

**Report to the Department of Families,  
Community Services and Indigenous  
Affairs**

**Report of the Evaluation of the  
Commonwealth Disability  
Strategy**

September 2006



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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) was introduced in 1994 as a planning framework to assist Australian Government organisations to meet their obligations under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*. Following the mid-term evaluation in 1999, a revised CDS was launched in October 2000 and remains in place today. The main objective of the current CDS is to ensure equity of access to all mainstream Australian Government policies, programs and services for people with disabilities. The CDS provides a framework to assist Australian Government organisations to improve access for people with disabilities to their programs, services and facilities. The CDS provides practical guidance to assist organisations to remove the barriers that face people with disabilities.

The CDS encourages organisations to:

- provide information in accessible formats;
- employ people with disabilities;
- purchase accessible services;
- recognise people with disabilities as consumers of services; and
- consult with people with disabilities to find out what they need.

This evaluation focused on the progress made in the removal of barriers for people with disabilities and the effectiveness of the CDS over the past five years by:

- mapping the CDS' performance against its objectives;
- highlighting any barriers or drivers to success; and
- identifying possible future directions for the CDS.

## Methodology

This evaluation has taken the form of a strategic review of a range of evidence in relation to the implementation of the CDS. Data was collected from a variety of sources, including the following:

1. Review of quantitative data, including the ABS report, *Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings* (2003) and analysis of a survey of Australian Public Service (APS) employees with disabilities.
2. Analysis of departmental annual reports.
3. Literature review of changes in government roles.
4. Stakeholder consultations, including interviews with members of organisations representing people with disabilities, interviews with individual APS employees with disabilities, a workshop for APS executives, a workshop for APS employees with disabilities, a survey of a sample of government departments, a survey of APS employees, a national call for public submissions, and a telephone hotline service.
5. Review of national and international disability policies and practice.

## Overview of findings

The evidence available to this evaluation suggests that there has been a range of positive outcomes from the CDS over the past five years. There has been greater recognition by Australian Government departments of the need to give consideration to the impact of their policies and practices on people with disabilities. There has also been a range of benefits for people with disabilities, as APS employees, as customers of government and as citizens. Examples of such benefits include increased accessibility of government information, increased physical access to government buildings, and more widespread availability of adaptive technology in workplaces.

It is also clear that people with disabilities have not universally or uniformly enjoyed these benefits in all areas or from all areas of government. Apart from some variances between states and territories, there is some consistency from all sources of data that indicates:

- APS employment of people with disabilities is falling, while the proportion of people with disabilities in the Australian population is rising.
- Levels of satisfaction with their employment circumstances are lower for APS employees with disabilities than for other APS employees.
- People with disabilities who live in regional areas, who are from non-English speaking backgrounds and/or are Indigenous Australians still face particular disadvantages.

Feedback was received about the inconsistency of approaches, both within and across departments, to people with disabilities. This is considered to be a product of limited understanding of the needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities, and limited appreciation of the implications for people with disabilities of decisions made by government officials. Many respondents sought improvement in the attitudes of many who work within government to people with disabilities. These attitudes are not necessarily malicious or overtly discriminatory in intent, but demonstrate a need for a greater comprehension of what is required to assist people with disabilities negotiate government services and functions on a day to day basis.

## Proposed future directions

The following five areas may add value to the future delivery of the CDS:

1. Revising the current *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* (including indicators of performance) for reporting departmental progress in relation to the achievements of the CDS' objectives to place greater emphasis on the achievement of outcomes.
2. Consider introducing a monitoring and feedback role within government to assist departments develop action plans (where desired) and meet their obligations in terms of reporting progress. This could also include the annual compilation of performance data into a whole of government report that established benchmarks and usefully demonstrates best-case practices.
3. Extending the scope of the CDS to all Australian Government departments, authorities, instrumentalities and trading enterprises, with the obligation of individuals and organisations providing goods and services to the Australian Government to be responsive to the principles of the CDS. Work could also be taken to strengthen the focus of the CDS in government tender documents.

4. Implementing a planned, educative process that informs APS employees, managers and contractors of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to the achievement of the CDS objectives; and promotes and illustrates the practical benefits of greater inclusion of people with disabilities.
5. Encouraging all Australian Government departments to ensure that their disability action planning, recruitment action and workplace modifications identify and take account of the specific needs of people with disabilities, in particular, those from a non-English speaking background, those with multiple/complex disabilities and those with episodic and psychiatric disabilities.



# Introduction

This report presents an evaluation of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS), conducted during June to October 2005. The evaluation was commissioned by the Disability and Carers Branch of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA)<sup>1</sup>, as part of the commitment specified within the CDS itself. As the CDS has now been in place for more than 10 years, it is timely to review not only the effectiveness with which it has achieved its aims, but also to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Structure of the report

This evaluation report is presented as a strategic review of the evidence available from data gained from a variety of sources. It does not attempt to evaluate the performance of individual departments or elements of the CDS. Rather, it attempts to identify the key issues that will need to be considered for the future development of the CDS. Chapter 2 outlines the methodology used in the evaluation. Chapter 3 presents a brief review of approaches to supporting disability policy in other countries. Chapter 4 includes a brief overview of the data available about the achievements of the CDS in five key areas: access to information, access to facilities, inclusion in consultancies, employment outcomes, and overall satisfaction. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the issues arising from the data collection and the implications for the design of an enhanced CDS. Chapter 6 discusses some opportunities for improvement.

## Background and context to the CDS

The CDS operates within a legislative framework that has evolved over an extended period of time. This legislative framework is designed to protect people with disabilities from discriminatory practices and policies and to support full and meaningful participation in the community.

The *Disability Services Act (1986)* provides the key legislation that supports the funding and delivery of disability support services designed to increase individual independence and integration of people with disabilities within the community. This legislation was also fundamental in facilitating the development of a national framework for promoting the rights of people with disabilities, following enactment of complementary State/Territory legislation.

This foundation was further developed through the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), which recognises the right of people with disabilities to equality before the law and makes discrimination based on disability unlawful. The CDS has become the primary vehicle by which Australian Government departments can develop programs and services that meet the intentions of the DDA. This legislation was the subject of a comprehensive review in 2004 by the Productivity

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<sup>1</sup> Then known as the Office of Disability within the Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS)

Commission. This review largely affirmed the intentions and objectives of the Act, but made a number of recommendations for refinement of its implementation.

The DDA, in summary:

- prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability, both to the person with disability and the person's associates, such as family members, carers and friends;
- provides a broad definition of disability;
- covers many areas of life, including employment, education, access to premises, administration of Commonwealth laws and programs and provision of goods, services and facilities; and
- provides a complaints and conciliation mechanism for alleged disability discrimination.

The CDS operates alongside a number of other government initiatives. These include: the *Charter of Public Service in Culturally Diverse Society* (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs), the *Client Service Charter Principles* (Department of Finance and Administration) and the *Government Online Strategy* (Australian Government Information Management Office), as well as individual workplace diversity programs; all of which contain elements aimed at improving access for people with disabilities to Australian Government programs, services and facilities.

### The CDS in brief

The CDS is designed to assist Australian Government organisations remove barriers in their policies, programs and services for people with disabilities. The CDS was not intended to be overly-prescriptive but allow for the variability of business activities across Australian Government departments, and changes in responsibilities over time. The focus is on achieving sustainable improvement over time.

### The principles behind the current CDS

Consistent with the requirements of the DDA, and the Australian Government's commitment to people with disabilities, the mid-term revision of the CDS was built around the following five principles:

- **Equity**, people with disabilities have the right to participate in all aspects of the community including the opportunity to contribute to its social, political, economic and cultural life;
- **Inclusion**, all mainstream Australian Government programs, services and facilities should be available to people with disabilities. The requirements of people with disabilities should be taken into account at all stages in the development and delivery of these programs and services;
- **Participation**, people with disabilities have the right to participate on an equal basis in all decision-making processes that affect their lives;
- **Access**, people with disabilities should have access to information in appropriate formats about the programs and services they use; and
- **Accountability**, all areas of Australian Government organisations should be clearly accountable for the provision of access to their programs, facilities and services for people with disabilities. This includes specifying the outcomes to be achieved, establishing performance indicators and linking reporting on outcomes of the CDS to mainstream reporting mechanisms.

## Coverage of the CDS

All Australian Government departments and statutory authorities are expected to comply with the requirements of the CDS. Government business enterprises are not required to implement the CDS, but are encouraged to report in their annual reports about how they have improved access for people with disabilities.

Implementing departments are responsible for:

- understanding their obligations under the CDS;
- designing and implementing strategies, policies and procedures to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are met;
- monitoring departmental performance against common key performance indicators; and
- reporting on performance outcomes in their annual reports to parliament.

Departments are required to consider the service delivery roles that they carry out and then report their success against these roles. The five roles are:

- policy advisor;
- regulator;
- purchaser;
- provider; and
- employer.

For each of these roles, departments are provided guidance about the outcomes required and the performance indicators that should be used to measure success.

The table in **Appendix 1** summarises each of the roles, the outcomes expected and the performance indicators.

## Evaluation objectives

The Australian Government's desired outcome for people with disabilities is full inclusion in all aspects of community life. The CDS, first released in 1994, provides Australian Government organisations with a framework to assist them develop and deliver policies, programs and services, which meet the needs of people with disabilities.

The original CDS was intended to provide a 10-year planning framework for Australian Government organisations to:

- promote acceptance that people with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community;
- identify and remove barriers in program development and delivery;
- eliminate discriminatory practices as employers and program administrators; and
- develop plans, strategies and actions to ensure planning and service delivery takes into account the needs of people with disabilities.

A mid-term evaluation of the CDS was completed in 1999. As a result of the mid-term evaluation, a number of changes were made to the CDS. Further, a commitment was made to review the CDS at the ten-year point. This evaluation responds to that commitment.

This project aims to assess progress in removing barriers to people with disabilities and to assess the overall effectiveness of the revised CDS. The evaluation will assess the CDS' effectiveness by:

- mapping the CDS' performance against its objectives;
- highlighting any barriers or drivers to success; and
- identifying possible opportunities for improvement.

### **Findings from the mid-term evaluation**

The design of the present CDS has been significantly influenced by the findings of a mid-term evaluation of the achievements of the CDS undertaken in 1999. The evaluation found that the CDS has been an effective tool in raising the awareness of the needs and rights of people with disabilities in their interactions with Australian Government departments. The evaluation also highlighted a range of issues that were restricting the CDS in achieving its objectives.

Predominantly, these issues related to:

- the inability of the CDS to keep pace with the changes occurring across Australian Government organisations in recent years; and
- the difficulties encountered in integrating the CDS into these organisations' activities.

These findings highlighted the need to develop a new approach that would recognise and accommodate the changing environment in which the CDS must operate. This new approach recognised the differing core roles of Australian Government organisations and their varying accountabilities in meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

The evaluation recognised a continuing need for a CDS as people with disabilities still experienced significant barriers in everyday aspects of their lives. Australian Government organisations also indicated the need for continuing support and guidance in implementing the CDS.

Some common barriers confronting people with disabilities in attempting to gain access to Australian Government organisations reported in 1999 were:

- inadequate consultative processes;
- limited recognition as customers;
- restricted availability of information in accessible formats;
- poor physical access to premises; and
- lack of suitable complaints handling mechanisms.

### **A profile of disability in Australia**

It is useful to understand the distribution and incidence of disability in Australia, to help to define the scope of the issues that must be addressed by the CDS. In developing this profile, it is acknowledged that differences of definition, target samples, and timeframes for data collection often make comparisons between different sources difficult.

## Defining disability

As discussed further in Chapter 3, there are many views on how disability should be defined. This issue is also discussed extensively in the Productivity Commission's recent *Review of the Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*. These varying definitions have implications also for capturing and reporting statistical data in relation to people with disabilities that derive from these different approaches. Not least of these implications is the fact that both general population surveys and those focusing on APS employees rely on self-identification and self-reporting of disability. It is considered that self-reporting has led to an undercount of the incidence of disability. Reporting may not occur because of the stigma that can be attached to people who identify as having a disability and the associated consequences, or because people with certain conditions do not consider themselves as having a disability.

These differences of definition derive from the two main approaches to thinking about disability issues: the "medical model", which views disability largely as a medical condition to be "cured"; and the "social model", which views disability as resulting from social barriers to participation.

The majority of data reported here derives initially from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of disability as "*Anyone who has experienced a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last, for at least 6 months and restricts everyday activities*". It is also important to point out that there are further complexities to reporting on disability. This includes, the fact that some people have multiple disabilities, and many people with disabilities also come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Differing cultural understandings of disability also create further complexities in gathering data.

## People with disabilities in Australia

According to the ABS, almost 20 per cent of Australians have a disability (3.96 million people). This proportion is increasing, particularly as the population ages (ABS, 2003, pp3-4). Another 20 per cent of Australians (4.15 million) have a long-term health condition that does not restrict their everyday activities. Some 19.8 per cent of all males and 20.1 per cent of all females report having a disability (ABS, 2003, p3).

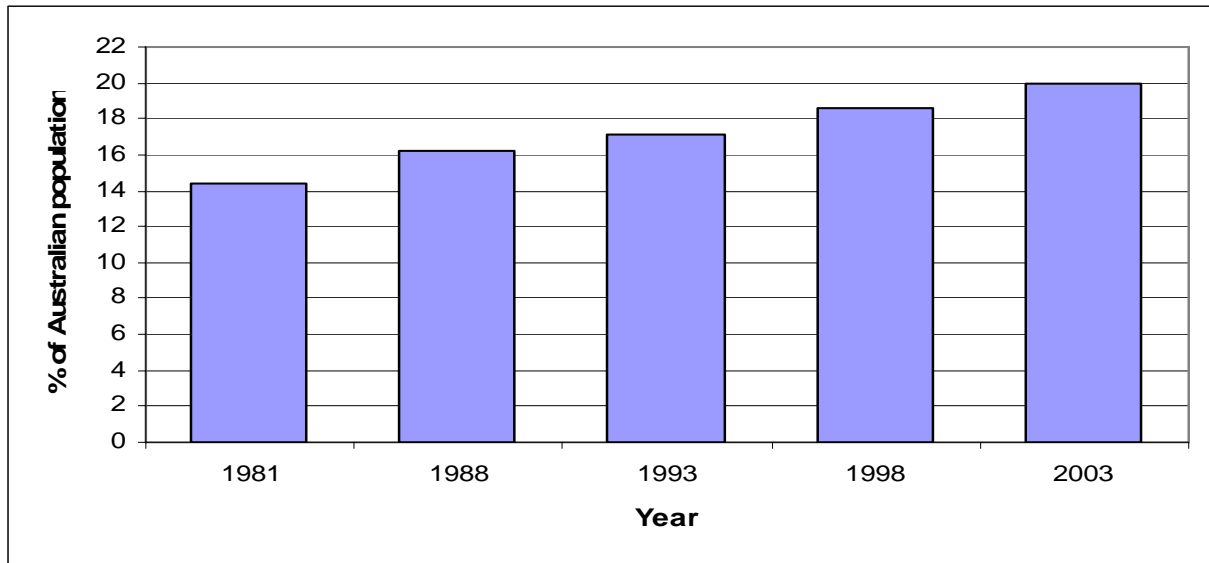
The proportion of people reporting a disability is increasing over time (Figure 2). This rise is partly due to better diagnosis and a greater willingness to report disability, and also reflects the ageing of the population. This trend is expected to continue.

Of those people with a disability, 86 per cent experience limitations in core activities (such as self care, mobility or communication), or restrictions in schooling or employment (ABS, 2003, p4). Some 6.3 per cent of people in Australia have a profound or severe core-activity limitation.

Most people with disabilities have physical conditions (83.9%); 11.3 per cent have mental illness, including behavioural disorders; and 4.8 per cent have intellectual and developmental disorders.

People with mental illness or behavioural conditions are more likely to have profound or severe limitation to their core activities than those with a physical condition (46% compared to 29%). Over half (56%) of those with psychoses or mood affective disorders, such as dementia and depression, have profound or severe limitations to their core activities.

**Figure 1: Changes in the percentage of the Australian population with disabilities, 1981-2003**



**Source:** Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003). Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, 2003, Publication Number 4430.0.



# Methodology

The evaluation included the following elements:

## 1. Review of quantitative data

A significant component of the evaluation was a meta-evaluation of existing quantitative data relating to:

- annual reporting by Australian Government departments;
- APS employees' perceptions about various aspects of their employment. An on-line survey of APS employees was advertised via selected departments' disability coordinators. Responses from 58 APS employees with a disability were received (out of a possible 4642 ongoing employees who have identified as having a disability<sup>2</sup>). (The questionnaire is included in Appendix 5); and
- income and employment outcomes for people with a disability (*ABS Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, 2003*, Publication Number 4430.0).

## 2. Literature review of changes in Government roles

A review of the literature was undertaken examining changes in the roles of government and the impact these have had on the lives of people with disabilities. The review examined the privatisation of government functions, including the use of new technologies, and the impact of a change in role for government from service provider to service purchaser/contractor. Information about these changes was gained through the APS employee workshops, as well as from a review of available literature.

## 3. Stakeholder consultations

Consultations were undertaken with a range of stakeholders to gauge perceptions of the CDS' performance, and of any barriers or drivers to success. Sixteen peak bodies representing people with a disability were consulted during the evaluation. In addition, representatives from four other government departments concerned with disability issues were interviewed. A list of organisations consulted is shown at Appendix 2.

Subjects for discussion with the disability community included:

- the five principles of the revised CDS (equity, inclusion, participation, access, and accountability) and its objectives and achievements;
- access to information and communication technology; and
- whether progress has been made through the CDS and other processes in reducing discriminatory behaviour in the public sector.

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<sup>2</sup> APSC, *State of the Service Report 2004-05*

Strategies for undertaking these consultations included face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders, case study interviews with six APS employees with disabilities, a call for public submissions (that was advertised nationally), an on-line survey, and workshops for invited stakeholders. The contract also required provision of a hot line with TTY facilities, but only four members of the public used this facility. Details of the instruments used to collect this data are shown in Appendix 7.

Two workshops for Australian Government employees were held. The first of these involved departmental executives with some responsibility for disability issues; the second workshop was for APS employees with disabilities and/or their managers. More than 40 representatives from 28 different departments attended these workshops. Departments represented at the workshops are listed at Appendix 3. The consultations with members of the APS included representatives from:

- different types and sizes of departments, including centralised and decentralised departments, and departments with a variety of responsibilities;
- people with disabilities employed within the APS; and
- public servants from different levels (APS 1 to SES and equivalent) of the APS, including people from the administrative, technical, and professional streams.

Written submissions were received from seven departments as a follow-up to their workshop contribution. In addition, six peak bodies also provided written submissions. Organisations that provided written submissions are listed in Appendix 4.

#### **4. Review of national and international disability policies and good practice**

A review of the literature on national and international disability policies and examples of good practice to identify possible future directions for the CDS was undertaken. The focus of this review was on policies and strategies that have facilitated equal access and the full participation for people with disabilities.



## Approaches to disability policy in other countries

In this chapter, we present an overview of some of the emerging issues in four countries to provide insights into other ways in which governments have responded to the challenge of enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. These countries were: New Zealand (NZ), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US). In addition, a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) review provides some relevant information.

Estimates of the number of people with long-term impairments appear to be in the same range as the one in five (20 per cent) figure reported in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2004). In the UK, some 10 million adults or 22 per cent of the adult population are covered by the *Disability Discrimination Act*. In the US, there are nearly 54 million people with disabilities (US General Accounting Office, 2005). In Canada, 3.6 million people, or roughly one in eight people are defined as having a disability (Government of Canada, 2004). In NZ, one in five people are considered to have a long-term impairment (Minister for Disability Issues, 2001).

This overview also demonstrates that the goal of inclusivity, or full participation in society by people with disabilities, is shared by other nations. To support the achievement of this goal, governments have established various mechanisms, some of which have parallels with the Australian experience, including:

- explicit principles for addressing the needs of people with disabilities;
- overarching disability legislation like the DDA;
- complaints resolution authorities;
- whole-of-government policy coordination units;
- use of a disability action plan or strategy;
- performance review and reporting frameworks; and
- a holistic approach that links and integrates each of the above elements.

## Underpinning principles for addressing the needs of people with disabilities

The disability policies of all countries are underpinned by a set of principles or beliefs about both the nature of disability and the place of people with disabilities in society as a whole.

### New Zealand

The NZ Disability Strategy, for example, is based on the “social” model of disability, which recognises:

*“Disability is not something individuals have. What individuals have are impairments. They may be physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, intellectual or other impairments...Disability is the process which happens when one group of people create barriers by designing a world only for their way of living, taking no account of the impairments other people have.”*

Following from this understanding, the NZ Disability Strategy develops a vision for the future of a fully inclusive, non-disabling society that highly values the lives of people with impairments and enhances their full participation. The strategy articulates a number of propositions that give substance to this vision, including the intention that people with disabilities have a meaningful partnership with Government, communities and support departments, based on respect and equality.

### Canada

The Canadian experience, in terms of views on what constitutes “disability” is somewhat similar to that of NZ, although at the federal level no single definition has been adopted. This reflects the view that disability is complex and multi-dimensional in nature. Like the NZ Strategy, the Canadian policy recognises that impairments may take one or more forms, and may differ in the level of their severity, and that there are numerous points at which people can become disabled. While some people are born with a disability, many more acquire a disability later in life as a result of accidents or health conditions. The Canadian policy document also recognises that disability is not always static or permanent and includes conditions that may be cyclical, episodic or progressive.

### United Kingdom

In the UK, disability policy has been recently reconceptualised within a broader equality and human rights perspective. The UK approach builds on the concept of “active citizenship”, which involves:

- establishing and maintaining fundamental rights;
- ensuring that people with disabilities are included and have a sense of ‘belonging’; and
- enabling people with disabilities to carry out their responsibilities as citizens alongside having reciprocal rights.

The current UK approach is driven by growing appreciation of a number of social and demographic trends, including the increasing diversity of the population caused by increased globalisation and immigration, the aging of the population, and the growing gaps between the wealthiest and poorest members of the society. There is growing appreciation also, of the economic cost of failing to ensure inclusion of all members of society, both as producers and consumers within the economy. The drive for greater inclusivity derives at least in part on the belief that intervention will bring net benefits to the economy, for example through widening the skills base and an increase in productivity.

### Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The OECD, in a major review of disability policies across its member nations, reaches similar conclusions. No single country, in the OECD's view, could be said to have a particularly successful policy for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, there were differences in outcomes that appeared to be related to the policy choices that countries made. The OECD argues that societies need to change the way they think about disability and those affected by it.

### **Overarching disability legislation**

Many countries have taken legislative steps to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Much of this legislation derives from an anti-discrimination perspective.

#### The United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the *Disability Discrimination Act* (amended in 2005) is the foundation for disability policy. This Act defines a disabled person as "someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." This definition reflects a fairly traditional view of disability as something inherent in the person (rather than a social construct), and is similar in intent to the Australian DDA in that it seeks to provide rights (in the areas of employment, education, access to goods, facilities and services, and buying or renting land or property) to people with disabilities.

#### United States

In the US, the cornerstone of disability policy since 1990 has been the *Americans with Disabilities Act*, which like its counterparts elsewhere has the primary objective of preventing discrimination against people with disabilities. The Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, state, territory and local government, public accommodation, commercial facilities, transportation, and telecommunications. The Act supports the full participation of people with disabilities in society and fosters the expectation that people with disabilities can work and have the right to work.

The Act has had an impact on the way that people with disabilities are perceived in that country, and has influenced the way that government departments, business and individuals respond to disability issues. However, critics of the US model argue that in recent decades, disability policy has come to resemble a mosaic, pieced together in response to court decisions and other external pressures, rather than the result of a well-thought-out concept of how the programs should be operating (cited in Matherlee, 2003).

#### Australia

There are significant differences, for example, between the ways that anti-discrimination legislation in different countries attempt to produce social change, not only in the technical aspects and judicial structures and systems that form the context for interpretation of the legislation, but also in the way in which it seeks to have an effect. The difference in legislative style between that which attempts to limit or proscribe certain behaviours and that which attempts to encourage certain behaviours may appear to be subtle, but can impact significantly on both the spirit and manner with which people comply with the legislation.

In terms of legislation, the Australian DDA appears to stand up well to international comparison. The recent Productivity Commission Review of the DDA found that it was not only reasonably effective in reducing discrimination, but also that no satisfactory alternatives for achieving its objectives exist. At the same time, the Review found that there had been mixed results for people with disabilities, and there is some way to go before its objectives are achieved. Most importantly, the Review recognised that the nature of the challenge facing the DDA would change as the focus shifts from removing physical barriers to addressing attitudinal barriers.

### **Complaints resolution authorities**

In Australia, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) has a major responsibility for resolution of formal complaints for people with disabilities. In the UK, this role is currently performed by the Disability Rights Commission, which was set up by the government in 1999 to help secure civil rights for people with disabilities. The Commission provides information and guidance on areas covered by anti-discrimination law for people with disabilities.

Structural arrangements for promoting the interests of people with disabilities have recently undergone significant revision in the UK. This includes plans to establish the Commission for Equality and Human Rights in 2007, which will merge the Disability Rights Commission with the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. The new Commission will maintain a complaints resolution mechanism, but will have a broader focus on ending discrimination and harassment based on disability, race, gender, religion or belief, or sexual orientation

### **Leadership and coordination units**

All of the countries considered in this review have established government bodies (sometimes independent and sometimes within existing departments) to promote, lead or coordinate the improvement of the position of people with disabilities.

#### New Zealand

The NZ Office for Disability Issues is responsible for ensuring government keeps faith with the NZ Disability Strategy by promoting the participation and inclusion of people with disabilities. The Office has three identified roles:

- lead, monitor and promote the NZ Disability Strategy;
- provide policy advice on disability issues, and lead strategic and cross-sectoral disability policy across government; and
- support the Minister for Disability Issues.

While the NZ Office's main role is to lead implementation of the strategy by government departments, it is also expected to influence the attitudes and behaviour of society as a whole. It is part of the Ministry for Social Development and reports to the Minister for Disability Issues.

Canada

The Canadian Office for Disability Issues provides a national focal point for collaboration among partners by:

- fostering coherence through improved horizontal management of federal policies and programs;
- building the capacity of the voluntary sector through strategic investment;
- creating cohesive, action-oriented networks of existing and new partners; and
- providing knowledge to inform policy and program development and build awareness.

The Canadian Office reports to the Minister for Social Development.

United Kingdom

The release of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit's report "*Improving the Life Chances of People with Disabilities*" in March 2005 led to the establishment of an Office of Disability Issues, reporting to a Minister for People with Disabilities, to help coordinate policy across government. The Office is a strategic unit responsible for coordinating Government work on disability and ensuring that this fits with the wider equalities agenda. It is the collective responsibility of all government departments to ensure that the recommendations of the report are taken forward.

Australia

Responsibility for disability issues lies across a range of departments, including:

- The Attorney-General's Department, which provides legal and policy advice on human rights; is responsible for anti-discrimination legislation (including the DDA); and has administrative responsibilities for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), which has policy responsibility for supporting employment of people with disability in the open labour market
- The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), which has a policy and monitoring role around the employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service
- The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA), which has policy responsibility for a range of assistance and support measures, including accessibility services and supported employment services. FaCSIA is also responsible for implementing and managing the CDS.

Over the past five years, FaCSIA has employed a number of media (including web and print) to promote the CDS. Most recently, materials and workshops in relation to print disability and hearing loops have been prepared. FaCSIA also provides advice, support and feedback to departments on disability action plans and performance reporting.

**A disability action plan or strategy**

The development of a national disability plan or strategy is another approach that is common across a number of countries, and reflects a range of contextual factors including the legislative and constitutional provisions governing social policy, the country's overall stage of development in recognising and responding to human rights, demographic considerations and the overall state of the economy.

## Canada

The Canadian Office of Disability Issues has developed a five-year strategic plan as a guide to working with partners (including federal departments and agencies, provinces and territories, the voluntary sector, the research community, business, labour and Parliamentarians) to promote the full participation of Canadians with disabilities in learning, work and community life. This strategic plan outlines four strategic directions that are closely aligned with the Office's mission: 'improving coherence'; 'investing in capacity'; 'developing networks'; and 'increasing the knowledge base'. A fifth strategic direction, 'achieving excellence', underlies all policy and program activities. Each strategic direction consists of a clearly stated strategic objective, planned activities and expected results.

## New Zealand

The NZ Disability Strategy, *Making a World of Difference*, is intended to be an 'enduring framework', under which government departments and other government agencies are encouraged to consider people with disabilities before making decisions. It sits alongside other government programs such as the *Positive Ageing Strategy*, the *New Zealand Health Strategy* and the *Re-evaluation of Human Rights Protections in New Zealand*.

## Australia

The CDS is designed to assist Australian Government departments and statutory authorities to remove barriers in their policies, programs and services for people with disability. It allows organisations the flexibility to develop and implement their own strategies that reflect their core roles and responsibilities. The CDS requires departments and statutory authorities to report each year in their Annual Report (other Australian Government organisations, such as government business enterprises, are 'actively encouraged' to provide similar reports). The CDS includes a performance framework, which includes a range of optional measures, to guide Australian Government organisations in this reporting process.

The CDS operates alongside a number of other government initiatives, including the *Charter of Public Service in Culturally Diverse Society* (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs) and the *Client Service Charter Principles* (Department of Finance and Administration). Initiatives are also incorporated into organisations' workplace diversity plans.

## **Performance review and reporting frameworks**

Performance monitoring and reporting is a central element in the disability strategies of several countries.

## New Zealand

In NZ, individual government departments are now expected to develop annual 'Disability Strategy Implementation Work Plans' that spell out what work they are doing to implement the NZ Disability Strategy.

## Canada

The Canadian Office for Disability Issues has an accountability framework designed as a set of overall 'quality of life' indicators, which are reported on a whole-of-government level annually. The annual accountability report, *Advancing Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*, presents information about Canadians with disabilities, their families and the challenges they face, as well as Government of Canada policies, programs and initiatives that address these challenges. The Canadian reporting framework is built around six aspects of inclusion, or outcome areas:

- disability supports;
- skills development and learning;
- employment;
- income;
- capacity of the disability community; and
- health and well-being.

These six outcome areas are understood by governments and the disability community to represent building blocks toward full inclusion. For each outcome area there is a set of indicators of progress. Indicators are measures that governments use to identify issues, monitor progress and report to citizens (see Appendix 10).

## Australia

The CDS mid-term evaluation led to two important changes. The first was removing the requirements for departments to produce annual disability action plans, and to lodge these plans with HREOC. The argument was, given the amount of planning that departments are already required to undertake, that a better outcome would result from disability planning being rolled into broader strategic planning processes. It has become commonplace for departments to refer to disability within their diversity plans.

The second change was the move to strengthen accountability arrangements for the CDS, and the development of a 'Performance Reporting Framework' that recognised that departments do not all perform the same functions. The new framework identified five key roles performed by Australian Government departments: policy adviser, regulator, purchaser, provider and employer. This 'Performance Reporting Framework', which is built around these key roles, was intended to assist Australian Government organisations to measure and report on their achievements in implementing the CDS. Performance indicators were developed based on addressing the major barriers to access identified by people with disabilities:

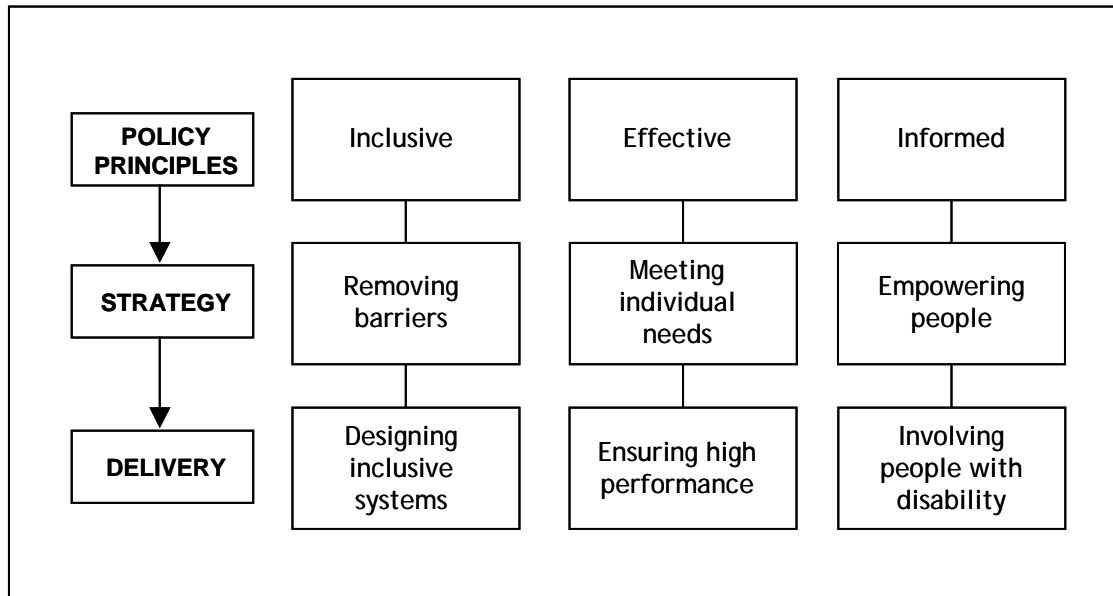
- including people with disabilities in consultations about issues which affect them;
- making information available to people with disabilities in accessible formats;
- providing complaints/grievance mechanisms through which people can raise concerns.

## **A holistic approach**

One of the key features of the UK government's strategy is the recognition that there needs to be a shift in attitudes, both towards people with disabilities, and by people with disabilities themselves. The UK strategy recognises that government departments alone cannot bring about the shift in attitudes required. It also acknowledges the need to address multiple sources of disadvantage, including gender, race, age and sexuality, which can be experienced by both people with and without disabilities.

A further strength of the UK strategy documentation is that it presents a coherent conceptualisation of how all of the pieces “fit together”. The three components – policy principles, strategy and delivery – are intended to be consistent and self-reinforcing.

**Figure 2: Connections between policy principles, strategy and delivery of the UK vision**



### Australia

Compared with the UK model, the sense of integration and coordination of actions is less evident in the Australian CDS. This in part reflects the more devolved nature of responsibility in Australian Government departments. There may be opportunities in future for the development of mechanisms within the CDS for increased coordination, so that examples of best practice can be shared among all departments.



## Findings: Progress achieved

This chapter endeavours to establish the progress achieved (particularly since the launch of the revised CDS in 2000) by considering the views of stakeholders against the following four measures:

1. access to information and services;
2. access to employment;
3. satisfaction with consultation; and
4. access to premises.

It was interesting to note that the consultation process used for this evaluation found that there was often a difference in the views (regarding the level of, and satisfaction with, access) expressed by people with disabilities, and the views expressed by those delivering services to people with disabilities.

### Access to information and services

The mid-term evaluation found access to information and services continued to be a common barrier for people with disabilities. In response, the following was included as one of the five principles underpinning the revised CDS:

***Access:** people with disabilities should have access to information in appropriate formats about the programs and services they use. (FaCSIA, 2000, p.4)*

To this end, FaCSIA publishes the guide, *Better Information and Communication Practices*, to assist departments take practical steps to improve access, such as making information available in braille, audio cassette or large print, and use of plain or easy English to assist understanding. It also refers departments to guidelines for electronic publication such as the Government Online Accessibility Standards.

Numerous peak bodies noted that they had seen limited improvement in terms of accessibility to information and services. One submission noted that *there was still a 'lack of accessible information informing [people with disabilities] of their rights, entitlements, essential services and support structures available'*. More detail was provided in the following peak body submission:

*While there has been some progress in availability of information in accessible formats, there are too many occurrences of important Government information being placed on inaccessible websites. We still have to remind Government agencies of their obligations to provide information in accessible formats [such as] Braille.*

Another peak body reported that many people with disabilities are 'restricted in their access to information and communication technologies (ICT) due to cost, poor design and lack of connectivity of ICT equipment'.

### Access to employment

There is no consistent definition across the APS of what constitutes disability for the purpose of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) data collected by departments. For example, some departments will measure disability in terms of the level of impact an impairment has on a person's ability to work, while other departments use self-reporting of impairments through EEO data.

Despite the inconsistency in definitions, it is still instructive to compare data with the wider population. In 2003, 53.2 per cent of people with disabilities participated in the labour force as compared to 80.6 per cent of those without disability.<sup>3</sup> Since 1993, the rate for people without disability has risen while the labour force participation rate of people with disabilities has fallen.

**Table 1: Labour force participation and unemployment rates of people with and without disability**

	People with disabilities			People without disability		
	1993	1998	2003	1993	1998	2003
Labour force participation rate	54.9%	53.2%	53.2%	76.9%	80.1%	80.6%
Unemployment rate	17.8%	11.5%	8.6%	12.0%	7.8%	5.0%

**Source:** ABS, 2003, p26; Productivity Commission, Volume 2: Appendices, pA.2. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households.

An emerging issue for the Australian Government is the decline in the proportion of APS employees reporting a disability:

*Over the past decade, the data shows a consistent decline in the employment of people reporting a disability as a proportion of APS employees. In absolute terms, the number of employees fell each year, before recovering slightly in 2002-03, and then declining again for the past two years. At June 2005, people with a disability represented 3.8% of ongoing APS employees, down from 3.9% last year, and from 5.4% in 1996. (State of the Service Report 2004-05, p.213-14)*

In presenting this data in its annual *State of the Service Report*, the APSC notes that it is important to consider two underlying factors. Firstly, that reporting on disability (like other EEO data) is voluntary and that there is a potential for under-reporting if individuals choose not to identify themselves as having a disability for personal reasons. Secondly, the decline can be partially attributed to the "reduction in the number of positions at APS 1-2 levels, where people with a disability were historically over-represented." (*State of the Service Report 2004-05*, p.214)

<sup>3</sup> Labour force participation refers to people who are in work or actively looking for work

Australian Government departments seek to improve the recruitment and retention of people with disabilities in the APS through a number of strategies. These strategies may be formally articulated and made publicly available through documents such as disability action plans (which can be downloaded from the HREOC website), workplace diversity plans, human resource policies and/or service charters.

These strategies generally include references to specific initiatives, such as the installation of assistive technology, the provision of allocated disabled car parking, the support of workplace harassment contact officers, and the adaptation of training and development programs and facilities to ensure they meet the needs of people with disabilities. Some departments have specific instructions for the human resource or personnel areas to monitor and report performance regularly throughout the year, while there is a requirement for all Australian Government departments to provide employment data once a year in the APSC *State of the Service Report*, as well as their individual annual reports.

The 2004-05 *State of the Service Report* noted the following initiatives were used over the previous 12 months:

- providing reasonable adjustment training for managers;
- participation in mentoring programmes or networks;
- providing deafness awareness training and general awareness of disability training for employees;
- facilitating placements for people referred by Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) Australia;
- developing better recruitment strategies; and
- developing and implementing disability strategies, either as a management strategy or as part of a wider diversity programme.

The consultation process identified that there are still some underlying barriers to full participation in the workplace. For example, in terms of personal development and career progression, one participant noted:

*As I am getting towards the end of my working life, I feel the Department could have done more to recognise and encourage my attempts to improve my position within the Department, as I attended many courses and on many occasions have offered to take on more complex work that I could certainly handle, but I see this opportunity taken over time and again by the engagement of temporary staff while I remain doing very basic and often repetitive work ... It has been extremely frustrating and at times quite intellectually and emotionally debilitating to be viewed as not able to handle certain tasks ...*

The perception still remains for some people with disabilities that their particular impairment will be a barrier to further promotion:

*Because my disability is not visible, I am not seen by my supervisors, managers or colleagues to have a disability. In the current workplace, it is not prudent to highlight one's disability or all opportunities for promotion or advancement go out the window.*

Workplace accessibility was also identified as an issue. Several participants noted that more could be done in some departments by way of facilities (for example, office settings and furniture, toilets, kitchens and car parking) and assistive technology. Others noted a need for greater support from employers and managers:

*My supervisor makes it difficult for me. A few simple changes would benefit me enormously and not disadvantage other people but he won't countenance any change.*

And,

*I have impaired hearing so clarity of speech is very important to me. This was not provided in the interview process ...*

What is difficult to determine is if these examples point to individual examples of poor management, or a more pervasive lack of understanding in the workplace of managers' obligations, coupled with a lack of awareness of the support made available by the respective department to managers and/or people with disabilities to accommodate any special needs.

Participants also noted examples of a positive workplace culture in which colleagues and managers readily accommodated any specific need, without making an obvious issue of it.

*The selection process was fair and my disability was not an issue. My disability did come up in conversation but only on the basis of one instance of future leave required for medical treatment. I was very satisfied with the overall process.*

*I have always been treated as an equal in the workplace. I do believe that staff forget that I have a disability which is how I like it.*

*People understand that I have a disability and they make certain allowances. My team work around it without it becoming a focus. It is quietly accepted and allowed for.*

### **Satisfaction with consultation**

Consultation is recognised as one of the primary strategies in the CDS, particularly in the Policy Advisor and Purchaser Roles. It is also acknowledged as a core element in many of the disability strategies adopted in other countries (for example the NZ Disability Strategy, 2004). The 1999 mid-term evaluation identified inadequate consultative processes as one of the common barriers confronting people with disabilities in attempting to gain access to Australian Government departments. Since that time, government departments have been encouraged to develop plans, strategies and actions to ensure planning and service delivery take into account the needs of people with disabilities. The current *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* has identified a number of expected outcomes in this area, including the need for departments to:

- actively involve people with disabilities in the policy development and review process through direct participation or consultation;
- actively involve people with disabilities in the development of purchase specifications where the purchase has a direct impact on the lives of people with disabilities;
- develop an understanding of, and capacity to provide services needed by people with disabilities; and
- establish procedures for considering consumer satisfaction, including for people with disabilities.

### Key observations

A review of annual reports identifies that most Australian Government departments consult with customers and employees with disabilities, and/or peak disability bodies. Some encouraging examples may be cited where excellent relations have been established with peak disability bodies and where people with disabilities or their advocates have been included in mainstream committees and working groups. Departmental executives also noted the establishment of consultative mechanisms as a key achievement. Some examples are:

- Use of committees, networks and other consultative processes to canvass the views of employees with disabilities. One large department reported that it had established a Staff Network in all states with representatives being appointed as members of disability workgroups to contribute to policy development. Another large department supports employees with disabilities through its national forum and uses networks of regional deaf and visually impaired officers. These provide an avenue for dealing with issues encountered by employees with disabilities and ensure that the specific requirements of people with disabilities are considered in the wider working environment, such as information technology purchases. One department has established a Disability Stakeholder Group to help plan for a recruitment and retention strategy for employees with disabilities. The strategy will be incorporated into their new diversity plan and will encompass a reasonable adjustment policy.
- Use of staff surveys as part of the development of equity and diversity plans. Staff surveys have been used by several departments to provide insights into the degree to which work practices complied with the DDA and to identify key areas for improvement.
- Representation of people with disabilities on client advisory councils. For example, one department has proposed that disability issues in one of its main policy theme areas will be addressed through inclusion of people with disabilities on a national quality assurance council.

APS employees also identified some examples of departments where strong internal consultative mechanisms had been established. Key features that contributed to these internal mechanisms included:

- Appointment of a senior officer to lead the process, and establishment of a standing committee structure with representation from all levels of the APS (including people with and without disability).
- Inclusion of the consultative mechanism within the department's broader diversity and business planning processes.
- Extensive promotion of the existence of the committee and its functions so that all employees are aware of how it can assist them.
- Publishing successful outcomes achieved by the committee in internal media and fora, such as departmental newsletters and celebration ceremonies.

Despite these positive examples, surveys, consultations and employee workshops conducted for this evaluation have found that there remains a strong feeling amongst many APS employees with disabilities that they are insufficiently consulted about aspects of their day-to-day and longer term working environments (see Appendix 8).

Peak bodies consulted during this evaluation expressed considerable appreciation for the financial support provided to them. Understanding the needs of people with disabilities has been enhanced across government by funding to peak bodies, through provision of appropriate forums for discussion and formal avenues for seeking advice on particular issues. Additional funding provided by FaCSIA

that allows people with disabilities to attend conferences and other meetings was cited as an example of how consultative mechanisms can be facilitated. However, many of the peak bodies also said that their level of funding was not sufficient to allow them to contribute as fully as they would like. Some were also critical of what they saw as superficial and tokenistic consultations.

FaCSIA has developed a publication titled *Inclusive Consultation: a practical guide to involving people with disabilities*, to provide practical advice to government departments on how to include people with disabilities in consultation processes (such as how to ensure consultation mechanisms are accessible). It also provides contact details of relevant peak bodies, advisory councils and other organisations that can help facilitate consultation. The guide notes the importance of including people with disabilities in consultation, even when they are not an obvious target audience. This publication was highly regarded by representatives from peak disability bodies who thought the principles were very sound. The point was also made that awareness of the document, and application of these principles by many government departments was variable.

### **Access to premises**

Although technically not covered by the CDS, this evaluation has also considered performance against making premises accessible as it was noted as one of the five common barriers in the mid-term review. It also has relevance to the role of employer (in that inaccessible workplaces present barriers to people with disabilities). It also may be considered under the roles of purchaser, provider and regulator where government organisations make decisions on facilities to be used by their customers.

In response to this, FaCSIA publishes the guide, *Better Physical Access*, which provides practical guidance to assist Departments identify impediments for people with disabilities (mobility, as well as manipulatory, vision, hearing, intellectual and psychiatric impairments). The guide also explains obligations under the DDA and refers departments to the *Building Code of Australia* and *Standards Australia*.

Section 23 of the DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of disability in providing access to, or use of premises that the public can enter or use. Indeed, interviews with key representatives of HREOC identified this as a priority.

The results are somewhat mixed in terms of the success with which accessibility issues have been addressed. While government departmental submissions suggest that access for people with disabilities is 'highly effective for building and workplace access', peak bodies suggest, 'the inaccessibility of the built environment has the potential to decrease the number of workplaces available and increase the level of energy necessary to function in a particular workplace'.

In light of these contrasting comments, it is noteworthy that statements made during interviews with peak bodies indicated there was increasing awareness among employers of the implications of buildings and workplaces with difficult access, and there was evidence of a genuine attempt to address this issue in many workplaces.

Such strategies on behalf of government departments are also underpinned in this area by disability action plans that address accessibility as a priority in planning and performance reporting frameworks.

One example is the articulation of this priority within the plan of one large department. This plan requires that 'all workplaces will be access friendly for people with disabilities', which is supported by the following measures:

- 90% of offices and service delivery outlets comply with relevant statutory requirements and provide equity of access;
- 100% of all newly leased premises comply with standards; and
- area and property managers have up to date information on accommodation standards, including those which impact on people with disabilities.

While it is acknowledged that this indicator uses both input and output measures, it demonstrates that this department has identified physical accessibility as a priority by setting clear targets.

The tentative conclusion that may be reached is that, while people with disabilities would suggest that there is much left to be done, it is apparent from both formal planning documents and actions undertaken by government departments that issues of accessibility are being addressed.



## Findings: Issues affecting progress

### Overview

The evaluation found that there has been a range of positive outcomes from the CDS since it was relaunched in 2000. This includes greater recognition by Australian Government departments of the need to give consideration to the impact of their policies and practices on people with disabilities. There has also been a range of benefits for people with disabilities, as APS employees, customers of government services and as citizens. Examples of such benefits include increased accessibility of government information, increased physical access to government buildings, and more widespread availability of adaptive technology in workplaces. Funding of peak bodies through FaCSIA has provided some capacity for people with disabilities to contribute to policy and decision making processes.

However, people with disabilities have not universally or uniformly enjoyed these benefits in all areas or from all areas of government. It is also clear that there is still some distance to be travelled before it could be said that the goal of full and inclusive participation of people with disabilities in Australian society has been achieved.

There is a great deal of consistency in the findings reported in the 2004 Productivity Commission *Review of the Disability Discrimination Act* and the APSC 2004-2005 *State of the Service Report*, and the information gathered through the consultation for this evaluation. Common findings are:

- APS employment of people with disabilities is falling, while the proportion of people with disabilities in the Australian population is rising;
- levels of satisfaction with their employment circumstances are lower for APS employees with disabilities than for other APS employees;
- people with disabilities who live in regional areas, or are from non-English speaking backgrounds, or are Indigenous Australians, still face particular disadvantages.

From the perspective of people with disabilities, and of peak bodies representing people with disabilities, the progress already achieved in addressing the issues and removing barriers to full participation needs to continue but in an accelerated manner.

### Future of the CDS

None of the stakeholders consulted for this evaluation consider that abandoning the CDS is a viable option. It was recognised that the CDS plays an important symbolic function, as well as providing practical support. The continued existence of the CDS was seen to provide a strong signal that the needs of people with disabilities, and the responsibility of government to address these needs, are important. It is also an opportunity for government to demonstrate its commitment to the objectives articulated by the DDA.

## Design of the CDS

An important question is whether the CDS, as currently conceptualised and implemented, is the best option for closing the gap between the goal of full inclusion by people with disabilities and the reality experienced by many.

Some stakeholders suggested that the CDS is a strategy in name only, since what is actually required of departments from the CDS is somewhat obscure; there is no sense of where it is headed; and no consequences for “failure”. In the words of one stakeholder, “there is no life in it”. Others suggested that it does not present a clear plan for bringing about the overall goal of sustained cultural change. Nor is there any apparent theory behind how this goal could be achieved.

Stakeholders commented that the CDS appears to be less a ‘plan for action’ than a set of principles by which government will interact with people with disabilities. While stakeholders thought these principles were appropriate and a vital starting point for any national strategy, they also believed that the CDS could be improved by clearly identifying objectives, more specific actions, and a timeline for the achievement of particular milestones. In the words of many stakeholders, the current CDS “lacks teeth”. It is only through examination of the *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* that the priority areas for action become apparent.

There was also debate about the legislative framework that underpins the CDS. For example, one peak body suggested that the DDA is inappropriate as it was established under the minority rights model, which relies heavily on public awareness and is essentially complaints driven. It was argued that the complaints process is problematic because it is time consuming and costly, and can be difficult to access for many people, particularly those from a non-English speaking background (NESB).

## Promoting the CDS

Since relaunching the CDS in 2000, FaCSIA has employed a number of media (including web and print) to promote the CDS. Most recently, materials and workshops in relation to print disability and hearing loops have been prepared. FaCSIA is also responsible for the Australian Government’s celebration of the International Day of Disability. Together with initiatives managed by other departments (such as the Prime Minister’s Employer of the Year Awards, which recognises the achievements of employers of people with disabilities), the Australian Government has sought to promote the value of adopting disability-friendly approaches. The extent to which these efforts have been successful in significantly changing attitudes, policies and practices is difficult to measure.

It is worth noting that in those APS workplaces where the most substantial progress has been made in accommodating the various needs of people with disabilities, it was also often reported that the managers in those workplaces had previous personal experiences of disability issues, generally through knowing someone with a disability (for example a family member, friend or colleague).

## Performance reporting

It was suggested during the consultation for this evaluation that the annual reporting process does not provide the most effective means for encouraging accountability and recording progress or identifying issues in the implementation of the CDS.

Under the CDS, Australian Government departments are required to report on their performance in their annual reports. A 'Performance Reporting Framework' has been developed which provides a series of indicators to assist departments in assessing their performance according to the five defined roles performed by government organisations (policy advisor, regulator, purchaser, provider and employer). The *Commonwealth Disability Strategy (2000)* notes that:

*All organisations are expected to assess their performance against the indicators specified in the framework and report on progress in their annual reports. However, individual organisations have the flexibility to set their own goals and targets and to adapt the means of measuring their performance to reflect the unique nature of their business requirements and current level of progress. (FaCSIA, p. 8)*

An analysis of departmental annual reports found that departments have met this obligation. However, the quality and style of reporting vary considerably from department to department. The majority of annual reports provide descriptive accounts of how departments have addressed accessibility issues. They describe intended practices, but contain limited data. Departments tended to emphasise access for people with mobility and sensory disability. Only a few departments reported on initiatives that accommodated multiple disability and other barriers.

Concerns with the current *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* centre around two issues:

- the construction of some of the measures suggested; and
- the practicality of implementing some of the measures suggested.

In terms of the construction of the performance measures, there was some concern that the indicators used were not the most effective in identifying the outcomes achieved. For example, the availability of grievance mechanisms is a performance indicator under the CDS reporting framework. However, what is also important is that complaints are acted upon, that complainants are informed of the outcomes of the adjudication and that the department makes changes to systems and procedures, where appropriate, as a result of the feedback. Reporting on whether the department has a grievance procedure is only the beginning of the story; there also needs to be measures of the effectiveness of the process. It is acknowledged that outcome measurement is seldom a simple task.

The mid-term evaluation found that there is no available mechanism that would allow identification of which departments have performed well in implementing the CDS. As a result, many departments felt that their efforts were insufficiently recognised. Analysis of the 2004 departmental annual reports and feedback in the consultation process suggested that the same conclusions could be reached in 2005. Department staff noted that they did not receive sufficient feedback in relation to their performance, and that the self-reporting process, combined with the lack of an independent audit or review, did not lend sufficient weight to the process.

It was also suggested that the current approach does not provide the opportunity for the aggregation of departmental reports. As such, it is difficult to determine the total impact of government effort across departments.

## Role of a lead department

Under the CDS, the lead agency is expected to undertake:

*... a leadership role in the provision of information and the establishment of networks to address the needs of people with disabilities. [FaCSIA] can provide:*

- *advice on how to implement the Strategy;*
- *advice on how to consult with people with disabilities including contact details for peak disability organisations and a publication entitled Inclusive Consultation;*
- *assistance in providing information in accessible formats including a register of providers;*
- *a range of publications designed to assist organisations to reduce discriminatory practices including Better Communication Practices, Better Physical Access and Better Employment Practices;*
- *material such as case studies for inclusion in a wide range of training courses offered by Australian Government organisations;*
- *assistance with raising awareness of disability issues including examples of good practice from which other organisations can learn; and*
- *advice on disability issues.*

*(FaCSIA, 2000, p.9)*

FaCSIA has been active over recent years in an educative and promotional capacity by producing a suite of print and web material, and conducting seminars and training sessions for Australian Government departments. Stakeholders consulted during this evaluation acknowledged these efforts, but they were also described as being insufficient in reach, scope and frequency to have widespread impact across all government departments.

The survey of APS employees conducted for this evaluation, while drawing from only a small sample of employees,<sup>4</sup> showed that less than a quarter of respondents considered they were very familiar with the CDS.

Stakeholders identified a need for stronger leadership and whole-of-government coordination to improve the profile of the CDS and address the lack of consistency in approaches both within and across government departments.

## Summary

None of these comments should be interpreted as an argument for abandonment of the CDS. Indeed, it is recognised as a necessary and vital element in ensuring departments can most effectively assist people with disabilities to reach the goal of full participation in society. Stakeholders with and without disabilities see the CDS as the most effective means for addressing access and participation in relation to employment and the design and delivery of services. There is scope for refinement of the strategy, however, to improve its effectiveness.

This could include revisiting the design of the CDS, to make it more of a 'plan for action', with identified objectives (and a strategy of how these might be achieved) accompanied by a performance framework that measures outcomes rather than actions taken.

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<sup>4</sup> 58 employees out of a possible 4,642 ongoing employees who have identified as having a disability

There is also support to strengthen the lead department role. This could include adding functions, such as providing a monitoring and feedback role, acknowledging the work of high performing departments, and preparing aggregated or whole-of-government reports. Strengthening this role would also assist in building awareness of the CDS across the Australian Government, and the wider community. Suggestions for further development are considered in Chapter 6.



## Future Directions

The evidence from the evaluation suggests that the principles espoused by the current CDS remain valid and are broadly accepted by all stakeholder groups, and should form the platform for further development. It is important to note that these principles, along with the CDS, will continue to sit within the framework provided by the DDA that enshrines certain rights for people with disabilities, notably "... that persons with disabilities have the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community", and the disability standards that derive from this legislative intent.

At the same time, an enhanced CDS should continue to provide material support for the achievement of the objective of the DDA ... "to promote recognition and acceptance within the community, of the principle ... that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community."

The CDS should continue to build a corporate culture in which the benefits of full inclusion of people with disabilities is implicitly accepted and understood. This corporate culture will be one in which departments view their responsibilities for responding effectively to the challenges and opportunities presented by people with disabilities as more than simply complying with legislative and other requirements, or even "removing barriers" to access or employment.

### **Leadership and coordination of the CDS**

Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation identified the need for stronger leadership and coordination of the CDS implementation. It was noted that while a role for FaCSIA was included in the previous and current CDS, the stated role does not specifically provide a mandate for leadership. It could be argued that, given FaCSIA's involvement to date, it could be well positioned to assume responsibility as lead department, provided that the roles for both the lead department and cooperating departments are clearly defined, and that appropriate resources are made available to exercise this role.

The following options could be considered:

- A lead department could take responsibility for co-ordinating, monitoring and providing feedback on the effectiveness of implementation of departmental plans through an annual whole-of-government report.
- The lead department could provide practical guidance as to how the CDS objectives can be achieved by departments. This guidance may include, for example, publication of best practice case studies illustrating departmental approaches and achievements across different government functions.

- The lead department could perform a 'championing role' for informing government departments and the public of the benefits of positively enhancing the participation of people with disabilities in the workplace and in the community. In this regard, the Prime Minister's Employer of the Year awards may offer a good starting point to provide role models and success stories about employees, and departments that have achieved significant success.

## Performance reporting

A role performed by the lead departments in other countries is analysing and reporting progress against a whole-of-government disability action plan. While most departments use the current *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* to report against, there is a considerable degree of inconsistency in what and how departments measure and report. Moreover, the majority of reports focus on the actions taken, rather than the outcomes achieved.

Consultations with and submissions from APS employees reveal an acceptance of the need to be accountable for the achievement of the intentions of the CDS. However, it was also noted that departments have received little or no feedback on either their actual performance or the quality of their reporting.

It was also noted that no department has a specific responsibility or mandate for providing such feedback. Further, peak disability bodies and departmental executives noted that there was no aggregated reporting from the departmental annual reports in a way that would allow progress on a whole-of-government basis to be established, which would in turn also provide a benchmark for assessing the progress of individual departments and for identifying and promoting best practice.

Departments supported the notion of whole-of-government reporting of progress against the CDS, similar in design to the APSC's *State of the Service Report*, which currently compiles and publishes extensive information on the APS, including employment data of people with disabilities.

However, this was suggested in the context that departments' input to such a report would not be onerous or intrusive, was purposeful, and reflected their particular contexts. It was conceded that to obtain meaningful information, some departments would need to make greater efforts to obtain customer satisfaction data. Departmental executives tended to view this effort as an internal function of government. Peak bodies consulted, however, saw such reporting as an opportunity for more broadly based reflection and targeting of efforts, through the establishment of a reference group or advisory committee (including senior government officials and the wider community, including people with disabilities), charged with oversight of the progress of the CDS as a whole. This group could provide commentary and recommendations on an annual basis about the outcomes reported in the aggregate performance report.

In light of the above, the following actions may be considered:

- An annual 'whole-of-government' report could be developed which permits aggregation of progress in achieving outcomes for people with disabilities, in a manner similar to the APSC's *State of the Service Report*.
- The current *CDS Performance Reporting Framework* (including indicators) could be revised to place greater emphasis on the achievement of outcomes rather than compliance with processes.

## Developing a more inclusive workplace culture

An enhanced CDS should seek to develop cultural norms, which make it standard practice to consider the needs of people with disabilities across a range of activities.

Initiatives such as re-launching the CDS would help to give the CDS and disability issues higher visibility for all employees. Given the many demands on APS employees, it is easy for the CDS to “slip beneath the radar”, especially if they do not confront disability issues on a day-to-day basis. Evaluation workshop participants believed that increasing the visibility of the CDS would also help to reduce the potential for the CDS to be marginalised as a human resources issue, rather than a business issue.

APS staff noted the key role that the departmental leadership play in establishing and promoting appropriate workplace cultures. In light of the trend towards the devolution of responsibility to individual departments, and consequently both increased autonomy and increased accountability for departmental heads, there is an opportunity for departmental executive teams to influence the nature of the department’s response to the CDS and the priority that is given to ensuring that both the letter and the spirit of the strategy is achieved. It also provides the opportunity for department leaders to explore innovative approaches to responding to disability in ways that meet the particular needs and circumstances of the individual department. The following actions may assist departments to strengthen an inclusive workplace culture:

- A planned, educative process implemented across the life of the CDS that informs APS staff (including executive) and contractors of their responsibilities and obligations in relation to the achievement of the CDS objectives; and promotes and illustrates the practical benefits of greater inclusion of people with disabilities.
- Department induction programs for new staff, and professional development programs for existing staff, to include specific reference to employee and management responsibilities in relation to people with disabilities.
- Department service charters (where applicable) be revised to include explicit recognition of responsibilities towards people with disabilities.
- The obligations for individuals and organisations providing goods and services to the Australian Government could be strengthened in government tendering and contract documents through, for example, the development of information packages and training sessions for suppliers of outsourced services.

## Supporting APS employees with disabilities

During the consultations, people with disabilities frequently noted their frustration with barriers that prevented them from contributing in the workplace in a way that made the greatest use of their skills. They argued that they should be judged on their abilities, not their disabilities. In this sense, they did not want ‘special’ treatment, but intelligent design of the workplace and working conditions that would allow them to work to their full potential. Overcoming the subtle workplace pressures that make it difficult for staff to operate to their ability was recognised as the most difficult of barriers to address. It involves genuine valuing of diversity rather than tokenistic or ‘sheltered’ employment in low skill jobs.

Both executive and non-executive staff provided examples of incidents where suitable workplace adjustments had not been made. In many cases, this was attributed to a lack of knowledge on the part of management on the availability of funds for ‘reasonable adjustments’. It was pointed out that in some departments this budget was more visible than in others.

From this it could be argued that there is a greater need for proactive rather than reactive processes, built around education and information strategies that identify and promote CDS-relevant information for managers, such as relevant tools and supports available, as well as case studies and examples of best practice. Underpinning these strategies is the need for relevant research and evaluation that is capable of clearly demonstrating the value of workplace diversity. Provision of advocacy services, both internal and external to departments, may be required in the short term at least to facilitate this knowledge transfer.

To facilitate greater inclusion of APS employees with disabilities, the following actions may be relevant:

- Departmental disability action planning should take into account the specific circumstances of people with disabilities, in particular those from a non-English speaking background, Indigenous people, those with multiple/complex disability and those with episodic disability.
- Implement a consistent, whole-of-government approach to ensure employees and managers are aware of the availability of tools and support (for example, funding for workplace adjustments and assistive technology).

## Summary

For the CDS to be more effective in the future, the view of many stakeholders is that it needs to be seen as an overall plan for ensuring that the objectives identified in the original CDS are achieved within a prescribed timeframe.

The evidence suggests that an enhanced CDS will need to be more active in supporting departments to achieve the overall goal. There is a need for stronger aggregation, summary reporting, and both individual departmental and systemic feedback on a regular basis, in regard to both planning and reporting processes.

A consolidated reporting process would provide improved opportunities for identification and dissemination of information about best practices.

Induction and professional development processes that give greater emphasis to informing employees and managers of the requirements of the CDS will help to build a more inclusive culture. Such actions, along with other initiatives such as re-launching the CDS and developing guidelines, support tools and promotional material will help to give the CDS and disability issues higher visibility for all employees. These efforts should be ongoing during the life of the strategy. Increasing the visibility of the CDS will also help to reduce the risk that the CDS is viewed as a human resources issue rather than a business issue.

An enhanced CDS should remain cognisant of the factors that will affect the future delivery of Australian Government functions and services as a whole.



## Appendices

- Appendix 1: The Commonwealth Disability Strategy Performance Reporting Framework**
- Appendix 2: Organisations consulted**
- Appendix 3: Australian Government organisations which provided input to the Commonwealth Disability Strategy evaluation workshops**
- Appendix 4: Organisations that provided written submissions to the evaluation**
- Appendix 5: Australian Public Service employee survey**
- Appendix 6: Evaluation workshop questions**
- Appendix 7: Stakeholder interview questions**
- Appendix 8: Employee case studies**
- Appendix 9: Background data**
- Appendix 10: Performance indicators in the Canadian annual performance report**
- Appendix 11: References**

## Appendix 1: The Commonwealth Disability Strategy Performance Reporting Framework

Role	Outcomes Expected	Performance Indicators
<b>Policy Advisor</b>	<p>Policy advisors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflect the current and changing needs and the diverse nature of people with disabilities and their role within the community, in the development and review of policy advice;</li> <li>▪ Actively involve people with disabilities in the policy development and review process through direct participation or consultation;</li> <li>▪ Assess and quantify the economic and social impact of policies on the lives of people with disabilities in the short, medium and longer terms; and</li> <li>▪ Provide publicly available information in accessible formats as close of possible to the time information becomes generally available.</li> </ul>	<p>Performance is measured against the indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New or revised policy/program proposals assess the impact on the lives of people with disabilities prior to decision;</li> <li>▪ People with disabilities are included in consultation about new or revised policy/program proposals; and</li> <li>▪ Public announcements of new, revised or proposed policy/program initiatives are available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulator</b>	<p>Regulators should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that publicly available information about the regulatory process and associated specifications is available in accessible formats and that its availability is promoted;</li> <li>▪ Ensure that publicly available performance information is available in accessible formats and that its availability is promoted; and</li> <li>▪ Provide accessible information at the same cost to consumers regardless of the format.</li> </ul>	<p>Performance is measured against the indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publicly available information on regulations and quasi-regulations available in accessible formats for people with disabilities; and</li> <li>▪ Publicly available regulatory compliance reporting available in accessible formats for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>

**Purchaser**

Purchasers should:

- Actively involve people with disabilities in the development of the purchase specifications where the purchase has a direct impact on people with disabilities' lives;
- Ensure purchase specifications and contract agreements/MOUs comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- Promote the availability of and meet requests for accessible formats of publicly available performance data relating to purchase or contract performance requirements; and
- Ensure that grievance/complaints mechanisms, including access to external complaint procedures, are established so that people with disabilities can have their issues heard and addressed.

Performance is measured against the indicators:

- Processes for purchasing goods or services with a direct impact on the lives of people with disabilities are developed in consultation with people with disabilities;
- Purchasing specifications and contract requirements for the purchase of goods or services are consistent with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- Publicly available information on agreed purchase specifications requested in accessible formats for people with disabilities is provided;
- Publicly available performance reporting against the purchase or contract specifications requested in accessible formats for people with disabilities is provided; and
- Complaints/grievance mechanisms, including access to external mechanisms, are available to address issues and concerns raised about providers' performance.

**Provider**

Providers should have:

- An understanding of, and capacity to, provide services needed by people with disabilities. This includes having a knowledge of people with disabilities' diverse needs with community and family life and an understanding of the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- Established mechanisms for quality assurance and quality improvement in place;
- A service charter that defines the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of both provider and consumer and includes service standards which address accessibility for people with disabilities;
- Established mechanisms for considering consumer satisfaction including for people with disabilities; and
- Established complaints/grievance mechanisms to address concerns raised by consumers, including people with disabilities.

Performance is measured against the indicators:

- Providers have established mechanisms for quality improvement and assurance;
- Providers have an established service charter that specifies the roles of the provider and consumer and service standards which address accessibility for people with disabilities; and
- Complaints/grievance mechanism, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns raised about performance.

**Employer**

Employers are required to ensure that:

- Employment policies and procedures for Government agencies comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- Staff training and development programs (for example, induction, supervision, policy development, contract management, customer services):
  - Incorporate education and information about the needs of people with disabilities as members of the wider community, consumers, customers and staff; and
  - Are accessible to staff with disabilities.
- Departmental recruiters and managers apply principles of “reasonable adjustment”;
- The on-going employment of people with disabilities must include some capacity to support the individual’s changing needs and ability to pursue a career path; and
- Workplace strategies are in place to address attitudes inhibiting people with disabilities from securing and maintaining employment.

Performance is measured against the indicators:

- Employment policies and procedures comply with the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*;
- Recruitment information for potential job applicants is available on request in accessible formats;
- “Reasonable adjustment” principles are applied by managers and recruiters;
- Training and development programs consider and respond to the needs of people with disabilities and include information on disability issues where they relate to the content of the program; and
- Complaints/grievance mechanism, including access to external mechanisms, in place to address issues and concerns raised by staff and public.

## Appendix 2: Organisations consulted

NAME	ORGANISATION
• Luci Macali, Executive Officer	ACE National Network
• John Power, Policy Officer	Blind Citizens Australia
• Ms Marianne Diamond, Executive Officer • Collette O'Neill, Policy Officer	Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO)
• Ms Diana Qian, Executive Officer	National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
• Mr Mark Pattison, Executive Officer	National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID)
• Ms Karen Lloyd, Manager	Australian Association of the Deaf Inc. (AAD)
• Mr John Rule, Manager, HIV Case Support	National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS
• Mr Brian Rope, Chief Executive Officer	Deafness Forum Ltd
• Dr Jennifer Bowers, Chief Executive Officer	Carers Australia
• Ms Sue Egan, Executive Officer	Physical Disability Council of Australia (PDCA)
• Ms Helen Connor, National Chairperson	Australian Mental Health Consumer Network (AMHCN)
• Ms Ros Sackley	National Indigenous Disability Network
• Mr Ken Baker, Chief Executive	ACROD
• Ms Alana Clohesy, Deputy Director Advocacy	People with disabilities Australia Inc.
• Ms Chris Kerr, Acting Chair	National Disability Advisory Council (NDAC)
• Ms Suzanne Varghese, Executive Officer	Brain Injury Australia
• Mr David Mason, Director, Disability Rights Policy • Mr Michael Small, Disability Rights Policy	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC)
• Mr Tim Tench, Manager, Disability Policy, Disability and Carers Branch	Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS)
• Ms Robyn Shannon, Senior Advisor, Social Policy Division	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)
• Ms Kathy MacDermott, Group Manager Evaluation	Australian Public Service Commission (APSC)

### Appendix 3: Australian Government organisations which provided input to the Commonwealth Disability Strategy evaluation by attending workshops

Organisation
Aboriginal Hostels Limited
Airservices Australia
Attorney-General's Department
Australian Customs Service
Australian Electoral Commission
Australian National Audit Office
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency
Australian Taxation Office
COMCARE
CRS Australia
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Defence Housing Authority
Defence Equity Organisations
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Department of Defence
Department of Education, Science and Training
Department of Finance and Administration
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Department of Family and Community Services
Department of Health and Ageing
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Department of Transport and Regional Services
Department of Veterans' Affairs
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Family Court of Australia
Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia
National Capital Authority

## Appendix 4: Organisations providing written submissions to the evaluation

Organisation
Attorney-General's Department
Centrelink
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Defence Equity Organisations
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
Department of Transport and Regional Services
Arts Access Australia
Christian Blind Mission Australia
Ms Gaye Donnellan, Victoria
National Ethnic Disability Alliance
Physical Disability Council of Australia Ltd
Women With Disabilities (Australia)

## **Appendix 5: Australian Public Service (APS) Employee Survey**

## EVALUATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH DISABILITY STRATEGY

## ON-LINE SURVEY OF APS EMPLOYEES

## SECTION A: PERSPECTIVE OF RESPONDENT

## 1. What is your current employment status within an Australian Government Department or Agency?

- Full-time  1
- Part-time  2
- Other, please specify...  3

## 2. Are you:

- A person with disability?  1
- A manager of a person with a disability  2
- Other interested party? (Please specify)  3

## 3. If you are a person with disability, from the following list, which best describes your disability?

- Sight impairment  1
- Hearing Impairment  2
- Head injury, stroke or other brain damage  3
- Psychiatric  4
- Intellectual  5
- Nervous system disease  6
- Respiratory disease  7
- Circulatory disease  8
- Other musculoskeletal disorder  9
- Arthritis  10
- Other  11

## 4. How familiar are you with the Commonwealth Disability Strategy?

- Not at all  1
- Little extent  2
- Some extent  3
- Great extent  4
- Don't know  5

5. If you are familiar with the Commonwealth Disability Strategy, how did you hear about it?

**SECTION B: PHYSICAL ACCESS ISSUES**

6. To what extent do you believe the following features of your current workplace are suited to the needs of people with disabilities?

	Not at all	Little extent	Some extent	Great extent	Don't know
6.1 Building entry and exits	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.2 Signage	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.3 Office access	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.4 Work spaces	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.5 Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.6 Kitchen amenities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.7 Car parking facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
6.8 Meeting/conference room facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

7. To what extent do you believe that office equipment in your workplace is generally suited to the needs of people with disabilities (eg, computers, desks, telephones, etc.)?

- Not at all  1
- Little extent  2
- Some extent  3
- Great extent  4
- Don't know  5

## SECTION C: INCLUSION ISSUES

8. Sometimes people are unsure how to treat people with a disability. This can be due to a range of factors, such as lack of awareness and education. On the other hand, sometimes people provide suitable, necessary and timely assistance to people with a disability. Thinking about your current workplace, would you say that people with disabilities are:

- Always treated the same as everyone else  <sub>1</sub>
- Usually treated the same  <sub>2</sub>
- Not usually treated the same, which is unnecessary  <sub>3</sub>
- Not usually treated the same, but this is necessary  <sub>4</sub>

9. If people with disabilities are not treated in the same way as their work colleagues, is this treatment positive or negative? Can you give an example?

Positive  <sub>1</sub>      Negative  <sub>2</sub>

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10. To what extent do you believe that people in your workplace are adequately informed about disability issues?

- Not at all  <sub>1</sub>
- Little extent  <sub>2</sub>
- Some extent  <sub>3</sub>
- Great extent  <sub>4</sub>
- Don't know  <sub>5</sub>

**11. In what ways do you believe that your current workplace could be made more inclusive for people with disabilities? (Please mark all that apply)**

- Provide information in more accessible formats  <sub>1</sub>
- Develop more suitable mechanisms for handling complaints  <sub>2</sub>
- Greater recognition of people with disabilities as consumers of government services  <sub>3</sub>
- Facilitate greater consultation on issues that affect their lives  <sub>4</sub>
- Other, *please specify*:  <sub>5</sub>

**SECTION D: PARTICIPATION IN AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT**

**12. To what extent do you believe the following issues are significant barriers experienced by people with disabilities in their employment?**

	Not at all	Little extent	Some extent	Great extent	Don't know
• Limited access to work premises and / or facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Negative attitudes of others in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Poor or inappropriate forms of communication	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Limited career progression opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Ability to access professional development/training	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Ability to apply for jobs in formats that suit their needs	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Ability to participate in selection processes that are appropriate for their needs	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Advertisement of positions in ways that discourage applications from people with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
• Other ( <i>please specify</i> )					

**13. In what ways has the Commonwealth Disability Strategy already improved the employment of people with disabilities in your current workplace?**

**14. What do you believe is the most appropriate way forward in order for government agencies to improve the lives of people with disabilities?**

## **SECTION E: GENERAL COMMENTS**

**15. Do you wish to add any further general comments on the Commonwealth Disability Strategy?**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTION**

## Appendix 6: Evaluation workshop questions

### WORKSHOP for AGENCY EXECUTIVES

#### QUESTIONS for DISCUSSION

##### Where to from here?

**Key Question: What actions should Commonwealth agencies now take to improve outcomes for people with disabilities?**

##### *At the whole-of-government level*

- Can improved outcomes be achieved through the existing Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS)? If not, what is the best way forward?
- If so, how can effectiveness be enhanced?
- Where should leadership and overall responsibility for the CDS reside?
- Should there be targets for each of the five elements of the CDS?
- Should there be incentives and sanctions for achievement of targets?

##### *At the agency level*

- What should the strategy require agencies to do?
- What support generally is necessary to enhance effectiveness of the CDS at the agency level?
- What are the resource implications for individual agencies in seeking to achieve better outcomes for people with disabilities?
- How can the intentions of the CDS become embedded in the day to day operations of individual agencies?

##### **What are the priorities for future action?**

In light of the discussion of the above issues, what appears to be the most important actions that now need to be undertaken by Australian Government agencies to improve the life of people with disabilities?

## Appendix 7: Stakeholder interview questions

1. In what ways have the lives of people with disabilities been enhanced by the Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) since 1999?
  
2. Can you provide specific details about the impact of the CDS in improving:
  - equity for people with disabilities (opportunity to contribute to social, political, economic, and cultural life)
  - inclusion of people with disabilities (availability of all mainstream Commonwealth programs, services and facilities)
  - participation for people with disabilities (participation on an equal basis in decision making processes that affect their lives)
  - access for people with disabilities (access to information in appropriate formats about the programs and services they use)
  - accountability for agency responsibilities in relation to people with disabilities (for the provision of access to programs, facilities and services, including complaints handling procedures).
  
3. Are there other major achievements that have been made by Australian Government agencies since 1999 that provide outcomes for people with disabilities?
  
4. What barriers remain to be overcome?
  
5. What do you consider to be the future priorities and actions for improving outcomes for people with disabilities?
  - What will help or hinder the achievement of these priorities?
  - What are the alternatives to the current approach (CDS) for achieving the outcomes intended ?
  - What is the best option for moving forward?
  
6. Are there any other issues you wish to raise in relation to the CDS?

## Appendix 8: Employee case studies

The following case studies have been prepared by Erebus International based on interviews with four APS staff members. Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.

### Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) Case Study 1: “James”

James is a “thirty something” tertiary qualified public servant working in Canberra. He has been in the public sector for over fifteen years and has worked his way up through the ranks. Over that time he has worked in four agencies. He currently has responsibilities for managing staff. James has two disabilities: one declared and one not declared.

The declared disability is related to a repetitive strain injury (RSI), which has led to the provision of voice activated computer software, so that James doesn't have to use a keyboard for his work. This support has allowed him to keep working in circumstances that would otherwise have been impossible. When James reported his RSI, he was referred to Comcare for assessment. His claim was dismissed, but he contested the case using a lawyer. He won the case before reaching the tribunal, but it cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000 to do this.

James and his immediate superior only know the undeclared disability, a psychiatric disability. He suffers from anxiety and depression. He entered the workforce with this condition and expects to leave the workforce with the condition. Accordingly he tries to avoid disagreements in the workplace. He has left work places to avoid this stress. The disability is an undeclared because James is concerned about stigmatisation in the workplace. He feels that any problems that arose in the workplace would likely be “shifted home” to his psychiatric disability. James believes that he is managing his condition more effectively than in the past. He also notes that medication can be an issue for people with a psychiatric disability. James sees the workplace becoming more competitive, which can cause more stress. The increasing recruitment of managers from “outside” concerns him, as they may not share traditional public service values.

James believes that the support mechanisms put in place have been helpful and, over time, have improved. However, there are a number of challenges that on a day to day basis he still finds particularly confronting: performance appraisal, recruitment processes, and on occasion general interactions. While the principles of reasonable adjustment are known and used, there is no reduction in the workload or expectations of him or his manager.

James has identified a number of improvements that could be made. He believes it starts with “tone at the top”: a need for a strong and supportive message from the top. Appropriate resources and practical training for managers are also seen as essential (eg how you manage people with epilepsy in the workplace). Strong and immediate support in the workplace is required for people with disabilities when there is an “incident”, rather than letting the matter escalate. Centres of excellence in the organisation could act as a resource for both people with disabilities and managers. While he welcomes workforce diversity planning, he believes it focuses on physical disabilities at the expense of other disabilities. He believes that there are particular challenges for young people with disabilities who do not have his level of experience or confidence.

### CDS CASE STUDY 2: “Maureen”

Maureen is a highly qualified tertiary educated public servant working in Canberra. She has been in the public service for an extended period of time. In comparison to the academic qualifications that she has, she believes that she is holding a fairly lowly position. She has seen a number of her co-workers promoted but has found getting promotion difficult. She is often offered acting positions, but finding permanent more senior positions has proved to be elusive.

Having a physical disability, Maureen is dependent on the use of a wheelchair. While her immediate working environment meets her needs, she feels that her work choices are very limited because of the few locations in her organisation that are configured to meet the needs of people with a physical disability: carpet taken up and replaced with vinyl, electronic door access and an accessible toilet. In particular, she believes that the concept that people with disabilities are happy to work in one place is a myth. Because of the obvious nature of the disability, nondisclosure is not an option. She has the feeling that there is an expectation that she will fail in the workplace.

Maureen feels that it's not about individuals and their needs, but about the environment being more inclusive. In that regard she sees for key issues for improvement: the environment, attitudes, policies and social values.

Rather than seeing things in light of "disability", she sees things in light of "ability". This means that within the right support, she will have the same opportunities to succeed that everyone else in the workplace has. She's concerned that people with disabilities are separated into groups, and wonders how appropriate this is in the 21st century. If the CDS was working, she believes that there would be no need for disability action plans.

In terms of the future, Maureen talks about "my rights" and "my responsibilities". There are a lot of practical implications in this view, starting with such things as appropriate public transport provision, physical access to the workplace and appropriate working conditions. Having the appropriate access, she then feels it is her responsibility to be a useful and productive member of staff. She feels that there is a need for significant education of parents of people with disabilities, of managers of people with disabilities, and people with disabilities as well.

In terms of planning by government organisations, she believes that diversity plans are in fact the answer. In particular, there is a critical need for the Australian Government to make intelligent purchasing decisions: for example, any buildings leased by the Australian Government should have to meet access standards. This would have the effect of creating a market for quality buildings that are accessible. She acknowledges that there are standards in place, but they are in fact taking far too long to implement (eg 20 plus years for accessible public transport).

### **CDS CASE STUDY 3: "Bill"**

Bill is a long-term public servant, who works in a regional office of one of the larger Australian government agencies. Bill has a repetitive strain injury (RSI), which means that he is unable to use a keyboard for his computer work.

To deal with this situation, Bill has been provided with voice activated computer software. Bill is appreciative of the assistance provided, which has allowed him to keep working. He feels as though he is a valued employee. He likes the organisation that he is working for, but there are issues in being an early adopter of new technology.

Firstly, when this technology was acquired to support Bill it was very much in its infancy: it didn't necessarily work very well. It required a lot of practice to become operational and there was little in the way of training. Bill became very frustrated over this. Further, because very many people did not use it across the organisation, support from IT was quite problematic in the early days as well. The processing power of standard machines was also an issue, as was the amount of memory required by the program. This caused lots of system crashes in the early days, but things are now much better from a computer perspective. Bill also indicated that he was uncomfortable in being an "early adopter": he felt that this made him stand out in the workplace from his colleagues.

In thinking about the skills required to “dictate” to a computer, Bill indicated that this was a somewhat different skill from keyboarding, maybe a different way of working that required different ways of thinking. So, the issue goes beyond training and into the specific ways in which people work.

Bill looks at the future with some uncertainty in mind. He is worried about corporate downsizings and their possible effects. In particular, he believes that despite only having a torn muscle in a shoulder, he is seen as disabled. The implication, in his mind, is that an employer would be thinking, “Well if this is a problem, what others are there?” Further, he had heard on the grapevine that another potential employer (i.e. another Australian Government agency) is not a technology friendly place for people with a disability. Accordingly, he is fearful of “ending up” in this agency as a result of downsizing.

#### **CDS Case Study 4: “Penny”**

Penny has a sight disability: she has been blind since birth. Penny came into the APS via the graduate recruitment program and has now been working in the APS for ten years. During that time, she has worked for three departments in Canberra.

When Penny arrived at the assessment centre for the graduate recruitment program, material was not available in an accessible format for her. While this caused some initial problems, her persistence ensured that “things were sorted out”.

Having a vision disability means that navigating the everyday environment is challenging for Penny. Day-to-day transport issues are very tricky: she needs to work where public transport is readily available. At one stage Penny had a job in an outlying suburb. While cab-charge vouchers were provided to get her to work, Penny felt this was a resource drain on the department. She was so uncomfortable about this that she left that department. Penny makes the point that the employment of people with disabilities can be easy, if thought is given before employment commences. Trying to devise solutions to these issues in a reactive way leads to higher costs and band-aid solutions.

Penny relies on the use of adaptive technology in the workplace. This has become an ongoing issue, mainly as a result of the outsourcing of information technology. When support issues arise with the equipment Penny uses, she is invariably met with “not part of the contract” from the provider. The issue gets escalated through the organisation until a senior officer gets involved to “sort things out”. She contrasts the situation with the USA where Section of 508 of the *Rehabilitation Act* has had a major impact on the way that suppliers operate on a day to day basis.

Another of Penny’s concerns is the focus on employing people in entry-level positions. Penny has an MBA, is studying for a Ph.D. and has ambitions of entering the senior executive service. She feels that quotas are not the answer: “it’s all about ensuring that people have the right knowledge and skills to succeed at executive levels”. There are some clear implications for succession planning in her mind.

In terms of future actions, Penny feels that there are still the physical barriers to be overcome (equipment, premises). The real change that she feels is needed is to change general perceptions of people with a disability. While the CDS has been good, there is still much to be done. Penny makes the point that people with a disability are often isolated, so there is a need to have someone internal (and senior) to trust, who has the authority to make things happen in individual agencies. She suggests that perhaps some sort of mediation service may be helpful. She also feels that there is a need for the equivalent of a “Board of Directors” for the APS who have a particular focus on disability issues. She felt that chairmanship by a parliamentarian, with representatives from inside and outside the APS would be good. The aim would be to hold the APS accountable for its actions, to act as a reporting centre for progress on disability issues and to also provide expert advice as required.

## Appendix 9: Background data

### Employment outcomes of people with and without disabilities

**Table 1: Labour force participation and unemployment rates of people with and without disability**

	People with disabilities (%)			People without disability (%)		
	1993	1998	2003	1993	1998	2003
Labour force participation rate	54.9	53.2	53.2	76.9	80.1	80.6
Unemployment rate	17.8	11.5	8.6	12.0	7.8	5.0

**Source:** ABS, 2003, p26; Productivity Commission, Volume 2: Appendices, pA.2. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households.

**Table 2: Labour force participation and unemployment rates of people with disabilities, by type of restriction**

Restriction	Labour force participation rate (%)			Unemployment rate (%)		
	1993	1998	2003	1993	1998	2003
Profound	19.9	18.9	15.2	20.9	7.4	13.9
Severe	39.9	40.2	35.8	22.2	11.6	9.5
Moderate	42.9	46.3	47.9	18.0	13.1	7.6
Mild	51.3	56.5	50.6	18.5	9.3	7.7
All persons with restrictions	46.5	49.3	47.7	21.0	11.7	9.9

**Source:** ABS, 2003, p26; Productivity Commission, Volume 2: Appendices, pA.6. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households.

**Table 3: Labour force participation and unemployment rates of males and females with and without disability, 1998 and 2003**

	Labour force participation (%)		Unemployment rates (%)	
	1998	2003	1998	2003
<b>Females</b>				
With disability	45.5	46.9	8.6	8.3
Without disability	71.0	72.2	8.0	5.3
<b>Males</b>				
With disability	60.3	59.3	13.5	8.8
Without disability	89.2	88.9	7.7	4.8

Source: ABS, 2003, p26; ABS, 1998, p35. Persons aged 15-64 years living in households.

**Table 4: Occupation type of people with disabilities**

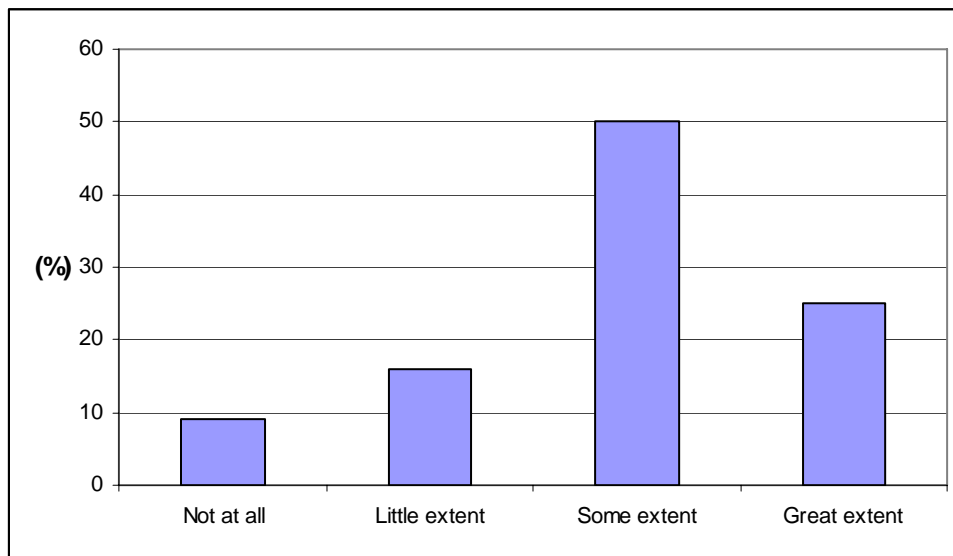
Occupation	People with disabilities (%)	People without disability (%)
Managers and administrators	8.4	8.1
Professionals	18.4	19.2
Associate professionals	9.6	13.4
Tradespersons and related workers	11.9	12.8
Advanced clerical and service workers	4.4	4.0
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	16.3	17.1
Intermediate production and transport workers	10.6	7.7
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	9.5	9.8
Labourers and related workers	10.9	7.9
Total	100%	100%

Source: ABS, 2003, Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia, 2003. Cat. No. 4430.0

**Table 5: Extent to which current workplace features suit the needs of people with disabilities**

	Not at all	Little extent	Some extent	Great extent	Don't know
Building entry and exits	0	9	46	43	2
Signage	9	32	46	13	0
Office access	4	14	43	39	0
Work spaces	5	18	45	32	0
Toilets	5	25	32	36	2
Kitchen amenities	19	37	25	19	0
Car parking facilities	12	21	35	23	9
Meeting/conference room facilities	4	21	45	29	2

**Source:** Erebus International, Survey of APS Staff, 2005

**Figure 1: Extent to which office equipment in the workplace suit the needs of people with disabilities**

Source: Erebus International, Survey of APS Staff, 2005

**Table 6: Extent to which barriers exist for people with disabilities in their employment**

	Not at all %	Little extent %	Some extent %	Great extent %	Don't know %
Limited access to work premises and / or facilities	12	21	48	19	0
Negative attitudes of others in the workplace	15	7	44	35	0
Poor or inappropriate forms of communication	7	17	48	26	2
Limited career progression opportunities	11	11	36	40	2
Ability to access professional development/training	19	26	28	25	2
Ability to apply for jobs in formats that suit their needs	15	20	25	35	5
Ability to participate in selection processes that are appropriate for their needs	9	20	26	33	11
Advertisement of positions in ways that discourage applications from people with disabilities	9	24	33	26	7

Source: Erebus International, Survey of APS Staff, 2005

## Appendix 10: Performance indicators in the Canadian annual performance report

### Indicators of progress

#### *Disability supports*

- Aids and devices needed for everyday activities
- Help needed for everyday activities
- Home modifications
- Supports for informal caregivers
- Transportation
- Information in multiple formats

#### *Skills development and learning*

- Children/youths aged 5 to 24 attending school
- Working-age adults with post-secondary diplomas or degrees
- Levels of literacy

#### *Employment*

- Employment rate
- Persons employed all year
- Hourly wage
- Employers providing facilities, equipment or aids to accommodate people with disabilities
- Persons employed in the federal public service, in federally regulated workplaces and by federal contractors
- Persons receiving workplace training

#### *Income*

- Household income
- Persons living in low-income households
- Major source of personal income
- Food security
- Net worth

#### *Capacity of the disability community*

- Human resource capacity
- Financial resource capacity
- Structural and systems capacity

#### *Health and well-being*

- Health status
- Impact of chronic conditions
- Impact of mental conditions
- Impact of violence
- Impact of injuries
- Impact of individual behavioural factors
- Impact of environmental factors

**Source:** Office for Disability Issues, Social Development Canada, (2004), p.6

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