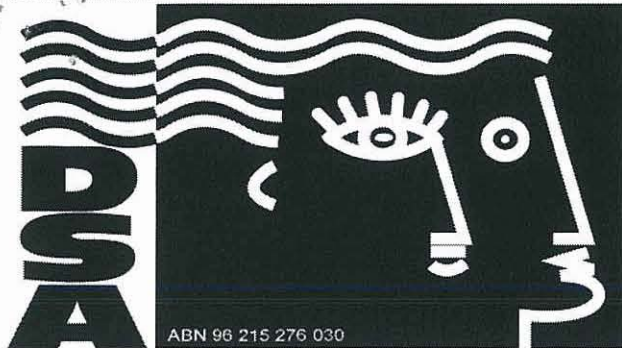


**INQUIRY INTO SERVICES PROVIDED OR FUNDED BY
THE DEPARTMENT OF AGEING, DISABILITY AND
HOME CARE**

Organisation: Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc.
Name: Mr Gary Blaschke OAM
Position: National President
Date received: 2/08/2010



DISABLED SURFERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc.

The Director
Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St.
Sydney NSW 2000

RECEIVED
2 AUG 2010
LEGISLATIVE
COUNCIL

29th July 2010

Inquiry into services provided or funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

The Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc. was established in 1986 to fill a void within the disability services sector for those born with or acquiring a disability and the elderly wishing to experience something that society had kept from them, a social or so called normal life.

My first personal experience of how the community looked upon the disabled was around forty years ago when after school every afternoon, I would visit a friend's home and never saw who or what was lurking behind a bedroom door when it suddenly slammed as I approached. Some thirty years later I asked my mother the question and her answer was the question of "Didn't I know that my very close mates in this particular family had a sister with Downs syndrome"? She had been living in a room for over fifteen years without any outside contact and very few neighbours knew of her existence.

Some thirty five years later I suffered a physical disability through an accident and personally found exactly how society looked upon people with any difference to what is the accepted. It was most probably sheer ignorance or lack of understanding, yet after twenty four years of hands on experience with the disabled find in some cases, very little has changed.

Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We have Discrimination Acts, National Disability Strategies & Agreements, Participation Frameworks, Action Plans and a conglomeration of Expert Panels who's work generally disappears once the funding runs out.

Sport is tokenistic in the way it provides massive support for both the elite able and disabled athlete, yet many within our community fall between the cracks and are never encouraged to pursue a dream, no matter their ability.

PO Box 345 The Entrance NSW Australia 2261

Surfers helping Surfers
www.disabledsurfers.org

THE HISTORICAL NEED AND CURRENT LEVEL OF FUNDING & EXTENT OF UNMET NEED :

I'm sure in the instance of ADHC they see that adequate funding is being met, again under that so called accepted level. The reality is that there are many individuals, be them disabled or carers and voluntary NGO's who fail to come under either the Federal or State radar.

Many like the Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc., who after twenty four years of voluntary services to the disabled in our chosen field and receiving accolades for world's best practice, inductions into Sporting Halls of Fame, medals from Queen Elizabeth for Australian Sporting Achievement and Order of Australia Medals for Sport are one that have fallen between the cracks in the system.

Self funded in the main, the DSA has pursued general recognition for our life changing services with several State and Federal Ministers over several years, just to be bestowed with the acknowledgment as a National Sporting Organisation for the Disabled (NSOD).

Kate Ellis MP, Federal Sports Minister and Bill Shorton MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities and Children's Services, being two of recent note.

Kate Ellis told the DSA that under the guidelines of the Australian Sport Commission (ASC) that we the DSA were not a SPORT, as we did not run Regional, State or National titles. Yet we asked her what sport catered for every disability under her National Plan for Disability Sport (Sports Connect), including ventilated Quadriplegics? The answer has never been forthcoming as we were simply passed onto Bill Shorton.

The DSA subsequently met with Bill Shorton in Canberra, for the recognition as a National Sporting Organisation for the Disabled (NSOD), as suggested by Kate Ellis MP and once again were met with total ignorance and asked the question of "how much we were looking for?".

Funding is fundamental to any NGO's existence, yet in all cases the DSA was not looking for funding, only recognition from our Federal government, as it was an important issue of our unmet need.

3.

Since our meetings with the ministers we have once again under the existing rules of which the DSA fulfil, have applied to the Australian Sports Commission for NSOD status. We have not yet had a reply since 30th March 2010.

In 2009 the DSA was approached by Andy Abel ML, representing the Papua New Guinea government and National President of Papua New Guinea Surfing Association for our services in specialised Disability Surfing training.

Andy is a board member of the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority, Vice President of the PNG National Museum and Art Gallery Board Trustees and Member of the International Surfing Association (ISA) New Surfing Nations Committee, and when he asked "how does the Australian Government recognise the DSA's world's best services?", we had to tell the truth, they don't!

It is a sad state of affairs, similar to other Australian inventions, that see the World's first Disabled Surfers Association being recognised by other countries and not their own.

VARIATIONS IN SERVICE DELIVERY, WAITING LISTS AND PROGRAM QUALITY BETWEEN (1) SERVICES PROVIDED, OR FUNDED BY ADHC & (2) ADHC Regional Areas:

Where governments fail to deliver for the Disabled and Aging is in the respect of hands on experiences. Tokenistic programs that deliver until funding runs out or are in place to give false indications of employment within the specified programs.

Most effective programs be them Sporting or other, are usually run by voluntary NGO's. Those who do it with expertise and passion and most without financial support or recognition.

One example was in 2007 when the DSA was sent a document by Darryl Clout the General Manager NSW Sport and Recreation called NSW sport and recreation industry strategic directions – a five year plan – Key issues discussion paper.

4.

An impressive looking, glossy, colourful, extremely thin document that failed to identify Disability Sport entirely in their five year plan. When approaching the General Manager on the issue both over the phone and in writing, the DSA was promptly told "Point Taken" and have never received a reply from either the chosen consultants or the department. Three years on, we have never seen any evidence of an inclusion of Disability Sport into the plan or the plan itself.

ADHC are well aware of the Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc. and the services and programs we provide. Major Federal and State ministers are also aware as testimony by winning Minister's awards for Outstanding Achievements in Implementing Safe Sport Practices and Most Significant Contribution in Water Safety by an Organisation.

The DSA not only has seven voluntary branches in NSW, it has branches in all other mainland states and in New Zealand and truly is a regional organisation catering for those who fall between the cracks of the Federal and State Disability systems.

The DSA caters for all ages with any disability and does not cherry pick for ease of implementation of practices as many others do. Our success is our total inclusion and keeping unsustainable bureaucratic standards out of our award winning programs.

The DSA is sorry to state the fact and do not apologise for doing so, that those working within the bureaucratic system, very rarely have the hands on experience of implementing the Disability and Aging services that change the lives for the better for so many people in our community.

In our twenty four years of experience, we see very few so called experts appointed onto board looking into Disability Services or strategies, having current hands on experience. Expertise does not come from the textbook, it is hard earned though many years of total and direct contact in the chosen field and with the recipients of the service, understanding of the needs and limitations of the services and good training for those implementing the service.

5.

The question still remains, If the Australian Sports Commission and the Federal Minister for Sport fail to identify any citizen of Australia who do not or could not reach the "Elite" status, whether able or disabled, and then who is responsible?

I hope that the DSA does not need to bring to the attention of this Inquiry the importance of Sport & Recreation at all levels, including a Participation level for those wishing to experience something different or new to their lifestyle.

The social aspect of participating and mixing with others, especially when one has a disability or is elderly, is most probably more important than the activity itself. It is the DSA's experience that when "Competition" becomes the main initiative or aim for both able or disabled, there will and is always a loser, this inevitability having a greater impact on the disabled by doubting themselves in future adventures or events through lack of confidence and self esteem.

There will always be the "Elite" no matter able or disabled and their encouragement to pursue a dream should continue. Yet the proportion of Elite to Participating, bears no resemblance in the amount of funding for the grass roots level through either the ASC or ADHC.

COMPLIANCE WITH DISABILITY SERVICE STANDARDS:

In 1986 the DSA wanted to be seen as complying with standards and subsequently applied to join the NSW Sports Council for the Disabled. Standards were in place and the DSA needed to comply to become a member group.

It did not take long before the DSA realised that being a member was nothing more than ticking the correct boxes to make not only ourselves look like we were complying, it also helped make the bureaucracy fulfil their duty and again allow for further funding, whether they and member organisations were providing correctly for the disabled or not.

6.

History now supports the DSA's decision to resign from the Council after only twelve months membership, as the Council for whatever reasons disbanded and several attempts to resurrect similar governing bodies have failed miserably.

High standards must be set for any service provider, yet those standards need to be set to suit each activity and each body needs to have direct input into setting those standards.

Legal status, Experience and ability to provide services, Safety and Security, Quality of service and Compliance with other legislation should be compulsory.

If major emphasis is placed upon Financial viability, especially at the NGO's infancy, neither the DSA nor NSW Sports Council for the Disabled would have made the grade. Out of the two, only one still exists that being the one which has lived off the smell of an oily rag for over twenty four years, yet the other being financially supported by the NSW government and still failing.

Assessment panels must be internal, not bureaucratic. The best assessment panel is a well balanced, educated and understanding committee who have direct influence on the direction and activities each group or body conducts.

A prime example of complying with all legal and duty of care issues is the DSA. Award winning, setting world's best practice, recognised by International standards, yet not recognised by their own government because they don't put the Disabled and Elderly into competition.

ADEQUACY OF COMPLAINT HANDLING, GRIEVANCE MECHANISMS AND ADHC FUNDED ADVOCACY SERVICES:

Every NGO has grievances especially during its infancy, internally or with authorities. Are the rungs set too high to allow for the NGO to establish? Who is there, to support the NGO's if required, without having to join an umbrella group or jump through bureaucratic hoops?

7.

The DSA has had many grievances with authorities who think they know better in our specialised field. Twenty four years of writing letters, meeting with ministers and departments, submitting documents to inquiries and strategies and joining so called expert panels or umbrella groups has taught us one lesson, that being to make sure you have the right people in the correct position, for the right reasons and evolution will take its course.

2009 saw the DSA meet with Graeme Innes the Australian Human Rights Commissioner. Our complaint was that 'Sport' in general, under the government's Sport Connect guidelines was cherry picking the disabled to suit their own capabilities and not being totally inclusive.

He debated with our representatives stating that Blind Cricket and other sports were catering for the disabled. When asked how many in his own team had Down syndrome, Amputations, and CP or were in wheelchairs, our meeting was terminated.

If this is any indication of how the government deals with disputes about non inclusion, we as a nation have a long way to go in fulfilling our international requirements under the United Nations Convention and our own Disability Strategies and Acts.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROGRAM EVALUATION INCLUDING PROGRAM AUDITING AND ACHIEVEMENT OF PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REVIEW:

This immediately sets the alarm bells ringing, as it automatically gives the impression that the Government owns the program. Program evaluation is provided by each NGO's committee or working party. Achieving the program performance indicators can be accomplished by the simple method of a government representative attending an event, speaking to the participants and carers and seeing for themselves the results.

8.

This may reduce financial waste and get a few out of the office and into the real world. Could the DSA be given the name of an experienced Disabled Surfing Auditor and the funding to employ that person, so that we can see if we are doing the right thing?

ANY OTHER MATTERS:

The DSA has been critical of all levels of government pertaining to the falsities of most Disability strategies or programs the government has dealings with or manage.

We wish to invite all members of this Legislative Committee to attend a DSA event. To actually do what we call "Getting your hands dirty". To see first hand what many Voluntary NGO's need to comply and conform to. Talk to participants and carers and listen to their concerns.

Our events are as follows...

South Coast NSW : Hands on Day 13TH November Culburra Beach

Central Coast NSW : Training Day for Volunteers Saturday 25th September

Hands on Day Saturday 16th October 2010

Far North Coast (Byron Bay): Hands on Day Saturday 16th October

(Ballina) Hands on Day Saturday 20th November

Hunter: (Blacksmiths Beach) Hands on Day Saturday 20th November

Sydney: Spastic Centre Sport and Recreation Expo. (Prairewood) DSA Display.

The DSA wish to thank the Standing Committee for the opportunity to put forward our views on these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Gary Blaschke OAM
DSA Founder and National President
Mobile :

A Brief History

The DSA (Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc.) was founded in Sydney in 1986 by Gary Blaschke, who was badly injured in a motorbike accident. Told he would not surf again, Gary was still keen to get back in the ocean. Necessity being the mother of invention Gary got a few mates together and formed a disabled persons support group specifically related to the surf. Initially set up for injured surfers, within 12 months the DSA had dramatically widened its target group to cater for all disabled, whether they were originally surfers or not.

The DSA has grown enormously from such humble beginnings over the past two decades. The Sydney 'Hands on Day', held at Collaroy annually, open to everyone, attracts over 300 participants and volunteers making it the largest Disabled Surfing event in the world.

Currently we have 14 branches in five states – WA: Perth and Far South Coast WA; SA: Adelaide; QLD: Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast; NSW: Sydney, Central Coast, Hunter, Hastings (Port Macquarie), Mid North Coast (Coffs Harbour), Far North Coast (Byron Bay) & South Coast (Wollongong); VIC: Ocean Grove; plus our first international branch in New Zealand. We are a totally voluntary organisation, existing purely on the support of our members and the local communities together with the odd small government grant.

The DSA is also quickly evolving into becoming an expert in the field of accessibility when it applies to beachside locations, offering advice and solutions to local government over the challenge of opening up Australia's greatest icon – the beach – to our disabled.

The DSA is uniquely Australian with ambitions to make it worldwide. We are setting world's best practice for Disability Surfing.



Who We Help

Over the past two decades of the DSA's existence, we have seen every type and degree of disability. In that time we have taken thousands for a safe surfing experience who may otherwise have never had the opportunity to do so.

The degree of disability that we cater for is literally unlimited. Sydney's Kelly McCann, who suffers from full quadriplegia requiring breathing assistance through a tracheotomy, is a regular DSA surfer both at Collaroy and on the South Coast. Kel is resuscitated the whole time she is in the water – inspirational, and proving just what can be done.

Each DSA branch holds 'Hands On Days' open to everyone several times a summer season. Additionally there can be several 'members only' events held throughout the year as well as catering for special groups when helper power is available. Remember that having a disability is not necessarily the same as having a handicap. None of our participants are handicapped – they are out there surfing!

How a 'Hands On Day' Works

The secret to our success in running a safe and happy surfing experience is the result of many years of refinement and ongoing evaluation of our activities.

Our prime emphasis is on safety. Apart from being well trained, (see next section under 'Volunteers'), the DSA utilises a unique colour coding system for all participants, carers and helpers to ensure event organisers know the 'state of play' at any one time: we have a very high helper to participant ratio, from a minimum of 6 to 1 up to as high as 30 to 1 with



challenging participants, such as in Kelly's case above, and we only surf in broken waves, in waist depth water. Our motto is "It's all about the participants". For a better visual idea of what we do, check out our website.

How You Can Help

The secret to the success of the DSA is the enormous good will generated by all parties involved, together with the use of modern surf technologies such as soft malibu surfboards and wetsuits, since so many of our participants suffer from poor circulation. The last half decade has seen the introduction of amphibious wheelchairs and surf socks which have overcome OH&S concerns in transporting participants, with dignity and safety, across rocky and sandy locations, to gain entry to the adjacent surf.

The DSA seeks three specific kinds of help:

Volunteers: Any person with a good heart can help at a DSA event but if you are a water-oriented type, you are additionally welcome. Each branch regularly runs our specifically designed 'Train The Helper' for new recruits – it's free.

Equipment Donations: Each branch is required to establish and maintain a gear trailer with an impressive inventory of gear. We are always looking to improve on what we've got while at the same time salt, sand and surf take a toll on what we already have.

Monetary Donations: This falls into two categories, individual donations and sponsorship from local, state and national businesses.

The DSA offers any business an opportunity for great exposure in that the DSA is such a highly visible and

praiseworthy organisation, apart from offering an avenue for fulfilling any stated corporate community commitment.

Additionally, we are a recognised charity attracting significant tax deduction benefits to commercial entities.

