

Fact Sheets

OVERVIEW

September 2010

This series of fact sheets has been developed in response to information and feedback received during the course of the 2010 'Connections Project'. These fact sheets detail some of the interesting findings of the information gathered and it is anticipated that they will be informative not only to clients, but also to the public and Association staff alike.

The fact sheets are available in a variety of print accessible formats and languages upon request. The information contained will be systematically included in Association mail outs, publications, and the website.

This fact sheet series includes the following topics:

- 1. Library Services**
- 2. Regional Community Matters**
- 3. Children and Youth**
- 4. Post-secondary Education and Employment**
- 5. Engagement and Communication**
- 6. Engagement of Aboriginal People and Communities**
- 7. Engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People**
- 8. How to Give Feedback – Compliment or Complaint**
- 9. Aids and Equipment**
- 10. Your Comments**

Library Services

The 'Connections Project' consultations and surveys attracted a myriad of comments across a range of topics. Comments about the Library were top of the list! Strong interest and concern emerged with regard to our library services and future changes. Interestingly, a large number of people have membership with the Association for the primary purpose of accessing Library services.

Our talking books were commented on throughout the 'Connections Project' community consultations and survey. Thank you for your feedback, it is encouraging to know what a vital resource talking books are both to people living in regional areas of WA and those living in the Perth metro area.

Many people were open to moving to new technology, however we observed that there is still confusion around the change from cassettes to digital format.

Cassettes? DAISY players? What is happening?

What do the changes mean to me?

The Association will continue to keep a small selection of large print books in the library but is gradually phasing out the use of cassettes to be replaced by digital audio. Library users will receive updates on any changes through the Association's 'Library Link' newsletter, so stay tuned or let us know if you want a copy! We acknowledge that for many, cassettes are familiar and therefore easy but at the end of the day, our cassettes are deteriorating and are outdated technology. Cassettes and cassette players are being manufactured less and publishers no longer produce books on cassette. We need to progress to meet the needs of everyone.

"I understand 'Talking Books' is moving to a new style. Is it going to be very simple?"

- Library User

For those who indicated their uncertainty about the library, please be reassured that we will support people through these changes. We are currently working on a simple way of delivering audio files to library users to make the process as friendly and accommodating as possible.

We will continue to consult regarding the planning and trial of the changes and hope that this contributes to our smooth and successful transition to digital audio.

We are currently exploring ways to assist people to acquire a recommended player. For those who wish to buy a unit now, we have identified two "preferred" DAISY players for which library staff will be able to provide operational support and guidance.

What do all these technical terms mean?

DAISY

DAISY stands for Digital Accessible Information System. We are continuing to research the DAISY units that have the best accessibility for people with a vision impairment and are simple to use. We are also working on solutions to make DAISY players widely available. There are many book and music players available from standard retail outlets that will be suitable to play our books (ie: iPods) but not all will offer all the additional features of a DAISY player. If you do choose to purchase a DAISY unit yourself you can access a limited number of books immediately, but be sure to confirm with the salesperson that it has a USB port.

iPod technology

The Association and Curtin University have been working together to make new technology available to members. DaisyWorm is a simple yet powerful DAISY audio book reader application for the Apple iPhone supporting the 2.02, 2002 and 2005 formats with full or partial audio. It costs approximately \$5 and will play non-protected DAISY full audio and full text/ full audio books on the iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch. This will be effective for books from the Association's talking book library, the Vision Australia library and many more.

“Your ‘Talking Books’ make a great difference to my life.”

- Library User

Did you know that, particularly in a couple of regional centres, local libraries have been playing a wonderful role in making audio material available to our clients and the broader community? We will continue to collaborate with these libraries and extend our reach to new ones!

We also heard your feedback regarding the need for improvement to the children's library resources. We will work on improving the children's collection to keep the library relevant to our youngest readers.

How can I get library materials?

If you haven't used the library before you can visit or contact our Library Resource Centre (located on the ground floor at the Perron Centre in Victoria Park). People or organisations wishing to use the library need to become members of the Association and we can assist you with this. The library collection currently contains Braille, talking books on cassette / CD / MP3, audio described films, children's books, toys and games.

Call the Association on (09) 9311 8202 to make further enquiries. Country callers can contact the Association on 1800 847 466.

What we will do next

- We will provide ongoing updated information about the introduction of digital audio to our library system through both our 'Library Link' newsletter and on our website.
- We will help library users to learn any new technology introduced and provide guidance regarding equipment needs.
- We will work collaboratively with libraries around the State to promote local accessibility of audio material.
- We will continue to research the most accessible and affordable DAISY players so that we can make recommendations to you about what will suit your needs and lifestyle.

People living in regional and remote areas have had a distinct voice through the 'Connections Project' consultations. The key issues that were raised were:

- Isolation due to distance
- Difficulty of service access
- Issues regarding support with technology and access to audio resources
- Issues regarding support and access to aids and equipment
- Relevance of information

The Association is keen to see some practical changes that we hope will address some of these concerns.

A Couple of Facts

- 23% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys expressed interest or concern about matters relating to people living in regional areas.

This represents over one fifth of people who participated in giving their feedback, indicating that this matter is important and has in turn reinforced the Association's focus on communication and service improvements in this area.

- Approximately 30% of people who participated in the surveys indicated interest in having more involvement and communication with the Association via technological methods such as SMS messages and online facilities. (eg, email, Skype, the Association's website, Facebook, etc)

These mediums would provide many possibilities for people living outside of the metro area who are keen to use such technology, to share and learn information and participate in learning opportunities, consultations and social networks.

Distance

Distance and transport emerged as key issues of concern and this obviously impacts most profoundly on people living in regional and remote areas. Even for people living on the more rural outskirts of Perth such as the Hills, the logistics of travelling to Victoria Park can be problematic.

The Association will continue to strengthen partnerships with service providers in regional areas and explore other ways that we can improve our contact with our regional members, in particular in the Kalgoorlie / Goldfields region and Esperance.

We currently provide regional services via a regular schedule of field trips by specialist staff including Guide Dog instructors, technology and training staff, members of the Children's Services team and field officers who visit country areas as requested and required. Such visits are also in response to requests we receive from people needing support. If you have a need don't hesitate to contact us about it.

Library

It is apparent that for many people living in regional WA, the library provides a vital service. We understand that the upcoming changes to the library resources (the change from cassette and CD to digital audio) is a big change, especially for those less familiar with this technology. We will be providing support to our regional members as these changes are introduced to ensure that you feel confident in being able to continue accessing the library service.

Did you know that some local regional libraries have been playing a wonderful role in making audio material available to our clients and the broader community? We will continue to collaborate with these libraries and extend our reach to new ones in other regional areas!

Aids and Equipment

Practical access to aids and equipment has been highlighted as another area of frustration for our regional members.

It has been suggested that more aids and equipment be available in regional centres so that clients can be aware of new items and have an opportunity to see them. It is our intention that staff working in regional centres will continue to have access to the aids and equipment available at the Victoria Park premises which are able to be used and demonstrated in regional areas.

Further to this, we are also exploring a new Aids and Equipment Trial Network consisting of Association clients State-wide who will personally trial new items prior to the Association deciding to promote them. This will ensure that new items have been trialled and endorsed by people with blindness or vision impairment.

“I feel left out when I read about services and activities in Vic Park and Perth. I would like more information about local services.”

- Client from regional area

Keeping it relevant

We have heard you on this matter. Many people have commented on the need for locally relevant information on the website, and in publications and mail outs sent from the Association. We have already begun to have more regional focus in Association information and publications and are open to your ideas.

Did you know that we have five regional staff located throughout Western Australia in the Great Southern Region, the South West, the Mid West and Mandurah?

You can contact these people to talk through any issues or questions you have and arrange to meet with you.

Did you know that we visit the Goldfields and Kimberley regions? If you live in these areas and want to talk with someone about an issue or would like to meet with a visiting staff member, contact the Association on the contact details below.

Great Southern Region

Susanne Reilly (Wed) – 9842 5566

South West

Tom Blair and Mark Graham
(Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri) – 9791 3200

Mid West

Eliza Thomas (Fri) – 0427 987 662

Mandurah

Rosemary Panting
(Mon, Wed & Thurs) – 9586 1147

Anywhere else in WA

Country callers can contact the Association in Perth on 1800 847 466 or via email at info@guidedogswa.com.au

What we will do next

- We will begin by ensuring that each magazine has more content dedicated to regional information and articles.
- We are making improvements to the Association's website to provide easily accessible and regionally relevant information which will be kept updated and available to anyone at any time.
- We will explore possibilities for providing more regular services to people in Kalgoorlie.
- We will extend more of our audio resources to local regional libraries and promote connections with new libraries.

Children and Youth

Families of young children and teenagers noted a number of matters important to them and their children. These included:

- The importance of orientation and mobility training. Parents and young people expressed concern that it wasn't always readily available or flexible to families' needs.
- The need to continually update the children's library resources and ensure availability of items via post.
- Parents highly value and understand the critical importance of technological aids and equipment, and want to be informed about new developments.
- Parents indicated the importance of meeting with and learning from other families.

“I can't rave about them (ABWA) enough. You come out of there thinking you have one of the best children in the world.”

- Parent of a child with vision impairment

A couple of facts

- Over 7% of people who participated in the Connections Project surveys were interested in children or youth matters.
- Approximately 6% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys expressed interest or concern about matters relating to primary and secondary education.

Parents appreciated the opportunity for contact with other parents that occurred at the youth and parent-focused consultation and expressed interest in this occurring more frequently. Following on from this, peer support for children and youth was also raised as a matter of great importance. Providing opportunities for children

and teens to socialise and develop connections with other young people with blindness or vision impairment drew great support.

Another matter that featured as a priority was that of ongoing contact with Association staff to plan for the future and to ensure delivery of appropriate services and support.

Did you know?

Do you know about the specific programs the Association provides for babies, children, teens and their families through our Children and Family Services program? They include:

- An Early Intervention Program. We see children with vision impairment from birth to 6 years of age in our Early Intervention Program. We provide individual and group services at our Perron Centre in Victoria Park, in the home and in the community. Programs are designed in partnership with parents and a range of therapists and professionals with specialist knowledge and skills in vision impairment.
- A School Age Program. We see children from 6 – 18 years of age and provide individual and group services at our Perron Centre in Victoria Park, in the home, at school and in the community. Programs are designed in partnership with parents and a range of therapists and professionals with specialist knowledge and skills in vision impairment.
- A playgroup for children aged four and under, held once a week and attended by a range of Children and Family Services staff.
- An integrated three and four-year-old Kindergarten Program onsite at the Perron Centre in Victoria Park.

- A Saturday Program for school-aged children which operates during school terms and provides children with a safe and supportive environment to try new activities and learn important life skills while having lots of fun. It also provides opportunities for peer support.
- A school holiday Fun Club program which provides opportunities for children aged 6 to 17 to participate in various activities during the school holidays.
- A camp is run each year for children aged 10 to 17 providing a safe opportunity for children to improve their independence and self-care skills. The camps also provide great opportunities for young people to develop friendships with other young people sharing similar life experiences.
- A specialist vision assessment and support program for children with a vision impairment aged 0 -18 receiving services from other agencies.
- A specialist consultative service to other service providers. This means that we can support other professionals assisting children who are blind or have vision impairment with our specialist knowledge. This is particularly effective for children living in regional areas receiving support from local service providers.

It is never too early to refer your child!

Our services are available to babies, children, and youth who meet the eligibility criteria. We support both people with low vision and people who are blind, so it is important to note that your child may be eligible for support due to 'low vision' and does not have to be blind to qualify for services. We are happy to talk this through with you. Feel free to contact the Program Manager for Children and Family Services on (08) 9311 8202 or by email at info@guidedogswa.com.au

What we will do next

- We will continue to improve and extend the children's library resources.
- We will endeavour to facilitate more opportunities for parents to connect informally with each other.
- We will continue to work towards expanding services to school-aged children and families.

Post-secondary Education and Employment Support

Although responses to the Connections Project consultations and surveys from people of working age was less than anticipated, issues around employment support and post-secondary education were nonetheless raised as vitally important matters affecting many people who are blind or have vision impairment.

A few facts

- Approximately 8% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys indicated interest in employment related matters.
- Over 5% of people who responded to the Connections Project surveys indicated interest in higher education.
- Of the people who responded to the Connections Project surveys, approximately 17% were between the ages of 19 - 59, that is, of working age or accessing post-secondary education.

The Industry Skills Centre

The Industry Skills Centre is located at the Association's Victoria Park premises and provides a safe and highly supported training environment for people who are blind or vision impaired. It is staffed by qualified trainers and supported by a technical, administrative and customer service team.

Small classes mean that you will get individual support and help. In addition, our equipment has been enhanced with assistive technology designed for the work environment, so that you will learn how to use the tools you need. We incorporate Windows 7 and Microsoft Office 2010 into our range of courses, which includes the following nationally recognised training courses:

- Certificate I in Information Technology
- Certificate III in Business
- IT Essentials I: PC Hardware and Software
- IT Essentials II: Network Operating Systems
- Cisco CCNA
- Braille Training

Half or full day workshops

We also run the following half or full day Assistive Technology workshops which are specifically relevant to people who are blind or vision impaired:

- JAWS Basics or Configuration
- Exploring ZoomText Magnifier or Reader features
- Surfing the Net with JAWS
- Searching the Net with JAWS or ZoomText

Prospectuses are published in Nov/Dec each year and provide detailed information about the courses offered by the Association. This information is also available from our website www.guidedogswa.com.au

What employment support services does the Association provide?

The Association has two main roles in supporting people with blindness or vision impairment in employment. This is an area that has undergone some changes of late so we hope that the following information provides some clarification.

Workplace Assessments

The Association has a team of staff that are approved assessors for 'Job Access', a National Government initiative under the Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) Scheme. We can assess and make recommendations to you and/or your employer on any workplace modifications, equipment or software that you may need to improve your effectiveness at work.

Once the application for assessment is approved, 'Job Access' will cover the cost of your workplace assessment and may also contribute to or cover the cost of equipment/software purchases recommended. To find out more or to arrange an assessment, complete a 'Job Access' application form with your employer (available online) or contact the Association. People with compensation claims and non-Australian residents are able to access this support via a fee for service.

Workplace Intervention

The Association plays an active role in the provision of recommended equipment and follow up training to ensure that employees use equipment/software correctly and efficiently to maximise their working potential and independence. This follow up support is usually covered by the 'Job Access' application which means that you and/or your employer do not incur any additional cost.

Did you know?

Did you know that as part of our structured classes we provide computer laboratory access to ensure that you have access to the learning environment you need? We also offer training in some units for students who are unable to travel to the Centre.

Have you heard of 'First Clicks'?

'First Clicks' is a basic introductory computer course. We have held this course both in the Perth metro and in some regional centres to help a wide range of people develop basic knowledge, practical skills and confidence using computers. We will advertise any upcoming 'First Clicks' courses through our 'What's On' newsletter.

To receive a prospectus or information about upcoming training opportunities, or to register your interest in any of our courses or employment services, call (08) 9311 8202 and ask for the Duty Officer who will refer you to the most appropriate contact.

What we will do next

- We will continue to run 'First Clicks' training courses in metro and regional areas to introduce people to computer skills and terminology.
- We will explore the development of technology and training programs and courses to be accessed externally and via the Internet.

Engagement and Communication

In total, 456 people were recorded as having contributed to the full range of consultations conducted over the course of the 'Connections Project'. This represents over 10% of the total membership of the Association.

Some facts

- Eighty percent of State-wide and phone survey respondents were over the age of 60.
- Teens to adults 45 years of age represented only 7% of survey respondents.
- Approximately 60% of survey respondents were female.
- Interest in personalised or face to face engagement opportunities attracted approximately 40% of responses.
- Interest in engagement opportunities via the use of technology attracted approximately 31% of responses.

Cause for thought! We observed that our more senior members of the Association were more inclined to participate in the Connections Project consultations and surveys (which is fantastic), but this does highlight the need for opportunities to be created to engage younger and working-age people.

Interestingly, the use of technological methods to get involved was not limited to the younger participants. Many people over the age of 60 indicated interest in getting more involved and in having a say through online options, email, and via other technology (Skype etc).

This of course does not diminish the very strong interest in face to face contact, but instead supports a broad, diverse range of consultation methods that the Association will be able to explore.

We acknowledge that not everyone has the desire or time to get involved in consultations, planning or feedback opportunities. In fact, 72% of survey respondents identified that they did not desire involvement in future consultations or feedback provision. In saying this, our aim is to make opportunities as available and convenient as possible so that people can make choices about what and when they would like to contribute.

Publications

The Association's publications have a large readership and this was evident in the feedback received. This is encouraging but there is still a lot that can be done to improve the information, relevance and timing of our mail outs. Our regional readers have called for more regionally relevant information and it is our intention to provide this.

"The newsletters are useful and they are read. Clients need to know that the Association is working on addressing the feedback arising from this project."

- Quote

The Association has three regular publications that are prepared and sent to a range of audience groups. The main publications that are routinely sent out to clients include:

- **Community Insight**

'Community Insight' is the Association's feature publication and is distributed to all members of the Association including organisations and donors who have taken membership. Until recently, 'Community Insight' was published quarterly, however this will now be published twice a year.

- **Library Link**

This newsletter is produced as new developments occur and is the main vehicle for updating clients about Library related news and changes. This newsletter is very topical at the moment with regard to the upcoming transition from cassettes and CDs to digital audio. Keep this one on your radar if you are a library user!

- **What's On**

'What's On' is our more informal newsletter advising of activities, events, courses and other newsworthy matters and opportunities. 'What's On' is a quarterly publication. It is distributed to clients/members who are blind or have vision impairment. Information featured includes articles regarding international events, research, online opportunities, Tele-link groups and the Confident Living Program activities in Victoria Park.

Would you like us to e-mail you our publications?

If you are able, we encourage you to consider the option of receiving publications via email. In the interest of being considerate of our environment, we offer email or online access to our publications.

That being said, we completely understand that for many people who have vision impairment, a printed or audio copy can be a preferable format. It is your choice.

Q. What are your interests?

"Newsletters. Have a call out to people to put their stories in. I would. Local personal stories. I read 'Community Insight' three or four times."

- Quote

Your feedback is making a difference! The quote above is one example of many. We have now included a 'Client Stories' page on our website and are open to including more personal stories that will benefit other people by the sharing of experiences.

What we will do next

- We will begin by ensuring that 'Community Insight' and 'What's On' have articles dedicated to regional information.
- A 'Consultation Contact Register' is being developed. This register will allow people who are interested in being involved in future consultations and feedback opportunities, to select specific areas of interest. In this way, we will be able to inform you of matters of personal interest and prevent you from being contacted about issues that are irrelevant to you.
- We will explore the use of online forums, chat rooms or Skype as potential mechanisms for online consultations and engagement. These fact sheets are a direct feedback initiative resulting from the 'Connections Project'.
- These fact sheets are a direct feedback initiative resulting from the 'Connections Project'. The purpose of these fact sheets is to reassure people who gave of their time and insights that their feedback was heard and that many things are being done in response.

Engagement of Aboriginal People and Communities

Regrettably, we were disappointed with our lack of success in engaging Aboriginal people in our community consultations and surveys. Through the lack of feedback we received from the 'Connections Project' consultations, it is clear that there is much to be done to better reach out and engage Aboriginal clients, their families, communities and service providers.

Connection with Aboriginal people and communities remains an area of significant challenge for the Association, but we have a strong desire and commitment to better engage and improve our service delivery to Aboriginal people.

We know that there are many people who could benefit from receiving support from the Association, in particular Aboriginal people. The small numbers of Aboriginal people seeking our support can be attributed to many factors - cultural considerations, geographical isolation, confidence in seeking our service, appropriateness and relevance of information and the need for continual nurturing of relationships to build trust, to name but a few.

The final report of the '2010 Connections Project' made a number of recommendations to address some of these issues. Data collected throughout the 'Connections Project' did not however, clearly identify participants of Aboriginal descent and this has limited the findings we can draw on this matter. In future, we will ensure the inclusion of information specific to Aboriginal peoples to better inform our findings.

Some facts

- As a proportion of the Association's State-wide client base, Aboriginal people represent less than 4%.
 - 54% of the Association's Aboriginal clients live in regional/remote areas throughout WA.
 - Trachoma is the leading cause of blindness worldwide, and is predominantly a disease prevalent in undeveloped countries, with the exception of Australia. In many remote Indigenous communities, the rates of Trachoma are as high as anywhere in the world (Centre for Eye Research Australia).
 - People with diabetes are at a high risk of eye damage leading to impaired vision or blindness. The Kimberly population in Northern Western Australia has the fourth highest prevalence of Type 2 diabetes in the world (Diabetes WA).
 - The rates of blindness and vision loss in Indigenous Australians are at least ten times higher than in non-Indigenous Australians (Centre for Eye Research Australia).
- Through our discussions with Aboriginal service providers we have sought to understand what we need to change to better engage Aboriginal people who are blind or vision impaired. Two approaches emerged:
- Active engagement whereby the Association seeks interaction and engagement with Aboriginal people and groups.
 - Passive engagement, creating and allowing opportunities for Aboriginal people and communities to acquire information of their own initiative & desire.

What we learned

It is clear that the development of trust and consistent, respectful relationships are key to engaging Aboriginal people and communities. Over the last 15 years the Association has provided targeted support to Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region and has developed some positive and enduring connections.

Given the broad geographical spread of WA however, it is impractical to maintain permanent local contacts across all of our Aboriginal communities. This is where partnerships with local Aboriginal service providers are vital. The local service providers are the permanent local contacts who have established connections and trust among their local communities. Through working in partnership with these local service providers, we hope to get word out to people about who we are and what we do.

Support the Association can provide

We want Aboriginal people who are blind or vision impaired to be confident in approaching us for information or support in maintaining or regaining their daily independence.

The support we can provide to Aboriginal people who are blind or vision impaired and local service providers includes:

- Visiting you and your community
- Talking with you about blindness or vision impairment and how it affects you
- Exploring what practical techniques, learning or aids could help you to be more independent
- Providing assistance to get aids, equipment or assistive technology that you require
- Training and upskilling of local service provider staff with a view to these local contacts being able to share in knowledge and skills that will benefit local residents.

Did you know?

In an effort to reduce barriers to accessing our services, people in the Kimberley region are not required to become members of the Association in order to receive a service.

Further to this, Aboriginal people in the Kimberley region can receive impromptu, one-off services during visits by an Association staff member.

What we will do next

- We will continue to nurture the connections we have already made with Aboriginal people, communities and service providers.
- We will develop a range of printed, written and pictorial information specifically relevant to Aboriginal people and communities.
- We will distribute this information to Aboriginal Service Providers / agencies, so that they in turn can spread the word to the people and communities with whom they have connections.
- We will explore the possibility of increasing key staff resources dedicated to the development of connections with Aboriginal communities and service providers.
- We will more actively promote our services to Aboriginal people and communities via local radio, the internet, local service providers and local publications.

Do you know someone who is blind or vision impaired that might be interested in having a chat with us?

If you would like to talk with someone, find out more or arrange a time to meet, please call and ask for the Duty Officer.

Ph: (08) 9311 8202

Toll free for country callers: 1800 847 466

Engagement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse People

FACT SHEET **7**

Throughout the 'Connections Project' we promoted the availability of interpreter or translation support for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It was disappointing therefore to reflect on our lack of success in attracting requests for this support and to interpret what this means.

It is our intention to identify some of the main barriers for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds connecting with our services with a view to improving our engagement of these people and community groups.

A fact

- Approximately 16% of the 317 State-wide survey respondents identified themselves as being of an ethnicity other than Australian.

It is important to note however, that this 16% of people from varying ethnic backgrounds included people from other English speaking countries. The survey did not clearly distinguish people who speak a language other than English therefore it is unclear what portion of this 16% come from a non-English speaking background.

What is clear is that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were obviously under represented.

The Association has a strong commitment to supporting people well. This includes consideration of people's cultural differences and language needs. If you are a client of the Association and would prefer to talk with us in another language, we will organise interpreter support.

Similarly, if translation of correspondence or other Association information is required, this can be arranged.

Our priority is to ensure that each person we support receives the full value of our assistance, and 'understanding' is key! We cannot make assumptions of people's needs, so please, let us know!

Did you know?

We will be visiting a range of ethnic community groups over the coming months to introduce and explain our services. We hope that this will establish some new connections with people and community groups that will benefit people who are blind or vision impaired from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Would you or someone you know like to talk with us with the help of an interpreter? If so, please arrange for a friend or family member who speaks English to call us on (08) 9311 8202 and advise us of your language and contact details. Alternatively, you can call the Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) on 131 450.

What we will do next

- The Association will conduct another round of Cultural Awareness Training for staff to educate and refresh our understanding of cultural differences and considerations.
- We will seek opportunities to promote the Association's services and opportunities for contact with interpreter support via ethnic radio (6EBA - 95.3FM).
- We will produce a series of brochures titled 'Eyesight Concerns' in six major languages. These languages aim to meet the needs of existing community and new migrant groups. The brochures will provide basic information about the Association's services, support and contact details, and will be available in Braille, audio and the following languages:
 - French & French Braille
 - Mandarin
 - Arabic
 - Swahili
 - Vietnamese
 - Mayama-Burmese
- We will introduce contact information onto the Association's website in the 6 key languages mentioned above.

How to Give Feedback – Compliment or Complaint

The 'Connections Project' was developed to seek direct feedback from clients and other interested people with a view to changing and improving the involvement of clients in the provision of feedback and participation in service planning. We certainly achieved this goal! Feedback poured in and people identified many areas that are successful as well as those that require changes.

“My experience is that if I make a suggestion, I never know if it was bad, good or indifferent and what the outcome is... if any.”

- Consultation participant

This fact sheet is only one of a series that aims to provide feedback to you about the findings and some actions resulting from the 'Connections Project'. This particular fact sheet directly responds to the comments we received from people saying that there is confusion around the matter of how to give feedback or get involved.

A couple of facts

- Approximately 78% of State-wide survey respondents indicated that they were already aware of the process for providing feedback or would be confident that they would be able to find out should the need arise.
- Approximately 22% of respondents were unsure or did not know how to go about providing their feedback.

The Association has a Customer Service Coordinator who assists people wishing to provide feedback. Whether it is a compliment or a grievance, you have a right to voice your ideas or concerns and the Customer Service Coordinator is a great person to start with.

How can I have my say?

There are a number of ways to provide feedback. We welcome you to use our feedback forms which are available from reception and in the member's lounge (adjacent to the cafe). There are two feedback suggestion boxes on the coffee tables in the member's lounge beside the forms.

In the instance of grievances, we want to reassure you that any complaint will be received without prejudice and will be responded to promptly and respectfully. We will maintain confidentiality regarding matters raised and resolving such situations is a priority.

Did you know?

Did you know that the Association has a dedicated Feedback Line? This register will provide a way for the Association to inform people who are interested in being involved in future consultations and feedback, of opportunities to voice their opinions and influence change.”

Feedback Line - (08) 9311 8219

Grievance process

1. We encourage you to communicate your grievance directly with the person concerned in the first instance. Often matters can be resolved quickly with an honest and respectful conversation.
2. If the matter has not been resolved at this point, you can contact a Complaints Officer via correspondence or phone to further discuss your grievance. To do so, simply call (08) 9311 8202 and ask to speak with a Complaints Officer.

3. The matter will be followed up with the relevant senior management and you will receive an official response within 14 days. If at this stage you still feel dissatisfied, you may refer your grievance to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who will likewise follow up on the matter and respond to you within 14 days.

4. If the response still does not resolve your concerns, you can refer your complaint to the Board who will make a decision about what further action is required.

5. Finally, if you do not accept the Board's decision, it will inform you of other avenues you may pursue to achieve resolution. These may include the Office of Health Review or Advocacy agencies.

Who can I contact?

The Complaints Officer role is shared by two senior management staff members who assist people to resolve their grievances. The Customer Service Coordinator or the Complaints Officers can both be contacted at the Association in Victoria Park. Our Complaints Policy is available upon request and on our website.

Phone

(08) 9311 8202
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What we will do next

- A 'Consultation Contact Register' is being developed. This register will allow people who are interested in being involved in future consultations and feedback opportunities to voice their feedback and influence change.
- The Board will revisit the engagement of clients, members and carers in terms of inclusive opportunities for structured 'client participation' in management level planning and concerns.
- We will continually reinforce the Association's commitment to prompt, respectful and reliable responses to people calls, feedback, grievances and requests in staff inductions and meetings.

Aids and Equipment

The '2010 Connections Project' community consultations were informal and conversational. Similarly, the responses received from the State-wide and phone surveys included a lot of feedback, suggestions and comments. Much of this feedback revolved around aids and equipment, highlighting it as one of the matters of particular interest to people.

We received questions, requests for more information and comments regarding people's satisfaction levels about their specific aid and equipment items. At one of the community consultations for example, the Food for Health large print cookbook received a lot of praise, but people expressed disappointment that the Microwave Cookbook had not been completed as hoped. You may be pleased to know therefore that development of the new large print Microwave Cookbook is now underway.

This is just one example of how each comment, no matter how specific, has at the very least been heard and that we are endeavouring to keep people better informed.

Other comments included requests for online and printed equipment catalogues, and for peer recommendation of new and/or useful aids, equipment and technology. There are many equipment-savvy clients who are very up-to-date with what is available and can provide insight from their personal perspectives. This valuable peer support may be something that is of interest to you.

“You need to promote the website and develop an online catalogue - have it include the aids and equipment that are available.”

- Participant quote

“We want better and more regular information about aids and equipment otherwise it is easy to get left behind.”

- Parent quote

Did you know?

Did you know that we have a team of Occupational Therapists and technicians with a wealth of expertise regarding useful aids and equipment?

Do you or someone you know who is blind or vision impaired have a practical issue that you need help with? It may be possible to help you regain a greater level of independence with a simple aid, technique or piece of equipment. If you would like to talk with someone and find out more or arrange a time to meet, please call and ask for the Duty Officer.

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What we will do next

- We are working to develop a 'Product Trial Forum', which will invite clients and members to trial and provide feedback on new equipment, aids & technology prior to endorsement and sales by the Association.
- We will explore the development of aids and equipment (printed and online) catalogues.
- We will occasionally profile new and interesting aid and equipment items in our publications.
- We will explore a way to engage clients in sharing their knowledge and experiences of aids and equipment with other people who are blind or have vision impairment.

Your Comments

The '2010 Connections Project' was a consultation strategy, developed to provide opportunity for clients and other key parties to share with us their feedback and comment through face to face community consultations, a State-wide survey, a telephone survey, a teleconference consultation and a series of interviews.

The focus of all of these consultations was to hear peoples' perceptions and ideas of how the Association, currently and in the future, could improve how we consult and engage people in service development.

The responses we received covered the breadth and width of topics and satisfaction levels, and provided a wealth of information and some interesting insights.

This fact sheet series has been produced in part to provide feedback to people who participated in the 'Connections Project' or who have an interest in feedback on the findings. There are 10 fact sheets in total. In the spirit of transparency, this final fact sheet provides a summary of people's comments and sentiments.

To our delight, the majority of feedback we received was encouraging and positive, however it is critical to acknowledge that feedback also reflected some dissatisfaction, confusion and need for service improvement.

A couple of facts

- When asked for words reflecting respondents' 'Perception of the Association' in the State-wide survey, there was an overwhelmingly positive response. Approximately 92% of responses were favourable.

The most reoccurring reference throughout the survey responses were the words 'help / helpful' and was the single most repeated reference by a significant margin.

- Approximately 7% of State-wide survey responses indicated dissatisfaction or disillusionment with the Association and/or its services in response to the question asking for words reflecting their 'Perception of the Association'.

Listed below are some examples of quotes and comments recorded throughout the project.

About regional services

"Remote clients need more support and help to improve their lifestyle."

"You provide a wonderful service to the community, congratulations to you all - don't forget the folks in Regional WA."

About contact with Association staff

"Staff do a brilliant job – you just need more staff."

"My experience was that I wasn't given much information or help."

"I have been very satisfied with the vision impairment group which meets here once a month. We have had much help and encouragement from the OT of the Association."

About having a say

“Clients need to be heard by management. Project Officers and other similar consultants do appreciate the issues and are sincere, but management beyond this level – not so confident.”

“My experience is that I make a suggestion I never know it was bad, good or indifferent and what the outcome is, if any.”

“I have used the suggestion boxes but not everyone knows of them.”

“Reference and feedback groups are fine but clients will be more encouraged to attend if they have confidence that something will come out of it.”

“Clients need to know that the Association is working addressing the feedback arising from this project.”

About programs and activities

“I have seen people who have done the Confident Living Program ‘grow in stature’.”

“The computer course I took helped me to some extent to learn to cope better and the ‘travel’ learning was helpful.”

“There is a lack of services for people aged between 18-30.”

About aids and equipment

“Initial assistance of advice and installing aids to ensure independence was much appreciated.”

“I was very satisfied with the vision aids that I have received.”

About client perceptions

“The Association has been an enrichment to my life.”

“Your service is encouraging, helpful, a lifeline to the written world.”

“There is a ‘no can do’ attitude. As a client, I do not see the extending of efforts that there could be.”

“The Association has a section of the Association that is untouchable – an ivory tower.”

“Coming to the Association is like coming to my family.”

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Again, these comments reflect only a tiny proportion of the overall feedback we received. We extend our sincerest thanks for all of your comments. They have been read and have contributed to the information, findings and recommendations reflected in the ‘2010 Connections Project’ final report.

For further information regarding the ‘Connections Project’ or to read the final report, please visit our website at www.guidedogswa.com.au or contact the Association.

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