

Consumer Representative's Report

Name: Christopher Newell

Committee: Australian Communications Industry Forum Ltd
Disability Council

Contact Details: Email: Christopher.Newell@bigpond.com
8 Lawley Crescent, South Hobart, Tasmania, 7004, Australia.
Ph: 03 62248584 Fax: 03 62236174
Mobile Ph: 0418545611

Date of Meeting: 14 February, 2006 **Venue:** Sydney

Date Next Meeting: May, 2006 **Venue:** Sydney

The ACIF Disability Council meeting occurred on Tuesday, 14th February in Sydney. There were several matters which are of particular interest.

Firstly, work is proceeding with the development of a single telecommunications consumer protection code, something long advocated by the Consumer sector. This is however proving a bit of a challenge in that it requires the morphing of a variety of existing consumer codes into a single code. The whole aim is to make things simpler rather than more complex- yet making it uniform is taking a lot of work.

The Morgan Disney Consultancy have finished a report into Consumer Consultation within ACIF. Largely the report has little implications for the ongoing work of the Disability Council except insofar as it does suggest the development of a consumer charter between ACIF and consumer representatives in order to address some of the problems of communication and relationship identified. Mostly the work of the Disability Council was not mentioned with the exception being to praise its work. The Board of ACIF has yet to make a decision with regard to where it wants to go with its consultative processes but in the short term I don't think there will be any adverse directions for the Disability Council and its work.

A variety of issues to do with convergence and VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) were highlighted in consultation with ACIF staff members.

I am pleased to report that the vexed issue of payphones is finally being dealt with via a round-table involving ACIF, HEROC and other players to look at how payphone issues for people with disability will be adequately dealt with given that the issues transcend the ACIF environment. A couple of nominees of the Disability Council are participating although there is a disadvantage in that there is no money set aside by ACIF and therefore it will need to be done by teleconference.

The Priority Assistance Review (assistance for people with life-threatening conditions in terms of fixed phone repair) is occurring and a nominee of the Disability Council (Mr Harold Hartfield) will be on that Working Group.

Issues of accessibility for several different consumer disability categories were identified including people with complex communication needs and were seeking to do a workshop with ACIF stakeholders later in the year.

My frank assessment is that there are some challenges in relationship within ACIF processes and that the Morgan Disney Report was trying to address these with the notion of a consumer charter. My aim is to ensure that the Disability Council is able to go on with doing its work and leave some of the politics to me as the Chair to sort out with ACIF. Mostly the members of the Disability Council just want to be involved in doing work rather than engaged in talking about process all the time. We have a very successful team approach.

As ever I would welcome any questions or suggestions or issues to be taken up within either ACIF or the TIO.

Christopher