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NEWS FROM APIDS – May 2008

Hello to members and supporters

This year is proving to be a very exciting one in the life of APIDS. With a new government in power in Canberra, there are exciting new opportunities for people with disabilities in the Pacific. And at the same time the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) has been very busy. But before we talk about the external scene, there are developments within APIDS too.

Members

At May 23rd 2008, APIDS has 76 Individual members, 2 Organisational Associate members and 1 Individual Associate member.

Website

You will find most of the information contained in the newsletter on our website, www.apids.org, which is regularly updated. You will also find links to websites of interest, including Pacific newspapers and Australian and International Organisations of people with disabilities.

Funding

The following funds were distributed in 2007/08

- \$300 to Disabled Peoples' Association of Solomon Islands for production and distribution of a newsletter.
- \$300 to Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (Vanuatu) for sign language classes.
- \$500 to Fiji Disabled Peoples Association (FDPA) for the costs of operating the office in Suva, including servicing of the FDPA vehicle.
- \$300 to Te Toa Matoa (Kiribati) for running a workshop on handicrafts, such as the making of doormats and fishing stick nets. The products made will be sold and the funds raised used to assist in building a multi-purpose centre for Te Toa Matoa members.

At a meeting in January, Directors agreed to provide grants of \$500 to the following DPOs as soon as either (a) existing partner DPOs provide

documentation to say that the funds have been spent, or (b) partnership agreements are drawn up with new partner DPO's.

Existing partner DPOs – Fiji, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu
Currently seeking partnerships with DPO's in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga

In February, the Timor Leste DPO - Kra'as Hadomi Timor Oan - approached APIDS for support. APIDS Directors unanimously agreed to complete a partnership agreement and to provide a grant of \$500. With the assistance of a Timor Leste NGO, Assert, all paperwork was completed and funds were granted to be used for expenses in implementing the organisations activity plan for April to July.

An APIDS member, Frances Gentle, visited Timor Leste in April as part of her job with Renwick Centre for Research and Professional Education, and presented the funds to Kra'as Hadomi Timor Oan. Thank you Frances.

Although we try to minimise onerous reporting requirements to ensure that we are supporting and not burdening our DPO partners, APIDS must nevertheless ensure an appropriate level of accountability and transparency is maintained for everyone's benefit.

Tax deductibility

We are progressing well in our efforts to obtain tax deductibility and expect to be able to make an announcement early in the new financial year. Stay tuned!

Australian Volunteers International (AVI)

The partnership between APIDS and Australian Volunteers International, which included an initial plan to send volunteers with disabilities to the Pacific has resulted in one volunteer going to work with the Psychiatric Survivors Association of Fiji in April. AVI and APIDS are currently preparing an information release about the program which will be sent to you when completed. We hope to be able to support more volunteers through this partnership.

AVI has been contracted by the Australian Government to undertake a review of international volunteering within the disability sector in the Pacific, including PNG. As part of this research, AVI invited APIDS to attend a Discussion Forum on 29 April. Maryanne, Deborah and Robyn attended

The purpose of the Forum was to present the preliminary review findings to a range of Australian-based stakeholders, including AusAID, Australian volunteer sending agencies, recently returned volunteers and associated peak bodies, working in the disability sector in the Pacific. The Forum provided the opportunity to discuss the Review and the lessons learnt. Using a combination of small group and plenary sessions, the Forum explored the numerous facets of disability programming in the Pacific, the specific contribution that international volunteering can make, and ways of enhancing that contribution. A key feature of the forum was the opportunity for

stakeholders to formulate future programming strategies, including the parameters of a good practice model.

We will keep you informed.

Australian Development and Disability Consortium (ADDC)

ADDC is a consortium of around 250 organisations in the disability and/or development areas. Its aim is “To promote the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in development activities, advocating that disability be fully integrated into all Australian development programs and policies.”

APIDS is an active member of ADDC.

Those of you who have email addresses have received information about the upcoming International Conference, *Disability, Disadvantage and Development in the Pacific & Asia* to be held in Canberra on September 29-30, 2008. Robyn is a member of the Conference organising committee, and assures us all that this will be an exciting event.

Four APIDS directors will be presenting papers, chairing sessions and/or providing session summaries.

All APIDS’ partner organisations in the Pacific will also either be attending or presenting at the Conference.

A copy of the conference flyer is attached for all members who receive this newsletter via Australia Post.

ADDC has also been busy preparing and presenting policy documents, primarily to inform the new Government policy on disability in the aid program. APIDS Directors have an active role in this process.

Find out more about ADDC at www.addc.org.au

Australian Government

APIDS is very pleased that there is an understanding within AusAID and by the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Bob McMullan, about the rights based approach to disability. They also understand the need for disabled people’s organisations to be centrally involved in the development of the Australian Government’s disability and development policy and strategy. A Disability Taskforce has been set up within AusAID. APIDS Directors will have ongoing discussions with the Taskforce in order to reinforce our messages.

We will also be meeting with Mr Bob McMullan in June.

We encourage you to forward this newsletter to your family and friends. If you would like to join please email apids@aapt.net.au for a membership form. You can donate at <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/apids>