



HOLDEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

The House in context

Holden Street Neighbourhood House is situated in North Fitzroy an inner city location close to Melbourne's CBD. The House also delivers services from two other smaller neighbouring sites. The House has one full-time staff member and 17 part time and casual staff members. There are between 30 and 50 volunteers in any one-year. The House is open four days a week. Using a broad definition of disability we estimate that approximately 50 percent of House users have a disability. All classes are open to people with disabilities. Some classes have been specifically developed to provide solutions for particular groups of disabled people. We provide computer classes for Deaf people with a fully qualified ASLAN interpreter, and a cooking class for people who have special needs.

Office hours

Mon 9.30-12

Tues/Wed 9.30-4pm

Thur 9.30-2pm

Holden Street Neighbourhood House
128 Holden St
North Fitzroy
Vic 3068
Tel 9489 9929
Fax 9489 9544

Mission statement

Mission

To attract, assist and encourage our diverse community to define and achieve its aspirations.

Vision

Holden Street Neighbourhood House is a vibrant, vital resource that attracts a growing community involvement in a welcoming environment.

HOLDEN STREET NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE INCORPORATED

No: A0013050V

STATEMENT OF PURPOSES

In this statement of purposes “activities” include educational, recreational and social.

The purposes for which the incorporated association is established are to:-

- Improve the quality of community life for residents of the area.
- Provide quality adult and community educational and recreational programs relevant to local community needs by seeking adequate funding from government and private sources.
- Develop a comprehensive resource and referral system able to respond to the needs of individuals, families and groups in the community.
- Encourage involvement in the development of the community.
- Encourage community responsibility for the development and maintenance of the neighbourhood house as a community-owned house resource.
- Seek and provide resources, information and support relevant to the needs of the community.
- Reduce social isolation, build a sense of community and promote a sense of belonging and community spirit.
- Encourage self-help, self determination and independence of residents.
- Promote the use of the House as a hire facility.
- Establish links with all appropriate local organizations

To ensure that we meet the real needs of people with disabilities we have contracted David Brant a blind advocate and activist -a member of the Victorian Disability Advisory Council- to conduct this review and prepare our Disability Access Plan. David will also present the plan to the House committee and conduct a review of the plan twelve months from now. We hope a team of our own clients with disabilities, perhaps led by David, will make a presentation at the next staff and volunteers training workshop.

DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

Review and suggested improvements to the physical environment.

We want this Action plan to be an integral part of our House policy so for simplicity at a local level and to ensure that this document is immediately accessible to those people in the House who will need to implement the plan, we have combined provisions:

- a) the provision of policies**
- b) the communication of policies**
- c) our review of policies and the built and surrounding environment**

d) the setting of goals and timelines.

The review is placed first, followed by action item solutions and then a suggested time frame for completion.

As Holden Street is an established provider to a wide range of local community members with disabilities, it has over the years through necessity, made many additions and adaptations to both its physical environment and its policies. This means it already meets many of the requirements of a Disability Action Plan [DAP]. We know though that there are many things on which we can still improve in both delivery of service and amenity, to ensure access to the built environment, education, information, work place training, and the most needed of influences being social and community involvement that leads to interaction between disabled and able members of our community.

PHYSICAL AMENITIES

PARKING

A disability parking bay is required at the front of the premises immediately at the main entrance. There is currently a two-car space 'fifteen minute only' loading zone.

Action> One bay should be made a formal disabled parking spot which meets the Australian Standard with 9am – 9pm as the time designation [the current disability parking spot at the rear of the property is unusable as there is now NO wheel chair access to the front door which is the only possible disability access.

Action> Negotiate with Yarra City Council. [immediate]

Problem> one reason for the inaccessibility is the need to provide 'child proof' gates on all exits to child care facilities. We need to find a gate that is *both* wheelchair accessible and child proof!

Action> consult with local kindergartens, child care facilities and SCOPE. [6 months]

CROSSOVERS

Holden Street itself is now an extremely busy cut through between the Eastern and Tullamarine freeways, there are no tactile ground surface indicators [TGSI's] on it or surrounding streets.

Action> TGSI's should be placed at the main entrance and at the front door. [6months]

Action> Yarra City Council [Yarra] needs to place TGSI's in the foot path outside, at the cross over to Saint Georges Rd. and the intersecting side street and the pedestrian crossing 150 metres west of the House. [12 months]

External access within the fence line is excellent with 2 slightly inclined ramps to the front door and 2 more accessing the rear child care facility.

The front door bell is at an appropriate height but should be more obviously signed.

Action> add blue disability wheelchair sign. [Immediate]

SIGNAGE

Overall signage is poor, ad hoc and amateurish.

Action> replaced signage with professional signs using internationally acceptable symbols positioned more appropriately. [six months]

FIRE ALARMS

There are NO fire alarms suitable for warning the deaf. As the House has two classes with a sizable numbers of deaf students it is imperative that a minimum of 2 appropriate visual alarms be fitted one in the dining area and one in the Computer room. Ideally a third alarm should be placed in the hallway.

Action> negotiate with property owners. [immediate]

ACCESSIBLE TOILETS there is already a well situated and appointed toilet that meets the standard.

CLASSROOMS

Doorways seem narrow but could be negotiated by the majority of electric wheelchairs.

Action> widen computer room doorway. [Negotiate with property owner]

Each classroom requires a minimum of one desk and chair which are suitable for wheelchair users or people with poor mobility these desks should be placed near the door. The chairs should be steady and allow secure and safe transfer from walking frames or electric scooters.

Action> purchase or relocate appropriate seating. Provide appropriate desks.[12 months]

Action> Short term - raise 2 desks securely on blocks to the necessary height. [immediate] .

Action>Check Australian Standards and local users re appropriate desk heights.[immediate]

Administrative policies

CONFIDENTIALITY

Minimal confidential information is collected. What is retained on paper is kept in a locked filing cabinet. The majority of people with disabilities who enrol come with a carer provided either by themselves or by an external service provider.

The House has a privacy policy which ensures that personal information is not given to service providers or government departments.

Action> at the annual disability in-service ensure that there is a training session where staff are made aware of the need for absolute privacy on these matters.- [six months]

Action> take steps to ensure people with disabilities do not require the assistance of a carer to enrol. Provide all key enrolment documents, House program brochures and house policies in alternative formats specifically in electronic and large print. [6 months]

ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

Action> Staff in-service. Arrange an annual beginning of the academic year in-service which includes everybody within the House and, if possible, other nearby neighbourhood Houses. Purpose to provide information on how to best communicate with clients with a range of disabilities. For example, teachers can exchange ideas on how better to meet the requirements of students within classes. Ensure that everyone in the House understands the needs of people with disabilities by including everyone who works within the House, ie volunteers and administrators. [15 months]

Action> Have segments of this run by people with disabilities.

Action> Have the ACE Disability Network involved. Use 'In My Shoes' facilitators guide.

STUDENTS

Some House users are opposed to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Action> Where classes or demographics which use the House show hostility or negativity to people with disabilities arrange for the teachers of these classes to teach understanding via the theme of disability. Examples for an ESL class students could be given the task of writing a story about what it would be like to be 'trapped' in a wheelchair. This is John he uses sign language to communicate how would you communicate with him?

CLASS MATERIALS

Currently not immediately accessible.

Action> adapt as required – electronic formats, large print, audio tape. Work with appropriate service providers for example Vision Australia VAILS national library service.- [immediately BUT as required]

Action> establish a contact list of service providers and or individuals who can help with the appropriate expertise for individual enrolments. [12 months]

ENROLMENT PROCEDURE

Some people with disabilities drop out of some classes very early in each term.

Action> Conduct follow-up interviews with disabled students on a one to one basis after the first week and the fourth week of term to ensure that they are being properly catered for. [six months]

Action> same as above at the end of each course. [12 months]

EVALUATION and IMPLEMENTATION

Evaluation and implementation of the success and progress of this Disability Action Plan should, of course, be ongoing and constant.

Action> establish a subcommittee of the House management committee to oversee the evaluation and implementation of the action plan. The chairperson of this subcommittee should ideally be a person with a disability.

Action> As people with disabilities make up a sizable percentage of all House users consideration should be given to allocating one committee position permanently for a person with a disability.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

It is imperative that and individual officer within the House take responsibility for implementation of this action plan.

Action> where there is an obvious 'champion' [a person with a disability or someone with direct experience of a disability] that person should be encouraged to take on the role be they the chief executive officer or the cleaner.

Action> where there is no 'champion' this role is perhaps most relevant to the coordinator of education.