

# SPARC DISABILITY FOUNDATION

## SUBMISSION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

### 1. THE ORGANISATION

The Mission Statement for the SPARC Disability Foundation:

***"To improve the quality of life of South Australians with a disability by supporting participation in sport, arts and recreation activities of their choice."***

To achieve this, we will:

- promote the inclusion of people with a disability in sport, art and recreation;
- raise the profile of sport, art and recreation for people with a disability;
- develop partnerships to support sport, arts and recreation programs for people with a disability;
- research and develop sport, art and recreation programs for people with a disability;
- operate in an ethical and open manner with all sections of the community; and
- ensure the interests of the disability community are our focus at all times.

The SPARC Disability Foundation is not a government body - it is an independent incorporated association and a registered charity. It is the only charitable organisation working at State level to enable people with all types of disability and ages to take part in sport, arts and recreational activities of their choice.

SPARC's main functions are to:

a) Raise funds from government, corporate, philanthropic and community sectors;

b) Apply these funds in a manner that responds to the greatest recreational needs and interests of people who have a disability and which emphasises participation and inclusion in all aspects of community life by

- prioritising and funding projects which are undertaken by other organisations;
- researching, funding, fostering and seeking partnerships to develop new projects.

The SPARC Disability Foundation also serves a role in:

- Providing information and advice
- Promoting the development of inclusive community activities
- Identifying 'gaps' and initiating innovative project responses
- Promoting participation and assisting individuals to take part
- Coordinating investigations into the recreational needs and interests of specific populations

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## **2. THE DDA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

The SPARC Disability Foundation in 1997 developed its own DDA Action Plan and this was approved by the SPARC Board and then submitted to HEROC in September 1997. Since this time SPARC has reviewed and updated the document and its strategies on a quarterly basis with staff input via its fortnight staff meetings and subsequently approved by the Board of Management.

SPARC has also provided advice and support including financial assistance to generic sport and recreation groups (eg Guides SA, Squash SA, Tennis SA, Basketball SA) to assist generic sports to become inclusive by developing their own DDA Action Plan. The financial support has assisted these groups to engage consultants to assist the organisation to develop the DDA Action Plan. Funds have been required to undertake the "disability audit" or review current issues or limitations, disability awareness sessions and in some cases to manage the entire process (internally and externally) and write the Plan.

In 1998, SPARC also established the State Disability Sports Program (SDSP) in collaboration with Sport SA with the assistance of the Office for Recreation and Sport to "expand pathways for people with a disability within mainstream sport".

Over the last four years 22 State Sporting Associations have embraced inclusion of people with a disability, and they are currently in various stages of developing their DDA Action Plans with strategies to limit and reduce barriers for people with a disability. Clubs are an integral part of providing opportunities for people with a disability. The SDSP is now conducting a pilot project for the inclusion of people with a disability at club level within the City of Salisbury. The project is focusing on two areas of development:

- Sport skill development for participants with a disability
- Disability awareness training and development for clubs as a whole

In addition, SPARC has assisted other organisations to develop DDA Action Plans and conducted disability awareness sessions for staff (eg City of Walkerville and Holdfast Bay) and managed the process on behalf of another organisation. (ie Living Health)

As detailed above the philosophy of SPARC is based upon a Community Inclusion Model, whereby we believe the responsibility for the provision of sport, art and recreation opportunities should be offered by generic sport, art, recreation and community providers. It has been our role to help facilitate the process via funding, advice, information and education/training.

In South Australia, many sectors of the community have embraced the notion of inclusion of people with a disability. The tool that they have used to manage this process is the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992. That is, both State Government and Local Government agencies, the sport, arts, recreation, disability and community sectors have embraced the notion of inclusion for people with a disability into mainstream community life.

In the remainder of the submission, we have addressed the issues as raised in the Discussion Paper, March 2003.

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### **3. GENERAL ISSUES**

#### **PROBLEMS THAT THE DDA SEEKS TO ADDRESS**

By making it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of disability the DDA meets one objective. The Act does not in itself change behaviours towards people with a disability. However, by development of a DDA Action Plan strategies can be identified and implemented that may change their behaviours. But the development of a DDA Action Plan is not compulsory and so only those with an incentive to change or view it as the "right thing to do" will attempt to follow this course of action.

To change attitudes you need to provide both information and education.

In South Australia, the DDA has improved access by people with a disability to a range of services, facilities, programs and activities.

#### **COMPLAINTS**

The complaints process of the Act puts the onus of responsibility back onto the person with a disability or their advocates. This process can be daunting and prohibitive for most people.

#### **HREOC'S EDUCATION, PUBLIC POLICY**

What education - not seen in this State!

As an agency based in Canberra our only contact from HREOC was them sending a certification of congratulations in submitting our DDA Action Plan. Anything to do with our own Action Plan or providing advice to others was created by SPARC and other local agencies. In the early days that did produce some resource materials but there was never any "education" component.

HREOC needs to work more closely with local State agencies to deliver its education and public policy role.

#### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

The major issue on the inclusion of people with a disability into the community rests with changing attitudes and behaviours of the general public. At a State level this can be achieved with the State and Local Governments showing leadership in developing their own DDA Action Plans and introducing strategies that improve access and participation by people with a disability to their range of services, programs and facilities.

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### **4. DISCRIMINATION IN SPECIFIC AREAS**

#### **ACCOMMODATION, LAND, CLUBS & SPORT**

Our experience has mainly been in the area of "clubs and sport" that also includes arts, recreation and community activities provided at the local level. In this State, there has been a general acceptance of the notion of community inclusion at this level through the leadership shown by both State Government agencies the Office for Recreation & Sport and Arts SA. For example the Government has supported the development of DDA Action Plans for "these clubs/groups" plus additional funds at club level to improve:

- physical access
- toilet facilities
- education of coaches/tutors
- disability awareness for volunteers, officials
- information/promotion to people with a disability
- skill development opportunities for people with a disability
- introductory or Come n' Try activities for people with a disability
- adapted equipment

This has meant that many service providers, clubs and groups are aware of their responsibilities in this area. The problem has been to implement change and to improve access that is sustainable because at the management level of their "club" they are reliant on volunteers that are forever changing.

The issue of "disability standards" - the problem would be most Club/groups would try to comply with minimum standards to achieve their goals. Incentives or recognition that they are achieving above a certain minimum standard might achieve more by giving them a promotional advantage to attract new members.

In relation to the role of HEROC - they do not monitor or provide feedback on DDA Action Plans they only act as a repository. That is, are the strategies that clubs identify in their DDA Action Plans workable, realistic and meeting a certain standard of compliance.