

**THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA**

**SYNOD OF VICTORIA**

**DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

**2000 – 2003**

Produced by  **UnitingCare** **VICTORIA**  
for the Synod of Victoria

## ***An Interfaith Litany for Wholeness***

Leader: Let us pray for all God's people.

For people who are blind and cannot see, and for those who can see but are blind to people around them,

**Response: God, in your mercy, help us touch each other.**

Leader: For people who move slowly because of accident, illness or disability, and for those who move too fast to be aware of the world in which they live,

**Response: God, in your mercy help us work together.**

Leader: For people who are deaf and cannot hear, and for those who can hear but who ignore the cries of others,

**Response: God, in your mercy help us respond to each other.**

Leader: For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance,

**Response: God, in your mercy help us grow in your wisdom.**

Leader: For families, friends and care-givers who serve people with disabilities, and for those who feel awkward in their presence,

**Response: God, in your mercy help us see each other with your eyes.**

Leader: For people who feel isolated by their disabilities, and for people who contribute to that sense of isolation,

**Response: God, in your mercy, change our lives.**

Leader: For all people in your creation, that we may learn to respect each other and learn how to live together in your peace,

**Response: God, in your mercy, bind us together.**

**All: Amen**

Written by Rev. Kate Chipps and adapted by Ginny Thornburgh.

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**“My daughter is an exuberant and sociable girl who is potentially unable to access the teaching and community life of the church due to total deafness. Fortunately, the people at the church she attends were keen to respond, and many undertook tutoring in sign language. The children’s segment at the worship service is visual and fully signed. I feel very sad when I think of all the silent deaf who have missed out on opportunities to really participate in church life—in the teachings, symbolism and community, because of their impairment. I think of the riches that programs or efforts toward inclusiveness bestow on everyone”.**

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
Moderator's Message	2
Task Group Convenor	3
Theological Background	4
History of the Uniting Church and Disability	7
Disability and Discrimination	10
Disability Experiences, Barriers and Attitudes	14
Preparing an Action Plan?	16
Resources	21
<b>Overcoming Barriers to Participation</b>	
Childcare Centres, Schools, Agencies	23
Property and Access	24
Congregations and Presbyteries	25
Synod	26

## **Acknowledgments**

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## Moderator's Message

Greetings. It is both pleasing and disturbing to commend to you this Disability Action Plan of the Uniting Church in Australia—Synod of Victoria. Pleasing because it stands in the long tradition of the Uniting Church's faithful commitment to justice and compassion with people marginalised by disability. Pleasing also because this Plan outlines a way forward for us to continue responding in practical and creative ways to ensure people with disabilities can fully participate in the life of the Uniting Church. This is consistent with our call 'to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself' (*Basis of Union Para 3*).

It is disturbing that discrimination is an ongoing concern. It is important to note that the Uniting Church is not exempt from the requirements of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. We need to address the issue in an intentional manner, and all areas of the Uniting Church need to be continually vigilant in pursuing the elimination of any discriminatory practices.

I want to encourage and challenge you. Encourage you to read this Plan, and challenge you to speak with another person or persons about your response. Think about your involvement in the life of the Uniting Church, and ask the question: "How might we improve what we are presently offering to ensure people with disabilities are fully participating?"

This Plan was developed by a Task Group appointed by Standing Committee, and arose from a 1998 Resolution of Synod. I commend this significant Disability Action Plan to you for reading and response. On behalf of the Synod I thank all members of the Task Group for their diligent and faithful contribution to this important work.

Yours in Christ,



**Rev. Alistair Macrae**  
Moderator  
Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of Victoria

## **Task Group Convenor**

At the heart of the goals and strategies of this Disability Action Plan, 2000–2003, is hospitality, and what takes place in a meal shared, a common experience, a journey together. This is one of our central calls as Christian communities. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that ‘in welcoming and entertaining strangers, we welcome angels without knowing it’. (Hebrews 13:2)

An Action Plan does have implications, legal and otherwise, that are being asked or demanded of us. Our minds turn to questions of property alterations and costs involved. Whilst we cannot avoid some of the economic implications of being an ‘accessible’ community, there is renewed hope and energy for the vision if approached from the motif of hospitality. We are invited to consider the ways in which those known to us, and those who are strangers, can access our community. How do we find each other? What attitudes and values will they encounter in our midst? Are there roadblocks: physical, attitudinal, emotional and historical that affect our ability to be communities of hospitality?

In the development of the Action Plan, the Task Group held consultations with two presbyteries, rural and metropolitan: Loddon–Campaspe and Maroondah. Questionnaires and/or information were circulated to childcare centres, schools and community services organisations within the domain of Synod. The results of a 1998 survey to congregations have also been used in the development of the series of actions contained within the Plan. The Action Plan complements the strategies of access and equity already undertaken by a number of congregations and services of the Uniting Church.

The proposed course of actions contained within this Action Plan, found in the Chapter ‘Overcoming Barriers to Participation’, will be submitted to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. This is a sign of the Uniting Church’s commitment to finding intentional means to eliminate any discrimination towards people with disabilities.

At Synod 1998, when it was resolved to develop an Action Plan, the late Ms. Elizabeth Hastings was the Director of Justice and Social Responsibility within the Synod. Prior to that Elizabeth had been Australia’s first Disability Discrimination Commissioner. The Task Group recognises and pays tribute to her commitment and early involvement in the development of this Plan.

On behalf of the Disability Action Plan Task Group, thank you to everyone who has contributed to the development of this work. It is the hope and prayer of the Task Group that our hospitality as the Uniting Church always finds ‘the stranger being entertained in our midst’.

Yours in ministry,

**Rev. (Deacon) Andy Calder**  
**Convenor – Disability Action Plan Task Group**

## Theological Background

What is the purpose behind setting up an *action plan*?

Organisations doing so have a genuine desire to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal place in society. Others will perhaps create a plan simply to stave off complaints and legal action.

When it comes to the church the mandate is clearly to do with universal justice and equity. The Hebrew prophets were particularly concerned about justice for people on the margins of society and who were ignored because of their being 'different'. The New Testament carried that message even further.

This is not simply a call for generosity of spirit, though that is assumed, but it is a call for *structural justice*. For instance, the prophets were not simply concerned with the plight of the poor and the widow, they were concerned about the societal structures that oppressed the weaker members. They avoided blaming the victim and instead asked the more radical question of what is wrong with a system that allows injustice to persist. The question is; *how does a system maintain discrimination against people with disabilities?*

What is it about the structures of the Church that maintain discrimination against people with disabilities in the life of the faith community? It is not only a case of better physical access to church buildings, it is about how the church goes about developing policy, planning and programming. It is about the culture and attitudes that perpetuate discrimination. It is about the theology of the church.

While hospitality is about welcoming a person into our midst, it is also about recognising the *person's living reality*. It means validating that person's *disability world*. Among other things, this entails being sensitive to their situation, without being embarrassed by it; being empathetic without condescension; being there with another person, without intruding into their independence. It also means anticipating the areas of possible discrimination and exclusion, in order to ensure the church does not become the 'disabler'.

This may seem obvious in theory, but in practice the church is still found wanting. Paternalism and prejudice still linger. Perhaps this is best illustrated by how the church goes about providing wheelchair access to its buildings. There are still instances where wheelchair access occurs not where everyone else enters, but at the back, or side, hidden from view. It is like forcing the workers to enter the manor house through the kitchen.

However, the theological basis for the church's attitude is deeper than simply hospitality. It goes to the root of how we understand God.

Some people with disabilities experience life as living 'outside the mainstream'. That means living outside the 'norms' of society. As Kerrie Thorne says;

*As a person with a disability I have to define my own way. I have to work out what I value, what I'm trying to do with my life, what quality of life or hope I have. Often what I come up with may not be looked upon as worthwhile to others—it can be quite an individual thing.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Kerrie Thorne *Outside the Mainstream* Published in "Challenging Disabled Practices: Talking about Issues of Disability". 1997 Dulwich Centre, Adelaide p27 – 30.

Therefore the word *achievement* takes on a new meaning. While society measures achievement in terms of a hierarchy of skills, knowledge, or wealth, the person with a disability may view achievement in other ways. Our society places a high value on achievement, whether it be in work, skills or sport. And for many it is through the competition to achieve and win that they seek their identity. This excludes many people with disabilities.

Assumptions about what is *normal* can also be oppressive. Image-makers have much to answer for in our society, not to mention the economic system that fuels it. Such pressures to conform exclude many others in society.

On this basis, the person with a *disability stands over against* many of the norms and expectations of our culture. Excluded from this culture of achievement, disability confronts it. As well as struggling with questions surrounding *disability*, the church also needs to wrestle with its understanding of *ableness*.

If we understand God as being able to do anything, then we will probably define people on the basis of their *ableness*. What do we mean by the words “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”? (Matthew 5:48) Traditionally God’s perfection has to do with God’s complete, all-knowing, all-powerful character. God is absolute, completely independent. In this respect the command for us to be perfect is impossible. To use the word ‘perfect’, is however, a misreading of the text. It is more likely that Jesus is asking us to love as he loved, to be “all inclusive, as your heavenly Parent is all-inclusive”.<sup>2</sup>

The model of perfection comes out of the life and death of Christ. Here God is the God who is emptied and takes on the form of a slave ..., and becomes obedient to the point of death. (Philippians 2:7) This is not the God who exploited completeness, power, or independence; rather, the God who loved even unto death. If there is one message that runs through both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, it is about the faithfulness of God’s love. This is what perfection is about. This is when God is most complete.

As Bonhoeffer has said, the Bible directs us to the ‘powerlessness and suffering of God; only a suffering God can help’.<sup>3</sup> God conquers not through mighty power but through weakness. It is the *disabled God*<sup>4</sup> on the cross who conquers. On the cross God suffers with and for us. God becomes the suffering companion who understands the suffering of the other. It is the suffering God who most speaks to our human reality, for behind the suffering there is the proof of God’s love.

It is out of this understanding of God as the suffering and loving God, that as Christians and as a church, we can best address the situation of people with disabilities. People are seen not in terms of ‘ableness’ but in terms of how God loved on the cross. In a very special sense God sees the world in the way the person with a disability experiences it. The challenge for us comes out of the parable of the last judgment. (Matthew 25:31-46) God is present to us in a very concrete way in the stranger, the poor and the hungry.

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<sup>2</sup> Walter Wink *The Powers that Be: A Theology for a New Millenium*. 1998 Galilee Doubleday Sydney. p167.

<sup>3</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer *Letters and Papers from Prison*. 1953 SCM London. p164.

<sup>4</sup> Burton Cooper *The Disabled God* Published in “Theology Today”. 1992 Princeton, NJ.

In this God confronts a world that is hung up on 'ableness', on performance, on perfection, on being 'normal'. The person with a disability becomes that concrete confrontation, judging the superficial values of a world that measures and assesses life on the basis of certain scales of achievement. A reminder again that as Christians our identity and worth comes from elsewhere.

For if we are to take our place as a church, then we too must be outside the mainstream, for we are in the world but not of it. The task of the church is not to necessarily bring the person with a disability into the world of the church, but rather to see that person as one in God's world, a world we share with each other. That is a world that espouses the value of suffering love above all else, and where 'achievement' takes on a different meaning, and where our real value comes from our life in Christ.

In the end, the church, the Body of Christ, will always "remain broken and incomplete without the presence and participation of people with disabilities as full and equal members".<sup>5</sup>

**"Though slightly disabled, I felt called to become a presbytery representative. Initially things went well, but as my disability increased, it made it more difficult for me to stand very long during the supper break. When I sat, no-one came to sit with me. I tried to use the break as a 'walking' time instead, but no-one came and walked with me. I then decided to stay in the church during supper-time, but I was generally alone. Recently my disability has meant the use of a wheelchair. Not knowing how to cope, most presbytery members generally chose to ignore me. I no longer go to presbytery, lest I cause further embarrassment. In any case the host church has no wheelchair access or disability toilet".**

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<sup>5</sup> *Part of the Body*. Crossroads Victoria, Strategic Plan 1995

## ***History of the Uniting Church and Disability***

Like many organisations, new initiatives of the Uniting Church with regard to people with disabilities began during the International Year of Disabled Persons 1981 (IYDP). An IYDP Committee, under the convenorship of Rev. John Howard, was established in 1980. A number of the church agencies had already done valuable work in this area and it was upon this tradition that the Committee built its work.

The IYDP Committee saw its major task as *raising awareness*. The 1980 Synod resolutions (80.3.6), raised issues of access and participation of people with disabilities in the life of the church and community. It recommended that parishes and the Synod become intentional in dealing with such issues. In 1981 the Synod designated a particular Sunday as Access Sunday.

In 1982 the Committee had a more specific focus. The Synod resolutions (82.5.9) included a policy statement (S/D1a.2) and further encouragement for parishes to recognise the contribution of people with disabilities in the life of the congregation and presbytery. The Theological Hall and the Commission on Continuing Education were both urged to take up the needs of people with disabilities in their programs and activities.

The Synod, presbyteries and congregations were requested *to act on making buildings and worship centres more accessible*. All new renovation and building plans were to incorporate proper access arrangements and provide clear access signs.

During the three years of its existence the IYDP Committee achieved a great deal, particularly in raising awareness. Members spent a great deal of time in deputation work throughout the church and it is upon their shoulders that we stand today.

There has been significant work done in the area of building-design to give greater access, and there is greater sensitivity of the needs of people with disabilities. Ramps and accessible toilets are now much more common. It is now customary for the opening Service of the Synod to be signed.

It is true that some congregations have further to go than others. While the focus was on congregational buildings in 1981, this has now been extended to all church agencies and schools. Property and architectural committees are much more conscious of their access obligations. The notion of access goes beyond physical access, and includes removing barriers to enable the full participation of people with sensory or intellectual impairments.

The significant change that has occurred over the past twenty years has been in the way the issue is addressed. Instead of seeing it as a problem for the person with a disability, we now need to see it in terms of a society that through its attitudes and actions *disables people*. It has been a move from a medical to a social model.

Within this framework (the medical model), a person's functional limitations (impairments) are the root cause of any disadvantages experienced and these disadvantages can therefore be rectified by treatment or cure.

The social model, in contrast, shifts the focus from impairment onto disability, using this term to refer to disabling social, environmental and attitudinal barriers, rather than a lack of ability.

After the high-energy years of 1980–82, disability issues took on a lower profile. But *disability* was now part of the language. Things were happening slowly and quietly. In 1996 the Synod Standing Committee endorsed ‘a process of intentional interaction with people with disabilities’. Congregations were urged to look at better ways of involving people with disabilities in the life and mission of the church (96/25.12).

The 1996 Synod established a Disability Working Group with Rev. (Deacon) Andy Calder as Resource Worker. Mrs. Joan McKenzie was appointed as an Order of St. Stephen candidate to support the work. In 1997–98 councils of elders, agencies, presbyteries and ministers were surveyed to discover “the variety of creative and important ways people with disabilities are being included in congregational and community life”.

The Working Group’s Vision Statement was: “In recognition of the unique gifts of all people, the network aims to enhance the capacity of the Uniting Church to include and honour people with disabilities in all aspects of its life”.

Congregations and agencies were encouraged to form discussion groups to reflect on the issues. The emphasis was on *involving people with disabilities* in the decision making.

Four hundred surveys were sent out to parishes and agencies within the Synod. Eighty-five responses were received. A range of questions were addressed, including participation and leadership in worship, pastoral care, use of auxiliary devices to assist people with hearing and sight impairments, and checking what physical modifications had been carried out.

With a 20% response rate, the information gave some indication as to what was happening in the church. (Summary available from Commission for Mission.) Clearly issues of physical access had been addressed by many of the respondents, so too had the inclusion of people with disabilities in worship. It was reported that pastoral visiting was taking place and large print materials were being used.

Though there is still a long way to go before the vision of the Working Group would be realised, there are some exciting stories to tell about what congregations are doing.

The Working Group used a newsletter to distribute material and also made visits to a number of parishes and agencies. One of the highlights of the year was the visit by Rev. Bill Gaventa from the USA in May 1998.

The Working Group looked at the significance of the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* 1992 and its significance for the Uniting Church. Consequently the Synod of 1998 affirmed ‘its commitment to creating a church that is for all people with disabilities (as defined by the DDA), and in all aspects of its life, free from discrimination’ (98.5.4.5).

As part of its commitment, the Synod appointed “a Task Group to implement an Action Plan under the DDA”. It began work in March 1999. In addition to discussing the Action Plan, the Task Group visited a rural and metropolitan presbytery to assess their current services and practices. This was extended in the form of conversations and questionnaires to Uniting Church schools and agencies.

By the end of 1999 it became clear that the Action Plan would be quite an extensive project. It was decided to enlist the Rev. Stuart Reid to put together the Plan in

consultation with the Task Group. The aim was that the Plan would be ready for the 2000 Synod and then lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

The Task Group is also in conversation with the Synod Property Committee to produce a Property Access Audit for use by congregations and agencies, to be available later in 2000.

UnitingCare Victoria, in collaboration with a range of agencies, congregations, Missions, and programs of the Uniting Church, continues to offer a range of supports, policy development, advocacy and care for people marginalised by disability.

<p><b>“It was raining. I arrived by taxi at the front door, but it was closed. It took some moments to get the attention of someone inside to open the door. It was great to finally get in out of the wind and rain and everyone was very friendly, saying how brave it was to come in this weather. I did want to come to church this morning. A couple of men offered to lift my chair up the steps, when a woman (presumably the wife of one) said, "Dear, don't you try lifting with your back the way it is". At that moment I was trying to thank them for the offer and also say "no thanks". I had once had a nasty fall when some well-intentioned people tried to lift my chair and I didn't want a repeat. I was starting to get embarrassed, why wasn't I like everyone else.</b></p>
<p><b>One man said there was a ramp at the side and promptly grabbed the chair and called out to someone to open the side door. Out into the wind and the rain again, around the corner and up the ramp. It seemed that the side door is rarely opened, so everyone was following my progress. To get in they had to move furniture and this affected those entering through the front door. They shut the side door and wheeled me down the aisle and placed me at the end of the pew. In all the confusion I did not have a hymn book, until a kind lady passed me hers. I was feeling very conspicuous and not much at ease.</b></p>
<p><b>At the end of the service the minister invited all to share in a cuppa in the hall. By this time I really needed a cuppa and so proceeded to wheel myself down the aisle to the door with everyone else. Then a man told me that I would either have to go out the side door I came in, or else around through the narthex and up a ramp to the hall. I was becoming even more confused and more in need of a cuppa.</b></p>
<p><b>I chose to stay and wait for people to leave. Then a man kindly wheeled me down the aisle and pushed me into the hall, entering the opposite side to everyone else. It was a 'grand entrance'. Someone got me a cuppa. After a while people began leaving by the front door. I knew I couldn't go that way because of the steps. Someone then wheeled me out another door out into the car park. I was by now emotionally exhausted and vowed not to go through it again”.</b></p>

## ***Disability and Discrimination***

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) Section 4(1), defines disability in fairly broad terms, as follows:

- \* the total or partial loss of a person's physical or mental functions (such as a person who has quadriplegia, brain damage, epilepsy, or who has vision, hearing or speech impairment);
- \* the total or partial loss of a part of the body (such as a person who has lost a limb, or a woman who has had a hysterectomy);
- \* the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness (such as infectious and non-infectious diseases and illnesses. For example, a person with AIDS, hepatitis, or TB, a person with allergies or who carries the typhoid bacteria);
- \* the malfunction, malformation, or disfigurement of a part of a person's body (such as a person suffering from asthma or diabetes, one who carries a birthmark or scar);
- \* a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from others (such as autism, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder or intellectual disability);
- \* any condition which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour (such as a person with a mental illness, neurosis or personality disorder).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998) indicates at least 19.3% of Australians identify as having a disability. For some people, disability has been there since birth, for others it is acquired. As people get older they are more likely to develop a disability of some kind. Some disabilities are not always 'obvious'. A person with a hearing impairment may pass unnoticed in a church service or meeting. A person with a poor heart may find it difficult to walk very far, or stand for a long time. This may not be apparent to all. It raises the question of whether our buildings, procedures and forms of worship are automatically friendly and universally accessible?

There are forms of disability which have not always been linked with discussions of disability. For instance the person who is extremely obese will find accessibility to buildings, vehicles, theatres very difficult. The extremely tall person, or person of short stature will experience disadvantage. Not to be forgotten are the carers, family and friends of people with disabilities who are in various ways involved in the circle of disability.

As Elizabeth Hastings suggests;

*It could be said that disability is one of the most commonplace occurrences in human living. It is certainly central to the experience of being human, both in its presence, and in the reaction of other human beings to its presence.<sup>1</sup>*

On a daily basis, all of us, whether disabled or not, are affected. It is an everyday part of life. It is rather curious that disability is;

*largely ignored in mainstream literature relating to counselling theory and technique, to theories of personality development, to child rearing, to family or couples therapy, to communication skills.<sup>2</sup>*

The question is whether it arises very much in the conversations of church councils and committees. Until recently, the church like so many other areas of society, dealt with disability in an ad hoc way, rather than in terms of anticipation and future planning.

## **Discrimination**

The DDA makes it unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis that they have or might have a disability. It is also unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis that one of their associates (partner, carer, friend or family member), has or may have a disability. This applies to any activity in our society, from the provision of goods and services to the provision of facilities.

It means that people with disabilities must be given equal opportunity to participate in and contribute to the full range of social, political, cultural and religious activities. The Act is not simply asking that society provide some limited or parallel access as an extra, but insists that 'equality of access' be integrated into the general provision of goods and services. This also applies to employment. When the church uses volunteers in its congregations and agencies, does equality of opportunity exist?

**Direct discrimination** refers to those situations where less favourable treatment is given to either a person or their associates. For example a person with a wheelchair may be given the worst seat in the restaurant, because their chair might get in the way of other patrons. People with disabilities have a right to the same level and quality of service as anyone else. Similarly, people with disabilities must have an equal right to participate in and offer leadership within the church and its agencies.

**"Bill liked going to church. Since his new medication allowed him to feel more alive he wanted to be with people. He was exploring faith and felt that he had God in his heart. An hour is too long for Bill to sit still, so he would wander out and have an early coffee, maybe a cigarette, and sometimes he would help himself to some milk if he was running short at home.**

**Because he was seeking companionship he wanted to join a men's group. The host for the evening made him welcome, but none of the other men spoke to him. Something about Bill's louder than usual voice in worship, or his restlessness must have made them think that he doesn't have needs for company like the rest of them, or that his feelings are somehow less likely to be hurt when he is treated with contempt. Now Bill says he won't go back to church. He doesn't want to risk being hurt again".**

The DDA also speaks of ***indirect discrimination***. This is where a person or institution requires a person to comply with certain conditions, which they simply cannot comply with, or which is unreasonable given the circumstances. This may involve having to comply with certain procedures or practices. For example, having to fill out a form when a person cannot write. In the case of employment, it is a prohibitive practice to place a job advertisement with only a contact phone number. In the case of education, it could be argued that a curriculum that demands a lot of physical mobility is discriminatory.

But discrimination occurs in more subtle ways. It is even often difficult for the person with the disability to articulate how it occurs. As Elizabeth Hastings says, “one just ‘knows’ there’s something fishy going on”.

Much discrimination comes through personal interactions, such as a patronising demeanour, the tone of voice, embarrassment or through simple avoidance.

We have witnessed of late the struggle of people with disabilities in claiming their rights in respect of human and intimate relationships, particularly in the area of sexuality. This is an issue over which many in the church and the community are acutely embarrassed. Some people find it difficult to accept the fact that people with disabilities also have sexual needs. The church’s struggle with gay and lesbian sexual activity, the awkwardness with which it acknowledges sexual desire among ageing people, has its parallel in its attitude towards some people with disabilities. Too often people with disabilities are regarded as ‘sexually neutral’.

It is easy to make assumptions about people with disabilities. A person who has lived with a disability from birth will experience life differently to a person who has no such disability. For one thing, their disability may have involved considerable dependence, which would affect their perception and experience of autonomy.

## **Universal Access**

Universal access means more than physical access. It encompasses how people with disabilities will feel included and involved in the life and programs of the church.

***Whilst access to a church may be seen as gaining entry into it, the concept of accessibility embraces not only entry to, but also enjoyment of, the use of all the building’s services and facilities.***

Put simply, the church needs to consider carefully what people need if they are to share fully in the life of the church and assess what barriers exist that will prevent that happening. Those barriers are not just physical, but include how people have access to participation in worship and other church activities.

It is no longer sufficient to provide alternative access to buildings. True accessibility occurs when people with disabilities have *access in the same way as everyone else*, eg. they need to have access through the same door. We need to avoid the situation of people being made into ‘spectacles’ before the crowd.

When a church building is accessible, when the worship and activities are truly accessible, then a great number of other people are also enabled: elderly people, people who are unwell, children, parents with prams. Once, we would have asked, how can we help the person with a disability? Today the question needs to be reframed. People with disabilities

are not the problem. The problem comes from outside. Disability is what happens when decisions makers build buildings, form policies, organise worship, arrange meetings, and plan social activities for the *mainstream majority*.

**“We, as members of the church, are disabled when people assume we will not want to join in, or decide for us rather than giving us the same choice as they have”.**

We are not dealing with disabled people, but a church and a society that by its actions, does the disabling. This is behind the concept of universal access.

It is not a matter of waiting until a person with disabilities turns up at the church door, to do something about accessibility. The church needs to plan preemptively for all people. Even if there is no one in a wheelchair, the church nevertheless needs to plan for suitable wheel-chair access.

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Hastings *Hidden Disability Discrimination* Published in "Challenging Disabled Practices: Talking about Issues of Disability" 1997 Dulwich Centre, Adelaide p 8-11

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Hastings *ibid*

**“I was sitting on the bathroom floor with my two year old niece watching the front loading washing machine do its final spins. My niece knew I would take her outside when I had to hang out the washing. All of a sudden I dribbled. My niece went into my kitchen, picked up the serviette, brought it in and wiped my chin. I was reminded of Jesus’ words to “enter the Kingdom of God, we must enter it as a child”. My niece loves me, accepts me, and cares for me. If only all people were as accepting of disability”.**

## **Disability Experiences, Barriers and Attitudes**

Much discrimination is caused by ignorance, embarrassment and lack of experience. People may be sensitive to a person in wheelchair, but that is only part of that person's world. It is being empathetic to that deeper experience of the person that is the real challenge. It requires sensitivity as well as imagination.

### **Barriers to Access**

One person's experience of disability will be different to that of another, even if the disability is similar. One person's barrier may not be so for another. It depends upon:

- \* the nature of the disability;
- \* the kind of supports that have been and are available;
- \* the ways in which the community has adapted;
- \* social attitudes;
- \* past experiences of disability.

Access is not just about the person's disability, but also about how both the physical and social environments responds to the person and their disability. It is an *interactive* thing.

It has to do with attitudes, how people are treated, how facilities are designed, how programs and services are presented. Access issues arise in relation to a number of things and these can easily be applied to congregations, schools and agencies. The following list is not exhaustive and can be added to according to the situation.

#### **Attitudes**

This is clearly where it begins.

What are the attitudes of the members and decision-makers towards people with disabilities? How do people with disabilities see the situation?

How comfortable are members when people with disabilities are present?

How far are attitudes reflected in practice?

Are people aware of the difference between the medical and social models?

#### **Mobility**

Is there adequate public transport and parking facilities?

Are their sufficient ramps? How steep are they?

Is their adequate space for people to manoeuvre with wheelchairs?

Are doorways wide enough and easy to open?

Are there dangers from low hanging objects, branches etc?

Are there hazards on pathways and floors?

Are there sufficient helpers available when needed?

Is there sufficient light?

## **Using Facilities and Equipment**

- Is equipment accessible for people in wheelchairs?
- Are counters too high for people in wheelchairs (also children)?
- Are sufficient numbers of people available to assist?
- Are the toilets adequate, including space for a carer to be present?
- What about facilities for the hearing and sight impaired?
- Do the spaces for wheelchairs offer the same advantages as others?
- What adjustments are needed, if any, should the minister, leader, teacher have a disability?
- Are there adequate signs to help people find their way?

## **Receiving and Interpreting Information**

This impinges on a number of people, not only people with disabilities. It applies particularly to people with sight, hearing and language difficulties.

- Is the information clear, understandable and comprehensive?
- Is there alternative information for people who cannot read or hear?
- What alternative technology is available, eg. Internet?
- Are there enough people available to assist if required?

**“Deirdre had been in the Psychiatric ward for several weeks and I visited her nearly every day. When she asked could I celebrate Holy Communion with her I brought the elements from the local church where I led worship the next Sunday. This was to me a way for her to feel part of a community beyond the hospital setting. I told the congregation something of her story of having been sexually abused as a child and as an adult and how in her state of mind she repeatedly cut open her arms or her abdomen in order to “let out the filth that was inside her”.**

**Many people in the congregation wanted to reach out to Deirdre. Some offered to pray for her, one offered to visit and one woman gave me a butterfly badge, a beautiful resurrection symbol to give to her. It wasn't safe for Deirdre to actually have the badge just then as it would have been another weapon to use against herself. Instead I showed it to her and I wore it for her every day until she was well enough to own it for herself. That became a point to work towards, a goal on the journey of recovery and she demanded to see it each day.**

**Knowing that a whole group of people she had never met were concerned about her was a definite part in her healing. Deirdre moved from the state of saying over and over that she was ‘Satan’s child’ to knowing that she is actually God’s child, and dearly loved”.**

## Preparing an Action Plan?

An *Action Plan* is what it says it is: a plan for *action*. Today, the term is used by governments, businesses, and organisations such as the church.

While we may all have good intentions, there comes a time in most organisations when people have to sit down and plan comprehensively to achieve a certain goal. The church has had practise in this area, in planning stewardship campaigns and other objectives. Church agencies and schools have all used the process to achieve certain outcomes.

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), recommends that government, business and service providers prepare their own Action Plans (Sect. 59-65). The aim is to improve equity and access for people with disabilities and reduce complaints under the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC). Organisations are then urged to register their plans with HREOC. Plans are available to others in preparing their own Plans. Lodging the Action Plan with HREOC has no legal obligation, but simply indicates the seriousness with which the organisation treats equity and access. HREOC may take the service provider's Action Plan into consideration when determining a complaint, such as assessing whether the adjustments required by the complainant pose an unjustifiable hardship on the organisation.

The development of an Action Plan is purely voluntary, but it does provide a good opportunity to comprehensively and intentionally address the issue of access. What is important is that the very ***process of setting up the plan is in itself educational*** for the congregation, school or agency.

The DDA suggests a number of ingredients that need to be included in an Action Plan (Section 61).

1. Policies and programs that aim to achieve the objective of the DDA in terms of *universal access* (cf. Disability and Discrimination).
2. A process of communication to the whole congregation or agency.
3. A review of current practices and buildings to identify possible areas of discrimination.
4. The setting of long-term and short-term goals.
5. A strategy to review and evaluate the Plan.
6. The appointment of a person or reference group to implement the Plan.

### **Steps in Developing an Action Plan**

**Remember, people with disabilities are the experts.**

#### **1. *Establish a Task/Working Group***

Given the consultative nature of the Uniting Church, it is appropriate that the first step should be the setting up of some kind of working group, whose task would be to create, execute and evaluate the Action Plan. In some cases, once the Plan has been established it may only need one or two people to monitor its implementation. Later, the group may be called together to conduct the evaluation of the Plan.

In setting up the group appropriate representation is essential. Consideration also needs to be given to representing the following interests and people:

- a) People with disabilities.
- b) Carers, family members or friends of a person with a disability.
- c) People of different ages.
- d) Finance, property and architectural interests.
- e) Educational and communication skills.
- f) Theological and liturgical knowledge/skills.

Such expertise may not always be available from within the organisation, in which case the group would be wise to consult with people outside.

In the case of service delivery agencies, it would be important to have a client representative. In the case of schools, including students with disabilities and their parents needs to be considered.

## **2. Communication**

If the Action Plan is to be effective, it needs to be understood and owned by the whole congregation, agency or school. When creating an Action Plan the end does not justify the means. The way the Plan is formulated and implemented will be crucial for its overall effectiveness. **Participation needs to be genuine and comprehensive.**

Therefore the first thing a working group needs to establish is how it will *communicate and network* within the organisation.

- \* How will consultation inside and outside the church be achieved?
- \* How will the working group communicate its plans and activities (eg. minutes, displays, newsheets, church announcements, bulletin boards, Internet, sharing stories, etc)?
- \* How will the working group get feedback from the members of the organisation, including clients, and others (eg. parents of children, clients of a drop in centre, families of residents in a nursing home, etc.) as to its progress?
- \* How will the working group consult with people with disabilities, taking into consideration the wide variety of disabilities, including those outside the organisation who may be potential members or clients?
- \* What provision is there for alternative methods of communication to ensure that people with disabilities have clear access to information and are able to offer feedback?

## **3. Establishing Policy**

In this context a *policy* outlines what needs to be the guiding principles behind the Action Plan. It is an attempt to give a rationale, an ethic, a theology to the Action Plan. Policy formulation includes being informed on issues of equity and access, the nature of disability, and how discrimination takes place, (including physical access and organisational procedures/culture). It may be helpful to inform yourself on how other similar congregations, schools or agencies, developed their policy. This may be a way of getting started.

Your working group may consider the following approach:

The working group first educates and informs itself of the issues and concerns and draws up a policy statement for circulation and comment within the congregation or agency. The circulation of the draft document may be accompanied by a wider educational program for members.

Such a program could take various forms.

*	<b>Seminars involving people with disabilities sharing their experiences and stories.</b>
*	<b>Forums with speakers/videos and discussion. (see Resources for ideas)</b>
*	<b>Special Access Sunday including worship service and discussion opportunities</b>
*	<b>Tours of buildings led by people with disabilities</b>
*	<b>An occasion to play the 'High Fly' board game. (see Resources)</b>
*	<b>Study group examining 'disability' in a theological context</b>
*	<b>Study of the Uniting Church 'Mental Health Resource Kit'</b>

Awareness raising and educational opportunities are important throughout the planning process. This ensures greater participation and ownership. ***The process needs to be an educational and learning experience for as many people as possible.***

#### ***4. Assessing the Current Situation***

Before any actual plans can be made, there needs to be a review, or audit of the present situation in the organisation, regarding access and equity. This will require:

- \* an access audit of the buildings and facilities to isolate problem areas.
- \* an audit of procedures, programs, services and activities as to their 'accessibility'.

The audit may be helped by using a checklist. The Property Board has undertaken to develop a self-audit checklist, available during the course of this Action Plan

***"What the audit comes down to, is clarifying those services, programs, procedures and facilities that make it difficult and sometimes impossible for people with disabilities to take part, remembering that what applies to one person with a disability may not affect another. The spin off is that access is opened to a much wider group of people generally."***

For an audit to be credible it will need the full participation of people with disabilities. People with disabilities sharing how they experience obstacles and difficulties. A tour of buildings may be a beginning, followed by issues of accessing programs and activities, worship services, materials and information.

Other people often left out of the conversation are the carers, family and friends of people with disabilities. They have a unique perspective and frequently encounter a secondary kind of discrimination.

## **5. Working out Solutions**

The problems isolated by an audit then need to be addressed. This is a stage when consultation with resource people outside the organisation may be helpful. For instance a congregation may consult with another congregation as to how they dealt with various access issues. Schools and agencies may also find value in similar resourcing.

It is essential to get feedback and suggestions from people with disabilities. Accurate feedback is also needed from the wider membership of the congregation, clients and workers within agencies, staff and pupils in schools, and any other associated groups.

## **6. Setting Priorities and Goals**

Priorities need to be established. A number of factors come into the setting of priorities, and these may vary from place to place. The following criteria may be useful as a framework in which to decide:

- \* Which changes will benefit the most number of people?
- \* Which changes will be the simplest to achieve?
- \* Which changes can be made immediately and which ones will take time?
- \* Which changes can be afforded at this time?
- \* Which changes can be linked to other changes going on in the organisation?

How the priorities are set will depend upon the nature and size of the organisation.

Whatever system of prioritising is decided upon, it needs to be flexible and satisfactory to all members of the organisation. It is important to see how the priorities are inter-connected and how they fit the overall policy.

## **7. Implementation**

Many Action Plans fail because insufficient time has been given to *deciding on and documenting how the Plan will be implemented.*

- \* Who is going to carry out and/or take responsibility for the work being done?
- \* By what date is it to be completed?
- \* Who will maintain communication with members, clients and people with disabilities?
- \* If major building alterations are required, what provision has been made to ensure that services continue safely?
- \* Have all the relevant bodies in the organisation been consulted (not merely informed) as to the changes and their effect?
- \* What arrangements have been made to review the on-going progress? Will the working group continue to meet and review? Or will this task be given to one or two people to supervise?
- Who will make the decisions if major changes need to be made in the Plan, because something new has cropped up?

## **8. Review and Evaluation**

Before any action is taken it is important to incorporate review and evaluation procedures. This will mean reviewing not only the completed work, but also how the ongoing review will take place.

- Who is going to carry out the review?
- Will it be the original working group?
- Will it be a new group, or an outside expert or audit team?
- How will the Review be carried out?

Whoever is chosen to carry out these tasks needs to be able to represent the interests of people with disabilities, and provide the necessary feedback regarding achievement of the goals set. Consideration needs to be given to whether there will be annual or biannual reviews which could be conducted in conjunction with other organisational reviews?

Some questions and issues to be considered are:

- a) Is there still a need for on-going education?
- b) In what ways can access and equity matters be integrated into the overall conduct and management of the organisation?
- c) How far are access and equity issues a part of the internal framework of people's thinking and planning?
- d) Have the needs, uncovered by the access audit, been met?
- e) Have new needs or problems arisen since then?
- f) Have the solutions solved the problems satisfactorily?
- g) What more needs to be done?

***Now you are ready to get on with it!!!!  
Don't forget to share your Plans with others!!!!***

**“The Arthur Preston Residential Services provides a valued living environment for people suffering from Huntington's Disease who are permanently institutionalised. It was awarded the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Victorian Chapter, Access Award in 1999. The building was designed by KLCK Architects. It has become a model living environment, while at the same time providing safety and dignity for the residents. All the appropriate supports and aids are provided in an unobtrusive manner, while the buildings blend well with the surrounding environment”.**

## **Resources**

*The following resources are available. There is also an expanding range of websites relating to disability and spirituality. Check your local library or college for sites. The asterisk\* below indicates which resources are available in the Synod Library (130 Little Collins Street, Melbourne), where there are further resources, including videos, on disability matters. The Joint Theological Library (9347 8480) has also in recent years been increasing its holdings in this area of endeavour.*

### **General Theological and Sociological Themes.**

\*Nancy Eiseland *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Understanding of Disability.* 1994 Abingdon Press. A valuable theological contribution in reconceptualising disability.

\*Brett Webb-Mitchell *Unexpected Guests at the Banquet: Welcoming People with Disability into the Church.* 1994 Crossroad. Ideas for a congregation to get in touch with disability issues, both educationally and theologically.

\*David Schwartz *Crossing the River: Creating a Conceptual Revolution in Community and Disability.* 1992 Brookline. Cambridge. He writes in thought-provoking ways of individual and systemic change.

Kathleen Black *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability* 1996 Abingdon Press.

\*Patrick Macken *Reflections on Inclusive Education* 1991 Inclusion Press.

\*Stewart D Govig *Strong at the Broken Places: Persons with Disabilities in the Church.* 1989 Westminster/John Knox Press Louisville, Kentucky. Biblical resources to create community and overcome stigma.

Colin Barnes & Geof Mercer (Eds) *Exploring the Divide: Illness and Disability* 1996 The Disability Press Leeds, UK. Papers drawing together research and analysis of the social and medical changes. A good discussion of 'disability'.

*Challenging Disabling Practices: Talking about Issues of Disability.* 1997 Dulwich Centre Newsletter No. 4. Adelaide. Series of papers, largely written by people with disabilities.

### **Access Audits**

John Penton *Widening the Eye of the Needle; Access to Church Buildings for People with Disabilities* 1999 Church House Publishing, London.

*Right of Access: A Guide to Developing Action Plans and Improving Access for People with Disabilities* 1997. Villamanta Publishing, Geelong West.

Uniting Church in Australia, (Victorian Synod) *Property Access Audit.* This material is in preparation and will be available in early 2001.

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. *Advisory Notes on Access to Premises.*

Sue Tate *A User's Guide to the Disability Discrimination Act*. 1993. Villamanta Publishing Service, Geelong West.

Sport and Recreation Victoria, *Sport and Recreation Access to All*. 1998. Victorian Government.

### **Study & Resource Material**

\*Uniting Church Mental Health Network Resource Kit 1999. Uniting Church Commission for Mission.

\*Accommodation for Disabled Persons (ADPACC/EHU Incorporated). *Housing for People with Disabilities Starter Kit for Church/Community Groups* 1996.

\**High Fly* Simulation material and interactive board game on issues of disability & discrimination.

### **Agencies**

Agencies which support people with disabilities can be useful for advice and information. Some of them also provide access audit services. Though the list is not exhaustive, the following organisations can be contacted as follows, or on the Web:

**Crossroads Victoria Inc.** Christian Fellowship with Disabled Persons. PO Box 15, Vermont. 3133. (03) 9803 3943 Also provides advice and training for congregations.

**OT Australia (Australian Association of Occupational Therapists)**  
6 Spring St. Fitzroy 3065. (03) 9416 1021.

**Paraquad Victoria.** 208 Wellington St. Collingwood. 3066. (03) 9415 1200

**Vision Australia.** H/Office. 7 Mair St. Brighton Beach. 3188. (03) 9599 5000

**Victorian Deaf Society.** 101 Wellington Parade, East Melbourne. 3002. (03) 9657 8111

**Better Hearing** 5 High St. Prahran 3181. (03) 9510 1577

**Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind** H/Office. 557 St. Kilda Rd. Prahran 3181.  
(03) 9522 5222

**Yooralla Independent Living** 212 King St. Melbourne 3000. (03) 9607 3512

**Prahran Mission** 211 Chapel St. Prahran 3181. (03) 9510 9055

## **OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

The overall key objectives are to eliminate discrimination and enhance positive attitudes.

### **1. CHILDCARE CENTRES, SCHOOLS, AGENCIES**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
1.1 To ensure clear policy statements which promote universal access, and eliminate discrimination, and prohibitive practices. To be developed in consultation with people with disabilities	1.1.1 To oversee development, where necessary, of access and equity policies in child care, schools, community services sector	During course of next 12 months, commencing September 2000	Organisations produce policies in consultation with people with disabilities	Commission for Mission to reinforce the development of such policies
	1.1.2 Early childhood centres to be aware of, and apply the Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV) standard model for inclusion of children with a disability	During course of next 12 months, commencing September 2000	Consideration of model at Governance level, and adoption of model where necessary	Early childhood centres' Boards to oversee implementation
	1.1.3 Schools to develop, where non-existent, an integration policy	During course of next 12 months commencing September 2000	Consideration at School Council level, and with Association of Independent Schools (AISV)	School Councils to oversee implementation
	1.1.4 <i>UnitingCare</i> community services to develop, where necessary, disability access and anti-discrimination policies	During course of next 12 months, commencing September 2000	Consideration at Governance level, and development where necessary	Boards of Governance of agencies to oversee implementation
1.2 Development of Disability Action Plan	1.2.1 All early childhood centres, school, community services and congregations to undertake access audits: employment practices, buildings, services provided, to ensure access, both physical and attitudinal	During course of next 3 years, commencing September 2000	Individual and achievable goals and plans developed	Each organisation to develop own Plan. Upon request, <i>UnitingCare</i> to provide relevant information and names of resource people/organisations to assist

## **2. PROPERTY AND ACCESS**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
2.1 To ensure property of UCA is compliant with access requirements	2.1.1 Property Board of Synod to develop Universal Access Guidelines	Commencing September 2000	Production of Guidelines and publicity of existence when produced. To be referred to by all sectors of church	Synod Property Board
2.2 For all congregations, agencies, schools, early childhood centres of UCA to self-audit property	2.2.1 Property Board of Synod to develop self-audit checklist, and strategy for self-assessment	Production of Checklist and strategy over course of next year, and application over next 3 years, commencing September 2000	Production of checklist and strategy. Publicity of their existence, and application by UCA	Synod Property Board and relevant presbytery
	2.2.2 Congregations & Programs to seek funds to support access requirements	Over the course of next 3 years, commencing September 2000	Applications, Plans and implementation of renovations and buildings for universal access	Congregations, presbyteries, Property Board and Disability Resources ( <i>UnitingCare</i> )

### **3. CONGREGATIONS/PRESBYTERIES**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
3.1 To ensure disability issues are at the forefront of presbytery considerations	3.1.1 That each presbytery nominate a person(s) to be an advocate for disability issues	Within 6 months commencing September 2000	Nomination of person who has awareness of issues	Standing Committee of presbytery
	3.1.2 That presbytery inform and direct congregations to consult with Property Board prior to modification or construction of property	Ongoing	Increasing numbers of compliant buildings	Presbytery and Church Council
3.2 To promote existence of accessible buildings (refer to 2.2.1)	3.2.1 Display access symbol on front notice board and in information about Church activities	From September 2000 for those which are compliant. Otherwise, ongoing	Increasing numbers of accessible buildings, and people with disabilities utilising them	Church Council
3.3 To ensure people with disabilities are able to fully participate in worship, social and leadership roles	3.3.1 Think laterally - think DisAbility. Attitudinal change of <u>belief in all</u> people as gifted, and made in the image of God	Ongoing	Increasing presence and involvement of people with disabilities in life of UCA	All members of UCA
	3.3.2 Use of Synod Mental Health Kit for purposes of discussion, Bible Studies, liturgy	Ongoing	Decreased stigma re mental illness, and increased acceptance of individuals and families living with mental illness	Promotion of Kit by Disability Resources ( <i>UnitingCare</i> ), and use by congregations
	3.3.3 Use of training and resource materials, liturgical resources, large print format, audio loops and personnel able to encourage inclusive participation	Ongoing	Increase numbers of people with disabilities participating positively in the life of the UCA	Congregations and Disability Resources ( <i>UnitingCare</i> )
3.4 Development of Disability Action Plans, to promote universal access, and eliminate prohibitive practices. To be developed in consultation with disabled people	3.4.1 All congregations and presbyteries to undertake and audit of buildings, and consider attitudes and practices which exclude people with disabilities	During course of next 3 years, commencing September 2000	Individual and achievable goals and plan developed	Congregations and presbyteries

## 4. SYNOD

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>
4.1 That the annual worship and meeting of Synod be fully accessible to people with disabilities, reflecting commitment of issue to the wider UCA	4.1.1 Select a venue which reflects this commitment: toilets, parking, doorway and internal access, and access to stage/sanctuary	Annual	People with disabilities present and able to freely participate	Business Committee of Synod
	4.1.2 To promote worship and meeting of Synod as accessible, by using access symbol	Annual	Promoted as such on all publicity materials, and copies of Service available in large print format	Business Committee
	4.1.3 To maintain commitment at Synod of signing for people with hearing impairments	Annual	Promoted as such on publicity materials	Business Committee
4.2 Synod to improve communication methods with people with disabilities	4.2.1 To purchase a Telephone, Typewriter (TTY) for people with hearing impairments	2000-2001	Available for use at Synod Switchboard, and promoted on Synod communications	Accounting Services/I.T Unit
	4.2.2 Encourage BOMAR to assist congregations seeking to develop signed worship services	2000-2001	Increased presence of people with hearing impairments in UCA worship services	Disability Resources (UnitingCare) and Executive Director, Commission for Mission
	4.2.3 When publicising events using images of people, that people with disabilities be included	Ongoing from September 2000	Increased presence of people with disabilities	Disability Resources (UnitingCare) and all communication 'arms' of Synod
4.3 To ensure the UCA is aware of its employment obligations under the DDA 1992	4.3.1 To develop an affirmative statement and policy re employment of people with disabilities	To be commenced over course of next 12 months	Completion of policy, and more people with disabilities applying for UCA employment	Disability Resources (UnitingCare) with Personnel Officer