

Contact: Matthew Flynn
Phone: 1300 794 611

Workforce development program pays off

When Paul Diamond came to Queensland for a holiday, he didn't expect to stay longer than a few weeks, let alone embark on a career change that would take him from excavating building sites in New Zealand to working with adults with a disability at a centre near Ipswich.

Five years later, Mr Diamond is still here and enjoying the challenges of his job as a support worker and work health safety officer at Treetops, the Endeavour Foundation's residential care facility at Redbank.

Mr Diamond said his job change had initially been a "very steep learning curve".

"But I got a lot of on-the-job training and support from managers and service development officers, and that helped make the transition easier," he said.

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"... even with five years of experience as a disability worker, I didn't have enough confidence in my abilities."
.....

Paul Diamond

Although he had done training to become a work health safety officer and completed short courses on job-related topics, Mr Diamond said he had never thought about gaining formal disability services qualifications.



Paul Diamond (third from left) relaxes with Treetops residents (from left) Jessica Den Otter, Karen Bartie, Brett Craike, Mark Rasmussen and Samantha Troy.

"I came here with no education to speak of," he said, "and even with five years of experience as a disability worker, I didn't have enough confidence in my abilities."

That's all changed though since he joined the skills recognition and training program for community and disability workers offered through TAFE Queensland as part of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

After just a few months in the program, Mr Diamond is now only a few modules away from a Certificate IV in Disability Work.

He said one of the best things about the program was that he could get

recognition of his prior learning and experience in the disability services industry.

"A trainer from TAFE came to my workplace and assessed what skills I had and what extra training I needed to do. Because of my experience, I could already meet most of the requirements," he said.

"I'm also getting ongoing mentoring from the trainer, which is helping me finetune my skills and build my confidence.

"My certificate could help me get management jobs higher up the ladder — but I'm quite happy on the ground level for now." ●●

Skills recognition and training available statewide

The skills recognition and training program is one of several workforce development initiatives introduced through the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

The program offers community and disability workers a range of specialised training and development opportunities aimed at recognising and expanding their skills and meeting the workforce needs of their employer organisation. These opportunities are available statewide through local TAFE institutes.

Several subsidies are available to workers and community and disability organisations participating in the program.

These include:

- subsidies for the cost of enrolment
- support for backfilling the positions of staff released for skills recognition and training
- subsidies to assist organisations and workers gather workplace evidence needed for recognition of prior learning

- additional funding to ensure rural and remote workers have access to training and development opportunities.

The training and skills recognition program is being delivered by the Department of Communities and Department of Employment and Training through the Communities—Vocational Education and Training (VET) Partnership. ●●

More information

Contact: Glenda Sacre

Phone: 1300 794 611

Promoting careers in service sectors

An innovative workforce development initiative is set to begin this month as part of a move to boost the number of workers in the community, disability and child safety services sectors.

The Director-General of the Department of Communities and Disability Services Queensland, Ms Linda Apelt, said there was currently a shortage of workers in these sectors, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas.

“The Education Pathways for Community Services Careers initiative involves two major activities to help overcome this shortage,” Ms Apelt said.

“Firstly, pilot projects will be established in Logan and Townsville to trial workforce development action plans aimed at attracting new workers to the sectors.

“Secondly, a statewide marketing strategy will be launched to promote career opportunities and pathways in community, disability and child safety services.”

Ms Apelt said two specialist companies — Hudson Global Resources and Ogilvy Public Relations Australia — had been appointed to work with peak organisations and non-government organisations on the initiative.

“Hudson is a leading recruitment and human resource management organisation, and Ogilvy is a recognised leader in social marketing and communication.”

Hudson and Ogilvy will begin meeting and interviewing peak organisations and sector representatives during September and October as a first step towards identifying workforce needs and opportunities.

More information

Contact: Glenda Sacre

Phone: 1300 794 611

New system set to standardise accounts

Community and disability organisations across Queensland have made sure they are ready for the roll-out of the Standard Chart of Accounts, the new streamlined accounting system being introduced as part of the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations strategy.

More than 870 staff and associates of funded organisations attended training sessions on the new system between May and early August in centres ranging from Cairns in the north, to Mt Isa in the west and the Gold Coast in the south.

According to Volunteering Queensland, the peak body engaged to provide training in the Standard Chart of Accounts, the new system will standardise and simplify bookkeeping practices across the disability and community sectors.

Volunteering Queensland Chief Executive Officer Di Morgan said this standardisation would deliver significant savings in terms of costs, time and stress.

“The grants acquittal process will be simplified, and reporting will be streamlined, making the jobs of committee treasurers, bookkeepers, accountants and auditors much easier,” she said.

Ms Morgan said the new system would improve financial management

practices in non-government organisations of all sizes.

“For some smaller groups that might keep their accounts ‘in a shoebox’, the Standard Chart of Accounts provides a systematic way of managing their finances.

“For larger organisations with systems and software in place, it means they can apply a uniform set of accounts using their existing resources.”

To help offset the costs of converting to the Standard Chart of Accounts, small one-off subsidies were provided to some organisations (those receiving annual amounts over \$10 000 from Disability Services Queensland and over \$20 000 from the Department of Communities).

Free follow-up support for implementing the Standard Chart of Accounts is available until the end of September by phoning a dedicated helpline on 1300 799 745 or emailing helpdesk@data-care.com.au. ●●

More information

Anne Finn

Phone: 1300 794 611

Website:

<https://olt.qut.edu.au/bus/DYO/>
(see Standard Chart of Accounts web pages)



Trainer Maureen O'Brien (left) points out major features of the Standard Chart of Accounts to Ray Roberts (Townsville West Community Centre) and Alison Goodwin (Inclusion Works) at a Townsville training session in June.

“One-stop guide” for Indigenous organisations

Indigenous community organisations are now able to access a suite of culturally suitable management resources with just a few clicks of a button, thanks to a “virtual office” CD-ROM produced as part of the Strengthening Indigenous Non-Government Organisations initiative.

Team manager Rod Setterlund said the CD-ROM, titled *VOICE — Valuing Organisational Improvement and Community Excellence*, included comprehensive information about office administration and management, along with templates, “how-to” guides and samples.

“It is designed to be a practical ‘one-stop guide’ for the day-to-day running of Indigenous organisations providing community services,” said Mr Setterlund.

“We’ve also made sure that all its resources are structured around the draft Standards for Community Services introduced from 1 July 2006.”

Focus groups who user-tested the CD-ROM gave it an enthusiastic tick of approval.

Junkuri Laka Justice Association Manager Beatty Retchford, who travelled from Mornington Island for the Mt Isa focus group session, was one of the many participants who wanted to start using the CD-ROM “right now”.



Mt Isa focus group participants said the CD-ROM would be a very valuable tool for management committees and workers in their organisations.

“What struck me about the CD-ROM’s information was that it was very relevant and easily understood,” said Ms Retchford.

“The vocabulary was appropriate to the target group,” she said. “Anyone who can read would be able to get the direction needed to strengthen their management capacity.”

Focus groups who user-tested the CD-ROM gave it an enthusiastic tick of approval.

The *VOICE* CD-ROM was launched by the Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth at the Premier’s Reconciliation Awards for Business ceremony on 27 July 2006.

It is being distributed to organisations funded by the Department of Communities and Disability Services Queensland during September and October. ●●



The CD-ROM includes resources on topics such as managing human resources, running meetings, strengthening governance, strategic management and risk management.

More information

Contact: Julie-Anne Rogers

Phone: 1300 794 611

A home of their own

A new respite centre is now top of the shopping list for the Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill.

After operating out of a rented house for six years in Camp Hill, Brisbane, the association recently secured funding to buy its own premises.

Under the Strengthening Non-Government Organisations disability sector Asset Acquisition/ Replacement initiative, the association has been awarded grants of \$150 000 towards the property purchase and almost \$35 000 for equipment.

These grants were part of around \$3.5 million spent during 2005–06 on assisting disability organisations purchase or upgrade capital goods essential for maintaining high levels of service quality.

Association president Toni Anderson said they will put the grants towards purchasing and fitting out a six-bedroom home in Brisbane’s inner-south.

“This support lets our clients know that the government and the community recognise our work as worthwhile,” said Ms Anderson. ●●

More information

Disability Services Queensland is implementing a number of initiatives to build the capacity of non-government organisations providing specialist disability services.

Contact: Annett Cummings

Phone: 3224 6435

Website: www.disability.qld.gov.au (follow the links: Home > Support and services > For service providers)

News in brief

Building Links grants

Thirty funded community and disability organisations received grants through the first round of the Building Links program which closed in April 2006.

Approximately \$700 000 was allocated to assist funded organisations create partnerships that help them improve services or operate more efficiently. Ten organisations received up to \$50 000 to implement planned collaborative activities, and another twenty were awarded grants of up to \$15 000 for developing business case proposals for collaborative ventures.

Standards for Community Services introduced from 1 July

Implementation of the draft Standards for Community Services began on 1 July 2006.

The standards outline the department's minimum expectations of funded community organisations. All new service agreements between community organisations and the department now require implementation of the standards.

Visit www.qld.gov.au/qcoor for the latest information about the standards, including suggestions about policies that organisations need to develop and implement to meet the standards, and answers to FAQs about self-assessment and accreditation.

For further information, email standards.team@communities.qld.gov.au.

Workforce development awards

Winners of the Minister's Awards for Excellence in Workforce Development will be announced at a presentation dinner in Brisbane on 14 November. All community and disability organisations are invited to attend. For details about the dinner, including program and costs, visit www.communities.qld.gov.au or phone 3234 0190.

Funding opportunities

The Department of Communities and Disability Services Queensland are planning a number of funding initiatives during 2006–07.

Some upcoming initiatives are listed below with expected closing dates for applications. Note that closing dates may change, so please check the relevant websites for the latest details (see 'Further information').

Department of Communities

- Volatile Substance Misuse

Expected to close
23 October 2006

- Rural Multi-Tenant Service Centres

Expected to close
6 November 2006

- National Youth Week 2007

Expected to close
13 November 2006

- Homeless Early Intervention Services

Expected to close
20 November 2006

- Community Crime Prevention

Expected to close
20 November 2006

- Respite for Grandparents

Expected to close
27 November 2006

- Seniors Week 2007

Expected to close
27 November 2006

- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month 2007

Expected to close
11 December 2006

Disability Services Queensland

- Younger People with a Disability in Residential Aged Care initiative — Assessment Services

Expected to close
16 October 2006

Further information

Further details will be available on the Department of Communities website and Disability Services Queensland website when initiatives are advertised (approximately six weeks before the closing dates):

www.communities.qld.gov.au/departments/funding/

www.disability.qld.gov.au/suppserv/dsq/younger-people-res-aged-care/index.html

Information about Queensland Government grants is also available at www.qld.gov.au/grants.

More information

For more information or to join the mailing list for this newsletter, contact:

Strengthening Non-Government Organisations team
GPO Box 806, Brisbane Qld 4001

Phone: 1300 794 611

Email: sngos@communities.qld.gov.au

www.communities.qld.gov.au