



HUNTER CARERS
INCORPORATED

PO Box 366
CARDIFF 2285 NSW
ABN - 48055975927

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN (DAP)

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Position: HC CEO

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1. Hunter Carers Disability Action Plan (DAP) Introduction

Hunter Carers Incorporated aims to ensure that at all times it operates its services and facilities based on the principles of access and equity. It is committed to ensuring that all services are accessible to and inclusive of all people, including people with disabilities and that the community has equitable, dignified access to its group homes, services, community activities, information, communication and employment opportunities.

2. Overview of Hunter Carers

Hunter Carers Inc is a Not For Profit organisation.

We offer long term supported accommodation which fosters community inclusion.

Hunter Carers was formed in 1991 by a small group of parents concerned about the future of their family member with special needs.

They were particularly concerned that the service would provide a Christian environment similar to the one they had known in their own homes.

Hunter Carers recognises that those who have an intellectual disability have the same rights as all members of our society.

What we do

We provide high quality accommodation services and community support to adult people with love, care and compassion.

We are committed to providing a safe, secure and supportive environment which is always sensitive to the individual needs and wishes of our residents.

Our Vision

- ❖ A compassionate society in which all people are enabled to live fulfilling, self- determined lives

Our vision statement highlights the importance we place on our commitment to Social Justice as it relates to our residents.

Our Mission

- ❖ To provide a service where residents are encouraged and supported to take control of their own lives

Our mission statement emphasises our commitment to the day to day delivery of person centred practices of: individuality, choices and the right of inclusion

Our Values

- ❖ In expressing our Christian philosophy we commit to these core values:

Family Involvement

Respect

Individuality

Empowerment

Inclusion

Dignity

Our values shape the way we approach our work, our interaction with residents, families and staff, the design of new disability services, the positive relationships that we build with the community and other services.

Our Strategic Directions

1. Generate New Services
2. Revitalise Existing Services
3. Outsource Advanced IT Systems
4. Work towards Excellence

Our Property Project

After the Newcastle flood in June 2007 Hunter Carers was granted NSW State Government Capital funding to purpose build two group homes for people with disabilities.

These purpose build group homes were built in compliance with all Building and Disability Standard Codes and were completed in 2009. Residents are happily living in these homes and have become part of their local community.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) commenced in NSW on 1st July 2013.

Many NDIS Participants contacted Hunter Carers applying for accommodation and support. The parents of these participants were aged and are in need of support themselves. These parents cared for their son and/or daughter their entire lives.

Hunter Carers is committed to provide services to support and enhance the community; our aim is to strive forward with our strategic direction of expanding services.

In 2013, Hunter Carers purchased a four year old house that is next door to our existing group homes. This home was purchased to offer four people with an intellectual disability, the opportunity of supported accommodation in a shared living arrangement.

The new house purchased is not currently completely suitable for a person with physical disabilities. However, this will not prevent any person with a physical disability from accessing Hunter Carers services as the purpose built homes next door are completely accessible.

The accessibility issues for the new house have been highlighted in this document (see Part 13 Summary of Key Issues). A time frame for action has been established to resolve the issues in both the short term and long term.

Hunter Carers has developed this DAP specifically to address any issues that may become evident during the establishment and opening of this new group home.

3. Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

Hunter Carers has a responsibility under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), to provide equitable, dignified access to goods and services and to premises used by the public. These are broadly defined and would include all aspects of service delivery.

The DDA provides uniform protection against unfair and unfavourable treatment for people with a disability in Australia. It also makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person who is an 'associate' e.g. a friend, carer or family member. Disability includes:

- physical
- intellectual
- psychiatric
- neurological
- cognitive or sensory (a hearing or vision impairment)
- learning difficulties
- physical disfigurement and
- the presence in the body of disease causing organisms

This broad definition means that everyone with a disability is protected. The DDA supports the principle that people with a disability have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community. Provisions apply to a wide range of life activities including:

- access to premises used by the public
- accommodation
- education
- provision of goods and services
- employment, and
- administration of Commonwealth laws and programs.

The DDA requires that appropriate changes be made to provide access. Where this does not occur, a person can take legal action through the Human Rights Commission (HRC) or the Federal Court.

4. What is discrimination?

- Discrimination is defined as treating people with a disability less favourably than people without the disability would be treated under the same circumstances (direct discrimination).
- Discrimination also exists where there is a condition or requirement imposed which may be the same for everyone, but which unfairly, excludes or disadvantages people with a disability (indirect discrimination).
- It is also unlawful to discriminate against a person because their associates (family, carers, partners etc) have a disability.
- Different treatment of people with a disability is not unlawful discrimination where it is reasonably intended to ensure that they have equal opportunities or to meet their specific needs.

5. What is a Disability Action Plan (DAP)

The DAP provides the framework for Hunter Carers to address disability access issues across all areas of service responsibility and operations and to support it in meeting its requirements under the DDA. The DAP is designed to ensure the practices of Hunter Carers are proactive in relation to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, their carers and associates, and that services and facilities will be accessible to all.

The DAP document:

- Identifies access barriers to mission centres, programs and services
- Outlines actions to remove barriers
- Includes priorities for actions
- Identifies who has responsibility for ensuring actions are completed
- Outlines how monitoring, reviewing and evaluating of the DAP will occur

6. Why prepare a Disability Action Plan

- Developing a DAP assists Hunter Carers to meet its responsibilities under the DDA
- The DAP will provide a framework for Hunter Carers to address disability and access issues across all areas of service delivery and provide equity of access to services, facilities, employment opportunities for all people.
- When the DAP is registered with the Human Rights Commission, it must take into account any complaints made against Hunter Carers in relation to disability discrimination.

7. How we developed this plan

The DAP was developed through a comprehensive consultation process with all key stakeholders including management, current residents, potential residents, their families, association members, staff, patrons and local community support members.

8. Objectives of this plan

The objectives of this DAP are to ensure that all members of the community have equitable and dignified access to all of the services, accommodation, information, communication, employment and community activities.

In addition, the objectives aim to ensure that people with disabilities have appropriate access to consultative and resident feedback processes in order to effectively contribute to and participate in service planning and developments to improve service delivery.

Key objectives of the DAP are:

- To confirm Hunter Carers acknowledgement of people with disabilities as an important and significant part of the community
- To confirm Hunter Carers commitment to meeting the needs of people with disabilities, their families and staff
- To provide a framework for Hunter Carers to work towards provision of accessible and equitable services in all areas of service planning and operations
- To promote participation and inclusiveness of people with disabilities
- To assist Hunter Carers to meet its legislative requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act and other relevant legislation.

9. What we plan to do

The following steps form the basis of the DAP:

- Document the key elements of an effective Disability Action Plan
- Identify the issues and/or barriers that impact on people with disabilities
- Document the actions that will be specifically undertaken to address issues or barriers
- Prioritise the actions to ensure those with the most beneficial impact on people with disabilities are actioned first
- Identification of a responsible person/s for each action

Hunter Carers Service Access Policy states that Hunter Carers will at all times adhere to the legislative requirements of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986, Equal opportunity Act 1984, Age Discrimination Act 2001, Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

Our intent is to ensure all buildings and facilities will allow for ease of access and egress for people with a physical disability or reduced mobility such as the frail and aged. In situations where it is not feasible or possible to modify a building to improve accessibility, alternative strategies will be explored to ensure access to services.

Where we cannot meet the needs of staff or residents with disabilities by using existing resources, we will explore alternative strategies to ensure access to services.

When accessing services, the safety of all people will be a priority.

At all times Hunter Carers will adhere to the legislative requirements of the Work Health & Safety (WHS) Act 2011 (NSW) and the Work Health & Safety (WHS) Regulations 2011 (NSW).

10. How we will monitor, evaluate and update this plan

This DAP will be monitored, reviewed and updated as follows:

- Bi-monthly reporting to the Management Committee on progress in implementing the actions documented in the plan
- Annual report to the Association each year regarding the accomplishments achieved for the period
- Annual consultation with identified stakeholders, including management, current residents, potential residents, their families, association members, staff, patrons and local community support members to gain feedback in relation to progress and priorities of the DAP
- Submission of a revised plan to Management each year for approval

The Human Rights Commission notes that a DAP is not a static document, but changes according to practices, review and evaluation. HRC describes 'reviewing' as the process of assessing and revising the DAP. (HRC Website)

11. How we will communicate this plan

The DAP will be communicated using the following strategies:

- Posting it on Hunter Carers website for free download: www.huntercarers.org.au
- Upon request, provision in hard copy and electronic format
- Provision of a hard copy to all Management Committee members
- Registration with the Human Rights Commission and posting on the HRC website

Hunter Carers welcomes feedback at anytime from anyone about our Action Plan. You can give feedback by:

Email: huntercarers@optusnet.com.au

Ph: 0249540040

Post: PO Box 366 Cardiff 2285

12. Access and Equity Requirements

There is a significant range of issues to be considered when addressing the provision of accessible services.

These include:

- Buildings and facilities
- Communications
- Consultations
- Equipment, technical and adaptive technology
- Events
- Format of reading materials
- Furniture
- Internet and related materials and supports
- Presentations
- Publications
- Resource sharing
- Service delivery methods, including the models of support
- Signage
- Staff employment, training and support

Prioritising the allocation of finite resources or services will be based on a careful assessment of a person's presenting needs, strengths and any associated risk.

13. Summary of Key Issues

Key issues that emerged from observation, consultation and analysis are as follows:

- 1. Inaccessible building and facilities at one of the three group homes**
- 2. Funding contingencies for building alternations**
- 3. Short term accommodation of a resident who becomes temporarily physically impaired**
- 4. Procedures for supporting people to obtain alternative services if required**

| Issue or Barrier | Actions | Responsibility | Timeframe |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p>Inaccessible building and facilities at one group home</p> | <p>Complete a comprehensive assessment of current building and facilities for legislative compliance with the DDA, particularly in relation to access and equity.</p> | <p>Property Project Sub Committee</p> | <p>Achieved Oct 2014</p> |
| | <p>Consult with LC Building Designs and Palmer Bruyn to ensure minor alterations are addressed to reduce the access barriers to the building to meet specific resident needs.</p> | <p>Property Project Sub Committee</p> | <p>Achieved Oct / Nov 2014</p> |
| | <p>Consult with LC Building Designs and Palmer Bruyn to ensure mid alterations to existing entry; bedroom door width and sanitary facility are addressed to meet specific resident needs.</p> | <p>Property Project Sub Committee</p> | <p>Achieved Mar 2015</p> |
| | <p>Consult with LC Building Designs and Palmer Bruyn to explore major alterations involving constructing new accessible facilities within existing areas of the building or a purpose built addition providing a principle pedestrian entrance, bedroom, bathroom, connection to spaces for use in common by residents and car parking to meet the relevant accessibility standards.</p> | <p>Property Project Sub Committee</p> | <p>October 2023</p> |

| Issue or Barrier | Actions | Responsibility | Timeframe |
|---|---|----------------|-----------|
| Funding contingencies for building alternations | <p>Continue with fundraising and donation activities.</p> <p>Seek support from Local Businesses</p> | CEO | Ongoing |

| Issue or Barrier | Actions | Responsibility | Timeframe |
|--|---|----------------|-----------|
| Short term accommodation of a resident who becomes temporarily physically impaired | The spare bedroom in the purpose built group home, that is, completely accessible to people with physical disabilities, will be available for short term accommodation. | CEO | Ongoing |

| Issue or Barrier | Actions | Responsibility | Timeframe |
|---|--|----------------|-------------------|
| Procedures for supporting people to obtain alternative services if required | Hunter Carers Service Access Policy has procedures to evaluate each person's individual needs and support people to acquire suitable alternative services if this option is deemed more beneficial to the person and to Hunter Carers financial situation. | CEO | Achieved Nov 2014 |
| | Continue networking with other services in the Hunter Region to ensure current knowledge and availability of services. | CEO | Ongoing |

Disclaimer

Due care has been taken by Hunter Carers in preparing this Disability Action Plan. The contents are believed to be fair and accurate. Hunter Carers does not accept responsibility or liability for the results of specific action taken on the basis of this information nor for any errors or omissions.

Legal issues in the area of anti-discrimination law are in the process of change. In addition, constant change is occurring in relation to Australian Standards and Building Codes. Due reference should be given to these and other relevant Standards. All actions taken by a public authority, organisation or individual in reliance on an Access Appraisal remain the responsibility of that public authority, organisation or individual.

14. Appendix 1 - Abbreviations

| | |
|------|---|
| DAP | Disability Action Plan |
| DDA | Disability Discrimination Act |
| CEO | Chief Executive Officer |
| HRC | Human Rights Commission |
| HCID | Hunter Carers For Intellectual Disability Inc |
| NDIS | National Disability Insurance Scheme |
| WWW | World Wide Web |

15. TRAINING

- Staff induction processes will inform new staff about the disability action plan and their obligations under it
- Staff induction processes will provide staff with a copy of all relevant policies and procedures
- Individual staff development plans will include specialised training in supporting people with disabilities

16.INTERNAL / EXTERNAL DOCUMENT REFERENCES

The Disability Action Plan is one of a number of policies, procedures, plans, strategies and guideline of Hunter Carers. The Disability Action Plan has implications for some of these. Copies of other documents are available by contacting Hunter Carers office on: Phone 0249540040

Internal Documents

- Strategic Plan
- Service Access Policies
- Rights Policies
- Individual Outcomes Policies
- Participation and Inclusion Policies
- Feedback and Complaints Policies
- Service Management Policies

External document and information

- Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
- Human Rights Commission Website (www.humanrights.gov.au)
- Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010