

OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND ASSISTANCE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

Legislation	
Legislative Framework	<p>Australia has both national and state/territory legislation to address discrimination against people with disability. There are also a number of other Acts that promote the rights of people with disabilities both at a Commonwealth and State/Territory level.</p> <p><i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i></p> <p>The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> (DDA) prohibits both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability, both to the person with a disability as well as family members, carers and friends. It provides a broad definition of disability and covers many areas of life, including employment, education access to premises, administration of Commonwealth laws and programs and provision of goods, services and facilities.</p> <p>There is an extensive system in place to ensure that any complaints of discrimination are resolved, primarily by conciliation. This includes the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the Federal Court of Australia and the Federal Magistrates Court.</p> <p>The State and Territory Governments also have anti-discrimination legislation in place, under which people are also entitled to have their complaints investigated and resolved. Commonwealth DDA overrides State and Territory Legislation to the extent of any inconsistency.</p> <p>In addition to its investigation function, HREOC has wide-ranging education and public awareness responsibilities and conducts public inquiries.</p> <p>Disability Standards</p> <p>The DDA also allows disability standards to be formulated in a range of areas.</p> <p>The purpose of disability standards is to spell out in greater detail rights and obligations under the DDA, providing greater certainty about the Act's requirements.</p>

Currently, two disability standards have been formulated:

- The Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002, and
- The Disability Standards for Education 2005.

UN Convention (United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities)

The United Nations General Assembly established an Ad Hoc Committee in November 2001 to 'consider proposals for a Comprehensive and Integral Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities'.

The purpose of the draft Convention is not to create additional rights for people with disability, but to enable them to access existing human rights.

The Australian Government supports the objectives of the proposed United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, which are consistent with Australia's own position on disability issues.

A Working Group was established at the 2003 meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee to prepare a draft text that would be used as the basis for negotiation by Member States. Australia has had an active involvement in the development of the Convention through its participation in the Ad Hoc Committee.

An Australian delegation has been sent to all seven sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee held in New York with the next meeting taking place from 14 to 25 August 2006.

The Australian delegation includes representatives from the Attorney-General's Department, the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission as well as the non-government sector.

Broadcasting Services Act 1992

Regulations made under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* require the holders of commercial television broadcasting licences and national broadcasters to caption television programs transmitted during prime viewing hours (6pm to 10.30pm) and television news programs and television current affairs programs transmitted at any time, with limited exceptions.

Commonwealth Disability Strategy

The Australian Government supports equity of access to all mainstream Commonwealth policies, programs and services to ensure that people with disability are empowered to achieve economic and social participation.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy (CDS) provides Australian Government organisations with a practical framework to assist them to develop and deliver policies, programs and services that are accessible for people with disabilities. To accomplish this, the CDS identifies responsibilities against Government's five key roles:

- Policy advisory: Agencies are encouraged to consider the diverse needs of people with disabilities through appropriate consultation when developing, revising, announcing or implementing policy;
- Regulator: Agencies are encouraged to ensure that publicly-available information on regulations (and compliance with regulations) is provided in accessible formats;
- Purchases: Agencies are encouraged to consult people with disabilities when purchasing, where the purchase will impact on their lives; ensure procurement practices comply with the DDA; and ensure information regarding procurement is accessible;
- Provider: Agencies are encouraged to consider the needs of people with disabilities when delivering services; and recognise this responsibility in relevant service charters; and
- Employer: Agencies must ensure that employment practices comply with the DDA; recruitment should apply the 'reasonable adjustment' principle; and develop strategies that address attitudes, practices and other barriers that may inhibit people with disabilities securing and maintaining employment.

Originally launched in 1994, the strategy was revised in 2000, which reflected the key principles of equity, inclusion, participation, access and accountability.

The Strategy is currently being evaluated to ensure it continues to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society

Under the Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Society (the Charter) all government services, including those

	<p>funded by government but delivered by a third party, are required to ensure that services are responsive to and effectively meet the needs of clients from different backgrounds.</p> <p>The Charter was endorsed in 1998 by the Australian Government, all State and Territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association and as such, represents a nationally consistent approach to government service delivery.</p> <p>In addition to the legal framework, there are a number of systems in place to ensure best practice in access and equity for people with disability. Australia has a range of policies, programs and services designed to assist participation within the community and to raise awareness of disability issues within the community.</p>
<p>Key Supports</p>	
<p>Income Support</p>	<p>Disability Support Pension</p> <p>The Welfare to Work package, introduced from 1 July 2006, helps people claiming Disability Support Pension, and people already receiving the payment, to become more independent and active in the community. More people with disability will be able to share in the rewards and benefits of work—increased income, improved standards of living, better links to the community and enhanced self esteem and wellbeing.</p> <p>People claiming DSP now are not eligible for the payment if they can work 15 hours or more per week for wages at or above the relevant minimum wage, independently of support, with up to two years of assistance. These people will be assessed for alternative income support payments, generally Newstart Allowance. People who were receiving DSP on 10 May 2005 are not affected by the changes to DSP.</p> <p>People who were granted DSP between 11 May 2005 and 30 June 2006 were assessed against the eligibility criteria in place at the time, including the 30 hours per week work capacity test. However, their entitlement may be reassessed against the new eligibility criteria, including the 15 hours per week work capacity test. For most people, this is likely to occur two years after DSP was granted.</p> <p>Welfare to Work reflects the Australian Government's view that people who have the capacity to work substantial part time</p>

hours should be treated as job seekers. Receipt of Newstart or Youth Allowance gives people with disability access to the full range of vocational and pre-vocational programmes to help them with job preparation and job search activities. Access to employment services are guaranteed for Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients with disability who have part time work capacity.

The number of Disability Support Pension recipients in June 2006 was 712,163.

The estimated expenditure for the 2005-06 financial year is \$8.5 billion.

Mobility Allowance

There are two levels of Mobility Allowance available to people who are unable to use public transport without substantial assistance.

The higher rate of Mobility Allowance (\$100 per fortnight) recognises that people on Disability Support Pension, Newstart and Youth Allowance who are participating, or required to participate, for 15 hours or more a week where wages are at or above the relevant minimum wage are likely to have to travel frequently to work or to look for work. People who increase their hours enough to go off income support can retain their higher rate of Mobility Allowance, while they continue working at least 15 hours per week.

People working fewer hours and/or doing voluntary work or training for 32 hours over a four week period will still be eligible for the standard rate of Mobility Allowance (\$71.40 a fortnight), if they are unable to use public transport without assistance. Mobility Allowance is free of income and assets tests.

Newstart and Youth Allowance

Newstart and Youth Allowance recipients with disabilities with a partial capacity to work (assessed as able to work less than 30 hours per week) will receive the Pensioner Concession Card, with access to pharmaceutical and other concessions available to card holders. People who move into work will be able to keep their PCC for 12 months if they lose entitlement to Newstart or Youth Allowance because of employment. People with a partial capacity to work also receive Pharmaceutical Allowance and Telephone Allowance.

Jobseekers with disabilities have improved access to services, including Job Network, Disability Employment Network, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services, to help them find work consistent with their capacity. They have activity test requirements which match their assessed capacity to work.

<p>Employment Assistance</p>	<p>Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)</p> <p>Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) provide a comprehensive intervention, combining vocational rehabilitation with employment assistance. VRS assists people who have an injury, disability, or health condition to work independently in the open labour market.</p> <p>VRS offers jobseekers help to understand, compensate for or manage their injury or disability, or the limitations or restrictions imposed by injury or disability they may face. It helps them build work capacity and/or develop new strategies to avoid reinjury.</p> <p>VRS providers assist jobseekers find suitable work, and work closely with employers to ensure safe and sustainable employment. The goal of VRS is sustainable employment in the open labour market.</p> <p>Vocational Rehabilitation Services are tailored to individual needs and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of the impact of a jobseeker's injury, disability or health condition on their ability to participate in employment; • identifying and delivering interventions and strategies to manage their disability and achieve employment; • vocational counselling and planning to identify a safe, suitable and sustainable job goal; • training and work trials; • job seeking and job placement assistance; and • assistance with job design workplace assessments or modifications. <p>In 2005-06, over 44,000 job seekers were assisted in VRS (including 25,482 job seekers who commenced in 2005-06), at a cost of \$141.08m.</p> <p>Welfare to Work reforms announced in the 2005-06 Budget have provided for a substantial increase in the services for job seekers with a disability. Additional funds have been made available to guarantee access to VRS for all eligible job seekers with partial work capacity and new part time activity test requirements from 1 July 2006 (an additional \$192 million over three years to assist more than an estimated 48,000 people).</p> <p>Work capacity for the purpose of eligibility and streaming to VRS will be determined by the new Job Capacity Assessment (JCA), conducted by JCA providers, which commenced on 1 July 2006.</p>
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Disability Employment Network (DEN), formerly Open Employment Services

The Disability Employment Network (DEN) provides specialist assistance to job seekers with a disability to gain and maintain employment in the open labour market.

The introduction of Case Based Funding for DEN services has been a major initiative of the Australian Government's disability service reforms. Commencing on 1 July 2005 it replaced previous block grant funding arrangements in a way that is both fair and equitable. Case based funding is a performance-based, fee-for-service arrangement where fees are paid to providers to assist job seekers with disabilities to find and keep employment. Fees are based on the job seekers' assessed level of support needs and employment outcomes achieved by providers.

Welfare to Work reforms announced in the 2005-06 Budget have provided for a substantial increase in the services for job seekers with a disability.

Additional funds have been made available to guarantee access to DEN for all eligible job seekers with partial work capacity and new part time activity test requirements from 1 July 2006 (\$173.5 million to assist an estimated 21,000 people over 3 years).

Work capacity for the purpose of eligibility and streaming to DEN will be determined by the new Job Capacity Assessment (JCA), conducted by JCA providers, which commenced on 1 July 2006.

The uncapped stream, which commenced on 1 July 2006, is for job seekers who have a part-time participation requirement and an assessed work capacity of 15-29 hours per week and an ability to work at or above minimum wages and to become independent in the workplace within 2 years.

Non activity-tested job seekers will still be eligible for assistance through the existing DEN capped stream. For DEN this includes job seekers who require long-term employment assistance or ongoing support in the workplace, or are unable to work at minimum award rates, or have an assessed future work capacity of 8-14 hours per week, or assessed future work capacity of 0-7 hour per week but are assessed as being able to achieve a higher level of work capacity with ongoing support. In 2005-2006 227 DEN capped stream providers assisted over 55,000 people with a disability.

Star Ratings for DEN providers -

The introduction of comparative provider performance assessments from July 2006 will further integrate the DEN programme into the Department of Employment and Workplace Reforms comprehensive performance framework. These performance ratings will be modeled on the Job Network Star Ratings but specifically developed and tailored to the characteristics and circumstances of DEN services.

Supported Employment Services

The *Australians Working Together* package announced in the 2001-02 Budget provided extra support and assistance to improve the participation of people with a disability through the provision of funding for an additional 24 000 places in disability employment services over four years to 2004-05. In addition, the new Quality Strategy was introduced to the sector.

Following a two year trial of the Case Based Funding model, its implementation within Disability Employment Assistance funding agreements was announced in the 2003-04 Budget and \$135.3 million was allocated over four years towards this. For business services, Case Based Funding was to be implemented progressively from 1 July 2004 and for open employment services Case Based Funding would be implemented from 1 January 2005. A further \$25.4 million was also provided over two years to improve business service viability.

On 1 December 2004, in line with machinery of government changes, responsibility for open employment services was transferred from FaCS to Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. FaCS retained responsibility for business services and overall responsibility for quality assurance for employment services funded under the DSA, that is, both open employment services and business services.

A comprehensive consultation involving business services, consumers and their families/carers was conducted in 2003, '*The Safety Net – How will people with disabilities be protected as business services adjust to the reforms*' in an effort to obtain feedback on the reform process. These consultations provided valuable input to the subsequent 2004-05 Budget package of measures, '*Security, quality service and choice for people with disabilities*'. This package, which provided an additional \$99 million over four years to the sector, included a range of assistance measures for business services and their current employees that included:

- a guarantee that no person would lose access to a service as a result of the changes;
- an assurance that no sole business service in a town or region would close due to changes in the sector;
- and offered assistance to directly address business viability issues, including the impact of wage increases.

The package also released the new case based funding model and the business services wage assessment tool (BSWAT).

Employer Incentive Schemes (EIS)

The Welfare to Work package recognised that people with a disability can, and will, continue to contribute to the Australian workforce. The Australian Government increased the assistance available to the Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) and Workplace Modifications Scheme (WMS). The Supported Wage System (SWS) received increased funding in the 2006 Budget.

Overall the Employer Incentives Scheme assisted 9964 people with disabilities into employment. Of these the National Disability Recruitment Coordination Service placed 952 workers with disabilities. 4,890 workers were approved under the Supported Wage System. 3,486 workers accessed the Wage Subsidy Scheme and 408 people received practical assistance under the Workplace Modifications Scheme

JobAccess

Job Access is an Employer Demand initiative announced in the 2005-06 Budget to increase employment opportunities for people with disability.

Job Access is a new resource that has been designed as a one-stop shop for all matters relating to employment of people with disability.

JobAccess is an online resource and telephone advice service that provides free, expert information and advice to:

- job seekers and their co-workers
- employers
- employment service providers.

The JobAccess web site has information about the full range of government services and incentive schemes in Australia for the employment of people with disability.

It also has step-by-step guides on:

- recruitment
- job searching
- adjusting a workplace

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding rights and responsibilities at work • addressing common concerns, and much more. <p>JobAccess can be visited on the web at www.jobaccess.gov.au or by calling a JobAccess Adviser on 1800 464 800.</p> <p><u>COAG Mental Health – Additional funds to help people with mental illness enter and remain in employment</u></p> <p>This 2006 Budget measure was developed as part of the Australian Government’s commitment of \$1.9 billion to COAG’s ‘Better mental health services for Australia’ package.</p> <p>This initiative provides 2,500 additional places in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations’ (DEWR) Personal Support Programme (PSP) to help people with a mental illness who are not yet ready to use employment services. Additional funding will be provided for post placement support through Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Disability Employment Network Services. The number of places for people whose jobs are in jeopardy will also be increased to assist more employees who are having difficulties because of their condition.</p> <p>This measure also funds projects to test the most effective ways of providing employment assistance for people with a mental illness and disseminate information to employers, service providers and jobseekers.</p>
<p>Housing</p>	<p>Commonwealth State Housing Agreement</p> <p>The Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) is a formal agreement between the Australian Government and each state and territory government, which sets out the framework for housing assistance and includes guiding principles, funding amounts and major housing program elements. The 2003 CSHA has been agreed for the period 1 July 2003 to 30 June 2008. The Australian Government will provide grants estimated at \$4.75 billion over the life of the 2003 CSHA to states and territories who will provide housing assistance to people unable to access alternative suitable housing options. The program is about the supply of appropriate, affordable and secure welfare housing.</p> <p>The Australian Government provides significant assistance to people with disability to access housing through its contribution to the CSHA. For example, in 2004-05 27.8 per cent of rebated public housing households and 17.6 per cent of rebated households assisted through the Aboriginal Rental Housing</p>

	<p>Program were households receiving a DSP. Furthermore, 58.8 per cent of new public households assisted in 2004-05 were households where at least one member of the household had a disability. Around 27 per cent of community housing households had some sort of disability.</p> <p>Supported Accommodation Assistance Program</p> <p>The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) was established in 1985 to consolidate a number of Commonwealth, State and Territory government programs assisting homeless people and women and children escaping domestic violence. SAAP provides recurrent funding for salaries and other operational costs associated with the provision of housing and support for people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.</p> <p>The States and Territories are responsible for managing the program, while services are provided largely by independent agencies.</p> <p>Total funding for SAAP V is \$1.92 billion. The Australian Government contribution is \$932 million over the five years of the agreement.</p> <p>SAAP provides a significant level of support to clients with a disability. In 2002-03, 24,900 SAAP clients (around 25%) were classified as having a disability. However, this is likely to be an underestimation as clients do not always seek assistance for their disability. This is particularly the case for people with mental health issues.</p> <p>For example, a study by Thomson Goodall Associates 2003 on homeless people who require a high level and complexity of service provision found that, during the four-week data collection period, 29% of SAAP clients required intensive and/or ongoing assistance with mental health issues.</p> <p>Disability clients in SAAP are more likely to seek assistance due to being a recent arrival in the area and due to recently leaving an institutions, eg prison, detention centre or hospital.</p>
<p>Education</p>	<p>Higher Education Disability Support Program</p> <p>The Higher Education Disability Support Program, started in 2005, provides funding to eligible higher education providers to undertake activities that assist in removing barriers to access for students with disabilities. Around \$6.6 million is being provided to institutions in 2006 under this program to support students with disabilities.</p>

2005-2008 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce

The Agreement sets out shared priorities between the Australian and State and Territory Governments in partnership with business and industry for vocational and technical education in Australia.

Through this agreement States and Territories will receive record funding from the Australian Government of \$4.97 billion over the 2005-2008 quadrennium, including \$215 million of additional funding for Australians Working Together.

All states and territories are required to increase the number of training places nationally, in specified areas, over the life of the Agreement. These broad areas are Australian Apprentices in skill shortage areas; skill shortage areas other than traditional trades; mature age and/or youth; people with a disability; and, Indigenous Australians.

The specific target for people with a disability is 10,000 additional places over three years for people with a disability.

Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme

In 2005-06 the Australian Government supported those apprentices and trainees identified as having a disability or disabilities with \$12.7 million (GST excl) in the form of employer incentives, wage subsidies and other benefits under its Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme (AAIP).

Disability Coordination Officer Programme and Regional Disability Liaison Officer Initiative

The Disability Coordination Officer (DCO) Programme, which commenced in 2002, and the Regional Disability Liaison Officer (RDLO) Initiative, in place since 1994, aim to assist people with a disability move between school, vocational and technical education (VTE) and higher education, to succeed in their chosen studies and move to suitable employment.

The DCO Programme allocation in 2006-07 is \$2.176 million and the RDLO Initiative allocation for the 2006 calendar year is \$0.942 million.

Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN)

	<p>Programme</p> <p>The Australian Government is providing targeted funding of an estimated \$2 billion over the 2005-08 quadrennium through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Programme to support the most educationally disadvantaged school students, including students with disabilities. Under the Schools Grants element of this Programme, the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$1.8 billion over the quadrennium. Of this, approximately \$429 million has been initially allocated nationally in 2006 and the element is supporting 134,756 students with disabilities within the target group of educationally disadvantaged students.</p> <p>The Non-Government Centres Support (NGCS) element of the LNSLN programme is to improve the educational opportunities and learning outcomes of children with disabilities (0-18 years) who receive services provided by non-government centres.</p> <p>Approximately, \$144 million will be allocated to the programme over 2005-08, an increase of around \$32 million from 2001-04.</p>
<p>Community Care</p>	<p>Home and Community Care Programme (HACC)</p> <p>The HACC Programme for the frail aged and for people with disabilities and their carers is jointly funded by the Australian Government and the state and territory governments. The Australian Government contributes approximately 60 per cent of programme funds and maintains a broad strategic role. The states and territories make up the remaining 40 per cent in matching contributions which in some states include contributions from local government. State and territory governments are responsible for the day-to-day management of the programme.</p> <p>In 2006-07, the Australian Government will provide an estimated \$928.4 million to the HACC Programme, an increase of 8.2 per cent over 2005-06. Should all states and territories agree to match the Australian Government's offer of funding, a total of \$1.5 billion will be provided nationally for the HACC Programme in 2006-07. HACC has had growth of 6% real per annum over the past 10 years.</p> <p>HACC services include community nursing, domestic assistance, personal care, meals on wheels and day-centre based meals, home modification and maintenance, transport and community-based respite care (mostly day care).</p>

<p>Mental Health</p>	<p>COAG Mental Health - Support for Day-to-Day Living in the Community</p> <p>The Australian Government has committed \$46 million over 5 years to the COAG Mental Health - Support for Day-to-Day Living in the Community initiative as part of its \$1.9 billion contribution to the COAG Mental Health package announced in the 2006-07 Budget.</p> <p>Around 507,000 Australians (2.5 per cent) are affected by a severe mental disorder. Approximately 70,000 of these individuals suffer from a psychiatric disability. Research has shown that specific 'living skills' programmes that engage individuals with psychiatric disabilities in community life reduces the frequency and severity of symptoms and contributes to an improved quality of life. The new Support for Day-to-Day Living in the Community initiative will support the non-government sector in providing structured living skills programmes.</p>
<p>Other Programs that Assist People With Disability, their Families And Carers</p>	
<p>Respite</p>	<p>National Respite for Carers Programme</p> <p>The Australian Government funds a range of information, respite care and support services under the National Respite for Carers Programme to assist carers of frail older people, people with dementia, people under 65 years with moderate, severe or profound disabilities who are living at home, people with a terminal illness in need of palliative care. The carers assisted may be of any age.</p> <p>More than 500 respite services provide respite care in a variety of community settings. Around 25 per cent of services target younger people with disabilities. Respite services assisted an estimated 33,000 carers in 2004-05. Commonwealth Carelink Centres assist people with information about what is available in their local areas. Nationally, on average, Carelink Centres assist over 15,000 clients per month to find out about local services.</p> <p>Across Australia, 56 Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres (usually located with Commonwealth Carelink Centres) specialise in helping carers find and use respite services in their local area. The Centres help plan practical approaches to respite and other support needs and can also arrange 24-hour emergency respite. In 2003-04, Commonwealth Carer Respite Centres assisted 50,291 carers, 20,036 (39.8 per cent) of whom were carers of younger people with disability. Over</p>

	<p>\$10.6 million was provided to broker short term respite for younger people with disability, which represents over 47 per cent of the total funding spent on brokerage. In 2004-05 (most recent figures), 59,733 carers were assisted with 40.4 per cent being carers of younger people with disability, with close to \$11.4 million (47 per cent) of brokerage funding being spent on respite for younger people with disability.</p> <p>Overall funding for these initiatives is expected to total nearly \$160 million in 2005-06 and rise to \$187.1 million in 2006-07.</p> <p><u>Older Carers Respite Initiative -</u></p> <p>In the 2004-05 Budget, the Australian Government announced it would commit \$72.5 million over four years, subject to matching commitments by state and territory governments, to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • up to four weeks respite care to parent carers aged over 70 years; • up to two weeks respite care for parent carers aged between 65 and 69 years, who need to spend time in hospital. <p>The \$72.5 million offer was conditional on state and territory governments committing a similar amount of money and managing the combined funds so that they directly assist older parent carers.</p>
<p>Regional Services</p>	<p>The <i>Regional Partnerships</i> program, which is administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services (the Department), has four objectives which are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate growth in regions by investing in projects that strengthen and provide greater opportunities for economic and social participation in the community; • Improve access to services by investing in projects that, in a cost effective and sustainable way, support communities to access services. It will priority to communities in regional Australia with a population of less than 5,000; • Support planning by investing in projects that assist communities to identify and explore opportunities and to develop strategies for action, and/or • Help communities make structural adjustments in regions by investing in projects that assist specifically identified communities and regions adjust to major economic, social or environmental change. <p>Information on the <i>Regional Partnerships</i> program, including</p>

	<p>the program guidelines and application form, can be obtained through its website: www.regionalpartnerships.gov.au. The <i>Regional Partnerships</i> website also lists approved projects.</p> <p>Under the <i>Regional Partnerships</i> program, assistance is available from an Australia-wide network of Area Consultative Committees to make it easier for communities to apply for Australian Government funding for regional development projects. The Area Consultative Committees can provide information and assist in developing an application and they are the key providers of independent advice to the Department on all applications under this program.</p> <p>The <i>Regional Partnerships</i> program has funded a number of projects which have provided assistance for people with disabilities. Details of these projects can be provided on request.</p> <p><i>Regional Partnerships</i> has funded a range of other projects which, while not specifically directed at, may provide assistance to people with disabilities including the development of community infrastructure, such as community halls, upgrading of sporting facilities or respite care facilities.</p>
<p>Advocacy</p>	<p>National Disability Advocacy Program</p> <p>The National Disability Advocacy Program is to help people with disabilities, their families and carers to get involved in community life as fairly and as fully as possible.</p> <p>The Australian Government currently funds 71 advocacy agencies Australia-wide at a cost of \$11.9 million. State and Territory Governments provide \$4 million for advocacy services.</p> <p>A review is currently underway of the effectiveness of the Program. A final report has yet to be received from the consultant. Once finalised, the report will be used to develop options for the future of the advocacy program. It is expected a small-scale consultation process will be conducted in late August with the sector.</p>
<p>Assistance to Carers</p>	<p>Carer payment and Carer allowance</p> <p>Carers are assisted through a number of Australian Government payments and services.</p> <p>Carer Payment is an income support payment for people whose caring responsibilities prevent them from undertaking substantial workforce participation. The payment is means tested and paid at the same rate as other social security</p>

pensions. In June 2005 there were 95,446 carers receiving Carer Payment. Around 90 per cent of these care givers also received Carer Allowance. Outlays on Carer Payment over the 2004-05 financial year amounted to \$1.062 billion.

Carer Allowance is an income supplement for people who provide daily care and attention at home to a person who has disabilities or a severe medical condition. The payment is not means tested; and is indexed annually by the CPI. In June 2005 there were 339,476 carers receiving Carer Allowance. Outlays on Carer Allowance over the 2004-05 financial year amounted to \$1.109 billion.

Information on growth in payments and no of customers is at [Attachment B](#).

Gifting and other initiatives

The Australian Government, through the Family and Community Services portfolio, has announced significant additional assistance for carers over the past two years. The measures total in excess of \$1 billion, and are in recognition of the wide diversity of carers, their various care situations, the range of care needs, and the long-term commitment of many carers.

On 13 October 2005 a package of measures worth more than \$200 million assist parents or immediate family members wishing to make private financial provisions for the current and future care and accommodation for their son or daughter with severe disability. Where a specific trust is established solely to provide for the care and accommodation needs of a person with a severe disability, the Australian Government will exempt that trust from the social security and veterans' affairs means test. Contributions to the trust by immediate family members who are within five years of age pension age or older will be exempt from the gifting rules.

Other measures have included:

- Carer bonus payments paid to eligible carers in June 2004, 2005 and 2006 of \$1,000 to Carer Payment recipients, and \$600 to Carer Allowance recipients for each eligible care receiver. In June 2006 the one-off carer bonus of \$1,000 was extended to recipients of Carer Allowance who also receive Wife Pension or the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Partner Service Pension

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing peer support groups for parents of young children with disabilities. • Respite for young carers at risk of prematurely leaving school or vocational equivalent education, and information services for young carers under 25 years of age. • Increased access to respite for ageing parents caring for their adult children with disabilities or severe medical conditions. <p>When Carer Payment recipients reach age pension age they may choose to stay on Carer Payment or transfer to Age Pension. In the financial year 2004 - 2005 there were 2,211 Carer Payment recipients who transferred to Age Pension. In June 2005 some 25% of Carer Allowance recipients were aged 65 or over.</p>
<p>Assistance to Children with Disability</p>	<p>Early Childhood – Invest to Grow</p> <p><i>Invest to Grow</i> is one of four streams of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (2004-2009). <i>Invest to Grow</i> provides funding for early childhood programs and resources with the aim of contributing to improved outcomes for young children and building the Australian evidence base about what works in prevention and early intervention in early childhood. Total funding under Invest to Grow for programs to support children with disabilities is around \$6.4 million over 4 years. Of these, two programs are autism specific and total \$1.2 million.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism Spectrum Australia's <i>Building Blocks</i> program (\$990,000 over four years) on the NSW far north coast provides children with Autism Spectrum Disorders or developmental disabilities with a structured 2 hours per week early intervention program that runs for a school year. The program also supports parents and families via group sessions and a resource centre. • Autism Queensland's <i>ProAQtive</i> program (\$220,000 over two years) which aims to develop skills and competence of children with autism spectrum disorders and provides family support. Invest to Grow funding has enabled the conduct of a robust evaluation, rather than directly funding the service delivery. <p>Other Invest to Grow programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kurrajong Waratah's <i>Rural Beginnings</i> program (\$1.5m over four years) which provides early intervention for children with disabilities and developmental delays via a hub and spoke model to families in the rural area surrounding Wagga Wagga. The model includes family support and behaviour

management training to ensure a holistic family centred response to support these children.

- Macquarie Research Ltds' Special Teaching and Research (STaR) Project (\$500,000 over four years) which aims to provide developmental/educational programs for children with disabilities within a generic early childhood/child care service.
- The Royal institute for Deaf and Blind's Remote Early Learning program (\$1.9 million over four years) which targets children with a sensory impairment aged 0-5 who live in rural and regional areas. It uses technologies such as videoconferencing, video recording, email, audio recording and digital photography in working with families and agencies to develop skills and strategies for supporting these young children.
- St Giles Vital Therapy and Family Support program (\$1.2m over four years) which supports children with disabilities or developmental delays and their families to achieve the best possible developmental outcomes and maximum independence. It focuses on speech therapy and family support.

New Inclusion Support Subsidy

The Inclusion Support Subsidy replaced the Disabled Supplementary Services Payment (DSUPS) and the Special Needs Subsidy Scheme (SNSS) on 1 July 2006. The subsidy is part of the integrated inclusion and Professional Support Program designed to promote and maintain high quality care and inclusion for all children in quality child care environments. The subsidy will assist eligible child care services to improve their capacity to include children with ongoing high support needs.

The DSUPS program assisted the access and participation of children with ongoing high support needs, including children with disabilities in Australian Government approved child care services. Expenditure on DSUPS in 2005-06 was approximately \$3 million.

The SNSS program increased the access and participation of children with ongoing high support needs in Australian Government approved child care services. The program was targeted at children with ongoing high support needs whose need for access and participation in a child care service could not be met by the child care service alone, or with the types of services provided by the Supplementary Services Program or other relevant services. Expenditure on SNSS in 2005-06 was approximately \$34 million.

<p>Assistance to Veterans</p>	<p>The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has a range of programs and support mechanisms to assist people with disabilities and those who care for them. These are summarised below.</p> <p><u>Payments:</u></p> <p>Service pension: paid (subject to means testing) on the basis of permanent incapacity to disabled veterans who incurred danger from hostile enemy forces during a period of hostilities and are unable to work.</p> <p>Disability pension: paid to veterans of Australia's Defence Force who have service-related disabilities from their war or peacekeeping service, or their peacetime service between 1972 and 1994.</p> <p>Incapacity Payments: Australian Defence Force members injured may receive incapacity payments to replace earnings lost due to incapacity for service or work; permanent impairment payments; assistance with vocational and other rehabilitation; and a range of other payments such as vehicle modification, household care, attendant care, telephone allowance. Dependent children of disabled members may also receive a lump sum and education assistance.</p> <p>Other payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children of severely injured veterans may receive benefits under the Veterans' Children Education Scheme. • Periodic incapacity payments may be paid to replace earnings lost through injury, medical treatment and rehabilitation. • Impairment payments may be paid in respect of a service-related disability. In cases of "severe injury", recipients' dependent children may be entitled to payments fortnightly payments until they reach 16 years of age. <p>A range of other payments and allowances is also available including rent assistance, pharmaceutical allowance, loss of earnings allowance, temporary incapacity allowance, attendant allowance and clothing allowance. Severely disabled veterans may also be entitled to assistance under the Vehicle Assistance Scheme and a GST exemption on the purchase of a new or used car and spare parts.</p> <p><u>Services:</u></p> <p>Veterans' Home Care - the Veterans' Home Care (VHC) program provides a range of home care services for eligible veterans and war widows and widowers. Services such as</p>
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	<p>domestic assistance, personal care, home and garden maintenance and respite care may be provided subject to assessed need.</p> <p>Other Services include convalescent care, aids and appliance, community nursing, homefront, attendant allowance, recreational transport allowance and Vietnam veterans counselling services.</p>
<p>Information for people with disability</p>	<p>The Australian Government provides funding for a range of initiatives designed to provide accessible information for people with disabilities. The National Relay Service provides services to enable people who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment to use the telephone. In December 2000, the world's first national text-based emergency call service was launched as a part of the National Relay Service.</p> <p>Radio Services for the Print Handicapped is a community broadcasting service that has a beneficial impact on the lives of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Job Access is a new resource that has been designed as a one-stop shop for all matters relating to employment of people with disability.</p> <p>Job Access is an online resource and telephone advice service that provides free, expert information and advice to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers and their co-workers • Employers • Employment service providers
<p>Advice</p>	
<p>Peak Bodies</p>	<p>National Secretariat Program</p> <p>FaCSIA currently funds 19 peak organisations under the National Secretariat Program to enable them to act as a conduit to carry information on government direction to the community and convey the views of their members to the government.</p> <p>Peak bodies are specifically funded to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to government policies affecting Australian families and communities • carry information between the government and the community on social policy issues, • represent constituents' views.

	<p>The peak organisations represent the welfare, disabilities, children, family, homelessness and community sectors.</p> <p>In 2004-05, the Department funded ACROD, the national industry association for disability services, and 9 national disability consumer peak bodies including the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations.</p> <p>In 2004-05, the Department spent approximately \$1.7 million on secretariat support for the national disability peaks.</p>
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