

Personalised Lifestyle Assistance (PLA)



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Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry on Disability Care and Support

PLA is a small grass roots organisation that strives to assist people with disabilities to have lifestyles that are personally meaningful, community inclusive and empowering. PLA exists to educate, inspire, inform and provide advice to people with a disability and their families to enable them to have opportunities typical of other citizens in the community.

As a small organisation we do not have the capacity to complete a full submission addressing all of the terms of your Inquiry.

However, we note that a number of questions have been asked in the Public Hearings to date about ways in which people with disabilities can be more fully included in community life, and the kind of community development approaches that have been shown to work. For example on the 16th June Ms Scott asked (in relation to an all-inclusive community) *"...what are the actual mechanisms to achieve it and how much it has cost, because at the end of the day we need to look at the feasibility of a proposal and not just the lofty rhetoric."*

Since 2003 PLA has been working on this exact aim, to enable people with a disability to live typical and included lives in the community. We have attached a description of our work and a recent evaluation that documents its success, as well as feedback from the individuals and families involved. The organisation has worked across Victoria, for a very minimal funding base of around \$140,000 per year. Despite this, to date we have been unable to obtain recurrent funding from the Disability Services Division in the Dept. of Human Services. PLA's recurrent funding ended at the 30th June 2010 and now survives on fee for service work and one-off philanthropic grants. We have recently been informed that DHS intends to put out a tender for capacity building work, for which PLA could apply.

Our key message to the Inquiry would be that while funding is important for people with disabilities to live a full life in the community, a funding mechanism on its own, whether it be a National Insurance Scheme or any other mechanism, will not achieve that goal without other supports to help individuals and families to raise their expectations of what is possible, develop their capacity and leadership in promoting inclusion, and to understand how the gifts and passions of people with disabilities can help them to gain meaningful roles and relationships in the community outside of service settings.

We hope that the attached documentation is self-explanatory, but would be happy to take any opportunities to present more about PLA's work to any future public hearings. You can also view some success stories on our website www.plavic.net.au. Please contact our Manager, Deb Rouget, if have any questions about the material.

Yours sincerely

for Delia Fisher, Chairperson PLA, on behalf of
PLA Management Committee and Staff

27 July 2010

Attachments:

PLA Overview

PLA Evaluation

Summary of feedback from families

Copies of Periodical

Copies of conference proceedings

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Personalised Lifestyle Assistance (PLA) Overview

What is PLA?

PLA is a small community based advisory service that builds capacity and knowledge predominantly in people with a disability and their families to enable them to have opportunities typical of other citizens in the *community*. That is lifestyles that are individually tailored, community inclusive and empowering. PLA is people/family friendly and value driven.

Our Vision

PLA believes *all people* should have the opportunity to pursue a unique lifestyle that is personally meaningful, relevant and typically intertwined in the community.

PLA's Guiding Principles

PLA also believes people usually do better when they:

- Are surrounded & supported by people who love them i.e. *family & friends*
- Are included in the fabric of their *community* and enabled to enjoy REAL friendships, jobs, recreation & living arrangements that are socially inclusive.
- When their *voices are heard* and listened to
- Are *supported & encouraged to imagine & pursue their own lifestyle and future*
- Are treated as *unique individuals* & thus supported in personalised (one person at a time) lifestyles
- Have supports that are *responsive, flexible, creative & informal*
- Are not done "to," "at" or "for" but "*with*" in all matters of importance to them
- Experience support processes that are *people friendly* i.e. people do not have their lives consumed by bureaucracy, standardized responses & regulations or tedious management processes

Create alternatives to group-based, segregated options for people with a disability; Create 'typical' lifestyle responses and supports that foster community inclusion, typical pathways and a range of freely given relationships; Create individualised (one person at a time and unique) lifestyles and supports; Be empowered to make decisions over their own lifestyles through self direction; Govern their own projects and arrangements and have high degrees of influence over service design and implementation.

PLA provides advice and consultation to people with disabilities and their families who wish to create - alternatives to group-based, segregated options for people with a disability; 'typical' lifestyle responses and supports that foster community inclusion, typical pathways and a range of freely given relationships; individualised (one person at a time and unique) lifestyles and supports; be empowered to make decisions over their own lifestyles through self direction; govern their own projects.

Aims of PLA

The aims and objectives of PLA is to provide advice, supported decision making, consultation and education to people who have a disability together with their families/allies so they can:

- Create alternatives to congregated/segregated options
- Create "typical" lifestyle responses and supports that foster community inclusion/typical pathways that are available to all other citizens
- Develop a range freely given relationships and not always be dependent on paid support to meet every need
- Create individualised (one person at a time/unique) lifestyles and supports
- Be empowered to make informed decisions over their own lifestyles through self direction
- Develop and build their own strengths and skills
- Govern their own projects/arrangements and have high degrees of influence over service design and implementation (if desired).
- Gain support and advice in a timely and personally relevant manner

The Types of Advice PLA Can Offer

- Building a unique vision for a good life
- Living in your own home (rather than in a group home)
- Pursuing community pathways that create community connectedness
- Building valued roles
- Supported decision making
- Consumer and family governance and self direction (individually and collectively)
- Circles of Supports and other safeguards
- Planning
- Supports (paid and unpaid)
- Networking opportunities
- Education and knowledge building

FEATURES OF PLA

PLA assists people by...

- Maintaining unambiguous guiding principles and a belief that all people with a disability can have a better life in the community, with an emphasis on inclusion, empowerment and individuality.
- Respecting & enhancing people's dignity and worth
- Encouraging people to think creatively and imagine solutions that are not standardised, segregated or congregated
- Encouraging people to develop a sound personal vision for good community life
- Encouraging people to build their own strength, capacity and change people's thinking through introducing ideas about the meaning of community living and practical examples of what is possible
- Providing bottom up assistance i.e. advice and consultation one person at a time (ensuring the person and their family drive the process, work at their own pace)
- Staying with people over time if needed
- Emphasising relationship building and long term safeguards around people's visions
- Encouraging links between individuals and families to share ideas, compare experiences, support each other and solve problems (e.g. linking individuals, networking, building consumer and family governed collectives), building networks or attending conferences/seminars)
- Encouraging links to community members and service providers who can assist with building, pursuing and safeguarding a vision
- Building right relationship with people which enables support rather than provide it
- Providing technical advice to design personalised arrangements
- Informing and educating individuals, families and professionals through seminars, a bi annual conference, networks, individual and family leadership development (based on its principles)

- Providing informal assistance with mentoring, advocacy, mediation, interpretation, problem solving, negotiations and liaison with stakeholders (community, agencies/government departments)
- Maintains an independence from the service system so that its principles can be upheld without compromise
- Providing extensive and in-depth knowledge of issues in regard to its principles

PLA Does Not...

- Take ownership or responsibility for making the vision or support happen as individuals and families are in control
- Provide funding, allocate resources, hold people's resources or provide support workers but it provides information and advice on such issues
- Put limits on what is possible around people - regardless of their ability/disability or complexity of need
- Slot people into services or give everyone the same thing but assists to build a good life around each person
- Support people to pursue segregated or congregated activities but looks to the community for solutions
- Concentrate on funding but rather explores possibilities for support (both formal and informal)

How Does PLA Work?

PLA is a small grass roots advisory service that is governed by a Committee of Management which consists of people with a disability, families and allies. It receives a non recurrent grant from the Department of Human Services (Eastern, Southern and North/West Regions) to employ a part time Manager and Education and Training Assistant. Melba Support Services provides administration support to PLA.

Criteria for Support

PLA predominantly supports people in Metropolitan Melbourne. There are no criteria for support other than the person has a disability and they (and if necessary their family) have a desire to pursue lifestyle options that are typical of other citizens i.e. personalised/uniquely tailored, community inclusive and self determined.

How to Contact PLA

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