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**Abstract**

This article by Queensland Parents of People with Disabilities looks at what is happening in Queensland in the area of disability due to policy processes occurring in the State government, and QPPDs campaign to influence these policies and practices. Issues are inclusive education, accommodation and inclusive lifestyles. **Keyword: Government**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE STATE GOVERNMENT?

### WHY IS IT A CRUCIAL TIME TO INFLUENCE POLICY?

The State Government is currently involved in two major processes, which will affect the lifestyles of people with disabilities for years to come. These are:

1. An Across Government Strategic Plan which reviews the framework of service provision to people with disabilities across the different state government departments.

RESPONSIBLE GROUP:

WHO:

CHAIR:

Disability Directions Committee

The Directors General of all the relevant departments

Ruth Matchett

Department of Family Services

(lead agency)

2. The development of policy and practices, which affect the way, that funding is given to provide services to people with disabilities.

RESPONSIBLE GROUP:

WHO:

CHAIR:

Division of Community Services

Development ~CSD)

Department of Family Services

The Office of Disability together with the Regional Offices

Julian Foley) Office

Lesley Fritz) of

Rod Waiters ) Disability

Regional Managers

Senior Resource Officers

### THE STORY SO FAR

A large number of people concerned about the lives of people with disabilities have come together to try to influence these two processes. A number of initiatives have been organised in an attempt to keep important issues on the State's agenda. QPPD supports and is involved in many of these initiatives including the Safeguards Coalition. Those people involved in our networks will be familiar with the Alternative Strategic Plan sent to the Disability Directions Committee and the Blueprint on Individualised Services and Funding Mechanisms currently being discussed with the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islanders Affairs.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE STATE GOVERNMENT?

### QPPD's Inclusive Education Network

This network has continued its campaign to influence policy and practices in the regular school system. During the past few months' members of this network have met with the following people in positions of influence with regard to educational policy:

Pat Comben, Minister for Education

Professor Roger Scott, Director General of the Department of Education

Peter Macdonald, Executive Director. Regional Operations Directorate

Peter Blatch, Jo Minchinton, Low Incidence Support Centre  
Jo Diesel, Studies Directorate

In meetings we have put forward issues based on our lobbying document which highlights the issues surrounding inclusive education. In doing so we have been very clear in pointing out the following:

- Where inclusive education of our sons, daughters and others with disabilities is a goal, we do not see this as being at the expense of other children with disabilities.
- AJI inclusive practices need to be planned resourced and accompanied by attitudinal change strategies. This is a long-term plan. There is no intention to close special schools immediately without the appropriate inclusive options being offered as alternatives and with safeguards for the child in place.
- What we clearly are proposing is that the State Government reverses the dominant pattern of responding to children with disabilities. Instead of offering a segregated education as the first option to many children with disabilities, we are asking that the child be welcomed and offered support to remain as part of regular neighbourhood school life.
- We are anticipating that, as more successful strategies for including children with disabilities, especially those children with high support needs, are known of; publicised and resourced, worried educators and parents will begin to see that their fears are unfounded.
- In this context, inclusive education is clearly a human rights issue, one that OPPD as an advocacy organisation feels strongly that it should be pursuing.

## **QPPD's Accommodation & Inclusive Lifestyles Network**

The campaign over the last few months has continued to highlight these network major priorities of:

- individualised service approaches and funding mechanisms
- a planned process of deinstitutionalization

Both these issues target people with disabilities who are living inappropriately in institutional care or in their parents' homes. QPPD is advocating for inclusive policies which enable people to move into a home of their own with the appropriate supports to do so. The ultimate aim is to have services and supports, responsive to the needs of people with disabilities with people being included in the life of their local communities.

### ***WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE STATE GOVERNMENT?***

During the last few months QPPD has met with the following people in positions of influence with regard to policy affecting the lifestyles of adults with disability:

Anne Warner, Minister for Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs  
Julian Foley, Director, Office of Disability  
Lesley Fritz, Rod Waiters, Office of Disability

QPPD has also sent copies of our lobby documents to Ruth Matchett, the chair of the Disability Directions Committee.

In meetings we have put forward our views based on the lobbying document, which highlight the issues surrounding personal support to live an inclusive life. Again we wish to point out the following:

Although QPPD is advocating for the closure of institutional care services, we are most concerned that this occurs in a planned way, which builds in appropriate supports and safeguards for the individuals it affects. It should not occur without appropriate resourcing and alternative inclusive living options being available.

The implementation of new individualised approaches and funding mechanisms are seen as crucial to the development of these new forms of inclusive living enabling a much wider variety of lifestyles to become a reality for adults with disabilities. Again the funding arrangements and services which evolve will need to provide safeguards for the individuals' who use them.

Although inclusive lifestyles is a goal, we do not see this as being at the expense of other adults with disabilities.

We are clearly asking the State Government to examine their current policies, which are leading to the dominant pattern of taking people away from ordinary life and from others without disabilities. We are asking that all new money go into those services and supports which maintain people with disabilities as part of their families, their neighbourhoods and their communities or that help them re-establish themselves as valued citizens.

We are anticipating that, as more successful stories are told about how people with disabilities can remain included in the everyday life of the community, those workers, parents and people with disabilities themselves will come to the realisation that, not only is it possible for some, but also it could be possible for the person I work with, or my daughter or son, or me.

Again we are seeing the constant segregating response in adulthood as being a human rights issue, one which QPPD as an advocacy organisation feels it should strongly be pursuing.

***POINT TO PONDER:***

*.... we left behind those in the business of building burdens and leaped beyond the boundary of their walls .....*