

Faces of MDAA



What is MDAA?



The Multicultural Disability Advocacy
Association of NSW Inc

- peak body for people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) with disability, their families & carers in NSW
- the only advocacy service in NSW available specifically to people from NESB with disability, their families & carers



Mission



To promote, protect and secure the rights and interests of people from NESB with disability, their families and carers in NSW



Main objectives



- Promote and safeguard rights
- Improve quality of life
- Increase participation in the community

Principles



All people from NESB with disability and their families/carers are individuals with the inherent right to respect for their human worth and dignity, who should enjoy freedom from discrimination based on race, ethnicity, linguistic skill, religion, class, culture, gender or disability.

In plain English...



All people from NESB with disability and their families/carers should

- enjoy equal opportunities
- have fair access to resources
- have a fair share of resources

Where does the money come from?



- NSW Dept of Ageing, Disability & Home Care
- Commonwealth Dept of Family and Community Services & Indigenous Affairs
- Project grants, e.g. in 2005-6 from NSW Health, Law & Justice Foundation, NSW Premier's Office for Women, ANZ Foundation

COMMUNITY VOICES PROJECT (CV)



- CVs are people from NESB with disability, their families and friends who are trained in public speaking and willing to talk to groups of people to raise awareness about the diversity of the community
- CVs aim to encourage people to think about what they can do to support and celebrate diversity at their school, in their community groups or in their every day work



CV Training & Preparation



Before the training:

- We contact interested people to explain the CV project and ask them to apply
- A panel of MDAA members and staff interviews the people who apply
- The course runs 1 day a week (4 hours) for 5 weeks

CV Training Course



Each trainee prepares their personal story:

- to put relevant ideas in some order
- to extract lessons or suggestions to share with disability services, or other people and communities (e.g. the right to access information, ask questions, have choices or make complaints)
- to learn public speaking
- to learn what words to use
- to understand the idea of self-advocacy, and standing up for your rights



Systemic Advocacy



- a process that starts when an issue affects more than one person
- we take up general issues with relevant service providers or government agencies
- we research issues raised by consumers & write reports, letters, etc



Consumer Forums



- A key tool used by Individual and Systemic Advocates
- Each forum is about an issue raised by people from a NESB with disability, their families/ carers, e.g. local councils, employment rights, workers compensation
- This increases people's knowledge and also raises issues for systemic advocates to take up with service providers, government departments, etc

NSW State Election Forum



- A recent NSW State Election forum at MDAA is an example of active consumer participation
- MDAA collected information about consumer concerns, particularly 'how to vote' issues
- consumers identified *major access barriers* they encounter in the electoral process



Why was it important?



- **Consumers said they don't know how to make their vote count**
- **Many consumers come from countries with very different political systems and did not understand the Australian system**
- **Many had no idea of the electoral system, e.g. every citizen's responsibility to register and to vote in every election**



What MDAA consumers want



- Accessible information about ways to vote
- Awareness campaigns about voting and elections
- Information sessions in plain English
- Step by step guides on 'How to vote'
- Better recruitment / training of polling officials
- Ballot papers in community languages & Plain English



What did MDAA do about it?



- **Wrote a submission to the State Electoral Office (SEO) about the SEO's *Equal Access to Democracy Plan* based on what MDAA consumers want**
- **Discussed the issues with the SEO**
- **Planned some training sessions for consumers to ensure they can participate in the political process**



Web Page: www.mdaa.org.au